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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



Harley is a 14-month-old Australian Shepherd, very smart. She goes everywhere with me, and she's very friendly and very energetic. - Dini Moreira, Great Falls

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Ending Election Fraud

BY KENNETH R. "KENN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



COMMENTARY

My earliest experience in government and politics came when I was a senior in high school. Responding to rumors in the rural community where I lived with my parents that vote buying was going on, I did a research paper at the encouragement of my government class teacher who knew of my intense interest in politics to learn whether vote buying was taking place. I made an inquiry to the then-secretary of the State Board of Elections as to whether I could secure vote totals along with the absentee votes cast for all the jurisdictions in the 1950s. Much to my surprise he responded with the numbers, and I charted votes cast in total along with the absentee votes cast. What I found was what I had been told: In rural Page County where I lived and several counties in far Southwest Virginia the percentage of absentee votes cast in years when local officials were elected would be about one-third. In other ju-

risdictions including more urban and suburban areas, absentee votes would account for only one to two percent.

What was happening was that political workers in these counties, apparently of both parties, would go out to backroads and mountain hollows with absentee ballots for which they would approach voters by agreeing to pay their poll taxes that were required to vote at the time and promising who knows what other favors. The answer I received when I inquired of leaders of both parties as to why this illegal practice continued was that both sides were doing it and there was no one left to enforce the law!

The poll tax requiring voters to pay a tax three years in a row at least six months before the election was instituted in the 1902 Constitution with the avowed purpose of "cleaning up" elections, translated to mean keeping Black citizens and poor whites from voting. Along with the blank sheet voter registration and lit-

eracy test the number of registered voters was cut in half. The reform of the voting system had met its intended purpose of ensuring—without fraud—that only the "right" people voted.

Fortunately, these abuses of the electoral system were eliminated by a federal constitutional amendment and court decisions. With the outcome of the Virginia elections in 2019 a more progressive General Assembly and governor were elected who further modernized the electoral registration and voting system to make Virginia a leader in election reform. We have the most open and accessible system of government among the states.

For the dozens of people who emailed me (with few emails coming from my constituents) asking that I seek a "forensic investigation" of the outcome of the 2020 election in Virginia, I want to be clear that I will not seek such an investigation. President Biden won clearly nationwide, and he won by a landslide in Virginia. There is no credible evidence of fraud or irregularities. The entire election process in Virginia is monitored by persons of both parties. The "big lie" is just that. Those who propose election changes to enhance their chances of winning are the ones who are creating the fraud.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thinking About 'Good Trouble'

To the Editor:

Today I was thinking about "Good Trouble." Once upon a time when I was a young girl my father worked with a young impetuous man named John Lewis. He was chomping at the bit for change and made it clear to all the Civil Rights players in the 60s, barely deferring to Martin Luther King at times. My Dad adored him. My Dad was a young White Presbyterian minister. Jump to 2014, my husband's law firm threw a reception to honor Mr. Lewis and I attended. I approached him and said, "I am Dave's daughter" (mind you I was and am old) - he doubled back and then embraced me in a huge bear hug. I giggled. He then said with a huge smile on his lips, "Your Dad was always fighting and challenging everybody in the Movement." We both laughed. He never, ever saw my Dad as White, he saw him and loved him as a colleague and a friend.

Elizabeth Ramage
Great Falls

Free and Open Exchange Benefits All

To the Editor:

Across the nation, state lawmakers

ers are actively working to prevent students from having an open and equitable history education - one that both acknowledges the role of racism in the United States and portrays the lived realities and viewpoints of people in marginalized communities accurately.

As someone who was born and raised in Oklahoma before moving to Northern Virginia, I have seen this censorship first hand and the disparities in history curriculums from state to state. In the past year, my Fairfax County public high school, McLean High School, has done an excellent job incorporating a multitude of perspectives into both our English and History courses and provided several opportunities for open and honest dialogue about the discrimination faced by Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. We have been assigned readings like Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You by Jason Reynolds, as well as had a plethora of projects centered around unheard voices. While the experiences of some, such as those of disabled and LGBTQ+ folk, have been less recognized, these conversations and assignments are exactly what history classrooms around the state and nation should look like. This free and open exchange has benefits for all students, and it has personally improved my academic experience significantly. We must continue to acknowledge and teach about the value, cultures, histories, and modern-day contri-

butions of all Americans, particularly of marginalized communities that are often the most invisible in many classrooms. All young people, especially students of color, deserve an equitable education and the right to learn and talk about issues such as racism and their own history.

