
What could have been: Incoming Headmaster's Pub chef tragically passes

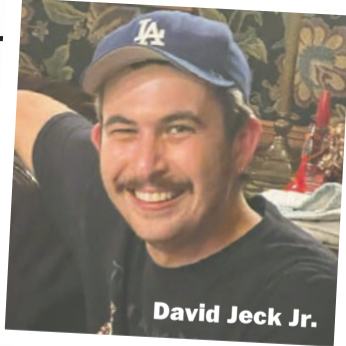
BY BEN PETERS

Rappahannock News staff

David Jeck Jr. was so close to achieving a lifelong dream of managing his own restaurant before having it stolen after tragically passing away.

Jeck Jr., 28, who died Dec. 6 after bleeding to death

internally from an unknown cause, had just purchased Sperryville's popular Headmaster's Pub from owner Cliff Miller IV. A classically trained chef with a deep passion for the culinary arts, Jeck Jr. was set to take over the restaurant



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as its owner and head chef in the final days of 2021, according to his father David Jeck Sr.

“David was so excited about it. I mean, it was kind of a dream come true ... we were all geared up for it, clearly it didn't happen,” Jeck Sr. said. Miller did not return requests for comment for this report, and the status of the pub's current ownership is not clear.

The elder Jeck, who's superintendent of Fauquier County Public Schools, said his son was hoping to revamp the pub's menu by adding a few more affordable options to attract a different clientele. One idea was a \$5 cheeseburger, according to his younger brother Caleb Jeck.

Affordability and accessibility were both central to Jeck Jr.'s mission as a chef, his dad said.

Jeck Jr. wanted Headmaster's to become a restaurant that could attract those looking for a fine dining experience, but also one where patrons could grab a quality, yet affordable, burger and a cold beer after playing a round of golf on the Schoolhouse Nine, the elder Jeck said.

He was a firm believer in the smashburger, according to Caleb Jeck, who reminisced about how Jeck Jr. would sautee the beef with onions to perfection.

Jeck Jr. grew up in Marshall but spent lots of time in Rappahannock County and at the pub playing golf with his dad and brother. He was a



BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

Caleb Jeck and David Jeck Sr. on the Schoolhouse Nine golf course outside Headmaster's Pub in Sperryville.

DAVID JECK SR.: “David was so excited about it. I mean, it was kind of a dream come true ... clearly it didn't happen.”

graduate of William Monroe High School in Stanardsville and the New England Culinary Institute where he was recognized as the most outstanding student in his graduating class, according to his obituary.

He started out as a waiter, his brother said, before making his

way up the culinary ladder and working for fine dining restaurants in Northern Virginia and in South Carolina where he served under an award-winning chef.

Most recently, he worked at Marshall's Field and Main, one of the highest rated restaurants

in Northern Virginia, where he convinced the owner that they needed to place a few affordable items on the menu to attract customers. Jeck Jr. went on to create a burger that became the restaurant's most popular menu item, according to Jeck Sr.

Jeck Jr. was a creative chef, his brother said. Many of his signature dishes were riffs on meals he grew up enjoying with the family that had a unique flair. Caleb Jeck's favorite dish of his brother's was a chicken pot pie he made for them in the past. He was also a painstakingly meticulous cook, his dad said. Jeck Jr. was known for tossing out gnocchi if an error was made during preparation.

A man of God, Jeck Jr. looked out for his fellow restaurant staffers. He even quit a handful of gigs because he felt others were being mistreated by management, according to his dad.

“David used to say, “The most important person in the kitchen is the dishwasher ... if something goes wrong with the dishwasher, then everything is going to get screwed up,” Jeck Sr. said.

To Caleb Jeck, his brother's “second-to-none” work ethic was an endless source of inspiration.

“He was really, really excited to be able to serve this community and call this place home,” Caleb Jeck said. “I just think that it sucks that it didn't work out because I think he had finally made it to the point where he wasn't on the line for 50 hours a week anymore. He wasn't cooking somebody else's menu. He finally had his own opportunity.”

