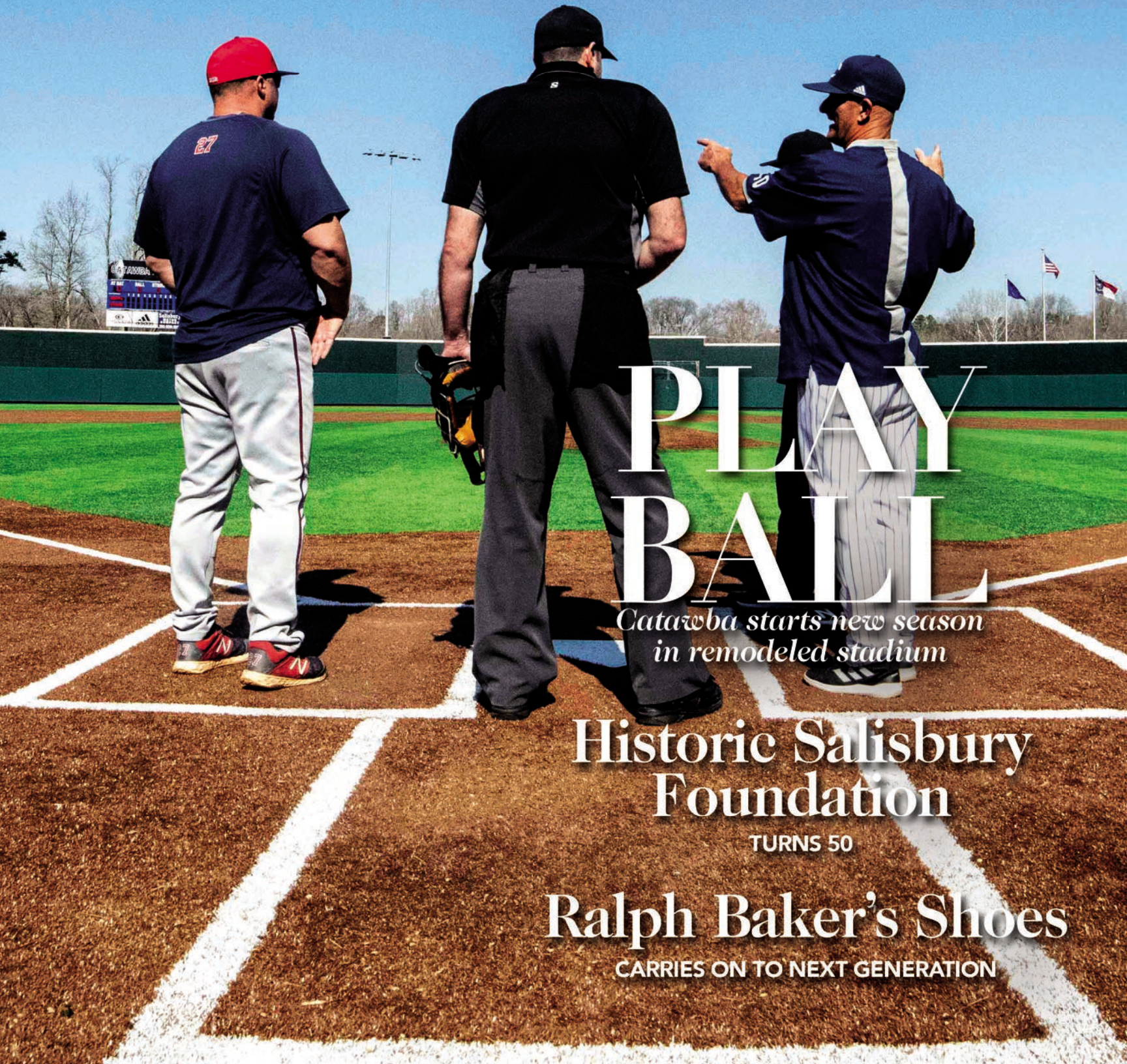


APRIL 2022

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Salisbury the Magazine

P.O. Box 4639

Salisbury, NC 28145-4639

Value \$3.99

Published 9 times / year

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SHAKE ON IT

Stiller has amassed impressive
salt and pepper shaker collection



On the cover: Catawba head coach Jim Gantt, right, meets with the officials and Shippensburg University coach Matt Jones before a baseball game at the newly renovated Catawba College stadium (Jon C. Lakey photo). On this page: Shirley Stiller has collected more than 750 salt and pepper shakers and also collects Jim Shore figurines, lighthouses, teapots and miniature buildings. (Sean Meyers photo)



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*Updated Catawba
 baseball stadium a hit*

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Wishing Historic Salisbury Foundation a fabulous 50

I do have to admit it: 50 was fabulous.

My best friend Carol and I (you'll be reading a lot about her in this space) saved money for years so we could go to the Grove Park Inn and Spa to celebrate together. (She's nine months older but that's close enough.)

We had a fabulous time, truly. We shopped at the stores in Historic Biltmore Village before checking into the (once again fabulous) Grove Park, built in 1913 in the Arts and Crafts style. We checked into one of the famous "eyebrow" rooms overlooking the mountains and the spa. They knew we were celebrating, so we had a room upgrade, champagne, and their famous tux berries (chocolate-covered strawberries decorated to look like tiny tuxedo shirts) upon welcome.

The next day was SPA DAY. We spent all day at the spa and had lunch there IN OUR SPA ROBES. It was an unforgettable experience. We also may or may not have done some synchronized swimming in the grotto pool.

We're already saving for 60.

So I want to wish Historic Salisbury Foundation a Happy 50th Birthday. Elizabeth Cook writes about its long history of preservation efforts, along with an introduction to the new executive director. Cook also tells us about a play, "Polishing the Silver," commissioned by HSF and penned by author



and playwright Jennifer Hubbard. The Hall House, which turned 200 two years ago, finally has its time to shine.

Sean Meyers and I visited with Shirley Still-er, who's been collecting salt and pepper shakers since she was 11. That's 63 years. That's a bunch of salt and pepper shakers.

If you build it, they will come. Catawba College has unveiled a state-of-the-art baseball field, and players christened it on Feb. 12. The First Pitch event that evening raised \$100,000. Now that's a real home run. Mike London brings us this story.

Did you know that only 3 percent of family businesses survive through the third generation? Ralph Baker's Shoes has done just that, with Marissa joining her father and grandfather at the store. Find out how this hardworking family lives together and works together.

If you've been to shows at Piedmont Players Theatre the last few decades, you've seen Eric Slipp perform. The Maine native moved here in 1987. He recently retired, and is now a full-time volunteer. Find out what keeps him busy as a Rowan Original.

Deirdre Parker Smith reviews "Hell of a Book" in Bookish. You've got to read it, she says. In it, a Black author is on tour, and is tired of talking about his book and tired of expectations of being a voice for his race. There's also The Kid, who may also be the author, and Soot, a sweet innocent boy. I've got a hold request at the library.

Clyde shares a spring scene in acrylic. Because, after all, it's spring. Enjoy, and I'll see you next month!



Susan Shinn Turner at 50th birthday party with best friend Carol, left.



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THROUGH THE LENS by Andy Mooney

*Rain drops sit on a daylily after a spring rain.
To submit a photo for Through the Lens,
send a high-resolution photo to
andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com.*

Pain, daydreaming undertones in ‘Hell of a Book’

Jason Mott’s “Hell of a Book” is indeed a hell of a book. It deserved the 2021 National Book Award. More to the point, it deserves to be read.

Entering Mott’s world — a story of an unnamed author on tour and The Kid, who appears to the author, and the sweet, innocent boy called Soot, enters a place where dreams can slap reality in the face.

Mott is from the Wilmington area and his first book, “The Returned” was made into a television series before it even hit bookstore shelves.

“Hell of a Book” has won enough accolades to get it noticed: the 2021 Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction; long-listed for the 2022 Carnegie Medal Fiction and the 2021 Joyce Carol Oates Prize, and the 2021 Aspen Words Literary Prize and is A Read With Jenna Today Show Book Club Pick.

That’s not why you should read it. You should read it for Mott’s storytelling and his handling of racial tensions in a quietly profound way.

While the unnamed author tours the country, a little boy is shot and killed by police. Everyone is talking about it, but indirectly. It’s just another incident of cops shooting a person of color.

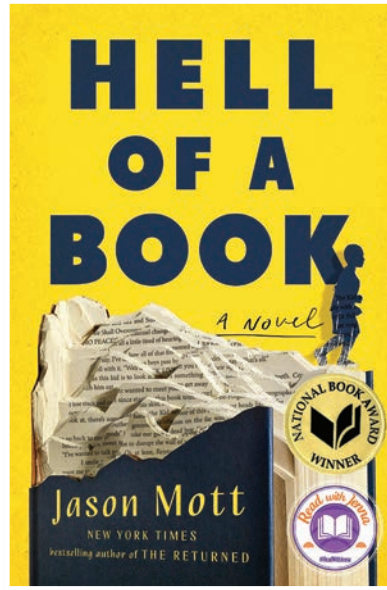
The author meets “media specialist” Jack, who gushes: “I can’t wait to shake the hand that made this happen! It’s just an amazing creation.”

And a few moments later, Jack says, “... You’re Black?” And he advises the author, “the last thing people want to hear about is being Black.”

The reader never really learns what this author’s book is about. He avoids talking about it. He’s sick of talking about it.

Instead, Mott takes us into the author’s mind: “When I was fourteen, I was diagnosed with my daydreaming problem. I saw things. I saw dragons in sunsets and rainbow skies at midnight. I had a friend that only I could see and my dog spoke to me.”

