

**It's off**  
Elton John won't be performing in Richmond on Tuesday.  
**Metro /B1**



**COMING TOMORROW**  
**'Bloody Sunday'**  
Remembering the march 40 years ago that changed our nation.  
Part 1 of a three-day series

**March madness**  
■ One CAA school's foreign flavor yields court success. **Sports /D1**  
■ Virginia Union moves closer to a CIAA championship. **Sports /D1**

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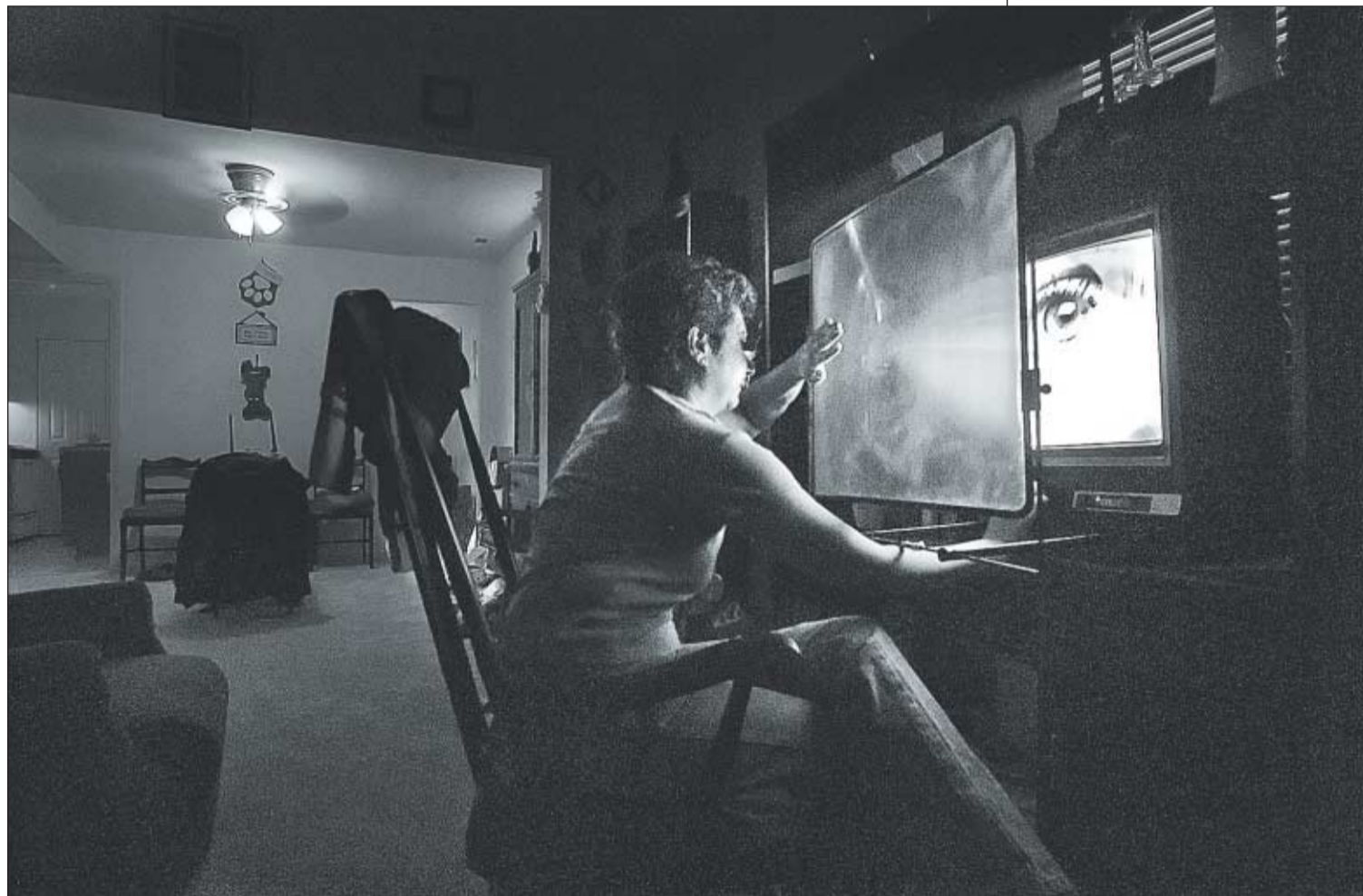
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA'S NEWS LEADER  
A MEDIA GENERAL NEWSPAPER

SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2005

A blind woman struggles to satisfy her own standards for beauty

Susan Dunham lost most of her sight when she was in her 20s. Here she watches television with the aid of a magnifying lens. She uses her hand to shield her eyes from the light. "Lights give me headaches," she said.



