

OC MAGAZINE

February 22–March 21, 2019 • One Copy FREE

ORANGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

*Meet Sara Smith Bosson,
The Visionary First Director*

“Return to the Ruins”

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Sara directs Twelfth Night at the Ruins, 1992. Photo courtesy of 4CP.

Meet Sara Smith Bossong, The Visionary First Director Four County Players and Barboursville Vineyards "Return to the Ruins"

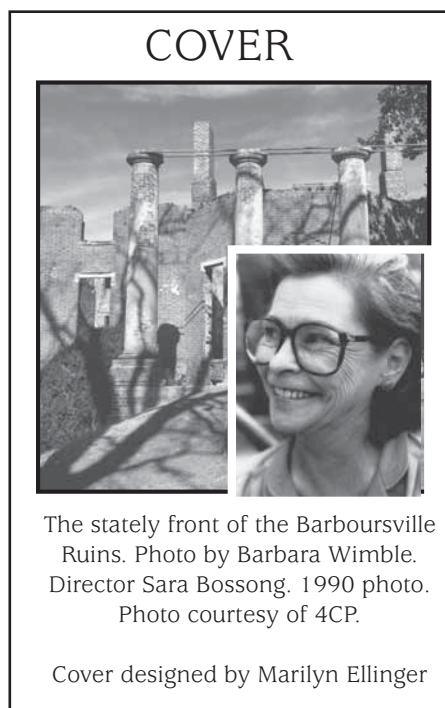
By Barbara Wimble
Correspondent

Theater lovers throughout the area will be excited to hear that Four County Players and Barboursville Vineyards will again collaborate with "Return to the Ruins" this summer for the first time in 13 years. A Midsummer Night's

Dream, which was also the first play at the Ruins, will be performed. And what a perfect time to go down memory lane with the woman who directed the first "Shakespeare at the Ruins" for Four County Players in 1990. This path-setting director, Sara Smith Bossong, is one of Orange County's most sparkling gems.

Founded in 1973, Four County Players (4CP), the oldest continuously operating community theater in Central Virginia, is located in Barboursville in the former schoolhouse next to the post office. The group's yearly repertoire at that time included a musical, a drama, a comedy, and a children's show. Sara introduced the idea of adding a Shakespeare production and, from then on, her name has been associated with Shakespeare in Orange County's theater community. How did this creative and talented lady become such an inspiration both on and off the stage? I spent several delightful hours talking with Sara in her apartment at "The Culpeper" retirement community.

See Sara Page 4



2019 "Return to the Ruins" poster. Courtesy of Four County Players and Barboursville Vineyards.

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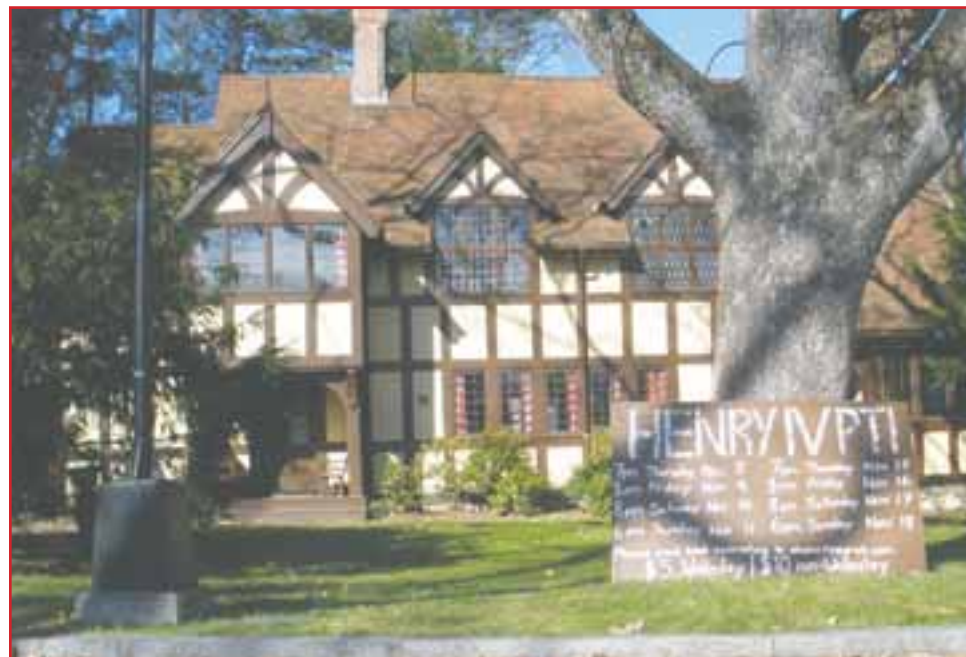
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Orange County Review

Sara from page 3



Wellesley College Shakespeare Tudor house. Photo courtesy of Wellesley College Shakespeare Society.

Always the lady and "dressed for the part" with her classic earrings and tailored clothes, Sara regaled me with amusing quips and quotes delivered in perfectly accented and character voices about the plays with which she was involved.

Act One, Scene One: A Star is Born

Sara Jane Murphey was born and raised on a farm outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee, the only child of a medical doctor and community leader. Her father was the only physician in Chattanooga who volunteered for the army in World War II and was assigned to run a hospital in Mississippi for three years. Her mother was active with the League of Women's Voters, and as president of the Junior League, led the League to found the first integrated reading clinic in the south.

