September 2014

the Village News

Volume 48 Issue 1

Serving the people of Cabin John and beyond

45th Annual Crab Feast Slated for September 13

by Tina Rouse

Cabin John's 45th Annual Crab & Chicken Feast is just around the corner! It's on Saturday, September 13, from 2-6 pm at the Clara Barton Community Center. And if the delicious food and refreshments weren't enough, there's live music for the grown-ups, fun activities for the kids, and Cabin John T-shirts and memorabilia for sale. A local tradition since 1970, this annual CJCA fundraising event allows Cabin Johners to celebrate their community spirit with old friends and new. Tickets are available for $15 at the door, and $13 if bought in advance (call 301-320-2685).

© Rick Hatch

A scene from last year's Crab Feast.

BUT WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!
If you have some time on September 13, whether

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No Summer Doldrums for Cabin John Gardens

by Peter Vogt

Saturday, July 26 had been blessedly cool and cloudless with low humidity—like coastal Maine or maybe Santa Fe.

At 6:45, Pam Zilly and I were in our back yard having a drink when we heard a remarkable number of sirens, seemingly coming toward Cabin John from the west, north and east. In my 45 years on 76th Street, I'd never heard so many and they weren't heading for the Beltway—they were coming here! "Someone must have gone off Union Arch onto the Cabin John Parkway below," I said. "It's got to be a disaster!" The sirens kept coming, and each one seemed to be stopping somewhere over on MacArthur, just through the trees and beyond a few houses. I had to find out what had happened, which was a matter of some debate, but I said, "Save some wine!" and headed off in the car with my camera.

Even among the tangle of fire trucks, ambulances and rescue vehicles, MacArthur Blvd. was open and I could see that the bridge was clear. When I left my car at Clara Barton Center, camera in hand, I realized all the emergency response action was focused on McKay Circle in the west half of Cabin John Gardens. I simply followed with my camera and went into the scene.

I'd never been among so many emergency crews and vehicles. I didn't ask questions—I just kept moving toward what seemed to be the focus of attention. It just took a few minutes, but there it

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Neighborly News

by Barbara Martin

No news to report in this issue. If you have news of your family, your neighbors, past CJ residents (births, deaths, marriages, honors, graduations, etc.), please call Barbara Martin at 301-229-3482 or email *bbeckmartin@verizon.net*.

August 30 – September 1, 12:00 to 6:00 pm
Reception, Friday, August 29, 7:30 to 9:00 pm
Spanish Ballroom

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Community Calendar

SEP

Aug. 30-Sept. 1 .... Labor Day Art Show
Spanish Ballroom, Glen Echo Park
noon - 6 pm

13 .....45th Annual Cabin John Crab Feast
Clara Barton Center
2 - 6 pm (see p. 1)

23 .....CJCA Meeting
Clara Barton Center
7:30 pm

Bruce Wilmarth: Banking on Cabin John

Bruce Wilmarth was born in Boston, the middle of five brothers. When he was 4, the family moved to Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, then 6 years later to Berwyn, Pennsylvania, on Philadelphia's Main Line. It was there he grew up, roaming Valley Forge Park, working as a camp counselor at the YMCA and at the Gap in King of Prussia Mall.

Bruce Wilmarth

With a grandfather and a father who were old car fanatics, and an uncle who worked for Harley Davidson, it's no surprise that all five Wilmarth brothers got around on bikes first, then mini-bikes, then on motorcycles, traveling happily around back roads of the area. "Our so-called family room, on a lower level that opened to the yard, was always filled with our vehicles. My mother good-naturedly accepted life as it was with five sons. We had a comfortable, if somewhat overactive family life."

In 1978, Bruce graduated from Conestoga High School ("To be honest, I wasn't a very good student.") and entered American University in Washington, DC. "I loved the city. I discovered Great Falls Park and the C&O Canal, and all the famous landmarks, and I liked the pace of living here—alive but not frenetic like New York." During college at AU, he worked at the new Mazza Gallerie and as a waiter for various catering companies in the city. "My

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WILMARTH
cont. from page 3

most prominent catering event was at the White House after the signing of the Middle East peace treaty during the Carter presidency." His senior year of college living off-campus was in a group house in Glen Echo on Wellesley Circle.

