

Harvey Morgan

My brother, three years older than I, was always a good example for me. When we were young, he organized a football team, and my mother adapted uniforms for us including pads and helmets. Jimmy was number three and I was number 12. We played our games on Mr. DuVal's grass tennis court. When Jimmy was 12 years old he created a newspaper called "The Scribe" It was published weekly for several years. Local merchants advertised regularly. Our cousin, Bobby Hart, who lived in Cologne was sports editor, and would send copy down by the mail truck. "The Scribe" reported on local news such as chicken house fires and other important events. I still have some copies of "The Scribe". Also at about age 12, he was given a complete chemistry set, including lab table. He became quite proficient, even made a firecracker with a long fuse that he made a mistake by lighting it upstairs in the back bedroom, then rushed downstairs, but not fast enough. There is still a black mark on the stairway landing.



When Jimmy was a senior in high school, he was voted the best all-around boy. Although Jimmy never sought leadership roles, he was the president of the senior class, captain of the baseball and basketball teams, the only two sports that we had. As a young adult he played semi-pro baseball with the Gloucester Butterflies team as outfielder and relief catcher.

During World War II, Jimmy served in the Navy as a Hospital Corpsman. In the spring of 1947 after the war, he was discharged and came home to learn that our father had bought some waterfront property on the North River at Ware Point. Jimmy spent that spring clearing the greenbriers and large pine stumps from the property. Then after I graduated high school in June, Jimmy and I and a number of friends from school spent the summer building a cabin that Jimmy had already designed. We furnished it to a large extent with war surplus materials from Camp Perry in Williamsburg where Jimmy served his Bootcamp. We used everything from sheet rock to bunk beds to tables and silverware. That was in 1947. The cabin is still in use, although not as a dwelling. We use it for storage and have another

building for a residence. We shared wonderful activities there through the years... several generations.

My brother was always a mentor. Jimmy was Gloucester's first Eagle Scout (1945), the first Explorer Advisor - a true leader. His old Mercury station wagon burned almost as much oil as gas. It was his work vehicle that carried all his tools and his canoe. It was notorious and a laughable sight to see. He knew it was one of his trademarks, dreaded far and wide. His boys and I, and many of the folks who would become the founders of FODR, when we saw or heard the car, would look for ways to hide and to not ride with Jimmy as we knew when he showed up in this "oil burner" that he was going to put us to work. We always dreaded when he wanted us to "do one more thing" before we headed home.

He would have made a good contractor. He could build anything - and did. Wooden toys for Christmas, useful household step stools. He never wasted time and always squeezed more work out of his boys or anyone in his company but wouldn't ask anyone to do more than he was willing to do.

Jimmy designed trail markers with a yellow dragon head that we put on trees to indicate the direction of the mainstream because the waterway opened up wide and the main stream, at times, was not apparent. Jerry Stokes from Tappahannock, who was with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, made arrangements to meet Jimmy and me at 9 o'clock when the store closed. We sat at one of the tables and he told us about Mrs. McKenna who owned an island in the Dragon Run. She needed to sell it but wanted a buyer who would take care of it. We decided to form the Friends of Dragon Run in order to purchase it.

The First Presbyterian Church had its own cemetery which was small and we needed to expand the church, so we contacted the families of people who were buried there and secured permission to have graves moved to the community cemetery, Windsor Gardens. That was done. Subsequently, the cemetery owners suffered financial problems and went into receivership, so a group from our church, spearheaded by Jimmy and a friend from his days at VPI, decided that rather than having anything negative happen to the cemetery we would buy it. We created a corporation, bought the cemetery and operated it for about a decade.

Jimmy and Max Healy from the Presbyterian Church dug graves when gravediggers were unavailable and there was a funeral scheduled. Later, the cemetery was sold to another company.

Jimmy's story would not be complete without telling of his courage in dealing with the cancer that ultimately took his life. It began in the salivary glands and required multiple surgeries over several years, including removal of a small bone in his leg to replace a portion of his jaw; loss of tongue and glands. During the ordeal, Jimmy continued his normal life work as a pharmacist, church and Boy Scout leader. If he wanted to express an opinion at a meeting, he would write it down to be read aloud. Food was liquid through a funnel to an indwelling abdominal feeding tube. Throughout the extended illness, he continued to live life to the fullest - a profile in courage. On a sailing trip one weekend (Jimmy prepared all the meals for everyone else even though he couldn't eat) and after he had his liquid formula, we were sitting around having a beer and I asked him "Would you like a beer?" He acknowledged that he would, so he took his bottle and poured the beer into the funnel, I joked "How is it?" He gave me a grin indicating that it was great. That's my brother.

