

For Release: January 10, 2013

Andy Griffith Book To Be Featured At Virginia Festival Of The Book

Laurel Hill Publishing LLC is pleased to announce that Thomas D. “Tom” Perry and his new book *Beyond Mayberry: A Memoirs of Andy Griffith and Mount Airy North Carolina* will be featured as part of the national book festival The Virginia Festival of the Book sponsored by the Virginia Humanities Foundation on March 20, 2013, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Perry will be part of a panel titled “What We Write, Why We Write” at the Northside Library at 300 Albemarle Square in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The mission of the Virginia Festival of the Book is to bring together writers and readers and to promote and celebrate books, reading, literacy, and literary culture. **As the largest gathering of authors, writers, and readers in the Commonwealth, and, indeed, the Mid-Atlantic region**, the Book Festival has become an integral part of the community and is presented in a unique partnership of [contributors](#) that includes the [VFH](#), foundations, corporations, bookstores, schools, libraries, area businesses and organizations, and committed individuals. This partnership results in programs in a wide range of topics set among a variety of venues throughout the City of Charlottesville, County of Albemarle, and the University of Virginia.

Along with the [staff](#), almost every aspect of the Festival is organized and generated by [Festival Committees](#) consisting of community volunteers who generously contribute their time and energy. Programs range from traditional author readings and book signings to a StoryFest day of children's authors and storybook characters; from a panel on how to publish a novel to a discussion on running a book club; from a workshop on book-binding to a discussion on freelancer's rights. All programs are open to the public; with the exception of a few ticketed events, programs are free of charge.

Virginia Festival of the Book

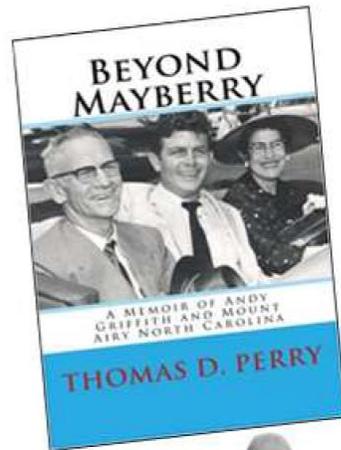
<http://www.vabook.org>

Tom Perry at Virginia Festival of the Book

<http://www.vabook.org/site13/participants/details.php?partID=199>

If you like the
Andy Griffith Show...

Join us for
Beyond Mayberry
with
Thomas D. Perry



ANDY GRIFFITH AND MOUNT AIRY NORTH CAROLINA

Virginia Festival of the Book

www.vabook.org

Wednesday, March 20, 2013, 4 p.m.

Northside Library,

300 Albemarle Square,

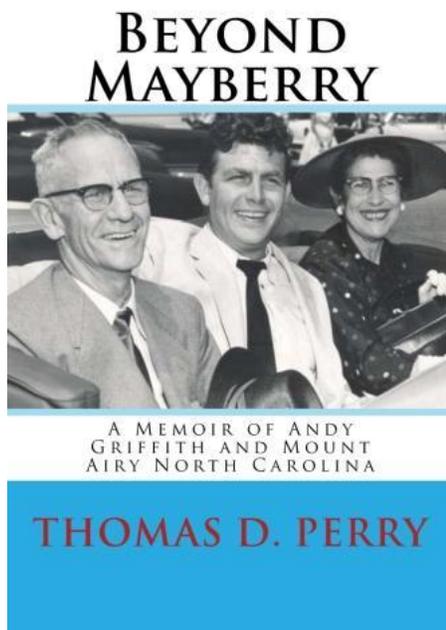
Charlottesville, Virginia

BOOK TALK AND SIGNING BY HISTORIAN TOM PERRY

FROM HIS NEW BOOK

BEYOND MAYBERRY:

A MEMOIR OF ANDY GRIFFITH AND MOUNT AIRY NORTH CAROLINA



For Release September 12, 2012

Laurel Hill Publishing LLC is pleased to announce the publication of 35th book from the regional history press. *Beyond Mayberry: A Memoir of Andy Griffith and Mount Airy North Carolina* by Thomas D. Perry will ... be available exclusively at Mayberry on Main on Main Street in Mount Airy, North Carolina through Mayberry Days on Saturday, September 29.

Historian and Author Thomas D. "Tom" Perry will be at Mayberry on Main for Book Signings of *Beyond Mayberry* Wednesday September 26 10 to 2, Thursday September 27 10 to 2 and Friday September 28 10 to 2 at Mayberry on Main, Main Street, Mount Airy NC during Mayberry Days.

The book is also available online at Laurel Hill Publishing LLC's website www.freestateofpatrick.com. The cost is \$19.99.

