

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
w/ HAL MEREDITH**

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY:

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photo by Robert S. Harding

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BROWNTOWN, VIRGINIA

2014

Interview

DR. HARDING: I am talking with Hal Meredith.

Okay, Hal, let's see. I want to talk about the founding of the Izaak Walton League, Warren County Chapter, of which you are one of the founding members. And I guess the first question would be how did this come about? Why did you decide to found this Chapter?

MR. MEREDITH: I actually didn't found the Chapter. This Chapter was founded in 1929. The Izaak Walton League itself was formed in 1923 in Colorado by 54 trout fisherman who were angry because the streams were becoming polluted.

The Warren County Chapter then was reorganized for some reason -- I don't know why -- in 1942, and we have pretty much run it ever since.

DR. HARDING: Okay. How many founding members were there?

MR. MEREDITH: We were not founders.

DR. HARDING: Okay. What should I say? Reformed members? How many of you were there?

MR. MEREDITH: There were 14. When we bought the Izaak Walton Park -- years ago we met at the Hotel Royal on North Front Royal Avenue in Front Royal. So each year the Izaak Walton League sponsored a crow

shoot. The guy killing the most crows was given a prize.

DR. HARDING: Okay.

MR. MEREDITH: And that was the big annual deal at that time. Then the Hotel Royal was sold and removed and we started meeting at the law library at the courthouse for some years.

That did not go over big. We gradually dwindled down in membership until there was only 14 of us. We then started looking around -- what to do -- and several of us got the idea we needed to buy a piece of property and move into it. Lynchburg had just bought a piece of property and so had Winchester. So Bob Priode and I started out looking for something for sale. Where the 4-H Center now is, there's 400 acres for \$10,000.00. We were looking favorably at that, and then we found out that the Borden place at Browntown was for sale. We came up and looked at this place.

Bob had a new car and was driving through brush coming up the driveway, cutting brush as he went, and we looked around and strictly -- mostly from the view of the mountains from this place we decided to recommend that they buy this place.

Now at that time we were down to 14 members. We had \$187.00 in the Treasury. We got together with the membership and we decided to buy it anyway. Several of us put up enough money to make a down payment of \$250.00, then we would pay it off \$25.00 a month for five years.

In any event, we started raffles and things like that and it proceeded along pretty good. We got some good donations.

We then had ten year bonds, non-interest bearing, printed up, and we got these out among the members to where we had enough that we paid the place off in four years. Then five years later we paid off all the bonds and we've never been in debt since.

DR. HARDING: Can you remember the names of the 14 members now?

MR. MEREDITH: Yes, the members and officers active in the Warren Chapter of the IWLA when our Park was purchased on March 5, 1955 were Myself (president), Giles Nossett (Vice-president), Ray Borden (Secretary), Turner Slaughter (Treasurer), Francis Slaughter, Bennet Ball, G. L. Linkenhoker, Haywood Griffith, Herbert Thrush, Ike Everly, Ralph Gimmell, George Bratton, Jack Crouse, Bill Coffman.

MR. MEREDITH: However, as I told you previously, we decided to go ahead in any event and we bought Ott Borden's place in Browntown. He wanted \$4,500.00. We came back to him and said we would give him \$4,000.00 but we wanted to go beyond the creek to control the creek -- for \$4,000.00 -- which he quickly accepted.

We then scraped together enough money among the members. Some of them contributed \$100.00 to make a down payment, and we bought the place in March of 1955.

We paid the place off, as I mentioned awhile ago, in four years, with raffles, donations, and the sale of non-interest bearing bonds. Those bonds later were called in and practically all of them were donated, so that didn't really cost us anything.

In 1959 we were debt free. The place was paid for. There was a lot of work to do. Porches on both sides of the house had collapsed and fallen down. On the left front the sheathing boards had all been removed for firewood, and in the living room was a great big bull roaming around. So this was a cow stable at that time. Of course, we had a spring for water.

The next year we started building the pond out here. The contractor gave us a price of \$700.00. The day they started he called me in a hurry. I came up here and his bulldozer was buried in the mud.