## THE BATTLE WITHIN

ARTICLE BY PAIGE AKIN / PHOTOS BY MARK GORMUS ■ TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF

Susan Dunham's life is endless darkness and passing shadows. ■ She sees shapes, but not people. She makes out images, but not faces. ■ Not even her own. ■ Dunham has been blind for more than 20 years. A degenerative disease and several unsuccessful surgeries have left her with 20-1200 vision. ■ Her home on Church Hill is a cave. Dark venetian blinds cover every window, and the only light inside comes from the low glare of the television and a few 7-watt light bulbs. Only at home is Dunham able to remove her black sunglasses and open her light-blue eyes. ■ But like many people, Dunham worries about how she looks. She can't study herself in the mirror, so she relies on her hands to tell her what parts are sagging, what parts are loose, what parts aren't as smooth and supple as they were in her 20s — when she still had sight.

See BATTLE on Page A8

Find more photos inside and online at TimesDispatch.com

**Richmond**

- Down 12%
- Crime fell in every other major category except homicides
- Crime rate: 77 crimes per 1,000 residents

**Chesterfield**

- Up 1%
- Down in every violent crime category except for robberies
- Crime rate: 27 crimes per 1,000 residents

**Henrico**

- Up 3%
- Most violent crimes down; assaults, burglaries up
- Crime rate: 45.6 crimes per 1,000 residents

**Hanover**

- Up 7%
- Increases in most major violent crime categories
- Crime rate: 13 crimes per 1,000 residents

## Crime decreases, thanks to Richmond

A 12 percent drop in the city last year offsets increases in surrounding localities

BY MARK BOWES  
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Richmond's suburbs can thank the city for the region's 4 percent drop in crime last year.

In a notable role reversal, the area's suburban counties saw major crime collectively rise 2.4 percent in 2004, while the city of Richmond recorded a 12 percent drop.

Except for a troublesome increase in homicides, crime in the city fell in every other major category — rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, larcenies, auto thefts and arson fires.

Perhaps even more significant, overall reported crime in Richmond has dropped 24 percent since 2002. During the same period in the suburbs, it's climbed 4.1 percent, according to statistics filed by police.

At least two local police officials believe former Richmond Police Chief André Parker, who was forced out after losing the sup-

**FOR MORE**

**INSIDE:** Breaking down the Richmond area's crime statistics. **Page A6.**

**ONLINE:** See crime statistics for all Virginia localities by clicking on this story at [TimesDispatch.com](http://TimesDispatch.com)

SEE CRIME, PAGE A6 ►

## Man liable in brother's death

Judge rejects suicide theory in civil case; wife to get damages

BY JAMIE C. RUFF  
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

**EMPORIA** — A Greensville County circuit judge yesterday ruled in favor of a woman who sued her brother-in-law, claiming that he killed her husband in a dispute over a will.

Judge Samuel Campbell ordered that \$350,000 in punitive damages be paid to Jewel B. Wiley in the suit filed over the death

of her husband, Carlton Wiley. "Clear evidence has been presented that there was a homicide in this case," the judge said. "It just boiled down to two brothers who had a problem and it got out of hand and they had a death."

Campbell said he wanted to outline his thinking rather than just issue a judgment, because people deserved to hear how he reasoned the case.

Carlton Wiley was found dead of a shotgun wound in March 2000. Local authorities ruled the death a suicide, but Jewel Wiley had her own investigation conducted, leading to her lawsuit alleging that Ralph Wiley shot his

brother to death. The suit had sought \$5 million in compensatory damages and a punitive award that under state law was limited to \$350,000. But in handing down the ruling, Campbell noted that the money was not the issue and that Jewel Wiley and her family "have gotten what they wanted today."

Ralph Wiley's attorney, Guy Harbert, said the decision would be appealed. "I'm very, very disappointed," he said.

Toby Vick, a former Henrico County commonwealth's attorney and federal prosecutor who

SEE CASE, PAGE A7 ►



## Ex-hostage injured, Italian agent killed by friendly fire

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**BAGHDAD, Iraq** — Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena survived a month of captivity and horror at the hands of Iraqi insurgents, but little could she imagine the terror that lay just ahead: a shrapnel wound when American troops opened fire on the speeding car carrying her to freedom.

