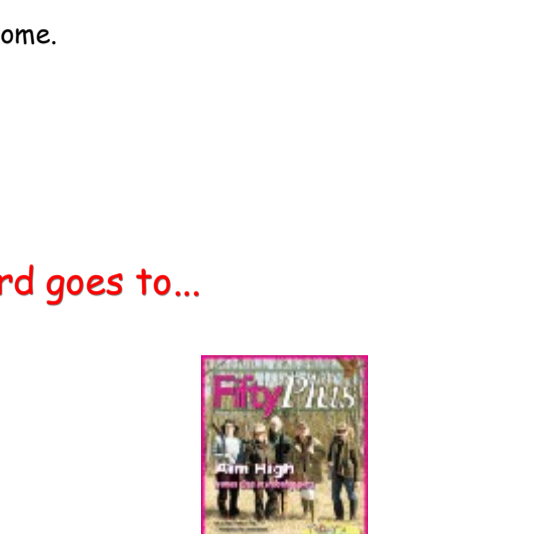


THE FIRST WORD...

Ol' Jones was out the other day with Mike Budd, the biologist for *Ducks Unlimited* in Virginia and David Norris, the Wetland Project Leader for the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries. Jones was learning all about conservation, wetland preservation, and what waterfowl need to survive. One of the things that struck him most is how much our environment is intertwined, and how a clean stream going into the James River near Lynchburg has a positive impact on the shellfish in the Chesapeake Bay.



Senora Corté della Queso was tagging along taking pictures of flora and fauna, following the three men walking along a branch of the Mattaponi River. As the three men conversed and watched wood ducks pour out of a nearby creek and beaver pond, they left the Senora sort of behind. The three men were busy contemplating saving the duck population--and the world as well. Jones tells me it is one of the human male's responsibilities. Suddenly, a scream came from behind them and they turned to see the Senora frozen stiff while the word **!!!SNAKE!!!** tried to come out of her mouth. The two biologists ran over to see what kind it was. Ol' Jones calls me to him. He put the leash on me because I tend to get curious about things that I have never seen before. Della Queso gathered her composure and proceeded to take pictures of the snake. All three men believed the snake they had just walked past, and nearly stepped on, was a Northern Water Snake.

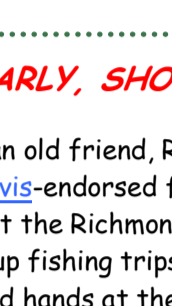


The Senora wanted to know how come two biologists and a self-proclaimed outdoorsman could almost step on a snake and not see it, and that a girl from the big city of Philadelphia had to discover it for herself!?? Ol' Jones replied that he thought snakes were common in the North and that's why so many Yankees moved South.

It was a quiet ride home.

Keep a leg up,
Luke

...and the award goes to...



Looks like Ol' Jones has won an award from the *North American Mature Publishers Association* for an article he wrote earlier this year for *FiftyPlus* magazine, about women shooting!

As he was showing me the award notice, I asked him what he was going to do now, and he said he thought he'd take a rest on his laurels.

I had to explain to him that getting the award was nice, but that one laurel wasn't going to fit his big caboose.

It was a quiet ride home.

Keep a leg up,
Luke

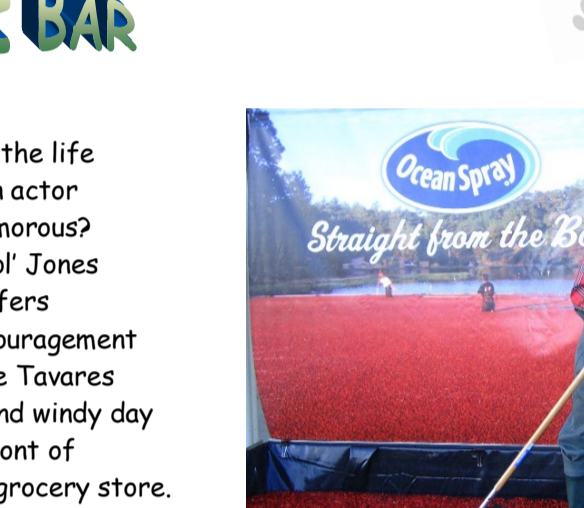
SHOP EARLY, SHOP OFTEN

Ran into an old friend, Russ Cress, who is now an *Orvis*-endorsed fishing instructor.