So he said, "I can't do it for \$700.00 if I have to use one bull dozer to push and one to shove or pull. I'll do it for \$1,500.00."

So we went back and got with the rest of the members and we elected to go ahead with that, and that's when the pond was completed, about 1956.

Through the years we started rebuilding these porches. T.B. Boies and his brother camped up here and rebuilt the east porch, which is the screened porch where we have most of our affairs, and then in 1975 we built the porch on the east side of the house. In the meantime, the first time the house ever saw paint, we painted it.

DR. HARDING: The Borden's were using this as a farm?

MR. MEREDITH: That's right. A pig farm.

DR. HARDING: Were they the original owners?

MR. MEREDITH: No. A fellow, Byrd Updike and his wife, Nanny, built this place in 1894, and they farmed here. Actually, we bought half of the farm, 155 acres. On the other side of the road was another 150 acres which we elected not to buy. We didn't know how we were going to pay for the one we bought.

Updike's sold the place to Ott Borden in 1920, and they moved then to Washington, believe it or not. And Mr. Borden owned the place and practically all of the land from here to Bentonville. He was land poor. He owned all that land, but he couldn't show you a dollar bill to save his life. So when we offered him a second offer of \$4,000.00, he jumped at it. He

needed the money.

There are several of our members that were born and raised in the house: Orivel Baker and the Bea Mathews Frame. At one time this place was rented to two families and the place was split between the them. While it was rented through the years, Mr. Borden kept on with his farming activities.

In January of '57 we took another big project on. At that time the Russians had moved into Hungary and were giving the Hungarian people pretty hard times. Everybody, I assume, has read about it. But in any event, a bunch of these Hungarians stole out in the night and came to this country.

We got word of that and we adopted a family of the Hungarians to bring up here. Sander Vida and his wife Margaret, and their two children, Clara and Peter. They were small children.

They had come out of Hungary in the middle of the night into their neighboring country. Margaret had given her last jewels to the guy that brought them out. They had been associated with the Budapest Opera.

Anyway, they were brought out and they arrived in New Jersey and we made an application for them to give them a place to start in this country, and sure enough it was accepted, and Francis Slaughter and Jack Krause went to New Jersey and picked them up at a park at the Port of Deportation and brought them

down here on a cold, windy, January day.

I've often thought about them coming back here in the mountains in a house that had never seen paint, but the ladies and the men had gotten together and made this house very habitable, and they had plenty.

We paid them \$25.00 a month and they lived here almost a year. They then moved to employment at Christy's Restaurant in Front Royal and moved on to several other places until they wound up managing an apartment complex in Adelphi, Maryland.

Both of those children were educated at the University of Maryland, believe it or not, and they both held good jobs. The daughter has lately retired from the government, the Treasury Department, and the boy is still a building contractor, and we see them both very often. The older people died years ago.

But they lived here and took care of this place for us for a year. Of course, I gave them a start to life up here. They are real nice people.

DR. HARDING: Was he farming up here?

MR. MEREDITH: No, no. He would just keep the grass mowed and the house cleaned up, and stuff like that. And meeting nights she'd cook the meal and then we'd pay for it.

The next big project we took on was the boat landings in Front Royal, in Warren

County. Now that program started right here at this Chapter. Our people started buying up the river frontage and we saw we weren't going to get access to the river. We got in touch with Chester Phelps who happened to be a friend. He was a Director of the Department of Game and Fisheries in Richmond. He was a friend of mine.

He came down to the house, and Statton Hammock Jimmy Simpson and I met with him -- Jimmy Simpson being the local Game Warden -- and Statton Hammock was another member. He lived to 103, by the way.

DR. HARDING: Wow.

MR. MEREDITH: We talked to Chester Phelps and he said, well, he was glad we called because he did have some money and he had been thinking, too, about a park to make the river accessible.

So we talked on and he said, "I'll tell you what. You guys are going to have the job of finding out where you want landings and locate them, and getting the deal with the owners, and I'll put you in five boat landings in Warren County."

And this went on and it was accomplished. The boat landing in Bentonville cost us \$3,000.00 for a parking area. Karo cost us a dollar a year from the Ramsey family. Front Royal would cost us nothing because that was an old state right-of-way, and

American Viscose gave us two acres to go with it at no cost.

