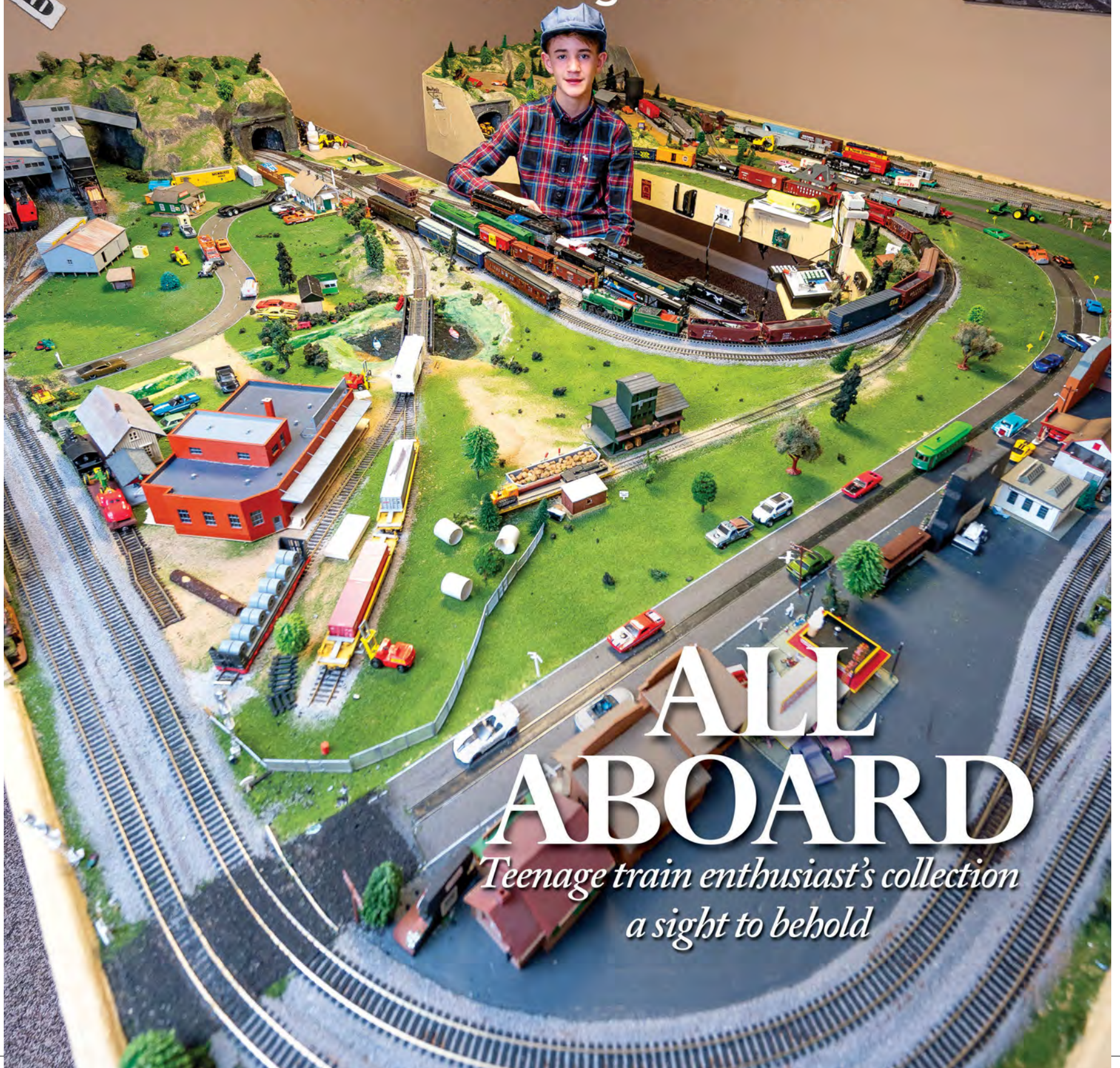


MARCH 2024

# SALISBURY

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# ALL ABOARD

*Teenage train enthusiast's collection  
a sight to behold*



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**Salisbury the Magazine**  
P.O. Box 4639  
Salisbury, NC 28145-4639  
Published 9 times / year



**32**  
**FLYING THE**  
**COMMANDER-**  
**IN-CHIEF**

*Retired colonel looks back on  
piloting Marine One helicopters  
that escorted presidents*

**42**  
**MAN OF MANY**  
**TALENTS**

*Carlton Jackson flourishes as a  
engineer, artist and musician*

**On the cover:** Train enthusiast, 13-year-old Brantley Perrill, has been collecting model trains since he was a little kid. His setup has taken over several rooms in the basement.

**On this page:** Marine veteran Col. Grey Medinger was a Vietnam helicopter pilot and later became the pilot for several presidents on Marine One.  
(Sean Meyers photos)



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## DEPARTMENTS



14

### THE ARTS

#### 14 Crafting dreams

*Fashion entrepreneurship meets the digital age*

### HOBBY

#### 22 All aboard

*Teenage train enthusiast's collection a sight to behold*

### IN EVERY ISSUE

**Editor's Letter** p.8    **Rowan Original** p.12  
**Bookish** p.9    **The Scene** p.52  
**Through the Lens** p.10    **Local Colors** p.54

### INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Accelerate Therapy and Performance.....39	Barnhardt Jewelers.....38	Randy Marion Automotive Group .....56	Rowan-Kannapolis ABC.....50	Windsor Gallery.....49
Ace Hardware.....11	Baxter Consultants .....11	Novant Health .....2	Stout Heating and Air .....49	Yatawara Gynecology and Wellness .....39
Ralph Baker's Shoes .....5	Blue Bay Seafood .....29	Osterhus Outdoors .....11, 30	The Barn at Cedar Hill.....48	Melissa Yates —
Bare Furniture.....4	F&M Bank.....55	Putnam's Carpet.....11	TMR Realty .....50	Lantern Realty .....48
Bargain Store Furniture .....11	Godley's Garden Center .....11	Ritchie's Steamway.....11	Tom's Carpet Care.....11	
	Cathy Griffin/Ashley Fippin ..7		Trinity Oaks.....31	



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# A fresh wind

When March winds blew in southern Alabama, I pumped my legs hard on my wooden swing and called out the poem I knew best: “Who has seen the wind?/Neither I nor you/But when the leaves hang trembling/The wind is passing through.” It’s by Christina Rossetti and my four-year-old repertoire was limited to her poem and several in Robert Louis Stevenson’s “A Child’s Garden of Verses.” I recited them, loudly, as I swung higher and higher under the oak tree, the wind whipping my hair into my face. It was the closest I came to flying, although I had surely tried when my neighbor Evelyn got a bunk bed. But that’s a story for another day.

The wind brings to you this month a panoply of stories from the area.

Sydney Smith Hamrick writes about young Brantley Perrill and his magnificent collection of all things to do with electric trains. Legend has it that his collection expands across several basements of extended family, although Hamrick visited only his main one. He’s so familiar to area conductors, they toss him train memorabilia as they pass by.

Andie Foley visited local designers Andrew Burgess and Paige Sechrist. They create new clothing from repurposed items, partnering with national vendors like Nike and Puma, going on international trips to work with their brands. Sechrist is from South Carolina; Burgess is a North Rowan grad and the son of Hurley YMCA director of healthy living, Esther Marsh.

A pilot for the president of the United States can’t be just any pilot. This month we talk with local Grey Medinger who served as helicopter



pilot for Presidents Carter, Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. He shares anecdotes that give a peek into the personalities of those leaders.