Bruce started AU with a major in business. "I had some wonderful professors. Many of the ones who taught finance and international business were Europeans who had come here because of the somewhat unsettled conditions in the formation of the European Union, and I got really interested in those subjects, especially when I was included in a World Bank-sponsored graduate tour of Europe's financial high spots." He graduated in 1982 with a double major in finance and international business.

Newly hatched from college during a recession, Bruce was glad to get a job as a mortgage banker with Shearson American Express Mortgage in Springfield, Virginia. "The job of helping people with one of the most important purchases of their life was very satisfying. Many of our customers were military, and builders and developers." Mortgage banking was an active area at that time, and Bruce worked for four different companies over the next 10 years.

On an auspicious evening, Bruce went with a friend to a party and met a pretty nurse named Barbara. Neither of them knew anyone else and they spent their time talking with each other. A date the next night convinced Bruce that he had found someone special. They married in Barbara's hometown of Highland Falls, NY, in 1986, and honeymooned in England and Scotland. Asked if he had roots in Great Britain, Bruce explained "Oh, my grandmother was so proud that one of her ancestors way back came over on the Mayflower, and she pushed for my brothers and me to join Sons of the American Revolution. I guess we did it to satisfy her."

Their daughter's Catherine's pending birth in 1988 meant they needed a larger place than their condominium in Falls Church. With Barbara's job at Sibley Hospital they were looking for a house in the Bethesda area. By good fortune they found Eleanor Balaban who showed them a newly renovated house in Cabin John. 6509 75th Place seemed the right fit, and has been their home for more than a quarter century.

In 1990, son Ted joined the family. In another 11 years, Thomas would complete the family. About that time, the instability of the mortgage business persuaded Bruce to move into the more steady area of traditional banking. He started working at a small community bank in McLean, Virginia, as Senior Lender, and got his experience of growing banks from the lending side. When the McLean bank was sold, he went to the then young Cardinal Bank and spent the next 5 years there. Ten years ago, he moved to Washington First Bank, and is now Executive Vice President. Before he approves a loan—and some of them to commercial entities, builders, and developers, as well as wealthy estate owners are in the millions—he visits the site for a close inspection. This calls for architectural and construction expertise. "Your bank is in the business of making loans, but you want to be sure they are well advised."

Bruce has been an active contributor to our town. In 1990, when good friend Burr Gray took the presidency of the Cabin John Citizens Association, Bruce became its treasurer and served in that job for many years. He is also treasurer of the Friends of Clara Barton Community Center, the organization that raises money for the Center's "extras" not funded by the County. He helped get out the last three very professional Cabin John community directories, started the raffles at the Christmas parties and other celebrations, and with his family attends almost all Cabin John gatherings.

Barbara is now a nurse practitioner at Georgetown Hospital's Neurology Department. Catherine received her BA and law degree at William and Mary, passed the Maryland Bar, and recently completed an LLM in environmental law at

the University of London and works at an environmental and energy law firm in Georgetown. Teddy ambitiously completed Whitman High and Montgomery County Tech (auto mechanics) simultaneously. He graduated from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff; he was already well acquainted with Arizona from visiting an uncle in Scottsdale and attending classic car shows there with Bruce. Ted is now in property management. Son Thomas attends Pyle Middle School and plays in several sports clubs.

"Montgomery County public schools are among the best in the nation. Our kids have flourished there, and have received whatever special attention and support they have needed. The county gives us fine services in many departments, and it's the only place in this area where real estate taxes are capped, so they can't suddenly shoot up."

When the Wilmarths travel, it's usually to visit family. Bruce is one of five; Barbara one of six. Count up all the siblings, nephews and nieces, and extended family in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Texas, and that explains a lot of vacations.

Barbara and Bruce are thinking about building a new house on the site of their present home—one with a basement, master bedroom and bath on the first floor. But they can't contemplate leaving peaceful, friendly, neighborly Cabin John—and that's lucky for us. —

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■ SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Holy Eucharist	8:00 a.m.
Bible Study	9:15 a.m.
Nursery Care	10:15 a.m.
Holy Eucharist	10:30 a.m.
Church School for All Ages	10:30 a.m.

■ UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Mondays, August 4 – September 1, 7:00 p.m.
Labyrinth Walk with Contemplative Music

Sunday, September 7, 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.
Homecoming Sunday Worship *(Ice Cream Social at 12 noon)*

Monday, October 6, 7:30 p.m.
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Summertime in Cabin John Captured in Photographs

© Twee Nguyen

From left to right: Harry Carzon, Tiffany Tran-Nguyen, Sushen Ooi, Eric Carzon, Jonah Carzon, and Maria Carzon get ready for the 4th of July parade.