And the Riverton Landing, that was owned by the Town of Front Royal, didn't cost us anything, and down at Howellsville Landing, Senator Ball donated two acres for a landing down there.

Four years later we had five river landings operating in Warren County. They later came back and we wanted a landing on the other side of the river -- there were none -- and they agreed to put one in on what's called Thunderbird Ranch right now. We had been into a problem with Thunderbird. There was an old road right-of-way to the river that was overgrown. You couldn't drive over it, but this way you could walk and I would go fishing.

We argued over it for years. We had legal fees -- \$3,000.00. Finally Thunderbird said, "If you'll give up on that, we'll give you a boat landing down on the river for the Game Department," which we accepted. This was Simpson's Landing.

Additionally, they came back to us -- they the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries -- and said, "You guys need a landing on the North River," which we had been pestering them for.

He said, "Go and do it and we'll put it in." And this is how Catlett's Landing on the North River came to be there -- all through the influence of this Chapter, and this was one of the major projects that we've accomplished.

At one time we had an agreement with them that we'd keep the landings cleaned up of litter and what have you. Finally, they employed a contract for coming out and cleaning them up.

In May of '58 the house got its first coat of paint ever. It had never seen paint. We had repaired the outside front. We had torn the old porches down and had to replace them with new.

In January of 1960 we were exempted from Federal income tax. None of the Izaak Walton League was exempted at that time, but Renolds Harnzberger (phd.) a retired government lawyer and a member of the Chapter, decided to go out and get us exempted from Federal income tax. He worked on it for three years, but he finally got it.

Next he went to the National Office and got it for them, and then the rest of the Izaak Walton League Chapters in Virginia. We are not exempt from State property taxes. We tried and tried, but no way, up to this time.

In December of 1956 we took on our third big project. We organized a Ladies Chapter. It took place right out here in this side yard. The Valley Ladies received their Charter in December of '56. That's probably one of the best projects we ever took on. They've done nothing but help ever since -- contributed

money and they built this \$11,000.00 picnic shelter across the pond. They were the Valley Ladies Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. They're a Chapter in their own right.

MR. MEREDITH: As I mentioned earlier, in April of 1964 river landings were in operation.

DR. HARDING: Yes.

MR. MEREDITH: In January of '60, the Izaak Walton Park paid off the Deed of Trust and it was released, and in August of 1960 we had to put a gate on the place. We started having people coming in and doing some damage -- young people upstairs doing what they shouldn't do here -- American Viscose donated an iron gate -- the same gate's down there now -- and that gate was installed.

We had left the place without a gate because we advertised this was for the use of people in Warren County, and they used it for things without even having to ask permission.

But vandalism forced us out of that. Right now and up to the present day, we allow our civic organizations, church, school, youth groups, to use the place if they call and make a reservation. But the place is used by the public.

In September of '66, we got a Cub tractor donated by Ernie Gill. He was a buddy of mine

in World War II. He spent 52 Christmases with the wife and I before he and his wife passed away, but we always had a high point in World War II. We were in Normandy and twice we got caught behind enemy lines and managed to get loose.

But anyway, what I started to say, he bought a Cub tractor and donated it to the place. At that time the Chapter didn't have any money. It was all going in to paying for the place. If we needed tools or anything, we bought them ourselves, and so that Cub tractor was a big help in all of this grass mowing around here.

DR. HARDING: Yeah. And of course you all maintain your own equipment, right?

MR. MEREDITH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

In 1971 the east side of the porch was completed with screening for \$2,000.00. We did not have to go into debt, and as I said earlier, we hadn't been in debt since we paid for this place. Chestnut trees were planted, and those trees bore heavy crops of chestnuts all of 40 years, I guess. At one time when the chestnuts were falling there were nine bear out there at one time eating chestnuts, and the deer fed off of them.

For some reason in 2009 these trees started dying after some 50 years, and they're all gone now. They were Chinese Chestnuts, not American Chestnuts.

DR. HARDING: I have two of those in my own yard that I planted about 30 years ago. I had bears in mine, too.

