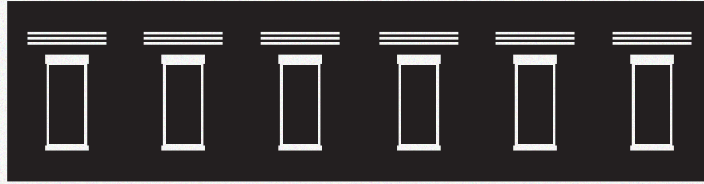


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March 2023

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March 4th



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*"Girl With A Pearl Earring"*

(PG-13) 2003

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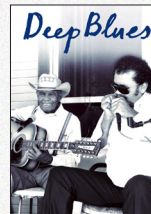
*Deep Blues*

*"Deep Blues"*

(Unrated) 1992

Documentary

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# Make Your Own Wooden Pen!

Free event sponsored by Ashford Area Arts  
(formally known as Ashford Arts Council).

Submitted by Debra Gag

The Central Connecticut Woodturners will be holding a free Pen Turning Event on Saturday February 4th, 2023, from 10-2:00 at Knowlton Memorial Hall/Babcock Library, 25 Pompey Hollow Road, Ashford, CT.

Anyone and everyone are invited free of charge! The club supplies all materials, and club members will guide you in turning your own pen, which will be yours to keep!

The Central Connecticut Woodturners (CCW) was founded in 1994 to support the needs of woodturners in the central Connecticut area. Its purpose is to promote a higher standard of excellence in woodturning by providing an ever-expanding source of information and resources to its members. With that in mind, the club also likes to encourage woodturning locally by sponsoring these pen turning events.



There will be a sign-up sheet when you come in. First come first served, with an estimate of wait time for others who want in.

Local members of the CCW club (Joanne Mann and Dan Merlo of Eastford CT, along with Ashford

Area Arts member Steve Gerling will be leading this event.

Dan Merlo is a self-taught woodturner and has been turning since 2013. Joanne has been turning since 2015.

Neighbors  
P.O. Box 430  
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Dennis Pierce, Bill Powers,  
Tom Woron, Loretta Wrobel

No. 215 January/February 2023

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 environ-  
ment of our region

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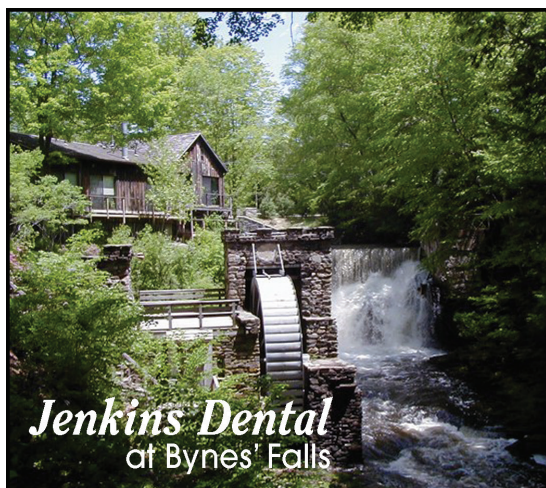
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On our cover: 12.28.22. Karen and I enjoyed a light hike on one of the trails in the beautiful Shafran Conservation area in Tolland. The streams through the area featured ice formations created over the cold Christmas weekend.  
Tom King photo.



# A Warm Place

By Loretta Wrobel

As the Christmas holiday approached, the weather went wild. One day it was in the fifties with torrential wind and rain. Abruptly, like the stock market, the temperatures plummeted and we were in a deep freeze. At my house it was four degrees outside! If my math is right that is a drop of nearly fifty degrees. I was fortunate enough not to lose power during that ferocious time. However, it made me be so very grateful that I have a safe, warm place to live in the midst of whatever mother nature throws at us.



After that experience, my focus shifted to concern for all of the people who have no place to call home or have a precarious hold on their present home. With inflation, soaring prices and the rising cost of rents, how many people will be unable to meet these outrageous costs that landlords are expecting from their tenants? I shudder when I hear of the monthly costs that renters have to absorb.

First, the unmanageable increased rent cost, followed by the rising cost of electricity, and of course the higher prices for heating. In addition, there are the food prices that grab more and more of everyone's paycheck. This assault is adding unconscionable stresses and burdens to those with limited resources. It must be addressed.

I checked into what is occurring in my small rural town. The rental increases are going from about \$850 to a whopping \$1400! Yes, that is an increase per month of over \$500! How in anyone's world is that a doable situation? What kind of cruelty and madness prevails? What we need is more affordable housing and a rational, sane and compassionate way to keep families in their homes and off the streets.

We all need to examine why this is happening in our Country, and particularly in our State, which is one of the wealthier states in the good ole United States. We need to revisit how we think about a person's value. Our goal appears to be more profit, regardless of how that impacts our citizens. What about our social responsibility to take care of our neighbors and create a society which really cares for all of its people, not just the ones with fat wallets?

Every human being deserves a place to live that is comfortable. As a nation, what do we believe in? Are we Scrooges and Grinches who want to extract at any cost? For what purpose?

I am a person of privilege. I am white, have a college education and have savings to cushion me. I know that there are many others who have not had the privileges that I enjoy because of my skin color and fortunate circumstances that allowed me to obtain an education.

I started out my life in a small four room apartment with no central heat and no bathtub. My parents paid a reasonable--for those times--rent and were able to save some funds

to eventually purchase a house. My parents and three siblings (plus one on the way) felt like we had moved to a mansion, when we entered our new house with six rooms, heat and a shower/tub!

Given the price of rents in 2022, my parents would not have been able to save any money, and most alarmingly, may not have been able to afford the rent for the bare bones apartment we lived in.

During this time of the ultimate consumer holiday, when we are brainwashed into believing that the more we love someone, the more expensive the present we gift them, we need to reappraise our values. What is the true meaning of the holiday season? It is about caring, sharing, and expressing our gratitude for each other. It is not about how much to spend, especially when funds are limited. It is being present for those you love and expressing your appreciation for the abundances that you have. It is so engrained in our minds to be consumers and not to value the beauty of being sensitive and compassionate.

I can say thanks to my loved ones in many ways, and not just by shopping at "Amazon" or wrapping too many presents. We can do better. We can be more aware of our connections to each other and how we judge people. We can examine our perceptions and judgments. Is someone more valuable if they live in a house rather than an apartment? Is someone more important if they have three bedrooms in their home? Is someone who is unable to pay their rent less than and not worthy?

I am bombarded by all these concerns as I sit in my warm and very cozy home without fear of being unable to pay my bills. We must not be complacent. We cannot accept the unaffordable housing that so many of our brothers and sisters live in. Taking action by pressuring our legislators, both state and federal, to put energy into working on policies that provide more affordable housing for all, can be a beginning step. No one needs to be out in the cold, and everyone deserves to be warm and comfortable.

I am encouraged to read that vouchers of nearly \$300,000 from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development will be available to Veterans in Hartford to assist those who are facing housing issues. The monies will be used to provide more permanent housing, and will offer supportive services to veterans who are lacking safe and stable housing. Many face issues of affordability, quality, and crowding, and this funding is a big step forward.

Another positive opportunity proposed by State Senator Mae Flexer is to add \$5 million in funding to the CT state budget to support emergency cold weather shelters to combat the homelessness that is up by almost 40% from last year. The added money could also be used to open new shelters, and pay staff and higher utility bills in already existing shelters. This budget would begin in July 2023.

All of this is uplifting news, but so much needs to be done by all of us. You can do your part by raising your awareness, talking with your lawmakers, and supporting your local shelters. Together we can make a difference, and it begins with not "buying in" to the belief that it is all about profits!

Have a rich 2023 with lots of laughter, companionship, and connection!



# The Mohegan Roots of Our Land

Submitted by Lorraine Reeder

It's somewhat common knowledge that much of the land that now comprises the Quiet Corner was once Mohegan tribal land under the control of the sachem Uncas.

Not long after bequeathing the land to his two sons, Joshua and Owaneco, the land was acquired by early settlers.

You are invited to learn more on Sunday, January 22, 2023, when David Eichelberg, Outreach and Tradition Specialist of the Mohegan Tribe, will give a presentation about the culture, history, and performance of dance and song of the Mohegan people.

"I hope that this will be the first of a series of talks members of the Mohegan tribe will make," shared Lorraine Reeder, a Vestry member of Christ Church. "I envision arranging future talks where we can learn more about how the Indians cared for the land and raised their crops. I think they may be able to help us determine how we as individuals can contribute to saving our environment, and maybe delaying the spread of global warming."

Christ Church Pomfret will open the doors of its hall at 2:30 p.m., offering refreshments prior to the 3:00 p.m. talk. Reservations



'Uncas' by David Wagner.

via email to christchurchpomfret@gmail.com are requested but not required. All are welcome and there is no cost to attend. Donations to the Tantaquidgeon Indian Museum will be accepted.

Christ Church is located at 527 Pomfret Street, Route 169, in Pomfret.

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## Coventry Winter Farmers Market

Every Sunday through March 19, 2023.

Website: [www.coventrywinterfarmersmarket.com](http://www.coventrywinterfarmersmarket.com)

Sign up for our weekly newsletter on the site.

We will have 25-30 vendors each week, consisting of local products and produce including baked goods, meat and fish, handmade jewelry and decor, freshly roasted coffee and much more.

The market is back at Coventry High School from 10:00-12:30. every Sunday.

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## Looking Up

# Bundling Up and Listening to the Wisdom of a Vernal Pool

By Bob Grindle

After the heart-achingly beautiful and almost inexpressibly colorful autumn treescapes that New Englanders' senses were able to feast on through nearly all of October and deep into November this drought-versed and climate-orchestrated year of 2022, the razor-sharp briskness, bleak and nearly colorless coda of a December gathering itself to end the year in an audience chilling rawness completely lacking in the colorful notes of our beloved regional seasonal symphony known as Fall in New England, it seems a fitting bridge into the rich aroma and pungent nose-coating smokiness of bonfires and blazing fireplaces and the chill-chasing comfort of woodstoves that almost, but not quite—at least not for this observer—lift winter up to rival the charming northeastern appeal of the other three seasons.

Bundled up against the blustery, chill, drenching rain on this gray December afternoon I hurry up the path across the lawn to feed the chickens and gather eggs and then into the garden where I stop by the bee hive to listen closely if the bees are active inside; on hearing a comforting low pitched buzzing sound I look up and feel the raindrops against my cheek, as cold as freshly melted ice, and I recall all the times I've heard someone say that what they missed most when they moved away from the northeast was the changing seasons...and the sound of the piled up the hill is almost like a drawn out three-note chuckle at the humor in that thought. The century old Norway Spruces that partially shelter the hive are whispering a stoic chorus as the breeze plays across their uncountable needles and raindrops spilling through the branches modulate the tone and timber and the whisper sounds almost like a low growl.

Further uphill a small vernal pool has filled, and according to the old folklore known as local wisdom we understand that winter can now begin officially. Ironically we feel the comfort of knowing that we have watched decades of this hillside's amphibian population be refreshed in this seasonal brood chamber...how many tens of thousands of small newts and salamanders, frogs and toads have hatched here to repopulate or to simply be a food source for the snakes, birds and numerous small mammals that call Clark Hill home here in Windham county(?). It is wet and cold near the top of the hill and no amphibian eggs will appear in the pool before early

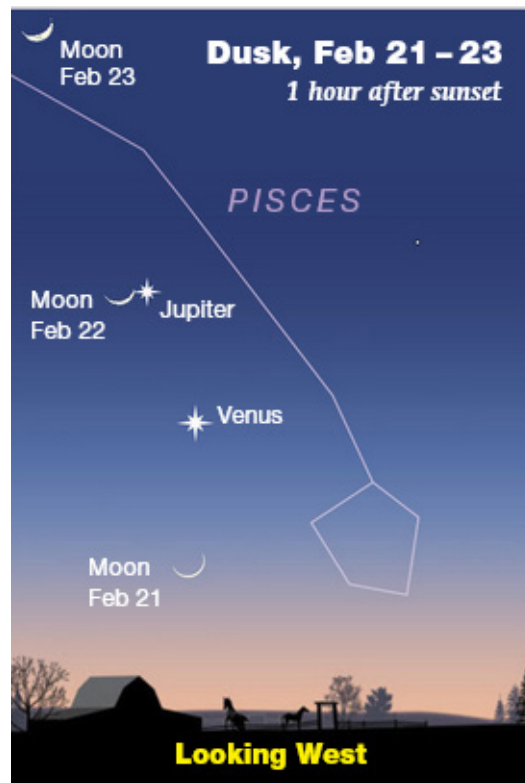
March, but just thinking about the tenacity of the life that will fill this tiny water hole in a few short weeks makes winter seem just that much more fleeting. Does cold and raw and wet have a smell, or snow-thickened rain have a taste...it seems like every sense is competing for time on a day like this, even the skin plays a role as it shivers and says 'head back to the house.' The afternoon is growing gloomy and looking across the valley over to Parish Hill the horizon of the recently crimson and orange silhouette of trees is now a line drawing in charcoal and black; the sound of the wind through the bare branches of this upland vantage lacks the richness of the more musical spruces down below, but the rising smoke from a neighbor's wood fire comforts all the senses and it is time to head downhill and home. The coming of winter is crouching down preparing

to pounce onto all of our lives and the natural world outside our doors settles in for a refreshing nap; Earth speeds around the Sun on its annual half billion mile orbital lap as a New Year beckons, and the waxing gibbous Moon of late December increases toward the full Wolf Moon of January 6th in the 2023 New Year.

The full Wolf Moon of January 6th and then the full Snow Moon on February 5th seem strangely balanced as if wolves and snow somehow go together naturally. I can remember a couple of years ago at a bookstore in Mystic, Connecticut seeing a children's book, *Wolf in the Snow*, reading it and being more than charmed that the central character was a little girl who comes to grips with fear and courage and compassion and perhaps I was more pleased that the wolves were not the bad guys. But if you get the chance to spend a few minutes outside in early January, shortly after dark, stop, look up into the south-eastern sky and enjoy

the rapidly waxing Moon pass just under the Pleiades, very near to Mars and through Taurus as it approaches its full Wolf phase...perhaps you'll get lucky and hear a coyote howl from nearby and complete the chilling capstone to a winter's night.

February's full Snow Moon slips quietly into the night sky of the 5th, but there is a much prettier picture to be seen later in the month when, on the nights of February 21st-23rd, a waxing wisp of Moon sets into the western sky and passes first Jupiter, then Venus as it heads into magic of March and the glorious 'circle of life' that is the mystery of the vernal pool once again rises out of the depths of winter. Be well, be kind and be part of the wonderful neighborhood that is the world we live in.





## Cultural Events in Willimantic

Submitted by Bev York, America Museum

**Jan. 16 Liber Tea featuring Martin Luther King, Jr. 4 p.m.** Discover some little known stories of King and his contributions to civil and equal rights. Tea, coffee and crumpets. Donations welcome. Eastern Connecticut Veteran's Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. The monthly LiberTea program is sponsored by the America Museum and shares stories and encourages discussion about people who have made significant contributions to American democracy and liberty.

### Windham Arts

The Coffee Break Gallery currently features "Veteran's Art" Paintings by Chuck Staples, Paul Panagrosso and Sheldon Dyer. (through January) Coming Exhibitions: Feb. "From the Heart," Mar. "You've Come a Long Way, Rosie!," April: "Everyday is Earth Day", May: "Man's Best Friend", June: "My Country Tis of Thee." Interested artists contact [director@windhamarts.org](mailto:director@windhamarts.org). The Gallery is located in the Eastern CT Veteran's Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic.

The Coffee Break Gallery is looking for visual artists from Eastern CT to present their work for the month of February 2023 in our Exhibit entitled, "From the Heart." Work must include at least one image of a heart or express the message of love. Work can be any size up to 3' x 4', framed or unframed, 2D or 3D. Artists must submit a sample of the work via email to [galler@WindhamArts.org](mailto:galler@WindhamArts.org). The registration form includes indicating size of work. Work must be delivered to the gallery no later than January 30 (drop off 10 to 2) and will need to be picked up on February 28 from 10-2. The gallery is located at 47 Crescent St, Willimantic. Date of opening reception Mon. Feb. 6, 5-7 p.m. Please indicate if your work is for sale, include information regarding the title, artist, medium, price. The gallery requires a 20% commission. For more information please email [director@windhamarts.org](mailto:director@windhamarts.org)

### Jillson House Museum

**Jan. 14 Fireplace Cooking at the Jillson House Museum. 1-4 p.m.** Bev York will demonstrate the preparation and cooking of some traditional foods served in the 1830s. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic CT The museum will be open on the second Saturday during the winter months of Jan., Feb., and March. For information call 860-423-1878.

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**Jan. 25 Tavern Night at the Jillson House Museum.** Meet the 40th President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy. 5 p.m. (program 5:30) Discover fascinating facts and the

president's favorite food and drink. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic CT Suggested donation to the museum \$10.



# If You Tickle the Earth with a Hoe She Laughs with a Harvest

By C. Dennis Pierce

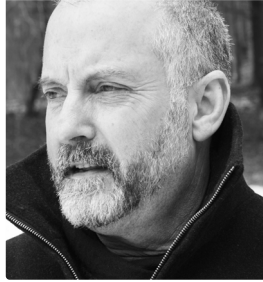
I cannot stack wood. No, let me clarify that. I do know how to stack wood. I have stacked wood for years, but I really think there may be a unique force in my backyard that causes the stack to constantly fall over. Let me explain. Over the years I have purchased the metal frames that hold the wood to be used over the winter. I have carefully followed the steps in setting them up. I even added metal poles driven into the ground to reinforce them. But as storms pass through, I wake in the morning only to find the stack neatly lying on its side on the ground. Sure, maybe a coincidence, but twice this year? You know, now that I think about it, my son has mentioned that I do not go to the gym as often as I should—maybe, with a little help from a health-conscious, “I care about Dad” family member, he is the culprit causing me to restack the rack just so I can stay in shape.

Purchasing local wood is not normally considered when we think about “buying local.” Surely we do not think of it as we do local produce. However, it is a commodity that we consume, in the way of producing warmth throughout the colder months.

As I write this, it is New Year’s Day. To continue with tradition, may I suggest that some of the following be added to your New Year’s resolutions list?

**Purchase local:** “Locally grown” has been a common catch phrase since the early 2000s. People who demonstrate a preference for locally grown food have been referred to as “locavores” since about 2005. But what exactly does “local” mean in this context? “Local produce” might be interpreted to be those fruits and vegetables grown within your own town or county. However, “local” often means produce from within a specified radius, such as 50 or 100 miles from your point of reference. Consider this: fresh local produce at farmers markets or local stands is good for your mental health as well as your body. Besides the nutritional benefits, there can be social and psychological ones as well. A local farmers market is a great place to rub shoulders with your neighbors and to make new connections. Connecting with your community can promote a sense of belonging, a feeling that you matter, and a healthy trust in your neighbors.

**Be conscious of your impact on the environment:** Supporting your local farmers market is beneficial for the environment as well. Locally and regionally produced food saves 5



to 17 times the CO2 that conventional food distribution companies produce. Connecticut has nearly 100 farmers markets and they can be found in virtually any town, seven days a week. The popularity of the markets mirrors the benefits—fresh, local products; friendly farmers that are the face behind the food you’re buying; and a community gathering place for everyone to enjoy. The number of farmers markets in the United States has grown rapidly in recent years, from just under 2,000 in 1994 to more than 8,600 markets currently registered in the USDA Farmers Market Directory. Now that is amazing!



**Take the opportunity to learn more about Connecticut agriculture:** On a cold winter’s night, when you are looking for something to do, check out the following videos. While one is older, it captures the history of agriculture in Connecticut.

