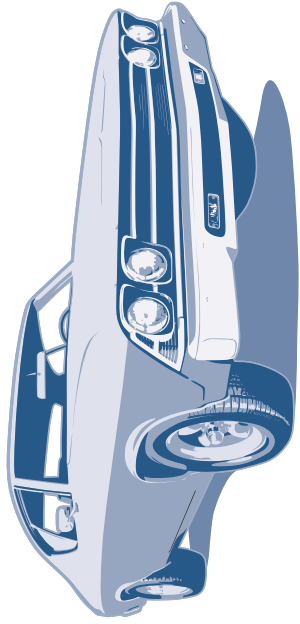


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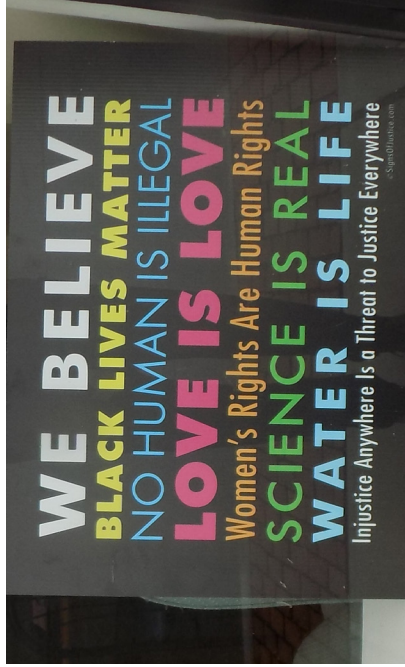
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May 2021

A little paper big on community

FREE

Neighbors



Background Noise and the Simple, Ordinary Moment

We inherited an enormous forsythia when we moved here to Clark's Corner in Hampton. It was 1975 and neither our new home, an aging, nineteenth-century, chestnut-boned but sadly neglected antique in need of serious help, nor the wildly overgrown and sparsely flowering yellow shrub that had become something of a plant ghetto and was staking its claim to pretty much the entire front yard after a few decades of uncultured freedom: neither of these obstacles seemed too great for our youthful energy. As the years of our stewardship—I use that term loosely—rolled by, we worked to bring this shrub-creature under control and would cut it back aggressively every year. Each spring my wife would cut forsythia branches to bring inside and force into bloom and, after they had faded, she would take the wilted flower-sticks and return them to nature by pushing them into the chill, usually damp, early April soil... dozens and dozens of them. They rooted!

The original plant is long since gone. We finally wearied of its enormous invasive presence in the middle of everything and dug up its huge root ball. Despite not being an especially big fan of forsythia, I must admit that, due to my wife's efforts, the mother-plant's offspring now brighten most nooks and crannies around the yard, as well as a section along a brook, bits of the property border, most of the chicken pen and some "bar-ways." There is a charming, almost spirit-lifting glow that seems to radiate from these rather blue-collar members of the olive family, especially on gray, misty days when the doldrums can lurk around every bend, and we all appreciate any spark of liveliness. Let the Sun shine brightly on them and they are brilliant indeed.

There are times when the background noise of our lives places so much emphasis on the extraordinary, the once-in-a-lifetime, sort of the “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” moment that it is easy to forget that most of the moments of our lives are rather common and ordinary—clothes hanging on a line, children playing in a field, a couple holding hands, a distant roll of thunder, a bee landing on a dandelion—and each of us could go on to fill journals full of special and very ordinary things that are the very foundation of the structure of our lives. When I look up into the early morning sky and see our planet’s heating and lighting system rising, and I know it’s 93 million miles to the utility room, or at dusk as the stars twinkle into view and it occurs to me that the unbroken stream of light I am seeing has traveled trillions of miles over countless centuries, and the Moon rises like a good shepherd gently herding the ocean tides and ever so subtly massaging the tides of our human moods, I am filled with a sense of the magic that is all around us in the moments and (see)scapes of our lives. If only we look.

May is a month when you pretty much just want to tip your face to the Sun—eyes closed, of course—and soak up the pleasures of spring in

New England, but as the warmth we've all been waiting for finally returns to the evenings as well, there is the added bonus that you don't have to close your eyes to look up.

Venus is bright and beautiful in the western sky all month, and by mid-month she's dancing with a razor-thin Moon and inviting us to catch a glimpse of her elusive messenger Mercury. Betelgeuse, the recently temperamental star of Orion, and Aldebaran in Taurus are part of the crowd of notables in this month's busy after-sunset sky. Bring binoculars and the crispy crescent Moon looks 3-D, and Mercury looks, well, visible at least.

TAURUS

Moon May 13

Mercury

Venus

Moon May 12

debaran

g West

This month's Full Flower Moon on the 26th will be near its closest approach to the Earth (its perigee) and no doubt someone, somewhere, will label it a Super Moon. Ho-hum! A Full Moon...rising, setting, peak of the night...they all feel rather special, and to simply flop down and Moon-stare or night-dream or drift through thoughts of the day or memories of earlier nights seems like a rather Super way to spend a bit of your life. Hope you are all staying well, discovering and enjoying some pleasant moments in the Cosmic neighborhood and working in some way to improve the neighborhood, someone else's journey and, of course, your own.



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On our cover: Photos from Cambera Farms Bakery in Willimantic. Top photo of owners Cori (l) and Kiera Antignani by Barry Watrous. Bottom photos by Calen Nakash. Read Calen's article and see other photos on page 13.

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

Neighbors
P.O. Box 430
Ashford, CT 06278
phone: 860-933-3376
email: neighborspaper@yahoo.com
website: neighborspaper.com

Tom King, Editor & Publisher
Dagmar Noll, Calendar Editor
Steve Woron, Mac Guru
Marisa Calvo, Graphic Design
Gary Kass, Copy Editor

Writers: Delia Berlin, David Corsini, Phoebe Godfrey,
Bob Grindle, John Murphy, Dagmar Noll, Dennis Pierce,
Mark Svetz, Steve Woron, Tom Woron, Loretta Wrobel

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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Injustice: True History of America

By Loretta Wrobel

I was one of many who felt relief at the guilty verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial for the murder of George Floyd. This was a case of the event videoed and witnessed again and again by most Americans. Listening to the verdict, I was intrigued when one of George Floyd’s relatives compared this case to Emmett Till’s, saying Emmitt Till was the first George Floyd.

A few days later when the opportunity appeared to watch a documentary called *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till*, followed by a discussion with the director, Keith Beauchamp, and others, I was on board. I had heard of this young man and never fully comprehended the extent of the violence and mutilation that was done to him. He was a fourteen-year-old teen who was visiting relatives in Mississippi when he was caught in a wave of racist cruelty and brutality. The terrifying reality of how entrenched racism was in our country in 1955 is painful. Even more chilling is how small the progress towards justice has been for the last sixty-five plus years in America.

The movie riveted me to the unjust and barbaric manner that exemplified the story of Emmett Till. I was shocked by the reaction of the community to the death of a Black teen and the severity of the cruelty inflicted on him. The fact that the murderers were not held accountable, and in fact were praised for their efforts, is extremely gut-wrenching and distressing. How embedded the white supremacy and depth of racism was/is in our culture that a Black teen whistling at a white woman warranted a response of unimaginable torturous death is difficult to digest.

After viewing this documentary, I was/am unsettled by the blasé reaction from the community to the mutilation of Emmett Till, the carnival attitude during the trial of the two white men accused of the crime, and the treatment received by Mamie Till-Mobley, mother of Emmett. The cruelty dished out to this distraught mother was unconscionable. As she walked into the courtroom, there were men and their sons sitting in the courtroom windows and the sons had cap guns aimed at her yelling, “bang bang.”

Mamie Till-Mobley was a young mother who confronted the horrid trauma of her son’s unexpected and brutal death with a warrior resolve. Faced with a locked coffin, she demanded the box be opened so she could view her son’s body. The authorities had not wanted the body to be seen. In the documentary she describes what she saw. Her careful explanation of her son’s disfigured face and head, including his tongue, ears, and other chilling descriptions, is beyond overwhelming. Not only did she witness these horrors, she then made a decision to keep the coffin open so the world could see what was done to her beloved son. As a result, many individuals witnessed with their own eyes the cruelty done to Emmett Till.



As I watched this film, I saw the courage and bravery of Mamie Till-Mobley who stood up to the oppressive system and vowed to show the world the atrocities her son experienced. She wanted him to not have died in vain. Mamie was a heroine of the highest caliber, who stood strong and fierce at a time of grief, loss, and shock. Because of her, we know the truth of what happened in Mississippi to Emmett Till in 1955.

Keith Beauchamp, the director of this intense and revealing film, has worked for over twenty years on the Emmett Till case. In the process he became close to Mamie Till-Mobley and interviewed many Till relatives. Due to the information presented in the documentary, the Till case was reopened in 2004 by the Justice Department. Sadly,

the case was closed three years later. Both of the men who were tried for the murder, after their acquittal, confessed that they had committed the crime.

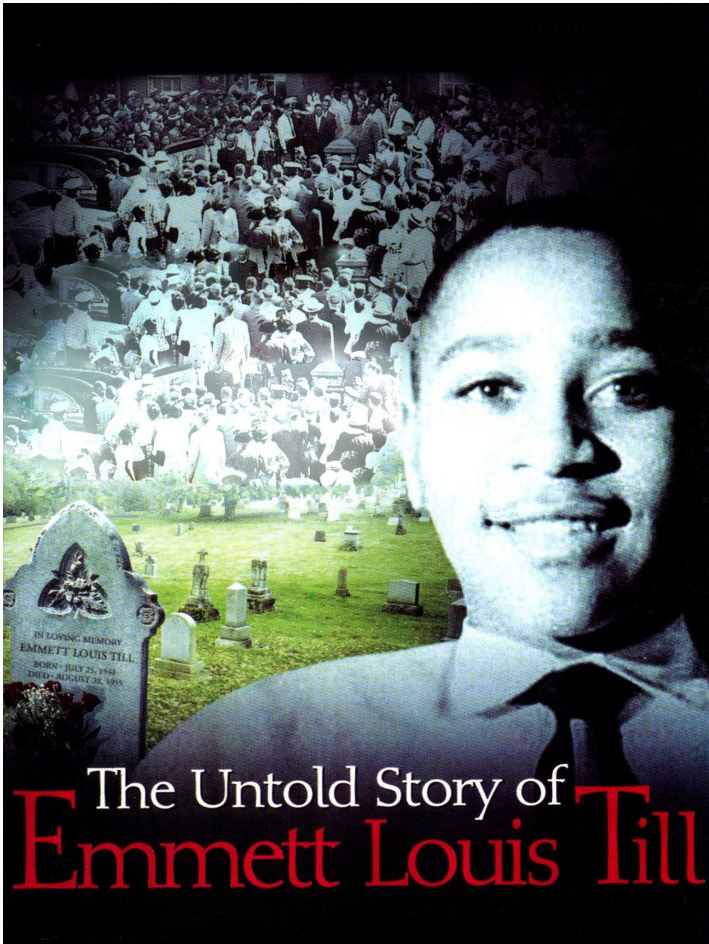
Mamie Till-Mobley knew this experience showed the world that racism not only resulted in the death of Black males but also Black children. It is easily understandable why this case is important, after seeing the circumstances of the attack, kidnapping, beating, and ultimate murder of Emmett Till, and the subsequent circus trial of Roy Bryant and J. W. Milam. Since the two men confessed, we have to accept the blatantly unjust and unfair justice system in America. Just another instance of white men getting away with murder.

Here we are in 2021, more than 60 years after Emmett Till’s lynching, and we are still looking squarely at systemic inequalities. Hopefully, with the recent verdict in the George Floyd murder, we can see a glimmer of possibility. Can we begin to unravel centuries of brutality, unfairness, and oppression? We can and must press onward in continuing to seek out justice and equal treatment for all Americans.

I am reminded that in the Till case, the jury was all male and all white. Are we starting to learn how to be more inclusive in our jury selection process? Are we able to comprehend that people of all colors need to be part of the justice system in order to enact justice?

I am so grateful to Keith Beauchamp for his persistence, and his investigative skills, which brought Emmett Till back into our consciousness. We need to be vigilant in order to ensure that we never repeat such a miscarriage of justice. I have a new heroine in Mamie Till-Mobley who never gave up, and made sure that we are forced to pay attention to racism and cruelty. She stepped into the role as a truth teller, even though she was shattered by the untimely death of her young son. Every Black woman’s nightmare became her reality. She did not succumb, but strode onward. Her son’s death inspired the Civil Rights Movement and brought racism to the forefront. Until her death in 2003, she continued working with the director in exploring options.

I especially implore all white readers to watch this documentary. Search Facebook or YouTube for *The Untold Story of Emmett Till*. This stellar documentary, plus the discussion with the director after the film, is sponsored by the Autorino Center for Arts and Humanities. After you view it, take some time to ponder what you saw, and then... Watch it again.



The Neighbors paper
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The Neighbors paper
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Building Immunity

By Delia Berlin

Something I remember from my first basic psychology course is that cities with the most churches have the most murders. This immediately caught my attention because it seems so unexpected. But upon careful consideration, it is not. The statement does not imply that churches cause murders. It simply points to a correlation. Cities with more people tend to have more churches, so one can logically infer that they will also have more murders. That’s related to the abundance of people, not to the number of churches.

One of the points illustrated by this example is the need to be careful when drawing conclusions from correlations. Imagine, for instance, that 1.7 million people receive a vaccine and that, soon afterward, 35 of them develop blood clots. Suppose that public health officials, claiming “an abundance of caution,” respond by suspending the rollout of that vaccine. That is exactly what happened recently with the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, widely used in Europe. But it turns out that in a similar span of time, any set of 1.7 million people will have approximately 35 cases of blood clots. When you have that many people, all sorts of things happen. In this case, the abundance of caution ended up being reckless.

We tend to equate doing nothing with playing it safe. First, do no harm, we say. But appearances can be deceiving. In the case of vaccinations, each day of delay means additional deaths. Delaying the rollout of this vaccine in several countries unfortunately may have caused more deaths than those caused by blood clots, even if they had been linked directly to the vaccine. They were not.

We must remember that doing nothing is not always the safest path forward. Fearing vaccines, those who delay them may feel safer, but they risk getting Covid-19 and suffering life-changing health problems or even death. They also risk spreading the infection to others, even if they themselves avoid illness. They are also contributing to the emergence of more contagious variants. As more people are immunized and fewer people are susceptible to the virus, evolution favors the transmission of the most infective strains. As long as the virus continues to reproduce, it’s only a matter of time until new variants overcome the protection of existing vaccines.

It’s nothing short of a miracle that just a year after the emergence of the novel coronavirus, the global scientific community delivered not one, but several safe and effective vaccines. We owe much gratitude to each and every one of the scientists involved in research and discovery, and also to the thousands of volunteers who participated in the trials. These volunteers served us all without assurance that they would suffer no harm. Further, they didn’t even know if they would receive a placebo instead of an experimental vaccine, reducing their chances of gaining protection in the process. The end of this pandemic depends on this type of altruistic cooperation, but ignorance and misinformation may stand in the way of achieving that goal.

We need to have at least 80% of the population immunized in order to end the pandemic. But, as the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink. After many months of learning how to make appointments for vaccines and waiting in long lines to get them, we have arrived at the point where supply outpaces demand. Vaccine skepticism and hesitancy, as well as fear of needles or side effects, are starting to get in the way of



reaching the collective immunity threshold we need to put this pandemic to rest.

There are many reasons skeptics give to reject vaccines. Fortunately, we don’t need 100% of people immunized to stop the virus. With only 20% of the population left vulnerable to infection, the virus would likely wane. But if a more significant percentage remains susceptible, the virus will continue to propagate, reproduce, and mutate. This will place all of us at risk, by diluting the potency of the tools that we have painstakingly acquired to fight the virus.

Vaccine skeptics fall into several categories. Some have fallen for the myths spreading on social media—for example, that vaccines can infect people with Covid-19, that they cause infertility, and that they are used to implant a microchip to control our minds and track our every move. Those who believe in these conspiracy theories are probably unconvincible. It may be best to resign ourselves to considering them part of a percentage that may never get vaccinated. There are also those who don’t want the vaccine because they don’t trust that it’s safe, and even those who are simply afraid of needles. These last two groups are convincible.

Perhaps the easiest intervention I can imagine is putting an abrupt end to the constant barrage of videos of needles going into arms. I suppose one can make a case for desensitization through overexposure, but I don’t subscribe to that theory. Personally, I consider myself quite stoic when it comes to needles and never considered a shot to be a deterrent to immunization. I have been getting annual flu shots for decades and keep all my recommended immunizations up to date. But even I am starting to get a bit queasy from seeing so much punctured flesh and so many needles magnified to the size of nails. Is this really necessary? For those with a needle phobia (and I know they do exist), it must be torture watching the news these days. These images are not helpful or even accurate. The needles used for Covid vaccines are tiny and their brief pinprick is hardly felt.

Those who don’t trust the safety of the vaccines can now use their own observations as additional data in support of the vaccines. By now, millions of us have received them. Not only are we doing well, but we are not getting Covid-19. Deaths, hospitalizations, and cases have plummeted in the cohorts targeted for immunization. New surges affect almost exclusively the age groups and populations that haven’t yet accessed the vaccines. But while these facts may be obvious to some of us, there are disinformation campaigns spreading “alternative facts” that are simply false. There are also common natural tendencies that get in the way of making rational decisions.

The facts continue to support the safety and effectiveness of all the available vaccines. Community studies now show that serious side effects are rare and that the most widely used vaccines are 90% effective in preventing infection. Those choosing to avoid vaccination may think that if everyone around them is vaccinated, they are putting only themselves at risk. That is not true. It needs to be understood that 90% protection is different from 100% protection. An unvaccinated person who catches the virus can incubate a variant form that evades vaccine protection, and transmit it to a vaccinated person.

Humans seem to be particularly challenged when it comes to understanding odds and have a tendency to overestimate their luck. A 90% chance of success is often seen as full assurance. On the other hand, a 10% chance of winning the lottery is also seen as a good shot. In fact, if a 90% chance of success is seen as a sure bet, a 10% chance

of winning should be seen as sure failure. But people still buy lottery tickets, in spite of even much smaller odds.

Convincing people to get the vaccine by providing facts can be difficult, not because the facts don’t make a strong case, but because decisions may be based on emotions rather than facts. Disinformation campaigns are successful because they appeal to emotions, but the facts about vaccines are clear. None of the vaccines can cause Covid-19 because they don’t contain the virus in any form. Nobody has died from receiving a vaccine, while almost 550,000 Americans have already died of Covid-19. And fully immunized people are now avoiding serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

Building immunity to a virus is one thing, but building immunity to falsehoods is another. For the latter, there may not be a miraculous vaccine. Gaining that type of protection may require a lifetime of learning information literacy skills, and these have been increasingly neglected by our education system. The ability to think critically and to use good judgment to evaluate information may be the most important and elusive skill we can pass down to our youth. Of course, we can only pass down what we ourselves have, and for humanity’s sake, I hope we don’t find ourselves lacking.

And now...BREAKING NEWS!

I finished writing this piece for *Neighbors* in early April. By mid-April, “out of an abundance of caution,” distribution of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was “paused,” for similar reasons as the AstraZeneca vaccine. In the case of J&J, six blood clots in almost seven million vaccine recipients have halted distribution. One blood clot per million is described as “below background incidence,” or lower than the number that would normally occur in that many people. But nevertheless, the timing of the clots, occurring close to vaccination, has caused concern.

