

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012

INSIDENOVA weekly

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**Looking
back**

Photos on page 10



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5 THINGS TO CLICK

1



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More than 18,700 of your neighbors 'Like' our Facebook page. It's the place to ask questions, share information and get the latest on what's happening in Northern Virginia. You're invited to connect with us and be part of the conversation at www.facebook.com/insidenova.

2

KEEP US POSTED

Do you have a story for us? How about an announcement from your church, school or community group? Submit your own news on InsideNoVa.com. It's free and easy. Go to events.insidenova.com and follow the prompts. Please be sure to notify us at least 10 days prior to your scheduled event.

3



GET A PET

Dogs, cats, rabbits, birds and more creatures are available for adoption at the Manassas and Prince William County shelters. See pictures of them every week at insidenova.com/pets. It's your source for pet news, photos and advice from nationally known experts and local columnists.

4

CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Got something you're trying to sell? Are you looking to buy something at a bargain price? Need a job? A car? How about a new place to live? The InsideNoVa Network's classified ads have all that and more. Go to insidenova.com/classifieds.

5

MILITARY NEWS

The InsideNoVa Network includes newspapers and websites for two major military installations, the Army's Fort Belvoir and Marine Corps Base



For sale: History, mystery

Mary Ann Ridge takes a photograph in Occoquan Bay of the tiny island she owns, which she is hoping to sell. Ridge took a boat ride to the island with realtor Gail Peterman and Capt. Mark Peterman on his Rivershore Charters boat on Feb. 1.

Will someone spend \$477,000 for this island?

BY AILEEN M. STRENG
astreng@insidenova.com

A little speck of an island in the middle of the Occoquan Bay — a quarter-acre with a few scrawny trees and a duck blind — is now on the market for the bargain price of \$477,000.

Well, perhaps not a bargain since Prince William County assessed its value at \$2.500.

But its owner, Mary Ann Ridge, of Lorton, remains optimistic that there is someone willing to pay her asking price.

"To some folks, including myself, that's a lot of money to pay for a small, little island. However, for some people, it's not," she said. "Who's to say that somebody just wants to say 'I own an island.' It would be a feather in their cap."

Ridge and her ex-husband bought it from his grandparents, William and May Howard, in 2000 for \$10,000. She got it as a result of the divorce and said she is selling it now because she needs the money.

"It's my hope and my prayer



ELIZA HERRANDEZ/INSIDENOVA WEEKLY

that it will attract somebody who wants to have a unique piece of property that also has some interesting history," she said.

The island dates back to the 1600s and was visited by Capt.

John Smith, if you believe county land records.

Or, it was manmade sometime in the 1920s, if you believe local lore.

While it's tiny, area boaters and



ONLINE

Check out Sunday's News and Messenger and InsideNoVa.com for more detailed information on our research into the history of the island. You can also watch a video of a trip to the island on InsideNoVa.com/weekly

fishermen know where it is. It also can be seen from Featherstone Road in Woodbridge.

Local residents refer to it as Rock Island, Smoot Island, Spider Island and even Duck Blind Island. The Ridges called it Pap's Island, after William Howard.

Mark Perry, captain of the Miss Rivershore, a 50-foot commercial pontoon boat, recently took Ridge and her real estate agent out to see it.

It was Ridge's first visit in seven years.

"When the pier was there we

See ISLAND, Page 8



ABOVE: Mary Ann Ridge (center) takes a boat ride to her island with realtor Gail Peterman and Capt. Mark Peterman on his Rivershore Charters boat on Feb. 1. BELOW: Ridge is hoping to sell the small island in Occoquan Bay, which is known by many names, but called Holiday Island in county records.

PHOTOS BY JEFF MANKIE/NEWS & MESSENGER



Island

From Page 1

used to dock up to it and just hang out, enjoying the peace and quiet," she said.

As the Miss Rivershore approached the island during the recent trip, Ridge's excitement grew.

"I am so thrilled to see it," she said. "Thank God it hasn't been wiped out. It's a very unique piece of property in a wildlife sanctuary."

During the ride out from Occoquan to the island and back, Perry pointed out about six bald eagles, an osprey, ducks and other waterfowl.

While the island is known by many names, county records call it Holiday Island.

