

FARMVILLE

the Magazine

October 2023

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It's a season of change

At this point, we are knee deep in fall. You've got the festivals, the college football and especially the food to look forward to. It's also a great time to think about and experience different traditions, be it with friends, family or a mix of both.

For example, with my group, we enjoy getting together to watch big football games. Even if we don't have a dog in the fight, so to speak, it's an excuse to come together, with everyone bringing some type of food. Now I recognize my skills don't lie in baking or anything of that nature, so my contributions are always involving the grill in some way. Here in this month's edition, for anyone who like me can use some help in the kitchen, Alexa details how to make a fantastic onion dip that will work with any fall party.

If I had to sum up this month's edition, it's about change, which to me is perfect for fall. You get to learn about the constantly changing and fascinating life of Dr. Lee Banton. You also get to read about a local staple



Brian Carlton,
Editor

in Taylor-Forbes Equipment, one that has been around much longer than I've been alive, constantly changing with time.

Change is everywhere, made clear especially in this season. You can call it fall, you can call it autumn and at one time, it was known as haerfest (harvest). That last one hasn't been used in a while, though, as it dated back to 12th century England. So how did we end up with "fall" as the title? For that, you can thank folks in the early 1600s. You see, by then, people started moving into cities and for those folks at least, there wasn't really a harvest season. They relied on what came in from farms outside of the city.

Instead of harvest time, they started referring to this part of the year as "fall of the leaf", as leaves fall from the trees. Over the next few centuries, "fall of the leaf" got shortened to simply be called "fall" and here we are. It's a great way to point out that things change over time. Traditions change, people change and maybe some of the businesses we're used to change as well. How will we change in this current season and how will we stay the same?

*Brian Carlton is Editor of Farmville the Magazine.
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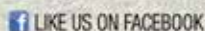


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On the cover: Dr. Lee Banton rides in the Farmville Christmas Parade in this photo from the turn of the 21st century.




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Dr. Banton at the State Capitol Building of Virginia with Dr. Elena Lubnina during a tour of the Capitol arranged by Dr. Banton.



Gov. L. Douglas Wilder signing the first proclamation of recognition for educators.

A TRACTOR, A BABY AND A HOT DOG:

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. LEE BANTON



Dr. Banton at the nuclear reactor lab at the University of Virginia.



Three hundred miles from Moscow in a village where the villagers toasted Dr. Banton as he was about to leave the village. Dr. Banton was the first American that the villagers had ever seen.



Dr. Banton with Valery, at Peter the Great's horse farm, the largest horse farm in the world.

Story by Olivia Hayes
Photos submitted by Dr. Lee Banton

He was 'the first tractor in the village', someone who wowed NASA Project Mercury astronauts with his undergraduate thesis. He delivered a baby on a beach while on a date, traveled across the world as a U.S. Foreign Relations Liaison and taught a number of classes at Longwood University over the course of 40 years.

In short, no one can say Dr. Robert "Lee" Banton's life has been boring.

DEGREES AND DEGREES

Banton's undergraduate years were spent at Randolph-Macon University in Ashland, where he studied clinical psychology and biology. It was during those years he wrote a thesis on post-rotational nystagmus, the disorientation a person goes through during flight.

His best friend's father worked at NASA's Langley Research Center at the time and shared Banton's thesis with the astronauts and researchers of Project Mercury, America's first man-in-space operation during the Cold War Space Race.



Left, Dr. Banton during his high school football days. He received an honorable mention on the All Tidewater Team. Right, Dr. Banton on the USS Eisenhower (CVN-69), in his “Top Gun moment” as he calls it. He was there to help with student enlistment into the Navy.

Project Mercury specialists accepted Banton’s thesis and used it while training the astronauts to avoid the catastrophes post-rotational nystagmus can cause, including loss of flight control which could lead to a fatal crash.

In 2013, Banton toured that same center. He jovially detailed his fascination with the technology: flight simulators, the training module for the Space Shuttle and a wind tunnel which simulated wind speeds up to 1,500 miles per hour. Not even tornadoes reach that speed, but the lack of resistance makes it possible in space.