Later, the author confesses, “I’ve been known to imagine things. I’ve got a condition: I’m a



“Hell of a Book,” by Jason Mott.
Dutton. 2021. 321 pp.

writer.”

So is it real or a dream when the touring author runs naked down a hotel hallway, pursued by the husband of the woman he’s just bedded? It’s funny, that’s for sure, especially when he dives into an elevator containing a little old lady with her groceries: “She’s eighty if she ever danced a jig. Short. Thin. Wispy blue hair crowning her head like dandelion spores.”

The author never knows where he is or what he’s supposed to be doing. Then he meets Renny, an author handler, who urges him, “You’re supposed to speak about the Black condition! You’re supposed to be a voice!”

But he’s sick of that, too: “A voice? What voice? The voice of my people? Always? Every second of every day of my life? That’s what Black people are always supposed to be?”

And then there’s Soot. To protect him, his parents try to teach him to be invisible, but there’s always the danger of being seen. Soot’s father talks to him about the boy who was killed: “You

will forget him. ... This boy is only the first of many that you will meet over your life. They will stack upon one another, week by week. You’ll try to keep them in your head, but eventually, you’ll become too full and they’ll spill out and be left behind. And then, one day, you’ll grow older and you’ll realize that you’ve forgotten his name — the name of the first dead Black boy that you promised yourself you wouldn’t forget — and you’ll hate yourself. You’ll hate your memory. You’ll hate the world.”

Pain hovers through this book, no matter how much daydreaming there is. When a Black man is shot simply for being outside at night, the very house mourns, “The eaves of the house howled in the late hours of the night when the wind blew in from the south, moaning and asking where he had gone.”

The son endures all the rituals of death. He “didn’t know it then, but he was becoming a believer. Not in God, ... but he was becoming a believer in stories ... that a story could take away pain.”

Here’s one of those stories: “He saw another Earth. No. Not Earth. Something else. An entire planet. ... It hung in the sky like the answer to a question his heart asked him every day of his life. This place, the entirety of it, was the color of onyx. ... There, he loved the color of his skin.”

If death and violence have become everyday, Mott’s writing will shake you. It’s not heavy handed, but the fear is real: “We all live lives under the hanging sword of fear. We’re buried under the terror that our children will come into all of the same burden and be trapped, just like we were. ...”

But you’ve got to read the book. And consider its subtitle, “The Altogether Factual, Wholly Bona Fide Story of a Big Dreams, Hard Luck, American-Made Kid.” **S**

Deirdre Parker Smith is a freelance writer and editor living in Spencer.

Center stage

Piedmont Players actor enjoys community involvement

Eric Slipp poses for a photograph at the Meroney Theatre.

WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

If you've been a regular attendee of Piedmont Players Theatre productions over the years, then you've probably seen Eric Slipp onstage.

Asking him to name his favorite play is like asking him to name his favorite child — if he'd ever had children.

Slipp came to Salisbury with his job, but these days is a full-time volunteer, giving his time to United Way, the Literacy Council and PPT.

"There are lots of things in the community you can be involved with," says Slipp, 59.

Slipp received his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering degree from Georgia Tech. He remains a rabid fan of its baseball team. He also has an MBA from Wake Forest University, concentrating in finance, marketing, human resource management, and operations management — some of which are post-degree designations.

Thus far, he's enjoying retirement, having planned for it since he turned 20. He may do some short-term projects, but for now draws great satisfaction from his community involvement.

When did you come to Salisbury?

I came in 1987 for work. I'd spent a year in Greenville, S.C., after graduation from Georgia Tech. I could choose between Salisbury and central Illinois.

Where are you from originally?

I'm from Anson, Maine, population 2,000. I went to school in Atlanta, which was the largest city in the South at the time. (Jacksonville, Fla. now holds that designation, neck-and-neck with Charlotte.) Salisbury was "just right."

When did you retire?

I was retired in 2020. I was and I wasn't surprised. I made sure I left on good terms. There were no harsh feelings about it. You miss the people you work with. I'm extroverted, but I appreciate alone time. I worked with that same company for 34 1/2 years, and had meaningful goodbyes. But I was exhausted. I drove down to the Outer Banks for a couple of weeks, then spent the holidays with my mom in Maine. My older brother lives in Rhode Island. I came back in January and started volunteering at PPT every day.

What do you do there?

I'm a member of the board. I analyze financials, write grants, build sets, clean toilets.

How did you get involve as an actor with PPT?

I took theater class in high school. I attended Piedmont Players programs through the 1990s. I had an idea for a play, and they put "Dark of the Moon" on the schedule. That was a strong signal I should audition, and that was in 1999. We had an incredibly close cast.

This may be an unfair question, but can you name some of your favorite shows?

I've done 11 shows over the years.

"Noises Off" in 2006 was a farce that tested my acting ability (attendees may remember that set that featured multiple doors that were slammed, frequently). I was acting with such good actors, I had to be on top on my game. The timing was critical.

"In God's Own Country" (fall 2017) was a cultural experience. (The play was done in collaboration with actors who came from Germa-



*Slipp speaks with Meroney
Theatre Technical Director
John Venderwoude.*

ny. It was a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and followed the struggle of Henry Muhlenberg to establish the Lutheran Church in America.) In 2019, I visited my German friends and stayed with Jane Taubert, a Rowan County native who leads the German theater company, Landesbuhnen Sachsen.

We did "Mamma Mia" in 2018. That was pure joy and fun and a solid run.

I'd say those are the top three.

What professionals tend to be drawn to auditioning?

Lawyers, waitresses, teachers, students. Lawyers especially love the theater because it's a great escape.

Tell me about your involvement with United Way.

I've volunteered there for many years, and served a term on the board. Whenever somebody needed me to do something for the report meetings during the annual campaigns, I'd do it. If they needed a quirky character for a report meeting, they'd ask me. David Whisenant was the first Miss United Way and I was the second.

United Way has changed the way it works with local non-profits. These entities can now write grant proposals. We focus on healthy lifestyles, substance abuse, mental health awareness, and basic needs. So rather than funding a specific agency, we work with any entity that needs a solution. We encourage a lot of collaboration.

What else keeps you busy?

I started Laubach literacy training this year. I sing in St. Luke's Episcopal Church choir, and I'm a member of Kay Norman's Jubilee Choir. To sing in these choirs elevates you into a different place spiritually.

I also enjoy cooking. My global travels have opened up my taste palate a lot. If you get chemistry, you can cook.


Where have your travels taken you?

I've traveled for work and pleasure. I've been to Greece and spent extended time in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. I've been to India and need to go back. I met an organic certified farmer in "deepest, darkest India."

What are two things you always keep in the fridge?

Cheerwine and ingredients for Cuban dishes.

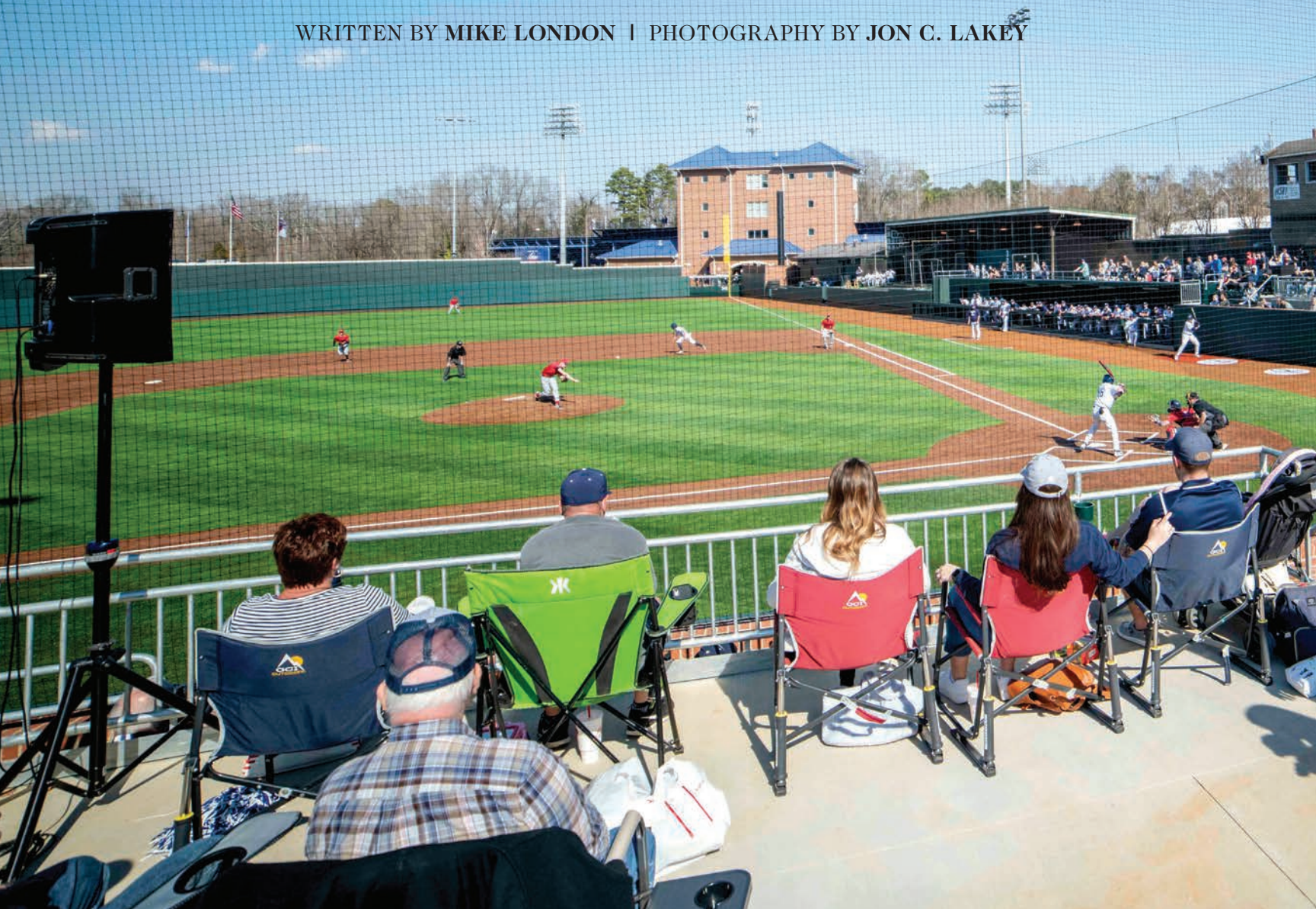
What would you say to a young Eric Slipp?

