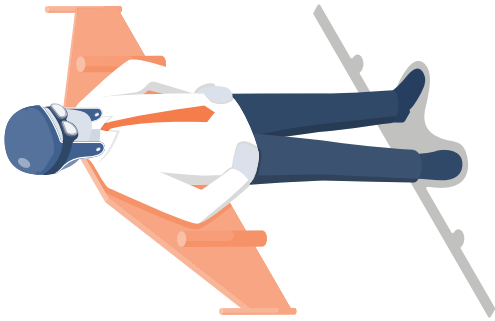


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Growth strategy



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Looking Up:

# Reviewing the Situation...Finding It Hard to Be as Black as They Paint

By Bob Grindle

The woods were filling up with snow for, could it be...oh, probably not, though it does seem like the thousandth time in these nearly forty-eight years of living on the side of Clark Hill, here in Hampton, deep in the woods of the Quiet Corner. That was more than two weeks ago, and the promise of a white Christmas, like a New England leprechaun-in-white, enchanted weather forecasters, and newspaper writers and radio announcers and old-time Yankee memoirists and anyone who likes to daydream a bit...enchanted us all, each in our own personal and profoundly private memory jewel box, with the singular images of a season that could very well be part of what keeps us here, just a few miles inland from the turbulent and whale-song haunting mystery of the cold North Atlantic Ocean.

Despite a climate that can easily challenge our stamina, while bracing our spiritual connection to this particular place on Mother Earth, we self-avowed residents of a place we often call out as the middle of nowhere will usually find affinity with Robert Frost's observer watching the woods fill up with snow...though I must admit to knowing quite a few locals who, like the little horse of Frost's lyric poem, find it a bit queer that anyone would enjoy this season. The snow did not last, though, and as the rains of Christmas Eve arrived in the afternoon, fell steadily throughout the night and all of Christmas Day, it spilled over the levees built up of all those white Christmas hopes and, somewhat miraculously, changed all that lovely snow into nutrient-rich water that replenished water tables and brooks and ponds and set rivers to raging.

Hopes and dreams do not give up easily, though, especially when they are forever fueled by the many ways we humans have of holding on to what we privilege from the pressed flower cabinet of our memories. If this year's

snow washes away, well, let me tell you about the marvelous white Christmas of 1973 and the ice storm of the same year...yada yada. And so it goes. The lovely green grass, however, that showed up after the 2020 snows of early December were washed into the glacial soils of eastern Connecticut, and sort of got lost in the grayness and disappointment of a white Christmas that slipped out of our grasp and round the bend.

If we can stop amusing ourselves with our endless frenzied rushing about, trying to arrange for outcomes that suit our fancy, perhaps there is some granular and mysterious bit of nature that we as yet do not understand and that might help us to stand back from our pompous assumption of existential superiority and have a go at finding humor in our sense of self-importance. After all, it is only within the last decade of our species' 70,000 years of existence that we have come to understand not only that trees communicate, but how. How could a species that considers itself so wise—Homo sapiens, after all—have missed something so elemental? Or have we simply forgotten what many Native cultures have been in touch with all along: Whether we understand it or not, whether we like it or not, whether we accept it or not, we are very much a part of the environment within which we live...Earth, Sky, Cosmos, all of it.

As I walk up to the garden compost piles to dump the day's accumulation of organic bits, the murky, gray, and darkening shadowy world feels like a rather gloomy metaphor for the labyrinth that often seems to have descended over the comfortable world of old truths and habits, dependable behaviors and outcomes. A smile crosses my face as I recall a line from the song "Reviewing the Situation" in the musical play Oliver! when the character Fagin sings, "And who will change the scene for me?" There is no breeze as evening settles in, and the pines don't whisper any notes of wisdom. Droplets have formed on the tips of

boughs and teasel heads, and as I turn to leave the garden, a patch of very green and healthy-looking parsley catches my eye, suggesting it might make a nice addition to a soup or salad for dinner. So be it. Perhaps each of us must do the work of changing our own scene, be stage workers as well as star in our own very personal play, understanding that murky gray or sunny days are all part of the rhythm, and gloom only really exists in our wise human minds. There is something about the heavy, gray mist and murk that feels like living in a cloud, so there is no reason to look up...that will be for another January evening, and there will be plenty to see.

For the first week of the month, Jupiter and Saturn—yep, the same pair that got so much press as a super rare Christmas star because they appeared so close to one another—will still be visible low in the southwestern sky, a bit farther apart now and really difficult to see without binoculars, but there nevertheless as they gradually exit the evening skies. Wait till late February when they reappear in the early morning sky with the waning crescent Moon, for what I consider a much more impressive show.

By January 11, the early morning southeastern sky, say around 6:30 a.m. or so, welcomes the always showy Venus very close to the last waning sliver of December's Cold Moon. Scorpio is also rising about the same time and the red supergiant star, Antares, the heart of Scorpio, sits rather high and to the right of Venus, again very near the fading Moon. Our Sun is about a million miles in diameter, while Antares is nearly a billion miles across, and so far distant—3,000 trillion miles or so, 550 light years—that it's hard to see that Antares is actually a twin star...two stars very close together. It makes the apparent conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter seem rather ordinary—except, of course, to our human need for drama.

Later in the month, Mars, in all its peachy-redness, and the waxing quarter Moon will share the overhead dance floor from the 19th till the 21st...really dancing with the stars. Mars is rather dim now, but still easy to pick out and will be until sometime in July. The Moon changes partners with the seasons and let's all hope that this month's full Wolf Moon on the 28th finds us each with our own set of reasons to celebrate this new year of 2021.

*Bob Grindle is a Windham Hospital retiree and 2017 ECSU graduate who concentrated in Astronomy.*

On our cover:  
12.26.20. Kayakers on the Natchaug River  
at Diana's pool in Chaplin. Joseph Szalay photos.

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The Purpose of Neighbors:  
-To encourage reading  
-To provide a place where ideas, writing, artwork  
and photographs of area residents can be shared  
-To encourage people to get involved in their  
communities  
-To begin to solve national and global problems  
on a local basis  
-To provide useful information  
-To serve the inhabitants and environment of our region

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# Can We Think Like Plants?

By Loretta Wrobel

As humans we tend to believe that we are the best, smartest, and most evolved. Biomimicry looks to nature for the solution to problems, as nature has been devising solutions for longer than we homo sapiens have roamed the planet. After attending part of the Bioneers two-weekend virtual conference, I got reacquainted with the concept “It’s all alive. It’s all connected. It’s all intelligent. It’s all relatives.” Bioneers (biological pioneers) is a nonprofit organization that connects people with solutions, each other, and our planet. They have been in existence for over thirty years and hold annual conferences. Their work is providing practical and innovative solutions to global environmental issues and bio-cultural challenges.



After being primed by the conference, I came upon an essay by Robin Wall Kimmerer, a teacher of environmental science, a botanist, and a member of the Potawatomi Nation. Kimmerer speaks of the gift economy and how she learns lessons from observing the serviceberry. Why do we focus on the scarcity economy where everything is measured in possessions and not calculated in terms of strength of relationships?

The gift economy is one of reciprocity and mutual exchange, not one of competition and commodification. The gift economy emanates from abundance, generosity, and caring. It is centered in reliance on relationships with the living beings in your environment, and seeks mutually beneficial behavior. Not to view from a price tag, but to value from a place of connection to the environment. Does that intrigue you?

Using the example of the serviceberry, Robin discusses its connection to the birds and how the birds devour the seeds and then aid the tree in distributing the seeds to further the growth of the berries. The humans also benefit by having nutritious, tasty food at no financial cost. Works for me.

When I eat the copious berries, I feel happy and grateful for the gift. How do I pass on the gift? I can thank the plant, water it, or donate to some nonprofit to reciprocate the gift. My tummy feels satisfied, the plant gets acknowledged, and if I give to a homeless shelter or a food bank, I feel that I am giving back. Sounds like a great plan. How do we implement the shift from valuing things, products, and possessions to honoring the gift economy where the value is in reciprocity and mutual interdependency?

As we have just ended another season of exchanging gifts with our loved ones, this may be the perfect time to contemplate what system we have engaged in. Is the value of the gift based on the amount of money spent to purchase it? Or is the purpose to thank someone for being in our lives? Do the gifts support creative artists who are working to add beauty to our lives? Does the purchase of our gift stimulate sustainability or add to the greed of accruing? How do we improve our relationship to our environment by our actions?

We are at a turning point in our civilization. Some have called this time the Great Turning and the Great Unraveling. We must dramatically shift our behavior and ways of interacting with the land, each other, and ourselves. How

we react will determine what kind of planet we will inhabit in the next twenty years. The pandemic has shown how nature, in this case a virus, can disrupt our patterns of relating and throw our economy into deep depression.

Ms. Kimmerer expresses her desire to live in a healthier world of gratitude and generosity. In her economic model she employs endless renewable resources, such as kindness, which multiplies when it is shared rather than depreciating in value. In examining the serviceberry, she witnesses a system of generosity. In this gift economy, thriving is only possible when you nurture your relationships with your community. This concept is basic to indigenous peoples and ecological systems.

The serviceberry produces an abundance of nutritious food for humans, birds, and a variety of wildlife. It is a gift that we can pick the berries free of charge and spread the good cheer of their delicious taste. We do not work to produce the berries. However, we can harvest them easily. We can walk away from the berries feeling a sense of abundance, gratitude, and satisfaction.

Robin uses this example to illustrate the value of sharing, which creates an atmosphere of abundance and reciprocity. When we feel abundant, we want to give back and pass along the goodness. This is very different from our present economic viewpoint, which places a cost on everything. The price rises with scarcity. Everything is viewed as a commodity, which promotes accumulation rather than sharing. It ensures that some are left out, while a small group accumulates nonstop, creating imbalance and greed.

Our present economic system is based on accumulating and scarcity. The more we have, the more we are viewed as successful. Can we shift to an alternative economy which values our connection to each other and our environment? In this system we take care of each other and our land and we all benefit. No one gains while others have to lose and suffer. There is enough for all, because a select few are not devouring an unfair share.

What will it take for humans to think like the serviceberry, producing enough to take care of and nurture the beings in our community? Can we stretch our hearts and minds to be inclusive and generous, knowing there is an abundance if we let go of possessing for the sake of accruing?

What lessons can we absorb from this past year of living with COVID and vividly experiencing how we are all connected? We have witnessed the generosity of giving, as many food banks, shelters and other non-profits have reported an uptick in donations this year. Coming at a time of huge job losses and numerous business failures, this demonstrates the desire to share and assist others in our community as they struggle to survive.

How can we grow this sense of connection and responsibility to support community and work towards an abundance mentality in the new year? When we feel abundance, fear decreases, energy increases, and our well-being soars. Why do we persist in depriving ourselves of opening to healthier patterns? Nature shows us when we slow down to observe and dance with the living beings around us. Stop, look, listen, and become like an acorn, a blade of grass, or even a serviceberry! Spread the abundance in 2021.

# Bring Tech on Next Outdoor Adventure

(StatePoint) Hitting the trail for a hike is good for the mind and body. Fortunately, there are still plenty of opportunities to get out and do so this winter. As you plan your next outdoor adventure, consider supporting your journey with the following tech tools and gear:

Lighting your path: The sun is setting earlier these days, but that doesn’t mean you don’t want to pursue the same long hikes you enjoyed last summer. Maintain top visibility and light your way safely with a hands-free headlamp. Today’s headlamp models offer hybrid energy options, battery life reader features and are lightweight, making them easy to stow

somewhere handy in your day pack and wear when needed.

Keeping Time: When you’re out on the trail, it’s easy to get distracted by logistics and miss out on the beauty of your surroundings. Wearable tech however, can give you the information you need to simply relax and enjoy those breathtaking vistas. The rugged, waterproof outdoor watches in the Pro Trek line from Casio provide altimeter, barometer, thermometer and compass metrics to help you seamlessly stay on top of your location and local weather conditions.

Easy does it: Weighing in at only a few pounds, an inflatable chair or couch makes for an easy addition

to your day pack, and one with huge payoffs when it’s time to take a load off for a picnic lunch. The latest designs offer better ergonomics, easy inflation and breathable materials for optimum comfort.

Fill ‘er up: A mini water filtration system can lighten your load substantially, freeing you of the burden of having to carry all the water you’ll need throughout the day. Just be sure that your route will take you past streams or other water sources so you can refill and filter on-the-go.



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# Fun & Winter Memories Fell with the Snow

By Mark Svetz

My holiday joy came a little early this year. It started with early reports of a snowstorm in December. When it started snowing that Wednesday night, I went to bed with an excitement I hadn’t felt in years. You see, I had decided to try sliding this winter with my granddaughter Miriam, and all the reports looked good for a deep powdery snow on our back hillside.

I grew up in northwest Connecticut. We lived way out in the country, and one thing we could appreciate out there in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, was snow. We got a lot of it in those years, and my brother and I spent those long winters making and maintaining sled trails. The best one we ever made started way up on the back hill and ran right past our kitchen door, ending near (sometimes in) the stream down in front of our house. That was a ride.

That week in mid-December started out with reports of a storm in the middle of the week. Twelve inches was the first report I heard, and with the predicted low temperatures, I began to think of sled trails and the wooded hillside behind our house. I had many times envisioned the path Miriam calls the Winding Trail. It takes us down to the woods and the river. There is a curve in the middle of the hill, but I thought I knew how to handle that. If there was enough snow, I could make a pile on the outside of that curve, making a nice banked turn.

Those weather reports of winter storms approaching usually send me down to check the snow-blower and shovels, but for some reason, this time was different. This time I was thinking of banked turns and the process of making a packed powder trail through the woods.

I began to draw on memories from the wonderful winter of 1960-’61. We had so much snow that winter, our sled trail – the one that went past the kitchen door – lasted for more than three months. I recall that was the year of the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York. My brother and I learned about those banked turns watching the bob sled races. We had snow forts on the hill from behind which we would throw snowballs at one another. One Sunday, after watching those bob sleds on Wide World of Sports, brother Mike and I made an ‘S’ turn in the sled trail, with the snow forts on the outside of each curve, and we had our own little bob sled run.

Anticipating this year’s first good snowfall, I asked Miriam’s dad to bring her flying saucer for her next visit. When she arrived a few days after the storm we wasted no time getting out to the hill with the saucer. We rolled around and played a lot, and then came in for lunch. One thing led to another and we didn’t get back outside



Miriam tries the hill without the sled. Mark Svetz photo.

until later in the afternoon. The first thing I did was get that saucer and go, not to the Winding Trail, with its gentle slope, but to what Miriam calls the Merry Little Path. The very steepest part of the hill. I rode the saucer down a few times, going a little farther in the deep, powdery snow each time. Soon, Sarah and I were watching Miriam fly down the packed trail.

She was tireless, flying down the hill and walking back up. Our trail came a little too close to a tree for our comfort, so Sarah and I shoveled snow to bank a gentle curve around the tree. Still, it was my job to stand by the tree for each ride, to make sure Miriam didn’t hit it. There were plenty of hair-raising spills. “Nonno!” She yelled, rolling in the snow. “That was a ‘Sled Over Miriam’ that time!” On another ride, she fell head-first into the snow. “That was a ‘Snow in the Forehead’ that time, Nonno!,” she called.

Miriam must have climbed that hill 50 times. From my position by that tree, I watch the half moon rise over our house, and behind Miriam as she got ready come flying down toward me. In the gathering darkness, I recalled many long ago nights playing in the woods or flying down our own sled trail, when Mike and I would find ourselves in the shadowy glow of the moon-lit snow. I cherish the memories of those nights.

When Sarah and I started to get tired and Miriam agreed to “Five more rides, Nonno!” it was pretty much full dark. The patch of woods on our hill was magical that night as Miriam turned that sled trail into a race-way. As we headed up the hill for the last time, cold and snow-covered, I knew the trail would not likely survive the next few days of rising temperatures

and rain predicted for Christmas Day. I wasn’t dwelling on the rising temps, however, I was thinking about the next storm and the next sled trail.

Back in 1960, it seemed to snow every day. One storm dropped more than 3 feet of snow on our yard. Mike and I spent every minute making that sled trail the best one we ever had, before or since. We would fly down that hill at such speeds that there were many crashes. We worked well into the night many times repairing the trail, not to mention our sleds. We moved tons of snow and rode our sleds hundreds of miles, or so it seemed to us that magical winter.

This winter holiday season has already given me the best present I have gotten in years. Making that trail and watching Miriam race down it, brought the magic of those long ago winters into my life again.

*Mark Svetz has been a journalist, activist, teacher and self-appointed knight errant in Willimantic for the last 45 years... and counting! You can read more of Mark’s writing at [www.WillimanticToday.wordpress.com](http://www.WillimanticToday.wordpress.com)*

## Environmental Groups Ask Lamont and CGA to Say “NO” to Killingly Gas Plant

Submitted by Sierra Club

Killingly, CT—Environmental advocates, elected officials and community leaders joined together for a virtual press event today to highlight public opposition to NTE Partners’ proposed fracked gas plant in Killingly, and to call for a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure projects in Connecticut. Together, grassroots activists have generated over 650 hand-written letters to Governor Lamont, in addition to 2,550 emails to the Governor and CT Elected Officials in opposition to the proposed fossil fuel power plant. The organizers closed out the zoom press conference with a holiday gift for Gov. Lamont; more than 5,925 petition signatures signed by CT residents in support of ending investments into fossil fuel infrastructure and investing instead into renewable energy and energy efficiency.

In their comments, speakers emphasized that new gas pipelines and power plants represent a glaring and unacceptable inconsistency with Connecticut’s clean energy goals, climate change policy and efforts to address dangerous air quality impacts in our cities:

“Connecticut continues to build 20th century technology in the 21st century,” said Louis Rosado Burch, CT Program Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “We’ve adopted ambitious clean energy goals, established the Governor’s Council on Climate Change, and made commitments to transition away from fossil fuels. These important steps forward will be severely undermined by building new fossil fuel power plants. We need Governor Lamont and the CT General Assembly to move out of the 20th Century and into the 21st Century. That means rejecting Killingly and prioritizing energy projects that help combat climate change. It’s time to say “NO” to Killingly once and for all, and to stop investing in dirty gas infrastructure projects.”

“In addition to being completely out of sync with the state’s bold carbon reduction goals and harming public health, the proposed fracked gas power plant in Killingly will send treated wastewater containing toxic chemicals, pollutants and heavy metals into the Quinebaug River,” said Anne Hulick, Connecticut Director of Clean Water Action. “There is simply no good that can come from building this plant and we urge the Governor and DEEP to do all they can to stop it.” “Governor Lamont and the CT General Assembly have a unique window of opportunity to alter the course of our energy future. Our state recognized the need to move away from fossil fuels twenty years ago when it acted to shut down the infamous ‘Sooty Six’ coal-fired power plants,” said Lori Brown, Executive Director of the CT League of Conservation Voters. “Today, we have a situation where a new polluting power plant has not yet been built and our elected officials must take meaningful action through a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure to prevent this future disaster.”

“We’re calling on Governor Lamont to keep his promise and protect the health, safety, and economic well-being of the residents of the state of Connecticut and of our climate. Over the last two years, DEEP and the Governor have received thousands of phone calls, emails and letters from residents opposing the Killingly power plant. This administration has promised a clean energy future, but continues to allow dirty, dangerous fracked gas power,” Ann Gadwah, Sierra Club Connecticut Chapter chairperson

Continued on next page

## DIY Weatherization Tips

(StatePoint) As temperatures fall outside, it’s time to get ready for the chillier months ahead. Most homeowners want to keep their home cozy and their heating bills low during the winter, but struggle to keep the warmth in and the cold air out. Weatherizing can seem daunting, but there are many benefits -- from reducing drafts to lowering energy use. Follow these low-cost tips to protect your home and your wallet.

### Give Windows a Makeover

Windows add charm to any residence and provide protection from the outdoors, but also account for a significant amount of heat loss in the winter. Heat gain and loss through windows account for 25% to 30% of residential heating and cooling

energy use, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Even if your windows are in good condition, window insulation kits are easy, do-it-yourself solutions that will save you from sky-high heating bills, keep you comfortable and help with energy efficiency all winter long.

Try Duck Brand Max Strength Rolled Window Insulation Kits, which add a barrier and create an airtight seal between the outdoor air and your home’s inside. The film comes with a pre-taped edge for quick and easy roll-on installation.

Want to check and see if you have a problem with insulation? Hold an incense stick near windows, doors and electrical outlets. If smoke blows sideways, you have an air leak.

### Deal with Drafts

Doors are one of the largest sources of drafts in any home and should be a top priority for homeowners this winter. From draft seals to door sweeps, there are many DIY weatherization solutions to choose from that are easy to install and don’t require measuring or tools. Draft seals slide under doors, are removable, machine washable, pet-friendly and don’t damage door frames. For example, Duck Brand’s Double Draft Seal insulates your door from both sides and blocks winter drafts, dust, insects and pollen for year-round protection.

### Don’t Let Air Sneak Through Cracks

While you’re at it, it’s a good idea to check for any cracks and gaps around doors and windows that can lead to heat loss. Weatherstripping doors and windows can save homeowners money. In fact, air

sealing an old or drafty house can save up to 20% on your heating bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. While there are a variety of gap seals to choose from, rubber gap seals can stand up to extreme temperatures that cause other seals to freeze or crack. Duck Brand Heavy-Duty Weather-strip Seals work well for sealing large gaps or sprucing up old or damaged door and window seals.