What’s more, Banton recounted a memory in which he went on a picnic with the original Project Mercury astronauts orchestrated by the father of his best friend.

“They were wonderful! I admit, at the time I did not realize who I was with because no one really knew much about the astronauts and NASA

projects yet. But boy we sure found out later,” Banton said. “They were great guys.”

When asked if he remembered what food he and the astronauts ate on that picnic, he answered without missing a beat.

“Yes I do. They had a saying that I’ve used the rest of my life: ‘I enjoy eating real food. Hotdogs and hamburgers!’” Banton said.

IMPACT ON EDUCATION

Aside from the space world, most of Banton’s life’s work was dedicated to academia and forwarding new developments in education. He was the first and only researcher to use a nuclear reactor to discover how improper ratios of magnesium, calcium and vanadium in the central nervous system contribute to learning disabilities in adolescents.

Banton received his master’s degree and doctorate from the University of Virginia. He was

offered a full scholarship for his doctorate and was appointed to the university’s faculty as an instructor while he worked on his degree. At the time, Banton was the youngest faculty member to be appointed at 26 years old.

It was also education reform that took him to Russia. Invited by Edward Dneprov, adviser to the president of Russia for federal issues of state educational policy and humanistic reforms, and Elena Lubnina, Deputy Head of the International Department of Cooperation, Banton spoke at conferences in the Kremlin concerning special education reform, approaches to individualized instruction and possible biochemical causes of learning disabilities.

On the first trip Banton took to Moscow for one of these meetings, Lubnina gave him an interesting piece of advice.

“I’ll never forget, Elena Lubnina looked at me

and said ‘Lee, do not be surprised if they look at you as if you are the first tractor in the village,’” Banton said. Meaning, of course, that being an American in Russia made him somewhat of a spectacle.

Six of his trips to Russia were to Voronezh’s Pedagogical University, where Banton and select university faculty and students attended meetings to discuss individualized instruction, learning disabilities, stimulus-response learning theory and motivation.

Russia isn’t the only country he traveled to for educational purposes — he also made it to Portugal, Denmark, Sweden, England and Austria. Denmark, he noted, was his favorite.

BUILDING A CARE PROGRAM

Banton developed a program known as Cooperative American Russian Education, or CARE, which served as a two-week exchange program during which Russian educators came to Longwood University to study the American approach to education and Longwood University professors traveled to Russia to study the Russian approach to teacher instruction.

Recruited in 1967 to revamp the Elementary

Teacher Certification Program in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Banton taught at Longwood University over the span of 40 years. He taught a variety of subjects, such as personnel law, child development, administrative law and research conduct.

Longwood awarded him with the most prestigious faculty award at the university: the Maria Bristow Starke Faculty Excellence Award, which is handed out to one professor a year “for overall excellence in teaching, service and scholarship.” He retired from Longwood in 2006 with the title “professor emeritus”: retired with honors.

RETIREMENT DIDN’T LAST LONG

But retirement didn’t last long for Dr. Banton. He represented Cumberland County on the Piedmont Planning District Commission for 17 years, working to retrieve funds from the Virginia General Assembly to increase local job opportunities. A part of this job was to meet with state senators to explain the need for this funding, one of whom being the “legendary and powerful” Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Senator Hunter Andrews.

Banton exalted Senator Andrews for taking

him under his wing and setting up countless opportunities for Banton to meet and speak with other senators to stress the importance of the funding he sought.

“Senator Andrews educated me in the art of getting what you desire from the Virginia senate. On several occasions (he) arranged a lunch or dinner for me with an important member of the Senate so that I could explain the importance or significance of funding the project in Southside,” Banton said. “It was amazing – Senator Andrews would often invite me to have coffee in a special Senate backroom that was used only by the senators to have coffee breaks and doughnuts. (He) made sure that he would invite other senators who could be key in passing a bill that would be helpful to Southside, Virginia.”

Another state official who made a significant impact on Banton was former Gov. Douglas Wilder. Gov. Wilder appointed Banton to the Commission on Educational Opportunities for All Virginians, a 17-member commission that recommended funding and programmatic changes for all Virginia school divisions.