© Burr Gray

Cabin John canoers gather for the annual group photo on the Potomac River on June 29 (see p. 11)

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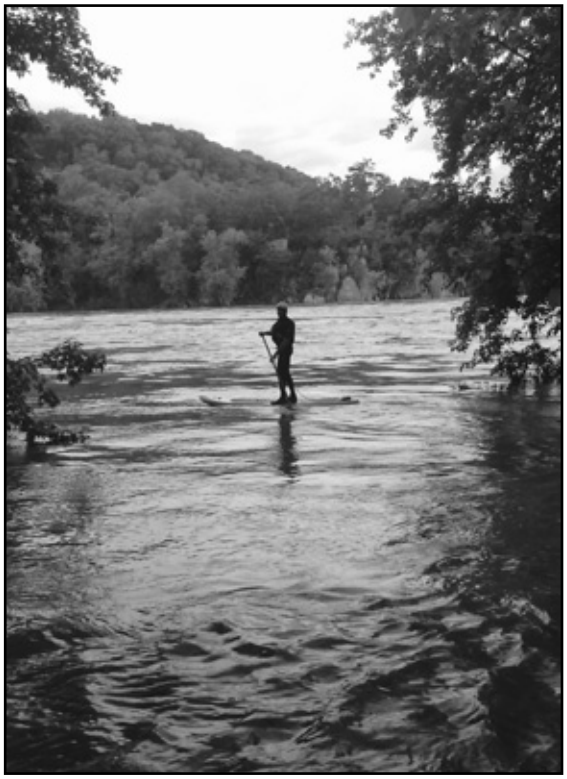
4th of July paraders stroll along MacArthur Blvd.



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Flood-level water levels didn't deter Skip Brown from getting in some paddle board time on the Potomac in the early summer months.

CRAB FEAST

cont. from page 1

you're a regular attendee or a first-timer, whether you're an adult or student, please think about volunteering. More specifically, we need help with clean-up during and after the event, assembling the side dishes in the kitchen, and selling T-shirts. Maybe you'd be interested in an hour or two of being a crab or chicken cooking assistant? Or how about mixing up some fresh, thirst-quenching lemonade?

We also need help in the days before and after the Crab Feast moving supplies to the Community Center, getting the word out in the local community, and packing up all the equipment afterwards.

Volunteering is a fun way to meet neighbors and it's really needed to make this tradition a success. The Crab Feast is the only fundraiser that CJCA does all year, and it enables a variety of community events such as the July 4th Parade, Potomac River canoe trips, and the December Holiday Party. If you are interested in volunteering, please call or e-mail Tina Rouse, 301.229.6532 or cjcrabfeast (at) aol.com.

Thanks (in advance) for rising to the occasion!

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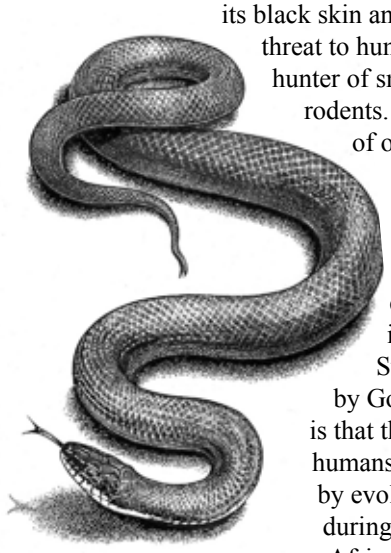
Local Nature

by Eric Dinerstein

Bogeymen of Nature

In one respect, the Eastern Rat Snake is the Great White Shark of the Potomac River's towpath. Just as the sheer thought of the marine predator keeps swimmers out of the water, the sight of an Eastern Rat Snake diverts many strollers from a riverside walk from May until autumn. There is one major difference: you are a million times more likely to encounter on the towpath an Eastern Rat Snake, one of the most common reptiles in our woods, than a Great White along the Maryland coastline. In fact, the global population of the Great White Shark, put at less than 3,500 for this ocean-going predator, is likely less than the number of wild tigers in all of Asia's forests.