To provide some perspective, taking a long-distance flight carries a 1 in 6,000 chance of developing a blood clot, and using oral contraceptives carries a 1 in 10,000 chance (described in the medical literature as “extremely rare”). In addition, flying or using contraceptives affects only the consumer, while forgoing a vaccine creates a risk for the individual and all related contacts, through potential contagion. Furthermore, according to the Centers for Disease Control, those who contract Covid have a 16% chance (that’s 16 out of 100!) of developing blood clots, and just since I finished writing the above piece, approximately 20,000 additional Americans have died of Covid. Please help me figure out the authorities’ decision-making process and wake me up when “out of an abundance of caution” they ban automatic weapons or require universal background checks.

Decisions based on cost-benefit analysis are difficult and complex. These vaccine distribution choices are being played out amid controversy. While many epidemiologists and public health experts have called for the pauses, some others, in addition to statisticians and public opinion analysts, are against them. They are gravely concerned about the immediate consequences, as well as potentially permanent changes in public attitudes about the vaccines. Transparency is important and all side effects should be disclosed, but communicating a minuscule risk (below one in a million for the J&J vaccine) and putting it in proper perspective is challenging. People endowed with strong critical skills are capable of complex risk calculations and make rational decisions. But those unable to grasp essential concepts can only follow their emotions in choosing a path. We can only hope they choose well.

‘Empty Bowls’ Benefits Covenant Soup Kitchen

Submitted by Shauna Shane

Empty Bowls, is a well-known fundraiser comprised of local potters producing bowls that are given for donations to deserving causes. This year Emine Chichowski initiated Empty Bowls for a 100% contribution to Covenant Food Kitchen in Willimantic. With several other potters

joining the cause, there will be a large display of beautiful bowls located at Fenton River Studio, at 287 Gurleyville Road,



Storrs. Bowls will be on display from now through June. Donations may be made at Fenton River Studio in a collection box or through the donation button on Covenant Soup Kitchen’s Facebook page. Call 860-429-3646 for more information.

Hampton Hometown Market

Submitted by Janice Trecker

Saturday, May 8, Fletcher Memorial Library sponsors a market, a book & bake sale, and a music event from 10 a.m.-1p.m. outdoors on the library grounds at 257 Main St., Hampton.

“Homegrown: A Celebration of Local Food Producers” is a one time farmers market that features area vendors selling a variety of local products: produce, including fresh greens, herbs, and asparagus; a variety of maple syrup products; eggs, honey, homemade bread, jams and jellies and Pebble Brook Farm’s maple cotton candy.

Fletcher Memorial Library will be holding a book sale on the same day and

the library’s well known bakers will have baked treats for sale. There will also be gift baskets available just in time for Mothers Day. Throughout the sale, live music will be provided by The Green Valley Pickers, featuring folk musicians Jamie Boss and Sue Way.

“This is an opportunity to celebrate spring and showcase our local farms, food and crafts, listen to some great music and take home a book or two. Come support your library and take home some wonderful goodies.” says Anne Christie, event organizer.

For more information, or to participate as a vendor, contact Anne at annes-garden@aol.com or 860 455-1086.

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).



A battle to get more clean energy into New England’s electric grid is underway. Here’s what you need to know.
CT Mirror. “ ‘Because of the lack of leadership on carbon at the ISO-New England, we are at the mercy of a regional capacity market that’s driving investment in more natural gas and fossil fuel power plants that we don’t want and that we don’t need,’ she said. ‘This is forcing us to take a serious look at the costs and benefits of participating in the ISO-New England markets’ ...Dykes has commandeered the other five New England states, the ISO, system stakeholders and more than a little national interest into a bona fide effort to figure out how to increase renewable power, decrease the use of fossil fuels and lower costs — or at least not let them go through the roof — and keep everyone on civil terms with each other.”

Opposed by GOP, Lamont campaigns for climate initiative
CT Mirror. “[The Transportation Climate Initiative] is a pretty simple idea,” Haskell said. “It says that if you are going to pump pollutants into the air, then you also have to pay for the asthma that those pollutants create. It says that if you’re going to pump pollutants into the air, then you also have to pay to pave the way for green infrastructure. You’ve got to pay for electric vehicle charging stations, you’ve got to pay to bring our transportation infrastructure, our public transportation infrastructure into the 21st century.”

Connecticut Dealerships Are Trying To Block The New EV Freedom Bill — Sign Petition For EV Freedom Clean Technica. “Connecticut is fighting for EV freedom, and dealerships are fighting against this just as intently. The EV Club of Connecticut recently launched a new website to help spread awareness and truth about the benefits of allowing people to buy electric vehicles directly from the consumer instead of having to go through an outdated dealership model that only makes the prices of EVs unnecessarily higher.” Plus: The fight for Connecticut’s EV Freedom is happening right now,

Biden, New England Energy Goals Could Soon Change Regional Energy Mix
Connecticut Public Radio. “He said the shift in resources to power New England should especially help lower electricity prices in the winter, when home heating needs can strain natural gas supplies and costs can spike. “When we’re seeing onshore that real energy crunch, that’s when wind speeds are the highest and the most consistent offshore here in New England,” Ausere said. “And so when

we project the expected wind production off these off the wind farms, it actually peaks during the winter.”

Electric Cars Could ‘Electrify The Future’ Of Northeast Transportation And Climate Initiative
WHUS “...more EVs means less need for fossil fuels at the pump or driving gas-guzzlers that contribute to 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in New England. And states like Massachusetts and New Jersey plan to pour tens of millions into clean transportation projects...now is the time for the rest of New England to release the brakes on EV growth. And he wants Connecticut to pass a law allowing residents to buy EVs directly from manufacturers like Massachusetts and New Hampshire can.” Plus: Amid annual lobbying battle with auto dealers, Tesla to plant its flag in E. Hartford

Why is Connecticut No. 1 in the cost of electricity among the 48 lower states? Here are 7 reasons.
Hartford Courant. “Transmission costs have soared more than six-fold between 2004 and 2019, according to the New England Power Generators Association. Costs related to the electricity transmission and distribution systems that connect power plants with consumers are for construction, which is higher in the Northeast where land for generators is costlier and the price of labor is higher; operation and maintenance that includes repairing damage related to accidents or extreme storms; and improving cybersecurity... Transmission costs in New England have risen from \$869 million in 2008 to \$2.3 billion a decade later, DEEP said.”



\$15 million renovation ensures historical Madison library will last well into the future
ShoreLineTimes. “As part of the \$15 million expansion and renovation, the library now draws its energy from two renewable energy resources. The building, expanded from 20,000 square feet to 39,000 square feet, has a photovoltaic solar energy array on the newly added second story, as well as geothermal energy for heating and cooling. “We looked at it as investment by a long-term owner...This building has been around for more than 100 years and we’ve tried to do what we can to make sure it’s around for another 100 years.”

Siting Council to Hold Public Hearing on 47-acre North Stonington Solar Project
CT Examiner. “...when the town was first approached in 2016 about a possible solar project, the plans only included the southern portion of the properties that is a former gravel pit. The town did not resist those plans, because the gravel pit seemed to be a good fit, despite the property being in a residential zone. The North Stonington Board of Selectman said in a letter to the council that they were concerned that the project would clear trees in an undisturbed section of core forest on the property, rather than use the former gravel pit.”

Clean energy activists oppose air permits for Middletown NRG power plant
The Middletown Press. “First it was Killingly. Now it is Middletown. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection continues to greenlight additional unnecessary fracked gas generation and increased carbon emissions, polluting our communities and speeding up the climate crisis”



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From the Ground Up - Buying Local in Connecticut

Memories of Fresh-caught Fish and Rhubarb

By C. Dennis Pierce

I grew up in a small mill town in New Hampshire. The rites of spring were a welcoming visitor. The change in weather melted the heavy snows and so often forced the Merrimack and Pemigewasset rivers to over flow their banks. So, what were the rites of spring for me? Typically, it started with trout fishing with my dad at a local lake or some backwoods stream that hosted some good-sized rainbow trout. I was always challenged with oversized waders and periodically would end up in the water causing stress on our fishing expedition. Sorry to say our family was not of the school, “catch and release”. We would take our limit, that lay in the bottom of an old wicker creel, and bring them home to sauté them in butter with a sprinkle of lemon.

Fishing for rainbow smelt was also a welcomed culinary adventure. In the old days the fingerling fish were caught with the use of a net. My dad and his buddies would head to the inlets on Lake Winnepesaukee and seine for these tasty morsels. When they arrived in our kitchen they were dredged with egg and flour, salt and pepper and sautéed to a crispy finish. As small as they were (about the size of a canned sardine) they were great eating and soon we were fighting over who would have the last one.

Spring also brought out all of the gardeners in our town. In our neighborhood we had a large family with eight children that lived across the street. Their garden’s roots came from the traditional “Victory Garden” that were established during the war. With eight children not only did you need access to healthy food but a large garden sure helped out with the budget. Our neighbors garden was a well designated plot that was well maintained. With eight children the weeds did not stand a chance. The garden was lined with a twenty-foot row of rhubarb plants. The rhubarb patch was always a gathering spot because the large rhubarb plant leaves would provide shade for the garter snakes that lived near the garden. It was always competition to see who could catch the most and longest snake. The prize in the end was that we were given a small cup of sugar. We would head to the rhubarb patch and break off stalks of rhubarb and dunk them into the sugar. First sour, then sweet.... hmm maybe that’s where the slogan for Sour Patch candies came from. So, my love of rhubarb came at an early age and that’s why I featured a rhubarb bread pudding later in this month’s column.

Now, it is truly feeling like spring in Connecticut. The local farmer’s markets are transitioning from their winter quarters and are welcoming their customers who are eager to get outdoors. All markets have COVID-19 restrictions that align with state mandates. But do not let that hinder you. Get out there and buy local. Our local farmers need you. It has been a tough year. Here is a brief look at a few of the local markets:

Storrs Farmers Market – First Spring Market, Saturday, May 1st. The market is located in front of the Town Hall in Mansfield. The market open at 3:00pm sharp. <https://www.storrsfarmersmarket.org/>

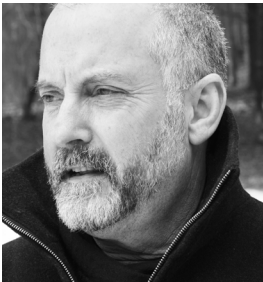
Ashford Farmers Market – dates have not been announced but typically they open in May. Check out their Facebook page for updates. Ashford Farmers Market - Home | Facebook

Scotland Farmers Market – located on Route 14 and Route 97, Scotland. They are open from May to October on Wednesday’s from 3:00pm to 6:00pm. Scotland Farmer’s Market - Home | Facebook

Coventry Framers Market- Opens June 6, 2021. For more updates their web site is Coventry Farmers Market at Hale Homestead

Ellington Farmers Market – Market begins on May 8th from 9:00am to 12:00pm. They are located on main street in Ellington. Updated info and list of vendors can be found at Mother’s Day Market for Opening Weekend! (facebook.com)

Like some spring plants rhubarb is short lived and it goes to seed early. You must make sure to cut off the flowering parts since they zap the energy from the plant. Rhubarb is a perennial vegetable famous for its tart-flavored pinkish-green stalks. Rhubarb originally stems from



Asia, but was brought to Europe in the 1600s and America not long thereafter. It thrives in areas with a cooler climate, making it popular in northern gardens. Rhubarb is easy to grow, but needs dormancy period to really thrive and produce an abundance of huge stalks. Please note...the stalks are the only edible part of the rhubarb plant. These have a rich, tart flavor when cooked. The leaves of the rhubarb plant are toxic—they contain an irritant called oxalic acid—so be sure that they are not ingested. What’s great about rhubarb is that it will produce for many years—five or more. For that reason, rhubarb should be planted in its own bed in any corner of the garden where it can grow undisturbed. So, go find some rhubarb at your local farmers market or prepare for next year by starting a plant of your own.

Rhubarb Bread Pudding with Rum Sauce
Makes 6 servings

Ingredients

- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup of whole milk
- 1 cup of half and half
- ½ cup of granulated sugar. Note, you will use a ¼ at a time. See below.
- 1 teaspoon of pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon of kosher salt
- 5 cups of day-old cinnamon bread, cut into ½ inch cubes
- 1 pound of fresh rhubarb (about 6 hefty stalks, cut into ½ inch slices, or 4 cups of frozen rhubarb
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Ingredients for Whiskey Sauce:

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¼ cup of granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons of half and half
- 2 tablespoons of whiskey (or you can use rum)
- Pinch of salt
- Directions:
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees
- Butter an 8-inch square baking dish and set aside.

In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, milk, half and half, ¼ cup of sugar, the vanilla and the salt. Stir the bread into the egg mixture and cover the bowl. Place in the refrigerator for 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.

Occasionally check on it and push the bread down into the liquid so it is well absorbed. In a medium bowl, combine the rhubarb, the remaining ¼ cup of sugar, and the cinnamon. Gently stir the rhubarb mixture into the bread mixture that you took from the refrigerator. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish. Bake until golden brown and slightly puffed, about 55 minutes to 1 hour and 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool on a rack for about 30 minutes.

Directions for the Whiskey Sauce (if using):

In a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk the sugar, half and half, whiskey (or rum), and salt. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring frequently, until the sauce is slightly thickened. About 4 to five minutes. Remove from heat. To serve, spoon the warm bread pudding into pre heated, serving bowls and drizzle with warm whiskey sauce. Not interested in making a sauce with alcohol? Try a drizzle of maple syrup instead. If you really are throwing your diet out the window add a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top.

As always thanks for reading my column. After many years I still enjoy finding out new items to write about, interesting farmers and the stories they have to tell and just encouraging residents of the Quiet Corner to purchase local Connecticut Grown. 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.

Peas be with you...

Opinion

STOP AGBOTIC on Browns Road in Mansfield

Agbotic Inc., a New York based corporation, is seeking to build six to 10 greenhouses at 438 Browns Road – across from the Red Barn Creamery and the Dorothy Goodwin Reserve / Joshua’s Trust. Many of your neighbors are opposed to this project. The impact of this project is far reaching. We believe the Agbotic greenhouses, in this location, will be a threat to public health, public safety, a “critical habitat” for wildlife, our environment and our quality of life.

Here is what you need to know ...

In March 1988, Russell & Phyllis Martin sold the developments rights for this property to the State of Connecticut in order to prohibit the subdivision or development of the property for residential, com-mercial and/or industrial purposes.

Agbotic is not a farm. The company’s “Smart-Farm” moniker is misleading. Agbotic’s greenhouses are, in fact, a food manufacturing plant supplying grocery stores and restaurants. The proper location for this operation would be an industrial park – not a residential community.

Each of the greenhouses will be 360 feet long, 52 feet wide, and 30 feet tall. The total area disturbed by this project is equal to 7.5 football fields. They will be lit 24/7. The greenhouses are a threat to the well and ground water supply, potentially impacting the aquifer well beyond the greenhouses and Browns Road.

Hemp is among the crops that may be grown in the greenhouses. Homeowners near hemp/marijuana production sites have experienced skunk-like odors, allergic reactions, eye irritation, headaches and nausea. The greenhouses will be located just 1.2 miles from the Mansfield Middle School and 1.8 miles from the Annie Vinton Elementary School.

Lighting for the greenhouses and for security will pollute the starry skies over Mansfield. Noise will be created by continuous operation of pumps and motors inside the greenhouses.

The Agbotic operations will lead to a significant increase in truck and commercial traffic on Browns Road, Mansfield City Road, Spring Hill Road and surrounding roads. Walkers, joggers and bikers are very active on these roads.

Importantly, these roads are heavily used by school buses to and from Annie Vinton School and Mansfield Middle School. Also, between Route 32 and #438 Browns Road (a distance of only 1.6 miles) there are more than 20 signs that warn of curves, blind spots, hidden driveways and bus stops.

The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection has identified this property as a “Critical Habitat” for many species of wildlife and birds: deer, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, fisher cats, red tail hawks, goshawks, horned owls, barn owls, woodpeckers, woodcocks, orioles and blue-birds. It is one of the largest wildlife areas in Mansfield.

If You Share Our Concerns ...

Attend the next meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission: Monday, May 3 at the Town Hall. A public hearing is included.

Write to your elected representatives: Mayor Antonia Moran and/or Deputy Mayor Ben ShaikenState Representatives Brian Smith and Gregg Haddad

Write to the Mansfield Department of Planning and Zoning.

Write to the Mansfield Planning and Zoning Commission.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Peggy Tucker & Ron Cotterill
Ellie & Scott Rhoades
Bernie & John Gilbert
Susan & Michael Stuart

Unsung Heroes of Soul:

The Wallace Brothers

By Dean Farrell

As host of “The Soul Express” on WECS, 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 features the Wallace Brothers, whose raw, unpolished recordings for the Sims label have long been treasured by collectors.

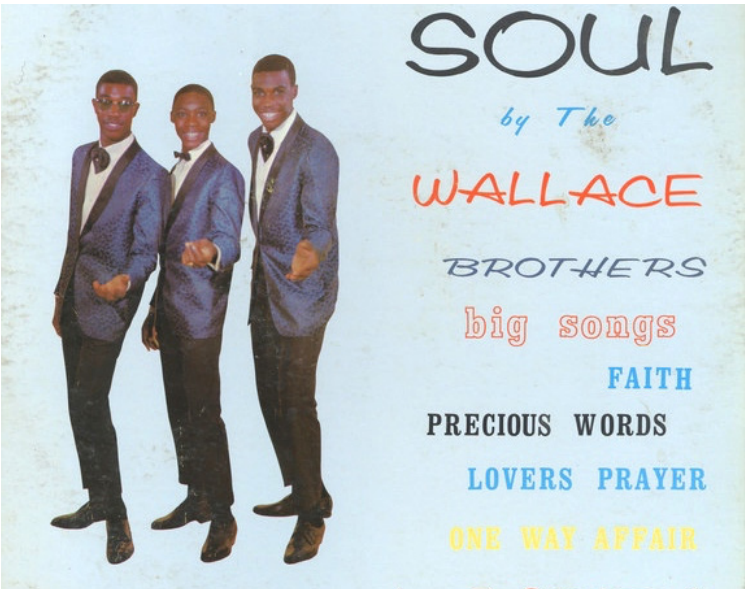
The “brothers” were actually cousins Johnny Simon and Ervin Wallace of Atlanta. By ages fourteen and sixteen respectively, they were touring with their own six-piece band. Along with vocal duties, Simon played the sax and Wallace played guitar.

By 1963, the Wallace Brothers were accomplished enough performers that Nashville record executive Russell Sims signed them to his label. No stranger to the music business, Sims had released more than 100 country and hillbilly singles on his self-named imprint before he decided to venture into the Rhythm & Blues market. The Wallace Brothers’ debut release, “Faith” / “I’ll Let Nothing Separate Me,” was the second R&B single on Sims.

As the title implies, “Faith” was heavily gospel-influenced, with a church-like organ and a meandering saxophone backing up the Brothers’ callow, uninhibited phrasing. It very much set the tone for future Wallace Brothers releases. Their next 45, the even more gospel-like “Precious Words,” cracked the national R&B top forty in the spring of 1964.

That autumn, the Wallace Brothers enjoyed their biggest hit, “Lover’s Prayer.” It not only made the R&B top forty, but crossed over to the Billboard Hot 100 as well. Its success was due in large part to heavy airplay and promotion by disc jockey John R. (Richbourg) of Nashville’s WLAC. Richbourg shared an office with Russell Sims and owned a share of not only Sims Records, but of the Wallace Brothers as well.

In 1965, Sims released an LP on the Brothers, “Soul Soul and More Soul.” Some of its tracks were done at the FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, making the Wallace Brothers one of the earliest acts to record there. However, these tracks featured not the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, but the duo’s own musicians.



The Wallace Brothers were also getting noticed in England. Guy Stevens of Sue Records, a hip UK independent, released both “Precious Words” and “Lover’s Prayer” and, later, “I’ll Step Aside.” In 1967, he put out an LP on the Brothers called “Soul Connection.”

