

# A Brief History of WJMA Radio

Ross Hunter

In the years after World War II hundreds of new radio stations began operation across the United States. Many of those stations were in small towns like Orange, Virginia. Approximately 157 new stations began operating in the United States in 1949, with WJMA in Orange joining the broadcasting boom on September 10 of that year.<sup>1</sup>

A few years earlier, Welford Sherman had been approached by Fred Allman, owner of WSVA in Harrisonburg, with the idea of a radio station in the Town of Orange.<sup>2</sup> Allman and Sherman made a presentation to the Orange Chamber of Commerce in March 1948 about their idea. They estimated it would take \$10,000, exclusive of land and a building, to get the station started and about \$2,000 a month to operate with a staff of five.<sup>3</sup>

Sherman began visiting Orange businesses to sell shares of stock in the James Madison Broadcasting Corporation. By the time WJMA took to the air, 27 area businesses had purchased stock. Space for studios was secured from Al DeVivi in the DeVivi Restaurant on US Route 15 just south of town. Sherman said, "The building was not being used...so he was willing to rent it. There was room out behind to put the antenna."<sup>4</sup> WJMA remained in that location for about 10 years. The restaurant and Jefferson Motel were torn down in October 2008 for a new motel.

Throughout the 1950s, WJMA offered various musical and public affairs programs to appeal to a local audience. Advertising in the *Orange Review* shows programs aimed at farmers and discussion programs on local issues; religious programs and speakers were common as well. There were also music programs plus news and entertainment from the Mutual Network. An old newspaper ad lists "The Shadow," "Roy Rogers," "Captain Midnight," "Tom Mix," "Queen for a Day," and "Adventures of the Falcon" among many syndicated programs. The Mutual Broadcasting System also gave WJMA access to some national sporting events. In the fall of 1950, WJMA aired the World



The small building (partially shown) to the right of the main Jefferson Motel (DeVivi's) was the original home of WJMA. The white door was the entrance to the station. The broadcast tower (not shown) was located behind the building. From a c1956 postcard, Lewis collection.

Series and late in the year the station carried the Gator Bowl game. In 1954 WJMA began broadcasting Orange High School football games. Football broadcasts continued until 2004.

Selling enough advertising to pay for operating the station was not easy in the early years and maintaining profitability was a challenge. In an effort to improve the performance of WJMA, stockholder Woodbury Ober bought out the other stockholders in October 1956. He hired a new General Manager and Sales Manager and gave the station new energy.<sup>5</sup> A few locals remained on the staff of WJMA: Ann Garnett Butler, Red Shipley, and Monty Smith. By the Spring of 1957, Ober agreed to a merger with radio station WINA in Charlottesville. The plan called for the two stations to operate independently. An *Orange Review* article said there were nine employees at WJMA.<sup>6</sup>

In January 1959, WJMA asked the Orange Town Council for permission to move to land on Spicers Mill Road. Charlottesville Broadcasting purchased 4.66 acres of land from Thelma and Eloise Kean and A. M. and Winnie Hitt.<sup>7</sup> The Council ap-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Radio Stations Established in 1949 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Category:Radio\_stations\_established\_in\_1949

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Now This" documentary, Chapter 1, :05, September 28, 2009, https://youtu.be/jxYUgGCjfhk

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Proposal For Radio Station In Orange Heard Thursday," *Orange Review*, May 27, 1948, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Now This" documentary, Chapter 1, 1:38, September 28, 2009, https://youtu.be/jxYUgGCjfhk

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "W.S. Ober Buys Local Radio Station," *Orange Review*, October 4, 1956, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "WJMA Merges With Station WINA In Charlottesville," *Orange Review*, May 16, 1957, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> "WJMA, Orange Station Preparing To Move," *Orange Review*, January 22, 1959, 3.

Harrison's purchase of WJMA a period of frequent ownership changes came to an end. Harrison operated WJMA for almost 25 years until 1984 when it was purchased by Digby Solomon (Solomon & Lowe).

During Arch Harrison's ownership, WJMA FM was added in 1971. Chet Burgess was hired as a full-time news director in 1974. The building was expanded in 1974 and many equipment and staff upgrades were made. One of the more popular programs during Harrison's ownership was "Swap Shop," a phonein program where listeners could buy, sell, and trade items.

Harrison was a strong proponent of radio journalism. Between 1973 and 1984, WJMA won 18 Associated Press news awards including four Douglas Southall Freeman Awards for Public Service through Radio Journalism. In 1978 the news staff won seven of the eight Associated Press news awards for nonmetro radio stations. By the late 1970s the news staff was four with Phil Audibert as News Director covering Orange County, Patricia McArver covering Madison County, Mitzi Clark in Greene County, and Barbara Potter (Willow Drinkwater) in Louisa County. The Associated Press chose WJMA as the Best Small Market Sports Operation for 1981. WJMA continued to be honored for news coverage through 2009.

This picture was probably taken in 1953 when the WJMA studios were located at the DeVivi Restaurant. The man on the left is unidentified. The man on the right is Ron Landry who began his radio career at WJMA. From WJMA he went to WBTM AM, Danville, VA; WSLS AM, Roanoke, VA; WDRC AM Hartford,

proved the purchase in March 1959. A 30 by 33 foot building was constructed and a broadcast tower was erected.

contributed by Woody Purcell.

