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Looking Up:

The Little Girl and the Cave

By Bob Grindle

Driving across town this evening as twilight teases the end of day and tremulous shadows give way to a more even palette of darkness, I feel a spirit-lifting connection to the lights that are flickering on in the windows of homes and garages and barns and outbuildings...even on lampposts, porches, and along walkways. And while I doubt many of the people behind those windows or up those walkways are intending to beckon passersby, there is something almost mythically comforting and inviting about light—campfire, candle, lantern, gaslight, lamp, streetlight, you name it—no matter its purpose: security, warmth, protection, visual aid, comfort, safety, maybe even signal, or something more. Its mere presence is a sheltering and familiar nod to our need for human contact.

As I arrive home after running a couple of errands this unseasonably mild March evening, the warmly yellow—almost twinkling—lights on the porch put a smile on my face and for a few moments I sit in the driveway feeling welcomed to my own hideaway, invitingly lit and tucked as it is into the rolling hills of eastern Connecticut. I feel a pleasant sort of end-of-the-day fatigue sitting here in the truck, and my mind loosens its grip and spills a few memories. There are so many songs that touch on the magic of light: “The Old Lamplighter,” “Here Comes the Sun,” “Morning Has Broken,” “The Myth of Fingerprints,” “Memory” from Cats, and on and on.

There is a Native American myth, told by Algonquin storytellers from the Great Lakes region, about how a mischievous raven steals the Sun and Moon and stars, hides them, and leaves the world in absolute darkness. A young girl, broken-hearted that she will never again be able

to see the lakes and streams and forests she loves, decides she will listen more closely than ever to all the sounds in the world around her, and is amazed to hear the wind through the trees whispering that it has seen where Raven hid the precious sources of light. Following the instructions of the wind, she bravely tracks her way through dark forests and into a cave to find the Sun and Moon and stars wrapped tightly in jet-black raven feathers. Carefully, she carries the package back outside and opens it up...and the world is once again bathed in light.

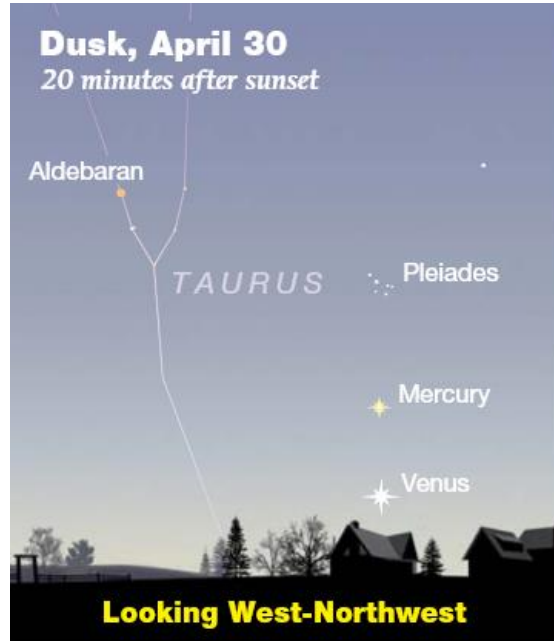
While we are on the subject of light, Venus returns to our skies later this month—this time to the evening sky—after a few months’ hiatus on the other side of the Sun. No need to rush out to spot this delightful sparkle; she’ll be with us throughout the year. Like a prima donna on stage, though, Venus tends to grab all the attention, leaving others in the shadows. Jupiter and Saturn will each form a pairing with the slender and fading Moon on the 6th and 7th of April; cast a pre-dawn glance to the east as you head off to work and you’ll see Saturn above the crescent Moon on Tuesday the 6th, and then Jupiter in the same spot on Wednesday morning about 5:45. By the time of April’s full “Pink” Moon on the

26th, chances are the fruit trees will be past the pink stage of bloom, but with any luck our charming orbital partner and tidal companion will find ways to beckon us outside to bask in its special April version of night-light. A few days later, on the last day of April, and just as the now waning Moon is starting to rise—about 8:15 or so—and the Sun has fully set, Venus will be rising in the west-northwest and Mercury directly above it. Grab a pair of binoculars; they’re fairly low on the horizon, but worth a look.

Native cultures from around this globe we all call home, and echoing down through the millennia, have thought of the Earth and the universe as a circle without end, and humankind as just one small piece of the circle. The buffalo and elk and wolf and tiger, the orangutan and frog and insect, the flower and grass and tree are all related to us. What a pity we spend so much time not listening to the stories of the people who live close to nature and consider themselves her partner, and not her master.

Enjoy the delightful sounds of the night, the smells of the season, and all the magical ways that light plays with how we understand and know our world. Be well and enjoy April.

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



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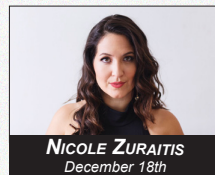
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On our cover: Heather Logee, Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Director, Emilie Hebert and Judy Buell of Buck’s Soft Serve in Woodstock (left to right). See page 13 for article and another photo.
Contributed photo.

This is our time on earth.
What are we doing with it?

Neighbors
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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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Protecting Wildness

By Loretta Wrobel



Living in Connecticut I have a wealth of options to experience the woods, forests, and streams. A short drive takes me to the ocean, and a bit further puts me on Cape Cod, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard. Our little State has a multitude of state forests. I don't always pay enough attention to what is occurring in other parts of our country. My insensitivity was exposed as I read Erosion by Terry Tempest Williams. A large piece of the book contains essays spelling out the assaults on our public lands and the threat to our spectacular wild spaces. These natural gems, mainly national parks and monuments, have been designated as public lands and are supposedly protected because of their uniqueness. The basic assumption is these lands belong to all of us, and if not safeguarded, they will be lost and their inherent grandeur never viewed by future generations.

During the past administration, our national parks and monuments were regarded as profit opportunities. The selling of leases to oil and gas companies for drilling, mining, commercial fishing and other commercial exploits was judged as important to our economic growth. The fossil fuel corporations are always ready to greedily gobble up any lease sales, particularly those held in western lands. In December of 2017, our then President seized 85% of Bears Ears National Monument (more than one million acres) with the intent to sell for mining and drilling. Plans were finalized in 2020 to open up these sacred protected lands to energy companies to extract any fossil fuels found. This demonstrated no regard for the tribal nations that continue to use this land for ceremony and have deep roots in the land. More than 100,000 Native American archaeological and cultural sites are located in this national monument. With the new Biden administration, the restoration of Bears Ears is a real possibility, as the President can issue a proclamation to preserve these sacred sites and return this land to the tribes that have lovingly managed these honored lands for centuries. The American people could continue to visit this extraordinary site, and the site would be spared from destruction by companies focused only on financial gain.

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, another public land also in Utah, is a precious treasure as it holds fossils from dinosaurs, some previously unknown. Paleontologists have uncovered fossils from 21 undiscovered dinosaur species. Grand Staircase-Escalante was stripped of a million acres by the past administration in 2017, and thousands of acres opened for drilling and mining operations in 2020. This area has long been coveted by the coal industry, and without federal protection, it is obviously a fresh market for the oil, coal and gas companies.

Coming closer to home, the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument, 150 miles southeast of Cape Cod, is also under attack. Learning that this special ecological asset is home to cold-water coral and protects marine life such as endangered whales, puffins, and sea turtles is both good news and frightening. This monument is not far away from Connecticut, and I was totally unaware of the danger that threatens the biological species that reside in its boundaries. The Seamounts are oases of marine life and the only ones in the United States Atlantic waters. This marine prize protects nearly 5,000 acres of ocean, and is a buffer to the ocean against climate change in addition to refuge for a diversity of marine life. Tragically, this

vital area is under assault. In 2020 the past administration opened these lands to commercial fishing and resource extraction exploration that can cripple and potentially destroy this fragile ecosystem. I am surprised that a place of such importance so near to my home had not been in my awareness. The sobering truth that the cold-water coral and endangered species were initially preserved and then potentially removed from protection and threatened with destruction is unacceptable.

Thankfully our present administration is reviewing all of these injustices, potential devastation to our environment, and the grabbing of our public lands for the sake of economic development and big fossil fuel interests. This is a theft of our lands. It deprives us of opportunities to appreciate our national monuments, and threatens to annihilate the rich diversity of life. It also desecrates the sacred ancestral lands. It denies us the chance to revitalize our spirit in natural spaces/places and to be able to nourish ourselves in these times of high stress and tension. We must keep these wild spaces to embolden our own wildness, which allows us to function as healthy and generous beings. Our humanity is sustained and grown when we spend time in our magnificent and awesome national parks and monuments. Without natural places we fail to thrive.

I am grateful to Terry Tempest Williams for pointing out the horrors that can occur to our stunning and magical public lands when we don't pay attention. What is so hard for me to accept is the frightening truth that our assumed publicly protected lands were stolen by an executive order. This could easily happen again. We must constantly be watchful. Our wellbeing and the wellbeing of our planet depends on our loving stewardship of the land. The earth takes care of us no matter how often we trash it and treat it as expendable. The earth is forgiving and keeps giving back to us regardless of how we disregard her. We in turn can be mindful of how critical it is to be alert to what is being done because of greed and disrespect for Native American culture.

We have a second chance with the Bears Ear and Grand Staircase-Escalante Monuments in Utah, and the Northeast Canyon and Seamounts Monument off the coast in the Atlantic Ocean. At least, I pray, this foolish and reckless decision will be reversed, and these places will be restored to their former status. It still chills my soul to realize how vulnerable our National Parks and Monuments are. It is easy to take for granted the fact that we live in a country that has amazing natural resources, and harder to accept how easily these beautiful lands can be damaged, spoiled, and ripped from us.

Our democratic foundations are not fixed and immovable. We need to be attentive. Only if we see the connection to our own wildness, will we be able to stay protective of the wildness around us. As humans we possess the intelligence to save or destroy our home. What are we choosing to do? It is up to all of us to remain awake, and allow the erosion we are now facing to uncover a healthier path. A kinder and more loving world is possible. A country where we live with each other and all the other living beings in this miraculous world with sensitivity for all of life. The pandemic, climate catastrophes, gun violence, and racism are uncovering our traumas, wounds, and shortcomings so we can examine our ways of living and believing. Let us dig deep into the pain and commit to work together to repair, restore, and regain. To forgive ourselves. To forgive each other. To open to healing so we can appreciate and protect the wildness that surrounds us, and direct our inner wild passion to compel us to do better.

Mill Museum Events

Submitted by Bev York 860-423-1878

April 14: Trivia on Zoom Theme : "Everyday is Earth Day" and misc. 7 p.m. Individuals or teams welcome, prizes, fee to support the Mill Museum Preregister at millmuseum.org

April 18: Zoom in for Tea: Herbal and Medicinal Teas (infusions) Get a cup of tea and join us for an enjoyable and educational hour. 4 p.m. Fee to support the Mill Museum. Preregister on web site at Millmuseum.org.

April 24: Tour: "Where they Stood" The American Revolution: History 101. First of three programs of teaching American history through visiting local sites. A slow-paced walk through 18th c. sites will take the out-of-doors tour from Samuel Huntington's Home to Windham Green and Lebanon Green. Preregister on the Mill Museum website. \$15 per person. millmuseum.org 10:00 a.m.

Participants should caravan or carpool, bring water, snack, mask.

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Willimantic, Now and Then:

Hard knocks, Hard work, Great life

By Mark Svetz



Since I retired (from my part-time job), I have been thinking a lot about work. Ironic, isn't it? There might be a few people out there who think I should have thought a little more about work when I was employed. I can't really argue with that.

I never was quick to put my shoulder to just any wheel.

I think I'm very fortunate to have had a lot of choice in my work life. I have done many things, and found that it's not what I'm doing, but who I'm doing it with that makes all the difference. I have gone back and forth between physical work and teaching or social work. It's all been fun and I wouldn't do any of it differently, but it seems a little different from other careers. So I've been kicking it around a lot lately.

I grew up around a lot of physical work. My father worked hard for a living, and as far as he was concerned, if things needed to be done around the house, well, that's why he had kids. And there was a lot to be done around our house. It was built on a hillside, and my father always wanted that bank a little farther back. He wanted some breathing room, I suppose. This was complicated by the forest on top of that bank. He wanted us to clear that so we could dig the bank back for the huge lawn he had planned for us to mow.

My father saw hard work as social, behavioral and political indoctrination. Training for life, he might have called it. Thinking about those years gives me a perspective on my lifelong ambivalence toward work, career and authority. I had always found class to be an adequate explanation. It's not that I was ever a working class hero, or anything like that. I just had this vague feeling: If I didn't come home with dirt and blisters on my hands, it wasn't honest work. That part of my father's indoctrination worked. You bet it did. It left me feeling a little unsettled with some of the work I was was paid to do in those days. The passage of time has, perhaps, presented me with other explanations.

However half-heartedly I have staggered off in one direction or another in what might be called my career, I have surrounded myself with hard work during most of my life. I moved furniture as a hobby, for cryin' out loud. Sarah and I heat with wood, even when we lived on the second floor. Some portion of our firewood every year is cut and split by hand. We get help from friends, but Sarah and I do our share of the work. We haul water for our garden in buckets and we make soil by digging in the small wooded part of our yard. It's hard work.

I got a wind-up radio from my friend Carol last year. I have started listening to the radio in the morning.

It's nice to have Wayne Norman back in my life. I crank for a minute or two and it plays for about a half hour. I guess that's enough work to justify it for me. I use a hand grinder for coffee. It has hung on the wall of our kitchen for 15 years. I used to say it was our lack of counter space, but I'm thinking those few minutes of cranking are what I'm after. Everything we do is pretty labor intensive. I have made that choice often in my life. Maybe I'm starting to see why.

It is almost as though the hard work justifies the choice. Or dictates it? In most cases, I think doing something by hand rather than using electricity is good for us and the planet. But really, would it use that much more water to run the hose to the garden and direct it on each of our plants? Do we really have to trudge up to the house, fill the joint compound bucket and lug it back to the garden? I don't know, but we do it 10 or 15 times a day, all summer long. I expect we'll continue to do it.

I have always been proud of my work ethic. But as I said, I have been thinking about this a lot lately, and I am wondering why I want to justify my choices. I won't even ask to whom. I can still hear my best friend's father asking the question: "What did you do for your country today?" He wasn't talking about community service. No, he shared my father's conviction that hard work was good for us. They also lived on a hill side, and we had the choice of which bank to dig. But it was really a question of which one to dig first, because both fathers demanded progress. They both enjoyed the fruits of our labor, and were quick to punish when they didn't get it. I guess that was the culture I grew up in. No hard work equals punishment. Fair enough.

So I sit in the morning darkness and relive some of my choices. It's not that hard; I still have the aches and pains from many of them. I think I could have done worse than pick up a splitting maul at age 65 and get used to it again after 40 years. But honestly, that's a little deeper into my psyche than I care to travel without a guide. Water under the bridge, my mother would say.

When I think about hard work at this point in my life, I believe it is my best health insurance plan. I feel a twinge of gratitude for my father's "life training." His choices might not have been so bad, after all. Mine have worked out OK, too. And I really do need the counter space.

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

The Peril of Directions

By Angela Hawkins Fichter

A month before my annual visit to the osteoporosis clinic at UConn Health in Farmington, I received a letter informing me that my doctor's office had moved to a new location. The letter said the office was now at 3 Squirrel Lane, and then it said to use GPS to find it. After reading this, I was puzzled and alarmed. I don't have GPS. My car is old, so GPS didn't come with it, and I am old and phobic about new technology, so I haven't bought a GPS device. My doctor's old office was in the same place as the clinic: a glass building next to a parking garage, down the hill from a hospital. No clues were given in the letter as to where 3 Squirrel Lane might be. "Just use your GPS," it said. That told me the letter was written by someone male and very young (meaning under 30). The letter concluded, Your bone density testing will remain at the place it was before. I hoped, as I drove all the way from Hampton to Farmington, that the people in bone density testing would know where 3 Squirrel Lane was.

It had been a year since I drove on Route 84 through Hartford and beyond. Because of the epidemic and warnings against going anywhere not absolutely necessary, I rarely go out, except for food shopping. Driving through Hartford, surrounded by huge tractor trailers going faster than the speed limit, was very different from driving on the narrow antique roads in my corner of Connecticut. When I arrived at the parking garage in Farmington, I got good news: I could park on the lower level and walk out of the garage onto a sidewalk and over to the glass building where the bone density test is done. And more good news: My doctor's office had merely moved across the street from the glass building! That's when I knew for certain that the letter was written by a young man. Anyone who is old will know why I say the writer was young...because the writer assumes everyone has GPS. And how do I know it's a male writer? Because he does not give directions by landmarks (meaning by common sense).

Years ago, I read an article written by a psychologist about possible differences between the male and female brain. It discussed a test in which men and women were asked for directions on how to get to a certain restaurant in town. The men gave directions by vectors, saying, Five blocks west, then two blocks north, then one block east. The women said, Do you know where the bank is? Well, go past the bank toward George's Grocery, turn right at George's and go to the gas station, then turn left. In other words, women give directions by landmarks, not vectors. If my letter had been written by a woman, it would just have said, "The doctor's new office is right across the street from the bone density office and parking garage."

The only thing more dangerous than directions from a medical facility is directions from the government. Several months ago, I received by snail mail a new Medicare card with a new Medicare number on it. The federal government did this for all Medicare recipients because the old cards had the same number as your Social Security number, and identity theft was becoming more of a problem. The accompanying letter began, This is your new card, shred the old one right away. Immediately, my instincts said no, don't do that yet. Why? Because as an attorney (retired now), I had to deal with town governments and the state government, and I found that their directions were not always easy or accurate. I kept reading the letter. Sure enough, at the bottom, it said, Oh, by the way, if you have signed up for prescription drug coverage with Medicare, don't shred your old Medicare card, you may need it for the pharmacy.

And you know what else? When I got to Farmington, there was no street sign saying Squirrel Lane.

Celebrate Spring in Coventry Village

Submitted by Ruth O'Neil

Historic Coventry Village will be celebrating Spring during the weekend of April 17 and 18. The special two days are being coordinated by local merchants and members of the Coventry Village Partners group.

The weekend is intended to celebrate Spring by supporting local businesses and eateries in the Historic District of Coventry Village. Local businesses which will feature in store specials and drawings for prizes. Weather permitting, live outdoor music will be provided by the Song-a-Day Music Center.

For the health and safety of all, visitors are required to wear masks in all businesses, practice social distancing, abide by capacity limits and are encouraged to make use of sanitizing stations provided by the businesses throughout the Village.

Participating businesses include Coventry Arts and Antiques, Preserved Antiques, eyeTrade, the Nathan Hale Antique Center, the Worn Yesterday Shoppe, Country Way Realty, Tips to Toes Nail Spa, Impressive Acrylics and others. Dining and Take-Out food are available at the Bidwell

Tavern, Subway, Pizza on Main and the newly opened Husky Pizza, all on Main Street.

While the Coventry Visitors' Center will not be open at this time, members from the Visitors' Center will be selling "Daffodil Décor" and have an information table in front of the Center.