Cherish your roots, but always look to grow. 

‘Still Newman, just newer’

Catawba baseball gets its field of dreams

WRITTEN BY MIKE LONDON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY





Catawba College baseball stadium Newman Park is sporting new upgrades as part of a phase 1 of improvements.

“There’s a ton of nostalgia when it comes to Newman Park for a lot of us. This renovation isn’t a change — it’s an upgrade.

— SANDY MOORE

Jim Gantt learned to dread approaching dark clouds and to despise the roar of thunder.

It meant his workload was about to triple.

Gantt has coached Catawba College baseball at Newman Park for 34 years, the last 27 as head coach.



Coach Jim Gantt

His worst enemy, his toughest adversary, was never Wingate or Lenoir-Rhyne or Carson-Newman.

It always was the weather.

“Every time we had a thunderstorm, I knew our infield was going to get washed into the outfield,” Gantt said. “The drains were going to be a mess. There was going to be mud in the women’s restroom. All those years of it, that’s a lot of time spent fixing the field. I never minded mowing the grass. But trying to put the infield back together every time it rained, that got really old.”

Gantt’s mowing days and manual field-reconstruction days are over.

Catawba baseball has taken the plunge into



the 21st century. Newman Park now has a green (coconut fiber) and brown (walnut shell) turf field. The diamond looks like well-manicured grass and dirt from a distance, but it's immune to washout. The foundation for turf fields is drain stone, which provides stability and durability and speeds the flow of water off the field. The synthetic field won't last forever, but it should be in place for at least a decade, a decade of not having to fret about the whims of the elements.

In June 2021, Catawba launched Phase 1 of the renovation of Newman Park.

"If they can tear down Yankee Stadium and build it back better, then they can tear down Newman Park and build it back better than it was," said Brian Hightower, former East Rowan head coach.

Newman Park is a local treasure, a picturesque baseball venue born in 1926 and with a grandstand added in 1934. Generations of fans in a baseball-mad town flocked to Newman Park for college, professional, American Legion and high school ballgames. Newman Park slowly evolved into far more than a baseball facility. It became a social gathering place where fans consumed



peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs, Cheerwine, and enjoyed great conversations.

Decades passed. As perfect as the field always looked and as superb as the baseball almost always was, the grandstand, the dugouts, restrooms and locker rooms became obsolete and outdated. In the case of the time-worn, wooden bleachers — dangerous.

Talk is cheap. There was chatter about reno-

vation and innovation for more than a decade before anything tangible happened. Meg Dees, Catawba's vice president of development, was the primary force in getting things moving forward in the face of COVID last year.

Millions have been raised and are being raised. Ambitious plans call for \$12 million to be employed for everything Catawba would like to get done.

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Congratulations to Steve Fisher!



A Tradition for Life



Steve Fisher and Lori Huie at the Boys & Girls Club of Cabarrus County Pancake Day, a fundraising tradition in Concord for over 60 years.

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***Above:** Catawba outfielder Trenton Walsh dives for the ball but misses with the glove. **Below:** The baseline leading up to home plate made of artificial turf shimmers in the bright noon sun.*



The price tag for Phase 1 is \$4 million. Getting the field in place for about \$1 million may be the most important first step since Neil Armstrong walked on the moon.

There's no turning back now.

"They were talking about making improvements before I ever played at Newman Park," said Connor Johnson, an East Rowan graduate whose pitching career for Catawba ended in 2018. "But they finally did get started on it, and what can I say? The field is just beautiful. I'm excited for the guys who get to play on this field."

The field itself is a marvel of technology. It's not like baseballs are taking kangaroo bounces and rubberized caroms out there. Batted balls still roll and occasionally hop like they did on dirt and grass.

"I'm kind of loving it," Catawba assistant coach Brett Mulkey said. "This in-field plays so true. It's not too bouncy, and there are no bad hops."

There have been rave reviews from foes as well as friends. Catawba opened its home season against Shippensburg on Feb. 12. Shippensburg coaches said it was the best turf field they'd ever played on.

Catawba will be able to play more often, with fewer rainouts, and the field will recover more quickly when Mother Nature does provide a rude outburst.

"The worst baseball field in the world is one that has no one on it, and we've experienced that way too many times in the past," Gantt said.

Part of the renovation plan has been to make the park play bigger, to equalize things for pitchers. Newman Park, historically, has been a haven for hitters.

There was no room to adjust the depth of the outfield walls, so home plate was moved back 10 feet. Now it's 370 feet to center field, instead of 360. It's 341 feet to the power alleys. There will be fewer homers launched, but with outfielders forced to play deeper to cover the additional ground, there will be more singles



falling in front of them. Gantt saw that happen repeatedly in Catawba's early games.

"It still feels like Newman Park," Mulkey said. "But it also feels like there's a lot more room."

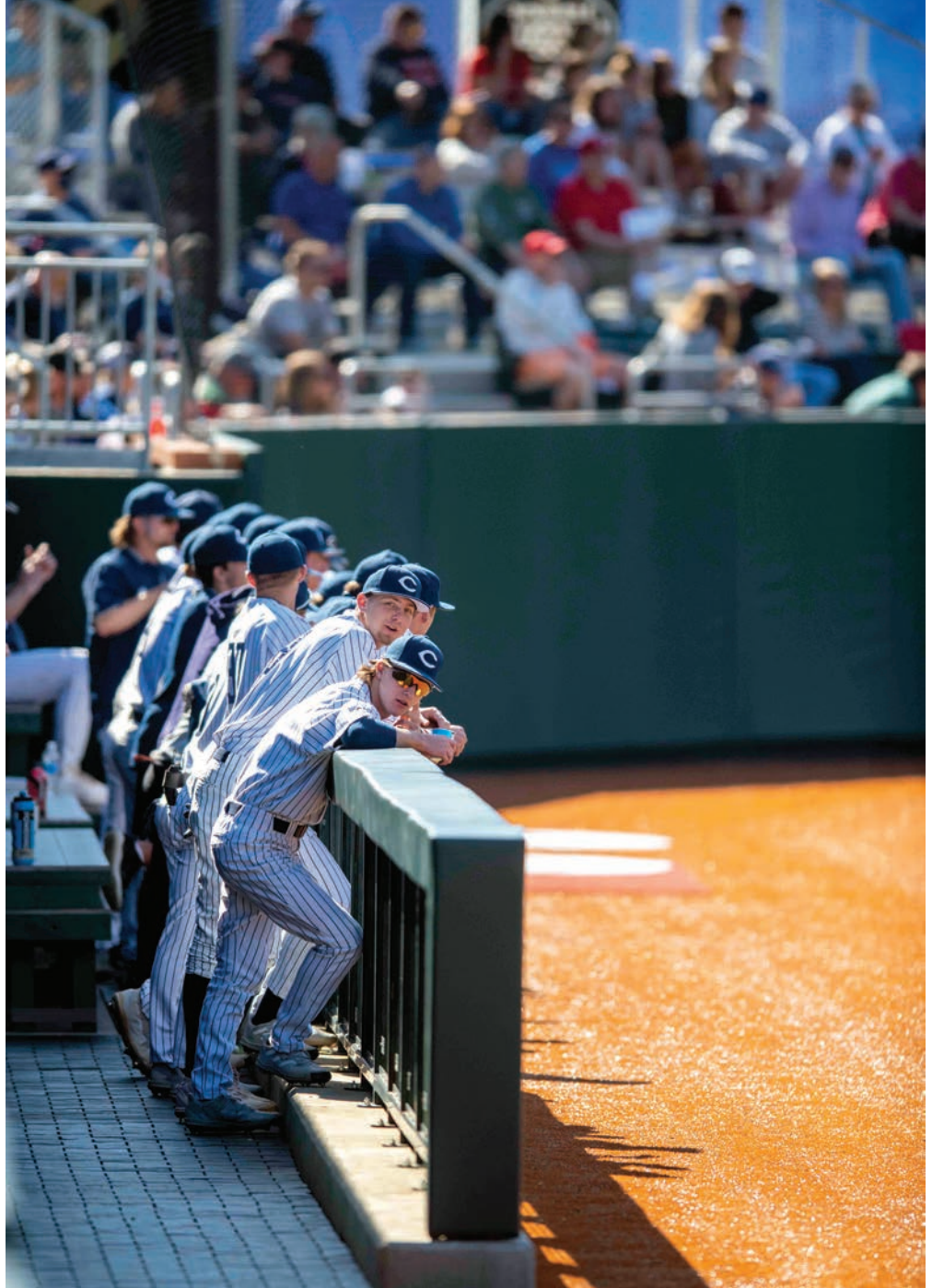
A few well-struck balls are still leaving the yard. Catawba right fielder Dawson Painter smacked the first homer in the renovated park in the Indians' home opener. Painter's father was seated next to Chiefs Club president Tommy Readling. Now everyone will want to sit beside Readling.