*Working the Land: The Story of Connecticut Agriculture*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBko8wjXv6s>

*A Place to Grow: Affordable Farming in Connecticut*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIX9IziC5QA>

Seed catalogues are arriving daily. Plan now to grow later: ’tis the season. Recently, my mailbox gave shelter to the new Territorial Seed Company, Fedco, and Burpee seed catalogues. These and others provide me with insight into what is new, what to try out, and what to possibly avoid. For those on tight budgets, watch when the Mansfield Public Library begins its seed offerings in the early spring. For those who have leftover seeds from last season, consider donating them to the library so others may enjoy.

Winter is when gardens begin. If you have not gar-



dened yourself, pick out a small sunny site on your property. Make sure it has access to a water source. When you have found a spot, start digging around. Take a sample and bring it to the Soil Nutrient Analysis Lab at UConn, where they will provide you with insight on the condition of your soil and what potentially needs to be added to the soil. Go online to find instructional videos. There is a cornucopia of information on gardening. You can find information on when to start your seeds indoors, fertilizer to use, and how to mulch to keep the weeds at bay. But more importantly, just grow what you like to eat!

This is a great story about the following recipe. Over Christmas, I took my family to dinner and as an appetizer we enjoyed this dish, which was prepared with local mushrooms. Now, that is not the story that I wanted to share, but it did remind me that back in the mid '90s I sent in a recipe after seeing a request for professional culinarians to submit recipes for a contest that Athens Apollo was sponsoring. I am sure you have used their products, either their phyllo dough or puff pastry, which can both be found in the frozen food section of any grocery store. On a whim, I sent in a recipe for "Greek Pizza" made from phyllo dough, and I was shocked when I received a call several weeks later inviting me to Cleveland, where all the award-winning chefs would gather so that their recipes could be showcased and photos taken. The company then created a cookbook with all the submissions. At one point in time, you could mail away for a free book; however, that offer is no longer available. I did find a few on eBay, if anyone is interested. So that is my story, and I had another few minutes of fame when I saw my recipe on the back of a box of phyllo dough. While the following recipe does not require phyllo dough, it does use puff pastry, which is made by Athens. Try it out; local mushrooms can be found at the Willimantic Food Co-op.

### Caramelized Onions, Mushroom, and Blue Cheese Tart

#### Ingredients:

- 1 large onion (sliced)
- 1 pound mushrooms (cleaned and sliced)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 sheet puff pastry (thawed but kept cold in refrigerator)
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/2 cup blue cheese
- 1/4 cup white wine
- salt and pepper to taste

#### Directions:

Heat the oil and butter in a pan. Add the onion and cook until it starts to caramelize, about 20 minutes. Add the mushrooms and sauté until they start to caramelize, about 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and add the wine, deglaze the pan, and cook until it has evaporated. Roll the puff pastry out to a 12x12-inch rectangle. Preheat oven to 400 F degrees. Score a line around the puff pastry 1 inch from the edge. Spread the blue cheese over the middle of the puff pastry and then spread with the onion-and-mushroom mixture. Bake until the pastry is golden brown, about 15–25 minutes.

I wish you a healthy and prosperous new year! I leave you with a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them."

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](mailto:Codfish53@Yahoo.com).

Peas be with you. Come celebrate with me and remember, every day is a holiday, and every meal is a banquet. I'll save you a seat at the table! New to *Neighbors*, this issue is a combined January-February issue. So, until March, see you then.



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# Beating the Odds

By Delia Berlin

Would you buy a lottery ticket if you had a 40 to 60% chance of winning the big prize, plus an additional 80 to 90% chance of winning something? I believe that most people would answer affirmatively. Yet, only 17% of eligible candidates have chosen to receive the bivalent Covid booster, which offers such amazing chances of a win. Granted, the big prize is not money, but not getting sick with Covid. And the consolation prize is not getting severely ill, hospitalized, or killed by Covid, plus a lower probability of infecting others. How does this lottery analogy work in real life? Our own family situation can illustrate it.

Both David and I believe in vaccines. We have gotten an annual flu shot without exception for at least 35 years. We are up-to-date on all our recommended immunizations. Naturally, we have been getting all our Covid shots as we become eligible for them. Our latest shot, the “bivalent” booster, is the only one that has been updated to include protection against the Omicron variants of the virus, which evolved after the original vaccines had been deployed.

Two factors have dampened the initial euphoria about the Covid vaccines. First, the immunity provided by the vaccines starts to wane after a few months. Second, the virus is not as stable as it first appeared, and it can change enough to evade immunity, whether given by vaccines or acquired via previous infection.

Fortunately, both problems have solutions. Boosters can restore the waning immunity. And they can also be updated to target new variants as they appear. This picture is not ideal. Virus variants evolve faster than boosters can be updated, lowering the effectiveness of these boosters as time goes by. New vaccines that provide stronger, broader, and longer protection are being tested. Science will continue to discover better weapons to fight this virus. But even the



vaccines we have so far have great potential benefits. Those who think “why would I get a shot if I can still get sick?” should think again.

After three years of dodging the virus at our home, just after Christmas David got sick and tested positive for Covid. His symptoms were not severe, but at 82 and with pre-existing conditions, he started taking Paxlovid, a specific antiviral. On the first of a five-day course of medication, his symptoms started to resolve.

Meanwhile, I felt like a sitting duck waiting for the virus to hit me. But sleeping in the same bed and eating meals at the same table, I continued to test negative. I fell in the 40 to 60% of bivalent booster recipients that avoid infection altogether after exposure. Having received the same vaccines and boosters, David fell on the other side of the curve and was not quite as fortunate. But he still got the consolation prize of mild disease, despite his age and conditions.

My daughter’s household (in Manhattan, with high occupational exposure and a school-aged child) has had to deal with Covid four times during the last three years. Yet, on three of those four times, only one person in the household got sick. The only time when more than one family member got infected happened before vaccines were deployed. This is another example of how vaccines work. Even when they are not perfect, if you are the person that gets spared an illness, they worked 100% for you. By now, we know countless similar cases that illustrate this point.

Vaccinations and boosters also award some protection against debilitating long Covid. The time for “healthy” skepticism that kept so many from being first in line for vaccines should be over. Those rejecting vaccines because they are not natural should be reminded that illness and death are, indeed, completely natural. There are no guarantees in life, but there are excellent ways to improve one’s odds. I do not know when the next booster will arrive, but my sleeve is already rolled up.

## Ancestor

By Judy Davis

I am beyond grateful, for all of the stories, songs, and poetry of Ireland. There is so much that is sacred in the legends of Brian Buru, Brigid, Boann, and Lugh, and in the four corners of Ireland, where all is of the Green. My mom, the daughter of Irish emigrants, taught me so much about the auld-sod. I believe in the times in Mohill, County Leitrim, where my mom’s parents came from. I celebrate their dreams; I trust in their pride; and I carry it forward in my own life. I am now an ancestor. And I laugh with the joy of knowing that!

## Poetry Open Mic

Wednesday, January 11, 2023  
4:00 – 5:30pm

Jonathan Trumbull Library on the Lebanon Green will host an all ages community poetry open mic. Join us in the library’s community room to listen to and read some poetry. Sign up when you arrive; you may read/recite three poems or read/recite for 3 minutes. If time allows, we can read more. Original poetry is encouraged!

The library is at 580 Exeter Rd, Lebanon, CT. Call 860-642-7763 or visit [lebanonctlibrary.org](http://lebanonctlibrary.org) for more info.

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T. King, Publisher





The staff of Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors (WHZ) of Pomfret.

## Celebrating a Culture of Community

Submitted by Laura Dunn

Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors (WHZ) of Pomfret is encouraging a culture of community by sharing the impact that the firm's team and clients were able to make in helping others to "Live Well" this holiday season and throughout the year.

Through their efforts and contributions, WHZ donated more than \$7,000 to local charities on behalf of their clients, contributed dozens of hours volunteering with local nonprofits and, most recently, collected more than 100 holiday gifts for children in need. In addition, clients added over \$1,000 in donations to help local organizations, for a total impact of \$8,000 in community support during the holidays.

"We are inspired by and grateful for the generosity that our team and our clients have shown this year in embracing our commitment to helping others live well, and we're blown away by what we've been able to contribute to our local community through their efforts," said WHZ Principal and Managing Partner Laurence Hale, AAMS®, CRPS®.

In 2022 WHZ focused most of their community support efforts on dedicated partnerships with area organizations, including Interfaith Human Services of Putnam (IHSP) and its Daily Bread food pantry; the Thompson Ecumenical Empowerment Group (TEEG); the Access Community Action Agency; and the

Hale YMCA.

Through company-wide and individual efforts enabled by that policy WHZ also supported specific initiatives of other nonprofits in the community, including Day Kimball Healthcare, the Northeast Connecticut Women & Girls Fund and the Quinebaug Valley Community College Foundation.

In total, WHZ's contributions of time, talents and funding this year helped to ease hunger and provide everyday essentials to those in need; offer valuable experiences and opportunities for disadvantaged children; support programs aimed at helping people improve wellness after cancer treatment or injury; promote racial equity; and fund college scholarships for deserving students.

"Empowering others to live well is what drives all we do here at WHZ. It is the ultimate goal we strive for to help our clients achieve through our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™ strategic financial planning process. But it also extends to the broader community as well, and we've fulfilled that commitment in a multitude of ways this year," said WHZ Principal and Managing Partner Jim Zahansky, AWMA®.

"Each experience of giving has in turn brought our team and our clients the gifts of joy, inspiration and feeling of fulfillment that comes from serving others and the greater good. And that's an important part of what it means to "Live Well" for us at WHZ."

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## Unsung Heroes of Soul

# Clarence Carter

By Dean Farrell

As host of “The Soul Express,” I play the biggest names in 1960s and ‘70s-era soul music. I also mix in the many great soul artists who did not necessarily become household names but were no less talented. This month’s column is about Clarence Carter, who critic Dave Marsh called “both an artist steeped in the most traditional aspects of Southern music and one of the most modern of all deep bluesmen.”

He was born blind in Montgomery, Alabama, on January 14, 1936. When he was nine, his grandmother gave him a guitar for Christmas. Carter attended the Alabama School for the Blind in Talladega and Alabama State College in Montgomery. He graduated in 1960 with a Bachelor of Science degree in music.

He began singing professionally with his friend Calvin Scott as Clarence & Calvin. Their first single, on Fairlane Records, was 1961’s “I Wanna Dance But I Don’t Know How.” On the Duke label, they called themselves the C&C Boys. Duke put out four singles on the pair, but none were commercially successful. In 1965, as Clarence & Calvin, they self-financed a session at the FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. It produced their final single, “Step by Step,” which they leased to Atco, an Atlantic subsidiary.

Scott left the act after being seriously injured in a 1966 car accident. (An alternate version is that Scott was forced to retire from music when his wife shot him.) Carter went solo and continued to record at FAME (but no longer had to self-finance his sessions). In 1967, he made the *Billboard* Rhythm & Blues chart for the first time with the self-written “Tell Daddy.” (Later that year, Etta James cut the song as “Tell Mama.”) At the suggestion of Atlantic’s Jerry Wexler, Carter’s singles started coming out on that label, which distributed FAME.

His first Atlantic single, “Slip Away,” was intended as the B-side. According to FAME’s Rick Hall, “We had to think ‘Funky Fever’ was a hit. We worked and worked and worked with that. I was sure it was a hit and sure enough, Atlantic ordered 10,000 singles the first week.” As for “Slip Away,” Hall said, “I think it took fifteen minutes [to record that song]!” Nevertheless, it was the single’s hit side, going to #2 R&B and #6 pop. It also earned an RIAA Gold Record.

Carter followed his big hit with the similar-sounding “Too Weak to Fight.” Clearly, the public was hungry for more as the song reached #3 R&B and #13 pop toward the end of 1968. And, like its predecessor, it was certified Gold. At the same time, Carter hit #4 on *Billboard*’s Christmas chart with “Back Door Santa.” The year 1969 was a good one for Carter, who placed four singles in the *Billboard* R&B top ten. And he entered the ‘70s with what became his signature song.



Atlantic’s Jerry Greenberg had sent Rick Hall a copy of “Patches,” a 1969 album track by the Chairmen of the Board. Hall loved the song and thought it was perfect for Carter, who nonetheless refused to record it. As Carter explained to Hall, “It’s a put-down to Black people and I’d never do that song.” However, Carter would later have a change of heart. Despite (or perhaps due to) its corniness, “Patches” became his biggest hit, peaking at #2 R&B and #4 pop in the spring of 1970. It also received a Gold Record and won the Grammy Award for Best R&B Song.

Also in 1970, Carter married soul singer Candi Staton. They had a son, Clarence Carter, Jr., and divorced in 1973.

Carter left Atlantic in late 1971 and returned to FAME. In 1975, he signed with ABC, who released three albums on the man. While his career faltered in the disco era, Carter found renewed popularity on Ichiban Records in the ‘80s and ‘90s with songs like “Strokin” and “Dr. C.C.” “Strokin” would turn up in two movies: *The Nutty Professor* with Eddie Murphy, and William Friedkin’s *Killer Joe*. Carter’s music also found an audience in the hip-hop community. Most notably, Run-D.M.C. sampled the horn break from “Back Door Santa” on “Christmas in Hollis.”

Rock critic Dave Marsh included four of Carter’s songs--“Slip Away,” “Making Love (At the Dark End of the Street),” “Patches,” and “Sixty Minute Man”--in his 1989 book, *The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made*.

Charted singles:

- “Tell Daddy” (1967) R&B #35
- “Thread the Needle” (1967) R&B #38, Pop #98
- “Looking for a Fox” (1968) R&B #20, Pop #62
- “Slip Away” (1968) R&B #2, Pop #6
- “Funky Fever” (1968) R&B #49, Pop #88



“Back Door Santa” (1968) Xmas #4  
 “Too Weak to Fight” (1968-69) R&B #3, Pop #13  
 “Snatching It Back” (1969) R&B #4, Pop #31  
 “The Feeling Is Right” (1969) R&B #9, Pop #65  
 “Doin’ Our Thing” (1969) R&B #9, Pop #46  
 “Take It Off Him and Put It on Me” (1970) R&B #23, Pop #94  
 “I Can’t Leave Your Love Alone” (1970) R&B #6, Pop #42  
 “Patches” (1970) R&B #2, Pop #4  
 “It’s All in Your Mind” (1970) R&B #13, Pop #51  
 “The Court Room” (1971) R&B #12, Pop #61  
 “Slipped, Tripped, and Fell in Love” (1971) R&B #25, Pop #84  
 “Scratch My Back (And Mumble on My Year)” (1971) R&B #41  
 “Back in Your Arms” (1972) R&B #46  
 “Put on Your Shoes and Walk” (1972) R&B #40, Pop #112  
 “Sixty Minute Man” (1973) R&B #17, Pop #65  
 “Mother-in-Law” (1973) R&B #24, Pop #80  
 “I’m the Midnight Special” (1973) R&B #15, Pop #101  
 “I Got Caught” (1975) R&B #49  
 “It’s a Monster Thang” (1981) R&B #81

Other notable recordings by Clarence Carter include “Step by Step” (Clarence & Calvin, 1965), “She Ain’t Gonna Do Right” (1967), “Making Love (At the Dark End of the Street)” (1969), “I Smell a Rat” (1969), “Getting the Bills (But No Merchandise)” (1971), and “Strokin” (1984).

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

Dean Farrell hosts “The Soul Express” Fridays from 7:00-10:00 p.m. on WECS, 90.1-FM ([www.wecsfm.com](http://www.wecsfm.com)) and alternating Saturdays from 2:30 - 5:30 p.m. on WRTC, 89.3-FM ([www.wrtcfn.com](http://www.wrtcfn.com)). He plays vintage soul music of the 1960s and ‘70s, everything from #1 hits to long-lost obscurities. Dean’s e-mail address is [soulexpress@gmail.com](mailto:soulexpress@gmail.com).

## At Hampton’s Top Shelf Gallery



Submitted by Janice Trecker

The January-February show at Fletcher Memorial Library’s Top Shelf Gallery will be Animal Watchers & More, featuring drawings and paintings by Frietha Lawrence. There will be an artist’s reception at noon on Saturday January 14. A longtime member of the Artists Open Studio group, Lawrence’s work has appeared in numerous shows in Connecticut.

Although Lawrence says she has drawn and painted since childhood, her career as a professional artist began later in life. Retiring after forty years of nursing, she earned a BA in studio from Eastern Connecticut State University. Her “Count It All Joy” studio on the Ashford farm where she lives with her family opened shortly thereafter.

Lawrence especially enjoys working with pen and ink, but also works with oil, colored pencil, and watercolor, and she recently produced an illustrated children’s book, *The Owl Watchman*. In addition, she is certified to teach the Zentangle drawing method which produces complex geometrical patterns from a variety of repeated shapes, and she has done after-school art projects for a number of years.

Her inspiration comes from the natural world, farms, animals, and gardens. “There are patterns and colors and images in the world all around us,” she says. Pleasure comes in recognizing these elements and interpreting them onto paper and canvas.”

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# Quenching a Thirst for Knowledge

**Benjamin Franklin's Thirst:** *"My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman."*

*Benjamin Franklin*

By Bill Powers

Ben Franklin's quotation recognizes that one's thirst for knowledge, explicitly is your own, and his was limited by the insufficient resources available to him from his father's library. In my own case, while growing up, my family had a few books and an encyclopedia available at home. However, it was fortunate that only a quarter of a mile away from my home was the Mark Twain Branch of the Hartford Public Library, located in what is today the Mark Twain House and Museum. There, there was access to a diversity of books; and, in addition to those in my school's library, I was helped in quenching my thirst for knowledge for different interests as my curiosities evolved. Clearly, having the ability to read opens many doors to knowledge which is greatly enhanced if you have access to a diversity of meaningful books for nourishing the spirit of inquiry. For me, the thirst for knowledge has always been at least temporarily satiated when there is the opportunity to share and compare what I have learned with others, especially in informal groups for discussion, such as a book club.

Today, not only do we have the vast resources of information technology at our disposal, but we also locally have an extraordinary opportunity to quench our thirst for knowledge at the UConn Extension's CLIR program (the Center for Learning in Retirement), where guest speakers provide up-to-date presentations with informal classes and discussions. In today's fast moving and complex society, it can be challenging to stay current in a thoughtful way, with the many important issues, needs, problems, and concerns that regularly confront humankind.

Each year the CLIR program provides fascinating classes that follow a three-season format: Spring; Winter; and, Fall. Knowledgeable presenters offer well-researched discussions that are entertaining; and, typically, the result of their own academic research. Each season, a true smorgasbord of topics is offered, not only to retired folks, but also to everyone else, since there are no academic or age attendance requirements. The 2023 Winter Schedule begins on January 4, 2023.

The January offerings are as follows - 1) A discussion about the "Emerging Seaweed Industry in the United States" with Anoushka Concepcion, UConn Associate Extension Educator in Marine Aquaculture. 2) On January 11, 2023 Madeleine Fugere, ECSU Professor of History will discuss "The Psychology of Attraction and Romantic Relationships".

3) Just a week later, Professor Charles Mahoney, Professor of English and Comparative Literacy and Cultural Studies at UConn, will continue the "Romantic" theme with a discussion about "Shakespeare and the Romantics". 4) On January 19th, Open Educational Resources (OER) will be the topic as "a social justice tool that promotes inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility. OERs are teaching, learning, and research materials either digital or print in the public domain or open license allowing for no-cost access, use adaptation, redistribution by others with limited or no restrictions." Nicolas Simon, ECSU Professor of Sociology will not only explain the benefits of OER but he will also explain how publishers are intent to keep their profits versus the common good. 5) "Mohegan Designs and Symbols from Ancient to Current Times" is scheduled for January 26, 2023. Visiting CLIR on that day will be the Mohegan Tribe Chairwoman for the Council of Elders, Beth Regan (Morning Deer).