For a project selector, articles, how-to guides and instructional videos for more DIY weatherization inspiration, check out Duck Brand’s Weatherize page at [duck-brand.com/weatherize](http://duck-brand.com/weatherize).

Don’t wait for the cold weather to set in. Weatherizing your home can be an affordable and easy do-it-yourself project that anyone can tackle. Ready to get organized?



# CT Green Energy News

Submitted by Peter Millman

Welcome to the CT Green Energy News, a weekly digest of stories that has been condensed into a monthly format for *Neighbors* readers. To read the full stories online, just Google the titles below. You can also subscribe to the free weekly email newsletter by contacting Peter Millman at [peter.millman7@gmail.com](mailto:peter.millman7@gmail.com).

News and events for advocates of clean energy, energy efficiency, and climate action at the state and local levels, focusing on Connecticut. Brought to you by People’s Action for Clean Energy (PACE) and Eastern CT Green Action (ECGA).



**Gillett nudges PURA into spotlight as challenges mount Hartford Business Journal.** “When there’s a void, when consumers are not getting access to information in a transparent or timely fashion, it’s incumbent on me to fill that void...In the past year, Gillett has given PURA a new profile as she seeks to both modernize the state’s electric grid and hold utilities accountable for storm preparedness and pandemic policies.”

**As Officials Ponder, Advocates Provide Clear Message: Stop Killingly Gas Plant CT Public Radio.** “It clearly does not fall in line with our targets for Connecticut for moving towards green energy and clean energy. It’s the absolute opposite of that,” Flexer said. “If we say Connecticut is committed to green energy, why is this power plant moving forward? It makes absolutely no sense.”

**Solar panels to be installed atop nine public buildings in Manchester to build solar sites Hartford Courant.** “Solar panels are to be installed on nine public buildings in Manchester, saving the town a projected \$150,000 a year in power costs...The town will host the solar panels and buy electricity from the Green Bank, a quasi-public agency created by the state legislature in 2011. The Green Bank in turn gets tax credits and income from the sale of electricity to Eversource.”

**Solar panels likely to cover 60% of historic Bristol farmland next year. The panels are expected to power the equivalent of 733 homes Hartford Courant.** “Preservationists warn that the state has lost thousands of acres of agricultural property to solar development in the last decade. But advocates for solar power point out that in many cases, there were no buyers to run a profitable farm on the property...The solar power is

Gas plant continued from previous page

said. “Even now as his own Council on Climate Change provides suggestions for climate action in the state, they’ve failed to recommend action on this high-profile and divisive gas proposal. These two directions are incompatible. We’re asking our elected official, sworn to protect us, to listen to our call to stop this power plant once and for all.”

“As elected officials we have choices,” said State Rep. Geraldo Reyes of Waterbury. “It’s imperative we put a line in the sand now, just as we did with the Hartford incinerator in 2020. It’s great policy to put a stop to the Killingly plant and start addressing environmental justice best practices and make progress towards walking the talk. Having learned valuable lessons and we’ve grown from the sins of the past, I’m championing better air, water and land for my children and my community.”

“For Connecticut’s young people, the choice is stark. Going

ahead with a new gas-fired plant now would ensure that our toxic dependency on fossil fuels, and the resulting damage to our community’s health and environment, would be extended for many years,” said Eluned Li, organizer with Sunrise New Haven. “This benefits no one but the oil and gas industry, authorizing them to continue to profit from activities which endanger our health and irreversibly degrade our environment. Our elected officials have the choice, now, to put a stop to the Killingly plant and serve as a strong step in realizing a Green New Deal, and a future for all of us. We ask them to make the responsible choice, for us and for their own children.”

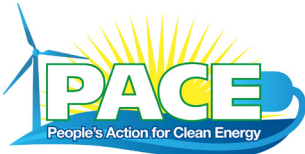
“Climate science states that our society needs to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and Gov. Lamont has promised to transition Connecticut away from the fossil fuels causing the Climate Emergency,” said 350 CT Steering Committee Member Ben Martin. “It is past time for the governor to back up his words with action by rejecting the polluting NTE

substantially less expensive than electricity purchased off the power grid, so Bristol would end up saving money on its energy bill.”

**Retroactive energy efficiency loans offer pandemic lifeline for some businesses Energy News Network.** “The Connecticut Green Bank, which administers that state’s C-PACE program, offers retroactive financing for qualifying projects completed within the previous year, but hasn’t done any since the pandemic hit...They have developed two separate incentive programs to help out business owners. One allows the borrower to defer the first two payments on their C-PACE loan, “so you’re getting money right into your pocket from the energy savings and increasing your cash flow.”

**Poll suggests strong support for Northeast cap-and-invest transportation initiative Energy News Network.** “The Transportation and Climate Initiative, or TCI, is modeled after the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a cooperative cap-and-trade effort that has helped drive down power plant emissions in the region. Participating states would set a cap on emissions from cars, trucks and other vehicles. Transportation fuel suppliers would have to buy allowances at auction for every ton of carbon dioxide their fuel will generate beyond the cap.”

**Pollinator-friendly solar projects move forward with new initiative led by Encore Renewable Energy and Greenbacker Capital to build solar sites Encore Renewable Energy.** “The new pollinator-friendly solar sites will support diverse and healthy pollinator populations with a diverse mix of native grasses and flowering plants. The higher upfront costs of establishing pollinator-friendly ground cover in Vermont and Maine are offset by long term savings for vegetative management. Pollinator-friendly ground cover at solar sites also allows for healthy plant ground cover that shades the soil, creating cooler ground conditions that may mitigate the negative effects of heat on solar energy production.”



**Closure Of MIRA Plant Sets Off Scramble To Recycle Thousands Of Tons Of Wasted Food WNPR.** “After decades of burning trash, the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) will close its Hartford incinerator by July 2022. That means hundreds of thousands of tons of trash will be destined for out-of-state landfills, a costly reality that has state and municipal officials questioning how to quickly reduce trash volumes. One solution? Recycling leftover food.”

fracked gas plant in Killingly, preventing new sources of emissions, and retiring current polluting plants.”

“This choice is one between the peoples’ best interests and further support of the fossil fuel industry,” said Dr. Todd Douglas, postdoctoral associate in the dept. of Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology at Yale University. “A brand new fracked gas plant will harm more of Connecticut’s greenfield land and useable water than we can afford, compromising the health of every resident of Killingly and surrounding areas. We have safe, clean renewable energy solutions with far greater energy output available cheaply already. There is no reason to build a plant that could pump out up to 90,000 gallons of toxic wastewater every single day. It’s time to do the responsible thing. We have the ability to protect public health, preserve our future, and lead the nation in clean energy solutions. Governor Lamont, make the right call.”

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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

A Farmer’s Dream

By C. Dennis Pierce

It was one of those gray days in November when the biting cold came late in the afternoon. The kind of day where the ground crunched under your footsteps, the grass shined from an early frost, and old man winter began teasing you as he occasionally tossed a handful of flakes in your face. On that day I was visiting the new farm that Julie and Todd Barton had purchased in Scotland, Connecticut. I had met the Bartons previously when I interviewed them in their roles as market masters for the Ashford Farmers Market. How can I describe Julia and Todd? Perhaps as dreamers? Mind you, not the type of dreamer who is wishful, but one who dreams about what life could be and then makes it happen. You can say that every farmer is a bit of a dreamer. Farm life is a vision that many farmers hold dear to their hearts, but few ever get to experience the greatest dream, a farm of one’s own. Not just any sort of farm, either, but a self-sufficient one running on nothing but the American Dream and a whole lot of elbow grease, the last stronghold of an era gone by in a world overrun with consumerism where big-box stores have shelves lined with processed foods. Barton Farm is a farmer’s dream.

We sometimes forget our roots in farming. Our early ancestors, about four hundred generations ago, were hunter-gatherers. Their food came from the plants they foraged and animals they hunted rather than from plants they farmed and animals they raised. When they began to domesticate animals and grow food in the first primitive gardens, they made choices about how to feed their livestock and what to plant. Those decisions produced tastier food, local food, food not only to sustain a family but also provide a community-supported livelihood.

As Todd and Julie will tell you, farming is hard work. Add to that the desire to be self-sufficient, and they have taken their efforts to a whole new level. Todd proudly shared, during my tour of the farm, that he would prefer to make something from scratch rather than to purchase it at a store. Whether it is milling his own wood or tinkering with a piece of machinery, the path to independence is a long and slow one, but a rewarding one. For the last nine years, the Bartons have leased land to grow their produce that they brought to market. After living and working on their agricultural journey, they finally have a place to call their own.

Julia and Todd said they were fortunate to have found their farm on Huntington Road (Route 14) in Scotland. The property runs adjacent to a large gurgling brook. A field, which lays nestled behind a stand of trees, is level, fertile with organic soil, and just begging to be productive again. The entire farm is a patchwork of pastures, cropland, and woods. In season, the Bartons’ selection of vegetables is a cornucopia of garden fare: Brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, red, gold, and russet potatoes, radishes, baby kale, beets, tomatoes, and mushrooms, to name just a few. Fresh eggs can be purchased at their stand at 35 Huntington Road from dawn to dusk. Having personally met their chickens, which are fed locally grown and milled grain, and experienced their eggs, I would highly recommend a trip to the stand for the best eggs from the Quiet Corner that you have ever tasted.

The Bartons’ mission is “to provide their customers, friends, and family with the most nutritious and delicious food around.” In season, Julie and Todd sell at the Ashford, Putnam, and Danielson farmers markets. If you follow them on Facebook (bartonfarmshampton), you might still be able to find their Saturday morning offerings that can be pre-ordered. On a return visit, I witnessed a line of fifteen customers, standing six feet apart in twenty-degree weather, waiting patiently as Julie and Todd scrambled to provide them with their orders.

More information can be found online at *bartonfarmsct.com*, or email *bartonfarmsct@gmail.com*.

\* \* \*

Beets when I was growing up were always that vegetable that comes in a can and the juice stains your fingers as you drain them in the sink. I would encourage you to experience roasted beets and find out what you have been missing. I am sure that you have not thought about serving pasta with beets. It is a great vegetarian option and healthy too. Here is a simple recipe that will convince your palate.



Julie Barton, at left, and Todd Barton, above.  
Dennis Pierce photos.

Roasted Beets with Pasta and Yogurt Cumin Sauce  
Serves 4

- Ingredients:
- 1½ lb. red beets
  - 1½ lb. golden beets
  - 4 tablespoons olive oil
  - 1 tablespoon fresh herbs chopped, such as basil, tarragon, or mint
  - 1 box egg noodles

- Ingredients for sauce:
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
  - 1 clove garlic, minced
  - 1 cup plain yogurt (thick, strained, or Greek-style)
  - 2 tablespoons sour cream
  - 2 tablespoons lemon juice
  - ¼ teaspoon salt
  - one-eighth teaspoon cayenne (add more to taste)

- Directions for beets:
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
  - Wash and dry whole beets, leaving skin on.
  - Toss/rub with olive oil.
  - Place on a rack in a roasting pan. Add a small amount of water to the pan and place in oven.
  - Bake until the beet can be pierced through with a knife.
  - Remove beets and let cool.
  - Trim beets and remove skins by rubbing with a paper towel.
  - Cut beets in 1-inch dice. Keep the colors separate.

- Directions for pasta:
- Everyone knows to salt their pasta water, but most add just a pinch. Ideally, you should add roughly 2 tablespoons of salt per pound of pasta. That might sound like a lot, but your pasta will be so much better for it. An adequately salted pot of water will result in perfectly seasoned pasta; an under-salted pot will leave your pasta bland and flat.
  - More often than not, cooking times listed on pasta boxes are far too long. Start tasting your pasta 3 to 4 minutes sooner than the time on the box to be sure you’re not boiling your pasta to mush.

For many classic pasta dishes, it is essential to create a velvety, delicious sauce. I like to set a glass measuring cup in the sink next to my colander to catch the first cup or so of pasta water. Later, when you’re mixing your pasta with your sauce, you can add this reserved water a tablespoon or two at a time if your pasta seems dry. This starchy, salty liquid will give your sauce body and improve its texture.

I know it’s tempting to boil pasta in the smallest pot possible. But if all your noodles are crowded together, they’ll cook unevenly. Give your pasta some space and use a larger pot.

After pasta is drained, it retains a light coating of starch—think of it as the glue that sticks your sauce to the cooked pasta. If you rinse that starch away, the surface will be smooth and the sauce will have a harder time adhering.

- Directions for sauce:
- Peel and mince the garlic clove. If you have a garlic press and want a stronger garlic flavor, go ahead and use it.
  - Put the yogurt, sour cream, lemon juice, garlic, ground cumin, salt, and cayenne in a small bowl. Stir to combine. Adjust all seasonings to taste.
  - Cover and store in the refrigerator and allow the flavors to blend for at least 1 hour.
  - When ready to serve, gently warm up the sauce. Do not overheat.
  - Place cooked pasta on a warm dish. Assemble cooked beets, separating the colors. Top with sauce and sprinkle with fresh herbs.

\* \* \*

As this is the January issue, we find the passing of the solstice, December 21, a time when slowly, so slowly, the days move from the shortest day of the year to the longest day of the year, the summer solstice. To me it is a time of encouragement, sort of seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, knowing that as the seasons change, opportunities lie ahead. 2020 was definitely a learning experience, and hopefully we all learned from the changes we made in our lives and became a little better person because of it. Stay safe.

If you have a suggestion for a farm or a local grower, or even a recipe that would feature a local ingredient, please let me know. I will do my best to share your suggestions in a future column. Drop me a line at *codfish53@yahoo.com*.

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Unsung Heroes of Soul:

# The Soul Children

By Dean Farrell

As host of “The Soul Express,” I play the biggest names in 1960s and ‘70s-era soul music. I also mix in the many great soul artists who did not make it big but were no less talented. This month’s column is about one such act: the Soul Children, one of only a few successful vocal groups to record at the Stax Studios in Memphis.

The songwriting/production team of Isaac Hayes and David Porter formed the group in 1968, following the forced departure from Stax of Sam & Dave, for whom Hayes and Porter had created hits like “Hold On! I’m Coming” and “Soul Man.” The duo was signed to Atlantic and had to return there following the end of the company’s partnership with Stax.

The original Soul Children were Norman West, John Colbert (better known as J. Blackfoot), Anita Louis, and Shelbra Bennett. Blackfoot had previously joined the Bar-Kays after four of its original members died in a plane crash; Louis had sung background on earlier Hayes/Porter productions; Bennett had recently signed with Stax as a recording act; and West had replaced William Bell as lead singer of the Del Rios, who recorded for Stax in the early ‘60s. He also belonged to a band called Colors Incorporated. At different times, each member got to sing lead on the Soul Children’s recordings.

Their debut release, “Give ‘Em Love,” reached #40 on the Billboard Rhythm and Blues/Soul chart in early 1969. They followed it with two more charted singles and ended the year with a top ten smash, “The Sweeter He Is, Part 1.” It also became their first entry on the Billboard pop chart. Nineteen Sixty-Nine further saw the release of the Soul Children’s self-titled debut album.

In 1970, Isaac Hayes ceased working with the quartet to pursue his career as a solo artist. After two years off the chart, the Soul Children came back with the uptempo novelty number, “Hearsay.” It reached #5 R&B and #44 pop in 1972. That summer, they played the Wattstax festival in Los Angeles.

In late 1973, the Soul Children released their all-time biggest single, “I’ll Be the Other Woman.” The deep, emotional ballad reached #3 R&B and #36 pop. It was also their last major hit for Stax before the label went bankrupt in 1975.

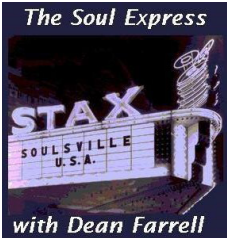
By the following year, the Soul Children had been reduced to a trio following Shelbra Bennett’s departure. In 1976, they signed with Epic, for whom the group placed three singles on the Soul chart. None rose higher than #49.

In 1978, David Porter signed the Soul Children to the reactivated Stax imprint, which now operated under the auspices of Fantasy Records. He co-produced their album, “Open Door Policy,” which spawned the group’s final charted single, “Can’t Give Up a Good Thing.” With no additional success forthcoming, the Soul Children split up in 1979.



Anita Louis left the music business and worked for FedEx, Time-Warner, and later as a professional business trainer. J. Blackfoot pursued a career as a solo artist, hitting #4 on the Soul chart with “Taxi” in early 1984. Norman West played in nightclubs and also performed gospel music. And Shelbra Bennett recorded several singles as Shelbra Deane.

In 2007, Blackfoot and West revived the Soul Children with two new members, Ann Hines and Cassandra Graham. They recorded an album called “Still Standing” for the JEA Right Now label. In 2008, West released a solo single, “Long Ride Home.”



J. Blackfoot, 65, died of pancreatic cancer on November 30, 2011. Shelbra Bennett, 66, died in Memphis on May 31, 2013.

Charted singles:

- “Give ‘Em Love” (1968-69) R&B #40
- “I’ll Understand” (1969) R&B #29
- “Tighten Up My Thang” (1969) R&B #49
- “The Sweeter He Is, Part 1” (1969) R&B #7, Pop #52
- “Hold On, I’m Coming” (1970) R&B #48
- “Hearsay” (1972) R&B #5, Pop #44
- “Don’t Take My Kindness for Weakness” (1972) R&B #14, Pop #102
- “It Ain’t Always What You Do (It’s Who You Let See You Do It)” (1973) R&B #11, Pop #105
- “Love Is a Hurtin’ Thing” (1973) R&B #59
- “I’ll Be the Other Woman” (1973-74) R&B #3, Pop #36
- “Love Makes It Right” (1974) R&B #47
- “Finders Keepers” (1976) R&B #49
- “If You Move I’ll Fall” (1976) R&B #99
- “Where Is Your Woman Tonight?” (1977) R&B #96
- “Can’t Give Up a Good Thing” (1978) R&B #19

Dean Farrell hosts “The Soul Express” twice on Fridays: on WRTC, 89.3-FM ([www.wrtcfm.com](http://www.wrtcfm.com)) from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. and on WECS, 90.1-FM ([www.wecsfm.com](http://www.wecsfm.com)), from 9:00 p.m. - midnight. He plays vintage soul music of the 1960s and ‘70s--everything from #1 hits to long-lost obscurities. Dean’s e-mail address is [soulexpress@gmail.com](mailto:soulexpress@gmail.com).

## Teacher of the Year Shares Distance-Learning Tips

(StatePoint) School closures and hybrid learning models have forced educators, parents and students to adapt to new forms of learning; the impact of this is not to be underestimated. Teachers and parents around the country have expressed concerns about the accessibility and quality of education under these conditions.

Fortunately, new tools and educational resources are being made accessible to help tackle these concerns. “Teacher of the Year” and author Michael Bonner is sharing resourceful ways for educators, students, families and communities to address some of the common challenges associated with distance- and hybrid-learning.

1. Students: Create Personalized Workspaces: When students have a lack of comfort, stress has a way of compounding at an exponential level. To combat this, focus on the things that create a productive and inviting learning environment, like creating a workspace that is functional, fun and organized.

The good news is that it doesn’t require many materials to create a DIY desk and it’s a great activity

to do together. Using science tri-folds and heavy-duty tape, parents and kids can create private cubicles that can be propped up on any surface and customized to their liking – be creative and look to bring things into the space that will keep your child energized and motivated.

2. Parents: Increase Communication Touchpoints: With most schools operating through some variation of distance- or hybrid-learning, communication is a key asset for parents. Staying in regular contact with your child’s teacher can help you better understand and track how your child is performing and get ahead of any potential issues or concerns.

Parents should feel empowered to reach out to their child’s teacher for progress updates or to address any areas of confusion with class schedules or assignments. Something as simple as sending a bi-weekly email with questions could help improve the overall experience for you and your child.

3. Teachers: Keep Kids Engaged: Teachers can break up the day by infusing different educational games and hands-on learning opportu-

nities like 3M Science at Home. This online STEM video series is a great example of how students can tap into their curiosity about the world around them. By discussing observations and giving kids a chance to ask questions and come up with solutions, teachers and parents can foster a growth mindset while keeping kids engaged.

4. Community: Working Together to Improve Educational Access and Equity: COVID-19 has forced organizations, businesses and education systems to configure new frameworks to continue functioning. Unfortunately, educators are facing a huge wall as roughly 15 percent of U.S. households with school-age children do not have the high-speed internet connection at home needed to complete their assignments, according to Pew Research Center data.

As we all adjust to new educational models, ensuring learning is engaging and fun doesn’t have to be challenging, it can start with just a few simple techniques. Diversifying your approach will help students better retain information and grasp new concepts while having fun.



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# The Price of Covidiocy

By Delia Berlin

I could (and probably should) be positive and focus on the good things that may have come out of the pandemic and the miracle of safe and effective vaccines starting to reach us, less than a year after the discovery of the novel coronavirus. But nah. I’m tired of lifting myself by the bootstraps and it’s time to acknowledge that this entire situation sucks.