Susan Shobeiri
McLean High, 12th Grade

Let's Have an Intellectually Honest Gubernatorial Contest

To the Editor:

As a lifelong Republican who voted for Trump twice, I'm truly dismayed by our party's reliance on false narrative and grievance-driven politics. Virginians deserve a Gubernatorial contest that's an intellectually honest contest of ideas between Youngkin and McAuliffe.

I'm obviously speaking of the Big Lie. I wish Trump had won, but he simply didn't. Who says? He lost the Nov. 4 election. He lost multiple recounts in battleground states. He lost an effort to prevent Congress from certifying the election. He lost no fewer than 86 election fraud lawsuits covering Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Neva-

da, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, including rulings by 38 Republican judges, some appointed by him. In what universe of reality is this record not dispositive?

Just the other day I heard Trump talk about "untold thousands of dead people voting," so I checked. Georgia has 2 confirmed illegal votes in 2020. Pennsylvania confirms only 1 attempt to cast a ballot on behalf of a dead person. Michigan reports no confirmed cases. You get the idea.

I'd hate to see Virginia become a national embarrassment like Arizona.

Arizona election auditors found 182 cases of potential voter fraud out of more than 3 million ballots cast. That's a fraction of 0.00006. Of the 182 cases, only 4 have led to charges. Of the 4, 2 votes favored Biden and 2 favored Trump. The Arizona "audit," cloaked in secrecy, was supposed to conclude in April. I strongly suspect they've found nothing material and are working to concoct "inconsistencies" to muddy the debate, satisfying whoever's paying them.

The Commonwealth has such a storied history, politically speaking. Our state is the home of giant political intellects such as Jefferson, Madison, Mason, Henry, etc. We would dishonor them and diminish ourselves to let Virginia become Arizona.

John Christmas
Alexandria

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PET CONNECTION



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Murphy, six months old. He's my pride and joy. Murphy and I are training to be a service dog team. He's an Australian Labradoodle Cocker Spaniel mix - Megan Wahl, Herndon, Waiting for Murphy's veterinary appointment

'Tails of Love,' Doing Good

The Pet Connection Summer 2021.

MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Something is shifting in our relationships with the animals we generally call pets. They are becoming "quasi" family members, not in the exact same manner generally as the other humans in our nuclear and extended lives. Still, we dote on the creatures. We can honestly say we love them (or at least some of them) and believe they love us back.

We stroke their feathery, furry, and scaly skin coverings, a tactile sensation for both of us. We bend down and confide our secrets to them, knowing they understand.

We acknowledge their rights and act on them. Pets have us trained. They tell us when we are to feed them, walk them, take them out to play. And we frequently boast to others of their intelligence, basking in their shadows with pride. All of this is good, especially during a pandemic.

We do not own our pets; they hold us to be their guardians, ensuring their safety and that they do not suffer. The Connection understands the mutual pet/human bonds, their sentient natures, and different levels, hence the Pet Connection.

We hope you enjoy these photos and their accompanying tales of love-that they



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Ellie is a 12-year-old, Collie Shepherd. In the good weather, we walk here at McLean Central Park. She doesn't chase squirrels like she used to. She knows she can't catch them. Cats? Cats are a different story. - Sandra [and Alan not pictured] Lichliter of McLean

make you smile and recall perhaps a pet you had the privilege to guard.