The native Eastern Rat Snake looks ominous with its black skin and near six-foot span. It poses no threat to humans, however, and is a skilled hunter of small mammals such as mice and rodents. Harmless or not, the mere sight of one sends many walkers the other way. Why is that? Why do humans fear snakes, spiders, and scorpions more than modern day concerns like nuclear fallout or climate change? One answer is suggested in an intriguing book, entitled Sunrises, Serpents, and Shakespeare, by Gordon Orians. His central theme is that the emotional make-up of modern humans has been strongly influenced by evolution through natural selection during our ancestors' early days in the African savannas. Back then, constrictor snakes like pythons—which catch and crush their prey before swallowing them—and venomous snakes like cobras and vipers posed significant mortal threats and so our ancestors who were able to quickly recognize and avoid them left more offspring who survived than those early uprights who tread on or too close to a deadly serpent. Our evolved ability to recognize snakes in the wild and attendant fear at their sight, has served humans well, and thus we maintained this vigilance—even a genetically predisposed ability to detect the flecked scale patterns of many poisonous varieties—as well as, in our conscious minds, a deep anxiety about them. In the Indian subcontinent, this cautious response is appropriate, as more than 50,000 people die each year from venomous snakebites. Some public health officials even wonder why more tropical medical research is not directed to producing more anti-venoms to address this prime health hazard.



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Eastern Rat Snake

People strongly dislike snakes of any kind typically, but they don't like rats much either. Imagine the reaction a Cabin John homeowner has to a single rat scurrying out of the garbage can. Now what if you drove onto your yard at night and the headlights illuminated hundreds of rats on the front lawn? All of a sudden, having natural predators around like the Eastern Rat Snake appears in a whole new light. They offer as valuable a community service as our local exterminator provides (a shout-out to Mr. Bugs!), and the rat snake works for free.

Eastern rat snakes range south to the tip of Florida and occur in the Everglades. It is in this magnificent ecosystem that a new chapter is being written that will soon find its way into the ecology textbooks. Floridians tired of their pet pythons, Burmese or otherwise, have released them into the swamps of south Florida, where they have proliferated (no chance of them moving north to the Potomac because they cannot survive frost). According to local ecologists, there may already be thousands of pythons in the Everglades, so numerous that it is now virtually impossible to eradicate this large constrictor. Consequently, bobcats, raccoons, and other middle-sized predatory mammals have all but disappeared. Sometimes, when invasives take over, we see the runaway ecological change in the composition of an ecosystem rather than the checks and balances of one population keeping another at bay but not eliminating it.

Snakes have an outsized effect on the human psyche and a profound one on wild nature, and sometimes both. I was bicycling home to Cabin John along the towpath from D.C. recently, thinking about how common rat snakes had been this year along the Potomac when I had to come to a screeching halt near Lock 6. Lying perpendicular to the trail was a nonchalant Eastern Rat Snake. I waited patiently and then finally told it to check out the August issue of the Cabin John News and in the meantime to please slither to the side of the towpath. The snake obliged and continued its hunt for smaller mammals than me. —

GAS LEAK
cont. from page 1

was. On the tiny side porch of a small and tidy one floor house was a modest propane tank. There was a fire hose and nozzle pointing at it. Its condition had precipitated this dramatic mobilization of Montgomery County resources and personnel.

There were seven fire engines, two ladder/tower trucks, two basic life support ambulances, two advanced life support ambulances, two hazmat trucks with heavy rescue equipment and the capacity to deal with chemical, explosives, and environmental threats. There were two Battalion Chief vehicles from which this "Maximum Hazmat Response" was being directed. All-in-all, there were 65 Montgomery County Fire and Rescue people and 18 fire and rescue vehicles. Stations responding had been Cabin John, (River Rd. and Falls Rd.) Glen Echo, Bethesda, (Wisc. Ave., Conn. Ave., Democracy Blvd., Old Georgetown Rd.) Potomac, Gaithersburg, Chevy Chase, David Taylor Naval Research and Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad on Old Georgetown Rd. They were in the Gardens, along MacArthur Blvd. and all around the Clara Barton Parkway entrance area.

Keep in mind that both east and west sides of Cabin John Gardens are closely packed with houses on small streets, circles and courts. It's part of the neighborhood's charm. However, that cozy closeness gives fire and rescue crews heartburn. An exploding propane tank could easily level one of those houses and cause damage and fires, injuries and death to neighbors all around. Clearly that reality was on the minds of county personnel who had to instantly decide how to respond to the 911 call a little while earlier.