Is there light at the end of the tunnel? Yes. But ignoring so much death and suffering is impossible. And things will still get worse before they get better. It’s already been a long time away from friends, family, and normal community interactions. I’ll admit that those of us who are still alive, healthy, with a roof over our heads and food on the table, have much to be thankful for. But if your dog dies, you grieve, even if less-fortunate others may be mourning close relatives. A “lesser” loss is still a loss and 2020 has been full of them.

One of the most stinging aspects of the pandemic is our dismal national performance, relative to many other countries. With 4% of the world’s population, we hover around a quarter of the world’s infections. And even now, close to a year into this calamity, we don’t have a consistent national response. Help is on the way, but we should never forget this embarrassing, painful, and costly debacle.

At our home, we are seriously hunkering down, but we go out for essential activities. There will be no shopping or gatherings for the holidays this year. So, a few days ago I went to the post office to mail a box with home-produced presents for my daughter’s family. I anticipated that, as Christmas nears, the post office would be busy. Fearing a long wait in a crowded indoor space, I wore a face shield in addition to a mask.

As I entered the post office, I was pleased to see that there were three workers at the counter and the line was moving fast. Although the line appeared long due to social distancing, there were only three or four people ahead of me. But it bothered me that there was only one narrow opening between the vestibule and the lobby. Everyone had to enter and leave through that doorway, making distancing and safe circulation impossible. To top it off, as I was reaching that opening, a rude man with a large box pushed past me to get to a table in the lobby. When I flinched as he shoved me aside, he yelled “Relax!” and glared at me. He looked like the kind of guy who would proudly punch a grandma, and I was tempted to dare him. But he was wearing his mask below his nose and I didn’t want to elicit more potentially infected droplets from him, so I just moved along.

That episode disturbed me for the abundance of ignorance it illustrates. First, that guy, like so many out there, didn’t learn to wear a face covering in a way that protects him and others. Second, he acted defensively, as if I was treating him as infectious, without really considering that possibly I could infect him. Third, how is it that the post office, an essential service, didn’t modify its circulation pattern to avoid a bottleneck? Restaurants and retail spaces had to incur all sort of expenses to follow guidelines to curb the spread. Why not the post office?

From the start of the pandemic, misinformation, confusion, and inconsistency of messages have been ram-



pant. Remember when we were told that our mask protected others and their mask protected us? Can that statement survive any logical explanation? Of course, if one barrier helps, a second barrier must help still more. It is true that if the mask wearer is the only infected party, his mask is that one that helps the most. But since we can’t know who is infected, there is no question that universal mask wearing is best. It is impossible to list all the ways in which we have screwed up, but the proof of our terrible response is in the pudding.

As I write this, we are starting to pay the price of rampant Thanksgiving self-indulgence. Against scientific advice, high powers told us to gather and have fun, because for some of us, it would be the last Thanksgiving. Sadly, because of that incompetent advice, it was indeed the last Thanksgiving for even many more. The response to the virus seems to require a level of thinking that has become rare: connecting a future event with present behavior. That kind of thinking makes squirrels collect nuts and put them away for times of need. You would think that humans are capable of similar cognitive achievements. Granted, some are, but many ignored the experts’ recommendations and 20% of us traveled far and wide, gathering in large numbers for Thanksgiving feasts. There is no better recipe for spreading a respiratory infection.

Unfortunately, the price of getting infected with a dangerous disease is not only paid by the victim. There are many more casualties, from those secondarily infected, to medical providers risking their own health to dispense care and loved ones left to worry or to mourn. Not everyone is infected through negligence, but those who don’t follow basic recommendations or refuse to wear masks are at least partially responsible for their fate.

I will avoid providing current data because numbers will be outdated by the time of publication. But let’s take New York City in the early days of the pandemic, as a microcosm of the country’s trajectory ever since. According to CDC data, during the first three months of the pandemic (roughly between March and June 2020) New York City had 203,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19. The overall death rate for these cases was 9.2%. Hospitals were overwhelmed, and almost one-third of the patients hospitalized with Covid-19 died. In that short period, New York City recorded at least 18,600 deaths from Covid-19. During peak intensity, the last week of March had an average of 5,132 cases per day, and a test positivity rate over 65%. It was during those dark days that my daughter, a physician at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, fell ill. For weeks, she had been working incredibly long hours in extremely trying conditions. Colleagues were getting sick. Some were intubated. So many people were arriving critically ill that some were dying while waiting to be seen. The normally orderly routine of hospital care was starting to feel like a desperate conveyor belt from ER to morgue. The city had several days when the number of 911 calls exceeded that from 9/11. Emotionally, it felt draining and surreal.

In order to preserve personal protective equipment and maximize capacity, New York hospitals cancelled all elective procedures. Suddenly, every patient was a Covid patient. As the rate of infections accelerated, PPE became scarce and practitioners were forced to improvise ways of protecting themselves. My daughter wore garbage bags as gowns, five-gallon Ziploc bags as face shields, cloth face masks made by relatives. Exhausted, she would arrive home for a little food and sleep, strip in the hallway, and

shower before greeting her family for fear of contaminating them.

Still, in spite of all precautions, she suddenly got body aches, a bad headache, a sore throat, and a fever. At that point, testing was reserved only for patients requiring admission. Each test required use of PPE that was in short supply, so the health care workers themselves had to forgo that privilege. They were expected to work, as long as they were able to. So, as soon as my daughter felt a little better, she returned to work, still untested. But after two or three days of feeling relatively well, her symptoms returned with a vengeance. Headache, nausea, cough, shortness of breath, and loss of sense of smell all appeared in turn. Almost simultaneously, my nine-year-old granddaughter had a low-grade fever and lost her sense of smell too. My son-in-law had only a brief malaise and headache that could have been attributable to worry alone. Without testing available, they couldn’t be sure about his status at the time.

On the thirteenth day after the onset of my daughter’s symptoms, she was able to get tested and confirm her diagnosis. Eventually, after several worrisome days, she recovered completely, and my granddaughter regained her sense of smell. Several weeks later, both my daughter and son-in-law were tested for antibodies. While my son-in-law was negative, my daughter had strong neutralizing antibodies. She was able to donate convalescent plasma and enroll in a study to track the evolution of her antibodies. As of her last test, she still had them.

Meanwhile, in eastern Connecticut, because our state took a regional approach to mitigation, we benefited from adopting measures at the same time as New York, the epicenter of the pandemic. The tsunami was headed our way and we could see it coming, so our intervention was earlier in the game and therefore more effective. By the time you can see the ravages of this virus, the train is already speeding down the mountain.

We were all staying at home then, but hardly anything was happening in our corner of the woods. When the cumulative number of cases in Windham hit 100, after many weeks, it was front page news. Amazingly, just yesterday our daily number of new cases was 95 and almost everything, except bars, is still open. As our second big wave started to build in the fall, we could also see it coming, but little was done to stem its impact. We will pay for this inaction. Exponential growth in cases will be followed by a corresponding rise in hospitalizations, and eventually in deaths. It’s only a matter of time.

We are the only developed country where the pandemic is worsening out of control, and the only one that didn’t do much to sustain our people and small businesses during shutdowns. Understandably, people are more likely to work when sick if they don’t have paid leave. Businesses are also less willing to close if they don’t receive assistance to survive the closing. Not enough is being done to keep everyone safe and afloat until the danger passes.

Eventually more vaccines will arrive and, hopefully, most of us will take them. Logistical problems for distribution abound, including cold storage and required double-dosing. It will take time, but each day of immunizations should reduce transmission and make our lives a little easier. In the meantime, please stay well and survive to get there. Be careful, kind, and reasonable. Avoid crowds and indoor spaces, wear a mask, and wash your hands.

## Weiss, Hale & Zahansky 2020 Five Star Wealth Manager Award Winners

Submitted by Jarell Roberts – Manager, Brand & Client Relationships.

POMFRET CENTER, CT (January 2021) — Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors’, Principals/Managing Partners, Laurence Hale & Jim Zahansky are Five Star Wealth Award Winners.

Five Star Professional partnered with Connecticut magazine to recognize a select group of Connecticut based wealth managers who provide strategic, quality advice to their clients. Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors (WHZ), Principals/Managing Partners, Laurence Hale & Jim Zahansky were selected among thousands of wealth managers across the United States for the 2020 Five Star Wealth Manager award. “We are honored and humbled to receive this recognition again this year as 2020 has

been a challenging one. The award symbolizes how our team continued to uphold our mission to create the best wealth management experience for every client, every time, at every touchpoint,” states Managing Partner Jim Zahansky. “We could not have won this award without the dedication, hard work, and thoughtfulness our team has shown towards our clients throughout 2020,” adds Managing Partner, Laurence Hale. The Five Star Wealth Manager award program is the largest and most widely published wealth manager award program in the financial services industry. The award is based on a rigorous, multifaceted research methodology, which incorporates input from peers and firm leaders along with client retention rates, industry experience and a thorough regulatory history review which include: Credentialed as an investment advisory

representative or a registered investment advisor  
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Favorable regulatory and complaint history review  
Fulfilled their firm review based on internal firm standards  
Accepting new clients  
Favorable one-year client retention rate  
Favorable five-year retention rate  
Non-institutional discretionary and/or non-discretionary client assets administered  
Number of client households served  
Education and professional designations

The Five Star Professional criteria are stringent and provide individuals, non-profit organizations and business owners with a starting point when searching for advisors that may be a fit to help guide them toward

their life financial goals. The WHZ Strategic Wealth Advisors team utilizes their Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™ process that continues to gain recognition, to help create the best wealth management experience for clients and prospects alike. 3,048 Connecticut-area wealth managers were considered for the award; 285 (9% of candidates) were named 2020 Five Star Wealth Managers. This award is not indicative of the wealth managers’ future performance. Your experiences may vary. For more information, please visit [www.fivestarpromotional.com](http://www.fivestarpromotional.com). Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. 697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret, CT 06259. 860-928-2341.



# Take Control to Begin Recovery or Acceleration of Your Financial Goals

By James Zahansky, AWMA®  
Principal/Managing Partner & Chief  
Goal Strategist



As we begin 2021 we have to unpack 2020 as it relates to our personal finances and life financial goals. Is your financial plan still intact? If yes, you are doing a fantastic job and are persevering through the pandemic. If no, why not and how do you recover and rebuild. Considering the WHZ Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well process, a great place to start is your personal or household budget. Do you ever wonder where your money goes each month? Does it seem like you're never able to get ahead? If so, you may want to establish or revisit a budget to help you keep track of how you spend your money and help you reach your financial goals.

### Examine your financial goals

Before you establish a budget, you should examine your financial goals. Start by making a list of your short-term goals (e.g., new car, new job, vacation) and your long-term goals (e.g., your child's college education, retirement). Next, ask yourself: How important is it for me to achieve this goal? How much will I need to save? Armed with a clear picture of your goals, you can work toward establishing a budget that can help you reach them.

### Identify your current monthly income and expenses

To develop a budget that is appropriate for your lifestyle, you'll need to identify your current monthly income and expenses. You can jot the information down with a pen and paper, or you can use one of the many software programs available that are designed specifically for this purpose.

Start by adding up all of your income. In addition to your regular salary and wages, be sure to include other types of income, such as dividends, interest, and child support. Next, add up all of your expenses. To see where you have a choice in your spending, it helps to divide them into two categories: fixed expenses (e.g., housing, food, clothing, transportation) and discretionary expenses (e.g., entertainment, vacations, hobbies). You'll also want to make sure that you have identified any out-of-pattern expenses, such as holiday gifts, car maintenance, home repair, and so on. To make sure that you're not forgetting anything, it may help to look through canceled checks, credit card bills, and other receipts from the past year. Finally, as you list your expenses, it is important to remember your financial goals. Whenever possible, treat your goals as expenses and contribute toward them regularly.

### Evaluate your budget

Once you've added up all of your income and expenses, compare the two totals. To get ahead, you should be spending less than you earn. If this is the case, you're on the right track, and you need to look at how well you use your extra income. If you find yourself spending more than you earn, you'll need to make some adjustments. Look at your expenses closely and cut down on your discretionary spending. And remember, if you do find yourself coming up short, don't worry! All it will take is some determination and a little self-discipline, and you'll eventually get it right.

## Tips for Organized Tax Filing

(StatePoint) 2020 was a particularly stressful year -- but filing its taxes doesn't need to be. With the following tips, you can stay organized and cool-headed throughout the process.

### File Early

File early so you check this major to-do off your list and relax. The good news is that the sooner you file, the better. This is true no matter what your circumstances are. If you owe money, you'll have that much more time to plan your payment. If you're due for a refund, filing sooner means you'll have your money sooner, money which can be used to pay bills, be invested or be added to a rainy day fund. To that end, take some time to glance at your overall financial picture

so you can make a smart game plan for directing your refund usefully.

### Check Your Work

A multi-functional printing calculator with a 12-digit display can help you check your work and track and manage any necessary calculations, while ensuring your figures aren't truncated. Look for a model that prints in two colors, such as Casio's HR-170RC, so you can quickly see both positive and negative numbers to avoid reading errors. If you have any international holdings, this is a must-have tax season tool, as its functions include currency exchange. This model also has a built-in tax feature that lets you store a frequently-used rate and pull it up when needed, as well

### Monitor your budget

You'll need to monitor your budget periodically and make changes when necessary. But keep in mind that you don't have to keep track of every penny that you spend. In fact, the less record keeping you have to do, the easier it will be to stick to your budget. Above all, be flexible. Any budget that is too rigid is likely to fail. So be prepared for the unexpected (e.g., leaky roof, failed car transmission).

### Tips to help you stay on track

- Involve the entire family: Agree on a budget up front and meet regularly to check your progress
- Stay disciplined: Try to make budgeting a part of your daily routine
- Start your new budget at a time when it will be easy to follow and stick with the plan (e.g., the beginning of the year, as opposed to right before the holidays)
- Find a budgeting system that fits your needs (e.g., budgeting software, smart phone app or website)
- Distinguish between expenses that are "wants" (e.g., designer shoes) and expenses that are "needs" (e.g., groceries)
- Build rewards into your budget (e.g., eat out every other week)
- Avoid using credit cards to pay for everyday expenses: It may seem like you're spending less, but your credit card debt will continue to increase

### Budget Well = Plan Well

Starting the new year off right financially is an essential ingredient to rebuilding or accelerating your life financial goals. Revisiting and establishing a forward looking and achievable budget is a basic component to Planning Well. If you need assistance prioritizing your finances to help you work toward your long-term financial life goals visit our website at [www.whzwealth.com](http://www.whzwealth.com) or give our office a call at 860-928-2341. Together, we can leverage our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well process to help you get to the financial fearlessness you desire.

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as a check function that allows you to scroll up to 150 steps of previous calculations.

### Stay Secure

Your financials and personal data are especially vulnerable during tax season. Be sure to keep all the paperwork associated with your taxes organized securely. As forms arrive by mail, file them neatly in one place that's locked and secure. Sensitive information can easily be misused if it falls into the wrong hands. If you're storing information electronically, be sure to use strong passwords and work only on a secure network.

By giving yourself the right tools and plenty of time, you can better ensure timely, accurate tax preparation.



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# Calling Her by Her Name

By Phoebe Godfrey

*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.*

— Author unknown, though often mistakenly attributed to Albert Einstein



wise, based on the thousands of years of insight, practice, and wisdom of Indigenous people around the world, what I understand as the root of our self-destructiveness may for some seem as enigmatic as “42.” For from our culture’s perspective, the cause, and thus the solution, must reflect our ever-increasing sense of exclusivity as humans, as civilized, as Westerners, as Christians, as Americans, as whites, as men, as rich people, as scientists, etc., and therefore such an answer as “42,” or what I and others would propose, must be a miscalculation, a joke, an impossibility, as it does not reflect our hierarchy of self-importance and therefore cannot, must not be feasible.

It is the start of a new year, and as the clock struck midnight on December 31 there was a palpable sigh that made a time-space wave around the world, inspired by the hope that 2021 will be, must be better. And as we have all been telling ourselves, especially here in the U.S.A, how can it not be, given that we are newly armed with the prospects of the Covid-19 vaccine and a new president ready to set up his seemingly more mature, civil, and even progressive administration. Even when it comes to our ultimate challenge, climate change and environmental destruction—which, like Voldemort, must not be named in our culture of denial—a renewed buzz can be heard whispering tropes of salvation such as “rejoining the Paris Agreement,” “investing in renewable energy,” “plant-based plastics,” and “Power-to-X” (a method to decarbonize energy use).

However, I would like to propose that all such potential optimism remains within the realm of “insanity,” as so defined as “doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.” I do not state this to make myself sound overly cynical and thereby advertise my intellectual prowess, nor do I state it to propose that I alone have an alternative insight into the means for manifesting authentic optimism, based on sanity. Rather, what I seek to point out is that, as a culture that has inflicted through conquest its profit-driven values around the world, our proposed solutions to the current convergence of crises all merely attempt to mitigate symptoms, as opposed to addressing causes.

As I like to say to my students, the vast majority of our solutions to climate change and environmental destruction are like methadone treatment for addressing heroin addiction; yes, it can help stabilize the body’s addiction and cravings so that therapeutic and behavioral treatment can begin to address the core psychological issues that may have prompted the behavior in the first place, but alone it is not a solution. Likewise, all of our highly technological solutions to climate change may help in the short term to stabilize our social and environmental destruction, but they are not long-term solutions because they do not come close to addressing the causes: our culture’s addiction to capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and other toxic forms of domination. I am reminded of the wonderful book by the late Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* (1979), in which the supercomputer Deep Thought spends 7.2 million years on the “Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything” and comes back with the answer “42.” Like-

Yet truth is a funny thing. Despite our cultural perception that it is stored in our minds like a memory, in “truth” it lives in our bodies and is what animates them, regardless of what we may believe. Truth is the breath that we who are currently living are collectively taking at this moment, and this moment, and this moment—it is the life force of all reality. And, in simple terms, this life force comes from fire (sun), soil (earth), water, and air, which together make life on Earth possible, and perhaps even inevitable. Thus, the cause of our culture’s self-destructiveness is our failure to recognize that it is not we who create life, but She, the living, breathing, tangible planet whose mysteries we can never fully learn, no matter how technologically advanced our wax wings become, for in the end their melting is all but inevitable. To best explore this truth, I am going to end with the words of Marilou Awiakta, a poet whose perspective fuses her Cherokee, Scots-Irish, and Appalachian heritage. Her poem “When Earth Becomes an ‘It’” (1993) offers what I understand as the sanity and the hope we seek this new year, especially if more of us prodigal children from the world’s most destructive culture begin our journey home, calling Her by Her name...

## When Earth Becomes an “It”

By Marilou Awiakta

When the people call Earth “Mother,” they take with love and with love give back so that all may live.

When the people call Earth “it,” they use her consume her strength. Then the people die.

Already the sun is hot out of season. Our Mother’s breast is going dry. She is taking all green into her heart and will not turn back until we call her by her name.

Solar Today:

# Questions and answers about solar in your neighborhood

By John Boiano

This will be an ongoing column and I am encouraging you to reach out and ask questions about solar and renewable energy. Appropriate questions will be answered in the following month.

My goal is to break some myths around solar and to help you decide if going solar would best benefit your financial and personal lifestyle. Solar’s not for everyone but it may be a perfect fit for you.

Please join us for a live community conversation on Solar and the free CT Home Energy Audit via a zoom meeting on 1/12/21 at 7pm. Access info is listed below.

Greetings,

Welcome 2021! There’s been a lot of excitement in the solar industry with the wonderful news of the 26% ITC (Solar Investment Tax Credit) being extended for another 2 years.

How does this benefit homeowners wanting to go solar? Soon, everyone who can have solar, will have solar! It just makes sense to use renewable resources for everything and anything we possibly can.

The extension will enable more people to receive a greater tax benefit than what we expected at the turn of the new year. The ITC was scheduled to step down to 20% on 1/1/2021 and then completely go away in 2022. This last minute extension is good for all of us.

On the Winter Solstice (12/21/20), Congress passed a MASSIVE \$35 Billion to go directly to energy research and development programs. It directs billions of dollars over the next 5 years to tax credits, technology improvements on solar, wind, geothermal and energy storage.

The Government knows that this is a large initiative and one worth fighting for. So much so that we are seeing major investors including those in “traditional” energy, including our government and utility companies nationwide, all investing in and implementing renewable energy growth and infrastructure. All across the country more and more local, state and federal agencies are investing in renewable energy. The US Government continually implements solar projects into their current and long-term planning strategies. I can throw out a bunch of statistics that would fill this and many more articles.

As you may notice, more and more solar farms are popping up. Some of them are owned and operated by the utility company. In looking at short and long-term goals, it costs less to procure land, build a solar fields with very low maintenance costs than it does to continually maintain and upgrade one of the oldest electric grids in the country. They’re doing this because it makes financial sense.

What does the extended tax credit mean to you? It means that:

You will save more money than if the credit went down to 20%.

Renewable energy is worth investing in otherwise they would not have extended the credit.

The industry is valid and you should take advantage of it as soon as possible. Why wait to save money?



Here are a few questions that I’ve recently received from customers:

I heard that solar costs more than the utility, is this true?

If it did cost more, we would see fewer people doing it. Whether you use your own money, the banks money (loan) or a finance partners money (PPA), on “average” I see people saving 25-30% on their monthly bill. If it did cost you more, I would recommend that you wouldn’t be a good candidate for solar.