Her family, along with some exceptionally good school teachers, exposed Sara to the world of the arts at a very young age, but not without some protests on her part. Being exceptionally bright, Sara skipped second grade, and it was recommended by her teachers that she should skip another, but it was decided instead that she should take music lessons. Little Sara was not thrilled with her piano lessons and struggled with them for three or four years.

Sara's Aunt Sally founded the Chattanooga Opera House Association, and Sara's Great Aunt Isma was an artist who painted sets for the traveling opera companies that performed in Chattanooga. Sara took art lessons with Isma at her studio and was bedazzled by the beautiful opera sets she saw, including the one her aunt painted for Madame Butterfly.



The Four County Players Playhouse, Barboursville.
Photo by Barbara Wimble.



Sara as Clairee getting her hair done onstage by Chene Felicia Stoner as beautician Anelle in *Steel Magnolias*, 1991. Photo courtesy of 4CP.

Act One, Scene Two: Falling in Love with Theater and Shakespeare

Sara attended a private high school for girls in Chattanooga and went on to Wellesley College in Boston, also all female. (Rose Kennedy, Madeleine Albright, Hillary Clinton, Cokie Roberts, and Diane Sawyer are among the school's other alumni.) Sara graduated magna cum laude with a degree in theology in 1960, but she fell in love with Shakespeare and theater while she was a student there. She said, "It was as if a veil was drawn away from my eyes; theater was a magical and wonderful place." The Shakespearean theater was housed in a Tudor-style building that was

See Sara page 6

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full of Elizabethan furniture, and Sara spent many hours enjoying “tea with English muffins” there and reading in the comprehensive Shakespeare library. She loved the “marvelous and gorgeous” costumes that were made by the students. As an officer of the college’s Shakespeare Society, she directed plays and often performed the male lead roles.

Act One, Scene Three: New Family, Old Houses, and Orange County

While in college, Sara met and married Cyril Smith. They had two children together – Cyril, Jr. and Samantha, and moved to Alexandria, Virginia, where they bought and restored an old house. She enjoyed making elaborate miniature 18th-century furniture, a hobby that began when she was given doll furniture as a child and was frustrated because she could not open the drawers. She made all of her furniture with working parts and intricate inlaid wood pieces. During this period, Sara also taught language arts for a middle school’s gifted program in Fairfax County, and directed a student production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

In the 1980s, they bought a farm in Rapidan in Orange County and Sara enjoyed fixing up that old house as well. (Years later, she opened her house for several 4CP’s picnics.) She taught a language arts class at Prospect Heights Middle School in Orange, where she directed a staged reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Being typical teenagers, some of the students proved to be a challenge, and she was tempted to call the play off. But the play went on and “they managed to put on a good reading.” Years later she ran into one of her former students who recognized her and exclaimed, “Mrs. Smith, that play I was in with you was the most fun I ever had in school!” Sara was very moved by her comment – moments like this one made all of the challenges worthwhile.

Act Two, Scene One: Four County Players – A New Theater Home

After her marriage with Cy ended, Sara began taking graduate classes at the University of Virginia in Renaissance literature. She was interested in getting back into theater in some way and in 1987 asked her friend Nicky Audibert at 4CP what she could do to volunteer. She was asked to audition for *On Golden Pond* and was cast as the female lead, Ethel Thayer. This was the first time she had been on stage since her college days – 28 years! Sara said that it was stressful – “a new play every night” – because her male counterpart had difficulty remembering his lines and she had to ad lib a lot.

Sara was soon ensconced as part of the 4CP theater family. In 1988, she joined the Board of Directors and volunteered to help with the children’s musical, *Really Rosie*. Her first task was to make a paper mâché lion’s head. She had never worked with that medium before and sat in front of her oven working and molding the head for hours until it dried.

Although she was officially the assistant director for *Oliver!* in 1988, she actually directed the play, taking over when the director “disappeared.” Sara was apprehensive because she felt she was a “neophyte,” having never before directed nor even been in the cast of a musical. However, everyone was very helpful and the “clever sets worked beautifully.”

Later that year, Sara returned to the stage in *Light Up the Sky*, in which she played the part of Stella, the character who reviewers described as the “witty and energetic gin-rummy-playing stage mother.” The next year, she directed George Bernard Shaw’s play, *Heartbreak House*. Sara was then cast as Clairee in *Steel Magnolias*, bringing “intelligent tartness” to her role according to one review. The next year, she had fun with the “plum role” of the overbearing Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The Edwardian period costumes made by Cheryl Barns were “just luscious,” Sara recalled.

Act Two, Scene Two: A Set is Born

Previously 4CP had no thought of performing Shakespeare; however, in 1990, Bill Niebel, president of the 4CP board, urged Sara to take a look at the Barboursville ruins. She found that it was “magical” and “so obvious that the terrain and ruins were designed (accidentally and by nature) for some kind of outdoor entertainment or production.” It was a one-of-a-kind setting. She negotiated with the Barboursville Vineyards manager, who agreed to allow them to do one production.

