

FAMILY



PARENTS UNITE AFTER MURDERS
Group lets members express unique pain.



MARK HAMILL USES THE FORCE
Former Luke Skywalker networks at Cannes.



DIVE IN, THE READING IS FINE—MEET CREATURES FROM THE DEEP
Gulf oil emergency reminds us not to take our Earth's water, or its mysteries, for granted.

MOVIES >> D2

BOOK COLUMN >> D2

LOSS >> D6

Google finalist shares dreams

STUDENT IS LITERALLY FLYING HIGH TODAY, BUT KEEPING EYE ON FUTURE

BY LAURA MOYER
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Last Friday was Google T-shirt Day at Thornburg Middle School in Spotsylvania.

Students and teachers planned to wear the shirts in support of Ryan Watson's big achievement—he's a finalist in a national doodle-4Google art contest whose winner will be announced this week.

But on T-shirt day, Ryan, a 14-year-old eighth grader, showed up at school wearing something else.

He explained that he'd worn the T-shirt earlier in the week when his mom took him for a celebratory cheeseburger. And that morning, as Ryan got out the shirt to iron it, he noticed that there was still a blot of cheeseburger on the front.

Wait, as he got out the shirt to iron it?

"Yes ma'am," Ryan said with a smile.

Ryan is a member of the Young Marines, an organization he cheerfully describes as "Boy Scouts on steroids." He's in the Fredericksburg chapter, named after Lance Cpl. Caleb J.

SEE GOOGLE, PAGE D2

HISTORY >> BLACK SCHOOL HAS RICH LEGACY

Look back with graduates

Marion Woodfork Simmons regrets that she didn't start working on a book about Union High School 10 years ago.

Caroline County's black high school operated from 1903 to 1969, and so many of the graduates and faculty have since passed on, she said.

Still, the Maryland woman, whose ancestors hailed from Caroline County, has spoken with dozens of people from the Union High community.

Though each of their stories is unique, she said, all have spoken of the teachers' commitment to their charges and the

students' resolve to succeed despite the obstacles posed by segregation.

The book is a work in progress and doesn't have a publication date just yet. In the meantime, some of Simmons' subjects agreed to share their stories with us. Simmons said she's found their tales inspirational and hopes readers of her book will feel the same way.

"I want to document the history and also people's memories," she said. "It's just a joy to talk to these people."

Read their stories below and on page D6.

—Edie Gross

THE SERIES



YESTERDAY: Former Caroline high school has long and proud pre-integration history.

TODAY: Some of Union High's graduates share their memories.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT A. MARTIN / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

JEANETTA ROCK LEE, CLASS OF 1952

Jeanetta Rock was relaxing on a bench at Virginia State University when two of her Union High home economics teachers—on campus for a workshop—spied the freshman and stopped to talk.

They were soon joined by Christopher C. Lee, who had been Rock's biology teacher at the Caroline County high school.

Eventually, the home economics teachers walked on. But Lee, who couldn't have entertained the thought of asking Rock out when she was his student, hung around.

"I fell madly in love," recalled Rock Lee, 76, who married her former science teacher after her freshman year and ultimately returned to Union High School as

a secretary in 1960.

She remembers the staff being intimately involved in their students' lives. For instance, her home economics teachers had helped her secure a job at Virginia State the summer before her freshman year.

And her husband spent his weekends trying to provide for his students.

"On any given Sunday evening during the time when they were having fundraisers, the teachers would go around and make personal house calls," said Rock Lee. "They would go from house to house asking for donations in order to see that the students

SEE LEE, BACK PAGE



KATE HUTCHINSON SAMUELS, CLASS OF 1950

Kate Hutchinson Samuels and her neighbors used to walk a mile just to get to the Union High School bus stop.

Sometimes a school bus carrying white kids would drive by.

"Their bus would go right on past us. They would spit on us," she recalled.

She and her friends got even one day by collecting swamp water in a crayon box and launching it through the windows of that bus.

"If you wanted to get an education, you could," she said. "But we had to go through a lot."

For the most part, she recalls, discipline wasn't much of an issue among Union High students.

Small infractions like cutting class landed you on the "chain gang," which picked up litter on campus. Hutchinson Samuels, 78, managed to avoid that, though she had a close call.

"The principal almost caught me chewing gum, and I swallowed it," she said. "He made me open my hands and my mouth."

Once, she said, a pressure cooker exploded in home economics class after the teacher stepped out for a moment.

"I was heading for the door," said Hutchinson Samuels, who, in



Union student Kate Hutchinson is pictured in 1946.

spite of that, learned to cook and went to work at a Richmond restaurant after graduation.

She later married classmate Percy Samuels and returned to Union High in 1968 to work in its cafeteria.

What she remembers most about Union was the camaraderie.

"Everybody worked together," she said. "Just like a family."



