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The Newsletter of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities | Spring 2004

Mingo Rocks The Palace

BY DAVID BEARINGER

Domingo “Mingo” Saldivar is sixty-eight. His face reads like an atlas of the Mexican border, a chronicle of life on the road. He’s small, with legs like pieces of wire in hard blue-jeans, a National Heritage Fellow and two-time Grammy nominee from the San Antonio dance clubs who has played the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall; July 4 on the Mall in Washington, the first Clinton inauguration. Tonight he’s wearing a narrow-brimmed cowboy hat and a red and black-patterned showman’s shirt, with a button accordion slung below his beltline, machismo to burn.

When Mingo plays, he bends toward the floor, moving back and forth across the stage, like a cat. His hands are quick, precise; his voice sharp and insistent. Energy pops and hisses around him, as if the man inside that shirt is turning and cooking on a spit. The accordion sound is bright, and he’s got a solid backup band—drums, harmonica, electric bass. They’re playing *Ring of Fire (Rueda del Fuego)*, rocking The Palace Theatre on a rainy Friday night in Cape Charles, on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. The house is packed—400 people, standing room only—and at least one-third of the audience is speaking Spanish.

The Palace Theatre is a lovingly renovated 1940s movie house with 30-foot ceilings, pin-drop acoustics,

a wide stage, and large silver-toned, art deco-style murals set high up on the walls. Performing tonight, below these elegant oil-on-linen paintings—of heron, lotus flowers, willow trees, and graceful female figures seated by the water’s edge, nets full of fish—is the Masters of Mexican Music Tour, organized by the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA).

Two Virginia communities, Cape Charles and Galax, are among the sites that have been chosen to host this national tour, which includes artists representing four distinctive Mexican and cross-border musical styles. The VFH awarded funds to Arts Enter Cape Charles and to the City of Galax, supporting bilingual publicity and the development of interpretive



Mingo Saldivar

materials to accompany these two performance events.

Within the past several years, the Eastern Shore and southern Blue Ridge counties of Virginia have seen major increases in the numbers of Latino—especially Mexican—residents. In Grayson and Carroll counties (Galax sits on the border between them), immigrants from Latin America have come to work the Christmas tree farms that are a pillar of the region’s new economy. This year, more than 10 percent of the children in the Galax public schools are speaking Spanish as their first language.



SPRING 2004

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Mingo Rocks The Palace

Continued from cover

On the Eastern Shore, large numbers of Mexican and other Latino immigrants work in the poultry and seafood processing plants; others, migrants as well as permanent residents, work the clam beds and the vegetable farms, picking, grading, and packing produce. Mexican grocery stores are scattered along Route 13, the major north-south artery that runs like a backbone up the center of Northampton and Accomack Counties.

Otherwise, the strong Latino presence on the Shore is easy to miss unless you know where to look for it. Latinos mostly live apart from the Shore's white and African American communities. And until now, the Latino audience at dozens of events hosted by The Palace Theatre has been small, barely visible. Something new is happening tonight along the border in Cape Charles. Inside The Palace, the border itself is starting to disappear.



The musical traditions represented in the Tour reflect an astounding variety of cultural influences—Spanish and Indian, primarily; but also Polish, West African, Afro-Caribbean, German, Czech. The traditions themselves include *Marimba* from Chiapas in southern Mexico; the Andalusian-sounding *Musica Jarocho*, from the lowlands of Veracruz on the Gulf Coast; *Mariachi* from Jalisco, a marriage of string and brass that has become an international symbol of Mexican folk music; and *Conjunto Tejano*.

In some ways *Conjunto*, the music Mingo is playing, is the most hybridized of all—a fast-paced, cross-border, Central



Marimba Chiapas

Photos courtesy of NCTA
and Arts Enter Cape Charles

ing of the region's history and of the rapid changes that are occurring there, changes driven in part by the forces of globalization. Here, and in Galax three-hundred miles away, the Masters of Mexican Music Tour has cracked a wall of cultural isolation that surrounds Latino communities, demonstrating the complexity of Mexican musical traditions and the skill of the artists who are their living embodiment.



Mingo Saldivar is winding up his set—his own version of Johnny Cash's *Folsom Prison Blues* (*La Ultima Milla*). He's got the audience on its feet; Anglo or Latino, it hardly matters. Some kind of line has been crossed, whatever side of the border you live on. The music of Mexico is here, in Cape Charles. Two traditional dancers have just tied a perfect wedding knot in a 20-foot-long sash with their steps, never once breaking the rhythm of their dance. Mingo's rocking The Palace. Something new and significant is happening on the Eastern Shore. Only the women in the murals seem unmoved: but who knows? Maybe up there, in their serene detachment, they've crossed some kind of border of their own.

European-influenced mixture of dance tunes and Tex-Mex country. Close your eyes and the Marimba is an audio pipeline straight to Senegal or Barbados. Mingo's *Ring of Fire* is played staccato, like a Cajun polka. It would sound at home in a Polish beer garden or a dance club in El Paso; on a front porch in the woods of Southwest Louisiana, or at Carnegie Hall. Stereotypes wither in the presence of this polyglot *lingua musica*.



