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A hand in unearthing a 17th-century village

BY JILL SAKAI

TIMES-DESPATCH STAFF WRITER

LURAY

Digging up the past is a laborious and time-consuming process.

Just ask any of the roughly two dozen dust-coated workers scattered around the Keyser Farm excavation site, sweltering on a humid July day in the name of science.

The dig, site of a 17th-century Indian village, attracts people of all ages and from all walks of life joining in a quest to unearth pieces of human history. This year, the "Passport in Time" project of the U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with the Archaeological Society of Virginia, drew par-



ticipants aged 6 to 80.

One afternoon last week, the assemblage included hobbyists, educators, professional archaeologists and a handful of Radford University anthropology majors.

To Rose Kelleman, a retired psychologist from Florida, working at the site is a way of opening a door back in time.

"You can learn so much about how the people lived," she said as she pointed out the site of a hy-

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BRUCE PARKER/TIMES-DISPATCH

Tents cover the side of the archaeological site of an Indian village in Page County.

Farm

—FROM PAGE E1

New York or Pennsylvania.

About 1600, the Keyser people apparently became heavily involved as the lowest rung in the deerskin trade. Where archaeologists would expect to find maybe a half-dozen defleshing tools in such a village, the Keyser site has produced more than 100 of the "beavers," including one found last Wednesday.

No European items have been found, adding to the evidence that the Keyser Indians traded only with other tribes, who acted as middlemen and kept the European goods for themselves.

"They were obviously processing a lot of hides," Barber said. "They probably traded them to middlemen, as opposed to Europeans, and they're not getting European goods back. . . . We're looking at the development among the Native Americans of sort of an incipient capitalistic system."

It's difficult for modern Americans to understand the impact on Indians of the Late Woodland period, which came after Columbus' arrival in 1492 was followed by other European explorers, Tolley said.

"The whole life of the Late Woodland Indians was thrown into turmoil. Everything changed for them. . . . They were seeing things for which they probably had no explanation," Tolley said. For example, their shamans could not protect them from European disease that took heavy tolls on their people. Tribes were combining, more so in eastern Virginia, and the deerskin trade began.

"Their whole society was changed by what some guy in London 4,000 miles away wanted" in deerskins, Barber said. By the 1700s, when European

explorers reached the Shenandoah Valley, the area's Indians had vanished, Tolley said. They may have returned north.

What they left behind was their trash, buried in pits that the Forest Service is now excavating to expand the stores of artifacts found during the 1940s excavations.

The 21st-century volunteers and archaeologists have unearthed pieces of the Keyser ceramic vessels, which feature smoothed-over corded marks and handle-like attachments associated with Indians of the Northeast region.

This summer, they found a Chesapeake pipe bowl and numerous beavers made from hollowed deer bone. The hollowed bone was cut into a groove and used to scrape hair from the hide.

Mike Wilke, a Highland County retiree with the Archaeological Society of Virginia, spent some of this summer carefully digging into a trash pit some 30 inches deep, which he found the edge of in 2004.

"Five hundred years from now, what we do here will be part of history," he said.

He said the group also has found drilled mussel shells and shell beads, which were apparently made at the site by drilling into the shell with sand-covered reeds.

"Each thing we find in there just adds more to the database on this site," he said. "The more you find of something, the more it says is that it was a common practice here."

About 200 Indians lived in this village, which may have been fortified with palisades. The people lived in circular wigwams made of saplings and ate a healthy, balanced diet of corns, squash, beans, mammals and nuts.

Typically, Indians in such villages would move every 10 to 20 years, as they overused the area for their crops and began running out of firewood. The Keyser site was also probably subject to frequent flooding, as it is today.

Then there was the sanitation issue, Tolley said.

There was a certain amount of stench involved, and insects and vermin, he said, that would have been attracted to the village and its food stores.

Barber said that given the signs of extensive deerskin trading, the archaeologists are now investigating whether the Keyser tribe practiced what is known as "costly signaling." That's the practice in which young men strive to become the "big man on campus" by holding feasts to show off their wealth.