Jeanetta Rock Lee enjoyed student days (top row) and professional days (bottom row) at Union High School.

YOU CAN VOTE

The public can vote on students' Google logos until 8 tonight.

Go to: google.com/doodle4google

Click on "regional finalists."

Click on "grades 7-9."

Click on "region 3" to cast your vote for Ryan's logo.

GET THIS

you tell us HAS DAD OFFERED WILD ADVICE?

For a light-hearted look at Father's Day, we'd like to hear about the funniest, craziest or most absurd advice your father—or father-like figure—ever offered you.

Include your name and contact information and send items to egross@freelancestar.com or Edie Gross at 616 Amelia St., Fredericksburg, Va. 22401. Submissions must be received by June 10.

UNION: 'With limited resources, we succeeded in the face of all that,' grads say

FROM PAGE D1



PHOTOS BY ROBERT A. MARTIN / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

IRENE QUASH FIELDS, CLASS OF 1947

The Quash family's oldest children would have liked to have attended Union High School.

But the family lived in Dawn, and there was no bus to take the kids to the school in Bowling Green.

So the oldest daughter went to live with an aunt in New York, where she could go to school, and two sons simply went to work.

This didn't sit well with their father, William Quash, who himself had a sixth-grade education. He and two of his neighbors, Wortham Fields Sr. and Lewis Tillman, lobbied the Caroline County School Board for a bus.

"They decided they'd had enough and the children had to go to school," said Irene Quash Fields, the seventh of Quash's 10 children.

The School Board responded with a challenge. If the families could secure a chassis, the county would provide the bus's body. But the families would need to pick up the body in North Carolina.

"I'm sure they figured nobody was going to do it," said Quash Fields.

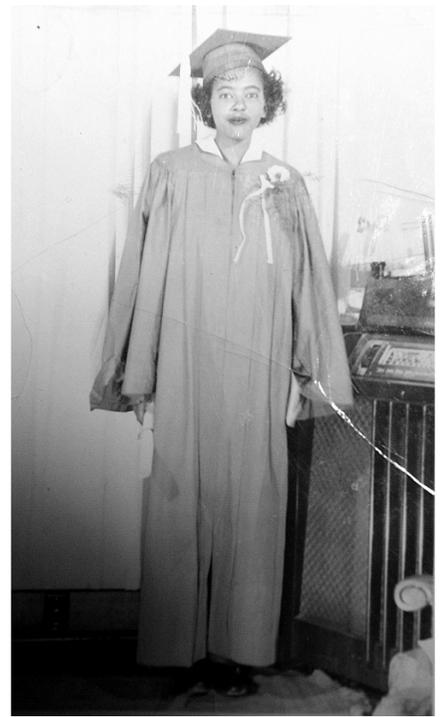
They didn't know Wortham Fields Sr. He purchased a chassis, strapped several milk crates to it for seats and drove the open-air contraption down to North Carolina to pick up the top, creating Union High's first bus.

Irene Quash later married his son, Thomas Fields.

"I figured if his father had all this resolve, I was going to nab his son," she said, laughing. "I figured he had something to offer."

After graduating from Union High School, Quash Fields went to Virginia State and then City College of New York, where she studied sociology and social work.

Her seven grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren tease her for "always push-



Irene Quash—later Fields—graduates from Union High School, Class of 1947.

ing school."

But Quash Fields, who has a master's degree in social work, said it's important for young people to aim high, something she learned from her own parents and her Union High teachers.

"Segregation didn't bother us because it was all we knew," she said. "With limited resources, we succeeded in the face of all that. It was the dedication of the teachers and the resolve of the student body to make it, 'in spite of.'"

WILLIAM J. BRAWNER, CLASS OF 1966

Union High School band instructor Blonnie Tipton needed a volunteer.

"She came to class one day and said, 'I need someone to play the sousaphone.' I had no idea what she was talking about," said former student William J. Brawner, who agreed to take on the tuba. "I thought I was playing in the circus."

Tipton, like a lot of Union's teachers, was a perfectionist, said Brawner. As a result, the band often bested groups from bigger, urban schools, regularly placing first at state competitions.

"There was so much pride. It was competitive," said Brawner, 63. "You wanted to be the best."

Raising money for instruments, uniforms and travel expenses was no easy task. Brawner recalls tying light bulbs to the front of his bicycle and pedaling door-to-door in rural Caroline, dogs nipping at

his heels, so he could sell them as a school fundraiser.

He loved the band experience so much that he majored in music education at Howard University, going on to serve as the school's assistant marching band director and, later, the business manager of Howard's College of Fine Arts.

Brawner said he owes some of his success in life to the encouragement he received from Union High's dedicated teachers.

"We'll never be able to pay them for all they sacrificed and did for us in a rural community," he said. "God's commandments are that we love our God and love thy neighbor as thyself, and the teachers, they loved the students. If there was a foundation given through their educational expertise, it was love. They loved teaching the kids, and we loved back."