Former Afghan interpreter takes refuge with Rappahannock County family



BY LUKE CHRISTOPHER

Fahim, his wife Hadia and their 3-year-old son Mano arrived in Rappahannock County in February after fleeing Afghanistan last summer.

'We were lucky to get out'

BY BEN PETERS
Rappahannock News staff

A young family from Afghanistan has taken refuge in the home of a Rappahannock County couple who helped coordinate their escape from the country with U.S. military officials after the Taliban took power last year following the withdrawal of American forces.

Fahim, his wife Hadia and their 3-year-old son, Manochehr, who goes by Mano, arrived in Rappahannock in early February to stay with the family (who will be referred to under the pseudonyms of Mike and Sarah since they requested to not be named for security reasons) after months of being displaced elsewhere across the globe in

REFUGEE

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search of a path to the United States to regain their freedom. Fahim also requested that his family's last name not be used for safety concerns.

Fahim, 33, had worked as an interpreter for the U.S. military since 2016 during a time when forces were shifting from fighting the Taliban directly to instead supporting the Afghan army to fight and aiding in further efforts to Democratize the nation under a western-backed government. His role was to translate and provide legal information to the U.S. military, help them develop policies not in conflict with standing Afghan law and root out corruption in the country's government. Through that work he became acquainted with Mike, a former senior official with the U.S. Department of Defense.

Unlike other refugees, Fahim understood that joining forces with the Americans was risky and may one day necessitate him and his family having to immigrate to the U.S. Once President Joe Biden announced last April that he would pull U.S. forces from the country in August, ending America's longest war, Fahim knew Kabul was all but destined to fall. What he didn't anticipate was how quickly Afghanistan's government would disintegrate in the face of the Taliban with such little resistance and how little time he would have to make evacuation plans.

Fahim, like many translators, was eligible for a special visa to immigrate to the states because of his work assisting the U.S. military, making the extended period of time it took for him to escape even more frustrating, Mike said. Fahim wasn't the only interpreter who didn't immediately make it out. More than 60,000 still remain in Afghanistan, according to The Wall Street Journal, and many others were killed.

"Sadly, the U.S. government didn't evacuate all those eligible immigrants. They took everyone who could make their way to the [Kabul] airport," Fahim said in an interview.

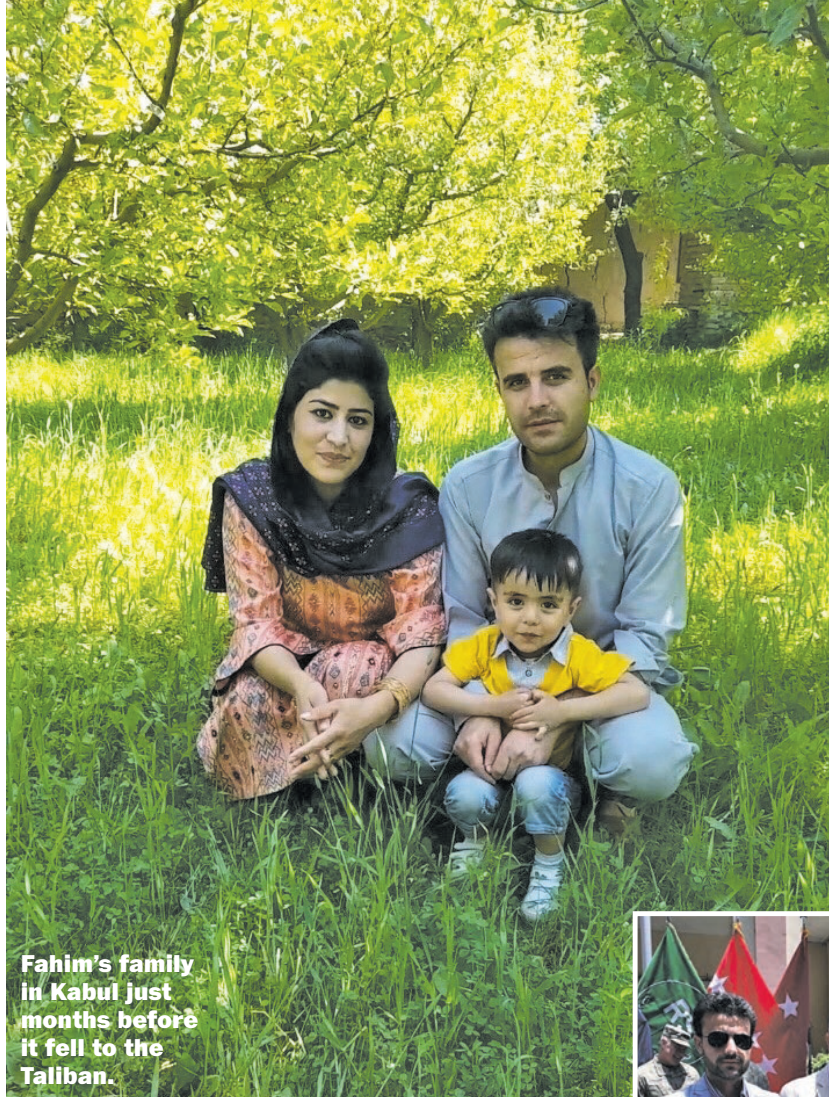
In August shortly before Afghanistan fell, Fahim, with the help of several members of Congress, had attempted to board he and his family on an airplane at the Kabul airport where Afghans were seen desperately clinging to aircrafts in an attempt to make it out of the country.