He and artist Ty Krueger were at the Richmond Orvis store at Short Pump Mall the other night, drumming up fishing trips for potential fly fishermen and old hands at the game.

While I was munching on some great roast beef by David Napier's White House Catering Service, www.whitehousecatering.org, I thought "What a wonderful and unusual Christmas gift that would be" for the fisherperson in your house.

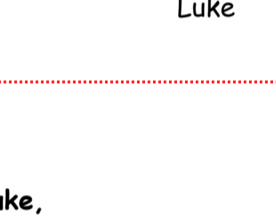
I can't think of a better way to get rid of winter blues than knowing you have a guided fishing trip coming in the Spring.



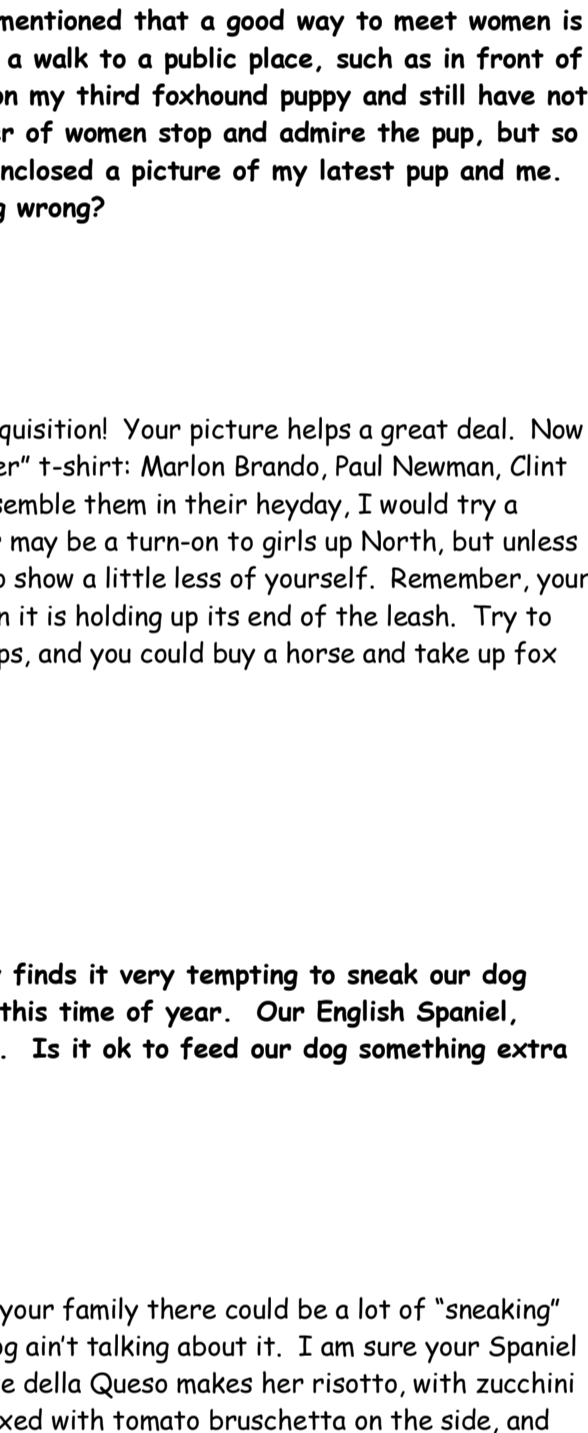
Here Russ explains to ol' Jones the advantage of a chartreuse lure.

Ol' Jones said he just wanted to catch fish, not become an interior decorator.

Keep a leg up,
Luke



Think the life of an actor is glamorous? Here ol' Jones offers some encouragement to Eddie Tavares on a cold and windy day in front of a Richmond grocery store. You can see more of Eddie by visiting [his web site](#).



