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March 2023

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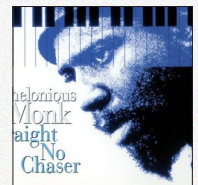
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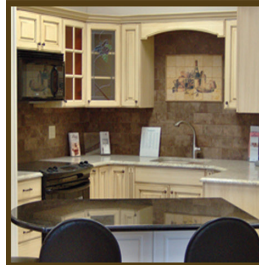
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No. 216 March 2023

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

Neighbors is published ten times
annually by Neighborspaper LLC.
Thomas A. King, member

Neighbors is printed by Rare
Reminder Inc. in Rocky Hill, CT.



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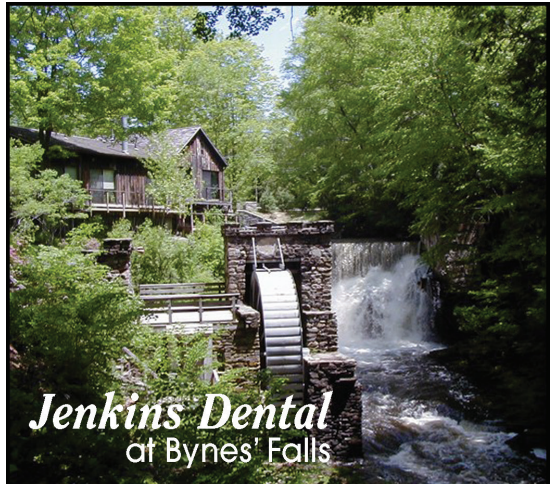
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On our cover:
Farmers and local residents converge at
the 2022 Know Your Farmer Fair in
Willimantic. Read about this years event on
page 35.

Photos were contributed.

What Price for Healthy Natural Resources?

By Loretta Wrobel

We are a society that values profits and closely monitors the dollar dimension. If it generates money, it is prized. We want to know how much will it cost? How much do I have to pay? How much of the burden do I have to carry? What is not considered is the long-term impact of any decision.



In Ashford we recently had a public hearing to discuss possible zoning changes to an area near the Route 84 (Exit 72) Interstate Interchange Development (IID) zone. Presently, the Ashford Motel is located on this property. The area has been zoned for light commercial development. The hearing gave the developers and their crew of attorneys, financial experts, and development experts an opportunity to explain why changing the zoning regulations would benefit the town economically. We are a small town with limited businesses and have this unique undeveloped area where zoning allows commercial development. The developers want to change the zoning regulations to allow for bigger buildings, taller structures, and inclusion of distribution centers, warehouses, and research laboratories for this IID zone.

I was astonished to hear that their plan is to erect at least a million-square-foot structure with no limit on size and a height limit of 75 feet in an area that includes the headwaters of the Fenton River (Tinkerville Brook) and nearby Morey Pond, headwaters of the Mount Hope River. Both of these waterways run into the Willimantic Reservoir, which provides drinking water for parts of Willimantic and Mansfield. Our town is entirely in the Natchaug watershed and we are part of the Natchaug Healthy Watershed Protection Plan. The purpose of this plan is to protect the water quantity and quality of the greater Natchaug watershed, including the Mount Hope, Fenton, and Natchaug Rivers. All of these waterways are upstream of the Willimantic Reservoir.

The frightening reality is that one parcel is surrounded on 3 sides by the Nipmuc State Forest. Part of the Fenton River is a Wild Trout Brook area managed by CT DEEP. Cold water trout streams are highly sensitive to temperature changes, chemical composition, and sediment shifts. Two important aspects, water health and aquatic vibrancy, could be threatened or impaired when we consider gigantic buildings and their impact on the environment.

There is poorly and very poorly drained soil in the targeted area. This will affect stormwater drainage and sewer issues. The potential for a horrendous impact on this sensitive and richly diverse area is real, when you look at the increase in

impervious cover and significant soil and bedrock removal that would be required to level the area for an enormous structure. Wildlife is abundant and there are wetlands and an unnamed drainage channel where the proposed warehouse/distribution center would be constructed.

What is the value of all this beauty? Why would we deliberately endanger this environment? Is that the only option for lowering taxes and stimulating economic growth? Can we stamp a dollar amount on clean water, healthy forests, and abundant wildlife? This particular area has a wealth of wetlands and water resources. What would happen to the precious waterways in our town? Is it worth the risk of having polluted and contaminated water?

In their presentation the development team kept stressing that their targeted area is a remote section of town; however, just down the road is the densely populated Lake Chaffee area. How remote is that? How do we value land? In Ashford many residents are proud of our dazzling natural resources that help keep our air and water clean. How would such a warehouse contribute?

It was stressed how much an average household would save on property taxes. What about the purity of our waterways and the possible pollution and contamination of our wells? How will the air be altered by a million-square-foot building? What is the cost of the damage to this captivating site, which showcases Ashford's natural resources, including clean water, thriving forest, diverse wildlife, and vibrant trout?

Unfortunately, we reside in a culture that has a one-sided view of what is important---profit! If it can make money (for whom?), we are on board. I am in favor of reasonable economic development. As chair of the Conservation Commission, I don't operate on the premise that every tree has to be saved. A town cannot exist without a thriving and growing economic development component.

I do honestly believe that we as a town can find a more appropriate economic project that will benefit our town's financial wellbeing and not raise havoc with our natural resources. We need a balance.

The rush of developing large distribution centers and warehouses is not a positive step forward. Having this grisly mega structure looming over the treetops seems like a scene from a dreadful movie. Are the distribution centers and warehouses going to take over the world?

They use the word park to describe these huge cancerous growths that comprise the industrial parks that are sprouting up all over our country. If it is near an exit, the mistaken

Spring Fever

February Spring
The sun on your face
Warm air on your skin
Feels so great
Enjoying the moment
Being here right now

Then you remember the earth
We did this to her
It's so nice to drink in
This Sweet Poison

Larry Gag

Brigit

By Judy Davis
All along the ancient paths of
Ireland, Brigit, the goddess of
Poetry and healing shared her
light.

Every February 1st, she is
celebrated in the festival of
“Imbolc”, where we are reminded
that the promise of spring will
be anon.

The bright fires of her worship
light our way, cheering us. She
is the wisdom of the water, and the
passion of the flame. In celebration
of the green Earth, Brigit, we
call your name.

Ask the goddess of healing
to enter our bodies, our minds,
our lives.

And, for that, celebrate Brigit,
And all things Irish!



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We are promised that the
developers are helping our town and
we should be so grateful to them. We
know that a warehouse of this size
will generate profits for them. How
will it help our town? Will the nega-
tive impacts make it worthwhile?

We live in a rural town
where the residents often speak of
the need to retain our rural character.
How does a monstrous structure fit
into the concept of rural character?
Or a building that stands out like
a sore thumb on the horizon? We
are already zoned for structures up
to 250,000 square feet. How big is
enough?

I am in favor of supporting
sensible economic development. The
composers who crafted the present
zoning regulations wanted to have
commercial development along the
interstate interchange. They allowed

for commercial activity, while
acknowledging the importance of
protecting the fragile environmental
features that support our healthy
ecosystem.

I know we can come up
with a better solution to encourage
economic development and honor
the magic of our dynamic natural
resources that allow us to live in a
town with clean water, clean air and
opportunities to enjoy outdoor recre-
ation such as fishing, hiking, biking,
swimming, and birdwatching.

I encourage our residents
to become involved and attend the
extension of the PZC public hearing
on March 13 at 7pm on zoom. You
can find the link under Planning and
Zoning Commission on the town
website and click on agenda.

My prayer is that people
examine what is important to them
and what is best for our town. How
can we focus on both sustaining our
beautiful resources and fostering
reasonable, not invasive, economic
growth?



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Memories Drifting About; Ash Trees and Lightning Bugs

By Bob Grindle

The family was small when it left a war-ravaged London a few years after WWII had burned off whatever small vestiges of innocence our species could still lay claim to. Yet, even after the unspeakable brutality of years of a suicidal civilization-wide seismic upheaval when the psychic-plate tectonics that seem to underpin all of humankind's breathtaking potential erupted with a hope incinerating volcanic fury that forced the human community to stare into the cosmic mirror and see its evil twin; after all of that, and as the 20th century tipped into its second half, a small, converted warship, the USS Argentina, set sail across a stormy and cold north Atlantic—bound for the United States of America—carrying several hundred survivors of the war, all filled with hope for a better future. Most of those passengers were young war-brides...one of them, an English woman with a young boy and a baby girl was my mother. The journey was long, the seas were rough and the future was uncertain, but hope is a resilient thing.

I am leaning against an aging... and, in this time of the first wave of the emerald ash beetle... probably a dying ash tree that was likely a sapling when my mother left everything she had ever known and, carrying only a couple pieces of luggage plus two young children, could look into that same cosmic mirror but see a future filled with all the wonder and possibility that hope can deliver to those who look into the fire and see a blacksmith's forge and not an agent of destruction. Somehow, leaning on this dying tree I feel a bit of the brotherhood of being a small part of the fabric of our planet and my mind drifts easily to a time I cannot recall, but a time that I lived through nonetheless, and I feel a deep and abiding respect—almost reverence—for the courage and pluck that my mother showed in setting off on such a journey. In all the tumult of being alive, at any time, during any epoch or age; through all of humanity's almost unfathomably twisted journey from the singularly rugged, but bright, hunter-gatherers born of stardust and improbability a few thousand millennia ago to today's equally rugged and bright, but multi-billion strong, builder-dreamer-destroyers, born of that same stardust and improbability, and who struggle to comprehend a planet whose beauty they see but do not understand...in all of this complexity of being alive, when facing the demons of any age, seen through any eyes, I wonder at the difficult path hope must travel to find its voice in our lives. Despite its resiliency, I have come to understand that hope is a painfully fragile thing.

Stepping away from the ash tree, I look up and smile a quiet, unsaid thank you to this towering yet fading sage of

our hillside and nod a warm good evening for almost magically helping connect me to an old memory as if it were as simple as putting out your hand a letting a lightning bug land on it. Hope, of course, can't accomplish much without the muscle of determination and hard work and vision and the list goes on and on...almost like a government agency's check list... but looking up through these weakening branches as Orion rises through the dark eastern sky to face off against Taurus and chases Venus across and into the southwestern sky for the countless millionth time, I understand that the world we have all arrived to live in has a carnival-like unpredictability to it, and with enticing and maddening relentless randomness will simply move on. The human race has arrived on the scene with an asteroid like impact on all things planetary and if our fascination with the doomed dinosaurs proves to be some sort of prescient warning perhaps our self-vaunted cleverness will assist in solving our dilemma.

That small English family grew, receded a bit and

now has started to grow again and there is an undeniable hopefulness about the future that wells up when watching life renew itself. Despite the random way we humans have of lofting ourselves to planetary prominence, I find some cause for enthusiasm in the recent increase in our interest in communicating with other lifeforms that share the Earth with us. Our narcissistic obsession that we are the chosen ones has not served us at all well and like our fascination with the castle on the hill we may have distracted ourselves from the fundamental survival value of knowing that all of life is connected and coming to truly understand that for every single creature on the Earth we must learn to share this house.

As Orion passes across tonight's winter sky, followed by his ever faithful hunting dogs Canis Major and Canis Minor I find some comfort in knowing that there is

no cosmic rush to sort through the uncountable keys on humankind's keychain in a frantic effort to find the right key, when we have no idea which is the right door. A billion years from now the planets will still revolve around our Sun and life in some form will still feel the wind and rain and perhaps watch Venus set into a magical western sky. For the moment that pleasure is ours and I hope each of you finds time to look up into a sky big enough to hold every hope and dream humankind has ever dared to ponder. With March will come the vernal equinox and the annual trickery that our hopes play with the realities of New England's ancient passage through the seasons and every one of us knows that, like fingerprints, no two years are the same. Stay well and enjoy the vagaries of sharing space with the mind-bending multitude of things in this life that are almost heart-stoppingly beautiful.



At the Top Shelf Gallery



Submitted by Janice Trecker

Meanderings, the March-April at the Top Shelf Gallery, features mixed media works by Goshen artist Lori Barker. Barker does both landscapes and figurative works, often collaged with layers of paper, fabric, metal and wood. She starts with original photographic images which she enhances with engraved lines and acrylic paint. "I work with a collection of materials," Barker says, "creating a unique conversation within each composition. Creativity allows me to crystallize my experience and tone the muscles of imagination."

A former teacher, Barker graduated from Southern Connecticut State University and studied further at Bennington and The Savannah College of Art and Design. Her work has been exhibited widely in Connecticut, with solo shows in many state libraries, including UConn's Homer Babbidge Library, as well as in various galleries and artist spaces. She has been an Artist in residence at Santarella Museum in Tyngham, MA and received The Museum of Contemporary Impressionism's award for excellence.

In addition to her creative work, Barker ran the award-winning Artist's Path Gallery in Bantam, CT for a time with her late husband. Her home in Goshen, CT features grounds with a labyrinth and sculptures and a straw bale building that occasionally functions as a meditation space. Referring to fifty plus years of "developing, learning and teaching techniques," Barker says, "I'm truly doing the work I was meant to do, I can't imagine doing anything else."

Meanderings opens March 1. The Top Shelf Gallery is at Fletcher Memorial Library, 257 Main St., Hampton. Info: 860-455-1086.

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Master Gardeners and Maple Syrup

By C. Dennis Pierce

It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want—oh, you don't quite know what it is you *do* want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so.

—Mark Twain

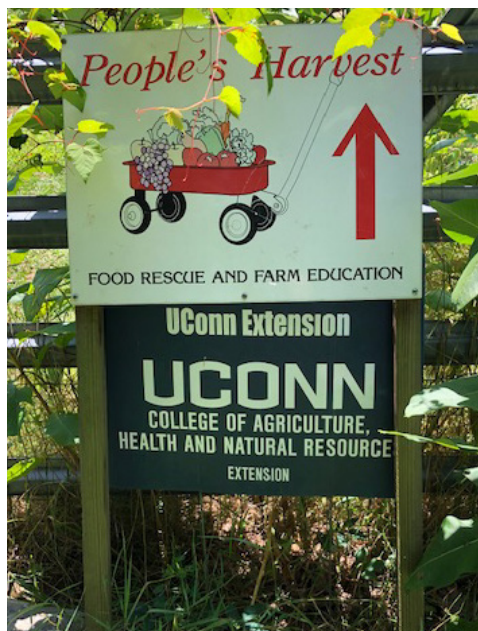


The winter that wasn't: I originally moved to Connecticut in 1974 for a brief stay. I was living in Maine and my job transferred me to a position at the University of Hartford. It was a transient assignment, but I recall a winter that was mild, no snow to speak of, and coming from Maine I thought that was great. In fact, that winter was like what we have experienced so far this year. February teased us a lot, suggesting that Spring was right around the corner.

As I write this column, it is a bit betwixt and between of a time for content. Too early to feature a local farm, and home gardeners are pretty busy starting their seeds, hoping this year's struggle to get the correct conditions does not end up with leggy seedlings. So let's start out by visiting some garden projects. As I shared in my last column, I am currently participating in the Master Gardener Program, an educational outreach program that is part of UConn Extension. The program started in 1978 and consists of horticulture training and an outreach component that focuses on the community at large. Check their websites at <https://mastergardener.uconn.edu/> and, on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/uconn.mastergardeners/>.

One project that is part of the Master Gardener Program is the People's Harvest Garden in Pomfret. The garden was started by the Windham County Master Gardeners in 2005, and all produce grown is donated to local food kitchens. Based on what I could find on the Master Gardener site, typical totals for the season are between 3,000 and 4,000 pounds of fresh produce. Now, that is a lot of produce that ends up assisting those that are less fortunate. The garden, managed by John LoRusso, Master Gardener Program coordinator from the Windham County Extension Center, also serves as a demonstration project for food security and a destination for local schools to volunteer.

So here it is the end of February and you always wanted to start a garden, but you lack the land to grow your own food. What do you do? The Town of Mansfield has the solution. For an inexpensive fee of \$25 for Mansfield residents and \$35 for nonresidents, you can lease a 20- by 30-foot plot where you can set up your garden on a parcel of land that the town has set aside on Route 195 next to the store that has everything, Mansfield Supply. There you can enjoy the fresh air and begin your journey in growing your own fresh produce. Planting begins mid to late May. Returning gardeners are notified by mail about pre-registration and receive priority. Once you have registered, you will receive a letter about the location of your garden plot and the recommended gardening practices. Gardeners are required to remove all large weeds, rocks, and weed barriers from their plot by the end of the season. Interested? The online registration materials are currently not active, but if you contact the Town Clerk's Office at (860) 429-3302, I am sure they can assist and point you in the right direction. Don't wait, since there is a limited amount of gardens spaces available.



Lack gardening experience or knowledge? Never grew your own vegetables before but want to give it a try so you can begin a healthier diet? Look no further: UConn Extension once again comes to the rescue. UConn Extension has many programs to assist with your vegetable garden, whether you are starting a garden for the first time or returning for another season. Specialists from their Master Gardener Program, Vegetable Crops Program, Soil Nutrient Analysis Laboratory, and Home & Garden Education Center are the best resources available. Check out the Education Center site for a start: <https://homegarden.cahn.uconn.edu/>.