Phase 1 didn't just provide a revised playing field. New dugouts are impressive. They're taller, wider and longer and equipped with bathrooms. There appears to be enough room in them to comfortably house a football team.

"There was a lot of Catawba DNA on the roof of those low dugouts we had, with guys jumping up and hitting their heads," Gantt said with a laugh. "Now our guys are in there jumping around, trying to touch the roof."

New lighting is also part of Phase I. Those lights are versatile as well as powerful — and easy to manage.

The ball park lights effortlessly transformed into wide spotlights as the Indians were introduced on the field to fans at the "First Pitch Dinner," the fundraiser that racked up \$100,000 for the Indi-



Above: The team can watch the game from the large dugout. The floor level of the dugout is the same as the field level.

Left: Pretzels and hotdogs are all part of the baseball experience.



***Above:** Carlos Lara (39) runs up and fields the bunt and fire to first base during a doubleheader with visiting Shippensburg University from Pennsylvania. **Below:** The former outfield wall padding hangs on the side of the Catawba College batting cage.*



ans on Feb. 12.

“You just set when you want the lights to come on or off, and they do what they’re supposed to do,” Gantt said. “I don’t have to turn them on and off physically anymore. I can control them by remote from my truck. Technology is a good thing. Just because you’ve done something a certain way for 30 years doesn’t mean that it can’t be done a better way. This is a better way.”

When the renovations began, it was discovered that the metal grandstand supports and roof would require complete replacement.

That wasn’t part of the original renovation plan.

“While it would have been ideal to keep the original grandstands, that’s no longer an option,” Gantt said.

Almost 300 fans watched Catawba’s opening doubleheader from temporary bleacher seats and made use of temporary bathrooms.

A new grandstand will be part of Phase 2. Also in the on-deck circle are new bullpens, locker rooms, batting cages, bleachers and stadium graphics. There are plans for a new press box, for a new backstop with extended netting and even for a picnic deck.

The new field and drainage system received and passed an



acid test with this winter's multiple snowfalls and brutal January weather.

"Usually it snows, and then it melts the next day," Gantt said. "This time the cold stuck around and we had snow and ice for six or seven days, but it didn't affect us nearly as much as it used to. It was nice to be able to get out on the field and practice."

The synthetic field has made laundry a much simpler task for the Indians.

"Everything is clean, with no dust flying everywhere," Gantt said. "We used to have to power spray uniforms after a game. Now we just throw them in the washer. I'm liking this field more than I ever dreamed I'd like it."

Many people in Rowan County have a Newman Park story.

Maybe they saw Bob Watson launch a home run for the Salisbury Astros minor league team or watched Aaron Pointer hit .400 for Salisbury Braves.

Maybe they remember a long one that Coe Brier slugged out of sight for the American Legion team. Maybe they have a special memory of coaches such as Joe Ferebee or Jim DeHart.

Maybe they remember the voices of Marty Brennaman, Howard Platt or Buddy Poole on their transistor radios.

Big names who admire Newman Park have lent a hand. Brennaman, Bob Costas, and Bob Ryan are honorary campaign chairs for the renovation.



Sandy Moore, who pitched for North Rowan, Rowan County American Legion and Catawba in the 1990s, stared wistfully out on the field during Catawba's home opener.

"There's a ton of nostalgia when it comes to Newman Park for a lot of us," Moore said. "But it's still the same feeling coming out here as it was when I was 15 years old. This renovation isn't a change — it's an upgrade."

"Still Newman, just newer," Gantt likes to say.

North Rowan, Salisbury, East Rowan, South Rowan, West Rowan and Carson scrimmaged at

Newman Park before the start of the high school season. American Legion baseball will return this summer.

Baseball is an important part of the cycle of life in Rowan County. Newman Park has always been a place where magic happened between the thunderstorms. The field may be turf now, but it's still a park that feels different than any other place.

"Newman Park has been a county gathering place for a long time," Gantt said. "We all look forward to getting back to that." **S**

*Marissa Baker, the third generation to work at Ralph Baker's Shoes, holds a Brooks running shoe, one of her favorites.
(Sean Meyers photo)*



The Baker family works together and plays together. From left, Grant Wood and his girlfriend Marissa Baker; Ralph Baker Jr. and his wife Terri; Taylor Butgereit and his wife Ashlyn Baker Butgereit.

A vintage advertisement for Birkenstock shoes. At the top, it says "When you walk, your foot flexes to support your body. The Birkenstock EVA sole and cork footbed flex with your feet for comfort with every step." Below this is a diagram of a foot. The main text reads: "The evolution of the Birkenstock® comfort footbed started with the idea that the shape of the shoe should match the shape of the foot. Much like walking in the sand, when your feet are supported by a healthy shape, walking is a pleasure." To the right, it says "The natural shape of our footbed allows room for correct alignment, the inside edge guides your foot a healthy walking position." In the center is a photo of a young girl, Marissa Baker, dressed as a doctor with a stethoscope, holding a shoe. A speech bubble says "Try Birkenstock instead of flat sandals and your feet will be happy." Another speech bubble says "We can fit grown ups too!" Below the photo is a box that says "MARISSA BAKER Professional shoe person and long time Birkenstock wearer". At the bottom, it says "SIDE A BIRKENSTOCK®". On the right side, there is more text: "OUR CONTOURED ENCOURAGES FOOT" and "The Birkenstock footbed resilient cork/latex and is shaped a healthy walking environment for Additionally, the cork/latex blends and reacts to natural body and therefore, over time, the foot to the characteristics of an individual just as the foot yields to the healthy our contoured footbed. Many Birkenstock wearers find that the more comfortable the".

Marissa was featured in Baker's ads when she was a little girl.



Ralph Baker Jr., Marissa Baker and Ralph Baker Sr. (Submitted photo)

Heart & **SOLE**

Marissa Baker is running strong
at Baker's Shoes

STORY BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER



Marissa Baker recently celebrated her 10th year of service at Ralph Baker's Shoes. She is 22 years old. Marissa represents the third generation of her family to work at the business. Her grandparents, Ralph Sr., 77, and Julia, 74, work seven mornings a week, keeping the books and taking care of all the paperwork. Ralph Sr. has always been the public relations man, with the personality to match. "He called me the morning he turned 75," son Ralph Jr. remembers. "He told me, 'I woke up so depressed. I realized my life was half over!'"

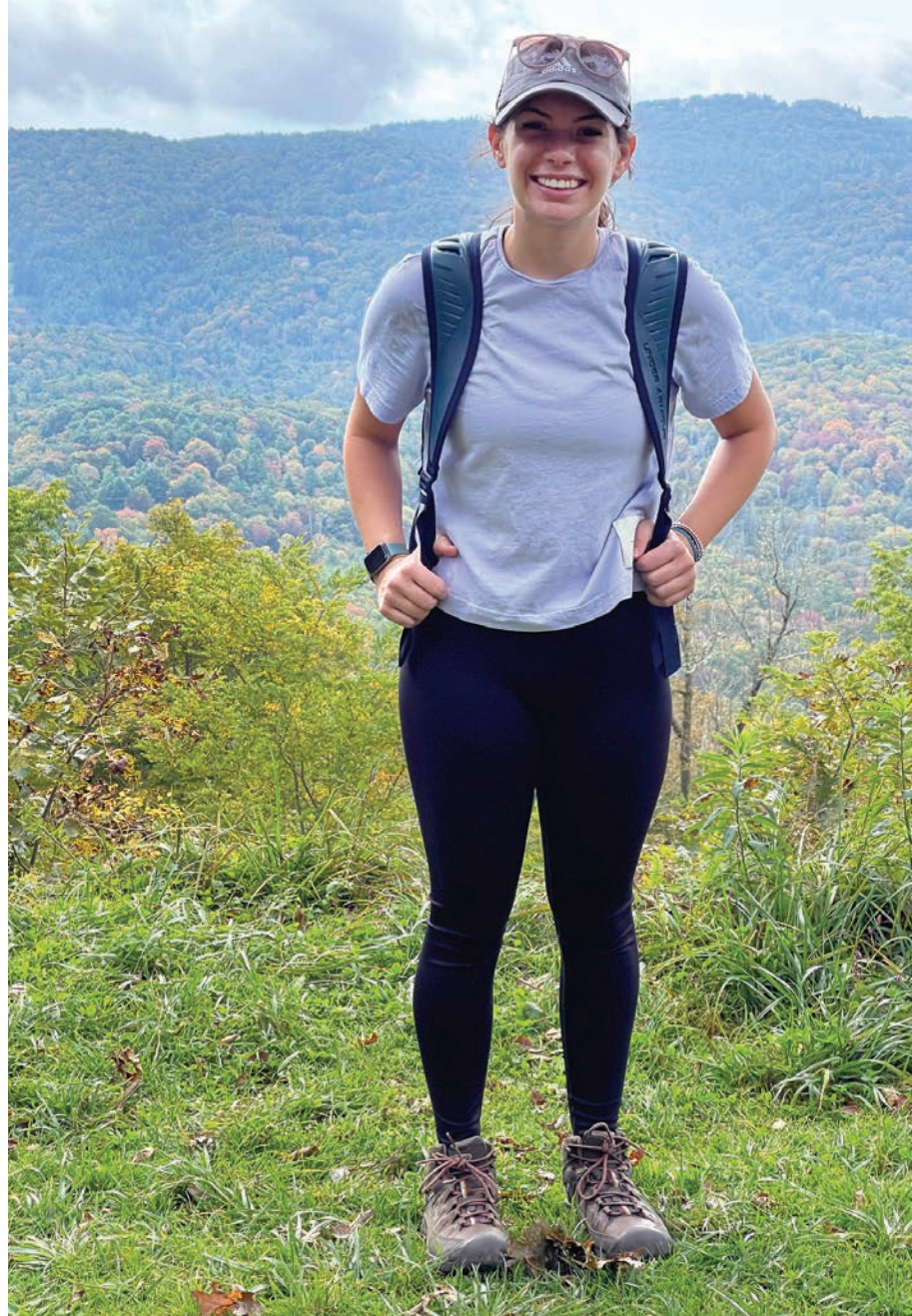
On the more serious side, Ralph Sr. is so proud to see the third generation join the business he founded in 1976 in Downtown Salisbury. Ralph Baker's Shoes moved to its current location at 428 N. Main St. in 2009.