The VFH has made a long-term commitment to the Eastern Shore, in part by establishing a Regional Council that serves both Accomack and Northampton Counties. Clelia Sheppard, the President of Arts Enter, who organized this event, is a member of the Council, and one of the goals of this organization has been to encourage greater understanding of the Shore's rich—and diverse—cultural heritage.

The Council is also working to promote a deeper understand-

Virginia Folklife Program and the Virginia Discovery Museum Feature Snake Cane Wood Carver **Norman Amos**

BY TORI TALBOT

I was both curious and perplexed when Virginia Folklife Director Jon Lohman asked me to look at the “Snake Canes” he brought back to the VFH from a recent trip to southern Virginia. But once I saw the intricately carved walking sticks, I was mesmerized.

The delicate scales were whittled into vine-coiled branches with such elaborate detail that I thought at any moment a reptile would come alive and slither right off the walking stick.

Lohman borrowed the collection of over 40 snake sticks (known as “thigmotropic walking sticks”) from their creator, **Norman Amos**, a wood carver who has spent most of his life in the shadows of Turkeycock Mountain in Pittsylvania County. Amos, a retired farmer and rural mail carrier, has received no formal artistic training. While he has operated largely under the radar of many “folk art” collectors, his canes have graced the Corcoran Museum of Art in Washington, D.C., and numerous craft and folk art shows, including an annual appearance at the Blue Ridge Folk Festival in Ferrum. This summer, his work will be on display at the Virginia Discovery Museum in Charlottesville.

Amos uses precisely sharpened hand-made tools to carve the snake

canes. One snake cane can take anywhere from 60-160 hours to carve and paint, depending on size. A snake like the canebrake rattler, one of two rattlesnake species found in Virginia, may have over 4,000 scales to be individually carved.

There is a long-standing rich tradition of snake cane carving in southern and southwest Virginia. Like many of Virginia’s cultural folkways, this carving arose as a creative and expressive human response to an everyday object or event. The process begins when a vine wraps itself around a tree branch and fuses to that branch, ultimately causing the branch to die and fall from the tree. The result is a wooden stick with a tightly coiled pattern on it, and the artist takes over from there.

While many Virginians have carved snake canes, few have embraced the art form as thoroughly as Amos. With the recent passing of 98-year-old carver Emory Robinson of Bonsack, Virginia, Amos now stands as the most



Norman Amos

prolific living snake cane carver. Recently, Amos achieved his lifelong goal of carving one cane for every species of snake indigenous to Virginia.

The Virginia Folklife Program will celebrate this unique collection and artist at a public reception on Thursday, July 8, at 6 p.m. at the Discovery Museum on the east end of Charlottesville’s Downtown Mall. The Virginia Discovery Museum will present snake-related activities for children in conjunction with this exhibit throughout the month of August. For more information about the Virginia Discovery Museum, please visit their website at www.vadm.org.

The “Crooked Road”: Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail

The Virginia Folklife Program has received a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to conduct fieldwork along the “Crooked Road” Heritage Music Trail. The Crooked Road, a project of the Appalachian Regional Commission, is Virginia’s Heritage Music Trail, a driving route through the Appalachian Mountains from the western slopes of the Blue Ridge to the Coalfields region in the far southwestern corner of the state. The trail connects major heritage music venues in the Appalachian region such as the Blue Ridge Music Center, the Birthplace of Country Music Alliance, and the Carter Family Fold.

The traditional gospel, bluegrass, and mountain music heard today was passed down from generation to generation and lives on through a wealth of musicians and instrument makers along the trail. Annual festivals, weekly concerts, live radio shows, and informal jam sessions abound throughout the region. The Folklife Program’s research, however, will not only focus on musical traditions but on all aspects of community life and traditional culture along the trail. The Folklife Program intends to make extensive audio and video field recordings, as well as to photograph aspects of daily life along the trail, resulting in an archive, book, and public exhibition.



A member of the Mt. Rogers Volunteer Fire Department mans the grill at the annual Whitetop Mountain Ramp Festival. This celebration of the pungent wild Appalachian Leek is an olfactory rite of spring in Southwest Virginia.





VABook! 2004 Tops Attendance Record Again

22,386 in Attendance at Events

BY KEVIN McFADDEN

The latest Virginia Festival of the Book, held March 24-28 in Charlottesville, is on the shelf. And while it will be archived in a row as the 10th of its kind, it would be difficult to compare it to any of its predecessors. Not only did the festival shatter its highest previous attendance record

by 5,000, its roster of participants in 2004 included winners of nearly all major literary prizes alongside the best emerging talents, solidifying its reputation as one of the best book events in the Mid-Atlantic.

VABook! 2004 saw memorable performances by **Garrison Keillor**, luncheon speaker **Clyde Edgerton**, novelist **Kaye Gibbons**, the Fellowship of Southern Writers, and, of course, Saturday's "bookend Michaels"—*English Patient* author **Michael Ondaatje** and *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* author **Michael Chabon**.

