The roots of folklife in Virginia go back a long way, past Jamestown, hundreds or even thousands of years before it ever occurred to anyone to “document” the songs the people of his tribe—or of neighboring tribes—were singing; the things they were making with their hands, the stories they told, the ways they hunted or dressed game. These things were simply part of everyday life, as natural as breath.

No one knows where certain traditions begin; and after 400 years, it’s mostly speculation. But we can be fairly sure that John Smith and his crew sang songs that were familiar to their great grandfathers, as they sailed and rowed their Shallop through the waters and tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.

We can be certain, too, that the shipwrights in England learned their trade from other masters of the art—people who may, in turn, have been influenced directly or indirectly not just by English craftsmen and shipbuilders, but at various times by Greek, Italian, or Scandanavian builders.

The connecting threads can be long, tangled, and complex. Today the roots of folklife in Virginia are as widespread as they are deep. Traditions from Mali and Ethiopia, Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Bosnia, the Middle East, are now part of the fabric of daily life in the Old Dominion; and the men and women who carry these traditions and pass them on to the next generation are among the greatest reservoirs of our “common wealth.”

Much of this wealth has been tapped and made accessible over the past several years through the Virginia Folklife Program and the tireless efforts of its director, Jon Lohman.
The results were joyously on display in Richmond in October, during the National Folk Festival, which featured thirty-eight distinctive Virginia folklife traditions. All of these traditions were affiliated with the Folklife Apprenticeship Program, a program Lohman conceived and built, not quite single-handedly, but largely through his own imagination, road-time, and passion for the “arts of everyday life” that make us who we are, as Virginians.

By coincidence, the third year of the Richmond festival was also the fifth year of the Apprenticeship Program. By design, this occasion was marked—and celebrated—with the publication of an important new book entitled In Good Keeping, which documents each of the forty separate traditions that have been featured in the program since its inception.

Virginia’s Traditions at the Heart of the “National”

For the past three years, Richmond has been the site of the National Folk Festival, produced each year since 1934 by the National Council for the Traditional Arts in partnership with a host community. These partnerships last for three years, and are a different kind of “apprenticeship.” The goal is that the local festival will be self-sustaining at the end of this period and will continue on its own, while the NCTA moves the “National” to a fresh venue and the cycle begins anew.

This year’s festival in Richmond attracted an estimated 175,000 people, the largest audience in its 69-year history. For three days, the richness and variety of American culture—from Zydeco and Latin dance music to New Orleans Jazz and Western Swing; from Punch & Judy puppetry to Guatemalan “flower carpets” to percussive dance—were on display. Literally at the center of all this was the New Market Stage, where Virginia musicians and dancers from the VFH Apprenticeship Program performed throughout the Festival, and a Virginia Folklife “avenue” where master artists and their apprentices demonstrated and discussed their work.

On stage, the Paschall Brothers sang a cappella Tidewater Gospel. Flory Jagoda and her apprentice Susan Gaeta performed Sephardic Jewish (Ladino) ballads. The air rang with the sounds of banjo, fiddle, and mandolin (played by the likes of Mike Seeger, moves the “National” to a fresh venue and the cycle begins anew. This year’s festival in Richmond attracted an estimated 175,000 people, the largest audience in its 69-year history. For three days, the richness and variety of American culture—from Zydeco and Latin dance music to New Orleans Jazz and Western Swing; from Punch & Judy puppetry to Guatemalan “flower carpets” to percussive dance—were on display. Literally at the center of all this was the New Market Stage, where Virginia musicians and dancers from the VFH Apprenticeship Program performed throughout the Festival, and a Virginia Folklife “avenue” where master artists and their apprentices demonstrated and discussed their work.

On stage, the Paschall Brothers sang a cappella Tidewater Gospel. Flory Jagoda and her apprentice Susan Gaeta performed Sephardic Jewish (Ladino) ballads. The air rang with the sounds of banjo, fiddle, and mandolin (played by the likes of Mike Seeger,
Buddy Pendleton, Gerald Anderson, and Spencer Strickland. Guitar masters John Cephas (Piedmont Blues) and Scott Fore (Flatpick) and their apprentices dazzled the crowd.