MR. MEREDITH: Is that right? I don't know why -- we got the forestry people in and they couldn't tell us why they were dying. There was no evidence of a chestnut plague. We lost every one of them.

In August of 1975 we put up a flagpole donated by Paul Strickler and installed by Bill Olinger. In July of '76, the rug in the living room was donated and installed by Bill Olinger.

Believe it or not, a movie was made up here, and this was a movie on mountain life, and they moved in -- the movie moved in here and they also took some film in Browntown and they spent a couple of days filming this place.

They gave us \$150.00, but this film was a film on mountain life. There was about 100 people in the crew.

DR. HARDING: Was this with Alan Arkin - a Christmas movie?

MR. MEREDITH: It might have been. It could have been.

DR. HARDING: Because I've got that movie on a DVD and it's got views of -- on the other side (West) of Gooney Manor Loop looking up at Hogback Mountain.

It is called "A Matter of Principle".

MR. MEREDITH: Oh, is that right?

DR. HARDING: And it also shows Alan Arkin sort of walking or running in front of Ray and Linda Ruhling's house, which is called "Creekside." Yeah, it's quite a -- it's about Christmas, and --

MR. MEREDITH: Uh-huh. We never did get to see it.

DR. HARDING: Oh. Mr. Purdy is the name of the character that Arkin plays.

MR. MEREDITH: Yes, this is the same movie. Yes.

In August of '78, American Viscose put all new furniture in their plant. I was in charge of getting rid of the old furniture, so the first thing I did was get permission to bring the cafeteria tables and chairs up here, which I did for a dollar.

In 1989 the clubhouse was completely renovated. Vinyl siding was installed, and all new windows were installed. We insulated it and then you could heat it quick. In 1990 to 2000, we put in a well, running water, and restrooms. At that same time we installed a new porch on the west side of the house with a concrete floor and what have you.

DR. HARDING: What about the stove?

MR. MEREDITH: Ha-ha. That's quite a story about the big wood stove in our living room -- in 1955 in May of 1955 the Baptist Church put in central heat and

they had a big old wood stove in the basement. We offered them \$15.00 for it and they sold it to us.

Now, believe it or not -- '55 -- and it's 2012 now -- and we're still heating with that stove. It sits in that big room in the clubhouse, and Bud Cherefko completely overhauled it, put in new bricks, the whole firebox, just like brand new.

At this time, we started giving \$1,000.00 scholarships to the high school, Warren County High School.

With the advent of the second high school we now give \$1,000.00 to Skyline and Warren County. We give \$2,000.00 in scholarships.

DR. HARDING: Now, when you say "at this time," do you mean at present or back in the '80's?

MR. MEREDITH: We started back in the 80's with Warren County. We give \$100.00 every year to Hunters for the Hungry, which is a very popular thing that's come up with deer meat.

For a lot of years here we had a program each summer called Riverfest, in which we had all kinds of environmental organizations. Along with Friends of the Shenandoah, we started working together and put on this "all day program" out on the South River, and of course there were various vendors there and all environmental organizations were represented with

tables and what have you. There were fishing contests and things like that. That played itself out about five years ago.

Water monitoring is one of the big things that really is what the Izaak Walton League stands for -- water monitoring. The Walton league, as I told you, was formed in 1922 by fifty-four trout fisherman who were angry because the Nation's waters were becoming polluted. They formed the Izaak Walton League.

As I told you also, at that time -- then the Warren County Chapter was formed in 1929, then reorganized in '41. Why it was reorganized, I don't know. I was overseas at the time.

DR. HARDING: Now, what I wrote down earlier was in 1942 it was reorganized. Now you're saying '41?

MR. MEREDITH: Yes, '41 is correct.

DR. HARDING: Okay.

MR. MEREDITH: As I started to mention, one of the big projects that represents Izaak Walton League is water monitoring. We have this group, "Save the Streams", that goes out and checks these streams four times a year -- and these streams -- I'm talking about Passage Creek, Happy Creek, and streams of this order -- for the amount of critters, we want to call them -- bugs (i.e., micro invertebrates), which denote whether the stream -- if there's a lack of bugs, the stream is polluted. With healthy bugs, the stream is fine.

