

Comprehensive Critical Review from Best to Worst Event

In the Following Order of the:

St. Mary's County Oyster Festival,

The Historic Sotterley Plantation NovemBEER,

St. Mary's County Fair, and the

7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred's Blessing of the Fleet

Updated January 15, 2022

Introduction: This review of the above four outdoor events is provided by Richard Lord, resident of the 7th District of St. Mary's County, Publisher of the website www.7thDistrict.org (the conscience of the 7th District) that has had thousands of web page views with positive responses. The reviews of these outdoor events are listed and presented in the above order from best to worst. The Publisher places the first three noted events in the best category with recommendations for improvements of all.

The Publisher planned & produced and promoted & managed outdoor events for non-profit organizations in St. Mary's County such as the 7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred Blessing of Fleet for four years with appropriate emphasis on live music utilizing the area's outstanding local bands. The Publisher also is well acquainted with all four above noted events where he attended them from beginning to end as he had a booth selling his novel BoonDOGgle. More on the book at the end of this article.

Event Summaries: The St. Mary's County Oyster Festival and Historic Sotterley's NovemBEER were equally well crafted, managed, and pleasing events, where the edge goes to the Oyster Festival as it was a two-day event with more offerings.

The St. Mary's County Fair also was a fine event with one notable shortcoming: the absence of live music unlike the Oyster Festival and NovemBEER that had continuous live music from event beginning to end utilizing many of the area's fine local bands.

The 7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred (Club) Blessing of the Fleet was highly disappointing as the superior event it once was first in failing to provide extensive continuous quality live music from our outstanding local bands

instead using a second-tier band from Pennsylvania, and then in eliminating the vast fine children's entertainment offerings it once provided.

Standards of Review as Follows: First, research and experience show that the second day of a two-day outdoor public event has half or less attendance than the first day. An exception is such as a County Fair of four days that is a large multifaceted community event and carnival that is well-attended over four days even if some days have less attendance than others. It also is not a serious issue for a St. Mary's County event such as the Oyster Festival that has a large attendance over two days even if the second day has far less attendance. The non-profit Sotterley NovemBEER was a well-attended one-day event that well understood this principle of the propriety of not having a second day.

However, for a nonprofit organization's event such as the Blessing of the Fleet with a modest attendance, where the second day has half or less the attendance of the first day especially when there are no entertainment offerings of substance, the second day was a debacle although not much worse than the first. Unfortunately, the 7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred failed to comprehend this maxim with its disastrous second day of negligible attendance.

Second, more so for a non-profit organization such as the 7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred and Historic Sotterley than the County government, event organizers must adhere to the principles of venue "Risk Management" and conduct a "Risk Assessment" and a resultant plan of "Risk Mitigation" in eliminating as much financial risk as possible in the unfortunate situation of an event cancellation such as a rainout or virus exigency where it has guaranteed financial contracts with music and entertainment providers and other vendors. The remedy is to have as many "No Play No Pay" contracts as possible following the Publisher's example of negotiating no-risk band and entertainment contracts as he did during his four-year tenure as Chairman of the Blessing of the Fleet.

The Publisher well learned this lesson from bitter experience where his first year as Chairman and the Saturday of the second year were rained out in what he calls "Robert's Revenge" as a tribute to the former event Chairman who resigned due to a wrongful adverse action taken against him by the Club. The Publisher had to scramble with bands and other entertainers to renegotiate their contracts to avoid Club payment and loss unlike prior Blessing of the Fleet rainouts where the Club paid bands and entertainment vendors in full for non-performances. The Publisher inherited these fully payable contracts and fortunately was successful

in voiding most of them with all but two children's acts. The publisher eliminated the costly snake and reptile act that insisted on payment replacing it with the risk-free highly regarded *Chris Campbell Show*, and the other children's attraction of carnival rides that agreed to perform for free the following year. Thus, this largely entails not hiring bands and other entertainers outside Southern Maryland that require guaranteed contracts, and/or negotiating "No Play No Pay" contracts.

Third, it is a standard rule in conducting outdoor events, that the Oyster Festival and Sotterley's NovemBEER well understood, that the County Fair and the Blessing of the Fleet did not properly comprehend, is that an outdoor event must have at least one main stage making the "Highest and Best Use" of that structure, which is almost always continuous live music adding other highly regarded attractions such as a *Reggie Rice Magic Show* utilized by the County Fair and prior Blessing of the Fleet events.