Along with their apprentices, singers Linda Lay (Bluegrass), Frank Newsome (Old Regular Baptist) and master tobacco auctioneer Bob Cage demonstrated the astounding depth and variety of Virginia’s vocal traditions, while Laura Ortiz (Mexican Folkloric Dance), Brenda Joyce (Appalachian Flatfooting), and Asha Vattikuti (Kathak Dancing) showed the same depth and variety in traditional dance.

The Madison Hummingbirds, an African American “Shout Band” from Newport News thrilled audiences with their joyous brand of spiritual music that is often compared to the sound of New Orleans jazz bands.

On the avenue, visitors could learn from the masters of Eastern Shore Decoy Carving (Grayson Chesser), Irish Flute-making (Patrick Olwell), White Oak Basketry (Clyde Jenkins), Draft Horse Training (Marshall Cofer), Country Ham Curing (Jack and Nannie Branch), Boat Building (George Butler), Steel Drum Making (Elton Williams), Fiber Arts (Sandra Bennett), Powhatan Blackware Pottery (Mildred Moore), Snake Cane Carving (Norman Amos); and the list goes on....

Meanwhile, other Virginia artists not directly connected to the Apprenticeship Program—National Heritage Fellow Wayne Henderson and bluegrass pianist Jeff Little, for example—contributed their own magic to the Festival and the delight of its overflow crowds, giving further evidence—if more was needed—that Virginia is home to many of the world’s greatest living traditional artists, fertile soil for traditions with deep root systems in the state (Powhatan Indian pottery, Appalachian banjo), as well as others newly transplanted.

The Folklife Apprenticeship Program supports the transmission of traditional knowledge unique to each particular art form—the skills and techniques as well as the stories and other cultural expressions that hold each art form in context. This is done, not in classrooms or lecture halls, but face-to-face, side-by-side, one-on-one. This transfer of knowledge is not mediated. Frequently, the instruments and tools of the “trade” are themselves the embodiment of a longstanding tradition. Thus, when an apprentice steps into the world of a master, he or she becomes immersed in something broader, more complex, and far more significant than simply learning a recipe or a fingering technique.

It’s a process that involves learning both the art form and the culture that created it. Each of the master artists who’ve been part of the Apprenticeship Program has learned in this way. Almost uniformly, these masters have told us how important it is to them to be able to pass along what they’ve learned, both from their own teachers and as lifelong practitioners; and how grateful they are for the opportunities and encouragement this program provides.

Seeing the response of this year’s Festival audiences to the work of the Master-Apprentice teams, their interest and curiosity, and the deep appreciation people have for these traditions, we’re confident that Virginia’s folklife is secure and will remain “in good keeping”; and that the Apprenticeship Program has played and will continue to play a vital role in making sure that this is so.
In Good Keeping: 
Virginia’s Folklife Apprenticeships

VFH Publishes Book on Virginia’s Folk Traditions

In October, the VFH published In Good Keeping, a 228-page book that celebrates and explores the folklife traditions of Virginia and the work of participants in the Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

The book is written and edited by Jon Lohman, with photographs by Morgan Miller. Peggy Bulger of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress calls it “a stunning record of the artistic heritage of Virginia.” It’s also a tribute to the richness and variety of that heritage, and to the achievements of the men and women who are the current and future carriers of these traditions.

Forty separate and distinctive individual traditions are represented. They range from blacksmithing to broom making; quilting to hewn log construction; Brunswick Stew making to West African dance.

Over the past five years, since the launch of the Apprenticeship Program in 2002, Lohman and Miller have traveled throughout the state to the homes, workshops, studios, and kitchens of the master artists, talking with them and with their apprentices about their work and the cultural traditions it embodies and represents.

Each of these traditions holds, as Jon Lohman writes in the book’s introduction, “an entirely different set of meanings in the 21st century” than it did in earlier times. The same is true of traditions that have been recently “transplanted” to Virginia from India, Bosnia, or Mexico.

Traditions don’t exist in a vacuum or a time-capsule. Each new master inherits from previous generations while at the same time being influenced by his or her experience—experience that becomes kneaded, consciously or unconsciously, into his or her own practice of the art form; and the tradition is changed as a result.

This explains the book’s title—“In Good Keeping.” Other titles, such as “Handing Down” or “Passing It On” were rejected in part because they imply that the artist is a passive recipient, merely a vessel, and that the traditions themselves are static: continuity that doesn’t admit change. Lohman argues, and this book demonstrates emphatically that that isn’t the case.