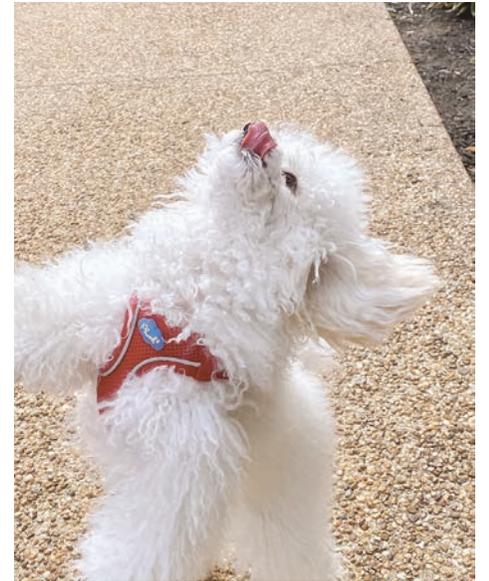
A vet once shared, with me, you only get a special pet once in your life.

This is for my Molly dog. I hope I did her good.



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Oliver, a 5-year-old, Coton de Tulear. He loves me, and we are dedicated to each other. -- Christian Hougen, McLean



MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

This is Chapoutier; he's my only child. I call him 'my little treasure.' - Liz (last name withheld), Tysons



PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Our Himalayan Blue Point cat, Mima, has been a great source of solace and entertainment for our girls Petra, 10, and Briella, 5, during the pandemic times and have spent countless hours snuggling with them. She is friendly, gentle, affectionate, and so cuddly. The first photo was on Father's Day last year, which was the first time we got to see the grandparents since the beginning of the pandemic. The girls are wearing matching dresses from their grandparents and are so happy to spend time with them after several months of separation. - Alice Demas and family, Great Falls

The second photo was taken on July 4 this year after watching the beautiful fireworks at Turner Farm. - Alice Demas and family, Great Falls



PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Harley is a 14-month-old Australian Shepherd, very smart. She goes everywhere with me, and she's very friendly and very energetic. - Dini Moreira, Great Falls

New Food Scrap Composting at Select County Farmers Markets

Nature's recycling reduces methane and lowers carbon footprint.

By MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Fairfax County residents have another option for managing organic wastes such as fruit and vegetable peels, food left on dinner plates, coffee grounds, and even paper towels and napkins. Rather than grinding some of these in a garbage disposal and sending the particles to wastewater systems or tossing them in the trash where they end up as part of the single most significant contributor in landfills, food waste, people can re-purpose them. Instead, they can help create a soil amendment, compost. Composting is one method to reduce methane, a potent greenhouse gas emission generated from organic waste in landfills.

Fairfax County Park Authority is one month into hosting composting pilot programs at four of its Farmers Markets. The pilot locations are the Wednesday Mount Vernon Market at 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria; the Thursday Herndon Market at 765 Lynn



Items accepted for composting - Fairfax County.

Street Herndon; the Saturday Burke Market at 5671 Roberts Parkway, Burke; and the Sunday Mosaic District Farmers Market, operated by FRESHFARM at 2910 District Ave., Fairfax.

“An estimated 25-30 percent of the food we buy is wasted,” said Sharon North, Fairfax County Section Chief, Communications Department Public Works and Environmental Services. “While there

are many strategies to reduce uneaten food, composting is the best solution for sustainably managing wasted food. Food scraps, when properly composted, provide an excellent soil amendment. Composted organic waste can be used as a natural fertilizer, putting nutrients back into the soil.”

THE CONCEPT for the novel program came about during discussion at the July 21, 2020, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee Meeting. At the time, Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck (D) discussed many environmental initiatives, including expanding county staff’s work to recycle and reuse compost.

“It’s clear as a community, as a society, as a world that we have to move our environmental efforts along. In fact, it’s critical that we accelerate our environmental efforts. In spite of and maybe even because of COVID-19, we are learning a lot of lessons about what pandemics are, what worldwide events can do to us as a planet, the harm that they can create, the death toll that they can wreak,” said Storck during the Committee Meeting. “I’m here to say to you that what we’re likely to face with respect to global warming and climate change will be ten times worse over the next couple of decades. So, this isn’t just a nice thing to do. This isn’t just a want to do. It is a must-do.”

