

## Unopposed at the Courthouse

Back in 1979, the competition to become Alexandria's next commonwealth's attorney was fierce. Prompted by the resignation of John Cowhig in a Bingo-and-sex scandal, a heated special election featured former Republican Commonwealth's Attorney **John Kennahan**, former prosecutor **Barry Poretz** and acting commonwealth's attorney **John Kloch**, who won that election and served several terms before becoming a Circuit Court judge.

Then, in 1997, acting commonwealth's attorney **Randy Sengel** faced defense attorney **Bob Battle** in a Democratic primary. Now that Sengel is stepping down from the office after serving four terms, assistant commonwealth's attorney **Bryan Porter** will sail into office unopposed — no Democrats emerged to challenge him in the primary and no Republicans stepped forward to stand against him in November.

"My philosophy is that the Republican Party has an obligation to find candidates and run them because a true democracy is best served by giving citizens choices," said **Tom Fulton**, chairman of the Alexandria Republican City Committee. "But I was not successful in making that argument."

For the first time in recent memory, a commonwealth's attorney will be elected without any opposition at all, either from his party or an opposing party. Although some may feel that's bad for democracy, Porter argues it's probably a good thing for law and order in Alexandria. "I'm relieved because it allows me to focus on doing what I love to do, which is prosecuting cases," said Porter, who has been a prosecutor since 2001. "It has given me the ability to focus on some very serious cases this summer, whereas if I was running a seriously contested campaign I might not be able to give as much attention to my job."

## Cheap Trick?

Del. **Charniele Herring** (D-46), who also serves as the chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Virginia, may not have an opponent for her House seat this fall. But she is involved in another campaign — going after current Republican Attorney General **Ken Cuccinelli**, who is running for governor.

This week, Herring led the charge for the governor to "come clean" about his ties to Star Scientific CEO **Jonnie Williams**, the Virginia businessman at the center of a growing scandal involving previously undisclosed gifts to Republican Gov. **Bob McDonnell**. Cuccinelli has tried to distance himself from the scandal, although the attorney general also received \$18,000 worth of gifts from Williams and Star, \$5,000 of which he failed to report initially.

"Virginians deserve better than leaders who embroil themselves in conflicts of interest and then wait until they are caught to acknowledge the impropriety of their actions," said Herring. "If he ever wants to repair that trust he should come clean today."

Republicans say Cuccinelli has already come clean, including a press conference detailing all of Cuccinelli's ties to Williams and Star Scientific. As a result, they respond to Herring's comments with a sense of indifference. But University of Virginia Center for Politics analyst **Kyle Kondik** said the fact that the attorney general has already had to revise his disclosure forms once gives the Democrats an opening. "It's not necessarily unreasonable to question whether he would need to revise more," said Kondik. "It may be a cheap trick, but that's politics."

## Never Too Early

This year may feature the most expensive race for governor in Virginia history. And next year will feature the congressional midterms. After that, 2015 will spotlight the Virginia state Senate as well as the race for Alexandria City Council. But it's never too soon to be thinking about 2016.

A new poll out this week by Quinnipiac University features a number of theoretical presidential match-ups in Virginia, which is expected to be a key swing state once again.

The poll is good news for former Secretary of State **Hillary Clinton**, who comes out ahead against New Jersey Gov. **Christ Christie**, 45 percent to 40 percent as well as Kentucky Sen. **Rand Paul**, 51 percent to 37 percent. Results are more mixed for Vice President **Joe Biden**, though. Christie beats Biden 46 percent to 38 percent although Biden beats Paul 47 percent to 40 percent.

— MICHAEL LEE POPE

## NEWS

# Beacons of Light

New book chronicles African-American history in Alexandria through 63 stories.

BY MICHAEL LEE POPE  
GAZETTE PACKET

Alexandria currently has its first black mayor, its first black city manager, its first black city attorney, its first black Circuit Court judge and its first black police chief — not to mention the first black president in the White House. But the strains of race relations continue to haunt the city, whether it's the division brought about by the George Zimmerman trial in Florida or the racial divide among Alexandria churches that takes place every Sunday morning.

The struggle for civil rights is not over, and yet standing at the dawn of the 21st century it's clear that the stories of how the movement took shape in Alexandria is an inspiring tale of perseverance and hope. That's why a group of authors came together to write "African Americans of Alexandria, Virginia: Beacons of Light in the Twentieth Century." The book was compiled by an editorial team of heavyweights in Alexandria: Char McCargo Bah, Gwendolyn Brown-Henderson, Audrey Davis, James Henson Sr. and Christa Waters.

"This book weaves a story — too long untold — of Alexandria's black community," the authors write in an epilogue to the book. "We wanted to give each individual his or her due, even as we are aware that the picture we paint here is incomplete."