The Appalachian tradition of Corn Shuck Doll Making, for example, very likely had its origins in Native American culture. Grayson Chesser can trace the “bloodlines” of his decoy carving far back into the 19th century, and his work remains in high demand even though, because they’re heavy and the plastic birds are durable and cheap, most hunters no longer use wooden decoys out on the marsh.

Likewise, Flory Jagoda sings Ladino ballads much the way her grandmother sang them in Bosnia, but her apprentices also sing them authentically with an American accent and sensibility. Blacksmith William Rogers uses traditional tools and methods to produce work that is strikingly contemporary.

In short, the traditions represented in this book are alive.

And the book itself thus makes a powerful, affirming statement about Virginia folklife and traditional culture: what it means, where it comes from, and where it’s going. What’s revealed could be compared to a watershed—to a system of cultural waterways and tributaries feeding an immense bay called Virginia.

The book is a visual delight and without a doubt the best introduction to Virginia’s folklife traditions currently available in print.

In Good Keeping is distributed for VFH by the University of Virginia Press. It’s available in bookstores statewide, and can also be ordered at a special discount price from the VFH website: www.virginiafoundation.org.

For Master Artist John Cephas, world’s foremost Piedmont Bluesman.

Bottom: Mexican folkloric dance apprentice Ariel Hobza-Ortiz, daughter of Master Artist Laura Ortiz.
The Virginia Festival of the Book is pleased to announce the list of “early signers” — those who have committed to appear in its 14th annual celebration of books and literacy, March 26–30, 2008.

Fiction luminaries include Booker Prize finalist Colm Toibin (MOTHERS AND SONS) and PEN/Malamud Award winner Nathan Englander (THE MINISTRY OF SPECIAL CASES). Participating in the annual “Crime Wave” of mystery and thriller writers are DAVID IGNATIUS (BODY OF LIES: A NOVEL), MARGARET COEL (THE GIRL WITH BRAIDED HAIR), JAMES W. HALL (MAGIC CITY: A NOVEL), and JACQUELINE WINSPEAR (MESSENGER OF TRUTH: A MAISIE DOBBS NOVEL).

Many non-fiction writers attending the Festival discuss committing themselves to causes, including M.T.A.S’H co-star MIKE FARRELL (JUST CALL ME MIKE: A JOURNEY TO ACTOR AND ACTIVIST) and international philanthropist GREG MORTENSON (THREE CUPS OF TEA: ONE MAN’S MISSION TO PROMOTE PEACE…ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME). Some participants are chroniclers of extraordinary pursuits like LOGAN WARD (SEE YOU IN A HUNDRED YEARS: FOUR SEASONS IN FORGOTTEN AMERICA) and A.J. JACOBS (THE YEAR OF LIVING BIBLICALLY: ONE MAN’S HUMBLE QUEST TO FOLLOW THE BIBLE AS LITERALLY AS POSSIBLE).

In poetry, two recent Pulitzer Prize winners, NATASHA TRETHEWHEY (NATIVE GUARD) and CLAUDIA EMERSON (LATE WIFE), will read at the Festival; other celebrated poets include HEATHER MCHugh (EYESHOT), CHARLES WRIGHT (LITTLEFOOT: A POEM), DAVID KIRBY (THE HOUSE ON BOULEVARD STREET) and BARBARA HAMBLY (BABEL) in readings sponsored by the UVa Women’s Center, the UVa Creative Writing Program, and the BEST NEW POETS anthology.

Hosts of the Authors Reception are figures familiar to Virginians as a gubernatorial family with an unforgettable role in the racial de-segregation of public schools. WOODY HOLTON (2007 NATIONAL BOOK AWARD NOMinee, UNRULY AMERICANS) will be joined by his mother, JINX HOLTON, and his father, former Virginia governor LINWOOD HOLTON, whose memoir OPPORTUNITY TIME will be published in spring. These authors will participate in programs that are free and open to the public; tickets for the Authors’ Reception ($25 per person) can be found online at vabook.org.

The Festival website is now posting events as details emerge. The full schedule should be available by January 31. For updates, visit vabook.org.

From top: Colm Toibin, Natasha Trethewey, Logan Ward, and Heather McHugh.

VFH CENTER FOR THE BOOK RECEIVES $20,000 GRANT

The VFH Center for the Book has received a National Endowment for the Arts “Big Read” grant to make TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee the focus of a statewide community-reads program. The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest.