But after he saw that the Taliban shot civilians and an ISIS suicide bomber carried out an attack on the airport, killing U.S. forces and nearly 200 civilians, he deemed that effort too dangerous and withdrew. Fahim decided to lay low for some time, cutting off communication with U.S. military officials for safety.

"We had no idea where he was. In fact, I thought he was killed," Mike said.

Mike and other officials eventually made contact with him via the encrypted messaging platform WhatsApp to make arrangements for him to evacuate the city. At the time, he also offered that Fahim and his family could live with them in Rappahannock if they ever made it to the U.S.

"Right after the chaos, all of my friends in the U.S. Military ... they all stepped up to help me ... Most of



Fahim's family in Kabul just months before it fell to the Taliban.

them didn't sleep during the night," Fahim said.

An Air Force colonel had helped connect Fahim to a handful of charities and other nonprofit organizations, which assisted in escorting them and six other families by car to the northern Afghanistan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in what was a 12 hour ride with Taliban checkpoints every few kilometers where they were interrogated about their travel plans, Fahim said. Each family in the car made up a different story to tell the Taliban about their plans.

Following their arrival in Mazar-i-Sharif, they were given a safehouse and a chef to cook for them. They remained there for about a month before in October an organization connected to Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, paid upward of \$1 million to fly them and about 12,000 other afghans from Mazar-i-Sharif to the UAE since it was believed the Taliban were planning to instate a travel ban, according to Mike.

"The Taliban are actively arresting and executing anyone affiliated with the U.S. government or the national army," Fahim said. "We all would have been arrested or executed by now." After they departed from Mazar-i-Sharif, the Taliban raided their safehouse and arrested the operator, the cook and another person.

"We were lucky to get out," he said.

Fahim still has family stuck in Afghanistan, including his parents, siblings and cousins. "I'm not sure if I can help them, but they are in plain danger right now," he said. For their safety, he's taken several measures to destroy any documentation that may

link him to the family.

Just days ago, he called home to instruct them on how to cooperate with the Taliban when their house gets searched. He instructed them to keep a low profile and stay off social media. On Sunday, a 19-year-old girl was killed by the Taliban in the family's neighborhood, Fahim said.

"They want to leave, but there's no hope unfortunately," he said, since the Taliban have now restricted Afghans from leaving the country.