Banton shared a vivid memory in which the former governor exemplified vigor and resolve




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Above, Dr. Banton with Russian school children in Rowan, Russia. Below, Dr. Banton at the Piedmont Symposium in 2000 with Governor Charles Robb.

after former Vice President Quayle backed out of speaking at a national convention just weeks after Gov. Wilder had been elected.

“So I get a phone call saying ‘Lee, do you think you could get Gov. Wilder up here to be our keynote speaker?’ After all, he’d just been elected and of course (there was) a lot of publicity associated with him. I said “I don’t know, but I’ll sure give him a call.” And I did. And sure enough, he accepted.”

Banton declared this last-minute event as what kindled their exceptional relationship and stressed the “mutual trust” and “pure professionalism” both Gov. Wilder and Senator Andrews upheld. No one stands as tall as those who kneel to help others.

THE BABY ON THE BEACH

Perhaps the most fascinating story Banton told was one that took place on Virginia Beach in 1964.

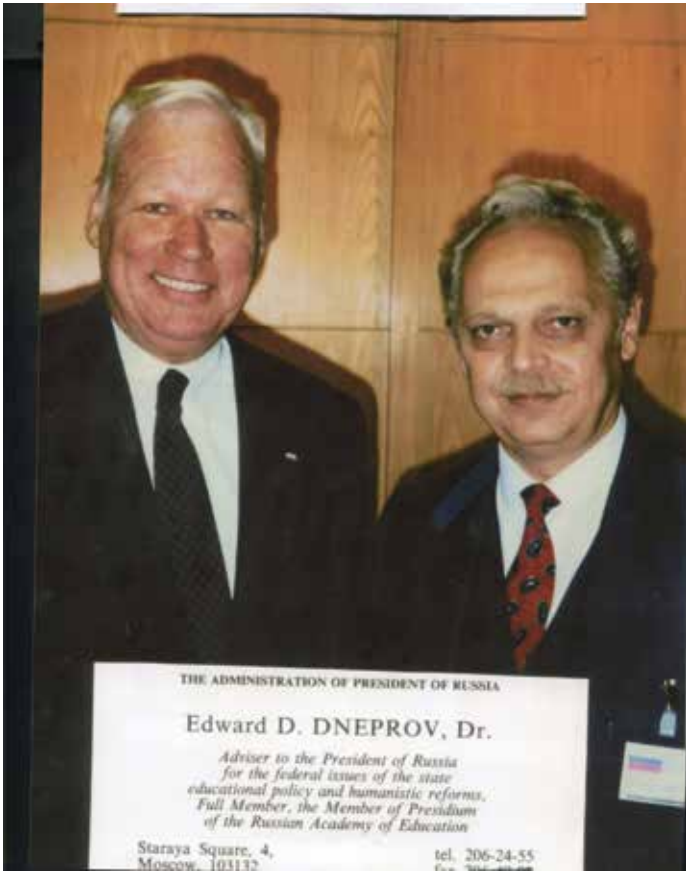
While on a date, Banton heard a woman start to scream — she was having a baby. Banton miraculously delivered the baby and used a random beachgoer’s shoestring as a hemostat to tie off the umbilical cord. Banton credits his heroism that day to his biology degree.

Looking back on years of accomplishments and journeys, a mix of deep gratitude and incredulity seeped through every word he spoke.

“I can’t believe those wonderful things happened to me,” Banton said.

Appreciative is not a strong enough word to describe Banton’s feelings for the educators, the politicians, Gov. Wilder, Senator Andrews, the foreign leaders who listened and the countless other leaders who knelt to boost him up. Who helped create the life and legacy of Lee Banton.





Left, Dr. Banton and Dr. Dneprov, who was the adviser to Russian President Yeltsin in the Kremlin. Right, Dr. Banton in Budapest, Hungary with an adviser to the Hungarian underground who opposed the Russian occupation of Hungary.



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My french onion dip recipe with candied bacon is creamy, sweet, savory and downright to-die-for.

FRENCH ONION DIP

With caramelized onions and candied bacon

Recipe, story and photos by Alexa Massey

Oh boy! It's that wonderful time of year again in which the air is crisp, fall has begun and the food is rich, comforting and will stick to your ribs.

