

The Bellwood Elk



Defense Supply Center Richmond
6090 Strathmore Road
Richmond, Va. 23237

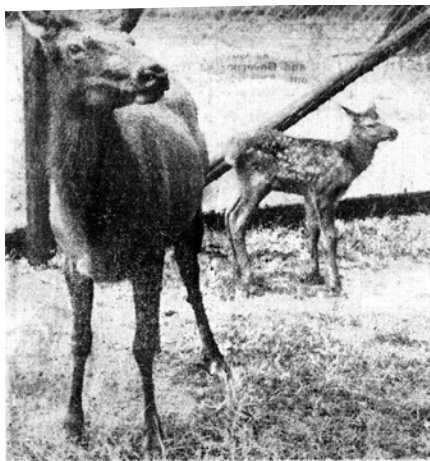
The Bellwood elk are well known throughout the Department of Defense, Defense Logistics Agency, and around the nation. They are often the first feature visitors ask to see. The elk are a living link to historic Bellwood Farms and show the post's commitment to retaining the cultural, historic and environmental landscape.

The Bellwood family was the last private owner of the land that Defense Supply Center Richmond occupies. James Bellwood was a highly respected and successful farmer. He was also an animal enthusiast and set aside land on his farm for a wooded park where deer, rabbits, and other wildlife could live and roam freely.

Around 1900, Bellwood imported a pair of Wapiti elk from the Northwest (Yosemite Park and Washington State) to start a herd on his land. Wapiti is a Shawnee word meaning 'white rump.' According to newspaper and magazine articles of the time, the elk became an immediate hit with the community. With plenty of forage and room to graze, the herd multiplied to more than 20 during the time Bellwood owned the land. On weekends, hundreds of visitors would take the Richmond-Petersburg trolley, to picnic and enjoy Bellwood's animal park. After Mr. Bellwood's death, his family wanted to sell the land but were concerned about the future of their father's beloved elk. The Army was interested in buying the property and the family agreed to sell on the condition that the Army would continue to keep the elk and provide for their care. The officer negotiating the sale for the War Department was sensitive to their concerns and a handshake completed the deal. The Army purchased 647 acres in 1941, built a supply depot and kept the elk.



Bellwood Elk Permanent, Army Decides



NEW RESPONSIBILITY: **BABY ELK 'ENLISTED'**

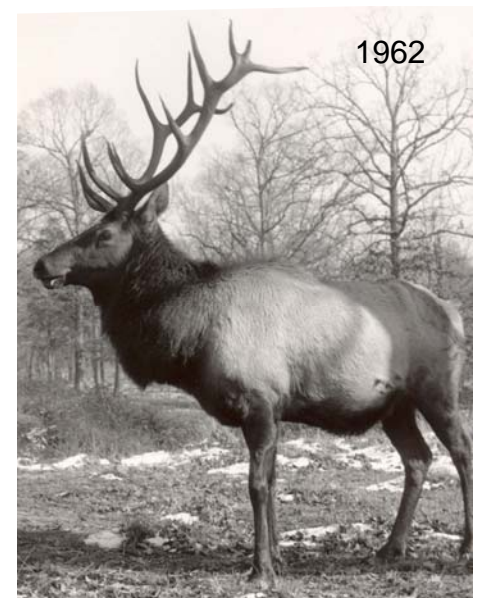
"We have a new responsibility here," the commanding officer of the Richmond Quartermaster Depot reported today.

The newest member of the depot's herd was born last week end, bringing the herd's total to five. Colonel Edward V. Macafer said.