**CLIR**  
**Lifelong Learning**  
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For February 2023, CLIR again offers a wonderful array of subjects for interested participants. 1) On February 7, Carol Atkinson-Palumbo from the UConn Department of Geology, will make the case that social equity is crucial to creating sustainable cities while she employs a case study method

using surface transportation to illuminate the concept of techno-salvation – the idea that technological innovations will solve the climate crisis." 2) Two days later, Mary Bernstein, Associate Dean of the UConn Graduate School and Professor of Sociology, will discuss a foremost topic of today, "Gun Violence: Prevention and the Politics of Worthiness." 3) The following week Hedley Freake, Professor Emeritus, Nutritional Science, UConn, will offer a program about "The Environmental Costs and Consequences of the United States Food System." 4) "The Asian American Community in Connecticut" will be topic on February 22nd presented by Angela Rola, who is the Founding Director of the Asian American Cultural Center at UConn. 5) The very next day on February 23rd, Avinoam Patt, Director of the UConn Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life, will address: "What accounts for the contemporary rise in antisemitism?" The title of his presentation is: "Why the Jews? Confronting Antisemitism."

In March as meteorological winter has just come to a close the program series continues. 1) On March 2, 2023, UConn Professor of History, Cornelia Dayton, will visit CLIR to share the story of "Abortion in the Colonial Period" in Connecticut. 2) On March 5<sup>th</sup> another historian, Jamie Eves, Windham Municipal Historian will speak about: "Building Thread City: The Early Industrial Revolution in Willimantic CT, 1822-1872." 3) On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the perspective of history becomes more expansive as Raymond Simon from UConn's Department of Physics discusses "The Formation of Galaxies over the History of the Universe." 4) On the very next day the speaker, Sean Kennelly who is CLIR's "resident Irishman", will address the new political reality in Northern Ireland.

continued on next page



## Three Fisher Cats

Small but savage creatures seldom seen  
Not one but two of them in twilight gloom  
Dark shadows silhouetted on the green  
Illuminated by the rising moon

Lost in our secluded woodland dream  
Peering out the window at the sight  
Seeing wicked teeth and eyes that gleam  
'Til suddenly they vanish in the night

I never saw a creature move so fast  
They looked at us, and suddenly weren't there  
A present wonder swept into the past  
Part cat, part devil, and part baby bear

Five years have flown since all our cats were killed  
As storm clouds gathered over paradise  
The fishers' prophecy of loss fulfilled  
But Mother Nature is forever wise

She surely is a strange mysterious teacher  
For once again she shows a snarling face  
When on a country road we see a creature  
We saw another time, another place

Out in the open stood a fisher cat  
Hissing at me from three feet away  
I stared in disbelief on seeing that  
It ceased to be an ordinary day!

He looked as if he had in mind to bite me  
I got into the car and closed the door  
I couldn't take that strange encounter lightly  
A prophecy of change it was before.

Kathy O. LaVallee, North Windham

5) On March 23rd Janet Avery, who is an avid British history researcher, will talk about "Queen Victoria and Her Descendants." 6) On March 28th equine artist and author, Hampton's Helen Scanlon will speak about "Horses in Art and History." 7) On March 30th, the 2023 CLIR Winter Schedule will come to an end while highlighting some local history, namely "The Development of the Shores of Coventry's Lake Wang-umbaug" with the Coventry Town Historian, John Holmy.

Also, ending on March 30th is the last of weekly classes for writers to write their memoirs to share in class. That class meets on Thursday mornings starting on January 5. Join

the CLIR experience in the Vernon Cottage on UConn's Mansfield Depot Campus, where there is free parking and access for the mobility-impaired. For additional information about registration, directions to Vernon Cottage, the catalogue, etc. consult "clir.uconn.edu"

If by any chance, this winter, you have a thirst for knowledge to be quenched, CLIR has just what you need!

*Bill Powers is a retired Windham Public Schools teacher who writes a weekly column about local history for the Willimantic Chronicle.*

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# 2023 Goals: 7 Financial Moves to Make Life Less Stressful

By Michael Baum, CFP®, RICP®  
Vice President, Associate Financial Advisor



The last few years have been, well... a lot, and 2022 was no exception. Between pandemic-related economic challenges to ballooning inflation, many have felt the financial strain. If you're looking to make 2023 a better year for your finances as well as your stress level, these seven moves will (hopefully) do the trick.

## Financial Move #1: Spend Smartly

Make your 2023 mantra an easy one: spend less, reduce stress. Before you buy, ask yourself, "will this actually improve the quality of my life?" If the answer is no or if it will just add clutter to your home (which can also add stress), then skip the purchase.

You can start small by doing things such as:

- Foregoing your morning latte and brewing a pot at home instead
- Cooking at home rather than going out to dinner
- Not buying new clothes regularly
- Checking for a new phone plan
- Waiting a few days and really considering each purchase to limit impulse spending

The above things can become lifestyle changes that you can implement into your everyday life.

## Financial Move #2: Reduce Debt

Getting rid of, or at least reducing, your credit card debt can relieve an immense amount of financial stress. That's especially true now that interest rates are the highest they've been in decades. Start by paying off the credit cards that have the highest interest rate before working your way down the line to lower-interest loans. (You can use the **Snowball Debt Elimination Calculator** in the Resources section of our website at [whzwealth.com](http://whzwealth.com) to make it easier to plan.) Making small changes can start becoming more of a lifestyle, therefore making it easier to reduce your debt.

## Financial Move #3: Track Expenses

If you track exactly where your money is going, it will give you a greater idea of where your overall financial picture stands. Simply understanding where your money is going can help you to really own it, which in turn can start to reduce financial stress. Here again, our Home Budget Calculator can make the job easier.

## Financial Move #4: Trade "Stuff" for Experiences

While you are still spending money here, research

shows that people enjoy experiences more than possessions, so this is a great way to make better use of our money. Rather than buying a new outfit, you could spend your money on cooking classes, traveling, art classes, or spending more time with friends and family. Whatever it may be, this will prevent stress and burnout while providing you with positive memories.

## Financial Move #5: Read Financial Success Stories

Simply reading success stories is a great way to change your mindset when it comes to a healthier financial lifestyle. Suppose you read about people who have been in your situation who were able to pay off debt, started earning more money, or overcame some type of financial hardship. Their stories may inspire you to implement these tactics into your own life.

## Financial Move #6: Create an Emergency Fund

It can be difficult to comprehend creating an emergency fund when you're already financially stressed. But whenever you can, put any extra money aside at the end of the month into an emergency fund for unexpected expenses, such as house repairs, car repairs or healthcare costs.

## Financial Move #7: Start a Spending Plan

Once you've worked diligently to reduce debt and build an emergency fund, start a spending plan. When you do this, you'll need to track your income while making a plan for all that you are earning. You can prioritize your spending once you have allocated the funds to cover expenses. This should hopefully help you breathe a little easier as you spend money while staying on track.

2022 has been hard on many people, personally, professionally and financially. But as we kick off 2023, you can use these tips to help reduce financial stress and set yourself up for a better year ahead.

Better yet, take it a step further and get strategic about planning for financial security and wealth building well into the future. Get in touch for a consultation to see how our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well strategic process can help you say goodbye to financial stress for good. You can contact us on our website, [whzwealth.com](http://whzwealth.com), by phone at (860) 928-2341, or by email at [info@whzwealth.com](mailto:info@whzwealth.com).

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# SolSmart in Connecticut Towns: Tripping the Light Fantastic

By Jim Hunt, Communications  
Manager, Sustainable CT

Sustainable CT, a statewide, voluntary certification program that supports sustainability best practices in Connecticut municipalities, announced that four of its registered towns – **Ashford**, Bloomfield, Manchester and Stonington – have achieved SolSmart designation this year.

SolSmart is a national program led by the International City/County Management Association and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) that recognizes cities, counties, and regional organizations when they foster the development of mature local solar markets. According to the SolSmart website, more than 400 cities, counties, and regional organizations in 42 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico have achieved SolSmart designation, representing over 107 million people.

Achieving at least Bronze-level status in the national SolSmart community designation yields twenty points towards Sustainable CT certification – the most points available for any one action in the Sustainable CT program. Each of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities has its own permitting process, permit application and fee structure, which makes widespread solar deployment a challenge. SolSmart encourages streamlining procedures and documentation so Connecticut towns can support and facilitate more sustainable projects, including solar, and bring more business to their communities.

“Achieving SolSmart provides a town national recognition and points in our program towards certification,” said Jessica LeClair, Sustainable CT’s senior program director, “and it’s an action that’s included in our Climate Leader Designation program, too, so it’s

like a win-win-win. Historically, our SolSmart action (5.6.2) has not been very popular with towns because it’s one of the more challenging in our program, but now we’re thrilled to see towns trying and succeeding.”

LeClair added, “We’re excited to continue our partnership with the Great Plains Institute to connect Connecticut municipalities with free technical support to work towards SolSmart designation in 2023. These four towns have demonstrated their commitment to advancing solar, enabling their residents and businesses to save on their electric bill while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”

Manchester was among the Sustainable CT-registered towns that achieved SolSmart Bronze designation by creating an online permitting checklist to increase transparency for community members and solar installers; and by reviewing local zoning codes to identify restrictions that intentionally or unintentionally prohibited solar PV development.

Courtney Lindberg, Manchester’s deputy director of public works, said, “Manchester is now certified as a SolSmart Bronze town because we’re streamlining and promoting solar energy growth in our community. And we’re thrilled that Sustainable CT continues to support and encourage these kinds of programs to help local municipalities meet sustainability goals.”

Towns that are registered with Sustainable CT can work with technical service providers for free. Through this no-cost assistance program, technical assistance providers work directly with communities to lay out a path to achieve SolSmart Bronze designation. Interested parties should email Sustainable CT for more information or visit the SolSmart page of the Sustainable CT web site.

For more information, visit [www.sustainablect.org](http://www.sustainablect.org).



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Coventry DPW garage and case study drainage: A view of the DPW garage in the background. In the foreground is one of the property's drainage ponds, shaped for proper drainage and planted with native vegetation like cattails. Invasive plants like Phragmites have been removed.



Red Plow With Pink Flamingos: Assemblage that greets visitors to the Coventry Department of Public Works, which the writer has titled "Red Plow With Pink Flamingos" and regards as folk art. Contributed photos.

## Opinion

This is a light-hearted discourse on folk art, small town can-do-ism and YES in my backyard.

Because it's in my backyard, I've been walking my dog in the vicinity of what is now the Coventry Public Works garage since I moved here in 2005, when it was still Olsen Farm. Actually, the DPW is in the backyard of the Waterfront Heights Association, which owns the surrounding private roads. When a proposal to purchase Olson Farm in order to relocate the DPW came before the Planning and Zoning Commission, I spoke in favor of it.

A few WHA residents strongly objected because "it would lower property values", but the PZC voted unanimously to approve the application. Now, a decade later, everybody on Edgemere Rd. is very happy to have quiet after 4 PM and one of the best roads in town that always gets plowed first.

Soon after that, when I was President of the Waterfront Heights Association as well as a Planning and Zoning

Commissioner, the town came to WHA asking to buy Fern Rd., the only way into the property. Because Fern Rd. was 'grandfathered' through a wetland, it was cheaper to buy it from us, at \$10,000, than to go through the process of getting an Inland Wetlands permit. Simultaneously, we needed to fix a road, at a cost of over \$10,000, that was in such bad condition that the school van refused to go up the hill to pick up the special needs child who needed transportation.

We fixed our road, the town got its DPW access road, and it was a win-win situation for all concerned. Score 2 for the benefits of YES in my backyard!

I still enjoy walking 'in my backyard' and especially appreciate two things: drainage ponds that are a case study in ecological landscape design and the beautiful folk art construction at the entrance. Titled and with a welded signature, "Red Plow With Pink Flamingos" is worthy of placement in any sculpture garden in the land.

Christine Pattee, Coventry CT

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**Ashford Senior Center:** Tue, Fri 9:30-10:30am  
Columbia Senior Center: Tue 1-2pm  
Coventry Senior Center: Wed 9:30-10:30am  
Lebanon Senior Center: Tue 4-5p, Thu 6:30-7:30p  
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## Unclothing Around

Thoughts...scrambled tortured dusty stampedes  
through the webs that twine from one end of my mind to the other.  
I cautiously navigate the avalanche that accompanies these things  
only to find I am covered in the alabaster sheets  
of some distant unimaginable yet familiar retreat.  
Silence them all I cry and insist  
for they only lead me to kindly despair  
in places where I am too afraid to repeat,  
these notions that call and call and never, ever, ever...sleep.

Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.



## Tai Chi Home

### Touch Down

By Joe Pandolfo

Midwinter and the night sky is so deep. It's hard to fathom how old and far away the light is from those stars. The silence is something you can feel, like an ocean of space surrounding you.

In traditional energy medicine, this season of vast outer emptiness is the time to nurture your most inner core. That's where the "pre-natal qi" - the origin of our vitality - is held. We sometimes hold fear there too, when a winter midnight leaves us lost, or helpless, or lonely.

Let go and touch down to the sea floor. At the deep core, that place in your bones and original memory, fear and separateness can disappear. There's a connection you feel, like the pull of an ancient tide.



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# On Knowing Who We Really Are: An Antidote to Environmental Destruction

...the thesis is that the prevalent sensation of oneself as a separate ego enclosed in a bag of skin is a hallucination which accords neither with Western science nor with the experimental philosophy-religions of the East—in particular the central and germinal Vedanta philosophy of Hinduism. This hallucination underlies the misuse of technology for the violent subjugation of man's natural environment and, consequently, its eventual destruction.

—Alan Watts, *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are* (1966), preface

By Phoebe Godfrey

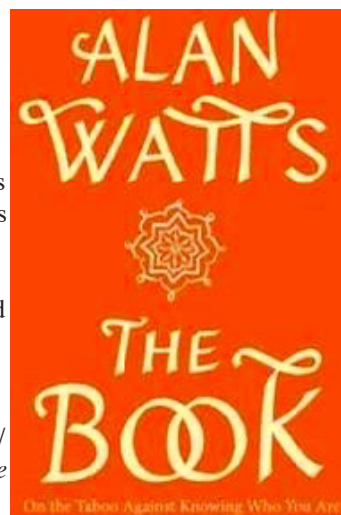
It is the second day of January 2023 and although I join in the collective celebration of a New Year, as based on the Gregorian calendar, it is also hard not to fear for what another year of climate change / chaos will bring. Given that this is my area of expertise—the study and teaching of the social causes and consequences of global climate change—such fears are often on my mind and of course those of my students. And although we are all culturally programmed to respond to our fears by crying out “What can we do?”, seeking to take immediate action that we hope will alleviate our distress, more and more I have come to recognize that in the case of climate change (and no doubt many other situations) what we in fact need is *not* more action, but much more challengingly, *less*.

What this ongoing crisis requires is a radical shift in our cultural perception of who we are, to move beyond our “hallucination” of separateness which, as the writer and philosopher Alan Watts recognized, gives us “a separate center of feeling and action, living inside and bounded by the physical body—a center which ‘confronts’ an ‘external’ world of people and things, making contact through the senses with a universe both alien and strange” (*The Book*, p. 8). It is this false sense that we do not belong here, that we are merely “temporary visitors in the universe,” that makes us as a culture “largely hostile” to the world, “forever ‘conquering’ nature, space, mountains, deserts, bacteria, and insects instead of learning to cooperate with them in a harmonious order” (8, 9). I would add, sociologically speaking, that such cultural “conquest” is imbued with our constructions of masculinity, whiteness, and social class privilege, all of which further the feeling of being separate from nature as a result of perceived superiority that is,

of course, also a hallucination.

In my last *Neighbors* article, I wrote about my time at the COP 27 climate talks, and from that experience I concluded that our only hope is for us industrialized Westerners to begin authentically listening to BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color) voices and to simultaneously uncouple our economy from the fanaticism of pursuing profit, hence corporate growth, over people / the planet. Reading Watts's *The Book* over the last few weeks has only furthered my conviction that any actions within our existing cultural model will be futile. As he astutely states, “The hostile attitude of conquering nature ignores the basic interdependence of all things and events—that the world beyond the skin is actually an extension of our own bodies—and will end in destroying the very environment from which we emerge and upon which our whole life depends” (9–10). Another result of this deeply culturally imbedded “feeling that we are separate minds in an alien, and mostly stupid, universe is that we have no *common* sense, no way of making sense of the world upon which we are agreed in common” (*italics in original*). Thus, he argues, it becomes “my opinion against yours, and therefore the most aggressive and violent (and thus insensitive) propagandist makes the decisions”—ones that will of course favor capitalism, nationalism, racism and sexism—thereby silencing other voices (10).

Yet as previously discussed, the other voices are there, including his, that offer us not mere quick technological or even religious fixes, all of which will inevitably remain rooted in the original hallucination. What we need instead is “a new experience—a new feeling of what it is to be ‘I,’” and to achieve this we need to confront that “[t]he most strongly enforced of all known taboos is the taboo against knowing who or what you really are behind the mask of your apparently separate, independent, and isolated ego” (12). This would include, as I share with my students, moving beyond our social identities of race, gender, social class, nationality, religion, etc., to recognize that we are “IT!” (*all capitals in original*), as in everything (17). But of course, this IT cannot be fully described, and so if we were to ask “What is everything?”, Watts urges us to “look and see” (131), or, as Aristotle recognized, “the goal of action is always contemplation—knowing and being rather than seeking and becoming” (126). And from this place of “knowing and being,” we can begin to truly appreciate the



miracle of ourselves and consequently of all life. Such a miracle does not require a deity; it does, however, require *awareness of* and *to* our own existence to be fully understood. As Watts asks,

How is it possible that a being with such sensitive jewels as the eyes, such enchanted musical instruments as the ears, and such a fabulous arabesque of nerves as the brain can experience itself as anything less than a god? And, when you consider that this incalculably subtle organism is inseparable from the still more marvelous patterns of its environment –from the minutest electrical designs to the whole company of the galaxies—how is it conceivable that this incarnation of all eternity can be bored with being?

The answer thus comes back to his argument that to know, and furthermore, to experience otherwise is the greatest and most dangerous of taboos. For those who make this realization that “I and ‘universe’ are one,” the next step is to “to consolidate your understanding, to become capable of enjoyment, of living in the present, and of the discipline which this involves.” Without these tools, I agree with Watts that all our actions “will be planned disaster” (106).

And so, as we look to the coming year, I invite us all to be much less busy doing, much less “bored with being,” and much more aware of and inspired by the wonder of all existence, which includes embracing our many failings and ultimately our mortality. From there we will actually be in a position to listen to what others (including other Beings) are saying, in particular those whose cultures already recognize our inseparability with all life, and then take slow, thoughtful actions that involve lots of humor. For once it is recognized that the IT we are, “is no vapid abstraction: it is very simply and truly yourself,” then in the words of a Chinese Zen master that Watts quotes, “Nothing is left to you...but to have a good laugh!” (143). Happy laughing!

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## Part One:

# The Last Dark Valleys & Waterways of The Quiet Corner

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

Connecticut's quiet northeast corner is a storied yet unsung New England treasure.

Many want it to remain so. Somewhat remote and privacy is treasured in this dark fringe of forest, farms and natural bliss that disrupts the dense urban corridor stretching from Washington DC / NYC to Boston. Flying at night, the **Quiet Corner** is the least-illuminated and less-developed last 25 to 30 miles across Connecticut before brighter Massachusetts.

Much of this undeveloped stretch of Connecticut is state park, forest, and farms where land is level. The lay of the land and waterways guided trails, bridges and roadways -- even "Airline Rails" -- that took people from their hamlets and towns to wonders like Diana's Pool and beyond, even fresh milk to Boston.

