

Some Famous Herndon Residents

By Barbara Glakas

Listed below are a few notable people who have lived in the Herndon area.

Lynda Van Devanter Buckley - (1947-2002). A former U.S. Army nurse during the Vietnam War, Buckley served as a surgical nurse with the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku, near the Cambodian border, in 1969 and 1970. In 1983 she wrote her memoir, *Home Before Morning*, the first widely-published book by a female veteran on the Vietnam War. The book described her experiences with the horrors of war as well as her struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The ABC television drama show *China Beach* (1988-1991) was based on Van Devanter's book, with the character Nurse Colleen McMurphy roughly based on Van Devanter's experiences as a nurse in Vietnam. She was the founding executive director of the Women's Project of the Vietnam Veterans of America from 1979 to 1984. She later served as a nursing supervisor at Reston Hospital and lived on Jackson Street in Herndon.

Jon Carman - (b. 1976). Carman was former All-America and all-conference offensive tackle football player. He played high school football for coach Tommy Meier at Herndon High in Virginia. He also played for Georgia Tech and for the Buffalo Bills.

Albert Scott Crossfield - (1921-2006). A celebrated test pilot, Crossfield was once served as a U.S. fighter pilot in WWII and later served as a naval flight instructor. He had Master's and Bachelor's degrees in Aeronautical engineering. In the 1950's he served as an aeronautical research pilot at Edwards Air Force Base. He, along with a small cadre of other test pilots, flew many of the initial dangerous initial test flights. In 1953 he was the first person to fly at twice the speed of sound. He was played by Scott Wilson in the 1983 movie, "*The Right Stuff*." Crossfield Elementary School, located on Fox Mill Road, not far from his home, was named in his honor.

Evelyn Davis - (c. 1904-1983). Davis was a pioneering modern dancer, choreographer, and dance instructor. Davis studied dance in Germany, graduated from George Washington University and did her graduate work at Catholic University. In 1939 she formed the Dance Playhouse Group to increase interest in dance. She later founded the Evelyn Davis Dance Playhouse, a studio theater in Washington, D.C., the only theatre in D.C. devoted exclusively to dance. The theatre was in the Church Street Theatre, now called the Keegan Theatre. She also lectured, authored books, and established studios and summer dance programs at American University, the University of Maryland, and other locations around the Metro area. In the latter part of her life, she lived in Herndon off Stuart Road.

J.J. Darlington - (1849-1920). Joseph James Darlington was a prominent Washington, D.C., attorney who had a summer home in Herndon. Born in 1849 in South Carolina, he moved to Washington D.C. in 1875 and began practicing law. An active member of the community, he was the President of the City Orphan Asylum, on the board of the Washington Loan and Trust Company and the Federal Bank, a member of the joint citizens committee on suffrage, and served as the Dean of the Washington Bar. He was solicited by two Presidents and other colleagues to serve in the Supreme Court, but he declined. In around 1888 he purchased about

500 acres of land in Herndon. He bought a house and added onto it, making it a large 25-room Victorian home in the area surrounded by Elden, Van Buren, and Monroe Streets. He entertained many prominent guests from Washington, D.C. He donated the land for Herndon's First Baptist Church, which was built with stone from a quarry on his land. He died in 1920 and his Herndon home eventually fell into disrepair and was torn down. A statue was erected in his honor at the corner of 5th Street and Indiana Avenue, NW, near the DC Court of Appeals.

Ronnie Dove - (b. 1935). Dove is a famous country musician born in Herndon. He said his very first musical performance was in his grade school in Herndon, where he got a roar of applause which encouraged him to continue performing. He sung in his high school glee club for four years and began his public musical career singing in Baltimore Clubs, where he eventually formed a group called the Belltones. In 1964 he broke with the band and went to Nashville. He made appearances on the Mike Douglas Show, the Merv Griffin Show, American Bandstand, and the Ed Sullivan Show. He had many hit singles and albums.

Craig Dunn - A 1974 Herndon High School graduate, Dunn was a stuntman for Steven Segal in *Above The Law*, *Hard to Kill*, *Under Siege*, and other films and TV series.

Wesley L. Fox - (b. 1931 - 2017). A USMC Colonel, Fox was a Medal of Honor recipient for actions during the Vietnam War. He later served as an instructor at Quantico and as the Deputy Commandant for cadets for the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. As a youth he lived off Dranesville Road and attended Herndon Elementary school. He later moved to Front Royal but, as a teen, he continued to work on a Herndon family farm during the summers. He currently lives in Blacksburg.

Angie Goff - (b. 1980). Goff is a broadcast journalist. She was born in South Korea but later moved to the U.S. and graduated from Herndon High School where she was the senior class President. She attended George Mason University. Her first television job was in California, and later got jobs in Iowa and South Carolina, where she won a regional Emmy Award. She returned to the Washington area in 2007, where she first became a traffic anchor for WUSA-7. In 2011 she joined NBC-4 where she anchored the weekend editions and also reported during the week. In 2019 she joined WTTG as a news anchor.

Brandon Guyer - (b. 1986). Guyer is a professional baseball player. Born in Pennsylvania, he graduated from Herndon High School in 2004. He lettered in both baseball and football, and in his senior year he set a school record for most touchdowns in a single game, scoring seven touchdowns. He also holds the Herndon High School's all-career homerun record. He played college baseball at the University of Virginia and was drafted by the Chicago Cubs in 2007. In his career he has played with the Tampa Bay Rays, the Durham Bulls, and the Cleveland Indians.