Fourth, an outdoor event that seeks a family rather than just an adult audience must provide substantial entertainment offerings for children. The St. Mary's County Oyster Festival as an adult oysters/food, adult beverages, adult based crafters, and live music event; and the Sotterley NovemBEER also as an adult food, adult beverages, adult based crafters, and live music; catered to an adult audience with fewer children's offerings where the County Fair had substantial children's attractions that still needs more children's offerings other than carnival rides. The 7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred Blessing of the Fleet touted its offering as a family event but had sparse and insignificant children's offerings with none of substance on the second day.

The St. Mary's County Oyster Festival: The St. Mary's County Oyster Festival greatly impressed the Publisher as did Historic Sotterley's NovemBEER, and he enjoyed both as they were primarily adult venues with the emphasis of course of the Oyster Festival on oysters and related adult food and events, adult beverages, adult crafters, and live music; and NovemBEER likewise mostly on adult food and entertainment, adult beverages, adult crafters, and live music.

For oyster aficionados, the Oyster Festival had great oyster delights of both raw oysters and various offerings of fried and cooked oysters. The oyster related events and contests also were a treat as well as the non-oyster related entertainment. The other fine mostly adult food offerings and beer and wine were much appreciated.

The entertainment offerings focused on the wide variety of adult crafters and seven bands of continuous live music from event beginning to end over two days. Unlike the County Fair that catered to a family youngster audience of kids' toys, trinkets, and such; the Oyster Festival featured crafters offering a wide variety of arts and crafts mostly on an adult level. The number and variety of crafters were impressive. However, the Oyster Festival could offer more children's attractions to better accommodate children accompanying parents.

The four bands on Saturday and three on Sunday from event beginning to end were well attended and appreciated by the many Oyster Festival attendees. There also was a nice variety of fine musical offerings such as the last two on Sunday that were the all-female soft rock group *The Bootleggers* and the classic rock group *One Trick Pony*. What greatly helped the bands for audiences was first that they were well publicized where the audience could count on them being all day both days from event beginning to end, and second the fact there was ample seating both inside the music Pavilion and outside in the dozens upon dozens of picnic tables encompassing the venue.

The Oyster Festival could use more children's attractions that also appeal to adults utilizing for free the County's portable stage such as those used by the Publisher for the Blessing of the Fleet including *The Blue-Sky Puppet Theatre*, *The Chris Campbell Show*, *The Balloon Nerd* with his balloon twisting and separate balloon twisting gifts for children, and *Foundation for Heroes* recognizable superhero characters and perhaps *Gracie's Dance Studio* performance as well as *Face Painting* off stage.

Lots of dogs at the Oyster Festival. Unlike the County Fair, the Oyster Festival allowed dog companions as well as the service dogs only allowed at the County Fair. The dogs were an enjoyable presence and well appreciated especially as the Publisher was selling his novel BoonDOG**gle with dogs as the main theme.**

Recommendations to Enhance the Event: The only recommendation is to expand children's attractions sans carnival rides adults also would appreciate utilizing the St. Mary's County portable stage for free employing such as *The Blue-Sky Puppet Theatre*, *The Chris Campbell Show*, *The Balloon Nerd Show* and his balloon twisting, *The Foundation For Hero's* entertainment, *Gracie's Dance Studio* performance as well as *Face Painting* off stage.

The Historic Sotterley NovemBEER: This new Sotterley Plantation event centered of course on beer and also wine and adult food delights. It had a fine array of adult based events and crafters while it could have offered more children's attractions such as those suggested above for the Oyster Festival. It had a high-quality band that played from event beginning to end for four hours from 1pm till closing at 5pm where the event began at noon for VIP attendees.

This was a well-attended simple event in terms of complexity unlike the other three noted more extensive outdoor venues. This likely was due to the fact it was a mid-November outdoor one-day event where best not to get too complicated with numerous public activities given colder weather. That said, if you appreciate a wide variety of adult beverages of beer and wine, outstanding food, amazing live local band music, incredible crafters helping you find quality Christmas gifts, and wonderful comradery with fellow attendees putting you in a proper festive mood for the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, this was a well-organized not-to-be-missed event that one would expect of Historic Sotterley.

