

THE FIRST WORD...

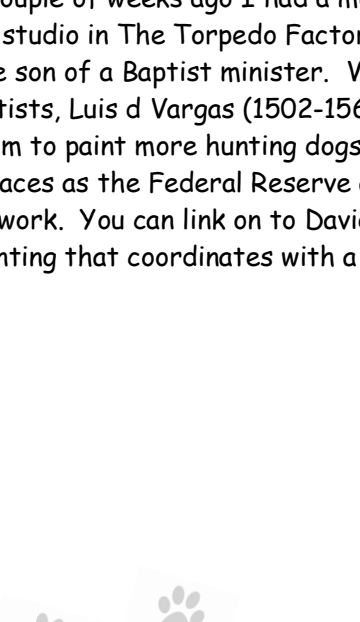
Midlothian, Virginia has seen a lot of changes since the 1830's when ol' Jones' family settled where the Stonehenge subdivision now lies. Very little of the community changed for about 135 years but there has been tremendous changes since then. People with funny accents moved in, tired of whatever it was that was bugging them and looking for the quite peaceful and unhurried aspect of what an area like Midlothian had to offer, thinking that they would not change the very thing they had hoped to find, and believing that Einstein's Theory of Relativity applied not to them but to the family that came to the area after them.



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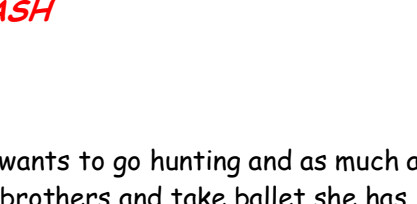
People then moved next to a park that allows shooting and has been in the area for years and then complained about the noise. Finally, the park has to find another more remote location depriving the locals who have long used it. Country becomes rural, rural becomes suburbia, suburbia becomes city, red becomes blue. I guess like dog food, everything has a shelf life.

Keep a leg up,
Luke



LUKE'S FUN TIME

A couple of weeks ago I had a meeting with David Cochran, nationally known artist at his studio in The Torpedo Factory in Old Town Alexandria. David went to VCU and is the son of a Baptist minister. We discussed the use of light in paintings by Spanish artists, Luis d Vargas (1502-1568) and Diego Velazquez (1599-1660). I encouraged him to paint more hunting dogs in his portraits. David's work can be found in such places as the Federal Reserve and Philip Morris and in homes that appreciate fine artwork. You can link on to David's site at www.davidcochran.com Some people buy a painting that coordinates with a piece of furniture, David's paintings coordinate with your life!



OFF THE LEASH

Dear Luke:

Please help me with this dilemma. Our daughter wants to go hunting and as much as we have encouraged her to follow her two older brothers and take ballet she has insisted on getting a Golden Retriever puppy and wants to train it to hunt grouse. What do we do?

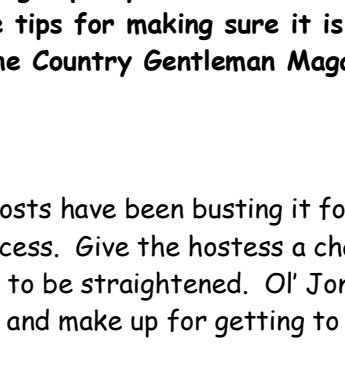
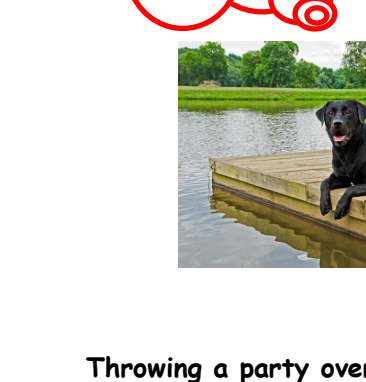
The Reeves, Binghamton, New York

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Reeves,

I am not sure I can help your sons as quickly as you would like. My instructional ballet DVD will not be out until sometime in the spring and it is for very advanced students of this form of dance.

Keep a leg up,
Luke

With the end of the year coming up, you may be looking for some tax deductible charities. Besides your church, some of my favorites are the [Patrick Henry Boys and Girls Home](#) in Brookneal, Virginia, the Nature Conservancy, the [U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance](#), the [Bird Dog Foundation](#), or the [VCU Massey Cancer Center](#).