Salisbury native Carlton Jackson must have been gifted with strong hemispheres on both sides of his brain. A right-brained engineer/manager for Duke Energy, Jackson uses his left brain to paint and play drums for local band Motel Soap. The article shows how the ingenuity of his father and grandfather helped him develop his talents.

Our Rowan Original this month is the delightful Kay (Goodman) Wilson. At 83, she can outwalk most of us. Her laugh is contagious, especially the rare laugh that has her throw her head back and laugh to the sky. She tells us about traveling to California as a young college grad and visiting the Seattle World’s Fair “while we were in the neighborhood.” She tells about setting the back yard on fire as a child and about her love affair with her work — renting

homes to “my tenants.” She’s a lifelong member of St. John’s and still sits in the balcony where she sat as a teen.

“If all the Goodmans were to die,” she says, “I’d still always return to Salisbury. Salisbury is my family.”

Our Bookish this month comes from Brenda Zimmerman, who reviews The Seven Sister Series by Lucinda Riley. It’s a set of eight books about seven adopted sisters who solve a mystery to learn their unusual family histories. Zimmerman says she couldn’t put the books down! Netflix is developing a series based on the books.

*How do you like to go up in a swing,  
Up in the air so blue?  
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing  
Ever a child can do!*

*Up in the air and over the wall,  
Till I can see so wide,  
Rivers and trees and cattle and all  
Over the countryside—*

*Till I look down on the garden green,  
Down on the roof so brown—  
Up in the air I go flying again,  
Up in the air and down!*

— Robert Louis Stevenson

*Maggie*

— Maggie Blackwell  
Editor, Salisbury the Magazine



# The Seven Sisters Series

What better way to spend a nippy evening than curled up in a warm nest and read a good book...or two...or eight!

When a wealthy global shipping magnate dies unexpectedly and is buried at sea without any of his family nearby, his daughters gather at their childhood home, Atlantis, to grieve. It is during this time together that they are each given a clue to assist in the discovery of their individual origin stories. The girls were all adopted as infants over a long period of time by their beloved “Pa Salt.” He had built a perfect home for them on an island at the edge of Lake Geneva. The rarely saw their father but were cared for by a guardian, Marina, and a devoted boat skipper, Christian.

As directed posthumously by a letter from Pa Salt, each young woman finds an individual clue in the armillary sphere in the lush gardens of their home. The sphere is a replica of an ancient tool used to study the heavens at a time when man thought Earth was the center of the universe. The significance of this tool for Pa Salt’s purpose is that he named each of the girls after the Seven Sisters of the star system Pleiades: Maia, Alcyone (Ally), Celeno (CeCe), Asterope (Star), Electra, and Taygate (Tiggy). If you know your constellations, or if you were counting, you notice Merope is missing!

Their surname, D’pliese, is an anagram

of “Pleiades.” Pa Salt’s name is also an anagram: using the “P” from Pleione, the mother of the mythical daughters of Atlas; and “Atlas,” the Titan who held the world on his shoulders.

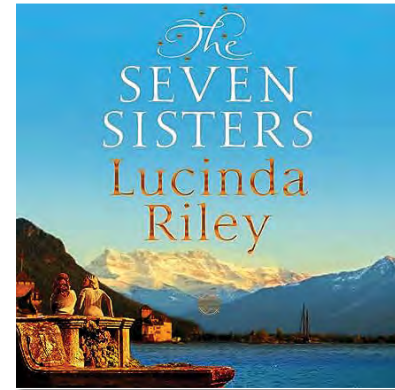
It is not necessary to know a lot about the traits of Greek gods and muses to enjoy the books, but many primary characters’ personalities are drawn from them. Unlike those ancients, the women in the books are traveling earthly realms investigating interesting stories and legends that relate specifically

to how they came to be adopted: the actual circumstances that brought them to Pa Salt’s castle to be brought up in a life of privilege.

As the reader follows each sister’s search for her past, he travels around the world to Australia, Spain, Kenya, England and other countries. One sister finds out that her ancestors helped design and build Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro. Another sister discovers her ancestry including aboriginal artists, leading

her to understand her own career as an artist. One sister goes to Alhambra and discovers that she is a descendant of gypsies. Each sister has a unique background revealed one book at a time.

The final book in the series reveals the life of Pa Salt and why he adopted each child. In this book the seven sisters (and their children) find out about the life of their often absent, always elusive father as well as their missing sister. It should be noted that this final book was completed by Riley’s son



Harry Whitaker. He and his mom had done extensive work on the book together. Riley passed away after a two-year battle with cancer before she was able to complete the book on her own.

The books are full of likeable characters, mysteries solved and beautiful imagery. This around-the-world trip may take more than 80 days since each book is 650+ pages.

The eight books in order are as follows: The Seven Sisters (2014); The Storm Sister (2015); The Shadow Sister (2016); The Pearl Sister (2017); The Moon Sister (2018); The Sun Sister (2019); The Missing Sister (2021); and Atlas: The Story of Pa Salt (2023). All are available wherever you purchase books.

The late Lucinda Riley is a globally known writer of fiction. Her extensive research on subject matter and chosen locations for her books gives them an all-encompassing feeling of authenticity. Other popular books include *The Light Behind the Window*, *The Angel and the Girl on the Cliff* **S**

**Note:** *Netflix is currently developing a series based on the books.*



by  
BRENDA  
ZIMMERMAN

**THROUGH THE LENS** by Maya Maxwell



Maya Maxwell captured a double rainbow over a farm in eastern Rowan County.

To submit a photo for Through the Lens, send a high-resolution photo to [andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com](mailto:andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com). Vertical orientation is required.

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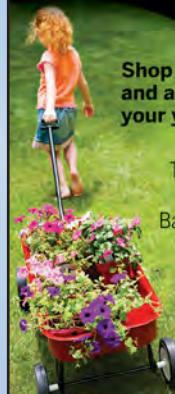


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**K**ay Wilson is 83 years old but any 50-year-old would have a challenge keeping up with her. Her “can-do” spirit and her work ethic have kept her fit and trim. She stands a proud five feet, one inch tall and laughs that sometimes she must wait in the grocery store for someone to happen by, to reach the top shelf for her.

Laughing is what she does best, which may be why she has steadfast friends for life.

She grew up in the house where she was born and lives there today, arguably the best-maintained home in Fulton Heights. She loves the neighborhood and has many happy memories of growing up there.

Her backyard was a kids’ paradise, with Mother’s rose garden and vegetable garden, a grape arbor, a basketball goal and a tree she used to climb up to the roof of the chicken house.

She has a good laugh as she recalls the time she accidentally set the yard on fire. She and a neighbor had been lighting matches, throwing them on the grass and stomping out the little fires — until one became too large to stomp out. The girls ran to the spigot and tried to fill a Coke bottle, but the five ounces of water was not enough. Fortunately, the housekeeper had seen the whole thing through the kitchen window and called the fire department. Kay “cried her eyes out.”

“Mother never said a word about it,” she remembers.

The fire were at least 20 kids about her age on the block, she says, and they played hard every day, with her home as “the hub.” They dug in the creek where Centennial Park is today. They roller-skated to uptown or took the bus.

Once on the way to dance class uptown, they stopped at Foil’s grocer on South Fulton and she invited all her friends to get candy on Mother’s credit account. “I really thought, ‘charge it’ meant it was free,” she says today. Mother did say a little something to her when the bill came that month.

“We never wanted to go on vacation,” she says, “because being home was so much fun.”