The Best Gifts...

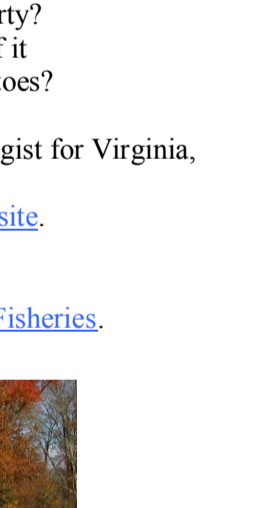
for any dog lover can be found at your local calendar store, or on the web at Amazon.com, or Browntrout.com, or through *Clarke's* website.



They are the 2009 *Black Labrador Retrievers Engagement calendar* and the 2009 *For the Love of Black Labrador Retrievers wall calendar* featuring photos of me, **Luke**, by internationally renowned photographer, *Dwight Dyke*.

As you can see, I am the Cover Boy on the engagement calendar. I can't wait to see the look on ol' Jones face when all the cuties start asking for *my* pawtagraph.

Keep a leg up,
Luke



OFF THE LEASH

Dear Luke,

In your past newsletters, you have mentioned that a good way to meet women is by getting a puppy and taking it for a walk to a public place, such as in front of a supermarket or to a park. I am on my third foxhound puppy and still have not had much luck. I have had a number of women stop and admire the pup, but so far, I haven't any takers. I have enclosed a picture of my latest pup and me. Can you tell me what I may be doing wrong?

Chris P. Andover, MA

Dear Chris,

Congratulations on your most recent acquisition! Your picture helps a great deal. Now some guys looked good in a "wife beater" t-shirt: Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood... but unless you strongly resemble them in their heyday, I would try a different wardrobe. Excess back hair may be a turn-on to girls up North, but unless you are a St. Bernard, you may want to show a little less of yourself. Remember, your pup can only do so much! I feel certain it is holding up its end of the leash. Try to look on the bright side, a few more pups, and you could buy a horse and take up fox hunting.

Keep a leg up,
Luke

Dear Luke,

With the holidays coming, my family finds it very tempting to sneak our dog "treats" from all the food we make this time of year. Our English Spaniel, Bentley, seems to really enjoy them. Is it ok to feed our dog something extra this time of year?

Sal V. Trenton, NJ

Dear Sal,

Depending on the number of people in your family there could be a lot of "sneaking" going on. One thing for sure is, the dog ain't talking about it. I am sure your Spaniel is just like ol' Jones when Senora Corté della Queso makes her risotto, with zucchini cubes sautéed in olive oil and garlic mixed with tomato bruschetta on the side, and pork tenderloin dish. He will eat until he is almost sick. You should be very careful about what you give your dog anytime of year. His stomach system is not like yours and there are some foods which, though very harmless to you, could be very poisonous to your spaniel. Consider yourself lucky if your bride lets you bring your dog in the house. Nothing changes your luck and your wife's Christmas spirit than having old Bentley try to take care of his upset stomach by showing your guests at your Christmas open house how many treats he has gotten in the last 24 hours.

Keep a leg up,
Luke

Not signed up yet?
Click [here](#) to receive
Luke (and Clarke's)
EXPEDITION

Do you have a wetland area on your property?
Would you like to get some benefit out of it other than as a breeding ground for mosquitoes?

You can contact Mike Budd, the *Ducks Unlimited* biologist for Virginia, or the biologist for your state, by logging on to the [Ducks Unlimited website](#).

You can also contact David Norris with [Virginia's Department of Game & Inland Fisheries](#).