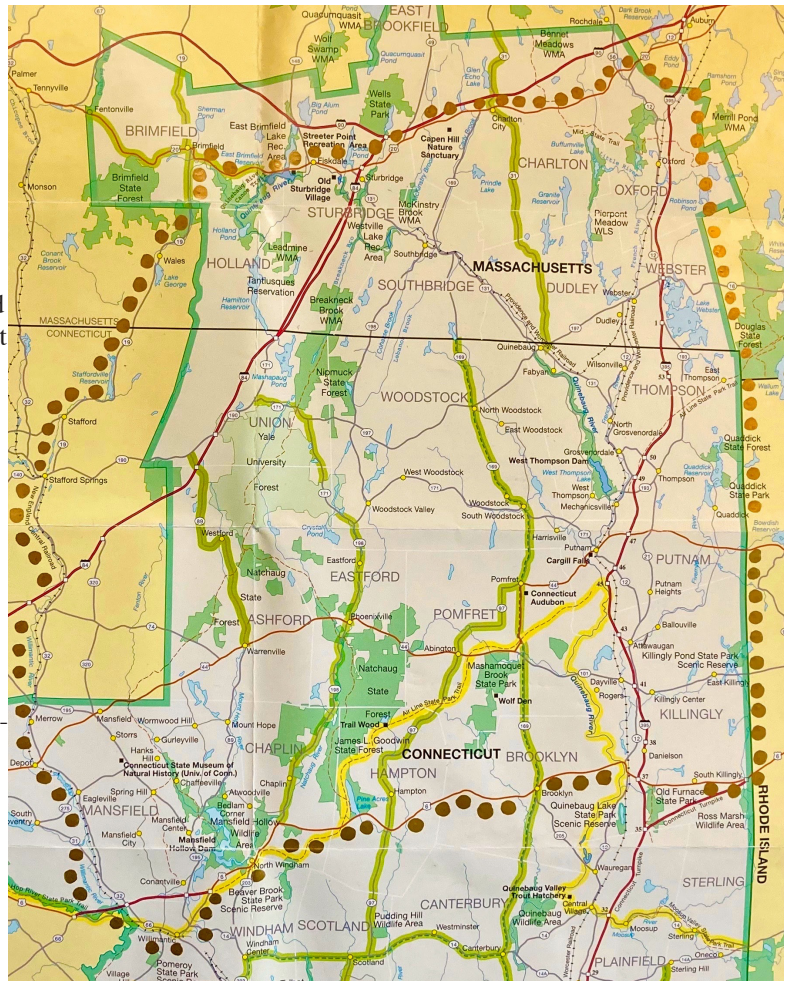
**THESE LAST DARK VALLEYS** are the coastal highlands between Hartford's suburbs and Rhode Island. They ascend north of US Highway 6 to the Quinebaug waterway that flows from the Worcester Hills in Massachusetts.

The Quiet Corner is roughly bounded by the Willimantic River / CT Route 32 on the west, and the Quinebaug River / Interstate-395 corridor on the east. The 25-mile square extends north into Mass. from Highway 6, the Hartford-to-Providence Turnpike that serves as a highland-lowland boundary east of Willimantic. IMHO.

The northern edge is the surprising Quinebaug River that first loops north from Holland MA, eastward into Southbridge then flowing south into Connecticut along the interstate corridor to the sea. Many fine old mill buildings, some going, gone.

These valleys are the northern tier of the **Last Green Valley**, a National Heritage Corridor of rural towns, forest and farmland. The LGV extends south of Highway 6 down the coastal lowlands toward the ocean ports of Norwich and New London.

**WEATHER** This temperate growing zone has had a recorded *Macroclimate* with mild winters in USDA Zone 5b, an average winter low of MINUS-15 deg F. to MINUS-10 -- but it hasn't been that cold recently. Even during the Christmas 2022 *Bomb Cyclone* that froze much of the nation, Chaplin had no snow, only windy rain, then lows of 10 to 15 degrees ABOVE Zero. Global warming to Zone 6 or 7?



Weather is noticeably colder in Storrs-Mansfield (UConn) than down in the valley of warmer urban Willimantic six miles south. Farms and gardens excel on the northern crests of the widening valleys but beware wicked winter winds. *Microclimates* vary, as everywhere.

**HUMAN** history in the highlands of Eastern Connecticut begins with native Americans, the *Algonquian*-speaking *Nipmuc* Indians. They grew food, hunted and coexisted with the land and waters, and with other coastal lowland tribes, for centuries. Their original paths are now often public trails and roadways. Country roads cross the ups and downs through hamlets and towns, past educational and religious institutions of colonial culture, and agriculture, the New England farm and its iconic stone walls.

After European settlement, agrarian hamlets became permanent towns. With congregation and competition, the "highest and best use" -- some say exploitation -- of land prevailed. The US Forest Service manages public lands for "the greatest good for the greatest number." Its "god" is maximizing logging to help local economies. To offset climate change,

the greater good is now sequestering carbon by protecting old-growth forests that store carbon, keeping it out of the atmosphere.

Waterpower was especially profitable. America's Industrial Revolution began in New England towns with waterpower, notably Rhode Island and Connecticut mills. Slave-picked Southern cotton created Willimantic and its gorgeous granite mills.

Early European settlers first thought of survival, eventually property and wealth, using land to excess. Natural resources now need the protection of conservation. Modern settlers also harvest timber, and some forest-bathe in the calming *phytoncides*. Some make gardens and some take nature's advice, learning to love the woods, thickets and weeds. And all its creatures.

I discovered the Quiet Corner in 2018. A NYC native, I was nurtured in the Midwest and transplanted to Boston in 2004. Chaplin is my horticultural heaven, the woods a haven. I love the land, its wilds, waters and history, and will share some small journeys in Part Two.

**WATERWAYS** These *Last Dark Valleys* are visible in daylight as the watersheds of three south-flowing rivers, the **Quinebaug**, **Willimantic** and **Natchaug Rivers**. These three valleys slope upstream as they ascend north from the ocean; their highlands roll east and west, ridge-to-ridge. This east-west corrugation is seen driving across the series of river ridges and valleys. Often wooded.

"*Natchaug*" is *Nipmuc* dialect for "*Land between the rivers*" which may refer to land between its two tributaries. It also suggests the pristine Bigelow Brook-Natchaug watershed between the industrial Quinebaug and Willimantic Rivers.

**Quinebaug River** This looping watershed drains from **Hamilton Reservoir** in Holland MA to Norwich CT, the historic seaport at the head of the **Thames** tidal basin. Longest river at **69 miles**, it drains from **Hamilton Reservoir** in Mass., draining *north* through **Brimfield State Forest** then east into Southbridge MA before its southward flow to Norwich, to the ocean. With tributary **Five-Mile** and **French Rivers**, the Quinebaug offered *uber*-waterpower for grain, wood-saw and textile mills.

**Natchaug River** Pure heart of the **Thames** watershed, the Natchaug is an **18-mile** flow from its origin in Charlie Brown Campground, Eastford CT, at the confluence of tributaries **Still River** and longer **Bigelow Brook** (from **Mashapaug Pond** in Union which doubles the Natchaug's length). Less industrial with woodsy trails, rocky kayaking and *Trophy Trout* fishing, it has benchmark water quality in an *uber*-healthy ecosystem, designated a *Connecticut State Greenway* for environmental protection. Diana's Pool is awesome.

**Willimantic River** Formed near Stafford Springs CT at the confluence of **Middle River** and **Furnace Brook**, the **25-mile** river dropped through rocky ravines, 100 feet in less

than a mile, to power Willimantic textile mills, now graced by the Garden on the Bridge and its *uber*-gardeners. Willimantic is a small city with a big Shaboo Stage history, a co-op and a college, and a good Thai restaurant (Pho Delight). The river merges with the **Natchaug** downstream, two rivers again becoming one, the **Shetucket River** continuing to the port of Norwich.

**Webster Lake** AKA *Lake Chaubunagungamaug*. The largest *Natural* lake (1,442 acres) in southern New England, it is actually three separate yet connected ponds, and classified as a **Great Pond** in Webster Mass., on the edge of Connecticut, at the top of the *Last Green Valley*.

The original Algonquian name may mean "*Fishing place at the boundaries - Neutral meeting grounds*" or "*Lake divided by islands*." Also known by a longer name of 45 letters with 14 syllables:

**Lake Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg.**

"The Lake Song" was recorded in 1954 by Ethel Merman and Ray Bolger with the tale of the name. Quirky character Kirk of TV's *Gilmore Girls* (2005/6) said it's "*an old Nipmuc Indian name. It means you fish on your side of the lake, I'll fish on my side, no one fishes in the middle. Or maybe it means Buffalo.*"

In the 1950s, shortening the official name of the lake inspired some unattributed doggerel verse:

*... "Touch not a g!" No impious hand  
Shall wrest one from that noble name  
Fifteen in all their glory stand  
And ever shall the same.  
For never shall that number down,  
Tho Gogg and Magogg shout and thunder;  
Chargoggagoggmanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg's  
renown  
Shall blaze, the beacon of the town,  
While nations gaze and wonder.*

**Mansfield Hollow Lake** on the other hand is quite unnatural, dammed in 1950 to create a state wildlife area at the confluence of the **Fenton**, **Mount Hope** and **Natchaug Rivers**. A contemporary boat launch for canoes, kayaks and BIG gas-engine-polluting boats, is in the upper pond, the confluence of the **Fenton** and **Mount Hope Rivers** that flow into the **Natchaug** in the lower pond.

Below the dam at Kirby Mill, the **Natchaug River** continues south to join the **Willimantic River** in Windham, and continue as the **Shetucket River** through the coastal lowlands to Norwich at the head of New London's tidal basin.

Where flatlanders have more lights.

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Chaplin



# Parasitoids Provide Hope for New Ash Trees

By Emery Gluck

The non-native Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) has been progressively decimating Connecticut's ash trees since 2012. Originally from Asia, it was first found in 2002 in Michigan. It spreads by flying up to a few miles per year and being transported in firewood and nursery stock. EAB's killing wave is reportedly now making its way through the far reaches of Windham County.

The metallic green adult beetle is about 1/2" long and active in June and July. The females lay tiny eggs in the crevices of the bark. After hatching, young larvae create serpentine galleries and feed on the tree's conductive tissues under the bark. If there is enough borers, they will kill (by girdling) well-established trees within a few years. The overwintering larvae pupates and emerges as a beetle.

The affected trees often have D-shaped exit holes, woodpecker holes, dieback of a significant portion of the live crown, epicormic branches or sprouts along the trunk or base of the tree and/or occasionally "blonding" of the tree. The latter happens where woodpeckers have removed the outer bark to get to the borer, exposing the lighter bark underneath.



White ash tree.

Photo by author.



D-shaped exit hole and partial blinding.

Photo by author.

Trees start dropping branches within a couple of years after some or all of the tree dies, as ash does not retain its structural soundness as long as much sturdier oaks. Trunk breakage can occur within a few years of death.

Non-native pests usually have no predators in their newly invaded land. Effective predators from their homeland are often imported after thorough examination. The USDA extensively vetted three species of stingless parasitic wasps from Asia that attack EAB eggs and larvae. They were released at several sites around the state. Dr. Claire Rutledge from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Dr. Jian Duan of the USDA (who traveled to eastern Russia to collect one of the wasps) and their colleague have recently recovered these parasitoids in Bozrah, miles from the nearest release site. They probably came from a release site in neighboring Lebanon .

There are innumerable EAB while only tens of thousands of parasitoids were released statewide. It





is unlikely that the parasitoids can save substantial numbers, if any, older ashes. But EAB populations should drop perceptibly once the killing front goes by. The parasitoids should then be able to keep EAB in check on the new generation of ash as they are currently doing in Asia.

There are other problems ahead for new generations of moderately shade-sensitive ash and oaks. National Park Service Ecologist Kathryn Miller analyzed seedling data throughout the northeast and found there were alarmingly inadequate numbers of tree seedlings due to many impediments. With too many deer and too much shade, very few ash seedlings or sprouts will likely make it to the overstory on their own. The additional sunlight allowed in by ash mortality, especially if it creates a sizable gap in the forest canopy, may be adequate if the ash can make it past the reach of deer. Unfortunately, additional sunlight stimulates invasive plants such as Japanese barberry and Multiflora rose. The mycorrhizal fungi associated with ash and maple forests create favorable sites for non-native plants to seed in. Invasives are particularly prevalent on former agricultural lands. In more and more areas, exotic plants are developing into dense shrub thickets that prevent native tree seedling development. This could become a huge problem for sustaining future forests. Some forests could even be transformed into shrublands when their overstory eventually dies out or gets blown over. Even where exotics are not precluding native seedlings, there are often far too few thriving younger ash and oak to adequately replace senescing trees. The forest risks becoming much thinner, less diverse and much less resilient as no population can be sustained without an adequate influx of successful new generations.

EAB and its effect on the forest ecosystem does not seem to be an outlier. It is not just that there are other invasive pests such as the Spongy moth (a.k.a. Gypsy moth) whose defoliations, when combined with drought, can have a devastating impact on more tree species. These exotic pests are emblematic of the ever-growing aggregating stressors that are confronting our forests.

At the release site in Lebanon, the EAB population appears to be receding as low number of larvae were found in sample trees. There are some sizable ash trees that are still alive, at least for now. Barberry is being cut and burned. Japanese bittersweet is being pulled up. Overtopping ironwood and birch are being cut allowing ash and oak seedlings to grow vigorously. There is hope.



## Have You Tested Your Drinking Water Lately?

Where:  
**Eastern Connecticut State University**

*\*Room TBD. Participants who sign up will be notified the room via email*

When:  
**Sunday February 12th**  
**2:30pm - 4:00pm**

*Even if your water tastes and smells fine, that doesn't always mean it's safe to drink...*

Through a grant from the USDA, UConn Extension is hosting a well water workshop to residents of Windham, Coventry and Mansfield providing information about where your water comes from and possible contaminants. A low-cost (\$50) water test will be available following this workshop. Seats are limited and registration is required.

Visit [s.uconn.edu/welltestwindham](http://s.uconn.edu/welltestwindham) to register

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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# Little Library, Big Ideas: A History of the Abington Social Library

By Donna Dufresne

According to Ellen Larned's *History of Windham County*, the first library in Pomfret opened as early as 1739. It was housed in Reverend Ebenezer Williams's house in Mortlake, but the rough roads and isolation proved to make it too difficult for the original shareholders from Woodstock, Pomfret, Killingly, Thompson, and Mortlake to visit the library. By 1745, the books were divided into two district libraries and the Pomfret/Mortlake collection was kept at Samuel Sumner's house.

It wasn't until 1793 that the **Social Library of Abington** was organized by a "propriety" group in the Parish of Abington. The minister of the Abington Congregational Church, Reverend Walter Lyon, was the first librarian, and the library was kept in the minister's house for many years in a closet that must have been bursting at the seams. Subscribers paid 12 shillings for a share, and 100 volumes were procured. The reading material proved to be too erudite for the youth who attended the Abington Schoolhouse, which stood at the intersection of what is now Route 97 and Rich Road. The **Abington Junior Library** was therefore established in 1804. John Holbrook became the librarian, and the 90 volumes of light literature were kept in his house or perhaps his law office on the green in Abington.

Nearly a decade later, a new group of educated readers demanded still more volumes to meet their particular needs. In 1813, Alatheia Lord, Nancy Ingalls, and Maria Gordon formed a constitution. The young ladies of Abington organized the **Abington Ladies Library Association**. Delia Goodell was clerk, Alatheia Lord the librarian, and Nancy Cunningham treasurer. Other members included Susanna Cunningham, Dolly and Delia Dresser, Dolly Allen, Sophia Sharpe, and the matron Mrs. Payson Grosvenor. Seventy dollars was raised to buy books carefully selected by George Sumner, and an admission fee of \$3 was established. An annual tax of 25 cents helped to fund the library, which was likely kept in the large home of Dr. Elisha Lord, where Alatheia lived. The Abington Ladies Library may have hosted lively book discussions like the present-day Abington Social Library. In 1815, the Junior Library and the Social Library consolidated and became the **United Library of Abington**.

By the 1840s, when newspapers and magazines were plentiful, the lending libraries fell by the wayside. However, the Ladies Library maintained its place as a pillar in the community, perhaps hosting Temperance and anti-slavery meetings. Like modern libraries, the lending libraries shifted with the times. But toward the end of the nineteenth century they experienced a revival, as industrialists endowed municipal libraries across the country. In 1886 the three Abington libraries were incorporated as the **New Social Library** and, finally, a building was erected to house the existing books. The new library was endowed with 700 new volumes. Eliza Kimball's great grand-

26 Neighbors



father, Augustus Sabin Chase, contributed \$500 to the original building, which cost \$1,500.

The **Abington Social Library** has always been more than a lending library. Even before consolidation, it provided education, enrichment, and ideas—first for young men like Lemuel Ingalls Jr., educated at Harvard, then for budding young scholars from the district school, and finally for a growing intellectual society of women. The timing was perfect in a new republic that was expanding geographically and intellectually. The library in all its incarnations was the cultural pillar of a bustling community from 1793 into the twentieth century, and later adjusting to the needs of a waning population and a commerce that no longer exists.

When the first Abington Social Library was established, the "Four Corners" of Abington was a center for manufacturing and commerce including shoemaking, the Sumner Cider Mill, Pomfret Fulling Mill, carpenter shops, carriage makers, blacksmiths, Dresser's General Store, and numerous other businesses which extended to the Brayton Grist Mill. Before Windham Road was widened to form Route 97, the Common united the farms and businesses. The training ground was on the southeast end of the Common across from the Ephraim Ingalls Tavern, which still stands next to the burial ground.

The railroad disrupted the landscape as well as the business-scape. The Pomfret Fulling Mill was destroyed, the millpond drained, and Abington Brook was diverted away from the newly laid tracks. The new transportation brought opportunities for education and commerce far from Abington. In the twentieth century the character of Abington faded from being a business center and village, reverting back to an agricultural community. But the lending library continued to engage residents in Abington and Pomfret while undergoing several revivals, changing with the times.

For nearly 220 years the community had supported the Abington Social Library, first through subscriptions, then taxation, and later municipal support. Although much smaller than the Pomfret Library, its history is emblematic of the American story. Our little library ferried its citizens through America's expansion of the mind, feeding the intellects of the first young men sent off to college and the junior scholars at the district school—and let us not forget the ladies who held the library together by engaging local women in social reform and volunteerism. More than just a building with books on the shelves, it is an important historical marker for the American ideals of education and reform. The Ladies Library may have been one of the first in the nation. The Abington Social Library is an historic treasure that continues to engage our rural, underserved community with enrichment programs, civic engagement, and the lending of books.

Sources: Bayles, Richard M. *History of Windham County, Connecticut*. New York: Preston Co., 1889.

Larned, Ellen. *History of Windham County, Connecticut*. Thompson, CT: published by the author, 1879 (p. 368).

# Mill Museum News

Submitted by Kira Holmes

The Mill Museum will be closed temporarily in January (to do some early spring cleaning) and then reopen on February 10, 2023. The Museum will reopen with a new exhibit and with a fundraiser dance on the evening of Windham's annual Romantic Willimantic Chocolate festival. We invite everyone to visit us again on February 10.

Mon., Jan. 2: **The Mill Museum closes temporarily. As we do every year at this time, the Mill Museum will close to the public for its annual deep cleaning, maintenance, and other projects, from Jan. 2 through Feb. 9.** When the Museum reopens, it will be with an exciting new temporary exhibit, titled "Here All Along"; In addition, the Mill Museum will host some great Saint Valentine's Day events on the weekend that we reopen.