The project began as a series of short narratives compiled by members of the Charles Houston Ad Hoc Naming/Narrative Committee appointed by the city to recognize the achievements of people in everything from law and medicine to arts and religion. By the time members of the committee finished gathering the narratives, they realized they had collected something special — an important slice of Alexandria history, told through the prism of personal stories and life experiences.

"So a small group of us decided to continue the project and turn it into a book," explained the authors in a preface to the book. "The individuals included here were people worth emulating. They did not shy away from community involvement even though many worked at more than one job."

**THE THEME** of the book is "beacons of light," an indication that the subjects illuminated the city in a way that changed the course of history. All of the individuals highlighted served as change agents in Alexandria, ushering the way to a better life for fu-

ture generations. For some, the goal was supporting their families or helping their community. For others, it was fighting for equal rights in the classroom or at the voting precinct. Most of them lived through the tumultuous transition from segregation to integration.

"The African American community of Alexandria had a rich and varied social life lived parallel to the other community, but their stories were rarely brought to public recognition," writes Mayor Bill Euille in the introduction. "This book remedies years of oversight of their achievements."

Some of the subjects in the book became known throughout the world, such as Tuskegee airman Rutherford Hamlet Adkins, the first African American to earn a doctorate from the Catholic University. Other individuals featured in the book are ordinary people who found themselves at a critical crossing, such as school cook Blois Oliver Doles Hundley who joined other parents in a 1958 lawsuit demanding their children be admitted to all-white schools.

"We are in danger of forgetting some of these people," said Henson, who is also working on a book about his family history. "I don't think we should forget them, and this book

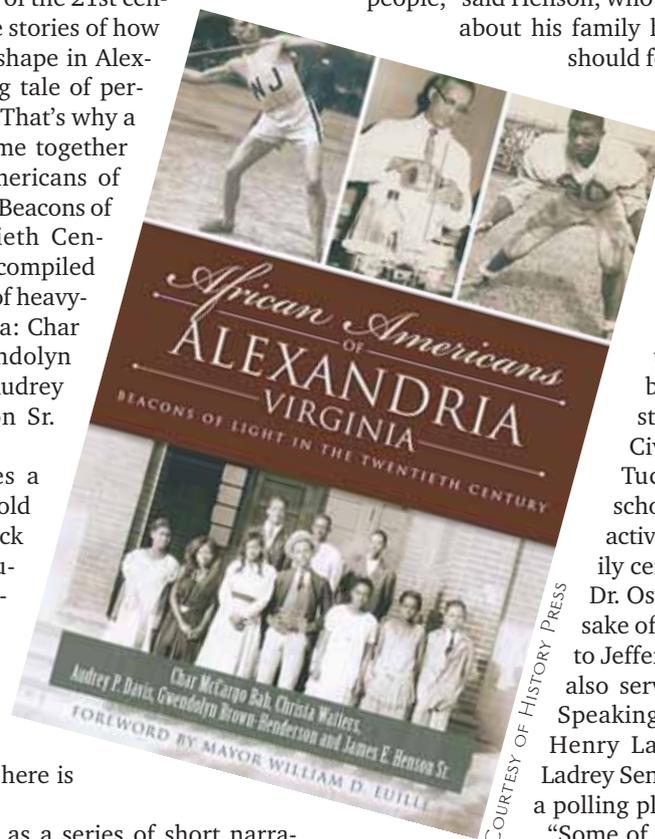
is one way for us to remember people who were beacons of light to the African-American community and the city."

**MANY OF THE PEOPLE** will be familiar to readers in Alexandria because buildings and institutions bear their names. Civil rights lawyer Samuel Tucker has an elementary school named for him. Civic activist Ruby Tucker has a family center that bears her name. Dr. Oswald Durant is the namesake of a community center next to Jefferson-Houston School that also serves as a voting precinct. Speaking of voting precincts, Dr. Henry Ladrey is honored at the Ladrey Senior Building, which is also a polling place.

"Some of these people you may already know about, people who made huge contributions," said Davis, who is the acting director of the Alexandria Black History Museum. "But the book also features people who made very quiet contributions but changed their communities in positive ways."

One hurdle for the authors was putting together a collection of biographical sketches for people in a community where record keeping was often not reliable. In several cases, the team had to conduct genealogical studies to determine basic facts such as a date of birth or marriage records. Fortunately the Barrett Branch Library has a collection of black newspapers that chronicled educational or sporting achievements.

"For years, people have been asking about a book on African-American history," said Davis. "We've had a lot of 18th century history and 19th century history but there's nothing that we've had that really talks about the 20th century. So this was sort of a perfect storm."



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