Eight months later on August 3, 1990, 4CP opened its 18th season with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the Ruins. The response was overwhelming. After one of the first productions, a “grand dame” of Orange County exclaimed with delight to Sara, “You must have a show every summer!” Sara directed a Shakespeare production for five more summers, and the tradition continued with other directors through 2006.

Barboursville Vineyards, just a couple of miles from the 4CP playhouse, is on the land that Virginia Governor Barbour owned in the early 19th century. The manor house, which was designed by his friend and neighbor Thomas Jefferson, was completed in 1822. It was once the most elaborate plantation in the county and was estimated to be twice as valuable as James Madison’s Montpelier plantation. Sadly on Christmas Day, 1884, the house was destroyed by fire. It was never rebuilt, but the red brick ruins and pillared portico remain.

The ambiance of the Ruins made an inviting and dramatic backdrop for the plays. The portico served as the stage, the four columns from the original house were used as part as the set design, and the two-story brick shell of the mansion was used as the back wall. The “greensward” (a word that Sara said I should add to my vocabulary and is defined as a manicured grass-covered ground) was surrounded by towering 200-year-old boxwood hedges. The audience sat on blankets or lawn



The cast of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* during a dress rehearsal on the stage of the Ruins, 1990. Photo courtesy of 4CP.

chairs on the ground surrounded by these hedges.

Act Two, Scene Three: The Stage is Set

Sara decided that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was probably the most approachable play for a first time Shakespeare production for 4CP. There was a lot to deal with – it was their first run out of doors and the first time doing a production at the Ruins. Although it was a minimal set, a second set had to be constructed at the 4CP Playhouse in the event of rain. She kept close watch of the weather reports each day of the run.

Opulent Elizabethan costumes had to be made. Sara and Cheryl Barns, the costume mistress, went to New York to see Cheryl’s cousin, an on-and-off Broadway lighting designer, who organized tours of several different theaters for them. They were especially interested in looking at the costumes and decided that they wanted to be authentic and do strictly Renaissance. It was important to know the history of the costume(s) of the period, including what each sector of society were wearing. For example, the Crown proscribed certain colors depending on occupation and class. (“Proscribed” is another word I’ve added to my vocabulary and is defined as forbidden.) “Queen Elizabeth I liked jewels – lots of jewels,” explained Sara, “but the courtiers had to be careful not to outshine the Crown at court. The jewelry had significance. During King Henry VIII’s reign, if you were given the Tudor Chain as a gift, you were required to wear it at Court as a mark of fealty.” Sara and Cheryl took all this into account and were meticulous in the details of the costumes. Sara said that, “the educated eye begins to analyze what makes the composition...It completes the picture. If a piece is missing, you know it.”

Cheryl and her fellow volunteer seamstresses made the costumes on Cheryl’s grandmother’s tiny vintage sewing machine from silks, satins, and velvets, including the pantaloons and doublets. There were minimal niceties for the actors, who changed costumes in tents. They performed three weekends in the summer, and it was often so hot that the actors perspired in their heavy costumes.

At this first Shakespeare production, no detail was left to chance, from the music to the food. Theatergoers enjoyed picnics on the grounds with Barboursville wines and box dinners provided by various caterers, who created themed menus to invoke an even more authentic period atmosphere. Period music was performed between the acts, and in later shows, strolling musicians, minstrels, and jugglers were added.

Even the volunteers parking the cars were dressed in period costumes.

One afternoon, Sara invited her neighbor's children to a production of Midsummer even though she thought that, at five and six years old, they were probably too young for Shakespeare. One of her happiest memories is watching the children on the front row "bug-eyed" throughout the performance. "Shakespeare," Sara declared, "is for all ages and all time."

Rick Gray, one of the actors, recalled his experiences that summer: "In the summer of 1990, I was a 39-year-old grad student who had just discovered how wonderful it was to stand on a stage. I was in rehearsal six days a week for a summer production at U.Va. But when I heard this place called Four County Players was holding auditions for A Midsummer Night's Dream, I brought my very short resume to Barboursville and auditioned for Sara Smith, who cast me as Philostrate, Master of the Revels. She was a wonderful director – demanding but generous – and I had a grand time. That was the first of three straight summers working with Sara at the Ruins – and the beginning of a 27-year affiliation with 4CP. I will forever be grateful to Sara for her vision, her authoritative bearing, her kindness to her actors. She is a great lady – and a spirited exponent of the stage."

Act Two, Scene Four: How to Retame The Shrew

The next year, the 4CP Board proposed performing The Taming of the Shrew; however, Sara said she would direct it only if the rarely performed alternate version she found during her research at UVA was chosen. This early version included an introduction and an epilogue, "a play within a play within a play – the inebriated raconteur Sly's dream," explained Sara. It was important to Sara, as a scholar, to explain why Kate (the heroine) says, "Yes, Sir!" at the end.

Brent Civres, who played Petrucio, the male lead in Shrew, has been an English and Drama teacher at Woodberry Forest School in Madison County since 1990 and now directs the theater program. He fondly remembered that Sara took him to Richmond to have his costume made by a professional tailor. It was green drapery material and looked "just right," and every once in a while, he still enjoys seeing his costume again on another actor on the 4CP stage. He said of Sara's director style, "She had a sense of humor and gave freedom to her actors to build their characters but had very specific ideas about blocking. She had a firmness in her vision and did not compromise." She has influenced Brent's own directing style at Woodberry Forest.