The Center for the Book, in partnership with the Northumberland Public Library, Pamunkey Regional Library, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library, and the Virginia Department of Education, will plan and promote events January through June.


Special materials and reader’s guides will be available. Let us know if you are interested in participating with a To Kill a Mockingbird event in your area. Contact Susan Coleman, spcoleman@virginia.edu.

The Virginia Festival of the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target Stores and in cooperation with affiliate state centers for the book, produces Letters About Literature. The deadline for entries is December 14, 2007.

More details are available at virginiafoundation.org/bookcenter/letters.html.

Letters About Literature

Read, Be Inspired, Write Back

A reading and writing program for students in grades 4-12

Students in grades four through twelve in public or private schools who are home-schooled are invited to write a personal letter to an author from any genre, fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic, explaining how the author’s work has affected the student’s way of thinking about the world or themselves.

The top state winners will receive cash awards and will be invited to read their letters aloud at the Opening Ceremony of the Virginia Festival of the Book in March and will move on to the national competition. Six national winners will receive a $10,000 reading promotion grant for their school or community library.

The Virginia Foundation and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target Stores and in cooperation with affiliate state centers for the book, produces Letters About Literature. The deadline for entries is December 14, 2007.

More details are available at virginiafoundation.org/bookcenter/letters.html.

VFH CENTER FOR THE BOOK RECEIVES $20,000 GRANT

Commonwealth to Read To Kill a Mockingbird in ‘08

The VFH Center for the Book has received a National Endowment for the Arts “Big Read” grant to make TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD by Harper Lee the focus of a statewide community-reads program. The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and Arts Midwest.

The Center for the Book, in partnership with the Northumberland Public Library, Pamunkey Regional Library, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library, and the Virginia Department of Education, will plan and promote events January through June.

Among those events will be the Virginia Festival of the Book Opening Ceremony remarks by CHARLES J. SHIELDS (MOKCINGBIRD: A PORTRAIT OF HARPER LEE), film screenings, a Depression Era dinner, and dozens of book group discussions.


Special materials and reader’s guides will be available. Let us know if you are interested in participating with a To Kill a Mockingbird event in your area. Contact Susan Coleman, spcoleman@virginia.edu.

Letters About Literature

Read, Be Inspired, Write Back

A reading and writing program for students in grades 4-12

Students in grades 4 through 12 in public or private schools or who are home-schooled are invited to write a personal letter to an author from any genre, fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic, explaining how the author’s work has affected the student’s way of thinking about the world or themselves.

The top state winners will receive cash awards and will be invited to read their letters aloud at the Opening Ceremony of the Virginia Festival of the Book in March and will move on to the national competition. Six national winners will receive a $10,000 reading promotion grant for their school or community library.

The Virginia Foundation and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target Stores and in cooperation with affiliate state centers for the book, produces Letters About Literature. The deadline for entries is December 14, 2007.

More details are available at virginiafoundation.org/bookcenter/letters.html.
Accurate depictions of Virginia Indian life have been extremely rare outside of Indian communities themselves. Until very recently, and with a few notable exceptions, most of the “portraits” of tribal life and of Indian people and families created by outsiders have been seriously flawed. They’ve been biased and misleading at best; and at worst, malicious and patently false.

Fortunately, this is changing as museums, colleges and universities, and other mainstream cultural institutions have begun, first to recognize the tribes’ continued existence; then to acknowledge the persistent stereotypes and subtle biases contained in previous scholarship, even in the language itself—the fundamental misreading of history on which much previous research has been based; and finally to reach out to and include the perspectives of tribal members in creating new kinds of programs.

One of the best examples of this new approach is an exhibit currently on view at Sweet Briar College’s Benedict Gallery, and online, entitled Family Portraits: Virginia Indians at the Turn of the 20th Century. It features a collection of more than two dozen candid, studio, and ethnographic photos, most dating from the period 1899-1930, and is supported by a grant from the VFH.

Members of the Chickahominy, Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Pamunkey, and Rappahannock tribes are shown in family portraits, at tribal gatherings, at school, and during ceremonial occasions such as the annual “Tax Tribute” of game to then-Governor Harry Byrd.