It has been a mild winter with cold days, mingled with warmer weather. Those who depend on maple trees giving up their sap so they can make tasty maple syrup are challenged, I am sure. Typically, days with temperatures in the 40-degree range and nights around 25 degrees are ideal for sap production. Sugaring has a long history. In the 1700s, Native Americans used maple syrup as a sweetener. In the 1800s, metal taps and sap buckets assisted in the gathering of sap. With more control available, syrup makers were able to process a larger volume of sap. In the late 1950s, vacuum pumps using flexible tubing became a means of gathering the runoff. It's a lot of work to make pure maple syrup, with gathering, fighting off nature's predators, and then evaporating the sap—so much that we take for granted as we pour that brown, delicious liquid onto our morning pancakes.

continued on next page

If you are interested in touring a maple sugar house where syrup is produced, check out the Maple Syrup Producers Association of Connecticut website at <https://www.ctmaple.org/maple-weekend.html>.

Still in search of a maple-flavored adventure? The Hebron Maple Festival is March 18–19 (Saturday and Sunday) this year. The festival is held throughout the Town of Hebron to celebrate New England's maple production industry and traditions. Events include tours at Wenzel Sugar House, Woody Acres Sugar House, and Pierce's Sugar House; chainsaw carvers; fire truck tours; historic church tours; a scavenger hunt; letterboxing at Burnt Hill Park; pellet stove demos; a craft fair at the Gilead Congregational Church; blacksmithing, woodworking, and wood turning demonstrations; a Revolutionary War encampment; an ice cream eating contest; a birds of prey exhibition; and a silent auction. Food: pancake breakfasts on Saturday and Sunday, sugar on snow, maple kettle corn, and pudding cake. The schedule is 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. both days, and admission is free.

The challenge I find with using maple syrup as an ingredient is letting the flavor shine through the other ingredients. Some say it has a caramel, wood butter, nutty and vanilla flavor. It works well when using vinegar such as in a dressing, apples, and greens, as well as Asian ingredients such as miso, ginger, and soy sauce. If you are using maple syrup as an ingredient and substituting it for sugar, use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of maple syrup instead of 1 cup of white sugar. You will also need to decrease any other liquids called for in the recipe by about 3 tablespoons per cup of syrup. The following recipe is amazing, but, as you can see, the marinating time takes patience.

Maple Ginger Chicken Thighs

Ingredients:

- 1 small onion (finely sliced)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup apple cider or real apple juice (not from concentrate)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon peeled fresh ginger, finely grated
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 8 bone-in chicken thighs
- 3 medium-sized apples, peeled, cored, and quartered

Directions:

In a medium-sized bowl, whisk onion, cider, syrup, ginger, vinegar, thyme, salt, and pepper. Place chicken in a large zip lock bag. Pour marinade into bag, seal it, and refrigerate for 24 hours. Occasionally rotate the bag so all parts of the chicken are marinated. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove chicken from marinade and arrange pieces skin side up in a medium-sized baking dish (9" x 13" or thereabouts). Tuck apples around chicken and pour marinade over top. Bake, basting occasionally for approximately 1 hour, until chicken is cooked through (165 degrees). Serve chicken and apples with sauce spooned over the top.

I am looking forward to further exploring the farms and orchards that surround the Quiet Corner. If you have a suggestion for a farm or a local grower or even a recipe that features a local ingredient, please let me know. I will do my best to share your suggestions in a future column. Drop me a line at codfish53@yahoo.com. Peas be with you. 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!



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A Life Spiral

By Delia Berlin

Last fall, the first anniversary of the death of our 30-year-old parrot companion, Eureka, still found me grieving her loss. The anticipation of a third winter and holiday season marred by the pandemic was not doing much to lift my mood. But, at least, I was cautiously looking forward to the start of rehearsals for a new season of the Windham Theatre Guild Broadway Chorus.

Then, just after Christmas, David got Covid. Thanks to vaccines, boosters, and antivirals, he had very mild symptoms and recovered quickly. But, due to isolation protocols during his initial illness and rebound, our normal routines were disrupted. As a close contact, I needed to protect others following similar precautions. Although I continued to test negative for Covid and never got sick, I was not ready to start chorus rehearsals when scheduled. With flu, RSV, and Covid hospitalizations still high, I decided to skip the season and find an alternative outlet to keep me from going off the deep end.

Since Eureka's death, I had been ruminating about memorial projects. Early on, I found an antique mahogany table with legs carved in a feather design at the flea market. It needed restoration and we hired a master craftsman for the job. We now enjoy Eureka's memorial table every day. But I still wanted to create something myself. I wrote plenty about her and my additional creative talents are limited. Having done some ceramics as a young teenager, I decided to try that medium.

Serendipitously, I ended up at the still-new location of Spiral Arts Studio (www.spiralartsstudio.com) on 750 Main Street, Willimantic. In addition to multiple art classes and workshops, the studio has a gallery storefront full of beautiful pottery and offers memberships to those qualified by previous experience. By becoming a member one can share facilities and tools to work



independently. Members buy their own clay and have access to the space 24/7, with shelf storage for their materials. For safety and efficiency, only the experts at the studio handle kiln firings, but everyone else can share in cleaning and maintaining the facility.

I decided to become a member, and because ceramics involves a multi-step process that spreads over time, I signed up for a minimum of three months. Knowing the schedule of classes and group activities at the studio allows me to work there when just a few others are involved in their own work. Spacious and sparsely occupied, the studio feels safe to work

unmasked this winter. It is a calming place. Even when other members are absorbed in their own projects, a wordless exchange of ideas constantly takes place. It is inspiring to see others at work and to admire their projects. Occasionally, conversations happen and I have found them helpful, encouraging, and kind.

Adding to the satisfaction of my creative experience is the fortuitous reconnection with ceramics artist Daniela de Sousa, the principal owner and manager of the studio. I first met her decades ago, while I worked as director of the Willimantic Center of Quinebaug Valley Community College and Daniela had just arrived from Brazil. As a teenager, she came with her mother to register for English-as-a-second-language classes. This was followed by many years of additional classes at QVCC, other colleges, and universities, where she earned undergraduate and graduate degrees. Eventually, she became credentialed to teach at schools and, presently, at QVCC and Eastern Connecticut State University.

Daniela has a clear, ambitious, and synergetic vision for Spiral Arts. She sees it as a place where people gather to learn, share, create, and build community in a wholesome way. A spiral of life keeps growing from this new gem in Willimantic, brightening a downtown spot that had been begging for it. Meanwhile, I keep filling the big hole that Eureka left in my heart. Making things while I think about her helps me accept her

loss, bringing her back a little, full of gratitude for her long and loyal friendship.



Out of Stock

Story and poem by Christine Acebo

He still had the farm and a small herd of dairy cows. The milk went to a co-op, though, so his name was never known by the children who drank it. His wife had a small flock of chickens and in the early summer she had enough extra eggs to sell at the farmers' market or sometimes to the very small, very fragile health food stores that blossomed, withered, and then faded away.

The general store was still around, but it took longer to make the 10-minute drive with all the traffic in town from the newcomers, and the store didn't seem to have what he needed (or wanted) anymore. The nuts, bolts, and screws were in plastic bags now and he missed the pebbly feel of them under his fingers in metal drawers. The sons of his old friend couldn't make something out of nothing like their father could when the tractor or a tool needed a piece no one manufactured anymore. He missed the crowded isles of the old store although he no longer really noticed the power bars and vitamin water and cans of organic black beans that took the place of white bread and

tomato soup. He missed sitting at the back of the store with old friends, gossiping about other farmers and shopkeepers and the pastor of the church. They had sometimes talked longer than they should have because the wood stove had been so comforting on chilly days.

Today he walked out with nothing in his hands and figured it just might be the last time. Not only were the fly strips out of stock (in August) but they had stopped selling wire screen altogether. His old friend's son said they probably had it at the Walmart and he just couldn't compete with them. The young man shrugged and looked away.

In truth, he was glad to step outside now... away from the smells of the flavored coffees, away from the shelves of clever crafts, away from the empty chairs in the back of the store. He'd be damned if he'd go to Walmart though. There must be some old screen in someone's barn for the kitchen door. Or she'd just have to live with the strips of tape over the tears and holes. He'd be damned if he'd go to Walmart. He'd be damned...

The General Store

Nuts, bolts, and screws,
a pebbly feel
under his fingers,
rattling like a song
in metal drawers.

He checks his wife's list:
milk, peanut butter and white bread,
second aisle on the left
facing cans of tomato and chicken noodle soup.
He adds a Hershey's bar for the kids.

Wire screen to repair the rip,
against the wall in back.
Fly strips for the barn,
beside the cash register
(in August).

He pays, and joins old friends.
A circle of chairs
around the wood stove,
always reminding that winter comes.
Today's gossip is about the pastor.

He remembers these things.
He aches for these things,
now that the store is something else.
Flavored coffees, power bars, crafts.
How does he describe what's gone?
How does he mend the screen?

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Candi Staton

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 Candi Staton, a four-time Grammy nominee who has recorded in the Southern soul, disco, and gospel genres.

Canzetta Maria Staton was born in Hanceville, Alabama, on March 13, 1940. Her family was poor, so she helped out by picking cotton when she wasn’t singing in the church choir. By age eight, she was in a gospel group called the Four Golden Echoes.

When Staton was ten, her mother moved the family to Cleveland to escape her alcoholic husband. Staton and her sister Maggie were then sent to the Jewell Christian Academy in Nashville. The pastor there paired the sisters with a third girl, Naomi Harrison, as the Jewell Gospel Trio. They toured the gospel circuit with the likes of Mahalia Jackson, the Soul Stirrers, and the Reverend C.L. Franklin (father of Aretha). The group also recorded for the Nashboro, Apollo, and Savoy labels.

At seventeen, Staton ran off to California with fellow gospel singer (and future soul-music star) Lou Rawls. They were going to marry, but Rawls’ mother talked them out of it. Staton returned to her native Alabama and soon became pregnant by the son of a local minister; they got married. The husband, who was jealous and abusive, demanded that his wife stay home and forget about her musical career. She did so for the next decade, having four children and limiting her singing to the church.

By the late 1960s, Candi Staton had left her husband and started performing secular music. She got a job touring with soul singer Clarence Carter (“Slip Away,” “Patches”), who would become her second husband. Through Carter, she met Rick Hall of FAME Records in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. In 1969, she had her first of five top ten Soul hits, “I’d Rather Be an Old Man’s Sweetheart (Than a Young Man’s Fool).” Her 1970 remake of Tammy Wynette’s “Stand by Your Man” received a Grammy nomination, as did her 1972 version of Elvis Presley’s “In the Ghetto.” In all, Staton’s FAME sessions resulted in thirteen charted singles and earned her the nickname, “The First Lady of Southern Soul.”

In 1976, Candi Staton jumped on the disco bandwagon and worked with producer David Crawford. This collaboration spawned her all-time biggest hit, “Young Hearts Run Free.” It went to #1 on the Soul chart, peaked at #20 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, and became Staton’s first hit in the UK, where it got to #2.



In 1982, she returned to gospel music. Staton and her then-husband, John Sessewell, founded the Beracah Ministries in Atlanta. She went on to record a dozen gospel albums, two of which were Grammy nominated.

In 1991, a reissue of Staton’s five-year-old recording with The Source, “You Got the Love,” became a #4 hit in England. In 1997, a remix got to #3 in that country.

In 2004, the UK-based Honest Jon’s label issued *Candi Staton*, a compilation of her FAME recordings. She subsequently appeared on “The Late Show with David Letterman,” and hosted her own program, “New Direction,” on the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

On October 30, 2018, Staton announced that she had breast cancer. Nine months later, she posted to social media that she was now cancer-free.

Candi Staton has been married six times and has five children. From 1970-2018, she released thirty albums.

Charted singles:

“I’d Rather Be an Old Man’s Sweetheart (Than a Young Man’s Fool)” (1969) R&B #9, Pop #46

“Never In Public” (1969) R&B #22

“I’m Just a Prisoner (Of Your Good Lovin’)” (1969) R&B #13, Pop #56

“Sweet Feeling” (1970) R&B #5, Pop #60

“Stand by Your Man” (1970) R&B #4, Pop #24

“He Called Me Baby” (1971) R&B #9, Pop #52

“Mr. and Mrs. Untrue” / “Too Hurt to Cry” (1971) R&B #20, Pop #109

“In the Ghetto” (1972) R&B #12, Pop #48

“Lovin’ You, Lovin’ Me” (1972) R&B #40, Pop #83

“Do It in the Name of Love” (1973) R&B #17, Pop #80

“Something’s Burning” (1973) R&B #83

“Love Chain” (1973) R&B #31

“As Long as He Takes Care of Home” (1974) R&B #6, Pop #51

“Here I Am Again” (1975) R&B #35

“Six Nights and a Day” (1975) R&B #86

“Young Hearts Run Free” (1976) R&B #1 (1 week), Pop #20

“Run to Me” (1976) R&B #26

“A Dreamer of a Dream” (1977) R&B #37

“Nights on Broadway” (1977) R&B #16, Pop #102

“Listen to the Music” (1977) R&B #90

“Honest I Do Love You” (1978) R&B #77

“Victim” (1978) R&B #17

“Honest I Do Love You” (1978) R&B #77

“When You Wake Up Tomorrow” (1979) R&B #13

“Looking for Love” (1980) R&B #42

“Without You I Cry” (1981) R&B #78

“Count On Me” (1981) R&B #82

“You Got the Love” (The Source featuring Candi Staton, 1986) R&B #88

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) and alternating Saturdays from 2:30 - 5:30 p.m. on WRTC, 89.3-FM (www.wrtcfm.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.

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T. King, Publisher

Ukulele Workshop

Submitted by Ruth O’Neil

The Song-a-Day Music Center in association with the Coventry Arts Guild will conduct an Introduction to the Ukulele workshop on Saturday, April 15 from 1 to 3 P.M. at the Song-a-day Music Center located at 2809 Boston Turnpike in Coventry.

Participants can expect to become acquainted with this increasingly popular instrument. Music Center owners Jim Hammitt and Ruth O’Neil will facilitate the workshop. Care and tuning of the uke, basic chord and strum patterns along with playing simple and familiar songs will be covered. Next steps will also be explored. Preregistration is required; enrollment is limited. Cost of the workshop is \$30 per person. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own ukulele but some will be available to use during the workshop.

The Coventry Arts Guild is committed to supporting the visual , performing and literary arts throughout the community. For more information about the Arts Guild and to become a member go to info@coventryartsguild.org.

For more information and/or to sign up for the workshop contact the Song-a-Day Music Center at 860-742-6878 or 860-918-5957 or inquiries@songadaymusic.com

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The Hampton General Store

By Bill Powers

While doing research for a Willimantic Chronicle series of articles about the evolving history of Hampton, Connecticut, I was impressed and pleased by several circumstances: 1) The assistance rendered by the staff of the Fletcher Memorial Library and the members of the Hampton Antiquarian and Historical Society was superb; and, 2) The number of historical works that have been published over the years about life in Hampton and written by residents of Hampton is astounding. These include: “All Our Yesterdays: A Century of Family Life in an American Small Town” by James Oliver Robertson and Janet C. Robertson; “Discovering Hampton” by Janice Trecker; “Hampton Remembers” and “Remembering 97 Years – A Spiritual Life” by Alison Davis.

It has been especially helpful to be able to interview both Janice Trecker and Alison Davis, who will be celebrating her 100th birthday in June; 3) A wonderful surprise awaited me as I left the Fletcher Memorial Library one day when I realized the Hampton General Store had reopened. I stopped in and it has now led to several more rewarding visits to the General Store in the historic Hampton Village. The store is located just across the street from the Fletcher Memorial Library and the Hampton Congregational Church. The store goes back to the early 1800s.

A General Store like that was often the center of activity in small towns and villages throughout New England. Allison Davis in her book titled “Hampton Remembers” provides the following description: “Hampton Village itself was known as Hampton Hill. It was the center of town, of course, with its beautiful white-spined Congregational Church dominating the street. The store, and for a long time the town clerk’s office above it and post office attached to it, were all just across from the church.”

As a child, I had been introduced to such a general store in the Vermont village where my grandmother was raised, when we visited my great grandparents. It also contained the local post office and pretty much carried all the merchandise and groceries that folks would need and anything else you could imagine. I always appreciated the “penny candy” counter. As I entered and walked around the Hampton General Store, I found it to be very inviting. For one thing, they had an assortment at a “penny candy” table (of course not for a “pen-

ny” these days). Perhaps it was the old-fashioned soda fountain that I saw. Maybe it was the smiling face that greeted me and warm welcome that was extended by Kara Hicks who opened the store this past September after renovating the building during the nine months previous to that.

Continuing my journey through the store, on my right was freshly brewed coffee and a variety of in-house baked goods including breads, doughnuts, biscuits, croissants, and cookies, as well as a choice of the hot soup of the day and the regular offering of homemade chili stew. Moving down the aisle there was a display of glassware, where wineglasses were

available by the set or just one. There were areas where books are offered for sale, cast iron skillets, sections for items related to pets, jewelry, camping, home-made soaps, relishes, jams, maple syrup, cheeses, soft drinks, and items of clothing.

Like the general stores of the past, the Hampton General Store of today carries a wide variety of things. Perhaps the best feature of today’s Hampton General Store is the food that is prepared and offered by Kara Hicks, who has decades of experience with food preparation, which becomes obvious very quickly as one tastes the homemade dishes and baked goods she prepares. The large variety of tasty dishes that she prepares for takeout attests to her culinary artistry. Her menu of “TAKE & BAKE MEALS” includes the following: shepherd’s pie; chicken pot pie; lazy lasagna bake; chicken parmesan; Mexican casserole; sugar ham dinner; roast pork dinner; bacon mac & cheese; American chop suey; smothered chicken & rice; eggplant parmesan; hamburger steak; and, pot roast pie.