The falling leaves and football games have got one particular dish embedded into my mind, and that's french onion dip!

My homemade french onion dip recipe is a labor of love that takes all of your classic french onion soup flavors and intensifies them into a dish that's creamy, cheesy and downright heavenly. Featuring deeply-caramelized onions cooked low and slow on the stovetop and classic french onion soup cheeses of gruyère and parmesan, along with some not-so-classic twists like candied bacon, (yes, candied bacon!) this dip

will become your next game day fave or makes for an excellent addition to any upcoming Halloween parties. I've also included the ingredients and instructions to turn a \$1 baguette from the grocery store into delicious, crusty and buttery slices of heaven perfect for dipping!

Here's the recipe:

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 90 minutes

Total time: 1 hour and 40 minutes

Dip Ingredients:

2 lbs. yellow onions
1 stick (8 tbs.) unsalted butter
8 oz. cream cheese
1 cup sour cream

1 cup mayonnaise
8 oz. shredded gruyère cheese
5 oz. shredded parmesan cheese
2 tbs. Worcestershire sauce
1 tbs. Garlic powder
8 slices thick cut bacon
1/4 cup brown sugar
1 pinch red pepper flakes
1 pin cayenne pepper
Salt and pepper, to taste
Parsley for garnish

Mini toast (for dipping) ingredients:

1 large baguette
1 tbs. butter, melted
3 tbs. olive oil
1 tbs. garlic powder

To make this mind-blowingly tasty french onion dip which is leagues above any dip you'll find



Here you can see the beginning, middle and final product of caramelizing onions. While the onions are a nice, light-brown color about half an hour through cooking, staying patient and allowing the onions to become quite dark makes for delicious, sweet onion goodness! Your caramelized onions should look no lighter than the onions in the third image and could even be cooked longer for an even more intense caramelization.

in the form of a dried packet at the grocery store, we must first learn how to properly caramelize our onions. Begin by donning your finest scuba mask (or whatever other fancy device you use to keep from crying when cutting onions) and loosely dice approximately two pounds of onions and add them to a large pot with your stick of butter, turning your stove to the notch just above low heat.

To truly caramelize our onions and bring out a deep, buttery-sweet flavor, the onions need to cook “low and slow” as we say in the onion biz. To bring your onions to full caramelization, the onions should be left in the pot and cooked for a minimum of one hour and as long as 1.5 hours, stirring occasionally, until they’ve reached a dark brown color and have reduced to about ¼ of their original size.

I know what you’re thinking. “Alexa, there’s no way I am hovering over my stove for over an hour for onion dip.” That’s the beauty of caramelizing onions – it’s a long but extremely lazy process! All you need to do is put the onions on the back burner and go find something else to do for an hour, coming back every now and again to stir the pot and inspect the onions’ progress. I like to caramelize onions on the backburner while I prepare the rest of the evening’s feast if I’m making food for a crowd, but if you’re just making an appetizer for a lazy Sunday, set the onions on the stove and go read a book, watch tv, whatever your heart desires! Just remember to come back every now and then to stir and check on your onions.

After an hour or so, your onions should reach full caramelization. They are properly caramelized once all the onions have shrunk down tremendously and are very dark brown in color. We’re not sweating these onions, we’re caramelizing them, making them pleasantly sweet and gloriously tender.

While your onions are caramelizing you can make your candied bacon, which is even more heavenly than it sounds. Preheat your oven to 375° fahrenheit. In a small ramekin, combine your brown sugar, cayenne pepper and red pepper flakes plus a few twists of freshly cracked black pepper. Stir your seasonings before laying out about eight strips of thick-cut bacon on a parchment-covered baking sheet or a wired baking rack above a pan for best results. Make sure you cover your pan with parchment paper or aluminum foil to avoid a big headache come

Coating a sliced baguette in butter, oil and garlic powder and baking the slices in the oven makes the perfect little dippers for any dip.



cleanup time. Rub the brown sugar mixture onto each slice of bacon and cook in the oven for 20-30 minutes or until the sugar has caramelized without burning. Allow to cool completely before chopping into crumbles.