Meanwhile, Russell Sims had begun to find the record business wearing. He issued one last single on the Wallace Brothers, “Thanks a Lot,” before closing up shop in 1967. By the following year, the duo was recording

for the Jewel label in Shreveport, Louisiana. After three commercially unsuccessful singles on Jewel, the Wallace Brothers split up.

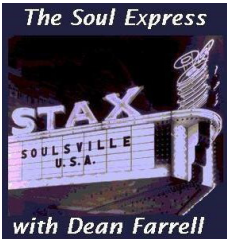
In 1995, the British reissue label Kent released a 22-track Wallace Brothers CD, “Lover’s Prayer: Their Complete Sims Recordings.” It was the first collection of their music in twenty-eight years.

Rock critic Dave Marsh included “Precious Words” in his 1989 book, “The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made.”

Please check out the new Unsung Heroes of Soul blog at <https://60459fe07898a.site123.me/>

Charted singles:

- “Precious Words” (1964) R&B #31, Pop #107
- “Lover’s Prayer” (1964) R&B #33, Pop #97



Other notable Wallace Brothers recordings include “Faith,” “Love Me Like I Love You,” “I’ll Let Nothing Separate Me,” “You’re Mine,” “Bye Bye Bye,” “Hold My Hurt For a While,” “Stepping Stone,” “These Arms of Mine,” and “I Need Someone.”

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.

May Events at The Mill Museum

Submitted by Bev York, Museum Educator

May 8 Free for Kids at the Museum 2-4 p.m. This is an outdoor drop by event. You stop by, plants seeds and pick up materials to take home. Limited supply. Reserve at themillmuseum@gmail.com or First come, First Served. Wear masks. The Mill Museum, 411 Main Street, Willimantic.

May 16 Zoom in for Tea Program Theme: International Tea Day. Brew a cup of tea and join us for an entertaining and educational hour. 4 p.m. fee Reservation at themillmuseum@gmail.com

May 22 Picturing America: Our Country’s History in Art. Exhibit on Garden on the Bridge, 322 Main Street, Willimantic 2-5 p.m. Stroll by a series of images of nationally famous art that shares the story of American history. “This project seeks to enhance and strengthen the understanding of America’s history and founding principles.” A project of the National Endowment for the Humanities. the-

millmuseum@gmail.com
Sponsored by the Mill Museum. Donations support Museum. Masks required. Rain date Sunday. millmuseum.org themillmuseum@gmail.com

May 29 Where They Stood: The Industrial Revolution: History 101 Second of three programs teaching American History through visiting local 19th century sites. A slow-paced out-of-doors walking tour lasts approximately 3 hours. 10:00 a.m. Fee. Drive, caravan or carpool on your own. Bring masks, water and snack. Itineraries with be emailed to people who preregister at themillmuseum@gmail.com

Bach in the Garden

Submitted by Janice Trecker

brary sponsors a new music program, Bach in the Garden, featuring noted Hampton instrumentalist Mark Davis. Free one hour musical programs will be held in the library’s butterfly garden every Wednesday at 4 p.m., weather permitting.

The programs will begin and end with Bach, but will also include other baroque, classical, and contemporary composers. Some Brazilian music is promised as well. Visitors are welcome to attend the entire performance or to drop in for part of the program. Bring something to sit on and snacks, if desired.

Davis, instrumentalist and composer, has performed several times at The Fletch and has concertized nationally and internationally.

The library is at 257 Main Street, Hampton. For more information or to check status in case of inclement weather call 860 455 1086.



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Transition to Adulthood

By David Corsini

I have three grandchildren. With two of them there is a biological link. Nicole, who is about to turn 21, is my daughter’s daughter. Dylan, who is almost 19, is my son’s son. There have been very different trajectories after high school in these two pairs. My daughter and granddaughter have followed a plan into adulthood similar to the one I followed: the pursuit of a college degree. My son and grandson had no interest in college. So, as seniors in high school, the question for them was not what college was going to accept them, but whether they were going to finish high school in the first place. The path followed by my son and grandson involves great uncertainty and is somewhat difficult to watch, as a parent and as a grandparent. Rather than following a path, it is more appropriate to think of my son and grandson as bushwhacking toward adulthood.

My son developed skills in high school through a work-study relationship in a TV repair shop. Are you old enough to remember the time when TVs that didn’t work were repaired, rather than thrown away? With the skills acquired from working on TVs, he was able to get employment installing electronics in cars. He then managed to obtain employment in the computer technology area at one of the casinos. His skills in IT eventually allowed him to get a position at UConn. So, even though he never went to college, he ended up at a university, the hard way.

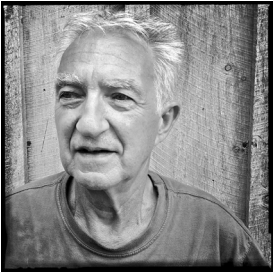
I relate the story of my son to illustrate my recognition that trajectory into adulthood need not involve college. Particularly in the years just after high school, it was not easy to watch my son’s transition. And now, although once removed, I have the same anxieties about how my grandson will evolve.

I am not sure what the categories of grandparent-grandchild relationships are, but one aspect must be the amount of shared time. When I think back to my own grandparents, I don’t think they had much influence on my life. My Italian grandfather died when I was a baby and I saw my Italian grandmother only briefly at Christmas and during short visits several times during the year. I remember her primarily for the delectable sauces, pastas from scratch, and soups she created. My mother once watched her make sauce and took notes and gave it the old college try. However, my grandmother’s Bolognese could be imitated but never duplicated. On a trip to Italy with my wife, Delia, I tried, without success, to find the taste of my grandmother’s cooking.

I had more interactions with my mother’s parents, but I do not remember many shared activities other than Thanksgiving, Christmas, and birthday celebrations. I remember them as being “old.”

Although I was in my early sixties when my first two grandchildren were born, I have had what I consider a limited relationship with them. Relationships require time spent together. I did not spend much time with my granddaughter. One reason for this lack of shared time can be understood from how her family and my family evolved. When Nicole was born, I had been remarried for more than fifteen years. In addition, we lived at a considerable distance and her parents divorced shortly after she was born. Subsequently, Nicole had to share time both with her mother and her father’s new family. Things get complicated.

My relationship with Dylan was a bit more involved. In his early years we lived in the same town and



I would pick him up from school on a weekly basis and spend a few hours doing primarily sports-oriented activities. I remember that it was with me that he first learned to ride a bike. And sometimes we would do a little homework, even though he didn’t think much of my math skills! But when he moved to a different town, we did not share much time together. In addition, he was much more involved with his mother’s parents and his maternal aunt.

But in his senior year of high school, we figured out a way to have more regular contact. He was a student at E. O. Smith High School and once a week after school we would meet at the Mansfield Community Center for several games of ping-pong. Although at this point I was in my late seventies, I could still hold my own on the ping-pong table and we had a nice rivalry.

This was also the time when he got his learning permit for driving. I would not go so far as to say I taught him to drive, but we did have fifteen to twenty driving lessons with a few exciting moments. One time he was in the left lane and pulled in front of a passing car in the right lane. There was a prolonged period of honking and as I looked back there was a very angry man gesticulating. This incident enabled a discussion about road rage.

These driving lessons also provided opportunities to discuss decorum when stopped by police. I showed him that there are blind spots in the side mirrors. I told him how quickly things can go wrong when you take your eyes off the road. I urged him to make a practice of not taking his eyes off the road for more than two seconds. So, if fooling with the radio or heater, peeking at an accident, or checking out a coed, it is important to count out one thousand one, one thousand two, and then get your eyes back on the road. I’m not sure if that is a rule of driving, but it works pretty well.

Our ability to play ping-pong stopped when Covid closed the Community Center. Dylan got his license and, even though he did not take to remote learning in the last part of his senior year, and I was quite anxious for him, he managed to fulfill his graduation requirements. Ta-da!

As grandchildren approach adulthood, it often takes time for grandparents to adjust their expectations. Grandchildren can sometimes surprise you. For example, they can decide to do things without asking for advice or showing concern for the worry that they might cause. Nicole is a junior at the University of Maryland and was taking online classes for the fall semester. While she started the fall semester at the university in a dorm, I was told she was very worried about catching Covid and had moved out of the dorm. While she worked primarily from her home in Connecticut, she would sometimes go to Maryland. Then, in late December my daughter informed me that Nicole was going to fly to Washington State to visit a boyfriend. She was not vaccinated and, as far as I know, had never flown alone. I was concerned. However, things turned out fine.

When Dylan graduated from high school, I was worried about catching the virus and we did not yet have vaccines. Feeling uncertain about how careful Dylan was being made me uncomfortable about doing things with him. I am sure I am not the only grandparent whose relationship with a grandchild was disturbed by the virus. I learned that he had moved into an apartment with friends in Willimantic and was earning money with DoorDash. He had a car that had belonged to his aunt.

It was difficult to figure out how to talk with him about future plans. At one point he shared that he was reading things online about different ways to make money. As this was the first time we had heard Dylan express

interest in anything slightly career related, Delia and I were encouraged. We gave him a little money to continue the tutorial he mentioned. We have also helped him with car repair expenses.

Delia and I want to help Dylan, but it is not easy to figure out how. We had saved money for both grandchildren in college accounts. We have helped Nicole with her college expenses to a considerable degree. Since it appears that Dylan, at least in the short term, is not going to use the college money saved for him, what will be the appropriate way to help him transition into adulthood? It is not going to be easy to figure that out.

Last February, Dylan announced to his parents that he was going to fly to California, rent a car, visit a friend, and then meet up with another friend who was making a music video. He made all the plane reservations, rented a convertible, met up with his friends, had a great time making the video, was able to change his return flight, and made it back. I never imagined he had those skills.

Once back home, Dylan showed no interest in planning a future that involved working around here. He was going to figure out a way to go back to California. Then, in April, I heard from my son that Dylan planned to buy a used car and drive with a friend to California. I was quite concerned until I remembered that at 19, in 1959, I took off with three college friends to Washington State with very sketchy plans. One difference from Dylan was that I was between my sophomore and junior year in college. My friends and I had heard from other students at our college about a pea factory that employed students during the harvest.

I remember my father was not at all in favor of my trip and my grandfather was sure I was going to get lost forever. The car for our trip belonged to a fraternity brother, Bobby Tow. Bobby didn’t know much about cars and neither did his passengers. For example, no one thought to check whether there had been a recent oil change. And the tires must have been poor because I remember that my father bought us two. We made it to South Dakota before spewing out big clouds of exhaust. In a small town we were lucky to find a garage that could do a ring job. The local police were polite but clearly not crazy about four guys hanging out in their town. We were offered the opportunity to sleep overnight in the jail. Since the price was right, we jumped at the chance. The only problem was that before being released in the morning, we were fingerprinted and had our photo taken. It was not the only time I have been fingerprinted.

We did get jobs working in the pea factory, but the harvest was poor, and I believe we only worked for two weeks. That was OK and our plan of return involved driving down the West Coast from Washington State to San Diego, California. The muffler blew as we entered the town of Monterey, California. The police pulled up behind us, stopped us, and requested we leave immediately. No souvenirs from Monterey! We made it to San Diego and went one night into Tijuana to be fondled by the bar girls. I came home sporting a beard that for some reason displeased my father. I did not have any money left to help with college tuition but for sure, I had had an adventure.

As I write this, I know that Dylan stopped to see friends in Nebraska, slept overnight somewhere in a teepee, drove through Yosemite, and has rented an apartment in El Segundo, California, which is near L.A. I bet he wished he had paid more attention to his Spanish classes. I don’t know his plans, other than that he promised to be back for his birthday in late May. I am anxious to talk with him and curious to see what will be next for him.

Art Show at Garden on the Bridge

Submitted by Bev York

“Picturing America” is a series of images of nationally famous art that shares the story of American history. Take this opportunity to stroll through over 300 years of our country’s heritage in laminated art hanging on the fence at the Garden on the Bridge at 322 Main Street in Willimantic. The art show will be Saturday, May 22 from 2 to 5. (Raindate Sunday) The event is sponsored by the Mill Museum. The event is free but the museum is collecting donations.

The images of paintings, sculpture, architecture and more are professional 3’ by 2’ laminated images. Some of the iconic works on display will include Anasazi

Pottery c.1100 from the Chaco Canyon; the painting “Washington Crossing the Delaware” 1851 by Emanuel Leutze; and “Autumn Landscape-The River of Life” a colored glass window created in 1923 by Louis Comfort Tiffany (photo at right).

The project was organized by the National Endowment for the Humanities “This project seeks to enhance and strengthen the understanding of America’s history and founding principles.”

The out door art show requires masks and socially distanced protocols. It is a great opportunity to visit the Garden on the Bridge. For more information themillmuseum@gmail.com or millmuseum.org.



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Don't Depend on Student Loan Forgiveness — Plan Ahead With Tax-Advantaged College Savings

By Laurence Hale, AAMS, CRPS®
Principal/Managing Partner,
Co-Founder & Chief Investment
Officer



There's a lot of talk in Congress right now about potentially canceling anywhere from \$10,000 to \$50,000 of federal student loan debt per person. But don't be confused — if this debt cancellation even happens at all, it will be a one-time cancellation for those who currently have qualifying student loans. So while it would provide some relief to existing borrowers it does nothing to alleviate the challenge of meeting the high cost of college that will still face current and future students.

That's why it's so important to plan well by creating a solid strategy to save for college costs. The best savings vehicles offer special tax advantages if the funds are used to pay for college. Tax-advantaged strategies are important because over time, you can potentially accumulate more money with a tax-advantaged investment compared to a taxable investment.

There are several tax-advantaged savings vehicles that you can consider, but the most popular and typically the most advantageous one is the 529 savings plan.

529 savings plans offer a unique combination of features that no other education savings vehicle can match. Here's what you need to know:

A 529 savings plan lets you save money for college and K-12 tuition in an individual investment-type account, similar to a 401(k) plan. Some plans let you enroll directly, while others require you to go through a financial professional.

529 savings plans are offered by states (you can join any state's plan), but they are managed by designated financial companies who are responsible for managing the plan's underlying investment portfolios.

Anyone can open a 529 savings plan account, regardless of income level. You'll typically be required to make an initial minimum contribution, however, which must be made in cash. You'll then select one or more of the plan's investment portfolios to which your contributions will be allocated.

Contributions to a 529 account accumulate tax deferred and earnings are tax free if the money is used to pay the beneficiary's qualified education expenses. (The earnings portion of any withdrawal not used for qualified education expenses is taxed at the recipient's rate and subject to a 10% penalty.) Most plans have lifetime contribution limits of \$350,000 and up.

In addition, many states offer income tax incentives for state residents, such as a tax deduction for contributions or a tax exemption for qualified withdrawals. However, be aware that some states limit their tax deduction to contributions made to the in-state 529 plan only.

529 savings plans also offer an estate planning advantage in the form of accelerated gifting. This can be a favorable way for grandparents to contribute to their grandchildren's education while paring down their own estate, or a way for parents to contribute a large lump sum. Under special rules unique to 529 plans, a lump-

sum gift of up to five times the annual gift tax exclusion amount (\$15,000 in 2021) is allowed in a single year, which means that individuals can make a lump-sum gift of up to \$75,000 and married couples can gift up to \$150,000. No gift tax will be owed, provided the gift is treated as having been made in equal installments over a five-year period and no other gifts are made to that beneficiary during the five years.

There are a couple of drawbacks to 529 savings plans to keep in mind, though:

Investment returns aren't guaranteed. You roll the dice with the investment portfolios you've chosen, and your account may gain or lose value depending on how the underlying investments perform. There is no guarantee that your investments will perform well enough to cover college costs as anticipated.

529 savings plans have limited investment flexibility. Not only are you limited to the investment portfolios offered by the particular 529 plan, but once you choose your investments, you can only change the investment options on your existing contributions twice per calendar year. (However, you can generally direct how your future contributions will be invested at any time.)

Although there's a lot of discussion among legislators right now about how to tackle the issue of the skyrocketing costs of higher education, for the moment there are no plans in place and the road to developing a solution is sure to be a long one. Saving for your child's or grandchild's education in smart, strategic ways is still the only way to ensure that he or she will have the resources required to benefit from the education they'll need to live well in the future.

If you haven't yet created a college savings plan, or you have one but are unsure if it's set up to best maximize your savings, you should talk with a financial advisor who can get you started off on the right foot and then guide you through the process, while also balancing your other financial needs and goals as well.

At Weiss, Hale and Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors we help our clients to establish the college savings plan that best suits their individual needs and situation, so that they don't have to wonder if they're doing all they can to help their children or grandchildren get started off on the right foot in life. Take a look at the Resources page on our website at www.whzwealth.com/resources for some helpful information and guides to college planning, and contact us at (860) 928-2341 or info@whzwealth.com if you'd like a knowledgeable partner in the process.

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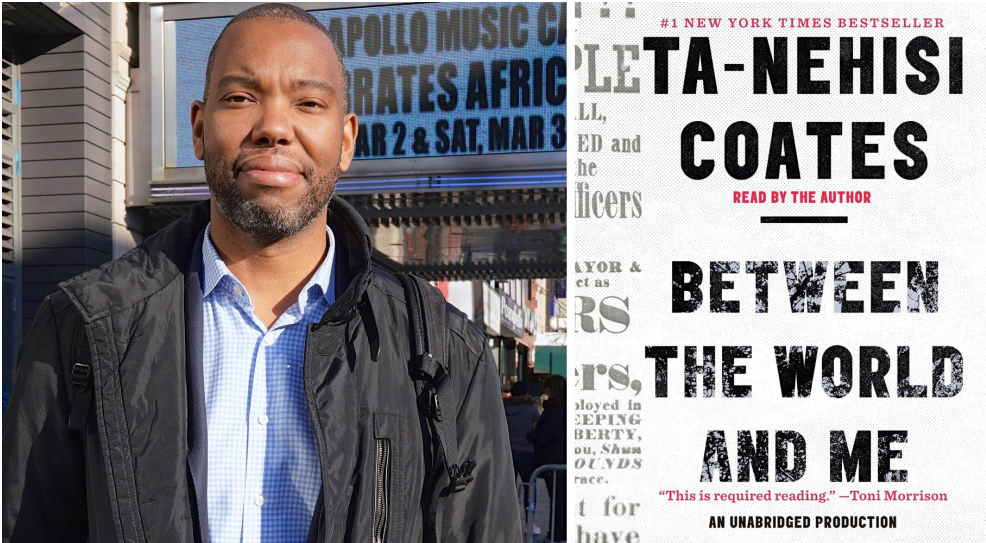
The Dreamers and Their Dream

“We believe that we [America] are not a nation with a history of racial oppression, but one with a history of freedom, opportunity, and advancement for anyone of any race” [underline added] - Resident of Coventry CT, quoted in the Willimantic Chronicle April, 2021.

By Phoebe C. Godfrey

Ahh... the power of belief in that it can change any reality into the one we seek, the one which we need in order to create our identities and thus our world according to our own image! When I read this bold statement (by someone I assume to be white) in an article titled ‘Controversy in Coventry’ about the question as to whether or not Coventry should declare ‘racism a public health crisis’, I was taken aback, despite my preexisting critical stance towards our society. My shock was not that this person (they are in fact quoted as a couple) was against the proposal, nor that they also said that black lives “are not more important than anyone else’s”, which is a fairly common sentiment among many whites, but rather that they seem to have absolutely no knowledge of the actual history of this country. Now were they illiterate, lived in abject poverty, were rural Southern whites whose nearest public school was desperately underfunded and they lacked electricity or access to any outside information, I might be able to understand and have empathy that their ignorance had been socially created by no fault of their own. However, this person living in Coventry, no doubt has been to school at least up to high-school, no doubt is literate, has electricity, access to the internet, a car and keeps up enough with town events to oppose the proposal in question and yet despite all that they are still willing to declare to a local journalist their beliefs seemingly totally unaware that they are a product of white supremacist fantasy. Furthermore, what makes this declaration all the more ironic, hence tragic, is that the very thing they claim to be true, is the very thing that all Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), not to mention women of all races and LGBTQ people still seek.