So far, we (my wife and I) have tried the soups and chili, cookies, cherry and mixed berry pie, chicken pot pie, pot roast pie, and lasagna. We found them all to be most gratifying to the palate. The “Take & Bake Meals” can be provided either frozen or refrigerated. Baked goods can be ordered ahead of time. The phone number for the Hampton General Store is (959) 995-1038.

It was the writing about local history that led me to the Hampton General Store. In many respects, walking into the store channeled me back to the Vermont general store of my youth and many other pleasant memories.

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

Photo by the author.



Community Workshop on Race with Author Debby Irving

Submitted by Rhonda Kincaid

Community members are invited to attend a day of learning about the impact of race in our lives and in our society. The Coalition on Diversity & Equity (CoDE) is presenting a workshop titled, Waking Up White, facilitated by Debby Irving, author of a book by the same name, Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race. The event will be held at the Douglas Library in Hebron on Saturday, March 11, from 10am to 2:30pm.

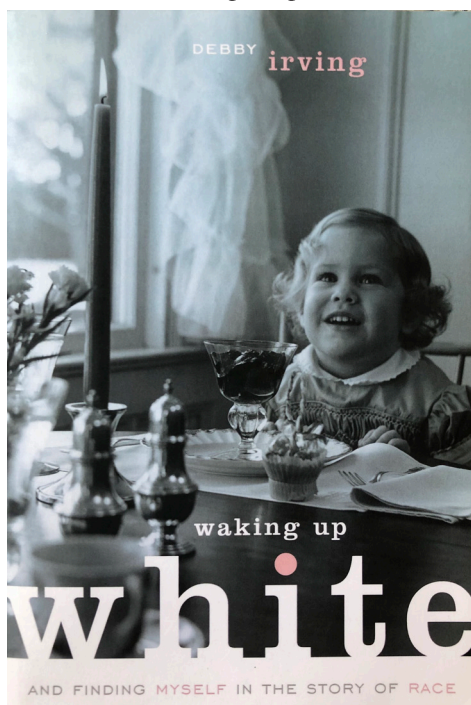
In her workshops, Debby draws on her own personal experience and reflections on bias, stereotypes, manners, and inclusion. She shares how she came to see and understand her own long-held beliefs about colorblindness, being a good person, and wanting to help people of color. Debby says that she “works with other white people to transform confusion into curiosity and anxiety into action.”

“We often hear people ask what the term ‘white privilege’ means -- or they wonder how best to talk about race with their children or grandchildren,” said Donna Jolly of CoDE. “It’s a highly charged and emotional topic and we want to help people feel more comfortable talking about it with family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. And above all, we want to make sure that in all of our communities, everyone feels welcome, and all voices and perspectives are encouraged and honored.”

Debby will share a presentation in the morning called I’m A Good Person, Isn’t That Enough? and facilitate a workshop in the afternoon called Transformational Conversations: Moving from Fear to Curiosity. Lunch from PABS African Restaurant in East Hartford will be

provided. Participants can attend the full day, which is recommended, or choose just the morning or afternoon session (plus lunch if they want).

“This workshop is an opportunity for parents and community members to come together to understand the impact of race in all of our lives,” said Jolly. “It’s a chance to learn in a safe, nonjudgmental environment and explore our own attitudes - and perhaps unconscious



bias - about people of other backgrounds than ourselves.”

Registration for the March 11th event is \$10 (although if that presents a problem for anyone, it will be waived). To register, visit <https://wakingupwhitecode.eventbrite.com>.

The Coalition on Diversity & Equity (CoDE) is a resident-led, grassroots nonprofit organization, serving the towns of Hebron, Marlborough, Andover and Columbia and surrounding communities. Its mission is to build more diverse, vibrant and equitable communities. For more information about CoDE, visit www.code-diversity.org.

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Still Life with Automobile

By Bob Lorentson

Why did the chicken cross the road? a) Because every chicken believes the other side is better than the side they're on b) Because the chicken was a free range chicken who had been raised to believe in possibilities, not limitations c) Because it had just read *Be All the Chicken You Can Be!* and wanted to challenge itself d) It didn't. It's last words as it stepped onto the road were "Oh Cluck!" before a 2,000 pound vehicle turned it into pavement pizza. The real question should be, Why would any animal cross the road? It's Carmageddon out there!

Previously on earth, when roads, cars, and roadkill were still a distant dream, people walked everywhere, and seldom ran over an animal larger than a mouse or faster than a turtle. There were larger and faster animals that ran them down however. This may have inspired the first joke, Why did the early human cross the savanna? (To feed the vultures.) Most humans just scratched their heads at this, ate the bugs that fell out of their hair, and continued trying to get to the other side, though the early chickens likely thought this was hysterical.

Eventually humans invented the wheel, and once they stopped rolling it over their toes, began to sense the possibilities for revenge. The wheel turned slowly however, and animals did not see it coming until it was on top of them, in the new form of an automobile. Not by choice, they began to take on new forms themselves. As pumped up as the people were about this new invention, it all left some animals rather flat.

Most animals paid the early cars no mind though, as they were limited to the few roads available to them. Not surprisingly, squirrels, which have no mind, were the exception, and for reasons still unknown, liked to use roads to bring attention to this fact. This was also the first indication anybody had of the inexhaustible supply of squirrels in the world.

Things all began to change in the 1920s when cars became widely available, which prompted a road building boom that humans called progress. The stunned animals just called for help. In 1924 a young naturalist by the name of Dayton Stoner responded and was the first to sound the alarm after he tabulated a remarkable number of roadkill in his travels. Nature, he likely reasoned, wasn't supposed to look so two-dimensional. What he didn't understand yet was that human nature had made motorists exceptional still life artists.

It's now been nearly 100 years since Dayton Stoner sounded the first roadkill alarm. Apparently, however, either we're still snoozing, or we ran it over somewhere at the intersection of Cars and Wildlife, and prefer to wake up to the

sounds of Splat! Thump! and Bam! Today there are 283 million registered motor vehicles in the continental U.S., careening over 3.9 million miles of roads like bumper cars at an amusement park. Seeing that each drives an average of 14,263 miles per year, one has to wonder if wildlife can ever be viewed as anything other than a speed bump again.

There are no firm numbers for wildlife, mainly because wildlife has never been this infirm before. By some estimates, over 400 million animals are killed on U.S. roads every year, leaving countless others likely suffering from high anxiety, PTSD, or chronic road rash. To check on this figure, I conducted my own survey recently. Predictably, I received no responses. Nonetheless, over 2,168 miles, I recorded 133 squirrels, opossums, raccoons, skunks, deer, chipmunks, rabbits, birds, groundhogs, and a category I call, 'Your guess is as good as mine.' I don't think I can extrapolate this figure to the country as a whole, but by my estimate, our cars and roads are turning the U.S. into a drive-through natural history museum.

If nature is nearly history now, drivers can still see a representation of it as they travel the museum's byways. Granted you may need a good imagination or a good roadkill identification guide to help bring the experience to life, because you may see a cubist squirrel one mile and an abstract opossum the next. But the exhibits are always changing. I once saw a surrealist raccoon with coyote and crow that had everyone slowing down in wonder.

So as cars are busy creating new museum exhibits daily, and are not particularly discriminating about them, one might reasonably ask a new question - Why did the human cross the road? Humans are not chickens, and the other side is no joke. But the road is still the road and cars are still cars, and if we can drive nature to the precipice, something tells me that we're just a punchline away from Carmageddon ourselves.

Please give animals a brake.

Bob Lorentson is a local writer and the author of Hold the Apocalypse - Pass Me a Scientist Please, a book somehow praised by both a past president of the Sierra Club and the writer of Zippy the Pinhead.

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

Historic South Windham Library Offers Free Programs and More

By Aubrey Hines

Have you heard of the Guilford Smith Memorial Library, a public library located on Main Street in South Windham? Chances are, unless you are from the area, you have not. Today's library is housed in a historic building built in 1836. It once served as the private home for Charles Smith who co-owned and operated the Smith and Winchester



Manufacturing Co. across the street. Charles's son, Guilford Smith, inherited the house and upon his death in 1923, gave the house and \$25,000 to the community for the purpose of establishing a library in the village of South Windham. A trust and board of trustees were established in 1930 on behalf of the library and the Guilford Smith Memorial Library formally opened its doors to the public on April 4, 1931 with 1,100 books in its collection.

Today's library houses 10,500 circulating items on the first floor including books, DVDs, audiobooks, magazines, and board games. The upstairs has two museum rooms containing historical items and photographs, documents, and artwork relevant to South Windham's history, along with an ongoing book sale. The library also offers free resources available to the public including patron computers, wifi, online streaming services, eBooks, and a wide variety of programs. All anyone needs to borrow library materials is a valid CT library card. Our programs are open to every individual regardless of library card status or residency and they are almost always free.

Spring and summer at Guilford Smith Memorial Library are our busiest seasons with a variety of programs, including our popular Easter Egg Hunt, Mother's Day Tea, Semi-Annual Book,

Bake, and Craft Sale, and 8-week-long Summer Reading Program. In March, Library Director Aubrey Hines and Children's Librarian Sarah Boyd are planning several craft programs to celebrate National Crafting Month including:

Thurs., March 2 at 5:30pm: Treat Yourself Thursday at 5:30pm. This is an adult program and we will be making cake pops and paper garden quilts. Signup requested.

Sat., March 11 at 11am: Seed Starting for Kids. This is part of our monthly STEM Saturday program and is appropriate for children of all ages. Signup requested.

Thurs., March 9 from 5-8pm: Pom-Pom Leprechaun Drop-In Craft for all ages. No signup required.

Thurs., March 23 from 5-8pm: Tissue Paper Flower Drop-In Craft for all ages. No signup required.

Additionally, we have our popular Foodie Friday kids' program every Friday at 10:30am. Tuesday mornings feature a children's storytime at 10:30am with a snack and craft or playtime afterwards. There is a local genealogy group that meets at the library on the third Tuesday of each month at 1:00pm, and the Windham Book Club, a new collaboration between the Windham Free Library and us, meets the third Wednesday of each month at 1:00pm.

To find more information on library hours and upcoming programs, including which ones require registration and how to sign up, please visit the library's website (<https://guilfordsmith.blog>) or Facebook page (facebook.com/LibraryGSM). We look forward to continuing to serve the literary, educational, and recreational needs of the community. If you have not been here yet, stop by some time and say hello!

Noah King, Realtor, ABR, SRS, SFR

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One Hundred Thousand Welcomes

By Jesse R. Clark

Céad míle fáilte (kay-ad mill-eh fall-heh). This is Gaelic for “one hundred thousand welcomes.” Irish culture is a really big part of who I am. It goes way past just having Irish ancestry and enjoying listening to the Irish Rovers and Celtic Woman. It is something that is an important part of who I am as a person. I love the different dialects, I love the humor, and I love the overall spirituality. I have taken Irish stepdance classes and have worked on doing certain Irish accents. This is something that connects me to who we are as a culture, the religious, more spiritual side.

I was in Ireland 13 years ago with my parents. It was the summer solstice, so we had the experience of walking to our hotel and seeing the sun set at 11:00 at night. That is also when I first experienced Irish music played live in a pub. At that moment, my feet and legs started dancing as if they knew what they were supposed to do. As if it was part of my DNA that was passed down, coursing through my veins. If dancing is connecting in a spiritual way, that spirit was alive in me.

Even here, my grandparents would keep the Irish culture alive through playing instruments, singing songs, and telling stories. The Irish humor was alive in them, that humor that mixes poetic morose reality with a joyful celebration of life. Here is an example of a traditional Irish story:

An Irish farmer went away on a trip. He was gone for two weeks. When he came back, his friend met him at the airport. He asked his friend if anything had happened while he was away. “Nothing much,” his friend said. “Well, one thing you should know about. Your dog died.” “What?” the farmer exclaimed. “How?” “From eating the burnt horsemeat.” “My horses died? How?” “The fire in the barn.” “My barn caught on fire? How?” “From the fire in your house.” “How did that happen?” “The candle fell off the coffin.” “What coffin?” “Your ma’s coffin.” “Me ma is dead? How?” “She had a heart attack when she found out that your wife ran off with your brother. But besides that... nothing much.”

On one level, the Irish culture is just a culture like any other, but on a deeper level, it’s an ancient culture that has experienced so much change and pain and oppression. Just listening to an Irish instrumental tune on the violin, you can feel the emotion of the culture behind it. I always think of the irony of the Irish leaving their country due to British oppression only to land in a place called *New England*. That’s Irish for you. And, yes, that humor or situation may be found in other cultures, but what makes the Irish culture so special is that it can be so identifiable to so many regardless of their background. It is one of many cultures that has a long history of folk stories and music. One whose stories, jokes, poems, and songs help to bring a sense of catharsis to a troubled world.

18 Neighbors

Proof of this is the San Patricio Battalion, a group of Irish Americans who sided with Mexico during the Mexican–American War. They saw themselves in the Mexican people, a group of people being oppressed. Not to mention their shared bond over religious views. How could they feel good about themselves knowing they were killing those who weren’t that different than themselves? This is the pinnacle of different cultures seeing themselves in each other. Maybe they shared this toast inspired by the Roman gods of wine and war: “May we all die a happy death, to merrily drown drinking with Bacchus, rather than dying for Mars.”

Most holidays seem to go hand in hand with the time of year that they are celebrated. Christmas—light in the darkest time of year. Halloween—the falling leaves, onset of darkness. Easter—spring blooming all around. This time of year is when spring is getting ready to come out of the winter drudgery, so you get this strange in-between feeling. That is the perfect time to celebrate Irish culture: joy and beauty mixed with cold and melancholy. St. Patrick’s Day is way more than just singing “Danny Boy” or “The Wild Rover” while drinking beer, though that is certainly part of it. It connects the spirit with something ancient, something magical. No matter what your culture is, you can find something to take away when taking a deeper look at this rich culture, even if it’s a simple joke that helps you laugh through the hard times as it reveals a sad truth, for you are always surrounded by others who are ready to laugh, cry, sing, write, and dance along with you.



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Adolescence

You place your finger gently against my quieted lips

You ask me not to be silent or reverent

All the new toys rest against the melodies we long ago forgot how to sing.

Where are the long new day shadows that cast doubts beyond all the notions we held as virtues?

Somewhere in violin accompanied skies
the moments take the shape of clouds too enticing not to touch.

Will the thought of togetherness once again fill all the jelly jars of delightful distant desires?

Or will we fade into the next new devotion that has nothing at all to offer you or me ... or the sky against trees.



Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine.

Tai Chi Home

Stirred Up

By Joe Pandolfo

Welcome March, the month when things are stirring up. In the cycle of the Taoist solar calendar we've turned to the time called "Awakening of Insects". Legend says the growing warmth these days brings rain and Spring thunder, waking the insects out of their slumber.

We're in that story, as well. It's a story that might tell you what it was that clouded your eyes, chilled and lulled you to sleep in a bleaker time; a story that can illuminate what wakes you, what's your thunder.



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Why Women Need to Plan for Long-Term Care

Laurence Hale, AAMA, CRPS®
Principal/Managing Partner,
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As mothers, sisters and daughters, women are often counted on to be caregivers for family members in need. Whether it's something as small as a cold or as debilitating as a terminal illness, women are typically the ones to care for and help out when a loved one is sick. But what happens when the caregiver is in need of her own care?

Too many women are stuck facing this dilemma head on and without a plan or supports. Here are just a few of the reasons why, and how women can empower themselves to think about and plan for their own care in the future, even while caring for others today.

Women Are Outliving Men

According to the Centers for Disease Control, in 2017 the average life expectancy of men was 76.1-years-old. Women on average, however, outlived their male counterparts by five years, with a life expectancy of 81.1 years.¹ While an extra five years may not sound like much, it opens women up to a much higher likelihood of developing chronic illnesses and disabilities that can threaten their autonomy.

Not only that, but if a woman has a spouse and that spouse passes away before her, she will no longer have a partner to act as a caregiver during these last few years. What's more, the couple's collective savings may have been drained by the healthcare and other costs required for his/her end-of-life care. Then when it comes time for a woman's own need for long-term care, the funds are no longer there.

Higher Risk of Health Problems

As mentioned before, a longer life expectancy leaves women much more vulnerable to developing chronic health problems later in life. Because of this, the majority of the population in need of long-term care services are women. In fact, 66.8 percent of nursing home residents, 59.1 percent of hospice care users and 70.2 percent of residential care community members are women.² Unfortunately, while you may not think long-term care is a part of your future, the statistics speak for themselves. More likely than not, women are going to be in need of some sort of long-term care later in life.

Affordability Is an Issue

Widows, divorcees and women who have never been married are often at a disadvantage when it comes to being able

to afford the long-term care needed later in life. Twenty percent of widowed women 65 and older were impoverished in 2012, while that number jumped to 29 percent in women who have never been married.³ Factor in a lack of long-term care strategizing and the development of a sudden chronic illness, and those women who were trying to stay afloat in times of good health are likely to only sink further into debt.

Lack of Retirement Planning

There are several reasons why women historically haven't planned for retirement at the same rate as men. While women make up 46.8 percent of the workforce, they're typically spending less time working as they leave jobs to raise a family or care for loved ones.⁴ Additionally, women are typically earning only around 80 percent of what their male counterparts do, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.⁵

With less overall income, women generally aren't putting the same amount of attention into retirement planning as men are. And without proper planning, they aren't preparing themselves or their finances for the possible need for long-term care and other unexpected expenses.