Fri., Feb. 10: **The "Here All Along" exhibit opens.** It is included with admission to the Mill Museum at the regular price. This exhibit will explore the African American experience in northeastern Connecticut (with an emphasis on Windham and Willimantic) from the 1600s to 1910, with an additional section relating to the 20th century. Learn the stories of Jo, Eliza, Job and Jesse Leason, Lyman and Clarissa Jackson, Caesar and Julia Hall, and others who experienced Connecticut, its rural communities and mill towns, and the meaning of freedom in different ways than their white neighbors.

Sat., Feb 11: **Free chocolate treats at The Mill Museum.** The Mill Museum is participating in the chocolate festival. The Mill Museum will close at 3 p.m. to prepare for the Sweetheart Dance.

Sat., Feb. 11: **Sweetheart Dance at the Willimantic Elks Club from 7 - 11 p.m.** Grab your sweetheart, a friend, or a group of friends and dance or chat the night away. Patty Tuite and her band will be providing the musical stylings for this evening. \$30 per ticket. Please

purchase your tickets by February 5. Online tickets will be available for purchase starting on Jan. 1st, or you may pay by check through the mail by sending the check to WTHM, 411 Main Street, Willimantic, CT, 06226.

Fri., Feb. 24: **Opening reception for the "Here All Along" exhibit, 6 - 7:30 p.m.** at the Mill Museum. Members are free, but the public will be charged admission to see the exhibit. The exhibit curator, Jamie Eves, will be there this evening and share some insight about the exhibit. The reception in the gift shop is free to everyone.

Sat., Feb. 25: **The Drop-in Spinning Bee resumes with Peggy Church, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., in person at Dugan Hall, 157 Union St., Willimantic.** Bring a spindle or wheel and join us at this free event. Beginners are welcome. We are still requesting that you be COVID vaccinated. Please let us know that you plan to come, and if you have questions, contact Peggy Church at peggychurch2@gmail.com.

Sun., Mar. 12: **Learn to Weave with Peggy Church at the Mill Museum, 411 Main St., Willimantic.** The first class of the next session will be from 1 to 4 p.m. The series of 8 classes is held on Sunday afternoons, and the schedule is flexible to accommodate those enrolled. Students will learn how to measure the warp yarn and dress a floor loom, then weave a sampler to discover various weave structures. Next, they will weave a project of their choice, learning how to read weave drafts and do project calculations. The class is limited to 3 students, and masks are required in the weaving studio. Students should be up to date with COVID vaccinations. The fee for 8 lessons is \$240. If you are a brand-new weaver, there is an additional fee of \$30 to cover the cost of the textbook and materials.



## Organic Roots Farm at Popover Hill

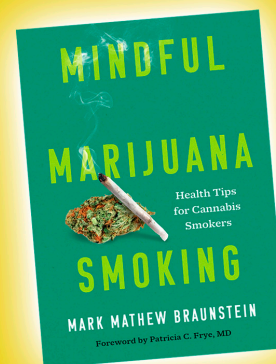
147 East Old Route 6, Hampton  
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# Recycling News

Submitted by Virginia Walton, Mansfield Recycling Coordinator

## PLASTIC WASTE – Response to Greenpeace USA report

News media grabbed onto a recent Greenpeace USA report with disheartening headlines and coverage about the state of plastics recycling in the United States. While news outlets focused on the undeniable failure of plastics recycling solving this issue of plastic waste, they neglected to make other important points.

Refill and reuse infrastructure could eliminate single-use and single-serve plastics.

Almost all single-use and single-serve plastics are trash – think plastic utensils, rigid Styrofoam and condiment packets. They are used for a short period of time but persist in landfills or as ocean and land litter. It begs the question - why are we using a long-lasting material for short-term use.

Especially when it cannot be recycled back into the same item repeatedly. Most of us assume that the chemicals and materials used to make packaging are safe. But the reality is that most single-use packaging contains untested chemicals – and even ones that have been proven to cause health impacts at low levels. Entrepreneurs in pockets of the country are starting to change this paradigm by creating refill and reusable systems. Examples include CLUBZERO, RePack, Imperfect Foods and Loop. We don't have this in our area... yet, but we as individuals we can make decisions that eliminates waste. Ordering take-out? Nix the plastic utensils, straws and condiment packets.

Bring your own bags, containers and cups. Hosting a gathering? Use washable items only. For informal get-togethers, ask your guests to bring their own washable place settings. In some areas, bringing your own plate, cup, bowl and silverware to a gathering is a social norm.

Keep recycling paper, cardboard, metal and glass.

The markets for cardboard, mixed paper (newspaper, office paper, magazines, and junk mail) and metal are strong. Glass, like metal, can be recycled countless times – the quality of the new glass products do not diminish over time. The issue with glass is keeping it “clean” so that it can be made back into clear, brown and green glass products – difficult to do when

residents and businesses combine glass bottles and jars with other recyclables. However, the recycle sort facility in Willimantic, where much of our region sends its recyclables, has a secondary glass screening system that helps clean the glass so that it can be made back into high quality glass products. Glass that is returned through deposit redemption is clean material; ideal for making back into new glass bottles. Recycling by way of returning your nickel deposit containers to store redemption, is the best way to ensure the highest grade of glass, plastic and metal.








Recycle only those plastics accepted by your community. In Mansfield, plastic container types are listed on the Mansfield website: [www.mansfieldct.gov/recycle](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/recycle).

Recycling confusion centers almost entirely on plastics. Consumers confuse the meaning of plastic resin codes to indicate recyclability. Plastic resin codes were created to help recycling processors, not inform consumers. The number inside the chasing arrow identifies the type of plastic polymer, not whether it is recyclable or not.

Recycling markets are regional, and market values fluctuate.

## Plastic Resin Identification Codes

### Quick Reference Guide

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>PETE</b> Polyethylene Terephthalate	<b>HDPE</b> High-Density Polyethylene	<b>PVC</b> Polyvinyl Chloride	<b>LDPE</b> Low-Density Polyethylene	<b>PP</b> Polypropylene	<b>PS</b> Polystyrene	<b>Other</b>
<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water bottles</li> <li>• soda bottles</li> <li>• peanut butter jars</li> </ul> 	<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• milk jugs</li> <li>• 5 gal buckets</li> <li>• shampoo bottles</li> <li>• laundry detergent containers</li> </ul> 	<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vinyl</li> <li>• tubing/pipe</li> <li>• siding</li> <li>• auto product bottles</li> </ul> 	<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• laundry baskets</li> <li>• bread bags</li> <li>• squeeze bottles</li> <li>• plastic film</li> </ul> 	<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yogurt containers</li> <li>• amber-colored pill bottles</li> <li>• coffee cup lids</li> <li>• straws</li> <li>• kitty litter buckets</li> </ul> 	<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• styrofoam cups</li> <li>• solo cups</li> <li>• egg cartons</li> <li>• to-go containers</li> </ul> 	<b>Common Products:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• toys</li> <li>• sippy cups</li> <li>• cd/dvds</li> <li>• lenses</li> </ul> 

Mansfield has a recycle contract with Willimantic Waste Paper/Casella Waste Systems, who sorts and markets metal, glass, cardboard, mixed paper, clear HDPE, color HDPE, PETE and plastics #3-7 in the U.S. and Canada. Right now the plastic polymer with the best market value is clear HDPE (milk and water jugs for instance). The market value of recovered plastics has dropped since December, but like anything else on the market, values fluctuate. On the Mansfield webpage, [www.mansfieldct.gov/trash](http://www.mansfieldct.gov/trash), visit What Happens to My Recyclables to learn more about the end markets of materials from residents and businesses in our region.

Feel free to contact the Mansfield Recycling Coordinator at 860-429-3333 or [waltonvd@mansfieldct.org](mailto:waltonvd@mansfieldct.org).

# A New Beginning!

By EC-CHAP

EC-CHAP is pleased to present “*A New Beginning*” – a Group Exhibit of original work featuring regional artists Penny Guerin, Richard Longmore, Carol Mackiewicz, and Christopher Gunderson.

The show will be available for viewing Saturday mornings from 10:00am – 12:00pm in the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery from January 7<sup>th</sup> through February 11<sup>th</sup>. **Opening Reception Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup> from 6:00pm – 8:00pm.**

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

The Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery is open Saturday mornings from 10:00am to 12:00pm and by appointment. The Gallery is located at 156 River Road, Willington, CT 06279. For more information or a request to display your original work, please email [info@ec-chap.org](mailto:info@ec-chap.org) or call 518-791-9474. **EC-CHAP ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE: INTRODUCING SARAH MOON**

Since 2017, EC-CHAP has offered annual Artist Residencies for



New EC-CHAP Artist-In-Residence Sarah Moon. Contributed photo.

artists of various genres. This one-year Artist-In-Residence offers studio workspace, promotion, and solo showings or performance opportunities.

Please join us in welcoming EC-CHAP’s new Artist-In-Residence, Sarah Moon! Sarah will be producing several original projects during her residency, and will serve as Director of the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery.

**Sarah Moon** is a playwright and assistant professor of humanities at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. She has taught creative writing at Plymouth Center for the Arts and playwriting at Mark Twain House in Hartford.

A recipient of the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Award for Best New Play and winner of Best Book for a

Musical or Play with Music in the 2013 Planet Connections Theater Festivity, her plays have been produced in Boston, Washington D.C. and New York City.

Most recently, her radio play adaptation of the novel *Not So Quiet* was produced by No Epilogue Productions. She is the organizer of the food-centered community writing and performance project Write Your Roots. She holds an MFA in Playwriting from Brandeis University and a PhD in English Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Connecticut. Sarah lives with her husband and three children in Coventry, CT.

*Sarah Moon is an Artist-In-Residence (Theater discipline) at EC-CHAP; Director of the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery; and Assistant Professor of Humanities at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Sarah can be reached at: [communitygallery@ec-chap.org](mailto:communitygallery@ec-chap.org).*



**A NEW BEGINNING**

Penny Guerin

Richard Longmore

Carol Mackiewicz

Christopher Gunderson

**Opening Reception**  
Friday, January 13, 2023  
6:00-8:00pm

**Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery**  
156 River Road, Willington, CT 06279 | 518.791.9474

**On Display**  
Saturdays 10:00am-12:00pm  
and by appointment  
January 7 - February 11



# CT Green Energy News

Submitted by Peter Millman

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



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

## Cheap natural gas is a thing of the past

**Commonwealth.** “The fossil fuel industry has figured out that its profits increase when more of US production is exported as liquefied natural gas, which squeezes the supply for domestic consumers and puts upward pressure on prices... the war in Ukraine only amplified a trend already well underway. As demand in Europe soared, the American Petroleum Institute began lobbying to replace embargoed Russian gas with North American LNG... Nearly 70 percent of [gas industry CEOs] surveyed said that increasing LNG exports to Europe would end the era of inexpensive gas in the US within a couple of years... Retrofitting the region's heating systems [to heat pumps] will be expensive, but keep in mind that pipelines are also costly to build and operate. So the choice is between spending billions to lock in a carbon-based fuel whose price is now expected to ratchet steadily upward or spending billions to transition to modern super-efficient heat pumps powered by an increasingly greener grid.”

## Operation Fuel Expects to Double Heating Assistance with Applications Opening Dec. 19

**CT Examiner.** “If funding promised by Gov. Ned Lamont and Eversource come through, Operation Fuel will double the maximum amount of its heating assistance grants and raise its income limits to help more people manage record high prices. Operation Fuel intends to offer grants up to \$1,000 to heating customers earning up to the state median income – \$66,270 for an individual, and \$127,443 for a household of four — when it begins accepting applications for its winter heating assistance program on Dec. 19. Lamont announced last week that Eversource had committed to giving \$10 million of shareholder money to Operation Fuel. United Illuminating parent company Avangrid also agreed to pay Operation Fuel \$3 million to settle claims by state regulators that its electric and gas subsidiaries illegally tried to garnish customers' wages during a COVID-related state-wide moratorium on utility shut offs....The funds are a major boost for Operation Fuel, which was already seeing a significant increase in requests for help during its summer to fall season, when demand for its heating assistance is typically much lower than its winter to spring season.”

30 Neighbors

## Connecticut town adds solar arrays to 7 municipal buildings

**Solar Power World.** “The Town of Manchester is proud to announce the installation of solar PV systems at seven municipal buildings, including six schools. The solar systems are projected to save the town more than \$100,000 annually in energy costs and more than \$2.1 million over the term of the power purchase agreements (PPA). These solar projects are made possible in part thanks to the Connecticut Green Bank's Solar Municipal Assistance Program (MAP), which simplifies every step of the solar process so towns can realize all the cost-saving benefits of renewable energy with fewer challenges. Solar developer Greenskies Clean Focus was responsible for the installation of the systems.”

## Coventry dairy farm converts manure, food waste to renewable electricity

**Hartford Business.** “When New Britain Mayor Erin Stewart received a call from Rashi Akki, asking if the city wanted to buy the output from a biogas facility fueled by cow manure, she was taken aback. Now, she has a 10-year contract with Hytone Ag-Grid LLC to receive the output — electricity — to power three elementary schools...A main benefit of biogas power, Akki said, is that it has a positive impact on the environment by generating renewable electricity while also diverting food waste. The electricity produced is considered to have negative net emissions because it actually removes greenhouse gasses. By capturing the methane and converting it to carbon dioxide, biogas facilities generate electricity while preventing methane from escaping into the atmosphere...While anaerobic digestion technology has existed for decades...It has only recently become economically viable with the help of renewable energy credits and virtual net metering, she explained.”

## Opinion: Elevate environmental justice by retiring fossil fuel 'peakers' and training a green workforce

**ctpost.** “When New England experiences a cold snap that turns up thermostats, or a hot and humid day that sends the AC into overdrive, the sporadic surges in electricity demand are routinely met by peaker power plants. Peakers are facilities that are only utilized during times of peak energy demand and tend to operate only a few hundred hours a year. When they do, however, they often emit excessive amounts of carbon dioxide and other toxic pollutants. These peakers are frequently sited in disadvantaged communities and communities of color, which exposes already vulnerable populations to disproportionate health hazards. In most cases, battery storage can be a viable alternative for peaker plants that only run when demand is highest...FirstLight Power has decided to retire our fossil fuel power generation facility in Preston and replace it with a large-capacity 17 MW battery energy storage system.”

## Energy rate hikes weeks away. Off-shore wind is years away. For now, Millstone nuclear power plant provides reliability. The Day.

“With consumers bracing for skyrocketing electric rates on Jan. 1, state officials say the situation could have been even worse.”

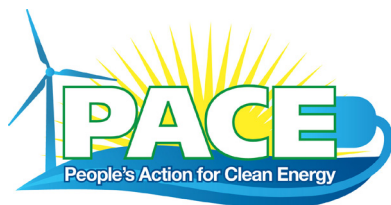
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But in 2019 the state struck a 10-year deal with the Millstone nuclear power station in Waterford that has ensured the plant reliably generates electricity. Millstone was facing potential closure more than five years ago when cheap natural gas threatened the financial viability of nuclear plants around the country. The situation has turned around completely as natural gas prices have skyrocketed recently — and plants running on natural gas have caused electricity price hikes...“We felt that if we didn’t keep Millstone running, we would have massive reliability problems and rolling blackouts on the power grid in the wintertime, particularly,” [DEEP Commissioner] Dykes said in an interview.”

**45-kW solar project supports Connecticut women’s outreach center Solar World.** “ ‘We’re grateful for the opportunity to work with Verogy to make our clean energy vision a reality,” said Wayne Valaitis, CEO at the WFC. “Our October 2021 electric bill was \$1,308. This past October we were thrilled to see that our bill was only \$535; our solar project cut our bill by nearly 60%. The savings on our electric costs will provide a tangible financial benefit, allowing us to direct more of our funding to programs that help families throughout Middlesex County and Greater New Haven.” WFC’s 45-KWDC solar installation will produce 68,123 kWh annually. Verogy designed, engineered and installed the project, which was then purchased by WFC who will own the project permanently.”

**Ford Dealers Cry Foul Over New Program Rules, But Why? EV Club of CT.** “Sparks are flying between Ford dealerships (at least those in CT) and Ford Motor Corporate over a looming deadline for dealers to declare whether they want

to opt-in to Ford’s new structure for selling EVs...Ford CEO Jim Farley said the company needs to further streamline its operations and specialize if it is going to become a leader in electric vehicles and achieve the kind of margins seen at Tesla...Ford’s plan is an aggressive gambit of the kind we haven’t often enough seen from the legacy automakers...Dealerships have often been a weak link in EV sales. Not all of them, but many. Their innate conservatism is part of what is causing the traditional car companies to badly lag Tesla. The share of registered EVs in Connecticut that are Tesla is higher in 2022 than it was when I first began tracking adoption in 2017...Ford’s plan is a serious attempt to solve the dealership conundrum.”



**ECSU goes electric on campus once again. The Chronicle.** “In keeping with its ongoing commitment toward sustainability, Eastern Connecticut State University recently installed five new electric charging stations in the university’s parking garages. Now, there are a total of 11 electric car chargers in the parking garages at Eastern. Installation of the charging stations is paid for using funding from various sources, including the university’s budget and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. “We have been able to keep the cost of the installation at a minimum by having our own electrical department perform the installations...”

**Be Light as a Feather**  
Loretta Wrobel - Feminist Therapy  
860-429-2629  
297 Pumpkin Hill Road, Ashford, CT

**Quiet Corner Contra Dance**  
1st Friday of every month  
Patriots Park Lodge  
172 Lake Street, Coventry  
Dance 8:00 - 11:00; beginner workshop 7:45.  
Live caller and band. Partner not necessary.  
Soft-soled shoes, light layered clothes & water bottle. Snacks are also welcome.  
For more information contact Dennis at knowdj@frontier.com or 860-742-9498

**At the Ashford Senior Center**  
**Tai Chi** - Tuesday & Friday 9:30-10:30am  
\$15 per month for one day/wk; \$25 for two  
Drop-in \$5  
**Low Impact Aerobics**  
Tuesdays 10:45-11:30am; \$2 per class  
Programs not limited to Ashford residents.  
Contact the Center at 860-487-5122  
25 Tremko Lane, Ashford

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

**Alanon Meetings in Willington**  
Alanon, a meeting for friends and families of alcoholics, is meeting every Friday morning from 10-11:00 in the Conference Room at the Willington Public Library, on 7 Ruby Rd. in Willington.

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



**EASTERN CONNECTICUT MEDIA REVIEW  
ON THE HOMEFRONT UPDATE  
WE ARE LAYING TRACKS FOR 2023!  
A REVIEW OF JOURNALISM IN CT**

By John Murphy

**ON THE HOMEFRONT SERIES UPDATE**

With apologies to Thornton Wilder, *On the Homefront* was created with that wonderful play, *Our Town*, in mind—with the program host as Stage Manager and Coach, breaking down the media fourth wall between guests and folks who listen or watch. It's always good to come up for air with you on the pages of *Neighbors*.

I am happy to report more progress with developing our regional media network. A series of tracks was established over the past two years, with themes and content for continuing weekly coverage with a wider range of guests in the coming year. Word about this project is getting out in the community and requests for coverage are coming in, and that's great. We are off to a good start and the studio doors are wide open for you to fill!

- TRACK #1—A Regional Network to Support Live Music
- TRACK #2—Arts Groups and Arts Resources in the Region
- TRACK #3—Commerce, Culture and Social Enterprise
- TRACK #4—Journalism, Local Government, Human & Social Services

These tracks provide individuals and groups with access to our media engine for storytelling and information sharing across the available media channels in our region—radio, cable TV, print and YouTube. The intention is to offer a *community promotions service* to reach and inform the public at any time. As the established media struggles to survive with increasingly limited resources, it is more important than ever for people and organizations to take full ownership of their community communications and

This effort has always been dedicated to using community media to help our community communicate with itself in a noisy and polluted public space. The way to engage and participate is delightfully simple: just do your usual advance planning for the coming year, set your goals and timeline for success—and then contact me to schedule a program segment about 2-4 weeks beforehand (15-20 minutes). After your program airs you will get a link to our YouTube channel for sharing your story on your own network and media. This network can be valuable and effective with supporting annual events for operations fundraising, capital campaigns or membership drives.