As recently as 10 years ago, she hosted reunion parties in her backyard for all her childhood chums from Fulton Heights. Today, she says, there aren’t enough of them remaining to have



# Life of adventure

*At 83, Kay Wilson has no plans to slow down*

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**

a party. And as beautiful as her backyard is, it's not friendly for walkers or wheelchairs.

She was a Goodman, of Goodman's Lumber, with her grandfather, then her dad at the helm. Her grandfather, Mr. E.A. Goodman, anagrammed most of his name to create the name of the Eaman Park neighborhood and Eaman Park Pool. He owned much of the land from Jake Alexander Boulevard (which wasn't there yet) to the west, to Thomas Street to the east. He also developed the area around Goodman Lumber: Lloyd Street, Myron Street.

Her extensive collection of scrapbooks shows her mother and all the sisters-in-law (Kay's aunts) at their own sewing club, family parties and pictures of Kay and her childhood friends playing in the expansive backyard.

A news article speaks of E. A. Goodman (Ampaw to the family) donating six-and-a-half acres to Boyden school for the gym, football field and parking lot "in hopes that our youth will enjoy recreation and a healthy life." Kay laughs as she recalls Ampaw just wanted the students to stop parking in front of his rental units. For years, as Ampaw sped through the street between Boyden and the gym, students would holler, "Watch out for Ampaw!" never knowing who he was or what Ampaw meant.

Kay attended Wiley School, Boyden High and Duke University, earning her degree in education. At Boyden, she was the first female president of the high school, besting George Knox, the star quarterback. As president, she attended Salisbury Rotary Club; they'd never hosted a young lady before. She was also a cheerleader and an honor student.

She says she'd love to go back to Duke — she feels she went through with all her senses off — and graduated feeling more like a part of Chapel Hill than Duke.

As president of her sorority, she had the opportunity to go to Pasadena. While she was there, her friend Bob said, "Well, you can't go home now; you have to see California."

"But first there was a party in Hawaii," she says, "then I stayed with a girlfriend's family for a week. We went to the Hollywood Bowl, the Brown Derby — we wine and dined! I came



home and told mama and daddy I had met the man I was going to marry. They went out there with me and I realized I wasn't in love with Bob. I was in love with California!"

After graduation, she asked friend Jay Farrington and two other girls to go to California with her. They drove across Colorado and Montana and dropped in on the World's Fair in Seattle while they were "in the neighborhood." In San Diego, the other girls got on the plane to return home. Kay set up an apartment and began teaching sixth grade. Her roommate worked as a carhop at a drive-in restaurant.

Are you getting an idea of the kind of adventurous gem she is?

Kay met future husband Norde on the beach in San Diego. "I thought he was arrogant," she says, her eyes sparkling with the memory. "And he thought I was a naïve Southern girl."

Her friends organized a trip to Disneyland and invited Norde to come along. When Kay returned to California from her Christmas trip, Norde was there to pick her up, saying, "I didn't think a lady should be out here alone."

They married and returned to Salisbury within three years.

Kay remembers with delight those teachers who were her colleagues at Knox Middle School: Hazel Goodman, Dot Garrison, Oliver Scott, Bronnie Hall, Esther Marioneaux, Shirley Moss, Karen Wood, Karen Young, Pat McGuire — and "the best principal Knox ever had," Bill Robinson. She says he told students, "You are me and I am you."

She continues today to have regular lunches with Mary Frances Edens and Margaret Basinger, more colleagues from those days.

Knox Middle School is so much in her heart that she went by just a few weeks ago, before demolition, and walked around the empty hallways, finding "her" room and conjuring memories of those days. When we expressed shock that she went in, she responded with, "Well? The doors were wide open."

She's been a member of St. John's since birth and still invites non-member friends to various events at the church, offering to pick them up if they'd like.


Ampaw left all his properties to the various Goodman families in his will. Kay received the apartments on South Ellis that face Salisbury High, as well as the other properties on that block, both sides and on Caldwell Street. She also owns properties on the South Fulton side.

Ampaw believed in sleeping in cold bedrooms, so there were no heaters in the apartment bedrooms. Kay added heat when she received the properties. Each apartment has a screened-in back porch so the tenants could enjoy fresh air.

Sons David and Gray are involved in the property management today but Kay is still quite involved. Her mobile phone rings nonstop. She has a wonderful cleaning lady but continues to clean the properties herself. You can often see her outside, picking up litter. Daughter Katie is married to popular author John Hart.

So, at 83 years old, how does she stay so young? She walks unaided with a quick gait, has retained her great sense of humor and stays quite busy. She shrugs off the question, saying she just doesn't think about it. She does acknowledge that going up and down the stairs or cleaning on her hands and knees at the apartments has kept her pretty mobile.

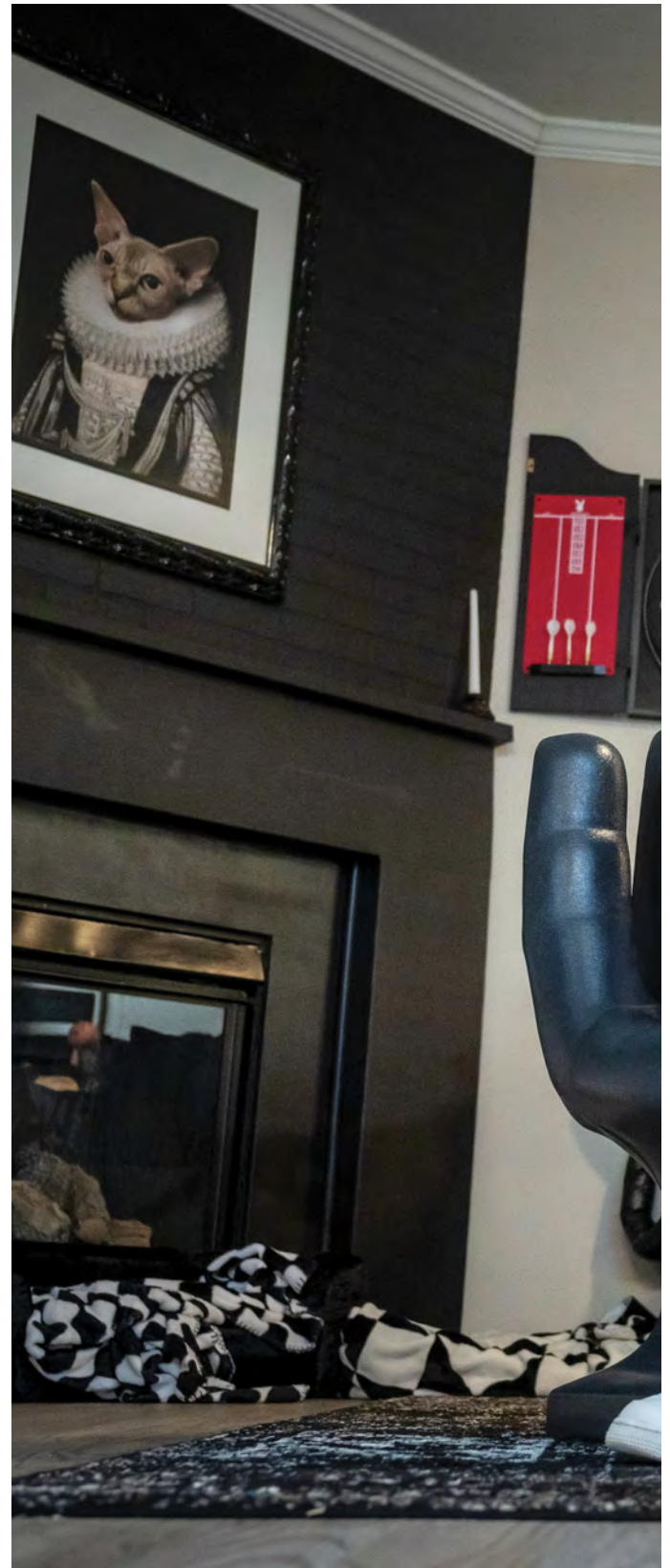
Her sons say she needs to take lunch with friends and play cards. "I'm not ready," she says. "I'm not going to let them take it all. My tenants are a lot of my social life. I have good people. I just like getting into a dirty apartment and fixin' it. It's fun — it's not like work."