Women Provide Care to Others

Whether it's for aging parents or loved ones with disabilities, one in five Americans serves as a caregiver. Of that group, 58 percent are women.⁶ And while many are happy to help, caregivers don't always take into consideration the physical, mental or financial toll it can take. Not only can caregiving remove a woman from the workforce, but it can drain her finances as she spends her savings on the expenses of a loved one. In doing so, she may be opening herself up to a future lack of funds when it comes to her own long-term care expenses.

With women being at a higher risk for needing long-term care later in life, it's important to spend time now preparing for unexpected expenses. Take the time to incorporate a long-term care strategy into your retirement plan to help keep yourself afloat in the face of untimely events.

How to Begin Planning for Your Own Long-Term Care

Given all the reasons discussed above, it's obvious how important it is that women be empowered to think about their own future needs as well as the needs of loved ones in the present. Preparing ahead now while there are still plenty of options, resources and time will make all the difference in the future.

To start with, think about what your wishes might be if and when the time comes. Would you prefer professional care in your own home? If you'd rather live in an assisted

continued on next page

living residence is there one that you'd prefer? The answers to these questions will help you begin to understand the expenses involved. The next step is to consider your assets and whether they'll be enough to cover those expenses. You may want to consider purchasing long-term care insurance to help bridge the gap or discuss other options with your financial advisor.

If you'd like help in planning for your financial future, including long-term care planning, get in touch with us at Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors and request a complimentary consultation. We'll show you how we can help you create a strategic financial plan for you and your future using our Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™ process. Contact us at (860) 928-2341, info@whzwealth.com, or on our website at www.whzwealth.com.

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<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db328.htm>

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‘November Sound’ Releases New Album

On February 23, 2023 **November Sound** released their fifth studio album titled *Normal Street* which is a collection of seven original music tracks. The songs range in style from what can best be described as jazz-influenced “introspective indie-pop” to a grooving form of alternative rock complete with smooth synth lines and epic mind-bending drum solos. With their last release being an acoustic creation, *Normal Street* marks a return to the mother, father and son trio’s contemporary pop sound. While **November Sound** is often compared to *The Cranberries*, *Massive Attack*, *Portishead*, *Kate Bush*, *Norah Jones*, *Jewel* and other seemingly unrelated musical acts here the trio unapologetically embraces the multichotomous nature of their genre-defying sound making music that some listeners are describing as a modern piano driven “dream pop”.

Even with the sophisticated piano chords, flowing synth parts, grooving bass lines and intricate drum grooves the entire *Normal Street* creation is produced to feature Melissa’s unique and powerful vocal delivery up front and center. This she does with a gracefulness that allows the thought-provoking lyrics to flow unhindered into the listener’s mind bringing the listener on a journey from realities of daily existence into supernatural and celestial themes: guardian angels, heavens, stars, constellations, guiding spirits of those passed away and even magical interstellar mermaids.

“Each one a gifted musician with a mastery of multiple instruments,

the three have found solid groove after nearly a decade of performing together, broadening their fanbase and unique sound as they continue to collaborate and grow, both as a family and as a band.” – The Chronicle, Willimantic.

With Melissa and Bill Rood (both graduates of the Hartt School of Music) and their son Will (with four years on the UCONN drumline and three drum corps tours) whether recording or performing live, their music is technically adept while maintaining a distinct cohesiveness as delivered by a musical family. Established in 2014 deep in the woods of Columbia, CT.

November Sound’s songs are popular worldwide, including the Father’s Day-themed *Strong Love* with over 200k views on YouTube, being featured several times on the *Women of Substance Podcast – Music With a Conscience Series* and a weeklong “featured artist” placement for their album *Friday* on a UK radio show. **NOVEMBER SOUND** continues a residency at Chagall Performance Art Collective at Artist’s Row in Salem, Massachusetts in 2023 and plays regularly at New England vineyards, breweries and more from springtime into early autumn. **NOVEMBER SOUND**’S music can be found on YouTube, Spotify, Amazon, Apple and most streaming sights.

All Streaming Links: <https://novembersound.hearnow.com/normal-street>
Website : <https://www.novembersound.com/>

Part Two:

Little Journeys in the *Last Dark Valleys*

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

The Quiet Corner

600-Odd square miles of Eastern Connecticut's coastal highlands are the *Quiet Corner*, a pocket of rural New England about 25 miles across. Quaint and quiet, little to do? *How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm?* Well, it's a global village now, and these trails and roads actually offer MUCH to do. This Part Two offers some such little journeys.

Natural and unnatural places, dark and bright, quiet and loud. Mostly quiet. Many walks in the woods. With interstate access to Hartford, Worcester and Boston, the Quiet Corner is surprisingly remote. Bounded by **Interstate-395** on the east, and **State Route 32** on the west, the southern edge is **US Highway 6**. These coastal highlands descend from northern boundaries **Interstate-84/90** and **US Highway 20**.

Flying to Boston ignores terrain, high over the less-developed, least-illuminated *Last Dark Valleys*. Water always flows downhill. People and cars flow in all directions along valleys and ridges, and across bridges. Roads often follow Indian trails.

TRAILS Connecticut forests have trails throughout the Quiet Corner, often along native paths. Settlement is dense toward the coast, Hartford and NYC, but northeast Connecticut is quite wild, such as Union's **Yale University** and **Nipmuc State Forests**, and **Bigelow Hollow State Park** with park paths in every direction, seven miles around **Breakneck Pond** and the **Nipmuc Trail** going south. Wild sanctuaries are also found in **Natchaug**, **Goodwin** and **Mashamoquet Brook State Parks**, and **Mansfield Hollow Lake**.

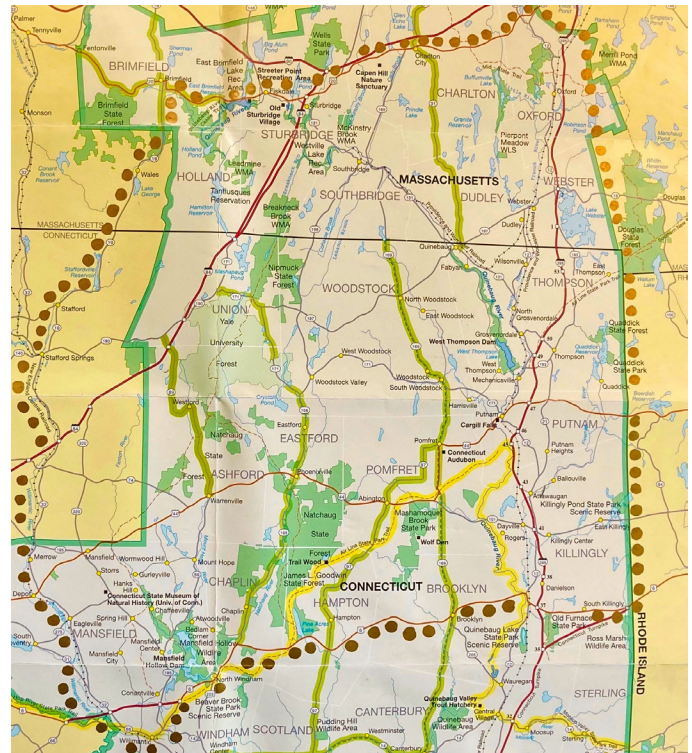
Hop River Trail This 20-mile hike along a Shetucket tributary to the Willimantic River crosses the Airline Trail, the ephemeral rail-line of the Airline Railway, in Willimantic.

Airline Trail Rails are gone, and the trail bed is great hiking and bicycling from Portland (20 miles SE of Windham) to the Massachusetts line, discontinuous in Willimantic and Putnam. Park cars at road crossings. A 50-mile long, 40-acre state park, the Airline extends across the Quiet Corner.

Windham to Putnam is part of the **East Coast Greenway**, a 3,000-mile pedestrian / bicycle route from Maine to Florida. The Thompson addition from **CT Route 12** leads into Massachusetts' large **Douglas State Forest** at the quiet corner of 3 states (with Rhode Island) where 3 New England trails meet, the Airline, Mid-State (MA), and the Airline remnant Southern New England Trunkline.

Once the path of the legendary **Ghost Trains** -- *gleaming white with gold trim, luminescent at twilight* -- the Airline Railway offered luxury Pullman cars with formal service in white uniforms. *Uber-fashionable*, late-19th century rapid transit for seventeen wonder years.

The railway was named for an imaginary line in the 22 Neighbors



air, the shortest possible route from NY to Boston. New rails were costly, so existing rails led to New Haven where the "Air Line" began its extraordinary diagonal journey.

By 1885, the **New England Limited** was cutting across Connecticut's picturesque coastal highlands in six-hours, an hour less than the coastal run. Trains became faster and longer into the 20th century, however, too heavy for the quaint winding grades and spindly trestle bridges of the Airline. Service defaulted back to the coast and intermittent passenger service ended in 1902, leaving a gaping hole in local imagination, speed and daring... until the Hurricane of 1938 (see part 3).

Natchaug Trail Rambles 17 miles in the **Natchaug** and **Goodwin State Forests** in Chaplin, Hampton and Eastford, meeting the longer **Nipmuc Trail** in Ashford.

Nipmuc Trail Extends 35 miles south from **Bigelow Hollow** to **Mansfield Hollow Lake**.

Mansfield Hollow Lake was dammed in 1950, creating a state park that protects native woods, if not waters. Gas/oil engines are allowed at the Bassett's Bridge boat launch in the upper pond. Good fishing. The lower pond has a dam overlook (45 cardio steps) where the Natchaug flows out. Better fishing upriver in pristine Chaplin waters.

Oversized boat engines at the launch remind us that Petroleum is King, not usurped soon by the Electric Queen. Both gas and electric vehicles need roads, and the infrastructure has a silver lining: iconic American road trips might continue while gas stays under \$5 a gallon. Better for the environment than flying ???

SETTLEMENT Roads dictate our vehicular culture now, but rivers guided early growth. Topography was difficult over three rivers and rocky land, but roads and bridges connected farm settlements with mills and markets. Easier traveling along north-south ridges and valleys, than crossing rivers. Rivers descend the highlands from the Worcester Hills to US Highway 6, the *Hartford-to-Providence Turnpike* that roughly demarcates the higher land from the coastal lowlands.

East-West roads traverse the 25 to 30 corrugated miles over three watersheds, the Quinebaug, Natchaug and Willimantic. Topography limited travel and development, thus fewer roads travel this direction, but the waterpowerful mills helped spark America's Industrial Revolution in the 19th century and attracted settlement. Larger towns are:

1. **Quinebaug: Southbridge MA and Killingly CT** are both large mill towns (now about 18,000 people each, 2020 census) along this long industrial watershed that is both the north and east boundary of the Quiet Corner. **Thompson, Putnam and Brooklyn** are smaller peripheral towns (8,000 to 9,000 each) along the **Interstate-395** corridor. (Downriver are the coastal lowlands to Norwich.)

2. **Natchaug:** The purest watershed in the QC has little urban density. **Storrs** (UConn) is a large less-polluting college town with agricultural fields (16,000 during school with a Hollywood-set-downtown on **195**) that is part of **Mansfield** (another 9,900) draining to Mansfield Hollow, a large state park at the confluence of the Fenton, Mount Hope and Natchaug Rivers. Only 5,530 people are in the "Natchaug core" of three small towns along the river, **Chaplin, Eastford and Hampton**.

3. **Willimantic:** The Corner's greatest density is at its southwest corner in **Willimantic**. The small city began as a mill town, now part of **Windham** totalling 24,000 people (about the same as the seven central towns). At the western edge of the Willimantic watershed, accessible from **Interstate-84**, 34,000 residents are in a suburban belt of peripheral towns near Hartford: **Stafford, Stafford Springs, Willington and Coventry**.

QUIET CORE Now 150,000 people in fourteen large towns (185,000 with the four Hartford suburbs) surround 23,000 people in seven small ones: **Ashford** (4,190 people) and **Union** (785) to its north; aforementioned **Chaplin** (2,151), **Eastford** (1,649) and **Hampton** (1,730) are the quietest core; and **Pomfret** (4,266) and **Woodstock** (8,200) are both spread over large woody areas, thus low density. These seven towns are Connecticut's Quiet Core. (South of **US-6**, two more rural towns are **Scotland** and thrice-as-large **Canterbury**, both in the coastal lowlands, not the highlands, and a flatter edge along **CT-14**.)

Hamlets of clustered houses are found near small gristmills such as **Gurleyville** where the mill is still intact on the Fenton River near Storrs, draining to Mansfield Hollow and the Natchaug.

These journeys reflect my five-years of enjoying the land, waters, woods and history of the Quiet Corner... as a master gardener/designer, tree planter and wanderer. This Part Two is trails and destinations along East-West roads. Part Three in April will be along North-South roads descending the coastal

highlands.

E-W ROADS Fewer roads travel East-West across the 25 to 30 miles of three rivers of the Quiet Corner than along the north-south valleys. Only three through-roads cross the coastal highlands from **I-395** to Hartford, and are listed from north to south with some little journeys:

A non-interstate trip -- called "**Shunpiking**" along the Mohawk Trail -- avoids the Mass Pike and aims diagonally from Boston to the Quiet Corner on Highway 16 through Wellesley to Webster until Massachusetts runs out of land... and the roadway continues westward as **CT-197**...

1. **CT Route 197** BEST *Shunpiking* route off **I-395** on northernmost and least-developed through-road in the Quiet Corner, quietest with few trucks, winding west, up and down through the woods of Woodstock to an interstate **I-84** ramp in Union. Like bicycling, the journey IS the destination.

2. **CT Route 101/44** Intermediate highways (*TRUCKS!*) west from Rhode Island to Hartford:

Corner Bistro at 1115 Hartford Pike (**101/102**) North Scituate RI; Last Chance westward for *Rhode Island Italian Cuisine!*

Zip's Diner Zip off **I-395** at **CT-12/101** for good sit-down meal near Burger King & MacDonald's, Killingly.

Dayville Woolen Mill *Wondrous* brick buildings deteriorating on Five Mile River, going, going... a magnet for photographers on **101** west of **I-395** just past the train tracks, Killingly.

Airline Grill Great burgers on **CT-44** (405 Mashamoquet Road) near Airline Trail & Wolf Den, Pomfret. FOR SALE ???

Wolf Den Off **44** on Mashamoquet Brook State Park trail to home of supposed last wolf in Pomfret.

Ashford Garden Center Annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees at 330 Ashford Center Road (**44**), Ashford.

Mansfield Training School/Hospital CT Dept of Mental Retardation closed it 1993; director declared "*the swamp has finally been drained.*" Now deteriorated "*with its eerie overturned wheelchairs ... a magnet for adventurous locals, the police, and amateur photographers*" - Wikipedia. At **CT-32** junction, across **CT-44** from state prison in Mansfield.

3. **US Highway 6** BUSIEST highway from Cape Cod MA and Providence RI west to Hartford:

Hart's Garden Center Annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees at 151 Providence Road, Brooklyn.

Yatco/Gulf Gas station/food mart with a Dunkin' Donuts, Dave's Pizza, and my affordable luxury, the Boston Globe newspaper. **Airline Trail** in back; liquor store and post office next door. 187 Willimantic Road (**Hwy 6**), Chaplin.

Windham Airport Commercial strip with Aero Diner, Aldi's, Home Depot, Oriental Groceries, Subway, Tractor Supply, Walmart, Wendy's... a suburban edge of the QC.

US Route 66 begins as ramp to Willimantic, forty miles to Meriden CT. *Get some kicks on Route 66!*

April will bring spring, daffodils and redbuds blooming, and another issue of *Neighbors* with more little journeys and some spring kicks in the Quiet Corner.

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Chaplin

I Promise

To you who no longer tarry:
As you depart without a word,
Or with all that had to be heard,
To follow a path of your own,
Or one that too many have known.
Maybe you feel lost amid woe,
Maybe you know just where to go,
Perhaps it is time to move on,
Perhaps you miss what will be gone.
You might wish that you could come back,
Or that your journey stays on track,
And the choice might be yours to make,
Or made for you despite the stake.
Others may know this to be true,
Others may be right there with you,
Yet sentiments might not fulfill,
Yet you might feel all alone still.
Whether you lead or go amiss,
Regardless of the vast abyss,
Whether you heed or are remiss,
Nonetheless, I promise you this:
I will be your sanctuary.

No matter where you roam,
However far from home,
I will be your sanctuary.
To beyond the serene,
Despite the walls between,
I will be your sanctuary.
Regardless of mistakes,
Regardless of uptakes,
I will be your sanctuary.
When, for yourself, you fend,
But you still need a friend,
I will be your sanctuary.
When you need a refuge,
From the heavy deluge,
I will be your sanctuary.
Should the world feel too grand,
With too much out of hand,
I will be your sanctuary.
Should life move on too fast,
Or linger in the past,
I will be your sanctuary.
Whether strife will not cease,
Or you have found your peace,

I will be your sanctuary.
However much you grow,
Passed when you might forgo,
I will be your sanctuary.
Even if you forget,
For sure, without regret,
I will be your sanctuary.
It may be just a start,
But I will do my part,
I will be your sanctuary.
However long I stay,
Until I find my way,
I will be your sanctuary.

Although we may be far apart,
You will never be far away,
For I will keep you in my heart,
Where yours is always free to stay,
And as one last oath to impart,
Should something for us go astray,
It is not the end but a start,
Because I will find you one day.