They stayed in the UAE for about three months, waiting for the next flight to the United States. The U.S. Embassy in the UAE reissued their visas and they flew to Washington D.C. in January where they stayed with Hadia's sister in Fredericksburg for a few days. But that didn't work out because her sister is raising four children of her own and the home became too crowded. Recalling the offer made to him months earlier, Fahim reached out to Mike.

Fahim and his family arrived in Rappahannock on Feb. 7 with just one suitcase and a single backpack with a few outfits for each. Within hours of their arrival, people in the Rappahannock community showered them with gifts, including clothing and toys for Mano, they said.

A pastor with Sperryville Methodist

Church took the family to a store and allowed them to pick out anything they would like and paid for it in full. The outpouring of support was both unexpected and overwhelming. "It was wonderful, unbelievable," Fahim said. "Because we had lived in Fredericksburg for a week and even Afghans didn't come and say welcome to us."

For the past several weeks, they've been coordinating with several charities and government agencies to help get them situated in the country so Fahim can begin applying for jobs. He holds an undergraduate degree in political science from Kateb University in Kabul and a master's degree in international relations from Avicenna University, also in Kabul.

Prior to working with the U.S. military, Fahim had been an office manager, a lecturer at several universities and a financial adviser. He hopes to find work as an office supervisor so he can financially support both his family in Virginia and the ones trapped in Afghanistan, whose economy is faltering under Taliban rule. Mike's wife Sarah has been helping him craft a resume.

There's been little culture shock for Fahim in America since he had been exposed to western ways of life for years through his involvement in the military. But it's much harder for Hadia, who doesn't speak English and has had no prior exposure to American culture. But the community has helped her to integrate, Fahim said.

She no longer is required to wear a headscarf and now dresses like western women. But she remains fascinated by the idea of casual

dating since that's strictly forbidden back in Afghanistan. She and Fahim didn't meet until after they were engaged.

Hadia said that America is beautiful and that she is happy to be living in the country, according to Fahim's translation of his wife's words. Mano is also thrilled to be living there since he now has loads of toys and games, Fahim said.

But Fahim and his family don't plan to remain in Rappahannock once he finds work. They hope to move to Northern Virginia and settle down near Fredericksburg, Alexandria or Arlington so Mano can attend school and Hadia, 28, can begin to learn English and eventually attend college. In the meantime, she hopes to find work in retail.

"Rappahannock County and the people here, we were all amazed with the love and respect and also the care they showed to us ... Because they started to help us right in the time we needed it most. It's very important," Fahim said.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Fahim with Gen. Abdul Ghayoor Andarabi, director of the Major Crimes Task Force of Afghanistan (middle) and Gen. John Nicholson the 4-star general in charge of all U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

Looking forward and back: Settle's celebrates 50 years

BY BEN PETERS
Rappahannock News staff

Mounted on the wall behind the desk of Bubby Settle, owner Settle's Cars & Trucks, is a small framed bulletin that reads in all caps: "TOUGH TIMES DON'T LAST TOUGH PEOPLE DO."

The note was hung by Bubby's mother, Ester Settle, a longtime breast cancer patient that he called "the compassion" of the operation, who alongside her husband William Richard "WR" Settle, helped found the used car lot that's become a Rappahannock County institution going on five decades.

The small family-owned company

plans to celebrate its 50th anniversary this spring with a celebration April 9 between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at its Flint Hill location.

"I know [Settle's] is going to continue. And I was thinking about it — if Kendra has any support and help at all, Settle's could go for 100 years," said Bubby, who in recent years stepped down from overseeing day-to-day operations of the business. In his place, Bubby enlisted his daughter, Kendra Settle Hahn, 30, who has been working for the shop in some capacity practically since she learned to walk.

Lately, Bubby, 61, has started to take more of a back seat in his role at the business as he looks toward retirement. But he's unsure when he'll stop working.

"He'll never retire," Heather Henry, one of his employees, cut in to say.

Bubby has worked for the family business for virtually his entire life — it's the only job he ever held. When Bubby graduated from high school in the late 70s, his father left the business to become a farmer and he took the reins.

