



## HOME SWEET HOMESTEAD

How has Washington changed over the years? Ask staffers at the resort that's been serving locals since 1766.

**THE OMNI HOMESTEAD—ORIGINALLY AN 18-ROOM LODGE BUILT IN 1766—IS** older than DC. But for more than a century, the Virginia resort, constructed around the country's oldest spa, has been a retreat for Washingtonians. It has changed quite a bit: Golf arrived in 1892. (The first tee is the US's oldest continuously operating one.) A fire tore through in 1901. Train arrivals gave way to the car. All the same, there have been a lot of constants, notably the staff, 100 of whom have been at the Homestead more than 25 years. **Eugene Allen**, whose life inspired the film *The Butler*, clocked in at the resort before moving on to the White House. Today, seven staffers are in the third generation of their families to work at the resort. They've gotten a close-up view of decades' worth of Washingtonians at play. —ANN COCHRAN



### KATHY MCCOLLUM

Cook

**Began at the Homestead:** 1979 apprenticeship; 1984 full-time

"Everyone craves the doughnuts. They're made with a 50-plus-year-old recipe. The pancakes are special, too, because we use flour and other ingredients from the same suppliers we've had for many decades. The menus were still classically European when I came, with wild game always an option. It was a happy day for me when they introduced portable omelet stations. No one else wanted to be cooking in front of guests, but I loved it from the start."



### WOODY PETTUS

Main Dining Room maître d'

**Began at the Homestead:** 1960

"Dinner was five courses. Now guests are more health-conscious, eating smaller portions. . . . We remember a lot of guests, and a lot remember us. Grandma and Grandpa, who might have come for their honeymoon, return with three or four generations. Some who came as children return with their children and ask, 'Are you going to cut up my children's food like you used to do mine, Woody?'"

## BLADE RUNNER

The saga of DC's favorite stolen sword

**IN SEPTEMBER, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE** discovered that **Joan of Arc's** sword was missing from her statue in Meridian Hill Park—again. At first blush, making off with the sword looks like quite a feat: Perched on a six-foot-tall block of granite, the equestrian figure stands an additional nine feet. The sword itself is almost five feet long and weighs 30 pounds. But where there's a will, we have learned, there has repeatedly been a way.

—ROSA CARTAGENA



**1922** Joan of Arc—the only equestrian statue of a woman in DC—is unveiled. A gift from the "Ladies of France in Exile in New York," it's a copy of one in Paris.

**1932** Joan's sword goes missing at the end of the year. On January 3, 1933, the *Washington Star* reports that it was found in a hedge, "bent but unbroken." The paper speculates that the sword might have been loosened when the statue was moved earlier in 1932. There are plans to replace it "soon."

**1968** Gone again: "When I visited the park shortly after

the 1968 riots that followed the assassination of **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, I was saddened to see that Joan's sword had been broken off the statue and removed," **Robert M. Rosenblatt** recalls years later in the *Washington Post*.

**1977** The National Park Service removes the statue for repairs, at a cost of \$2,330. "She was in perfect shape when we put her back

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE HOMESTEAD, MCCOLLUM, AND PETTUS COURTESY OF THE OMNI HOMESTEAD; JOAN OF ARC STATUES COURTESY OF DC PUBLIC LIBRARY



## VIRGINIA STRASSER

Finance Department,  
general cashier

Began at the Homestead: 1943

"I started working here during World War II, after my husband went off to serve. It was 1943, the first year the government started taxing income—the Victory Tax. My salary was \$90 a month. Women had to wear long gowns to dinner. I once saw the Duke and Duchess of Windsor walking down the hall. Our guests have gotten very casual, but I think it's good that men still have to wear jackets in the main dining room."



## DON RYDER

Director of golf operations;  
retired July 2015

Began at the Homestead: July 1965

"Golf honors tradition, so not much has changed. Golfers dress appropriately, though more colorfully. Shoes don't have metal spikes, so there's less cleaning and polishing. Less golf is played, generally. Families do more together, especially on a short getaway, and golf requires a lot of time. We continue to add more activities, like Segway tours and paintball."

## FEEDING AND READING

Tim Causa's tool makes it easier for parents to hold phones while feeding babies. He got Kickstarter funding—and internet backlash.



**WHEN TIM CAUSA'S BABY HAD** acid reflux, the doctor ordered more regular, leisurely feedings—about once an hour. They took forever and were boring, especially at night. So the Reston resident did what any industrious suburban dad would do: He went to the hardware store. Armed with a sheet of polypropylene, a scroll saw, and a heat gun, Causa fashioned a doohickey that let him attach his iPhone to the baby's bottle. He could support Jack's weight and write e-mails or make fantasy trades by the light of his cell

phone, without waking his son.

Boredom solved. Baby resentment avoided. Heat gun holstered.

Then people started telling Causa it was a great idea. (Causa prefers the adjective "market-disrupting.") He learned CAD design software to make a prototype, built his own 3-D printer, and lined up a patent attorney. When he realized he'd need another 12 grand to manufacture what he was calling the Swipe and Feed, he bought an ad on Facebook to kick-start his

Kickstarter campaign.

Causa got his funding, but if he'd been reading his phone on a Swipe and Feed, he'd also have gotten an earful. Hot Moms Club called it "the latest parenting gadget you'll hate yourself for wanting." CONTRAPTION ATTACHES YOUR PHONE TO YOUR BABY'S BOTTLE BECAUSE NOTHING IS SACRED ANYMORE joked a Popsugar Moms post. Some have questioned Causa about having all that invisible cell-phone radiation so close to a baby's head.

When I talk to Causa, a head-hunter by day, it's 4 PM and he's tired. He was up at 3 AM to do a segment for *Good Morning Britain* called "Smart Thinking or Lazy Parenting?" Causa says a lot of the e-mails he gets are more positive. Waking the negative side of the internet is just the inevitable cost of—you guessed it—"disrupting the market." In fact, he's pretty sure he's found his calling: "I have a book of inventions I've always wanted to take to market. I don't think this is going to be my last."

—AMANDA WHITING

up in 1978," NPS superintendent **Burnice Kearney** later says.

**1980** "It would be no exaggeration to say I've put eight or ten swords up there," **William "Crank" Cranford**, the metalworker charged with fabricating replacement blades, tells the *Star*. "You could do it a thousand times and it'd still be gone the next day." The same year, Kearney

says: "The sword's been broken off maybe a dozen times. We put a new sword up, and every time it was there less than a month."

**1987** The sword is missing.

**2010** In his *Post* opinion piece, Rosenblatt says: "I've always hoped the statue would be repaired, but after 42 years, I'm beginning to doubt that will happen." He's referring



to when he first saw the sword missing, in 1968. Even the Park Service can't

precisely say if or when the sword was replaced or stolen during these years.

**2011** A full restoration of the statue takes place. The foundation is cleaned, and metalwork returns the bronze to its original dark color. The entire process, including installing a new sword, costs \$43,039.

**2016** The sword is stolen in mid-September, broken

off at the same weak point where the blade and guard meet the hilt. Someone replaces it with a foam weapon. **Scott Kreilick**, a Pennsylvania conservator who did the last restoration, still has the wooden model and is hoping to replace the sword this time, too. If it's stolen in the future, Kreilick says he'd be open to replacing it: "I like working in the park, but I don't hope it will happen again."