(To hear Chabon's reading of an "apocryphal chapter" from *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, visit the VFH website virginiafoundation.org.)

"There was so much excitement and energy during the week," said VABook! Program Director Nancy Damon. "It was really gratifying to see people out and around talking about books."

Participant and Arlington resident **Edward P. Jones** came

to the festival having recently won the National Book Critics Circle Award for *The Known World*. Days later, the book would also be recognized as the winner of the 2004 Pulitzer Prize in fiction. In April, participant and Charlottesville resident **Henry Wiencek** would go on to win the 2003 *L.A. Times* Book Prize in history for *An Imperfect God*, his exploration of George Washington's complicated relationship to slavery.

In addition to widespread coverage of the festival around Virginia, features on the festival appeared in *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, and *Poets & Writers*.

The 11th annual Virginia Festival of the Book is scheduled for **March 16-20, 2005**. For more information on VABook!, visit the festival website www.vabook.org.



Author Henry Wiencek, winner of the 2003 *L.A. Times* Book Prize in history, was a participant, reception host, and moderator in panels in the festival.



A festival crowd packs the UVa Newcomb Hall Ballroom to hear novelist Michael Ondaatje and forensic anthropologist Victoria Sanford discuss their work and the intersections of fact and fiction.



At the Opening Ceremony of the 2004 Virginia Festival of the Book, three Virginia students were honored for their winning entries in the **Letters About Literature** writing competition. Sponsored by the VFH Center for the Book, students across the Commonwealth were invited to select a book that had made a difference in their lives and to write to the book's author.

This year awards went to **Kelly Mulquin**, a fifth grade student at Churchill Road Elementary School in McLean for her letter to Priscilla Cummings, author of *Saving Grace*; **Lauren Costlow**, an eighth grade student of the MBC Home School for her letter to L. M. Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables*; and **Alyssa Jenkins**, an 11th grade student for her letter to Harper Lee, author of *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

Letters About Literature is an annual competition organized by the VFH Center for the Book in cooperation with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, and with the national sponsorship of Target Stores. Guidelines for the 2004-05 competition will be available from the VFH after September 15.



The 2004 winners of the Letters About Literature contest: Alyssa Jenkins, Kelly Mulquin, Lauren Costlow, featured with the keynote speaker of the festival opening, John Stokes.



Brigida Mack, reporter and anchor of Charlottesville's NBC affiliate Channel 29, reads to storylovers young and old at StoryFest. VABook! 2004 set another record for attendance at youth events, introducing 9,000 area youths to authors and book-related programs.

Voices of Adult Learners: Sharing the Power of Stories

If you don't know the trees, you will get lost in the forest, but if you don't know the stories, you will get lost in life.

—SIBERIAN PROVERB

Stories were the focus of the evening when hundreds eagerly gathered March 25 at Burnley-Moran Elementary School in Charlottesville to celebrate Voices of Adult Learners, a program of the 2004 Virginia Festival of the Book. One after another, students enrolled in area basic education, literacy, GED, or ESL classes stepped to the podium to proudly read aloud their compositions. They included teens, parents, grandparents, native-born Americans, and those who have come here from abroad, all sharing a common desire to learn, to improve their lives, and to improve their families' futures.

As one man contemplated on his present status, he also looked to future generations when he wrote, "I think that my going to school sets a good example for my grandchildren to stay in school." Another writer from China reflected on events in China that caused him to "flee to America to get a new life!" Several paid tribute to their tutors and teachers, as did the woman who expressed her gratitude by writing that she now knows she "has potential to go after education... thanks to a wonderful teacher."

Sponsored by the Region 8 Literacy Coordinating Committee (RLCC), Voices of Adult Learners has become an annual event at the Festival and one of the most popular. Thanks to the assistance of the business and printing classes at Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women, each writer was presented with a printed edition of *Voices of Adult Learners*. In addition, each entry from 1997 to 2004 can be read on the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library website, <http://avenue.org/adulted/voal.html>.

As RLCC co-chair **Susan Erno** noted, these compelling stories "help us understand why adult education and literacy programs exist and should continue to exist" as vital components of a dynamic community with a strong economic base and a rich civic life.

Center for the Book SUMMER READING

We asked some of our favorite readers to recommend to us their favorite books. Here are just a few.

COMPILED BY SUSAN COLEMAN

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd

This well-crafted novel filled with beautiful literary devices subtly weaves together the life of a young girl from rural South Carolina with the events of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. A good companion book for *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons and/or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.

— LINDA NICHOLSON, ENGLISH TEACHER AT
HIGHLAND SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL

The Coming of the Third Reich by Richard J. Evans

The definitive book (so far) of the decline and fall of democracy—the Weimar Republic—in Germany and the rise of Hitler and Nazism. A cautionary tale of how easily a democratic government can commit suicide.