Will it work for me? Maybe?

The only way to know for sure is to get a no cost quote by a professional. Solar is simple. It either makes sense or it doesn’t. It will either work for you or it won’t!

Should I do this now? Why wait?

Folks who I’ve visited with years ago and sign up down the road always say that they wish they would have done it years ago.

There are a few hurdles to get by when going solar. One hurdle is the amount of capacity remaining on your local transformer. When that fills up, there either needs to be an investment made to upgrade your transformer or the application is denied by the utility. A better solar company will do all of this research work for you.

Is a battery the least expensive way to store extra solar energy?

The least expensive way to store extra energy is through net metering provided by the utility company at no charge to you. Batteries are costly and work in many situations. They can be implemented with solar at any time down the road.

Should I wait for new technology?

You can if you want to but I wouldn’t recommend it. I’ve been studying the industry for about 13 years. I haven’t seen waiting for new technology to be an advantage for a homeowner.

It’s like waiting to buy your next computer until technology stops changing. If you do, you will never buy a new computer.

By the time there would be any significant changes in technology, you would have spent more money on current utility costs than what the new technology would save you in the long run. That is if there even was a savings. R & D and new production costs money, they pass those costs on to consumers.

Conceptually paying for solar is simple.

You switch who you’re paying for power at a lower guaranteed rate.

If it makes sense, people do it, if it doesn’t, they don’t. It’s that simple.

Let’s continue this conversation: Please reach out with questions for next month’s column and be sure to join us for our community conversation on solar via Zoom on 1/12/21 at 7:00PM. Please email or call me to gain access to the meeting link.

Until next month... ENJOY!

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# Brain Wars – The Gender Edition

By Bob Lorentson

By now, most of us have likely noticed that there are significant differences in the way the brains of men and women work. Or don't work, as the case may be. Neuroscientists explain these differences with highly technical scientific jargon about places like Broca's area and Wernicke's area, all of which makes the brain seem more like Area 51 to me. It should be noted however that these explanations can differ substantially among neuroscientists. This should not be surprising, as neuroscientists also come in different genders. But as few of us can understand neuroscientists of any gender, I've taken it upon myself to try and act the part of interpreter.

Let's get this out of the way straight off. Men have larger brains than women. This is no doubt because men are always subjecting their brains to strenuous workouts. Women question whether drinking beer while solving the world's problems with friends can be called workouts, but then women question everything men do. If they had larger brains they might seek answers instead of merely asking questions.

Women have more brain cells than men, which seems a suspicious way around the size discrepancy. The neuroscientists seem to be silent on the reasons for this, but women tell me it's likely how they can avoid doing stupid men things. And then they go on and on listing those things. I think I heard the words war and football, and something about not listening to them, though I can't swear to it. Regardless, it seems one thing is clear anyway – they have men to thank for those extra brain cells. I won't hold my breath waiting for a thank you.

Men and women use different parts of their brains while thinking. This gets fairly complicated, but in common language these are known as either the right parts or the wrong parts. To make it even more confusing, sometimes the right parts are wrong, and vice versa.

Male and female brain neurons take up significantly different amounts of dopamine, which is a brain chemical that acts as a mood enhancer. This may be because men's neurons can only be activated by an on-off switch, while women's neurons are believed to be activated by a randomly operated dimmer-type switch with thousands of gradations. Women love to flaunt this feature over men, who can only respond by turning their neurons on or off, or by bragging about their larger brains.

Women experience more brain pain from pressure than men. Men don't feel much brain pain from pressure, unless it's coming from women. Women experience more brain pain in general, and list coexisting with men as the primary reason. Men list bragging about their larger brains as the primary reason for coexisting with women.

Women have greater language skills than men and so are more communicative. This is because of their larger temporal and frontal lobes. Women like to remind men that it is these complex language skills that separate humans from other animals, including most men. Men generally respond by either grunting angrily, grabbing another beer, or turning up the volume on the football game. Some even do all three.

Men tend to be better at math, thanks to their larger parietal lobes. Unfortunately, this lobe is not the lobe it used to be, having been rendered largely obsolete by electronic technology. To rub it in, women are better at multi-tasking, as any male can confirm by watching them easily juggle electronics like computers, calculators, phones, and guided robotic surgical tools, all while criticizing them.

Women handle stress better than men, all thanks to the release of a hormone called oxytocin. Men release oxytocin too, though for them it is immediately pummeled into submission by the male hormone testosterone, whose job it is to patrol the brain and root out all weak, pacifist leaning hormones. Thanks to testosterone, men have long known that stress is better handled with beer than oxytocin anyway.

Women have better long-term memory, and a better memory of faces. This is possibly because the part of the brain associated with blame is more highly developed in women. Men have better short-term memory, and a better memory of things. This is possibly because the part of the brain associated with beer is more highly developed in men.

Perhaps most importantly, extensive IQ testing has revealed that neither gender is more intelligent. The testing however does show differences. Women's IQs tend to be bunched around the average, while men's are more likely to fall into either high or low extremes. Which extreme likely depends on the quantity and quality of either the women or beer in their lives.

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Roadtrip to New London:

# Connecticut College Arboretum

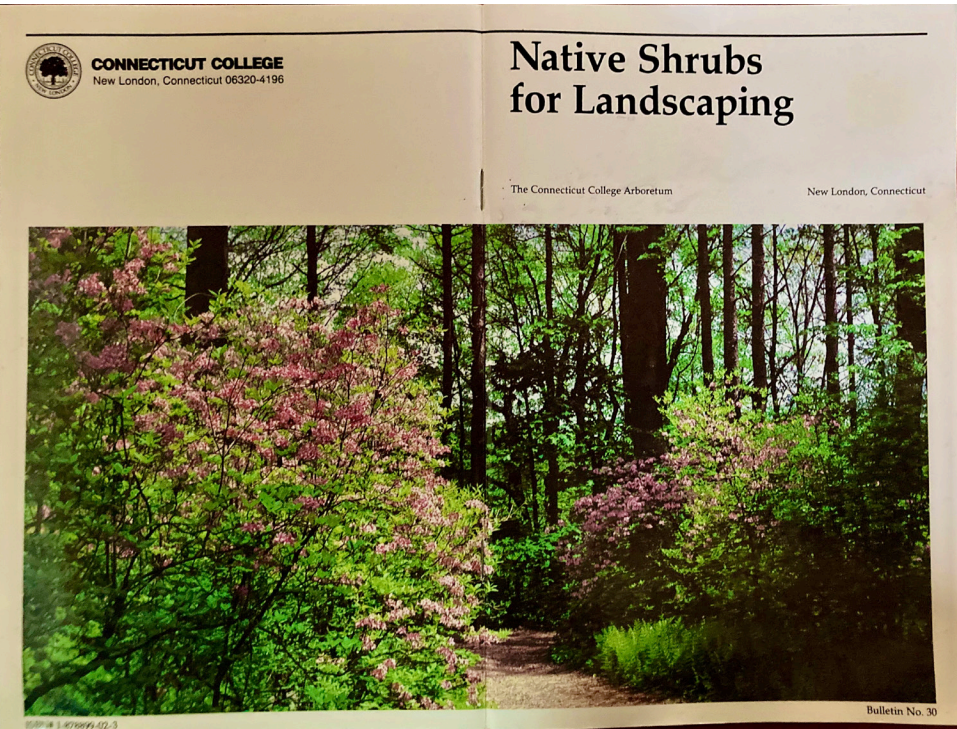
Why visit an arboretum when we all live near woods in the Last Green Valley?

By Brian Karlsson Barnes

Arboreta teach us about woody plants and reduce our stress, a public health service in Boston, less of a factor in our Quiet Corner. Yet, who doesn’t like a woodsy walk? Perhaps many. Bob Lorentson wrote that most people feel panic in the woods (‘The Dirt on Forest Bathing’ Dec 20). I appreciate light humor in dark times, and that some do have “woodsy worry.” I suspect most people are refreshed by exercise in the therapy of trees.

**PART OF NATURE** “*Shinrin-yoku*” (“taking in the forest atmosphere”) was popular in America as “forest bathing” in the 1980s, and is now a foundation of Japanese healthcare. Walking in the woods reduces cortisol – our “fight-or-flight” hormone -- lowering pulse rate and blood pressure. Forest bathing reduces anxiety. Science says. It’s healthier to simply walk among trees, for mind and body.

And spirit. My reverence for the Land commends conservation, and Connecticut College Arboretum’s noble mission is conservation research and education. As a neighbor of Arnold Arboretum for a decade, docent for 5 years, I laud Harvard’s science and the refuge offered citizens of Boston. The ecological heart of Connecticut College’s mission, however, reflects something else missing in our restless world: the spiritual need to feel more connected – interconnected – as a part of nature, not apart.



**Connecticut College Arboretum** has 750 acres of gardens, plant collections and conservation land. Larger than the Arnold’s 282 acres, CCA has fewer roads interrupting nature, and many trails. Remote conservation areas offer the greatest spiritual solace, as rugged Mamacoke Island in the Thames estuary (see March 2020 issue). The College’s mission is research and education. Bulletins are published on naturalistic landscaping and energy conservation, on native shrubs and other garden plants, on coastal marshes and wildlife... even mushrooms. A Native Trees bulletin may be next. Bulletin No. 30: *Native Shrubs for Landscaping* (1987, still relevant, 40 pages, \$5.00) There are new cultivars, and changes in botanical classification and global climate in the last 30 years. Plants migrate north with warmer winters to become native. Some mid-Atlantic plants are already here in commerce, such as Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea*) and Witch-Alder (*Fothergilla*), both southern shrubs with fragrant flowers and fall color. But there are no new useful native shrubs in the last three decades, unless we consider Burning Bush (*Eunonymus alatus*) on which purists disagree. The handbook lists dozens of Connecticut shrubs with color photos and good advice – such as planting with leaf mulch and composted cow manure. For the nonbotanical reader, shrubs are listed alphabetically by common name instead of the Latin *Genus*.

Perhaps later roadtrips to “*Six Points of Especial Botanical Interest in Connecticut*” (Bulletin No. 9, 1956, 32 pp. \$1.00). First, the CCA, and:

- Barn Island Marshes on Long Island Sound.
- North Haven Sand Plains, ten miles north of the Sound on the Quinnipiac River.
- Catlin Wood, hemlock and white pine dating to 1795, with transition hardwoods in Litchfield.
- Cathedral Pines, destroyed 1989 by tornadoes, now a model of ecological restoration near Cornwall.
- Bigelow Pond Hemlocks with picnicking to the north near the Mass. border.

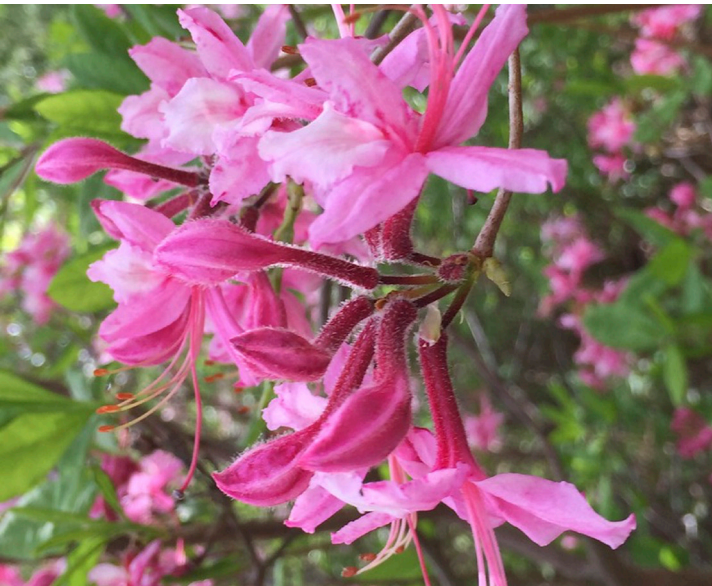
**NATIVE SHRUBS** have both horticultural and ecological appeal. They enhance our landscapes -- and feed wildlife. (As dominant species, we humans could be better stewards of the planet.) Online research and old-school books are useful, and better to see real plants. Best to see mature plants. January is actually a good time to visit any arboretum, far from the madding crowd, to see the architecture of bare branches and evergreen contrast. It’s also a great time to stay inside, and study landscape options. Where more flower, fruit, attractive leaf and bark, fall color or winter structure? Where is screening needed? Online research and old-school books are useful. Better to see real plants. Best to see mature plants in all seasons.

**AZALEA** (*Rhododendron* technically) Stunning native azaleas grace Connecticut College Arboretum in spring, typically 5 to 10-ft. I look forward to spring, walking the quiet arboretum trail lined with fragrant Roseshell Azalea in early May. “Summer azaleas” are deciduous, often with fall color, losing leaves in winter, and some flower before leaf-out in spring. Bloom can be later in colder highlands. All are acid-loving and like bright sunny edges, but not hot and dry.

- Roseshell Azalea (*Rho. prinophyllum*) is the earliest azalea with pink clove-scented, tubular flowers in early May; similar to Pinxter:
- Pinxterbloom Azalea (*Rho. periclymenoides*) is the most common pink azalea in Connecticut’s acidic oak woods, dry and moist soils, and in swamp margins.
- Pinkshell Azalea (*Rho. vaseyi*) blooms the lightest pink in late May, with the best fall color of these spring-flowering azaleas (deep red at Arnold Arboretum).
- Flame Azalea (*Rho. calendulaceum*) is later flowering, yellow to red-orange, afire in early June.
- Swamp Azalea (*Rho. viscosum* for wet sites) is the latest with white clusters of fragrant flowers in midsummer when few shrubs bloom.

True Rhododendrons are mostly evergreen and flowers have 10+ stamens. More colorful azaleas are both evergreen and deciduous, some with fall color, and have 5 stamens. I’ve planted two azalea cultivars in Chaplin, golden yellow ‘Klondyke’ and bright pink ‘Frank Abbott’. According to M. Dirr, cold-hardy Abbott hybrids were created by Ed Mezitt in the 1960s, crossing Roseshell Azalea with Mollis hybrids. Many cultivars were developed by the Mezitt family at Weston Nurseries, Hopkinton, Mass., where I worked later as a designer. Better than a graduate degree to learn local plants, coming from Minnesota where I had, however, earlier planted ‘Jane Abbott’.

**BLUEBERRY** (*Vaccinium*) Highbush Blueberry (*Vac. corymbosum*) is the “aristocrat of our native shrubs,” extols bulletin, with flower, human fruit, brilliant red fall



Pinxterbloom Azalea, courtesy Connecticut College Arboretum

color and red stems in winter. There are many cultivars with early, middle or late season berries; plant several for better pollination. Most grow 6 to 8-ft. Blueberries thrive in full-sun and wet acid soil, adapting to dry, open sites. I’ve planted two highbush, ‘Brigitta’ and ‘Duke’, and a 3-ft dwarf, ‘Blueberry Glaze’.

**DOGWOOD** (*Benthamidia*, formerly *Cornus*) Red-osier Dogwood (*Ben. sericea*) is the showiest of our red-stemmed natives with clusters of creamy white spring flowers and bright red branches. Fruit feeds birds in thickets reaching 6 to 10-ft. Dogwood shrubs are effective screens in moist or wet soils. Not hot and dry. Pruning older canes promotes new red branches. Red-osiers are interplanted among my white-barked birch and a bright green stemmed *Kerria*.

**MOUNTAIN LAUREL** (*Kalmia latifolia*) is Connecticut’s State Flower and possibly our finest ornamental native shrub. The species reaches 10 to 15-ft.; many hybrids are 6-ft. Clusters of exquisite white to pink blossoms resembling tiny hanging rice bowls, burst open in early summer. The bell-like flowers dispense pollen in a novel way: stamens are arched, with the tips held under the rim of the bell until a bee lands, releasing the stamen and flinging pollen like a catapult! Found in acidic oak forests and best in moist part-shade. Not full-sun, hot and dry. I envied *Kalmia* from afar in Minneapolis’ bitter winters, and now have pink-red flowered ‘Sarah’, a 6-ft mountain laurel hybridized in 1976 at the New Haven, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station by Dick Jaynes (now owner of Broken Arrow Nursery in Hamden CT); hybrid named for his wife, who goes by Sally.

**ROSEBAY RHODODENDRON** (*Rho. maximum*) is southern New England’s best flowering evergreen screen in shade. A tall shrub (12 to 15-ft, 30-ft in the South where it thickets) with large 6 to 8-inch dark evergreen leaves. In early July, large deep-pink buds open to showy trusses of white to pink tubular flowers. Rosebay thrives in moist acidic soil, not wet. Of all evergreen *Rho.*, it is the most tolerant of wet sites, found in Atlantic White Cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) swamps. I’ve planted two large-leaf cultivars: an unidentified hardy dark purple *Rho.*, perhaps from the Mansfield Flea Market, and an unusual yellow ‘Capistrano’ with *Rho. catawbiense* parentage, less cold-hardy.

**WINTERBERRY** (*Ilex verticillata*) is a deciduous holly with long-lasting masses of red berries on 6 to 10-ft thickets that feed birds and small mammals in mid-winter. Many cultivars of fruiting females need a male pollinator within 50 feet. Common in acidic sunny swamps and wet edges, it tolerates dry soil. ‘Winter Red’ was my choice to plant in a group of five with a ‘Southern Gentleman’.

**IF YOU GO** With pandemic surges, the great tradition of American Roadtrips surges in popularity. A daytrip to New London limits exposure; simply drive south from our tributary highlands. Thirty miles (45 minutes) north in Chaplin, I follow the rivers to the Thames, Route 32 directly to Connecticut College’s main gate at 270 Mohegan Avenue. Roadside parking along Williams Street (across from west entrance to campus) is near the Native Plant Collection. Simply wander in. Roadtrips easily alter course, so you can also wander from New London to old Norwich-town or west to Old Lyme.

As Tolkien suggested, not all who wander are lost. *Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Master gardener / designer and wanderer, Chaplin, Connecticut*





Graphic submitted by Steve Woron.

# Winter

By Kathy Lepak

Winter came silently in the darkness before dawn, softly falling flakes unseen by many and the calm chill in the air belying the storm to come. Its season of solitude and reflection had arrived earlier than we had expected and yet, the glory of its beauty in the early morning light shone like a beacon on the frozen branches of the trees and the wide expanse of the landscape.

Winter is a time of quiet, a time of rest from a hurried life; a turning inward to discover what truly lies beneath the surface of our being; a truth untold, yet to be found.

Winter’s stillness calls to us. It beckons us to come into its silence, to slow down our pace and enjoy its beauty. As the storm outside subsides, it blankets us in the wonder of the season and if we listen well enough, we can feel the earth sigh as it prepares for its long rest.

We prepare for the season as well. Gardens have been harvested, and resulting goods put up to sustain us throughout the season; long rows of canned vegetables line the shelves in the basement, grapes and blackberries transformed into delicious jellies and jams, sugar pumpkins cooked and frozen for future pies and quick bread.

A season’s supply of wood has been split and stacked, ready to grace the living room fireplace and provide its hypnotizing burst of flames and warmth on a cold winter’s night. Tools and machines have been prepped for their long storage in the shed near the garden, the generator serviced against the possibility of future storm outages.

The pantries have been filled with ingredients for winter’s warm meals of comfort foods; soups and stews, breads and biscuits, pies and cookies, all made the better with the help of younger family members willing to learn the art of grandma’s recipes.

The studio has had materials replenished and sketches await the process of being converted into finished paintings and drawings. Blank notebooks are ready to hold the bones of stories written in the early morning hours; feather quills and colored inks are lined up to pen the newest poem.

Outside, dressed in a heavy coat, fur-lined boots, knit hat, and mittens, the cold, crisp air makes my breath visible as I trudge out to the road and the mailbox beyond, leaving a trail for others to follow. Mid-morning, the children dress in layers of clothing so thick that movement seems almost miraculous as they venture out into the cold where sledding and snowmen await. Several hours later, their snow-encrusted figures waddle back into the house for the promise of steaming cups of hot chocolate and plates filled with cookies.

In the evening as the veil of darkness begins to cover us, we will curry down under our blankets and dream of possibilities, of future promises, and look into ourselves for hints of things to come. The season of stillness has arrived and we welcome its peace.



## Winter Blues

Look for gotten melodies  
Some old and some not so new  
Days spent quietly listening to  
clouds humming deepening blues

Memories strumming faded tunes  
Not just for me or for you  
Quiet mics and silent chords  
Sung by a dwindling few

Days renew the faintest whisper  
of ways one takes a chance  
Reminding all who dare to try  
Some music’s not made for dance.

Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.

## Letters and Emails

To the editor-

In his satiric piece *The Dirt on Forest Bathing* (November 2020), Bob Lorentson questions what a forest could possibly get out of having human beings come to it for stress relief and enjoyment. Well... since you asked: appreciation and respect. And, as someone who (unlike the author) actually does experience solitude and rejuvenation from being alone in the woods, I might even add the word love into what the forest could receive.

When we experience pleasure and joy in an activity, a place, a thing, we become interested in it. Our interest may lead us to the kind of curiosity that allows us to know it deeply and feel it as familiar. We may come to see the ways that we are related to it and, eventually, feel love for it.