Ralph Sr. says of his granddaughter, "She's a delight in our lives and a good addition to the store. In our family, we say we've gone from good to better to best. I think we've done pretty good."

A strong work ethic permeates the entire family.

When the store first opened, Ralph Sr. worked seven full days a week.

Ralph Baker Jr. trims an orthotic insert for a client in the back room of their building on North Main Street. (Sean Meyers photo).



“I wanted something better for my son,” he admits. “I actually discouraged him from going into business with me. I encouraged him to get a good job with benefits and better hours. But he said, ‘Pop, I love this business.’”

Ralph Jr., works six days a week. Marissa takes Sundays and Mondays off.

Ralph Jr., 53, has been a pedorthist for more than 25 years. A pedorthist is a foot specialist. Ralph Jr. and Marissa make custom orthotics, and work with diabetic patients from the Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury. Ralph Baker’s Shoes is also a full-service shoe store, specializing in comfort shoes and athletic shoes.

“We’re very, very thankful for the VA,” Marissa notes. “We were classified as essential workers because we provide medical necessi-

ties. That allowed us to stay open during COVID.”

Soon after Marissa started work, she opened her own savings account. She never touched it until she turned 16.

“It was nice getting money,” she admits. “I bought clothes for work and had some pocket money, but I never went crazy.”

Marissa received her diabetic shoe fitter certification in 2019. The next year, she completed pedorthist school through Kennesaw State University. She loved the fact that it was an online program, since she was still in college here.

“It’s a very rare certification,” Marissa points out. “Microsoft Word does not know it exists. It puts a red line under it every time I type it.”

***Above left:** A grinder is one of a pedorthist’s tools of the trade.*

***Above right:** Marissa enjoys hiking when she’s not at the store.*



When she received her certification, there were 4,633 pedorthists in the entire country. She thinks it's cool that her dad's number is 0633.

Marissa is a 2017 graduate of North Hills Christian School and a 2021 graduate of Catawba College with a degree in business administration with a concentration in entrepreneurship.

While there are pedorthists in Charlotte or Greensboro, they are more connected with medical supply stores, and not based in

Marissa Baker takes a measurements and impressions of 12-year-old Donovan Carter's feet for an orthotic insert. (Sean Meyers photo)

shoe stores. Other professionals send orthotics to a lab, while Ralph Jr. crafts each one in-house, allowing for a one-week turnaround for customers.

"We routinely have customers who drive from 75 miles away to see us," he says.

Marissa handles her pedorthist appointments and works on the sales floor. Athletic shoes are her specialty. Her first day in sales was the day after Christmas 2015, when the store sold Brooks running shoes for \$69.88 per pair.

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Marissa and Grant with her boxer, Brutus.



“There were about 25 customers in the athletic section alone, and you know how small that part of the store is. It was packed,” Marissa remembers. “That was the best way to throw me in. I was shy when I was younger. Selling has gotten me more comfortable in talking to people.”

Marissa was planning to study nursing, until her sophomore year in college, when, she says, “Something clicked for me. I was looking for a sign. I was not placed into a science class I needed, and I would have been behind a year in graduating. It just all worked out. I do not regret my decision one bit.”

Marissa’s sister, Ashlyn Baker Butgereit, is a dental hygienist who lives with husband Taylor in Mooresville. She checks in with her sister daily to see how the store is doing. Ashlyn works every Saturday and

on her days off.

“Her finger is on the pulse of this store every day of the week,” Marissa says.

Marissa says that her parents and grandparents are thrilled she’s gone into the family business, but there’s never been any pressure on her to do so.

“I think a lot of young people are forced to go into a family business,” she says. “This was 100 percent a choice for me.”

Marissa’s mother, Terri, works remotely for the Food Lion office. She comes into the store to help out from time to time and helps her husband behind the scenes.

Marissa’s typical day starts with appointments between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. She breaks for lunch at 11:30 a.m. and returns at 12:30 p.m. for more appointments. Her time slots run in 30-minute increments, and she doesn’t take appointments after 4 p.m.

During the pandemic, the store was only



Clockwise from above: Marissa visits with a V.A. patient. She says that their contract with the V.A. to serve diabetic patients allowed them to stay open during the pandemic as an essential business; although Ralph works six days a week, he says he has a work-life balance; Marissa often meets a friend during her hikes.

open from 9 a.m. to noon.

“I never had so much free time in my life,” she says with a smile. “I stayed outdoors the whole month of April 2020.”

Of working in a family business, she says, “I loved I didn’t have to interview for a job, but I was not thrilled about not having Saturdays off. But I couldn’t get fired!”

On her days off, Marissa hangs out with her boyfriend, Grant Wood, most of the time. They eat with her family on Sunday evenings, and typically cook for themselves the next night.

The two enjoy walking and hiking around Tanglewood and Clemmons, as well as the Salisbury Community Park and the Greenway.

“We have the perfect shoes in the store for walking and hiking,” Marissa notes.

By the way, just how many shoes does Marissa have?

She does get a family discount, and so she has about 200 pairs. She’s conscientious about rotating her athletic shoes.

“I wear out my athletic shoes pretty quickly,” she says.

She has athletic shoes, hiking shoes, boots ... pretty much every pair of ladies’ shoes the store carries.

Grant, 26, is also involved in a multi-generational business. He and his grandfather are the owners of Grandfather Clock Repair.

(Look for their story in an upcoming issue of Salisbury the Magazine.)

When asked how Marissa feels about eventually taking the reins, she laughs.

“I don’t think any of us will ever retire,” she says.

Her dad agrees.





Marissa holds a model of the foot and a pair of one of the many brands the store carries.

“My dad and I will both likely work until we die,” Ralph Jr. says. “I’m not encouraging him to retire. We all live close to the store, and we’re back-door neighbors. If something would ever happen to me, Marissa could pick up and do fine.”

He adds, “Having Marissa here full-time has definitely injected new life into our business. It invigorates everything. It takes some stress and pressure off me, even though she has created new business for us.”

Ralph Sr. adds, “As long as I can work and not embarrass my son and granddaughter, I’ll be here.”

Even through the store has developed a reputation as offering shoes for diabetic customers, Ralph Jr. says they often work with folks who can’t make it through a work shift because of their painful feet.

“*This business is a marathon, not a sprint.*”

— RALPH BAKER JR.

“But not everyone needs a custom orthotic,” he points out.

Ralph Jr. says that he and Marissa have a great work dynamic. They don’t even attempt to separate work life from home life, the duo says.

“There has never been an evening meal that we haven’t discussed the store — ever,” Ralph Jr. says.

“We don’t have anything else to talk about!” his daughter adds.

“This store is so much a part of who we are, it’s definitely in our daily conversations,” Ralph says. “This business is a marathon, not a sprint.”

And you need good shoes for it.

Ralph Jr. says although he works Monday-Saturday, he doesn’t work late hours. The whole family attends church at LifeWay. So he says he does have a good work-life balance.

“This store and this community have been so good to us,” he says. “We’ve put our hearts and souls into it.” **S**

*Marissa and
boyfriend
Grant Wood,
who works
with his
grandfather
in their clock
repair business.*



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*Ed Clement and the
John Steele House.
(Sean Meyers photo)*



*Left: Portraits
of Dr. Josephus
Hall's family sit
on a table in the
study of the Hall
House.
(Sean Meyers
photo)
Right: The
historic
McCubbins-
McCanless
house on Park
Avenue. (Jon C.
Lakey file photo)*



HISTORY
as an
ASSET

Historic Salisbury Foundation
celebrates 50 years

BY ELIZABETH G. COOK

T

he Historic Salisbury Foundation was an upstart when then-banker Ed Clement convened the first meeting in April 1972.

Clement marshaled a battalion of like-minded Salisburians to stand against the wave of modernity that was sweeping the city — erecting bank buildings where irreplaceable old homes once stood, slapping aluminum facades over downtown brickwork and turning a blind eye toward deteriorating neighborhoods.

“America wanted to rebuild after World War II, and rightly so,” Clement says. “New became good and old became bad. So significant houses were torn down, not just in Salisbury but all over America.”

People would lament, “What a shame.” But no one spoke up in Salisbury until Clement and the foundation challenged the prevailing mindset.