— GEORGE GARRETT, AUTHOR AND
POET LAUREATE OF VIRGINIA

Wait Til Next Year by Doris Kearns Goodwin

A memoir about growing up in the 1950s and 60s in New York City as a die-hard Brooklyn Dodgers fan. Goodwin is an excellent writer who paints a picture of a simpler time, growing up in the borough of Brooklyn, and of the close relationships with her family and neighborhood. You need not be a baseball fan to enjoy it, but it helps.

— DANA G. SCHRAD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

Heart's Needle by W. D. Snodgrass

As the divorce rate in America continues to increase, this 1959 Pulitzer Prize winning work of poetry remains powerful. It explores the confusion and pain that results from the loss of family and child, bringing fresh insights to the familiar struggle.

— PHILIP RAISOR, PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE,
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Rabbit Hill written and illustrated by Robert Lawson

Long before I had the privilege of eating lunch at the real Rabbit Hill house in Darien, Connecticut, I loved Lawson's ominous illustration of rabbit tombstones and the Kentucky bluegrass voice of Father Rabbit. Don't settle for a paperback if you can find the out-of-print hardcover version, which features a splendid endpaper map of Rabbit Hill and a jacket with retro 1940s colors.

— MARY E. LYONS, AUTHOR

The Monkey Bridge by Rafe Martin

This book takes place on the banks of the Ganges River. It is a wonderful book about learning from others even if you are at the top of the heap. A great read aloud book for kids, ages eight to ten.

— PHIL FELLOWS, LITERACY SPECIALIST
AT B.F. YANCEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Dangerous Fortune by Ken Follett

In this novel about the lives of a closely intertwined family in England, Follett captures the themes of love, greed, ambition and joy. There is mystery and romance and philosophy. His characters, as always, seem to leap off the pages and live with you. It's a book to enjoy more than once.

— ELIZABETH L. YOUNG, BOARD CHAIR,
VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR THE HUMANITIES

A Wealth of Wisdom: Legendary African American Elders Speak edited by Camille O. Cosby and Renee Poussaint

This book contains pearls of wisdom and observations about life as told by 50 or so African Americans aged 70 and over. Each of these elders shares a bit of wisdom from their vast and varied life experiences and serves as a guide to the future based on the past.

— BELLE WHEELAN, SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

A Year in the South: Four Lives in 1865 by Stephen V. Ash

Ash draws from the written journals of four Southerners—a slave, a Confederate officer's impoverished widow, a plantation owner, and a Confederate sympathizer in pro-Union East Tennessee—to bring to life the final year of the Civil War. Ash is a wonderful storyteller and writer. This book is social history at its finest.

— JOHN COTHAM, LIBRARIAN OF THE
WAMPLER LIBRARY AT MOUNTAIN
EMPIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency by Alexander McCall Smith

This book follows the travails of Precious Ramotswe, an original, independent thinking woman in Botswana Africa, as she follows her heart and her mind in opening her own Ladies detective agency. Written with a keen understanding for the female spirit, Precious is unexpected and delightful.

— ELIZABETH WILSON, FINANCIAL
CONSULTANT, RBC DAIN RAUSCHER

VFH Symposium on the *Brown* Decision and Virginia's Massive Resistance: A Hall of Fame for Virginia's Civil Rights Activists

BY AMY TILLERSON

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* U. S. Supreme Court decision, the VFH African American Heritage Program hosted a symposium, **A Half Century After *Brown v. Board of Education*: To Remember and to Act**, on May 21 & 22 at Monticello Event and Conference Center in Charlottesville.

Friday's keynote address by Virginia Congressman Robert "Bobby" Scott, an impassioned historicizing of the *Brown* decision and a challenge to continue the fight for equal educational opportunities for all students, was followed by the recognition of 15 extraordinary "ordinary people" for their contributions to social justice.

In some cases, the widows of fallen civil rights activists accepted their husbands' awards and made moving remarks remembering the era that created the necessity of civil rights work during Virginia's massive resistance. Director of the Virginia Center for the Book Susan Coleman commented that while listening to the guests, she "...felt like I was among royalty." The activism of these guests ranged from legislative to grassroots.

Honored guests included **Delegate Viola Baskerville**, whose activism has focused on urban revitalization, economic empowerment for women and small and minority businesses, and women and children's health issues. **Mary Ann Elwood** is the widow of **Dr. Bill Elwood**, who wrote and produced the documentary film *The Road to Brown*. Elwood, a professor of Renaissance English and the Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at UVa, recruited African American scholars for graduate school. Mrs. Elwood in 1964 worked with Penny Weiss to start the Church Woman's Preschool for African American children who would not otherwise be able to attend what were then private