**TRACK #1—A Regional Network to Support Live Music**

Music venues are critical resources for our social and cultural wellbeing, and I am working with a small but dedicated network to cross-promote events and share audience building for live music in our region. Despite real progress, we are still recovering from the heavy economic impacts of the Pandemic, and it is critical for people to remember how vital their support is to nurture the Creators and attend live events.



Partners: Chris/Side Door Terry/Stomping Ground

- The Side Door Jazz Club in Old Lyme/Chris Beaudry ([www.sidedoorjazz.com](http://www.sidedoorjazz.com))
- The Stomping Ground in Putnam/Terry Paquette ([www.the-stomping-ground.com](http://www.the-stomping-ground.com))

Combined with other live music venues in our region they collectively provide dots on the music map for a reasonable drive from anywhere within our region, including *The Packing House* in Willington ([www.thepackinghouse.us](http://www.thepackinghouse.us)) and *The Strange Brew Pub* in Norwich (<https://strangebrewct.com/>). *Willimantic Records* presents live music throughout the year at the BLiSS Marketplace (<http://blog.willimanticrecords.com/>) The Woodstock Academy has opened its wonderful theater space for occasional concerts at *The Loos Center for the Arts* ([www.theloos.org](http://www.theloos.org)) Get out and see live music near you! Your individual support at any event is the precious glue that will keep these crucial cultural resources alive through the rest of the Pandemic and beyond.

**TRACK #2—Arts Groups and Resources in the Region**

I cover the arts community every week, with people from groups and organizations across our region sharing news, event calendars and arts business opportunities. *The State*

of Connecticut Office of the Arts (COA\*) provides essential support and resources to artists of all kinds, and I frequently review news and grant opportunities with occasional COA staff interviews. I provide media support to the COA-Designated Regional Service Organization for our region, the *Cultural Coalition serving southeastern and northeastern Connecticut*.

-Spectrum Public Access TV Channel 192 (<http://www.ctv192.org/>) (schedule, program info)  
-WECS Radio 90.1 FM and [www.wecsfm.com](http://www.wecsfm.com) (rebroadcasts on Wednesdays between 12-3 pm)

I want to thank you for reading *Neighbors* and for your comments and suggestions from past columns. I appreciate your interest and support for local media and hope you will stay connected with this project in the coming year. To be a guest or share information on our network just contact me at the email address below.

Always keep the faith, my best wishes for 2023!

John Murphy  
[john@humanartsmedia.com](mailto:john@humanartsmedia.com)  
WILI Radio Wednesdays 5—6 pm  
WECS Radio Wednesdays 12—3 pm



Charlene Haukom/NE Coordinator, Cultural Coalition

I have guests from across our region on a rotating basis—follow the websites below to stay in touch with artists and the arts scene in your area:

- Windham Regional Arts Council (<https://www.windham-rac.org/>)
- Coventry Arts Guild (<https://coventryartsguild.org/index.html>)
- Ashford Arts Council (<https://ashfordarts.org/about-2/>)
- Putnam Arts Council (<https://putnamartscouncil.com/>)
- Arts Center East (Vernon <https://artscentereast.org/>)
- Cultural Coalition Serving southeastern/northeastern CT/DRSO/ (<http://culturesect.org/>)
- \*COA/[https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Arts-and-Culture/About\\_Arts\\_Office/About-Office-of-Arts](https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Arts-and-Culture/About_Arts_Office/About-Office-of-Arts)

TRACKS #3 and #4 will be covered in the next issue. Collectively these tracks constitute a community information infrastructure that can serve individuals, groups, and organizations across our region!

#### HOW TO ACCESS OUR NETWORK:

The following link will take you to the WILI Radio YouTube channel, where the local weekly programs are posted—a full weekday block airing live on Mondays through Fridays from 5:00-6:00 pm:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFY4\\_TDRh\\_jING5Z0k-6pmKg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFY4_TDRh_jING5Z0k-6pmKg)

- WILI Radio 1400 AM and 95.3 Digital FM—our home base on Wednesdays at 5-6 pm
- WILI YouTube Dedicated Channel = search on WILI
- Radio or open email links (subscribe!)
- Neighbors Newspaper ([www.neighborspaper.com](http://www.neighborspaper.com)) (monthly reviews and guest/topic previews)



# How Short Stories, Poems, and Novels are related

By Felix F. Giordano

We tend to regard short stories, poems, and novels as separate platforms in the elements of writing and we also pigeon-hole authors as short story writers, poets, or novelists. That's a mistake. Whether you write short stories, poems, or novels, they all attempt to convey a universal idea and that is to tell a story. In that way they are all related. Also, the similarities of a short story, poem, or novel are that they must have a protagonist and an antagonist. That doesn't mean they each have to be a person. In some short stories, poems, and novels, the antagonist is bureaucracy, time, the weather, a disaster, an addiction, or sometimes the antagonist can even be embodied in the protagonist as the internal demons that haunt them.

The novel and the short story are examples of prose, or narrative writing. Short stories and novels share the same main narrative elements, such as plot, characters, theme, and conflict. Anytime we compose a story, whether it's a short story, poem, or novel, there must be conflict—that's what drives the story. The difference with poetry is that it uses aesthetic and often rhythmic qualities of language to convey the story. Poetry also does more with less, which is also referred to as "An Economy of Words". Poems are usually short and to the point. Short stories allow the author to expand their descriptive narratives and novels can reveal even more about the characters and settings.

As writers we tend to be attracted to one or more of these platforms. Some writers like to compose poems and short stories while others like to work on short stories and novels. Others can work in all three and some only like to work in one platform. You may find it difficult to become a novelist if you struggle with plots or if writing longer pieces seems daunting. Likewise, poets are masters at pacing and momentum. Short story writers often like their medium because they can write multiple short stories in a short span of time. Whichever you are attracted to, ensure that it exemplifies the best use of your talents.

Here's a writer's prompt for everyone interested in writing. Take a novel that you've either written or one that you like by another author and write it as a short story either in a condensed form or have one character explain the novel to another. Then take that same novel and write it as a poem. Or do it in reverse, take a poem and rewrite it as a short story. I won't suggest rewriting a poem as a novel because of the sheer enormity of the project. The song, *Mack the Knife* can be regarded as a poem but it can easily be rewritten as a short story and also composed as a novel. In the end, they are all stories to be told, it's up to us to choose what platform to use.

One contemporary author who was adept at both short stories and novels, critically acclaimed, and also commercially successful in selling his work for more than 50 years and having them adapted to the big screen was Elmore Leonard. He's called the Dickens of Detroit and may be considered America's most famous novelist to the chagrin of the fans of Stephen King. If you wanted to learn how to write a short story or a novel you can do no better than to read anything published by Elmore Leonard. One of his cardinal rules was that if it sounded like writing, he would rewrite it. He was an unconventional writer but a master at prose.

Let's compare a short story and a poem written by the same author. In Edgar Allen Poe's short story *The Cask of Amontillado*, the protagonist plots the murder of Fortunato, the antagonist, in a methodical and relentless way. "In pace requiescat" (In peace may he rest) are the last words in *The Cask of Amontillado* which conveys the depth of depravity in the protagonist, Montresor. Because, in reality, there can be no peace and no rest for the soul of someone who is murdered.

In his poem, *The Raven*, Poe's use of rhythmical verse conveys a morbid and haunting sense of loneliness and hopelessness. It's considered a masterpiece of writing and for the protagonist, it approaches that sense of no peace and no rest that Fortunato experiences in *The Cask of Amontillado*. If not for having been written prior to *The Cask of Amontillado*, one could propose that in the *Raven*, Poe intended the soul of Fortunato to be embodied in the raven. The last words of *The Raven* are "Shall be lifted—nevermore!" We could suggest that in *The Raven*, the reader recognizes the unrest of Fortunato's soul from *The Cask of Amontillado*.

Although each of Poe's compositions is in a different platform, the overall sense of foreboding is expressed in both. In this way, Poe remained true to his writing style. That's what is most important if you choose to write in different platforms. Whether you like to write dark mysteries, light-hearted romances, or genre-based themes, stick with what motivates your creative mind across platforms. That doesn't mean that someone who writes suspenseful short stories can't write a comedy. Some people are adept at writing in different styles. It may also be that people can write in different styles but their protagonists' and antagonists' personalities and motivations remain similar in whatever style they're writing.

To discover whether you're best suited to work on short stories, poems, or novels, consider attending writing classes which will introduce you to each platform. When you find which platform appeals to you and which one motivates you to write, continue the classes to sharpen your skills. Joining local or online writing groups will also help you determine

what platform best suits you. There you can obtain feedback through constructive criticism, also called critique which will expose you to other skilled writers. That's how we grow as writers.

I attended writing classes at Manchester Community College from 2004-2009, one six-session class three times a year with Jordon Pecile, Ph.D. who was the retired head of the English Department at the US Coast Guard Academy, a professional author and script writer for PBS. Jordon and my fellow classmates helped me develop my writing skills. I've also participated in writers' groups in an ongoing basis from 2010 to present and have had my first three novels edited by professional poet and novelist, Eileen Albrizio. The wealth of knowledge that I gained from these experiences cannot be overstated. I encourage everyone who is interested in becoming a professional author or who is already an author but wants to get to the next level, to attend formal writing classes, join a writers' group, and meet and learn from other authors and writers.

We defined "How Short Stories, Poems, and Novels are related" 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 7,500 and has had more than 5 million pages of his books read by Amazon Kindle Unlimited subscribers. His website is jbnovels.com.*

Next Month's Topic: Traditional Publishing vs. Self-Publishing

## Alexander Technique Studio Opens in Ashford

Submitted by Kristin Mozeiko

Kristin Mozeiko, DMA, founder of *ART of Releasing*, is an AmSAT certified Alexander Technique (AT) teacher and a 2008 graduate of Alexander Technique NYC where she completed a three-year training and served as a faculty member for seven years. Dr. Mozeiko merged her skills as an educator, musician, conductor, author, and AT specialist and served as a faculty member, tenured, at Queens College where she taught and performed for 14 years. She currently teaches AT and Releasing in NYC and CT. After leaving her academic post she moved to Ashford, the northeast of CT, where, in December 2022, she officially opened her new lakefront studio and is welcoming new clients. [www.ARTofReleasing.com](http://www.ARTofReleasing.com)

### What is AT?

The **Alexander Technique** (AT) is a holistic and educational method that primarily addresses postural tone, breathing, and movement coordination. AT is also known as a cognitive embodiment approach as it helps you to identify and eliminate harmful habits in how you use "yourself" (your body-mind). AT can help to improve posture, eliminate or reduce pain, as well as develop greater awareness and energetic efficiency in everyday activities and interactions. When freed from fixed habits and patterns there is a coinciding freedom from the physical, mental, and emotional reactions to stimuli. Nearly everyone has habitual patterns of tension, some of them are consciously learned while others are unconscious. As awareness is developed the unconscious are revealed and then unhelpful patterns can be unlearned, this enables the possibility of new choices in posture, movement, breathing and reaction. After the basic AT principles are integrated you will have the tools, skills and embodied knowledge to help yourself without being reliant on a practitioner and you will become your own best teacher.

AT is typically instructed in either a group or a private session with a trained AT instructor who uses physical touch,

verbal cues, and a variety of strategies to develop self-awareness and improved use of the self in any situation or activity. AT has attracted many artists, musicians, athletes, dancers and actors looking to help improve performance and posture. It



is also beneficial to anyone who struggles with speaking or breathing issues, sitting at a desk and working at a computer for long hours, and for anyone in pain. Sessions are available in person, online or using a hybrid of both in-person and online training. If you would like to see the peer reviewed research that has been conducted on AT please go to [www.alexandertechniquescience.com](http://www.alexandertechniquescience.com) and be sure to check out the

results of the published **back pain study** conducted in 2008 by Little, P., Lewith, G., Webley, F., et al.

### Kristin's Story:

At 19 years old I was diagnosed with hypermobility, carpal tunnel syndrome, thoracic outlet syndrome (TOS), tendonitis, subluxing ulnar nerve, TMJ, back pain (poor posture) and anxiety. I started taking AT sessions and learned HOW to sit, stand, do computer work and hold my instrument with greater ease, better alignment, and an increased balance of muscular tone. My pain lessened significantly and the positive effects of each weekly session I took lasted much longer than the other modalities I had tried. One unexpected bonus of learning AT was my range, tone, breathing and performance improved on my instrument and with my conducting. I also felt a reduction of the anxiety I experienced and learned how to manage performance stress. I started to train as an AT teacher in 2005 and within three months I felt something amazing happen: the dreadful pain in my upper back was gone! It was the first time in my life I knew what it was like to not have constant pain in my right shoulder. It was one of the best moments of my life-I felt free and thought, "this is what everyone else probably feels like-normal and without pain". That was seventeen ago and today I am still free of numbness and chronic pain.

To learn more: [www.ARTofReleasing.com](http://www.ARTofReleasing.com)



# The Spiritual Practice of Firewalking

Submitted by Sage Moffitt

Firewalking is an ancient ceremony or ritual that honors the relationship between people and the element of fire. It predates religion and has been utilized throughout time by Indigenous cultures around the world. They have formed relationships with nature and the elements fostering a deep connection to the environment around them along with the understanding that they are not separate from the earth but part of it. Through this knowledge incorporating the elements of earth, water, fire, and air was the foundation and model they used to navigate and honor everyday life. Fire was often used in ceremonies to honor deities, rites of passage, used for offerings, cleansings, and initiations. As many cultures began to shift from the natural world to a more materialistic world that connection and understanding to nature has been severed. All is not lost as more people begin to remember the connection to nature and begin to re-establish relationships to the elements and art of firewalking. The practice of firewalking can be found in places like Japan, Fiji, China, India, Nepal, Tibet, Ireland, and now in the US. Each culture having their own protocols and ways to work with fire.

Today, firewalking is utilized as a tool to help build self-esteem, overcome obstacles, help transform fears and elevate spiritual practices. This creates an opportunity to step into one's own power with grace and ease. Facing fears and insecurities via firewalking supports the process of overcoming challenges in life. It is astounding to witness people move past barriers of perception and begin to realize and rediscover the power of fire that they hold within. Fire is a powerful symbol of what is possible when we make a conscious choice toward our own transformation and growth, unlocking infinite life possibilities. The process of walking the fire transforms the old paradigms and choice constraints of accountability and responsibility to making choices from an accountable and responsible place which is more aligned with harmony, balance, and our own divine power. Firewalking offers an opportunity to grow, to align with our true nature self, and reestablish our connection to our bodies.

So how does one walk on fire? During the firewalk, one is not actually walking on fire but rather coals which is done with bare feet. It sounds scarier than what it is, and there is a process that is followed to prepare someone to walk using exercises that align the inner and outer fire mentally, physically, and spiritually. It may be done via prayers, singing, drumming, movement, or any combination thereof. Firewalking can be done as a group or individually and each walk is different depending on the theme or the intention that is set by the group, the individual or the facilitator. The art of walking the fire has its foundation in nature. Honoring the elements, the directions, nature, our connection to the Spirit of fire is all part of preparing to walk. Once the connection to the Spirit of Fire has been forged, it is time to WALK!

Can you get burned? The possibility is there however very unlikely. There are times when the fire will give a participant what is called a sun kiss. When someone is gifted a sun kiss it signifies an area in the body that may need to be addressed. It can be a physical issue, an emotional issue, or spiritual one. Locating the area on the foot using a foot reflexology chart helps determine what corresponding body part or organ is affected. For example, if the kiss is located on the bottom top of the toes it is related to the head or brain. If it happens to be on the balls of your feet then looking at the lungs and chest and heart may be beneficial. Please note that this is not a medical diagnosis or treatment that is better placed with your doctor. Walking fire is more than just walking fire. It is about conscious choice to walk or not. The beauty of consciously making the choice, comes from a place of centeredness, a place of connection to all we are. It is a sacred space free of judgment, a place to be witnessed and seen for the divine spark within. It is a choice made truly from our free will.

I believe when we step into our fears and release what is not true, that is when we begin to live! That is when our Divine Self steps forward, shows up, and our purpose here begins which is bringing our medicine to the world.

The Firewalk Facilitator Training is for anyone who feels guided to deepen their own personal growth or to help others begin their journey and relationship to fire. Opening a sacred space for yourself or others to walk through the gateway of fire, allows for the alchemy of transformation to shift consciousness and tear down the illusion of fear. The training is an intense 7-day program that will take one through several initiations and is done via zoom. Working remotely offers a sense of ownership and doing your own work.

Leading people through the firewalk process helps them discover courage, faith, and strength. Are you ready? Come, Let's Walk!

*Sage Moffitt owner of Sacred Grove Healing Arts Center is an Elite Firewalk Trainer. Empowering others to bring fire to their community creating a safe container for those who want to reignite their internal fire via the process of firewalking. She is a Connecticut Licensed Massage Therapist, Esthetician, and Reiki Master/Teacher. A practitioner of shamanic arts, herbology, medicinal aromatherapy, sound work, and energy healing. Sage creates sessions and classes around her clients that allow them to begin their journey toward inner peace, health, and wellness. She utilizes many different tools and modalities, enabling her clients to establish a connection to mind/body/spirit through self-awareness, self-responsibility, and self-healing. She supports and honors the divine light in everyone.*

# Solar Today - Honoring Earth Day, every day

By John Boiano

*I invite you to join a peaceful revolution by simply changing how you buy your electricity.*

**Utility rates have gone up.... Again, and this time, it's a LOT!**

*If you've been thinking about looking into solar, NOW is a really great time to take a serious look!*

**Eversource is predicting that an "average" home will see an approx. increase of \$80.00 per month on electric bills starting Jan. 1, 2023.**

**How do you look into solar and what does it cost for an initial evaluation?**

Initially, it costs nothing, except an hour or so of your time. A local professional can evaluate your current electric usage per year, vs what solar on your home or in your yard could produce. We match the output numbers of solar vs electric usage history, crunch a few numbers and there you will have the mathematical results to see if solar would make financial sense. From there, it's an emotional decision. Do you want to continue paying Eversource rates, or invest in yourself? **It's in the numbers and in your heart.** My suggestion is to at least take a look at it. *You took the time to evaluate almost every other purchase, why not evaluate your electricity costs?*

**Once you go solar, your rate is locked in. I use myself as a perfect example.**

*I've saved over \$10,000.00 since I said yes to solar.*

I went solar 14 years ago. Delivered Kilowatt cost from Eversource at the time was .11 cents. Delivered cost is the supply rate, plus the multiplied delivery fees, including the customer service charge, divided by the amount of kilowatts on your bill that month. THIS is the *delivered cost of electricity*.

**Here's an exercise for you. Get out your recent utility bill.**

Take the amount that you owe for the month (TOTAL CURRENT CHARGES), do not include any back charges if you owe any (balance forward), and divide the number by the amount of kilowatts shown for the "current usage" on page 2 of your Eversource bill.

Take your December 2022 bill and use the Total current charges: \$227.06 divided by 845 *kwh* used = .268 cents per kilowatt hour. (Now do THAT again in February 2023 and see how much your rate went up!)

I pay \$850.00 a year for 6500 *kwh* of solar energy generated on my roof. At today's rate, I would of paid \$1,742.00 this year with Eversource.