During one of the Shrew rehearsals, Sara recalled that one of the actors was "posturing" on the set and not following her specific instructions. She stopped him and asked, "What are you doing?" to which he replied, "I'm playing!" After one or two beats Sara retorted, "And I'm directing!" He took her direction after that. Years later, she heard that he said that everything he knew about theater, he learned from Sara.

The next summer, Sara directed Twelfth Night – her favorite Shakespeare play to direct. In 1993 she directed Much Ado About Nothing, which was performed the same year that the Kenneth Branagh movie version came out. A reporter commented that 4CP was brave to put on the performance at that time, but Sara, "oblivious to going toe-to-toe with the movie," was proud to demonstrate what bunch of "ordinary folks" could do.

Act Two, Scene Five: Sara's Swan Song

The last play Sara directed for 4CP was The Winter's Tale in 1995, her "swan song" (in her words) for 4CP.

Some of her favorite lines from all of Shakespeare are from this play when Florizel gives his beloved Perdita the highest of compliments. Sara recited these lines for me:

What you do

*Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
I'd have you do it ever: when you sing,
I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
Pray so; and, for the ordering your affairs,
To sing them too: each your doing,
So singular in each particular;
Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
That all your acts are queens.*

In a letter to me, Sara noted that a picture of her from The Winter's Tale evoked many happy occasions at "Shakespeare at the Ruins." She "loved the whole enterprise dearly – from the first line of Dream to the last line of Winter's Tale, and I like to think that my happiness – nay, my glee at being allowed to direct those shows – shines through in every scene."

Act Three: Making Beautiful Music Together

As a representative of 4CP, Sara gave a talk to the Rotary Club in Culpeper in the early 1990s. There she met her future husband John Bossong. "He had a truck and was eager to help anyone. John never met a stranger," and soon was enlisted to help 4CP, including joining the Board. "A most darling man, and a marvelous chef who loved to cook and entertain," John lobbied for the 4CP Bistro snack bar that has been a wonderful addition to the Playhouse. Sara and John married in 1994, and Sara took that summer off from directing for their honeymoon. They were both also very involved in the local classical music scene and enjoyed making beautiful music together until John's death in 2012.

Brava! Encore!

I've found that Sara's creative vision and vast knowledge about Shakespeare and theater are awe-inspiring, but she is humble about her accomplishments.

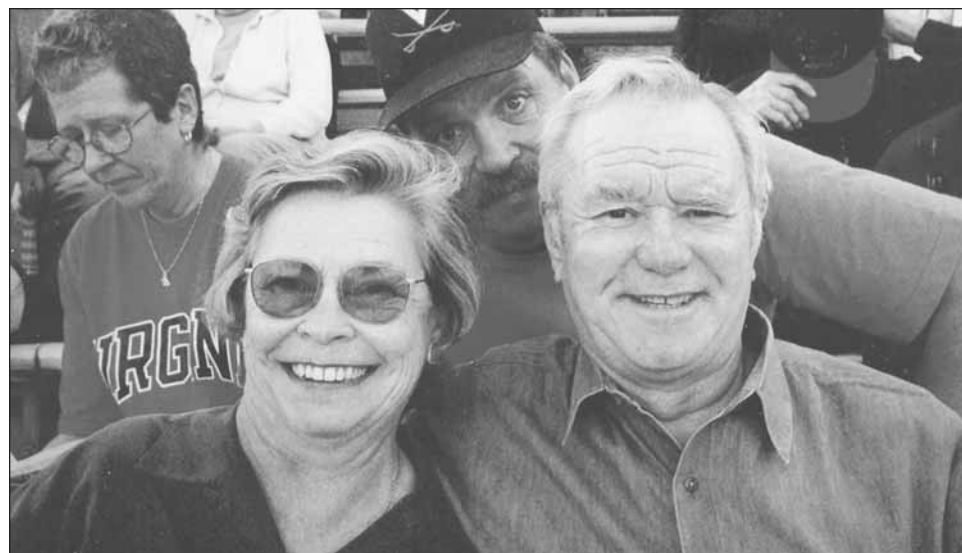
After watching any performance with her, you can count on an honest critique and analysis. Sara is a class act.

When asked about her favorite Shakespeare play, she responded that she has an "abiding affection" for Midsummer because she had been involved with it so many times. However, she said her favorite play is Hamlet, particularly Hamlet's first appearance in Act One, Scene Two when he delivers his soliloquy and wins over the audience.

One of my favorite lines from the Bard is from Twelfth Night, "If music be the food of love, play on..." We look forward to revisiting Sara's legacy this summer when we "Return to the Ruins." Play on!

~ ~ ~ ~

Four County Player's "Return to the Ruins" A Midsummer Night's Dream, directed by Lydia Underwood Horan, will be performed weekends July 12th through the 27th. Visit the websites of Four County Players, fourcp.org, or the Barboursville Vineyards, bbvwine.com, for more information.



Sara and John Bossong enjoying game at UVA. Photo courtesy of Sara Bossong.