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Science matters

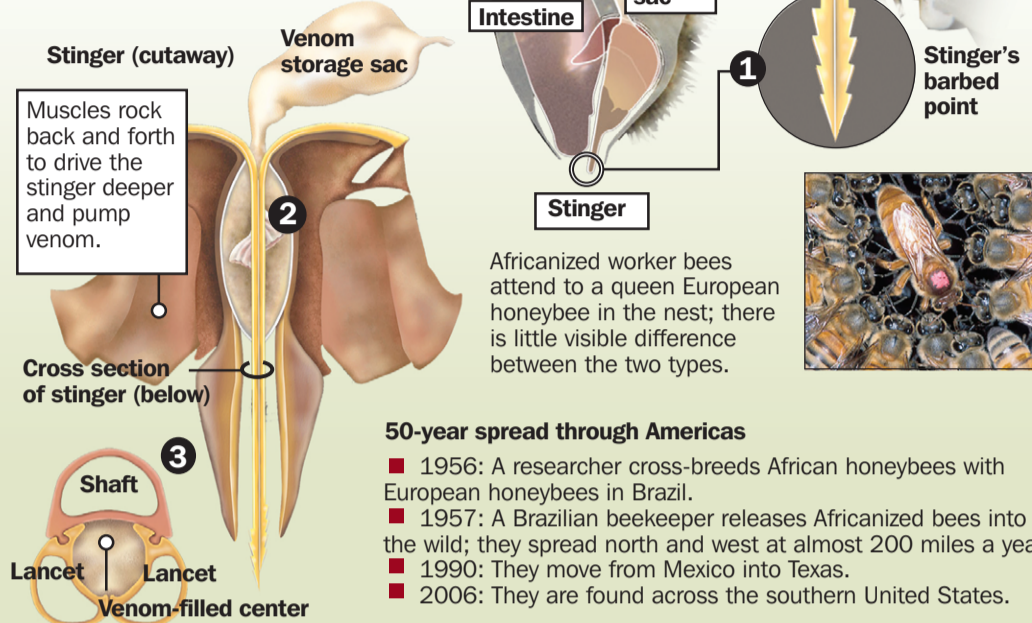
Dangerous bees mix with gentle relatives

Aggressive bees from Africa are spreading through the Americas, breeding with docile European bees; they make honey and pollinate crops well, but they pose a danger to beekeepers and the public.

How they sting

They attack quickly and in large numbers, and may chase a victim as far as 1/4 mile.

- 1 The barbed stinger locks into a victim's flesh, tearing the stinger from the bee's body.
- 2 Muscles pump venom from a storage sac through the hollow stinger for more than a minute after the bee stings.
- 3 Two lancets slide up and down along the stinger shaft, driving the point deeper into the skin.



Africanized worker bees attend to a queen European honeybee in the nest; there is little visible difference between the two types.

50-year spread through Americas

- 1956: A researcher cross-breeds African honeybees with European honeybees in Brazil.
- 1957: A Brazilian beekeeper releases Africanized bees into the wild; they spread north and west at almost 200 miles a year.
- 1990: They move from Mexico into Texas.
- 2006: They are found across the southern United States.

SOURCE: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, William Kern of University of Florida, U.S. Agriculture Department, Dyce Laboratory for Honey Bee Studies

CINDY JONES-HULFACHOR, SUN SENTINEL/McCLATCHY-TRIBUNE

Dogtown is reborn as a thriving arts community. See **Discover Richmond**, coming Sunday, Aug. 6.

You've spent the whole week in the office. Get a breath of fresh air with the **Outdoors** page, every Friday in Sports.

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New surgical procedure for heart rhythm problem

VCU Pauley Heart Center doctors are performing a new procedure that may eliminate **atrial fibrillation**, a common rhythm abnormality in the heart's upper chambers and a cause of stroke.

The technique, called a **modified Mini-Maze**, offers hope to patients who previously have had limited treatment options.

During the procedure, surgeons insert instruments into the chest through several keyhole-size incisions between the ribs. With the aid of a tiny video camera, a specially designed instrument is placed around the top of one of the atria and energy is delivered to destroy the tissue near the origin of the irregular impulses.

