

ALL IMAGES ARE OF
OLD RAG MOUNTAIN
Nethers

IN THE MOMENT WITH CLIFORD MERVIL

AN INTERVIEW BY TRICIA ANDERSON



@clifford.mervil

Right off the bat, two things are clear about outdoor photographer Clifford Mervil: He loves his dog, and he's one of the most adventurous people I've ever met.

Both are associated with his profession, as his dog is what drove him to start exploring Virginia's outdoor spaces and developing an eye for stunning photography. We took a few minutes to chat about his journey, from his childhood experiences hiking Haiti's mountains to how Virginia's outdoors have changed his life.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHY?

After college, I was working a corporate job, going in before the sunrise and coming out after the sunset. That was the normal routine. And then I got a dog. On my days off, I would hike with her.

I am originally from Haiti, and my grandparents lived in the mountains. I would visit them in the summer and hike. I kind of lost that passion, and then found it again after hiking with my dog, meeting people on solo trips. I began bringing a camera on the trips with my new friends — it wasn't even about photography, it was to share those moments.

That's where the photography started. But with the outdoors, I've always wanted to explore.

CLIFORD'S TOP HIKES

1. Old Rag
2. McAfee Knob
3. Cascade Falls

THERE'S BEEN A LOT MORE FOCUS ON INCLUSIVITY IN OUTDOOR SPACES. HAVE YOU NOTICED THIS IN YOUR TRAVELS?

Not just noticing it, but bringing others into it. Like the group that we have, SoulTrak, it's about bringing all kinds of people into the outdoors. When I started, it felt like I was the only Black person out there. I didn't always feel like I belonged. But I started meeting new people and we began building inclusive communities.

HOW HAVE THE OUTDOORS CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

You meet new people, you get new experiences. It's good for mental health, also. Technology is great, but I love disconnecting in the middle of nowhere, no signal for days. I don't have to worry about anything and I can just be in the moment.



Check out the full interview on [Virginia.org](https://www.virginia.org)



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VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

SUNSHINE & SANCHO

BY SUNSHINE SOL
@withsunshinesol

My journey as an immigrant from the Philippines to where I am now has been an incredible adventure, shaped by dreams, perseverance, and the courage to step outside my comfort zone. Born and raised in the Philippines, my childhood was filled with a yearning for exploration, knowing that extravagant travels were beyond our means. But it was those humble beginnings that ignited my desire to break free from the constraints of poverty and seek opportunities abroad.

A turning point came when I was accepted into a US hospitality exchange student program at the age of 21. Living alone taught me self-reliance and fueled my passion for travel and adventure. After internships in Florida and Virginia, I joined a major hotel

chain, starting a new chapter in my career. Through hard work and dedication, I climbed the ladder, achieving stability and financial security.

However, when the pandemic struck in 2020, I was furloughed. Surprisingly, I welcomed this pause as an opportunity for reflection. It was during this time that I found my dog, Sancho, who pushed us to spend more time outdoors. With travel restrictions in place, we explored the beauty of Virginia's great outdoors through hiking, camping, and discovering its wonders, nurturing a newfound appreciation for nature.

With the support of my husband and Sancho, I decided to share my love for the outdoors and adventures through content creation. My page, WithSunshineSol, became a platform to document our adventures and inspire others. Little did I know that our shared journey would resonate with so many, and our page grew to over 300K followers.

In August 2021, I took a leap and left my job, fully committing to content creation. This decision was both liberating and challenging, as I had to navigate an unfamiliar environment and step away from the stability of my previous job. However, it marked a turning point for my personal growth and happiness, allowing me to wholeheartedly pursue my passion and inspire others to break free

from their limitations.

Fostering a community of pet-loving outdoor enthusiasts has been deeply rewarding. The enthusiasm and support from my community inspires me every day. Together, we've created a space where individuals can connect, share their stories, embrace personal growth, and push boundaries through shared adventures, fostering a deeper appreciation for nature's wonders.

Looking ahead, I aspire to expand my community and collaborate with fellow adventurers, organize inclusive events, and support conservation organizations. Moreover, I'm committed to making a difference in the lives of dogs, just as my dog, Sancho, has done for me, and promote responsible pet ownership. I also seek to inspire others to break free from their limitations, embrace new experiences, and discover their true beauty and potential through shared adventures and pushing boundaries.