These photographs are drawn from the collections of the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, the Valentine Richmond History Center, the Smithsonian Institution, and the University of Virginia. Some were taken by well-known photographers such as James Mooney and D.L. Gill; others are anonymous.

Fortunately, and thanks in large part to the contributions of tribal members, many of those depicted in this exhibit are not anonymous. They’ve been identified and are named in the photo captions, which are significant in themselves.

In fact, most of the photographs in this exhibit were previously displayed at Sweet Briar in 1993, as part of the College’s Ewald Symposium, which featured nationally known American Indian writers, scholars, and tribal leaders, as well as members of Virginia’s Monacan and Upper Mattaponi tribes.

Some of the photo captions in that earlier exhibit were taken verbatim from the original labels written by mid-20th century curators. In any case, most were seriously out-of-date in 2007. One of the goals of the project—and one of the reasons VFH decided to support it—was to create a new interpretive framework for the earlier display, one that would enhance rather than detract from the power of these photos.

With assistance from the tribes, the labels and captions were edited by Professor Lynn Rainville, the project director; first for accuracy, then to deepen their historical content and—insofar as possible—to identify those pictured.

On September 14, the College hosted a public reception and forum, in which Indian leaders spoke about current issues facing the Virginia tribes, accuracy in scholarship,
and the importance of this kind of undertaking.

Speakers included Chief Stephen Adkins (Chickahominy) and Assistant Chief Warren Cook (Pamunkey), both of whom had family members pictured in the photographs; Deanna Beacham of the Virginia Council on Indians; and Chief Kenneth Branham (Monacan), whose participation and generous welcome gave particular meaning to this event, and the further possibility that it might serve as a starting point for reconciliation.

Sweet Briar and the Monacan Nation are close neighbors in Amherst County. But their relationship has been strained in the past, partly as a result of the publication in 1926 of a book co-written by an anthropologist named Ivan McDougle, who had been a member of the Sweet Briar faculty while he was conducting research on the Monacan community.

This scurrilous book, entitled Mongrel Virginians, reflected racial attitudes embodied in the 1924 Racial Integrity Act and in the Eugenics Movement that was also prevalent at the time.

The Racial Integrity Act effectively denied to Indian people in Virginia the right to claim their own identity. The book, which is now discredited and almost entirely unknown, was deeply humiliating and a source of profound injury to the Monacan, serving as a justification for racial bigotry as well as discriminatory state policies that remained in effect until the 1970s.

Chief Branham’s presence at the Sweet Briar program, like the College’s own recent steps toward inclusion and partnership, reflect broad changes in the ways Virginia Indian history and culture are being seen and interpreted.

Meanwhile, the exhibit itself provides a rare glimpse into the lives of Virginia Indian families and communities at a time when most aspects of Indian life were either misunderstood or entirely hidden from the view of outsiders.

For more information, contact Professor Lynn Rainville at lrainville@sbc.edu.
When Janey Comes Marching Home

PORTRAITS OF
WOMEN COMBAT
VETERANS

BY DAVID BEARINGER

Women have always been among the casualties of war. Some have been killed or wounded while serving in uniform, but, until fairly recently, their numbers have been relatively small compared to their male counterparts.

Today, the tens of thousands of women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan still have a "non-combat" status, but the lines are blurred; and their experience of war—and of its life-altering physical and psychological wounds—is often hard, or impossible, to differentiate from that of male soldiers.

Increasingly, their experience of combat is just as personal and direct.

This is a complex subject that raises difficult questions, some with a root system in our national psyche and in debates about war and gender reaching back at least as far as the Revolutionary War, and perhaps beyond.

Today, the composition of our armed forces, the nature of their deployment, changes in the ways wars are fought, and improvements in body armor and battlefield medicine have all contributed to a dramatic increase in the number of women who are returning home profoundly changed as a result of their wartime experience.

American society has only begun to come to terms with this phenomenon and what it means—for the women involved, their families, and their communities—and for society as a whole. Some important first steps are being taken in Virginia, in a photo-documentation and oral history project supported by a grant from the VFH.

Many of the interviewees have related stories and feelings that are deeply personal: stories about loss and comradeship, pride and frustration, conflict and transcendence, and the problems of re-integrating into civilian life.
as a result, many of the interviewees have related stories and feelings that are deeply personal: stories about loss and comradeship, pride and frustration, conflict and transcendence, and the problems of re-integrating into civilian life.