The damaged tissue disrupts the abnormal signaling pathways, stopping the irregular impulses.

"This is a significant advance in the management of atrial fibrillation," said **Dr. Vigneswar Kasirajan**, chair of the **Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery** at the VCU Medical Center's **Pauley Heart Center**. "We've known this could be an effective strategy for treating the abnormal rhythm, but until now we haven't had the tools to do it efficiently."

Atrial fibrillation, or a-fib, is an irregular heart rhythm caused by abnormal electrical impulses that begin at the top of the heart and travel down the upper chambers, or atria, causing them to contract erratically.

The irregular rhythm interferes

with the heart's ability to efficiently pump blood. As a result, blood can pool in the atria, which can lead to the formation of clots and the possibility of a stroke.

For years, doctors have used catheters to ablate or burn sites inside the atria and ventricles — the heart's lower pumping chambers — that cause arrhythmias. Many a-fib patients are treated with antiarrhythmic medications and anticoagulant drugs to prevent clots.

"We carefully evaluate patients before recommending them for the Mini-Maze procedure," said **Dr. Kenneth Ellenbogen**, director of the **cardiac electrophysiology lab** at VCU Medical Center. "It is primarily for patients who are too old for catheter ablation, had an unsuccessful ablation or are unable to tolerate blood thinners."

Unlike catheter ablation, which treats the inside of the heart, the Mini-Maze technique is performed on the heart's surface which may offer a "more complete ablation of the abnormal impulses that trigger arrhythmias," according to Kasirajan.

Kasirajan trained for a year before performing the first Mini-Maze procedure in June.

According to the American Heart Association, more than two million people in the United States suffer from atrial fibrillation, and about 300,000 cases are diagnosed each year.

For more information about **Mini-Maze**, call 828-7565.



The pediatric palliative care comfort room

VCU Children's Medical Center opens pediatric palliative care room

The **VCU Children's Medical Center** recently celebrated the opening of its **new pediatric palliative care and pain management room**.

The new area includes a pediatric palliative care comfort room and a family waiting area. A team of health care professionals will focus on specialized medical care in the treatment of pain, symptoms and stress of children and their families living with complex or life-limiting conditions.

"The goal of the patient room is to provide a more spacious and homelike atmosphere for our palliative care patients," said **Deborah Fisher**, clinical director of the pediatric palliative care program and pain management team.

Fisher said the pediatric palliative care comfort room facilitates excellent medical care, a more conducive environment to meet emotional and spiritual needs and a peaceful atmosphere to increase the comfort of families facing

difficult transitions in the care of children with life-threatening illnesses.

The new space is painted in periwinkle blue and buttery yellow. It is twice the size of a regular room and provides enough space for families to stay overnight. The room is uniquely equipped with an oversized bed that allows family members to lay with the child.

"We also provide consultation services for holistic care, including care giver support," said **Dr. Sue Sreedhar**, associate professor, Department of Pediatrics. "This is a service that's been very much required in the community."

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Richmond provided funding for renovations of the room, while the MCV Hospitals Auxiliary and the Brett Jones Foundation provided funding for the renovation of the family waiting area.

For more information, call 828-6781.

Calendar

Upcoming seminars, classes and other events around the VCU Medical Center

August 8

Let's Talk Cancer!

VCU Massey Cancer Center at Stony Point, 6:30 p.m.

Join a new monthly discussion group. Featured topic: "A Cancer Diagnosis: How It Affects the Family." All sessions are free and open to the public. For information, call 828-8709.

August 8

Infant CPR for Expectant Parents

Main Hospital, Room 8-210; 7-9 p.m.

Learn the basics of infant CPR through hands-on practice with baby dolls. No certificate given. Registration is \$15. For more information, call 828-4409.

August 19

K95 CountryFest 2006

Richmond Raceway Complex

Concert featuring Montgomery Gentry. General admission is \$15. Partial proceeds to benefit VCU Massey Cancer Center. For details, visit www.k95country.com. Volunteers needed, call 828-1451.

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