

Local & State

Business

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Jeff Markie-Staff Photographer

Above and below: Gail and Dean Niedemhofer have been restoring their home, Park Gate, in Nokesville since they moved in 20 years ago. The house is now listed on the state's register of historic places and will soon be featured in the magazine Old House Journal.

THIS OLD HOUSE

Restored Tidewater-style house ready to meet the reading public

By MIKE FUCHS
Staff Writer

NOKESVILLE — It's hard to picture what the house once owned by George Washington's niece looked like when Gail Niedemhofer and her husband Dean decided to restore the place in 1975. The windows were boarded up, ivy,

honeysuckle, litter and farm equipment obscured the view of the house. There was no running water, plumbing, central heat or electricity.

During the unusually harsh winter of 1976, the couple's then 12-year-old daughter Laura discovered a snow drift in her bedroom because the weather boards were warped.

"My Mother's Day present was a functioning toilet," Gail said laughing. And let's not forget the rats.

The couple said they awoke one night because they heard strange thumping noises in the kitchen. They crept down the stairs, turned the flashlight off and waited for the noise to resume.

When it did, they flicked the light back on only to discover huge rats nudging potatoes off the kitchen table onto the hardwood floor. The critter convoy then nosed the potatoes to their basement hide-away.

Gail, 63, said the rat problem was difficult to deal with. "There were days when we said 'we've lost our minds,'" said Gail, who retired as a corporate liaison director with the Department of Education.

It got so bad that the couple organized a "rat shoot," inviting neighbors to come over with their guns.

"We got them by the dozen," said Dean Niedemhofer, 69, who retired as a Department of Transportation automotive engineer in 1980.

While searching for other methods of eradication at an area library, Dean came

U.S. not ready for bioterror doctors lead

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

ARLINGTON — It will fall to doctors — not the military or police — to recognize when bioterrorists have struck and to react in time to stop thousands of Americans from getting sick or dying, experts told the first medical conference on the danger Tuesday.

Imagine a truck driving by a football stadium during a fall game. It sprays a mist that drifts over the stadium. Nobody notices.

Two days later, hundreds show up with sniffles and fevers that doctors believe is the flu. But five days later 300 people are dead before a local scientist solves the mystery: It's not flu, it's anthrax.

Johns Hopkins University used that fictional scenario to tell doctors that the danger is real — and the nation isn't yet ready to handle it.

"To remain unprepared is to invite disaster," said Hopkins' Dr. D.A. Henderson, who led the world's eradication of smallpox and now is mobilizing health workers and the government against bioterrorism.

Policy-makers know how to

respond almost immediately to outbreaks of the disease. The problem is that more than 100,000 people are killed each year by anthrax, so the real, so-called biological terrorism is not a matter of if, but when.

"We must be ready to respond to a biological attack," Henderson said. "We must be ready to respond to a biological attack," Henderson said. "We must be ready to respond to a biological attack," Henderson said.

A bioterrorist attack is highly unlikely, but it is the worst case scenario.

Rector of U of Va is asked to

Stance on Clinch Valley

WISE (AP) — The Wise County Board of Supervisors has unanimously called for the resignation of University of Virginia Rector John Ackery for opposing the use of the U.Va. name in its Wise branch.

"It is the sense of this board that the rector of the University of Virginia did not give leadership in this matter consistent with the wishes of the people," the board said in the resolution asking Gov. James S. Gilmore III to seek Ackery's resignation.

The board's action came last week after the state Senate and House of Delegates passed identical bills calling for Clinch Valley College to be named the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

Ackery's resignation was announced March 10. In a letter to the board, Ackery said he would not support the name change. He said the name change would be a disservice to the community and the state. Some board members called the name change a "disgrace" and said they would support a resolution to remove Ackery from the board.



Historic Homes

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Hunters kill more bear, fewer deer

ROANOKE (AP) — Virginia's hunters killed far fewer deer and turkey this past season than the previous fall and winter, but they bagged a record number of black

deer kill wasn't cause for alarm because the decline in the number of female deer killed was disproportionately large.

The doe harvest dropped from

shot in areas where deer populations are declining faster than desired.

The decline in the 1998 fall turkey harvest was expected and



ary School in Dale City is getting ready to celebrate with a celebration March 13 from 1 to 5 p.m. Faculty and staff alumni are invited to school at (703) 670-4444.

Reunions seek members for reunions

and military veterans reunion and luncheon. Send self-addressed, stamped envelope to Box 130327, Sunrise, Fla. 33313, for registration.

Division Association Spring Fling, April 8-11. Shirley Gossett, (927) 898-5977 or write: 5459 Northcutt Place, Dayton, Ohio 45414.

destroyer reunion, DD731, 622, 168, Sept. 8-11. Cliff Gillespie, (714) 960-5283; 215 Wichita, Huntington Beach, Calif. 926648; e-mail: cgillespie@comcast.com.

Meals at Vietnam Veterans meeting

Vietnam Veterans of America Inc., meets at Harbor's Restaurant, 262D Cedar Lane, Cedar Rapids, Vienna, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

is Greg Mann, director of Research and Development, War/Missing Personnel Office, who will coordinate the operations to recover and identify the remains of servicemen from World War II, Korean and Vietnam. Call (703) 255-0353.