The center provides business, historic, cultural and travel information on the many resources available to guests visiting the area. Visitors' Center volunteers and the Coventry Village Improvement Society have overseen the planting of thousands of daffodil bulbs throughout Coventry over the years. Visitors during the weekend may take note of potted daffodils outside of participating businesses. These have been provided by the Village Improvement Society. For more information on Celebrate Spring in Historic Coventry Village, please contact 860-918-5957

Submitted by Ruth O'Neil for the Coventry Village Partners. Call 860-918-5957 if any further questions.

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from January 2015
to present in COLOR
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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.

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).

Could a catastrophic blackout like the one in Texas happen in Connecticut?

CT Mirror. "First off, Texas sacrificed reliability for cheaper costs as it designed and regulated its electrical grid. Anyone who has paid an electric bill in Connecticut knows that Connecticut's regulators believe in investing in reliability. And our solar fields and wind turbines are winterized, unlike those in the Lone Star State. Another piece of the puzzle is that Connecticut is part of the broader ISO-NE regional transmission organization, which brings with it rigorous standards to participate in the market, unlike Texas.

Connecticut solar developers enlist sheep to cut grass and ease tensions

Energy News Network. "The proposals reflect the growing interest throughout the region in what's called agrivoltaics — the practice of combining agricultural uses and renewable energy production on the same parcel of land. The idea is that "we essentially utilize the sheep for vegetation maintenance, and it allows the property to continue in an agricultural use."

Opinion: TCI a good investment in Connecticut's future

CT Post. "The Transportation and Climate Initiative Program, or TCI, is a new, regional market-based program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and generate proceeds to reinvest in clean transportation options and infrastructure...TCI is good for the climate, good for the economy and good for the health of Connecticut's residents — particularly our most vulnerable...politically disingenuous critics have already started a fearmongering campaign falsely claiming the program will increase gas prices by 17, 38 or even 61 cents per gallon. This is fake news."

Make green jobs good jobs

CT Mirror. "In the 1930s, manufacturing became the dominant driver of the U.S. economy and a major generator of employment. But those jobs were dangerous, exhausting, and low-paid. It was only after the industry unionized that these jobs became the primary path to

middle-class membership. Now, as the economy shifts and clean technology jobs increase, we have an opportunity to make energy jobs the new path to economic prosperity instead of settling at poverty wages as many retail jobs have."

Connecticut regulators sharply criticize Eversource before and after Isaias and say UT's work was 'underwhelming,' though acceptable

Hartford Courant. "Regulators investigating the utilities' handling of Isaias before and after it slammed into Connecticut on Aug. 4 cited Eversource for poor communications with customers, a failure to manage municipal liaison programs and an inadequate response to weather forecasts. The Berlin-based utility fell short in "meeting its obligation to secure adequate resources in a timely manner to protect the public safety and to provide for the overall public interest."

Solar Panel Work Commences At 3 Vernon Schools

Patch. "Vernon Superintendent of Schools Joseph Macary said the cost of electricity for the local education system goes down 4 cents per kilowatt hour with the panels. Purcaro said traditional power consumption between the three schools and the police station, ...is projected to go down by 633,296 kilowatt hours each year. That translates to a savings of \$1.299 million over 25 years, Purcaro said."



Solar MAP guides Connecticut munis through project development process

PV Magazine. "The Green Bank also arranges for project financing through a power purchase agreement (PPA). Since 2014, the Green Bank Solar PPA has facilitated solar projects at municipal buildings with no upfront installation costs, no new debt to incur, and no operations and maintenance costs. The Green Bank said the PPA allows municipalities to lock in low electricity prices so the project cash flow is positive in year one."

Transportation Committee approves bill to allow direct electric vehicle sales in CT

CT Post. "Many of us think this state should be doing everything it can to make it easier, more convenient to get behind the wheel of an electric vehicle, and instead our state laws do just the opposite. We force people who want to buy a Tesla, Rivian or Lucid to go out of state to make that purchase." Plus: **The New Green Deal? Connecticut's, on EVs, is old and brown**

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The Neighbors paper
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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

On the Farmlands of Lebanon

By C. Dennis Pierce

Are you aware that the State of Connecticut is the host to over 5,521 farms covering 381,539 acres? In Lebanon, Connecticut, there is a plethora of farms that continue the history the town was founded upon. In 1704, Joseph Trumbull, father of Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., brought livestock farming to the town. Throughout its history Lebanon has maintained its focus on agriculture, and has remained a dedicated farming town. Economically, the town has large agricultural sectors and one of the largest employers' centers on farming.

This month I visited Evans Farm Stand located at 157 Oliver Road, in Lebanon. Not far from Willimantic it was a brief trip through the farmlands of Lebanon. It was a great day with the sun shining and a slight breeze that was just enough to chase away the

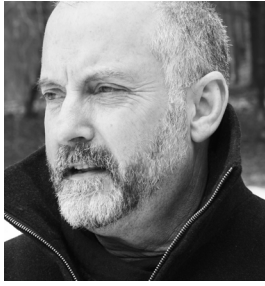
small swarms of the spring "no-seeums". In route, on a Saturday morning I saw that many farms had their taps in place with yellow hoses linking the maple trees like a daisy ring. The moist grown was encouraging the daffodils and crocuses to welcome the spring but unfortunately no one was peeking out to show their faces. Evans's farm is one of those best kept secrets tucked down a windy, country road. They are a family run farm that prides themselves by offering grass fed beef, free range chickens, heritage pigs and fresh produce and flowers in season.

The stand itself is only a year old, built by John, the family's son, from locally sourced timbers. Though it may appear to be small, once you are inside you will be

surprised by many options they have to offer. Not only are the farm's offerings but also a wide array of local products from milk to honey, maple syrup even Connecticut grown popcorn kernels. The freezer and coolers are overflowing with their own products too. It is truly a one stop local convenience stand. Among the shelves and cooler / freezers I saw beef, pork, chicken, honey, eggs, dairy products, goat soap, dog biscuits, hot sauce and seasonings. The stand is currently open on Saturdays from 9:00am to 5:00pm. You can also get updated hours as the season changes on their Facebook site at Evans Farm - Home | Facebook

The Evans purchased the land in 1998. Angel, and her husband Mark had no prior previous experience with farming as they carved out their 50 acres and created Evans's farm. The farm hosts chickens for eggs and also over 600 Cornish Rock chickens that are bred for the farm's meat sales. What makes this farm unique is that they raise a breed of cattle called Fleckvieh Simmentals. The Fleckvieh cattle breed originated in central Europe as a dual-purpose strain of Simmental cattle. They were rigorously selected, not only for providing beef, but also milk production. The breed history dates back to the 1830's. The Evans farm's animals grow to about 1,500 pounds each. They are bred in June and July and they calve in March. Each year the farm maintains the female stock and send off the rest to New England Meat Packing in Stafford Spring for butchering. The beef is so popular it is regularly served at the Vintage Restaurant in Connecticut (Vintagect.com) and La Belle Aurore Restaurant in Niantic, (labelleaurorect.com). For additional information and special orders, the farm can be reached at 860.705.0182 or at Evansfarm4@aol.com.

I am not aware if I ever shared a recipe for a quick bread in my column over the past years. This bread is a combination of sweet, moist carrots and thyme. As the season begins local herbs can be picked up at produce stands, farmers markets or you can even grow your own. The wholegrain mustard and kick from the chili make it a great accompaniment to soup or chili.



Savory Carrot and Chili Quick Bread
Make 1, 2-pound loaf

You will need an 8-cup loaf pan, lightly buttered, lined with parchment or baking paper. Pre heat oven to 350 degrees.

Ingredients:

2 ¾ cups of all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons of baking powder
½ teaspoon of salt
½ teaspoon of coarsely cracked black pepper
1 stick of butter, melted
2 eggs, beaten
¾ cup of whole milk
2 tablespoons of wholegrain mustard
10 ounces, carrot, grated
1 bunch of fresh thyme, leaves only
1 teaspoon dried chili flakes



Angel Evans and her son, John, in the doorway of the farmstand he built.

Dennis Pierce photo.

Directions:

Sift flour, baking powder and salt into a large bowl and stir in black pepper.

In a separate bowl, whisk the melted butter, eggs, milk and mustard together

Stir lightly into the flour mixture.

Gently stir in the carrot, thyme and chili flakes

Take care not to over mix

Place mixture into the prepared pan and bake for about 1 hour

Check to see if loaf has risen and a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean

Leave the loaf to cool in the pan for 20 minutes

After cooling turn onto a wire rack and leave to cool completely.

This is my favorite time of the year. It is earmarked by the buds from the pussy willows, the forsythia bush eager to flower and the dandelions that if you harvest early are great in salad. What more can a person ask for? So, stay safe. We can only conquer this by doing this together. 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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A World in Harmony

By Kathy Lepak

A single note pierces the air
The mesmerizing vibrato of a violin
A solitary sound

The deeper tone of a viola is added
To create a harmony
Two in unison

The rich sounds of a cello chord
Add depth to the trio
And then

The double bass
Brings in its dark glory
A Quartet is born

Alike, but not the same
Each with a voice of their own
Yet, a family

Other voices are heard
Wind instruments and chimes
Drums and horns

The voices become one
They speak of unity
And progression

I have a voice
One to be heard
Listen

You have a voice
One to be heard
Speak

The world that I dream
Brings unity and harmony
To all.

Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

Last month's article had a picture of a shop built Model T postal truck along with the article. That vehicle serviced 60 miles of territory in northern Minnesota. The Model T Ford Club of America is now its caretaker at their museum. I added the photo so that readers could see how far the United States Postal Service has come in delivering the mail.

This is the time of year we look forward to warm weather and everything coming to life after a long hard winter. I usually talk about your vehicle's air conditioning or getting your vehicle ready for summer driving. The truth is I really don't know what to talk about this month. The last 13 months have been a rollercoaster ride. The automobile industry is trying to deal with changes of its own. The consumer is trying to decide if they should buy a new vehicle or fix their existing vehicle. If they decide on a new vehicle, what will they buy? The RV people wonder what their season will be like. I am really hoping for the road trip just to get ice cream or just plain get together with friends and laugh.

The vehicle you own is probably the last thing on your mind. I want to remind you that its your responsibility to make sure that your car is safe, not only for you, but for your family. The car or truck you own still has to be checked to be sure it is safe to drive. Checking the fluids, air in your tires (low tire pressure hurts your fuel mileage), air conditioning, and that annoying noise that's getting worse. Wiper blades that people forget about until they are really needed on a rainy day and the condition of your battery. Today vehicles need to have an electrical system that works properly. Weak batteries sometimes cause alternator failure and poor vehicle performance. These few things can head off problems you may encounter when taking that road trip.

I guess we really do need to talk about getting your vehicle ready for summer driving. Have your vehicle serviced before any long trip and be sure to tell your mechanic about any problems or noises that you have noticed. Putting it off won't make it go away and no one wants to be disabled on the side of the highway in the middle of nowhere on a Sunday afternoon. Wishing everyone a Happy Easter and happy motoring!!!

Rick Ostien is the owner of Franc Motors in Willington.

Unsung Heroes of Soul:

Maxine Brown

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 Maxine Brown, whose "uptown soul" sound produced four top ten Rhythm & Blues hits.

She was born in Kingstree, South Carolina, on August 18, 1939, and moved to New York City at age seven. As a child, she sang with a gospel group called the Angelairs. In her teens, Brown joined another gospel act, the Royaltones. By 1960, she had turned to secular music and signed with the tiny Nomar label. Her debut release was the ballad "All In My Mind," which Brown wrote. It became a solid smash, hitting #2 on the R&B chart #19 pop in early 1961. The follow-up, "Funny," also did well. This prompted Brown's 1962 move to ABC-Paramount, with whom she spent a single, disappointing, year.

In 1963, she signed with Wand Records, a division of Scepter (whose artist roster included the Shirelles, Dionne Warwick, and the Kingsmen of "Louie, Louie" fame). Brown stayed with Wand for six years and enjoyed a series of charted singles, the biggest of which was the Carole King/Gerry Goffin song, "Oh No! Not My Baby."

The background singers on Maxine Brown's recordings included Dee Dee Warwick (sister of Dionne Warwick), the Sweet Inspirations featuring Cissy Houston (mother of Whitney Houston), and the future Motown songwriting team of Nickolas Ashford & Valerie Simpson. Brown also recorded several hit duets with her labelmate, Chuck Jackson.

Despite Brown's success, Scepter/Wand had increasingly turned its focus toward pop acts like B.J. Thomas. Consequently, Brown left the company and signed with Epic, for whom she recorded two singles and an LP. By 1969, she was on Commonwealth United, reaching #15 R&B and #73 pop with "We'll Cry Together." Brown later recorded, without success, for the Philadelphia-based Avco label (home of the Stylistics). In the early '70s, she performed in the Broadway musical, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope." Brown also delivered a cabaret performance at New York's Seafood Playhouse.



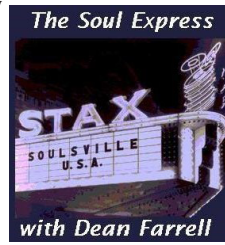
In the early '80s, she toured Europe and appeared on Dutch TV. In 1985, the UK-based reissue label, Kent, discovered several unreleased masters of Brown's in the Scepter/Wand vaults and immediately put them out. In 1991, she received the Rhythm & Blues Foundation's prestigious Pioneer Award.

Maxine Brown was still active as recently as 2019.

Charted singles:

- "All In My Mind" (1961) R&B #2, Pop #19
 "Funny" (1961) R&B #3, Pop #25
 "After All We've Been Through" (1961) Pop #102
 "I Got a Funny Kind of Feeling" (1962) Pop #104
 "My Time for Cryin'" (1962) Pop #98
 "Ask Me" (1963) Pop #75
 "Coming Back to You" (1963) R&B #34, Pop #99
 "Oh No! Not My Baby" (1964) R&B #2, Pop #24
 "It's Gonna Be Alright" (1965) R&B #26, Pop #56
 "Something You Got" (duet with Chuck Jackson, 1965) R&B #10, Pop #55
 "One Step at a Time" (1965) Pop #55
 "Can't Let You Out of My Sight" (duet with Chuck Jackson, 1965) Pop #91
 "I Need You So" (duet with Chuck Jackson, 1965) Pop #98
 "If You Gotta Make a Fool of Somebody" (1965) Pop #63
 "I'm Satisfied" (duet with Chuck Jackson, 1966) Pop #112
 "I Don't Need Anything" (1966) Pop #129
 "Hold On! I'm Coming" (duet with Chuck Jackson, 1967) R&B #20, Pop #91
 "Daddy's Home" (duet with Chuck Jackson, 1967) R&B #46, Pop #91
 "We'll Cry Together" (1969) R&B #15, Pop #73
 "I Can't Get Along Without You" (1970) R&B #44

Dean Farrell hosts "The Soul Express" twice on Fridays: on WRTC, 89.3-FM (www.wrtcfm.com) from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. and on WECS, 90.1-FM (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.



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Happy 51th Anniversary of Earth Day!

By George Jacobi

Only the Yippiest among you will remember the exorcism and levitation of the Pentagon, October 21, 1967, and the chant "Out, Demons, Out". "Led" by Ed Sanders, poet, writer, co-leader of the band The Fugs, the group of hippies, leftists and anarchists actually got permission to raise the building off the ground – but only 10 feet. The idea and structure of this invocation, as well as some of the words, come from Ed Sanders' recitation at that event, updated for a new century and a new challenge. I checked with Sanders last year when I wrote this, for an Earth Day that crashed and burned because of the Coronavirus. He approved, so I revive it again now. As Ed suggests: "Nonviolent direct action. At once."

We meet here today as a planetary community, all of us, old and young, to demand the healing of Earth. With wailing trumpets, with crying violins, with our enraged voices, we hereby offer this desperate litany. In the name of the amulets of seeing, marching, touching, singing, and loving, we invoke the limitless powers of the cosmos to bless our holy ceremony.

In the many names of the ever-breathing planet: In the name of Gaia, in the name of Pan, in the name of Yoruba Orisha and Magna Mater, in the name of all the creatures who have lost their habitat, in the name of all living beings killed out of convenience and fear.

In the name of sea-born Aphrodite, in the name of the Apple-Tree Man and the Dryads and Naiads, in the name of Yahweh, Jesus, Allah, and of course Dionysius. In the name of Artemis, in the name of Papatuanuki, in the name of Ashoka-sundari, and St. Francis and the long-gone Nymphs of the Lower East Side.

In the names of Prithvi, Abnoba, Viridious, Neptune, Kali, and Tuli, in the names of Anubis, Asimov and Abbey, in the names of Eisely and Emerson, Carson, Leopold, Max Yasgur, and the Area 51 Elvis is Alive coffee klatch.

In the name of the unnamable, we call upon the Great Spirit. We call upon the spirit to come down as the warm jungle rain, to swim out of the deep turquoise waters, to rise up from fire-filled Earth. In the name of the eternal cycle, where all good things come around again, we call on you

now. We call on the bees, and the trees, and the rhizomes that remember, we call upon the Woolly Mammoth and the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, we call on the volcano and the lightning and the stars – help us defend the Earth. Heal the Earth. Heal the Earth. Heal the Earth. Amen.

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Eating Well

By Delia Berlin

The fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has taken a toll on all of us. Many who avoided getting Covid-19 have experienced impoverishment, isolation, or both. As a consequence, most of us will emerge from the pandemic significantly older and less healthy than our former selves. Some of us have tried to fight those effects with wholesome habits. We can't entirely control our health, of course. Or at least not for the better. That is, we can't guarantee that good habits will keep us healthy, but we can almost assure that bad ones will harm us. So, for me, doing the best I can to stay well is worth a shot.

We have always eaten wholesome and tasty foods at our home, but we also used to eat at restaurants two or three times a week. Even when eating out, our menu selections were mostly health-minded, and we didn't overeat. We almost never ordered appetizers or desserts, and we brought leftovers home when portions were too generous. But our commitment to eating well must not be understood as sacrifice. We also select foods by taste and enjoy them thoroughly.

During the first lockdown, faced with having to eat every meal at home, we attempted to break the routine by getting takeout food once in a while. But that didn't work for us. Dealing with reheating, serving, and disposing of all the containers aggravated me more than preparing a meal. So I cooked, day after day. Needing creative input, we signed up for an organic CSA share.

I have already written in these pages about our wonderful CSA, but for those still unfamiliar with the concept, Community Supported Agriculture is like a pre-paid subscription to a periodic box of goods from a local farm. Some involve vegetables, but others focus on meats, eggs, dairy, or even honey. The duration of CSAs varies, but ours was 20 weeks long, with weekly pickups. When that ended, we followed it with a late fall CSA, with biweekly pickups, that went into mid-January.

When the CSAs ended, we discovered that we could continue getting local produce at the Storrs Winter Farmers Market, going into April. It's amazing what farmers can produce in this harsh New England winter environment. Winter harvest goes well beyond root vegetables, onions, and potatoes. We have been able to get spinach, arugula, baby kale, salad mixes, and assorted sprouts and microgreens.