The Chapter did donate a kiosk down on the river at the Andy Guest State Park right after it opened. I think we invested something like \$1,000 in that.

We donated crabapple trees to the lawn of the Warren County High School in 1996.

The picnic shelter was built by the Valley Ladies Chapter -- the \$11,000.00 that I mentioned before -- and that was done in 1998.

Prior to the opening of the 4-H Center this place was essentially built for children, for young people -- 4-H clubs, Sunday school -- things of this order -- and we used to before the 4-H Center opened, we entertained about 900 children a year up here.

Now, since they're there, we do about 200 to 300 scouts -- mostly scouts -- and we do get some 4-H'rs once in a while. We get lots of youth groups, church groups, and that we really push because that's what this Chapter stands for.

We have a trout fishing rodeo each April where we buy 150 trout and put them in the pond, and we invite children from this county and neighboring counties to come in for a day of hot dogs and drinks, and trout.

For the last 15 to 20 years, we also have taken on as a project to try and keep the Browntown Road cleaned up. We pick up trash on the Browntown

Road from Front Royal to our parked gate four times a year. This is a project that gets about as much public relation remarks as any.

For fundraising -- for some years we have had an annual feast done. That's gone on for about 15 years. Lately we've tried barbecue dinners to replace it and they've not worked out as well, but some fundraising dinner will be maintained on an annual basis. We have to survive.

We bought this place for \$4,000.00, 56 years ago. At the last assessment, it was valued at a million three. We have -- at our last meeting our total asset money -- assets of \$72,000.00 -- so we have not done too badly through the years.

DR. HARDING: No, I would say not.

MR. MEREDITH: I might should have bought something for myself. You know, sometime -- it never crossed my mind that we were risking anything. There were 14 of us there with \$187.00 -- and paying \$4,000.00 for a farm -- you know, it's either dumbness or a lot of guts -- I don't know which.

DR. HARDING: I'd say a lot of guts.

MR. MEREDITH: I'm the only one living out of the original group, and I'm 95.

DR. HARDING: What year were you born?

MR. MEREDITH: April 3rd, 1918. I'm 94 1/2 actually.

DR. HARDING: Okay. Well, let me -- a couple of questions that come to mind. The Valley Ladies have melded into the group?

MR. MEREDITH: The Valley Ladies moved their membership into the Warren County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. They are members of the Warren County Chapter. And that is another one of the best moves we've made.

DR. HARDING: I think so, yeah.

MR. MEREDITH: One of them is the Treasurer, another is fund raising, another one is the membership chairman. We did ourselves a big favor.

DR. HARDING: What year did this happen? Just three years ago or --

MR. MEREDITH: What is that?

DR. HARDING: The melding of the -- when the ladies chapter --

MR. MEREDITH: About three years ago, yes.

DR. HARDING: Okay. Now, I'd like to ask you -- not in terms of facts, but in terms of you reflecting on your life and what this has meant to you.

MR. MEREDITH: Hum. Well, I was property chairman here for 47 years. I was president for 12 years. In fact, I've served in all offices, but it's just been for half of my life. I'm just sorry that the guys who started out with me aren't here to see what we've done.

DR. HARDING: Yes.

MR. MEREDITH: Because we walked in here and these porches were both hanging down, there was siding off of the front of the house, there was cow crap all in here, and -- but we've had it 50 years and went to work on it. Now we have a trail system -- a wonderful trail system. The trees are identified by signs.

DR. HARDING: And there's a shooting range.

MR. MEREDITH: Yes. That has just been improved.

DR. HARDING: When was that put in?

MR. MEREDITH: The shooting range -- I put it in originally years ago. We had some 2x4's up there with some targets hanging on it, and some kind of a -- oh, we had a barrel to mark shooting positions.

DR. HARDING: Okay.

MR. MEREDITH: About 30 years ago -- I've forgotten the guy's name that built shooting benches at 30, 50 and 100 yards --

And then two years ago we had a bulldozer in here and we redid the butt section -- the butt section back there -- because it was getting dilapidated -- and we have it arranged now where one person can shoot at a time, but it's pretty well up to standards. It's a nice rifle range.