SANCHO'S TOP 5 OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES IN VIRGINIA:

1. *Whitetop Mountain*
2. *Grayson Highlands State Park*
3. *Kiptopeke State Park*
4. *The Point Overlook*
5. *The Great Channels*



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Virginia's Greatest Golf Courses

All ages and skill levels can enjoy a beautiful day on these local courses.



Nestled in the shadows of the Blue Ridge Mountains overlooking the fabled Shenandoah River, **Caverns Country Club Resort** creates one of the most scenic golf opportunities in the Mid-Atlantic region. High above the banks of this storied river, these 6,499 yards of gently rolling fairways seem to touch the mountain foothills. Amid vistas of nearby farmlands, large tees and greens complement this 18-hole, par 72 course.

Caverns Country Club Resort provides comfortable accommodations in partnering motel and hotel properties near the course. Situated in quiet, country settings, each affords magnificent views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah National Park.

Golf, scenery, an internationally famous natural wonder and a national park – a grand slam location adjacent to Luray Caverns in the land of Shenandoah.

Caverns Country Club Resort
296 I.C. Northcott Boulevard, Luray, VA 22835
(540) 743-6551
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The **Golden Horseshoe Golf Club** honors the classic traditions of the game — rated a top-5 golf course in Virginia and currently ranked #43 on Golf Digest's list of "American's Greatest Public Courses". Designed by the father-and-son team of Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Rees Jones, players experience 36 championship holes over three courses, surrounded by mature woodlands and free from neighboring real estate. Get in touch with nature, focus on your game and get back to the true essence of golf in the heart of Colonial Williamsburg.

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Golden Horseshoe Golf Club
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The Omni Homestead Resort has been a renowned golf destination for more than a century and was named as one of the top 100 golf resorts in the world for 2024-2025 by GOLF magazine. Bath County native and golf legend Sam Snead once remarked that if he could play only one course, it would be The Cascades. Annually ranked among the top 100 courses in the country, **The Cascades at The Omni Homestead Resort** is regarded as one of William S. Flynn's finest works.

Flynn's deft architectural skills created a course which fit perfectly within the scenic Allegheny Mountains. A variety of tee shots lead to sloping, tree-lined fairways and the Cascades stream comes into play on several holes.

The Cascades has challenged PGA TOUR professionals and US Presidents alike. The renowned course has hosted eight USGA championships and more than 200 Virginia State Golf Association championships.

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WHAT HAPPENED HERE CHANGED THE WORLD



The U.S. Civil Rights Trail encompasses churches, courthouses, schools, museums and landmarks mainly in the Southern states where activists fought against segregation in the 1950s and 1960s. The trail offers firsthand historical experiences for families, travelers and educators.



U.S. Civil Rights Trail Podcast

Stories and interviews from pivotal moments in the movement are brought to life in this podcast.

Official U.S. Civil Rights Trail Book

Released in 2021, this book showcases the history of the movement for a new audience.

14 Partner States

Events at sites in each state influenced the Civil Rights Movement.



Augmented Reality Experience

The march in Selma, the Greensboro Four and the Little Rock Nine were brought to life with this award-winning AR experience.

U.S. Civil Rights Trail Website

Fully redesigned in 2023, the website allows visitors to experience the trail and history in a whole new way.

Award-Winning Campaigns

The Ordinary Objects, Extraordinary Stories campaign, which features the familiar in a new light, won a Bronze ADDY.

Visit [CivilRightsTrail.com](https://www.CivilRightsTrail.com)

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www.virginiawine.org/pages/visit

love renewed:

THE REOPENING OF THE WARM SPRINGS POOLS

By Tricia Anderson

You probably know about Virginia's Jefferson Pools, but after recent renovations, the Omni Homestead Resort embraced the origins of the famed springs with the name that graced the mineral-rich waters back when Thomas Jefferson soaked in them: the Warm Spring Pools.

Jefferson may have been one of the most famous visitors, however he did not discover these pools. According to local lore, that distinction went to an unnamed Indigenous wanderer, who fell asleep relaxing in the mineral waters and

awoke rejuvenated many centuries ago.

The Warm Springs Pools predated the hotel's grand opening in 1766, with the stone structure erected in 1761. Incredibly, that makes the Warm Springs Pools the oldest spa structure in America!

The pools underwent a massive renovation, reopening in 2022 to reflect their original glory. Today, you can relax and soak in the healing waters of the Warm Springs Pools—the same therapeutic experience that Thomas Jefferson (and several other U.S. Presidents) enjoyed in the 18th century!