In December 1959 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) granted a license to WJMA for a new studio, transmitter, and tower location on Spicers Mill Road.<sup>8</sup> The location was chosen in part because the land behind the building was swampy and well suited to AM radio transmission. Daytime power was increased to 1000 watts. Nighttime power remained at 250 watts.<sup>9</sup> The FCC approved operation from the new location on September 25, 1959.

Don Heyne, President of Charlottesville Broadcasting Corporation (WINA) announced the sale of WJMA to Arch Harrison (WJMA, Inc.) in March 1961.<sup>10</sup> Harrison had been Program Director at WFVA in Fredericksburg, Virginia. With

After a listener research study showed many people said they "listened to the Orange station," WJMA adopted the moniker Radio Orange. A new logo was designed.

In addition to news, WJMA had many sports reports each day as well as a full schedule of local, college, and professional play-by-play including UVA and Virginia Tech football and basketball, Washington Redskins and Washington Feder-



CT 1960-66; WBZ AM Boston 1966-1969; and finally KGBS AM

and KFI AM in Los Angeles. Between Roanoke and Hartford

he spent two years in the Army as part of Armed Forces Radio.

While in Los Angeles he became half of the Hudson & Landry comedy team who recorded "Ajax Airlines" and "Ajax Liquor Store" which was nominated for a Grammy in 1971. Landry also

wrote for the TV shows "Benson," "Flo," "The Redd Foxx Show,"

and "Gimme A Break." Landry's widow says "he loved working at WJMA where he did everything including sweeping the floors. It was at WJMA that he developed his unique radio personality that got him jobs in a number of major markets." Ron Landry died in September of 2002 at age 67. Photographer unknown,



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Federal Communications Commission, History Card, 12/30/1959 https://licensing.fcc.gov/cgi-bin/prod/cdbs/forms/prod/getimportletter\_exh.cgi?import\_letter\_id=61283

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> "Now This" documentary, Chapter 3, 5:15, September 28, 2009, https://youtu.be/Dai7GayhaMI

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> "Orange Radio Station Sold Friday," *Orange Review*, March 23, 1961, sec. B1.

als football, Virginia Squires basketball, and Washington Senators and Baltimore Orioles baseball. WJMA continued to broadcast Orange High School football and basketball. Limited coverage of other area high school sports was also included. Area high school football coaches from Orange, Madison, Greene, and Louisa Counties had weekly programs.

A series of anti-smoking Public Service Announcements was chosen by the American Cancer Society as best in the country for small market radio in 1975. The award

was presented in New York by Barbara Walters. Phil Goodwin's 1994 feature story *Water Discovered* about the rehabilitation of a drinking fountain on Main Street in Orange was chosen by the Radio Television News Directors Association as the best in the country among small market radio stations. The award was presented in California by Andy Rooney.

Satellite-delivered radio programs arrived at WJMA in the spring of 1983, when the Virginia News Network (VNN) installed a satellite dish. News, sports, and weather in better audio than phone lines became a reality. Phil Audibert did a *Monday at One* program with VNN meteorologist Greg Fishel. Fishel was in Raleigh, NC, while Phil was in the WJMA news studio in Orange. To the listener it sounded like they were both in the same room. Interviews via satellite are now common in both radio and television broadcasting.

Under Harrison's ownership, programming was diverse and included Mac Moore's *Jazz Scene*, classical music from Les Myers' *Night Music*, and Ralph Graves' *Artsong*.

In the early years of broadcasting around the country, and at WJMA, women did not have much of an on air role. Ann Garett Butler worked at WJMA from 1949 to 1957. She did clerical work, hosted some shows aimed at women, and voiced some commercials. Pat Watson was a long time employee (1966-1988) who served as receptionist/bookkeeper and had a football season prediction program called "Pat's Picks" in the late 1970s/early 1980s. Beverly Swallow Aylor (1958-1960) was Program Director/bookkeeper/copywriter/receptionist. Cathy Wills (Christovich) was the first full-time female announcer starting in 1970. She left in 1971. Jean Love was hired in 1972, also with a full-time announcing position.

Harrison also found and hired some "hidden" employees. Mostly they were news stringers...a freelance journalist who contributed to WJMA on an ongoing basis, but was paid individually for each story broadcast. Jean Purcell was a reporter for the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, but also sent stories to WJMA. Likewise Rob Eure was employed by the Charlottesville *Daily Progress*, but also sent stories to WJMA. Stringers were rarely, if ever, credited with a story. Somerset resident Beverley Allison,



who had worked as a writer for the Peter Jennings evening news at ABC News in Washington, contributed stories to WJMA. Chet Hagen was not hidden – he did a weekly program, *Eye on the Tube*, where he commented on his view of television. Hagen had been a news documentary and music show producer and Emmy Award winner for NBC.

Arch Harrison was the 1984 recipient of the C. T. Lucy Distinguished Service Award from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters. It honors a Virginia broad-

caster who has spent a significant part of a career in Virginia and who has been a leader in the state's broadcast industry.