"I always felt if all the Goodmans were wiped out, if my family were gone, I would still come back to Salisbury," she says. "Salisbury is my family." 



**Left:**  
Hundreds of  
keyboard keys  
make up a corset  
that was created  
for a customer.

**Right:** Paige  
Sechrist and  
Andrew Burgess  
with their cat,  
Remi, at their  
home in Concord.  
They use upcycled  
clothes, quilts  
and materials to  
create one-of-  
a-kind clothing  
that is garnering  
international  
attention.



# Crafting dreams

*Fashion entrepreneurism meets the digital age*

WRITTEN BY ANDIE FOLEY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS





Paige's business, RemyGirl Reworks, creates custom corsets, including one made with hundreds of keyboard keys, meticulously drilled, then attached.



Andrew prepares to cut out fabric in his workspace at their home in Concord.





For the generations born before the age of the internet, it's often far too easy to typecast the digital era and its young adult inhabitants. We see their faces hidden behind screens, their focus on the faraway and intangible as they exist largely disconnected from reality.

Yet, just inside of Charlotte, 2018 West Rowan High School alumni Andrew Burgess and his Floridian girlfriend Paige Sechrist are living lives in direct opposition to this trend. In fact, the young entrepreneurs' stories showcase the unlimited, untapped potential offered through the World Wide Web and its global flattening.

Together, the pair have taken the world of fashion upcycling and sustainability by storm. Their stories were shaped as virtual inspiration turned to action, and, to date, the couple has amassed a collective 750,000+ followers on TikTok through their unconventional takes on repurposing. To them, anything can be a source of inspiration.

Burgess, for example, often finds inspiration away from the clothing aisles. He finds it, instead, in quilts.

### ***THRIFTED BEGINNINGS: A STITCH IN TIME***

Burgess says his venture into fashion design was a slow evolution.



**A pair of Andrew's patchwork jeans rests on the table.**

"Once I got to high school, around freshman or sophomore year, I started being more aware of what I was wearing," he said. "I wanted to dress cool, so then I started thrifting. Not only was it cheap, it was just a fun hobby."

But, as he continued to scroll his Instagram and Twitter feeds, he realized he wanted something more.

"I followed some designers that were upcycling already," Burgess said. "They were doing cool little projects and it just inspired me. Th

more I got into fashion and just dressing nice, the more I wanted pieces or clothes that nobody else had. So, I began to start customizing my own."

Initially, Burgess said these customizations came in the form of rudimentary, hand-sewn patches. Trial and error, coupled with the guidance of YouTube tutorial videos, helped advance his skills.

And, because he'd seen the path to success modeled time and time again through social



Andrew's business, Vivid Visions, recently created a capsule collection of colorful pants for Puma.



media, he knew the next steps necessary toward reaching an end goal of starting a clothing brand. He had to start posting his designs.

"You have to be vulnerable at first. Obviously, posting what you want to do with zero followers...you're putting yourself out there a lot at the beginning when you have zero platform," Burgess said. "But I knew it was what I wanted to do."

### ***A PASTIME TURNED ONLINE PRESENCE***

When it comes to Sechrist, crafting wasn't something she stumbled into – it was innate.

"My mom knows how to do everything," she said. "I just grew up sewing. Clothing for me was kind of an afterthought."

It started with repairing her own clothes. Then, at Florida State University, she started creating custom game-day apparel.

When COVID took her and her classmates

away from in-person classes, she started passing the time in a familiar way: in thrift stores. Sechrist was a business major in school, and was growing increasingly aware of the importance of sustainability and the negative impacts of fast fashion.

"So much of what's being donated is just thrown away," she said. "It's in stages -- it goes to Goodwill, then it goes to the bins, then it gets shipped off somewhere and it gets burned."

Looking to break this cycle, as well as fill the remaining hours of her days during COVID's lockdown, Sechrist began reworking her find and sharing the results. The positive response from viewers ignited the idea of sharing her skills through tutorials.

"I'll rework stuff, but it's usually to teach other people how to make their own stuff" she said. "For me, my inspiration behind everything is really just the environment and how fast fashion is affecting everything. I'd rather teach people how to upcycle their own clothes instead of selling

the things I make.”

### **BRINGING IT TOGETHER**

Growth was slow at first, Burgess said. But, when TikTok took off in 2019, so did the pair’s online presence.

“I heard of a couple people that went to high school with me that had had a couple random videos go viral,” Burgess said. “It wasn’t necessarily like they were a business or anything, but it made me think: if they can do it, so can I.”

Burgess’ initial source materials for his upcycled creations were woven tapestry blankets. But when he happened upon a quilt and shared its transformation into a hoodie, he finally found true virality.

“I like quilts because they are all individual pieces of fabric sewn together, which is a very intricate and time-consuming process,” Burgess said. “Quilts in themselves have a whole other world and community, which is obviously centered more towards the older crowd. This is kind of taking that and blending it with fashion and the younger generation.”

Burgess said he’s mostly gotten support from the quilting community, though there have been some who question his decision to cut into such intricate work.

The experience helped him come upon his eventual slogan for his own brand: “Where the past meets the future.”

Sechrist’s work, while less controversial, is still equally sentimental. She breathes new life into treasured items with high emotional value, turning concert tees and even torn sweatpants into stylish corsets.

It was this shared dedication to unconventional mediums that drew the pair toward one another. Their relationship bloomed the way many do in the digital age: as the two followed each other on all their respective social media platforms.

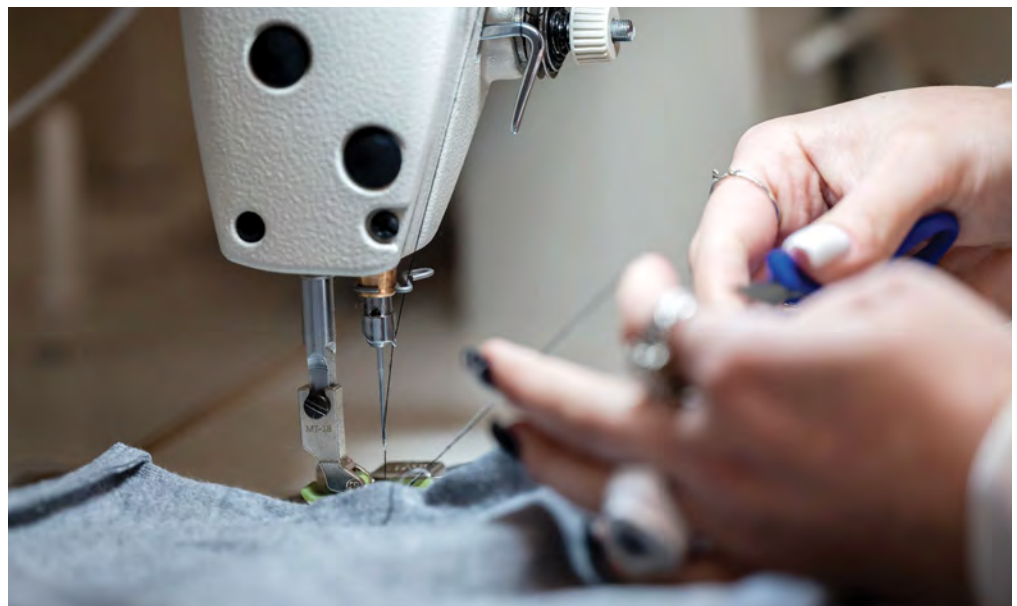
In the end, it was Sechrist who made the first move, reaching out through direct message.