JEANETTA ROCK LEE, Continued

FROM PAGE D1

were exposed to things they normally wouldn't have due to lack of funding."

Her husband worked at Union High School for 18 years, then worked for the Social Security Administration before becoming a

minister. He passed away last year.

The school community—students, graduates, teachers, staff and parents—was close-knit, she said. Teachers like her husband had high expectations because they knew, with a little support, the

kids could meet them.

"When we didn't live up to their expectations, they didn't look down on you. They reached out and helped," she said. "They were just genuinely interested in the children. They were *their* children."

UNION HIGH SCHOOL

Maryland resident Marion Woodfork Simmons, whose ancestors are from Caroline County, is working on a book about Union High School, the county's African-American high school for nearly 70 years.

Simmons is interested in talking to people who attended or worked at the school. She can be reached at 301/549-3659, by e-mail at marion@woodforkgenealogy.com or by mail at P.O. Box 505, Burtonsville, Md. 20866.

Parents of murder victims are helping each other

BY CORINA KNOLL
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES—Here is the woman whose daughter-in-law is accused of stabbing her son to death and smothering her two grandchildren. And there is the mother who discovered her daughter's body inside the family van.

They gather for a meeting of a club no one aspires to join. They are Parents Of Murdered Children.

The only agenda here is to share—what it's like to wait for a break in the case, for a killer to be arrested, for a trial to begin, for a parole board to meet. Share whatever.

PROCESSING UNTHINKABLE

"A lot of times you get the feeling that people think you should've done something to protect them in some way," offers Jan Williams.

Williams' son Neal, 27, was stabbed more than 90 times inside his Rowland Heights, Calif., home in 2007. His sons Devon, 7, and Ian, 3, were suffocated, detectives said. Awaiting trial for all

three homicides is Neal's wife, Manling Williams, 27.

Since the killings, stress drove Jan Williams to take a 12-week medical leave from her job during which she learned her position had been eliminated. She has wrestled with depression and endured descriptions at hearings.

"I've noticed she looks to see if I'm there," Williams, 52, says of her daughter-in-law. "Being a stubborn person, I'm always there. But you have to key yourself up to go to these. I think they'll go on long enough until it kills me bit by bit."

"You've gotta be strong," says Rozie Lindorfer, 56. "Fight till the end. Fight for them."

It's been nearly four years since Lindorfer's son Orlando was shot. The 25-year-old was walking to a friend's house after his car broke down on the 105 Freeway. Someone shot him twice in the back of the head. Police have no suspects.

Lindorfer and her husband Steve—Orlando's stepfa-



RICARDO DEARATANHA / LOS ANGELES TIMES

Grieving mother Jeanette Chavez addresses a California chapter of Parents of Murdered Children support group.

ther—are tired of people telling them to be grateful they have one son left.

"They love you differently, they speak your name differently," she says, voice quivering. "I never knew the difference until one was gone."

NO ILLNESS, NO ACCIDENT

Murder, this group has learned, is a special kind of death. Murder means there

was no illness, no accident, no forces beyond anyone's control. It means there is someone to blame, although no promise of punishment. With murder, mourning mingling with calls from reporters, funerals delayed by autopsies and glacial legal processes.

Justice, if it ever comes, will never be enough. It won't change the unnatural order that keeps you up at night.

After the shock, the funeral, the memorials, people around you want to hear that you have moved on.

"It wasn't a subject people could easily be around," recalls Robert Hullinger, who founded Parents Of Murdered Children with his wife in Cincinnati. Their daughter was beaten with a hammer by an ex-boyfriend in 1978. Their need to talk seemed to make people uncomfortable, even family members.

The Hullingers attended a group for parents whose children had died, but discovered murder led to heartache of a different shade.

SOLICE IN EACH OTHER

Today, Parents Of Murdered Children has dozens of chapters, about 100,000 members and an annual conference. The group is a source of information on how to deal with authorities and attorneys and how to exercise rights as a victim.

Members attend one another's hearings, and e-mail reminders are circulated

when a member is dealing with the anniversary of a death or a child's birthday or facing a trial.

"It makes me feel good that I'm not alone," says Luz Ruiz, whose 23-year-old son was shot at a party in 2005.

A single mother, she adopted the grandson left behind. Seven-year-old Robert sees a therapist but still cries in bed. Quiero a mi papi. Ruiz, 54, weeps when she hears the words.

I miss my daddy.

Ruiz recently threw a birthday party for Robert and his father, who would have been 27. Throughout the day, group members stopped by or texted her. She calls the members her family, the meetings her oasis.

"It's the only place I feel safe to say and do whatever I want without worrying I'm going to hurt someone."

Withholding judgment is part of the chapter's motto. How you feel is how you feel.