He was President of the Virginia Associated Press Broadcasters in 1971-72. He was also a supporter of the National Association of Broadcasters and the Radio Advertising Bureau. Locally, he was a member of the Board of Germanna Community College.

In an October 14, 1979, article in the Charlottesville *Daily Progress*, he talked about broadcasting and his career. "Being the only station in town, we can produce shows that analysts call audience killers...but not having to worry about our audience or our ratings allows us to run shows we want to. Our goal is to inform the public and to help with its problems. It forces us to constantly think about our community responsibility."<sup>11</sup>

Digby Solomon and Solomon & Lowe purchased WJMA AM/FM on April 1,1984. The new owner made some changes in programming and added UPI network news. In December of 1984, WJMA FM changed to WVJZ and adopted the slogan Z96.7, playing Adult Contemporary music while continuing to simulcast with WJMA AM. Solomon and Lowe also acquired stations in Brookneal and Buffalo Gap, Virginia.

Solomon & Lowe sold to Carl Hurlebaus and Radio Virginia Ltd. in the Spring of 1988.<sup>12</sup> The news and sports coverage was reduced and the music took on a more Top 40 flavor with the slogan "Jammin' 96." It was around this time that technological advances allowed the station to stay on the air 24 hours a day without having to have someone in the building.

Unfortunately, Hurlebaus became involved with a company called Sonrise Management Services, which was taking advantage of the FCC's creation of 689 new radio station allocations in 1985. In 1988 Sonrise, their lawyer and Telemedia, Inc. (of which Hurlebaus was a co-owner) were the subject of investigation for securities fraud and other related charges. In 1990, Sonrise, Telemedia and Thomas Root, their lawyer,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> "Arch Harrison's Radio Station Is a Voice for the Community," *Daily Progress*, October 14, 1979, sec. E1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Broadcasting Magazine, March 28, 1988, 60.

were indicted by a Federal grand jury in Washington, DC, on hundreds of counts including securities fraud, wire and mail fraud, filing false legal documents, forgery and obstruction of a grand jury investigation.<sup>13</sup>

Hurlebaus was forced to sell WJMA AM and FM. He had bought the stations in the spring of 1988 for \$850,000, but sold the stations in 1993 for \$30,000 and assumption of \$220,000 debt. The stations were purchased by a group of local business owners operating as Piedmont Communications on January 1, 1993. The new ownership group was headed by Robert Gillespie, Lloyd Garnett, and Harry Sedwick, Jr.<sup>14</sup> The music format was changed to country with the slogan "Country Mix 96" and the FM call letters were changed back to WJMA in February of 1990. Piedmont Communications still owns and operates the stations from the building in Orange.

In June 2001, a three-station shuffle allowed WSIG FM in Mount Jackson, Virginia, and WREL FM in Lexington, Virginia, to increase power, and WJMA FM to move from 96.7 to 98.9 with a new slogan of "Your Place In The Country." WJMA AM changed call letters to WVCV AM and, at the time, featured satellite-delivered oldies music and syndicated talk shows.

In the fall of 2002, Piedmont Communications traded the new 98.9 frequency to North Carolina station owner Tom Joyner for Joyner's two Culpeper, Virginia, stations: WCVA AM (1490 kHz) and WCUL FM (103.1 mHz).<sup>15</sup> On March 1,

<sup>13</sup> Patterson, Dennis, "Thomas Root, Others Charged with Securities Fraud," AP News, June 4, 1990 https://apnews.com/article/9094ba758 fb5ae06b61043b8f1696b0d

<sup>14</sup> Radio and Records, January 22, 1993, 11.

<sup>15</sup> "Greensboro Station Could Face Class Change," *Radio and Records*,

### Board Members

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2004 the WJMA FM programming was added to the WCUL FM tower on Clark Mountain on the WCUL frequency of 103.1. At midnight on April 15, 2004 WJMA FM at 98.9 was turned off thus ending almost 33 years of an FM station licensed to Orange. While the studios remain in Orange, the city of license for WJMA FM is now Culpeper. The WJMA AM call letters were given up when the AM station became WVCV. Programming on WVCV and WCVA is a simulcast of WJMA FM.

At approximately the same time, Piedmont Communications purchased WLSA FM in Louisa, Virginia. The WLSA call letters were changed to WOJL. Four stations are now operating from the studios on Spicers Mill Road in Orange: WJMA FM licensed to Culpeper, WOJL FM licensed to Louisa, WVCV AM licensed to Orange, and WCVA AM licensed to Culpeper.

In the early 1980s during the Carter administration, the Federal Communications Commission began to relax rules and regulations for American broadcasters. Under Reagan, the Fairness Doctrine was abolished in 1987. This effectively ended what had been known as Equal Time which required broadcasters to provide air time for alternative opinions on a controversial topic.

The FCC also ended guidelines on how much informational programming should be aired. Broadly, this eliminated a requirement for stations to be responsive to public issues. Rules on the total amount of time allowed for commercials were ended. Many other record keeping regulations were abolished. Regulations on the number of stations one owner could have led to a greater concentration of station ownership.

Beginning in the 1980s there was a rapid growth in the number of FM radio stations. The addition of new FM stations, growth in cable television, satellite television, and the internet created much more competition for broadcasters.