“There’s just not a lot of guys who do fashion design and stuff. It’s mostly girls. And-- he was cute,” she said with a laugh.

The pair will celebrate three years together in April.



Andrew prepares to cut out fabric in his workspace.





Andrew shows a vest made for a Twix advertisement.

### ***BUILDING A BRAND***

Today, both Burgess and Sechrist each have their own online businesses: Remygirl Reworks and Vivid Visions, respectively. Both offer one-of-a-kind creations composed of their thrifted finds – though they both take custom orders to rework a client’s already-owned items.

Their designs can be seen on the likes of Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics, rapper A Boogie wit da Hoodie, and model Ana Montana – who happens to have a tie to North Carolina through her Charlotte Hornets boyfriend, LaMelo Ball.

Though their creations currently sell for anywhere between \$55 to \$350, the most profits are still found through social media, Sechrist said.

“For me, I wouldn’t be able to do this if it wasn’t for the social media part because that’s where you make the most money for your time,” she said.

The key, they said, is in networking. Connections they’ve made through their platform have led to opportunities across the United States and beyond. They’ve had pop-up venues in New

York and participated on the competition show “Upcycle Nation.”

In particular, the pair has found financial success through a series of brand deals dating as far back as 2020. Burgess said these collaborations were an unforeseen benefit to building a following.

To date, the pair have worked with over 25 different brands – ranging from fashion choices like Levi’s, Dickey’s and Jordan or leftfield household names like Sprite, Twix, and Chips Ahoy, to name a few.

Most recently, Burgess teamed up with Puma, highlighting the brand’s new RE-Fibre, a material created through 100% recycled polyester clothing. The collaboration included tours through the company’s many production facilities overseas, as well as what he calls a “capsule collection” made from the sustainable fabric.

“It’s been really awesome,” he said. “I got to travel a lot with them, go to Germany, London and Turkey. It’s been a lot of work, but it’s been incredibly rewarding too.”

Rather than finding the brand deals and collaborations stifling, Sechrist said they offer a welcome challenge.

“I wouldn’t usually make a cookie bag,” she said. “I made a corset out of trash for a photoshoot. I wouldn’t generally do that on my own. It really tests your abilities.”

Burgess agreed.

“I love when they give you creative freedom,” he said. “It only gets complicated when they have a set brief or they’re overly fixated on one thing. It’s tough when I, the creator, know they’re trying to target Gen Z and I find myself thinking ‘this is not going to go well.’”

### ***ADVICE FOR THE UP-AND-COMING***

For aspiring artists and creators looking to navigate the competitive world of fashion and design, Burgess and Sechrist’s advice comes down to one simple message: Know your worth.

“You kind of have to set the tone,” Burgess



Coats and hoodies hang on the rack.

said. “Even when you’re starting out, just because you don’t have a following you don’t want to trap yourself. You don’t want to make it too cheap, but obviously you can’t charge super expensive either.”

Sechrist explained: “I’ve seen some people selling reworked clothes and I think, ‘Good

for them for getting themselves out there,’ But they’ll be charging just as much as me or Andrew would and it’s not nearly the quality.”

“You have to be self-aware of where your skill level is,” Burgess said.

But, he said, it’s important not to get caught up in thinking a career in fashion requires in-

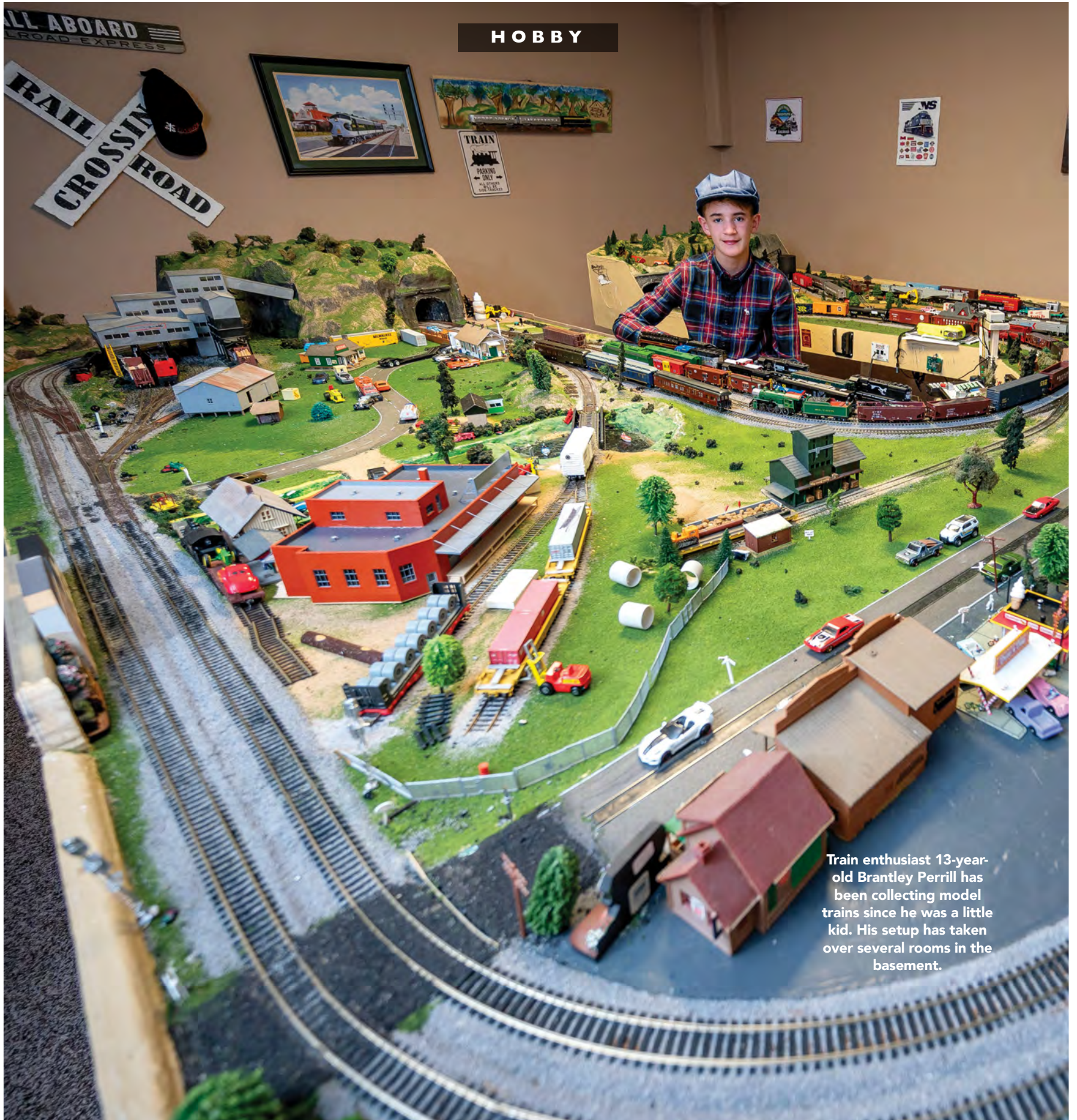
tense training or a specific, prestigious school. He’s had neither, he said.

