



WANDERING AROUND WASHINGTON

Editor's note: "Wandering Around Washington" is a regular, exclusive column from Joe Tennis highlighting the untold stories in the county, direct from the people who live and work here. Watch for him to wander into shops, restaurants and parks to bring you the gab and gossip — only in the Washington County News.

Abingdon gets some new faces

ABINGDON, Va. — Hats off to Derek Webb as the new mayor of Abingdon, Virginia.

He's calm and cool and collected.

Webb marched right into the job at the July 1 meeting. And he brought his youthful zeal and wit to the town meeting; from now on, he'll be orchestrating a very different kind of Town Council.



Joe Tennis

Why, just five years ago, you would've found all different council members plus a different town manager and a different police chief in charge of Abingdon.

Now, it's a new day and a new way of working through the town's business, with new members like James Anderson and Amanda Pillion.

It is indeed a new day with even more change to come — with a vacancy on the Town Council.

Al Bradley has resigned, which opens up the possibilities of trying to find someone else to fill his spot. Someone will be appointed, according to the town attorney, Cameron Bell.

And that will likely change the dynamic even more.

Even Bell is a newcomer, having filled the spot for only a couple of years.

Town Manager Jimmy Morani, too, has been in town little more than a year.

Times change.

Unless she is appointed or wins election again, we may no longer hear the pleas by Cindy Paterson to look deeper into issues. The former vice mayor is no longer in office.

And what about Wayne Craig?

The very spiritual former mayor of Abingdon told me that God told him to run for reelection.

Unfortunately, Craig lost the vote.

But who knows?

Craig might reappear on the planning commission or some other place.

Times change.

And so do the faces of a town.

Barberitos to open new location in Abingdon

ABINGDON, Va. — Barberitos will open an eatery in the town of Abingdon next week.

The new restaurant is scheduled to open Monday at 101 Cook St., according to a news release. The fast-casual chain is known for its southwestern fare like burritos, tacos and quesadillas.

During the grand opening week, Barberitos will hold a drawing for free food for a year, T-shirts and other prizes, the release states.

Four residents test positive in Christian Care nursing home

BRISTOL, Tenn. — Four residents at the Christian Care Center of Bristol tested positive for COVID-19 after an employee there tested positive, according to Jennifer Skaggs, the Bristol, Tennessee nursing home's executive director.

Two of the residents are being quarantined and two are being hospitalized, according to a Monday statement from Skaggs. The employee received a positive test result June 25.

Skaggs said the facility's medical director, Dr. Vivian Clark, is working closely with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department and "following strict Joint Commission, Department of Health and CDC precautions and guidelines."

From staff reports

MOJO'S TRAILSIDE CAFÉ AND COFFEEHOUSE



David Calvert, a Buddhist monk who moved to Damascus from California, has purchased Mojo's Trailside Café and Coffeehouse. Calvert holds a photo of the former owner, John Seymore, who was killed in a motorcycle accident in March.

DAVID CRIGGER/WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

Preserving a legacy

Mojo's reopens under new management after death of previous owner

CAROLYN R. WILSON

FOR THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS

DAMASCUS, Va. — Three months after a tragic accident took the life of a beloved restaurant chef, his Damascus eatery is reopening with a new owner who is keeping the same name and menu — and most all of the staff.

Mojo's Trailside Café and Coffeehouse, formerly owned by John Seymore, began serving the community again on July 4, according to new owner David Calvert, who has spent the last few weeks configuring the interior of the building located on Douglas Drive in town.

Calvert, better known by friends as "Paragon," said that lifted COVID-19 restrictions have allowed him to operate at full capacity.

The interior of the café is about the only thing that will change for the small-town café that drew customers from all around to savor recipes made with what Seymore once described as "American traditional with a Southern flavor."

Seymore, who started the café five years ago, was known for his upscale menu that included shrimp and grits, crab cakes, Reuben sandwiches and Greek salads.

Locals said they couldn't start their day without a cup of coffee from Mojo's. Hikers were pleasantly surprised to find the hidden treasure within a few feet of the Virginia Creeper Trail.

"I'm keeping the menu items so John's history and vision can continue," said Calvert, who plans to add a few of his own Mediterranean dishes.

The interior of the café includes memorabilia that was displayed when Seymore was chef.

"Every chef has a tool — a knife, fork or spoon — that they like to covet.

"From my understanding, John had a fork and mixing bowl — it was his whipping fork and bowl for things like making scrambled eggs. No one has allowed to touch the fork. It was John's fork."

In the new interior design, Calvert added a wall at the entrance of the café. Calvert placed the fork inside the wall with a caring note from the staff.

"So, the first thing people are going to feel is John's energy and passion for what he did," said the owner. Calvert will continue to use the bowl for mixing eggs, and it will be passed down to future chefs.

"I'm here to continue that legacy."

A recent visit to Damascus led Calvert, a California businessman, to purchase the café that had been up for sale since June.



Calvert said he was looking for a peaceful place "to reinvent himself" when a friend invited him to spend some time in Damascus.

After learning about Seymore and his passion for cooking, Calvert decided he would buy the place and become the new proprietor.

A former chef of a 10,000-square-foot restaurant in Santa Barbara, California, Calvert dabbled in other entrepreneurial ventures before arriving in Southwest Virginia. He performed medical research in Sydney, Australia, and started an environmentally-friendly chemical company after the BP oil spill — before selling it all and traveling to Thailand to become a Buddhist monk until COVID-19 forced him to return to the United States.

"After doing some research, I absolutely fell in love with John and his vision for this restaurant," said Calvert.

"When I saw the place, I got emotional. I'm not going to let this man's vision die.

"But this is not about me. It's more of a contribution to John's vision and to keeping his history alive."

Calvert said a percentage of the restaurant sales will fund a scholarship program in Seymore's name to help a local community member attend a culinary school.

"His story touched my heart so much that my visit turned into a decision to move to Damascus," he said.

"John had a large following on social media. When I recently posted about reopening the café, hundreds of people responded. He touched so many lives just by his smile and being a happy man.

I'm touched by the love the community still has for John even though he's gone. It says so much about the power of his love for this community."

Calvert said he cooks very similarly to the style of Seymore.

"Like John, I change the menus with the seasons, I like to use higher-end quality items, and I subscribe to the farm-to-table concept where bringing in local foods reiterates giving back to the community."

His new menu items include a watermelon salad pizza made with large slices of melon topped with arugula salad, feta cheese, cherry tomatoes with balsamic vinaigrette. A vegetarian stack is made with risotto with grilled onions, broccoli and carrots.

The new owner said every customer with a Damascus address automatically will receive a 10% discount off their meal.

"Damascus customers will know that this is their place."

Calvert is extending the café's hours to 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day for breakfast and lunch menus; however, the dinner menu will not be offered until August.

Live music will be a regular feature.

"If we could put Mayberry somewhere on the planet these days, it would have to be Damascus. The people here are amazing and so helpful and loving," said Calvert.

"I've decided I'm staying here. I want to be part of this town and active in this community."

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