



The 2023 Influencer Award recipient from The Culpeper is Curtis Brooking!

V. Curtis Brooking was born in December of 1936 in Orange County, Virginia. He was born and raised in a home built in 1848 by James Madison's great nephew. The property was adjacent to Madison's Montpelier. Curtis recalls that his younger years were filled with joy and peace, enjoying the ability to "roam the countryside at will."

Curtis was influenced greatly by his father, Linwood "Link" Brooking, who managed both his own property and the Montpelier estate. Curtis says his dad was a caliber individual, full of common sense and used a practical approach in every part of his life. Curtis says that seeing his father manage such a multifaceted organization like Montpelier inspired him to want to be exactly like his father and do the things he did. Though he states "that did not materialize," he does feel that he did pick up some of those qualities and was able to settle into a meaningful career with the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Mildred Brooking, Curtis' mother, was also a significant influence - she was a homemaker that provided a great environment. She volunteered for community organizations including the Red Cross, local nursing homes, and at their church. Her devotion to helping

others helped set the tone for her children; they should give a portion of their lives to service and charitable organizations.

Additional childhood influencers include Curtis' extended family; "special" uncles and aunts who helped shape him into the person he is today.

Curtis met his wife Odile (Dee) while on a blind date in France! Curtis served in the U.S. Army and was stationed near Orleans, France. His buddy wanted to go on a date with a girl but needed Curtis to go with him so that they could use Curtis' car. So, his buddy set him up with "a local girl" and they went paddle boating. Curtis and Dee dated for over a year while he was in France, and then they were married before he got transferred to Augusta, Georgia, to serve as a military instructor. He left for the States before his new bride and found a house for them.

Curtis remembers admiring Dee's courage in traveling to the United States for the first time, by herself, without knowing a soul in the country except for him. He met her arrival in New York City, and she had faith that he'd be there! They've been married for 62 years.

Today Curtis is influenced the most by his wife, his pastor, Rev. Dan Carlton, and Rev. Hans Murdock, chaplain at The Culpeper. Curtis was on the nominating committees for both Dan and Hans and admires them both for what they give and give back to their community using the gifts that God has given them.

Curtis and Dee moved to The Culpeper in 2015. After serving on the Virginia Baptist Homes board of trustees for 18 years, he says he had a good feel for what a continuing care retirement community could provide; elements of life that offer both freedom and professional care as aging occurs. Mr. Brooking served as a Virginia Baptist Homes (VBH) Trustee in 1991-94; 2002-08, and 2008-2014 for The Glebe only. He was Vice-Chairman of the VBH Board in 2005-2009, and from 2012 to 2014 he served in various leadership positions for VBH, including the Planning, Marketing, and Nominating Committees for Roanoke, Culpeper, and Richmond, and on the Strategic Planning Committee.

He says The Culpeper had a lot to offer, and that when it came time to retire from the farm, he and Dee moved into the community at the right time for them and their family. With the peace of mind and independence that comes with living in a continuing care retirement community, Curtis can enjoy “piddling in his garden” and not have to worry about taking care of their home.

He also had visited The Culpeper as a volunteer for over 20 years. He taught Sunday School at his church, Culpeper Baptist. He was asked to teach at The Culpeper and has been coordinating church volunteers at The Culpeper ever since. He leads Bible studies and Vesper services and is a regular in the annual Christmas pageant.

His engagement and time were also shared during The Culpeper’s building expansion project, supporting the executive director with valuable insight regarding the expansion. He continues to share his enthusiasm about the community with his friends, neighbors, and fellow residents. He is always looking to assist and support The Culpeper, LifeSpire of Virginia, and the VBH Foundation in every way he can.

Curtis still owns property in Orange County, about 25 miles away from The Culpeper in two separate parcels of land; 165 acres in one section, and then 100 acres on the Rapidan River. He is still involved in the management of those, renting them out for beef cattle pasture, farming, and timber. But he says that next year he really will retire “this time” but remain involved in his volunteer work.

He says that the Lord has blessed him with various talents and skills, and that he is most proud of how he has been able and willing to use those acquired/ inherited features for the betterment of his family, his church, and the community.

He looks forward to supporting the quality events and activities at The Culpeper and continuing to give his time and service through teaching, assisting with community and church functions, and encouraging and guiding others to become involved.

His goal for the coming year is to be available to what God has planned for him next.