The word “groundbreaking” is used at times too loosely. But this project is clearly exploring new territory. It’s already created some important new partnerships and provided an outlet for women veterans eager to share their experiences.

It’s also laid the foundation for a much broader discussion about the impact of war on women’s lives and on their families, their children and spouses especially. In a state with a huge military presence and several of the largest military installations in the country, this seems especially important, and timely. The potential impact of a project like this is thus even larger than it might be otherwise.

But one of the reasons VFH decided to support this effort is that it has national, not just statewide significance. The issues being explored and the personal stories that are at the heart of this project are not bound by geography or by local interest alone.

Like its organizers and its other supporters and partners, we hope this project will contribute to a much broader conversation and to a greater understanding of war’s impact on the people—in this case the women—who carry its heaviest burden.

For further information, contact Laura Browder at lbrowder@vcu.edu.
With Good Reason Garners National and Local Awards

In summer 2007, With Good Reason, the weekly public radio program produced by the VFH, won second place in a national competition for “Best Interview” in the Public Radio News Directors Incorporated (PRNDI) Awards Competition, Division B (for programs produced by 3-4 full-time staff). The WGR interview for which the award was given is entitled “Into the Light” and features the University of Virginia’s Bruce Greyson, describing his experimental investigation of near-death experiences to producer–host Sarah McConnell.

Earlier in the spring, another WGR program, “Race, Class & Katrina,” was named “Best Documentary / Public Affairs Program” in the public radio division of the Virginia Association of Broadcasters Awards Competition. The award given this show—which features Dirk Philipsen and Renee Hill, both of Virginia State University—as also bolsters the growing reputation of With Good Reason as a leader among public radio’s interview programs.

A psychiatrist at the University of Virginia’s Division of Perceptual Studies, Greyson is a self-described skeptic who, some 20 years ago, began trying to figure out the science behind “near death experiences.” Since then, he has interviewed more than 800 people who claim to be among the estimated millions of Americans who say they have, in effect, died and lived to tell of it. In “Into the Light,” Greyson tells McConnell of the startling consistencies in their experiences, which appear to transcend the usual boundaries of time and space and often involve “encountering some deity or loved ones.” At a point in a near-death experience, subjects either “decide to return or are sent back against their will,” explains Greyson. But “their attitudes, their beliefs, their values, their behavior are profoundly transformed. And this transformation is maintained over decades.”

In WGR’s “Race, Class and Katrina,” Philipsen and Hill, Co-Directors of Virginia State University’s Institute for the Study of Race Relations, offer a social and economic analysis of the relationship between race and poverty at this point in U.S. history. The destruction and wretchedness that followed Hurricane Katrina, they say, revealed an entrenched poverty that is by no means unique. Philipsen observes that, “as a society and as a culture we are prone not to pay attention to and therefore abandon poor people.” We now have, he says, “significantly more poor people than we had 20 or 30 years ago.”

“The VFH Radio production staff is dedicated to creating thought-provoking, as well as entertaining shows,” comments Media Program Director Andrew Wyndham. “We’re delighted by the Virginia and national recognition of the excellence of their work. It’s a tremendous affirmation for them in the public radio community.”

With Good Reason is the only statewide Virginia public radio program. Each week, the show features scholars from Virginia’s state–supported colleges and universities who connect their research and writing to what is happening now. Associate Producers Elliot Majerczyk and Jesse Dukes join Sarah McConnell on the production team. Nancy King produces WGR’s news-capsule features. Lydia Wilson coordinates publicity and listener relations, and Jeanie Palin manages listener requests. Wyndham is Executive Producer. A consortium representing all of Virginia’s state–supported colleges and universities provides major funding. WGR programs are available on-line at withgoodreasonradio.org.

Decisions Virginians Make and Why: New VFH Radio Features Series Debuts

BY LYDIA WILSON

Every day we each face decisions, from the simple selection of a breakfast cereal to the choice to start a business or to have and raise children. VFH Radio explores the decisions Virginians make and how they came to make them through a series of radio stories debuting this month during drive-time news on public radio stations statewide.

Each story will spotlight an individual as he or she reflects on the circumstances leading up to a choice they made, circumstances as diverse as the people experiencing them. In turns whimsical or agonizing, these decisions show how Virginians consider the steps they take to move forward in this world, the issues deliberated and what eventually sparks action.