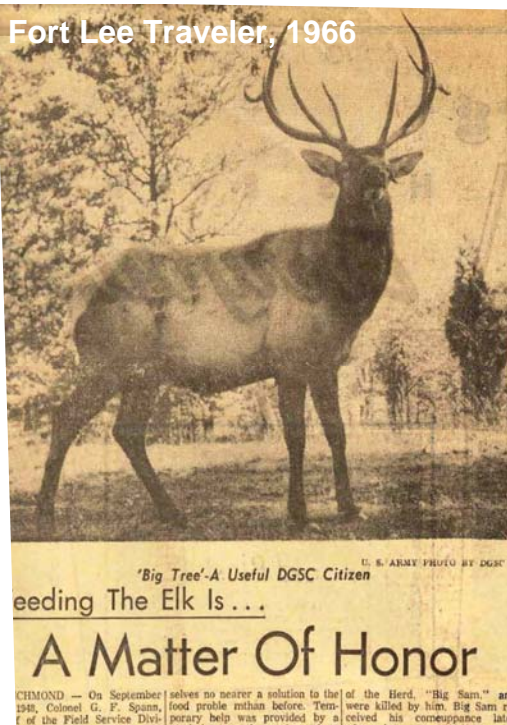
Richmond News Leader, 1952

an open pasture set aside for them near the southern boundary of the post along Kingsland Creek. In the summers the pasture was covered in grass for them to

During World War II, the elk grazed in



Fort Lee Traveler, 1966



graze and in the winters their diet was supplemented with hay and grain purchased for the horses used by the post's mounted security force. As horses were phased out and government funding was withdrawn, the post was faced with the quandary of how to feed the elk. Some consideration was given to donating the herd to the state or to a conservation agency, but the Army insisted on honoring its commitment, despite having no appropriated funds allocated for the elk's care.

Over the years, efforts to feed the elk were supported by donations from employees, through an Elk's Bawl fund drive run by the Elk Relief Association. This practice was discontinued in 1972 due to government regulations against solicitations. Donations were then made through the use of jars placed around work areas.

In 1975, the Officers' Wives' Club took over fundraising, holding bake sales and other events to raise money for the elk. A few years later, a Wildlife Management Council was established and the facilities engineer was appointed as wildlife conservation officer. In recent years, the Elk Feed Fund Council uses money raised from recycling and private donations. Money was also raised by the occasional sale of one of the animals. Currently, there is a ban on moving elk between herds due to chronic wasting disease. It is contagious and fatal and has no cure. Outbreaks of

The Elk Horn, 1980



Several months from now, the long hard winter will be over and the Bellwood elk herd can go back to grazing on fresh, new spring grass, with just a little hay, bran, and oats to supplement their diet. The recent snows, and the winter months cut down on the grazing that the herd can do and puts a strain on the elk feed supply that the Council purchases. The Elk Feed Fund has been hit by inflation as well as the demands (two new mouths to feed) of winter supply and the time has come to contribute to the feed funds. This year will mark the 32nd year that employees have voluntarily contributed to the support of the elk. To make it easy on all and to let everyone participate, the Council will hold the annual Bake Sale on 21 March. All funds from the sale of goodies will go to the purchase of hay, bran, oats, salt blocks and other sundry items necessary to maintain the good health of the herd. Please help.

Say Hay! Elk bakeoff time again

Say Hay! And bran! And Oats! It's that time again. The annual DGSC Elk Feed Fund Council Bake Sale is scheduled for 21 March.

"And none too soon," Major John Hillmer, Chairman of the Council, said, "this year's event is the all-time best yet."

As in the past, baked goodies, donated by the good folks on the Center, will be on sale on the 21st in the Cafeteria, Bldg. 34, and in Storage and Transportation.

"From rumors that are floating around by those who are supposed to be in the know, there may be a tenth mouth

course, will go into the Elk Feed Fund for the purchase of bran, oats and hay. "We believe in equal opportunity," John said, "which means we are not limiting donations to the girls. There are a lot of men around the Center who pride themselves on their ability to not

Jan., 1970



THE ELK HORN

DEFENSE GENERAL SUPPLY

CHORUS ENTERTAINS NEW VA. EXECUTIVE

The 40-member chorus of the Center led off the new Governor's Inaugural Celebration when they performed before more than a thousand diners at the Governor's Inaugural Breakfast. On hand for the occasion in addition to the celebrating Republicans was Governor and Mrs. Holton. The chorus presented a 30-minute program that was well received.

