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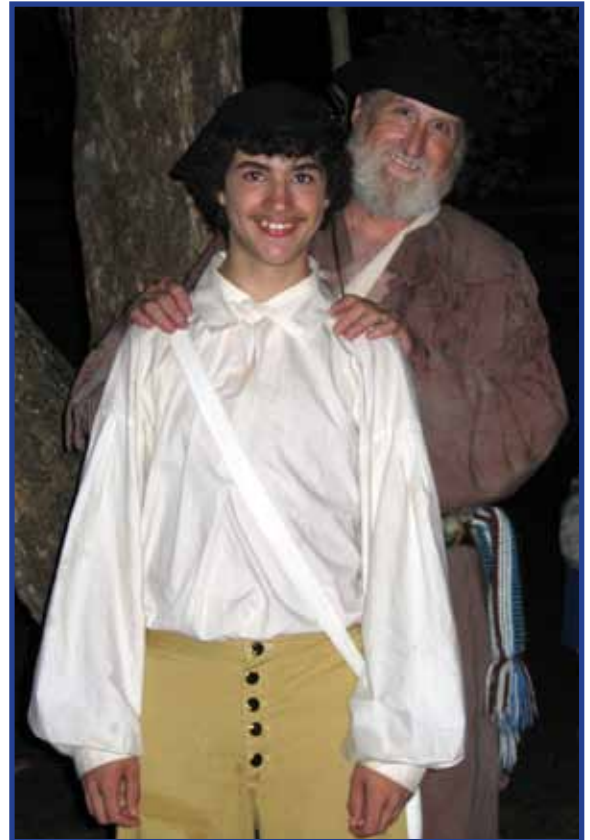
‘Liberty!’ worth ‘every mile, every minute’ for father/son duo from Greene County

ELIZABETHTON – Taylor and Ron Moorefield love liberty, in every sense of the word.

The father-and-son duo are an integral part of the cast of *Liberty!*, Tennessee’s Official Outdoor Drama, that continues with performances Thursday, Friday and Saturday beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the Fort Watauga Amphitheater at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area.

And the Moorefields surely put their time and money behind their love, driving the farthest distance for rehearsals and performance. One hundred and four miles, to be precise. And Ron says that’s if they take the “short” route, which is littered with municipal red lights, so they generally travel even more.

But the miles mean nothing to the Moorefields. “We’re proud to be a part of *Liberty!*. It’s worth every mile, every minute,” dad Ron says.



Taylor and Ron Moorefield

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Taylor's introduction to the outdoor drama came when he was performing in Mary Jane Kennedy's production of "America Sings."

"Mrs. Kennedy told me about Sycamore Shoals, and the play, and she suggested that I might want to try it. So I did."

And, with that, 8-year-old Taylor made his debut at the Fort Watauga Amphitheater in 2004, portraying a young pie thief who just can't pass up the smell of a fresh cobbler cooling in one of the cabin windows.

Over the next several seasons, he played a variety of roles, including Adam, the young patriot of the Watauga settlement, bedeviled by a cantankerous father; and Landon Carter, son of early pioneer John Carter and hero of the Revolutionary War victory at King's Mountain, S.C.

This year he is taking on a new challenge, portraying Valentine Sevier, the younger, supportive brother of John, who rose to prominence in the settlement and went on to rise to the rank of general, become the first governor of the state of Franklin and the first governor of Tennessee.

"These stories are always fresh and new. They never get old to me. Every time I hear those words and that music, my heart swells and I feel 10 feet tall. And I begin to go right back in time. And then I'm there with them..."

Ron Moorefield

"One of the most enjoyable things in my life is to walk out there and be a part of the drama," Taylor says. "I look forward to it all the months we are not performing."

"Taylor and Ron are such delightful people. They give so much. When you look at them, you literally see the picture of what we're trying to accomplish here, with families getting together to tell the old stories of some of our first families," said SSSHA Manager Jennifer Bauer.