kindergartens. **Dr. Paul Gaston** is a noted southern historian and professor emeritus at UVa, and lifelong activist for civil rights. He was assaulted in the Memorial Day stand-in at Buddy's Restaurant on Emmet Street in 1963, and supported anti-racist activities at the University throughout the 1960s. **Adelaide Griffin** is the widow of **Rev. L. Francis Griffin**, who played a crucial role in creating a fair, open school system not only in Prince Edward County, but in the nation. As president of the local NAACP and chairman of the Moton High School PTA, Griffin supported the two-week strike by more than 400 Moton students in 1951, which led to the *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* case, a lawsuit later incorporated into *Brown v. Board of Education*. **Flossie Hudson**, a native of Prospect and life-long community servant, used the basement in her home to teach nearly 50 school-aged students when public schools in Prince Edward County closed rather than integrate. **Joan Johns-Cobbs** is the sister of **Barbara Rose Johns-Powell** (deceased), who in 1951 was a 16-year-old junior at the segregated Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville when she organized a student strike over conditions in her school, which was designed to hold 180 students and had 450. The Farmville case became one of the five cases reviewed in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. **Katherine Kilby** is the widow of **James Wilson Kilby**, who fought relentlessly for quality education for black children. In 1958, he

and other parents, with the backing of the NAACP, won a lawsuit against the Warren County School Board that led to the admission of 22 black students to the previously all-white Warren County High School, one of the early cracks in Virginia's state-mandated wall of massive resistance to public school desegregation. **Senator Henry L. Marsh, III** was a partner in the law firm Hill, Tucker & Marsh in the 1960s and joined the fight against massive resistance. After having served on the Richmond City Council since 1966, Marsh won the mayor's seat in 1977, becoming the first black mayor in the city's history. In 1991, Marsh was elected Virginia State Senator from the 16th Senate District and is now serving



Congressman Bobby Scott (keynote speaker) and guests Eugene Williams and Charlottesville Vice-Mayor Meredith Richards share conversation during the *Brown* symposium.



Among the *Brown* symposium's honored guests were (front row, left to right) Mary Ann Elwood, Adelaide Griffin, Katherine Kilby, Joan Johns-Cobbs, (second row) Dr. R. A. Johnson, Senator Henry Marsh, Mrs. Ida Lewis, Delegate Viola Baskerville, Congressman Bobby Scott, Dr. Paul Gaston, (third row) Dr. Milton Reid, John Stokes, Dr. William F. Reid, Eugene Williams, and Dr. Edward Peebles. Honored guests were recognized for their courage and contributions to social justice during Virginia's massive resistance and beyond.

his third term. **Dr. Edward Peebles**, sociologist, public health educator, civil rights activist, and documenter of the Prince Edward story for 44 years, participated in the February 1960 sit-ins at the Richmond Thalheimer's department store and later led activism that resulted in reforms to eliminate discrimination in the federal disaster relief programs. **Dr. Milton A. Reid**, a retired minister and civil rights leader, is current chair of the board of the Virginia Unit of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that he helped to organize in 1960. Reid led a Prayer Pilgrimage to Prince Edward County and three other pilgrimages to the nation's capital and was incarcerated 12 times for civil disobedience during his participation in the Civil Rights movement. **Dr. William Ferguson Reid**, the first African American elected to the Virginia General Assembly in the 20th century, is a medical doctor and community leader in the city of Richmond, and was the only African American in the General Assembly when he took office in 1968; he served three terms. **John A. Stokes** is retired principal of Baltimore City Public Schools, and one of the leaders of the 1951 student strike at the R. R. Moton High School in Prince Edward County. He is now working on the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Program and Fund. **Eugene Williams** in the 1950s built the Charlottesville chapter of the NAACP into an army for change, and increased the chapter's membership from 65 to 1,500 in just two years. In

1955, Williams helped organize a petition demanding the admission of black children to all-white Lane and Venable schools. When the petition was rebuffed by the Charlottesville School Board, Williams' wife Lorraine joined 11 other families in a lawsuit that contributed to the federal court ruling ordering the admission of the students. **Dr. R. A. Johnson** is well known for rallying, marching, meeting, sit-ins in restaurants, standing in hotel lobbies—all actions necessary to integrate public facilities in Albemarle county and surrounding communities—and pastor of Zion Hill Baptist Church in Cismont for 47 years; **Ida Lewis** is a graduate of Jefferson High School, and the first African American and first female to be employed by the City of Charlottesville sheriff's department. Now retired, Mrs. Lewis is a CASA worker and a member of the Charlottesville Regional Jail Authority.

Saturday's activities included panel discussions and workshops on Virginia's reactions to *Brown*, harking back to the era of massive resistance in Prince Edward and Warren Counties and in the cities of Charlottesville and Norfolk. Public schools closed in these Virginia locations to resist desegregation. Representatives for each of these locations presented their personal reactions to the era with emotion and clarity. Mr. Leslie "Skip" Griffin represented Prince Edward County; Mr. Andrew Heidelberg, Norfolk; Mrs. Betty Fische, Warren County; and Dr. Paul Gaston, Charlottesville. Dr. James Hershman

moderated this panel.

Other discussions and workshops focused on the backlash to and legacies of the *Brown* decision, considering the questions, "What still needs to be done in our nation's quest for civil rights?" and "What problems did the *Brown* decision create or fail to address?" Dr. Stefan Bradley, from Southern Illinois University, moderated this panel, and presenters included Mrs. Brenda Edwards, senior research associate for the division of legislative services, Dr. Peter Wallenstein, associate professor of history, Virginia Tech, and Norman Neverson, a Prince Edward County native. Concurrent workshops for both sessions were designed for high- and middle-school-aged participants from the Virginia counties and cities where desegregation was resisted with the closing of public schools. Awele Makeba, Fred Motley, and Jasper Hendricks facilitated these workshops.