“It was something I thought I had to do,” Clement says.

Fifty years later, the Historic Salisbury Foundation is as fundamental to Salisbury as Southern accents and church steeples. Signs of its success are everywhere: the reborn Salisbury Station, the saved Bell Tower, scores of homes spared from demolition, a downtown that is the envy of other small cities.

The passion for preservation that Clement and the foundation inspired has sealed the city’s reputation and forever linked the words “historic” and “Salisbury.”

To an outsider, it might appear the foundation’s work is done. All the big, grand houses have been saved and major landmarks preserved. The first champions of historic preservation have stepped back or passed into history themselves.

What now? How can the foundation sustain



*The Bell Tower.
(Andy Mooney photo)*

what it started a half-century ago?

Even as current foundation leaders pay homage its history, they are hard at work adapting to a new age, to younger tastes and new economic and civic dynamics.

Michael Young, vice president of the foundation's Board of Trustees, says that's essential.

"We're not doing change for change's sake, or because there was something wrong with what we were doing," Young says. "It's just that we want to be sure we're on sound footing. ..."

"We want to be relevant for the next 50 years."

• • •

The foundation's first decades saw high-profile accomplishments.

Clement and his troops saved the Bell Tower from the wrecking ball and started the iconic West Square Historic District. Clement convinced Southern Bell not to demolish the McKenzie-Grimes House on West Bank Street. A revolving fund was set up to buy and sell endangered houses and put protective covenants on them.

The foundation bought the Hall House to create the city's first house museum, and volunteers organized the first OctoberTour.

(See accompanying story.)

"Someone came up to me and said, 'What are you trying to do, make us into Williamsburg?'" Clement recalls. But the flurry of activity established the organization's reputation.

"It showed early on that this foundation was going to try to accomplish something," Clement says.

A group of prominent women shared Clement's passion for saving the historic character of the town they loved. Clement names several who were instrumental — Holtie Woodson, Kate Mills Snider, Blanche Robertson, Rosalie Kizziah Mayfield, Elizabeth Stanback.

A courtly man in his 90th year, Clement refers to the early activists by their husbands' names — Mrs. Nelson Woodson, Mrs. Arnold Snider, and so on. But the women's determination was all their own.

"It was a national movement, though it was not coordinated," Clement says. In a day when



Above: The front of the Blackmer House on South Fulton Street in 2009. (Joey Benton photo).

Below: The Historic Fulton-Mock-Blackmer-Dixon House after being renovated in 2015.

(Jon C. Lakey photo)



few females served in public office or pursued careers, women led the burgeoning preservation movement. "The women stood up against these men who were running the towns in America and doing a good job but didn't really think

about the history much."

• • •

One of the first foundation projects involved the Crawford House, a circa-1869 home that sat in the way of a Wendy's restaurant on East Innes



Street. In 1976, the foundation hired a mover to lift the brick house from its foundation and haul it a mile away to South Fulton Street.

All of Salisbury seemed to stop and gawk at the slow-moving spectacle. Clement says Joe Taylor, head of the Belk-Harry store, fussed about the move disrupting downtown business. “He became one of our principal supporters later.”

Those who grouched often converted. Jimmy Hurley, publisher of the Salisbury Post, went against preservationists when he had the Capitol Theater on West Innes torn down for a Post expansion and parking lot in the 1980s. Yet Clement knew he could count on the newspaperman to help save other structures.

Hurley was one of the first to donate toward the foundation’s purchase of Salisbury’s dilapidated train station from two railroad companies.

The Gillespie-Crawford House, a circa-1869 home, was moved in 1976 to make room for a Wendy’s restaurant on East Innes Street.

The foundation’s Save Our Station campaign led to a multimillion-dollar restoration.

“Jimmy Hurley said, ‘Every time I see you it costs me money,’” Clement says.

As he speaks, Clement is sitting in the sun-room of the 1799 John Steele house he owns on Richard Street, the oldest structure in Salisbury. An ardent practitioner of what he preaches, Clement saw the house through a painstaking restoration that spanned more than six years. Now, set up much like a house museum, the building serves as his office.

That patience, persistence, and purity of principle have helped Clement and the foundation

succeed where others might have given up.

After fire left the home of long-ago starlet Suzanne Blackmer uninhabitable in 1984, her family held on to the charred, empty house even as neighbors called for demolition. Finally, the foundation’s third attempt at buying the house was accepted in July 2012 — nearly 28 years after the fire.

“Patience pays with preservation,” Clement said at the time, “because it has been a long process.”

The Blackmer House is one of about 75 properties that have gone through the revolving fund. (The foundation has helped write protective covenants for many more.) The house is now the beautifully restored home of Glenn and Beth Dixon and their family, and is a popular OctoberTour site.

The foundation has also worked with Living-



The foundation completed a multimillion-dollar renovation of the Salisbury Station. (Andy Mooney photo)

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stone College to restore homes near its campus, which is part of the city's very first historic district.

The foundation has had well over a dozen different board presidents and almost as many executive directors. But for nearly five decades it had one guiding force — Clement. He served on the foundation board for 48 years, including 10 as president, and says he didn't realize until he quit what a heavy thing it was.

Former executive director Karen Hobson emphasizes the legacy of that work.

"I think the city and for that matter Rowan County owe the foundation a debt of gratitude," she says. Preservationists fought to keep the area's once-fragile historic character intact and strengthen it. She can't imagine what Salisbury would have become otherwise.

"I have to always give credit to Ed Clement," she says. "It was his perseverance and passion



Ed Clement served on the foundation board for 48 years, including 10 as president. (Sean Meyers photo)



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that kept it moving.”

•••

As president of the foundation board now, Steve Cobb is keenly aware of the institutional knowledge and expertise lost when Clement stepped down in June 2020.

“But it kind of gives us an opportunity to think about doing some reinventing and doing things in a different way,” Cobb says.

Hiring Sada Stewart Troutman as executive director right out of graduate school in 2019 was a step in that direction. “She brought a fresh and young perspective to an organization that was aging, and kind of started the ball rolling on doing more things that would attract young people,” Cobb says.

Troutman left for a job with Downtown Salisbury last year. Cobb says work she started will be picked up and expanded by Kimberly Stieg, who stepped into the job Jan. 31. (See accompanying



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The John Steele House in the snow. (Sean Meyers photo)

story.)

Young ticks off recent updates: writing new bylaws, contracting a group to manage the Salisbury Station, hiring a consultant to review the Hall House, strengthening the revolving fund's contracts and agreements, beefing up planned giving campaigns, reducing the number of committees.



Steve Cobb

The foundation intends to pay closer attention to potential revolving fund properties on the city's entrance corridors — North Main and Innes streets — as well as Park Avenue, Franklin Street and Clay Street.

A new marketing and events coordinator, Kayla Harris-Haag, has been hired.

A big thrust, Cobb says, will be building membership and community relations. "We want to make sure that people know about us, they appreciate what we do and are willing to join ... and that people in the community think highly of Historic Salisbury Foundation."

• • •

Edward Norvell might be a bridge between the Historic Salisbury Foundation of old and the new. President of the foundation from 1986 through 1992, he recently returned to the board. He says acquiring the depot in 1984 was a turning point.

When a developer's plans to bring shops and restaurants to the station fell through, the board decided to go it alone and turn the giant structure into an event center. A feasibility study concluded there was no way the foundation could pull that off, Norvell says. "But we did."

Help came in many forms. Norvell's father-in-law, D.C. Linn of Landis, had recently sold his construction business, and he stepped up to help with the project for free. Financial support came from the Hurleys, Tom Smith at Food Lion, the Stanback family and countless others.

The restoration brought a long-neglected part of Salisbury back to life. In the midst of the station project, the foundation stretched itself to buy and protect an old warehouse nearby that later became the Emporium. Other trans-



Edward Norvell

formations soon followed, with a new arts district taking shape and the F&M Trolley Barn opening.

"It was exciting being involved," Norvell says.

But a shift took place, in Norvell's eyes. The foundation, then less than 20 years old, went from nimbly jumping from project to project to bearing the responsibility of running an event center.

"When we first bought the station and redeveloped it, I don't think the board ever envisioned owning it forever," Norvell says.

Typically, local government or some other public entity runs event centers. The building put big demands on the foundation's staff and finances.

Still, there's no denying the station's overwhelmingly positive impact, nor the enduring value of the foundation's work across the city.

"We kind of changed the whole ethic of the city," Norvell says. "Salisbury began to see our history as an asset."

• • •

Educating the public about the preservation has always been on the foundation's priority list, but Clement wishes he'd done more of that. A generation or two of disinterest could reverse decades of progress.

"We do need constant education in history and the historic preservation field so that people will appreciate what they have and be able to sustain the quality of life," he says.

Board member Sherry Beck chairs a committee working on just that, hoping to teach residents about area history and share renovation tips with new old-house owners.

With a distracted public now uninterested in history and museum houses, Beck and others see an opportunity to use the Hall House differently — as a site for lectures, concerts, classes, art expos and wine tastings. Blankets and Bluegrass gatherings there have already proved popular.

Soon it will serve as a stage. Local author Jennifer Hubbard has written a play, "Polishing the Silver," about the house and the Hall family that is slated to be presented on the front porch during the foundation's 50th anniversary celebration this fall. (See accompanying story.)

Hubbard is married to Cobb, who says the house has still more stories to tell as well.

"It's one of the few examples of an urban house that had an existing slave dwelling," he says. "It's important to talk about the history of people who were not talked about."

Norvell wants to get more African-American residents involved in the foundation.