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Events and Announcements



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Date: Exhibit open now through March 29, 2019

Time: Mon. - Sat. 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Cost: Free

Location: The Arts Center In Orange, 129 East Main Street, Orange

Website: <https://artscenterinorange.com/in-the-morin-gallery/>

More Info: (540) 672-7311

African-American Art from the Petrucci Family Foundation Collection. The exhibit brings together paintings, sculpture, prints, and drawings by prominent African-American artists of the past and present; the art confront the legacy of slavery while celebrating the beauty, compassion, strength, and persistent culture of African-Americans. The works are on loan from the Petrucci Family Foundation (PFF), founded in 2006. The foundation's mission is to support education and create opportunity for Americans at every stage of and station of life. The PFF Collection is a targeted initiative to bring focus to the full range of African-American visual creativity and its essential place in the history and discourse of American art. Visit PFF online at: www.pffcollection.com. Photo: Eldzier Cortor, Classical Study No.36, 1979, Oil on linen canvas, Artist's Rights Society, New York.



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Book Talk with Douglas Ronald

Sunday, March 31, 2019 at 3:00 p.m.

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Gerilee Hundt in children's section. Photos by Barbara Wimble



Kathy Judge with her dog Gizmo.

Books Bound2please – From Book Lovers to Booksellers

By Barbara Wimble
Correspondent

Kathy Judge loves books. So does her friend Gerilee Hundt. From a friendship and a mutual passion came an idea, and now these two entrepreneurs are undertaking a venture, Books Bound2please, the new bookstore in Orange that opened on February 11. “There hasn’t been a bookstore in Orange for many years, and it was time to open one,” said Kathy, who owns the store. “We believe that every town should have a bookstore and every Main Street should have a place where folks can come in and discover something wonderful...that you didn’t know you wanted,” Gerilee added.

This cozy bookstore is located on West Main Street in Orange, nestled behind Maria Pace’s design shop across from the Post Office. The store offers high-quality new and gently pre-owned books of every genre from “children’s first readers to mysteries, gardening books, young adult fiction, Virginia history, and coffee-table

tomes on the history of art.” explained Gerilee. Kathy added, “If we don’t have it, we will bend over backwards to get it for you.” They offer expert customer service and gracious hospitality in a warm and inviting atmosphere.

Let’s meet these two. Kathy grew up in Oyster Bay, Long Island. During her summers, she gained experience as a theater technician with the Peterborough Players, a well-known community theater in New Hampshire. After high school, she moved to the Big Apple, where she worked as an Off-Broadway theater technician. While visiting a friend in Charlottesville, she realized that she liked the small-town feel, and after living for years on a shoestring and ready to get away from the snow, she decided to move south to Virginia. She married and had a son, but soon found herself as a single mother when that marriage did not work out. While trying to accommodate her young son’s schedule, she worked a string of part-time jobs, including private gardening, caring for horses, copy-editing for Charlottesville Arts Monthly, and working as a technician at Live Arts Community Theater. With Live Arts, she was able to travel to Scotland to participate in the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, a famous festival dedicated to the arts.

During this time, this bibliophile came up with the idea for a start-up business helping people organize their home libraries. She named it “Library Logic” with the catchy tag line “Restoring your library to the comfortable oasis it should be.” In response to an ad she put in a Live Arts playbill, she was hired to run an on-line bookstore for a bookseller in Earlysville, where she learned about the book-buying and -selling business and how to “cherry pick” through piles of books to look for distinguished publishers. It is said that you “can’t judge a book by its cover,” but Kathy Judge can. She knows books.

For the next six years, Kathy worked in the reference department of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library in Charlottesville while still doing gardening work and advising her Library Logic clients. After she retired and her son left for college, she thought about moving to an even smaller town. Kathy found her house (on Craigslist!) and moved to Orange in the fall of 2017.

Gerilee brings her own expertise in the world of books and publishing to Books

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Bound2please. She was born in a small town in Indiana to a social studies teacher mother and an English teacher father, and books were part of her life from an early age. After earning a Bachelor's degree from Indiana University and a Master's in English from Northwestern University, she enjoyed a career in book publishing in Chicago for 28 years. During her first job as a copy editor for Encyclopedia Britannica, her favorite time of the year was working on the Britannica Book of the Year – a summary of the year's events. She has fond memories of spending hours at the Chicago Public Library fact-checking the stories and events. She later worked for the Contemporary Books Publishing Group as project editor and as the managing editor for the Chicago Review Press, where she managed the production of more than 50 books a year.

While visiting a friend in Orange, Gerilee fell in love with the area, and realized that she was ready to stop doing the big city thing. Now, she has reversed her life – she used to live and work in a big city and vacation in small towns, now she is doing the opposite. She moved to Orange in 2007 and worked a variety of part-time jobs, including at The Arts Center in Orange. She loved working there, but books have been a passion all along, and she is thrilled to be a part of this new venture.

Soon after Kathy moved to town, she met Gerilee while shopping at the Arts Center. They saw each other again when Gerilee and her husband were walking in Kathy's neighborhood. They had considered buying Kathy's house before she bought it. They saw Kathy sitting on her welcoming front porch, she invited them in for a tour of her renovations, and they hit it off and became good friends. Gerilee said that she spent most of the visit perusing Kathy's bookshelves and being impressed with her excellent taste in literature.

Opening the store has been quite an endeavor. From setting up the on-line store, eBay account, and the credit card system to replacing the track lighting, the learning curve has been steep. And there were problems they did not anticipate, such as the cold winter hampering the process of staining the bookshelves. But the end result has been worth the effort. While they were setting up the shop, several curious customers have come in to explore and buy books.