Recommendations to Enhance the Event: The only recommendation is to expand children's attractions sans carnival rides adults also would appreciate utilizing the St. Mary's County portable stage for free such as *The Blue-Sky Puppet Theatre*, *The Chris Campbell Show*, *The Balloon Nerd Show* and balloon twisting, *The Foundation For Hero's* entertainment, *Gracie's Dance Studio* performance, and *Face Painting*.

The St. Mary's County Fair: The four-day St. Mary's County Fair was everything one would want and expect in the County Fair with one exception: the absence of live music. It again was a high-quality event almost equal to prior Fairs. However, the lack of live music from our quality area local bands greatly diminished the Fair leaving one with an empty feeling of something missing of substance and significance. The Fair was well attended and crowded at times with a very enthusiastic audience with a large youth presence but could use more children's events like and in addition to the *Reggie Rice Magic Show*.

Rather than cite all the many fine offerings, the following are the highly successful top ten main elements of the Fair.

1. Animal exhibits for display, events, judging, and awards.
2. Farm equipment display, events, judging, and awards.
3. Arts & Crafts and food exhibits for display, judging, and awards.

- 4. Vendors of goods & services including arts and crafts.**
- 5. A wide variety of food and drink vendors including beer.**
- 6. Carnival rides primarily for children.**
- 7. Various entertainers including the highly renowned Reggie Rice Magic Show.**
- 8. Local and County government, health Department, and political party information.**
- 9. General County information including area businesses.**
- 10. County Volunteer Fire Department & Rescue Squads**

The only significant deficit of the Fair as previously noted was the absence of live music. No outdoor event of this magnitude and prominence is complete without live music be it Classic Rock, Contemporary Rock, Blues, Country, etc. The Publisher has so enjoyed prior County Fairs with its live music, and it was sorely missed by him and others with whom he spoke. The Publisher is aware that some people did not attend the Fair for that reason. The Fair should venture to attract all whom would desire to attend and that includes the many who appreciate live music from the area's outstanding local bands at a nominal cost.

The fine and spacious Entertainment Tent with vast seating that was almost exclusively used for the *Reggie Rice Magic Show* also could be used for live music bands. The Fair could be further improved for children in the Tent by adding such children's acts as the *Blue-Sky Puppet Theatre*, *The Chris Campbell Show*, *The Balloon Nerd Show* and balloon twisting, *The Foundation For Hero's* entertainment, *Gracie's Dance Studio* performance, and *Face Painting*. When the Publisher served as Chairman of the Blessing of Fleet for four years, he booked our fine local bands and Reggie who shared the same stage for their performances, and so that likewise could be easily done for the Fair with bands in the Pavilion or with Reggie in the Entertainment Tent.

The problems in the past for the Fair in attracting live music audiences, where the Fair does not need an ABBA Band, first was that it did not have continuous live music from event beginning to end; second, the music band Pavilion is sandwiched in between other buildings muffling sound and hindering public visibility and notice; third, in the past the Fair Pavilion also had very limited seating for an audience; and forth, there was little publicity as to band offerings before or during the Fair, limited as they were.

The Oyster Festival used this Pavilion for its extensive offering of local bands all-day with four on Saturday and three on Sunday that the public could count on being there whenever people arrived. It also added numerous picnic tables on each side and rear of the Pavilion, with the result that the Pavilion and the picnic tables were packed with people. The Oyster Festival also well publicized its band offerings.

The Entertainment Tent allows sound to travel. It would be hard to miss music emanating from it and could be used for bands. It would be a shame if in the future the Fair continued to neglect our quality local bands and not have live music.

The remedy for the Fair in attracting large audiences for live music if in the Pavilion lies in booking the County's fine local bands from event beginning to end on which the public can rely, and better publicize them with the public as well as provide adequate public seating. The Oyster Festival provided numerous picnic tables on both sides and rear of the music Pavilion that accommodated a large audience. The County Fair should do likewise. The County Fair and the Oyster Festival could further expand Pavilion public seating by adding bleachers placed against the full length of the wall of the Comm 1 Building, that is the closest adjacent building, with bleachers from the Fair and/or borrowed from public parks and schools as was done in the past with the Blessing of the Fleet and still have room for all the picnic tables the Oyster Festival installed.