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Throwing a party over the holiday season? Here are some tips for making sure it is a good one, from *The Country Gentleman Magazine*.

First, for the guests:

Never arrive early. Your hosts have been busting it for days to make sure what they have invited you to is a success. Give the hostess a chance to reapply makeup and straighten whatever needs to be straightened. Ol' Jones like to go to parties late, catch the good Scotch and make up for getting to the party late by leaving early.

Don't allow yourself to be, as a minister friend and mother to a great looking Golden Retriever, Maggie, says, "over served".

For the Host & Hostess:

Make sure room temperature is right. Adult beverages make bodies feel warmer and bodies warm a small room so watch the heat.

Make the rooms smell good but not overpowering. Spritzing the cocktail napkins with a mild scent is a nice touch.

Use flattering or soft lighting. This helps when the crowd may be a bit older. Candles can help give rooms a softer look and put older people in a more flattering light. Ol' Jones likes rooms that have the lighting of a medieval catholic church.

Make sure the canapés can be eaten in one bite. Nothing is more embarrassing when you bit into one of those things and have the rest of it crumble in your hands and fall on the floor. If you are not going to observe this tip make sure you have a bunch of Pomeranians or Yorkshire Terriers around to clean up the mess.

Looking for a decent, different wine to impress? Try a 2001 Quinta dos Aciprestes Reserva Tinto from Portugal. You don't really have to buy it to impress some one, just be able to say it.

Keep a leg up,
Luke



And speaking of parties, Realtor Magazine Online offers some great networking tips:
Dress professionally and accordingly
Arrive on time
Don't be afraid to introduce yourself by linking yourself with the hosts or the event. (But don't make your intro a canned speech)
Keep conversation light. You are there to build a relationship not close a sale.
Listen to the person you have just met to pick up a reason to speak to them after the party.
Try to find something you have in common with someone you have just met. For instance, if someone asks you, "Do you know that tall guy with the beard and the black lab hairs on his jacket hogging all the good Scotch and hovering over the hot crab dip?" Say, "No, do you?"

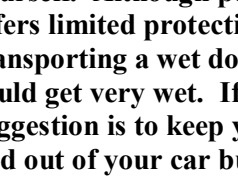
GET INVOLVED!!!



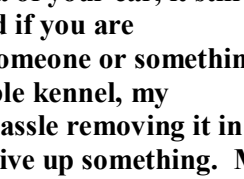
If you, like I, are a lover of both dogs and the outdoors, you may be interested to know the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) has received a number of complaints regarding the use of hunting dogs in Virginia.

Therefore the VDGIF will be looking into an issue that may impact any and all hunting sports using dogs. Foxhunting, bird hunting, beagling, duck hunting, just to name a few. You can get involved with this study by signing up for e-mail alerts by going to www.dgif.virginia.gov/houndhunting or e-mailing letters to HoundHunting@dgif.virginia.gov

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



YOU ASKED!



Dear Clarke,

My wife and I are doing more traveling with our dog now that we have learned from you how to find pet friendly hotels throughout the country. She insists that we get a dog guard to keep the dog in the rear of our vehicle and not get dog hair on the seats. I want the dog to ride up front with me. What do you suggest?

Mike W. Powhatan, VA

Dear Mike,

The safety of your dog when traveling in your car should be a primary concern. Some form of restraint should be considered in case there is an accident or a sudden stop. You don't want to pitch your pooch around in your car and injury it or yourself. Although pet guards keep your dog in a smaller area of your car, it still offers limited protection to your dog in case of an accident and if you are transporting a wet dog and it begins to shake water off itself someone or something could get very wet. If your vehicle will accommodate a portable kennel, my suggestion is to keep your pet in it while driving. It can be a hassle removing it in and out of your car but for everything you get, you've got to give up something. My dog often rides up front with me but is not allowed on the seat. This is not what I recommend doing but I often travel alone and it is important he knows where we are going because some nights he has to drive us home.

Go well,
Clarke

Dear Clarke,

My wife and two kids are planning a trip to Montana and may take our Golden Retriever. My parents live just outside of Chicago so we are stopping off there for a short visit. My mother has allergies so I need to find a place to keep my dog. Also my wife and mother aren't on best of terms. I need to take my wife and kids some place special for allowing the in-law visit and the hassle of taking my best buddy with us. Can you recommend something that will make this trip memorable?