When we come to love a thing, we realize how we are connected and the effect we have on one another. We care for and defend the things we love. Forest Bathing – or even plain old walks in the woods- can build our capacity to appreciate, respect, and love the world beyond ourselves. We might have a better chance of continuing to live here, breathing, benefiting from the earth beneath our feet and the sky above our heads and, of course, the trees around us.

If you really do care about trees, Mr. Lorentson, find someone who does like being in the woods and go with them to give that Forest Bathing one more try!

Winky Gordon, Mansfield



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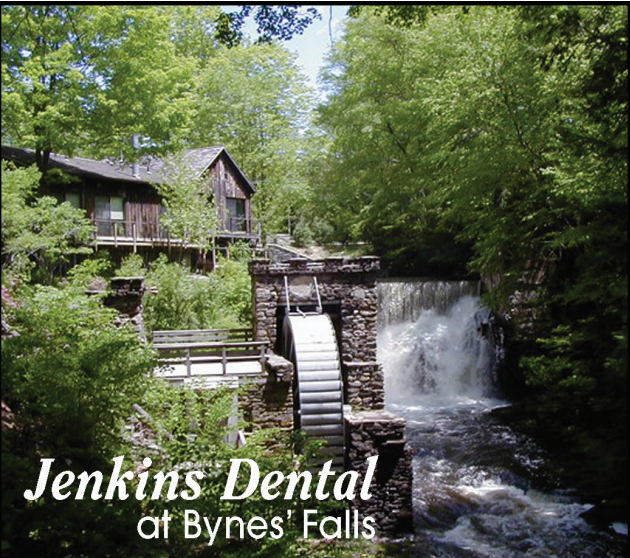
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# Tipping Point

## Bill McKibben On A Planet In Peril-Part Two

*Ed. note: This interview first appeared in the October 2019 issue of the excellent publication, The Sun. This is the second of three installments. Reprinted with permission.*

Interviewed by David Barsamian

**Barsamian:** The host of Meet the Press, Chuck Todd, devoted an entire show to climate change last December (2018). He said, “The science is settled, even if political opinion is not.” Afterward an organization called the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which is partly funded by the billionaire Koch brothers, took out a full-page ad in The Wall Street Journal that said, “Contrary to Chuck Todd and the alarmists, there is real debate among scientists.” Really?

**McKibben:** Of course not. This is the Koch brothers throwing a hissy fit because for the first time in thirty years a broadcast-TV network actually devoted serious time to talking about climate change. Whole years have gone by in which the network news devoted less than half an hour to climate change — in the course of a year. The networks are beginning to do a little better now, but the fossil-fuel industry, after three decades of successful propaganda efforts, won’t tolerate even the tiniest crack. So, yeah: a full-page ad in The Wall Street Journal. And you can bet that the fossil-fuel industry is reminding the networks precisely how much advertising it buys a year.

The science has long been clear. The last moment when anyone could have credibly said that there was scientific debate about the problem was in 1995, just before the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued its second report, which reconfirmed that human beings are raising the temperature of the earth. You and I are sitting here today in Boulder, Colorado, home to the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and I promise you, you could walk the corridors of the national labs here without finding a single climate scientist who would disagree with Chuck Todd.

**Barsamian:** Still, in reports about, say, Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico or Hurricane Harvey in Texas or the firestorms in Northern California, the media fail to mention climate change — a term that, incidentally, our friend Ralph Nader scolded me for using. He prefers “climate disruption.”

**McKibben:** Or “climate chaos.” I got a note from him, too. I sometimes still call it the “greenhouse effect.” That’s how long I’ve been doing this.

Look, this has not been a great chapter in the history of journalism, but it’s getting much better. The New York Times and The Washington Post and The Guardian now provide pretty good daily coverage, but they have a lot to make up for. Environmental correspondent Mark Hertsgaard is launching a major effort at The Nation.

**Barsamian:** The number of people affected by floods worldwide is expected to triple by 2030. Last autumn the IPCC issued a new report that gives 2030 as a kind of cutoff date. What is the significance of this?

**McKibben:** The IPCC produced its report as a kind of follow-up to the 2015 Paris climate conference. The question it tackled was: If we want to meet the target that we set in Paris — to hold the temperature increase to somewhere between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius — what would it take? Now, remember, these are not ideal targets. We’ve already raised the temperature about 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) since the start of the Industrial Revolution, and that’s melted half the Arctic. So it’s not that we’re aiming for a good solution; we’re aiming for the best solution that’s still within the realm of possibility.

The IPCC said that if we haven’t begun to make a fundamental transformation by 2030 — basically cutting carbon emissions by half — we’ll miss our chance of meeting those targets. That’s why both the Green New Deal and the Sunrise Movement envision 2030 as a crucial deadline, which is now ten years and some months away. Anyone who knows politics knows that if you want something to happen in ten years, you have to start working on it right now. This is the last presidential election, the last Congressional cycle, where we’re going to have a chance to meet that deadline.

**Barsamian:** What do you think of the Green New Deal?

**McKibben:** I think it’s brilliant. I’m very proud of the young people who are behind it. Social activist and author Naomi Klein and I helped launch a fossil-fuel-divestment campaign, which 350.org really pushed hard on college campuses. Many activists who cut their teeth on that campus-divestment movement formed Sunrise, the political-action organization that came up with the Green New Deal. They were the ones who managed to get

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to join them in a sit-in at House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office. Now, sit-ins normally don’t attract much attention, but this was something that doesn’t happen very often in Washington, D.C. — a congressperson sitting in at her boss’s office, as it were. That was a galvanizing moment that launched the Green New Deal and helped turn Ocasio-Cortez into the commanding and remarkable figure that she is.

It’s not that this legislation is going to pass tomorrow. It clearly isn’t. It may never pass, because it’s big and bold. What it does do is describe for the first time the kind of large-scale effort that’s required to deal with the problem we now have. The right-wingers who are saying, “Oh, the Green New Deal is socialist,” or, “Oh, it’s too big,” are precisely the same people who kept us from taking small steps thirty years ago. I have to restrain myself once in a while from saying, “If only you had listened to me then, there were lots of little things we could have done.” Thirty years ago a modest price increase on carbon would have been enough to put this country on a different trajectory. But the oil industry was having none of it, and now they’re the ones saying the Green New Deal is too big.

Exxon, and the fossil-fuel industry as a whole. . . . began spending lots of money to build an architecture of deceit and denial and disinformation that for the next thirty years kept us locked in a pointless debate about whether global warming was real.

**Barsamian:** You say Falter is about being human. What do you mean by that?

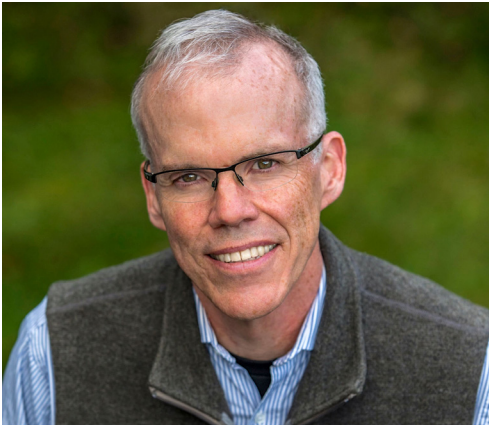
**McKibben:** The book is partly about climate change but also about what’s happened in this country over the last thirty years. And it’s about the next round of technological invention and hubris — in particular, artificial intelligence and human genetic engineering, which feel to me the same way climate change did thirty years ago: like something ominous we’re not paying enough attention to. In October 2018 a Chinese doctor produced the first two designer babies on the planet, a pair of twin girls. Since then, a number of important scientists have signed a letter saying we need a moratorium on human genetic engineering. But there are an awful lot of other scientists — and, more important, tycoons in Silicon Valley — who want to push ahead, and fast, with human genetic engineering. They know that in a consumer culture there is an infinite market for improved people.

In the book I raise some practical problems with that, some of which are so obvious they hardly even need to be discussed. For example, we live in a deeply unequal society right now. Do we really want to etch that inequality into our genome by allowing the rich to have designer babies?

Turning people into products also raises deep questions about what it means to be human. We know a fair amount about how genes control the brain’s serotonin and dopamine levels — and, hence, mood. I can envision a day, not far off, when a couple will be able to go into the clinic and, if they have sufficient funds, decide what level of dopamine they want their child to have. Imagine you are that child, and you’re thirteen and find yourself feeling happy one day. How do you know whether it’s because of something that’s actually going on or just the genetic engineering kicking in? Let’s say your parents went back to the clinic two or three years after they had you for baby number two, and they had more money by then, and the technology had progressed, and they got the next set of upgrades. Does that make you the human equivalent of Windows 2000 or the iPhone 6? This is a world we don’t need to have. We can prevent the transmission of genetic diseases with other means that don’t require tinkering on this scale.

We should pay attention to this the way we should have paid attention to climate change thirty years ago. There is a long chapter in Falter about [novelist and philosopher] Ayn Rand and the rise of hyperlibertarianism, which is the one thing that unites the Silicon Valley tycoons and the fossil-fuel billionaires. Ayn Rand is a goddess in both communities. They don’t want anyone ever telling them what to do. They don’t value society or human solidarity, only a kind of extreme freedom to do whatever they want. The result is a world that’s getting hotter.

**Barsamian:** The current occupant of the Oval Office calls climate change a hoax perpetuated by the Chinese. I was very curious when he made the announcement



Bill McKibben

Photo by Nancy Battaglia.

in the White House Rose Garden in June 2017 that the U.S. would pull out of the Paris Agreement, which isn’t even a treaty, just a loose understanding among nations.

**McKibben:** And you know why it isn’t a treaty? Because the rest of the world decided there was no way the U.S. Senate would ever muster the sixty-six votes needed to pass a climate treaty. Instead they would have to jury-rig a system of pledges and promises. Our political dysfunction was the reason the Paris Agreement was such a weak and watered-down affair.

**Barsamian:** What I found disturbing at that Rose Garden event was that the assembled audience of administration officials burst into applause. I thought, Is there no shame at all?

**McKibben:** This was their project. The only good thing that came out of it was that Trump’s speechwriter had him say, “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris,” and three hours later the mayor of Pittsburgh said, in essence, “You don’t speak for us,” and announced a plan for his city to run on 100 percent renewable energy by 2030. Since then, there’s been an awful lot of progress at the state and local level. Just this week Denver joined many cities in divesting its pension funds from fossil fuels.

**Barsamian:** More than forty cities have done so.

**McKibben:** Including London, New York, and Paris, the great financial capitals of the world. When I started talking about divestment, I didn’t envision that it would put quite so much hurt on the fossil-fuel industry. We’re now at \$8 trillion worth of endowments and portfolios that have divested in part or in whole. Shell said last year that divestment has become a material risk to its business. A couple of weeks ago there was a big story in Politico in which coal executives say quite bluntly that they simply can’t raise capital anymore: too many investment funds have divested from fossil fuel.

It’s been good to watch this play out around the world, and there’s a lot more to come. Just yesterday a campaign was launched to get Harvard University to divest its \$40 billion endowment — the biggest endowment of any university in the world — from fossil fuel.

**Barsamian:** The Rockefeller Brothers Fund divested right after the 2014 People’s Climate March in New York City.

**McKibben:** That was a key moment, when the heirs to the first oil fortune said, in effect, “No more for us. This is (a) an immoral way to make money, and (b) not even a smart investment anymore, because oil stocks are doing badly.” Over the last five years fossil-fuel stocks have underperformed every other part of the market.

The cost of a solar panel has dropped 90 percent in the last decade. The cheapest, easiest way to produce electricity around the world now is with sun and wind. The batteries to store that power are getting cheaper with each passing month. There’s no long-term future for the fossil-fuel industry. The executives just want to keep their business model going for another couple of decades, even at the cost of breaking the planet, which it will. Fifty years from now we’re definitely going to run this world on sun and wind. The question is: Can we make the transition fast enough to avoid a broken world? On our current trajectory we’ll need a lot of solar panels and wind turbines just to power the pumps to remove the seawater from all the coastal cities of the planet.

**Barsamian:** Here’s a question I hear a lot: “Don’t these oil guys” — and they’re mostly guys — “have children and grandchildren? How could they put their own families at risk?”

**McKibben:** One answer is that they’re drunk on Ayn Rand. In the minds of libertarian luminaries, markets solve all problems. If markets aren’t solving climate change, they think, then climate change is not a problem.

A question I get all the time is: “Why didn’t Exxon just decide to dominate the solar-energy business? They had the cash flow to build out. It would have been the right solution.” The answer is that, although you can make a lot of money from solar energy — people are going to get rich putting up solar panels and wind turbines — once you’ve put the panel up, the sun delivers the energy for free. From Exxon’s point of view, that’s a stupid business model. It would be as if you had a furnace in your basement that somehow just created oil out of thin air. Exxon wants you to write a check to it every month forever. It doesn’t want energy to be free. That’s why fossil-fuel companies have used every resource at their disposal to try to beat back renewable energy. But it’s getting so cheap that they’re just playing for time, making the transition take as long as possible.



# Finding Lost Village Walking Through the Understory

By Donna Dufresne

The understory is the most important part of a forest. It is where nutrients are formed, the building blocks for diverse species of plants, fungi, invertebrates, and vertebrates. In the understory you will find rich soil, the bed-rock foundation that supports the roots of trees ranging in age from saplings to hundreds of years. The forest floor in the understory tightly holds onto pools of carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere. Within the understory you will find leaves and debris that become detritus broken into mulched humus by an underworld of invertebrates such as worms and beetles, all doing their part to build the story of the forest. The forest is a tightrope dance between carbon storage, CO2, and oxygen in the Cirque du Soleil of climate change.

We humans don't always see the forest through the trees. In New England, we focus on the majestic maples, ash, oaks, and pines towering above the canopy. The understory, the ground layer, and the forest floor hold no esteem with those who have a mercantile eye. They see forests as a natural resource measured in board feet, economic value, and opportunity, the locomotion of economy and power. In the name of progress, the understory has too often been plundered throughout the world, leaving swaths of erosion, depleted soil, silt-filled rivers, and eutrophication, not to mention huge releases of carbon into the atmosphere.

History is not unlike a forest. We have been taught to revere the sturdy oaks of heroes and villains, a mostly white, entitled, and privileged minority, who have taken the world on a roller-coaster ride of economic ups and downs, bipolar politics, and unnecessary wars. Meanwhile, the real work of history has been constructed in the understory by the everyday people who remain in the shadows. In America, the shadow dancers consist of disenfranchised poor whites, Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants—the worker bees who built the land of honey on which we sup. The foundation of history is not created by those who tower above our canopy with their big truths and little lies. Only a small portion of the story can be found in their museums and textbooks, and it is doubtful you will find truth in Confederate statues. Instead, we must dive deeply into the dark, rich soil of the forest floor where everyday people have carried our national legacy on their backs. It is the understory of American history that intrigues me most, and this is the story I am cultivating from the forest floor of local history in my book about Lost Village, *A Good Piece of Land: A Thousand Acre Journey Through Time*.

I first conceived the idea for the book in 1996, when I participated in an archaeological dig in the ruins of the Darius Higginbotham homestead in Pomfret. The cellar holes on the west side of Nightingale Brook, where Darius lived, are part of an eighteenth-century family farm which includes the home of Obadiah and Dorcas Higginbotham on the east side of the brook, the remains of two small mills, and a graveyard shared with the Randall family, who were somehow related. Jonathan Randall's enslaved Africans, who are buried in the graveyard, are the subject of much of the folklore and ghost stories which were passed down for generations. Local folk assumed the enslaved Africans believed the graveyard was haunted or had vowed to haunt the place because their graves are marked with only fieldstones and not with tombstones. I will not presume that they said such things because, well, their history has been stolen from them, a string of shiny beads passed down to children and misremembered while the real words from their mouths and their names have been lost in history.

Lost Village (Bara-Hack) was once called the Village of Voices because it was thought that you could hear the voices of the past there: children laughing, dogs barking, the rhythmic rumble of horse hooves and carts rolling through the woods. This was first written down in a poem by Odell Shepard in the early 1900s when he visited "the Village of Voices" with some friends while trekking across the northern border of Connecticut on foot. By the time I got to volunteer on the dig, I had already spent years investigating the Higginbothams through primary sources and had discarded the Bara-Hack lore as unfounded bunk mismanaged by generations of oral history. However, I had an epiphany while digging in front of Darius Higginbotham's house.

The site is about 1¼ miles from the old Boston Turnpike. One sultry morning in July, the archaeology crew and I met some tree trimmers working along the roadside near the trail to Lost Village. About mid-morning, after



the crew and I had followed the trail to our site, I could hear the laughter and conversations of the woodcutters. It seemed like they were only a few feet away until their chainsaw interrupted their conversation. I peered through the woods and all around me but saw no movement in the direction of the sound. There were only a few other people working their little test pits around the site and no one was talking. On the way out, I saw the woodcutters in the same spot where we had left them. I asked them if they had been cutting in the woods down our trail, but they said they had been in the same spot all day. I found this curious, since you could practically hear their conversations over a mile away in the woods. I had a hunch that the shape of the land might have something to do with the way sound traveled down to the site. When I got home, I looked at the topo map of the area that cradles Lost Village and found that the Darius Higginbotham site was the focal point of an amphitheater-like bowl. I realized then that the shape of the land shapes history and how people interact with the land. The folklore and ghost stories were the tip of the iceberg shaped by the last glacier, the cherry garnish in a cocktail of geology, natural history, and social/cultural history shaped by the topography graphically displayed on a map I pulled from a drawer.

Ten years after "The Dig," I managed to develop a thesis and chapter outlines for the book and tried for a sabbatical leave so I could dive into the research. But the busy life of teaching and running a blueberry farm in the summers didn't allow for the time required to research a book with such a lofty theme. It took another fifteen years of teaching, a pandemic, and a lockdown for me to give myself permission to put work and volunteering aside to focus on the book. So began my journey into the understory of local history. It is a vision quest into the intimate lives of people not unlike my own family. A deep dive into the ordinary and extraordinary lives of everyday people: hardworking but poor farmers eking out a living on the dumping grounds of a glacier; early engineers and machinists who harnessed the tiniest of brooks and tributaries to turn waterwheels that powered sawmills and fulling mills and produced items such as spindles and spools and the first Champion Road Grader; slave traders who re-invested in textiles when it became clear that their former industry was on immoral and shaky ground; enslaved and formerly enslaved Africans who married Nipmuc Indians and whose descendants would fight in the Connecticut 29th Colored Regiment during the Civil War; and the descendants of those soldiers, who worked as teamsters and laborers on local farms and sawmills and later became truck drivers and heavy machine operators.

The roots of history are woven in the fine threads of ordinary cloth, sometimes rough-cut and loosely stitched together through family stories, census reports, and genealogy. *A Good Piece of Land: A Thousand Acre Journey Through Time* is truly an American story whose mixed fibers are examined through the micro-lens of local history and individual stories that make up a national tapestry.

*About the author: Donna Dufresne is a writer who lives in Pomfret. She began her teaching career as an environmental educator. With a degree in history and a master's in gifted education, Ms. Dufresne brought history alive in her classroom by using primary sources, artifacts and first-person interpretations of Prudence Crandall, Rachel Carson and other historical figures. She is currently researching and writing the book 'A Good Piece of Land, A Thousand Acre Journey Through Time' which explores the understory of American History through a local lens.*

## At a Crossroads? Consider Career as a Home Caregiver

(StatePoint) Considering a career change? You're in good company -- 18 percent of the deskless workforce who had a job during COVID-19 plan to leave for better benefits or job security, according to a recent survey by Quinix.

Experts say that if you're looking for meaningful work in a reliable, recession-proof industry, the field of home healthcare might be the right career path for you.

"At a time when work and life are blurring together more than ever, home caregiving allows for greater mobility and flexibility for professionals like LPNs, RNs and therapists, as well as home support aides and companions," says Jennifer Sheets, president and chief executive officer of Interim HealthCare Inc. "Compassionate and mission-driven professionals within and outside of healthcare can bring their unique skills to these positions to ensure patients get the care they need."

To encourage people from all professional backgrounds to consider whether a career in home healthcare is right for them, Sheets offers the following insights into the field:

Previous home care experience not required:  
For certain roles, you don't need a degree or industry experience to qualify for a home caregiving position, you just need a compassionate heart and a willingness to help others. Whether you're a licensed healthcare professional (like a nurse or therapist) or you're employed in a service industry like hospitality, retail or food service, you likely have people skills and a desire to positively impact others, both of which are needed to step into this field and begin a rewarding career.

The work is rewarding:  
Seeking a career path with purpose? Caregivers have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others every day. And, if you decide to take your career further, you can. The industry offers much potential for career growth.

Positions offer autonomy:  
If you already work in the healthcare industry, you may discover that providing personalized care to patients at home offers greater flexibility and autonomy than other sites of care in the industry. Home caregivers have full visibility into a patient's health and provide the unique care the patient needs to achieve their goals. What's more, every day is different, offering diverse experiences that use every facet of your skill set.

Jobs are wide-ranging. In the case of Interim HealthCare Inc., a healthcare franchise company providing nurses, therapists, aides and other healthcare personnel to approximately 173,000 people annually and has been operating since 1966, there are job opportunities in every specialty: from medically complex pediatric patients to seniors who need a little bit of help. More information on Interim HealthCare and current openings across the country can be found by visiting [IHCmadeforthis.com](http://IHCmadeforthis.com).