In Ta-Nehisi Coates’ book *Between the World and Me* (2015) a love letter to his son he begins by telling his son about an interview he did on a popular news show. He states that the host asked him “what it meant to lose his body”, in reference to sections of the book where Coates talks about the experiences of being a Black male in American, constantly fearing for his life / his being and levels of disembodiment that comes as a result. He goes on to say that he was used to “intelligent people asking him about the condition of his body without realizing that nature of their request” (p. 5). Then he shares how she, the host, wanted to know why he “...felt that white America’s progress, or rather the progress of those Americans who believe they are white, was built on looting and violence”. To this comment he states, he “...felt an old indistinct sadness well up in me. The answer to this question is the record of the believers themselves. The answer is American history” (p. 6). He then goes on to talk about how white America has



been able to sustain their origin fantasies rooted in democracy and equality given that “there exists, all around us, an apparatus urging us to accept American innocence at face value and not to inquire too much. And it is so easy to look away, to live with the fruits of our history and to ignore the great evil done in all of our names” (p 6-7). However, he then says “But you and I have never truly had that luxury.” He then goes on to talk about African Americans who have been killed at the hands of racists police and citizens such as Eric Garner, Renish McBride, John Crawford, Tamir Rice and the list goes on and on year by year, day by day... In returning to the host from the popular news show, he goes on to say that in asking him about his body it was as if she was asking him to “awaken her from the most gorgeous dream.” (p. 11). This is the Dream as he describes it of “...Memorial Day cookouts, block associations, and driveways. The Dream is treehouses and the Cub Scouts. The Dream smells like peppermint but tastes like strawberry cheesecake”. However, for Coates and all other BIPOC, this Dream “rests on our backs, the bedding made

from our bodies” and thus those who Dream it against all the evidential odds, he refers to as ‘the Dreamers’. Living in this deeply rooted contradiction, Coates goes on to say that, “...knowing that the Dream persists by warring with the known world, I was sad for the host, I was sad for all those families, I was sad for my country, but above all, at that moment, I was sad for you” (p. 11). And as such we too should be sad, or rather if we are white, we should be riddled with remorse for having taken part in a maniacal Dream that ‘wars against the known world’ and thus is in essence an ongoing nightmare. For not only does it continually ‘rest on BIPOC’s backs’, with ‘the bedding made from their bodies’ but as Coates observes at the end of his book this Dream is “...the same habit that endangers the planet...” (p.151). And so, in returning to our neighbors in Coventry, it is perfectly clear that they are quintessential ‘Dreamers’ and that no doubt this Memorial Day they will have a cookout, and that they may well be members of block associations and churches, that they have houses, yards and driveways, that their children have treehouses, are members of the Cub Scouts and that for them this narrative will and should go on indefinitely. For why shouldn’t it, given that Dreamers love God, and ‘God loves America’, and of course no lives matter more than anyone else’s, and climate change does not exist and if we hold on really tight to this Dream one day we will be ‘great again’, as we were from the beginning with *our history of freedom, opportunity, and advancement for anyone of any race*. Amen.

If only

Take Your Mind for a Walk

By Bob Lorentson

As I was out walking the other day, the thought occurred to me that many interesting thoughts occur to me while I’m out walking. Like the one about how our ancestors came down from the trees some four million or so years ago and took up walking for the first time. And how this might have been when they took up thinking for the first time also. It’s hard to know for sure as paleontologists have yet to discover any fossilized thoughts. My wife says that’s only because they haven’t studied any of mine. Thoughts like these, I’ve learned, would likely never have even happened if our arboreal ancestors hadn’t taken that first giant step for mankind to begin with. This is because, studies have shown, walking improves one’s creative thinking. Even my wife, who has been studying me for years, concluded that my thinking is never more creative than when I come back from a walk knowing there’s a list of chores waiting for me. Those early walkers had to get creative in a hurry of course, and may have sensed that their kind would never live to pass down their interesting thoughts if they didn’t quickly show how creative they could get. So after it became painfully clear that they lacked the claws and fangs that many other ground dwellers had, they invented running. This had the effect of improving their creative thinking further, and so with their newly freed hands, they began to pick up sticks and stones and invented weapons. While this allowed them to slow back down to a walk, mankind really hit the fast track now. With the creativity of those early walkers unleashed, language was invented and fire was domesticated. Impressive accomplishments unquestionably, but where would those early walkers really have gotten to without the shoe? The shoe provided comfort, and allowed the walker to travel great distances, opening up the world as it opened the walkers’ minds. It’s rather surprising though that the oldest shoe discovered only dates back 10,000 years. Personally, I would have thought that “I need shoes!” would have been among the first things uttered after language was invented. We’ll never know, as the list of things humans needed was still rather long at this point, and with writing not invented until 3400 BC, they couldn’t very well have kept a written to-do list. What’s still more surprising is that it took until 1790 to invent shoelaces! And not until 1818 were shoes differentiated for the right and left feet! I think these shortcomings can be laid directly at the feet of horses. Horse riding was discovered 5,000 years ago, which began to take mankind off its own feet and off its creative game. Horse-shoes, which were invented 2500 years ago, didn’t need laces, and the same shoe worked just fine for the right, left, front, and back feet. Maybe we should be thankful that our shoes aren’t nailed on. Fortunately, the greatest walkers stayed on their feet, and proved to be the greatest minds. From Socrates and Aristotle, to Beethoven, Darwin, and Einstein, walkers such as these consistently proved Friedrich Nietzsche’s maxim, “All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking.” Of course, walking while thinking can be dangerous too. The great thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau claimed that walking saved his life. It also killed him when he was run over by a horse and carriage, giving us the first early warning about distracted walking. We don’t know what he was thinking at the time, but odds are it was somewhere between one of his greatest thoughts and “Sacre-Bleu!” Unfortunately, the popularity of the horse and carriage was the beginning of the end for the everyday walker, and the everyday thinker wasn’t far behind. Walking and thinking take up a great store of the body’s available energy, so it proved very attractive for most people to ride and talk instead. Neither of those activities took any energy, and could be done by non-thinkers from all walks of life. So the wheel, one of mankind’s greatest inventions in 3400 BC, was back, and soon it was poised to put even the horse out of business. The bicycle, the train, and the horseless carriage, or automobile, followed, taking ever more people off their feet. The creativity of the modern walkers/thinkers, people like Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg, still shined, but at what cost? Nowadays, most modern walkers are unthinking smart phone users who can’t walk across the street without texting, or listening to music or podcasts. Why strain your own brain when you can carry one with you? Serious injuries and deaths to distracted walkers are increasing yearly at the hands of equally distracted drivers. As walking has become a life-threatening activity once again, distracted thinking has prevailed. This is not a recipe for the advancement of mankind, and neither running nor weapons can help us this time. The latest thought I had while I was out walking was that humans are devolving. If we all don’t start taking walking seriously again, and soon, we might all be driven back into the trees from whence we came. How’s that for creative thinking?

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Solar Today:
Questions and answers about solar
in our community and beyond

By John Boiano

Join a community Q & A, conversation via ZOOM on 5/10/21 at 7pm
Conversation Topics will include:
Busting the myth of free solar!
Honoring EARTH DAY
- every day with solar!



Greetings,

Thank you to all who joined our Zoom call and Facebook live event last month.
Monthly reader David asked me to expand on: “Snow on residential and commercial solar panels.”
David wrote: “My neighbor’s roof top panels stay covered with snow for two weeks. My question is; Do the commercial solar farms have a protocol to prevent this? Someday in the future when Connecticut is relying on commercial solar farms for 30% of our energy and we receive 15 inches of snow followed by two weeks of freezing temperatures so that the snow does not melt, will we all go powerless? Even just a few days without 30% of our energy could be challenging. Perhaps solar is not the answer for Northern states.”

Answer(s); In short, solar continues to be a great and viable option even with snow issues.
As far as residential solar production: When I perform a solar evaluation for a home, I use a sophisticated software program that takes in every aspect of solar production, including a 365 day synopsis of all the variables the solar system will see through the year. Roof angle to due south, pitch, shading, snow etc. The algorithm includes 30 years of local weather data for average snow days, including how long the roof pitch and angle will hold any snow, how many rainy days, cloudy days, etc. Once the computer has worked its magic, we have a very accurate analysis of the 365 day production for the system. We even include a 25 year warranty that guarantees the production!

Now onto grid energy procured from solar: Solar arrays in commercial fields are pointed to access the most amount of energy as possible. They mainly face due south at about a 35 degree angle. This equates to great production values and, because of the direction, snow slides off the panels quite fast from receiving the smallest amount of radiant heat from the sun. Think of your car windshield. If you have 8” of snow on it and, even if the sun barely comes out on a mildly overcast day, a water barrier is created on the windshield and the snow easily comes off the car. When solar is placed in this direction, snow slides off with ease and it usually does it on its own. In addition, the height of solar arrays in a field are quite low and more easily accessible for maintenance and snow removal than residential roof mounted systems.

Solar production in snow: Eversource works hard at keeping the grid up and running. Including switching power sources in milliseconds. Here’s why: If Eversource cannot deliver energy to your home or business they cannot charge you for it! What does that equate to? Loss of revenue. Their best interest is to keep the grid up and running at all times. This includes keeping snow off of the solar arrays. In the long run, building solar fields, and maintaining

them, costs much less than relying on buying power from 3 states away. Solar equates to long-term controlled costs and less physical maintenance. Even solar farms close to the Arctic Circle have become viable with advances in solar technology and decreasing costs for maintenance.
On-demand power supply from solar to grid:
Years ago when I was going to energy conferences, Eversource and other large companies used to come and sit in the sessions poking fingers at the solar industry. Currently, the tables have turned and Eversource has become leaders in large deployment and management of on-demand energy. They are leading the way in developing software for solar management and battery storage distribution. Green mountain power in VT has been using renewable energy for quite some time and they are really good at it. Also, utility companies are pro’s at software development with switching energy sources for distribution. It happens all the time; and mostly every day. When this happens, there are buffers in place so we don’t even see our lights and appliances flicker. Eversource is a national leader in software development on this topic. Massachusetts is a few years ahead of CT in large scale solar development. NH, VT and Maine are also ahead of us here in CT. So, as you can see, solar is here to stay, snow or no snow!
Questions from the community.

Q – Is solar the best option for me?
A – Maybe! There’s a simple way to find out. Give me a call and I can do a no cost evaluation of your home’s solar potential and then compare that to your energy bill. The numbers will tell the story. It will either work for you or it won’t. The computer models that I use are very accurate.

Q – When I have solar, will I still need a generator?
A – Yes, unless you have a battery for back up. And, even with a battery, if the panels are not producing energy for a few days the battery will drain and you will be resorting to starting your generator.

Q – How much energy will the panels produce?
A – There are many variables that determine the amount of solar production that solar panels will produce. Everything from roof direction and pitch, to obstructions that would create shade such as chimneys, dormers, trees and more.

Question – Do I have to cut that tree?
A– It all depends. Some trees have a high impact on solar production and some are OK if they shed minimal shade on the panels.

Quote from a recent local solar customer:
“Thank you for taking the time to help me understand the full process of switching to solar power. I can’t wait for install day!”

Join the conversation:
Zoom meeting > 5/10/21 at 7:00PM. Please email or call me for the meeting link.

Until next month... ENJOY!

John Boiano 860-798-5692; john@zensolar.net
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Roadtrip to Naumkeag

A Great Garden Estate of the Gilded Age

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

Naumkeag in Massachusetts’ Berkshires is a 44-room French Norman “Cottage Mansion” with a grove of whitebarked birch (*Betula*) lining its iconic Blue Steps -- an architectural and horticultural treasure.



The tranquil beauty of the Housatonic River Valley is an amazing grace. The Berkshires alone are worth a daytrip and I took my time getting there and back through Connecticut’s other quiet corner.

“*Shunpiking*” (as it’s called along the Mohawk Trail, Mass. Route 2 in the northern Berkshires) avoids the interstate. Simply drive west from our green valleys on Route 44. If you can stay on course, it’s an interesting dissection of Hartford, and it’s the simplest direction. Just go west on 44 to Highway 7, then turn north to Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Easy-peasy!

But I turned right in Winsted instead and drove north on Highway 8. A red covered bridge decorates Sandisfield, Mass. Take a lunch. Like Route 2, picnic tables invite you to stop along a swift rocky river.

The Berkshires are a series of steep hillsides, small mountains that are large enough to show the diversity of our Eastern Deciduous Forest. Layers of light and dark reveal varying stands of trees among conifers in the distance, some just starting to green. Or redden as my favorite harbinger of spring in the forest, the red-flowered canopy of *Acer rubrum*, our native Red Maple.

Naumkeag has native language meanings: one is the piscatorial place that is mostly Essex County including Salem, in coastal northeast Massachusetts.

Naumkeag means fishing place:
“namaas” = fish + “ki” = place

PEOPLE Naumkeag is also the name of the Native American people that fished the Salem territory, a subtribe of the Pennacook Indians to the north. Indigenous people have lived in New England since the last glacier retreated some 12,000 years ago.

In Stockbridge, the Mahican Tribe -- aka Mohican as the Daniel Day Lewis film, but not the Mohawk who drove them east out of the Hudson Valley -- was native to the Housatonic Valley.

Farther east, Joseph Choate was born on a Salem farm in 1832. Graduated from Harvard Law, his illustrious legal career as a jury lawyer fighting such as Boss Tweed in NYC, spared him service in the Civil War.

Caroline Sterling Choate was born in Salisbury, Connecticut, in 1837, and married in 1861. Artist, gardener and mother, also “Gilding suffragette” and women’s education advocate who co-founded Barnard College.

Living in NYC during the Civil War draft riots, the Choates sheltered Blacks in their home from lynching by White rioters in 1863. Ethical elites. Joseph was appointed Ambassador to Great Britain in 1899 and Queen Victoria thought him loud and ill-mannered. But he and Caroline were popular among the socially elite on both sides of the Atlantic. (Some find Victorian style loud and crass in color and contrasts, I sniff.)

Daughter Mabel Choate was born 1870 into the Gilded Age, and inherited Naumkeag in 1929. She continued Caroline’s passion for the land, collaborating for 30 years with Modernist landscape architect Fletcher Steele to extend the landscape toward its marvelous vista.

Gilded Age The last 30 years of the 1800s were similar to today’s cultural clash in America. Disparity between Haves and Have-nots was great.

Post-war opportunity for White privilege was great in 1865, except in the South. Carnegie, Vanderbilt and Rockefeller built fortunes, and some of the largest houses in America were built in the Berkshires.

The newly elite celebrated their social success with elaborate estates during a non-gilded era of inequality for millions of poor European immigrants.

The Gilded term popular in the 1920-30s was coined by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner. Their 1873 book, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, mocked an era of social ills with the metaphorical “gilding” of a cheap metal by a thin layer of gold.

HOUSE Naumkeag’s steeply sloped site, 48 acres on Prospect Hill’s west side and less than a mile from Stockbridge center, was bought in 1884. The famously fanciful “cottage” with shingle siding, gabled roof, brick turrets and towering chimneys, was designed by Stanford White (of McKim, Mead & White), built 1887, and named for Joseph’s birthplace.

The house is a romanticized French farmhouse. Agricultural origins are in medieval Normandy – where farm silos became attached to houses, and fortification outweighed fenestration.

Naumkeag was a favored family home for eight months of the year, instead of the 45-day summer showplace that was many gilded mansions. Two floors of the mansion are normally open to the public; check pandemic scheduling.

GARDENS The vista was grand when the 19th Century grounds were first offered to Frederick Law Olmsted who was designing Boston’s Arnold Arboretum at the time. He wanted to move the house halfway down the hill, removing a treasured Oak (*Quercus*). He was dismissed.

Instead, Nathan Franklin Barrett, a self-taught local designer best known for his municipal work, laid out the gardens. Joseph may have liked farmer’s work, wanting to grow food with the orchard down below. Caroline wanted terraces of roses with flowering perennials and an Afternoon Garden. I imagine vista was a priority to keep the manse at the top of the hill.

Needing a tonic after our viral winter, I hoped snow would be gone, to see some early flower. Snow was gone on a gorgeous spring day in early April. Few plants seen, but trees were greening and the Berkshires were glorious.

The gate was closed, however, due to the pandemic. I was hoping to walk Under the Linden (*Tilia*), and down the Blue Steps. The Linden Walk is a tree-lined boulevard for pedestrians on the south side of the house. Wanted to find a quiet place, to reflect under the linden.

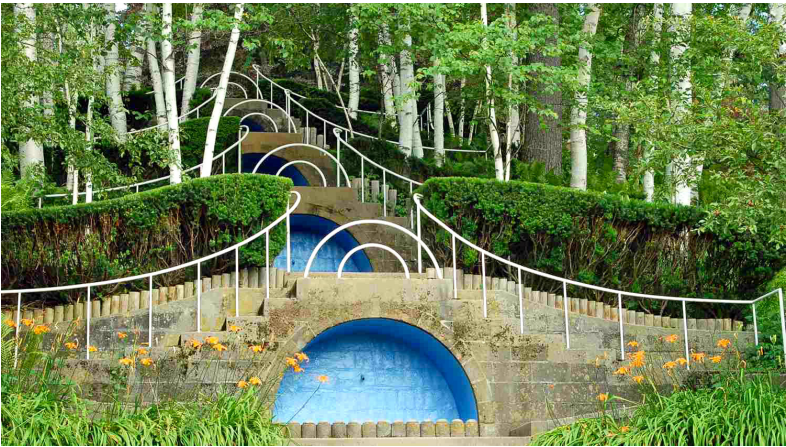
“*Unter der linden*” is a famous lyric poem -- pinnacle of the medieval German love lyric called “*Minnesang*” -- by Walther von der Vogelweide (c.1170-1230. Descendent Anne Voglewede may be playing piano somewhere in Connecticut.



Not Seen: a walled Chinese Temple Garden houses oriental art among Asian plants. Walk through the Moongate for good luck. A woodsy path winds past maple (*Acer*), pine (*Pinus*) and spruce (*Picea*) to a large statue of Diana, Roman goddess of hunting, virginity and perhaps the moon. (Diana’s Pool in Chaplin’s Natchaug River near my backyard is no relation.)



BLUE STEPS Fletcher Steele’s Art Deco design is an iconic water feature with a sharp drop of 30 feet from the Afternoon Garden fountain. Water runs to the steps through a runnel (channel) in the patio and descends sixty steps shaded by whitebarked birch trees, through four deep blue fountain pools along the stairway down to the lower meadow level. (Steps are steep with no railing on one side, so careful with children.)



From the distant (closed) gate, the tall trees appeared to be our native Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) reaching 60 feet, black marks on bark with age. It was introduced 1750 and available in the 1930s.

Whitebarked birch is my favorite tree. I’ve planted a small grove of three genera at my home, “Chapel of the Birch”, since 2018. Nonflowering, but the bark is showy every season all year long.



Fortunately, it was easy to see the grand vista was preserved. A broad meadow slopes down the hill from the Blue Steps, to an orchard and family cemetery at the bottom.

I wanted to step out upon the lower meadow, toward the cemetery -- nearer my God that is Nature to thee in the Housatonic Valley, an elite destination in itself. Another time.

IF YOU GO GPS: 5 Prospect Hill Road, Stockbridge, MA. 100 miles from Connecticut’s Last Green Valley. Drive west on Route 44 past Hartford. Turn right on Route 7 north into Stockbridge Mass. Route 8 is most interesting. Faster on the interstates (I-395 north to I-90 west).

The Berkshire Botanical Garden and Norman Rockwell Museum are near Naumkeag; Tanglewood and The Mount at Lenox are slightly farther.