Before the call had been made, across the fence from that lowly leaking tank, neighbors were having a family get-together. They were in the house, but someone came out, and smelling the

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© Peter Vogt

Emergency vehicles fill the streets in Cabin John Gardens on July 26.

© Peter Vogt

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Above: The neighborhood's narrow streets are further crowded with crews installing new curbs (left) and power poles (right). Below: Emergency team members stand at ready on McKay Circle.

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6509 Persimmon Tree Rd	$729,000	4	3	0	2	1	2
7640 Tomlinson Ave	$749,900	4	2	1	3	1	2
6421 83rd Pl	$829,998	4	3	1	3	1	1
6429 83rd Pl	$839,000	3	3	1	4	1	0
7602 Cabin Rd	$875,000	5	2	1	3	1	0
6422 83rd Pl	$1,125,000	5	4	1	3	1	1
6710 Tomlinson Ter	$1,250,000	5	3	1	3	2	2
7506 79th Pl	$1,395,000	6	5	1	3	2	2
6604 Seven Locks Rd	$1,399,000	5	4	1	3	2	2
6511 78th St	$1,899,000	6	6	1	4	1	2
UNDER CONTRACT:							
2 Russell Rd	$399,000	2	1	0	1	0	0
6533 79th Pl	$1,299,900	5	4	1	3	3	2
6520 79th Pl	$1,320,000	5	4	1	3	1	3
8212 Caraway St	$2,179,000	5	4	1	3	1	2
SOLD:							
35 Ericsson Rd	$525,000	2	1	1	1	0	0
6418 Wishbone Ter	$739,000	4	3	1	3	1	2
6446 Wishbone Ter	$769,000	4	3	1	3	2	2
8007 MacArthur Blvd	$899,000	4	3	1	3	0	0
6414 83rd Pl	$935,000	3	4	1	3	1	1
6530 78th St	$1,015,000	4	3	1	3	1	0
6515 76th St	$1,058,000	4	3	1	3	1	2
6408 Little Leigh Ct	$1,114,000	5	4	1	3	2	2

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GAS LEAK
cont. from page 9

strong odor of gas, came over to tell the owners. They came out, agreed it was a real problem, and called Suburban Propane. Suburban said they had a technician on call and would get him there without delay. It took him hardly a half hour. When he saw agitated neighbors and smelled what they were agitated about, he immediately told them to call 911. He told the owner to get his wife and pets out of the house and to disconnect his electrical service. He also told the neighbors to evacuate. By that time, the leaking tank was spewing clouds of propane, condensing with moisture in the air. Something was clearly very wrong. The level-headed technician turned off the flow of propane to the house and, as the host of first responders arrived, he led and cooperated in a rapid and tense disconnection, plugging and propane expelling operation.

Almost everybody else was there in case something went horribly wrong. Fortunately it didn't. County crews deployed a telescoping tower to the back yard. They and the technician connected the leaking tank to the tower base. The remaining gas was released and ignited at the top in a dramatic six foot flame, lasting until the tank was empty. I had been asked to leave well before that, and yes, it would have been a great shot! However, there were no injuries, no damage and it was an impressive reminder of what our county can do when we need them.

As if that weren't enough turmoil for McKay Circle, within thirty six hours, their road was completely torn up for radical construction of new concrete curbing and a storm drainage system. On top of that, their electrical utility poles were being replaced and re-wired by a PEPCO contractor.

Those who'd been away had clearly missed a lot.

By the way, Cabin John Gardens, which has been a co-op since shortly after WWII, is a resident-owned entity. Their roads, circles and courts are theirs to maintain. The curbing and storm drainage improvements, amounting to nearly a million dollars, are being paid for by their sale of two rental properties.

© Peter Vogt

There was still some light and still some wine when I got back to 76th St. —❧

Neighborhood Services

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2014 Cabin John Canoe Trip Report

The weather and river level could not have been better for our June 29 excursion. Those aspects combined with a good-sized raucous group of Cabin Johners and friends (over 50 people) made this year's canoe trip one of the best ever. As always, Calleva provided the canoes/guides (head guide was CJ resident Olivia Murphy) and many thanks goes to CJ resident Tom McEwan's Liquid Adventures company for providing the kayaks and three guides to handle the increased interest in kayaking this year. We ended up with a flotilla of over 30 watercraft. CJCA subsidized about one third of the trip's costs. —❧

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Neighborly News: 301-229-3482 or *bbeckmartin@verizon.net*

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