These talented and imaginative ladies have created a welcoming atmosphere, "a place for people who like books to hang out with people who like books," said Gerilee. Customers can enjoy a mug of tea while sitting in a comfy chair perusing one of the many books offered in the shop. In the future, they plan to offer book signings and play readings and a place for book clubs and knitting groups to gather.

Why the name "Books Bound2 please?" While brainstorming for a fun, different, and catchy name for the shop, they came up with a play on words about the book-binding process. "It is an old-fashioned store with an up-to-date vibe, a clever pun, a saucy name," said Gerilee.

Both have been readers since they were very young. Kathy would not have eaten tomatoes but for reading Harriet the Spy, in which the heroine ate only tomato sandwiches. Gerilee's taste was more to fantasy, like The Chronicles of Narnia and The Hobbit. She noted that, "with Kathy's background in theater and libraries and my history in publishing, we just naturally agree that books are important."

But what is the allure of books? In today's world of downsizing and minimizing, why buy books? Why not read on a Kindle? I believe that books can be an emotional tie to the past and can represent good memories. Book lovers like me have them spilling out from book cases, piled high on nightstands, and stacked in every room of the house, and we love to share our books with friends. Gerilee further explained, "Books are eternal. Kindles serve a purpose, but there's something about holding a book in your hand that is special, and most people still want to see it, heft it, turn it over, read the back cover, open it at random, and start reading."

Big book chains and the internet have put many independent "Mom and Pop" stores out of business but buying on-line or going to a big box retailer does not have the ambiance of shopping in a store such as this one. You miss the whole experience of the human contact of meeting and talking to your neighbors and holding and savoring a book and wondering about what adventures await inside.

Does this sound old school? Maybe, but books are never out of fashion. Why not support a community business and buy local when you can? "Bookmark" a visit to Books Bound2please on your calendar and enter the cozy world of your new neighborhood book store. You are bound to be pleased!

Books Bound2please, located at 132 West Main Street in Orange, is open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. You can visit the website at booksbound2please.com, or call the store at 540-672-4000.



Wyatt and his shark book.

Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 Pageant title

5 Gothenburg native

10 Party thrower

14 Workout woe

15 Like candles or crayons

16 Quite fond of

17 Work against

19 Den denizen

20 Call for

21 It may be arranged

23 Baby powder ingredient

25 Baker's need

26 Luxury Chrysler until 1993

30 Bivouac

33 Scand. land

34 Void, as a marriage

36 Homework helper?

37 Divisible by 2

39 Doomed one

41 iPhone assistant

42 Send to a specialist

44 Belly button

46 Restroom sign

47 Bone-boring tool

49 Replant timber

51 Befitting a king

53 Courtroom request

54 Out of control

57 Drink of the gods

61 Musical based on "La boheme"

62 Like some tumors

64 Unit of measure

DOWN

1 Defensive spray

2 Computer symbol

3 Word with up or down

4 It has 100 seats

5 Sign of an injury

6 Theme of the 1968 movie "Where Eagles Dare"

65 More eccentric

66 Bratty talk

67 Genealogy diagram

68 Repulsive

69 Pony's gait

7 Final, e.g.

8 Tooth trouble

9 Salad follower

10 Flower used in herbal teas

11 "Wait your turn!"

12 Guys-only party

13 Pulled apart

18 Coronet

22 Carry on

24 Big name in cameras

26 Lifeless

27 Bekins worker

28 First choice

29 Like some calendars

31 Societal norms

32 Out of ____

35 Pivoting bar

38 Ancient drug for grief

40 Petroleum plant

43 Temper tantrum

45 Successful dieter

48 UN member

50 Get a new actor for

52 Lavin or Blair

54 Worry

55 Derriere

56 New England fishes

58 Ski lift

59 Moreover

60 Staff symbol

63 Parrot or puppy

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Daniel Lauber, Collin Wade, with coach Laurie Jamerson. All photos by Matthew Franks

Orange County High School Robotics Team: The Sky Isn't the Limit

By Matthew Franks Correspondent

Suspended from what resembles the Mars Lander, the robot whirrs to life, its wheels gliding down to rest on the ground. Only then does its latching mechanism release, setting the robot loose to scan the surface for valuable objects. It recognizes and rejects the first two white orbs, then settles on the

gold cube. It rolls towards the cube and extends its arm with the objective of grabbing up the gold prize and depositing it back at the correct compartment of the lander.

Building that robot from scratch, piloting it, and programming it to know what to do – that's how some students are spending their after-school hours at Orange County High. The Robotics



Orange County High School Robotics team excels at state championship competition.

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The OC Robot 3 State model.



Luke Clemmer designing with CAD.

New Addition to Our 2019 Lineup: Nick Smith -Tickets \$30 each

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Hailing from small-town Kent's Store, VA, Nick Smith quickly learned the values of hard work and independence at a young age. He loved singing and became a member of the varsity choir throughout his high school career. After graduating from Fluvanna High School, Nick pursued a business degree and continued playing the guitar to compliment his vocals with the goal of becoming a full-time entertainer one day.