A fascinating if longer return loop continues on Route 7 north, then right on Route 2 east to Shelburne Falls’ Bridge of Flowers and 50 glacial potholes, one a world record 39-feet.

Worth overnight stays in better days.

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Chaplin, Master gardener / designer and wanderer.
Photos by the author or contributed.

Cambera Farm Bakery

A Weekend-Only Willimantic Delight



At left: Cori Antignani checks temperature of the baking bread loaves. At right: Cori and Kiera and the fruit of their labor at the CLiCK kitchen in Windham.

Article and photos by Calen Nakash

A pair of talented sisters have opened up a weekend doughnut and bakery shop on Main Street in Willimantic. Cambera Farm’s official opening was on Saturday, April 24th, with a grand ribbon cutting giving way to the smell of fresh, sourdough doughnuts ranging from boston cream to apple pie. Cori Antignani moved to CT from Maryland in spring of 2018, choosing a doughnut shop with her sister Kiera who lived in Boston after a series of successes selling their bread at farmers markets in Connecticut. While they only started making doughnuts last fall, the quality speaks to their combined near-decades of experience between them. A sign in the window reads “We believe love is love, black lives matter, no human is illegal,” because the sisters said they wanted everyone to feel safe and included.

The popularity of Cambera Farm started with the sisters’ first post online, garnering attention before the doors had officially opened. “Everyone went crazy, like ‘Oh my God, when are you opening and where’s your location?’” Cori said. Each weekend closer to opening day was busier and busier, and on that Saturday the sisters sold out of all of their doughnuts.

Before moving to Connecticut, Cori and Kiera lived in Maryland and operated via the Cottage Food Law, which allows businesses to sell low risk food such as bread. Because Connecticut had not yet passed this law when they arrived, the sisters needed to find a commercial location, and they chose the CLiCK kitchen in Willimantic.

The two sisters found instant popularity at Connecticut’s farmers markets, wholesaling their bread first to the Willimantic Food Coop, then to Red Barn Creamery and expanding from there. “While we were at the market, people kept asking if we could vend at their (location). Everyone was looking for bread vendors,” Kiera said.

When the pandemic hit, the winter markets were impacted. One market closed a week before the shutdown, and two others were cancelled. However, because of their connections at the Red Barn Creamery in Mansfield, Cori and Kiera were able to continue their business. They also began offering delivery, mapping out the routes to customers’ houses themselves and waking up at 6-7 am to deliver for 5 hours straight. The sisters went from selling 6 loaves of bread a week to around 80.



With their popularity cemented, Cori decided to open a restaurant in Willimantic and called Kiera, who had just been laid off at her job in Boston. Kiera had 10 years of restaurant and managerial experience. Cori had 8 years of baking experience and a farm in Hebron that sells goat milk soap, holds dairy and meat goats, a pet sheep named Herbert, meat rabbits and a retired horse. The location for Willimantic worked out due to its proximity to CLiCK. It turns out the biggest challenges ended up being working with the ovens and the buildings themselves, but eventually they got into the swing of things and made Cambera Farm what it is today. On a regular day, the sisters bake around 88 loaves of bread, but during market season that number can shoot up to 120-220. The internal temperature of each loaf is also checked with a thermometer to make sure it has a temperature of 180.

“There just aren’t enough hours in the day,” Kiera said. A normal night of baking might mean working until 1 AM, taking an hour nap and starting their special sourdough doughnuts at 3 AM.

The store is a cozy place to spend time with comfortable furniture and a heavenly fragrance. It is open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, from 8 am to 12 pm. The doughnuts are savory and fluffy, with a rotating selection. The bread is fresh and the coffee is a perfect complement on a cool spring morning. They also sell produce and soap from Cori’s farm and handmade crafts.

The sign in the window represents the need to keep Cambera Farm safe for all individuals. “Our mother’s side of the family is Jewish and came to the US after surviving Hitler and the Nazis,” Cori said, explaining that they have a heightened awareness of how fear can manipulate people. She’s especially sensitive to legal sanctions, hypocrisy in government and unequal treatment against people that are considered “different.”

“(It) seems like such a small gesture, but the underlying human struggles of what the simplified statements represent run deep. We choose to display it because we want anyone who decides to enter our shop to feel safe and comfortable without fear of negative judgment,” Cori said.

Cori and Kiera are happy to be a part of restoring positivity and helping bring Main Street back to life, and are thankful to the community for all their support. Based on the vanishing doughnuts grand opening weekend, Willimantic is thankful as well!

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Whitewashing History

By Donna Dufresne



Recently, I visited a cellar in an old colonial house which must have been used for a home industry or craft in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The stone walls had been meticulously whitewashed to reflect limited candle or lamp light, but over the past two hundred and fifty years the flaws were becoming more evident. Water stains and the darker minerals in the local granite gneiss were beginning to poke through and show their true colors. An earlier inhabitant tried to cover up these flaws, but truth has a way of bubbling to the surface.

Like that aging colonial foundation, our country has come to a place of reckoning with its past and the whitewashing of history. We can no longer hide the truth because it has been steadily eating away at our flesh and bone. It has been exposed by the historic and present-day rhetoric of white supremacists and the pustule of uber-right extremism that formed in 2016. White liberals seemed ever so shocked by the blatant hate speech spewing from the cracks of social media onto the streets, and yes, from the White House. “This is not America! This is not who we are!” we cried. But, in fact, it is exactly who we are and have been throughout history. Our black, brown, and immigrant communities have known this all too well and continue to suffer the consequences.

We Americans like to think of ourselves as resilient and optimistic. We want to believe that we live by the ideals set forth by the Constitution, in the land of opportunity and dreams, the “give me your tired and poor.” Yet our darker angels continue to boil to the surface, demanding our attention. It’s about time that we unite as a country and face down the ugly beast which has driven the cogs in our wheelhouse since the first enslaved Africans arrived in 1619. We cannot solve the problem of systemic racism unless we acknowledge that it exists, and the first step is to break through the white-washed wall of denial that keeps it in place.

Racism is not a Southern problem. It is not limited to the KKK, nor is it the banner of the rural poor or a badge of ignorance. It is not someone *else’s* character flaw. It is *us*. Even the white, highly educated, middle class of New England cannot escape it because we have always been complicit in holding structural racism in place. From the beginning of the slave trade, where New England’s wealth was built, to the present-day institutions of finance and education, Northern complicity and denial have helped to perpetuate an apartheid society. Real estate redlining, inaccessible mortgages and loans, substandard housing, underfunded schools (the pipeline to prison in a cracked justice system), and a failing health system have contributed to the widening race and wealth gap. But the buck doesn’t stop there.

Much of white America turned a blind eye to the racist and nativist agenda in the campaign of 2016, but feigned shock when the white nationalist base of the Republican Party pledged its loyalty to Donald Trump and stormed the Capitol in an act of sedition. Yet while many of us rallied around Black Lives Matter after the shooting of George Floyd tipped the scales of “wokeness,” some continued to behave like fragile children with their retaliatory taunts “Blue lives matter” and “All lives matter.” We are told that by exposing the truth, *we* are dividing the country—as if ignoring the facts or throwing a coat of paint on them will make them go away.

Another example of fragile white reactivity can be seen in the conservative zeitgeist around so-called cancel culture. Unfortunately, “Cancel culture!” has become the battle cry of the culture wars and has mutated into an attack on how American history is taught and whose story is told. Distortion and disinformation have a way of dismantling democracy in a society that has lost respect for science and facts. The fact is that the teaching of history has been highly manipulated by viewing it through a white and sometimes white supremacist lens. We need to strengthen the lens so that we can see all the multifaceted details that brought us to this time and place.

And what is this time and place? In the words of George Santayana, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The four years of the Trump regime and the decades leading up to it are our condemnation. The rise of hate groups and white supremacy, the blatant racism and resistance to justice and equity may not have emerged had we been vigilant about teaching a complete American history. While public schools were distracted by high-stakes testing and collection of data, many dropped history from the K–6 curricula, leaving it to the discretion of teachers and their pet projects. As a result, generations of Americans are divested from their history and care little for serious discourse or justice.

This neglect rendered us incapable of recognizing the dog whistles of nativism and racism in the rhetoric of the former occupant of the White House. It also helped to cultivate the recent antics of Marjorie Taylor Greene, whose America First Caucus proposed that we return to teaching the white, Anglo-Saxon version of history which “made America great.” In other words, a government by the white people for the white people only.

Unfortunately, the whitewashed version of history has obscured the true story of America, so rich in diversity. It has left out the understory of Native peoples, enslaved Africans, and immigrants. It has skimmed over the mistakes and flawed policies of our leaders and ignored the resistance and resilience of the American people who have carried the destiny of this nation on their backs. The consequence of whitewashing history is the erosion of trust and a deeply furrowed divide. The likes of the Heritage Foundation and the uber right would have us believe that telling the truth, facing our demons, and embracing our flaws is anti-American. But what could be more patriotic than to know our past, the good, the bad, and the ugly? If we truly love our country and our heritage, we will show the world that we are willing to embrace the full story of American history and engage in a discourse that will solve problems in the future. Hiding the truth of our past prevents us from living up to our ideals. After all, if you don’t see the cracks in the wall, the foundation will crumble.

My America

By Vincent Iovine, Jr.

Like so many Americans, born and raised in this country, I was so accustomed to the freedoms inherent to being a citizen that I had begun to take these rights for granted. Consider our right to independent thinking and self rule, the autonomy to live as privately or as publicly as we wish, the unfettered opportunity to fulfill our hopes for the future and realize a dream becoming a reality no matter how outlandish, the right to an education and preparation in a field of our choice. The unfortunate reality, however, is that, historically, these, “birthrights” have been, and continue to be denied to a significant percentage of Americans whose skin color, ethnic background, religion or nontraditional life style invites the ignorance and cruelty of racial bias and social targeting.

While these freedoms, and countless others, define us as Americans, the foundation of this country and its philosophy is the obligation of each and every one of us to be a conscientious citizen and execute our responsibilities as identified in our Constitution, to remember the promise of Abraham Lincoln when he spoke of, “...a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”, (Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863 on the battlefield near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.); to fulfill the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King that all races, “...will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.” (August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom)

America is, and has always been, a world community, counting every culture and every country among its numbers. America’s identity is dependent upon its creed that welcomes all who seek a better life, who wish to contribute in a positive way to enhancing the traditions of this free, independent, yet imperfect society, this dynamic blend of humanity that enters as strangers, filled with hope, but quickly becomes an integral thread in the fabric of American culture.

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, ...”

(The New Colossus, by Emma Lazarus, 1883 on a bronze plaque inside the base of the Statue of Liberty).

America is the Doughboys of, “The War To End All Wars”. America is the millions of men, women and children, in and out of uniform from all countries, all cultures and all ethnic groups, “The Greatest Generation”, who banded together to win World War II.

America is the hundreds of thousands of young men and women who fought bravely in a thankless war in Vietnam, returning home to a welcome of antagonism and ridicule, but still managing to make their contribution, however small, to the American dream.

America is Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and all of the many other unknown, unacknowledged, “secret” conflicts in regions of this earth where American service men and women stand watch so that the citizens of these countries feel the presence of that safety net to live their lives as they wish, confident that America has their back

We remember these millions of young men and women who have answered the call to fight and continue to fight, bravely in all of America’s wars, often in obscurity, frequently paying the ultimate price for the freedoms I and many like me ashamedly took for granted for so long and which we continue to deny to so many. Combat is the great equalizer; it sees not color, ethnicity, religion, nor lifestyle, only commitment, honor and courage. Once experienced, we all are brothers and sisters ready to share in the life for which so much was sacrificed.

America is the many volunteers, at home and abroad, who bring humanity and hope to the forgotten, the suffering, the poor, victims of manmade and natural disasters that occur every day in every corner of the globe, not seeking recognition, but dedicated to sharing their strength to those weakened and demoralized by the indifference often associated with life.

America is: the Italian stone masons who built the magnificent mansions of Newport, Rhode Island, the 3,400 workers, predominantly European immigrants and Mohawk iron workers, who risked their lives at dizzying heights raising, fitting and riveting the steel skeleton of the Empire State Building in 1931; the thousands of unsung, unknown heroes of dozens of nationalities who celebrated the completion of America’s first Trans Continental Railroad on May 10, 1869, at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory.

Picture the solitary gentleman, in work clothes, brimmed hat and common shoes, faithfully trudging the streets of New York, of Chicago, of Detroit, Boston and hundreds of other cities and towns across this land with his pushcart of fruits and vegetables living in isolation to send money back to his family in the old country.

America is my grandfather, Michael Panucci, a decorated, but humble World War I hero, who could speak no English but came here just before Mussolini closed Italy’s borders and worked as a Block Carpenter at Electric Boat on third shift for more than twenty five years, helping to build and launch the submarines that defeated Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo.

America is my father, Vincent Sr. a 17 year old “Dreamer” who traveled steerage, from Naples, Italy to work in his brother’s grocery store in New Haven, CT, learn English, complete night school, become an American citizen and gain acceptance to Yale University’s School of Art.

America is my mother, Maria who was sent to our shores as a teenager, promised in an arrangement to my father, in marriage, a union of faith and fidelity that lasted 33 years producing four children who were blessed with parents who knew what sacrifice was, who understood that obstacles were really opportunities in disguise.

America is all of these things, and more, but it is not perfect, just human, compassionate, supportive, accepting. America’s strength is all of its goals, achievements, beliefs, weaknesses and imperfections. America is real, a symbol of new beginnings, of second chances, of a future filled with hope, but the true America knows it is a work in progress and as long as it keeps its eye on that work, its progress will far out way its failures. It is all up us. We are America.

Vincent Iovine, Jr. is a Vietnam Combat Veteran and U.S. Army Special Forces Trained Medic.
Most recently, Mr. ‘I’ served as Theater Director at Windham High School in Willimantic, CT for a total of 13 years staging 28 stage productions, 14 of which were Musicals, retiring in December 2016 after 32 years as a Junior and Senior High School English/Journalism Teacher and Drama Director.

Mutual Aid? It’s Coming Your Way

By Len Krimerman with Elena Stone

You may have already encountered it in February’s *Neighbors* paper, on page 8. There you would have found Steve Thornton’s provocative article, “Apoyo Mutuo, Mutual Aid Emerges in Hartford, CT.” According to this initiative, mutual aid means that “every member has the opportunity to give and to take, as needed, no questions asked. This is people helping people.... The intention is to decentralize power and put control in the hands of our community. It’s not charity; it’s solidarity.”

Steve puts it another way: “...these activists are building a new world in the shell of the old.” His view might seem extreme or exaggerated, but consider this statement by Ariel Aberg-Riger of Bloomberg CityLab:

2020 was a year of crisis. A year of isolation. A year of protest. And, a year of mutual aid. From meal deliveries to sewing squads, childcare collectives to legal aid, neighbors and strangers opened their wallets, offered their skills, volunteered their time and joined together in solidarity to support one another.

Aberg-Riger goes on to note that “tens of thousands of mutual aid networks and projects have emerged around the world” since the beginning of the pandemic. That’s according to educator, abolitionist, and organizer Mariame Kaba, who a year ago joined Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to create Mutual Aid 101, an online toolkit that enables people to organize their own buildings, neighborhoods, communities, towns, and cities utilizing their own mutual aid networks. Indeed, what is happening in our state is connected to a much wider mutual aid resurgence, one that embraces a variety of activities that aid and engage struggling communities on the global, national, and local level.

But has any of this reached us out here in the Quiet Corner(s) of eastern Connecticut? Steve Thornton’s article about mutual aid in the Hartford area and beyond offers much food for thought about this. What we do know is that there are *many diverse* mutual aid enterprises working throughout Connecticut. One particularly thoughtful effort is called CT Mutual Aid:East of the River, and it seems open to working with folks from Vernon, Willimantic, and other eastward towns.

East of the River is a collaboration between two organizations: the African American and Black Affairs Council (AABAC) and Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community – Manchester (USIC). Their joint effort was born in large part of the realization that while people in need were confronted with similar problems, *they were facing them in isolation*. The creative model they sought was one that would use community conversation and engagement to help people realize they “have the power and resources to take care of themselves and their families.”

In their own words:

We felt that providing an opportunity for community members to come together and share information & experiences would create a means for emotional support and lead to better, more community-informed solutions. We also wanted to explore alternative approaches to economic systems which could lead to creative solutions, grounded in the resources that the community has to offer as well.

Through a document they call “Philosophical Underpinnings,” East of the River attempts to strengthen ongoing relationships between neighbors based on trust and common interests, who collectively decide how to share and pool resources. Some of this takes shape in the form of unique “beliefs” and “values” that reveal their support and their commitments to each other. For example, they believe “everyone has something to offer and everyone has things

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

that they need. No one knows everything but together we know a lot. Needing things is not a personal failure; we are living in a profoundly unequal society.”

In the iterative practice of this experiment, the group maintains, every person deserves dignity and stability in their lives. “No matter why someone is reaching out, we do our best to support them... This is an experiment, and we are flexible: learning from our mistakes, redesigning our systems as we go, and building our muscles of decentralized organizing. We remain committed to each other, even when we mess up.”

Adapting part of what they have learned from the Movement for Black Lives, East of the River chooses to slow down to build trust and maintain accountability to each other. And ultimately, they center racial justice, noting:

We know that wealth and safety nets have been systematically taken apart for people of color over generations, leaving people more vulnerable in crises like this. We commit to mutual aid support as a form of resource redistribution and weaving of a new community-held safety net for all.

Apoyo Mutuo and East of the River are not the only mutual aid networks to surface in Connecticut. Other initiatives have emerged in almost all parts of our state, from the largest cities to our smaller towns. Nationwide, this recent emergence is far from unique. If you check out the Mutual Aid Hub’s Table of Networks (<https://www.mutualaidhub.org/table-of-networks>), you’ll find an immense interstate list—close to ten thousand—of mutual aid groups from Alaska to Florida. (When we first learned of this list back in 2020, it was roughly 40% smaller, a good sign that new mutual aid enterprises are still on the rise.) Mutual aid networks are also emerging in many other countries, e.g., Belgium, England, and Germany (see <https://mutualaid.wiki/>).

Connecticut’s share of this budding movement consists of a dozen or more mutual aid networks. Some states, including Massachusetts, California, Illinois, and Vermont, have two or three or even ten times that many. Nevertheless, Connecticut’s mutual aiders have established something that many of the larger states lack.

Looking over the Mutual Aid Hub’s Table of Networks, we found that almost all of them are self-described as singular initiatives, working without direct connection to other mutual aid networks within their state. Connecticut, on the other hand, has enabled a number of diverse

networks to join and collaborate together, including efforts in Hartford, Waterbury, Middletown, and New Haven. It gets even better, as several smaller towns have joined the original four, including Norwalk, Milford, Bridgeport, Stratford, and New London, as well as Apoyo Mutuo (East Hartford) and East of the River (Manchester).

Back in late January, a Zoom conference brought together representatives from many different Connecticut mutual aid enterprises. Collaboration was taking place in a number of arenas, including food assistance and security, as Bridgeport folks worked with East of the River to determine the best ways to gather and package resources, and many others were establishing community gardens, food pantries, or connections to farmers. Multiple groups of the Cancel the Rents coalition focused on the housing crisis, on stopping the notorious evictions, empowering tenants to obtain legal aid and counsel, and strongly suggesting that *every mutual aid network* train one person to door knock and outreach. (It’s important to note that only 7% of tenants in Connecticut have legal representation, compared to more than 80% of landlords.)

To nurture the mutual aid movement in our corner of the state, we need to connect with each other. In that spirit, folks in northeastern Connecticut who are already engaged in mutual aid enterprises, or who would be open to considering a role in forming a new enterprise of this sort, are invited to contact Len at lenisageo@gmail.com or (860) 918-8709. Let’s help this important movement grow together!