Once your onions are fully caramelized and your bacon has been cooled and chopped, add the bacon into the pot the onions are cooking in. Add in your sour cream, mayonnaise, cream cheese, garlic powder, Worcestershire sauce and salt and pepper, to taste. Add in half of your gruyère and parmesan cheeses, reserving the other half for the top of the dip.

After mixing all ingredients, transfer the dip to a casserole dish and top with the remaining gruyère and parmesan. Allow to cook in your 375° oven for 25 minutes or until golden and bubbly, topping with a nice sprinkling of parsley

just before serving for a welcome pop of color.

If you’d like to make some ridiculously easy and delicious toasted bread to go alongside your french onion dip, simply cut a large baguette into even slices and toss in a bowl with melted butter, olive oil, salt, pepper and garlic powder. Once the slices of bread are well-coated, pop them in the oven to toast approximately five minutes before the dip is set to come out, flipping halfway through.

And there you have it! This decadent french onion dip with candied bacon is so delicious and has a surprising balance of salty, sweet and creamy flavors. My family devoured ours while hovering right over the oven accompanied by some sweet and tangy fig spread which you can find at most grocery stores this time of year. Give it a try and let me know what you think!



Candying bacon is as easy as coating bacon slices in brown sugar and spices and baking everything in the oven for half an hour. The result is magical-sweet-crunchy bacon heaven, of course.

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From the Ground Up

All parts of the okra plant are edible and have a delicate, slightly sweet, vegetal flavor.

OKRA

THE QUINTESSENTIAL SOUTHERN FOOD

Story and photos by Dr. Cynthia Wood

When late summer days become seriously hot and humid, that quintessential southern vegetable comes into its own. Yes, okra, the vegetable that people either love or hate. Food historians have long believed that okra originated in Ethiopia or West Africa, where it's been grown for thousands of years. From there, its cultivation spread throughout Africa, the Middle East, India, and ultimately to North America. A visitor to Egypt mentioned okra in a letter written in 1216 BCE. More recent research, however, seems to indicate that okra may have originated in Asia and then spread elsewhere.

No matter where okra originated, most southerners have strong opinions about it. For many, the slime can be problematic; for others, it's the prickly nature of the plants. Many older southerners have vivid memories of picking okra on hot, humid southern mornings. The older varieties were spiny and caused exposed arms to itch intensely. The reward came later in the day when those little pods were used to prepare a variety of delicious dishes. The most common was fried okra. The pods, really fruits, were sliced into rounds or long strips, moistened with a bit of buttermilk, and then

dipped in flour seasoned with a sprinkle of Old Bay, and fried. The result was a crunchy delight that was often the centerpiece of a supper of okra, corn, tomatoes, and cantaloupe.

In addition to frying okra, southern cooks use it in vegetable soups and in gumbos where it serves as a thickening agent. Chicken and andouille sausage gumbo is a New Orleans classic. In the Low Country, Limpin Susan is the delicate rejoinder to the more robust Hoppin John. Modern versions include Carolina Gold rice, chicken broth, garlic, okra, celery, and bell peppers, all drizzled with okra oil. Add shrimp or chicken and Limpin Susan is a whole meal.

When there is excess okra, it can be pickled and used as a component of the traditional relish tray or as a garnish for bloody marys. Thinly sliced rounds of raw okra can be added to salads where it adds crunch and a fresh, aromatic grassy flavor with a hint of sweetness.

Cooks in the know, don't limit their use of okra to the pods. All parts of the plant are edible. The young leaves are tasty sauteed with olive oil, onion, and garlic. They have a delicate flavor of okra without any of the dreaded slime. The flowers can be cooked just like squash blossoms. Harvest them early in the morning, remove the stamens and pistil (they're bitter), stuff them with cheese or a fish mousse, dip them in an egg or tempura batter, and fry them gently. A plate of sauteed blossoms, stir fried leaves, and fried okra pods is the ultimate southern feast.

Okra is easy to grow. It can be planted in rows in a traditional vegetable garden, used as an edimental in mixed perennial beds where the plants' green to reddish green stems, deeply cut leaves, and large yellow flowers add height, texture, and color. Okra needs full sun, but isn't picky about soil type. There are many different varieties available, including dark red, ivory, green tinged with red, and spineless ones. The Clemson spineless variety is the most popular variety grown today.