The book is part biography of Andy Griffith and part memoirs of the town of Mount Airy pointing out the connections between the town and it's most famous son beginning on the day of his death of July 3, 2012. Perry also discusses his own life in the town and his thoughts about the tourism that keeps the downtown so vibrant.

Perry wrote the book while recovering from prostate cancer surgery. Looking for a project to get back into the swing of writing, he found the laughter of *The Andy Griffith Show* to be just what he needed. He watched all Andy Griffith's performances available and based the books on published sources. He observed the events of Griffith's death and the next day July 4, 2012, which was Donna Fargo Day in Mount Airy as the favorite daughter was in town to be Grand Marshall of the July 4 Parade.

Thomas D. Perry is the author, editor or publisher of over 35 books on regional history. Holding a BA in History from Virginia Tech where he studied under Civil War Authority James I. Robertson, Jr., Perry started the effort to preserve J. E. B. Stuart's Birthplace just outside Mount Airy in Patrick County, Virginia. Perry is an award-winning historian, who recently raised over \$200K to expand the Bassett Historical Center and worked with the Martinsville Virginia Heritage Center and Museum on a groundbreaking exhibit on the Vietnam War titled "Never Forget."

Andy Griffith and Mount Airy from www.freestateofpatrick.blogspot.com by Tom Perry

If you grew up anywhere near Mount Airy, North Carolina, you could not escape Andy Griffith. If you grew up as a baby boomer watching television, you could not escape Andy Griffith. Most people have a choice about him, love him or hate him, but you cannot deny that he is part of our lives.

He is also part of our economy. Just drive down Main Street in Mount Airy and there is hardly an empty storefront. Contrast that with Martinsville about an hour away that does not have the tourist draw that is A N D Y Y as Emmett Forrest, Andy's boyhood friend and the man who collected most of the material in the Andy Griffith Museum in Mount Airy, likes to say.

Last Christmas I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and had surgery on February 15. Dealing with the cancer, thoughts of mortality, the physical condition it causes for a man such as bladder control and ED, leads to depression and I fought that. I needed something to bring me out of the dark and get me writing again. I struggled with history projects that usually I dive into, but then one day I ran into Emmett Forrest on Main Street. He too is fighting illness and he said to me that it was like jumping off a ten story building. Someone asks you about the seventh floor of the fall how you are doing. Emmett answered, "Well, so far the ride has been pretty good." I marveled at his positive attitude and as I always did, I asked him if he had spoken to "Mr. Griffith" lately. I never called him Andy because I did not know him. Emmett told me about their conversation. A month or so later Andy Griffith died on July 3, 2012.

I had written and toyed with the idea of writing about Andy Griffith, but I did not want to write about The Andy Griffith Show (TAGS). I wanted to write about Andy Griffith and Mount Airy, North Carolina, where we were both born. In fact, I was born about a month after TAGS premiered on CBS just down the street from the house Andy grew up. I began to explore the common experiences and the different Mount Airys we both knew.

I began to watch episodes. I began to watch movies Andy Griffith starred in thanks to Netflix. I was surprised at how good a dramatic actor he was. I went to Goldsboro and found the house he and his first wife, Barbara, lived in along with the high school he taught music. I found his dorm at UNC-Chapel Hill and read some of his papers in the Wilson Library. I went through huge files at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History and I read many articles online with interviews.

I began to write. I found my voice again. I think the reason was that I was laughing so much at the man from Mount Airy. If there is anything funnier in television history than the TAGS when Don Knotts was on it, I have never seen it. I have always thought that after Knotts left Andy Griffith seemed bored. He was bored and eventually left for other challenges and he struggled, but he left us some of the best comedy on the small screen.

So, I have a book that is written as things happened with his death and the day after July 4, 2012, when Donna Fargo came to town to be Grand Marshall for the parade. There is no more professional and classy woman that I have ever met. When introduced at the museum, she talked about Andy. Before she had asked me how I was feeling, as she knew I was sick. She has MS, but she will not leave until everyone that wants to see her or get her autograph gets there time with the “Happiest Girl in the Whole USA.”

I usually write about things long after they happen, but this was an opportunity to catch Mount Airy on the day it’s most famous son died and the day after when it’s most famous daughter came home. I walked over to the statue of Andy and Opie headed to the fishing hole and found Patricia Comire and her teenage son, Benjamin. She says her family calls her a “Helen looking for an Andy,” but she likes Ernest T. Bass, so she likes a man on the edge too. People often talk about the “Mayberry Thing” dying away, but Benjamin reminded me that day there are many in the younger generation that still love TAGS. He knew all about it and talked and talked.