Clement says he'd like to see historic markers or monuments at the family home of Wiley Lash, the city's first black mayor, and at the Shober Bridge that carried black students across railroad tracks to integrate the Frank B. John School on Ellis Street.

History is ever-evolving. And though young people reportedly don't care about the past, Clement says they sure care about downtown apartments. Salisbury probably would not have a thriving complement of those apartments if not for preservation of the storefronts below them. A growing number of people want the convenience and energy of living in the city's

center.

"So what is the bottom line of historic preservation?" Clement says. "As far as I'm concerned, the bottom line is not the improvement of the building condition. It is the improvement of the human condition." • • •

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The interior of the John Steele House. (Sean Meyers photo)



Above: A portrait of John Steele. Left: Shadows from the ornate railing reflect off the wooden floored front porch of the Hall House. (Sean Meyers photos)

New director takes the reins

Carolina was far from Kimberly Stieg's mind when she and her husband started looking for a home closer to grandchildren in Florida.

Their Oklahoma home was just too far away from family.

But the opening for executive director of Historic Salisbury Foundation in North Carolina — still hundreds of miles from Florida — piqued Stieg's interest. She had a background in hospitality, nonprofit management and historic preservation.



Kimberly Stieg

She and her husband, Scott, had even opened their 1938 home to the public in 2018 for the Linwood Place Tour of Historic Homes in Oklahoma City. She knew what preserving old homes was about.

Meeting board members on the Historic Salisbury Foundation search committee confirmed her instincts about the job and her potential bosses.

"I've never seen dedication and loyalty like this board," Stieg says. "You can feel the passion every time you speak to one of them, whether it's regarding the history or the projects that are currently ongoing, or the future. The excitement is there. ..."

"The momentum is, in our hopes, just beginning."

Stieg started in the job on Jan. 31. She succeeded Sada Stewart Troutman, who left Historic Salisbury after two years to lead downtown development for Downtown Salisbury Inc.

Educated at Rose State, a two-year public college in Oklahoma, Stieg has worked for a literacy alliance in Columbus, Georgia; a country club in Opelika, Alabama; and a market in Edmund, Oklahoma. She's been back in Oklahoma for five years.

Husband Scott's retirement as a school administrator nudged the decision to move.

"I feel I have a servant leader's heart but a business mind," she says.

She loves history, preservation and communities, and is all about Southern hospitality, she says.

Preservation icon Ed Clement helped launch the Historic Salisbury Foundation 50 years ago, and the organization has kept to its mission to preserve, protect and revitalize the historic fabric of Salisbury and Rowan County.

Stieg embraces that purpose.

"My goal is to fulfill the vision and the mission that Mr. Clement had in the beginning, and then expand on that and elevate it for the next 50 years."

— Elizabeth Cook



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‘Polishing the Silver’ shines light on Hall House

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH COOK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

A window at the home of Dr. Josephus Hall caught Jennifer Hubbard’s imagination when her fourth-grade class visited the stately house museum on Jackson Street decades ago.

“Mary” was etched into the glass. The guide said Hall’s second wife had scratched her name there with a diamond ring.

“That kind of detail really made me understand that a person who was once alive walked these halls and played under these trees,” Hubbard says.

Now Hubbard is bringing more Hall House details to life with her play, “Polishing the Silver.” Commissioned by Historic Salis-

bury Foundation, owner of the 1820 Hall House, the play honors the structure’s two centuries by telling the stories of people who lived in it.

“It’s about preserving history,” Hubbard says of the play. “It’s about the reverence for family stories as well as heirlooms. And it’s about the life of a house.”

The play will be performed on the porch of that house this fall, when the foundation celebrates its own 50th anniversary during OctoberTour weekend. The event will also honor the Hall House’s 200th anniversary, delayed two years because of the pandemic.

Originally built in 1820 to provide classrooms for Salisbury

Academy, the Hall House was best known as the home of Dr. Josephus W. Hall during the Civil War era. Hall was a native of Rowan County who returned to Salisbury from St. Louis, Missouri, after a cholera epidemic took the lives of his first wife, Henrietta, and daughter Josephine, in 1849. Coming to Salisbury with him were his other daughter, also named Henrietta, and son Stockton Solomon.

Hall married the wealthy Mary Cowan and they transformed the house at 226 S. Jackson St. into a grand home, with a new double portico trimmed in cast iron filigree.

Historic Salisbury Foundation bought the house from Hall descendant Mildred Seaber in 1972, a bold move for an organization in its first year of existence.

Generations of Hall's descendants have lived in the house, but his is the era frozen in time there, from the portrait of Hall's first wife hanging in the front parlor to the former kitchen and slave living quarters out back. The family had nine enslaved people at one time.

A Civil War cannon stands sentry on the front lawn. Inside, 19th century antiques, many original to the home, speak of an age long past.

The house is rich with material for a writer like Hubbard who cherishes history. In addition to touring the Hall House as a child, she often visited her friend, Ellen Turner, who lived in a historic home within a block of the house.

Now, life coming full circle as it often does, Hubbard lives on that same block with her husband, Steve Cobb, and keeps a protective eye over the Hall House property.

"I am aware that this once belonged to other people who loved it," she says.

Research material provided by Susan Sides, president of the foundation when Hubbard set to work on the play, helped flesh out the characters. The doctor's obituary was especially helpful.

"Sometimes obituaries point out the best in a person," Hubbard says, "but you can tell in the way that his daughter, Henrietta, spoke of him that he was a really good man."

Initially Josephus and Mary Cowan Hall were opposed to the war, Hubbard says. "But I don't think he had a choice. He was basically drafted to work on behalf of the Confederate Army as a doctor."

He tended the sick at the Confederate Pris-



Playwright Jennifer Hubbard scripted the short play about the Hall House, 'Polishing the Silver,' for the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Historic Salisbury Foundation.

on for a year and did much more. "He basically worked at every hospital that was in Salisbury, and after the war was over, he was a doctor for people who couldn't afford medical care," Hubbard says. "That's another thing that speaks to his goodness."

Union troops occupied the house for a time. President Andrew Johnson pardoned Hall in 1866 for his work on behalf of the Confederacy. Later Hall had a hand in financing or constructing several downtown Salisbury structures, rebuilding what Gen. George Stoneman and his Union troops had destroyed.

A play that's less than 30 minutes long cannot cover every stage of the house's life, but it does include one living character. Hubbard won't say who.

Her main gig, as she puts it, is as a novelist. She has two published young adult novels, "Paper Covers Rock" in 2011 and "And We Stay" in 2014. Her Penguin-Random House contract calls for one more.

She came into writing plays by necessity. While teaching at Woodberry Forest School in

Virginia, she had trouble finding works that the teenage boys there were interested in performing. So she wrote one.

Several have followed, including 10-minute plays and an adaptation of "Pride and Prejudice," performed at Lee Street Theatre. Piedmont Players was scheduled to present her adaptation of E.M. Forster's "A Room with a View," in 2020 but, again, the pandemic intervened. It may be presented yet.

Meanwhile, Hubbard looks forward to seeing local actors bring the Hall family to life.

The only prop is silver, as mentioned in the title, "Polishing Silver."

Hubbard says that works on a literal and a metaphorical level, silver being a material of value and shine. Preserving history requires ongoing, loving care, much as tending silver requires regular polishing and care when it passes from generation to generation.

She would like to see the play revive interest in the Hall House and encourage people to delve into the foundation's evolving work. Beyond the Hall House and the West Square Historic District, she says, families who love history are buying and preserving houses, and saving neighborhoods.

"I think we all need to feel connected again to our communities," she says, "and I'm hoping that this play will help to do that." **S**



Shirley Stiller's salt and pepper collection has it all — from fried eggs to a bowling ball and bowling pin to, you guessed it, boobs.





all
**SHOOK
UP**

Shirley Stiller's salt and pepper shaker
collection brings her joy

WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



S

hirley Stiller started collecting salt and pepper shakers when she was 11.

“When we’d go on vacation,” she remembers, “I’d use my allowance to buy salt and pepper shakers.”

Shirley, who lives in southern Rowan County, is now 74. That’s 63 years of collecting. That’s 750 sets of salt and pepper shakers.

I am not making this up.

The collection is housed in two custom-built cabinets that Shirley and her husband, Boyce, had made when they moved into their home in 1985.

Her collection contains salt and pepper shakers in every design imaginable.

Fried eggs. Mice. Entwined geese. Flowers. Maracas. Lighthouses. A washing machine. Frogs. Red peppers. Radishes. Chickens. Watermelons. Ice cream cones. Pigs. Eggplants. Rabbits. Pot bellied stoves. Covered wagons.

They’re made of ceramic, aluminum, plastic, wood.

Shirley has amassed her collection by visiting yard sales over the years and buying them during her vacations. She pops into the ReStore from time to time.

And people have given them to her as gifts.

Musician Matthew Weaver is always on the lookout for Shirley whenever he travels to perform.

He’s given her a ceramic set with a red truck that has a Christmas tree in the bed. There’s a pink flamingo (salt) driving a bright teal convertible (pepper).

Shirley has even collected a salt or pepper shaker that doesn’t have a mate.

“If I want it bad enough, I get it,” she says. “I might down the line find its mate.”

You never know.

Shirley surveys her other cabinet. She has commodes and sinks since she once worked for a plumber. She worked for Bill Brown for 17 years, and the Register of Deeds Office from 1991 to 2009. She worked part-time for them before retiring in 2013.