I Promise

To you who stay sedentary:
As you stay behind in silence,
Or in untold ambivalence,
To carry on despite languor,
Or as if there is nothing more.
Maybe you feel where you belong,
Maybe you await your swan song,
Perhaps it is time to let go,
Perhaps you have something to owe.
You might wish that you had closure,
Or that you came with to rapture,
And the choice might be yours to make,
Or made for you despite the stake.
Others may know this to be true,
Others may be right there with you,
Yet sentiments might not fulfill,
Yet you might feel all alone still.
Whether you plead or so dismiss,
Regardless of the coming bliss,
Whether you heed or are remiss,
Nonetheless, I promise you this:
I will be your sanctuary.

However long you stay,
Until you find your way,
I will be your sanctuary.
From beyond the serene,
Despite the walls between,
I will be your sanctuary.
Regardless of mistakes,
Regardless of uptakes,
I will be your sanctuary.
When, for yourself, you fend,
But you still need a friend,
I will be your sanctuary.
When you need an escape,
From the desperate scrape,
I will be your sanctuary.
Should the world feel too small,
With too much stuck in thrall,
I will be your sanctuary.
Should life move on too fast,
Or linger in the past,
I will be your sanctuary.
Whether strife will not cease,
Or you have made your peace,
I will be your sanctuary.
However much you grow,
Passed when you might forgo,
I will be your sanctuary.
Even if you forget,
For sure, without regret,
I will be your sanctuary.
It may be just a start,
But I will do my part,
I will be your sanctuary.
No matter where I roam,
However far from home,
I will be your sanctuary.

Although we may be far apart,
You will never be far away,
For I will keep you in my heart,
Where yours is always free to stay,
And as one last oath to impart,
Should something for us go astray,
It is not the end but a start,
Because you will find me one day.

I Promise

From the author-

In life, there are as many partings as there are meetings, and, even when we know that it is expected, voluntary, or inevitable, a parting can be difficult for any of us to accept. It is because we desire to be with others, especially those whom we care about, so it hurts when it is neither temporary nor a choice that we cannot be together as we

wish. We recognize this to be true, yet it can be difficult to recognize that others may be going through the same pain, including the ones who have left us or the ones who we have left. However, whatever our circumstances may be, we do not have to feel alone because there is a way that we can ease this pain for ourselves, for others with us, and for those who are apart from us, and all that it requires is love. Think about what we do when we love someone: we accept them as a part

Buddy

Submitted by Diane Rutherford

Buddy came to us matted and needy. The story among 40 cats in 35 years is that he was always:

- Kind
- Welcoming
- Inclusive
- Tolerant
- Loving
- Color Blind
- Compassionate
- Peaceful
- Tender
- Joyous
- Accepting



Buddy is the long-hair cat (rear) with Tipper the newest arrival.

Tai Chi Classes for Health & Balance

Windham Senior Center: Mon, Wed 10-11am;
& Wed, Fri 9-10am
Call or text Sarah Winter: 860-931-8636

Ashford Senior Center: Tue, Fri 9:30-10:30am
Chaplin Senior Center: Thu 1:00 -2:00pm
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
Call or text Joe Pandolfo: 959-444-3979

of our lives, we remember our experiences with them, and we welcome them into our hearts where they can always be close to us wherever either of us may be. As long as we hold onto our memories, keepsakes, and sentiments of others, we are accepting our role as a protector of their existence—we are promising to be their sanctuary—and if the feeling is mutual, then they will do the same for us. This is how we can continue to be connected and to be together however life takes us our separate ways, either as the one who departs or the one who remains, and this piece is designed to express this responsibility. May it offer guidance and support when a parting seems too much to endure, and, to family, friends, and the Columbia Writing Connection whom encouraged this work into fruition, I thank you.

The Seeker of Equilibrium

COERVER CT EAST APRIL BREAK SOCCER CLINICS



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Columbia Congregational Church
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Gather with us Saturday, March 11th
for an ALL YOU CAN EAT
Breakfast buffet:
Omelets (design your own), scrambled eggs,
belgian waffles, home baked pastries, etc.
\$12 per person
Family of (4) 2 Adults & 2 child.
(under 12) \$30
For information contact Michele
at the Church Office: 860-228-9306.



Images by Peter J. Crowley

Images

By Kathy Lepak

It had been a long day, and he was weary by the time he arrived back home again. After shaking off his jacket and placing his hat on the window sill, he put the coffee on, set his cup aside the stove and sat down at the kitchen table to take a much-needed break. The Nikon sat before him and he was anxious to see the developed images. If he had enough energy after dinner he might consider working in the darkroom. If not, he imagined that tomorrow would be soon enough.

His health had presented some significant problems over the past few years, and his normal wanderings about the neighborhoods had become less frequent because of it. It wasn't as if he could actually abandon his daily walks however - he had been creating images for the better part of his adult life and his ever-present muse still called him to it, whether he was up for the challenge or not.

The Pacific Northwest was new to him. He had grown up in New England - in eastern Connecticut. Small mill towns dotted rolling hills and riversides. The weather in New England held snowy, blustery days in the winter and warm, humid days in the summer - fall and spring being the favored seasons among a good part of the local residents.

He would walk about the streets of Coventry, Willimantic, and Norwich - Nikon jostling about his chest as he

went through the streets, camera bag filled with lenses and filters hanging by his side. He was well known by residents and business owners alike. With the true eye of an artist, there always seemed to be images ready to record though the lens of his camera. Peter showed us the exquisite details that we very often pass by and take no notice of.

His images reflected the many aspects of those towns; from the period doors and the lace-adorned windows of the Victorian homes nestled in the hills of Willimantic, to the patrons and staff of the local coffee houses and restaurants. Local views and local people. His first published book of his photography "All the Usual Suspects" expanded on those places and people. From an image of local residents gathered around antique Model A cars during a block party at the Head Shop, to a portrait of Ray Aramini getting ready to bike across the country for Bike for Bread; several interior shots of the still abandoned sections of Windham Mills, former home of the American Thread Company; to a portrait of master sculptor Arnold Prince working on his clay base to the finished bronze sculpture of the Reverend Hardage who had marched alongside Martin Luther King. Peter's images were always brilliantly in focus - whether the focus was meant to be sharp, muted or very subtle.

Several series of photos spanned the decades. Theatre and dance programs from both the University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut State University proved to be a "motion" portfolio. A collection of nude portraits evolved over time including that of a figure appearing behind the lace curtain of a Victorian window, and another showing a perfectly shadowed reclining nude figure.

I was able to work with him on a portrait of a clothed young woman standing under the fully-blossomed apple tree in our yard. I hand-tinted the print with Marshall's Oil Colors - which was a very interesting process. The coloration of the final piece was very softly muted, looking as if it was an antique image from an earlier time.

His health issues over the past few years had eventually prompted him to move across country to be near his daughter Kirsten in Washington state. He was happy to have done so. It was good to be near family and his granddaughter, Inara, had become the joy of his life. She was very creative, full of life and would often travel about town with him while he was photographing the many places and people that were new to him. Inara proved to be a fine companion for his travels.

In those times when the weather would not cooperate, the interior alcoves and corners of his home still beckoned to him to explore settings and subjects. An engaging still life can very easily trigger stories as can a figure in motion or the essence of a garden. In his photo of the windowsill which held his hat, we await the growth of the amaryllis plants, their blossoms and the possibility of the small pumpkins being transformed into soups that will sit within creative table settings.

The eyes and talented visions of the photographer urge us to look deeper into the arts, nature, architecture, and life in general. Peter beckons us to broaden our view by bringing it into the sharp, minutely detailed visions of everything that we have passed by and not truly seen. All of the arts allow us to grow, to understand what others may see that



When it was difficult to travel too far, the garden outside his apartment offered a myriad of possibilities in all seasons and he took full advantage of the location. A composition of dried grasses with one curved, brightly colored swirl that managed to immediately bring your eye into the image. Brilliant.

we might not. Open not only your eyes, but your understanding of the world as well, so that as the amaryllis, you also, will blossom and grow.

Peter J. Crowley is a well-known photographer from Coventry and Norwich who has since moved to Olympia, Washington where he continues to create beautiful images.

Read Neighbors on your desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Go to neighborspaper.com for link to current and past editions. All in beautiful COLOR!

On This Special Day

There must be something magical about the seventeenth of March
For we all become a wee bit Irish on this special day.

We wear the color of the shamrocks,
so that all can see
that we are truly Irish
on St. Patrick's Day.

We may drink a mug of Irish stout
and maybe a shot or two of whiskey,
and get a wee tipsy,
on this special day.

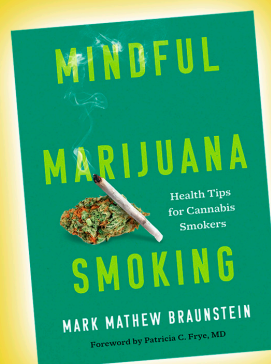
Corn beef with cabbage
and Irish soda bread
may fill our Irish bellies
on St. Patrick's Day

We might dance the Irish gig
and definitely speak some blarney
cause we know we're a wee bit Irish
On this one special day.

Happy St. Patrick Day!

By
Jeanne Esterquest

Health Tips for Cannabis Smokers



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in ways that
reduce its risks

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Publishers
2022

"A wealth of knowledge on how users can maximize the benefits from smoking cannabis while reducing the risk."

—Patricia C. Frye, MD, author of

The Medical Marijuana Guide: Cannabis and Your Health

www.MarkBraunstein.Org

The Odds Aren't Great - COVID Vaccines Deserve Healthy Skepticism

By Gregory B. Park, M.D.

I write to provide a counterpoint to the article, "Beating the Odds" by Delia Berlin published in the January/February edition of *Neighbors*. That article wholeheartedly endorsed the COVID vaccine boosters. I have a decidedly less sanguine view on the matter.

Would you take a drug that had the promise of not completely preventing an infection with a less than 1% fatality rate but possibly decreasing the severity of the disease caused by the infection at the cost of very slightly damaging your heart with each and every dose? You would at least think twice about it before rolling up your sleeves right?

I am a physiatrist, a physician with specialty training in rehabilitation medicine. I first noticed a potential problem while taking care of stroke patients in an acute rehabilitation setting. In the Spring of 2021, I had a patient asking for their second mRNA booster injection during their hospitalization. That by itself would not have particularly caught my attention, however, the patient had received the initial dose of a vaccine that was not stocked by the hospital and a family member was insistent that they receive the 2nd dose vaccine from the same manufacturer. Upon further investigation, I discovered that the patient's rather unusual stroke caused by carotid artery ulceration occurred six days following his initial dose of the mRNA vaccine. This was a patient without comorbidities except treated elevated cholesterol who exercised and weight-trained everyday.

Within a month, I had 3 other similar cases of patients sustaining stroke 3-6 days following doses of their mRNA vaccines. I reported all four cases to VAERS (Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System), cosponsored by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration). I appreciated how underreported VAERS was when I discovered that each of the cases I reported to VAERS were unique. There would have been at least three attending physicians who had taken care of these patients prior to the patients being admitted to my rehabilitation unit, none of the prior physicians noticed a pattern nor filed a report. As of this writing, there are over 35,000 deaths associated with the COVID-19 vaccines reported to VAERS, representing over 90% of all vaccine-related deaths since VAERS started tallying this data in 1990. It is estimated that VAERS captures only 1-25% of adverse events, the vast majority not being reported.

A prospective study of 835 subjects in Switzerland who received the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine presented at the 2022 European Society of Cardiology Congress (Mueller 2022)

demonstrated that EVERY SINGLE PARTICIPANT had some elevation of their high-sensitivity troponin relative to their control group matches within days of receiving their vaccine. High-sensitivity troponin is the test used to determine whether a patient coming into the emergency room with chest pain is experiencing a heart attack. This Swiss study and a different prospective study performed in Thailand (Mansanguan, 2022) showed that the rate of myocarditis, pericarditis, or myopericarditis that met clinical criteria was over 2%.

Since the beginning of 2021 to the end of 2022 there have been 1101 reported cases of athletes dying of cardiac arrest in the world (Polykreitis, 2022). The spike in deaths was not observed until June 2021. Prior to 2021, roughly 66 athletes died of cardiac arrest each year in the world, mostly due to congenital heart diseases. A large retrospective study performed in Israel looking at nearly 200,000 unvaccinated adults recovering from COVID-19 between March of 2020 and January of 2021 did not demonstrate an association between COVID-19 infection and myocarditis or pericarditis (Tuvali, 2022). The authors conclude, "Our data suggest that there is no increase in the incidence of myocarditis and pericarditis in COVID-19 recovered patients compared to uninfected matched controls."

So it might not be the infection or "Long-COVID" that increases the vulnerability of the heart. What happened in the Spring of 2021 that may have changed things? To refresh your memory, The State of Connecticut Office of the Governor announced, "As of April 1, 2021, all adults over the age of 16 will be eligible to schedule a vaccine appointment."

But these vaccines are effective right? A recent paper states, "Because [influenza A, SARS-CoV-2, endemic coronaviruses, RSV, and many other "common cold" viruses] generally do not elicit complete and durable protective immunity by themselves, THEY HAVE NOT TO DATE been effectively controlled by licensed or experimental vaccines (emphasis mine). This excerpt is from a paper published in the journal *Cell Host & Microbe*. One of the authors is none other than Dr. Anthony S. Fauci. This paper was published on January 11, 2023.

Indeed these panaceas that were touted to be 99% effective initially at preventing death or hospitalization are now as low as 28% effective for the bivalent booster, and this is from poorer quality retrospective data. Please note that in both the Moderna and Pfizer prospective, randomized double-blinded, multi-center, placebo-controlled studies (the gold standard) studying over 70,000 individuals both published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, up to 6 months of data

News from The Windham Textile and History Museum

March is Full of Celebrations from Our Library to Women's History

Submitted by Kira Holmes, Executive Director

Fri., Mar. 3: **Dunham Library Birthday Party 2 - 4 p.m., in person at 411 Main St, Willimantic.** Receive a tour of the library, learn about one of the newest donations to The Mill Museum, and have a piece of cake and punch. Contact Kira at director@millmuseum.org to learn about an accessible option for this event. This event is included with admission to The Mill Museum.

Fri. - Sun., March 10 – 26: **Irish Kit.** Pick up your kit from The Mill Museum Friday - Sunday 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. One kit will be to make an Irish Flag for ages 8 and under, and the other kit is to make a Saint Brigid's Cross for 8 and older. Craft is free, but if you visit the Museum admission is (\$10 for adults; \$7 for kids/students/ seniors).

Sun., Mar. 12: **Learn to Weave with Peggy Church at the Mill Museum, 411 Main St., Willimantic.** The first class

did not demonstrate a significant difference in deaths between the placebo group (30 deaths) and the group that received their respective vaccines (31 deaths). This 6 month period encompassed the winter of 2020-2021, the period of peak COVID-19 wild-type mortality in the United States, the wild type being the specific virus the vaccines were designed to prevent. This mortality data was well-hidden in both the Pfizer and Moderna articles, almost as a footnote. Even though deaths were not a primary end-point in either of these studies, you don't think that if they found deaths to be significantly reduced, both Pfizer and Moderna wouldn't have crowed about it?

Healthy skepticism has been recently denigrated as being somehow unscientific. "Belief in science" is somehow parroted as a moral virtue. The history of science and indeed progress itself is a history of skepticism. Harvard Nobel laureate Walter Gilbert said, "The virtues of science are skepticism and independence of thought." Belief, a subjective acceptance of a tenet, and science, a systematic study based on observations and experimentation, are two different things. A pebble falls out of my hand at roughly 9.8m/s² while I'm standing at a beach whether I believe in gravity or not. Until recently, it took on average over 10 years for a novel vaccine to be approved for use in the United States because it took that long to determine whether the vaccine was safe firstly and effective secondly. The COVID-19 vaccines either provide a net benefit or they do not. Data is still being collected on this question, and until we get objective data, not sponsored or collected by Pfizer or Moderna, I believe it is healthy to be skeptical and to ask questions.

of the next session will be from 1 to 4 p.m. The series of 8 classes will be 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.

Sat., March 18: **Volunteer Party 4:30 - 6 p.m., in person 411 Main Street, Willimantic.** It will be a potluck dinner so please bring a dish. Please contact Kira director@millmuseum.org by March 11 to coordinate a count.

Sat., Mar. 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., March 26: **The Smith Women.** This lecture will take place at 2 p.m. in the Dugan building. Learn about three Irish American women who are woven into American Thread and Willimantic history from 1900-1930. The Executive Director will be presenting this lecture. \$12 for members and \$15 for the public. Please purchase your ticket in advance through our website, by PayPal, or at the Museum Gift Shop, cash or credit card.



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, Facilities & Project Management, Legal, or Nonprofit Development experience to apply.

Please visit www.ec-chap.org/board2023 to learn more and to apply online. Questions may be

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CT Green Energy News

Submitted by Peter Millman

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



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

CT electricity The winter energy crunch, what it costs, and what it will take to fix it are spiking this winter. What's going on?

CT Mirror. "Energy generators and utilities are resistant to changing how they make money and lobby strenuously to keep the existing system in place, and it is difficult to build new transmission. Lawmakers, many of whom don't understand the complicated world of energy, have been reluctant to spend money and therefore timid in their embrace of renewable energy and other infrastructure. And, finally, there has been a persistent focus on short-term energy rates, as opposed to investments in upgraded systems and renewables that may cost more upfront but will save money and improve reliability down the road. Ironically, that focus on keeping rates low by limiting renewable power may be a big reason why Connecticut ratepayers are paying so much more now."