As perseverance ruled, Nick's career in music moved forward enough to put together his first album EP in 2012. From there, Nick's songwriting and music production have since led him to write his latest album called "Just A Preview."



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team is coached by teacher Julie Jamerson, who wants everybody to know that while she has experience leading teams, she doesn't have a background in robotics; the kids are the ones who build, program, test and refine all the robots that roll out of the workshop, or "The Bunker," as they call it.

Their hard work is paying off, too. When I first met with the OCHS Robotics team, they were just coming off an impressive performance in the qualifying round of the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Tech Challenge, held on January 5 at the University of Virginia. That propelled them to the State match, one step away from the World Championship. They knew it was a long shot, but they had taken on teams with corporate sponsors before, and they were hard at work improving the robot that had gotten them this far.

They were encouraged by winning the Design Award at the UVA round, which recognizes the best functional design at a competition, for their innovative latching mechanism. The team knew they were on to something when the latch became something of a celebrity at the competition, with several other teams coming by to study it and snap pictures of their design.

After speaking with Jamerson, as well as several members of the team, it became clear that robots have a lot of moving parts, and so does a robotics team. The full team roster includes:

See Robotics Page 14

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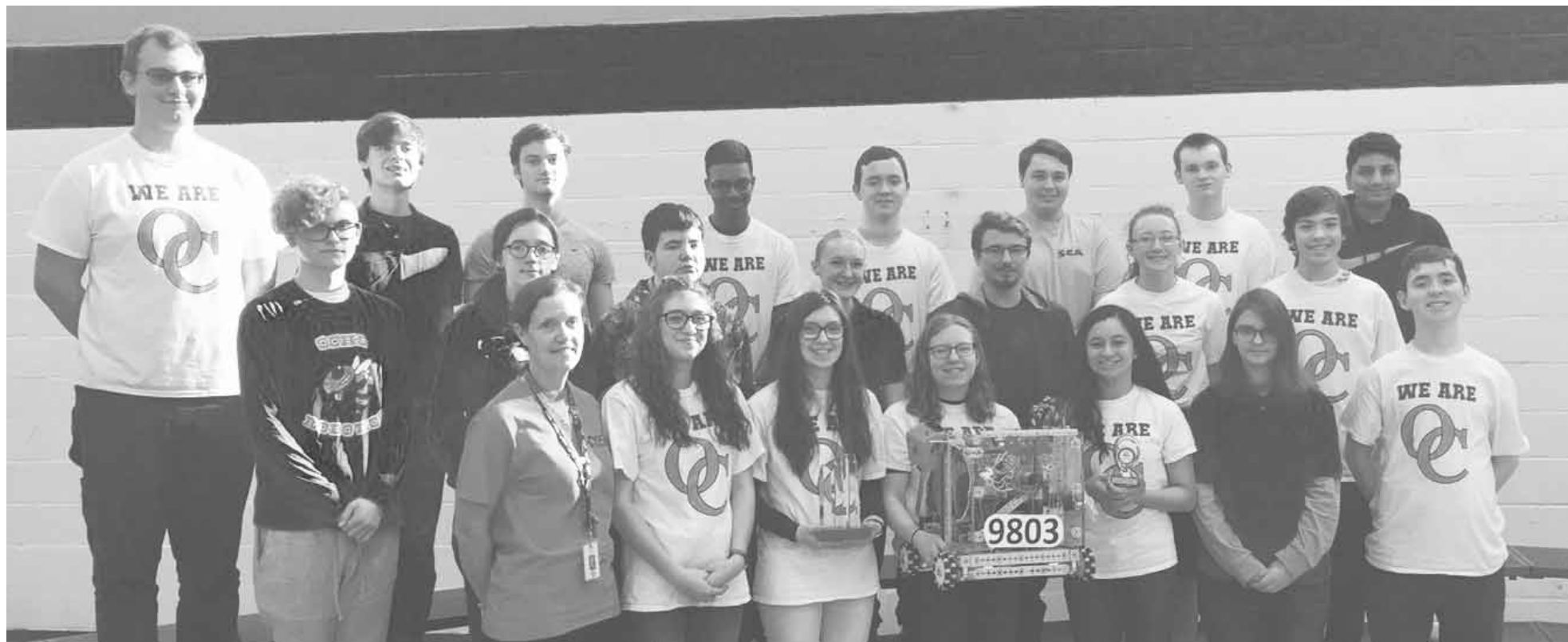
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Congratulations to the Orange County High School Robotics Team for winning the Award for Industrial Design at its best at the State Championships on Saturday, February 2, 2019. OCHS won this award over 55 other teams, most of which are corporate sponsored. This judged award is presented to teams that incorporate industrial design elements into their solution. The team demonstrated industrial design principles, striking a balance between form, function, and aesthetics. The robot distinguished itself from others by its aesthetic and functional design. The team was also recognized for its CAD drawings, many prototypes, and team collaboration. Photo courtesy of Laurie Jamerson

Rebekah Zummo, Joanie Zummo, Collin Wade, Julie D'Orts, Daniel Lauber, Jarrett Long, Jace Clemmer, Luke Clemmer, Alyson Kinkopf, Rodney Zummo, Rav Patel, Anna Stafford, Asher Perry, Connor Dodson, Monty Payette, John Ashley, Alexis Bradley, and Malia Staples. How much each team member can contribute varies, but everyone contributes something, and it's not only about building robots. Fielding a competitive team requires documenting the entire process, from concept to prototype to finished product, as well as forming relationships with other teams and navigating complex and changing rules.