I think many times that there is much envy and jealousy aimed at Andy, but to wish for the “Mayberry Thing” to go away is to wish for Mount Airy’s downtown to lose the economic prosperity it now enjoys and I am against that way of thinking. You might be against the silliness or the greed that it engenders, but do not forget that Andy Griffith gave many of us pure joy in the laughter and entertainment he produced over six decades from standup comedy to Broadway to movies to television to musical recordings, the only thing he ever received awards.

This book is part biography of the man and part memoir of the town we both grew up with and in. If you are looking for negative stories about him, there are not many because no one would go on record and hearsay does not interest me. What I found was a man who did not suffer fools and who was very serious about his craft. He never left Mount Airy. He took with him and shared it with the world and he put it on the map. There is only one person from Mount Airy, North Carolina, to have a Presidential Medal of Freedom and we should be proud of him.

Andy Griffith was not Andy Taylor. I think his father Carl Griffith was Andy Taylor. Described as “the funniest man I ever met” by Andy’s first wife, Carl Griffith was the inspiration for his son. This book is also a little about my father, who grew up the son of mill workers in Mount Airy. In 1966, Erie Perry and Andy Griffith found themselves in line together at the Hospital Pharmacy just a block from Andy’s parent’s home and across the street from where I was born. When I asked my father what he said to Andy, he said nothing because he was so shocked to see him. When I asked my father what Andy said to him like Mark Twain my father, who tells the ladies he is still “Erie-sistible” said Andy was so shocked to see him, he didn’t say anything either. Such is life living in the town that produced two legends in their own time.

One of my favorite authors passed his latest book to me the other day. By John Peters

It wasn't Stephen King, though I'm a big horror fan, and it wasn't David Baldacci, whose sister and I grew to be good friends when we lived in the same community. And sadly, it wasn't Robert Parker — though if he had been around that would have made for a heck of a ghost story.

It was none other than local historian Tom Perry, and his latest book is “Beyond Mayberry: A Memoir of Andy Griffith and Mount Airy, N.C.”

I've covered this ground before, so I won't go into great detail about why I admire Perry's work other than to say he has done about as much as anyone I know to preserve local history in a manner that is accessible to all. He's written more local history books than I can list here, including books exploring the life of Civil War General J.E.B. Stuart; the history of Mount Airy; the history of Martinsville, Va.; and histories of other local communities.

His books sometimes have a bit of a folksy feel to them. Rather than reading like an academic work, or one by a writer trying to impress us with his vast literary capability, reading Perry's books gives me the feel of someone chatting with me on the street, telling me a story. I wish more writers could figure out how to do this.

A hallmark of Perry's work, at least the ones I've seen, is a healthy dose of photos. “Beyond Mayberry” is no exception, and this may be its strongest appeal.

Don't get me wrong, I enjoy reading through the chapters — I am, after all, a writer at heart more than anything else — but the pictures he includes bring his subjects to life in ways that are difficult to accomplish with words.

I'll give you a couple of examples from his more recent effort. On page 157 there is a picture of Andy Griffith from his childhood days. I don't know exactly what year, but I'd guess Griffith was somewhere between the ages of 7 and 11 when that one was shot.

It could have been a school picture, or perhaps one his parents had done of their only son. Looking at that photograph I don't see a famous actor or musician. Instead I see a small boy, a ghost of a smile on his face — or maybe it's an expression of longing for something his parents cannot afford to give him. Then again he could be thinking of what he's going to do that afternoon after the photographer is done and he's free to run off with his friends.

I've seen that sort of expression in my own kids, and looking at that photo in the light of comparing it to my own children, I can personalize some of Griffith's life — compare some of his struggles and joys to those of my kids, or my own. And with that simple photo, Perry made the entire book more alive for me, as a reader.

That's why I enjoy local writers such as Perry. The good ones understand how to connect with their local audience, how to bring area history alive for their readers, and I think he's done that again with his latest book.

Signed copies of “Beyond Mayberry” are available at Pages Bookstore in Mount Airy, and Perry will be holding a book signing for this and other works he’s written at Mayberry Days Sept. 27-30.

John Peters is editor of The Mount Airy News. He can be reached at jpeters@heartlandpublications.com or at 719-1931.

Read more: [Mount Airy News - Local writer brings history alive](#)

http://www.mtairynews.com/view/full_story/20166286/article-Local-writer-brings-history-alive

THIS BOOK INCLUDES AN ENTIRE CHAPTER ON THE PATRICK COUNTY CONNECTION BETWEEN ANDY GRIFFITH’S FAMILY AND PATRICK COUNTY VIRGINIA. HIS MOTHER WAS A NUNN FROM THE KIBLER VALLEY SECTION. PERRY EXPLORES THE ORIGINS OF THE MAYBERRY NAME IN THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW.