One of the Italian intelligence agents who negotiated her release yesterday was killed as he threw his body across her when the shooting started. One, perhaps two, other agents were wounded, in still another tragic friendly

fire incident at a U.S. checkpoint.

Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, an ally of the United States who has kept 3,000 Italian troops in Iraq despite public opposition at home, demanded an explanation "for such a serious incident, for which someone must take the responsibility."

President Bush expressed regret and promised to investigate, the White House said.

The U.S. military said the car was speeding as it approached a coalition checkpoint in western Baghdad at 8:55

SEE IRAQ, PAGE A5 ►

**SATURDAY**

Chance of showers.  
High: 46.  
Low: 30. /B10

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**Quite a bounce**

So what caused the Dow Jones and S&P 500 indexes to hit multiyear highs?

**Business /C1**

**Steroid hearings**

A Virginia congressman is behind an effort to get baseball stars to set the record straight.

**Sports /D2**

**Fat Monday?**

Kirstie Alley describes "Fat Actress" as a version of her life, amplified.

**TD Channels /G4**



**Straight 'Jacket'**

Movie is well made and intriguing, but who wants to see it, Dan Neman asks.

**Entertainment /B5**

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# THE BATTLE WITHIN



It's 9 a.m., too early for Dunham's guide dog and her daughter, Kala, who got only a few hours of sleep before she had to accompany her mother to Dr. Joe Niamtu's office in Midlothian. "You've got to leave enough skin so I can close my eyes," Dunham joked with Niamtu as he marked her face and eyelids for surgery.

Before he nips and tucks, Niamtu injects a concoction of fluid to puff up Dunham's face and prepare it for minor liposuction. "Fat is not the enemy," he said, but some fat in Dunham's face and neck had to go. Balled-up gauze and tape protected her eyes during the facelift.



Rejuvenating Dunham's face is a team effort. Niamtu, who has performed hundreds of facelifts, relies on a team of skilled surgical assistants to prepare equipment during the half-day procedure. Here, Kelly Clay helps with some stitches while Julian Stocks and Cristen Cramer discuss the next step.



Niamtu's steady hand uses a laser knife to remove small patches of skin and fat from Dunham's eyelids. An assistant uses a surgical vacuum to suction away the smoke and smell of burning flesh.

## Battle

— FROM PAGE A1

Dunham, 46, exercises daily and diets religiously. Her struggle with her appearance began when she was a child. The middle of three girls, her father chided her almost daily.

"My dad always said, 'It's a shame you can't be as pretty or as smart as your sisters,'" Dunham said.

When she was 14, her father told her she'd have more friends if she "had a better chin." He took her to a plastic surgeon for a chin implant, but surgery didn't help her social standing.

Now, decades later, Dunham is still haunted by her father's words. After two years of diets and regular gym visits, Dunham decided her own efforts to improve her appearance weren't enough.

She turned to cosmetic surgery. In December, Dunham decided to leave her happiness in the skillful hands of Dr. Joe Niamtu III, an oral and maxillo-facial surgeon who nips and tucks Richmonders to a better appearance. Now that all the staples are out and the normal bruising is gone, Dunham is happier with her looks than she's ever been. She can't see her new firmer skin and thinner neck, but everyone else can.

"I love to hear the compliments," she said, a wide grin spreading across her smooth cheeks. "Now, I look as good on the outside as I feel on the inside."



It's just before 10 a.m. on Dec. 10, and Joe Niamtu's office is abuzz with people covered head to toe in blue surgical scrubs, masks, hats and booties.

Before Dunham undressed and started her anesthesia, Niamtu marked her face with black ink as a guide.

Just before she drifted off to sleep, she whispered to him, "You're a blessing."

In her consultation weeks earlier, Dunham told him exactly what she wanted, "to look younger but not like I've had a facelift." That's what most of Niamtu's patients want.

"They do this because they want to

look tighter, younger, fresher — not to look like somebody else, or to get a promotion, or to save a failing marriage," he said. "As a surgeon, you have to tell people it's a scalpel, not a magic wand."

For the next five hours at Niamtu's Chesterfield surgery center, the doctor deftly sliced, sucked and stitched Dunham's face. He and his surgical staff listen to music during their operations. For Dunham, it was a classic rock collection including "Brown Eyed Girl" and "Sweet Home Alabama."

"One hundred percent of people will tell you they don't want to look like Joan Rivers or Phyllis Diller," Niamtu said, stretching Dunham's cheek toward her ear. "They want a discreet look. A good facelift should whisper, not yell."