DR. HARDING: Yes. I know Bud and I have been fishing in the little creeks around here just for a little Brook Trout.

MR. MEREDITH: Yeah.

DR. HARDING: Those are all wild.

MR. MEREDITH: They are all wild.

DR. HARDING: They haven't been stocked.

MR. MEREDITH: The State wanted to put some stock trout in there once and we wouldn't let them. We would put stock -- well, they used to put stock trout in the pond if we would leave the gate open for the public to fish in here, which we did, but we buy our own trout now for the fish rodeo.

(End of recording)



Hal James Meredith Jr. (1918 - 2014)



Hal James Meredith, Jr., 95, died Tuesday, February 18, 2014 at Envoy Healthcare in Winchester, Virginia.

Mr. Meredith was born April 3, 1918, in Jackson, Mississippi, son of the late Hal James Meredith, Sr., and Nola Kathryn Thurman Meredith. He grew up in Brandy Station, Virginia where he met the love of his life and wife of 60 years, the late Olive Brown Meredith, who preceded him in death in 2006. Mr. and Mrs. Meredith were married August 24, 1945. They lived in Front Royal together with William and Violet Olinger for most of their adult lives.

Mr. Meredith joined the Army April 16, 1941 and served as a Staff Sergeant. He was stationed in England for two years and saw activity in World War II in Normandy, France, as a part of the D-Day Invasion, and in Rhineland as a part of the Battle of the Bulge campaign. He said many times that he was extremely lucky to have been a part of so much activity in the war and to have come away without so much as a scratch.

Following his military service, Mr. Meredith was employed by American Viscose, which was later known as Avtex. He retired from Avtex as a Manufacturing Superintendent after thirty five years of service.

Mr. Meredith was a charter member of the Warren County chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America. He was a part of the group of fourteen members instrumental in purchasing the land and the park that the group now occupies. He held many leadership positions within the chapter, including Chapter President, Building and Grounds Chairman, and Chairman Emeritus. In March of 1998, the Hammock-Meredith house on the Izaak-Walton property was dedicated to Mr. Meredith and his lifelong friend Statton Hammock in honor of the service and dedication of these two men to the park. Spending time at this beautiful place was one of Mr. Meredith's greatest joys.

Mr. Meredith will best be remembered as a true gentleman who was gracious to all who knew him. He never met a stranger and loved to be with people of all ages. He loved his family very much and encouraged them to make the best lives possible for themselves and to make the world better for others. He was an avid fisherman and hunter who loved the outdoors. He could be seen many evenings sitting on his front porch enjoying the view and beautiful weather. He will be missed very much.

Hammock-Meredith House



The Hammock-Meredith House, with its accompanying 155 acres, was purchased by the Warren County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League in March 1955 for \$4,000 from Ott and Nannie Borden.

The House was built in approximately 1894 by Byrd Updike. A sawmill was moved onto the high ridge East of the house to cut lumber, mostly chestnut. The Updike's lived here until 1922, at which time the place was sold to Ott and Nannie Borden.

Numerous families have lived here through the years: Clarence Baker; David Clatterbuck; Richard Henry; and Turner Mathews. Orivel and Ott Baker were born here; members of the chapter, as well as Bea Frame, wife of a deceased member.

HISTORY OF A HOUSE

By ROY HIGHBERG AND HAL MEREDITH



photo by Robert S. Harding

It all began in the late 1600's when Johannes Opdyck who was born in 1651 in Holland came to America settling on Long Island. His grandson, John Updike, born in 1718, was the ancestor of all the Virginia Updikes and John's grandson, Samuel, born in 1817, was the first Updike to settle in what is now Warren County; He and his family lived on a farm between Bentonville and Browntown. Samuel's son, John Byrd Updike, constructed a home around 1896 on what is now the Izaak Walton League property on Gooney Manor Loop south of Browntown. He moved a sawmill onto the ridge east of the selected house site, where the lumber was cut for construction. All of the framing is of chestnut. The Updikes and their eight children farmed the property until 1918 when they moved out after selling it to Ott Borden. Three present-day Browntowners were born in the house after 1918: Bea Frame (nee Mathews) and Ott and Orivel Baker. Bea attended the one room school whose foundation still is visible north of the Cool Spring Church, and the Baker boys attended the Browntown school.