“Just consistency, trial and error, and social media is your friend for growing a platform. It’s a tool,” he said. “As many downsides are there are, if you use it the right way, it’s changed so many people’s lives.” **S**



Paige holds bag she created for a cookie company promotion.

HOBBY



Train enthusiast 13-year-old Brantley Perrill has been collecting model trains since he was a little kid. His setup has taken over several rooms in the basement.



A streetcar named Desire sits idle along the tracks.

# All aboard

*Teenage train enthusiast's collection  
a sight to behold*

WRITTEN BY **SYDNEY SMITH HAMRICK**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**



Engine No. 9739 makes its way around the track.

If you venture into the basement of Brantley Perrill's home, prepare yourself to see a multi-room train collection reflecting thousands of hours' worth of hard work, dedication and patience. Brantley, a 13-year-old Rowan County seventh grader, has been a massive train enthusiast his entire life, and his impressive model train setups are mesmerizing.

"It all started with a pink blanket," explained Brantley. When he was a baby, barely able to even hold up his head, he was given a blanket covered in a train motif for Christmas. Trains have always held a special place in Brantley's life, starting with that simple blanket and blooming from there. As he grew older, his interest in trains took hold with Lego brand locomotive sets; he would spend hours deconstructing them and then rebuilding them into new track configurations. His great uncle James Wagner, another lifelong model train enthusiast, recalled the excitement the two of them would share whenever it was time to build another train set.

"Getting to share this interest with him has been a sure joy," James Wagner fondly recalls of those early years. The pair enjoyed pouring



out buckets and buckets of Lego pieces, sorting them, and then building new creations together. As Brantley matured (and started caring more about building train setups rather than breaking them all apart, James Wagner recalled with a laugh), he graduated from Legos to the real

deal — his first model train table, complete with train cars, hand-painted details and electrical capabilities.

The amount of detail included throughout Brantley's entire setup is intriguing. If you get eye-level with the table, you can see little details





From left: Norfolk & Western Class J 611 steam locomotive. Brantley and his grandfather rode the actual train from Spencer to Roanoke; an engine from Amtrak's Piedmont line that makes stops at Salisbury Station; Southern Railway's No. 2920.

that really bring the scene to life, such as tiny riders hiding inside train cars and shingles atop the trackside buildings. Since receiving this first table, Brantley has vastly expanded his setup to include even more features, including tracks that operate on a set schedule and actual steam-producing engines. His collection quickly evolved from a single table as he and his great uncle continued to add more table space for bigger tracks and more trains.

“One of my favorite pieces in my collection is the Amtrak Piedmont,” Brantley explains as he holds up the train car. It’s a favorite because the actual Amtrak Piedmont often runs through Salisbury Station. His collection currently contains over 700 individual train cars. Some pieces are special gifts from relatives; others were sourced from careful internet and train shop searches. The most expensive piece in his collection cost an estimated \$900, in part because of its rarity and also in part because of repairs needed to get the train in working order again.

Brantley’s grandfather is another great source



of inspiration for his lifelong passion for trains. Chris Wagner was a machinist at Rowan Precision Machining, Inc. in Granite Quarry prior to his retirement. During his time at Rowan Precision, Chris Wagner was offered a unique opportunity when the company was tasked with resurfacing pistons for the restoration of the Norfolk

& Western Class J 611 steam locomotive.

All people who helped with the restoration project were invited to ride the finished 611 from Spencer to Roanoke, Virginia, where the train was set to permanently reside on display. Chris Wagner and Brantley were able to experience this once-in-a-lifetime ride together, and Brantley was the only youth passenger permitted on this expedition. Because the train was intended to become a display piece after the restoration, it rarely sees any track time. The journey from Spencer to Roanoke was one of the last major trips the 611 would have taken, and Brantley and his grandfather were able to experience it together. “It was so special to see the project we got to help with happen,” explained Brantley as he recalled the experience he shared with his grandfather.

The Roanoke journey hasn’t been the only time Brantley experienced an opportunity to see these engines operating firsthand. Brantley also enjoys taking his interest “on the road” regularly by going to see different trains in person. He and



his father try to catch train sightings whenever they can, and their travels to see certain engines in action have taken them all over the state of North Carolina. One of their most dedicated excursions involved driving to Hamlet, North Carolina at 3:30 in the morning to see the Amtrak Crescent ride through. These trips have resulted in quite a few meetings with fellow train enthusiasts and train personnel themselves. It isn't unusual for a conductor to toss a patch or pin to Brantley and his father out the window as they pass through a station. In fact, Brantley keeps a special display box packed with a variety of pins and patches he's received from various stations, conductors and other folks he's met on the road.

Annette Gurley, Brantley's mother, recalled a time when he tearfully begged her to go see the Southern Railway 1401 steam locomotive, currently housed in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, due to rumors of it possibly being scrapped. "He was determined to see it for himself, before anything could happen to it," she recalled. Fortunately, the rumors weren't true and the locomotive still sits on display in the museum, but Gurley recalled the visit to the Smithsonian to see it as a special moment that really highlighted the intensity of her son's pas-

*Annette Gurley supports her son's interests 100% — "except for his idea about knocking a hole in our basement wall to make more room for his model setup," she jokes.*



**Clockwise from top left:** Brantley holds a commemorative pin he received after a ride on the Steam engine No. 611; smoke rises out of Engine No. 722 as it makes its way around the village; Brantley runs the trains with a wireless controller; collectible engines sit in their protective case.





sion.

Gurley supports her son's interests 100% — “except for his idea about knocking a hole in our basement wall to make more room for his model setup,” she jokes. Though her son is passionate about lots of other things such as basketball and spending time with friends, his greatest passion is learning everything he can about trains, building his models and spending time with the people in his life who share the same interests. Gurley is thankful for his commitment and passion to model trains because it challenges him to continuously learn and build strong bonds with his family.

When asked for advice about how to get started with collecting model trains, Brantley suggests starting small, though he warns that “starting small” won't stay very small for long. “It is so easy to get sucked into it,” he explains. “The e is always something new to add, something that needs to be fi ed, something you can do to make your train setup even better. But the most important thing is to have fun with it.”

This sentiment is evidenced by Brantley's vast collection, which all grew directly from the very first setup he was gifted by his great uncle. Using on-line resources such as YouTube videos and the valuable knowledge gained from working alongside his great uncle, Brantley was able to learn how to do the electrical work, repairs, cleaning and maintenance required to expand his collection and keep all its parts running smoothly himself. He also credits local train shops, such as Chuck's Trains & Hobby Depot in Landis and Little Choo Choo Shop in Spencer, as being invaluable sources of





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information. Over the years, he's built relationships with the staff in both stores and sourced many pieces for his collection from them.

Some of the best experiences Brantley has con-

cerning model trains involve the relationships he's built along the way. "The people who helped me make this all possible and put their time into it are really important to me," he explains. From

his father, his grandfather, his great uncle, other collectors and actual train conductors, Brantley credits the growth of his collection as well as his knowledge to them all. **S**



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Grey Medinger sits in a room filled with memorabilia he has collected over his 30-year military career in the Marines.





# FLYING

*the commander-in-chief*

Retired colonel looks back on piloting Marine One helicopters that escorted presidents

WRITTEN BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS



Grey and Candy Medinger pose for a photo in their Spencer home.

