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Pamplin City man enjoys his player piano

**Debra Ferrell
Times-Virginian
Editor**

Old western shows often feature a player piano blasting out boisterous tunes while the cowboys whoop it up.

We've all seen old movies and television shows with a gang of people clustered around the old player piano...singing and have a ball. Unfortunately, the age of radio just about killed those days.

Perhaps images such as these helped instill a desire to one day own a player piano in Pamplin City resident Patrick Lair.

"I've always wanted one and was excited when I saw one for sale about 15 years ago by a man in Roanoke," he recalls.

Unfortunately, they were not able to come to an agreement on a price at that time. "When he wouldn't



Gathering friends around his player piano for some singing and socializing is a lot of fun for Patrick Lair of Pamplin City.

come down on the price I told him 'you don't have to sell it and I don't have to

buy it'," he remembers.

Lair is a former car salesman and sold Fords for 30

years on Rt. 460 so he's used to negotiating a good deal.

He bided his time until the piano was relisted for sale again when the Christmas holidays rolled around. This time he was successful in buying it for a decent price.

"Getting it to my home in Smith Mountain Lake (where I lived at the time) was the next step."

Lair hired four men who worked all day getting the piano from Roanoke to Smith Mountain Lake. They ended up having to partially dismantle it before they could move the heavy music maker.

The exhausted men told him not to call them if he ever wanted to move it again.

And move it he did years later when he moved to Pamplin City. But this time he hired W. R. Boring, his piano tuner, to undertake the job. "It wasn't a bit of trouble for him. He and one

other man got it in here in about an hour. He acted like there was nothing to it. It just goes to show what a difference experience makes."

The player piano is certainly a thing of beauty and is in excellent condition thanks to the Roanoke owner having it restored. It has a lot of age on it and could be close to 100 years old. The serial number on the back of it would need to be researched to get the actual age.

Lair gets a lot of enjoyment out of the piano that came with a number of QRS Word Rolls containing several songs each that activate the keys to tinkle out a tune. He has a wide number of songs including those with Gospel and Country music. He's even got "Grandma Got Run

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The Gibson Brothers to perform at auditorium

Bluegrass music lovers are no doubt chomping at the bit to see the Appomattox Bluegrass Concert set for Saturday, April 9, 2 p.m., at the Appomattox County High School Auditorium located at 198 Evergreen Avenue, Appomattox.

The ever-popular Gibson Brothers will be the headliners for this great show.

It is presented by the Appomattox County High School Athletic Booster Club.

Tickets are: Adults \$20 in Advance; \$25 at the door; Children (6-12) \$10; Children 5 & under free.

Purchase Tickets with major credit card or go to www.lyncburgtickets.com,

More information can be found at www.appomattox-bluegrass.com or by calling 660-7101.

A No Depression blogger referred to members of the band as "...the Gibson Brothers who don't share the Gibson name."

But there's no doubt they're a band of musical brothers as Steve Leftridge of PopMatters described them this way: "Eric and Leigh Gibson might have, pound-for-pound, the most impeccably fine-sounding traditional bluegrass band on the contemporary scene. ...the reason these guys can't lose is that, quite simply, they sound so great."

School Board votes to adopt 2017-18 budget proposal

**Charles Conrad
Times-Virginian
Staff Writer**

On Thursday, March 23, the Appomattox County School Board voted unanimously to adopt the proposed 2017-18 fiscal year school budget. The fiscal year begins on June 1, 2017.

Bruce McMillan, Director of Finance and Human Resources, outlined a breakdown of projected budget numbers, with a total revenue of \$23,849,669 expected to equal the amount of expenses.

Superintendent Dr. Dorinda Grasty will forward a letter to the Appomattox County administrator requesting local funding, and will receive a response af-



APS students Madison Crews (left) and Callan Shields (right) win the Paper Tower contest at School Board meeting Thursday

ter the County Supervisors approve the County budget for the coming year in late

April or early May.

In the general fund, projected state revenue

is \$16,494,000. Federal revenue is expected to be 1.1 million dollars. Other revenue is \$213,000. The amount expected to be requested from Appomattox County is \$5,966,000. All employee salaries and the majority of spending comes from the general fund, according to McMillan.

Separate funds are for text books, Carry Forward, and Capital Improvement Fund. Those three funds are reviewed in June before the end of the fiscal year. If unused funds are remaining, a request is made to the County to re-appropriate those funds back into the school division for use in next year's budget. Any money left over from the

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Moneta resident brings his nation-healing mission to Appomattox

**Charles Conrad
Times-Virginian
Staff Writer**

On April 9, 1965, a nation divided by war became one nation in Appomattox. While not currently in a declared war, the same nation is divided across political and cultural lines, creating a war of ideas. At it's worst, this undeclared war forgoes civil discourse and results in violence and death.

Moneta resident David Merritt believes that while healing the land is a painstaking effort, one man can help make a difference. His mission "Walk of One Nation" is a personal effort meant for Americans to communicate more effectively about the issues of our time.

On March 1, 2017, Merritt began his journey to walk across America in Virginia Beach, the city where he was born. He will take his message across the country parallel to Route 40 en route to a final stop in San Diego, California.

In early March, Merritt paid an important visit to



Charles Conrad/Times-Virginian David Merritt on the steps of the McLean House in Appomattox, where the nation united in 1965.

Appomattox. The visit was not a coincidence. Merritt's wife pointed out that Appomattox would be the perfect town to visit because it is where the Civil War ended after much bloodshed, and the United States unified again.

Aside from meeting and talking with various people in Appomattox, Merritt

took the time to tour the Appomattox Court House National Park. Although wanting to end his journey in 3 to 4 months, Merritt said his time in Appomattox was a time of reflection and will be one of his longest stops along the way.

Merritt's idea was born through a conversation with his oldest son, a member

of the U.S. Archery team, about the extreme civil unrest in America while driving home from a January 2017 archery tournament in

Pennsylvania. Merritt said, "I told him 'I am just sick of this, aren't you?'"

"I brought up the idea about doing something positive and walking across the country and asking people how we can come together as a country again. He looked right dead at me in the eye and said, 'Dad, you're the perfect guy to do that.' And at that point, it was the spark of the idea."

Being a husband, father, farm owner, and operating an archery park and bow shop, Merritt's backpacking trip across the country comes with great responsibility and forethought.

Merritt packs needed devices such as a safety beacon to send an SOS in case of emergency, a solar charger for his cell phone, and a small tent. He travels as lightly as possible, furnishing enough food and daily supplies for several days.

Frequent restaurant stops help with nourishment and meeting everyday people on his journey.

"The dynamic has been really interesting to me because I think a lot of people see a guy walking down the road with a backpack and they probably think he's either a vagabond or a hobo. It's unique, I think, to see, from my perspective how people are viewing me initially. And, once I tell them what I'm doing, it's really the icebreaker," Merritt said.

The banner on Merritt's backpack, which reads "walkofonenation.com" also peaks the curiosity of people who ask him what it all means, which then begins the nation-healing conversation he is hoping to continue. Merritt needed to change his website to a ".us" link since the banner was made.

Being a natural introvert, Merritt developed a more extroverted personality while in college, which now helps him approach people confidently. Merritt, who

teaches wilderness survival courses, was once told by an instructor he didn't have the personality to lead a training course. Merritt decided he wasn't going to allow his inherent shyness to stand in the way of his dream, so he worked on being more open with others.

"My wife says that I'm a walking contradiction in many ways. I'm probably one of the few people that

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