Connecticut, Massachusetts regulators call on Eversource to defend sharply higher rate

Utility Dive. "Connecticut and Massachusetts regulators on Tuesday called on Eversource Energy to defend the doubling of its standard offer supply rate, to 24.2 cents/kWh that took effect Jan. 1. The Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority scheduled the technical meeting in response to a request by Connecticut Senate Democrats who criticized the "exorbitant and punishing rate increase" sought by Eversource. Eversource told regulators natural gas prices have the biggest impact on the cost of electric supply in its service territory and gas pipeline capacity is "severely constrained" for electric generation on the coldest days, limiting capacity and leading to higher prices."

Branford, East Haven Collaborating to Offer Residents Energy Efficiency Programs

Zip 06. "Branford was the first town in Connecticut to run a HeatSmart campaign. It helped hundreds of residents make their homes more efficient, comfortable and affordable. 'Round 2' of HeatSmart builds on that success and will help residents save money and energy." In 2023 Branford and East Haven

will work together on HeatSmart. They are applying for Energize ConnecticutSM Community Partnership Initiative funding. HeatSmart will reach out to all Branford and East Haven residents, with special emphasis on Income Eligible residents who struggle with utility bills and often live in energy inefficient dwellings."

Connecticut homeowner associations can no longer block solar installations

Energy News Network. "The provision was added to the 35-page Connecticut Clean Air Act before it was approved by lawmakers last session. Associations may still adopt rules on the size and placement of solar installations..." "This is one of the best-kept secrets from the past legislative session," said Mark Scully, president of People's Action for Clean Energy, or PACE...Condominiums are exempt from the rooftop solar provision...As written, the law only impacts a small subset of households, probably under 1,000, according to Kim McClain, executive director of the state Community Associations Institute."

In Connecticut, frustration grows over lack of access to Canadian hydropower

Energy News Network. "New England's reliance on natural gas for electricity generation is expected to cost the region dearly this winter. And in Connecticut, political leaders are suggesting that their northern neighbors are standing in the way of relief..." "I beseech the people of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, where we — with adequate transmission lines coming through their states — could access way more power generation from Hydro-Québec," Needleman said..."People are going to find fault with solar on farmland; there is consternation around offshore wind because it may impact the fisheries," he said. "All of these concerns are absolutely correct, but we have to make hard choices if we are going to move away from fossil fuels. Hydropower is the closest available source of clean power. We just have to figure out a way to get it to New England."

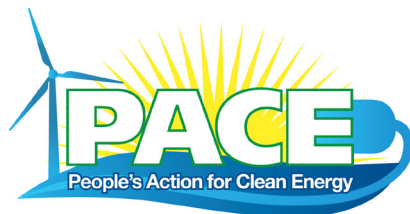
N.Y. weighs East Coast's first statewide building gas ban

E&E News. "New York's Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul called yesterday for the nation's most aggressive ban on fossil fuels in new buildings, setting the stage for a possible showdown with the gas industry and state lawmakers..." Hochul urged the state Legislature to phase out the sale of fossil fuel heating equipment in existing residential buildings beginning in 2030 and in 2035 in commercial ones. The governor also proposed requiring new residential and commercial buildings to be all-electric by 2025 and 2030, respectively..." Hochul's proposals face an uncertain path ahead. Last year, the governor came out for the first time in support of a gas ban for new construction that would have gone into effect in 2027. The idea found support in the state Senate, but was repeatedly blocked by the Democratic speaker of the state Assembly, Carl Heastie."

UConn Student Group Stepping Up to Help Push for Clean Energy UConn Today. “The Clean Energy Society, created in the fall of 2021 by Agriculture and Resource Economics student Liam Enea ‘24 (CAHNR) unites many elements, including energy regulation, ratemaking, grid modernization, smart technology, and community engagement. The group aims to build knowledge and action for the fast-growing clean energy sector...Enea is a proponent for solar energy coupled with the capacity for energy storage. He explains that homes and businesses could save money through net metering where the energy they generate can be sold back to the grid at the retail electricity rate. They could also dispatch their energy stores at times when electricity from the grid is more expensive. Communities could even build solar arrays that allow people to receive clean energy credits without having to install solar panels on their roofs.”

Milford mandates EV charging stations in future build projects Millford Mirror. “Any future developments with 30 or more parking spaces will have to make 10 percent of those spots electric vehicle charging capable, thanks to a newly approved change to the city’s zoning regulations. “The future is here,” City

Planner David Sulkis told members of the Planning and Zoning Board at its meeting Tuesday, during which the board approved the new rule. The regulation change will affect any developments after Tuesday’s vote.”



Gas-powered leaf blowers will now be restricted in Westport CTPost. “Our constituents have been asking us for relief from these noisy and polluting machines for years, and we’ll finally be able to offer them some, while still allowing landscapers and homeowners to keep up their properties appropriately...” “Beginning May 15, gas-powered leaf blowers cannot be used on state or federal holidays. From May 15 to Oct. 14, gas-powered leaf blowers can be used from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, but cannot be used on Sundays. Only one gas-powered leaf blower can be used on a property of a quarter acre or less...Starting May 15, 2024, the use of gas-powered leaf blowers will not be permitted in the summer.”

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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

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.

Coventry Winter Farmers Market

Every Sunday through March 19, 2023
Website:
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.

Stuart Hecht, Market Master

Please thank and patronize our advertisers for making Neighbors possible.

Christmas in Québec

By Dennis R. Blanchette

“Christmas isn’t just a day, it’s a frame of mind.”
—*Miracle on 34th Street*

“Ow,” I shouted as my head cracked into the side window of the car again. It seemed like we had made 37 turns in the last 10 miles.

“Is this car taking us the shortest way or the fastest way?” I asked Janet.

“Shortest number of miles,” she responded. “It’s all about the charging stations.” We had heard good things about Québec at Christmastime and were on the way from West Paris, Maine, to check them out. There would be no sleeping or writing, so I did the only thing left—stared out the window.

Every half mile or so, a driveway left the road and disappeared into the woods and I tried to imagine what was at the end: a cabin, a mine, or a mansion? Virginia rail fences were fairly common. They don’t require postholes, perfect for the rocky soil up here—and long after the fence falls down, the rocks that supported the posts serve as silent testament to the fence that once stood there and evidence for future surveyors trying to locate an old property line.

In the small towns we passed through, deserted houses that witnessed better times stood only a few feet from the road, the porches sagging, holding on by one nail, refusing to give up. Newer houses were farther from the road, sometimes directly behind an abandoned house. Why not fix up the old ones or tear them down, I wondered? Some of the houses only had siding on one side, the remainder wrapped in Tyvek—did winter come too soon or the money run out too fast? There was often an RV in the yard, making one wonder about priorities. Many yards had accumulations of what seemed to be junk—was it due to Yankee thriftiness, lack of time to haul it away, hoarding issues, or simply lax zoning codes?

An old rusted fire truck sat out in a field waiting for a fire that it couldn’t do much about anyway. Was it dumped there or was someone intending to restore it someday? The route took us past several of the connected farmhouses that Thomas C. Hubka wrote about in his classic book *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn*. Giant old paper mills that looked like they had rambled right out of a Stephen King novel stood vacant and deserted while loaded logging trucks headed south, away from the mills, probably to a port so the logs could be shipped to China.

Cannabis stores seemed to be as numerous as the trees; how they would all make a profit was something else to wonder about. We passed the historic Solon Hotel, a home for travelers for 125 years and recently renovated for another lifetime. Churches were everywhere and all seemed well maintained, testifying that the business of selling hope is still lucrative. The bare farm fields, harvested of their crops and now displaying only stubble, told of the oncoming winter.

In Moscow, Maine, serendipity appeared in the form

of a 30-foot-tall wood retaining wall decorated with hundreds of colorful birdhouses in every imaginable shape, along with the occasional ski boot, buoy, and cannabis leaf. The Million Dollar Birdhouse Wall, as it is known, has its own Facebook page and website. The wall is on a blind curve with nowhere to pull over, and so I wondered how they got all those pieces in place.

We charged up the EV in Jackman, Maine, and a few miles later Route 201 turned into Route 173 at the Canadian border. The navigation system took us to our rented apartment, a massive stone building said to be one of the original structures in Québec. It was a block inside the three-mile-long wall that encloses the Old City and its fort, La Citadelle, the largest fortified base in North America.

Québec was founded by the Frenchman Samuel de Champlain in 1608, and in 1690 the French started to build a timber-and-earth wall around the city. The British were not too happy about this. Fortunately for the British, the French got sidetracked and never completed the wall. The British snuck in at night and captured the city in a 20-minute battle. The British then spent a century building a fort and completing the wall. Since its completion, it has never witnessed a single battle. After a few years the British got disgusted because no one would speak English and gave Québec back to France, wall and all.

In the morning, we wandered up and down the massive granite-block walls in the bitter cold, the wind hitting us like a runaway freight train going 60 miles per hour. The obligatory visit to the historic 600-room Fairmont Le Château Frontenac was just an excuse to check out the toboggan run, but it was not open. The Frontenac is said to be the most photographed hotel in the world, but I must have been on its bad side, for I couldn’t get an unobstructed picture no matter where I stood. The cobblestone streets were decorated with hundreds of Christmas trees. When the lights lit up in the evening, it was sheer magic and the streets were thronging with people, despite the bitter cold. Every now and then there was an outdoor German Christmas market with vendors selling every manner of product from mittens to pâté, at little wooden booths.

My favorite exhibit at the Museum of Civilization was entitled “Ô Merde!” (Oh Shit!). With the goal of seeing poop as a resource rather than a waste, it is by far one of the most interesting and amusing museum exhibits ever. The good mood was quickly quelled by the horrors expressed in the next two exhibits. The Witness Blanket exhibit paid tribute to the victims of the residential school era, when the children of First Nations peoples were taken away from their parents, isolated from their culture and religion, and deprived of their ancestral language. Conditions at the schools led to malnutrition, starvation, disease, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and death. The exhibit, “This Is Our Story,” tells the story of the 11 Aboriginal nations of Québec and how they were stripped of their land and government.

The next day we wandered down to Petit Champlain, its narrow brick streets lined with restaurants and shops. It


continued on next page

was enchanting, but also crowded and a bit touristy. Just as we were about to leave, serendipity provided for us again in the form of a 20-person choir, clad in fur coats, singing Christmas carols. That night, the German markets were packed; people were lined up 10 deep at the Winterbar for glühwein and shots of Jägermeister. Only the fried dough booth had a longer line. The lively strains from a trio of musicians distracted the crowd from the lines and the cold, while I wondered how they could play stringed instruments in 20-degree weather.

Too soon, it was time to leave for the mountains. A 45-minute drive brought us to the Mont-Sainte-Anne cross-country ski area; with over 100 miles of trails, it is the largest in Canada. After burning off the calories we had acquired from eating French food for four days, it was off to Le Massif de Charlevoix for two days of downhill skiing. On the second day we got the last chair up, but all the runs back down were roped off. We ducked under the rope and skied the last run of the day all alone in semidarkness, snowflakes swirling around us. The lodge at the bottom was dark and deserted, but they had left the door open for us to retrieve our ski bags. I'm usually "Bah! Humbug!" when it comes to Christmas, but the hospitality and joie de vivre of the Québécois could win over even the cold heart of Ebenezer Scrooge.

Dennis R. Blanchette is a travel writer and occasionally civil engineer. Pictures of the trip can be found on his travel blog, Derelicting About with Dennis, at www.dennisblanchette.com.

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A New Community Center!

Submitted by Bev York

The Eastern Connecticut Veteran's Community Center in Willimantic just held an official opening and ribbon cutting. The center which houses the weekly Wednesday morning Veteran's Coffeehouse is operated by the nonprofit Windham Region Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Other veteran programs in the facility include social programs, martial arts, classes, and veteran's counseling to apply for benefits, services, ID cards, computer skills, food assistance, clothing bank, Backpacks for Life and assistance with employment and starting businesses. The structure also houses the Windham Chamber of Commerce Office, Windham Arts and the America Museum. In November, the center hosted the Business Expo for Veterans sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration. There is a large population of Veteran's in the region including about 1500 in Windham alone.

Windham Arts is a public charitable non-profit whose mission is to support and promote art, culture, history and tourism in Northeast CT. The purpose is to assist artists, art and cultural organizations, museums, and groups of people with projects that enhance our community and quality of life. Windham Arts is a leader in the Windham Region Partnership for Arts, Culture and History Organizations serving arts groups and museums to collaborate, combine resources and market our regions assets. In the new Vet Community Center, Windham Arts operates the Coffee Break Art Gallery with monthly art exhibits to help artists show and sell their work. The organization provides teaching spaces for artists, newsletter for grant and other opportunities, business assistance, community calendar and artist directory. director@windhamarts.org

The America Museum project aims to enlighten "we the people" about America. It has mobile exhibits and programs to share stories about Americans who helped to shape our country including the many patriots who served our armed forces. It presents topics and promotes discussion about people and events that are relevant to our freedom and democracy. The monthly Liber Tea programs are fun and informative. Americamuseum.org

The center is located in the historic Oaks School built in the late 1800s. The neighborhood is known as "The Oaks." Quercus Avenue ("Quercus" is Latin for oak) and Fairview Streets were developed by the Willimantic Linen Company later American Thread.

The Community is invited to use the Eastern CT Veteran's Community Center spaces for meetings and workshops. The Center is seeking sponsors and funding to help cover operating expenses programming. The organizations who share the building are grateful to the Town of Windham who has leased the property for five years. The Center is located at 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic, just a few blocks from the Frog Bridge. The open hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5 :00 p.m. For more information contact director@windhamarts.org

The Distraction

By Gary Bergquist

Civil war is the autoimmune disease of a nation. Pitting brother against brother, friend against friend, citizen against fellow citizen, civil war is the tragedy of human nature turned on itself. As an evolved species, we derive meaning and happiness from cooperation and social interaction. Civil war is a pathology that manages to unmake us.

Soldiers in a civil war have two traits in common. First, they feel strongly for their side and equally strongly against the other side. Second, the source of these feelings does not come from within but from above. In short, participants in a civil war are puppets dancing on strings being pulled by their leaders.

In the American Civil War, the leaders of the South, namely plantation owners and the politicians controlled by these businessmen, set the tone for the Civil War. The leaders in the North did likewise. Given hindsight, we are inclined to say, "Sure, but the North was fighting on the side of Right." Perhaps, but at the time, both sides, the Gray and the Blue, were equally convinced of the righteousness of their causes. In the trenches, the pawns of these leaders, moving in step with the pull of their invisible puppet strings, inevitably had the most to lose, the least to gain, and the steadfast courage of their blind convictions.

The evil of civil war is that the foot soldiers are drawn into a conflict that is not of their making. The conflict is between their leaders, who could justly resolve their issues on their own if inclined. However, political leaders and captains of industry generally prefer to offload their conflicts by using the silk in their voices to weave the invisible threads that direct their dispensable minions. The tragedy of civil war is that these minions, who pay the toll, enable the sins of their leaders. Mesmerized to do their Masters' bidding, the puppets blindly but willingly dance.

Our modern undeclared civil war, though not yet bathed in violence, has the hallmarks of any civil war. The two sides are neatly demarcated and have been assigned colors. We call them Red and Blue, Left and Right, Conservative and Liberal, or Republican and Democrat. As puppets, we willingly tune into the likes of Fox News or MSNBC to reinforce the strings that tether us to our puppeteers. The visceral distaste we have for the other side blinds us to the blemishes on our side. Our choice of candidates in primary elections is often determined by assessing who will beat the candidate on the other side, rather than deciding who will do the best job. Our obligation to vote has become an exercise in cynicism.

The driving impetus in this civil war, of course, is not slavery but the backlog of unsolved national issues, such as immigration, gun control, abortion, fossil fuels, and health-care. To understand the forces shaping this civil war, you need only look at the motivations of our political leaders. They can see that any solution to these thorny problems involves compromise and sacrifice, two tablets that politicians fear the

electorate may be reluctant to swallow. While possibly being able to structure workable solutions, our leaders lack the courage and character to persuade us of the long-term viability of these solutions. They prefer to pander to what they believe are our whims rather than risk alienating us with programs that require us to tighten our belts. The fear that they may be voted out of office by disgruntled citizens elevates their concern for themselves beyond their concern for their constituents. So, they leave the problems unsolved.

To camouflage their intentions, our leaders simply point across the aisle and blame the other side for the unsolved problems. Rather than working together to do what is right but difficult, our leaders do what is self-serving. They offer distractions and blame so we will not look behind the curtain. We are so busy arguing with siblings, friends, and fellow citizens, we refuse to see what our leaders have done to us. Though the pollsters tell us that all three branches of our government have the lowest approval ratings in the history of our country, i.e., that *we* don't approve of the job they're doing to represent us, we continue to give half of them (those on our side) a pass. We believe their words, that the problems *could* be solved, if not for the other side.

As we engage in endless and pointless arguments, the main trait we share with our adversaries is that we are weary to the bone.

Enter Donald Trump.

Those who despise Trump cannot comprehend how any civil human being could admire him. The man is a self-serving, deceitful, narcissistic blowhard with a track record of failed businesses, failed marriages, and a carnival barker personality.

Perhaps. But he was not Hillary Clinton.