The FCC changes were not without critics. A December 1987 article in *CQ Researcher* said, "As is the case with other deregulated industries, such as transportation, telephones and banking, there are growing questions about whether the lifting of federal controls from broadcasting has served the best interests of the public. Those who advocate a return to a more active government role in controlling what goes out over the airwaves base their position in part on the ability of radio and television to influence the values and behavior of millions of people."<sup>16</sup>

WJMA was not immune to the changes. New owners sought to survive and acquired additional stations. Advances in technology made it possible to operate many stations with a smaller staff. With the ownership change in 1984, truly local radio in Orange changed with the times. While many of the

November 1, 2002, 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> https://library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/document. php?id=cqresrre1987120400

original players have passed on, their heirs and other local individuals strive to continue the mission of this truly exceptional and relevant radio station and to keep its historic spirit alive in the Town of Orange and surrounding counties.

### After WJMA

Much more information about WJMA, including photographs and documents, are at WJMA.radiohistory.net.

"Now This," a 90-minute documentary on WJMA's first 35 years can be found on WJMA.radiohistory.net or go to YouTube https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNvG7 Lj28crRI3USQUV7CFyGJdYRsxna4

There is also an additional 90 minute video of material that didn't fit in the "Now This" documentary on YouTube: https://youtu.be/rwinQqBd8qw

Following is a small selection of WJMA employees who worked in broadcasting or related fields after leaving WJMA. A reader can go to the WJMA web site (WJMA.radiohistory. net) for a full All-Time Staff List if they want to see these and many more names. Or the list can be found in the WJMA file at the Orange County Historical Society.

Phil Audibert (1976-1986) stringer, News Director, after WJMA: Orange County Review; Virginia Sportsman magazine; musician; writer; documentary producer AHHA Productions

Harrison Cluff (1980s) part time announcer, after WJMA: WVIR-TV 29 Charlottesville news/sports videographer, WTVR-TV News 6 Richmond news/sports videographer, WRDW-TV Augusta, GA. news/sports videographer, WAGA-TV Fox 5 Atlanta, GA news/sports videographer, Morris Communications Augusta, GA. TV show producer, UVA Athletics Video, Charlottesville show and video producer as well as ESPN & ACC Network live producer and camera op., Freelancer for ESPN, Fox Sports, Raycom Sports, CBS & ABC Sports

Clint Estes (1977-2004), announcer, sports play-by-play, after WJMA: WLSA Louisa VA; sports WTKR Radio; play-by-play on WINA, WCHV, WKAV, WSVA, ACC Select UVA baseball and women's lacrosse; James Madison University football color, JMU men's and women's basketball Jane Gardner<sup>\*</sup> (1973-1974) news stringer, after WJMA: WSLS TV Roanoke reporter, WTVR TV Richmond reporter, WVEC TV Norfolk reporter, news anchor 1978-1990, WTKR Norfolk 1990-1999, 2018 added to the VCU Hall of Fame

Phil Goodwin (1976-1985/1990-2018) announcer, Music Director, News Director, after WJMA: WINA Charlottesville; WCUL/WCVA Culpeper; WTKR Stanardsville, back to WJMA 1990 as News Director

Ralph Graves (1983-1987) announcer "Artsong," after WJMA: WTJU Charlottesville morning show 1991-present; WTJU "Composer Cameo" host/producer; Nimbus Records; DCD Records

Ron Landry\* (1953-1955) announcer, after WJMA: WBTM Danville, WSLS TV Roanoke, Armed Forces Radio, WDRC Hartford; WBZ Boston; KFI & KGBS Los Angeles, sit com writer: "Flo," "Benson," "Gimmie a Break," "The Red Foxx Show," "Scarecrow & Mrs King," Grammy nominated comedy album "Ajax Liquor Store"

Patricia McArver (1978-1984) Madison reporter, News Director, after WJMA: Editor *Madison Eagle, Orange County Review*, publications for Woodberry Forest School, The Citadel, teacher, Interim VP The Citadel

Red Shipley<sup>\*</sup> (1956-1959) announcer, sports play-by-play, after WJMA: WPRW, WKCW, WPIK, WAMU Washington, Stained Glass Blue Grass at WAMU for 25 years, International Bluegrass Music Association Broadcaster of the Year-2006, returned to WJMA in 1995 as morning host

Lynne Vogt (1994-1994) announcer, after WJMA: associate producer/editor WTVF Nashville, TN, news producer WVIR TV Charlottesville, VA

Seth Williamson\* (1966-1968), part time announcer; after WJMA: WVTF Roanoke

\* indicates deceased

## Legacy

One way to extend your positive influence on your community is to include the Orange County Historical Society (OCHS) in your Will. Whether you wish to support the Society's genealogy files, research materials, programs including the extended outreach via the "History-to-Go" series, oral histories, local history books or any combination of these, a legacy gift in your will would be an investment in Orange County's future.

When writing your will, you can include a gift to OCHS with little fanfare. And if you already have a will, you can, when

updating it, add a codicil leaving what you wish to to any entity. Ask your attorney about including the OCHS in your will. As Board of Directors member Bill Speiden likes to say, "Charity begins at home."