Sow okra seeds after the temperature of the soil is consistently above 68 F. The first crop will be ready to harvest in about 60 days. The pods are best when they're three to four inches long and still tender.

No matter how you choose to eat okra, it's a delicious reminder of southern culinary traditions.



Okra is easy to grow in flower beds where it adds color, texture, and height.



Sauteed okra blossoms stuffed with cheese, stir-fried young okra leaves, and fried rounds of okra pods are all excellent ways to enjoy okra.

CELEBRATING HISTORY AND COMMUNITY WITH TAYLOR-FORBES



Story by Rachel Austin
Photos submitted by Nat Carter

Taylor-Forbes Equipment has had a long history in Farmville as it celebrates 138 years of serving Southside Virginia.

The business began in 1885 as a merchant shop owned by Edward Samuel Taylor. That grew from his father's flour mill in Elam before moving to Prospect five years later to an old tobacco warehouse. Back then, the Taylor Company sold products like feed, lumber and farm machinery.

Then in 1944, Roxie Taylor, the widow of Edward Samuel Taylor's son Bascom Taylor, became business partners with James Forbes.

With a contract from International Harvester, the store sold agricultural equipment for the Farmville area along with Dodge automobiles. The new name and partnership started a new era for Taylor-Forbes.

More changes came as Roxie sold her share to Forbes who then partnered with C.J. Cox, the local Chrysler-Plymouth dealer. Due to the store's history and connection to the family, they decided to keep the name Taylor-Forbes.

WORLD WAR II BRINGS CHANGES

This was followed by World War II, which brought a few changes to the store. Forbes and Cox were both focused on selling and obtaining automobiles during wartime, so they hired a manager to take care of the store. Meanwhile, at the store, it was facing similar issues with getting

farm equipment as production was focused on the war effort.

After World War II, Earl Carter Sr. was hired and worked his way up to become a shareholder and manager. In the 1970s, ownership was passed to Earl Sr., who passed the store to the next generation of Carters who still run the store today.

"My dad, Earl Jr., got into management and owns it now with his cousin George," said Nat Carter, the grandson of Earl Carter Sr. "They're still working today and I'm trying to learn all I can from both."

'THE FARMING INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED'

Just like in the early days, the store at 1102 E. Third St. still sells farming equipment and much more. They also sell equipment for personal use

like boats, trailers, generators, lawn equipment and all-terrain vehicles.

"The farming industry has changed in the area as it has considerably downsized causing a shift from major agriculture to power equipment to serving homeowners and their needs too," said Nat. "It's forced some adaptations and we are always looking for better ways to serve our customers."

This shift caused a change in the equipment sold at the store. It saw the addition of hobby-like equipment that expanded their customer base. Now homeowners can also come and find what they need, not just farmers.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Nat enjoys having the store in Farmville due to the people there. The store is celebrating 75 years

Nat Carter says Taylor-Forbes has changed as the farming industry has, adding more material for homeowners.





Group photo: Paul Newman, Tyler Weller, Beth Carter, George Carter, Gary Millar, Nat Carter, Tasia Mitchell, Bill Orange, Gail Elliott, Taylor McAbee, Earl Carter, Jess Fryer, Gary Hearn, Tommy Price, Dakota Vaughan and Ken Fielding.



of its Farmville location where it has used this opportunity to build relationships with customers and help them get the products they need to be successful in their business or keep their personal property looking good.

“There is a wonderful network of people that know each other and work together,”

said Nat. “Farmville is a unique market to have because there is reach across the state to Richmond and Charlottesville. But, it’s also a great place to live.”