The best thing about a CSA for me is its variety. Our boxes always had some things that I normally wouldn't have gotten, either because they are rarely found in grocery stores or because of my tendency to select familiar vegetables. Uncommon veggies like watermelon radishes, Romanesco, ginger, and turmeric would make a surprising appearance, challenging my imagination and creativity to use them in tasty dishes.

Other pluses of CSA vegetables are their freshness and the lack of unnecessary packaging. Veggies are harvested immediately prior to distribution, so they are super-fresh. They are carefully packed in boxes that are kept cool until picked up by customers. At that point, the veggies are transferred into customers' personal bags, and the boxes are reused for future distributions.

Eating reflects personal values, so "eating well" can be defined only roughly. People have different likes and dislikes in food, and David and I are quite flexible in that respect. However, we are more particular when it comes to the ethics of our food choices. We both love animals and are concerned about climate change. Ideally, we would follow a vegetarian diet, avoiding animal suffering and lowering our carbon footprint. Although most of our meals are indeed meatless, we do eat small servings of local fish about three times a week and some poultry once a week. Research indicates that older adults who don't eat any meat at all may lose muscle mass at a faster rate, and

this is our main justification.

We eat a mostly plant-based, high-fiber, low-sugar, varied diet. While people often complain about contradictory nutrition information, there is almost universal agreement supporting this type of diet from many angles, including environmental, public health, and animal rights.

Neither David nor I have a snacking habit, so we eat three meals a day, spread over ten or eleven hours. That almost fits the acclaimed "intermittent fasting" schedule, but we were accustomed to an early supper long before that became a trend.

The heightened awareness of packaging waste that our CSA gave us has moved us further away from processed foods. While we never relied heavily on processed foods, we used to eat commercial veggie burgers and other meat substitutes. During the pandemic, I've found many ways of making my own veggie burgers and stopped using

meals.

Speaking of breads, the Willimantic Farmers Market has introduced us to The Bread Lady, providing another component of many of our meals. The Bread Lady is a cottage industry run from a home in Scotland, Connecticut. It produces more than forty types of breads for \$6 a loaf. They are only sold at farmers markets, but during the off-season they can be ordered by email (dquercia6@charter.net) and picked up monthly in Scotland. These breads freeze great, so we slice only one loaf at a time. For many of our dinners, a toasted slice provides the grain part of the meal. Some of our favorite varieties are German Farm, Ancient Grains, Hanover Wheat, and Porcupine bread.

Another important component of our weekly meal plans this past year has been The Fish Market in Willimantic. In addition to providing a variety of local fresh fish, this

market has given us a great exercise routine. On most weekends, we walk from our house to the market via the Eastern Connecticut State University campus. We have never measured the distance, but it must be three to four miles round-trip.

At the market, we make two fresh fish selections for that evening and the next, and we also buy some locally smoked trout or salmon for a meal later in the week. We select the fish by looks and by origin—the closer the better. This has been a winning strategy because it has introduced us to lots of great fish that we hadn't tried before. We can unusually find something interesting from Stonington. Occasionally, we get fish from as far away as New Bedford or the Cape, but we never need to resort to frozen, farm-raised, or imported fish.

The USA is both the biggest importer and exporter of fish in the world. How can this be? The reason is that most Americans stick to a narrow fish menu:

salmon, shrimp, and scallops. So we import lots of those, because we don't have enough of them, while we export almost our entire local harvest, because there is no demand for it here. Some of the local fish treasures we enjoy are weakfish (also called sea trout), John Dory, and skate wing, in addition to a variety of flounders and soles, black sea bass, monkfish, and cod. In season, we can also get sea scallops from Stonington and shrimp from Maine and other places along the eastern seaboard.

It's easy to cook fish. I tend to use the oven, but it can be successfully cooked on the grill or the top of the stove. If filleted, the basic formula is to oil a pan and coat the fillets with oil on both sides by turning them over once. Then cover the fillets with a topping for flavor and bake them briefly, depending on thickness. An easy topping that never fails is chopped garlic, parsley, and citrus juice. But almost anything goes. Try chopped green olives, cummin, and garlic. Or chopped walnuts, tarragon, and grated cheese. Or dip the fillets in a beaten egg and then coat them with panko or seasoned breadcrumbs. Easy-peasy!

I haven't talked much about balance here, but it's important. When you include a protein, a grain, a green vegetable, and an orange vegetable in a meal, the plate looks colorful and inviting. It also assures that you're getting lots of good nutrients. It's not necessary to eat every nutrient in each meal, but it's good to make a habit of including at least three of these components for nutrition and enjoyment, and to avoid a sad, bland look. And a small glass of Argentine Malbec can never hurt.

In terms of quantity, remember that one can get too much of a good thing. With many meal components, small amounts are best. Dinner plates have become larger in recent decades, distorting our sense of proportion. Using plates from the '50s or '60s, or similarly sized, helps with keeping portions in check.

Talking about food can make some people hungry, but it doesn't have that effect on me. It does, however, preoccupy me until I know what I'm going to cook next. If I don't envision tomorrow's supper before bedtime, I think about it in my sleep all night. So, I make a habit of planning our meals for the next day as we enjoy our after-dinner coffee. Bon appétit!



meat-like products. I don't miss them.

I don't follow recipes and never make the same exact thing twice, but when you use good ingredients, you usually end up with good food. Every time I read a recipe, I discover that I don't have some ingredient I would need. I prefer to plan meals around what I have, rather than buying ingredients for a specific dish. I don't waste any food and I'm careful about eating only fresh food. That requires planning. Having to eat something because otherwise it will go bad never happens in our house. Utilizing everything and coming up with good dishes is like solving a puzzle, and I enjoy the game.

Something I find helpful is cooking legumes and grains in quantity. On most weeks, I cook a pound of dry beans (rotating among black, navy, and pinto beans, black-eyed peas, and lentils). At the same time, I cook a large amount of a whole grain (brown rice, kamut, farro, quinoa, barley, bulgur, etc.). Separating these two staples in portions to be used later—in main dishes, sides, soups, and salads—makes food preparation quick and easy.

Although I can't offer any actual recipes, my general formula for main-dish salads never fails and knows no bounds: toss a selection of grains, legumes, greens, onions, fresh or dry fruits, nuts, cheeses, olives, etc., and dress them with olive oil and vinegar. Think ethnic: black olives, red onions, and feta for a Greek salad; garlic, ginger, peanuts, soy sauce, and chili powder for Thai. Indian, Moroccan, Italian, Japanese...you never run out of options. Having different vinegars for salads of diverse characters lends variability.

Almost any cooked legumes and grains can be combined as a base for veggie burgers. For example, mix cooked red lentils and brown rice with flavorful ingredients of your choice (chopped olives, cheese crumbles, diced onions, garlic, etc.) and add a beaten egg. Drop mounds of the mixture on an oiled pan and bake them, to be used as the protein component of a meal.

Similarly, with soups, it's hard to go wrong with fresh, simple ingredients. Chop and boil almost anything, and as long as you add some flavor (garlic, onions, leeks, herbs, spices) and some oil, you'll have a good soup. Whole grains and legumes will give it body, fiber, and nutrition. Hearty soups and good breads make great winter

Follow These Budgeting Basics to Create a Strong Foundation for Your Finances

By Leisl L. Cording, CFP®
Vice President, Associate Financial Advisor



April is financial literacy month – a great time to learn about or refresh your memory on the basics of personal finance. While getting “back to basics” may not seem very exciting, it’s critical – it’s the basics of financial literacy that allow you to form the foundation you need to build wealth so you can live well, now and in the future.

If you’re feeling like your financial literacy isn’t up to par, you’re not alone. The latest National Financial Capability Study conducted by the FINRA Investor Education Foundation found that an alarming 66% of Americans are financially illiterate.

The good news is, you have the power to change that for yourself. Investing a bit of time to educate yourself about the basics now will pay off for years to come. The four basic elements of personal finance are: budgeting, credit, saving and investing.

Learning how to budget is step one; if you can’t properly manage your budget, you can’t very well save or invest, and the chances of having good credit become pretty slim as well. Here are six tips for how to create and stick to a budget that will allow you to plan well, invest well and live well:

1. First, sit down and thoroughly take stock of your income and expenses. This seems like an obvious step, but in the routine of everyday life it can be surprisingly easy to lose sight of exactly what the cash flow is in and out of your bank account each month.

So take some time to add up your monthly income, including income earned from work as well as any other income from sources like investment accounts or real estate. Then tally up your monthly expenses, being thorough and honest with yourself. Include everything from your rent or mortgage payment and utilities, to your car and education loan payments, insurance premiums, clothing, food and what you typically spend on discretionary items like entertainment or travel. How much is left at the end of the month to save or invest? Is it enough to meet your long-term goals? Is there anything even left at all? Your answers to those questions will tell you whether you need to strike a better balance between your monthly income and your spending habits.

2. Follow the 50/30/20 rule. This rule is an excellent way to break down budgeting into an easy-to-follow template. Figure out what your monthly income is after taxes. Then take that amount and dedicate 50% of it to your needs (housing, utilities, medical care, bills, and other essentials). Allow 30% to be spent on those things that are not essential, but that you want – dinner out or other special activity, or that item in the shop window you’ve been wishing for since last month. And finally, put that last 20% into savings for future goals and emergency needs.

3. Don’t spend beyond your means. This tip follows from the previous two and pretty much speaks for

itself. But it’s not the complexity of the idea that’s the challenge; it’s the willpower to remind yourself of it every time you want to splurge even when you know you shouldn’t. So remember this phrase, and listen when your conscience tells it to you in the heat of the moment.

4. Pay yourself first. It’s a common misconception that you should pay down debt before stashing your extra cash in savings – and it can be a dangerous one, too. While you do want to eliminate debt as quickly as possible, make sure you’re putting money into savings every month as well. If you find yourself in credit card debt, move the high interest balances to 0% interest credit cards, if possible, and allocate some of your wants category discussed above to pay down that balance as quickly as you can.

5. Use a budgeting app. Yup – there’s an app for that. Lots of them, actually, and they can be a huge help in keeping track of your budget and how well you are (or are not) sticking to it. Mint is the one that I recommend most often, but there are others as well – just search the app store or the internet to find one that works for you, and then use it faithfully. Your online banking app may also provide a budgeting tool which you can use to track income and spending. You’ll be surprised what you’ll learn about your spending habits and the ways you can save a bit more here and there.

6. Don’t count on windfalls. We’ve all planned out how we’d spend those lottery winnings a time or two. But whether it’s wishful lottery winnings, anticipation of a suspected big bonus, or some other type of influx of cash that you’re hoping for, don’t count on it. That’s not to say you can’t dream or hope – but be sure you’re not spending real money based on the expectation of fictitious income. While these are basic ideas, they are key to building that foundation of personal financial knowledge to help you work towards achieving your financial goals and living well! Be sure to consider your special circumstances before beginning to budget. If you need assistance prioritizing your finances to help you work toward your long-term financial life goals, give our office a call @ at 860-928-2341, visit us online www.whzwealth.com or follow us on LinkedIn and Facebook so that we can leverage our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well process to help you get to the financial freedom you desire.

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Social-Environmental Justice Begins with ‘Radical Self-Love’

Radical self-love summons us to be our most expansive selves, knowing that the more unflinchingly powerful we allow ourselves to be, the more unflinchingly powerful others feel capable of being. Our unapologetic embrace of our bodies gives others permission to unapologetically embrace theirs.

—Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love*

By Phoebe Godfrey

This semester I have been teaching a class called Sustainable Societies, in which I invite the students to explore what makes a sustainable, just, and thriving society, and therefore what makes people collectively and individually happy. For this class, as with all my classes, students keep reflective journals, but in this instance those journals are focused on the concept of embodiment.

Embodiment is one of those concepts that defines the entirety of life, as life necessitates a material manifestation, whether it be tiny microbes or giant sequoias. Yet for those of us raised in Western culture, the intellectual and experiential meaning of embodiment often escapes us. In fact, we are an intensely disembodied culture, meaning that we have been infected with the dualist philosophy of the Greeks, which bled into Christianity—saying that matter (nature, body) is evil and spirit (God, soul, mind, civilization, nurture) is good—and that later gained secular popularity with the work of the philosopher René Descartes.

Out of these divisions has emerged our hierarchical ideology, which ranks all aspects of society in terms of how close they are to Nature, with Nature seen as the nemesis of our so-called civilization. Civilization, associated with all that is good and that constitutes progress and superiority, manifests disembodiment through the ongoing domination and colonization of Nature, as well as of the body—in particular, those bodies deemed to be “uncivilized.” This is evident in the structures and practices of sexism, racism, and classism, as well as the fear and oppression of LGBTQ individuals. Certain groups are conceptualized as being closer to Nature, defined by their bodies, their lusts, their emotions, and their inability to be “tamed,” or civilized. Of course, there are exceptions to this narrative, as in the term “unnatural,” which is used



strategically, particularly in the case of LGBTQ identities, to demonize and pit certain bodies against an imaginary, hyper-purified notion of what is “natural.” However, the dominant narrative of maligning Nature is endemic in our culture and can be understood as being linked directly to what is now a climate and ecological crisis.

The cultural background that shapes our reality and experiences is why we find it challenging to inhabit our bodies, to be present to our own physical experiences, and to do so without fear of ideological judgment or critique. And yet it is my understanding that until we can do this, not only will we be unable to create environmental and social justice, but we will also be unable to achieve what author and activist Sonya Renee Taylor calls “radical self-love.” In fact, one could argue that these processes must be co-created, since radical self-love and environmental/social justice are inseparable.

In her groundbreaking book *The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love* (2018), Taylor writes, “Living in a female body, a Black body, an aging body, a fat body, a body with mental illness is to awaken daily to a planet that expects a certain set of apologies to already live on our tongues. There is a level of ‘not enough’ or ‘too much’ sewn into these strands of difference.” Those communities whose bodies inhabit, intersect with, have been marked by, and have fed upon this toxic hierarchical ideology are branded as being “not enough” or “too much” and are called to ask for existential “forgiveness” from those whose bodies are also branded but in the opposite way, as being superior, civilized, clean, male, white, pure, normal, appropriately proportioned, etc.

Taylor identifies her own body as fat, Black,

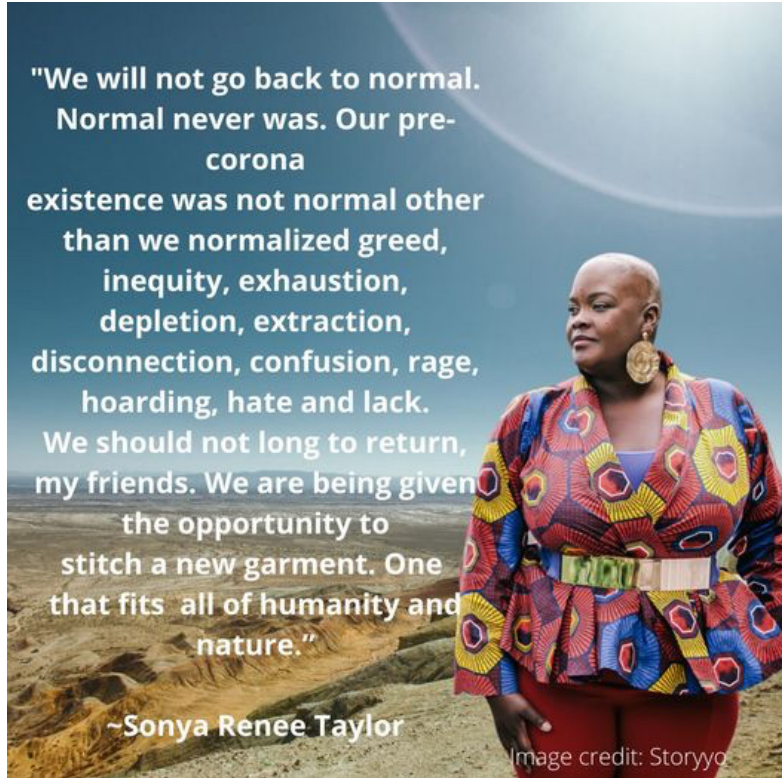
female, queer, non-normative. And yet, against the social odds, she celebrates her body and herself, having put in the work of practicing what she preaches. She exudes radical self-love, inviting us to see the miracle of embodiment through which social and physical liberation can be achieved. As she states, “Radical self-love demands that we see ourselves and others in the fullness of our complexities and intersections and that we work to create space for those intersections.” In so doing, we give ourselves the right to

be as we are, which gives others the right to be as they are in all their manifestations.

Taylor argues that the more we make conscious the choice to “unapologetically embrace our bodies” (which can be painful and difficult), the more the social signifiers that have been placed upon us like unconsented tattoos dissolve. As a result, we give “others permission to unapologetically embrace theirs” and collectively become the embodiment of spirit, no longer separated by the unfounded and damaging concept of

dualism. Thus, social-environmental justice spreads, body to body, matter to matter.

As I tell my students, only a disembodied culture would actively, knowingly, and willingly destroy its external body, the Earth, which holds and creates our individual bodies, all living matter. So, if you want to help create social-environmental justice, begin with your body, with radical self-love, for such a beginning is never an ending, it is always another beginning. Don’t believe me? Read and listen to Sonya Renee Taylor, or ask any of my students, or, better yet, try it for yourself, for all of us are embodied beings. And while you are doing so, heed Taylor’s timely and prophetic words about “going back to normal” (see image).



Warning: Mud!

By Angela Hawkins Fichter

Everyone knows what mud is. When you are a child, you love to play in it. You make mud pies with it. You get it all over yourself. And then when you have children of your own, you are reintroduced to it by their playing with it and in it. But neither your childhood nor your kids’ childhood prepares you for what I am about to disclose.

We in New England know what corduroy roads are. In spring, up in the wilds of Maine, there are corduroy roads. These are dirt roads that turn so muddy that vehicles can’t drive over them unless they are converted to corduroy roads. That means that logs are placed in the mud in a pattern that is perpendicular to the direction of the road. You can drive over a corduroy road, but you can get stuck in a muddy road or driveway in spring.

Well, a couple weeks ago I discovered a new kind of mud. A kind that makes you fall, not get stuck—fall right down on the ground the second you step on it.

First week of March, I took a walk in the backyard around my flower garden. The lawn was frozen solid. I was just looking to see how things were, whether any bulbs had come up. In the second week of March, I went out to walk around my garden again. I was looking to see where I could plant the perennial flowers I had ordered from catalogs. Ever heard of flower lust? If you get catalogs in February with

color photos of plants in full bloom and you think, “Oh, I want that; it is so pretty,” that is flower lust. You get it when you look at those gorgeous photos and then out the window at your own garden, which is brown, asleep, and has snow patches.

When I set out on my second inspection, I stepped carefully around the perimeter of the garden. It felt as frozen as it was the week before. But I only walked a few feet before I slipped, and thud! I was smack on the ground.