In March of 1955, fourteen members of the fledgling Warren County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America bought the property consisting of 155 acres, the house, barn and outbuildings from Ott Borden; Mr. Borden had earlier removed all the marketable timber off of the property. At the time of purchase there were cattle roaming through the house, the siding on one side of the house was off, paint was peeling off everywhere, and the two side porches had to be taken down as well as the barn. To pay for property, non-interest-bearing bonds (par \$100) were sold and Mr. George Silek of the Warren Quality Shop donated a suit and a pair of shoes which brought \$6000 when raffled off. The mortgage to Mr. Borden was paid off in four years.

In 1956, during the height of the Hungarian Revolution, a Hungarian refugee family of four named Vida arrived in Warren County in need of housing and work; the husband and wife had both worked with the Opera House in Budapest, Hungary before fleeing from the Communists. The Izaak Walton League members and their wives fixed up and furnished the house and offered it to the Vidas rent-free, plus giving them \$25 a month for living expenses. Mr. Christie gave Mr. Vida a job at his restaurant in Front Royal and the family lived on the property until 1960.

The house has subsequently been rewired, had a full-length side porch added, received vinyl siding and new windows, and the kitchen modernized. It now serves as the chapter house and all of the monthly member meetings are conducted there year around. The grounds have been improved with the addition of a spring-fed pond, hiking trails, varied wildlife plantings, extensive split-rail fences, picnic shelter, barbecue shelter, rifle ranges, and several resident geese.

The community, youth groups, the Front Royal Parks and Recreation Department, churches, wedding parties, family reunions, class reunions, and others have made extensive use of the park's facilities. The general public has an opportunity to visit the property in June when the Chapter holds its annual fund-raising BBQ dinner.

The house has been named the Hammock-Meredith House in honor of Mr. A. Statton Hammock and Mr. Hal J. Meredith, Jr.

The Updike Family

In about 1600, Louris Opyck was born in Holland. He had a son by the name of Johannes Opdyck who was born in 1651. Johannes was a planter at a place called Dutch Kills at Long Island after the family came to the United States. Johannes had a son whose name is uncertain. This "third son of Johannes" was shot by accident about 1730, but he left three daughter and four sons, one of which was John Updike.

John Updike was born in 1718. He moved from New Jersey to Virginia after the Revolutionary War...he was ancestor of all the Virginia Updikes. John was a tailor and worked mostly with buckskin. He went from house to house selling and making leather clothing. He died in 1802. One of his sons was John Updike Jr.

John Updike Jr. was born in 1775 in Loudon County where he married Elizabeth Pancoast whose family was from England. He operated a sawmill and gristmill after he moved to Rappahannock County where he died in 1852. He left a son named Samuel.

Samuel Updike was born in 1817. He married Angeline Brown and they lived on a farm near Bentonville where he died in 1893 and is buried beside his wife in the family cemetery on their farm. They had a son named John Byrd Updike.

John Byrd Updike was a farmer who lived at the present day Izaak Walton League Park. He was born September 5, 1860 in Bentonville. He married Pauline Updike and they moved to Washington, D.C. in their later years. He died on February 27, 1954 at the age of 93 and is buried with his wife at Prospect Hill Cemetery in Front Royal. They had eight children.

One child, Halris Strode Updike, was born on July 17, 1901 and only lived five months. He died the day before Christmas the same year of his birth and is buried up on the hill above the house at the Izaak Walton League Park. Alongside him is a lady by the name of Sal Cooper who faithfully served the Updike family in the care of their children.



Front Row - Right to Left: John Byrd Updike, Pauline Updike, Daisey Updike, John Frank Updike, Arleigh Updike, Shirley Updike and Shadah Updike.

Back Row - Right to Left: Grover Updike, Sal Cooper, and Reginald Updike.

In Memory of
Hal James Meredith, Jr.
(1918-2014)