Visit the VFH website virginiafoundation.org to listen to comments and discussions from the symposium.



Awele Makeba is an award-winning and internationally known actor, emerging playwright, storyteller, and educator. She uses ethnographic theatre to examine the history of segregation. Here, Awele presents to public school students from Prince Edward and Warren Counties and the cities of Charlottesville and Norfolk.

Elaine Carter Has Led a Renaissance at Christiansburg Institute

Elaine Carter has been a member of the VFH Board of Directors since 2000, but her association with the Foundation began at the time of our first grant to Christiansburg Institute, Inc., in November 1999.

Christiansburg Institute (CI) was founded in 1866 in a log cabin, as a federal Freedmen's Bureau initiative. It grew to include 14 primary buildings on a 185-acre campus in Christiansburg, becoming one of the most distinguished

African American educational institutions in Virginia and the nation. The school closed in 1966.

Elaine grew up in Elliston, in rural Montgomery County, and graduated from CI at age 14. She went on to become an Assistant Commissioner with the New York Human Resource Administration; Assistant Dean of the Columbia University School of Architecture

and Planning; President of a successful human resource consulting firm, Elaine Carter Associates; and the Executive Director of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, before returning to Virginia in 1996.

Working first as a volunteer, then as Executive Director, Elaine Carter has led a renaissance at CI, recapturing a history that was in danger of disappearing; developing an array of educational initiatives and programs that preserve and explore the school's remarkable legacy; re-envisioning and defining a new mission for CI based on the values the school embodied; and steering the institution toward a future of renewed leadership.

It's an inspiring story—as inspiring in its own way as the history of the school itself.

Here, in the first of an occasional series of interviews with distinguished friends and associates of the VFH, Sean Tubbs talks with Elaine about her personal history and the importance of CI.

— DAVID BEARINGER



Sean Tubbs: You were born in Roanoke, but can you tell me where you grew up?

Elaine Carter: I grew up in Elliston, my father's hometown, a small village between Roanoke and Christiansburg. Elliston had a typical Southern pattern. The more well-to-do whites lived on the highway, and right behind them lived the African American community.

ST: What did your mother and father do?

EC: My father was a hotel bellman at the Patrick Henry in Roanoke. My mother was a schoolteacher who read to us a lot. I began to go to school in Elliston in a two-room school. I read all the books in the small school library.

ST: Can you tell me what CI was like in the mid 1940s, when you were enrolled?

EC: For me, it was a touch of paradise to go from a two-room school to a campus with brick buildings, and marble stairs, and mahogany woodwork, and a large auditorium. It just opened me to worlds I had no knowledge of. The teachers were educated, they were attentive and respectful, and that made me feel very grown up and very responsible.

ST: Would that have contrasted with other African American schools in the region at that time?

EC: The only other high school that I knew of until I was a junior was the Lucy Addison High School in Roanoke. In Wytheville, the entire high school curriculum was taught in one room by one teacher until the early 1950s. There was no secondary school for African Americans in Pulaski County. They only offered subjects until ninth grade.

ST: You graduated at 14 and went to a suburb of Chicago to attend Rosary College. You transferred to Howard to finish your bachelor's, and eventually went to Boston College to get a Master's in Sociology. What prepared you to seek out a full education, and how was your initial transition into the working world?

EC: I was reared in my home to expect to go to college. My mother had gone to Fisk University. My father had finished at Virginia State, but there were no jobs for an African American male except teaching. When you live in an apartheid society, the broader opportunities that a society offers are unknown to you. At that time, most of the women who graduated from Howard University went to work for the government, and the men went to work for the post office. That was the world of opportunity.

ST: But, you were part of the generation that began to change all of that. Some of the things you went on to do from there, from managerial jobs in New York City government to starting your own firm, indicated you were either able to create your own experiences, or the world was changing. Can you explain?

EC: The world was changing. I was in Washington when it was desegregated in 1953, and I was beginning to see the world differently. New York was where I had a mercurial rise. The opportunity structure was broader, deeper, and when the anti-poverty program came along in the 1960s, it was a major



Demolition of the Christiansburg Institute campus

Student life on campus
at the turn of the century
(Christiansburg Institute Collection)



opening of opportunities for black professionals in the human sciences.

ST: In the early 90s, you came back to Southwest Virginia to attend a Ph.D. program at Virginia Tech. How did you get involved with the Christiansburg Institute again?

EC: I had left very young and memories that I had were always very active in my mind, and I wanted to know more. I had been very cynical about the history of the school. When I was told its buildings were being demolished, I just said, "What do you think? We're in the apartheid south!" So, I really brushed it off as symptomatic of an era I despised. But, to see these people who had lived here all of their lives and had vowed not to let the Institute die—I fell in love with them and the project and became more and more involved.