Sometimes, life brings you to a crossroads. For many people, that time is now. Whether you're looking to make a difference in a new industry or you're seeking to level up your healthcare career, consider whether the field of home caregiving might be right for you.

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## HISTORIC VENUE FOR PERFORMANCE & EVENTS

# Reboot Please: CTRL – ALT - DEL!

## January

*"The new year stands before us,  
like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written."*

**-Melody Beattie**

By EC-CHAP

The “Reboot” sequence has been initiated... We have often come to use the term “reboot” to restart our computer or phone because it’s acting funky or even frozen.

Several dictionaries provide similar definitions of the term “reboot” with slightly different twists: *the act or an instance of shutting down and restarting something* (merriam-webster.com); *an act or instance of making a change in order to establish a new beginning* (dictionary.com); *to start something again or do something again, in a way that is new and interesting* (dictionary.cambridge.org)

At precisely 12:00am, January 1, 2021, our calendar rebooted - reset to zero, symbolically marking the start of a new beginning. Unlike a machine, where it shuts down and working memory is erased forever, leaving a fresh new instance - our world doesn't work quite like that. We don't shut down. The past is not erased, but carried forward - the good and the bad - with the hope of bringing new knowledge and experience to make the future better.

This *IS* a time for **New Beginnings!** We wish you great days filled with good health and peace!

Happy New Year to All!  
EC-CHAP Board of Directors

*“A New Year has tiptoed in.  
Let’s go forward to meet it.”*

**-Anusha Atukorala**



Greg Abate

Contributed photo.

In the mid 70's after finishing a four year program at Berklee College Of Music, Greg played lead alto for the Ray Charles Orchestra for 2 years. Since the 70's, Greg has led a number of jazz combos of various configurations; and until COVID surfaced, he toured the globe with over 225 performances a year.

The Greg Abate Quartet will be recording a live session at The Packing House on February 27th. This video will stream live on **Saturday, March 6, 2021 at 2:00pm.** Greg will be joined by **Matt DeChamplain** (piano), **Lou Bocciairelli** (bass), and **Ben Bilello** (drums). Tickets \$10.00 or Free Will Donation (available on our website January 15th).

For more information about these extraordinary jazz artists, please visit: [www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming](http://www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming).

**JOIN US FOR EC-CHAP's Virtual Talent Showcase:  
STEAMING JANUARY 20TH, 7:00PM**

EC-CHAP  
*Virtual* Talent Showcase



Live Stream  
**7:00pm - January 20th**  
Submit your videos by January 13th (15-Minute Max)  
CALL 518.791.9474 FOR UPLOAD INSTRUCTIONS

We would love to include local and regional artists to share in our virtual events, and invite you to participate. All events are free to the public.

**CALLING ALL** acoustic musicians, film makers, poets, comedians, jugglers, puppeteers, and creative artists of all ages are invited to perform in our *virtual* Talent Showcase! Here is an opportunity to showcase your work together with other “creatives” **STREAMING LIVE** in our **VIRTUAL SETTING**. Test ideas and concepts; and receive comments.

Our Talent Showcase is designed as a platform for local and regional performers to share their talent in front of a live audience. Until we are able to return to live performances in The Packing House, we are offering a virtual Talent Showcase which will be prerecorded and streamed live each month.

If you would like to perform in our monthly virtual Talent Showcase, please call for instructions to submit your video and be placed on the schedule. You may have up to 15-minutes to present your work, and we encourage anyone - of any age - to share your talent.


We will compile your videos and present the January Talent Showcase as a LIVE Stream on **Wednesday, January 20th at 7:00pm. (Please call 518.791.9474 for information and be placed on the schedule. The deadline to submit your video is January 13th).** Join us for an evening of “talent sharing talent”! Virtual Access at: [www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming](http://www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming) the day of the show.

If you have missed our Live Stream offerings, you can view them on our YouTube channel at: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCE7849dIweGDhNCOvAEa8wQ>).

We leave you with the following:

*"The beginning is the most important part of the work."*

**-Plato**



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# “Bonus”: The \$50,000 Christmas Bull



Company cows at show.

Contributed photo.

By Tyler Hall

EC-CHAP’s Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum at The Mill Works hopes everyone had a safe and happy Holiday. Around this time, I am always reminded of a curious event that took place in South Willington nearly a century ago. During the season of giving, William Henry Hall - former president of the Gardiner Hall Jr. Thread Company - did just the opposite. To understand what happened, and why it was so out-of-the-ordinary, I first must explain the phenomenon of gentlemen farmers, and how the concept relates to the Gardiner Hall Jr. Company.

Throughout our Nation’s history, wealthy business owners and politicians have operated farms for both pleasure and status. These farms are often meant to showcase success - boasting vast acreage, masterfully constructed barns, and state-of-the-art agricultural technology. Typically, they are run by full-time staff, including a farm manager and a host of on-site laborers.

As the thread industry flourished through the early 20th century, so too did the Willington manufacturer’s assets. Gardiner Hall Jr. Company landholdings expanded to nearly 5,000 acres. New tenements were erected, and old ones maintained, and a series of philanthropic projects made the Village more modern, attractive and comfortable. Much of the land was har-

vested for its white birch, which was used in the manufacture of wooden thread spools. Plots were loaned to mill workers, who used the land to grow their own vegetables, and raise small livestock. This expansion and construction was all part of the company’s grand vision – a pristine, traditional New England village.

Another project completed during these years of expansion was the construction of the Gardiner Hall Jr. Company’s “model farm”. Cattle farming was a hobby greatly enjoyed by company founder Gardiner Hall Jr., and his son, William Henry. Both were heavily invested in the Stafford Springs Agricultural Society, and each served a term as president. The company constructed three architecturally unique barns on over fifty acres of well-kept pasture. These structures were cutting edge, a testament to advancements in construction, design, and technology. The surrounding land was perfectly manicured. Rolling pastures ran along the banks of the Willimantic River, cut with miles of masterfully arranged stone walls and barbed wire fences (many of which still stand today).

Surrounding the main barn, which was situated at the bend of Route 32, across from the mill, were two large cow shelters and a tool shed. The farm was tended day and night by four full-time caretakers who lived in a residential section of the livestock barn. Additions to the herd were carefully selected, and often purchased at exorbitant



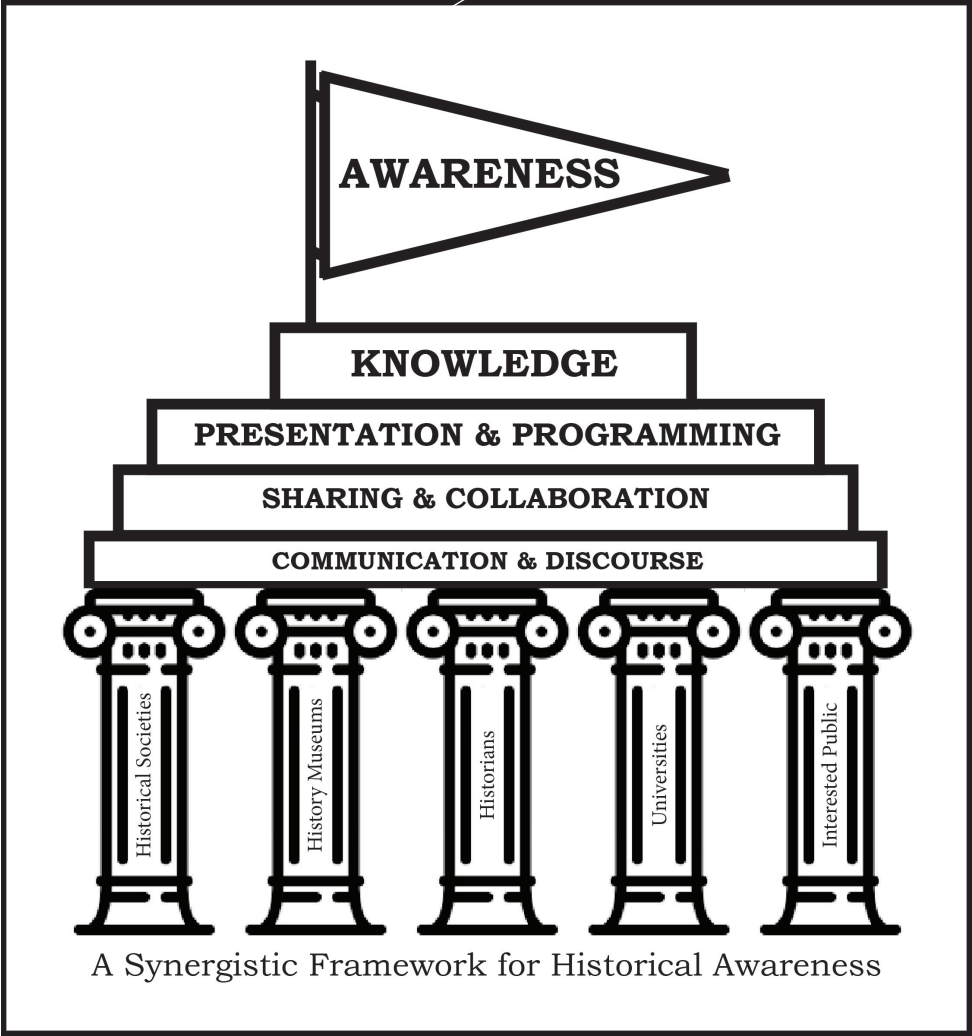
prices. The most exceptional cattle were transported by railcar to fairgrounds across New England, earning ribbons and trophies as they traveled.

Every Christmas, the Gardiner Hall Jr. Company gave their employees a generous bonus. Mill workers would often receive a gold coin from management, a welcome gift when a common wage in the early 1900s was \$13.00 a week for 55 hours of work. One year, however, William Henry’s desire to collect the best livestock outweighed his usual generosity. Marion Pardus, a former spinner, recalled, “One year, William Henry didn’t give his employees a bonus. Instead, he bought a bull for \$50,000. The workers said, ‘huh... instead of us getting a bonus, he gets a bull!’ The people named the bull “Bonus”. That’s as far as it went, though... nobody rebelled - but he had prize cattle.”

This unique event was passed through the generations, recalled not with contempt, but with humor. It was an uncharacteristic decision for a company that diverted so much of its earnings back into the community. The story eventually made its way onto the menu of Jury’s Tavern (a restaurant that later operated out of the repurposed livestock barn), as an entertaining piece of Willington history.

All of us here at EC-CHAP wish the community a healthy and prosperous New Year, and hope you will visit The Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum at The Mill Works in 2021.

*Tyler Hall is the Curator of Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum, Board member of the Hall Foundation, and History student at ECSU.*



## New Year’s Resolutions – A Personal Perspective

By Tyana Lopez

Happy New Year everyone! I hope your holiday season was full of warmth and love. As we jump headfirst into a New Year, one of the most prevalent conversations I hear involves New Year’s Resolutions. The start of another year brings hope that things will get better, and that we can all work to better ourselves as well. Whether you want to work out more, make new friends, or read more books, everyone is thinking about ways they can improve their lives. My new year’s resolution is to build my business up into something great, and work hard to create the best gallery experience at EC-CHAP as I can!

Last Year, I came into 2020 jobless and unsure of myself. My life took a turn for the better once I was able to re-discover my passion for crystals and fossils. As a child, I would seek out and collect as many rocks as possible! There is something so magical about a beautiful crystal that was created by mother earth on its own, it captivates me in a way nothing else does. The older and rarer a fossil or mineral, the more fascinating it is in my eyes. This passion grew into a hobby of creating jewelry using



these stunning crystals. And when the time came, I turned my hobby into a business, selling my love of these rocks and sharing that passion with others.

Now my business Jurassic Gems has grown bigger than I could have imagined at the beginning of this past year. With posting regularly on social media like Instagram and Facebook, I’ve been able to build enough clientele to sustain myself. As of today writing this, I’ve also been able to start live streaming my jewelry making process on Twitch. It has been so much fun to relax and create with my viewers, and they have input on the things that I end up making! Especially in these times, it’s been so important to have that connection to the community when we cannot be together in person. Being able to interact live online has changed how I view my business and my clients completely!

Because of this growth, my new year’s resolution this year is to build up a community of other crystal lovers to share my passions with. I want nothing more than to work and interact with others who share the same views on fossils and other cool rocks. I hope to do this by continuing to post on social media and streaming live



more regularly. If you are interested you can view my work at Instagram.com/Jurassic\_Gems, or at Twitch.tv/Jurassic\_Gems.

If your new year’s resolution is to expand on your artwork as well, EC-CHAP has just the opportunity for you! While my work is my artistic passion, I also want to share the works of other local artists who deserve a spotlight. Whether you enjoy painting scenes of the snow, or sculpting the human body, we encourage you to reach out to us regarding your passions! We are always on the lookout for new local and regional artists in the New England area to show at the Dye and Bleach House Community Gallery. Please email us at CommunityGallery@ec-chap.org to discuss opportunities to show your work in the Community Gallery. We can’t wait to hear from you!

If you would like to visit the Dye and Bleach House Community Gallery, we are open under CDC Guidelines on Saturdays from 10 AM until 2 PM, we are closed between exhibitions. Located at 156 River Road in Willington, CT. Check out our website or social media for announcements and information regarding reopening WWW. EC-CHAP.ORG.

*Tyana Lopez is a freelance artist, the EC-CHAP Artist-In-Residence, and Director, Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery.*

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To find a farmers market close to you visit the CT Department of Agriculture website for a link to markets.





12.19.20. Human and ‘gingerbread’ yogis at the Mansfield Library. Left to right: Julie Menard, Nan Kyer, Steve Lane, Winky Gordon, Kathleen Krider. Photo by Richard Gold.

A Short Story in Four Parts

# Two Tons For Maria - Part 4

By Wayne A. English

Previously:  
*Settling in Hartford, Connecticut, Red Decker opens a weight loss clinic and becomes friends with Jen Peterson and her young daughter, Maria, who has severe health problems. Red’s old girlfriend plans to steal the charity bank account that he set up to pay Maria’s medical bills. As Part 4 opens, six months have elapsed, and Louise is burglarizing Red’s office for the information necessary to steal Maria’s healthcare account.*

No one saw Louise slip into the office. She was dressed in drab, loose-fitting clothing, a dark wig, cheap sunglasses, and gloves. She’d been in there before, of course, and knew what she wanted and where it was. She found the checkbook, opened it, and photographed a check. Locating our cancelled checks, she photographed one so that she now had our signatures as well. She did not remove a check. There was no need. She would move the money electronically. Then she saw it. How could Red be so stupid, she thought, as she photographed the login ID and password. Now she could log in and see the account balance. This saves me the trouble of wheedling it out of him, she thought.

She did all this in less than three minutes and left soundlessly, locking the door behind her with the missing office key. Then she nonchalantly walked toward Hartford’s east end; she’d never been there before and would catch a cab, which she would pay for in small bills. Louise would do nothing that might cause the cabby to remember her. To that end, she had removed her expensive fingernails. After she scored, the cops would look into anyone associated with Red and the charity. The nails? She had an appointment booked to replace them later today. A thought struck her: If she did this right, Red might take the blame. Ooooh, she thought, wouldn’t that be delicious?

\* \* \*

It became evident by the way they responded that motivating my clients would not be a problem. For the first time, I saw Jen worry-free. She looked lovely, and a pang of guilt tugged at my heart. If Louise hadn’t shown up again¼

Over the next five weeks, I added thirty-five new clients and my existing ones continued losing weight. I deposited thirteen hundred dollars into Maria’s get-well fund, which was well on its way to providing for her needs. Every week saw more weight lost and another deposit into Maria’s account. Jen logged on every Friday night after I made the weekly deposit to see how we were doing. For the first time, she could see a way out of the nightmare of Maria’s illness.

\* \* \*

Louise planned on logging in and transferring the money to an account she had made with an untraceable smartphone that she had paid cash for. She would transfer the money again and again in varying amounts, so it was untraceable as well. All she needed to do then was lay low. She would stay in town, because to leave so soon after the crime would draw attention to her, her assumed name, and her actual background. And she couldn’t have that. So, tonight she would empty the charity account. The money would end up in the Cayman Islands in one of a dozen numbered accounts she had created years ago.

It was 10 p.m. when Louise opened her laptop and logged into the bank via Ken’s Wi-Fi and computer. Big mistake number one.

Next, she logged into the charity account using its bona fide ID and password. What she did not know was that the bank’s computer routinely checked the IP (Internet Protocol) address and MAC (Media Access Control) code of all machines logging in and compared them to those of the machines authorized to access the account.

Big mistake number two: Her IP address and MAC code did not match those on file.

The bank’s computer sent an alarm to the security company and immediately locked the account. It did not send Louise a message; her computer continued to look, to her, like the transfer was pending. This was to keep her in place until the cops got there. The security alarm included her IP address, her physical address in Hartford, and data on the Wi-Fi system she was using. Ten minutes later, three police cars arrived.

Through the dining room window, the cops saw Louise bent over her laptop. They pounded on the door. “Police, open up!”

Louise checked her makeup in the hall mirror, thinking, just some men to manipulate, then it’s back to the computer.

The cops burst in when she unlocked the door. Two of them kept her away from the computer while the third checked it. Yes, it was accessing the bank. Louise was arrested. While two cops ran her in, the third waited for the forensic computer tech, who would take charge of the laptop in such a way that its value as evidence was preserved. The tech also interrogated the Wi-Fi router, as its make, model, and configuration were additional evidence. The computer and router were bagged and tagged.

\* \* \*

It was past midnight when my phone rang. “Hartford police calling for Mr. Red Decker,” a voice said.

“Speaking. What’s going on?”

“Mr. Decker, we’ve arrested a woman for attempting to steal funds from your charity.”

I left for the police station and found...Louise.

“Louise, you were going to steal that little girl’s charity money? How could you? Who are you, Louise?”

She could see that I knew the truth about her. She said, “I want to speak to my lawyer.”

She was way too smart to admit anything. That she had her lawyer’s phone number on speed dial was telling. And I got the message.

As I left, I thanked the police, understanding now what Ella had tried to tell me. When I got back to the hotel, there was an email from the bank’s security company. The charity account was locked and would remain so until approved for activity by the bank’s senior management. Until then, no money would be released or transferred, and no checks would be paid.

The next day, I asked Jen to meet me at Andy’s after she got off work. Before Jen arrived, I went in back to find Ella.

“Ella, would you be kind enough to give me a few minutes of your time?” I asked.

She looked at me. “Sure, why not.”

“You were right about Louise. I’m sorry. You can’t imagine how sorry I am that I didn’t believe you. Did you hear she tried to steal Maria’s charity money?”

“I did.”

“Well, she was not successful and was arrested. Now she’s in jail.”

“No, she’s not,” Ella said. “Guess you didn’t hear that, did you?”

“No, no I didn’t. How’d she get out?”

“Posted bond. Made bail. All you got to do is track her down and move in together. Just like old times. No?” Ella said.

“Yes, that’s a lovely idea. I didn’t know that sarcasm was your middle name. Thank you so much, Ella. You know, when I came in here, I hoped we could come out of this as friends.”

“Red. We are. We are friends. I’m sorry for the insult.” Then she smiled. “I hear that Jen wants to be friends again, too. Just thought I’d mention it.” This delivered with a grin. “Just saying.”

“Thanks, friend-of-mine,” I said. “I’m glad to hear that. Really glad. Thank you, Ella.”

“You’re welcome. Well, well, speak of the devil. She just walked in,” Ella said, looking into the bar. “Why don’t you go say hello? Let’s see if you can fix anything other than bombs.”

Giving Ella a wry smile, I left to meet with Jen. I could see that Ella was smiling as I left.

Jen and I took a table. “Jen, I want you to know how sorry I am that I allowed Louise to play me like that. I’m embarrassed. I’m ashamed. That I didn’t see it coming. I really thought she cared for me, but all she ever cared for was money. Had she been successful¼” The thought of Maria’s funds being stolen was just horrible.

Jen said, “Speaking of your old girlfriend”—she emphasized the word *old*—“I saw her running for the New Haven train before I opened the coffee shop. I ran after her, but she got aboard before I could get my hands on her. I don’t think she’ll be back.”

“That’s okay with me,” I said to a smiling Jen. “Don’t forget, on Saturday we meet with my clients at the clinic.”

“I won’t,” she said.

\* \* \*

On Saturday, I was talking to my clients when Andy raised his hand to get my attention.

“Red,” he said, “I just want to say how happy I am with you and this fantastic clinic. I’ve lost twenty-five pounds and could not be happier. Thank you.”

“Thank you, Andy,” I said with a smile. “You folks lost more than four thousand pounds and funded Maria’s medical care. Come on out,” I said to Jen and Maria, who was now walking and running.

“Because of all of you, this beautiful little girl can walk. I’m proud of each and every one of you. And I can see that you’re proud of yourselves. As well you should be. You all worked hard in a hard place and won through. For Maria...and for yourselves.”

As I was saying this, a little boy in a wheelchair was pushed out toward me by his mom and dad. Maria scampered over to him and held his hand.

“This is Brian,” I said. “He needs an operation...”

About the Author-  
Wayne A. English is a locally, nationally, and internationally published writer. He has published four books and has numerous publications in magazines, newspapers, and online. See more of his work at WayneAEnglish.com.