I immediately thought of my orthopedic surgeon. He gave me a reverse shoulder replacement three years ago. Five years before that, he operated on that same shoulder and my elbow after I fell down fourteen wooden stairs in Scotland, Connecticut. After he finished the shoulder replacement three years ago, he looked me in the eye and said, “For the rest of your life, never, ever fall again.” This was like a commandment, and I have been very careful.

I thought of him and his commandment as I lay on the cold ground. I looked at the ground. The top quarter inch was mud, under which the ground was frozen. The yard had not seemed muddy to me when I walked on it the week before. But this is a newish yard, only five years old. As I lay on the ground, inspecting it, I saw wet mud in between blades of grass.

Before my husband and I moved to Hampton to a new, smaller house with safety features for the disabled, we had lived for thirty-two years in Scotland in a

house built in 1872. During those years, my husband dug garden beds for flowers and vegetables. He double-dug the beds, putting the soil on a sheet next to the bed, loosening the subsoil with a spade fork, replacing the topsoil, and shaking out the grass with its roots, which he put on the compost pile. That grass had roots that were several inches deep. Not so with a new house, where the grass, though it looks nice, is brand new, with little root structure yet.

After my initial shock at falling in the yard, I gave thanks to God that I had fallen on my left side, not my right, where the shoulder and elbow surgery had been done. First to hit the ground was my left knee, then my backside, which has cushioning. No cushioning on the knee, so I had a scraped knee under my jeans. I came inside, washed up, laundered the muddy jeans and jacket, and prayed I hadn’t injured my knee beyond the scrape. So far, so good, I’m glad to report.

My advice to you is that if you go outside next March to check your garden or anything else, and you walk not on pavement but on grass, use a walking stick that has spikes on the end to latch onto the icy ground under the quarter-inch mud. Or just don’t walk in your yard until April, at least!

Ragged Hill Woods Offering Outdoor Activity Sessions at W-T 4-H Camp this Spring

Submitted by Elaine Nelson

Get your overly zoomed children out of the house into the spring breeze to participate in some fun and educational environmental science programs outdoors at the camp, 326 Taft Pond Rd in Pomfret.

April 6 (PK & K)/ April 7 (Gr. 1 – 6)/ & April 8 (Gr. 7 – 8) Water Cycles (learn about how the water cycle works)

April 13 (PK & K)/ April 14 (Gr. 1 – 6) & April 15 (Gr. 7 – 8) Salamanders (hunt for and learn about salamanders)

Sessions last one hour, (max 10 per time slot) \$12 per child (all 4 sessions \$40), held outside, masks and social distancing required. Must pre-pay, (all payments are non-refundable). Pre-K and K sessions offered at either 11:30 AM or 3:30 PM. Grades 1 – 6 sessions are offered at 10 AM, 1:00 PM and 4:30 PM. Grades 7 – 8 will be offered at 4:30 PM.

To register and get further information about time slots available, please call 860-974-1122 or e-mail raggedhillwoods@gmail.com.

Solar Today:

Questions and answers about solar in our community

By John Boiano

Join a community Q & A, conversation via ZOOM on 4/11/21 at 7pm

Conversation Topics will include: The steps of a solar evaluation. Who qualifies? The different PPA, payment or finance options.



Greetings,

Thank you to all who joined our Zoom call and Facebook live event last month. We were able to help 2 local families realize their solar dreams!

We received quite a few questions this month, see further down the column for the answers. Please keep sending in your questions, or better yet, join our monthly Zoom event.

Honoring EARTH DAY every day!

I grew up in a fix-it family. To this day, I do as much fixing and building of things that I can on my own. My Dad owned a gas station with a 4 bay mechanics garage and my Grandfather started a screw machine factory with one machine in his chicken shack. At a young age I learned how to take things apart, like the entire lawn mower engine. Dad wasn't too happy when he came home but he helped me put it back together. I was also driving trucks way before the legal age to drive. So, I grew up liking the power of machines and engines. As I've discovered over the past few years, I don't like the smell of exhaust, oil, gasoline and I especially do not like the loud noise of power tools. Mine, or a neighbors!

A question I received from a customer this past month sparked my interest in sharing why I have been switching to using battery operated power and lawn tools. I do currently use a gas powered lawn tractor and a chainsaw. However, when the tractor has seen its day, I will buy the battery operated Ryobi lawn tractor.

A few years ago my push lawn mower died. That's when I bought my first battery powered outdoor equipment. The battery mower is every bit as powerful as the gas one, it's also lighter, quieter and there's no maintenance schedule. I followed that with a string trimmer and then a couple of attachments, a hedge trimmer and small tiller for the power head. The items are less expensive to purchase and maintain than their gas powered counterparts.

I've been using battery drills, sawzall and a circular saw for many years. A mechanic friend has quite a few battery operated tools for working on vehicles. I was very impressed by the power of those tools. You may have noticed that the dedicated space for battery operated tools has increased dramatically in hardware stores.

Some of the benefits of battery power tools are: Interchangeable components for the powerheads, no or low maintenance, no oil/gas mixture, shuts off when not holding the trigger, starts with a simple pull of the trigger, quiet, most are as strong as their gas powered counterparts.

The next time you replace a powered tool I hope you check out the battery operated version. They may impress you. And if you're thinking about solar, all of these can be charged for less money with a solar system than by purchasing more expensive utility company power.

Questions from the community.

Q: I see Facebook "click bait" ads, is solar really free and what about those "New" CT programs?

A: Solar is NOT free! I get this question a lot because of all the false advertising. It really gets me that companies put out false information about pricing, rebates, new programs etc., etc., just so someone will "click" an ad on Facebook or YouTube. Like most things, solar cost money. Solar usually costs less than the utility rates and the cost is controlled over time. You always know what you're paying with solar! As far as new programs? I've been in the solar industry for a longtime. I haven't seen a new program in CT for many years. Can you say "Click Bait"?

Q: Why does solar sound too good to be true?

A: It sounds that way because for those who qualify, it's a really simple switch. Most of us are conditioned to believe that if it's very easy and it saves money that there has to be a hidden catch. Well with solar, there's not. It's simple.

It either works for a home owner or it doesn't. If it works, you simply take the money you are currently paying to the utility and put it towards solar. In almost every case it's less than what the utility company charges, and it stays that way. Once explained properly, folks go from "solar sounds too good to be true" to "this would be silly to pass up".

Q: Do I have to buy the solar equipment?

A: No, purchasing the solar equipment is only one way to have solar installed on your home. Solar company financed is a common option. So is a simple Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). Each homeowner has their own particular financial situation and goals. If a homeowner does choose to purchase, I favor a low interest 1% solar loan. The company I use to help home owners also has a Federal Tax Credit grace period. Either choice is less expensive than the utility company, otherwise it just wouldn't make sense.

Q: Do I have to put up any money up front?

A: Not unless you want to pay cash, then a deposit is required.

Q: Can we add extra panels for a future electric vehicle?

This question came in from one of the folks I helped realize their solar dream.

A: You can add extra panels for future use if:

- 1- You have enough roof space to cover your current usage plus some.
- 2- The utility allows the extra solar production.

This particular customer had enough roof space and I was able to add panels for extra production. We are still waiting to see if the utility company will approve the extra solar production.

Quote from a recent local solar customer:

"Thank you for helping us. It really does cost less than the utility prices!"

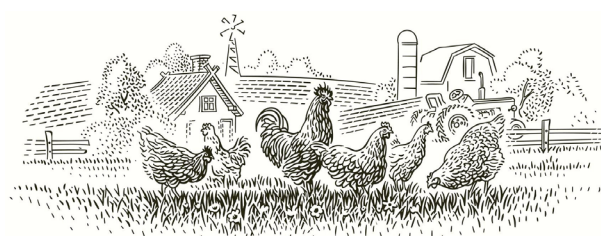
Join the conversation:

Zoom meeting > 4/11/21 at 7:00PM. Please email or call me for the meeting link.

Until next month... ENJOY!

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What the different payment
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'Fast-tracking' Landscape Design

By Brian Karlsson Barnes

APRIL is a **GOOD** month to consider spring planting. **BETTER** if you've lived with the site for a year, if you know the windy corners, the hot, dry and wet sites, the rabbit- or deer-browsed spaces, and the glorious places.

BEST is beginning in the fall, measuring the site, noting existing vegetation and microclimates. "Suit the site, fit the space, then seek beauty." Your sense of beauty.

Large deciduous shrubs and trees -- the structural "bones" of the landscape -- can be planted in autumn, poised for spring growth. In winter's bare branches, see where to frame wanted views, to screen the unwanted, and where to provide seasonal appeal. Deciduous woody plants lose leaves, dormant in winter, fine to plant in the fall. Never dormant evergreens are better planted in spring, now.

WORST is a delayed late-spring closing (June 2018 in my case). Less time for analysis, design and site preparation. Like fast-tracked architecture, logistics began before final design.

Not familiar with the site. I knew where cars were, but didn't know the well was hidden below the driveway. I knew where to mound compost for the next best time to plant,

in autumn. And I knew some plants wanted: whitebarked birch, white-flowering dogwood and serviceberry, blue *Hydrangea* and myriad perennials, some lawn and a firepit.

Herbaceous perennial beds are unnaturally diverse contrivances of color throughout the seasons; they die to the ground each winter, and mature in 3 to 5 years. Shrubs mature in 5 to 7 years. Trees take decades. Half of this offering is my list of what is growing well -- with copious compost -- in the Last Green Valley.

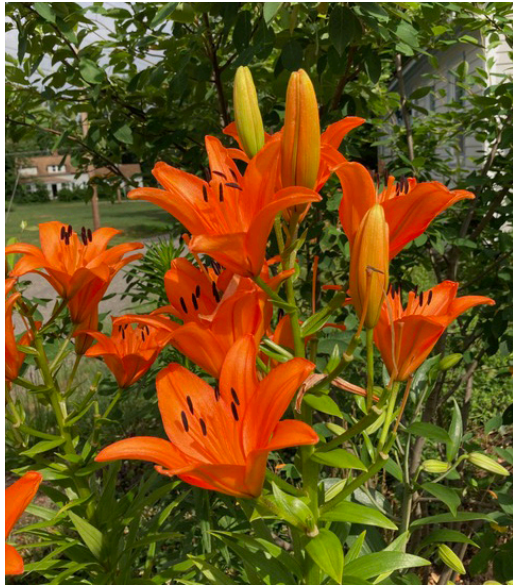
1 WILDS

The 1750 farmhouse is charming, but the wild backyard is its glory. Looking out the kitchen window to the wilds... birds, squirrels, rabbits and their cover of thickets, to hill and dale, a low paddock for horses the story goes... mesmerizing.

Rhus (Staghorn Sumac) is my only thicketing native shrub-tree. Showy early fall color, orange and red, and large crimson-red hairy fruit (drupe technically) that flavored native "lemonade". Other thickets are not native! Burning Bush (*Euonymus*, named for its flaming fall color) and Multiflora Rose (*Rosa*) -- weeds that I like -- of



Whitest Himalayan Birch & Gray Birch (behind)



Orange true Lilies in summer.

Forsythia and Lilac (*Syringa*) planted long before me for spring bloom.

These tall shrubs isolate my contrived front plantings from weeds and bugs, and nature from my ornamental encroachment. Eyes are drawn past the thickets into the darker woods beyond, toward a wild woody path to Diana's Pool.

2 STYLE

Traffic is certainly different in 2020 and the farmhouse is on a busy road. I'm used to the city, born in NYC, decades in Minneapolis and Boston. Screen the front, live in the back.

Landscape aesthetics are subjective, not necessarily better in someone else's opinion. Resale value and neighbor relations play a role, but your style is a good choice for you. Not to say we can't learn, evolve, even change attitudes. Living at the edge of the woods has been instructive for the naturalistic impulses of this urban-suburban gardener. (Weeds and bugs.)

My style is less-manicured, encouraging some weeds. Certainly contrived. Naturalistic but not natural.

Conventional landscape design takes many cues from urban-suburban yards where many afford the luxury of landscaping for curb and patio appeal. House foundations are diversely layered with tall plants in back, often evergreen, and front flower borders. Corners and island beds have ornamental trees and shrubs. Entrances and walks are a focus for color and contrast. Formulaic, but the design process can be tailored to individuals, and regardless of design, nature makes every garden special.

Whether aesthetics are conventional or imaginative, it need only appeal to you. Neighbors may disagree.

Caveat: Too many plants can be too busy. Fewer plants are calming. Repeating imparts rhythm.

3 SITE

COMPOST! Bulk compost had more weeds than expected, but also clover that rabbits love, and it self-fertilizes by "fixing" atmospheric nitrogen in the soil. I like a biodiverse lawn, don't use chemicals that kill rabbits and dogs to permit a perfect lawn. Love the bunnies.

Whatever designed, my site preparation adds nutrient for root development. The driveway was hardpack after a century of barn and household use. Bad for planting. My first logistic was truckloads of compost where birch trees were to be planted in the fall for screen, shade and comparison.

(When I started as a designer / project manager at Weston Nurseries in Massachusetts, I might add an inch of compost to some garden beds. After a few years, I always added two inches.)

Plant when nursery plants are available April to June. Before July. Mid-summer is the harshest time of the year to plant. Possibly effective if NO heat-stress and watered often. Wait until fall.

4 PLANTS

Last month's *Neighbors* showcased the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden, away north but warm near the ocean with many plants suited to southern New England. Herewith plants I'm using in eastern Connecticut.

TREES My noblest purpose is planting trees for global benefit, converting carbon dioxide to oxygen. The smaller park-scale of "forest bathing" reduces stress,

cleanses spirits.

Bark, flower, fruit, fall color, form and a shade canopy are my smallest scale for enjoying trees. I like white bark, ornamental in all four seasons, and am comparing three whitebarked birches:

1. Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis jacquemontii*, planted 4), an exotic (non-native) birch with the whitest bark from mountains in India; And two native birch (3 of each) that are less vulnerable to native bugs:
2. Paper Birch (*B. papyrifera*), our iconic native birch, large enough to encase canoes;
3. 'Whitespire' Gray Birch (*B. populifolia*), a native cultivar with lustrous green leaves.

'Whitespire' (with native gray birch DNA) were the largest planted; three 25-gallon containers were dug into compacted ground with 18 inches of compost level to the pot's grade, mounded 7 to 10 feet across. With a "compost saucer" to hold water and a soil drench of liquid phosphate to stimulate roots. Plus 3 inches of pine mulch.

Birch leaves are yellow in autumn, lovely as a stand on Plum Island, Mass. (thanks Lori who planted Himalayan in Newton), and eventual-

ly my driveway. Some deciduous shrubs and trees (losing leaves in winter) have showier fall colors of orange, pink, red or purple, but flower is the first order of ornament.

Trees planted for fall color and white spring flower are *Amelanchier* (Serviceberry) and two of the new genus *Benthamidia*

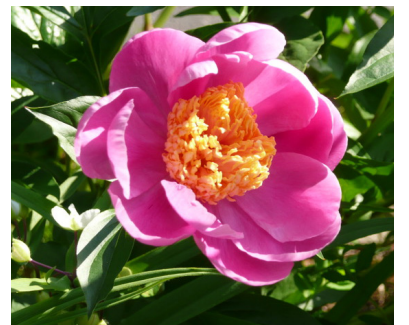
(Dogwoods, formerly *Cornus kousa* & *C. florida*). *Cercis* (Redbud) blooms very early, a profusion of small pink-purple flowers along branch nodes before leaf-out, without showy fall color. Ascending branches are graceful as Japanese Maple, and faster growing.

Acer palmatum (Japanese Maple) has purple leaves, flashy red in the fall, but no flower. Very slow growing (wish I'd planted larger). *Cotinus* (Smoketree) 'Royal Purple' is also planted for purple leaves turning red in autumn. A shrubby tree with panicles of pink-to-purple flowers in summer, then fluffy hairs (pubescence) remain after bloom like a cloud of smoke.

Five *Fagus* (American Beech) were planted at the edge of my woods. Beech-Maple is the "climax mesic closed canopy hardwood forest", pinnacle of succession and common when first Europeans settled. None remained in my small patch of Eastern Connecticut woods. Beech



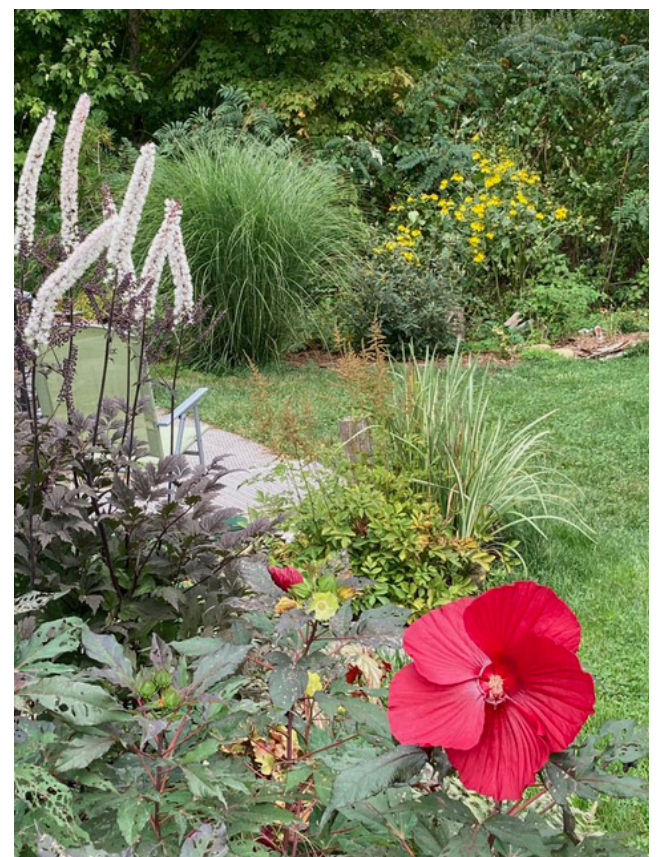
Arnold Promise' Witchhazel (Hamamelis), 14 February 2018 at Arnold Arboretum, Boston



Peony in Spring



Prickly Pear Cactus flower in summer



Red Rose Mallow and white Bugbane in fall



Karry and John 'Buzzy' Balogh of Mansfield Tree Service hold their plaque surrounded by their crew.

Contributed photo.

Community Spirits Recognized

Submitted by Elaine Nelson

The pandemic dealt a mighty blow to the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp, forcing it to close in-person camp in the summer of 2020. It was a heart wrenching decision to make and the financial ramifications were daunting to say the least. Board members, staff and 4-H friends donated extraordinary hours of service this past year to keep the camp afloat and ready to re-open for campers June 2021.

At this year's virtual annual meeting of the Windham County 4-H Foundation, two local businesses were given Community Spirit Awards to acknowledge their extremely generous support during this difficult year. Both businesses were recently awarded plaques to display that recognize their efforts.

Buck's Soft Serve of Woodstock offered the Windham-Tolland 4-H camp the opportunity to sell water

to patrons of their rich ice cream concoctions. The \$1.00 price was often rounded up to \$10 by generous patrons. The donations jar to support the camp was in prominent display at the check-out area and owners Judy Buell and Emilie Hebert were also frequent contributors.