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to seeing you at our programs this summer season and/or in the Research Center at 130 Caroline Street, Orange, perhaps researching your family's genealogy, local history, or just browsing our publications.

## The Pamunkey Switch

### Jack Frazer

Telephone service came to Orange County, Virginia, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As might be expected, it began within its two population centers, the towns of Orange and Gordonsville. County historian Frank Walker wrote that the first telephone in Orange County is thought to have been the one installed in Dr. Ricketts' drug store on Railroad Avenue in 1896 as an extension of the Culpeper Telephone Company. Three years later a telephone within the J. H. Stratton drug store in Gordonsville was added as an extension of the Louisa Telephone Company.<sup>1</sup>

In the county's rural areas, service was later, sporadic, and limited. Around 1899-1900, financier Walter G. Newman reportedly installed over two miles of telephone poles between his Mount Athos estate and the Somerset railroad station. A year or two later, the duPonts of Montpelier established a telephone line between that estate and the Town of Orange. Both appear to have been for private rather than public use.<sup>2</sup>

Little activity was found during the following decade; W. W. Scott's 1907 history of the county has a single reference. In 1906, the levy (taxes received) totaled \$10,804.22. Of that amount, \$33.65 was reported as received from county telegraph or telephone sources. Specifics regarding those two entities were not further described, but the minimal amount is indicative of the early stages of this new and evolving means of communication.<sup>3</sup>

The Pamunkey Mutual Telephone Company may have been the first operation of its type to incorporate as a rural, community-based system. Founded in October, 1912, it served a group of residents in the southeastern section of the county frequently referred to as the Pamunkey Neighborhood. According to the Virginia Corporation Commission, its address was listed as Lahore, Virginia. The first president was W. N. Green of Lahore, and its secretary and general manager was M. S. Johnson of Thornhill. Maximum capitalization was reported to be \$5,000, minimum capitalization \$2,000.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. John Decker Frazer (1876-1913) was the company's initial advocate as well as its primary financial backer, and the system's first telephone was located in his home. He was born on Oak Grove Farm, a 353-acre property on the Orange and Spotsylvania county line, received his early education from his mother, a local school teacher, and later graduated from Richmond College. In 1902, he earned a medical degree from the Medical College of Virginia, and interned at Richmond's Sheltering Arms Hospital. He was a Fellow of the American Medical Association, and a member of the Medical Society of Virginia.<sup>5</sup>



Pennfields, the home of Dr. John Decker and Sarah Penn Frazer. Photo by Jack Frazer, taken April 1988.

Once his education was completed, Dr. Frazer returned to his family home, and in 1906, married Sarah Penn Farish. She was the great grand-daughter of James Coleman, and the owner of a 622-acre farm, originally part of that ancestor's historic Orange Springs estate. Initially named Seven Gables, the farm was later renamed Pennfields in honor of her Penn family surname. After marriage, Dr. Frazer moved from his family's adjacent farm to Pennfields. There, he began a medical practice with his office in its house (c.1804) while overseeing both properties, a total of 975 acres.<sup>6</sup>

He was a progressive physician and farmer. Recognizing the need for telephone service to facilitate a quick response to neighborhood medical emergencies, he founded the Pamunkey Mutual Telephone Company in 1912. His son, Dr. William Penn Frazer (1910-2000), described its origin and operation:

When my father started his practice, he had no telephone service. He organized and was an early stockholder in the Pamunkey Mutual Telephone Company. The telephone line ended at our house. There was a central operator in a home seven miles north, halfway to Orange. In our house, the telephone was wall mounted in the living room. You had to stand to use it, and there was a pad and support on which to write. The phone had three batteries which lasted about a year and were furnished by the phone company.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Walker, Frank S., Jr.; *Rememberings: A History of Orange County, Virginia*, (Orange, VA: Orange County Historical Society, 2004), 280.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> County Historian Ann Miller's research, provided to the author on January 17, 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Scott, W. W., *A History of Orange County, Virginia*. (Richmond, VA: Everett Waddey Company, 1907), 171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Charters Granted By Corporation Commission," *Richmond News Leader*, October 12, 1912, 5, Accessed electronically at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Frazer, William Penn (MD), *Reflections: A Family History*, (Hamilton, VA: Self-published, 1990). Archived in the Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, Virginia (section V Ref. 921), 7-11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Miller, Ann L., *Antebellum Orange: The Pre-Civil War Homes, Public Buildings and Historic Sites of Orange County, Virginia*, (Orange, VA: Moss Publications, 1988), 161.