ST: What have some of the obstacles been to getting the new CI off the ground?

EC: Well, remember, the school was destroyed. There was only one building left on its original foundations that was available. The wrecking ball had taken the rest down, buried them under. There was no historic commemoration on the part of the control board that had operated the school since 1934. The alumni decided the one thing they could do was to preserve its history through the collection of photographs, documents and artifacts. Right now, we have over 4,000 items. [There is a] kind of faith that makes things live and keeps things going. My cynicism had had not been in the right direction.

ST: CI is now recognized as a historical landmark in on both the Virginia and national lists. Can you talk a little about where the restoration is now?

EC: We've had, a \$300,000 predevelopment grant. We are well into development to restore the Edgar Long building and we are also going to build a new building, which is going to be a trades building. We have gotten quite a few partnerships with local community colleges and universi-

ties. We have rolled all of the restoration and construction into one project that has escalated the cost from \$2.1 million to \$4.5 million.

ST: What will be happening at the new CI when it is complete? What are some of the programs and in what spirit will they be taking place?

EC: The spirit is the legacy of CI, a legacy that held with deep conviction that every human being given the right opportunities could optimize their capabilities and with discipline and trust people could in fact grow. The whole notion of diversity, opportunity and trust in human capability, bringing those to bear again in ways that engage the community again through collaborative efforts....We want to tear down some of the walls that separate people, and we want to apply the experiential learning philosophy that was so much part of the Christiansburg Institute.

ST: What role did the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities play in helping contribute to the rebirth of the school?

EC: The VFH had the confidence to give this very young, embryonic organization (CI Incorporated) a grant. We were very new and we submitted a proposal for a traveling exhibit. And that exhibit is still showing. At the same time, the African American Heritage Program was emerging, and CI was in the first group of grant recipients. Being on the board has been a tremendous resource to me personally. I learned a great deal about what other organizations are doing, and it gave me a lot of clarity about how to pursue the course we were on.

ST: You spent most of your adult life outside of Virginia. What was returning to Virginia like?

EC: It's been one of the most troublesome and the most expanding opportunities I've ever had. The mark of oppression is very much stamped into the hearts and minds of large numbers of African Americans. Their relationships with whites are by and large very traditional. Say what white

people want you to say, do what they want you to do, and hurry home and close your door so that you can be away from them. That isn't characteristic of everyone, but that's a pronounced pattern.

ST: What can be done to help to bridge some of the gaps?

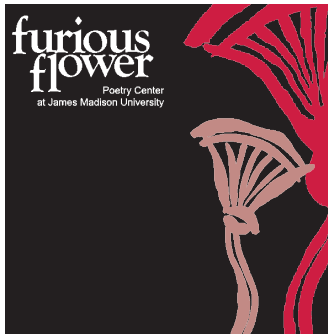
EC: One of the most positive ways is not to let African American institutions like the Christiansburg Institute die.

ST: What matters most in education?

EC: Just because your material building is bad it doesn't necessarily mean your education is, because education is more than what goes on in the classroom. Education is a relationship between a person who knows more and who trusts your ability to grasp and to seize everything they have, and are willing to steer you beyond them to other places. And that was the educational process during the emancipation period, 100 years of apartheid in the southern United States. The torch carriers of the African American experience in America are Southern. And it's because of the environments and the culture in which the education took place, meager though the resources were. It was the culture of the African American community that protected the talent and gave people the drive to push through the obstacles and the barriers.

The complete interview with Elaine Carter may be heard on the VFH website, virginiafoundation.org.

VFH Supports **Furious Flower** Poetry Center's Conference on Black Poetic Expression



With the help of a VFH grant, the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University is organizing a public conference September 22-25 devoted to African American poetry and criticism entitled *Furious Flower: Regenerating the Black Poetic Tradition*.

Like the first nationally acclaimed Furious Flower conference held in Harrisonburg in 1994—which was also VFH-funded and regarded as a tremendous success—the upcoming conference will examine the significance and development of black poetic expression over the last century and explore its future trajectories.

Led by **Dr. Joanne Gabbin** of James Madison University, the conference promises to attract scholars, poets, and critics worldwide to introduce original work and explore innovative critical approaches for the general public. Poets who are confirmed to attend include **Elizabeth Alexander, Amiri Baraka, Lucille Clifton, Toi Dericotte, Cornelius Eady, Nikki Giovanni, E. Ethelbert Miller, Sonia Sanchez, Natasha Trethewey, and Kevin Young.**

The decision to wait 10 years before calling together another Furious Flower was a calculated one (some suggested that a conference of such magnitude should not be attempted more than once in a decade). The main themes of the upcoming conference were cultivated on the idea of carefully observed growth: “Roots and First Fruits” (examining folk traditions at the heart of major 20th century poets), “Cross-Pollination in the Diaspora” (assessing international impact of African American poetry in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Asia, and Europe), and “Blooming in the Whirlwind” (exploring the emergence of younger poets and the implications of poetry in the 21st century).