The Publisher also served as co-chair of numerous musical events befitting local charities using our fine local bands. The County has numerous outstanding County based bands with public followings and the Fair should highlight them as part of the greater County community. The St. Mary's County Fair is incomplete without live music of our great County musical bands, and as one purpose of a county fair is to highlight local talent, the Fair should likewise feature the County's extensive musical talent.

Recommendations to Enhance the Event: The recommendations are (1) provide live music, (2) have live music from Fair beginning to end, (2) if using the Pavilion, provide enhanced music seating such as adding picnic tables surrounding the venue and possibly add bleachers in an appropriate placement, (3) better publicize music bands and times of their performances, and (4) expand children's attractions sans carnival rides adults also would appreciate utilizing a current structure for Reggie Rice, or add the St. Mary's County portable stage for free such as *The Blue-Sky Puppet Theatre, The Chris Campbell Show, The Balloon*

***Nerd Show* and balloon twisting, *The Foundation For Hero's* entertainment, *Gracie's Dance Studio* performance, and *Face Painting*.**

The Publisher's preference in improving the event is adding live music from event beginning to end in the Pavilion with enhanced seating and publicity and adding more children's attractions as noted above in the Tent with Reggie Rice.

The 7th District Optimist Club/St. Clément's Hundred Blessing of the Fleet

Overview: The Publisher, having well-served as the Chairman of highly successful Blessing of the Fleet events for four years, well knows what works and how to best present this event to the public. One may know what works based on audience appreciation as evidenced in public attendance and satisfaction. The 2021 event over its two days only had the fireworks, as flawed as it was, and its two fireworks bands, that attracted a sizable audience upon event dismal attendance prior to the appearance of the two bands after 5pm that showed any semblance of public interest. The event also had greatly reduced offerings of events for children both in quantity and quality.

The main deficits of this event were (1) the lack of live music for most of the event with no live music for five hours on Saturday until the appearance of the first fireworks band around 5pm with no live music at all on Sunday, and (2) very few quality offerings for children on Saturday with none of substance on Sunday.

One-Day V Two-Day Events: The 2018 Blessing of the Fleet was a highly successful one-day event rather than the two-day event of prior years. The next event in 2019 unsuccessfully went back to a two-day event as did the event in 2021 following the Covid-19 pandemic. The reason the 2018 event went to one-day was because the Publisher came to understand the second day of a two-day event has half or less the attendance of the first day, and the Blessing of the Fleet being a small to mid-size event, struggled for an appreciable paying attendance on the second day. Thus, the Publisher successfully combined all the critical entertainment and attraction elements of both days, such as the Sunday Parade and Mass on St. Clément's Island, into one day on Saturday greatly enhancing its event offerings and attendance, saving the Club money, and reducing the time and effort burden on Club volunteers.

Live Music: An outdoor event such as this should have but did not provide continuous live music on the main stage from beginning to end on the first day and for at least several hours at the event beginning on the second day. The highly successful County Oyster Festival well understood this principal and had live music from beginning to end on both days with four local bands on Saturday and three on Sunday. The Sotterley NovemBEER also had live music from beginning to end for its one-day event.

Main Stage Events: The rule in outdoor events is make the “Highest and Best Use” of the main stage, which is almost always live music. The 2021 Blessing of the Fleet went on the cheap for the first five hours on the first day on Saturday and booked no music bands, and instead spent its band money on only two fireworks bands later in the day with one very expensive band from Pennsylvania. Instead, it had somewhat pleasing belly dancing, but as a second-tier attraction with no prior advertised public draw, did not attract more than a dozen viewers at a time over its hour performance that became tiresome by the end. Such acts as belly dancing should only be used during the half-hour or so between bands while they are involved in stage take-down and set-up of musical equipment. There were no musical bands on the main stage on Sunday, but then, there was nothing on the main stage on Sunday.

Music Bands: Prior Blessing of the Fleets on the main stage had as many as four highly regarded local bands all-day on Saturday and three on Sunday while the 2021 event only had two on Saturday evening with one from Pennsylvania.

Prior events also used well-regarded local bands as the main fireworks bands such as *Six Gun South* with Pat Woodburn in 2017 and *HydraFX* with Greg Barrick in 2018. Pat was the first to step forward and decline payment in the 2015 event rain-out with all other local bands following his example. Pat also was also rained out the following year. However, the Publisher made a solemn promise to Pat and the other bands that he would keep scheduling his band as the fireworks band and the other bands until the weather allowed him and they to perform. Pat finally played in 2017, and Greg Barrick in 2018 as the fireworks bands, as well as the other bands, equaling or surpassed the attendance of the *Amish Outlaws*.