“It was an honor to be chosen to fly the presidents — there’s no question. I knew, unfortunately, that I would be gone from the family for much of the time. But all in all, it was definitely a good experience”

That’s Grey Medinger, who grew up in Spencer and has returned for his retirement years. In his role as Marine helicopter pilot, he flew Presidents Carter, Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush.

He shows us around his well-maintained ranch home on a hill, pointing out invitations to the Christmas Tree lighting at the White House, models of helicopters and pictures of his children Scarlett and Bradley.

Medinger attended North Rowan High School and graduated from East Carolina University. His college years were busy; he played football, married in 1967, joined the Marines in 1968 and graduated in 1969. After college, he went to Officer Candidate School at Quantico Air Force Base in Northern Virginia. His wife, Candy, stayed with her parents while he went to flight school in Mineral Wells, Texas. On graduation, he went to Savannah to complete his instruction.

“Then” he says with a bit of irony, “I went to New River, North Carolina, to learn to be a Marine.”

In August of 1970, Medinger received orders to Vietnam. Their baby Scarlett was only six weeks old. Candy and the baby stayed in their home on North Main Street, near her parents on Eleventh Street.

Medinger arrived in Vietnam in September and his friend from flight school, Frank, joined him there in January. Frank



Medinger points to a book drawing portraying the helicopter he flew in Vietnam with the HMM-262 Squadron.

was flying 53s. The “Sea Stallion” CH53 is a heavy lift military transport helicopter. Medinger was flying the HMM262 “Flying Tiger,” a medium Marine helicopter. About two weeks after Frank’s arrival, he confided to Medinger, “I don’t want to be here. I have an awful feeling.” They talked for about an hour, Medinger encouraging him, “Just do your mission and you’ll be fine.” They prayed together.

Both pilots had early missions the next morning and had to get to bed. Next morning, Medinger heard a call: “53 down.” “Frank was on that one,” Medinger recalls. “He knew.”

After Vietnam, Medinger had assignments in New River and then Pensacola, where he served as a flight instructor for four years. His commanding officer selected eight men to go with him to serve at HMX, “Marine Helicopter One Expedition,” the Marine helicopter squadron responsible for the transporting the president, vice president and other state officials. Medinger was among the eight men selected. He served in that capacity from 1978 through 1982.

### ***FLYING PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER***

He remembers flying President Jimmy Carter to meet friends for fishing in Georgia. “The weather was so bad,” he remembers, “they couldn’t drive it; it was raining terribly.”

The group were fishing in a creek south of Atlanta. Medinger served as co-pilot on the trip. He and the pilot had flown the



Medinger's pilot's helmet rests with other Marine memorabilia.



route the day before to identify landmarks along the route.

On the day of the flight, they told the president he shouldn't be flying but he was anxious to go.

**Medinger's pilot's jacket hangs on a door at his home.**

Always friendly with staff, President Carter sat in the jump seat during the flight and chatted with the pilots. The pilots, however, were navigating from their memory of the day before, with the ground obscured by pelting rain. The colonel was getting more and more irritated with the chatter and couldn't concentrate. Finally, he turned to the president and said, "Sir, we have a job here to get you to your zone."

President Carter understood. "You do your thing," he said, and settled back into his seat. Soon familiar landmarks appeared and the pilot began to relax. On landing, President Carter turned to the pilots and said, "You did a great job. I wasn't sure we were going to find it"

"Neither was I," replied the colonel.

### ***PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN***

Shortly after the fishing trip, Medinger was called in to learn he was being made command pilot. Carter was voted out and Reagan was elected. Two crews were sent to the president-elect's ranch in California between the election in November and the Inauguration in January. Medinger says Reagan was quite nice, down to earth

The President's House, Washington is a watercolor which is part of the permanent collection of The White House and hangs in the Lincoln Bedroom.



The President's House, Washington

by Lefevre Craystone 1860

A signed gift from President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalyn, hangs on a wall at the Medinger house.



Jimmy Carter Rosalyn Carter



Medinger looks over his pilot's logbook from the Vietnam war.

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and often rode his horse up to them to talk.

Medinger took a trip during Reagan's presidency when it turned out the helicopters were not needed. Anwar Sadat was killed in 1981, and two helicopter crews were sent over for the funeral. "We had quarters in the Hilton," Medinger says, "but I didn't get to spend one minute there." Instead, they slept in the hangars. They observed horse-drawn carts in Cairo picking bodies out of the street every morning. "The flies were terrible," he notes.

One busy trip saw five helicopter crews in five locations for President Reagan: Greece, Rome, Berlin, London and Sweden. "That's when he made the famous speech saying, 'Mr. Gorbachev, tear this wall down.'"

### ***LIFE AFTER THE PRESIDENTS***

After his HMX assignment, Medinger toured Okinawa, then spent 1984-1989 in Hawaii, where he served as commanding officer of HMM262, and later, commanding officer of station operation and engineering. It's during this conversation that Medinger's wife, Candy, gets into the conversation. They had quite a strong wives' group in Hawaii, often driving to movie or TV sets to watch filming. In 1987, Medinger ran the Honolulu marathon.

When they returned to Quantico, Medinger was promoted to colonel and developed all training standards for the Marine Corps. From there, they went to Cherry Point, where he was director of facilities.



A handmade plaque honors Medinger and his Medium Marine Helicopter Squadron HMM-262.

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While stationed in Hawaii, the Medingers both ran and finished the 1987 Honolulu Marathon.

On their 25th anniversary, Medinger went for a training swim to re-qualify for piloting. When he came home, his chest was hurting. They drove to the hospital at Cherry Point, where he was flown to Portsmouth to Bethesda. He had a triple bypass.

Having had the heart attack, he could no longer pilot. From 1992 to 1999, he had a desk job as director of facilities at Cherry Point. After retirement from the Marine Corps, he worked for Progress Energy, then finally retired again to play golf.

### FLYING PRESIDENTS

“Flying presidents is not that nerve-wracking because you’ve done it many times in practice. Our heli’s are well-cared for and we have rehearsed so much,” Medinger says.

“You don’t get to fly a president unless you are good. We had confidence; we had two capable pilots. Only seven of 60 pilots were qualified to fly presidents. You felt good about doing your job!”

“There were times when we would fly press,” he says. “We were at Quantico in the winter and President Reagan had come down to go horseback riding. Sam Donaldson was on one of the 53s — all the press was on there. Well, Sam told the crew chief to turn the damned heat up. So, the chief comes to the pilot and says, ‘Sir, Sam Donaldson wants the heat up.’ The pilot said,



‘You tell him the heater is broken.’ After they all unloaded, the crew chief said, ‘Can we turn the heat back on now?’”

It’s one of the few times Medinger breaks out in a laugh — a good, loud guffa. He’s all the things you’d imagine a retired pilot to be: slen-

der, well-groomed, meticulously dressed and disciplined in all he says. He appears much younger than his chronological age.

“I loved flying the presidents but I loved being a Marine more. Thirty years of my life, and I’d do it all again in a heartbeat. I have no regrets.” **S**









Artist, musician and humanitarian Carlton Jackson, reminisces about his life growing up in Salisbury.

# *man of* MANY TALENTS

Carlton Jackson flourishes as an engineer,  
artist and musician

WRITTEN BY **MAGGIE BLACKWELL** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **SEAN MEYERS**

**C**arlton Jackson is a bit of a Renaissance man. He's an engineer, managing lighting in the Piedmont and Pee Dee regions of the state for Duke Energy; he's an artist; he's the percussionist for a local band.

He started painting seriously as an adult with five kids at home.