Shirley Stiller has collected more than 750 salt and pepper shakers and also collects Jim Shore figurines, lighthouses, teapots and miniature buildings.





There are shells because she loves traveling to the beach. There's a set of feet with bright red toes. A baked potato with butter and sour cream. Two boiled eggs. She has a horse and buggy because she loves the Amish country.

I pull out one set that looks like jugs of pottery, tiny enough to fit in the palm of my hand.

Wait a minute ... are these what I think they are?

"Yep," Shirley says. "Boobs."

Why would she buy these?

"Because they were unusual," she says.

All righty then.

Shirley says she likes all of her salt and pepper shakers equally, but admits that her mama's aluminum sets are special to her.

Two questions: what will happen to this collection, and how on earth does she dust it?

"I don't have children, and my niece and nephew aren't interested," she says.

That doesn't seem to bother her, though.

What about dusting?

"Not very often!" Shirley says, laughing. "During the pandemic, I





“All of them have a memory attached.”

— SHIRLEY STILLER

cleaned as many shelves as I could reach.”

If you think Shirley would be satisfied with one collection, you would be wrong.

She has lighthouses with lights on one piece of family furniture. A set of Jim Shore angels graces her mantel.

In the kitchen is her collection of teapots that top every wall. Her cabinetry features 32 punched tin fronts.

She and her husband and her parents, the late Mae and Jack McDonald, punched every one.

So back to the salt and pepper shakers. How does she keep up with what she has? How does she know?

She just does.

“All of them have a memory attached,” she says.

She bought a lot of sets for the Gay Dolphin at Myrtle Beach and from “gyp joints” in the mountains.

“It’s not the finer-looking stuff,” she says. “They just see another sucker coming.”






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When she's not looking for salt and pepper shakers, she's out working in the yard, trimming bushes, weeding, picking up sticks, working in her flower beds, or shopping.

She's an active member of Grace Lutheran Church, and she reads a lot at night.

"There's just always something to do," she says. "The day gets gone fast."

And what if she finds a set of salt and pepper shakers she just has to have?

"I'll squeeze 'em in." **S**

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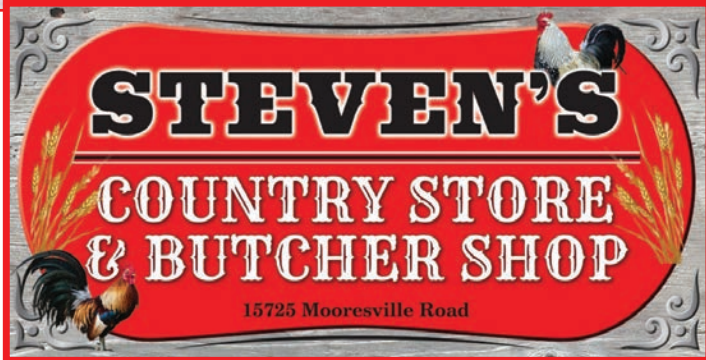
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There are few shelves or tables in Shirley's home not covered by her collections.



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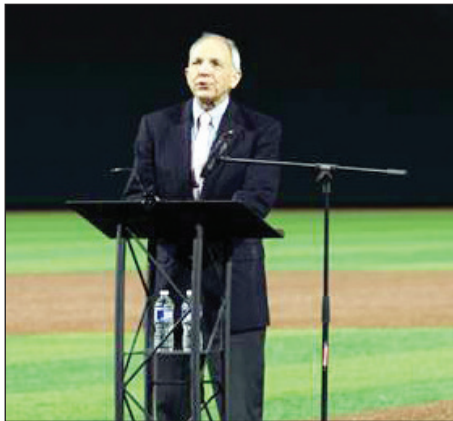
Neil Wilkerson sings the national anthem.

Catawba Home Run Derby and ‘First Pitch’

Catawba alumni, fans, and supporters gathered Feb. 12 for the annual First Pitch fundraiser supporting Catawba baseball. The event capped an exciting day as the Indians kicked off their home opener against Shippensburg on a brand-new, state-of-the-art field. First Pitch raised a whopping \$100,000 for the baseball program. Now that’s a home run.

— Photos by Emily Marcincavage, Class of ‘24

Dr. Ken Clapp gives the blessing.



Meg Dees, vice president of development for Catawba, with Gordon Hurley.



Shari Graham, Class of ‘83; Hen Henderlite; and master of ceremonies Doug Rice.



Above: Former Catawba football and golf coach David Bennett was the keynote speaker.

Left: Home run derby on Friday evening with former Catawba baseball players.

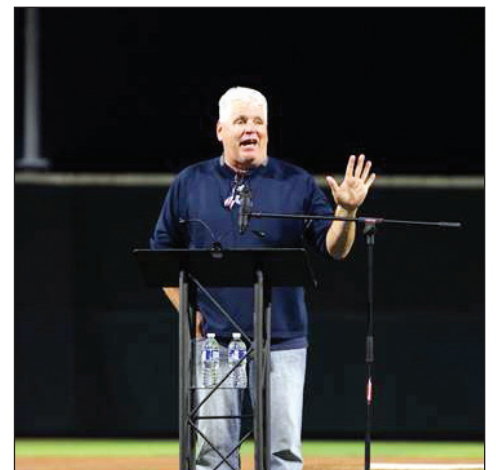


Left: Catawba President Dr. David P. Nelson

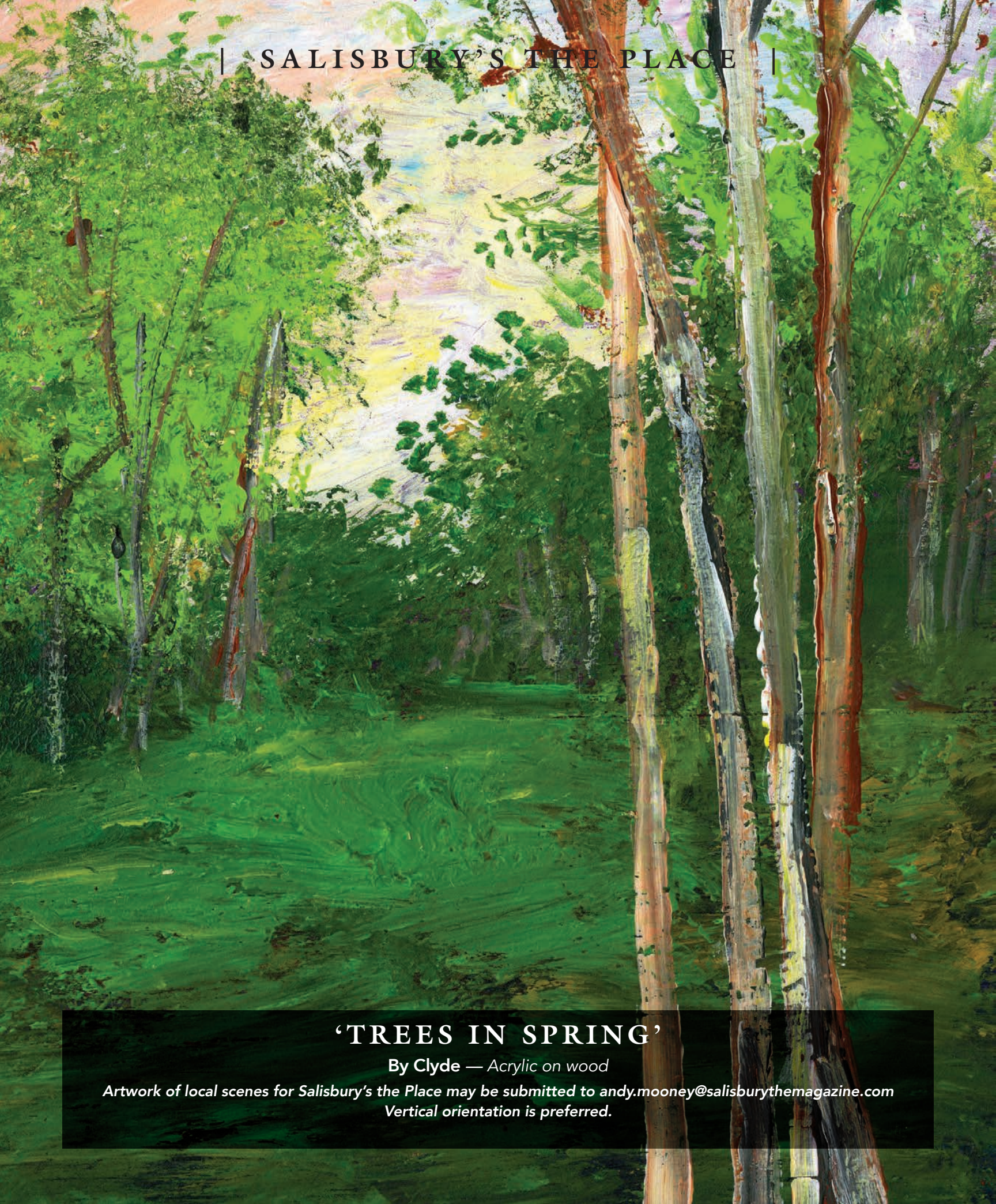
Right: Former Catawba baseball players come back for the inaugural home run derby organized by former Catawba baseball player Russ Weiker, Class of '17.



Current Catawba baseball players entered the event as the Field of Dreams.



Bill Butts, Class of '82, gives the alumni remarks.



‘TREES IN SPRING’

By Clyde — *Acrylic on wood*

*Artwork of local scenes for Salisbury's the Place may be submitted to andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com
Vertical orientation is preferred.*

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