A band such as the 2021 main band, the Amish Outlaws from Pennsylvania, likely would not agree to decline or defer payment in the event of a rainout.

The Publisher only used highly talented local bands as they attracted the same size or greater fireworks audience as did the *Amish Outlaws*, but at a far lower cost allowing the play of more bands helping local musicians and the local economy, and with no risk for non-payment in the event of a rainout. The Publisher firmly believes a local event such as this should only spend its money on the County's numerous high-quality local bands, and the cost of the four local bands in 2018 on Saturday with no financial risk about equaled the cost of the two bands for 2021 that was at financial risk in the event of a rain out that surely shall come sooner than later given our climate change in weather.

The Two 2021 Fireworks Bands: The two bands were pleasing enough to satisfy the audience as the lead-in to the fireworks, but the fireworks were the main draw with the bands supplementing and enhancing audience attendance. Given his involvement with bands, the Publisher does not speak ill of bands especially a local one, and so he shall not critically comment on the bands except to say that absent the high-quality musicianship of our premier local bands, the Amish knockoff shtick antics of the *Outlaws* soon grew tiresome.

Further, the Publisher found troublesome and unconscionable that the Club, which should exemplify "Tolerance" and reverence of others, hired *The Amish Outlaws* band, which was an insensitive insult and affront to our Amish community neighbors upon which we rely for so much that enhances our lives.

That said, much better, far less costly, and risk free to use the County's outstanding local bands such as *Six Gun South* with Pat Woodburn, *HydraFX* with Greg Barrick, and other high-quality bands such as with the lead female vocalist and keyboard extraordinaire Dr. Nancy Zearfoss (DRZ), also with their followings that generated the same size fireworks audiences or greater with their highly acclaimed and audience appreciated performances at prior Blessing of the Fleet events. As the 2018 Fireworks Band, at the Publisher's request, Greg Barrick of *HydraFX* well performed a guitar solo ala Henricks of the National Anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*, as a lead into the fireworks, and it was well that the 2021 event retained this tradition in playing the National Anthem as a lead-in to the fireworks.

It would have been far better to spend money on the County's incredible highly talented first-rate local bands rather than the expensive and clownish *Amish Outlaws* from Pennsylvania to satisfy someone's ignorant, misguided, and foolhardy ego-trip in hiring such a second-rate band for the following reasons:

- 1. Our outstanding local bands generate the same size or greater fireworks audience as expensive out of area bands. The most accomplished top-ten lead-guitarists in St. Mary's and southern Calvert Counties that should be the headliners in area musical events not necessarily in this order are EJ Allen, Bob Schaller, Joe Huffman, Donnie Malloy, Pat Woodburn, Greg Barrick, Richard Wagner, Eric O'Dell, Billie Breslin, and John Posner.**
- 2. Better to spend money on local musical talent financially helping local musicians rather than the musicians of an out of area band.**
- 3. Better to keep local money within the local community.**
- 4. No risk of mandatory payment in the event of a rain out.**

It is ironic that the Publisher, with no historic, family, or dependent economic ties to the 7th District, advocates only using local bands rather than those with deep roots in the 7th District who had the self-promoting grandiose ideation in 2019, and now 2021, of hiring and paying bands outside of Maryland.

Children's' Events: There were few quality children's events on Saturday and none of substance on Sunday. Prior Blessing of the Fleet events established by the previous Chairman continued and enhanced by the Publisher involved a separate Children's Stage provided for free by St. Mary's County (now eliminated) that had the also now deleted repeating acts of the *Blue-Sky Puppet Theater*, the *Chris Campbell Show*, and the *Balloon Nerd Show* for his balloon twisting act and later when he twisted balloons for children waiting in long lines. Also eliminated were the *4-H Club* pony rides and animal display, *Foundation for Hero's* interactions with children, as well as other Children's activities such as the *Reggie Rice Magic Show* and the local *Gracie's Dance Studio*.