DGSC hosts Tech Data Seminar

The Center was host to more than 50 representatives of DoD, the military departments, DSAH and DSA Centers at a just completed DSA Technical Data Management Seminar held in the

Bellwood Center new dividend

Quarterly dividends will now be paid by the Bellwood Federal Credit Union, Bob Kershaw, President, announced at the annual meeting held in the Cafeteria. The new dividend payments will begin after June 1970. Also announced was the Board of Directors decision to contract for Automatic Data Processing (bookkeeping) services with a local ADP organization. The new ADP capabilities will provide fast and efficient service to the membership. The dividend workload figures will be picked up by the local ADP concern the evening and new update figures will be returned by opening time the next day.

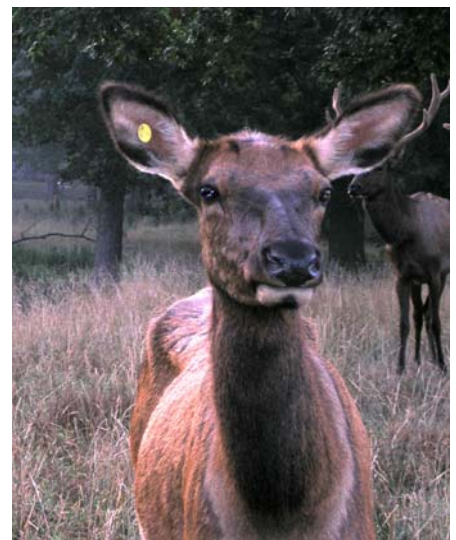
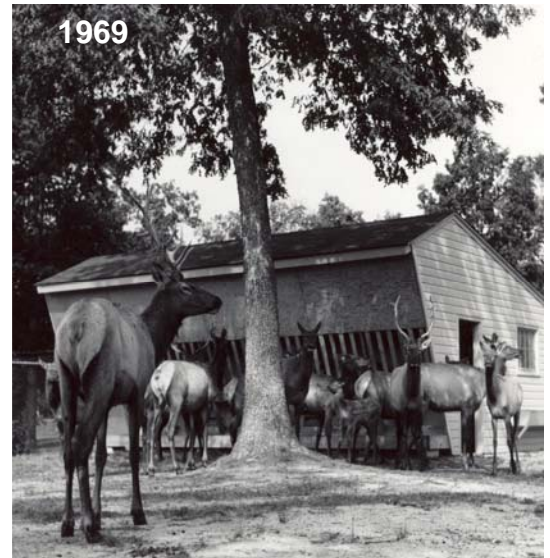
Theme of the annual meeting was another highly successful year. Membership rose slightly, reaching 3,735, with assets at

the disease have been reported in domestic and wild elk, but the Bellwood elk do not have the disease.

The herd size is maintained between seven and ten head. When it grows beyond that number, elk are donated to wildlife reserves or parks around the country. They live in a 20-acre preserve, with grass and a dense stand of oak trees. Although the Bellwood elk live near people, they are still wild animals and are not handled unless they are being treated by a veterinarian.

Employees who feed the elk have no direct contact with the animals. The elk remain wild creatures and those who work around them respect that. Elk eat grass, alfalfa and grains, such as corn and oats. During morning feedings the cows greet their caretakers with high pitched screams, while the bulls joust for a prime spot at the feed bin. Feeding is done from inside the barn. Grain is dumped into a feed shoot and hay slid into a rack.

A veterinarian keeps inoculations up to date on the herd and ensures each animal is registered with an ear tag, as required by the state. To treat the elk, the veterinarian must put them to sleep with a tranquilizer shot from a special gun. Elk are hardy creatures and have a natural immunity to most diseases. Tuberculosis, or TB, has been found in some domestic elk, so the Bellwood elk are tested and vaccinated to guard against the disease.





A Fort Lee veterinarian gives an elk cow a TB shot in 1971. Ear tags are used to identify the elk and required by the state.



Elk are curious animals and sometimes get themselves into trouble. A bull named Junior had a reputation of being overly curious. Junior got his head stuck inside a red feed bucket so firmly that the veterinarian had to pay a visit, tranquilize him and pry it off. An observer said "that bucket was on so tight that the poor elk looked cross-eyed."