## Pamunkey Switch (continued)

Other area residents also provided financial backing and served as stockholders. Furnishing cedar poles and telephone wire was part of the stockholder agreement. Later, non-stockholders or renters were able to participate for a fee of \$8.00 per year. Original stockholders had free service until the company was taken over by the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company in 1953. My youngest brother, John, was its last president.<sup>7</sup>

Orange County historian Ann Miller supported Dr. Frazer's recollection regarding a central operator. In her description of Whistle Stop (c.1830) she wrote:

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pamunkey Mutual Telephone Company's switchboard (known locally as the "Pamunkey Switch") was located in this house with Mrs. Lallie Lohr and other members of her family acting as operators. The old switchboard was replaced by a modern dial system in 1953.<sup>8</sup>

Vernon Rea Jones also verified Dr. William Frazer's account of the telephone company's operation. His parents owned a



Whistle Stop, photo by Ann L. Miller from Antebellum Orange.

general store at the intersection of Thornhill Road and State Highway 522 from 1921 to 1981. The store was located a short distance from Pennfields, and the Pamunkey Mutual telephone was an important feature of its business. Moreover, his father, George Randolph "Rannie" Jones (1890-1966), was responsible for maintaining the system for many years.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, the new technology played a role in Dr. John Frazer's premature death. His son provided details:

My father died on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1913. It was a cold, damp day and a phone call came in to attend a sick Proctor child about seven miles away, past Thornhill on the Kirk Church Road. One of the stable hands came to the house and said that the horse he planned to use was "very nervous and jittery." My father told him there was not time to bring another horse from the pasture to hook to the buggy, and to "put her in the shafts."

Later that evening, my mother received a message that my father had been found on the side of the road and taken to a house near Thornhill where he died very shortly thereafter. The family was told that it was likely after closing the gate to the Proctor's farm, he somehow became tangled in the lines and was dragged to death.<sup>10</sup>

His death was widely reported within the medical profession.<sup>11</sup> It was also a shock to his community. Dr. John had been a prominent civic leader as well as a physician and farmer. He was responsible for organizing and serving as trustee for the newly created Thornhill School, one of the earliest public high schools in the county. After his death, there was a local effort to rename the school for him, but his family felt the original name should be retained. He had also served as a trustee for North Pamunkey Baptist Church (c. 1774) near Lahore, and was one of the area's few practicing physicians.<sup>12</sup>

His wife was left with four small children; the youngest was born three weeks after his father's death. She never remarried, saw to her children's education, and managed the farm, which remained in the Frazer family for almost another century.<sup>13</sup>

Sarah Penn was also determined that one of her sons would become a medical doctor. As Dr. William Penn Frazer wrote: "It fell to my lot to fill that role." Like his father, he became a country doctor, also recognized for many public service and civic accomplishments. However, unlike his father, he had a long-term medical practice. In 2001, on the one-year anniversary of his passing, *The Washington Post* published a lengthy profile entitled: "For 53 Years Country Doctor Was Just The Right Medicine" in which his father's death was described.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Frazer, John W. (Jack), Jr., *The Pamunkey Neighborhood: The Long History of a Small Place*; (Richmond, VA: Brandy Lane Publishers, Inc., 2016), 126 and January 1, 1914 newspaper article, "Name Suggested for Thornhill High School in Orange County: Would Honor Dead Chairman." (Found in a family scrapbook, the source is not identified, but based on partial evidence, was most likely the Fredericksburg, VA, *Free-Lance*, which was in operation between 1885 and 1926).

<sup>13</sup> Miller, Ann L. *Antebellum Orange*, 161 and the *Orange County Review: Bicentennial Farms Special Edition* (March 25, 1999), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Scheel, Eugene, "For 53 Years, Country Doctor Was Just the Right

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Frazer, Dr. William Penn, 11-12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Miller, 177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Jones, Vernon Rea, In-person interviews on August 17, 2012 and July 20, 2014 during research for the author's earlier book, *The Pamunkey Neighborhood*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Frazer, Dr. William Penn, 11-12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> The death of Dr. John Decker Frazer was reported by: Stedman, Thomas L., MD; *Medical Record: A Weekly Record of Medicine & Surgery*, Vol. 84 (July 5, 1913 – December 27, 1913), William Wood & Company, New York, NY, p.1133; 2) The 1914 *Journal of the American Medical Association*, p. 2172; and 3) at the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Medical Society of Virginia held in Washington, DC during October 27-30, 1914.

## Pamunkey Switch (continued)



Left, John Decker Frazer holding Goodwin McCoy Frazer; right, Sarah Penn Farish Frazer holding William Penn Frazer, August 1911. Family photo courtesy of Jack Frazer.

The Pamunkey Switch's connection to the Frazer family ultimately came full circle. The founder's son, John Walker Frazer (1913-1993), born three weeks after his father's death,

was elected Pamunkey Mutual's last president. Following World War II military service, he returned to the neighborhood and purchased 195 acres of the original Pine Top estate (c.1745) from his father-in-law, Bertelle Woolfolk, an original Pamunkey Mutual shareholder.<sup>15</sup>

The Woolfolk stockholder certificate #25 transferred with the property and was reissued as certificate #40 on November 3, 1951. It may have been the last certificate issued as the company was consolidated into the Chesapeake & Potomac system two years later.

As an example of ongoing business activity, a December 2, 1948 article in the *Orange Review* reported that the Pamunkey Mutual Telephone Company had applied to the State Corporation Commission for permission to increase the monthly rental from \$1.50 per month to \$1.75 per month. The proposed increase, submitted by its president John W. Frazer, requested it become effective January 1, 1949.<sup>16</sup> Local school teacher Julia B. Burrus (1909-2005) was the company's last secretary and maintained its records. She was also the last Burrus family member to own Piney Woods (c.1800). After her death, that property was sold, and any Pamunkey Mutual records that may have been stored there have not been found.<sup>17</sup>

Author's Notes: Dr. John Decker Frazer, Dr. William Penn Frazer, and John Walker Frazer were my grandfather, uncle, and father respectively. The Pamunkey Mutual was in operation for the first 11 years of my life. We were on a six-party line with five neighboring households. Our telephone was wall mounted. A hand crank initiated calls to the central operator for long distance or out of area calls, or directly to those on our party line. Our code was three long and two short rings in quick succession.