Buzzy Balogh of Mansfield Tree Service donated many hours of crews and equipment service clearing dead trees away from buildings, the ropes course and our walking paths to make our campus a safer place. As an added bonus, our volunteers and staff cut up the downed trees and sold cords of firewood to make some extra money to pay the bills. Win/win situation!

The Windham County Foundation is very grateful for the generous support of these community partners and is pleased to recognize them publicly.



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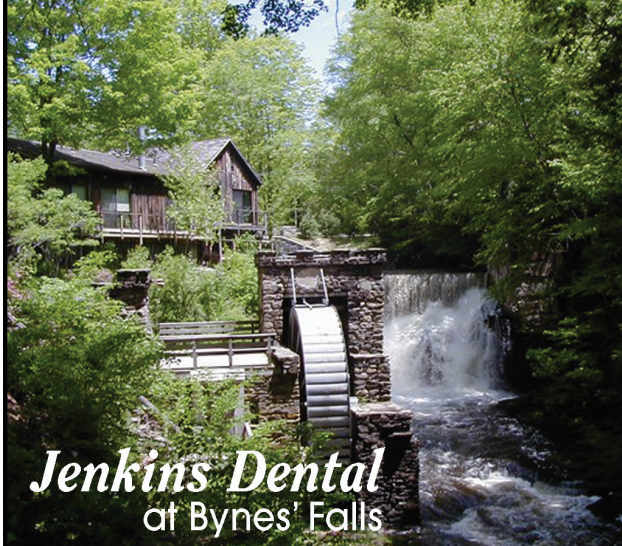
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The Jury Was Out and Justice Not Rendered

By Bill Powers

I have always believed that it is an important duty for citizens to serve on juries when called. A jury can help to provide a measure of justice for defendants and plaintiffs, as well as victims of crimes. Over the years, I have been summoned for jury duty several times. Never before when writing an essay have I found the need, until today, to quote from the Bible, particularly these words attributed to Jesus: "Many are called but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). This quote applies to jury service in my experience, because in the dozen times that I was summoned, on eight occasions I was not required to report to the court at all after checking in on the previous evening. On two occasions, I needed to report and spent most of the day waiting in a crowded room before being released. Only twice did I get close to becoming a member of an actual jury as one of the "few chosen": for a murder trial and for a trial involving illegal entry.

In the first situation, after an orientation, the group of potential jurors was told: "This is a murder case, but not a death penalty case, and most likely it will last at least a month. If you believe you have a good reason that you cannot serve, you will need to talk with the judge in order to be excused." On the day the trial was scheduled to start, I was to begin my first day teaching for Hartford Public Schools, after completing my master's degree in special education. I met with the judge, he listened intently to my explanation, and, interestingly, he asked about my previous education and employment experience. He also asked why I had changed careers and why I chose to teach in the inner city. The judge told me that he had recently presided over an action related to the Connecticut Supreme Court case *Sheff vs. O'Neill*, regarding civil rights and the right to education. He smiled at me and said, "At this time, I believe Hartford needs you more than we do. I wish you the best of luck with your new career." I was excused and free to begin my new job, but left disappointed that I would miss the opportunity to sit on a jury.

A few years later, I finally got that opportunity. By that time, I had become a high school history and social science teacher and was teaching a civics class called "The Law and You." I had never observed a *criminal* case in a courtroom, and in fact made it a practice to avoid courtrooms in my personal life. However, I had taken my students to observe *civil* cases through a program sponsored by the Connecticut Bar Association. These field trips provided an important learning experience about the law for my students and me.

One day, soon after a field trip to the courthouse, one of my students looked out the classroom window and saw a limousine driving up and parking in front of the school. It was the governor, accompanied by a state trooper in a second vehicle. The student noticed that both vehicles were parked in the fire lane, despite warning signs and a painted curb.

On that day, we happened to be discussing readings on the question "Is anyone above the law?" A student said that her mother had recently been told to move her car when she parked in the same place, protesting, "That just isn't fair!" There was a consensus among the students that this somehow wasn't all right. One student asked for a pass so he could take photos of the vehicles.

The situation presented what teachers call "a great learning opportunity." I saw that we needed to do some research about state statutes and local ordinances regarding parking lanes. Students contacted the school administration, the Willimantic fire and police chiefs, the Windham fire marshal, and the Windham town manager for information and opinions. We learned that the governor's visit, while official business, was not an emergency and that there were no other exceptions for parking in the fire lane for the governor or anyone else.

The class decided to take what they were learning to another level: since no one is above the law, they would put the governor on trial. They created rules for a mock trial and assigned roles: judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, a jury, witnesses, and the defendant. Our principal, Albie Harris, a former social science teacher, consented to play a role. The mock trial was an opportunity not only to learn how a criminal trial works but also to practice skills such as formulating a persuasive and coherent argument, critical thinking, and public speaking. The defense attorney did her research and was able to convince the jury to acquit the governor because he struggled with dyslexia, which could affect his ability to read the signs that indicated it was a fire lane. As one juror put it, "In my mind, justice and mercy should go hand and hand."

Now back to the time when I served on a jury. I had not recognized the other potential jurors the first time I was summoned, but this time was different because I knew two people. One was a woman I had not seen in years; she had briefly worked at a place where I worked. She also was selected to serve on the jury. The other person was a man I knew as a child more than sixty years earlier. His family had lived just down the street from mine in Hartford. When they read his name, John Patry, I approached him and asked if he had lived in Hartford on Owen Street. He had, and he remembered me. He was three years younger, and his mother had hired me to walk with him to and from our Catholic school. We spoke briefly and were surprised to discover that we still lived on the same street, only now in Windham Center. He did not serve on the jury, but we meet frequently at the Windham Center post office and reminisce about the old days.

The case was heard in the Danielson courthouse and, due to prolonged jury deliberations, it lasted for five days. The defendant was charged with entering a home with the intent to commit a crime associated with the physical assault of an elderly man. Serving on the jury turned out to be a truly educational experience. I got to see firsthand how the process of dispensing justice worked. It was also an intense experience, one that left me with mixed emotions and searching for answers.

On the second day, a group of eight young men were seated in the courtroom, and they were silently acknowledged by the accused, who was facing five charges. As the days went by, I noticed that each and every one of them was staring at members of the jury. Not until later did I realize their intentions.

When the jurors considered the charges, they quickly and unanimously found the accused guilty of the first three charges, which were misdemeanors. The two additional charges were felonies and would result in more serious penalties. During three more days of deliberation, the jury could not agree and was sent back three times by the judge to further consider the charges. There were two holdouts on the jury; the rest of us tried many avenues of persuasion and conducted several thorough reviews of the facts; questions were sent to the judge for clarification of the law. No matter what we tried to do to convince the two holdouts, they were having none of it. As a result, the accused was not convicted of the more serious charges.

The reluctance of the two made no sense to me at the time and never did, until later, when I happened to meet each of them by chance in the community. When the group of young men sitting in the courtroom during the trial were staring at the jury, the two holdouts, both women who lived in the neighborhood where the old man was assaulted, interpreted the intense staring as a threat of retribution. Perceived intimidation and fear neutralized the effect of facts and logic, and unfortunately caused justice not to be served.

Bill Powers is a retired Windham High School teacher and resides in Windham.



Drinking the Moonshine

Nightfalls and below the open windows I listen for your voice to once again fill the darkened air.

I realize that I cannot see beyond all the notions that rise and fall with each breath, somehow you always find me alone.

Above the others I gather thoughts, moments of each day that I leave at the doorway to forgetting.

Knocking gently at my sullen door, you have anticipated my mood and have gathered moonlight in a glass jar and make it your offering.

What brings you here again I ask as you brush aside my questions. You enter, without asking the way, and place your hands on the corners of my fears.

Removing the robes that cover my doubts, you gently insist that I listen to the melody that accompanies your songs

This requires neither my permission nor my objection. The light from the jar now casts an understanding shadow across from each thought.

With both arms I reach to thank you and discover only my reflection is there.

Finding...

you were only a whisper of my own longing, in a drinking moonshine mirror.

Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.

All Welcome to Arbor Day in Hampton!

Submitted by Gay Wagner

Hampton's Arbor Day, April 30, 9:30-10:30 AM, will find Hampton Elementary School students and community members celebrating with tree planting, stories and songs they have written, and goodie bags to enjoy. The Selectmen will read a special proclamation honoring the event. This year's Arbor Day is especially important because it launches a yearlong national celebration leading to 2022 Arbor Day, the 150th anniversary of the observation of the celebration.

Arbor Day actually began in Nebraska in 1872, when farmers moving west from forested areas of our country realized they needed trees on the open plains, for shade, for erosion control, and for beauty in the landscape. Nebraska was the first state to make Arbor Day an official holiday. While the date of celebration may vary, depending on climate, the sentiments are the same – to beautify the community and to make young

people aware of the value of trees in the landscape.

The Hampton Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, the Hampton Board of Education, the HES PTO, and the electric utility Eversource have joined forces to provide trees to be planted and goodies to be shared. The community is invited to attend.

This year's ceremony represents a revival of a regular tradition in Hampton, commemorated in a 2018 column in the Hampton Gazette:

"Arbor Day was an important holiday at Hampton's consolidated school [now Town Hall]. Every class was responsible for some form of reverence – pictures and posters, stories and reports. Someone would recite Joyce Kilmer's poem, and, of course, the ceremony would always culminate with the planting of one. These were important concepts to instill in children – how to plant a tree and how to

take care of it, along with all the lessons as to why – the scientific reasons and the personal ones. Whether you celebrate at a ceremony in a school, or a public place like a park, or your own yard, there's almost always room for another tree. And time for all the lessons that accompany the planting. Happy Arbor Day!"

For more information about Arbor Day and the Arbor Day Foundation headquarters at Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City, Nebraska, see the website www.arborday.org. and the National Arbor Day Foundation page on Facebook.

INFO:
Bruce Spanan
forestryct@outlook.com

The Connecticut State Animal You've Never Seen

By Bob Lorentson

I'm willing to bet that the average reader of this paper, as sharp and observant as he or she may be, couldn't both name the Connecticut state animal and claim to have ever seen one. I'll also extend the same bet to all the above and below average readers. Here's a hint: This dubious honor was bestowed upon the animal in 1975 by the state's General Assembly, which, while not being technically incompetent, had to work at it more than in other years. They thought that a state animal would take people's minds off the high tax rate, and it might have worked if they had chosen an animal that all of them could get behind.

This immediately excluded elephants and donkeys and seemed to improve the odds for snakes and weasels, but politics being what it is, the two sides instead went back and forth with all manner of other animals they thought best represented the Land of Steady Habits. Legislative habit proved steadier, however, and eventually all these animals became roadkill. So, while this General Assembly seemed more underwater than most, yet still unable to tell a crustacean from a cetacean, they naturally compromised on the sperm whale. Although no one had ever seen one, they were all fairly sure that at the very least they wouldn't have to worry about the new state animal ever being squashed on Connecticut's busy roadways. They also may have thought that if they could sell the state on laws that didn't make sense, they could do the same for any animal they chose, even an animal whose sole relationship with Connecticut came at the business end of a harpoon. As it was with Moby Dick and Captain Ahab's ship, the *Pequod*, some say it was the sperm whale that sank the 1975 Connecticut General Assembly.

Some facts about Connecticut's state animal:

—A sperm whale has the largest brain of any creature that ever existed, larger even than the combined brains of the 1975 General Assembly.

—Sperm whales can reach 65 feet in length, which means that 812 of them laid end to end would stretch from Old Saybrook, Connecticut, to East Marion, New York, the former proposed site of a bridge spanning Long Island Sound. This information is offered for reference purposes only, not as a design suggestion.

—They can dive over 4,000 feet in search of prey, largely giant squid and cuttlefish.

—Sperm whales have never been seen in Connecticut waters, possibly owing to Long Island Sound having an average depth of only 63 feet. Diving in such waters when you're 65 feet long is not advisable. Additionally, Long Island Sound is totally lacking in giant squid and cuttlefish.

—Sperm whales are the largest of the toothed whales. Their 40 to 50 teeth each weigh over two pounds. Either despite this or because of this, they rarely chew their food. It should be noted that toothless whales do not chew their food either. Chewing never seemed to catch on as a whale behavior somehow.

—They are called sperm whales because of a waxy substance found in their heads called spermaceti, which was formerly used to make candles and ointments. They have never gotten over this.

—A sperm whale has a huge head, which takes up nearly a third of its body length. And this was before being named Connecticut's state animal.

—They live 50 to 70 years and generally die of natural causes, unless a whaling ship finds one first. They are considered endangered, when they are considered at all.

—Sperm whales make the loudest sound of any animal on Earth. Divers have described it as sounding remarkably like "HELP!"

Bob Lorentson is a retired environmental scientist and an active daydreamer.

Brian Karlsson Barnes continued from page 12

retain their tan leaves into winter when brilliant sunsets illuminate them like manuscripts attesting to persistence.

Deciduous trees and shrubs grow faster, but evergreens screen views in winter. Faster growing tall evergreens are *Pinus* (White Pine) and *Thuja* (Arborvitae). A dwarf *Thuja* 'Zmatlik' hides my wellhead.

Exotic *Sciadopitys* (Japanese Umbrella Pine) has an unusual texture of whorled umbrella-like evergreen needles. Slow growing. (Gift from client's too shady yard in Cambridge, Mass., doing well in sunny CT, thank you Val and Jen.)

SHRUBS Evergreen spring bloomers are dark pink *Kalmia* 'Sarah' (Mountain Laurel, CT state flower) and many of the *Rhododendron* genus:

- Largeleaf 'Purple Passion' and yellow 'Capistrano' (gifted from a Dover MA client with hungry deer, thank you Fred);
- Littleleaf *Rhododendron* 'PJM' and 'Purple' Gem', also Azalea 'Hino Crimson';
- Deciduous azaleas (with fall color) are pink 'Jane Abbott' and orange 'Klondyke'.

Arnold Promise' Witchhazel (*Hamamelis*) is a large shrub to frame my late winter view against the distant dark woods with bright yellow petals that unfurl like a party blower in warm weather, curling tight again in cold nights. But deer browsed and it must be transplanted. (Deer tend to follow the same path, sometimes in one yard, not the next. A "deer-interruption fence" across the path, even fishing line, can limit damage without continuous fencing.)

Other deciduous shrubs for spring flower and fall color: *Amelanchier* (Shadbush), *Vaccinium* (Blueberry, 4 cultivars for better pollination and fruit) and *Viburnum* (American Cranberrybush). Prague *Viburnum* is also planted, semi-evergreen in mild Connecticut winters.

Shrubs with summer bloom: *Hydrangea* 'Endless Summer' and especially Rosa (Rose): lavender 'Angel Face', magenta 'Hansa' and two new roses from Miracle on the Hudson that are coral orange-pink and bright red. No fall color. "Deadheading" removes spent flowers to encourage rebloom, or rosehips.

Ilex (Winterberry) is a deciduous holly with red berries in winter ("dioecious" needing female and male), native to swamps, not hot and dry.

HERBACEOUS Flowering perennials provide the most seasonal interest. Some have showy leaves (and less significant flowers) spring through fall, as the colorful fronds of *Athyrium* (Japanese Painted Fern), as multi-color-leaf *Heuchera* (Coral Bells) and succulent *Sempervivum* (Hens & Chicks).

In spring, *Phlox subulata* (Creeping Phlox) greets the street with mats of red/pink, purple/blue or white flowers in April, full sun, then Iris (Bearded and Siberian) and *Paeonia* (Peony). *Polygonatum* (Variegated Solomon's Seal) is elegant in some shade with *Aquilegia* (Columbine) and *Dicentra* (Bleeding Heart).

Bulbs add bloom. Earliest is *Narcissus* (Daffodil, pushing up by my door as I write mid-March), hardiest to colonize a space... then species *Tulipa* (Tulips) that are hardier than the many brightly colored hybrids. *Allium* (Ornamental Onion) and *Lilium* (true Lily) flower in summer.

Summer has the most herbaceous flower: *Anemo-*

ne tomentosa 'Robustissima', *Asclepias* (Butterfly Weed), *Astilbe*, Threadleaf *Coreopsis*, *Echinacea* (Coneflower) and *Geranium* (not *Pelargonium*). *Hibiscus moscheutos* 'Midnight Marvel' (Rose Mallow) has large deep red flowers and purple leaves turning orange in fall. *Hemerocallis* (Daylily, not a true lily), *Monarda* (Bee Balm), and *Salvia* (Russian Sage, formerly *Perovskia*) continue flowering with *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* (Sweet Coneflower), 5-ft stems with quilled (curled) yellow petals, 3 inches across. *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' (Stonecrop) blooms pink in summer and stays erect for winter interest.

Herbaceous flower in autumn: *Actaea* (Bugbane, formerly *Cimicifuga*) and *Tricyrtis* (Toad Lily, not a true lily) in some shade. *Nipponanthemum* (Montauk Daisy) is a 3-ft shrub-like mass of white daisies, rivaled by blue *Symphotrichum* (New England Aster, formerly genus Aster); both bloom vigorously in full sun.

In winter, *Miscanthus* ornamental grasses stay erect for visual interest. Old growth is removed well before the new blades in April.

A curious winter survivor is *Opuntia* (Prickly Pear Cactus aka Bunny Ears) that dehydrates flat in cold weather, looks dead, and swells again in spring. The large paddles have delicate yellow flowers in summer, but beware tiny irritating barbs that imbed skin.

Old growth is under-appreciated. Some gardeners like to clean up the land in fall, cutting back all, tidy and bare all winter. Old protects new growth from bitter winter and spring freezing, so I wait until spring.

Ah spring! Three years later, there is some maturity in my gardens, and I have an evolving sense of belonging, a part of the land, not apart.

SHOUT OUT to Sulo Salmela, friend and foreman at Weston Nurseries, Hopkinton, Mass., when I worked there, who has helped plant my Chapel of the Birch.

Brian Karlsson Barnes, Chaplin CT, Master gardener / designer

Dear Reader-

Please consider contributing to Neighbors-Write an article about a person you admire or a local program you believe is important. Take a photo of a friend, loved one or pet. Write a poem or a piece of flash fiction. These pages would be full of press releases without submissions from local residents who care about each other and their community.

T. King, Publisher

Advertise in
the Neighbors paper
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Windham-Willimantic NAACP Environmental Justice Committee

Invites You to a Zoom Presentation

**"Environmental Injustice:
Imminent Threat"**

Saturday, April 10, 2021

1:00-2:30 pm

Visit windhamctnaacp.org and click Events>NAACP Panels for more information and to register.



Jacqueline (Jacqui) Patterson, a former Peace Corps Volunteer, has been Senior Director of National NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice Program for twelve years. She is the Convener/Coordinator of Women of Color United, a network that brings together over 50,000 women nationwide, for the past fourteen years. The breadth of her skills and commitment includes areas of racial justice, global health, economic justice, gender justice and environmental justice.