Richard T. Richmond, VA

Dear Richard,

Luke would say to make this trip memorable, leave the wife and kids at home and bird hunt your way to Montana. However, I believe I can help. First book your family in to the brand new Westin in Lombard, Illinois. It just opened in August and they love dogs. Your wife and kids can shop and see the town while you visit the folks. Then when you are in Montana reserve one of the cabins at the [Paws Up Resort](#) about 30 minutes northeast of Missoula. Don't let the word cabin throw you off. They are wonderful. Your family can horseback ride, fly fish, shoot sporting clays, and your wife can go to the spa. Believe me it will be Special but will cost a lot less than Luke's idea.

Go well,
Clarke

Dear Clarke,

I have met this really special girl and would like to do something very romantic for her at Christmas. What do you suggest?

Mark J. Midlothian, VA

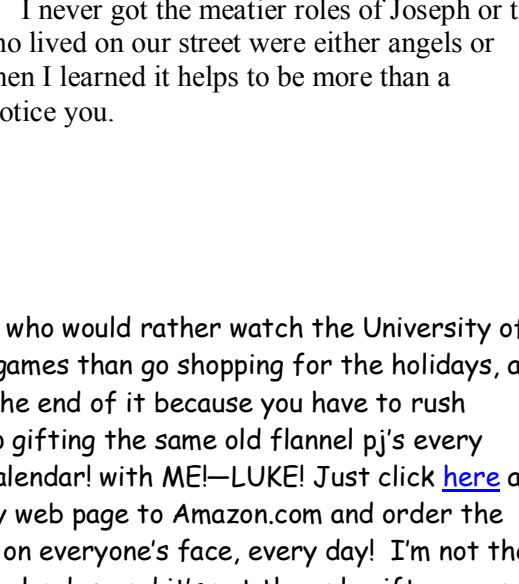
Dear Mark,

Rent a limo and take her to see the Christmas lights around Richmond. While on the tour stop off at the Jefferson Hotel to look at the Christmas trees, have a cocktail, and give her a small early Christmas present. She really won't care how expensive it is but will be thrilled you thought about her in that way. If things go well, you could make it a tradition to meet every Christmas Eve at the Jefferson. Really special girls will think this is really special—at least for a little while.

Go well,
Clarke

THE LAST WORD...

Most of you are smack dab in the middle of holiday preparations; hanging lights, trimming the tree, going to Christmas pageants and parties, trying to find that special something for someone or that special someone for something. It can be a fun but maddening time that seems to be over too soon when things are going RIGHT in our lives or we are almost glad when it's over if things are not.



Smithfield Christmas Parade 2007

I remember as a child wonderful Christmas Eves when I couldn't sleep and awoke before dawn on Christmas morning. Some Christmas mornings my brothers and sister and I had to wait up stairs because Santa "hadn't come yet" meaning my exhausted parents hadn't finished wrapping presents. We would be clumped together at the top of the stairs waiting for a signal from our parents and like the bulls of Pamplona, rush downstairs to the den only to be hit square in the eyes by the blinding lights thrown at us from the six bulb movie camera my father used each Christmas to record us walking like quick-footed robots to the fireplace where the stockings were hung.

This climatic event of Christmas morning was preceded several nights before by displaying our ability as thespians in the Christmas pageant at our church. The Jones boys were always cast as shepherds. My brothers and I always got new bathrobes around the first of December. I remember one year we all were given robes that looked like Hugh Hefner's smoking jacket. The shepherds took on a rather rakish look that year. In my debut as a shepherd, I uttered the stirring words from Luke 2:15 "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us" and was forever type-casted. I never got the meatier roles of Joseph or the Wise Men. The two pretty Harris girls who lived on our street were either angels or Mary. It was at the tender age of 6 or 7 when I learned it helps to be more than a shepherd to get the good-looking girls to notice you.

Go well,
Clarke

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P.S. For those of you who would rather watch the University of Richmond basketball games than go shopping for the holidays, and then you never hear the end of it because you have to rush around and you end up gifting the same old flannel pj's every year—how about—a calendar! with ME!—LUKE! Just click [here](#) and you can go through my web page to Amazon.com and order the gift that puts a smile on everyone's face, every day! I'm not the only Black Lab in the calendar, and it's not the only gift you can get lickity-split from Amazon, so take a gander and maybe you'll get kissed without having to stand under that plastic mistletoe again this year!

Keep a leg up,
Luke