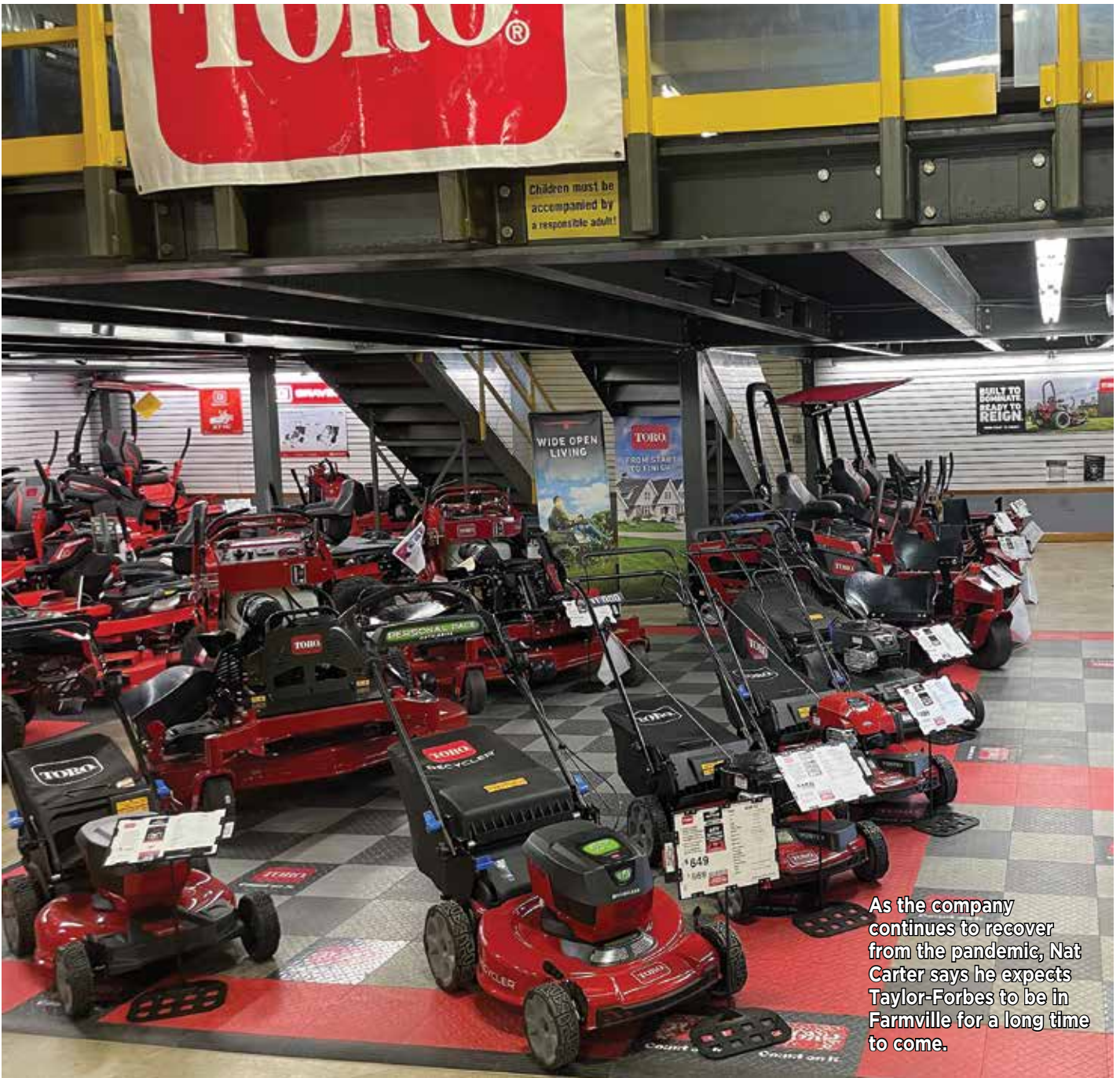
Looking at the immediate future, the store is still working to recover from the pandemic. With the impact it had on the supply chain,

the store is working to get things back to normal. Even so, Taylor-Forbes still has a wide selection for anyone looking for equipment or parts.

“We have a great team of people in the business and the goal is to keep them together and expand wherever possible,” Nat said.



Taylor-Forbes officials celebrate Farmville as a unique market, as it pulls in customers from Richmond and Charlottesville.



As the company continues to recover from the pandemic, Nat Carter says he expects Taylor-Forbes to be in Farmville for a long time to come.

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