There was one inflatable moon bounce children's ride that was taken down at the end of the day and not available on Sunday where in the past there were as many as three as well as a Rock-Climbing Wall now also eliminated. The previous Chairman intended that the Blessing of the Fleet not only attract an adult audience but a youth and family audience as well, and he well accomplished this task that the Publisher expanded and enhanced that now is a Club abandoned family/youth friendly event that shall lose that reputation & appeal, and attendance & income.

Crafters Pavilion: The Crafters Pavilion Tent had a wide and fine array of crafters where the Publisher was situated selling his novel Boon**DOG**gle. The organizers of the Crafters Pavilion did a fine job of setting up and publicizing the existence of the Tent to maximize public awareness. However, there was light

attendance most of the day on Saturday until around 5pm with the arrival of the fireworks Bands and fireworks, but at that time the Pavilion Tent closed to the public. Sunday also had no appreciable attendance due to the lack of attractions for adults and children. Thus, the Crafters Pavilion public attendance, sales, and overall experience for sellers was disappointing.

Public Seating: The grounds are extremely limited in size, and the former Chairman had five metal bleachers, that the Publisher expanded to seven, to comfortably and more safely accommodate a large audience to make the best and safest use of the small space. This event had no bleachers or other public seating and the public crowded unsafely into the limited band viewing area with most having to uncomfortably sit on the grass.

Fireworks Display: The problem with the fireworks display is that it did not meet minimum industry standards for quality. The event fireworks were sufficient to gain audience acceptance as it is hard to provide fireworks that fail to garner public appreciation. The two main rules in fireworks display quality are (1) that there be a firework in the air every second, and (2) there not be a dominance of less costly silver/white fireworks. The Blessing of the Fleet fireworks failed on both counts and the Club should go to a professional fireworks company utilizing industry standards for the same cost as the amateur home-grown fireworks provider it utilizes.

The Stage: The previous Chairman and the Publisher used a portable band stage trailer loaned for free by Bailey's Party Rentals, and while adequate, not as substantial as the costly rented stage used for the 2021 Blessing of the Fleet.

The Parade: The Parade lasted under twenty minutes, lacked notable participants, and had no audience.

For prior Parades, the Publisher set up a hundred or so seats for an audience that filled the spectator grounds to capacity along with many standing spectators as well as others seated in the chairs they brought. The parade lasted an hour. The three County high school bands stopped and played/performed for the audience.

The Publisher had the participation of many car clubs and other civic organizations. Additionally, the Publisher established the tradition, now abandoned, of having a past Club President be in the lead car as the *Grand*

***Marshall* honoring his prior service as Club President with Club Charter Members following in other vehicles. The Publisher was most pleased that under his watch Jimmie Banagan, Eddie Bailey, and Russ Cullins (staunch Democrats) served as *Grand Marshall* honoring their service.**

One reason prior Parades were so well attended was that there was extensive planned and advertised entertainment such as live music and children's entertainment immediately following the Parade to enhance a Parade audience.

The 2021 Parade had no *Grand Marshall* honoring a past Club President. It also did not have many prior Parade participants. Additionally, it had no seating for an audience but then there was no appreciable audience for whom to seat. Two of the high school marching bands did not bother to stop and play as there was no one to listen to and appreciate their playing. The third high school band stopped at the exclusive hospitality tent and played for those present. Not having an audience for whom to play, the marching bands may very well not return as why would the area high schools go to the trouble and expense of bussing bands to the event only to have no audience to appreciate the efforts of their students.

Had there actually been entertainment immediately following the Parade, such as the live band music and children's events and activities of prior Blessing of the Fleet events, there likely would have been a Parade audience, but absent any Sunday 2nd day entertainment of significance such as live music or children's events and activities, why bother to attend the Parade or the Blessing of the Fleet. Again, best to go back to a one-day event with the Parade starting off the event immediately followed by live band music and children's events and activities.

Electronic Billboards: The electronic billboards used to cite sponsors and advertisers, and show events as they occurred, were a fine addition, but were a failure as a replacement for the extensive now eliminated printed "Guidebook" of the past 50 years. The Guidebook also served to provide historical information of the 7th District area and as a record of the event now lost as well as a lasting listing of ads by sponsors and advertisers. The Publisher is well pleased the very last Guidebook produced under his watch was the finest in Club history. The Guidebook also served to highlight recently deceased Club members, and while the electronic billboards also could have done so, to the Club's shame, they failed to show proper respect to the Club's recent notable noble fallen such as Eddie Bailey, Jimmie Banagan, Russ Cullins, Ken Cheseldine, Richard Lacey, Duffy

Owens, and others who also served as past Club Presidents. Please go to the www.7thDistrict.org section entitled “7th In Memorial” to see a slide show of pictures of many prominent 7th District residents who have passed. The Publisher shall add others upon request.