On another occasion Junior got fabric tangled on his antlers and ran through the field with it streaming behind him. In 1981, a bull tangled barbed wire on his antlers prompting another visit from the veterinarian. A report in the post paper described what happened when a grounds crew left a tractor in the pasture while they took a lunch break. A bull attacked it, puncturing the radiator and doors.



Jan., 1981



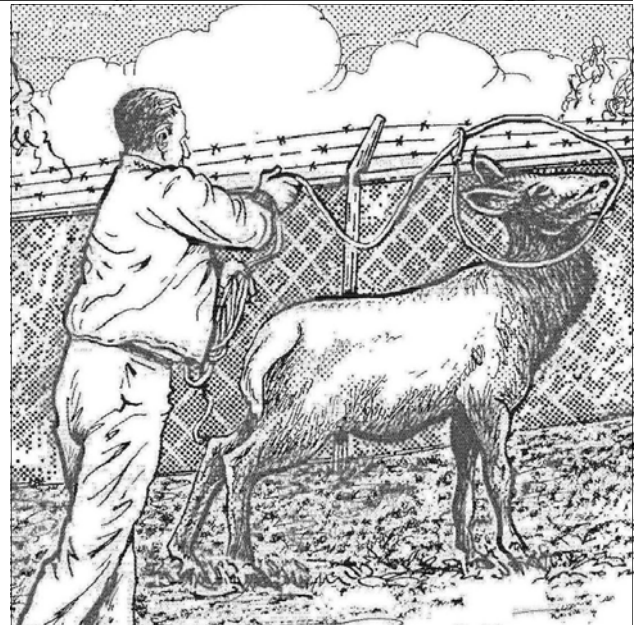
Junior



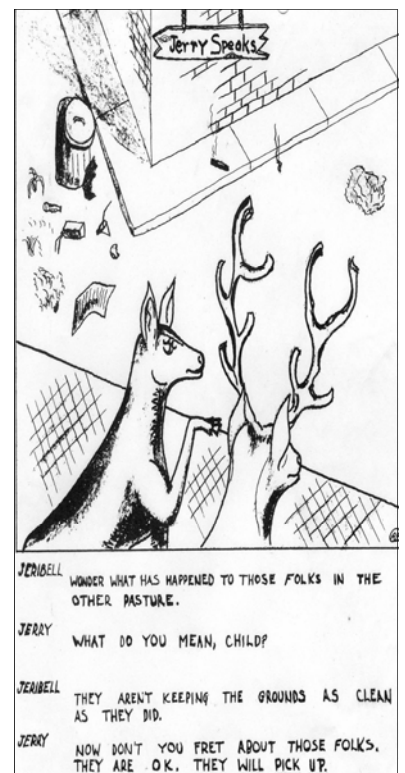


Meanwhile back at the pasture

Pick, pack and ship may be easy for Storage and Transportation but what if the item was a 800 pound, four-legged, ebullient elk. This was the logistical problem of John Moore, Assistant Director of the Baltimore Zoo and Dr. Mitchell Bush, a veterinarian from John Hopkins University Department of Animal Medicine. The two men arrived at DGSC with three helpers, three crates, and one truck. Their assignment—pick, pack, and ship three elk. Dr. Bush used the tranquilizing method on two of the elk, one male and one female. The elk were shot with a tranquilizer pistol and loaded into crates while in a somnolent state. An antidote was administered to each animal after they were crated. It was decided that the remaining cow would be captured in rootin', tootin', wild west style. The roundup action from lasso to labeling was captured in pen and ink by Harris Brightly of Graphic Services Branch, from pictures by Clay Hall, DGSC photographer. With the transfer of the three elk to the Baltimore Zoo, the DGSC elk herd census reads: four bucks and eight cows.