Ah, but what was wrong with Hillary? What Trump-haters tend to overlook is that Hillary Clinton's weakness was more than the sum of her mistakes. To the weary and disgruntled citizen on the street, Hillary represented "more of the same," a leader inclined to assign blame to the other side rather than accept her burden of the blame. Step back, and she looked no different from any other politician.

So, given a base of voters exhausted at the effort of arguing one way or another for leaders in Washington who are never able to solve the big problems, Trump, the Democrat-turned-Republican, pro-choicer-turned-pro-lifer, professed to belong to neither side. His promise was simply to Make America Great Again, a pledge that hints at finally addressing the country's problems. Trump may have been a failure in his business and personal life, but at least he was colorful. With nothing getting done in Washington, many of us wondered, what was there to lose?

In essence, Trump represented a two-meter tall, orange middle finger being sent to D.C.

Recognizing our civil war for what it is and having a lifetime of business experience pulling strings, candidate Trump wasted little time picking a side and anointing himself

continued on next page

the leader of the Right. Harnessing the energy of the already simmering civil war, Trump employed the proven powers of fear, anger, greed, and blame to craft images of immigrants flowing into our country to steal jobs and commit crimes as they took refuge in sanctuary cities. Trump then pointed his finger across the aisle: “The Left encourages these criminals to enter our country; the Left wants to use your taxes to support them; the Left wants to take the guns; the Left wants to kill unborn babies; the Left wants Crooked Hillary.”

In the end, Donald Trump was elected President, surprising even himself.

The rest is history. The big question is, what effect has Donald Trump had on our civil war? At a gut level, most of us sense a significant increase in intensity. Each of us knows people who were indifferent to politics before Trump, but who are now avid soldiers in one camp or another. Few of us remain neutral. The breadth and energy level of our civil war has gone up, culminating in the January 6 insurrection and the subsequent recriminations, with Donald Trump the target of most finger-pointing.

But take a closer look. The same leaders are still in control and our national problems remain unsolved. While our fingers are pointed at Trump instead of our leaders, while we blame each other for unworkable extremes implanted in our minds by our leaders and their news outlet mouthpieces, these politicians cash their paychecks but refuse to fulfill their obligation of working together to craft solutions to our problems.

Yes, Trump has been a catalyst in the expanding civil war, but he is not the architect of that war. Trump is merely a distraction. As our leaders are engaged in vilifying or promoting Trump, they have accomplished their mission, keeping our eyes off the ball, the ball they have dropped.

Despise or adore Trump at your own risk; the effort is an exercise in futility. Trump is neither the problem nor the solution. Before long, another carnival will come to town. The problem is and always has been the disappointing performance of our other leaders. They simply don't earn their considerable pay.

Fortunately, unlike most civil wars, ours comes with an escape clause. Each of us can cut the strings that make us dance. In fact, we can cut the strings at either end. We can cut them at our end by simply returning to our homes, embracing friends and family, accepting that all people have a right to their views, and that we can be happier and healthier if we learn to accept rather than to judge. And we can cut the strings at the other end by retiring our ineffective leaders at the voting polls. We can send them back to their homes too.

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

Know Your Farmer Fair

Submitted by Becca Toms

In Willimantic over the last 7 years there has been a gathering slowly rising to popularity. Each year, before the full spring frenzy whisks away our local farmers to the tasks of fields and crops, a group of farmers set up tables in a community area and get ready to say hello. The 8th Annual Know Your Farmer Fair is meant to do just that- help you know your farmer. Though many farmers bring something to sell (whether it be jarred items, frozen meat, cold weather crops, or CSA subscriptions to purchase), the offerings are slimmed down and the moment relaxed. This isn't a mid-summer farmers market with people scrambling for the last pint of blueberries, but rather an opportunity to walk table by table and say hello to a person that has invested their time and energy into producing food for you and your family.

This year, the farmers will be gathering at the new community center in Downtown Willimantic on April 1 from 11-2pm. With over 20 farms already signed up (and more joining!) you can easily picture a large room filled with farmers and friends a-like buzzing with conversation and laughter as some folks reunite with farmers after the long winter rest and some make new acquaintances with a farmer they will start to visit every week for their groceries.

For many, this is an opportunity to share information about what their CSA will look like this year. A CSA share (or Community Support Agriculture share) is, often, a weekly share of vegetables and/or fruits that a farm produces and distributes to customers during the growing season. This basic model has a lot of opportunities for tailoring from farm to farm, so the event has always been a good way to talk with farmers about what their specific CSAs will look like. How many weeks does the share run? Do they offer half shares? Are their extra add on options like eggs, bread, or flowers? Do they have a meat CSA with different pick-up times?

But for folks that have a large vegetable garden and don't need the weekly infusion of veggies to their larder, there is still plenty to talk to farmers about. Many farmers in our area are specializing in things such as honey, maple syrup, teas, and soaps. These community gems are hidden treasures that can be hard to find if you were scrolling the internet late at night looking for local honey to relieve allergy symptoms, or soothing organic herbal tea to help you get to sleep. These farmers come not just to share their wonderful products with you, but share the craft that they have been developing to give back to the community.

And for those that are eager to know about how their food is raised this is the chance to get a better insight into our local farmer's practices! If you are looking for an organic farmer, one who doesn't use GMO's or meat or poultry that is soy-free, the farmers are happy to answer those questions. Our farmers care so much about the land they are on and the people that they feed so the practices they use to raise our food are often things that are very important to them and they are happy to talk to you about what makes their farm, and how they farm unique (and brings that added flavor!)

With food trucks, kids activities, and a seed swap, there is plenty that will make this event a great family outing and something that will make you linger as you explore the farms that make this region, the Quiet Corner, so unique and a reflection of the agricultural history and heritage of our state.

Ashford residents confront developers of mega-warehouses/distribution centers

Submitted by Christine Acebo, Ashford resident since 1990

On February 13 the Ashford Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing about a proposed text amendment submitted by landowners and a large out-of-state construction and development company. The amendment would expand the allowable uses of land beside the I-84 exit (72) for Ashford to include warehousing and industrial facilities; research facilities, including research development and testing laboratories or centers; and distribution centers. Proposed changes would also increase allowable building heights from 35 ft. to 75 feet and would allow buildings with a footprint “greater than 250,000 square feet” (the size of 26 football fields) with no upper limit noted. (The current upper limit building footprint is 250,000 square feet.). Approving these amendments would open the door for a mega-warehouse or distribution center and the applicant presented descriptions of massive potential facilities that could be proposed if regulations were amended. The applicants apparently would only build the structure(s); they did not disclose who might be potential users or final owners. The proposed changes to allowable uses could feasibly allow: an Amazon distribution center; a chemical or infectious disease research facility; a mega warehouse storing ‘something;’ a factory; a Federal prison.

Before the hearing, the Commission received 52 public comment letters, 47 in opposition, and 6 supporting the proposed changes. At the hearing 21 individuals spoke in opposition, and 8 spoke in support. The meeting lasted 4 ½ hours. At 9:00 pm, 122 people were on the Zoom meeting, and at 11:23, 75 hardy souls were still in attendance. Testimonies in opposition to the amendment included those from a nationally recognized professional land use and environmental planner, a former PZC commission member who helped write the original regulations for that site, a Yale Forestry Professor, a Geoscientist, a Land Use Attorney, a Dept. of Public Health Certified Water Inspector, and many passionate, concerned Ashford citizens.

The most prominent concerns of those opposing the amendment were: destruction of the rural character of Ashford and irreversible damage to the watersheds of the Fenton and Mt. Hope Rivers. The site is on the fragile and pristine watershed for the Fenton River that supplies water for Mansfield and Willimantic (55,000 people downstream). The water from these watersheds is currently some of the cleanest in the State. With no public water or sewer lines to the site, a mega-warehouse/distribution center would drain and pollute the watershed wetlands and compromise nearby residential wells.

Some of the other concerns were about noise and light pollution, increased truck and other traffic on local roads, decreased property values, need for a larger town budget to support upgraded fire, police, safety, and regulation/monitoring

of a mega-warehouse, little actual tax reduction for residents, few jobs because facility would likely have “robotic” employees or low-paid jobs with few benefits, and environmental degradation to the abutting State Forest,

Several residents noted that the lack of specificity in the proposed (and even current) zoning regulations leave Ashford open to large scale development that most in the town have said (in a previous survey) they don’t want and would make it difficult for the town to oppose oversized buildings at the gateway to Ashford. Several residents called for the Planning and Zoning Commission to put together a working group to refine Ashford’s regulations to make them more specific instead of letting out-of-state developers amend our regulations to suit their needs.

Those relatively few letters (6) and public statements (8) in support of the amendment focused on tax benefits to the town to increase/upgrade infrastructure, possible tax benefits to residents, making Ashford business friendly, and bringing Ashford into the future with a “wonderful opportunity” proposed by a “quality operation.”

A recording of the Public Hearing is here; public testimony follows the applicant’s presentation at hour 2 of the recording.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbYFCNYhIMY&t=8136s>

Public Comment Letters, along with other documents including the Applicant Presentation, can be found on the Ashford Town Hall website (ashfordtownhall.org).

Go to:

<https://ashfordtownhall.org/agendas-and-minutes/planning-and-zoning/>

Click on the link “To Access Planning and Zoning meeting materials, click here”

Click on the folder for “February 13, 2023”

Click on PZ-23-1 Text Amendment Article 300-14 and Article 300-1

If the Planning and Zoning Commission accepts the text amendment, All of Ashford will change, no matter whether you live in the south or north part of town. Rather than a rural place to raise your family, it will be the first step to creating an urban landscape. Learn more, go to the website: <https://www.keepashfordrural.net/>

The Public Hearing will be continued on March 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm. The Zoom link for the meeting will be posted on <https://www.keepashfordrural.net/> as soon as it’s available.

The Commission has assured us that they will continue to accept letters from the public and that public voices will be heard at the meeting.

Email your letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission at zeo@ashfordtownhall.org Tell them to SAY “NO” to the proposal and why, then attend the Public Hearing.

Solar Today - Honoring Earth Day, every day

By John Boiano

Greetings all,

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



Utility rates have gone up again! This time it was on the SUPPLY SIDE which doubled the rate from .12/kwh to .24/kwh!

This month I'm going to briefly discuss deciphering your electric bill, 3rd party energy suppliers and the difference between supply and delivery price increases.

For those who don't know, your Eversource bill is divided into two sides. First is the supply side which is what you pay for the raw electricity that you purchase. The supply side has one multiplier that changed from .12/kwh to the new .24/kwh.

The second side is the delivery side where you pay for the purchased energy to be delivered to your home. The delivery side has many multipliers depending on the line item on this side of the bill.

The two sides combined are the numbers you see on the upper right side of your bill just above the line that says: Total current charges. Just below that, there is a simple explanation of the two combined charges. On page 2 of your bill you will see on the right hand side under: Total charges for electricity that goes into a deeper breakdown of how they are charging you. On the left side of page 2 it shows a chart that is all of the kilowatts of electricity that you purchased each month for the past 13 months.

This is the first time in 6 years that Eversource raised the supply side portion of the electric bill. All of the previous increases since they started astronomically hiking the rates after storm Sandy has been on the delivery side where the price increases felt like a lot, but those turned out to be a much smaller hit to the consumer than the increase we just had on the supply side.

How can you help offset the new price increases?

1. Go solar! If you have a home lucky enough to produce sufficient solar energy for yourself and your family, you won't need to buy energy from Eversource and you won't be subject to their continual price increases. And, in most cases, solar cost quite a bit less than Eversource and that starts in the first month that the system is turned on.

2. Find a third party supplier for your supply rate side of the electric bill. A third party supplier typically offers lower rates than Eversource.

How can I find a third party electric supplier?

Google third party energy supplier in CT, or go directly to energizect.com then hit the drop down arrow on the far right tab "Rate Board", click compare energy rate suppliers, then click residential and finally hit "compare rates."

Now that you've landed on the supply rate page you can view the different suppliers along with the rate and term length that they offer. I personally like a little higher price per kwh because the term lengths are usually longer.

Example: Today I searched and saw that Direct energy had a rate of .1069 (just under 11 cents/kwh) but the term was only for 8 billing cycles (8 months) and then another company had a rate of .148/kwh for 34 months. Hands down, I would pick the higher rate for the longer term.

Here's why:

First off, when the low rate expires, who knows what the new rates offered will be. They will NOT be lower!

Secondly, and more importantly, third party suppliers bank on a fact that you will not mark your calendar to remind yourself that the term is ending. When the term ends, they jack your rate higher than Eversource's rate and that's how they really make a lot of extra money. I've seen it time and time again where people are on auto pay or don't pay attention and just pay their electric bill unknowingly paying the higher rate charged after their term expired.

How can I cancel* a third party supplier?

It's easy to switch back to Eversource or change third party suppliers at any time. All you have to do is either call the supplier and put in a cancellation notice or call Eversource directly and let them know that you want to go back to buying supply side energy from them.

**In CT, it is illegal for a third party to charge an early cancellation fee!*

I hope this information helped you with looking into saving money with purchasing your electricity.

If you'd like to know more about Solar or Third Party energy, please reach out to me directly.

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



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History, Art, and Performance, Inc.

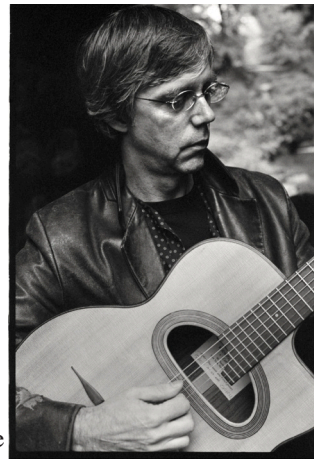
Performing Arts



THE PACKING HOUSE

1870

HISTORIC VENUE FOR PERFORMANCE & EVENTS



The Packing House: Your Regional Performance Venue

By EC-CHAP

March

"March is the month of expectation."

- Emily Dickinson

Welcome to march! The weather has been kind to us so far... and Spring is officially right around the corner. We have a wonderful lineup of performers and programs scheduled through the end of May, and hope you will be able to join us!

"SONGS FOR UKRAINE" – A BENEFIT EXTENDED:

We have just passed the One Year Mark of the senseless and brutal War in Ukraine... EC-CHAP is committed to extend our Benefit Event 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://thepackinghouse.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.

EC-CHAP JAZZ & ACOUSTIC ARTIST SERIES:

Saturday, MARCH 4th – Luke Hendon with Jack Soref: An Evening of Gypsy Jazz (Gypsy Jazz). 7:30pm. Tickets \$20.00 Online / \$25.00 at the Door (Doors Open 7:00pm)

EC-CHAP is excited to have Luke Hendon (photo above) return to The Packing House stage this spring Luke brings his own original qualities to the Gypsy Jazz tradition of Django Reinhardt.

Luke Hendon has had success in the world of Django music, performing with top players from around the world. A Veteran guitarist, Luke has had many successes in his career. He has opened for legendary acts such as Al Green, Sun Ra, and Los Lobos, performed on Broadway, composed and recorded for television and film, worked with dance ensembles, cruise ships, theatre companies, and many, many bands.

Luke is among the notable guitar staff/artist instructors who have taught at the acclaimed Django in June Gypsy Jazz event held at Smith College, North Hampton, MA.

Luke will be joined at The Packing House by Jack Soref. Jack became captivated by the music of Django Reinhardt after attending the International Django Reinhardt festival

in Samois-sur-Seine France as a teen. Ever since, he has been studying and teaching Django's music, and performing all over the United States, and abroad playing concerts, pubs, Jazz clubs, and festivals.

Saturday, March 25th – An Evening of Jazz with Matt & Atla DeChamplain (Jazz). 7:30pm. Tickets \$20.00 Online / \$25.00 at the Door (Doors Open 7:00pm).

Matt DeChamplain is no stranger to The Packing House. An exceptional jazz pianist who has graced our stage since 2016 as a part of the Greg Abate Quartet; and again in 2018 with his own "Drummerless Trio". Matt returns this spring with his wife Atla, an accomplished jazz vocalist. We are excited to have this extraordinary jazz duo debut their original works and arrangements at The Packing House!

The couple have played venues all over the U.S. such as The American Stage Theater (FL), The Side Door (CT), The Steinway Gallery (MI), The Monterey Jazz Festival (CA), The Valentine Theater (OH), Millennium Hall at the Kennedy Center (Wash. D.C.) Provincetown Jazz Festival (MA) and a weeklong engagement at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola (Jazz at Lincoln Center, NYC) opening for acclaimed vocalist Freddy Cole, brother of Nat King Cole. They have had the good fortune of sharing the stage collectively and independently with such artists as Jon Henricks, Dave Brubeck, Jimmy Cobb, Ken Peplowski, Earl McDonald, Avery Sharpe, Eric Alexander, Nat Reeves, Steve Davis, Javon Jackson, Kurt Elling, Yoron Israel, John Lamb and many others.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31st - A Special Evening with Singer/ Songwriter, Lyricist, and Composer Crys Matthews (Indie). 7:30pm. Tickets \$25.00 Online / \$30.00 at the Door (Doors Open 7:00pm).

EC-CHAP is thrilled to welcome prolific lyricist, composer, and performing artist Crys Matthews to The Packing House! Crys's debut performance in our intimate setting will confirm the truth of her words and power in her messages - leaving you wanting more. From her home in Washington DC to Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, Crys Matthews is on a trajectory for national recognition. This is a performance not to miss!