Sharon Lewis, a lifetime Hartford resident, is Director of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice. This group was instrumental in the closing of Connecticut's last coal-fired power plant in Bridgeport, prevailing after over ten years of organizing and opposition. Ms. Lewis has stated that "improving human health and the environments of low-income and communities of color is our work."

To all our contributors-
Thank You!

Without your submissions of writing, poetry, artwork and photographs, this paper would not exist. T. King, Publisher

The Packing House Opens Fall 2021!

By EC-CHAP

April

"April is a promise that May is bound to keep."

- Hal Borland

We wish you continued good health in mind and body, and leave you with the following:

*"Whether you think you can
or you think you can't,
you're right."*

- Henry Ford

Peace,
EC-CHAP Board

It's an EXCITING Time!

We are planning for the GRAND REOPENING of The Packing House September 2021. As long as vaccinations continue to progress favorably, and critical health metrics continue to decline, we will be prepared.

We have put together a great line-up of talent in collaboration with new and returning artists. We have tried to offer a variety of musical genres and programs based on input from our patrons and supporters. We have also selected appropriate monthly films to screen which we believe you will enjoy through the fall.

We will be highlighting different artists and films each month in the coming issues of the Neighbors paper leading up to our Fall Reopening. We hope to provide additional details, artist profiles, accomplishments, and content for the planned events.

Current CT State Guidelines for Movie Theaters and Performance Venues as of March 19, 2021, require masks; 6' social distancing; 50% capacity (max 100); and an 11:00pm closing time. Providing there is no resurgence of the virus, and facilities continue to safely open, EC-CHAP will continue to maintain these guidelines through the end of 2021 regardless of any official easing of these requirements.

EC-CHAP is looking for volunteers! Julie Engleke, our Volunteer Coordinator is seeking individuals that may possess video production and social media experience; as well as those that would just like to lend a helping hand. If you are interested in learning how you may be able to help support this effort, please contact Julie at: volunteer@ec-chap.org.

If your EC-CHAP membership has expired, or if you are interested in becoming a new member, please visit: <https://www.ec-chap.org/membership-information> or give a call (518-791-9474).

EC-CHAP has been offering our LIVE Talent Showcase since 2016. Our Talent Showcase is designed as a platform for local and regional artists to share their talent in front of a live audience. As always, acoustic musicians, film makers, poets, comedians, jugglers, puppeteers, and creative artists of all ages are invited to perform at The Packing House. Visit www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming for general details.

Since the arrival of COVID-19, EC-CHAP has been offering monthly online programming beginning in April 2020, and launched our Virtual Talent Showcase beginning July 2020. We plan to continue this virtual offering through September 8th; and then resume our LIVE monthly Talent Showcase on Wednesday, October 13th!

We are streaming our Virtual Talent Showcase on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm. Please consider participating by sharing your talent, or just join us to see and hear local and regional creatives sharing their talent.

If you would like to participate in our Virtual Talent Showcase, please give us a call for instructions to upload your videos. Each participant may submit multiple files up to a cumulative maximum run time of 15-minutes. All video files should be submitted in Landscape mode (Horizontal format), and .mp4 file format. Video files will need to be received one week prior to streaming, or by the 1st Wednesday of the month.

Our next Virtual Talent Showcase is scheduled to stream at 7:00pm, Wednesday, April 14th (all files must be received by Wednesday, April 7th).

EC-CHAP ACOUSTIC ARTIST SERIES

"Twice Around" with Curtis Brand (Indie/Folk). Saturday, September 18th, 7:30pm.



EC-CHAP is pleased and excited to reopen The Packing House with Twice Around, an acoustic duo from Milford, CT. These folks graced our stage in 2018, and are back to start our new season.

Twice Around (Frank Veres & Luisa Tanno) is a modern, yet semi-throwback duo with a sound that could be classified as singer/songwriter with an essence of Pop and Melancholy. The foundation of their music is acoustic guitar and vocals; often with harmonies and guitar interplay, sometimes just one guitar and one voice, raw and rich. Their latest CD "Here Before" features 12 original songs that explore the ups and downs of all matters of the heart with an optimistic perspective. We've all been "Here Before". They play original music along with a selection of familiar and unexpected covers.

Local singer songwriter Curtis Brand will be kicking off the evening with several familiar original songs that us local have come to embrace. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

"Ramblin' Dan Stevens" (Blues). Saturday, September 25th, 7:30pm.



Ramblin' Dan Stevens performs a mix of traditional finger style blues, Americana and originals and has entertained audiences throughout the United States,

Germany, UK, Canada and US Virgin Islands. His unique style of "bottleneck" slide playing popularized by early Mississippi Delta bluesmen includes use of a homemade, three stringed "Cigar Box Guitar" and one stringed "Diddly Bow", both primitive blues instruments.

Dan also plays regularly in the New York City Subway System in locations such as Times Square and Grand Central Terminal. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

"AJ Jansen featuring The Outlaw Women of Country Music Show" (Country). Saturday, October 23rd, 7:30pm.

AJ Jansen has been traveling around New England, and has been performing in CT for years in various venues, musical showcases and pageants. She's a well-traveled Cowgirl that now calls Nashville her second home and recorded her first album after wining a state-wide competition in 2005 from the CT Music Association that sent her to TN.



AJ will debut her "Outlaw Women of Country Music" with us at The Packing House - a musical journey that showcases the Women of Country Music that pioneered and changed Country Music forever. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

"Eric Sommer" (Blues/Americana). Saturday, November 20th, 7:30pm.



Singer/songwriter Eric Sommer is an unbelievable intersection of improbable influences and experiences channeled into an amazingly diverse catalog and a résumé that reads more like a musical adventure novel than a series of career bullet points.

Sommer emerged from the Boston music scene in the 80's with a vengeance, a Folk guitarist with a percussive, open-tuning style. He traveled, lived, and played in Europe for several years before returning to his Boston roots. Whether in band or one-man form (which nakedly showcases his amazing acoustic Blues guitar stylings), Sommer is a living history of contemporary music and a musical force of nature. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

"Tracy Walton" (Folk/Indie). Saturday, December 4th, 7:30pm.



Tracy Walton wears many musical hats: Singer songwriter, bassist, producer, author, and studio owner. He has toured the country with various groups including most recently the duo Belle of the Fall. Tracy has also played bass with David Bromberg, and Vernon Reid among others.

He is currently recording his 4th solo album with an expected release of fall 2021. He also produces albums for artists at his studio, On Deck Sound Studio, in Northfield CT. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

EC-CHAP JAZZ SERIES

“Greg Abate Quartet” (Bee-Bop). Saturday, October 9th, 7:30pm.

We are pleased to have international Jazz Recording Artist Greg Abate return to The Packing House to kick-off our new season! In non-COVID times, Greg Abate, jazz saxophonist, flutist, composer continues to tour 225 days a year around the globe.

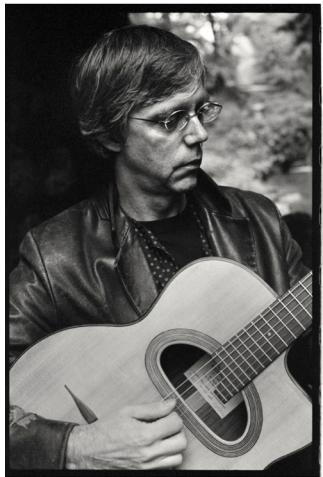
Greg recorded his first CD Live At Birdland NYC in 1991 on the Candid Jazz Label with the trio of James Williams, Rufus Reid, and Kenny Washington. To this date he has recorded over 17 other recordings, and is currently a Whaling City Sound recording artist. Greg’s newest release, Magic Dance, is due to be released in April 2021.



Greg will be joined by Matt deChamplain on piano, Lou Bocciarelli on bass, and Ben Bilello on drums. The Quartet recently recorded a live concert at The Packing House on February 27th, which was available for viewing March 6th and 7th. At the request of the artists, we will post this concert on our website (by April 15th) for viewing. Please visit our website for the link. Tickets: \$25.00 online / \$30.00 at the door.

“Luke Hendon” (Gypsy Jazz). Saturday, November 6th, 7:30pm.

In his acoustic project, Luke Hendon cooks up a gumbo of old and new. He playfully mixes modern influences and traditional gypsy jazz with virtuosity and style. Luke Hendon’s obsession with Django Reinhardt began in 2007 as a student at the renowned music camp Django in June -where he later would teach in 2013.



In 2015 Hendon travelled to Europe to a Sinti camp to study with Paulus Schafer and Fapy Lafertin. Upon his return to the U.S. he recorded Silk and Steel, an album of original gypsy jazz compositions. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

“An Intimate Evening with Nicole Zuraitis (A Holiday Theme). Saturday, December 18th, 7:30pm.

Grammy® Nominated New York based musician and winner of the 2021 American Traditions Vocal Competition Gold Medal, Nicole Zuraitis blends clever songwriting skills, an effervescent presence, and dazzling vocals in a consummate package that has thrilled audiences across Manhattan and across the world. If recently you happened upon Greenwich Village’s 55 Bar or Birdland Jazz Club and were enchanted by the seismic versatile talent of inspired vocalist, keyboard player and songwriter Nicole Zuraitis, you’re officially part of the lady-powerhouse burgeoning fan club.



We are excited to have Nicole back for her 3rd appearance at The Packing House! She will be closing our fall season with a very special Holiday theme. Tickets: \$30.00 online / \$35.00 at the door.

EC-CHAP SPECIAL PROGRAM

“An Evening with Spiritual Medium Maura Geist”. Friday, October 8th , 7:30pm.

Back by popular demand, Maura continues to provide healing and inspiration to others. She will discuss when and how this unique ability began, what a Medium is and her understanding of the Afterlife. She will also give an overview of how a reading is done, methods used in the process and what she will need from the audience. Maura will then make connections for the audience members and bring loving and healing messages from loved ones that have crossed over.



“Life is a beautiful thing, it is our journey of learning, but it is even more interesting through the Eyes of a Medium. This is my journey and all the things I have learned about God, our Souls, and the Afterlife.” - Maura Geist. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

EC-CHAP Film Series:

“Begin Again” (R). 2013. Friday, October 21st, 7:00pm

What better way to start a new beginning at The Packing House than a screening of the musical journey portrayed in Begin Again???

Begin Again (R) was written and directed by John Carney, and stars Keira Knightley, Mark Ruffalo, and Adam Levine. The film portrays “a chance encounter between a down-and-out music-business executive and a young singer-songwriter, new to Manhattan, (that) turns into a promising collaboration between the two talents. IMDb

This film is a part of the EC-CHAP Film Series hosted by the Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP), a 501.3.c non-profit membership-based cultural organization. To learn more and how you can become a member, visit www.ec-chap.org. Suggested donation \$5.00.



“Once” (R). 2007. Friday, November 18th, 7:00pm

Once (R) was written and directed by John Carney, and stars Glen Hansard, Marketa Irglova, and Hugh Walsh. The film presents “a modern-day musical about a busker and an immigrant and their eventful week in Dublin, as they write, rehearse and record songs that tell their love story.” IMDb

This film is a part of the EC-CHAP Film Series hosted by the Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP), a 501.3.c non-profit membership-based cultural organization. To learn more and how you can become a member, visit www.ec-chap.org. Suggested donation \$5.00.



“It’s A Wonderful Life” (PG). 1946. Friday, December 16th, 7:00pm

This seasonal classic has been an EC-CHAP tradition with a screening each Holiday Season since 2016. Unfortunately we missed 2020 due to COVID-19, but we’re back to share this heartwarming gem in a time that seems quite appropriate.

It’s A Wonderful Life (PG) was written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett; and directed by Frank Capra. The film stars James Stewart, Donna Reed, and Lionel Barrymore.

This film tells the story of “an angel is sent from Heaven to help a desperately frustrated businessman by showing him what life would have been like if he had never existed.” IMDb



Do you remember what happens when an angel gets their wings?

This film is a part of the EC-CHAP Film Series hosted by the Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP), a 501.3.c non-profit membership-based cultural organization. To learn more and how you can become a member, visit www.ec-chap.org. Suggested donation \$5.00.

Tickets, Reservations, CANCELLATIONS, and Contact

Tickets for all shows and program registrations for the Fall will be available for purchase online by April 15, 2021 at www.thepackinghouse.us/upcoming; or may be purchased at the door the day of the event. Unless otherwise specified, doors open 30-minutes prior to show time.

Unless specified otherwise, all performances will feature EC-CHAP’s Exclusive Bring Your Own Beverage & Food “BYOB&F”™ model - wine & beer ONLY (Not applicable to Meetings, School Programs, and First Sunday events). Snacks and soft drinks will also be available. You can also bring your paid ticket to Willington Pizza House (or WP Too) for eat-in or take-out the night of the show and receive 15% off your meal purchase.

If you’re feeling sassy, SPECIFICALLY ask for “The Packing House” pizza! You won’t go wrong. Visit www.thepackinghouse.us for the secret recipe.

Program cancellations will be listed on the EC-CHAP website (www.ec-chap.org), and The Packing House website (www.thepackinghouse.us). If you’re unsure, just call (518-791-9474).

The Packing House is located at The Mill Works, 156 River Road, Willington, CT 06279. Parking is free and located across the street with limited onsite parking. For questions, program or rental information, please call 518-791-9474. Email EC-CHAP (info@ec-chap.org).

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Winter/Spring

Through the swaying trees our eyes met
 He of the cool blue eyes
 blinking frosty lashes,
 beard a cloud of snow.
 We both trudged forward,
 trying to survive
 And the wind howled
 Swirling flurries stung my face
 I think I saw him go into a cave.
 The scent of woodsmoke signaled home
 My step quickened
 Rocking chair, fireplace, hot cocoa

I slept until March
 then entered the forest
 where patches of snow receded
 and moss-covered rocks sang the color green.
 The sky went from cerulean to ultramarine.
 The earth, the sun, the leaves
 Through the swaying trees our eyes met
 She of the sparkling green eyes
 Her smile revealing dimples
 Her hair lustrous and long.
 We both moved lithely
 feeling life surge through us
 The birds rejoiced
 She disappeared into a glen
 where the stream gurgled and splashed.
 The scent of Lilacs signaled home
 I felt the awakening so pleasant
 Wicker chair, lemonade, hopping birds.

Debra Gag, March 16, 2021
 Font 'n Pen

Snip and Rip

a tale of reminiscence

By Marian Vitali

Snip, Snip, Rip
 the worn cotton jerseys,
 tear the fibers apart
 into something new,
 a rag,

Rags.
 Do people today have bags of rags
 from clothes with holes in places
 where no patches would go?

Rags.
 What do people do today with their
 worn and done-for shirts or pajamas?
 toss,
 take a few swipes at something,
 then toss,

Rags, have you been replaced
 by paper towels or new cloths of synthetic anti-static fibers,
 neatly packaged and sold with
 the latest claim to attract
 dust.

Dust coyly waits, you know.
*"Here comes the green one this week,
 last week my seducer was blue!"*,

Has the rag man
 gone asleep,
 will he awake, obsolete,

Does he dream
 about his big empty bag
 with its jaws open
 to catch a few rags?

Ah, nearly done,
 just a few more
 ragged shirts to
 Snip, Rip, Rip,
 and Tear,

Tearing into the faded years,
 Out I call,
 "Mom, Mom, will the rag man
 wheel his cart
 down our street
 today?"

Calling, Calling,

"Rags, Rags
 drop them here.
 I'll take them.
 I'll take your rags, your worries
 all away."
 Yep, that's what he would say.

I tell the future adults
 about this scene
 from my childhood,
 they think
 it's all a storybook dream,
 Rip, Rip
 Van Winkle
 had seen.

Poet Laureate News

Submitted by Tony Paticchio

April is National Poetry Month. It was introduced 25 years ago by The Academy of American Poets, and each April celebrates the ways poetry enriches our culture and our lives. At The Academy's website, poets.org, you will find links to events occurring throughout the month. You can also sign up there for Poem-a-Day and receive an email each morning with a new poem.

This month is also the start of my term as Ashford's Poet Laureate. To mark this beginning, I have written a new poem about the arrival of Spring here in Ashford. It's titled "Becoming". After the past year, I suspect many of us are looking forward to finding our way through to better days.

Becoming

Sometime in March or April,
 The Mount Hope, near its headwaters
 down below the house, turns river again;

grows loud each day; spills its winter stream
 in a full-on cold clear silver river rush;

threads a new watercourse run
 across a thick-grown marsh that once was a beaver pond;

pours out through a rock channel carved
 in the ruin of an old button mill dam;
 and finds its way.

Tony Paticchio

FONT
 'n Pen

Putting Pen to Paper

Submitted by Marian Matthews

Our writing group, Font 'n Pen, started last year just before the pandemic and we were able to meet a couple of times in person before everything shut down.

Created by the Ashford Arts Council as one of their member artist sharing meetings, we found we bonded so well that we decided to keep going. We now meet once a week (with some interruptions) on Zoom, sharing our writings which are most often inspired by a prompt.

Most of our writers are artists in other media, as well, so we also share photographs, paintings, and other pictures that inspire or are inspired by our writing. Please look for our members' work in this and other *Neighbors* issues. Our members are Christine Acebo, Claudia Lebel, Kathryn Eidson, Kathy Lepak, Deb Gag, Debora Aldo, Marian Vitali, and Marian Matthews. Kathy Lepak created our logo. Thank you, Kathy!

Advocating for Education

An introduction to a new column-

Francis Bacon said, "Knowledge is Power" and this holds true for parents as their children move through school – from the Pre-K to high school graduation. My goal is to support community members by providing information so that parents/guardians know and understand "education language," what questions to ask, what growth benchmarks to look for and when and who to contact at their child's school when questions or concerns arise. JPD

By Joanne Prague Doyle

Any parent of a school aged child needs to know the meaning of Section 504, PPT meeting, special education, IEP, RTI, STAR Reading, DRA, iReady...and there are so many more acronyms. These are educational terms that educators use and parents need to become knowledgeable about.

I am an education advocate. What exactly does that mean? I find myself explaining this often and I am always glad to spread the word about my work. An education advocate is an individual with experience in education and knowledge of the laws protecting students. My clients range in age from 3 to 18 and my role is in helping their parents/guardians get the services their children need in any area of life. I work closely with families and school districts to provide evaluations, in-school services in academics, related services, counseling, or behavioral supports.

My experiences as a teacher, school counselor, assistant principal and principal led me to this role when I retired from public education. I opened my own business and found that many parents do not know their child's legal rights and many school districts do not provide services children need. That is where I come in.

Why aren't all schools providing what every child needs to succeed in all areas of life? I am not sure I know the answer to this question, but I know that fighting for what a child needs has become my passion. In my work, I review the student's records and I attend meetings, I help the parents understand the process of regular and special education and I assist parents in becoming their child's best advocate.

I am looking forward to sharing information each month on topics in education advocacy and helping parents' voices grow stronger. Should you have any questions I can answer in the column, please feel free to send them in.