Ron "started out as a chauffeur" for his son and then graduated to walk-on

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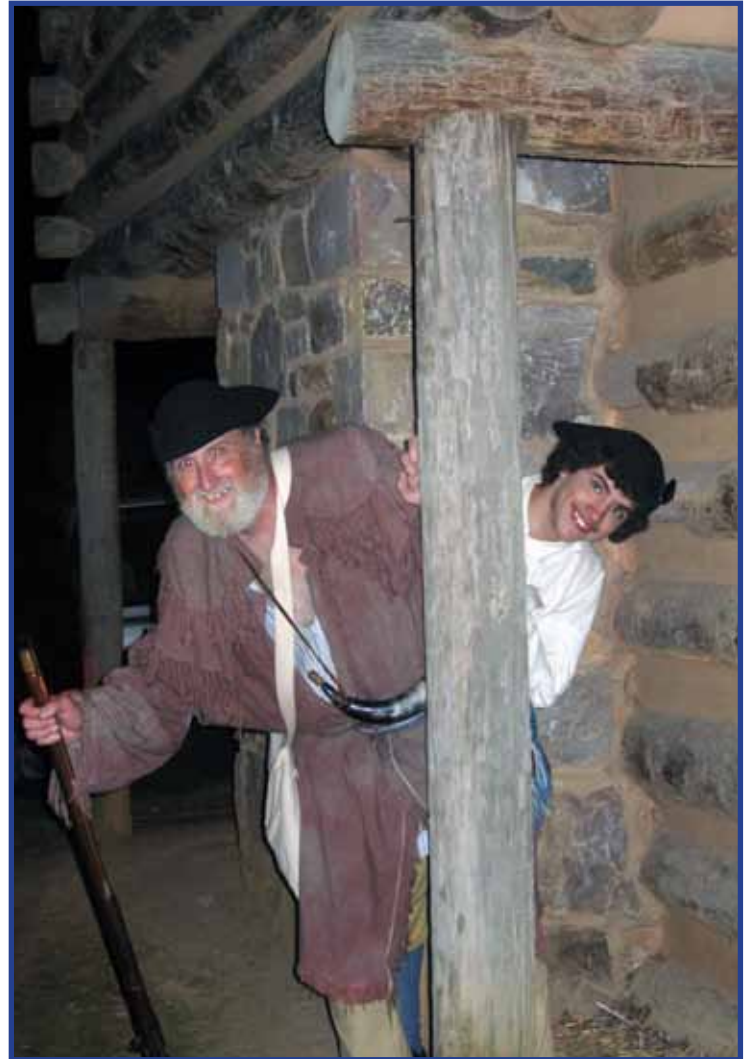
player himself. “I was scared to death the first time I went out to say lines. I’m not an actor, and never will be. I knew that I had to try it, because I wanted to do whatever I could to be supportive. But I was terrified,” he said.

Ron managed to overcome his encounter with stage fright and now happily and exuberantly portrays Julius Caesar Dugger, one of the founding fathers of Watauga Association.

Taylor, on the other hand, is perfectly comfortable” in front of audience. He has traveled widely and performed as a musician and singer with the Highlands Youth Ensemble. He began his vocal career at a young age, first as a member of the Mountain Empire Children’s Choral Academy and then singing three years with the East Tennessee Children’s Choir under the direction of Beth McCoy.

“He is a wonderful young man and just terrific on the stage,” McCoy said after watching her former student’s performance in *Liberty!*. “I’m so very proud of him.”

“He loves to perform,” Ron says with obvious pride. “And a large crowd doesn’t bother him in the least. In fact, I think he likes it more when there are 10,000 people watching and listening.”



A long drive does nothing to diminish the joyful playfulness of Ron and Taylor Moorefield.

The manager of Goodwater Vineyards in Greene County, Ron is a firm believer in quality education. “This is a great learning experience for all these young people. You can watch them grow and mature. They are developing skills all along the way, personal skills, and learning how to work together. The kind of people

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skills that they will be able to use in any type of work.

Equally, Ron knows that hard work pays off. Thousands of grapevines have prospered at the tender touch of his calloused hands. “Experts say that it typically takes five years to get the first harvest but, after only three years, we gathered 20,000 pounds of grapes. They predict we will top out at around 100 tons when the vines are fully matured.”

All of the Moorefields – including Taylor’s mother, Sarah, and his brother Chris – have performed in the drama, no doubt spurred on by the family enthusiast.

“I love acting,” Taylor says with a wide smile. “I love the people here. The script. The stories. All of it.”

Taylor’s contagious enthusiasm is shared by his father.

“These stories are always fresh and new. They never get old to me. Every time I hear those words and that music, my heart swells and I feel 10 feet tall. And I begin to go right back in time. And then I’m there with them, when they’re signing the Articles of the Watauga Association, and at the muster of the volunteers,” Ron said.

“And I look out there and see my son and I couldn’t be happier. He has learned so much that he will take with him throughout his life. He has made friends that he will probably always have.

“I really love the stories. They never get old to me. I am honored to be a part of this, of keeping it alive. I’m thrilled that it has been going on 31 years. I want to see it go on 31 more years. Fifty years. One hundred years,” Ron said.

“These stories are so important, for everyone. Without those people, there wouldn’t be a Tennessee. Maybe not even a country. We owe them the best we’ve got.”

(Liberty! will be performed Thursdays-Saturdays, July 16-25, in the Fort Watauga Amphitheater behind the Visitors Center at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area, 1651 W. Elk Ave. in Elizabethton. Tickets are \$10 for adults; \$9 for seniors; \$8 for students; and children 5 and under are admitted free. For more information, contact the park at 423.543.5808)

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