Niamtu, who along with his partners regularly performs free surgeries on needy children and adults with facial deformities, met Dunham several years ago when she saw him because her old chin implant was causing pain. The implant, he found, had worn away the bone on her chin, and he had to perform a bone graft to reconstruct the chin.

At that time, Dunham told Niamtu that she wanted some additional cosmetic surgery but couldn't pay for it. Niamtu decided to operate for free. In all, his practice has given Dunham more than \$10,000 in free surgery.

"Despite her significant disability, Susan wanted to lead as normal a life as possible," he said. "I was touched by her desire to look and feel younger, even though she could not see the results."

After Dunham's procedure, Niamtu and his assistants helped her into a "face bra" to keep swelling to a minimum. When she healed, the only evidence of the facelift would be a few tiny scars behind her hairline.

"The only people who should know are the patient, the doctor and the hair-dresser," Niamtu said.



Dunham was Susie Marie Whitton when she graduated from Douglas Free-

Continued on Page A9

# THE BATTLE WITHIN

Dunham stocks up on groceries once a month. In early February, she walked three blocks to the newly opened Sunny Supermarket for a few items. Store owner Yeng Yoo was not familiar with her shopping routine, so Dunham explained that she needed him to escort her. She uses a rubber-band system on canned goods so she can tell green beans from carrots, tomato soup from chicken and stars.



Dunham and her guide dog, whose name she won't give out, brave the cold for a trip to the neighborhood grocery store. She called ahead to get walking directions from her home on Church Hill. "Straight, straight, left, find the curb," she tells the dog.



Continued from Page A8

man High School in 1976.

She married soon after, had a son and daughter and divorced when she was 21. Dunham was with her second husband from 26 to 33. By her early 30s, her vision was so bad she couldn't read.

"He put an ad in the newspaper announcing that he wanted to divorce me, knowing I wouldn't be able to read it," she said. "Boy, can I pick 'em."

For years, she sat at home alone, trying to make out shapes on TV and eating out of boredom.

"Your hunger isn't linked to sight — it's more about smell. I had no job, I wasn't busy, and I was lonely," she said.

Dunham suffers from keratoconus, an abnormal bulging of the cornea that causes impaired vision or blindness. She also has surgically severe astigmatism and has undergone three corneal transplants and three laser surgeries. Nothing helped. By the time she was 30, she was legally blind.

The only visual memories she has of her daughter Kala, 24, and son Bud, 25, were when they were very young. Dunham lives with Kala and her faithful guide dog in subsidized housing and receives food stamps. Bud lives in the Fan District.

Now that she's had a facelift and is feeling better about herself, Dunham said she'd like to find a job — something she has been trying to do for years — and maybe a date.

"People treat nice-looking people better," she said. "My daughter tells me my skin looks like it did when I was in my 20s," Dunham said.

After "looking like an alien" for a few days following her facelift, the swelling went down and Dunham's new face began to emerge. She doesn't look like a different person, just younger.

Exactly what she wanted. "When I go like this," she says, shaking her head from side to side, "my cheeks

don't wiggle."

To get around, Dunham rides a GRTC Transit System CARE van, which offered transportation to the disabled. Five days a week, she takes a CARE van to and from the gym. She's still hung up on keeping her weight at 127 pounds and on losing the pooch on her narrow waist — a pooch that only she notices.

"I've got stuff that hangs over my pants. It bothers me," Dunham said, grabbing at her side. "I've been working on myself for two years, and if this isn't gone in a few months, maybe I'll consider a tummy tuck."

Niamtu said he's pleased with Dun-

ham's subtle results.

"Our whole goal was to help Susan feel better, and we accomplished that," he said on one of Dunham's many follow-up visits to his office. "That's my payoff — when you smile, and I know you feel good. Unlike those makeover shows, my unveiling is a hug or a thank-you or sometimes a peck on the cheek. That's all I ask for."

While Dunham can't see the results, her hands tell her all she needs to know.

"When I feel my face," she said, "I feel like I'm supposed to feel."

• Contact Paige Akin at (804) 649-6671 or pakin@timesdispatch.com



Twenty days post-facelift, Dunham has resumed her daily workouts. She's still trying to reach her fitness goal, despite her trainer's jokes that "pretty soon, you'll be floating." Exhausted, she rests on a machine after lifting weights at Victory Lady Fitness Center on West Broad Street. If her stomach isn't flat in a few months, Dunham said, "Maybe I'll consider a tummy tuck."