The discussion ultimately led the Board to approve the first pilot program. “In November 2020, the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) launched a pilot program for residents to collect food scraps at the I-66 Transfer Station and the I-95 Landfill Complex,” said North. The two permanent sites accept food waste seven days a week.

SUMMER OF 2021, SWMP expanded the food scrap compost program to include farmers markets. It coordinated with Fairfax County Park Authority to identify host markets that would be good candidates. They also cited one program at the year-round market run by FreshFarm in Fairfax. North said adding the market locations provided another option for Fairfax County residents who wanted to compost food waste, particularly if they had meat, dairy, and other items that do not do well in a backyard composting system.

“Food scraps collected through the pilot program are taken to commercial facilities that manage them in a more industrial process...They also can accept compostable take-out containers, plates, cups, and utensils,” North said.

At the Thursday Herndon Farmers Market, Fritz Gottschalk of Veteran Compost, welcomed market shoppers to his table. “We come here to talk to folks who come to the market. We pick up their food scraps from their homes and run them through our composting process. We use the compost on the farm or feed it to the worms and distribute it back to our residential customers,” Gottschalk said.

Asked what can go in the compost bin, Gottschalk said if the food is on your plate and that includes meats and grains, put it in the bin. Other items include coffee grounds, paper towels, napkins, the cardboard part of the toilet paper roll, and compostable food containers, flatware, plates, and cups. There is no cooking grease, though, paper towels from the garage or bathroom, tissues, or pet waste.

According to Gottschalk, the farm is at Woodlawn Estate in Alexandria, where Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture is located. Arcadia is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a more equitable and sustainable local food system in the Washington, DC area through four programs. One is its Veteran Farmer Program that trains military veterans for new careers in agriculture.

Gottschalk said the majority of Veteran Compost employees are veterans. Some volunteered for military service after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. They are now separating from the service and are seeking careers in the civilian sector. However, the veterans are either having problems finding a job, wanting to work with other veterans, being underemployed, or being unemployed. “We work with them to get a job making compost, making something out of nothing,” Gottschalk said. The stated goal of Veteran Compost is “To fuel our growth with people and material that others pass over.”

John Dudzinsky, Farmers Market Manager at the Herndon site, said that Veteran Compost provided a good opportunity for homeowners to dispose of their food waste. The company and the program fit in well and helped with environmental sustainability. “Our Farmers Market welcomes the veteran-owned composting business,” said Dudzinsky.



Public Notice

Updated weight limits on Virginia bridges and culverts

In accord with state and federal law, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has imposed new or changed existing weight restrictions and installed new signage indicating the updated weight restrictions on the following bridges and culverts (structures) in Virginia within the last 30 days.

Jurisdiction	VA Struc No.	Route #	Route Name	Crossing	Posted Date
WYTHE	1086	52	FORT CHISWELL RD	GALENA CREEK	7/7/2021
WYTHE	1093	52	FORT CHISWELL RD	STREAM	7/7/2021
HANOVER	6016	617	SPRING RD	SOUTH ANNA RIVER	7/6/2021
SMYTH	6345	800	ST. CLAIR CREEK RD	ST CLAIR CREEK	7/3/2021
RICHMOND (M)	8034	7542	GROVE AVE	ROUTE 195 & CSX RR	6/24/2021
SCOTT	6505	617	SHELLEYS RD	BRANCH	6/17/2021
BUCHANAN	1060	460	RIVERSIDE DR	LOONEYS CREEK	6/15/2021
BUCHANAN	1107	T1012	RAILROAD AVE	LEVISA RIVER	6/15/2021
WISE	6219	630	SOUTH MOUNTAIN RD	BAD CREEK	6/11/2021

The list above is not a comprehensive list of all structures with weight restrictions in the Commonwealth, but shows only structures that have new or changed weight restrictions within the last 30 days. The list contains only basic structure identification and location information and the date the new or changed weight restriction and signage became effective.

For a full listing of all bridge and culvert weight restrictions with detailed information about specific structures, including location data and actual weight limits, visit www.virginiadot.org and navigate to Info Center/Trucking Resources. This page references a posted structures report and a GIS map tool that contain detailed information about restricted structures in Virginia. To receive email notifications regarding new or updated weight restrictions for structures statewide, complete the sign-up form on the web page.