Don Handfield - (b. 1971). Handfield was a 1989 graduate of Herndon High School. In his career as an actor some of his movie roles have included *Deep Impact*, *Captain Jack*, *A Reason to Believe*, and *Defying Gravity*. Television roles included *Saved by the Bell*, *Profiler*, and *JAG*.

Francis "Frank" Harden - (1922-2018). Harden was a popular radio announcer who co-hosted the Harden and Weaver radio show on WMAL in Washington, D.C. from 1960-1998. Formerly

working in Denver, he came to the D.C. area in the late 1940s to take a job at WMAL, where he initially reported the news, sports, and other events. Although for much of his later life he lived in Bethesda, Maryland, it was in the 1950s that some Herndon locals remember Mr. Harden living in Herndon in an old house that formerly stood near the intersection of Elden and Lynn Streets.

Louis Armistead Jones - (1893-1961). Jones was the son of Robert Tyler Jones and the grandson of President John Tyler. He married Frances Strother McMillen, daughter of John and Mary McMillen. The Jones's lived on the McMillen Farm on Dranesville Road for all their lives, where the McMillen family farmed; however, Louis Jones's occupation was an accountant for the U.S. Government in the General Accounting Office. The Jones's daughter, Margaret McMillen Jones, grew up on the farm and later married George Coomber. Many Herndon residents still remember Coomber Hall on the farm property, where the Coomers operated a school of music and dance.

Doug Kammerer - (b. 1975). Kammerer is an NBC-4 chief meteorologist who grew up in Herndon and attended Herndon High School. Kammerer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in meteorology which he earned from Northern Colorado University. He began his career in Macon, Georgia, before going to Jacksonville, Florida, and then to Orlando. He arrived in Philadelphia in 2003 and returned to the Washington, D.C., area in 2010 to work for NBC-4.

Adam Kokesh - (b. 1982). Born in California, Kokesh enlisted in the Marines in 1999. He later became active in an anti-war advocacy group called "Iraq Veterans Against the War." From 2007-2013 he became well-known on the national scene and participated in many anti-war and pro-gun rights protests, sometimes without permits, which led to his arrest. In 2013 he organized an "Open Carry March on Washington" where thousands of armed marchers were expected to march from Virginia into Washington, D.C., in protest of gun laws. He later distributed a press release in which he called for a "Final American Revolution" in DC to take place on July 4th. After posting a YouTube video of himself loading a shotgun on Freedom Plaza in violation of DC law he was arrested at his home in Herndon. He has appeared in film and in 2016 launched a "For the Love of FREEDOM!" tour, an exploratory tour for a possible 2020 Presidential run.

Elisabeth Leonhardt - (1867-1953). Leonhardt grew up in the town of Herndon. She was one of the Sacred Twenty, the first 20 nurses in the U.S. Navy during World War I. In 1919 she became the Chief Nurse of the U.S. Navy. After her retirement from the Navy in 1928, she returned to Herndon.

Ferenc Nagy - (1903-1979). Nagy was an exiled Prime Minister of Hungary. He was elected as Prime minister in Hungary's first democratic election in 1946. He attempted to resist Hungary's Communist party from taking control of the government. After his son was kidnapped, he agreed to resign in exchange for his son. The United States granted him asylum and he arrived in Herndon in 1948, where he lived in a historic home on Elden Street.

Sean Parker - (b. 1979). Born in the greater Herndon area, Parker attended both Oakton and Chantilly High Schools. As a child he learned how to program on an Atari. As a teen he hacked, wrote code, and started companies. He co-founded Napster, a free music file sharing service.

Napster was eventually shut down by lawsuits due to opposition by the recording industry. In the mid-2000s he worked with Mark Zuckerberg, founder of new company called Facebook. Parker soon became the founding president of Facebook. He was portrayed by Justin Timberlake in the 2010 film “*The Social Network*.”

Edith Rogers - (1887-1978). Rogers was the first woman to serve on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, 1935-1940. She was a dairy farmer and a teacher, living in the Floris area of greater Herndon. She served overseas in the Red Cross during WWI. She resigned from her position as a school principal to serve as supervisor to represent the Dranesville District. She also served as an officer in the local grange - a farmer’s association - which met in the Floris school house.

Scottie Reynolds - (b. 1987). Born in Alabama, Reynolds later attended Crossfield Elementary School and Herndon High School, where he was a four-year starting basketball player. In 2005-06, he led his team to be state runners-up. He played for the Villanova Wildcats and was named the 2006-07 Big East Rookie of the Year. In 2010 he was named to the AP All-American 1st Team. He participated in the NBA summer league, development league, teams in Italy and Turkey, and played a brief stint on the Utah Jazz.

Alexa Lange Wesner - (b. 1972). Wesner was a Class of 1990 Herndon High School graduate and All-American track star. In 2013 she was appointed as U.S. Ambassador to Austria.

Suzanne Whang - (1962-2019). Whang was Herndon High School’s valedictorian for the class 1979. She graduated from Yale and Brown Universities. Whang became an actress and TV show host, best known as the host of HGTV’s House Hunters for nine years.

About this column: “Remembering Herndon’s History” is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon’s past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of “Remembering Herndon’s History” columns is available on the Historical Society website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org.

The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society’s website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org, and the Historical Society’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.

Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com.