The oldest transfer of the island's deed at the county courthouse is dated 1947 and states "Holiday Island, being part of the island which in the Colonial Days (about 1651) was known as 'Dogue' or 'Doags Island.'"

Dogue Island is where it is believed that Smith encountered the Indian town of Tauxenent.

Occoquan Mayor Earnie

Porta wrote a book on the history of the town and the Occoquan River. He studied the work done by Fairfax County archeologist Michael Johnson on Smith's exploration of the area. It indicates Smith met the Indians closer to Mason Neck in what is now Fairfax County.

"So, Holiday Island is almost certainly not the Dogue Island mentioned in the 1650s," Porta said.

Perry shared with Ridge what he had heard about the island's history.

"Local lore is that [a lawyer or judge] hired a barge and went out there and started dumping rock, got the rock up to the level it was out of the water and then brought another barge out there with a cement mixer and started pouring a little jetty on the south side of it," Perry said.

"I understand that it was once a government perk and J. Edgar Hoover used to duck hunt on it," Ridge said.

"Another rumor is that Teddy Roosevelt was part of the reason the island was constructed," Perry said.

Other residents credit a Alexandria man who owned a sand and gravel company for creating the island in the 1920s.

They also said some of the stories tying the island to presidents and government officials are likely being confused with St. Catherine's Island, south of Colonial Beach.

No matter its origins, the island is now on the market and Ridge remains anxious to sell it.

"Every day I am thinking of different ways to market it to people who have the money to buy something like this, people who have

HOOPS FEST 17

BENEFITTING TREVOR BLANE

Where Prince William's best high school athletes shoot for a cause.

Hoops Fest is an annual event sponsored by the Insidenova Network that raises money for families in need in Prince William County by bringing together the area's top high school boys and girls basketball players for a night of various skills competitions. Hoops Fest started in 1996 when Woodbridge High School hosted the event. That night, \$4,000 was raised to help Lee Thompson Jr. who needed prosthetics on both his legs after coming down with spinal meningitis.

Since then, Hoops Fest has raised over \$110,000 for families in need in Prince William

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bringing together the area's top high school boys and girls basketball players for a night of various skills competitions. Hoops Fest started in 1996 when Woodbridge High School hosted the event. That night, \$4,000 was raised to help Lee Thompson Jr., who needed prosthetics on both his legs after coming down with spinal meningitis.

Since then, Hoops Fest has raised over \$110,000 for families in need in Prince William County. Last year, the event was held at Hylton High School and raised an event-record \$13,100 for Hylton graduate Josh Himan.

HYLTON HIGH SCHOOL

Wednesday, March 14th at 7:00 P.M.
Doors open at 5:30 ■ Tickets: \$10

NO PRESALE FOR TICKETS.
ID REQUIRED AT THE ADMISSION GATE
TO GAIN ENTRANCE.

CAN'T ATTEND? YOU CAN STILL CONTRIBUTE.
Donations to Hoops Fest can be mailed to
the News & Messenger (please make checks
payable to Hoops Fest)
ATTN: Linda Perwin | PO Box 431
Manassas, VA 20108



This year, all proceeds will be donated to Trevor Blake, a 10-year-old Woodbridge resident who on Aug. 14, 2007 was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Trevor has battled through five rounds of chemotherapy and two stem cell transplants. The money raised will go to Trevor and his family to help defray medical expenses. Even though he is battling, he still takes time to help out his fellow cancer patients with visits to hospitals bearing a treasure chest of toys through his non-profit organization Trevor's Treasures.

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the stories tying the island to presidents and government officials are likely being confused with St. Catherine's Island, south of Colonial Beach.

No matter its origins, the island is now on the market and Ridge remains anxious to sell it.

"Every day I am thinking of different ways to market it to people who have the money to buy something like this, people who have cash," she said.

Since the island is priced far above its assessed value, it is unlikely someone could get a loan to buy it.

While it's only been on the market since December, Ridge has gotten two offers on it.

The second was double the first. Ridge declined to say how much, but she is holding out at this point for her asking price.

"The reason I priced it at that amount is a matter of faith," she said. "My ex-husband owes me that amount so that is what it is worth to me. If I get that, it would be wonderful. This really is all about faith."

For more information about Holiday Island, contact Gail Peterman at gpeterman@verizon.net or 703-978-9400.

Staff writer Aileen M. Streng can be reached at 703-530-3907.