Notices regarding bridges and culverts with new or updated weight restrictions are published monthly by VDOT. For additional information or questions, please contact, haulingpermits@vdot.virginia.gov.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, or national origin, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need further information on VDOT's Title VI Program or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact the Virginia Department of Transportation's Title VI Program Specialist at 804-786-2730.

PET CONNECTION



A Year with Dexter

Elaine Lin Wang of Great Falls shared a photo of Dexter and her two daughters:

"Dexter is a seven-year-old Australian Shepherd, and in the picture with him are Julia and Jenna from Great Falls. They were visiting a park together.

Dexter is our very first dog as a family, and my first dog ever. Dexter came to us from a dear friend right before the pandemic in 2020. We were so lucky to have Dexter especially during the beginning of the pandemic. He

kept Julia and Jenna entertained, and definitely kept my husband and me sane through the past 18 months.

I used to be terrified of dogs growing up. But Dexter was the first dog that I wasn't scared of. For some reason, I was able to be close to him physically. I used to run away from dogs due to fear. We bonded immediately when we met. I never knew that I could love a dog so much! I used to wonder why people love their dogs or pets so much, and now I know why!"

WEEK IN GREAT FALLS

Radiant Heat From Welding Torch Causes Great Falls House Fire

On Thursday, July 22, at 7:11 p.m., units responded to a reported house fire in the 9400 block of Brian Jac Lane in the Great Falls area of Fairfax County.

Units arrived on the scene of a two-story, single-family home with fire showing from the roof. A water tanker task force was dispatched due to limited fire hydrants in the area. Crews quickly extinguished the fire. No civilian or firefighter injuries were reported.

No occupants were home at the time of the fire. The fire was discovered when a neighbor saw smoke coming from the rear of the house. Another neighbor called 9-1-1. There were working smoke alarms in the home at the time of the fire.

Fire Investigators determined that the fire was accidental in nature and started in the ceiling above the metal I-Beam. The subcontractor was using an open flame torch near wood structural members in the ceiling. Radiant heat from the welding torch ignited the wood structural members in the ceiling.

No occupants were displaced as the house was undergoing a major renovation. Red Cross assistance was offered but declined. Damages as a result of the fire were approximately \$93,750 - according to Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department.

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VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hearings to solicit public comments on the drawing of state and congressional legislative districts in Virginia.

A total of eight public hearings will be held in July and August. Hearings are scheduled regionally both in person and virtually. Hearings will be livestreamed and archived online

For more information on dates and registration:
<https://www.virginiaredistricting.org>
Follow Us @CommissionVa



From 1-3 p.m. on July 31, short plays will be performed at the Town Green Amphitheater.

PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Vienna Play Festival to Be Held July 31

The Vienna Play Festival is being held on July 31, 1-3 p.m. It's organized by Vienna resident Benjamin Cudmore who was inspired to create this festival from the numerous plays he wrote and directed in other playwrighting festivals.

"Thanks to the Town of Vienna sponsoring the event, this dream of mine to create more

opportunities for actors and playwrights as well as to create a fun afternoon for my community to enjoy is possible," Cudmore said.

Short plays must be family-friendly and range from 10-20 minutes. Plays will be performed at the Town Green Amphitheater.

— JESSICA FENG

CALENDAR

WOLF TRAP PERFORMANCES

- At Wolf Trap Farm Park, McLean.
- July 27 – Joanie Leeds "All the Ladies" – Children's Performance
- July 28 – Elena Moon Park and Friends – Children's Performance
- July 28 – Aoife O'Donovan with members of The Knights
- July 29 – The War and Treaty
- July 30 + 31 – Norm Lewis with National Symphony Orchestra
- July 31 – Maryland Youth Ballet "Snow White" – Children's Performance
- August 4 – Straight No Chaser
- August 5 – Lindsey Stirling with special guest Kiesza
- August 6 – Renée Fleming with National Symphony Orchestra, Patrick Summers (conductor)

FRIDAY/JULY 30

Friday Night Live. 6:30 p.m. At Herndon Town Green, Herndon. Popular free outdoor concert series returns to regular performances. This will be the 27th season for the concert series which is produced by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce.