Hahn, a mother to a newborn boy, has also spent much of her life at Settle's. Among her earliest memories is sitting on the knee of Patsy, the woman who ran the register, and ringing up customers. "It's literally in my blood," she said. "I mean, I can't put it any other way."

"I think it's a legacy for our family — for the county, really," Hahn said.

"We've been here for so long and we hope to be able to maintain it."

The business was born in the late 60s inside a Laurel Mills home where the Settle family worked on the first floor and lived on the second. But with the help of a family friend in the early 70s, Settle's relocated to its now-iconic Flint Hill location where Bubby and his family lived in the home that now houses the company's administrative office.

"The couch was right there; the RCA TV was in the corner," Bubby said last Friday in the living room that is now a bustling workspace where phones seemingly ring without end and eager customers drop by for consultation.

Back when Bubby lived onsite, →



WORK & FAMILY |
Heather Henry,
Kendra Settle Hahn
(with baby Buxton
Hahn, 7 weeks),
Samantha Settle
and Bubby Settle

Below:
Ester and William
Richard Settle
founded the
business.



➔ Settle's size and scope was much more limited. Today, it's expanded to have hands in several markets including, used car sales, vehicle repairs, state inspections, fresh food, fuel and agriculture, along with a second car lot in Amissville. "If the car market is off for six months, you've got a little income over here," Bubby said of their additional ventures.

The farm, which Bubby's father started, is now managed by Hahn's husband, Ben Hahn, who raises cattle that after slaughter find their way into the freezer of Settle's Flint Hill deli.

Even as the cost of fuel soars across the nation amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Settle's has managed to still maintain among of the cheapest gas prices in the county. That's thanks to them remaining fully independent and maintaining a longstanding connection with a trusted fuel supplier. Although, independence does not come without challenges. Hahn had to run off for some time during the interview to repair a gas pump.

"When something breaks, we're responsible," Bubby said, noting that doing business with a large car dealership could help alleviate those problems. "But we'd rather be independent of that and then that way I can control my prices. I don't have someone controlling me and the product. Once the product comes here, I pay for it then have control of what I sell it for."

Soon Settle's will carry branded gasoline from 76, a division of Chevron. But Bubby insisted that prices won't rise as a result since they will still own everything but the logo the station will soon bear. "We don't gouge at all," he said.

Bubby attributed the business' enduring accomplishments to the family's faith in God and generations of dedication and hard work.

"We made a lot of sacrifices during those times when you work seven days a week and you didn't take any time off and you lived in fear of going under — so you work three times harder than anyone around you," he said.

But they believe the beating heart of the business and a testament to its



LOYALTY | Bubby Settle, right, with longtime customers, Tom Massie and Tom Massie Jr.
Below: **Bubby Settle with 18-year-veteran mechanic Stewart Settle, no relation.**



sustained success is its loyal customer base bred by the family's laser-sharp focus on staying community-oriented. They touted building customer trust as their core value, as well as not adding "gimmicks" to doing business with customers.

Providing customers with reliability and familiarity of the services on offer is paramount and helps to keep them coming back. Some have purchased several vehicles from Settle's over the years, Bubby said.

While the business side is very much

family-oriented, they also employ a stable of loyal longtime employees, some of whom have worked at Settle's for nearly 20 years. "We need help and they need employment. And if we can get along, that'll work," Bubby said. "I think if your goal was to make sure you have an environment that protects your people and yourself, we all will enjoy the work. And that's what I see."

He continued, "It's not that we have the best health care or any of those type of things — we're a small business. But if we have someone that's sick or needs off ... we all pitch in and try to fill those needs."

Hahn loves the family-oriented culture they've fostered at Settle's and the flexibility the role affords her. But she also bears the weight of carrying the business' torch into a new generation.

"We're going to continue in [Bubby's] footsteps and sell cars and do the way that he has done it for so many years ... and just continue to keep doing what we're doing — kind of changing with the times, but not too drastically that it knocks us out," Hahn said.