Financial Success: Despite the fact there was sparse public entertainment for adults and children, the Publisher expects the 2021 Blessing of the Fleet was at least a minimal financial success as were prior highly profitable events primarily due to the financial backing of sponsors and advertisers. Unfortunately, the powers-that-be at the Club only look at the financial bottom line as a judge of event success and not the quality of the entertainment offerings and resultant customer attendance, appreciation, and satisfaction. The Publisher questions if the Club will improve and salvage this event given its intransigence to profit over excellence, but hopefully may do so out of necessity as the event further declines in public appreciation, attendance, and profit.

If the Club refuses to make the necessary changes to return the Blessing of the Fleet to being a fully adult and family event of continuous live music and extensive children’s entertainment, it should only tout the event for its evening fireworks and bands not starting until later in the day around 5pm and eliminate the early-afternoon Saturday and Sunday fiascos altogether.

Recommendations to Enhance the Event: Where to start. The recommendations are (1) make this a one day Saturday only event with Sunday as a rain-out day, (2) have all music and children’s entertainment contracts be “No Play No Pay” agreements, (3) provide live music not just beginning 5pm on Saturday as a lead in to the fireworks, but from event beginning to end ala the Oyster Festival and the Sotterley NovemBEER, (4) hire our high-quality county top-tier local bands that far surpass such as the *Amish Outlaws* from Pennsylvania, (5) hire a reputable fireworks company to provide fireworks on a professional level, (6) provide enhanced music seating such as adding bleachers, (7) publicize music bands and times of their performances, (8) begin music and children’s events immediately following the parade to attract a parade audience, (9) keep open the Crafter’s Tent during the fireworks, and (10) expand children’s attractions such as offered in 2018 including carnival rides and children’s performances adults also would appreciate utilizing the St. Mary’s County portable stage for free such as *The Blue-Sky Puppet Theatre*, *The Chris Campbell Show*, *The Balloon Nerd Show* and separate balloon twisting for children, *The*

***Foundation For Hero's* entertainment, 4-H Club Pony rides and animal display, *Gracie's Dance Studio*, and *Face Painting*.**

Sponsor's and Advertiser's Alert: Sponsors and Advertisers take note to best invest your money where the people are such as the Oyster Festival, Sotterley events, and the County Fair, and don't waste your money on the Blessing of the Fleet unless and until it improves its music and children's entertainment offerings resulting in far better attendance as a credit to your company.

Publisher's Note: The Publisher has great respect of the new Chairman of the Blessing of the Fleet as the fine person he is. Going back to a single Chairman rather than a large committee (it is said the camel was created by committee), the Club created after the Publisher resigned as Chairman running and ruining this event is a step forward. There is a large learning curve in chairing such an event as this and the Publisher hopes given Club acquiescence, the new Chairman shall learn from the widespread significant failures of the 2021 event and take appropriate corrective actions for 2022 heeding that as specified above.

At the 2018 event Hospitality Tent, a prominent Club Charter Member now deceased, commended the Publisher for the fine event and not to be troubled by the negatively of some of the jealous leadership where everyone is a critic, thinks they can do better, but can't and won't. The Publisher responded that he had not heard of any complaints. This member replied that did not surprise him as the Chairman would be the last to know where backbiting, dishonest dealings, and subterfuge from some now prominent small-minded non-Charter Members is one of the problems with the Club where the Charter Members no longer exercise influence over Club matters they once did now dominated by those of lessor character to whom personal honor does not matter. Interesting to look at the obituaries of recently deceased Charter Members and see whom they did and did not recommend to make donations with the Club a conspicuous non-mention.

