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CenturyLink outages pose safety risks to residents, officials say

► 'I don't know what happens if someone tries to call 911, can't and dies in their home.' ► Broadband the solution?

BY BEN PETERS
Rappahannock News sta

Some Rappahannock County residents say that for years they have been forced to contend with unreliable service from telecommunications giant CenturyLink, with frequent and lengthy outages posing potentially dire health and safety issues in

areas where cell and broadband service is unpredictable at best, if not wholly unavailable.

Geneva Welch, who helps to care for her husband, former Rappahannock County Supervisor Roger Welch who is suffering from Parkinson's disease in their home located near Flint Hill, received landline and internet service through CenturyLink. But for

nearly three weeks in November, her connection unexpectedly failed, leaving them with few communication options during a time when her husband has had to recently make several 911 calls for emergency medical care. It was just one of many outages in recent months.

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Sarah Latham on the job in the 1960s.

IN APPRECIATION

Sarah Latham got the job done

Rappahannock News editor told the county's stories for decades

BY DAPHNE HUTCHINSON
Special to the Rappahannock News

Sarah Latham was a liberated woman. The long-time editor of the Rappahannock News, who died Nov. 24, 2021, would have chuckled to hear that term applied to herself. Likely she would have squeezed her lips tight, looked over her specs and shaken her head in disagreement. She never saw herself as a libber, a ground breaker or a trail blazer. But what better way to describe a woman with a high school diploma who became editor of the county's paper of record in 1956 and led the newspaper through the transition from manual Underwood to computer, from hot lead to digital type, and from tabloid to broadsheet as the county changed around her? At the same time, she was a magistrate for two decades and a founding member of the Amisville Fire Dept. who set records for fundraising. And she did it all as a single parent, widowed at 35 with four daughters, the youngest 8 months, the oldest 14 years.

See LATHAM, Page 12



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Peter Hornbostel's new short stories twist and surprise

The Flint Hill resident's book hops from past to present, jumps from Switzerland to Brazil to Rappahannock, and from heartbreak to happiness. 10



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“Whatever it takes, you do it . . . Hard work and long hours won’t hurt you, and all I ever needed was a 15-minute soak in the tub before I was ready to face another day,” Latham said. “The job had to be done.”

Facing page: Dorothy Davis, Sarah Latham, Emily Miller and Quita Parrish at the Culpeper train station in 1960 where the LBJ Victory Special (dubbed “The Cornpone Special” by reporters) had arrived. Latham went to Alexandria earlier in the morning so she could make the trip to Culpeper with Lyndon and “Lady Bird” Johnson, who were on a 5-day, 8-state, 3,500-mile campaign tour by train.

Left: Intrepid reporter Latham, on the job covering beekeepers.

→ Editor-in-chief, added the former RCHS English teacher, who was back in Amissville for Sarah’s 90th birthday.

Sarah took seriously the responsibility of putting out the news. There was a week in December 1958 when she left for work Monday morning and didn’t return home until Thursday. Many nights she grabbed a few hours of sleep cushioned by cardboard boxes on the office’s cement floor; many mornings she dared icy, snowy roads to get to the job. “Whatever it takes, you do it . . . Hard work and long hours won’t hurt you, and all I ever needed was a 15-minute soak in the tub before I was ready to face another day,” she said in

an interview on her retirement in 1982.

The job had to be done, but I enjoyed every minute of it. You’re never doing exactly the same thing, and there’s a different challenge every week.

While earning a living, Sarah also kept busy with homemaking and raising her family. She was a fabulous cook and her homemade bread, apple sauce, cookies, pies and cakes were sought after. She boxed up and delivered dozens of cookies to friends, neighbors and county workers at Christmas and was so young at heart that even her grandchildren’s contemporaries considered her their friend.

As a single parent, Sarah had some support to help her meet challenges. When she married A.C., she gained a lifelong friend in his sister Mary Miller Payne. Mary and her husband Red were ready stand-ins whether it was having the girls sleep over on the nights Sarah was late at the newspaper, helping get Nancy back and forth to college, or piling everyone in their car to go see the national Christmas tree in D.C. Sarah also depended on Alice Edwards as caretaker and nanny to watch over baby Susan until her older sisters came home from school.

At that 90th birthday celebration a decade ago, Aline Johnson of Sperryville, a regular target of Sarah’s rare ticket sales for Amissville Fire and Rescue, had words that could serve as a benediction on a long life well lived:

It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes people like Sarah Latham to keep that village going. She has done more than her share for Rappahannock County.

...And blowing snow at the ski slope near Washington in 1962.