Joanne Prague Doyle owns Northeast Education Advocacy and is always willing to help parents help their children. My website is www.northeasteducationadvocacy.com or email me at northeasteducationadvocacy@gmail.com



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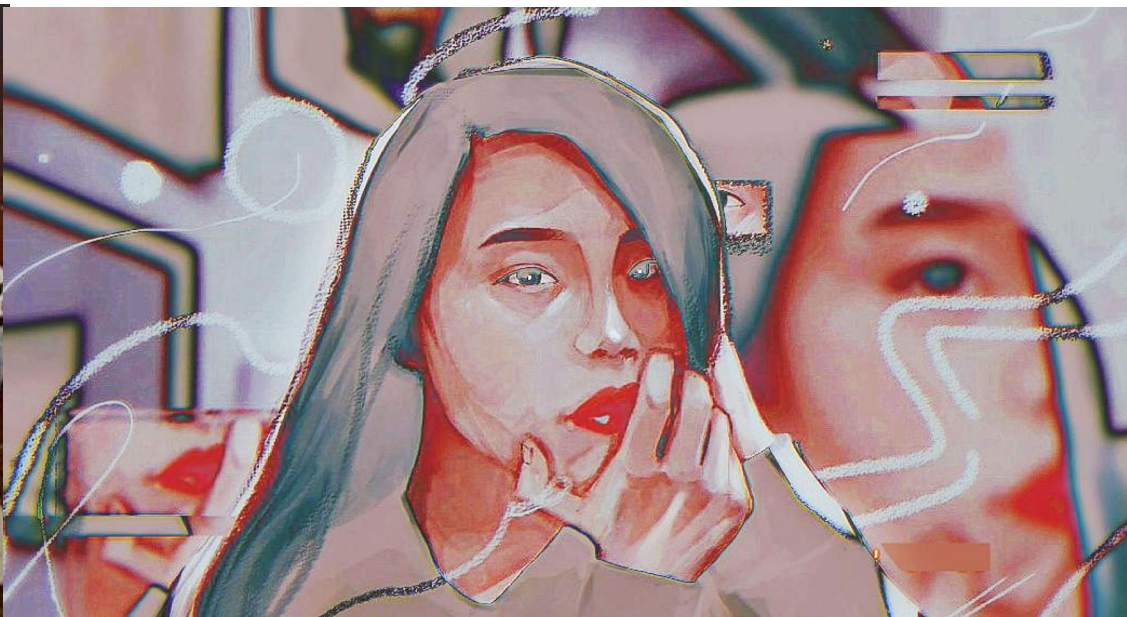
To all our contributors-

Thank You!

Without your submissions of
 writing, poetry, artwork
 and photographs,
 this paper
 would not exist.
 T. King, Publisher



Analiese Hardon



Crystal Zhu

The Dye and Bleach House Community Gallery

E.O. Smith Art and Design Student Show

By Tyana Lopez & Tammy Glaeser

We invite you to Spring with a vibrant show of young artists around the Last Green Valley. Join us this month to celebrate E.O. Smith High School's AP Art & Design students, and EC-CHAP's own board member and teacher, Tammy Glaeser. These Senior Art students have worked incredibly hard creating unique work during a time of consistent change, hybrid learning, and pandemic. Over the course of the year, students delve into projects that revolve around a visual underlying theme, one that often relates to their life experiences or concepts they would like to explore further. Experimentation with new mediums, abstract thinking, and vigor make it possible to create at least 12 individual pieces for a portfolio that will be submitted to the College Board for review. This "Sustained Investigation," or ongoing theme of communicating visually, will be on display for you to enjoy at the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery for the month of April.

Join us in welcoming Analiese Hardon, Andrelle Lewis, Alissa Recchia, Haley Rothausen, Brianna Vannais, and Crystal Zhu to the Dye & Bleach House Gallery.

The students will submit 15 images of their process, ideas, and artwork to the College Board in May, where they will be analyzed by AP Readers. Their Sustained Investigations, technical scores, and written commentary can earn them college credit toward their college of choice, should they continue in higher education. The work on display will showcase several pieces from each student, giving you a glimpse into their world and ideas.

This show will be running at the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery from April 3rd-30th, with an artist's reception from 12-2pm on Saturday, April 24. The Gallery welcomes all to visit our facility, which is open under CDC and CT state guidelines on Saturdays from 10am to 2pm or by appointment. We request that all visitors wear a mask and stay 6ft. distant

while they visit and enjoy a variety of art, including digital paintings, mixed media, colored pencil, charcoal, and printmaking. We are located at 156 River Road in Willington, CT. Check out our website or social media for announcements and information regarding opening hours or closures: WWW.EC-CHAP.ORG.

The Dye and Bleach House Community Gallery encourages all local and regional artists alike to participate in our gallery shows! Whether you are a beginner or an experienced professional, we would love to show your work. Consider adding a gallery show to your resume! We love finding new and exciting art to fill our space, and our next feature could be yours. If you are interested in joining us in showing art, please contact us at CommunityGallery@ecchap.org.



Visual Arts



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President for Life

By Dan McGinley



It happened last night while you were all sleeping, a sweeping storm of super-secret voting that has now put me—“Danny Boy” McGinley—firmly in the driver’s seat and into the White House. I’m chilling in the Oval Office as we speak. Driver’s seat. White House. Since last night, I have been your true acting President of these United States.

I know, right? Amazing. You read it right here in a noble little newspaper catering to my ultra-conservative liberal friends, my constituents, my college-aged baristas and waitstaff, and my stumbling grassroots supporters teetering on the edge of society but immersed in the very heart of humanity. You voted for me while sleeping or God knows what, while a robocall accosted your phones and issued this simple declaration: An unanswered phone is a vote for Dan. Nearly one hundred million refused to answer the damn phone, which means I’m the new president.

What’s that? Your phone didn’t actually *ring*? Of course not! With a crack-erjack IT crew tweaking the smartness out of your flat little glow box, they all vibrated on command. And since I’m the commander in chief...ha! I commanded your phone to shimmy, and believe-me-you, Trump was a rank amateur when it came to questioning the legal voting process. Cellphones beat tweets any day of the week, and vibrating cell phones at 3:00 a.m.? They move my agenda.

First order of business...what border? There’s no border with Mexico anymore, so pass me those crispy tacos and don’t double-dip the chips, my dancing señoritas. You cannot cross what does not exist! People will be walking around in the desert asking, “Where is it, where the hell is that border?” while Mexico scrambles to fight and defend...what? We didn’t invade or commit military aggression; we just erased the damn border! You’re next, Guatemala, don’t even think we don’t see you.

Next order of business is the pandemic, which we haven’t really addressed at all outside of the vaccine. Not even close to my very high presidential standards, because Americans love to have things sugarcoated and spoon-fed slowly from an angel, and our money-based society needs to make...money! *Lots* of money! So down there in spring break Florida, are you ready to party hard like rock stars and go up in flames like Jim Morrison bathing in Paris? We need our freedoms and unlimited options to act like complete idiots, and I’m *perfect* for the job! Thanks for your vibrating votes, by the way. Have you seen my new Andre Carbouzian trim-tailored seersucker suit? Presidential!

Next order of business, cracker wrappers. Very important, and please stay focused. Whenever you buy certain boxes of Ritz crackers, the orange-dyed goods are stored in those long tubes of something similar to wax paper, and once you open those tubes, it’s very difficult to twist them shut again, especially if you only eat a few crackers. This will cause the others to spoil and force you to buy more crackers. Wars have been fought over smaller issues. And beer.

Moving along, there will no longer be any armed forces because there are no longer any borders to defend, so we can all just fight amongst ourselves and work it out. This solves the gun problem; disputes will be settled with arenas like Thunderdome or steel cage matches, with thumb wrestling on Sundays. Our planet will be changed from

“Earth” to “Planet Love” because...duh! Words like “gun” and “weapon” and “sharp steak knife” will be banned from Planet Love, because they suggest violence, and this will not be tolerated. Dancing ensues.

Just so you know, there are already crews painting the White House to resemble a giant rainbow, and an entire herd of those tiny little horses you see scattered about the Quiet Corner will be romping through the Rose Garden (all thorns now removed), sporting body paint to resemble My Little Ponies. Kids will love it, and when they come to visit and make important decisions concerning the economy, our roses will be thornless and safe. Genius, genius, I know.

God, I love being president of Planet Love—I really do—but there’s one little problem that won’t seem to go away, and it involves reality. Like where do you even *find* such a thing? Huh. I’m dedicated to locating it soon. My wife worries.

But wait! While I’m president of these here United States (possibly forever) there will be a planned proposal to edit weather conditions. Tornadoes ripping through the Midwest and snow pounding Colorado will cease, because I won’t tolerate any crap from that harlot known as Mother Nature, period. She will abide because I know too much. (It involves nepotism and a guy named Eddy.)

Ah, you say, what about the rising cost of gas? No borders, remember? We all share, so prices will plummet immediately, and car companies will respond by ramping up production of even *more* powerful vehicles! Trucks that can pull mountains, cars that have more horsepower than a souped-up rocket ship, going from 0 to 60 at the speed of sound, then light, then a sound and light show. We’re talking massive gains for people who want to be noticed, and a good day for people who make, say, racing tires and stripes and scoopy-swoopy additions to the exterior that make it look like you’re some kind of racer when you’re really just reaping the benefits of my great term in office (which lasts forever, BTW).

Oh yes, my friends, my enemies, my friends soon to be enemies, and so forth, these will be great days on Planet Love, barring some interference from alien invaders or perhaps common sense. Great days indeed. I’m getting fitted for another suit even as we speak—even though we aren’t speaking right now—and not just *any* suit, or even a suit at all. I’m talking about the \$100,000 chinchilla coat that heroin kingpin Frank Lucas wore to the Muhammad Ali fight at Madison Square Garden in 1970, when authorities looked across the ring and asked, who’s *that* guy? I spent a lot more, of course, because of historical value and those tiny crystalline packets still in a hidden pocket, but to mention such outrageous things would be so *gauche*, so...oops. Not cool. Unpresidential.

So here we are—me president and you not—making America into Planet Love, one borderless area at a time. Hearts and minds, people. Hearts and minds. Now I’m going to curl up in my soft chinchilla coat and read a good list of recipes from some chef with a reality show where he screams at everyone to make meals for snarky beautiful people. It’s the very last episode because there’s no angry screaming allowed on Planet Love, and no more beautiful people. Planet Love has embraced the Seattle grunge scene for now, because...ripped jeans! Duh.

Happy April Fool’s and safe travels as spring gets into full bloom!

Spring and Resurrection

By John Coffey

It’s hard not to get excited about spring! The other week I was out in the garage and heard, for the first time in months, birdsong. Immediately my heart lifted! I’ve never noticed it before, but for whatever reason, every time I hear birdsong I start singing with the bird in my heart. It’s something about this time of year, about spring, that just fills the heart and soul. It’s the birdsong, the daffodils growing, the lambs frolicking (if you’re lucky enough to see such a thing!). The world is coming back to life after a long winter!

Yesterday my wife and I took our daughter out in the yard just to soak up the sun. Our daughter is getting big enough to explore on her own, and even she seems excited about the warmth and sun of spring. Off she goes, down the hill to the raised beds, up the hill to the daffodil tufts, over to the brush, just here, there, and everywhere. Even at the church building—over to this bush, now to the sign, “What’s over here? Can I eat this? Can I touch that?” She’s just bursting with energy. All of creation is bursting with energy!

I can’t help but wonder if this is not a sign or a foretaste of resurrection and new creation. In much run of the mill, cultural Christianity, the hope is for some spiritual existence in heaven after death. This vision is rightly criticized for encouraging escapist beliefs and practices, where we ignore the current plight of people in favor of focusing on the saving of their souls, or we help them if they will let us evangelize to them. This Christianity is much closer to Gnosticism than I am comfortable with, and is increasingly recognized as unbiblical. It’s not completely untrue, just as Gnosticism isn’t completely untrue, but it’s missing the whole point of the Bible.

The Bible begins with creation, where earth is a sort of temple which God has created for himself and humans are the image of the deity in the sanctuary. The image is quickly marred, resulting in the earth becoming unfit as a temple. God chooses Abram as the one through whom he will set things to right, which involves the exodus—liberating the children of Abraham from slavery so that they might be the unique people of God. They will be responsible for keeping a new dwelling place on earth, a new temple. To do that, they must be holy and righteous.

But they aren’t very faithful at it. They’re constantly striving after other things, other gods, riches, power, status. They oppress one another and are oppressed themselves. Even so, they serve as a sign or a foretaste of the way things are meant to be. Imperfect as they are, they pass down and proclaim that the Creator desires to dwell in the midst of a peaceful creation, where creation flourishes and humans are able to live at peace with God, themselves, and nature.

It’s through this imperfect community that God reveals himself, first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. The revelation is strange—a human, just like every other human. He lives and breathes, eats and drinks, sleeps and walks, and does everything else that being human entails. But as he goes about being human, he testifies to and exemplifies a new way of being. It’s a way that points to God’s original intent for all of creation—flourishing by its union with God. Jesus testifies to and exemplifies the reconciliation of all things.

For this beautiful message, he is subjected to (and submits to) a gruesome death. The people striving after other things, other gods, riches, power, status—they put him to death. They use everything in their power to silence him, to get him to stop upsetting the status quo, to quit testifying and exemplifying this way that allows all people to flourish instead of merely a select few. Their trump card is execution. Death, after all, silences everyone.

But not this time. There’s a thread throughout the Old Testament that testifies to a time when God would act mightily to set all things to rights, when God would bring about this reconciliation of all things so that the wolf and the lamb would lie down together and the nations would be at peace with each other. This thread runs right to Jesus and the third day.

This Easter proclamation, that the One who was crucified is risen, is the proclamation that God has begun to set all things to rights. It’s the proclamation that the undoing of death and decay is begun, and their end is assured. It’s the proclamation that, when we submit ourselves to the waters of baptism, we too die and are buried and resurrected, that we may be new creation, reconciled to God and one another.

This proclamation, that though I was once dead, I am now alive, fills my soul with joy and excitement! It also fills my soul with confusion. If all things are set to rights, why is there still pain and suffering, evil and injustice? Here I see one of the pernicious problems with a Gnostic Gospel—it invites us to merely try to wait out injustice and evil.

Not so with the Bible. Since we are new creation already, we are entrusted with this grand ministry of reconciliation. What was begun in Christ, in his ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection, is continued in the church, the community of people who live in light of Jesus’ ascension and continued reign at the right hand of the Father. We do not merely go around preaching and teaching, but we go around doing the work Jesus did—helping the least of these, undoing the results of death and decay.

This vision is a bit like the renewal of creation each spring. We go outside and soak up the warmth. We wonder around, preparing the garden, trimming the hedges, starting new projects, cleaning out old spaces. It’s arduous, at times, but also joyful—spring is here at last! So, too, the Christian life. It’s arduous at times, but also joyful—new creation is here at last!

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

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Cringe Time in Autism Community

By Michelle M. Baughman



April is cringe time in the autism community. This is because a highly visible anti-autism organization masquerading as an autism charity rolls out its “Light It Up Blue” campaign and it’s patronizing jigsaw puzzle piece symbol and portrays autistic individuals as unfavorably as possible in order to garner sympathy from the general public, which translates into very generous donations to their organization. They raise millions of dollars, yet as can be seen from their tax exemption forms (which can be found online), less than 4% of its budget actually goes towards helping autistic people. A very large share of its budget goes towards eugenics research, intending to eliminate autistic human beings. (How can any organization whose goal is the eradication of an entire population of human beings be considered a charity that is a proponent of said population? Hence, my use of the term anti-autism organization in describing them).

Another sizeable percent of this organization’s budget is spent on prolific television advertisements, the propaganda vehicle that shaped the general public’s view of autism as tragedy and autistic people as sub-human. It is this propaganda that fuels the filicide (murder of children and autistic adults by parents or caregivers) that I wrote about last month. This propaganda also facilitates the ableism that results in courts of law, courts of public opinion, and the media excusing these murdering parents and/or giving them lighter sentencing by portraying these murders as “justifiable and inevitable” due to the “burden” of having a disabled person in the family. Please visit disability-memorial.org for an accounting of these murders and the media records surrounding these cases. Take particular note of the case of Conner Seth Snyder of Albany, Pennsylvania who’s mother murdered both Connor and his little (non-disabled) sister on September 26, 2019. His mother was charged with first- and third-degree murder. Both children were murdered in the same manner, suffering the same horrific fate, yet the courts saw fit to charge two different degrees of murder (which translates in to different severities of sentence), reflecting how the life of the child with a disability is considered less valued by society, thus the crime for his murder was deemed less heinous and there for a lighter charge and sentence for that death. This is ableism, plain and simple. And it is unacceptable. If this organization of which I speak were truly an autism organization they would be talking about this issue of filicide and bring awareness to stop it. Instead of portraying autistic individuals as pitiable and in need of fixing, they would be portraying us as fellow human beings, whose lives are equally valued due to the simple fact of our shared humanity. If this organization were truly an autism organization they would stop over-shadowing the United Nation’s World Autism Day, (which is intended to uphold autistics’ human rights, support efforts to eliminate stigma, and foster a better understanding) with their money-grubbing “Light It Up Blue” fundraising campaign which flies in the face of all the original aims of the UN. If this organization were truly an autism organization they would stop deliberately disseminating harmful misinformation, stereotypes, and rhetoric as a clever means of garnering generous donations from well intentioned, yet poorly informed public. If this organization were truly an autism organization they would stop using sensationalist scare tactics and dehumanizing language that portrays autism as a tragic epidemic that robs parents of their children and destroys marriages. If this organization were truly an autism organization they would stop their “war on autism,” hell-bent on finding a cure and eradicating autistic human beings from the face of the earth.

Understandably, the autism community is outraged by this organization and considers its blue puzzle piece an upsetting and offensive symbol, tantamount to the swastika. Witnessing our communities’ businesses, neighbors, and loved ones participate in “Light It Up Blue” campaigns every April is as unnerving and psychologically damaging as watching a Klu Klux Klan hate march because it represents to us the lawless murders of disabled people at the hands of the ones who they should have been able to trust the most. The annual reminder of how society reports on, discusses, justifies, excuses, and replicates these murders is very upsetting and intimidating. It is a violation of our human rights, and it needs to stop.

After years of outcry from the autistic community, this organization has made minor token changes (they have stopped televising their most offensive commercials), but the damage they’ve caused in shaping the general public’s misconceptions and prejudices had been done. And this

damage continues to wreak havoc in the lives of autistic people: Bias bars us from obtaining gainful employment, impedes access to appropriate medical care and inhibits people befriending us. They continue to ignore our voice. They make no efforts towards reparations for the damage they have facilitated. They don’t have the decency do away with the symbols that are so abhorrently offensive to us, and they position themselves as the authority on autism (when the true authority on autism are actually the autistic people themselves).

So this April, please show your support for the autism community by boycotting Autism Speaks, their blue puzzle pieces, their blue lights, and their insufficient “awareness.” By doing so you show that you are actually listening to us and respecting us as fellow human beings and making us feel more welcomed in the world. Autism is a natural part of the human experience. Autistic rights are human rights. There are all kinds of minds, and this world is big enough for all of us.