# Scapegoating Autism Is A Lousy Legal Defense Strategy

By Michelle M. Baughman

Currently, the case of Alek Minassian who drove a rented van down a crowded sidewalk in Toronto in April 2018, killing ten people and injuring 16 others is being tried in the Canadian courts. The defense attorneys are using Simon Barron-Cohen’s antiquated and debunked theories on autistic lack of empathy in order to prove Minassian not criminally responsible for his actions. Minassian was interviewed by forensic psychologists and the police after his arrest where he admitted that he knew what he was doing, he admitted that he knew that it would result in people’s deaths, and that he knew that killing people is wrong. He is even quoted to have said that his only regret is that he had not managed to kill more women. (Minassian had become very involved in an online misogynist community of “involuntary celibate” men or “incels” who feel that they have been unfairly rejected by women. He told police that he was trying to incite an incel uprising and that he felt proud that he had accomplished his mission).

Because of this admission, the usual NCR (not criminally responsible) defense is not available to Alek Minassian. So in a Hail Mary attempt to allow him to escape justice, his defense attorneys are trying to scapegoat autism, arguing that it is his autism that caused his thinking to become “distorted similar to psychosis.”

Unfortunately, there is a lot of unchecked misinformation surrounding autism which makes this defense “believable” by people who have only been exposed to this misinformation. Likewise, there is plenty of misinformation surrounding mental illness. So misinformed, lazy people are quick to accept this explanation without bothering to learn more about either situation, and thus understand how they differ. This only causes the stigma surrounding autism to grow, which in turn oppresses autistic individuals when the public at large mistreats us or excludes us from opportunities because of people’s erroneous beliefs about autism.

Needless to say, the entire worldwide autistic community is very upset by this very irresponsible, ablest, and outrageous defense strategy. This defense strategy is as damaging and as bigotry-inducing as the antiquated beliefs people used to have about people of color “deserving” to be made into slaves, as “God’s plan” because they were deemed to be “inferior” beings worth only 3/5th of a white person. The very discussions of this trial in the media has set back our disability civil rights movement. Expert witness and Yale University forensic psychiatrist Dr. Alex-



ander Westphal adamantly insisted that the web feed of his testimony be blocked from the public feed because he was concerned that it could be used to demonize and victimize people on the autism spectrum. Despite these precautions, damage has been done. So I am writing this to do my part to try to counter that damage:

Autism is a neuro-developmental condition. It is not a mental illness or psychological disorder. Furthermore, autism is not characterized by violence or a lack of a moral compass. Studies have actually shown that the opposite is true; autistic individual are actually more likely to be victims of violence, rather than the perpetrators of violence. Recent studies have also been conducted that completely contradict Barron-Cohen’s antiquated “zero empathy theory,” revealing that autistic individuals actually have a greater degree of empathy than the general population, which has been called “hyper empathy.” Other studies have shown that this misperception is due to the fact that people with autism have difficulty recognizing facial expressions which is why participants in Barron-Cohen’s studies failed to properly recognize what a person might be feeling from an isolated photograph of a person’s facial expression (which is what the initial studies were based on). But when autistic subjects were able witness a situation of a person in distress in context they had no difficulty understanding what the other person might be feeling. Thus, what Barron-Cohen observed is due to deficits in social communication rather than due to a lack of underlying emotional response.

*Michelle M. Baughman is a late-in-life diagnosed adult on the autism spectrum, an educator, a parent of a twice-exceptional child, and a trauma-informed AANE Certified AsperCoach who provides intensive, highly individualized coaching to individuals with Asperger Syndrome (AS) and related conditions. Michelle ascribes to the Neurodiversity paradigm and writes to help debunk the general misconceptions surrounding this condition to help autistics live their best lives and to change the negative cultural narrative about autism. She may be contacted via email: LifeCoach.PELC@gmail.com, cell phone: (860) 207-4263, or her online presence: <http://linkedin.com/in/michelle-m-baughman-28b5a92b> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1015628291826263/> <https://www.alignable.com/storrs-mansfield-ct/personal-evolution-life-coaching-2>*

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# Brushes with Celebrity

By Bill Powers

“A celebrity works hard all his or her life to become well-known and then wears dark glasses to avoid being recognized.” This is a quote from Fred Allen, a prominent comedian and humorist who hosted a popular radio program in the 1930s and 1940s during the “Golden Age of Radio.”

It can be a memorable and exciting experience to meet someone who is famous, especially when it happens by chance and is totally unanticipated. Since I don’t travel in the circles of the rich and famous, there have only been a few surprising, and unexpected brief brushes with celebrities during my life.

As a youngster I was fascinated by western film and television genre stars like Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd). My very first 45 rpm phonograph record was Autry’s recording of “Rudolph The Red-nosed Reindeer” and I played it over and over on my new record player. Today, the iconic recording remains at the top of my holiday favorites. Movies and television series featured heroes of the West – “the good guys.”

My other favorites in those days included: The Cisco Kid and Poncho; the Lone Ranger and Tonto; Zorro; Clint Walker; Wild Bill Hickok (Guy Madison); Matt Dillon; and Chuck Connors (the Rifleman). I actually have met only one of my favorites and would have been thrilled to meet any of the others as well.

It would also have been wonderful to meet Jingles, Pat Brady, Dale Evans, Gabby Hayes, Festus, Chester, and Kitty. Among my most cherished possessions is a photo of Hopalong Cassidy autographed by William Boyd.

When I was 13, my parents took my sister and me to New York City for a long weekend and what was to be an exciting and memorable trip. In addition to staying at a fancy Manhattan hotel, our tour included visits to museums, the Statue of Liberty, and St. Patrick’s Cathedral. We went to Yankee Stadium for a baseball game, rode the subway, and saw the city from atop of the Empire State building.

It was at the Empire State Building, while riding up in the elevator to the observation deck, I met my first celebrity in person. My younger sister Patty said later, “He is the tallest man I’ve ever seen.” I whispered to my dad, “Is he the rifleman?” My dad encouraged me to ask him. I said looking up at him, “Excuse me sir, are you the rifleman?” With a smile on his face he answered, I sure am son. Do you like the show?” To which I answered, “I love it.” The doors of the elevator opened and we all went on our way. Prior to his acting career, Chuck Connors played professional basketball for the Boston Celtics and first base for the Chicago Cubs.

In August of 2004 while on vacation in Bar Harbor Maine and Acadia National Park, it was my usual practice to stop in at a specialty coffee shop at opening time for a cup of their freshly brewed dark

coffee. There was a man standing at the counter ahead of me. As he conversed with the clerk, I became aware that I knew his distinctive voice. When he turned to leave and I saw his face, it all came together. As our eyes met, I raised my hand and began saying “Are you...” – and before I finished he smiled broadly, winked and said. “Yes I am.” It was Sean Connery, aka James Bond –“007”. Then I asked the young clerk if he knew who the man was, and he said he didn’t. I told him it was Sean Connery; and he said, with a puzzled expression, “Who’s that?” I found out later that “007” was headed to Prince Edward Island, Canada, aboard his Yacht “Aerie” for a quiet vacation.

In 1986 my son and I, as we often did on a Sunday morning, traveled the short distance from Storrs to Ashford to the Wagon Shed Restaurant for their wonderful Belgian waffles. On this occasion my wife had also joined us. After ordering, we were amazed to see Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman come in and sit down just across from us. There were a good number of customers that day; and by the time we had finished our meal, just about all of the customers had approached those celebrities and interrupted their breakfast while seeking autographs. The idea of getting their autographs had crossed my mind, and it was briefly discussed with my wife. She believed that respecting their privacy was more important than an autograph, and it would be wrong to disturb them. My wife she was right!

Later, on two more occasions, when my son and I enjoyed breakfast at the restaurant, the two celebrities were also present; and we continued to respect their privacy. The last time we saw them was on a day when we arrived at the restaurant’s opening time. Just as we were ordering, Woodward and Newman came in and sat across from us. The four of us were the only customers for the whole time that we were there. As we were leaving, Joanne Woodward asked my son, “Were those waffles good?” My son smiled and vigorously nodded in the affirmative; and then Paul Newman said as he extended his arm for a hand shake, “Thanks for letting us enjoy our breakfast.” I told him “Coming at opening time probably helps.” To which he responded, “You got that right” and laughed.

Subsequently, I learned that the reason they were visiting Ashford was to develop plans for the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp for children. They both had distinguished acting careers receiving many awards with both receiving an Academy Award.

I am grateful for those brief and unexpected encounters with people who have achieved celebrity status. These experiences are life-long gifts that help me to recall some of the good times with my own family, whether in New York City, Acadia National Park or at Ashford’s Wagon Shed enjoying Belgian Waffles.

*Bill Powers, a retired teacher, lives in Windham Center.*

# The Gospel of Christmas

By John Coffey

Technically, Christmas is the beginning of the Christmas season, whereas the period between roughly Thanksgiving and Christmas is the Advent season. So reflections on Christmas in January aren’t completely out of date. Besides, after a year like 2020, can we think about the joy of Christmas too much?

This skipping of Advent and rushing right to the Christmas season is probably inevitable in America, where we believe in getting what we want right when we want it. Advent is almost heretical to the cult of Americana, which thrives on impatience, self-sufficiency, and consumption. The idea that we have to wait for a savior from outside of us who eschews consuming everything around him in favor of giving to others, is a sharp indictment of much of American life.

That in itself is good news—it says that the brokenness around us is not the way things are supposed to work, and that there is a solution for it. The bad news is, that solution comes in the form of a child, who then has to take 30 years or so to grow up, and who, when he does grow up, says we have to leave everything behind and follow him. In other words, Jesus is a solution that takes a long time to actually get around to doing the solving, and whose solving involves us denying ourselves and all the crutches we have used to get where we are today, in favor of reliance on him.

But again, this is about Christmas. It’s strange to me that the birth of a child can be heralded as a grand, salvific event. I’ve seen babies. I have a small child. I’m well aware that, as grateful as I am for her, she doesn’t do much. She eats, sleeps, and excretes. She cries. She can’t hold her head up. She’s fragile. She doesn’t solve the problems we face as a family—she compounds them.

But I tell you what—there is no better feeling than just sitting and holding that beautiful girl. And I’m not big on pictures or picture taking, but the first time I was out and about after we got home from the hospital, I was showing off pictures of her to the random lady helping me at Verizon.

Perhaps this is a lesson for us about God and salvation. On the one hand, God makes us uncomfortable. After all, my daughter compounds the problems we face as a family, not just because she is needy, but because she forces us to reckon with the ways we are selfish with our time, attention, and love. More often than not, I think our problems with God say less about God than they do about ourselves.

On the other hand, I can never stay upset at or about her. No, she doesn’t

do much, but everything she does brings me joy. That’s what babies do—bring joy. Perhaps this is where our relationship with God should begin as well—simple joy at knowing and being near God.

When God determines to save us, he doesn’t begin with a 30 year old king at the head of an army. He begins with a little, useless, trying, joy-inducing baby. As we come to God, our relationship begins as something that induces joy, even as it reveals ways in which we are bad human beings. On its own, that guilt and shame would be unbearable, but just as with children, the joys underlie and overwhelm all else.

I’m struck by the prayer “Children as Gospel” from Stanley Hauerwas, in his collection of prayers, Prayers Plainly Spoken (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999, pg. 79).

Dear God, our children are wonderful news: the news that you refuse to give up on your creation. Against the blackness of this world, against the injustice, against the violence, against the busyness spurred by our inflated sense of importance, you give us children. What a wonderful gift. We thank you for Adam, Sarah Austin, Katie, Gabriel, Joshua Paul, Andrew Thomas, Joel and others. Thank you for these your children, who screw up our lives, thus teaching us our true desires. Like your Son, they are our fleshly advents, because through them we learn patient hope. Thank you for making us your joyful, confident children, capable of welcoming our children, hopefully in imitation of your welcome of us. Amen.

Christmas is a reminder that our relationship with God begins with and is always filled with joy. Sometimes more than others, perhaps, but it’s always there beneath the surface. It’s a reminder that God’s work in our lives and this world is not always clear, but it is always happening. It’s not exactly clear how baby Jesus will save Israel while lying in a manger. It’s not clear how he will save Israel as he grows through adolescence and eventually enters ministry. But sure enough, God is working in him and through him, bringing about the salvation of Israel and the world. So sure, in fact, that as soon as people start hearing about Jesus, they erupt in praise due to God’s salvation. So we too, as we wait for the consummation of the ages, can have joy and praise God, because as surely as Jesus was born and died and resurrected, he will come again.

*John Coffey is a minister at the Storrs Road Church of Christ in Mansfield Center.*

## To all our contributors- Thank You!

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Photos taken at the Gurleyville Grist Mill in Mansfield by Christine Acebo.

# Tribal Fires

By Judy Davis

The awakening of heritage and time-  
All that came before is mine.  
Voices of my ancestors seep into my soul  
I am fulfilled – I am whole.  
Histories, tall as a tree-  
Songs of the ancients echo within me.  
Names and faces turn life’s page-  
Everyday, I am of all age.  
Sun shining – moon on high.  
First Nations –people of the sky.  
I soar in joy with all I have here.  
The Willow Tree – the bear – the deer.  
I am the sum of heritage’s embrace –  
The best of time – best of space.  
My grandmothers are all sweet-  
Grass, rivers, sage and corn-  
It’s all my beautiful, collective morn.  
Medicine women, near and far, sing to me from the stone-  
For they are my blood – and they are my bone.



## Gunner and Bridget

By Dan McGinley

Last night Gunner called our house phone and described Trump babbling on and on about election fraud and how we would all see “millions of votes” materialize to put him over the top and secure a second term.

Gunner is a poet savant of running commentary, and now he was driving at high speeds somewhere in western Massachusetts on the turnpike. He had two radar detectors buzzing and chirping like crazed birds, interrupting AC/DC coming from his satellite radio. The combination was maddening, yet fascinating.

You never want to be a passenger in Gunner’s car, for so many reasons. He has been rocketing along for over forty years without a single accident or even a ticket, but to witness him behind the wheel is to test your belief system pertaining to odds, physics, and common sense. Odds being he should be dead or without a license, physics saying he should crash sooner or later, common sense saying slow the hell down.

Forty years. I hate him for this madness, yet . . . he never tailgates or drives fast on secondary roads. He never intimidates other drivers or gets into a duel, he just goes like hell on open highways.

He was ranting like usual when music and speed got his blood going, so I immediately hit “record” on the answering machine because - well - Gunner.

“Trump was sitting alone,” Gunner said, “most likely ingesting some kind of toxic mushroom or exotic drug, repeating claims of fraud over and over, after verbally attacking some journalist like the third world dictators he admires so much, and it was really sad, because the humor wore off a long time ago, and now he’s just a clown caught in the rain, make-up running like hair dye down Giuliani’s bug-eyed face. Sweet Jesus how pathetic. Make America great again? Really? You’re not gonna do it selling bullshit, red hats and altered flags!”

He was starting to get louder on the phone, breathing like a three-hundred pound lineman after a hundred yard dash, and I have noted these signs before. I have seen the horrific carnage when Gunner’s temper runs unchecked during political rants. There has been blood on tavern floors. Those days are thankfully behind us, but phone ranting is still very much



alive in our frayed friendship.

“It’s just a stupid catch phrase,” I said, trying to lighten the mood and calm his nerves. “Charmin is squeezable soft!”

His voice lowered to an ominous rumble. “A catch phrase often catches fools. Fintan O’Toole says people in Ireland are feeling pity for the United States now. PITY!”

“And Fintan would be . . . ?”

“The Irish Times, for Chrissakes! Try to keep up!”

“Of course . . . I read it every day.”

“Don’t tweak me out, Mac. My fuse is burning short these days.”

“So is your memory, Gunner. It’s not like politicians haven’t used slogans before - I mean - “Ask not what your country can do for you . . . ?”

“You sick bastard, don’t even think of bringing Kennedy into this conversation.”

“Good point.”

“Not to mention, you could hardly fit that phrase on a cheap triple x tee shirt, much less a stupid baseball cap.”

“Just say no?”

“First ladies don’t count.”

“Ouch.”

“We’re talking presidents.”

“Well this one is out the door anyway.”

“Not soon enough. Even Sherpa mountain guides are entertained in a very bad way, their cackling laughter ringing through jagged snowy mountain tops like crazed hyenas. It drove the snow leopards to eat one of them.”

“For real?”

“Maybe a yak. Whatever lives up there.”

“I don’t think yaks eat people.”

“You mention Trump to a yak, see what happens.”

“Relax Gunner. He’s going away now.”

“He’s never really going, you know. He craves attention more than the Kardashians, with less brain power. No wonder he paid Cohen to destroy those college transcripts. He cheated like hell and still struggled to get a C, which is higher than his overall grade as president.”

“So what’s your take on Biden?”

“Wow.”

“Wow?”

“That hurt my head, switching gears so fast.”

“So what’s your take?”

“Well I’m not going to judge him pre-presidency, or by past actions, because this arena he’s stepping into? Nothing like it, not even close.”

“True.”

“But people like Kamala are going to have his back, which is older than a sea turtle by the way, and twice as scaly.”

“Also true.”

“And he swims a lot.”

“Like a sea turtle.”

“Exactly, if sea turtles owned olympic pools.”

“Who says they don’t?”

There’s silence on the other end, then, “Jesus.”

“Maybe I’m thinking ninja turtles.”

“You don’t take me seriously, McGinley. You never take me seriously.”

“I do when you call from prison somewhere.”

“Go ahead and play that card, remember what I did for you in Montreal?”

“Vaguely\_.”

“Twenty years of playing hockey; you know about five words of french, and me speaking french is what saved you from a backwoods lynching. Five. Words.”

“Five great words.”

“Speaking of cards, you still consult the tarot?”

“Every day.”

“And how’s that working for you?”

“Sometimes it’s better not to know the future.”

“Told you so.”

We were quiet for several seconds, before he asked, “Everything alright?”

“It’s life.”

“Something’s not alright.

“It’s life, “ I snapped, letting my temper out.

“Sorry,” Gunner mumbled. “You need to put those cards far far away, that stuff is no joke.”

“I don’t need the cards to tell me what’s coming.”

“But you won’t tell me.”

“I gotta go,”

“I get it, I’m just about at my exit anyway.”

“Yeah? I bet there’s skis in the trunk, and you’re heading north to meet the Samurai Sisters.”

“Solo run to Sunday River.”

“What are you driving?”

“A Ford Taurus.”

“The police model? How ironic, you’re like a Blues Brother.”

“The 440 is long gone, now it’s a twin-turbo.”

“When did Ford go European?”

“Japanese actually, Yamaha builds the engine. They’re making SHO models.”

“Super High Output?”

“These are my Samurai Sisters, Very, very fast.”

He couldn’t see me roll my eyes.

“Safe travels, Gunner. We’ll talk before the New Year.”

The cards he mentioned were not telling me anything new really, just reflecting whatever life was bringing my way and suggesting how to handle things. Direct revelations from the Major Arcana

and nothing too subtle. The Fool told me of a new journey I was taking in my career, just as it unfolded. Justice told me how to handle legal negotiations, also unfolding. Darker cards addressed our old, sick Jack Russell shivering \_under soft blankets across the room, with a heat pack on her back.

Gunner would appear to be sympathetic if I told him about Bridget, but he is not the kind of person who gets choked-up over dogs, and Bridget is not the kind to seek sympathy. She would chew tarot cards to pieces and poop out a mixed bag of undecipherable readings.

Forever faithful and fearless and stubborn until her very last breath, Bridget is one of the greatest companions ever, and this is going to be a very hard transition to get through\_.

Her kidneys are starting to falter, and the outlook is not good. She’s lived about fifteen robust years full of love and play and mischief, sometimes hunting frogs and fish in the shallows, or perched on the bow of a sailboat.

Sometimes she raises holy hell with our playful greyhound, who - despite an enormous size and weight advantage - often gives up in a game of doggy toy tug-of-war.

Bridget and Gunner both display fearless traits, but while Gunner loves to rant and rave about news and people and politics, Bridget is more like a well-seasoned football coach, driving teams to win with brutal smash mouth tactics. Vince Lombardi comes to mind.

She had been sold as a show dog but proved to be far too independent, so when the buyers gave up, she was offered for adoption, and the breeder named her for a stubborn aunt.

“You can’t ever let her win at tug-of-war,” the breeder said when we adopted her. “She will be alpha to you after that.”

Bridget was quickly alpha to the entire world.

So maybe in some ways Gunner and Bridget are very much alike, as she will pull a doggy toy till your arm falls off, and Gunner will never drive slow on a wide-open highway. Both of them would chew up tarot cards and scoff at such things. Bridget is fearless to the core while Gunner is . . . fearless for all the wrong reasons.

Some day that phone may ring and maybe - just maybe - it will be Bridget with a squeaky toy under her chin, calling from that Doggy Heaven we all know exists (because it was in a movie, duh).

“I’ve been thrashing everybody’s ass up here,” she will say. “Eventually you will join this defeated army of angels.”

There will be a wicked doggy laugh, and then, “I can also speak perfect English.”

No? Let’s see what the cards say . . .