Because of the party line feature, private conversations were non-existent. It was an early example of social media, an enjoyable feature for some, a source of irritation to others. As its president, my father felt the Pamunkey Mutual's technology was dated; as a farmer and businessman, he disliked the party line feature, and was successful in facilitating the Chesapeake & Potomac takeover. That change resulted in a more modern dial system; but ironically, the new C&P utility continued the party line system, which lasted until about 1970 when individual service finally became available.

(\*) INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF Mutual Telephone Cu a hore, Virgini (this Certifies that Job Frazer is the owner of Walker Thank of the Capital Stock of Hutual Telephone Co Key transferable only on the books of the Corporation by the holder hereof in person or by Atterney upon surrender of this Certificate properly endorse In Witness Whereaf, the November 99195 Jack H. B. Secretary •EACH ·

Pamunkey Mutual Phone Co., Stock Certificate. Courtesy of Jack Frazer.

Medicine," *The Washington Post*, Local News Section (Washington, DC, December 2, 2001), 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Wilson, Martin L, *Bicentennial Farms*, The Virginia Farm Bureau Federation (1985), 35, and *Orange County Review: Bicentennial Farms* 1722-1999; Special Edition (March 25, 1999), 6, 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Orange Review, Volume 18, Number 40, 14, December 2, 1948. The Orange Review newspaper was operational from 1931 to 1972. The

name was changed to the *Orange County Review* in 1973. Article accessed electronically at The Library of Virginia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Miller, Ann L. Antebellum Orange, 179.

## Orange County Historical Society Members as of March 16, 2023

The Orange County Historical Society would like to thank all of our current members! Without your support, we could not continue to carry out our mission as a research, archival, and educational organization dedicated to the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of the history of the people, places, organizations, and events of Orange County and the surrounding area.

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## LTC David Kerr Claude

#### Paul Carter

David Kerr Claude, son of Gordon H. and Sophie Worthington Claude, was born in Annapolis, MD, on March 2, 1903. In his early years he attended public schools in Annapolis. He displayed leadership early in his life when he was a Boy Scout at fourteen. He went door to door in the Annapolis neighborhood collecting money for the Red Cross and all the money was donated to the Annapolis Health and Social Welfare Association.

David's father was a dental surgeon at the Naval Academy, and it was almost predetermined that he would attend. David entered the Naval Academy from Illinois when he was 17 in August 1920, left in February 1923 and enlisted in the Marine Corps. He is listed as a non-graduating member of the Class of 1924.

From March 1925 to April 1927, Kerr served as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant at Marine Barracks at the Norfolk Naval Yard, the Philadelphia Naval Yard and at Quantico, Virginia. In April 1927 he was deployed to Nicaragua with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Brigade fighting the rebels trying to overthrow the government. There he met and became close friends with Chesty Puller. Chesty Puller eventually became the most decorated marine ever with five Navy Crosses.

Service in Nicaragua lasted until April 1929 when he was transferred to the USS *Wyoming* moored at Puget Sound, Washington, as a Junior Battery Officer, five inch. In October 1930 he returned to the Marine Barracks, Naval Academy as a First Lieutenant. He was assigned to a special detachment to Camp Rapidan in Criglersville, Virginia in July 1931. President Herbert Hoover wanted a place to go to fish and be in the outdoors away from Washington, DC, and in 1929, his first year of presidency, he requested the Marines, as a military exercise, to build Camp Rapidan. After Camp Rapidan was built, 150 to 250 Marines manned the facility to provide maintenance and security. The barracks for the Marines were located about a mile from the "Brown House," President Hoover's name for the main house. Camp Rapidan was located at the headwaters of the Rapidan River and was later called Camp Hoover.

First Lieutenant Claude met his future wife in Orange, the only town within miles of Camp Rapidan. He married Emma Cullen Browning, daughter of G. Judson Browning and Elizabeth Cullen Ricketts, on October 31, 1931, just months after he was assigned to Camp Rapidan. Both were 28 years old.

From October 1931 to September 1937 his assignments included Quantico, Washington, DC, San Diego, and Philadelphia. During this period, two assignments were to the USS *Utah* and USS *Idaho*. In 1933, he was the legal officer on the *Idaho*. In 1935 while stationed at Quantico, he was promoted to Captain and served as the assistant post exchange officer. In January 1937 in Philadelphia, his son, David Jr was born.<sup>1</sup> The first person to visit his newborn son was his friend from service in Nicaragua, Chesty Puller.

In September 1937 he had an assignment at the US Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Service members are often sent to other units to learn their tactics. Marines are often given temporary duty to the Navy for aircraft training and to the Air Force for military police training. Army duty is highly unusual for a Marine unless it is for advanced training. This would begin his transition from a staff officer to a leader of men. From July 1938 to June of 1940, he commanded the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Marines at San Diego. He was back at Quantico in June of 1940 as a staff officer at the Marine Corps School and was promoted to Major in November 1940. His last assignment before being deployed overseas was in New River, North Carolina.