In the spirit of Autism Acceptance Month, which focuses on sharing positive, respectful, and accurate information about autism and autistic people, I would like to de-bunk some widely held misconceptions:

1. We do not lack empathy, in fact many of us are acutely sensitive. This is perhaps the most damaging misconception, because it justifies abuses and violence towards us.

My oil painting and artist’s statement “Kitten Empathy” is being featured in this month’s Autism/Asperger Network of New England’s newsletter:



“I think it is interesting how dog owners seem to think that cats are very aloof creatures not considered capable of showing empathy. But cat owners know that felines are indeed quite empathetic towards humans as well as towards other cats. It seems an interesting parallel to how neurotypical people unenlightened about autism seem to think that we autistics are aloof loners who lack empathy. Yet the truth of the matter is that we are actually very empathetic and sensitive...we just do not show it in the way that NTs expect to see it, so they are not capable of recognizing it. And when we are among our own autistic peeps with whom we feel safe and comfortable we can be quite gregarious, the antithesis of loners! Any time people of one “culture” judge another culture by their own standards there is bound to be misunderstandings. It is time we retire these old erroneous misconceptions about autism. To say that autistic people lack empathy is a distinct lack of empathy!”

All proceeds from the sales of Kitten Empathy merchandise this month will benefit a local autistic family: <https://www.redbubble.com/people/M-Baughman-Art/shop?asc=u>

2. Autism is not a mental illness, it is a developmental, neurological difference. It is present at birth. What makes a person autistic is that their brain developed differently. There is no cure that can change a person’s neurotype.

3. Attempts to make an autistic person appear more neurotypical (non-autistic), such as ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) are cruel and damaging. Many autistic adults who were forced to do ABA as children have been traumatized by the experience. (Google Amy Laurent Ted Talk for more information).

4. There may be just as many female autistics as male, but they are being missed in the diagnosis process because the criteria is biased toward the male presentation, and females are better at compensating for and hiding their idiosyncrasies. Because of this, many women do not receive diagnosis until later in life, when they are moms and grandmas. If you would like to learn more about this, read Spectrum Women: Walking To The Beat Of Autism

5. Many autistics have average to above average intelligence. We have asynchronous development, and we have an incredible capacity to learn. This means that although we may be behind age peers in some areas, we can be far ahead of age peers in other areas, and we can quickly catch up in the places we are behind, given the right learning environment. This is why holding an autistic child back a grade is a disservice to them: They will not need an entire school year to catch up, and they will be bored and disengaged.

6. Not all autistics are shy and introverted. Some of us are gregarious or extroverted. However, just like you, we can become withdrawn when we are ostracized and do not feel safe. Provide a safe place where we are respected, allowed to be ourselves, and are free to ask questions without ridicule, and watch us bloom!

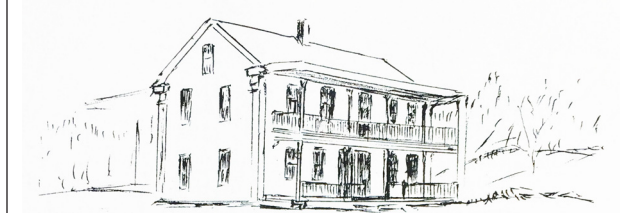
7. Only a very small percentage of autistic people are savants (like “The Good Doctor”), and we are not all computer-techie. We are as diverse in our aptitudes and talents as the non-autistic population. However, many of us have some unique talents that surpass yours: detail oriented, logical thinking, effective systemizes, talent for pattern recognition, precocious learners, ability to hyper-focus for long periods of time, out of the box thinkers, great long-term memory, acute hearing, sense of smell, and/or taste, creative, loyal, reliable, not duplicitous, non-judgmental, resistant to peer pressure.

8. People do not outgrow autism. We learn to adjust, cope and become better versions of ourselves, just like everyone else. But autism is still a part of us even if you can’t see it, and we are still challenged by our sensory sensitivities, emotional regulation, and managing our personal bioenergetics resources. So autistic adults still need and deserve support and reasonable accommodation.

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> <https://www.redbubble.com/people/M-Baughman-Art/shop?asc=u>

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Research

By Felix F. Giordano

When we compose a short story, novel, poem, or even a newspaper article, our professional intent must be to convince the reader that our story is believable. To do that we must have a viable comprehension of what we are writing about.

One easy way to do that is to write about what we know. We can write about things that we have experienced, like growing up, making friends, attending school, jobs we may have had, dealing with personal or career challenges, perhaps marriage and raising children, taking care of our loved ones, or just the simple fact of growing old.

But what if we want to write about something beyond our basic mundane human experiences? What if we wanted to write a novel that takes place in an exotic faraway land like *Tales of the South Pacific*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of short stories by James A. Michener. Or perhaps we want to write a series of hardboiled detective novels like the more than thirty by Frederic Dan- nay and Manfred Bennington Lee that describe a fictional mystery writer named Ellery Queen who assists his police inspector father solve New York City murders. Or maybe we want to become the next famous science fiction writer like H.G. Wells who penned these famous novels: *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*. How can we convince our readers that we are knowledgeable of the South Pacific, an expert in criminology, or a visionary in futuristic time, in- ventions, and space travel if we've never been there, done that?

The way to satisfy that requirement is to convince our readers that we ARE an expert in the subject matter by writing in a comfortable and self-confident manner. We do that by completing research on the topics we write about.

Back in the day, one way that writers would accomplish that was by packing up a loose-leaf notebook, a handful of pens, maybe an eraser, and travel to a local library and spend hours upon hours going through the li- brary card catalog cabinet. Writers would go to a section in the catalog cabinet pertaining to the information that they were searching for, jot down book titles, author names, or subjects the books were about. Once they had the reference number for the book, then they would walk up and down the library book aisles searching for those books and then sit at a table to gather the information they needed. That could take hours, days, or even weeks. That is, if the books they were looking for were still in the library's active col- lection and not currently being browsed by other patrons.

The other way that some writers would complete research, and many still do, would be to visit locales they are writing about, interview people who are experts on the subject matter, or actually spend time training or working in the field.

Today, the best way to perform research on what we are writing about is to do it right from our own com- puter screens. The Internet offers the best solutions for obtaining research. With the click of our mouse or with the swipe of a finger on our tablets we can gather information about nearly anything we need to make our characters come alive, our plots compelling, and our stories seem real. We can use Internet searches to determine weather and climate, topography, travel distances, language and dialect, people's physical description and characteristics, culture, cars, trains, planes, and even more. No piece of informa- tion that is relevant to our stories is beyond our ability to search, capture, categorize, and utilize it.

The important thing to remember is that anything that you wish to include in your story is worthy of an Internet search. When everything is subject to a possible research effort, the reader begins to believe that the author has firsthand experience in what they are writing and as a writer you do become that expert.

Referring to the authors I previously mentioned, if you want to write about the South Pacific, then Google it. Pinpoint the islands, the landmarks, the weather, the local government, its people, and much more. If you want to write about a detective who solves murders, Google police departments, notorious crimes, the FBI, weapons, even books and newspaper articles that have been written about past crimes. If you are a science fiction writer then Google

a multitude of topics like space travel, propulsion systems, astronomy, parallel universes, legends, and various super- natural categories. There is a wealth of information at our fingertips waiting to be gathered.

In my most recent novel, *Miracle of the Talking Stick*, I needed to find a way for a murderer to flee the scene of a crime after he spots a police car in the neigh- borhood. How could I effectively do that so the murderer gets away from the police without being followed? I considered how police stop a fleeing car and stop sticks came to mind. I Googled stop sticks and then researched how homemade stop sticks are constructed. Wood was not an option because they would be difficult to deploy on the spot. I decided on metal stop sticks. Then I searched for the material used for stop stick spikes and settled on titanium. Then I needed a way for my antagonist to deploy them so I searched how to deploy stop sticks.

This is what I arrived at based upon my research:

The man ran to the back of the van. He swung open a folded, heavy metal bar and unhitched it from under the van's bumper. He let its full twelve foot length drop across the road with a clank. He then climbed inside the van, revved the engine and peeled away at a high rate of speed.

He looked in his side mirror and saw the police car's flashing lights and heard the blaring siren.

When the police car ran over the homemade stop stick, the angled, grade 5 titanium spikes penetrated all four tires and ripped them to shreds. The car skidded to a stop off the side of the road and crashed into a ditch.

The clank from the deployed stop stick alluded to its heavy weight thereby guaranteeing that it wouldn't slide or topple when the police car drove over it. There was also no question that the titanium spikes would do their job. In the end the antagonist got away, the police car was dis- abled, and the plot thickened.

In another part of my novel I needed an injured eagle to be rescued and securely placed in a vehicle for transportation to rehabilitation. Instead of simply saying that without any detail, the following descriptive passage shows the reader that research went into the scene:

Arnie pulled on a pair of heavy-duty utility gloves and safety goggles from his truck's glovebox and snatched a blanket off the passenger seat. He instructed Jim to grab the plastic dog carrier from his truck bed. Then the two men approached the fallen raptor with caution.

Arnie warned, "Watch out for the beak and talons."

Arnie first covered the raptor from behind with the blanket to reduce its visual stimulation. Then he gently placed his gloved hands on the blanket and folded the bird's wings onto its body. Finally, he lifted the eagle into the carrier which was slightly larger than the bird. During the entire procedure the raptor was relatively calm except for a bit of jostling when Arnie expertly removed and then maneu- vered the blanket onto the carrier thus again restricting the bird's visual field. When the eagle was secured, he brought the carrier to the back of the pickup truck and latched it onto the truck bed.

These are just two examples of how Internet research can make a scene evolve into something that is both unique and believable in the eyes of the reader. It adds depth to the scene, makes the reader visualize what is hap- pening, and shows that the writer knows what he is talking about.

We defined "Research" 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 sub- scribers. His website is jbnovels.com.

Next Month's Topic: Protagonist & Antagonist

Drums

By Judy Davis

The heartbeat of the old ones
echo in my hearts core.
My Great-Grandmother once
gathered herbs in her
sacred hands,
and her good medicine heals me
on this day.
The drums from the Spirit World
have urged me to breathe.
Native women create
a powerful force,
which flows forth from all
who preceded me.
Grandmother, speak, so I may
share your stories.
Cry, so I may taste your tears,
and may be made strong.
Then, may I celebrate in
your footsteps; and I will
know who I am –
because of you.

Where They Stood

Submitted by Bev York

The Mill Museum is presenting a new series of Saturday field trip tours: "Where they Stood" American Revolution: History 101. Over the next three months the Museum will present the American Revolution (April 24), the Industrial Revolution (May) and the Race Revolution (June) by visiting heritage-rich local sites. Participants will preregister on the museum website. They will be emailed the itinerary for the day.

"Where They Stood:" The American Revolution. The first month the group will visit 18th century sites. The American Revolution will take the tour from Samuel Hun- tington's Home to Windham Green and Lebanon Green. The Declaration of Independence, the planning for the war, recruiting soldiers, provisioning the army, Rochambeau's trail, supplying the French troops and more will be dis- cussed. Each trip will touch upon the political, social, and economic aspects of American life.

"Where They Stood:" The Industrial Revolu- tion: The second month the tour will visit a mill site, the Willimantic cotton factory and industrial village, and the CERR rail road museum. Topics include immigration; rise of industry; labor and working conditions, corporations and robber barons; development of unions; and classism of the 'gilded age' Victorian life.

"Where They Stood:" The Race Revolution: The final trip will visit sites on the Norwich Freedom Trail: grave of enslaved persons, Jail Hill district, the Under- ground Railroad, stories of freed blacks in the 19th c., Civil War connections and more.

The tour is an easy slow paced walk that will last about three hours. Visitors need to caravan or carpool, bring water, snack, and masks. The tours are planned to be out of doors and will distance and mask when necessary. Each tour is \$15.00 prepaid. The prepaid series is \$40. Register at millmuseum.org. There are a limited amount of spaces. The tour is planned for ages 12 and up.

The Museum has a long history of local field trips. They have had a Mill of the Month program, (complete with passports for stamping) for years. "Where They Stood" is a series of minute videos on youtube of places people visited in Windham created in 2020 for virtual pro- gramming and funded in part by The Last Green Valley.

The tours will be led by museum education consultant, Bev York. York maintains that the finest way to absorb history is to visit the very place where something happened. It is a magical moment to be "Where they stood" literally and understand where they stood politically and socially. All these stories and events led up to who we are today as a country. York said "There is a keen awareness of how people need to revisit history, geography, science, and civics. And as much as things change, they stay the same. It was about equality, rights and rights in the 1700s and it's about equality, rights and voting today!"

For more information contact the museum themi- llmuseum@gmail.com or 860-456-2178.

Silhouettes from Our Past

Article and photos
By Bill Powers

Since 1783 the Windham Inn has overlooked the Windham Green at the heart of Windham Center. In the past, the Green has been a place for community gatherings and celebrations. The Windham Bicentennial celebration was held there in 1892. The Green has since welcomed special events including concerts on a regular basis.

The Windham Inn is a historic landmark that has recently been acquired by Windham Preservation Inc., a non-profit organization that is focused on preserving elements of historical significance. Not long ago, while passing by, I was pleasantly surprised to see a new and creative artistic addition to the front of the Old Windham Inn. The beautiful artistic displays were done by Windham Center artist Annie Wandell.

When the idea of painting life size silhouettes for the front windows of the Inn was conceived, Annie Wandell, a Windham Center neighbor, whose studio is just a stone's throw away from the Inn, became involved in the project. She skillfully painted the five silhouettes on canvas for the windows facing the street. The images bring new life to the structure by portraying the following exhibits: 1) a young woman reading a book; 2) a young girl serving a cup of tea; 3) a vase with flowers; 4) a gentleman tipping his stylish stove pipe hat; and 5) a cat in the window. When I asked Annie Wandell why she chose the five figures, she replied: "I was trying to provide an authentic representation of the Inn in historical times. The young woman reading the book and the gentleman represented guests at the Inn. The young girl who was serving tea to a guest might be the daughter of the proprietor. The flowers



were facing a southern exposure for the sunlight and cats were common pets in homes and inns at the time."

In the past, the famous American Impressionist artist J. Alden Weir painted many of his most important works while living in Windham Center at the Baker-Weir home, which is just down the street from the Green. The view from the Inn at that time included tennis matches taking place on the Green that at times involved the inhabitants and guests from the Weir residence.

Just as J. Alden Weir's paintings of Windham and Willimantic preserve the scenes from our past for posterity, so too will the preservation of the Windham Inn with these pictures which represent life in the past. These very significant dynamic elements on display preserve the important sense of who we are.

Annie Wandell has an extensive resume of creations including over forty miniature replicas of homes and other buildings in Windham Center.

Bill Powers is a retired teacher and he volunteers at the Windham Textile & History Museum.

Random Thoughts of an Aging Curmudgeon

By Alan Smithee

- We've been dealing with Covid for over a year. That's plenty of time to learn how to properly wear a mask. If you still wear it beneath your nose, you need adult supervision.
- I'll bet the same losers who murdered a Capitol Police officer had previously insisted that "Blues Lives Matter."
- If I have to get stoned to appreciate your music, your music is crap.
- The South lost the Civil War, and it did so 156 years ago. Also, the war was about slavery, not states' rights. This is documented history. If you can't deal with it, seek professional help.
- If you pose in front of a "No Smoking" sign with a cigarette, you're not being clever and funny, and you're not rebelling. You're being childish and idiotic.
- I've yet to meet a Hispanic who says "Latinx," but I've met several who won't say it because they think it's condescending.
- If the waistline of your pants is below your genitals, you're doing it wrong.
- Research suggests that marijuana might slow the growth of certain cancer cells in laboratory animals. But that's a long way from "Pot cures cancer," so stop claiming that it does.
- If you're thinking of starting a podcast, don't. There are too many now and most are, at best, mediocre.
- Don't call me an associate; I'm an employee. And don't call me a consumer; I'm a citizen.
- Today's rap-haters are the ideological heirs of the rock 'n' roll-haters of the 1950s. Their arguments are even the same: "It's not music," "It corrupts our youth," etc. It was ignorant then and it's ignorant now.
- If the transgendered want us to adopt their lingo, they need to come up with words we can actually pronounce. "Tse?" "Xer?" "Womxn?" Come on already! It's like you *want* to be marginalized.
- Before the pandemic, I caught cold every few months. But now that people wear masks and practice social distancing, I haven't been sick in over a year. It turns out, we introverts had it right the whole time!

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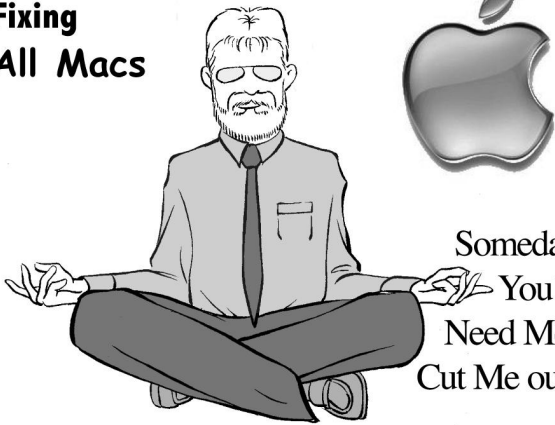
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Kate Pitts Joins Weiss, Hale & Zahansky

Submitted by Laura Dunn

POMFRET CENTER, CT (March 31, 2021) — Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors (WHZ) has welcomed Kate Pitts to the team as director of client experience and relationships.

Pitts, who holds a BS in Marketing from Quinnipiac University School of Business, brings over a decade of experience in the financial industry to WHZ, having spent the last ten years in various roles at State Street Global Advisors in Boston. She has served as an Investment Strategist and most recently as Vice President, Head of Participant Engagement in their Retirement business.

In her new role at WHZ, Pitts will oversee fulfillment of the firm's mission to deliver the best wealth management experience for every client, every

time. This will include management of WHZ's client experience standards, as well as existing client relationships and onboarding of new clients. She will also oversee production of virtual and live financial education and other events, and serve as the firm's point of contact for community engagement.

"We're thrilled to have Kate as part of our team. She grew up in north-east Connecticut and will be moving back here to help ensure that we deliver an exceptional experience for our clients and build meaningful relationships in the broader community," said Managing Partner James Zahansky, AWMA®.

"Our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™ strategic process is built on our underlying mission to help people and businesses realize their goals and dreams through thoughtful, educated and strategic investments. Fulfilling

that promise requires strong personal relationships and meaningful, ongoing communication with our clients. Kate's expertise as well as her personable nature make her a perfect fit to help us carry out that mission," Zahansky said.

"It's exciting to be part of a team that helps people achieve their financial goals through thoughtful planning and investing. I'm intrinsically motivated by helping people with their financial lives and I'm looking forward to being a part of that journey at WHZ," Pitts shared.

For more information about Kate Pitts or Weiss, Hale and Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors, visit www.whzwealth.com.



Kate Pitts

Contributed photo.

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