Historical Society meets Thursday

County Historical Society meets Thursday at Stafford County Administrative Center, 1000 N. Main St., Leesville, Va. A faculty member from Mary Washington College is presiding and restoring historic landmarks.

call Derval Brown, (540) 373-8195.

Recruiting a volunteer in the local area

William Area Agency on Aging urgently needs volunteers to assist frail and socially isolated elderly persons on Friday during the day. There is a waiting list of people to be visited. Two male volunteers available for the day are particularly needed.

are matched with seniors in their area who are socially isolated and may have chronic health problems. Volunteers establish friendships with the seniors on a weekly basis. The visits are scheduled on the volunteer and senior. A one-hour commitment for one year is required. Training is provided. Call (703) 92-7662.

needed to deliver noontime meals to homebound throughout Prince William County. Volunteers are needed on a weekly or biweekly basis. Meals are delivered to the Woodbridge Senior Center on Church Lane, Manassas Senior Care Center on Mosby Street and at the seniors. One and a half to two hours delivered. Training is provided. Meals are not delivered on holidays or during inclement weather. Call (703) 369-5292.

volunteers are needed to assist teachers in English, Language, General Education Development classes. Volunteers will work with all age groups and no experience is necessary. Classes are weekdays and evenings in various locations throughout the Prince William area and the city of Fairfax. Call (703) 369-5292.

Center, 4-H Therapeutic Equestrian Program

its 1999 riding and hippotherapy classes. Volunteers are needed to support the work of therapists and physical therapists during sessions with horses and the disabled is welcome but prospective volunteers must be 14 years old. Call (703) 369-5292.

League of Northern Virginia meets

League of Northern Virginia, made up of Loudoun, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William counties, is having its third organizational meeting at Chantilly Library, on the corner of U.S. 50. For details call Linda Pool, (703) 369-5292.

School in Dale City is getting ready to celebrate 30 years

School in Dale City is getting ready to celebrate with a celebration March 13 from 1 to 5 p.m. Faculty and staff alumni are invited to school at (703) 670-4444.

Fire department spring bazaar

Volunteer Fire Department Auxiliary is planning a spring bazaar from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 13 at the Fire Hall, 1000 N. Main St., Leesville, Va. Call (703) 670-4444.

Classes scheduled by heart association

Heart Association is giving adult cardiopulmonary classes March 13 at the Hillendale Community Center, 13511 Hillendale Drive in Dale City. Classes, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Call (703) 369-5292.

which 4,000 law enforcement agencies erected checkpoints and ticketed drivers who were not wearing seat belts. They also broke a three-year trend in which national seat belt

Restored house ready to meet reading public

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across an old chemical formula of corn meal and plaster of Paris, which supposedly would kill the rodents without harming pets and wildlife. Gail said she substituted dry muffin mix for the corn meal.

Between the compound and the hunt, the rats eventually went away, and the couple gradually transformed the dilapidated structure into an elegant landmark that recently caught the attention of a national magazine.

The Old House Journal, based in Gloucester, Mass., will feature the Tidewater-style house in its upcoming bimonthly edition in March.

Mary Ellen Polson, the magazine's senior editor, said the publication in 1977 printed a letter that Gail wrote describing the couple's daunting restoration efforts.

"Here was an opportunity to look ahead 20 years and see what it really took for the house to be restored," Polson said. "It's a real testament to their hardheadedness and perseverance to finish."

The house, with its long, triangle-shaped roof and six dormers, two wide brick chimneys and a spacious front porch, sits on 41 acres of property that offers sweeping views of the rural Nokesville area.

Because the couple wanted the house to resemble its original appearance, they replaced the withered siding with redwood milled in Vancouver, British Columbia, and delivered by rail car.

The leaky tin roof, not original to the home, was replaced with shingles made of cedar.

The window trim was painted slate-blue gray while the siding was painted a biscuit-color. The shutters were painted the color of chocolate.

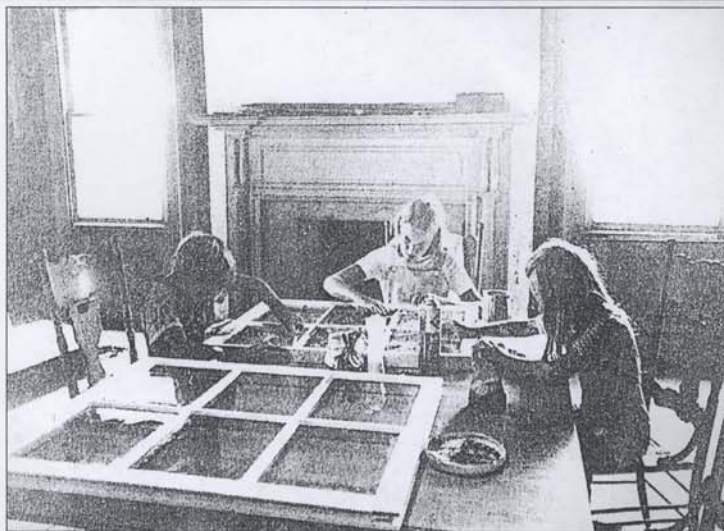
Inside, the living room is decorated with furnishings including a Victorian-style couch made of ornately carved walnut.