Sets of collectible poetry broadsides from the first Furious Flower are available from the VFH. For more information on the conference, visit www.jmu.edu/furiousflower/.

Three Performances by the Paschall Brothers in Washington, D.C., During June

Virginia Folklife master artists The Paschall Brothers are performing at three national venues in June showcasing their unique Tidewater Gospel tradition. On June 15, the Paschalls were featured on the Neptune Plaza of the Library of Congress in the Library's free public performance series of traditional music and dance that draws from communities across the United States and revives the Library's tradition of folk music presentations dating back to the 1940s.

Later that same day, the Paschalls appeared on the Millennium Stage in the Grand Foyer of the Kennedy Center as part of the Kennedy Center's Performing Arts for Everyone, an initiative launched in 1997 to expand and increase access to the performing

arts for local Washington residents and visitors by offering free public performances 365 days a year.

The Paschalls will return to Washington, D.C., on June 25 to participate in a gospel showcase on the National Mall. This event is the signature concert of the first weekend of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and highlights one of the Festival's three themes: “Water Ways: The Past, Present, and Future of Maritime Communities in the Mid-Atlantic.”

The Paschall Brothers stand firmly in the tradition of unaccompanied religious singing in Tidewater Virginia. The black gospel quartet tradition can be traced back to plantation life in the South. The style blossomed in the region and by the 1920s found a national following with groups such as



the Heavenly Gospel Singers and, notably, the Golden Gate Quartet of Norfolk. Formed in 1981 by the late Rev. Frank Paschall, Sr., the Paschall Brothers carry on this remarkable tradition and bring new life and energy to this venerable style. The Paschall Brothers CD entitled *Songs for Our Father* was released in 2003 by Virginia Folklife Recordings, a project of the Virginia Folklife Program and the VFH. Copies can be obtained by contacting the VFH, 434-924-3296, or by emailing folklife@virginia.edu.



VFH President Rob Vaughan; Steve Herrick, Director of External Relations for the American Academy of Religion; and Sheryl Hayes, VFH Development Director, in front of the Cannon House Office Building following a congressional visit during Humanities on the Hill.

VFH staff members and representatives from several Virginia organizations participated in two legislative advocacy days for the humanities this spring: Humanities Advocacy Day, March 15-16, sponsored by the National Humanities Alliance, and Humanities on the Hill, April 20-21, sponsored by the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

VFH Establishes Planned Giving Advisory Council

As the VFH reaches its 30th Anniversary, we are looking to the future and what can be done to endow the work of the Foundation against the volatility of fluctuating markets and the uncertainty of private and government funding.

We are pleased to announce the establishment of a planned giving program at the VFH. The Foundation has assembled a group of advisors who have expertise and experience in various aspects of estate and gift planning—attorneys, financial planners, stockbrokers, and others. This Planned Giving Advisory Council will advise the VFH board and staff on marketing and implementing gifts that will serve as the basis for long-term stability for the VFH.

Additionally, the University of Virginia's Office of Planned Giving has agreed to provide investment management for our planned gifts, gift structuring, and the administration of payments to our patrons. This support means that planned gifts made to the VFH will benefit from the strength and stability of one of the nation's best performing investment portfolios.

Council members include Ron Feinman, estate planning attorney from Lynchburg; Jorgen Vik, financial planner with Merrill Lynch in Charlottesville; Mark Smith, Director of Planned Giving at the University of Virginia; Mary Ellen Stumpf, VFH Board member and President, Stumpf and Associates of Richmond; and Richard T. (Dick) Wilson, VFH Board member and Senior Managing Director, RBC Dain Rauscher, Richmond.

Not only does a planned gift help to ensure the future of an organization that you care about, it can also solve problems for the donor. Properly structured planned gifts can help to reduce income and estate taxes, or provide a stream of income to the donor or a designated beneficiary.

Over the next several months, we will be holding events and sending publications telling our friends about how to take advantage of this "win-win" situation. We hope you will become our partner by attending events, by telling a friend, and by considering a planned gift.

VFH Board Chair Liz Young and Barbara Lovelace of the Middlesex County Museum hosted an April reception in honor of the 30th Anniversary of the VFH at Puller Park in Saluda, Virginia. Members

of the Museum's board, local grant recipients and friends of the humanities joined in the celebration.



Mary Steed Ewell and Barbara Lovelace of the Middlesex County Museum enjoying the Saluda event (above).

Thomas Foley, Ruth Noble, and VFH Board Chair Liz Young (right).





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Images from VABook! 2004



VABook! 2004 featured three panels on the legacy of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Participants in the Prince Edward County story are (from left to right) Dorothy Holcomb, moderator Amy Tillerson, and Drs. Vonita White Foster and Gerald Foster.



Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Michael Chabon signs books for a line of eager fans after a reading from an "apocryphal chapter" from *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*.



Robin and Linda Williams, frequent guests on NPR's *Prairie Home Companion*, join novelist and radio host Garrison Keillor for traveling music before the end of a VABook! 2004 headline event.