**For some, Solar simply makes sense.**

BTW – if anyone asks you to sign ANYTHING before they give you pricing, please look elsewhere. Recently people have called me as if they are still looking into solar only to find out that they **unknowingly** already signed a contract. **Here's a simple indicator; "if" they are sending someone to measure your roof or look at your electricity hook ups, YOU signed a contract!** *Sure they say, don't worry, you can cancel at any time.. I say.. buyer, beware!*

**When is the best time of year to go solar?**

*ANYTIME, and as soon as possible is the best time!*

**How easy is it to get into solar?**

*Super easy! There are numerous ways to finance a residential solar project. Most have no upfront cost and payments start approx. 60 days after solar is installed.*

**If you are at least a little bit curious to see if solar could offset the utility price increases, please give me a call and we can discover it together. A complimentary, no commitment evaluation of your energy bill vs the cost and potential savings of solar will determine if solar could be a good financial fit for you. With the proper information, you can make an educated decision and decide for yourself if solar is the right choice for you and your family.**

**Keep it simple, keep it honest, keep it local... Zen Solar**

*Thanks for reading my article and let's make every day Earth Day!*

John Boiano 860-798-5692

john@zensolar.net

www.zensolar.net



## Seeking New Board Members

The Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP) is a 501.c.3 nonprofit cultural organization serving Eastern Connecticut and beyond.

EC-CHAP is positioning its Board of Directors to ensure we have the capacity to oversee a **major facility project**, and respond to a **changing environment**. At this time we are inviting interested individuals possessing Sound & Video Production, Legal, or Nonprofit Development experience to apply.

Please visit [www.ec-chap.org/board2023](http://www.ec-chap.org/board2023) to learn more and to apply online. Questions may be addressed by email to: [info@ec-chap.org](mailto:info@ec-chap.org); or by

**WWW.EC-CHAP.ORG**

156 River Road, Suite 2106A, Willington, CT 06279 | 518.791.9474 | [info@ec-chap.org](mailto:info@ec-chap.org)





# A New Year at The Packing House!

By EC-CHAP

## January

*“January, the first month of the year.  
 A perfect time to start all over again.  
 Changing energies and deserting old moods.  
 New beginnings, new attitudes.”*

- Charmaine J Forde

Welcome to January! A time to create anew and embrace the past. EC-CHAP has plans for both as we present new performers and film screenings; and welcome our returning artists! Please join us!

### “SONGS FOR UKRAINE” – A BENEFIT EXTENDED:

EC-CHAP is committed to extend our Benefit Event through the end of June 2023 to reach a goal of \$10,000. We hope you will consider giving what you are able. A video stream of the “Songs for Ukraine” Concert (held on September 24th) will be available for viewing this month. Tickets will be offered as a free will donation. Please visit <http://thepacking-house.us/upcoming> for ticket availability.



To learn more about how you can help, and to donate to this cause, please visit: <https://www.ec-chap.org/benefit-for-ukraine> or click the “Songs for Ukraine – Extended” QR Code. 100% of all funds raised go directly to the people of Ukraine through our Charitable Partner, Direct Relief.

Neighbors  
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 Locally Wread

### EC-CHAP ACOUSTIC ARTIST SERIES:

**Saturday, January 14th - Ramblin’ Dan Stevens (photo above) (Blues). 7:30pm. Tickets \$20.00 Online / \$25.00 at the Door (Doors Open 7:00pm)**



**Saturday, January 28th – Sperry Creek (Bluegrass). 7:30pm. Tickets \$20.00 Online / \$25.00 at the Door (Doors Open 7:00pm).**



**Saturday, February 4th - A Special Program with Claudia Schmidt, Sally Rogers, and Howie Bursen (Folk). 7:30pm. Tickets \$20.00 Online / \$25.00 at the Door (Doors Open 7:00pm).**

Neighbors  
 a little paper, big on community



**Saturday, February 25th Poor Monroe (Bluegrass).  
7:30pm. Tickets \$20.00 Online / \$25.00 at the Door (Doors  
Open 7:00pm).**

**EC-CHAP MONTHLY TALENT SHOWCASE – 2nd  
Wednesday of the Month:**

**Wednesday, January 11th; February 8th - 7:00pm (Doors  
Open 6:30pm)**

Acoustic musicians, film makers, poets, comedians, jugglers, puppeteers, and creative artists of all ages are invited to perform at The Packing House. Here is an opportunity to showcase your work in an intimate historic setting before a live audience. Test ideas and concepts and solicit feedback. PA / sound reinforcement, video projection, and up to 3 microphones provided (Please - No full drum kits).

Please consider participating in our monthly Talent Showcase the 2nd Wednesday of every month (October – May). Call to be placed on the schedule: 518-791-9474. Not performing – no problem - simply join us to see and hear local and regional creatives sharing their talent. Free Admission – Donations Graciously Accepted.

**EC-CHAP Film Series – 2nd Thursday of the Month:**

As a 501.3.c non-profit cultural organization, EC-CHAP believes offering opportunities to view film as an art form is essential and consistent with our mission. EC-CHAP established this Film Series in 2016, and has provided an eclectic mix of content including art and music documentaries; timeless award winning classics; current controversial topics; Holiday Traditions; and original content from regional film makers. Please join us for an evening of film!

Thursday, January 12 th - “Girl With A Pearl Earring”. (PG-13) 2003. 7:00pm. Suggested donation \$5.00. (Doors Open 6:30pm)

Thursday, FEBRUARY 9 th - “Deep Blues”. (Unrated) 1992. Documentary. 7:00pm. Suggested donation \$5.00. (Doors Open 6:30pm)

**EC-CHAP INFORMATION EXCHANGE MEETINGS –  
3rd Thursday of the Month:**

EC-CHAP is reinstating our monthly “Information Exchange Meetings” in 2023! These informative meetings are intended to share information about our organization, review our mission, discuss membership benefits, volunteer opportunities, and review program offerings. We are very interested in obtaining your input and feedback with respect to how we can best meet your interests and needs as a cultural organization. These meetings are free to attend.

Meetings are held in The Packing House at 5:00pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month beginning January 19, 2023. For more information, please visit [www.ec-chap.org](http://www.ec-chap.org); call 518-791-9474; or email us at [info@ec-chap.org](mailto:info@ec-chap.org).

**SAVE THE MARCH DATES!**

**Saturday, March 4th, 2023 - 7:30pm - EC-CHAP Jazz Series: An Evening with Luke Hendon (Gypsy Jazz).**

**Wednesday, March 8th, 2023 - 7:00pm – EC-CHAP Talent Showcase (2nd Wednesday)**

**Thursday, March 9th, 2023 - 7:00pm – EC-CHAP Film Series: “Thelonious Monk: Straight No Chaser” (PG-13) 1988.**

**Saturday, March 25th, 2023 - 7:30pm - EC-CHAP Jazz Series: Matt & Alta DeChamplain (Jazz).**

**Friday, March 31st 2023 - 7:30pm - EC-CHAP Acoustic Artist Series: An Evening with Crys Matthews (Indie).**

**EC-CHAP SEEKING MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS**

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We leave you with the following:

*“ Count your age by friends, not years.  
Count your life by smiles, not tears.”*

**- John Lennon**



# How to Have a Really Great Year (Though It May Be Trying)



By Jesse R. Clark

For several years, at the end of the year, I would read on Facebook or hear people say that they are so glad the year is over. Good riddance! It was a horrible year and they can't wait for the new one. This would be understandable, if it wasn't repeated every single year. How can every year be so horrible? Surely, some good things have to happen. Of course they do, but it is so easy to see only the horrible when we watch the news shows and other media sources.

Well, one day in late December, I decided I had had enough. I was going to prove people wrong by finding positive articles in the paper all year long. That December was in 2019. The next year, I discovered it was actually a lot easier than I thought—I just had to change my perspective of what is “positive.” Positive news items don't necessarily mean only good things are happening, but are rather an acknowledgment of reality with a positive point of view. In the midst of tragedy, there is hope. In the midst of struggle, there is growth. And growth takes time. It doesn't happen because we decide it will at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. These choices, these changes, come all year long.

Here is a poem I wrote showing what we can do this coming year.

## A Candle in the Night

A cold October night. The wind blows through the trees,  
as falling leaves slowly leave the trees bare.  
A candle shines, allowing people dressed up  
to find joy in a pumpkin's smile,  
chasing away darkness.  
Chasing away fear.

The night grows longer.  
The days, colder.  
As winter draws near, the bare trees creak,  
echoing the feeling in your bones.  
But a candle glows,  
giving warmth  
in a time of darkness. Of winter. Of cold.

The joy comes not in spite of the darkness—  
trying to avoid it out of fear—  
but *because* of the darkness,  
for that's when the candle shines brightest.  
Gazing into the candle's light,  
one can blow it out,  
but the smoke, the essence, the peace,  
still prevails.  
It slowly moves from the candle, wafting around the world,  
transcending cultures with its transcendent light,  
as we all breath in the hope, gratitude,  
and peace  
uniting us all.

A community of candles shines,  
burning in the night, bringing hope,  
celebrating light  
and remembering the dead.

Long after the holiday lights are taken down,  
a candle still shines its light  
in the cold, bitter dark.  
It shines  
in our heart.  
Freeing us from our own fear and shame,  
it burns the brightest, warming all who see it  
during the coldest of nights  
like a jack-o'-lantern sharing its joyful smile.

Neighbors  
a little paper  
big on community

It matters not who you love, where you love,  
why you love, when you love or how you love,  
it matters only that you love.      John Lennon

# Colt and His Legacy in Hartford

By Ryan Elgin

Rather than focusing on Connecticut industry at large for this article in the Connecticut Industry During Times of War Series, I wanted to focus on a specific Connecticut industrialist. That being the highly influential Samuel Colt and his legacy. Samuel Colt was born in 1814 in Hartford, Connecticut and maintained an interest in pyrotechnics through his youth.



Experiments involving pyrotechnics would see him kicked out of boarding school in 1830 after causing a fire damaging school property. His father then sent him off to learn to be a seaman that same year. It was here that Colt saw the clutch mechanism of a ship's wheel that inspired him to improve upon the revolver design (connecticuthistory.org).

Colt being the inventor of the revolver is not technically correct. Indeed, guns firing from a revolving cylinder had been around centuries before Colt. However, the cylinder or "wheel" of these wheelguns had to be turned and indexed by hand. Colt's revolutionary contribution was his idea of a manually operated hammer that would automatically revolve the cylinder and lock into the correct position for firing. He would receive a patent for his revolving pistol design and create his first company, the Patent Arms Manufacturing Company, in 1836 in the town of Paterson, New Jersey. This first venture was a failure with the company closing 7 years later. It wasn't until Captain Walker of the Texas Rangers asked Colt to make him 1,000 pistols of a new design that Colt would have the capital to establish his new business back in Connecticut: Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company (Museum of Connecticut History). Colt's design would now continue to see successful iterations and rising sales numbers.

One of Colt's greatest strengths was his marketing prowess. He would present engraved and gold decorated guns to notable individuals and heads of state to attract new orders via an early version of celebrity endorsement (Museum of CT History). If a news source mentioned Colt or talked negatively about his competitors, he would buy hundreds of copies of that edition and send the editor a free revolver with his inscription on it (Hosley 1999). He saw the value of mythmaking and catchy marketable slogans. Samuel Colt and later the Colt company would often market the product as an equalizer for the vulnerable against the powerful, a protector, or an essential part of rugged frontier life.

In 1855, Colt built the Hartford factory complex complete with its Blue Onion dome atop the East Armory that we've all driven by on I-91. The complex, named Coltsville, spanned 260 acres complete with multiple factory buildings, recreation areas, worker housing, and Colt's personal mansion. In just a year, Colt's factory was producing 150 firearms a day.

Although the assembly line concept is largely attributed to Henry Ford, Colt's Hartford location was one of the birthplaces of precision manufacturing and mass production (Eric Hintz, Smithsonian). Working with Elisha Root, the Colt factory had specialized machinery to assist in making identical parts, hastening the old process of hand fitting. Different steps of the process would then be done by employees in an assembly line fashion.

I mentioned the Blue Onion, but the one we are familiar with is not the original. Samuel Colt would die in 1862 and a fire would burn down most of the armory in 1864. The heir to his company would be his wife, Elizabeth Colt, who would lead the company until 1901. It was her decision to rebuild the structure, including the iconic blue dome, rather than close it down. The rampant colt that sat in Colt's private garden was used as the replacement to adorn the top of the dome. A century later, the dome was in disrepair and efforts to do maintenance caused the head of the colt to fall off. It was sold to Peter Tillou, an art dealer of Litchfield, who then sold it to the Museum of Connecticut History. The picture seen in this article is of the 1867 rampant colt statue that can be seen at the museum today. The colt that sits on the current Blue Onion was commissioned in the early 2000s and is made of fiberglass (National Park Service).

Samuel Colt was not only a revolutionary inventor, but a remarkable salesman, innovator, and industrialist. The Colt name is one that nears the top of the list in terms of Connecticut ingenuity throughout the years. Today, a collection of rare or early Colt firearms can be seen at the Museum of Connecticut History, where much of the information found in this article was sourced. Since 2014, Coltsville has been in the process of becoming an official National Historic Park with the National Park Service. Colt Gateway, a management company currently owning most of the Colt complex, hosts apartments, commercial offices, an event venue, and the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Full Day high school. All of this helps maintain the spirit of innovation in this area and sees that the legacy of the Colt family continues to be preserved.

The Gardiner Hall Jr Museum is open to the public Saturdays from 10:00am to 12:00pm. For more information, please call 518-791-9474.

*Ryan Elgin serves as EC-CHAP Assistant Director, Curator of the Gardiner Hall Jr History Museum, and Volunteer Coordinator. He may be contacted directly at [ryan@ec-chap.org](mailto:ryan@ec-chap.org).*



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# Why I Am Pro-Life: A Rational Defense

By Conrad McIntire

In the last several months, from the point the Supreme Court documents were leaked to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and until now, the local newspapers have printed numerous articles heavily in favor of the pro-abortion side. Researching for this article, having a number of back copies of the *Journal Inquirer* but by no means all of them, I found 54 newspapers with at least 66 pro-abortion articles compared to seven that might be called pro-life (and only one of those gave any reason to be). The editor had answered an e-mail I sent him early on when I asked if the *Ji* planned to be fair in this controversy. He replied that they “try to be fair and even-handed.” Nothing could have been further from the truth! So let me give a rational defense to be pro-life.

At the outset I will say I am literally both pro-choice and pro-life. You do not get pregnant by e-mail. A choice takes place before anyone can get pregnant. Having said that, like most pro-life supporters, I am in agreement that if the mother’s life is at stake, abortion may be the lesser of two evils. I am also open to discussion regarding rape and incest. These things should be reported, the rapist severely punished, and possible use of the morning-after pill before conception has taken place can be considered. However, these cases are pro-abortion movement smokescreens that account for less than 2% of all abortions! Ninety-eight percent are done for convenience.

I also recognize that this is an issue that creates a lot of emotion. Some of the words that came out from pro-abortion people in these articles were “horror movie,” “worst fears,” “we are heartbroken,” “devastating,” “a betrayal,” “we will fight like hell,” “terrible toll on women,” and “the country is at a crisis moment.” If we are going to have a real discussion, we need to get off the rhetoric-fueled emotional roller-coaster and start looking at the evidence for each position.

Several years ago, I saw video on YouTube called *180* that forced me to take a deeper look at this controversy. (Anyone can still view it on YouTube now.) My research led me to the conclusion that the pro-abortion position is scientifically unsupportable, philosophically and logically incoherent, as well as socially destructive and humanly degrading.

When *Roe v. Wade* was first passed in 1973, we did not have all of the scientific information we now have. No amount of smokescreens can now change the fact that abortion ends a human life. The American College of Pediatricians states: “The predominance of human biological research confirms that human life begins at conception... [T]he human being emerges as a whole, genetically distinct, individuated... living human organism, a member of the species *Homo sapiens*...” The child in the womb is not part of the mother’s body, but is hosted inside the mother as a separate life with his or her own DNA and genetic code totally different from the mother’s. Every feature from the child’s eye color on is already present, and within a matter of weeks the child will have its

own heartbeat and brain waves. To tell someone this is just a “clump of cells” is an outright lie. If you believe that, look at an ultrasound. This is beyond dispute. In a recent study, 96% of biologists agreed.

Having lost the scientific argument, abortionists repeatedly turn to an almost religious metaphysical philosophy to try to escape the obvious. Efforts are made to reason away from the science by trying to define “personhood.” But this is a philosophically unstable, shifting-shadows position, defined ultimately by their own views, values, and ideology. Exactly where is this line? Arguing that the baby in the womb is not a person is to use the same logic that racists used to support slavery and Hitler used to justify the extermination of the Jews. The Supreme Court erred in the *Dred Scott* case in 1857 the same way it erred in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 by redefining personhood to fit an ideological position instead of a biological fact. Hitler did the same by defining the Jews as a “sub-species.” When you allow an ideological position to take control over scientific fact, you open up the door to any horror being justified.

The argument given by abortion supporters is that since we don’t know when personhood begins, then we should allow abortion. To any logical thinker, it should be the opposite. If we don’t know, we should err on the side of life! To argue otherwise is like looking for a three-year-old child lost on a farm by plunging a pitchfork into a haystack because we don’t know if he is in the haystack. The viability argument is an illogical marker as well that constantly changes over time with medical technology. The goalposts move in favor of the pro-life movement every year.

Abortion is also socially and humanly degrading and racist. First, as Mother Teresa once said, “Abortion is profoundly anti-woman. Three-quarters of its victims are women: half the babies and all the mothers.” While abortion is championed in the rhetoric of “a woman’s choice” (after they already made a choice to have sex), the procedure is mostly to the advantage of predatory men! A study by the Population Research Institute found that almost three-quarters of women who had abortions (73.8%) felt pressured to do so. A majority (58.3%) said they had their abortion to make someone else happy. Nearly a third (30%) said they feared losing their partner if they did not abort their child. So much for abortion proponents being pro-choice!

Second, it is humanly degrading to say that the baby in the womb has no intrinsic value unless we choose to give it. When tennis star Serena Williams was pregnant, she wrote a letter to her unborn baby that began: “My Dearest Baby, You gave me the strength I didn’t know I had. You taught me the true meaning of serenity and peace. I can’t wait to meet you.” When Princess Kate was pregnant with her first child (Prince George), every magazine and newspaper referred to him as an heir to the throne. Neither of these children was considered a “blob of cells.” They were rightly recognized as human beings with untold potential in the future. Do children gain value only

continued on next page

because of who their parents are? Is it morally right to eliminate someone because they're an inconvenience? Doesn't the "heir to the throne" look just like any other child? I find it ironic that one writer referred to the pro-life position as a "horror movie." Every day, a real horror movie happens during an abortion: little fingers, toes, eyes, etc., are pulled or sucked out piece by piece. All the while, the baby tries to move away from this intrusion as it happens. Has anyone really ever taken a minute to think about this and view an ultrasound?

Third, why is abortion pushed so out of proportion on the Black population? As former Connecticut Black congressman Gary Franks, who was formerly pro-choice but is now pro-life, points out, while Blacks make up 14% of the population they are having nearly 40% of the abortions. He further points out, in a January 28, 2022, internet article, that it is a well researched fact that Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger long harbored racist views when she wrote about the "Negro problem" in 1932 and had the first family planning and birth control clinic built in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn as early as 1916. Franks now admits that if he had known then what he knew now, he "would have never allowed myself to be associated with any group she led."

There are two million families on a waiting list for adoption. They want a child. There were around 675,000 babies aborted last year. Do the math; we can give these children a chance. I was at a softball game this past fall. There was a little one-year-old girl there

whose shirt caught my eye. It said, "I am one in a melon." It was funny but it was true; she is one in a million. She is unique, one-of-a-kind, and she will experience all the joys and the hardships of life as that one unique person. She deserves that chance. I am sure she will be glad she got it. It's a bit hypocritical for abortionists to be against life when they have already been born. We are rightly horrified at senseless school shootings that end precious lives. We should be grieved as well for the innocent children who will never be allowed to go to the first grade, to grow, to experience the awe and wonder of childhood because they were considered an inconvenience, not even worthy of adoption.