"One Saturday I was flipping through channels and Bill Alexander did wet-on-wet painting. In 22 minutes, he did a complete landscape. I went to Walmart and bought myself a basic acrylic paint set and a couple of housepaint brushes. I used a kitchen knife for a pallet knife."

He mentions that his dad always said this is not a world of handouts: you must be willing to work hard to get what you want.

His grandfather worked at Isenhour Brick, loading bricks. It was hot, heavy work. He did yardwork on the side and got up early on Sunday to load coal into the boiler so the church could be warm in time for the sermon.

With his large family, Jackson had to be just as frugal as his dad and grandpa. He cut a shipping box with a smooth interior to use as the canvas for his first painting, a mountain scene. He continued to watch Bill Alexander. "It was what I knew I was going to do on Saturday."



Carlton's first water color was inspired from watching Bill Alexander shows on PBS.



Jackson shows his set of colored pencils.

He made a relationship with Ridenhour Lumber and got castoff molding bits from them to make his own frames. Rhonda of Rhonda's Picture Place would save mats for him that had been cut to the wrong size.

Today his kids are grown with children of their own and he's still painting. After acrylic he went to watercolor. He tried oil briefly but did not love it. He continues to create with acrylic, watercolor, graphite and colored pencils. He smiles as he thinks about his media. "This week I love steak; next week I might love chicken."

His subjects are either entirely in his head or photographs that "speak" to him — although he never copies a photograph exactly out of respect for the photographer.

His portrait of a railroad man was a photo in a pamphlet he received. "It captivated me," he says, "because he was in a crowd, looking off in the distance, thinking about something."

Jackson recently drew an iris with colored pencils.





Jackson's portrait of a railroad man.



Another favorite is his portrait of Mother Teresa. He's been enjoying colored pencil and a recently drew an iris.

One might think art by an engineer would be stilted, formulaic — but that's not the case. His train man's eyes say something to you. The iris could easily be real. The folds in Mother Teresa's habit fl w.

He says most everything is done in one sitting, but portraits take 40 to 50 hours.

When he was a young boy, his uncle taught him to play drums on pots and pans, promising when he showed some promise, a drum could come his way. Jackson practiced and practiced on the pots and pans and eventually got that drum. Today he has many and often plays in the basement, living room or den. Or in the car, on the steering wheel. "I drive my wife crazy," he rues.

He played percussion in a high school band and has played off and on until he started playing in earnest for The Brubakers about 30 years ago. He's played for Motel Soap for about 10 years.

Yet he still presses his blue jeans and makes sure his shoes are shined properly.





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With all he does, he insists the best thing that ever happened to him was meeting his wife. “Everything I’ve ever accomplished is due to her.” They’ve been married 50 years.

As to his real job, he insists he doesn’t consider it work.

“You go to a field where they’re going to build a shopping center and you know you have to deliver electricity to each of those components in the center. My first project was River Road Shopping Center in Mooresville. The senior engineer handed me a big roll of blueprints. Holy smokes! I had to strategically figure out how we are going to deliver to each building. Those aspects, learning the math, transformer conversions, 400hp converted to kilowatts...”

He catches his breath. “I’ve been with Duke 43 years and I’ll consider retirement when it starts to feel like work.” 



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Jackson's portrait of Mother Teresa.





Terri Myers socializes



Terry and Eunice Holt



Evin Burlison, Charlie Seegel, James and Hilda Miller

# Rowan History Museum honors board president

Rowan History Museum honored board president Terry Holt at its annual meeting.

Holt was a long-time, highly revered history teacher in Rowan County middle schools and a Boy Scout leader. He designed and installed many Rowan Museum exhibits over the years.

*Photos by Mimi Apple, curator at the Rowan Museum*



Attendees during dinner



Kaye Hirst gives introduction

# Discover

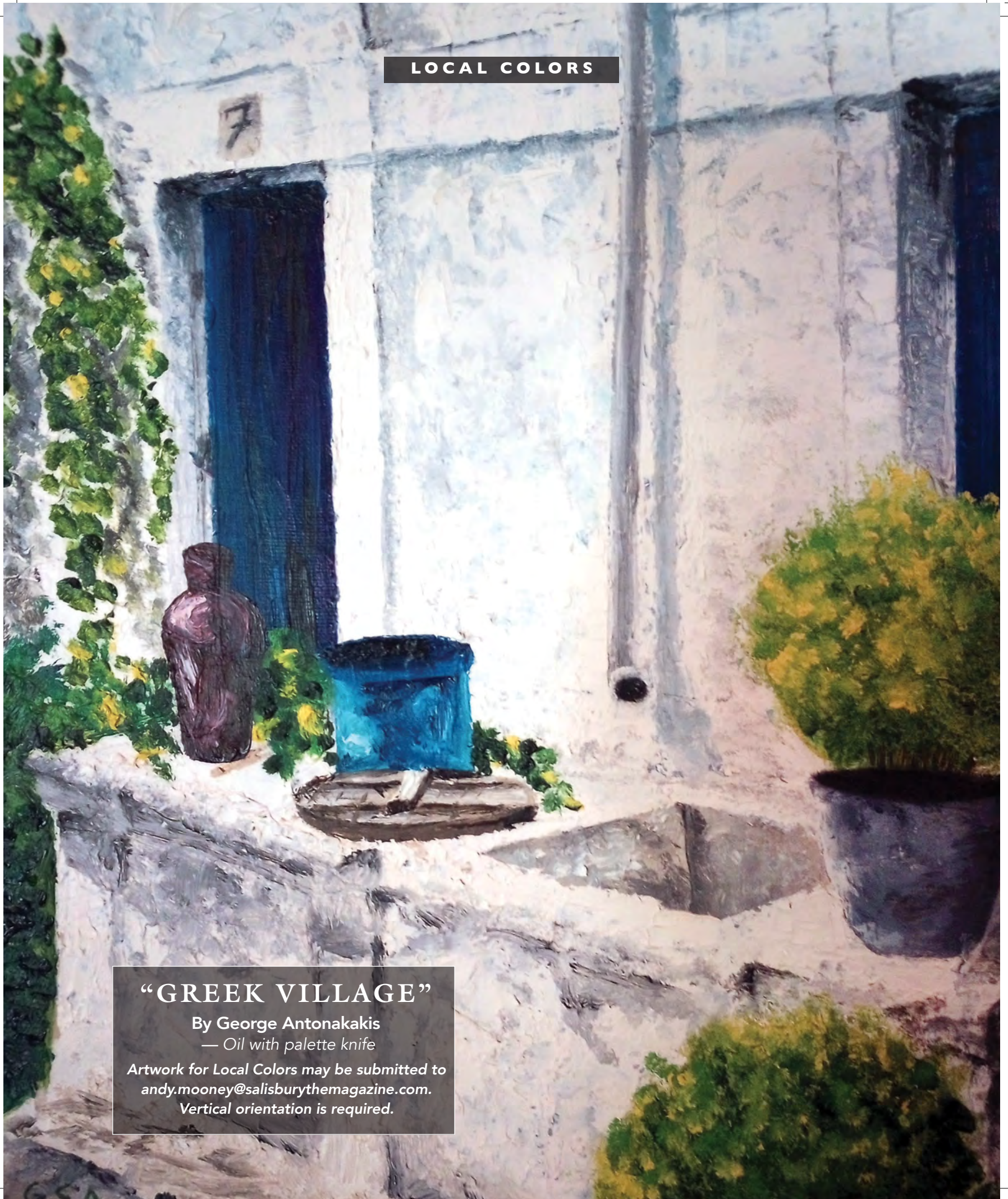
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— Oil with palette knife

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