A final question: Why has mutual aid recently become so amazingly alive in so many different places? Perhaps this is a case of crisis giving rise to opportunity. With the multiple crises of the coronavirus, systemic racism, and climate change converging in the public consciousness and people’s daily lives, the emergence of grassroots efforts that bring neighbors and communities together on their own behalf is a positive and powerful sign for the future of participatory democracy.

Perhaps so, but why would people be drawn so readily and so diversely to mutual aid? We’ll look at this in our next article...

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By EC-CHAP

May

*“May, more than any other month of the year,
wants us to feel most alive.”*

- Fennel Hudson

Happy May!

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.

As indicated last month, 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. This month we will highlight the artists that will be opening our season and performing during the month of September. These include the acoustic duo, “Twice Around” with local singer songwriter, Curtis Brand; and Ramblin’ Dan Stevens, CT based Blues artist.

EC-CHAP is seeking applicants for our Artist-In-Residence (AIR) Program. Currently, the Artist Residency is for a term of one (1) year, with possible renewal. Program details and application will be available by May 1st at: <https://www.ec-chap.org/artist-in-residence>.

The Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery and the Gardiner Hall Jr History Museum will be closed during the month of May. Please check our website for details. We will provide an update in the June issue of the Neighbors Paper.

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 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.

We will continue to stream our Virtual Talent Showcase on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm through September. We plan to resume our LIVE monthly Talent Showcase on Wednesday, October 13th! Please consider participating by sharing your talent, or just join us to see and hear local and regional creatives sharing their talent (see details below). Our next Virtual Talent Showcase is scheduled to stream at 7:00pm, Wednesday, May 12th (all files must be received by Wednesday, May 5th).

We leave you with the following:

*“Success is not final, failure is not fatal:
it is the courage to continue that counts.”*

- Winston Churchill

May your May Be Merry!
EC-CHAP Board

SEPTEMBER 2021 HIGHLIGHTS AT THE PACKING HOUSE

“Twice Around” with Curtis Brand (Folk/Indie). 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. They will be joined by local singer songwriter Curtis Brand, famous for his “Older Than Dirt” CD, who will kick off the evening.

TWICE AROUND is an acoustic duo equipped with a couple of guitars, their voices and a grand love of music. Their self-crafted songs tell stories of the heart (sometimes broken, sometimes full) and walking your own

path. Longtime friends Frank Veres and Luisa Tanno have been making music together since 1996. They started in a 10-piece Funk band, then in a harmonious trio that eventually became a duo. Much of their music-making has been in Frank’s basement recording studio where they tinker and play to their heart’s content revealing their efforts onstage and in three full length CDs of original music.



They may be considered 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.

Over the decades they have gone through cycles of performing every weekend and cycles of performing a few times a year, but never have they been away from audiences, and each other, for this long. Like all of us, they’ve missed the singular connection that happens when sharing the experience of live music, especially in true listening spaces such as The Packing House. An evening with them includes original music, stories in between songs and a real affection for their audience. You can get a preview of their music by visiting the listening page of their website: <https://twice-around.net/listen-buy>.



CURTIS BRAND traces his musical roots back to the Weavers and Josh White, with more contemporary influences from Harry Chapin, Jim Croce, Kris Kristofferson and Willy Nelson. Curtis freely admits that the core of his music is the words. Curtis would say, “The words have a rhythm of their own”, and the creative task he undertakes is to tell a story in which the rhythm of the words and the rhythm of the music match. When you hear Curtis for the first time, you won’t recognize most of the songs. While he will occasionally do a cover of a song by Woody Guthrie or Willie Nelson, most of his performance songs are his own creations which explore the joys, challenges, and side effects of life. Curtis views his music as an extension of his life’s work, helping people he meets by sharing the stories of real people and their time on the planet. “I think that’s what Woody was doing,” he says, “and that’s a pretty good example to follow.”

A review of his music by Susan Price Dziedzic noted “Spending an evening with singer/songwriter/storyteller Curtis Brand leaves one with that peaceful, easy

feeling of a barefoot summer’s evening; of relaxing on the back porch in a pair of faded old jeans, favorite beverage in hand, surrounded by best friends. His music, his stories, and even the essence of the man himself, just put folks into a state of laid-back easiness.”

Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

“Ramblin’ Dan Stevens” (Blues). Saturday, September 25th, 7:30pm.



At the young age of sixteen, DAN STEVEN’S romantic streak was ignited by his first guitar teacher in small town central Pennsylvania who told him stories about the lives of traveling blues musicians like Mississippi John Hurt and Fred McDowell. After being inspired by Woody Guthrie’s book, “Bound for Glory”, the magnetic lure of the road captured his imagination and with a driving passion he hitchhiked and hopped freight trains, guitar in hand across the United States five times, eventually covering over 100,000 miles.

Always seeking diverse experiences, he has worked as a teacher in Pennsylvania and Arizona, a rock climbing instructor in New Mexico, broke his collarbone riding bulls in Colorado and sailed schooners for a living on the Eastern seaboard. He lived full time on his own wooden sloop in Mystic CT for a couple of years while performing solo up and down the East Coast. A highlight of this period was sailing throughout Central and South America as mate aboard David Crosby’s (Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young) sailboat, the Mayan.

Musically, Dan continued to hone his guitar skills taking lessons from renowned acoustic guitarist and W.C. Handy Award winner Paul Rishell, who taught him how to play slide. Later, he was blessed to study with Greenwich Village based folk/blues icon Dave Van Ronk during the last years of Van Ronk’s storied life. His repertoire reflects the influence of his revered teachers who actually knew and performed with many of the legendary blues masters. His tastes include delta blues “bottleneck slide” tunes, the more carefree piedmont style, and arrangements comprised of complex orchestration with plenty of chord changes up the neck in the spirit of Dave Van Ronk. His originals remain true to the traditional forces which powerfully shaped his early musical development and prompt listeners to praise the authenticity of his approach.

As a full time professional musician since 1991, Dan continues to tour incessantly along the East Coast, U.S. Virgin Islands, U.K., Germany and Canada. He has appeared with such artists as Johnny Winter, James Cotton, Charlie Musselwhite, Arlo Guthrie, Richie Havens, Charlie Daniels, Livingston Taylor, Ronnie Earl, and others. An irrepressible guitar collector, Dan surrounds himself with vintage and custom instruments acquired in his many travels. Usually packing three guitars, any given performance may find him choosing to play a Gibson J-200, 1950’s Sears Silvertone, a 1931 National Steel, a retro lime green Resophonic, and more.

Dan’s most recent CD, “Dirt Floor Sessions”, has been described as having a real, raw, rockin’ feel with songs encompassing sounds from his major influences. Several cuts are interpretations of intricate finger style arrangements learned directly from mentor Dave Van Ronk. Others invoke the spirit of the delta through his newfound interest in primitive homemade instruments, specifically the 3 stringed cigar box guitar and one stringed diddley bow. Rounded out with Dan’s originals and the addition in just the right spots of tuba, clarinet, lap steel and percussion, the disc is a true snapshot of his musical evolution.

Termed “Connecticut’s hardest working bluesman” by the New York Times in 2002, he plays over 200 engagements a year, including concerts, clubs, festivals, coffeehouses, community and private events and educational programs. He has appeared at Long Island’s Riverhead Blues Festival; the Berlin Blues Festival in Connecticut; was the closer in the acoustic section of the Fleet Blues Festival in Albany, New York and Pennsylvania’s Harry Smith Festival. Dan was a finalist at the International Blues Challenge ‘08 on Beale Street in Memphis TN with

partner Chris D’Amato and has been chosen to be included on the roster of the Music Under New York program enabling him to perform in prime locations throughout the MTA system such as Times Square and Grand Central Station. He is also endorsed by Connecticut’s State Arts Commission and the New England Foundation for the Arts. He lives on the shoreline in Old Lyme, Connecticut with his wife Gail and daughter, Haley.

Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

EC-CHAP ACOUSTIC ARTIST SERIES

“An Evening with Singer/Songwriter & Keyboardist Bob Malone” (Rock/R&B). Saturday, October 2nd, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$25.00 online / \$30.00 at the door.



“AJ Jansen featuring The Outlaw Women of Country Music Show” (Country). Saturday, October 23rd, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

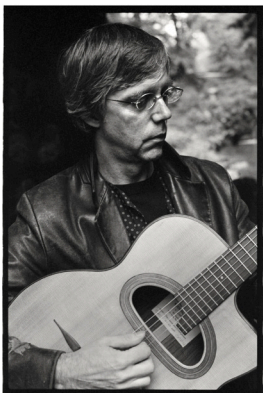


AJ Jansen (left) and Tracy Walton.

“Eric Sommer” (Blues/Americana). Saturday, November 20th, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

“Tracy Walton” (Folk/Indie). Saturday, December 4th, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

EC-CHAP JAZZ SERIES



Greg Abate, Luke Hendon and Nicole Zuraitis (l-r).

“Greg Abate Quartet” (Bee-Bop). Saturday, October 9th, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$25.00 online / \$30.00 at the door.

“Luke Hendon” (Gypsy Jazz). Saturday, November 6th, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.

“An Intimate Evening with Grammy Nominee Nicole Zuraitis (A Holiday Theme). Saturday, December 18th, 7:30pm. Tickets: \$25.00 online / \$30.00 at the door.

EC-CHAP SPECIAL PROGRAM

“An Evening with Spiritual Medium Maura Geist”.

Tickets: \$20.00 online / \$25.00 at the door.



EC-CHAP VIRTUAL TALENT SHOWCASE

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 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, May 12th (all files must be received by Wednesday, May 5th). Visit www.thepackinghouse.us/ upcoming for general details.

EC-CHAP FILM SERIES

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.

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



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

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

Tickets, Reservations, CANCELLATIONS, and Contact

Tickets for all shows and program registrations for the Fall are available for purchase online 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).

An Old White Horse

We used to pass him by from time to time
An old white horse out in his field alone
No farm or house nearby, a woodland road
A place where maybe once a house had stood
But it was gone, and still the horse remained.

Eventually we stopped to visit him
His fence was strung with just a piece of string
He didn’t come to see us, so we put
An apple down for him and drove away.

But after that he knew us when we stopped
He came to get his apple by the fence
Standing solemnly behind his string
How tall he was, how deep and dark his eyes
How old, the oldest horse I’d ever seen;

Unbrushed but not uncared for, glad to see us
But not effusive in his friendliness
Though one day he seemed cheered by seeing us
And kicked his heels up in a little dance
A little frolic in an ancient horse
Truly unbelievable to see.

Swaybacked he was, with wispy mane and tail
But beautiful in ancient dignity.

Kathy O. LaVallee, North Windham

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To all our contributors-
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Without your submissions of writing, poetry, artwork and photographs, this paper would not exist. T. King, Publisher



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The Elements of Writing-

Protagonist & Antagonist

By Felix F. Giordano

In writing, as in life itself, there is a yin and a yang. These opposing forces in a novel, short story, or even in a poem are the protagonist and the antagonist. Traditionally, the protagonist is the hero and the antagonist is the villain. The protagonist is whom we cheer for and the antagonist is whom we despise.

The antagonist is the protagonist’s main obstacle to the goal or resolution to the story. That creates a conflict which is storytelling’s universal attraction. Usually the protagonist is a person, living or dead, young or old, male or female, historical or contemporary. The same goes for the antagonist although sometimes the antagonist can be a non-person. That is, the non-person antagonist can be bureaucracy (the IRS), pure evil (the devil), a monster (think Godzilla) or even an impending event like a wedding, a mortgage payment, or a sporting event against a superior opponent. What drives the relationship between the protagonist and antagonist is this concept of conflict which we will cover in next month’s issue. It’s this conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist that creates the yin and yang in the story. The conflict can be physical, monetary, or even psychological.

For many works of literature the protagonist and the antagonist can be easily identified. For instance, in the *Wizard of Oz* we recognize Dorothy as the protagonist. We identify with her as a misunderstood teenager with the weight of the world on her shoulders. The Wicked Witch of the West is clearly the antagonist and we recognize that not only by her loathsome dialogue and her physical repulsiveness but also by her cackle, her green fire-bombs, and her hoard of flying monkeys. In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* we see that both Romeo and Juliet, as star-struck lovers, can be considered coprotagonists. We immediately sense their attraction for one another and hope that they will survive the obstacles placed before them. One of those obstacles is the antagonist, Tybalt, a member of Juliet’s family (Capulet) that has a longstanding feud with Romeo’s family (Montague).

However, in some stories the identity of the protagonist or antagonist can be convoluted. My all-time favorite author Jules Verne, in his classic novel, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, introduces the protagonist as Professor Lidenbrock. In fact the entire expedition is named after him. But can we say for sure who the antagonist is? Why, it’s the bowels of the Earth itself which not only tosses Professor Lidenbrock around as if he were simply a towel in a washing machine but then unceremoniously spits him right out.

The use of a nonperson as the antagonist is not an uncommon thing in literature. Take for example the book, *Death Be Not Proud* by John Gunther. His son is the protagonist but the antagonist is his son’s brain cancer. Also, in the book *Kon-Tiki*, the author Thor Heyerdahl is the protagonist but the antagonist is the vastness of the Pacific Ocean and the journey that the raft, Kon-Tiki has to undertake.

Sometimes the protagonist can later become the antagonist in the story and vice versa. Take for example Charles Dickens’ novella, *A Christmas Carol*. In the beginning, Dickens makes good use of portraying Ebenezer Scrooge as the antagonist. Dickens exemplifies that by having Scrooge demoralize, demean, and humiliate his loyal and only employee, Bob Cratchit. But then we are introduced to the ghost of Scrooge’s former business partner, Bob Marley. That is when we begin to realize that Scrooge may not be the antagonist we all thought he was. Through further examination we begin to realize that not only is Scrooge actually the protagonist but he is so much like every one of us when we forget about what is really important in life and that is human interaction, companionship, and goodwill unto others. We then realize that the true antagonist in *A Christmas Carol* is not a person at all but instead six of the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, and gluttony. Fortunately, Mister Scrooge overcomes them all by the end of the novella.

When developing your protagonist and antagonist for your story, please take a moment, and consider how you want to portray them. Usually, you want your protagonist to win in the end but if you make your antagonist weak or less formidable, the reader may even correctly guess how the story will end. Give your antagonist a quality that creates a challenge to the protagonist. Make the protagonist battle for everything that’s worth fighting for.

Please refer back to the May 2020 issue of *Neighbors* and my submission titled, *Creating Believable and Enduring Characters*. That article will help you define your characters and develop the attributes of your protagonist and antagonist.

The last thing that I wanted to discuss regarding protagonists and antagonists goes back to the example of yin and yang. But this time use the concept of yin and yang to separate your story into sections, sort of like rounds in a prize fight. Consider the popular Clint Eastwood movie, *Dirty Harry*. In that film, Inspector Harry Callahan, the protagonist, plays a cat and mouse game with the antagonist, the Scorpio Killer. In some confrontations, Harry gets the best of Scorpio and in others Scorpio gains the upper hand. If you employ this back and forth yin and yang, it will keep your readers guessing what will happen next. It will also make your readers wonder who will be the last one standing at the end of your story, the protagonist, or the antagonist.

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

Felix F. Giordano is a local author with books sales in excess of 7,000 and has had more than 3 million pages of his books read by Amazon Kindle Unlimited subscribers. His website is jbnovels.com.

Next Month’s Topic: Conflict

‘Completely Connecticut Agriculture’ Explores the Creativity and Resilience of Connecticut Farmers



Contributed photos from Assawaga Farm in Putnam.

Submitted by Stacey Stearn

It’s easy to take our food supply for granted while strolling through the abundant aisles of a grocery store. We do not often consider how our food gets to the store or where it comes from. A group of students in UConn’s College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR) is bridging the communication gap between agriculture and consumers in their documentary film, *Completely Connecticut Agriculture*.

Zachary Duda, Jonathan Russo, and Alyson Schneider are agricultural advocates and vocalize the importance of the industry while inspiring others to do the same. All three are CAHNR Agriculture and Natural Resources majors, graduating in May. The students met as high school agriscience students, and later served together as state officers in the Connecticut FFA Association. The idea for the documentary about Connecticut agriculture formed while they were state officers. They received an IDEA grant from the UConn Office of Undergraduate Research to complete the film project. Production began in the fall of 2019 and culminated with the release on April 8th on their website <http://s.uconn.edu/ctagriculture>. The documentary is free for anyone to watch.

Each of the farms featured in the documentary offers a unique perspective on Connecticut agriculture through their efforts to secure a sustainable food supply, reconnect with consumers, and produce uncommon commodities. Agricultural innovation has allowed each farm to expand their vibrant business model.

A sustainable food supply forms the foundation of practices adopted on farms. “Environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are two huge challenges facing agriculture today,” says Zachary Duda, ’21 (CAHNR). “We need to figure out how to craft a more sustainable food supply, while keeping a watchful eye on our environment, habitats, and ecosystems. Our farmers support the environment with their practices; they are stewards of the land and are helping craft a more sustainable food supply for future generations.”

The farms featured for their innovation in creating a sustainable food supply include Sub-Edge Farm in Farmington, Assawaga Farm in Putnam, The Farm in Woodbury, and Freund’s Farm in East Canaan. Each offers unique innovations in their farming practices, whether through no-till, drip irrigation, soil health initiatives, cover crops, or integrated pest management. These practices improve the environment and our biodiversity. Producers then communicate these sustainable innovations to their consumers.

“There must be a sense of trust between consumers and producers in our food system,” Alyson Schneider, ’21 (CAHNR) says. “Every generation is further removed from the farm and therefore less aware of food production systems. Throughout Connecticut, producers are working day

and night to ensure that their consumers put a face and family to their food, and provide us with nutritious, locally grown products.”

The documentary features Stone Gardens Farm in Shelton, Common Ground High School in New Haven, the 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm in Bloomfield, and Arrowhead Acres in North Franklin for their work re-connecting consumers to agriculture. Through the documentary, we learn about their educational outreach. They connect with consumers and adapt farm outreach to meet their needs. The farms differentiate themselves with events, products, and their locations. Differentiation means that consumers remember the face connected with their food supply.

“Change is certain, inevitable, and ultimately good,” Jonathan Russo, ’21 (CAHNR) says. “Our producers here in Connecticut face challenges every day. Yet, no challenge is as great as meeting the constantly changing needs of the consumer. By incorporating various markets under the umbrella of agritourism, our farms and farm families bring us many experiences. Our producers are doing everything they can to keep up with the times and prosper.”

Uncommon commodities further connect agriculture and consumers, as the farms offer experiences and products that are not readily available – whether that’s pick-your-own flowers, an event venue, or unique food products. Farms featured in the documentary for their uncommon commodities are March Farm in Bethlehem, Bush Meadow Farm in Union, and Podunk Popcorn & Dzen Tree Farm in South Windsor.

Zachary, Alyson, and Jonathan traveled around the state filming *Completely Connecticut Agriculture*. Their documentary showcases the diversity that comes from our farms and the dedication of the producers. Farmers are a vital part of our community and the stewards of our future food system. The students share their own and our farmers devotion to agriculture through the lens of these 11 farms. Connecticut has 5,500 farms statewide – in addition to those featured in this documentary. Look a little closer at the products available in the grocery store or visit one of the many farms in our state. Connecticut agricultural producers are helping to ensure that we have a nutritious, local food supply.

Learn more about *Completely Connecticut Agriculture* at <http://s.uconn.edu/ctagriculture> or watch the documentary at <https://youtu.be/HxLytSgnV5o>. This project is supported by the IDEA grant program in the UConn Office of Undergraduate Research and UConn CAHNR Extension. Programs delivered by Extension reach individuals, communities, and businesses in each of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities. UConn Extension educators work with the agricultural operations featured in the documentary and throughout the state to help them adopt innovative practices and create a sustainable food supply.

This article was originally published on UConn Today.