Check out the
full story on
virginia.org

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DANIEL ROBILLO

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN 2024



Jackalope Fest

In 2023, the legendary Tony Hawk attended Jackalope Fest, known for its extreme sports like skateboarding, base jumping, skimboarding, and BMX. It was such a hit that it's gearing up for a triumphant return in 2024.

SAM DEAN / SARAH ANN ATKINS / COURTESY OF ROBERT TRENT JONES GOLF CLUB



Team TWENTY24

Founded in 2005, TWENTY24 was built as a stepping stone for athletes to reach the Olympics, with their sights initially set on London 2012. Every four years, their focus shifts to the upcoming Olympics. Currently, they're gearing up for the Paris 2024 Games, training hard on the unique trails and mountains in Roanoke, Virginia. One thing's for sure — an Olympian is in the making!



Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival

The 2024 Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival will celebrate its centennial, marking a century of colorful parades, entertainment, and community spirit in Winchester.

Lego Discovery Center

Discover the recently opened Lego Discovery Center in Springfield, your ultimate indoor Lego playground, where 12 themed zones promise a brick-tastic adventure!

BRIAN HODES / MICHAEL BRANNON / SARAH ANN ATKINS



Bee City USA

Virginia boasts 12 Bee Cities and five Bee Campuses, committed to promoting pollinator-friendly practices and biodiversity, emphasizing sustainable urban environments.



2024 Solheim Cup

The biennial Solheim Cup showcases the top LPGA USA players competing against the best European women players. This prestigious event is set to take place in September 2024 at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Club, a private club located in Gainesville. When speaking about the course, RTJ himself commented, "The terrain is aesthetically perfect. I don't think we could have done anything better anywhere."





Carter Family Fold - 50th Anniversary in 2024

Rita Forrester, the granddaughter of A.P. Carter, carries on a family promise at The Carter Family Fold. This year, the music venue and museum celebrates its 50th anniversary showcasing the enduring influence of the Carter Family, Mother Maybelle, A.P., and Sarah Carter, who are often referred to as the "First Family of Country Music." The trio's first recordings in 1927 as part of the famous "Bristol Sessions" jump started country music with their traditional mountain sound.



Tapawingo

Virginia has been the backdrop to popular series like *Swagger* and Oscar-winning blockbusters like *"Lincoln,"* but it's also an indie filmmaker haven. *"Tapawingo,"* a period comedy starring Napoleon Dynamite's Jon Heder, filmed throughout Central Virginia and debuted at the Virginia Film Festival in 2023, before its final destination on streaming platforms. Dive into the fun of indie filmmaking, and view Richmond through the lens of a 1980s coming-of-age buddy comedy.

The Crooked Road

Celebrate two decades of musical heritage and vibrant culture as The Crooked Road marks its 20th anniversary in 2024, promising unforgettable experiences in Virginia's heartland.



The Virginia Film Festival

The Virginia Film Festival, held in Charlottesville, is Virginia's longest-running film festival. Held annually during peak fall foliage, the VAFF brings in award-winning films from around the world and along with them the chance of seeing film icons like Sandra Bullock, Ethan Hawke, or Ava DuVernay strolling along the city's pedestrian mall. The festival benefits from its University of Virginia ties, putting together one-of-a-kind panels and discussions between filmmakers, renowned journalists, and cultural experts. This will be its 37th year.

HANNAH ARMSTRONG / HANNAH ARMSTRONG / COURTESY OF EGGY BOTTOM PICTURES / COURTESY OF THE VIRGINIA FILM FESTIVAL



ON THE MAP

GLOBAL GOODS TRANSFORM A SMALL TOWN

By Patricia Anderson



Don't let the name fool you—Farmville is much more than rural beauty (although there is plenty of that, as well). This small-but-mighty town continues to add new lures for visitors — from a luxurious boutique hotel to dozens of outdoor activities that could fill an entire week or more.

But when it comes to revitalization, there is one place that started it all: Green Front Furniture. Opened nearly 70 years ago as a grocer, the business eventually pivoted into the furniture industry, and now stocks an astounding 12 buildings and warehouses (a total of nearly one million square feet) with home decor sourced internationally. Find rugs from Turkey, wood tables from California, and thousands of items from practically every country when you browse the endless showrooms.

Bringing visitors from all over the Eastern seaboard and beyond, Green Front Furniture helped put Farmville on the map, and in turn led many new businesses to put down roots in the community, guaranteeing the longevity of this friendly Central Virginia community.

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