The Elements of Writing

Wordplay

By Felix F. Giordano

Welcome to 2021 and let’s hope that the challenges of 2020 are left far behind and that we only experience peace and joy for many years to come. As we begin a new year’s worth of monthly editions for The Elements of Writing, I want to recap what we’ve covered thus far. Go to the website [neighborspaper.com](http://neighborspaper.com) and then follow the instructions at the bottom of the page for back issues. You will find the following 2020 editions for The Elements of Writing:

- March - The Elements of Writing
- April- The Hook
- May - Creating Believable and Enduring Characters
- June - Driving the Story
- July - The Story Arc and Outlining
- August - The Plot and Sub Plots
- September – Cliffhangers
- October - Red Herrings
- November – Foreshadowing
- December – The Power of Three

This month we will define Wordplay which is both a clever and a witty use of words and phrases. On face value, wordplay seems like a very basic literary term. Yet it is used in a variety of ways with a complexity of different meanings. Wordplay often involves ten major literary devices and techniques such as acronym, alliteration, assonance, consonance, double entendre, idiom, onomatopoeia, pun, rhyme, and slang to form amusing and often humorous written and oral expressions. By using them in our writing we can make what we write not only pleasing to the ear of our readers but also crafty and interesting. Let’s review each of these examples one by one.

Acronyms – the use of abbreviations such as MTA for Metropolitan Transit Authority or IMO for in my opinion. They can be used either in dialogue or descriptive prose. Using them shows the reader that a certain local flavor is used in the story. For instance, you would not want a character in your story saying the Federal Bureau of Investigation when they can simply say the FBI. The reader will know what the FBI is and spelling it out in longhand would not only disrupt the flow of your story but also make the conversation seem contrived.

Alliteration – repeating the same first consonant sound in a series of words. In *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald writes, “His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead”.

Assonance – the repetition of similar vowel sounds that takes place in two or more words in proximity to each other. You can recognize some of the following examples in common language or in movies: “son of a gun”, “after a while crocodile”, “stranger danger”, “keep your eyes on the prize”, “lean mean fighting machine”, “wild child”, “weak and weary”, “ice is nice”, “shop till you drop”, and “surf and turf”.

Consonance – the repetition of the same consonant sounds in a line of text which causes a pleasing sound. Usually occurring at the end of the words, but it may also be found within a word or at the beginning. Some examples are: “there’s a tear in my beer”, “love­y do­vey”, “heaven help us”, “honky-tonk”, “hokey pokey”, and “fight or flight”. Consonance can also be used in titles of books and movies such as in *King Kong* and *Fright Night*.

Double Entendre – this is the usage of a double interpretation of a word or phrase, with the secondary meaning usually being funny or risqué. In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Mercutio is stabbed by Tybalt when Romeo gets in the way of their play fighting. Mercutio is dying but no one believes that he is badly hurt because he is a joker. He continues to make jokes while he is bleeding to death and says just before he dies, “Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man”.

Idiom – We all know these. They are figures of speech in everyday language that are contrary to the literal translation of the words. Some examples are: “It’s hotter than hell in here”, “I can eat a horse”, “don’t drown me in your tears”, “cat got your tongue”, “their report knocked my socks off”, and “thanks for the gift did you hold up a bank”. Again, the use of idioms can show the reader your characters’ personality and also relieve tension if your story

is dramatic.

Onomatopoeia – the use of a word that describes a sound or mimics the actual sound of the object or action it refers to when it is spoken. Like the quack of a duck or the roar of a raging river. Two examples in poetry are Edgar Allen’s poems *The Bells* and *The Raven*. In those poems, Poe makes excellent use of descriptive sounds for the bells (jingling, tinkling, tolling, rolling, throbbing pae­an, clamor, and clangor) and the raven (rapping, tapping, Lenore, nevermore). To describe a gunshot in your story, use the word BANG in caps, or to describe a car accident or tree falling use the word SMASH or CRASH. Think of the 1960s TV series Batman and the producers’ use of plastering those words in CAPS across our TV screens. The use of onomatopoeia gets the point across to our readers in a more effective manner than just saying “He fired his gun”, “The car crashed”, or “The tree fell”.

Pun – I think we all pretty much know what a pun is. A pun is a play on words that is centered on a word with more than one meaning or words that sound alike. Some funny examples are: “So what if I can’t spell apocalypse - it’s not the end of the world!” and “Waking up this morning was an eye-opening experience”. You can use puns in your writing to either relieve tension in the plot or to show the reader the humorous personality (for better or worse) of one or more of your characters. Who can forget the James Bond film, *Die Another Day* when a man introduces himself to Pierce Brosnan’s James Bond and says, “I’m Mr. Kill”. Bond then replies, “That’s a name to die for”. Or in *Thunderball* when a would-be assassin is disabled by a spear gun and Sean Connery’s Bond says, “I think he got the point”.

Rhyme – When identical or similar concluding syllables in different words are repeated. Rhyming most often occurs at the ends of poetic lines. Rhyming abounds in the poetry world. Some examples can be found in the rich and varied poetry of not only Poe (*Alone*, *Eldorado*, *Annabel Lee*) but also in Robert Frost (*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, *The Road Not Taken*, *Fire and Ice*) and Lord Byron (*She Walks in Beauty*, *When We Two Parted*). These poems can be found through an Internet search and are great examples of rhyming by masters of the art.

Slang – Used in literature to describe a character’s social standing or culture. For instance, if you are writing a story set in Brooklyn New York, your characters are apt to use words such as fahgettaboudit, stoop, and bodega. If your story is set in London you may use slang phrases such as “bugger off”, “a bit knackered”, or “telling porkies”. Using slang will give your reader a real sense for where your story takes place as well as the social status of your characters. Since my novels take place in Montana, one of the common phrases in that part of the country when describing a few items is “a couple three” as in “It’ll take me a couple three days to get around to fixing your car”. So complete the required Internet research if you need to enhance your awareness of the local lingo. One of the best sources I found to help with dialect and the local lingo is the website [funtranslations.com](http://funtranslations.com).

In summation, use Wordplay to enhance and enrich your story, bring your characters to life, and enable them to interact with one another as they should depending upon where they each live and their individual social statuses.

We defined “Wordplay” as part of The Elements of Writing, and I hope I’ve piqued your interest in writing. Storytelling is inherent in us all. It is who we are as social human beings and we all have stories to tell.

*Felix F. Giordano is a local author with books sales in excess of 7,000 and has had more than 3 million pages of his books read by Amazon Kindle Unlimited subscribers. His website is [jbnovels.com](http://jbnovels.com). Felix is also an organizer of the Eastern Connecticut Writers (ECW) at the Willington Public Library. To find out more about ECW, go to this link: <https://easternconnecticutwriters.blogspot.com/>*

Next Month’s Topic: Prose & Dialogue

Helpful Winter Weather Tips From the Meteorologists

(StatePoint) Preparing for unpredictable winter weather? Take stock of your home, vehicle and planning tools to ensure your family stays safe and warm all winter long.

Luckily, AccuWeather’s expert meteorologists know a thing or two about predicting the unexpected. They shared their top winter tips.

Stay Safe on the Road-

If you’re among the 74% of Americans planning to travel for the holidays, the AccuWeather app’s Minute-Cast forecast can help you predict when to hit the road. It provides a constantly updating minute-by-minute look at precipitation over the next two hours (soon to be expanded to four) locally and at your destination.

AccuWeather meteorologists make sure they’re prepped for the road before leaving. “If your car’s snow accessories have been sitting for a long time, it may be wise to make sure they’re in proper working order,” recommends senior meteorologist, Paul Pastelok. This may include checking whether it’s time for an oil change.

In snowy climates, outfit your car with winter tires, which can withstand winter weather more effectively than all-season tires. Whether or not you’re traveling, ready your car by monitoring tire pressure, testing your car battery, keeping an eye on windshield and wiper blades and adding a coat of wax if you can.

Get Cozy at Home-

Channel your inner meteorologist to keep the house safe. AccuWeather meteorologists have some simple hacks for preventing messes such as frozen pipes, broken radiators, flooding and leaks.

“Replace worn out weather stripping around windows and doors,” says AccuWeather senior meteorologist, David H. Dombek. “Also, ensure your rain gutters are cleared of leaves and other debris. Clogged gutters can lead to problems when it comes to snow, ice and below freezing temperatures.”

To prevent clogged drains, you can make a simple, environmentally-friendly mixture of salt, baking soda, and cream of tartar, then pour it into drains once a week. Opening cabinet doors in the kitchen and bathroom can help circulate warmer air around plumbing. In frigid conditions, let a bit of water drip from faucets, especially where pipes aren’t insulated. You can also unhook garden hoses before the first hard freeze to prevent busted pipes.

For older furnaces that may need replacing, schedule a tune-up. Senior meteorologist Alan Reppert also makes sure to clear leaves and snow away from his heat pump to ensure air flow. “Anything in the way of air flow can affect your heating system’s efficiency,” he notes.

To track rain, snow, cloud cover and potentially dangerous conditions so you can get the house winterized, use the mapping features on AccuWeather.com and on the app.

Plan Ahead to Dine Outside-

With COVID-19 cases on the rise and restrictions on indoor dining in effect nationwide, dining out can require advanced planning. When eating outdoors, factor in the variables associated with unpredictable winter weather. AccuWeather’s forecast provides info needed to plan a week out—plenty of time to make that reservation.

Meteorologist and emergency preparedness specialist Becky DePodwin also recommends checking AccuWeather’s RealFeel Temperature to determine what it’s actually going to feel like tableside. This can help you decide whether to venture outside, bring a blanket or opt for takeout. “Oftentimes in winter, especially if there’s any amount of wind going on, the temperature’s not going to be an adequate indication of what it feels like outside,” she says.

Get an Insider View-

A one-size-fits-all weather report isn’t sufficient when it comes to planning. AccuWeather’s Winter Center page provides detailed winter weather predictions just like a meteorologist would, with everything from the newly added ice accumulation tracker to the wind speed calculator. You can also find forecasts designed for specific interests and needs, including the outlook for holidays, snow sports and longer-range looks at the months ahead.

All of AccuWeather’s winter prep resources are available at [AccuWeather.com/en/us/Winter-Weather](http://AccuWeather.com/en/us/Winter-Weather).

No matter what your winter plans are, you can plan with confidence like a meteorologist, for a safe, warm winter.



# The Legend and the Probable True Story

By Tom Woron

Atlantis. We see the name in various places every so often. Hotels, resorts and casinos carry its name. One of our space shuttles is named after it. But where did the name come from?

When we think of ancient history, right away we think of the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Rome and the city-states of Greece that flourished in the few thousand years Before Christ. But was there another ancient civilization that was lost when the sea suddenly swallowed up its home continent?

We all know that ancient Greece had a few very wise men called philosophers. One of those philosophers, Plato, would have no idea that a subject discussed in a couple of his writings would be the source of very intense fascination, study and debate by scientists, scholars, intellectuals and explorers alike for almost 2,400 years right up until the present day.

Plato was close to 70 years old around 360 B.C. when in two of his written dialogues, “Timaeus” and “Critias,” he describes a civilization that was once located out in the Atlantic Ocean “beyond the Pillars of Hercules” on an island larger than Libya and Asia Minor combined. (Libya here means most of northern Africa not just today’s country of Libya.) The Pillars of Hercules is interpreted to be the Strait of Gibraltar, the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea and that large island, said to be west of the Strait out in the Atlantic was Atlantis.

According to Plato, an Athenian statesman from ancient Greece named Solon first heard about Atlantis when he visited Egypt some time around 590 B.C. While in Egypt some high priests described to Solon details of how over 9,000 years before their time, Atlantis had a very prosperous, wealthy and advanced society. However, as they gained more wealth and power the Atlanteans became corrupt and turned to evil ways. Militarily powerful, the Atlanteans went on a march of conquest overrunning much of the known world of the time around the Mediterranean Sea. The Atlantean Empire at it’s height extended inside the Pillars of Hercules in northern Africa all the way to Egypt and in Europe as far as Italy. It was only the Athenians of Greece that defeated the Atlanteans and drove them back. Thereafter, falling out of grace with the gods, the Atlantean civilization was destroyed when in one single day and night catastrophic earthquakes, storms and terrible floods overtook Atlantis and sank the entire continent into the sea.

In the centuries since the 300s B.C. the big question has been was the legend of Atlantis and it’s sudden destruction in one day and night a fictitious tale



invented by Plato or was it an actual description of a real historical event that happened some 9,000 years before the time of Solon?

In 1882 former U. S. Congressman Ignatius Donnelly kicked off modern interest in Atlantis with the publication of his book, “Atlantis: The Antediluvian World.” Donnelly hypothesized that the people of many ancient civilizations in Europe, Africa and even the Americas were all descendents of migrants from Atlantis. Donnelly believed that the original Garden of Eden existed on Atlantis and that the destruction of Atlantis itself could be attributed to the Great Flood mentioned in the Bible. With his book Donnelly unknowingly promoted the belief that legends contain hidden information and only certain ingenious scholars could interpret it.

Today’s scientists and geologists will tell us that it just was not possible for there to be a large island or continent out in the Atlantic Ocean, west of the Strait of Gibraltar, that sank into the sea in one day and night. One can forget about there ever having been an Atlantic Atlantis. However, Plato’s Atlantis may not be total fantasy on his part.

There are several theories of where Atlantis could have been located if it indeed existed at all. One of the most likely explanations of the Atlantis story states that, first of all, the math is wrong and second, a very real and unimaginable catastrophic event that actually happened inside the Mediterranean Sea itself could have inspired Plato’s Atlantis tale.

Around the year 1500 B.C. a tremendously cataclysmic volcanic eruption destroyed most of the Greek island of Thera (today called Santorini) in the Mediterranean. Most of the island blew right up and out of the earth in the eruption and the sea rushed in to fill the large area where land was. As a result of the eruption a very large tsunami smashed into the nearby island of Crete and seems to have basically destroyed the Minoan civilization, a civilization that very little is known about, that flourished there. While the exact year of the Thera eruption is not known, it is believed to have occurred some time between 1600 B.C. and 1450 B.C. with near 1500 B.C. a strong possibility. If the Atlantis story heard by Solon was a historical reference to the Thera disaster, then the time in which that happened would be in the ballpark of around 900 years before the time of Solon. It has been theorized that 900 years was mistranslated into 9,000 years. A final pitch to support the theory that the Thera disaster inspired Plato’s Atlantis story is that the mountains on both sides of the Gulf of Laconia, the southernmost gulf in Greece, were in ancient times called the “Pillars of Hercules.”

## Where to find the Neighbors paper

<b>Ashford</b> Terry’s Transmissions Ashford Spirit Shoppe Wooden Spoon Restaurant Ashford Post Office Babcock Library	<b>Hampton</b> Hampton Post Office Hampton Library
<b>Brooklyn</b> Brooklyn Post Office Baker’s Dozen Coffee Shop The Ice Box	<b>Lebanon</b> Lebanon Post Office Green Store
<b>Bolton</b> Bolton Post Office Subway-Bolton Notch	<b>Mansfield/Storrs</b> D & D Auto Repair Holiday Spirits All Subway shops Bagel Zone Storrs Post Office Mansfield Senior Center Starbucks Storrs Comm. Laundry UConn Bookstore-Storrs Ctr. Changs Garden Rest. Liberty Bank Spring Hill Cafe Nature’s Health Store Mansfield Supply
<b>Chaplin</b> Chaplin Post Office Pine Acres Restaurant	<b>Mansfield Center</b> Lawrence Real Estate Mansfield OB/GYN Mansfield Library East Brook Mall
<b>Columbia</b> Saxon Library Columbia Post Office	<b>Mansfield Depot</b> Thompson’s Store Tri-County Greenhouse
<b>Coventry</b> Highland Park Market Meadowbrook Spirits Coventry Laundromat Subway Booth and Dimock Library Song-A-Day Music	
<b>Eastford</b> Eastford Post Office	

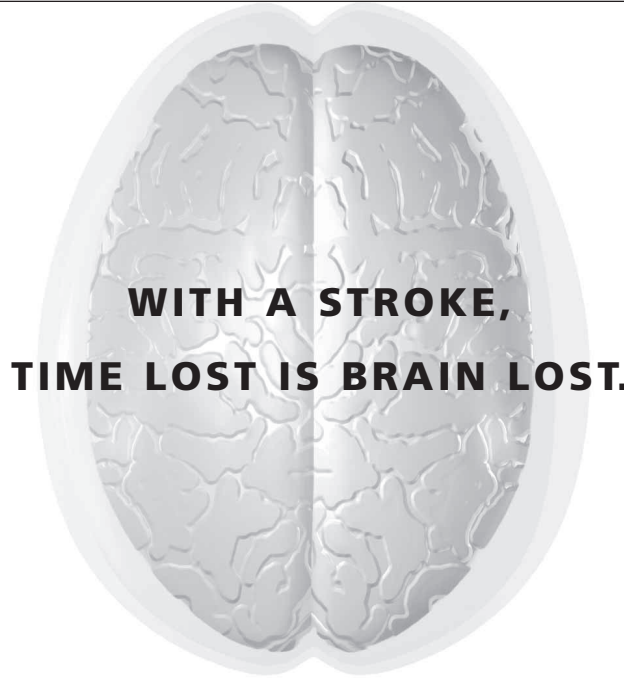
<b>North Windham</b> Bagel One Subway No. Windham Post Office	<b>Tolland</b> Birch Mountain Pottery Subway Tolland Library Tolland Post Office
<b>Pomfret</b> Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Vanilla Bean Restaurant Pomfret Post Office Baker’s Dozen Coffee Shop	<b>Willington</b> The Packing House Franc Motors Willington Pizza I & II Willington Post Office Willington Library
<b>Putnam</b> Antiques Marketplace Putnam Library Subway Putnam Post Office	<b>Windham/Willimantic</b> Willimantic Food Co-op Design Center East Schiller’s Windham Eye Group CAD Marshall Framing Clothespin Laundromat Main Street Cafe That Breakfast Place All Subways Super Washing Well Willimantic Public Library Windham Senior Center Elm Package Store Not Only Juice Willimantic Records
<b>Scotland</b> Scotland Library Scotland Post Office	<b>Windham Center</b> Windham Post Office
<b>South Windham</b> Bob’s Windham IGA Landon Tire So. Windham Post Office	
<b>Stafford</b> Stafford Coffee Company Stafford Library Subway Artisans at Middle River Stafford Post Office Stafford Ciderly Hangs Asian Bistro	



**Love Animals?**  
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Each week, dozens of volunteers from all over Connecticut assist us in providing care to the deserving animals at our Sanctuary in Ashford. We hope you will consider getting involved as a Sanctuary volunteer.

Visit our [OurCompanions.org](http://OurCompanions.org) for full job descriptions and volunteer requirements or call us at 860-242-9999.

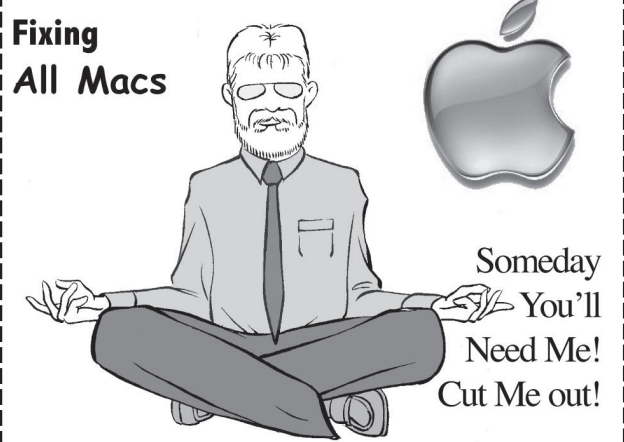


**WITH A STROKE,  
TIME LOST IS BRAIN LOST.**

If you suddenly have or see any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately:  
Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body • Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding • Difficulty seeing in one or both eyes • Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination • Severe headache with no known cause

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**Note: Some locations may be closed due to pandemic.**



A close-up portrait of Governor Ned Lamont, smiling and looking directly at the camera. He has short, light brown hair and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt and a patterned tie.

*“I’m going to be pretty tough when it comes to these negotiations — I will step in. I’d like to find a way that we don’t need a new power plant in Killingly.”*

—Governor Ned Lamont<sup>1</sup>

## GOVERNOR, ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

The proposed decision by your Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to approve a fracked gas pipeline for a new power plant in Killingly<sup>2</sup> will be a disaster for our water, air, and future.

This pipeline will rip through miles of wetlands and streams, destroying the habitat of several protected endangered species, and will lock our state into burning fracked gas for decades to come. Worse, the energy from the proposed plant is *simply not needed* to keep Connecticut going.

Connecticut families deserve better from the agencies and leaders charged with protecting our water and air.

Connecticut residents should **contact the Governor today at 800-406-1527 or [governor.lamont@ct.gov](mailto:governor.lamont@ct.gov)** and demand that he keep the promise he made to our state. Keep your word, Governor. Stop the pipeline *now*.

—SIERRA CLUB CONNECTICUT

1. “CT regulators stall pipeline to controversial power plant site,” *New Haven Register*, October 9, 2020, <https://www.ctinsider.com/business/nhregister/article/CT-regulators-stall-pipeline-to-controversial-15635018.php>

2. The 650 MW gas plant will emit 2.2 million tons of carbon dioxide each year, releasing 5 percent of Connecticut’s total greenhouse gases.