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Go to neighborspaper.com for link to current and past editions.
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When Bad is Good

By Dan McGinley

In the opening scenes of Terry Pratchett’s Good Omens (Amazon series), the angel Aziraphale is listening to a demon named Crowley, who - as a serpent - tempts Eve with the infamous apple. Aziraphale is the guardian of Eden, and a servant of God.



Crowley wonders aloud why God would set-up such a test, and make the forbidden fruit so easily assessable. He thinks it’s unfair and cruel, and questions why Aziraphale was instructed to look the other way.

“What if I did the right thing with the whole ‘Eat the apple’ business?” Crowley asks him. “A demon can get into a lot of trouble for doing the right thing. It’d be funny if we both got it wrong, eh? If I did the good thing and you did the bad one.”

It understandably freaks the angel out a little, and there were many such games played by God besides the apple if you follow such things. Kill your son for me, build an arc, check out this burning bush, etc. I mean, there are a lot of questions if you don’t succumb to blind faith.

Blind. Faith. This brings in ethics and morality, which most of us deal with countless times before death, and sometimes even right at the very moment of death, like . . . “Really? Did I just dive in front of this speeding truck to save a puppy and now . . . dead? Looking back, it may have actually been a stuffed toy. Can we please have a reset?” [Eternal nothingness ensues.]

If that happened already, it’s too late for review, and you’re probably not reading this, but who knows? Afterlife could be a thing.

So there are definitely times when bad is good and good is bad. Sometimes you have to step away from rules and regulations assumed to be fair and just. Sometimes you have to go rogue. Commando. No undies.

There’s another series playing (Netflix) called The Lost Pirate Kingdom, which is really a documentary filmed as a dramatic reenactment, with some creative license thrown in for good measure, yet they stick to general historical facts.

Those facts can turn your head around, concerning an overall egalitarian pirate republic in the Caribbean that was far more just than other powerful governments of the time.

For instance, to be a common sailor in Great Britain’s Royal Navy was to put your life at risk, because your life was considered fairly worthless. Beatings, torture, and sexual assault were common place, for very little wages and a chance to get rickets or STS. There were no cures for STS in the early 1700s, other than a deadly shot of mercury where it hurts most. Good times, good times . . .

In comparison to standard navies, the Caribbean pirates had a very democratic system which was actually a loose foundation for what would later become our Constitution, whereas all men onboard were treated equally, and everyone had a say. The crew could hold a vote of “no confidence” regarding captains at any time, and there was documentation of this taking place. A member of the crew could also “freelance” and take boats on their own, without being considered a traitor. Most crews taken by pirates were not injured, and until Blackbeard started changing and became violent (most likely due to advanced syphilis), slaves were often recruited to join the pirate crew, where real wealth was possible.

So who were the bad guys (or girls, if you’re Anne Bonny) on the high seas? Who were the bad guys in the American Revolution, or the Civil War? Or any war? Sooner or later you are forced to make a decision in this life, to pick a side if you will, and judge choices carefully.

Case in point, the police are now on trial like never before, and can’t be trusted to follow the law, or make rational, lawful decisions. Could they ever? It’s case by case of course, but if I review some incidents I’ve encountered with police, it points to a very widespread problem. Allow me to describe an encounter with a maniacal officer in none other than (drum roll) . . . Minnesota!

I had flown out for my cousin Bobby’s wedding, and we were doing some last minute running around when a police car lit up and pulled us over, for having a feather hanging from the rearview mirror.

Yes, a feather.

It was a officer, and she explained how the feather was attached to a small alligator clip, which is often used for smoking pot.

She was angry and serious, and we were not, which apparently is a felony in Minnesota.

When she explained the reason for pulling Bobby, I leaned over and to my cousin and said, “As your attorney I advise you to remain silent.”

She flipped and called backup – yes – three more cars full of backup.

They ordered us out, frisked us down and asked why I had a Massachusetts driver’s license.

“His wedding is tomorrow,” I said. “Unless he’s in jail.”

They seemed to back down a little, until I added, “Over a feather.”

Loud threats ensued, and they made us wait while running my license to investigate the diabolical hell I had emerged from in the wicked east.

“Please don’t talk anymore,” my cousin implored, but he didn’t have to tell me, I had already reeled-in the east coast attitude and succumbed to “total compliance mode”, which should probably be an option on every car I ever own.

They held us up for a long time, the fine was steep, and I’m still in awe of their flagrant little amateur hour, like Nazi youth when Hitler was on the rise.

But nothing even close to George Floyd, not by a long shot.

My thoughts concerning police is that you never know who you’re dealing with if you ever interact with a representative of any law enforcement agency. You don’t know what kind of training they had, what kind of childhood trauma is about to rear its ugly head, or what just happened to them before encountering your present situation.

I believe a serious retooling needs to be done with several law enforcement agencies, from hiring personnel to the foot soldiers who should not only be monitored closely, but retrained on a frequent basis. I’m not talking about a morning brief, I’m talking about pulling them out of the field and challenging them in diverse and intelligent ways. Make them tend a busy bar for a week, or at least barback, wait on tables. Make them study ballet, take painting courses, sensitivity training, rocks and ropes in the wilderness. Have them serve as orderlies in a mental institution, work a soup line, bring supplies to the homeless. Ensure empathy, ensure that they will think twice but think fast. Know the difference between a taser, a Glock, and a bowl of pasta.

Ensure empathy, and know when force is truly needed. Try to understand the meaning of hypocrisy, and how that single blue line on an American flag is using the same method of communication as a football player kneeling during the anthem. Colin Kaepernick knew what could happen, and was hated for it. Many still hate that gesture, but salute a flag altered to their liking. Some even kill Capitol police.

Good and bad are often bad and good, depending on the observer.

Maybe that serpent was right after all.

What’s Not There

Aisle after aisle
shelves display an unfamiliar pattern
dull and shadowed spaces
holes and sparseness
mingled with brightly marketed jars and boxes,
signs instructing, 1 per Customer,

But today I was floored, shocked really, transported as I arrived at the greeting card section, searching and mentally ticking off the placards Birthday, Humor, Wedding and then, and then, rows after rows of emptiness at the sympathy section, only their distant eyes staring back at me, All gone.

I’m so sorry that
no card is here for me to send to your family,
I never thought
I would be praying at a memorial site
Here,
at Big Y, next to the newborns.


By Marian Vitali
member of Font ‘N Pen writing group

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Community Media and Regional Arts

By John Murphy

Good greetings and good grief, we are somehow making it through this COVID-19 crisis, and sometimes despite ourselves! So glad spring has sprung, and warm weather arrives...just in time.

This month's column features local media and arts news and updates about projects underway:

1. New weekly radio series with Connecticut writers
2. *Connecticut Arts Alliance*—statewide arts coverage for recovery and restoration
3. Mansfield Agricultural Development Project on Browns Road with *Agbotics*

New weekly radio series with Connecticut writers—muses, methods, manifestations

It was wonderful to launch this new radio interview series in April, co-created with John Stanizzi, poet, teacher, and author of poetry collections. We include writers of all styles and levels of experience. Our focus is on the art and craft of creating meaning and sharing emotion and experience through sound or the blank page. Conversations and live readings will be featured at 1:00 pm during The Pan American Express, Tuesdays from 12-3 pm on WECS at 90.1 FM and www.wecsfm.com.



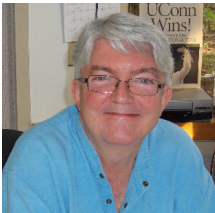
April 27—Sean Frederick Forbes
May 4—John Stanizzi
May 11—Elizabeth Thomas

Interviews will be recorded and posted at www.humanartsmedia.com and on my YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_JZT9nwKpWuofMdyzPrUig/featured
Connecticut Arts Alliance Radio Series—Post-Pandemic Arts Restoration and Recovery

The *Connecticut Arts Alliance* is a statewide non-profit organization that works to build political, financial, and grassroots support to ensure that arts are a vital part of life for everyone in Connecticut. CAA engages artists of all kinds, arts leaders, and members of the community with regular advocacy updates and signature programs like Create the Vote and Arts Day at the Capitol. More information at www.ctartsalliance.org.

- CAA educates to share the stories of how arts and creativity make a difference in all our lives, every day
- CAA advocates to inspire and empower people across Connecticut to raise their voices in support of the arts
- CAA organizes an arts community to be stronger together

As some readers will recall, in addition to my writing for *Neighbors*, I have been producing local radio and TV for many years. The arts in many forms across our region has always been a focus for storytelling and information sharing. For the past few years, I have served as a (volunteer) board member of the Connecticut Arts Alliance. I am pleased to report that I have successfully connected my media coverage with the people and organizational mem-



bers of CAA to co-create a new radio series about the arts across our state.

I am sharing a link to three recent interviews, which served as a test run for the series, originally broadcast and webcast on The Pan American Express, Tuesdays from 12-3 pm on WECS 90.1 FM and www.wecsfm.com.
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL5AN89RCIRr7cUsQp54HCzz-y37eaGU_dk

1. State Representative John-Michael Parker, March 9, 2021: about pending CT House Bill 6119 and other proposals for enhanced arts/culture/tourism funding in Connecticut.
2. Eric Dillner, Shoreline Arts Alliance, March 9, 2021: about reopening arts venues safely as the struggle to return to normal and rebuild the arts economy continues. Eric is presenting monthly web meetings to keep people informed and prepared for what is next. Info at <https://www.shorelinearts.org/>.
3. Danielle Chesebrough, First Selectman, Stonington, March 16, 2021: about the state of the arts in her region, how people and organizations are dealing with the Pandemic and making plans for the post-Pandemic new normal. We also discuss prospects for HB 6119 and other proposals for enhanced arts-culture-tourism funding.

I also created a new section within my YouTube channel, dedicated to CAA, so all interviews can be shared widely as a common resource. More information at www.humanartsmedia.com.

Mansfield Agricultural Development Project on Browns Road with *Agbotic Inc.*



This story is an unusual mix of contents from Mansfield-based Facebook groups, community meetings and personal conversations. The Willimantic Chronicle had a front page story on April 27 and a few letters have been printed in recent issues. Coverage will continue in the June issue.

An application is active and pending in Mansfield for the construction of a new agricultural business at 438 Browns Road by Agbotic Inc., a company based in Sackets Harbor in upstate New York. A smart farm was proposed that would

include six greenhouses, a wash-and-pack building with a small office and two restrooms.

A virtual public hearing is planned for 6:40 pm on Monday May 3 at the Planning and Zoning Commission. The meeting will be live-streamed at <https://townhall-streams.com/town.php?id=69>.

Information from the public will not be accepted after the public hearing is closed. As expected, there has been some local heat developing from those already opposed and those caught by surprise, and those in support. The recent Chronicle article was about a petition from over 100 people already opposed to the project. Locals are still learning about this development effort and want more information while the legal process is still underway.

I am hopeful the May 3 meeting will clarify the facts and misunderstandings to enable high quality discussion of the short and long term pros and cons. I assume the meeting will be recorded and if so, I will ask for permission to air it on my radio program for those who cannot attend. With limited local journalism these days any way to inform the public about town affairs, and at the very least prevent misinformation from spreading, is useful and worthwhile. This will be essential if there is only one opportunity for public comment.

My effort to do local radio interviews was premature at best, a bust at worst! Many email invitations were sent, and messages left but no one seems ready to talk live on the radio right now, even just to share basic info that has been released and the areas for questions and further inquiry. I will wait until after May 3 when people may have a better understanding and clearer thoughts to share. I will share info and links as I follow the story.

Online Information and Resources

1. Agbotic Inc. application documents, agendas, announcements, including videos of meetings with project presentations: <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/2123/Proposed-Projects>
 - February 18, 2021 Economic Development Commission Meeting
 - March 17, 2021 Conservation Commission Meeting (Joint Meeting with Agriculture and Parks and Natural Resources Committees)
2. Additional project documents and reports: <http://www.mansfieldct.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/620>
3. Link to Chronicle article April 27: <https://www.thechronicle.com/stories/20210427SMART-FARM.php>



As always, thanks for reading, for listening and for keeping the faith during these hard times.

John Murphy
john@humanartsmedia.com

The Caves

On that first Springlike day, burrowed deep in his cave, where the walls were slick with frost, he saw her, and knew his days were numbered. The icicles dripped-dripped-dripped sending shimmering rainbows along the rocky opening. She turned his way, and a shiver went down her spine as she saw his cool blue eyes from deep within watching her. She froze in her tracks, so he retreated deeper still into the cold interior where the icicles were sharp and the darkness was complete, remembering her green eyes and the way the gentle breeze rustled her hair. Something was melting inside him, his heart.

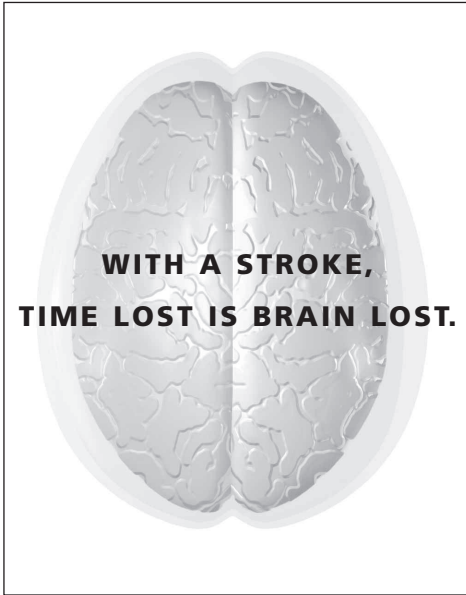
Outside the birds rejoiced and seedlings sprouted. The shimmering stream was full now with melted snow, brimming, splashing, gurgling. It spoke to her as did the birds, as did the seedlings, and looking up she saw the trees were no longer barren and the cerulean blue sky behind danced with fair-weather clouds. She remembered him and shivered, felt compassion. His days were numbered. This season belonged to her. She spent the day alighting on all that had been sleeping and it was a happy carefree day. But as the sun went down a cool wind came in gusts that got stronger with the setting sun. The temperature dropped and the night sky was clear with stars. She watched clouds rush by the pink moon. The treetops whipped in seeming agony, creaking and snapping back with fury.

Outside his cave, he blew and blew what was left of him. I will not go out like a lamb, he thought. Ice formed in the stream, seedlings retreated, birds found refuge, but the cold night bore down, unrelenting. And she of the green eyes shivered and cried tears that froze.

He saw her there on the south side, standing with her arms wrapped around herself. She was trying to survive the night. He came to her and she saw compassion in his eyes as he motioned for her to follow him to the bear cave. Entering, they could hear soft snuffling sounds and soon they were deep enough where you could see the steady rise and fall of the massive furry sleeping bear. It was warmer here. She snuggled up beside the beast as winter, with his cool blue eyes, covered her with dry leaves and watched over her all night as she slept.

By morning the wind had died down. To the East, a warm sun rose, and he felt himself weaken. The bear began to stir. The blue-eyed cold one and the green-eyed warm one left the cave together. When she reached out to him, he let her. And although her embrace would end him, he welcomed it, for she had warmed his heart. And this was her time to live.

Deb Gag
April 5, 2021
Font 'n Pen



Common Sense Car Care

By Rick Ostien

The photo below is a cabin air filter that we removed from a customer’s vehicle that was here for service. The idea of the cabin air filter is really a very good one as it keeps out leaves, varmints, or anything that will enter through the fresh air ducts. Like anything else it will become moldy over time. Just a reminder, every time you drive your car you breathe this air in. This service is definitely something you should consider having done for your own health, and it is a very low-cost service.

The cost of new technology which quickly becomes old technology has now come into play when repairs are made on vehicles. The R12 freon refrigerant that was in your air conditioning systems years ago was replaced with R134A freon. Air conditioning service was still very affordable. Now there is a new technology replacement of R134A freon with one called R1234yf freon. This has caused air conditioning service to skyrocket in price. R1234yf costs around \$400. This also means that repair facilities need to purchase new equipment to provide air conditioning service. The cost of a machine to service a R1234yf system starts at around \$5000 and could cost as much as \$20,000. The cost of the R1234yf freon is what has caused the increase in price.

The problem that I see in the future will be the increase to other repairs. Many mechanical repairs involve the removal of an air conditioning component. This means recharging the system. Auto body facilities are and will have the same problem. The next paragraph is taken from a previous article written about this new technology in air conditioning.

This new refrigerant is slowly being phased in. The phase in process began with some 2014 model year vehicles. The new refrigerant is patented and manufactured in a joint venture between Honeywell and DuPont-Chemours. There are others who are also licensed to produce R1234yf. R1234yf has cooling properties that are similar to R134A which has been used since it was introduced back in 1994-1995 to replace R12. R134A contains no CFC’s which are harmful to the ozone layer of the atmosphere, but it does retain heat well and has a high GWP (Global Warming Potential) rating of 1300. R1234yf has a GWP rating of 4 which is 350 times less than R134A. R134A is to be phased out of domestic car production by 2021. R134A

will still be available to service older vehicles. Vehicles that use the new R1234yf refrigerant will require a slightly larger or more efficient condenser and a more robust leak resistant evaporator. R1234yf also requires a new type of compressor, PAG oil, and new certified recovery and recycling equipment designed especially for the new refrigerant. R1234yf is very expensive. A 10-pound container is selling for as much



as \$650. It is also very unlikely that R134A systems will be able to be converted to R1234yf as the materials and lubrication issues make them not compatible. Many people have questioned whether this new refrigerant is flammable. After extensive testing it was determined that R1234yf has a low combustible rate at 2L. This means that it will slow burn, but it takes a lot of heat to ignite it. Almost every other fluid under the hood will light more easily and burn hotter than R1234yf, so the industry has determined that with proper AC system design, it does not increase the chances of a fire in a vehicle.

As I was sitting in the office the other day I happened to look up at the wall of pictures of old and new eras in automotive repair. The one picture I saw was of a very early repair facility. I couldn’t help but think of where we have come from. From the horse and buggy days with a blacksmith as a “mechanic”, to the early auto repair facility, to what we have today for repair facilities, car dealerships, and all the new technology today, how far we have come. One thing is for sure, change is a constant in our society and technology is speeding it along. Until next month...

Rick Ostien is the owner of Franc Motors.

Audubon Programs

Grassland Bird Conservation Center
218 Day Road, Pomfret Center, CT 06259
(860)928-4948 ctaudubon.org/pomfret-home

Focus On Nature Photography Contest
Exhibition and Sale
Sunday, May 2 thru Wednesday, June 30
Entry forms & more information at ctaudubon.org/pomfret-programs-events

Early Morning Bird Walks
Every Tuesday in May at 8 a.m. (except May 18 - no walk)
No pre-registration required.
With access to over 1,650 acres of land, we will seek out a variety of bird species. Meet at the Center, 218 Day Rd. Wear drab-colored clothing and bring binoculars. Spotting scope optional.
Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.

SPRING BIRD WALKS:
We have several exciting guided walks at various preserves and birding locations during this migration season!
For details and required registration information, go to ctaudubon.org/pomfret-programs-events

Migration Madness Weekend: May 14, 15, 16 - Join us for the Fourth Annual Migration Madness Birdathon! Watch for sign-up information at ctaudubon.org

Bird Banding Demonstration
Saturday, May 22 at 9 a.m.
Watch Andy and our master bird banding crew in action. See birds up close as we gently catch them, record measurements and safely release them.
Limit 12 people. Register by emailing arzenikiewicz@ctaudubon.org
Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.

2021 Summer Camp Season
ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN. Go to ctaudubon.org/pomfret-camp or call 860-928-4948

Programs at TRAIL WOOD, 93 Kenyon Road, Hampton, CT 860-928-4948
ctaudubon.org/trail-wood-home

The Little Green House on the Hill

Was new for Jack and Jill when they planned their family.

One sunny day came a bubbly
Little girl with big brown eyes
and a dimpled chin that made them grin.

Just as soon a little boy -
full of joy
bold and brassy
Filled their home of Love and bills
“In the Little Green House on the Hill”.