In the first feature in the series, Martha Woodroof of WMRA spoke with Gail Hobbs-Page, a spiffily dressed chef who for years worked in some of Virginia’s finest restaurants. Today, you’ll find her caring for and milking nearly 100 goats on Caromont Farm, the 23-acre farm in southern Albemarle County she shares with her husband Daniel. On a sweltering afternoon this past August, Gail Hobbs-Page sat in the shade by one of her goat pens and talked about her decision to trade in her saftey pans for milk pails. Originally broadcast across Virginia beginning September 28, you can hear her story on the VFH Radio website: www.virginiafoundation.org/media/vfhradio/archive/fall07.html.

Since September 2005, the VFH Radio Feature Bureau has been commissioning work by the Commonwealth’s most talented independent radio producers, delivering to listeners statewide stories of the state’s little known history and rich culture. Steve Clark (Richmond), Jesse Dukes (Charlottesville), Mike MacKenzie (Richmond), Nancy King (Charlottesville), Peter Solomon (Richmond), and Martha Woodroof (Harrisonburg) contribute reports to the bureau focusing on the humanities in public life.

To suggest people to be profiled for VFH Radio’s “Decisions” series, contact Bureau Editor Lydia Wilson at 434-924-6895 or lydiawilson@virginia.edu.

Martha Woodroof, Reporter and Producer, WMRA-FM
Thanks to the **Pension Protection Act of 2006**, individuals may make gifts from their IRA accounts directly to VFH and other qualified charities without being subject to Federal income tax on the IRA withdrawal. Moreover, IRA gifts count toward the annual Minimum Required Distribution. But the benefits of this act expire on **December 31, 2007**.

You still have time to take advantage of the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the VFH while improving the taxation situation for yourself or your heirs.

Some details regarding the Pension Protection Act of 2006:

- Individuals must be at least 70 ½ years of age
- The maximum amount transferable from a Traditional or Roth IRA in a calendar year is $100,000 per person
- The gift must be an outright gift that would normally be considered fully deductible
- The funds must be distributed to a qualified charity (supporting organizations and family foundations do not qualify)
- The funds must be received by a qualified charity no later than December 31, 2007.

If you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, or for more information, please contact Sheryl Hayes, VFH Director of Development at 434/924-6562 or by e-mail at sheryl@virginia.edu.
Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
2007 Board of Directors

Brooks Miles Barnes
Eastern Shore Public Library
Accomac, Virginia

David Baldacci
David Baldacci Enterprises
Reston, Virginia

Peter Blake
Virginia Community College System
Richmond, Virginia

Robert H. Brink
General Assembly of Virginia
Arlington, Virginia

L. Preston Bryant, Jr.
Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond, Virginia

Audrey Davis
Alexandria Black History Museum
Alexandria, Virginia

Rhonda Dreyfus
Charlottesville, Virginia

Johanna R. Drucker
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

John P. Fishwick, Jr.
Lichtenstein, Fishnick & Johnson
Richmond, Virginia

Barbara J. Fried
Fried Companies, Inc.
Crozet, Virginia

Michael J. Galgano
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, Virginia

Charles M. Guthridge
Charles M. Guthridge Associates
Richmond, Virginia

Ronald L. Heinemann
Hampton-Sydney College
Hampton-Sydney, Virginia

Jo Ann M. Hofheimer
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Maurice A. Jones
The Virginia Pilot
Norfolk, Virginia

Anna L. Lawson
Daleville, Virginia

James D. Lott
Staunton, Virginia

Cassandra Newby-Alexander
Norfolk State University
Norfolk, Virginia

Bittle W. Porterfield, III
Rice Management
Roanoke, Virginia

W. Taylor Reveley, III
College of William & Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia

Robert C. Vaughan, III
Virginia Foundation for the Humanities
Charlottesville, Virginia

William C. Wiley
Ascendent Equity
Richmond, Virginia

Robin Traywick Williams
Crozier, Virginia

The Virginia Arts of the Book Center held its annual “Raucous Auction” on October 26. More than $7,000 was raised in a lively sale and auction of artworks by VABC Artists. The VABC promotes the values of the humanities through appreciation of the arts of the book, visual and verbal literacy, creativity, and the fostering of traditional and contemporary skills. To find out more about VABC, including classes and membership, visit virginiabookarts.org