"It's lovely," Gail said of the house, which has come a long way since the couple were fending off rats in the 1970s. "Very peaceful."

An office down the hallway

seat belts themselves are more likely to leave their children unbuckled. Car accidents are the No. 1 killer of children 14 and under.

"If we know what's killing our kids and we're not applying



In a picture circa 1977, the children of Gail and Dean Niederhofer glaze the windows of their home, Park Gate. The house is fully restored after 20 years of work and is listed on Virginia's register of historic places.

was once used as an operating room during the Civil War. The property changed hands between the North and South five times during the Civil War.

A spare bedroom across the hall was once used by slaves to serve food.

Although steeped in Civil War history, Gail is quick to point out the house was around before the United States even existed.

The house, called Park Gate, may have been built between 1734 and 1750, according to history books. The couple believe it was erected earlier, but they can't prove it.

Col. Thomas Lee, eldest son of Richard Henry Lee, signer of the Declaration of Independence, lived there from 1790 to 1805. During the war, Thomas Lee carried secret documents back and forth between his father and Arthur Lee, the American envoy in France.

He was also an aide-de-camp to George Washington and, at one time, practiced law in Dumfries.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, Thomas Lee was forced into early retirement after contracting an illness that ultimately killed him.

His wife Mildred Washington, niece of George Washington,

percent after Thanksgiving.

In surveys completed by the same firm in 1994 and 1996, the safety administration found seat belt usage to be 58.9 percent and 61 percent, respectively.



Gail Niederhofer stands on the porch of a restored Tidewater-style home in Nokesville.

died in 1796 and is buried in a cemetery abutting the property.

According to Lee's will, Gail said, 11 house slaves served on the plantation. The slave quarters, which featured a roomy fireplace, where pots were hung and food was prepared, was refurbished as a parking garage.

Commemorative plaques hung on a porch wall also tell the story of how Park Gate has been recognized locally and nationally as a historic landmark.

Park Gate is registered with the Prince William County Historical Society, the Virginia State Register of Historic

Places, the National Register of Historic Places and the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Inventory.

In 1993, the Elizabeth McIntosh Hammill Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution held a ceremony at the house and installed a plaque describing its history.

"We feel a real sense of gratitude that we could save something really important," Gail said, standing next to the house with her husband on a sun-drenched afternoon. "This was an opportunity to save something that people used to say 'don't bother saving.'"

Doctors learn U.S. not ready for Bioterrorism

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and smallpox, which are highly deadly and can be manipulated into weapons that victims inhale.

A more likely scenario is small attacks, said former National Security Council member Jessica Stern. Americans already have experienced one: In 1985, a religious cult poisoned Oregon salad bars with salmonella, making 750 people sick.

Germans are the ultimate sneak attack. Leave a germ-tainted package in a subway, and the terrorist is long gone before anyone knows there's a problem.

Publicly, the most feared germ weapons program has been Iraq's.

But the Japanese cult that released the nerve gas sarin in a Tokyo subway in 1995 attempt-

happened to the former Soviet Union's vast stockpiles of weaponized germs, including smallpox, said Christopher Davis of ORAQ Consultancy, who investigated Soviet bioweapons for Britain.

But terrorists don't have to dispense germs to cause terror. Stern said, pointing to a spate of anthrax hoaxes starting last year that have so far affected more than 5,000 Americans.

All the threats so far have been hoaxes, but investigating can cost up to \$100,000 and repeated false alarms mean some cities don't take the threats seriously anymore, Olson said.

"It's the 'cry wolf syndrome,'" he said. "The danger, obviously, is we're going to miss something."

If local doctors spot unusual symptoms, alerting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quickly could help

Manassas Council to talk applications

COUNCIL From Page B1

because city charter requires the council to appoint a new member.

However, the city may next year seek a change to its charter that would allow the new appointee to face election in May 2000 instead of in 2002 when the term expires. The General Assembly would have to approve the change.

But even with a charter amendment, city officials are uncertain whether the new law would apply to the appointee.

"I'm not sure if we appoint someone under the existing situation — the existing charter — whether that person could come up [for election in 2000]," said Councilman Harry "Hal" Parrish.

If no charter change is sought

ed member would face election in May 2002.

Parrish was appointed to the council position in 1993 to fill a vacancy and was elected to a full four-year term in May 1996. The council job pays \$9,860 a year.

Parrish said the new search should involve residents as much as possible.

"Hopefully we'll have some good names to choose from," he said.

The search will make city officials even busier than they would have been this time of year because they are also screening candidates for a new city manager. City Manager John Cartwright plans to retire in April.

Additionally, council members are preparing for Cartwright to send them his fiscal 2000 budget on Feb. 22.

Waldron, who is resigning to spend more time with his wife