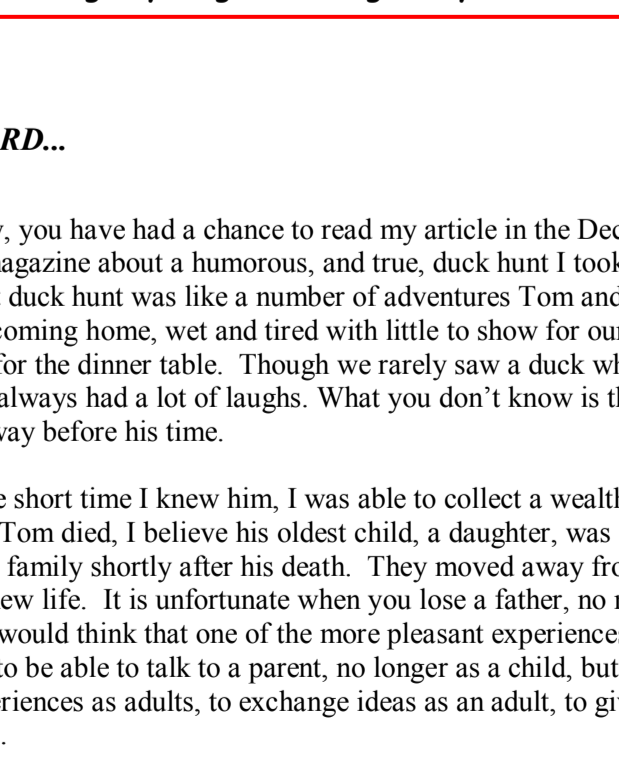
Left to Right: David Norris, Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, ol' Jones, Mike Budd, Ducks Unlimited Biologist for Virginia and West Virginia

Stocking Stuffer

Looking for the perfect gift that gives all year long? Why not a gift subscription to either *Virginia Wildlife* magazine, *Virginia Living* magazine, the *Virginia Sportsman* magazine, Or all three?

Every month or so, your Christmas gift will show up in someone's mailbox. You will be thought of each month when a magazine arrives.

LUKE'S FUN TIME



There is nothing more fun than a boy to play with.
They like finding streams and creeks and just messing around.
And there is nothing better for a boy than a dog.
Boys can tell a dog anything and a dog always seems to understand.

THE LAST WORD...

Hopefully by now, you have had a chance to read my article in the December issue of *Virginia Living* magazine about a humorous, and true, duck hunt I took with a dear friend named Tom. That duck hunt was like a number of adventures Tom and I went on together, always coming home, wet and tired with little to show for ourselves as family providers for the dinner table. Though we rarely saw a duck when hunting, much less shot one, we always had a lot of laughs. What you don't know is that Tom passed away years ago, way before his time.

Fortunately, in the short time I knew him, I was able to collect a wealth of wonderful memories. When Tom died, I believe his oldest child, a daughter, was 12. I had lost touch with Tom's family shortly after his death. They moved away from Richmond and all had to start a new life. It is unfortunate when you lose a father, no matter what the circumstances. I would think that one of the more pleasant experiences as a child grows into adulthood is to be able to talk to a parent, no longer as a child, but as an adult. To be able to share experiences as adults, to exchange ideas as an adult, to give and receive advice as an adult.

After the story came out, I was able to reconnect, thanks to researching the internet, with both of Tom's children. I was able to make contact first with his son who, in turn, gave me the office number of his sister now living in New York City. I called her and left a message. I received a phone call from her the next day. I had wonderful conversations with them both, but the supreme irony of all this was that the daughter told me I had no idea how much my phone call meant to them, because the day I called was the anniversary of their father's death. I truly had no idea.

I have since been able to write out a number of stories for them about their father, and send a few pictures of Tom and me that I had saved. I thank the editor of *Virginia Living*, Richard Ernberger, for giving me (unknown to us both) the unbelievable opportunity to reconnect Tom's son and daughter with the past and bring a little light to shine on the man who once was their father.

I guess each of us have our own idea of what the phrase "went before his time" means. Whether someone is 8 or 98, going before your time is leaving while there is still someone here who will truly miss you when you leave. It is hard to keep in perspective, in this busy and confusing world, that when you are sharing a laugh or moment with one of your favorite people, it may be the last one you two ever have again.

As we approach this time of Thanksgiving make sure, in the midst of the family gathering, that you give thanks for the fact you have someone to share with you this holiday season. Even better, invite someone who may be spending this time alone over to your house for Thanksgiving dinner.

I am always amazed at how what seems to be a small act of kindness is so largely remembered.

Go Well,

Clarke