Down in the workshop, Collin Wade focuses on fabrication, which is literally the nuts and bolts of the project – drilling, assembling, and occasionally modifying parts during competitions to get the best performance out of them. Their prototype robot's body was built out of a milk crate, until one team member's father donated some Lexan, a transparent plastic, to give it the frame needed to compete with other teams. Jace Clemmer and Daniel Lauber are the "drivers," and they were putting the robot through its paces using remote controls. Joanie Zummo was working out a glitch in the program that was throwing off the pattern recognition of the robot. Daniel also helps with programming; he started programming with drag-and-drop software, but now he's moved on to Java. The skills that Joanie and Daniel gain programming their robot can be used in a number of ways, as Java is one of the more popular programming languages and widely utilized in web applications. Jarrett Long helps design parts using AutoCAD (computer aided drafting) something that will also be useful as he pursues another of his interests, architecture. One of the youngest members of the team, Luke Clemmer, also designs parts for the robot with AutoCAD, and he knows his way around the 3-D printer that turns their ideas into working parts. Because funding a robotics team can be a challenge, being able to use school resources like the 3-D printer is crucial to their success; "Mr. Gimple [OCHS principal] is very supportive," noted Collin.

The whole team was working to get ready for their next challenge, the State competition on February 2, because they knew the competition would be even tougher than the UVA round. Each competition has a theme, and this year's Rover Ruckus appears to simulate an extra-terrestrial mining operation, with robots evaluated on their ability to descend and detach from a Lander, collect minerals from a crater, and sort them into a cargo hold. Robots must function in two modes, both of which can score points for the team. In the Driver-Controlled mode, the team scores points on how well a robot can perform tasks with a pilot controlling it remotely. Writing the software to make sure the connection between controller and robot is functional is a challenge, but the real programming challenge is the Autonomous mode. This is where the robot has to take certain actions (disengaging from the lander, scanning for objects, picking up the right one) with no one controlling it – the team has to write enough computer code to tell the robot exactly what to do, even when conditions are altered, like switching the positions of the target gold cube and the less valuable white orbs.

But as the whole team knows, the robotics competition isn't just about the technical aspects of design, fabrication, programming, and piloting. It's also a chance to gain experience in camaraderie, communication and critical thinking. For example, two teams are paired up to compete with two other matched teams, which

means the competition also contains the challenge of effectively communicating with other teams and solving problems on the fly. In the past competition, Joanie had to write computer code under a timed situation to make sure the two teamed-up robots would be able to work together.

All of this is a lot for high school students to juggle, but when the day for the State competition finally arrived, the Orange County High Robotics team was ready...more or less. "It was challenging," commented Julie D'Orta. The team had added an improved, precisely scaled mount for the scanner. To design the part, "I used the Pythagorean theorem," laughed Julie, giving geometry teachers everywhere another opportunity to tell students that they actually can use what they learn in class for something useful, while Alyson Kinkopf utilized AutoCAD to produce the part.

But the team also had to deal with some unexpected issues. Snow days cost them some time in the lead up to the competition, which meant that the paddle-wheel designed by Alyson to pick up and deposit the minerals couldn't be completed. The team had to improvise a scoop out of a whisk from a dollar store, to which they added pipe cleaners. It wasn't what they had in mind, but it did the job.

There were other challenges during the competition itself. Drivers Daniel and Jace had to deal with a flaw in the playing surface when the robot's wheel got stuck in a gap, but quick thinking led them to use the ramp-like edge of the simulated crater to pop the wheel out. Because teams get paired up, talking with the other teams is part of the game. And while "It's cool to talk with other teams," said Jarette, you also have to figure out "what they say their 'bots can do, and what their 'bots can actually do."

The need to form alliances also presents some pitfalls. In one of the last rounds, the team reprogrammed their robot to help boost a team they were paired with. It was a bit of a gamble – not all teams are as willing or able to reciprocate such assistance. But building relationships with other teams is part of the long-term strategy of the competition, so it's a calculated risk. Unfortunately, this was one of those times where the OCHS team put in a lot more effort than they got back.

In the end, the Orange County High School Robotics team came so very close. They placed one slot away from a trip to a World Championship match. But once again they took home the Design Award, with even the corporate-backed teams studying their latching system with envy.

And the team isn't done. Aerojet Rocketdyne, an aerospace company involved in propulsion systems for missile and space technologies, has invited them to demonstrate what their robot can do at Rhodesville on February 19th. They'll get to meet over a dozen engineers who work in the industry, a great opportunity for a team that includes aspiring aerospace and mechanical engineers.

When asked how far they saw this going, given the obvious Mars Lander theme of this year's game, they were a little cautious at first. Was it too soon to talk about something so big? But once you break the ice, their enthusiasm for exploration came spilling out – Mars, Venus...wherever. For the Orange County High School Robotics team, the sky isn't the limit.

Any business or individuals interested in helping to sponsor the team may contact Julie Jamerson at ljamerson@ocss-va.org.

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Answers to the Crossword Puzzle from page 11

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A	C	H	E	W	A	X	E	N	I	N	T	O
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