In November 1943 he was part of the invasion of Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands in the South Pacific as a Lieutenant Colonel in the  $2^{nd}$  Marine Division. It is in this activity that he lost his life and was awarded the Silver Star. The citation reads:

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Lieutenant Colonel David Kerr Claude (MCSN: 0-3963), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action as military observer attached to the Second Marine Division during action against enemy Japanese forces on Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, November 20-22, 1943. Constantly subjected to a devastating barrage of enemy rifle and machine gun fire while proceeding to the beach in a landing boat, Lieutenant Colonel Claude sighted a number of seriously wounded men in danger of drowning. Unhesitatingly exposing himself to the direct line of hostile fire, he valiantly plunged into the treacherous waters, repeatedly swimming distances of from 30 to 75 yards in order to bring the men back to his own boat from which they were transferred to other craft for medical attention. Finally gaining the beachhead after successfully completing his perilous act, Lieutenant Colonel Claude gathered information vital to subsequent operations before he was killed by enemy fire while proceeding on an important mission to a forward command post. His splendid initiative, great personal valor, and unrelenting devotion to duty in the face of grave peril directly contributed to the saving of many lives and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

There is no doubt that the unselfish traits that David showed that day shadowed his old friend Chesty Puller who stressed that your men come first. Lieutenant colonels are rarely killed in battle. There was only one other killed at Tarawa. Tarawa was listed as the bloodiest battle in the Pacific Theater. The number of Marine dead was listed as 1,026 and Marine wounded as 2,557.

LTC Claude's body was returned to the Naval Academy where he is buried. In addition to the Silver Star, he was awarded the Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal, Second Nicaraguan Campaign Medal, American Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, and Navy Presidential Unit Citation. His medals were passed on to a family member who was a Marine. After David's passing, Emma and David Jr. found it very difficult to deal with his death. She didn't tell her 6 ½ year old son about the death of his father until after the New Year of 1944 so as not to ruin his Christmas holiday. Emma died in 1971 at the age of 67 and is buried in Graham Cemetery. David, Jr. is now 86 and lives in Everett, Washington.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sadly, while at Quantico, the Claudes had a daughter who only survived for one day. She is buried here in Orange, at Graham Cemetery.

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# Duff Green (1928-2023): A Life of Service

### Jeff Poole

Robert Duff Green, of Orange, died Saturday, March 25, in his hometown of Culpeper at the age of 94.

As the longtime editor, photographer and co-owner of the *Orange County Review*, Duff was the de facto archivist for Orange County. With his camera ever in hand, Duff chronicled not only the actions of local government, but also everyday life in the community—from civic clubs to church suppers, ballgames to bake sales—and all the in-between that completes the picture. Each week, for more than three decades, Duff and the *Review* reported and recorded Orange County history in the making. It may not have been glamorous or exciting, but it was honest and actual—even when it wasn't always flattering to the community he loved. Through the pages of the *Review*, Duff documented Orange County and held it accountable—encouraging the community and its leaders to be better, chiding it when he felt it had lost its way, and perpetually challenging it to grow.

Just as important, Duff's community service was not limited to his vocation but manifest in his numerous volunteer efforts, government appointments and public offices. Few organizations existed in Orange County from the 1950s through the 1980s that did not enjoy the benefit of Duff's contributions—either personally or professionally.

Duff was born July 16, 1928, in Culpeper, the seventh and youngest child of James W. Green and Helen Armstrong Green. He graduated from Culpeper High School and then attended Woodberry Forest School for two post-graduate years—excelling in multiple sports at both schools. Too young to enlist for military service in World War II, Duff joined the Merchant Marines, transporting horses across the Atlantic in support of the war effort.

After the war, he attended Sewanee, the University of the South, and the University of Virginia, where he enlisted in the

U.S. Marine Corps Reserves—later serving stateside during the Korean War.

After graduation from UVa, where he co-captained the wrestling team, Duff returned to Orange to join the family business—the *Orange Review* and Green Publishers, Inc.

Duff was married to Mary Miller Green for nearly 68 years and the couple had three daughters—Elizabeth "Betsy" Green Chuchla, Eleanor "Duffy" Green Long, and Susan Green Roberson—seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

For more than half a century, Duff volunteered, served and improved his community through his work at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, the Orange Volunteer Fire Company, the Orange County Welfare (Social Services) Board, the Orange County Nursing Home (Dogwood Village), the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, American Legion Post 156 and James Madison Post VFW, the Orange County Boosters, the American Red Cross and the Orange County Historical Society, among many, many others.

He was appointed to the Orange County School Board and elected to the Orange Town Council and Orange County Board of Supervisors.

Following the family's sale of the newspaper in the 1980s, Duff remained a regular contributor and office presence at the *Review* well into his 90s, sharing local history and precedent, institutional insight and spirited stories. His definitive collection of local photographs and archives now reside at the Historical Society where they are being cataloged and scanned for improved community access and preservation.

Duff's legacy is one of absolute service—to his family, his nation and his community.