The 7th District Optimist Club and the St. Clements Hundred do not have any members of color. The Optimist Club does not allow women to be members. It would be advantageous relative to an enhanced sense of civility to have a woman heading the Club and chairing events of the competence of the two women who administer the St. Mary's County Museum Division and the Oyster Festival, and Historic Sotterfley and its NovemBEER

About the Publisher: The Publisher is 7th District resident Richard Lord, Master of Public Administration (MPA), Brigham Young University, Marriott School of Business, Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics. The Publisher also is the retired Analyst-in-Charge, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), of the Criminal Alien Division. Thus, the Publisher is Romney ethics centric and an ICE well-qualified, no-nonsense, no-excuses analyst having taken down the worst-of-the-worst criminal aliens where at the Publisher's retirement ceremony in 2014 he was acclaimed for his significant contribution resulting in the deportation of 400,000 criminal aliens that year alone.

The Publishers likewise applies truth to power having no tolerance for and showing no quarter to the clownish antics of ignorant and petty rank amateur fools and scoundrels that would disparage and demean the Publisher's admirable volunteer service to the 7th District community and St. Mary's County.

Beyond the vile personal attacks from the then Club leadership against the former Chairman and then the Publisher, well-performing at his own financial expense for administrative costs, the main harm the Publisher felt was the Club denigration and destruction of the high-quality Blessing of the Fleet to minimize cost the former Chairman and the Publisher worked so hard to make into a cost efficient and effective world-class event that now has low attendance absent the substantial and significant high-quality live music and children's attractions of the past where the only reason to attend is if you are OK with second-rate fireworks and fireworks bands on Saturday evening.

The Publisher has extensive experience planning, producing, and managing outdoor events where for four years beginning in 2015, he served as the Chairman of the 7th District Optimist Club, Blessing of the Fleet. The Publisher became Chairman when the then Chairman abruptly resigned due an adverse action by a recalcitrant Club leadership, and the Publisher stepped forward to serve as Chairman when no one else would saving the Blessing of the Fleet. The former Chairman died shortly after he resigned as Chairman, but not before he passed on to the Publisher event materials and counsel. Subsequently, the Publisher made a solemn vow in his memory for his long service to the Club Event that he would carry on his fine vision of the Blessing of the Fleet expanding and enhancing it where possible and appropriate that the Club now has disavowed and repudiated.

The Publisher likewise resigned as Chairman and from the Club when the mostly same deleterious Club leadership dominated by a smutty member maliciously

jealous and resentful of his notable success and public acclaim cajoled his sycophant poor-excuse failure of a Club President to act nefariously against him denigrating his significant Club volunteer service as done with the former Chairman. Refusing to be distraught and disheartened by the then deleterious Club leadership, death did not follow resignation. The 7th District Optimist Club and the St. Clément's Hundred leadership, which should be most representative of the 7th District and that for which it stands historically, fails to comprehend and exemplify the 7th District and St. Mary's County precept of "Tolerance" and resultant good will and honorable comportment towards all.

See below section of the Publisher's critically acclaimed novel BoonDOG**gle:**

BOONDOGGLER: A NOVEL NOIRE DE SOCIETE: BoonDOGgle is the Publisher's highly regarded novel where we stupid humans kill ourselves off through warfare, diseases such as Covid-19, environmental degradation, racial injustice, social conflict, governmental incompetence and malfeasance, and sheer human stupidity; and our smarter Dogs have the run of the place and RULE! The novel is available on-line from all worldwide booksellers in hardback w/dust jacket, paperback, and eBook such as from Amazon and Kindle, Barnes and Noble and Nook, Walmart, and others. It also is available in all three branches of the St. Mary's County Library. You may also read more about the novel on www.BoonDOGgle.dog.

A five-star review on Amazon reads, "This page turner will have you holding your seats for dear life! Richard adroitly weaves real life figures into the gripping tale of canine dominance. What will happen as a result of this interspecies battle? You will have to read it to find out!"

From the webpage, IndieReader, "Richard Lord's BoonDOGgle is an interesting and creative idea, with a solid crack at worldbuilding, and a vigorous and lively style about what would happen if dogs developed human level intelligence and took over the world."

Steny H. Hoyer, Congressman of the Maryland 5th Congressional District, and House Majority Leader, "The themes you discussed are compelling and philosophical, and I thank you for your creative talents producing meaningful works for the community." February 26, 2021.

President Joe Biden, "I look forward to writing the next great chapter in the American story with you." June 10, 2021.

Note: The Publisher writes extensively of St. Mary's County and the 7th District on page 287.