Seven years flew by and a
Blue eyed baby boy
became the second son
of my one and only one.

In the silence of the night
Lights shine bright on
“The Little Green House on the Hill”.

Up and down and all around
the family scurries to and fro.
Always late for a date they go,
In Purrfect Harmony,
In good old Cow Ven Treeee!!!

Written for my son who taught me how to
give and love,
Memere.

Friday Afternoon Walks
Every Friday in May at 1 p.m.
Join plant enthusiast Anne Christie and nature photographer Amy Porter for a leisurely walk at Trail Wood. Bring a camera if you like. All ages welcome. (Inclement weather will cancel.) Call 860-928-4948 to register. Free to CAS members; \$3 non-members.

Trail Wood Bird Walk
Thursday, May 13, 8 a.m.
Thursday, May 27, 8 a.m.
Join Andy as he points out various birds while hiking at Trail Wood, such as Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Veery and more. Limit 7 people. Email Andy at arzenikiewicz@ctaudubon.org to register or call 860-928-4948. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members.

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WWW.EC-CHAP.ORG

156 River Road, Suite 2106A, Willington, CT 06279 | 518.791.9474 | info@ec-chap.org

A Mighty Brook

By Donna Dufresne

In October of 1778, Obadiah Higginbotham traveled to Pomfret from Cranston, Rhode Island, to buy ten acres of land from the heirs of Edward Paine. It was not a good piece of land. The scrappy lot in the Mashamoquet uplands was a glacial dump, the dregs of Paine’s south lot which had recently been subdivided into ten-acre parcels and sold for one hundred pounds of Spanish silver each. The proceeds from the sales would be given to Paine’s grandchildren as bequeathed in his will. John Trowbridge, who had been married to Paine’s daughter, Phebe (deceased), oversaw selling the acreage and wasted no time in getting the word out. Apparently, Jonathan Randall, who lived in the neighborhood but still owned property in Pawtuxet and Cranston, heard about the sale and contacted Obadiah.

It’s unclear what the relationship was between the Randalls and Higginbothams. There may have been familial ties through Obadiah’s wife, Dorcas, whose maiden name was Greene, possibly connected to Joseph Nightingale, whose property bounded Paine’s. A number of Rhode Islanders, particularly from Cranston, had settled in the Mashamoquet neighborhood in the 1770s. Perhaps they had been involved in the burning of the revenue ship the *Gaspeé* in 1772 and wanted to escape the British, who were swarming like mad hornets in and around Cranston. There were also rumors that Obadiah Higginbotham and Jonathan Randall had deserted the British Navy and absconded with the bursar’s gold, but they certainly didn’t leave a paper trail that would prove that theory. Who would?

Whatever the origins of the Randall/Higginbotham relationship, the two families were intertwined for generations, usually with the wealthy Randalls providing mortgages and work for the Higginbothams. But it wasn’t a one-sided contract. Obadiah possessed something that Randall and his forward-thinking friends needed. He was a millwright and mechanic from Lancashire, England—the seat of the English industrial revolution. Those who had accrued wealth through the East India and slave trade could read the writing on the wall: abolition was coming. In less than a decade, anti-slavery laws would be passed and already there was moral pressure from some religious leaders to be rid of slavery. It was time to look to the future, and the word in the air was “textiles.” The American entrepreneurial spirit would be unleashed after the war, and the nouveau riche would need to harness waterpower.

I like to imagine Obadiah Higginbotham standing on the bluff overlooking Nightingale Brook in 1778. True, the ten acres could barely offer subsistence, perhaps enough to support a milk cow and a pair of oxen. It was extremely rocky, and wet at that. He would have to rent land from neighbors to run his sheep, and if he were to grow flax, Jonathan Randall would have to provide the arable land. Randall seemed more than willing to join in a venture for growing and producing linen now that the boycotts had banned English cotton. But there was something more that caught Obadiah’s eye in his musings for the future. The falls below had a considerable drop. Someone, perhaps old man Paine, had already dammed the meadows up above to provide enough power for a temporary sawmill. The timber from that venture still lay in the flat yard across the brook. He could see that much of it was chestnut cut from the hillside to the east of his newly acquired plot. Already, Obadiah was planning the sluice and the flume for his flax wheel, spinning, and woodshop. He couldn’t wait to get home to tell his young wife of his plans.

Dorcas would have been relieved to escape the crowded seaport and the rising tensions of the war. Just after she gave birth to their daughter, Rhobadiah, in May of 1778, a smallpox epidemic struck Cranston and the coastal villages. There were rumors of the vicious Hessian mercenary soldiers heading up the coast on behalf of the British. Her husband had joined the local militia and was issued a musket and bayonet by the Continental Army, pledging that he was “willing and able to bear arms.” With three young children, Elisha, Obadiah Jr., and the newborn Rhoba, she was none too keen on her husband running off to defend the seaport. When Jonathan Randall sent word that there was land for sale near his property, she likely urged Obadiah to investigate. Surely, Mrs. Randall would hire her to do some spinning and weaving, which would give them some extra income. Dorcas had become an excellent weaver of linen, and spinning flax was easy with Obadiah’s treadle-foot flax wheel.

There may have already been a small house on the bluff on Edward Paine’s land, or perhaps Jonathan Randall loaned the labor of his enslaved Africans to help dig the cellar and build the house. The Higginbothams may have even stayed on the Randall estate while the house was be-

ing built. By 1780, they were established in Pomfret when their son, Darius, was born, and Obadiah was farming, building flax wheels, and helping to construct local mills in the Mashamoquet watershed.

It’s hard to imagine that Mashamoquet Brook was once thriving with mills and small industries. During the frequent droughts we’ve had in recent years, there hardly seems enough water for a pollywog to wag its tail. But the water wasn’t always this low. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were fewer trees and vegetation to absorb the run-off, and the water table was higher. The tributaries ran high through clear-cut forests and farmland, flooding newly built roads and bridges during spring freshets and making the Mashamoquet a mighty source of water.

When Obadiah started damming up his millpond in the 1780s, the water would have been high enough to operate a mill for six to nine months of the year, depending on rainfall. For the most part, small shops like Obediah’s would operate in the off-season between planting and harvesting, mowing, and threshing. Most mill owners were also farmers who supplemented their incomes with gristmills, sawmills, linseed oil mills, fulling mills, and other pre-industrial textile operations. There would have been few employees outside of the family, and they too were seasonal, having their own farms to run in the summer. Unlike the Arkwright-style manufactories that sprang up on the Quinebaug River after 1815, the mills on Mashamoquet and its tributaries were neighborhood affairs.

Just a mile upstream from the Higginbotham mill there was an early sawmill operated by Henry Brayman under the old mill privilege at Nightingale Pond. This was also the site of a tannery, forge, and woodwork shop that produced shingles, clapboards, moldings, and casings until about 1838. It may seem puzzling that there was a sawmill on Obadiah’s land, such a short distance from Brayman Hollow, but the brook seems to have had several sawmills less than a mile apart. After all, the logs weighed up to 4,000 pounds and transportation was anything but easy in the Eastern Uplands.

About three-quarters of a mile downstream after the confluence of the Lyon, Nightingale, and Schoolhouse brooks, Nightingale becomes Mashamoquet. Here was another early sawmill on Taft Pond, possibly operated by Peter Cunningham Jr., whose house was on the hillside overlooking the pond. Later, a descendant of Squire Sessions owned the sawmill and sold it to George W. Taft. After the railroad was established, Taft hauled lumber to the train station in Abington. But the road was poor and sometimes unpassable. Taft took it upon himself to tinker with the wooden road graders used at that time and came up with a steel version, which he named the Champion Road Scraper. His innovation was much more efficient, pulled by six horses and furnished with steel blades that could cut through the muddy ruts. It wasn’t long before others took notice. After filing a patent, Taft built his “steel factory” at the former sawmill on Taft Pond. He piped spring water from the hill down to the forge for his workers to drink. In the 1870s he sold the operation, which moved to Pittsburg near the steel mills. The company was eventually sold to the Canadian company Champion Road Machinery, which was later acquired by Volvo.

Where the mighty Mashamoquet snaked away from the uplands toward the Quinebaug, there were numerous mills, including the earliest sawmill built by Abiel Lyon on what later became the Cunningham estate. In 1815, Peter and Elizabeth Cunningham sold land to Squire Sessions downstream from their estate. As early as 1809, Sessions was operating the Holbrook grist/sawmill just west of Covell Road, where Ebenezer Holbrook previously operated the mill around 1720. Later, the complex was owned by Willis Covell from 1895 to 1918.

The only remnant left of the mills in Marcy Hollow (Mashamoquet Park) is the Brayton Grist Mill, owned by the Pomfret Historical Society. But here once stood several mills powered by a substantial dam and reservoir, including a carding mill, wagon shop, and cider mill. There was also a linseed oil mill operated by Ebenezer Holbrook from 1725 to 1735. The hurricane of 1938 and the floods of 1955 destroyed most of the dams and mills along the brook, including several enterprises in Marcy Hollow which had also been destroyed by fire. It wasn’t the first time that a storm destroyed the mills. Just downstream of Marcy Hollow in Mashamoquet Park, the Pomfret Manufacturing Company erected a woolen mill in 1815. Two years later it was destroyed by a spring freshet and the investors went bankrupt.

In Pomfret Landing there was a cotton twine mill and a shoddy mill. But here the water flattens out into the floodplain of the Quinebaug, and the landing had a different industrious nature than the uplands. The Quine-

baug was still navigable from Norwich up to Pomfret in the 1700s, bringing East India trade, rum, molasses, bricks, and other necessities for a fledgling colonial enclave. Pomfret shipped wool, mutton, and numerous other goods for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary war from Pomfret Landing. The Sumner Tavern welcomed travelers crossing from Providence on the turnpike or traveling by river to and from New London, and a thriving village grew, with its own schoolhouse and general store.

It’s in Pomfret Landing that I recently discovered a substantial mill site. I brought Dick Symonds, an expert in early mills, to the perplexing ruins on Bark Meadow Brook next to the Pomfret Rod & Gun Club. Dick was intrigued by the stonework and was sure there were once several mills there, including a grist and sawmill. He determined all this through the glinting eye of an expert in site evaluations. I went back to my Susan Griggs book, that quick resource for local history, and discovered that there was a gristmill, sawmill, cider mill, and cobbler shop operated on that site by the Bruce family. The land was previously owned by James Sawyer, who operated a sawmill further downstream near the Quinebaug River. This was when there were no roads and early transport relied on the river. Much of that timber would have been shipped out for the King’s Navy in the early 1700s.

Apparently, Mashamoquet Brook wasn’t the only power source in early Pomfret. Besides Bark Meadow Brook, I brought Dick Symonds to a mill ruins on Lyon Brook which has mystified me since I discovered it in the 1980s. As quick as a wink, he was able to determine that it was a sawmill with an “up and down saw.” In the early 1800s, Samuel Sumner, who owned the Sumner Tavern and much of the land along Route 44 from Abington Four Corners to Eastford, operated a sawmill on Lyon Brook. His daughter married one of Squire Sessions’s sons, and Sumner outfitted their newly built home with cherry furniture which was cut on his land and milled at the sawmill. Without knowing any of this, Dick hypothesized that there was a wood shop, possibly for building furniture attached to the mill.

The late 1700s and early 1800s was a busy time in the Mashamoquet Purchase. Despite wars with Great Britain and the economic fallout of recessions and pandemics, Pomfret was thriving in small businesses. The tiniest of streams were harnessed for power, including the diminutive Abington Brook, where Nathaniel Ayers built his fulling mill and his son operated a sawmill-shingle mill until 1868, when the railroad ordered the millpond to be drained. There was also a tanning mill on Abington Brook. Blackwell Brook in Baker’s Hollow hosted a leaching mill. Someone recently mentioned there was a “gin mill” on Youngs Road near Pomfret Landing. I was wondering if there was a juniper orchard nearby for distilling gin, but it turns out it was a cotton gin mill. The point is, there were small industries peppered throughout the region on the mighty little brooks and streams that make their way to the Quinebaug and the Thames River Basin. The experimental dams, flumes, sluices, and waterwheels constructed by local farmers and entrepreneurs built the foundation of knowledge and expertise for designing the larger factories in Putnam and Danielson by the mid-1800s. I like to think of them as the cog in the wheelhouse of the American industrial revolution.

(Sources: Mashamoquet Brook, Its Past Into Its Future, Pomfret Conservation Commission, 1975; Griggs, Susan Jewett, *Folklore and Firesides*, Higgins Book Publisher, Salem MA, 1950; Wetherbee, Olive Pike, *The Old Fulling Mill of Pomfret*, E. W. Farnum Printing, Worcester MA, 1971)

Learn more about Pomfret history by joining the Pomfret Historical Society. Check out the website at <pomfret-historical-society.org>.

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Sky Nation

By Judy Davis

Native women are vitalizers. We sing the old songs – we dance the new steps, ever forward. We heal, we pray, we live the four directions: east, where the day begins; north, home of the wind; south, the touchstone of seasons; and west, the shine of promises. We breathe, our hearts rejoice in aliveness – we sing with all we have been, are now, and the evermore of women. We shout our energy to the heavens; the stars are listening. Grandmothers hands are the best of life. We dance on the sunshine, float upon ourselves; we gather flowers which our smiles have planted. Native women celebrate the red clay on the riverbanks of a life well lived. We share good medicine, healing all still to come, and all in our wake. Our birthrights are words, kissed by legends. When we are bedded down, under the moon, the comforter of family will keep us warm. These days are made holy, and sacred voices call us, singing the lullaby of “Yes.” Great women walk beside us, taking us by the hand, leading us ever home to the wilderness, which is permanent in our blood; a wilderness which will endure as long as one Native woman is alive. Preceded by the bearers of the sacred feathers, we cast beautiful rainbows, for we vitalizers live in the glorious light of day!

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Wyndham Land Trust Protects Two Properties

Submitted by Marcy B. Dawley

POMFRET CENTER—The fight against climate change just got a boost thanks to acquisition of two properties in the Quiet Corner by the Wyndham Land Trust.

The Wyndham Land Trust recently acquired two properties that add to the 5000 acres of forest and grasslands already protected by the land trust in Connecticut’s Quiet Corner. The new 86-acre Cartier Preserve is located north of Quarry Road in Woodstock. The new 65-acre Potrzeba Preserve sits a short distance away to the west of Swedetown Road in the northwest corner of Pomfret.

“There’s something about these woods that never fails to help me refocus on what’s truly important in this life,” says the land trust’s treasurer, Penny Foisey. “As the saying goes ‘And into the woods I go, to lose my mind and find my soul.’ The Cartier and Potrzeba Preserves are great places to enjoy the beauty of nature. I always feel like I’ve stepped back in time walking these paths that were here long before I.”

Both preserves are part of a large undeveloped area of forested habitat covering several thousand acres that is important for storing carbon and fighting climate change. Land manager Andy Rzeznikiewicz is excited about the new acquisitions: “The diversity of birds is very high—an indication of the health and the size of the forest. Species like black-throated blue warblers, hooded warblers, black-throated green warblers, and scarlet tanagers breed here. Bird species that I don’t find in most parts of our area are attracted to the large stands of thick



A babbling brook cuts through the Potrzeba Preseve. Protecting critical wetlands is one of the missions of the Wyndham Land Trust. Photo Courtesy of Wyndham Land Trust.

mountain laurel, where they nest and raise their young. “The land trust is focusing on acquiring large, unbroken blocks of land, and we’re hoping for additional donations to protect this valuable habitat in our region. I’ve long admired the wild feeling of this area, and I’m grateful we have managed to protect some of it.”

The Cartier Preserve rises to over 900 feet in its center and is traversed by a mile-long trail that runs through the dense mountain laurel. Foisey will lead a walk through the Cartier Preserve on June 13 as part of the Last Green Valley’s Spring Outdoors event, and the walk is timed to coincide with the spectacular bloom of the mountain laurel. Scouts from BSA Troop 27 in Woodstock recently cleared fallen trees and brush along the trail in preparation for the event.

The Wyndham Land Trust was formed in 1975, and the work of the all-volunteer group is possible only through the generosity and dedication of its members and donors. To learn more about the Wyndham Land Trust visit wyndhamlandtrust.org. You can also follow them on Facebook and Instagram.

To all our contributors-

Thank You!

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

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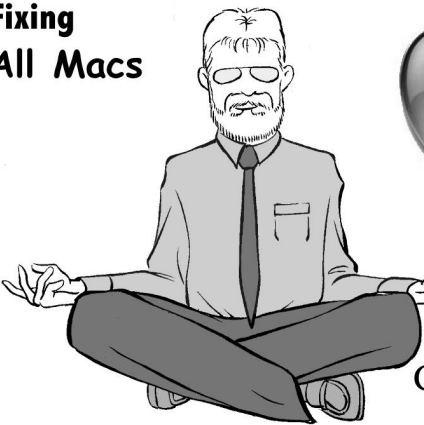
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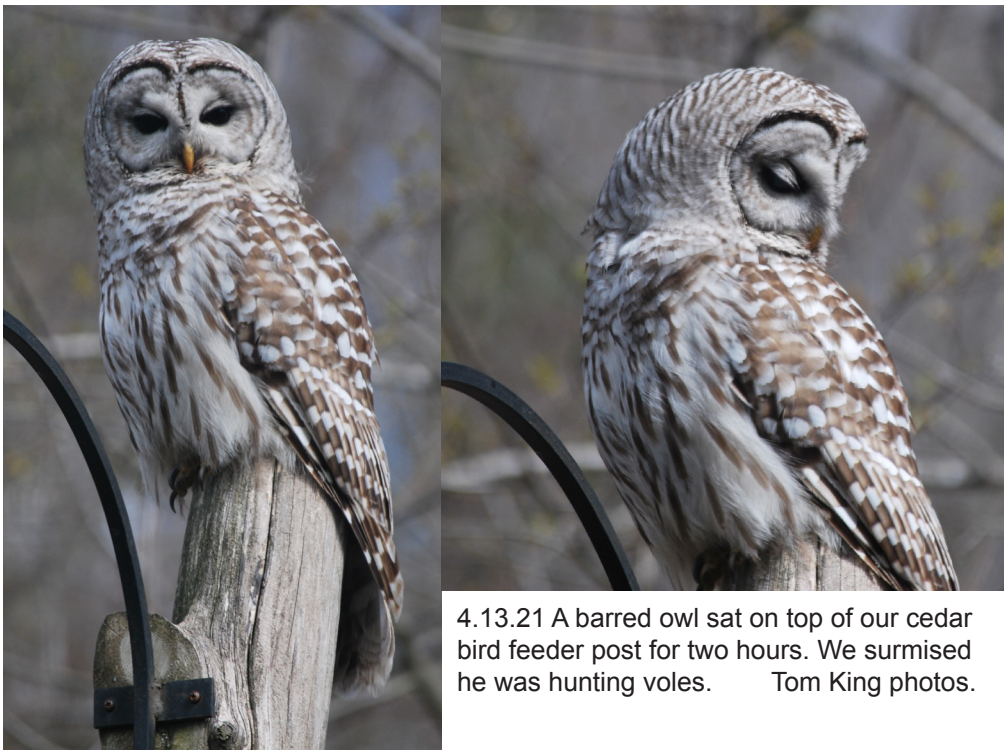
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4.13.21 A barred owl sat on top of our cedar bird feeder post for two hours. We surmised he was hunting voles. Tom King photos.



Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.

A single daffodil alone in the spring rain.
You stand so proudly far away from all the others.
I wonder if you sense growing without the friendship of huddled yellow neighbors.
They gather wildly in groups that seem often strangely out of place,
as if sent there to bring beauty to the leftovers of winters retreat.
And now you, a solitary velvety bell has decided to go it your way...
and there I notice how I have been touched by your charming oneness.

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