In the last several months the *Journal Inquirer* has also printed articles relating to saving birds, lobsters, whales, and turtles, and treating pigs more humanely. It is hard to take politicians and social-cause groups seriously when they purport to champion the poor, helpless, and marginalized in our society, even animals, but then won't take a stand against the greatest social injustice abuse of our time, ending the lives of innocent children. Take the only rational stand there is: be pro-life.

*Conrad McIntire Jr is a member of the Society of Christian Philosophers, the Evangelical Philosophical Society, and the International Society of Christian Apologetics, and a co-director of the Christian Apologetics Research & Education Service. He welcomes questions and comments to: caresipeter315@aol.com.*

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# Herding Cats

By Gary Bergquist

My wife and I just got back from a week with the grandkids. Whew! I know we're supposed to experience joy when we visit the rug rats, and maybe we did, but right now I'm too tired to tell. Our granddaughter is 13 months old and is a fearless pinball, bouncing from object to object. While climbing is her favorite pastime, jumping to her death seems to be a close second. I can't count the times I caught her by the ankle before she bored into Mother Earth. Never once did she thank me for saving her life. Ingrate.

Our grandson is 30 months. That makes him a dreaded two-year old. Yikes! The term "terrible twos" was coined for a reason. The lad has spent the first two years of his life being comforted, cared for, and coddled, as he has gradually learned self-control. Now he can walk, talk, feed himself, use the toilet, brush his teeth, dress himself, and pick up his toys. Sounds like the perfect gentleman, right?

Well, yes, when he wants to be. And there's the rub with a two-year-old. After two years of attention from his parents, an effort that was critical to his development, he has come to believe he *deserves* to be the center of attention. The world, he believes, is his oyster. Sadly, for him, this is the time when gears must shift as his training evolves from teaching him how to be a living being to how to be a civil being. In short, he must learn his place, and that place is no longer the center of the universe.

Here are some examples of his behavior.

His mother asks, "Tommy, which of these cups would you like to take to daycare today, the tan one or the green one?" Tommy looks down at his breakfast as if it contains the answer. After a few seconds, "Tommy, tan or green?" Tommy remains mum. Again, "Tan or green, Tommy, or I'll pick for you."

Tommy looks up. "Pink," he says.

"The pink cup is Sally's. Tan or green?"

"Red," says Tommy as if it's the most obvious answer in the world.

And on it goes.

Or it's time for supper. "Tommy, we're getting ready for supper. Pick up your toys and go potty." Tommy picks up a book, opens it, and lays down on the family room floor. You find yourself twirling your finger in your own ear, checking for wax, as you clearly must have misheard the instructions.

Or he just sits down and starts whining. "Come on, Tommy, it's time for supper. Pick up your toys." He continues to whine, throwing in a moan or two to keep it fresh.

"Tommy, what's the matter? We're having chicken for supper. You love chicken." Tommy chokes out a few sobs and continues to sit on the floor.

"Let's do it together," his father suggests. "We'll pick up the toys, go potty, and then we can have supper. Come on, Tommy," as the father pulls him up.

Or he's made it to the table and gotten strapped into his booster seat. In front of him is his plate of food along with a

plastic spoon and fork. He picks up the plate and starts rocking it like a boat on the high seas.

"No, Tommy. Leave the plate on the table where it belongs. Don't play with it. You know better than that. If you do it again, that's Strike One." Tommy looks his father in the eye, lowers the plate to the table, and uses it to tap out a rhythm as if his plate is wearing tap shoes.

"That's a Strike, Tommy. Put the plate down." Tommy slowly lowers the plate and picks up his fork as if he's learned his lesson and is ready to get serious about eating. Indeed, he eats a few bites. Within a couple of minutes, though, he's stabbing and flicking his food as if he's jousting with it.

"Strike Two, Tommy. You know not to play with your food." Depending on Tommy's temperament, he may or may not reach Strike Three in that meal. If he does, he faces some form of deprivation, such as time-out in his room, no bedtime story, or loss of a favorite toy.

These are just a few examples. No matter where the parents draw the line, Tommy walks up to the line, wraps his toes over it, and waits for a reaction from the parents. You see, at the age of two, Tommy has come to realize that his parents are his favorite toys. He plays them like a set of drums, or perhaps like dancing puppets. He acts, they react. He pulls, they push. He pushes, they pull. He whines, they cajole. He possesses the ability to control not only his emotions but theirs. Way more fun than Legos.

Having raised our own kids, one of whom is a parent here, it's easy to sit back with a scorecard and tally the mistakes the parents are making. After all, we've made them ourselves. Perhaps our advice might be helpful. Ah, but here we must tread lightly. After all, our advice is not being actively sought. Why is that?

One reason is that we raised only one of the two parents. While that parent is likely to concede that his perfection is a result of our child-rearing methods, the equally perfect spouse may disagree, since she arrived at her perfection via different parenting techniques. Once parents start asking in-laws for advice, they must reconcile the inevitable differences in the two philosophies from which they were shaped. This is not an easy task and can create more disagreement than it resolves.

A second reason for not seeking advice is that parents who have reached the stage in their lives of accepting responsibility for keeping these little critters alive have also developed the confidence to trust in their instincts. They don't ask for advice because they feel they already have most of the answers. Sure, they may need to tweak their approach here and there as new issues come up, but they otherwise have everything under control.

Still, as grandparents, it's painful to watch the parents suffer needlessly, knowing that the answers are there but must remain untapped.

But hark! I am a writer. I may not be able to share my answers with the parents, but I can share them with my keyboard. So, here are the three golden rules:

1. No choices.

2. No strikes.
3. No herding.

Parents like to offer their kids *choices*, such as the tan or green cup. I'm not sure why this is. Perhaps they feel this gives the child an opportunity to exercise the decision-making center of his brain, as if he does not make a billion decisions on his own every day. The problem with offering a choice is that the parents relinquish control. The parents give Tommy power he didn't possess a moment before and for which he did nothing to earn. Tommy is now free to use that power to toy with his parents. I suppose parents may feel that choice-making builds a sense of self-esteem and self-determination in the child, but self-esteem is not assigned; it's earned. In life, we make choices where we've earned the right to make choices. Some choices are not ours to make.

Discouraging bad behavior by assigning *strikes* sends the wrong message. The message is, "You may misbehave twice before you are punished." At two years of age, Tommy already knows right from wrong. He does not need two strikes to remind him. As he gets older, will he be able to punch someone twice before he's punished, tell two lies before he tells the truth, or rob two banks before being arrested? If he puts his hand on a hot burner, will he not burn himself the very first time? In life, we normally get zero strikes. If we misbehave, we are immediately punished. Hopefully we learn. The job of parents is to set the rules and to enforce the consequences of misbehavior. It is not to play umpire.

These days, parents tend to believe their children can be controlled. They believe that if they parent properly, their children will behave properly. This view is the same as believing they can *herd* cats. Parents who hold this belief are in for a lifetime of frustration and misery. The job of parents is to make clear the rules of life (including home life) and the consequences of breaking those rules, and then to dispassionately enforce those consequences. I say dispassionately because any sign of compassion will be noted by the little miscreant, as the parents are again viewed by the child as toys rather than as fair arbiters of justice.

For what it's worth.

*Gary Bergquist is a local freelance writer. His latest book, Becoming What We Watch: Television's Unintended Legacy, is available from Amazon.*

# Nickel Deposit

By Tom King

The clickedy-clack of hard rubber wheels striking sidewalk seams amplifies the tingling of glass bottles and aluminum cans. He stops the cart abruptly to pick up a Bud can hiding under a hemlock bush. Twenty blocks to Stop and Shop and he's hoping for better pickings. A man in shirt and tie under heavy wool topcoat emerges from a nearby building.

"Hey Joe, how's your day been?"

"Not so good, Doc, I thought when they put a nickel on water bottles business would pick up."

"How are the lungs?"

"Fine since you cured that pneumonia. No more smokes for me. Only fresh air for these babies."

A loud beep-beep from a Mercedes as the old physician approaches.

"Some day I'll repay you for your treatment, Doc."

"I won't accept it Joe. You vets have been getting screwed for decades. Thank you for your service. Good to see you."

Half-way down the next block he stops for another treasure. A fresh Marlboro, only half-smoked sleeping on the light coating of new fallen snow. A battle ensues within him. The craving, so recently altered, begins to overtake him. His feet start walking, he doesn't know why. He slowly realizes he needs to focus on the cumulative effect of these momentary victories.

It's getting dark, the wind's picked up and the snow is falling hard again. A few more random cans, a 12 pack of Bud light and the hunting and gathering is over. He feels his heart rate rise as he pushes his half-filled cart through the slushy parking lot. Two men are leaving the bottle room squeezing bottle receipts like winning lottery tickets. They recognize each other, nod, and move on. \$2.10 in bottles, \$3.45 in cans, not a good day. He leaves the cart. He'll pick up a new one in the morning. He turns from the service counter and heads down towards the produce aisle. He pays for

## FLASH FICTION

his fruit, tosses it in his old shoulder sack and heads out.

The blowing snow clings to his forest of facial hair as he plods down Main Street. He approaches a large metal door and knocks loudly. A huge Hispanic man cracks open the door. "Sorry Joe, we're full, come earlier tomorrow," and clangs the door shut. He turns down an alley and re-ties the cord on his hood. Briefly he is out of the storm. He emerges facing a group of one-story metal buildings inside a large fenced-in lot. He follows the fence around the back where it's not as well lit. He loosens a corner of the fence and pulls it away from its post and places his bag inside. He then lays on his back and creeps his body under the fence, pushing it up first with his hands, then his feet. For a moment he's back in boot camp at Paris Island. "Keep those butts down!" his drill sergeant screams. His maneuver pulls his hood back and deposits a pile of snow down his back. He jumps up, pulling out his shirttails, shaking the snow off his body.

Joe picks up his bag and starts walking past a long row of camping trailers, boats and motor homes, most covered with blue tarps or shrink-wrap. He turns to look back at a sky full of heavy snowflakes glistening in a distant spotlight. For a moment he forgets his discomfort to appreciate the temporary beauty mother nature is bestowing on this self-storage ugliness. He lifts a weathered 'For Sale' sign duct-taped to the door of an old trailer with flat tires. He snakes his arm through a broken pane of glass and grabs the handle. He finds his bed for the night by the light of his trusty 'Bic'. "Never be without fire," Dad always said. He climbs under the bedding fully clothed and shoed. The heavy snow has changed to sleet. He enjoys the ping-pinging of the wind-blown pellets against the metal siding. Pulling an old 9-volt transistor radio from his bag he fumbles with frigid fingers the nickel-sized tuning dial. Finally, the speaker comes to life, "Boston Bruins hockey brought to you by VISA, for the life you deserve."



# Waterpipes

## *The Big Bong Theory*

By Mark Mathew Braunstein

While the waterpipe had for centuries been traditionally used for tobacco, nowadays waterpipes are associated only with cannabis use. Models for cannabis vary widely. Some are compact and portable, while most are designed for tabletops. Some models are made of silicone or ceramic, while most are made with bowls of glass or metal, and with bodies of acrylic or glass. Glass bodies have morphed into sculptural designs whose creation has elevated the craft into an artform. As accoutrements of cannabis culture, ornate tabletop models have been nicknamed “bongs,” while pocket-size models are called “bubblers.” Whether simple craft or ornate art, whether tabletop or pocket-size, the two ingredients that all models ultimately share are cannabis and water.

### **Waterpipes Are Way Cool**

Bongs provide you assurance that you are being kind to your lungs. Just hearing their bubbling sounds calms your senses. And when you are done, pouring the chamber’s spent water down the drain enhances your feeling of good health. When you smell its stench, you can be thankful that the stink is in the sink and not in your lungs. You are doing your lungs a big favor by cleaning and cooling and moistening the smoke. Or so you believe.

Your assumptions are only partially correct. Yes, waterpipes do cool the otherwise hot and scratchy smoke. But contrary to many smokers’ expectations, waterpipes do not moisten it. Hot and dry, smoke desiccates and irritates your mouth and throat, which makes you more susceptible to respiratory diseases. The parched air of indoor heating, which dries out your nasal passage and mouth and throat, contributes to the higher incidence of colds and flu in winter. To counteract the arid air, room humidifiers add water vapor into the air. While it is comforting to consider waterpipes as humidifiers for your mouth and throat, that analogy does not hold water.

The power of suggestion is strong. The bubbling water in the bong leads you to believe that the smoke bubbles gather some moisture along the route from the bowl to your mouth. Yet, chemical analysis of the smoke exiting the waterpipe has proven otherwise. The mere passage through water does not impart any steam into the smoke. You might be as high as a kite, but the smoke remains as dry as a bone.

### **Ashes to Ashes, Lung to Lung**

Although smoke bubbles absorb no moisture from the water, the water does gather something from the smoke. The water purifies the smoke bubbles by trapping some of the water-soluble toxins such as hydrogen cyanide, much of the hydrocarbons, and much of the tar and ash. There is no safe level of tar and ash in your lungs. Any minute amount is harmful. So water indeed is a health-promoting feature of all waterpipes.

When you fill your waterpipe straight from the faucet, you probably use lukewarm or cold water. Cold water indeed cools the smoke, while experienced waterpipe users claim that hot water traps more tar. If so, a dual-chambered waterpipe would be ideal, one chamber filled with hot water, the second

chamber with cold. While such models do exist, most waterpipes lack two chambers, so you can resort to two other health-promoting techniques. First, change the water in the chamber midway through each smoking session, before the water loses its cleaning efficiency. Second, use non-chlorinated water. We already drink too much chlorinated water from municipal water systems, so

avoid inhaling chlorine vapors. In its most lethal form, chlorine gas devastated the Allied armies of WWI trench warfare. If you do draw tap water from your sink’s faucet, filter it. Or let the water sit in an open container for twenty-four hours, and the chlorine will evaporate.

In theory, chlorine bleach intended for removing laundry stains might be effective for cleaning stained bongs. In practice, liquid chlorine bleach is noxious to inhale, caustic to handle, and leaves a lingering antiseptic odor on your bong. You’re better off not staining your bong in the first place. Water itself will not stain your bong, so fill the chamber only with water, never with soda, juice, tea, coffee, and contrary to the legendary beer bong, never ever with alcohol.

Alcohol very effectively captures cannabinoids, which is why alcohol is used for making cannabis tinctures. That is reason enough not to fill your bong with any alcoholic beverage. Furthermore, alcohol is the most toxic of all recreational drugs. Further still, alcohol that is addictive when ingested by the stomach is even more addictive when inhaled by the lungs.

### **Testing the Waters**

Now comes some unsettling news, hinted in the previous statement that alcohol captures cannabinoids. The very water that filters out the undesirable components of smoke also filters out the terpenes and cannabinoids. A widely cited



study published in 1993 reviewed six previous cannabis studies conducted primarily during the 1970s, the primordial years of cannabis research. That review study concluded that while much tar was captured, so also was much THC.

A noteworthy study published in 1996 further challenged many popularly held beliefs about waterpipes. Rather than focus on THC alone, it tested the spent waters for the full range of total cannabinoids. It found that waterpipes filtered out proportionately more cannabinoids than tar. It postulated that to compensate for lost cannabinoids, waterpipe users end up smoking more, and therefore inhaling more tars. With smokers right back where they started in regard to total intake of tars and other toxins, the potential benefit reaped from waterpipes was canceled out.

This quandary about the counterproductive ratio of captured tar to captured cannabinoids presently lacks any definitive answer and probably never will be answered. That 1996 study was the last of its kind. A harm reduction study published in 2015 cited the 1996 study, but it conducted no further research and so cast no more light on the subject. Continued exploration of the efficacy of smoking cannabis with waterpipes has hit a dead end. Instead, research has been redirected to the technological wonder of herbal vaporizers. That shift has yielded a deluge of studies investigating and confirming the health benefits of vaporizers over smoking. So if you were considering purchasing a waterpipe, you might consider instead turning to the latest generation of vaporizers.

Alternatively, if you presently use a waterpipe, you can conduct research to reach your own conclusions. You can perform an animal experiment, the animal being you. Measure two equal quantities of herbal cannabis that meet your expectations for a single waterpipe session. Administer dosage A with your waterpipe. Wait forty-eight hours, and then administer dosage B with your hand pipe.

To achieve the same relief or same high as with your waterpipe, did you need to administer with your hand pipe the full measure of dosage B, or do you have some leftover? Anything remaining was the extra amount of cannabis you needed to squander to compensate for the cannabinoids and terpenes trapped by the water in the waterpipe. That's extra smoke that potentially sullies your lungs.

### **TB or Not TB?**

Smoking cannabis with waterpipes adds one risk factor that has never been linked to smoking joints or hand pipes. The incidence of tuberculosis (TB) is rare among Caucasians in North America, Australia, and Great Britain, but continues to be diagnosed among new immigrants from Asia and Africa. In countries of the West and especially Australia, when an immigrant household or circle of friends regularly shares cannabis in a waterpipe, a high rate of infection with TB has occurred.

Isolated cases of other respiratory diseases have also been traced to waterpipes, even when not shared with others. Water provides the foundation of life, but also provides an incubator for microscopic pathogens that harm larger life forms. Countless studies show that cannabis smokers suffer a higher incidence of wheezing, coughing, and spitting than nonsmokers, and that such signs of ill health are precursors to respirato-

ry illnesses. But no study has investigated what proportion of the high incidence of colds and flus might be directly attributed to waterpipes. If not emptied, cleaned, and thoroughly dried after each use, the health risk in waterpipes resides in the moist environment that is conducive for breeding bacteria.

Do bacteria carry from the water into the smoke, or do they find their way to the mouthpiece on their own steam? That answer has not been clearly articulated by the many medical reports linking tuberculosis to waterpipes. TB or not TB? That is not the question. The question is, waterpipe or no waterpipe?

### **Keep It Clean**

If your answer is, "Yes, waterpipe," then you need to be vigilant to keep it clear, dry, and clean.

*Buy It Clear:* Buy and use only a waterpipe that is clearly transparent. You need to see just how clean or dirty are its inside walls. Leave behind the psychedelic-colored bongs to decorate the smoke shop, not your home.

*Store It Dry:* Rinse and thoroughly dry the entire assembly after each use. Otherwise, a moist waterpipe can become a breeding ground for mold and bacteria.

*Keep It Clean:* To thoroughly clean the entire glass pipe, use either isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol) or ethanol (ethyl alcohol). For cleaning purposes, the two solvents are interchangeable. If you drink them, ethanol will get you drunk, while iso alcohol will make you sick. But iso alcohol is safer to handle and to dispose than is ethanol. Salt does not dissolve in alcohol, so to serve as an abrasive for cleaning tar add some coarse-grain salt to the solvent, and shake the salty solvent inside your bong.

As long as you rinse and dry it after each use, you can consider delaying its thorough cleaning. Delay until every other use? Or every ten? There is no user's manual to consult for this. The choice is yours.

### **Clean, Rinse, Dry, and Repeat**

If you share your treasured waterpipe with anyone other than your lover, always sanitize the mouthpiece with alcohol wipes before passing the bong to your smoking companion. Then wipe off any alcohol from the mouthpiece. Your waterpipe experience will not be enhanced by the antiseptic smell of a doctor's office.

If all these precautionary measures for cleaning your waterpipe have not altogether discouraged you from enjoying your pipe, then please do *Clean, Rinse, Dry, and Repeat* as needed. Just be aware that if you're a recreational smoker and you want to use your bong before it's completely dry, then you're probably smoking too much.

**Mark Mathew Braunstein** has contributed to many holistic health magazines and is the author of six books, including *Mindful Marijuana Smoking: Health Tips for Cannabis Smokers* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2022), from which this article was adapted. You can read his many editorials and articles about medical marijuana and recreational cannabis at [www.MarkBraunstein.org](http://www.MarkBraunstein.org)





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