Schedule

- July 30 -- Kristen and the Noise;
- Aug 6 -- Social Call;
- Aug 13 -- It's All Good;
- Aug 20 -- JunkFood;
- Aug 27 -- All-Star Band;
- Sept 3 -- Shake the Room;
- Sept 10 -- keeton + 8 Track Jones;
- Sept 17 -- The Reflex;
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Bedridden in Burtonsville



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

It all started innocently enough: on Crystal Beach in Galveston Texas while enjoying a family vacation. Due to 11 years of chemotherapy, I have neuropathy in both feet. As a result, I never walk barefoot, especially on a beach, unless of course, I go into the water. Which on the Saturday before last. I did. When I returned to my beach chair, with my feet all sandy and wet, I elected not to put my sneakers and socks on for the 50-yard walk back to our accommodations. Oh (literally), how I wish I had.

Not 10 feet from the end of the beach was a narrow strip of road (tar, concrete, I can't remember) which we had to cross to reach the grassy margins which would then take us to our house. No sooner had I stepped left, right, left, that I felt like a buffalo which had been shot on the Great Plains, as I immediately collapsed onto a neighbor's yard swearing in pain as I landed; as the heat of the pavement seared through the bottom of both feet. As I sat on the grass with my heels clenched and my toes pointing skyward, I thought, "I'm not going to be able to walk the 25 yards to our house." Somehow, within a few minutes, I summoned up the strength to stand and somehow I managed to hobble my way home. (I'll spare you the details of the excruciating pain I endured walking up the 20+ wooden steps to get inside our house.)

The following day, I remained inside with my feet off the floor and my socks on angling for some kind of relief. The only times I had to move (to visit the bathroom) were sheer torture. Later that day, I relented and let my wife, Dina, look at my feet. She removed my bloody socks and recoiled in horror. To say it wasn't a pretty sight isn't really stating the obvious. It's stating that I was oblivious. I suffered through the rest of the night, taking only Extra Strength Tylenol for pain. It didn't really work. The next day we drove to Urgent Care.

I was seen within 15 minutes of my arrival. The physician's assistant on call removed my socks and assessed the damage. He said I had second degree burns on the soles of both feet. He prescribed an antibiotic pill, a pain pill and some medicinal cream. The cream was to be smeared on a non-adhesive bandage which then was to be placed on the affected areas and wrapped with a self-sticking, ace-type bandage which was to be changed twice a day. I was given my prescriptions and a set of crutches. Soon I was out the door - via a wheelchair, and then Dina drove us across the street to a pharmacy where we picked up our goodies. Finally, we had a treatment plan and relief was in sight. Oh (literally) how I wish it were so.

The next day was our last day of vacation. Of course I was no use to anybody as the house was cleaned and everyone packed their stuff as the cars were loaded with luggage (and back down those same 25 wooded steps). It was nearly three hours later (after a two-hour car ride) with Dina driving (don't tell the car rental place) as I squirmed in pain, until we arrived at our airport gate with yours truly getting wheelchair assistance.

Circumventing lines to drop off baggage and pass through security, with haste and super efficiency, we eventually were deposited at Gate A17 in plenty of time to make our departure. Unfortunately, the pain had not really subsided. In my mind I knew I was going to Urgent Care later that night after we arrived home in Maryland. These painkillers couldn't kill a fly let alone the pain from a second degree burn. (We were seen that night at a local Urgent Care around 11 pm. They confirmed the diagnosis, but they prescribed a more serious painkiller: percocet. Which so far hasn't stopped the pain. Duller it, maybe?)

Back at the gate, while we waited to board, a woman came over to sit next to where I had stretched out across two seats to minimize the pain. Dina explained to her the reason why I had my legs outstretched was because I was injured. She smiled and said: "Would you mind if I ... ? Stay tuned to this space for "Still Bedridden in Burtonsville" publishing Wednesday, August 4th.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.



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