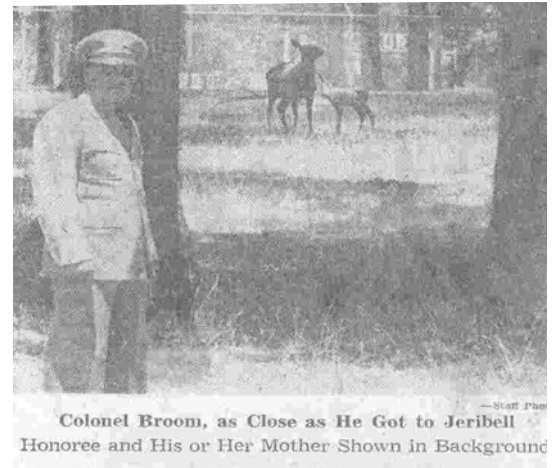


Elk Horn, 1968

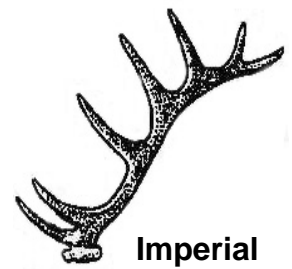
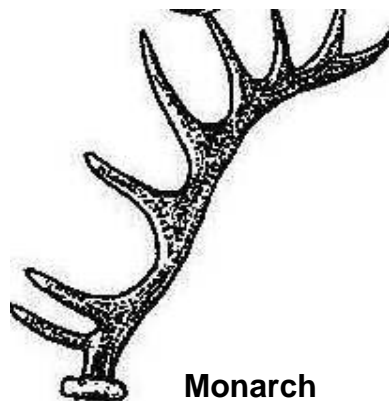
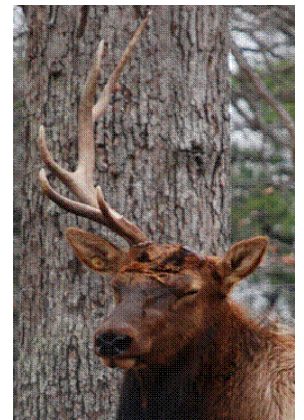


The elk captured the attention of people across the country in 1953, when the Saturday Evening Post magazine ran a story called "The Elk that Joined the Army." The post's archives contain letters between the commander and Arthur Godfrey, a famous radio and television personality of the time. In 1950, Godfrey adopted several Bellwood elk and moved them to his farm in Leesburg, Va. Situation reports, prepared by military duty officers during the post's first two decades, include items on elk escapes, battles and deaths. The post's newspapers are filled with stories on elk births, naming competitions and fundraising efforts. The elk are also featured in holiday artwork, comics and instruction materials. Local newspapers also ran stories about the elk.

A 1955 Times Dispatch newspaper story highlighted a calf naming contest on post. Of 1,200 names submitted, the winning name was Jeribell. This became a problem when the calf turned out to be a bull. The prize winner received \$10. The elk herd lineage is annotated in documents on births and deaths; from illness, old age and battle wounds. The names of reigning bulls, including Big Sam, Big Tree, Jerry, Jeribell, Elmo, and Junior, are also noted.



Male elk are called bulls, females are called cows, and the babies are called calves. Bulls mature at age seven, weigh 800 to 1,100 pounds, and stand five to six feet tall at the shoulder. Cows mature at age three, weigh about 550 pounds, and stand about four feet tall at the shoulder. Only bulls grow antlers; the number of points is influenced by genetics, feed and age. Elk grow their first set of antlers at age one and use them for defense. They keep their antlers through the winter and shed them in the spring. A mature bull's antlers can weigh between 20 to 30 pounds. As antlers grow, they are surrounded by a soft tissue called velvet. The bulls scrape the velvet off when the antlers stop growing. Bulls compete for dominance during the fall mating period by sparring and through powerful vocal calls known as bugling. Elk with six points on each antler are called Royal elk; seven point elk are Imperial; and those with eight points are Monarchs.





Cows give birth after approximately 246 days. The calves are born mid-May through July and spend the first week of their lives hidden in tall grass. Calves are born with spots and develop brown coats in six months. Cows with calves will join together and take turns 'babysitting' while the others graze.