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Questions for Tom Perry 12-4-2012 for the Greensboro News & Record Published 12-23-2012

Q: You've edited or published 35 books on regional history. This is your first that's part memoir, part biography with former Mt. Airy resident Andy Griffith as the subject. What were the challenges and rewards in writing this kind of a book?

This book had been on my mind for a long time since I found the marriage certificate of Andy's parents in the Patrick County Virginia courthouse. When he passed in July, I escalated my efforts. I was recovering from prostate cancer surgery and I used the laughter of the Andy Griffith Show to get me going again. This book was easy to write as I grew up near Mount Airy and like most people my age Andy was part of my life from as long as I could remember. The reception of this book has been amazing from people telling me how they feel about it to the amazing sales it is generating.

Q. *Beyond Mayberry* is loaded with details such as Andy Griffith had a birthmark on the back of his head his mother called "Andy's strawberry patch." He swept out buildings for \$6 a week to buy his first trombone. You also delve into his parents and grandparents past. You pored over old records in libraries and courthouses. How did you keep it organized and was there a lot you didn't use?

Most of this book was from printed sources. The Mount Airy Museum of Regional History had a huge archive of files about Andy Griffith and Mount Airy. I did visit Andy's papers at UNC-Chapel Hill and Goldsboro, where he lived and taught school after graduating college. Almost everything I found is in the book with the focus being mainly on Mount Airy.

Q: You say Andy Griffith never said for sure that Mayberry was based on Mt. Airy. His cagey reply when asked was, "It sure sounds like it, doesn't it?" There's been a bit of controversy over where the "real" Mayberry is located. Could you describe it and your thoughts on the subject.

In Jerry Bledsoe's book about biking the Blue Ridge Parkway, he tells about visiting the Mayberry Trading Post and Addie Wood the owner telling about Andy visiting the place as a kid. In Andy's papers at UNC-Chapel Hill, he had a photocopy of the related pages and the paragraph I mentioned above was circled without comment. You can read into that maybe that Andy was pleased to see that. I think his visits to Mayberry Virginia were a pleasant memory of his youth with his mother's family from Patrick County, where his mother, Geneva Nunn Griffith was from, but that is just my opinion.

Q: The photographs in the book are fantastic. Is there somewhere on the internet where they, and those not used, can be viewed? Which are your favorites?

Most of the photos came from people who knew Andy, Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, and the Mount Airy News. I loved the cover photo of Andy with his parents in the parade in Mount Airy on his 31st birthday, which I believe was for the opening of his movie *A Face in the Crowd*.

Q: What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about Andy Griffith?

I think many people assume that Andy Griffith was Sheriff Andy Taylor. He was not. I came to believe that Andy Taylor was Carl Griffith, Andy's father, who was a great storyteller and Andy's first wife said was "the funniest man I ever knew" and she was married to Andy Griffith. Andy Griffith was

a serious actor and he was playing a role. In real life, he was not as approachable as the character he played.

Q: Why do you think the appeal of *The Andy Griffith Show* has endured through generations?

I think the Andy Griffith Show was one of the funniest shows ever on television especially when Don Knotts was on it. I think Andy took Mount Airy with him into the show and that made it real. I think part of the appeal of the show is that it is taken from real life.

Q: You wrote this book while recovering from surgery for prostate cancer that has side effects that, though generally temporary, could throw any man into a depression. How did writing the book help you through that time?

I had surgery in February 2012 and when Andy Griffith died in July, I was struggling to start work again. As I said earlier, I used the laughter from the show to heal, but it was a subject that I knew and that made it easier to write about something so close to home for myself too. Prostate cancer for men is not easy, but I had robotic surgery at Baptist in Winston-Salem and am now almost fully functional again.

Q: What were the most unexpected discoveries you made about yourself and Andy Griffith while writing or promoting *Beyond Mayberry*?

I think the thing about Andy that I did not realize was how much a product of his parents he became. He got his musical ability from his mother's side, which was the only thing he ever received recognition such as Grammy Awards for his albums. He got his story telling from his father Carl and probably the acting.

As for myself, I think I was surprised at how much pride I began to feel for being from the same place as Andy Griffith. He received a Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush and if you look at the ceremony, you can see the joy Andy Griffith in his face. It is the first thing in the book because I don't think we will see anyone from Mount Airy getting one of those any time soon and I came to feel what a memorable event that was for Andy Griffith and Mount Airy.

BEYOND MAYBERRY



A MEMOIR OF ANDY
GRIFFITH AND MOUNT
AIRY NORTH CAROLINA

THOMAS D. PERRY

Carl, Andy and Geneva Nunn Griffith in the parade in Mount Airy, North Carolina, in June 1957 on Andy Griffith's 31st is birthday celebrating the release of his movie *A Face in the Crowd*.