Jimmy was laid to rest in Windsor Gardens after his death on October 16, 1997. The 1998 Gloucester Daffodil Festival was dedicated to his memory. Formerly, he served as President of the Gloucester Chamber of Commerce and received its John Hasty Award for Community Service in 1989. He was a member of the board of directors and a Paul Harris Fellow of the Gloucester Rotary Club. In 1990 he received the Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Conservation from the Garden Club of Virginia for his efforts to preserve the Dragon Run. In 1996, he received the Bald Cypress Award for exemplary ethics and practice in conservation from the Friends of Dragon Run. He was also well known for his countless volunteer hours at Gloucester's Beaverdam Park. In recognition of his contributions, he received the Freedom B. Goode Memorial Award in 1992 from the Gloucester Department of Parks and Recreation.



Jimmy Morgan - far right

In 1993, he received the John Clayton Botany Award for his tireless efforts preserving the Dragon Run. A longtime volunteer with the Boy Scouts of America he received the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Northern Star District, BSA, for service to youth and the community in 1989. He served as Scoutmaster for Troop 111 and Adviser to Explorer Post 111. He was also Chairman of the Northern District, Peninsula Council. He received the Silver Beaver Award and was inducted into the Order of the Arrow. An active volunteer with the American Red Cross, he began the first water safety instruction program in Gloucester County. He served First Presbyterian Church of Gloucester as deacon, elder, and building committee finance chairman. All this while working as a pharmacist in the family business he co-owned.

He married Violet Ritchie and together they reared three outstanding sons.

Brent Heath

How do you know Jimmy?

He was a childhood friend of my older siblings.

Can you share a memorable story or experience involving Jimmy?

Jimmy was an Explorer trip leader. My first trip on Dragon Run was in Jimmy's canoe clearing out snags on the Dragon and hanging Dragon signs at key points to guide paddlers safely down the stream. (Early paddlers could easily get lost in the many branches of the upper Dragon.) One of the most exciting memories with Jimmy was discovering the GIANT CYPRESS TREE on a trip with Jimmy, my wife, Becky, Leonard Langdon, Mike Oney and me. Jimmy was so excited that we had found this Giant Cypress that by holding hands and stretching our arms as long as possible - we couldn't complete the circle around the tree, estimating the circumference to be 30' - 36'!



What personal quality of Jimmy's stands out most to you?

Jimmy was a true naturalist who was intrigued about all forms of life and studied, learned and shared their life histories and stories with others.

Had Jimmy inspired any changes in your personal or professional life?

He hired me to be a part of the team at Morgan's Drug Store. He inspired those that he hired to develop their strengths and talents to enjoy and perform their best in their roles as part of the team at Morgan's.

What message would you like included in a tribute honoring Jimmy?

He was a kind gentleman who was persistent in pursuing his beliefs and successfully encouraging others to join in his quest to preserve Dragon Run.

David Muffelman

For a good part of his life, Jimmy Morgan was well-known for his leadership commitment and involvement in the Boy Scouts of America and their local Gloucester & Mathews Troops. As a close friend of Larry Brown, Scoutmaster of Mathews Troop #114, and looked up to as a surrogate Uncle by Larry's son John Paul Brown, Jimmy was asked by John Paul to be his sponsor/advisor for his Eagle Scout project. He proudly agreed to do so. The proposed project was to lay out, clear, and mark and label local flora on a Nature Trail on the recently acquired "Big Island" Dragon Run property. Eagle Scout projects are designed to involve and direct a group of your local Troop Scouts "hands-on" to the proposed projects' completion.

Unfortunately, the weekend of John Paul's project starting in the Dragon Run was not only stifling hot summertime, but Jimmy was still recovering from tongue & throat cancer surgery at home. Never mind, Jimmy insisted he was going. I was to pick up a Suburban load of the boys, then swing by and pick Jimmy up at his house. I was to give them a "heads-up" that if he was difficult to understand speaking, they were to say so, and he would repeat himself. Don't just nod as if you understood him if you didn't; he'd repeat himself. He spoke with slurred speech and a facial droop. Throughout the hot morning, we all worked with pruning shears, chainsaws and hatchets, clearing out the Nature Trail.

The boys could hardly keep up with Jimmy. We took a much-needed break for lunch, sitting on a couple of downed logs. "My wife Pam made us all peanut butter or bologna sandwiches. Which do you guys want?" I asked. They shouted

out their orders. “Jimmy, which do you want? I asked. “I ‘an’t eat” he mumbled. “What?” I asked again. “I ‘an’t eat” he repeated. ((I can’t eat. After his tongue surgery, swallowing was near-impossible) “You’ve got to have something”, I insisted. With that he wiped the drool from his mouth with a rag from his pocket, unbuttoned 2 or 3 buttons from his shirt front, and pulled out a rubber tube/hose coming out from his stomach, and placed a small funnel in the end of it. He picked up a carton of Ensure liquid supplement from his backpack. As he poured it down the funnel, running into his stomach, the boys all gasped, wide-eyed. Jimmy just broke into a great big grin and went “AAHH!” and rubbed his tummy in delighted satisfaction.

Live your life as an example to others.

Jimmy Morgan and Larry Brown are both gone now, but Larry’s son John Paul Brown and my son Matt Muffelman are both Eagle Scouts to a great extent because of them and are leading lives exemplifying Jimmy and Larry’s life principles.