Crys Matthews is nothing if not ambitious. In August 2019, she simultaneously released both a new full-length album, *The Imagineers* and an EP, *Battle Hymn For An Army Of Lovers*. These collections showcase two sides of Matthews'

dynamic songwriting; The Imagineers is a selection of thoughtful songs about love and life while Battle Hymn For An Army Of Lovers tackles social justice themes. Songs from both projects have already won her recognition and awards. She was one of ten finalists (from a pool of 5,000) in the year's New Song Music Competition and, after performing at Lincoln Center on November 30th she was named grand-prize winner. Matthews also won the People Music Network's Social Just Songs contest at the Northeast Regional Folk Alliance.

Matthews blends Americana, folk, jazz, blues, bluegrass and funk into a bold, complex performance steeped in traditional melodies and punctuated by honest, original lyrics. Having been compared to everyone from Toshi Reagon to Tracy Chapman to Ruthie Foster, Matthews' eclectic infusion of genres has won her honorable mentions at the 2013 and 2014 Mid-Atlantic Song Contest and extensive radio play from Woman of Substance radio to WTJU-Charlottesville and WMRA-Harrisonburg to KBOO-Portland. Matthews has shared stages with Melissa Ferrick, Chris Pureka and Liz Longley, as well as several regional artists such as Owen Danoff, Eliot Bronson, and Heather Mae.

A prolific lyricist and composer, Matthews has found inspiration in her surroundings; from driving through the Blue Ridge Mountains to the compelling and heart-breaking love story of Richard and Mildred Loving. Thoughtful, realistic and emotional, Matthews' songs speak to the voice of our generation and remind us why music indeed soothes the soul.

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

Wednesday, MARCH 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, March 9 th - "Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser". (PG-13) 1988. 7:00pm. Suggested donation \$5.00.

(Doors Open 6:30pm)

Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser is a 1988 American documentary film about the life of bebop pianist and composer Thelonious Monk. Directed by Charlotte Zwerin, it features live performances by Monk and his group, and posthumous interviews with friends and family. The film was created when a large amount of archived footage of Monk was found in the 1980s.

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

EC-CHAP has reinstated our monthly "Information Exchange Meetings last month! 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 Our next meeting is March 16th. For more information, please visit www.ec-chap.org; call 518-791-9474; or email us at info@ec-chap.org.

EC-CHAP SEEKING MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

EC-CHAP continues to seek new Members and Volunteers! To learn about various Membership opportunities and benefits, please visit our website at: <https://www.ec-chap.org/membership-information>; or call 518-791-9474.

We need volunteers that may possess video production and social media experience; as well as those that would just like to lend a helping hand. If you are interested in learning how you may be able to assist, please contact EC-CHAP at: info@ec-chap.org.

Soft drinks and snacks available at all events. Unless otherwise noted, we are pleased to offer our exclusive "BY-OB&F" TM model - Bring Your Own Beverage & Food TM (Wine & Beer Only - I.D. Required). You can also bring your paid ticket to Willington Pizza House (or WP Too) for eat-in or take-out the night of the show and receive 15% off your meal purchase. Ask for "The Packing House" pizza!

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

We leave you with the following:

*"The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you're the pilot."*
- Michael Altshuler

Happy Spring!
EC-CHAP Board

Regional Media and Arts News

Submitted by John Murphy

ON THE HOMEFRONT SERIES UPDATE

This month I will continue my report from the last issue about the progress that is happening 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 is great.

TRACK #3— Commerce, Culture and Social Enterprise

TRACK #4— Journalism, Local Government, Human & Social Services

Our goal is to *help our community communicate with itself* and make life better in every way. Contact me to schedule a program—and you will receive a link to the WILI Radio YouTube channel program for sharing it with your group and your communication networks. This can be valuable support for annual events for fundraising, capital campaigns or membership drives.

TRACK #3—Commerce, Culture and Social Enterprise

Our community needs a new kind of financial architecture for creating a better balance of commerce, culture and living in our daily lives. During recent years I have seen and felt an increasing spirit of social enterprise and localism in our business community. I feel positive and optimistic about what this spirit can do.

New forms of business collaboration are emerging that share assets and common resources to leverage sales and other income to create growth and returns that also benefit the people in our community in creative new ways.



John Murphy (r) with Andrew Gutt, Stone Row Kitchen & Bar and WDNA. Contributed photo.

The Willimantic Downtown Neighborhood Association (WDNA) is the primary forum I know of for dialogue, support, and innovation for existing and new businesses in the Willimantic region. WDNA is the new incarnation and extension of Thread City Development, the group that contributed

significantly to Willimantic development for many decades. WDNA currently meets on the third Monday of each month, in the morning at various partner locations, and you can learn more at their website. I am happy to have Andrew Gutt, Owner of Stone Row K+B, as my program partner for this track of storytelling on the series.



Website: <http://www.willimanticdowntown.org/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/willinextgen>

TRACK #4—Journalism, Local Government, Human & Social Services

The state of journalism today is stressed and damaged, especially at state and local levels. Good journalism informs us about our government and community, helping us learn and decide about critical issues that impact our daily lives. I was pleased and honored to have many journalists from across the state for our first two episodes of this series—The Day, CT Mirror and Neighbors for the debut episode, and Willimantic Chronicle, Journal Inquirer and The Bulletin for program #2. YouTube links below—enjoy!

1. Debut program January 11: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfEjNedBmC4&list=PLgpHwaCnfeKqxQD5QSs1rX-0k97ks6gf-x&index=26&t=27s>
2. Program #2 February 15: <https://youtu.be/ljCPUX6rpe4>

NEW SERIES WITH WINDHAM REGIONAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Another part of this track of programs includes coverage of how public money is used to serve people directly in our region via human and social services. These agencies live at the front line where the government meets the voters and the individuals and families who are served. I want to use storytelling to humanize these relationships and the processes used, to give them heart and soul in everyday life to improve the way we resolve the many challenges to service delivery.

I am pleased to have the Windham Regional Community Council (WRCC, nonprofit agency, <https://wrcc.online/>) as my program partner. We are collaborating to bring public awareness and understanding to every aspect of the agency—its structure, operations, services, the struggles, and the impacts of what they do.

The goal is to produce “bottom up” or “ground level” stories to activate and engage the public with expanded information exchange, dialogue, and solution-seeking with the people who are served and those who provide service, and the larger community, and political/social stakeholders. This is an urgent unmet need for all of us.

1. December 14, 2022, debut program/agency overview (2nd half):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13UXS3Tv6Hg&list=PLgpHwaCnfeKqxQD5QSs1rX0k97ks6gf-x&index=23>

2. January 18 program about child day care and youth support at WRCC: <https://youtu.be/k1lhDiNrPgc>

Collectively these program/theme tracks constitute a community information infrastructure that will provide continuing coverage of how we live together in this community. With apologies to Thornton Wilder, *On the Homefront* was created with that wonderful play, *Our Town*, in mind—with the program host (that is me!) as Stage Manager and Coach, breaking down the media fourth wall between guests and folks who listen or watch. It is always good to come up for air with you on the pages of *Neighbors*.

A complete archive of *On the Homefront* broadcasts is available at the WILI Radio YouTube channel—enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgpHwaCnfeKqx-QD5QSs1rX0k97ks6gf-x>

Also, you can view the archive of all other 5-6 pm daily community programs at WILI at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFY4_TDRh_jING5Z0k-6pmKg

HOW TO CONNECT TO 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

How you can access our regional network—to learn more or be a guest:

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) (monthly reviews and guest/topic previews)

Spectrum Public Access TV Channel 192 (<http://www.ctv192.org/>) (schedule, program info)

WECS Radio 90.1 FM and 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.

Always keep the faith, my best wishes for spring, it is on the way!

John Murphy

john@humanartsmedia.com

Animal Grief and Human Grief

By Angela Hawkins Fichter

When I was a child, I had dogs as pets: first one poodle, and after he died, then another poodle. We lived on Long Island, not in the New York City part of L.I., but in Nassau County. While we and our neighbors lived in houses, they were really on city-size lots. Still, we did not hear the sirens of fire engines, ambulances, or cops nearly as often as NYC people did, who lived mostly in apartments. One of our dogs drove us crazy whenever an emergency vehicle with a siren blasting drove by. He threw back his head and howled just like a wolf howls. We thought that maybe he believed the siren was a wolf howling, so he howled back. None of our neighbors' dogs howled, just ours. Maybe he had an identity crisis and thought he really was a wolf; who knows?

I lived with my grandparents. One day my grandfather said to me, "Go get Grandma and have her call the doctor." He then collapsed onto the floor right in front of me. This was decades before you could call 911 for an emergency. So I ran to Grandma, who called the doctor, who came and inspected my grandfather and then called an ambulance. Boy, am I glad we can just dial 911 now when someone collapses. I went outside and sat on the steps to wait for the ambulance. My dog sat right next to me. I dreaded the howling that would come from my dog in our own family emergency. Except that howling never came. The dog didn't utter a peep, never mind a howl. To be sure the dog wouldn't jump on any of the emergency personnel, I put him in his pen in the garage. Not only was our car in the garage, but also my grandfather's workshop, where he worked on stuff that others turned into computers years later.

The ambulance personnel inspected my grandfather and announced he was dead. An undertaker then came and removed my grandfather's body. All this was in front of our silent dog. The undertaker then made the mistake of thinking that he could just reach into the pen and pet our dog. This dog never bit anyone or lunged at anyone before, but when the undertaker reached into the pen to stroke him, my dog lunged at his arm and tried to bite his hand, the same hand that had just removed my grandfather from the house. The undertaker got his arm out of the pen in time to prevent a bite, but at that moment I really identified with my dog and thought I'd like to bite that superficially friendly guy who took my grandfather away.

I fed and walked my dog before I went to school and when I came home from school. I think my grandfather must have walked him while I was at school, and I know he spoke to the dog while he toiled in his workshop. My dog moped for weeks after Grandpa died. He curled into a ball in the pen and didn't beg to come out. Finally, I went and got my grandfather's sweater. He got up, sniffed it, wagged his tail, and then curled into a ball and moped again. He knew Grandpa was dead. Other animals show grief too. Elephants have been seen repeatedly visiting and touching the carcasses of family members and even visiting the bones of family members that have been dead for some time. People who call themselves scientists claim that only humans can grieve, not other animals. They forget that humans are animals too.

#SaveUConn?

By Phoebe Godfrey

The January 2023

Connecticut Magazine featured a cover story about UConn's new president, Dr. Radenka Maric. As a UConn employee/faculty member, I read the article with interest—and some bias, as I had been sad to see the previous president, Thomas Katsouleas, resign



after two years of conflicts with the Board of Trustees, which, according to a Sept. 17, 2022, *Daily Campus* editorial, constitutes an “undemocratic structure” that has “a huge amount of influence” over student lives. Katsouleas had touched me in his commitment to meeting, listening, and talking to students, including when they were not happy over issues of on-campus racism, sexism, and global climate change. He set aside times to be at the Benton Museum café to just hang out and chat with students, and because of this he ended up talking to one of my students. This student shared with him how moved she had been by an activity we had done in class to acknowledge and honor the tragic suicide of one of our fellow students. As a result, he sent me a handwritten note thanking me for my commitment to the emotional and social development of our students—a rare action on the part of a university president.

Returning to the article about President Maric, I was pleased to read her comment, “Everything we do, we ask the question ‘How does this help our students to succeed?’” (p. 56), one that is echoed in her emails, which she signs “Leading with joy and love for all” and the slogan “STUDENTS FIRST, UCONN ALWAYS. HUSKIES FOREVER.” As for the rest of the article, what I noticed was the emphasis on money (UConn has “a \$3 billion annual budget and \$602.7 million endowment” [p. 59]), corporate buy-in, state and federal investment, and the growth and power of UConn as an institution. Now, as a sociologist I am not naive about the economic web in which UConn, despite being a “nonprofit state institution,” is entangled. Yet Maric’s claim that “UConn is Connecticut, and Connecticut is UConn” (p. 143) gives me, like the slogan about the students, the uneasy feeling of excessive corporate marketing. Of course, if you are paying in the hundreds of thousands for branding as UConn does, then you come up with such meaningless slogans, including one that I have written about previously, “UConn Nation,” which, as I argued, makes the students the unfortunate inhabitants of a nation ruled by a plutocracy!

I am giving all this background to lead up to what happened on campus over the last few weeks, culminating in the February 15 walkout organized by the Student Government and inspired by President Maric’s February 8 email to all students raising the alarm about proposed budget cuts, which could result in a tuition increase of \$3,000 (listed as the first



Contributed photo.

item). In a *Daily Campus* op-ed the following day, Student Government President Mason Holland stated that the blame lies with the governor, whose proposed “‘values’ include raising tuition by \$3,000” per student. Holland went on to say, “When he cuts our budget, he kills dreams, he kills what Connecticut could be,” and therefore called for students to take buses to the capitol to protest under the banner “#SaveUConn.” After this, flyers appeared around campus and students began talking about the rally, including in my classes.

In my Social Theory class, where we had just read sections of *The Communist Manifesto*, I offered my students the opportunity to discuss and debate whether or not we should cancel class on Wednesday, as a few students had already stated they wanted to go to the rally. One of the more poignant points was made by several students of color, who said that such increases would hit them, as well as low-income students and first-generation students, the most. Other students raised a question that I had also posed, which is why an increase in tuition was listed by President Maric as the first item to be affected, and not administration salaries. We then linked that point back to Marx’s analysis of the bourgeoisie and proletariat, and proposed that some of what was going on was that the students were being manipulated for the benefit of “UConn” the institution, as opposed to any benefit for UConn students. This prompted more discussion about the reality of who would be hit the hardest, and we ended with a vote to cancel class in solidarity with the students who wanted to go.

The next day, faculty got an email from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) urging us to go to the rally and inviting us to speak out ourselves, as another item listed for potential cuts was faculty pensions. This caught my attention and, having canceled my classes, I considered going. But something still didn’t feel right, and in the end I chose to stay home and catch up on some grading, serving my students that way.

A headline in the *Hartford Courant* on the day of the rally quoted Governor Lamont as saying that the students were acting under “misinformation” spread by President Maric and that the funds being cut are federal Covid ones, not state ones, which, he said, have actually increased. Of course, in the long

run, state funding has *decreased*, but UConn's resources, including income, have grown, making it ever more self-sustaining. However, for me the elephant in the room was acknowledged by Chris Powell in his February 20 column in the *Journal Inquirer*, in which he commended the governor for being one of the first to have "pushed back a little against the arrogance of the University of Connecticut." He pointed out how much money UConn spends on athletics (coaches' salaries), the Health Center, and some employee salaries. Case in point is that "the 15 highest-paid state government employees work at UConn, as do 66 of the 90 highest paid, and the university has the largest payroll of any state agency." Additionally, when it comes to cuts, UConn is faring much better than the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, including our community colleges, all of which graduate double UConn's numbers. In fact, the state allocates \$11,000 per student for UConn, \$7,000 for the other state universities, and \$4,000 for each of the community colleges, and yet there was no mention of these

other students or schools in our "call to arms."

In wrapping this all up, what I want to emphasize is that if we say "Students First," then why was tuition the first item listed for increase and why are we who work and go to UConn not invited to think of all our state's students, including those in our K-12 public school system? Additionally, I have asked my students how they feel about Lamont's claim that UConn students were "misinformed," and the resounding sentiment was that they feel "used." This has been reinforced by the fact that neither Maric, the Student Government, nor the AAUP have sent an email explaining or even apologizing to students and faculty. It is as if the February 15 event never happened. The only thing to remind us of it is the "#SaveUConn" graffiti left on a UConn building, which, when I saw it, prompted me to ask myself, Who, or rather what, is the UConn that needs "saving"? One answer that came to me is that it is not the version of UConn that all Connecticut's students need and even deserve.

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A Divided Connecticut: Politics in the Civil War

By Ryan Elgin

For this entry into the Connecticut Industry During Times of War series, we will be taking a further detour than usual by discussing the complexities of Connecticut's political landscape during the Civil War. This topic piqued my curiosity recently when rewatching Scorsese's famous *Gangs of New York*, set in the backdrop of the Civil War and heavily involving themes of patriotism, race, and politics. Now that over 160 years have passed since the start of the conflict, it seems rather easy to boil down the beliefs of the time period to Connecticut being a Northern state and therefore decidedly and wholly behind the Union cause. As we all know, individual beliefs and politics are a bit more complicated.



By the time of the American Revolution, there were more enslaved people in Connecticut than any other New England state. It would be one of the slowest New England states to emancipate its slaves as well, passing the Gradual Abolition Act in 1784, leading to an official abolishment of slavery in 1848 (Menschel 184). US Census data shows Connecticut's recorded slave population in the year 1800 was 1,000 and by 1830 it numbered only 25, showing the process was successful albeit slow. Even still, Connecticut could never fully absolve itself from the use of slavery. It was an industrialized State with diverse industries reliant on many raw goods from the South, primarily cotton (Cowden 540).

CT industry's use of raw goods from the South is just one of the many reasons our State had a sizable minority of what were called "Peace Democrats". In the year before the Civil War, the Democratic party was split into two main factions: The Northern Democrats and the Southern Democrats. To oversimplify, Northern Democrats often believed in popular sovereignty, having the position that if a State's population favors the idea of slavery then it can be allowed there, while the Southern Democrats were more in favor of slavery and wished to see it expand westward. Once the war began in 1861, the Northern and Southern Democrats in the Union States would colloquially be called "War" and "Peace" Democrats respectively. The moderate Northern Democrats joined in support of the war along with the Republicans. The Southern "Peace" Democrats disagreed with the necessity of the war, arguing that coercion from the national government through war was unacceptable.

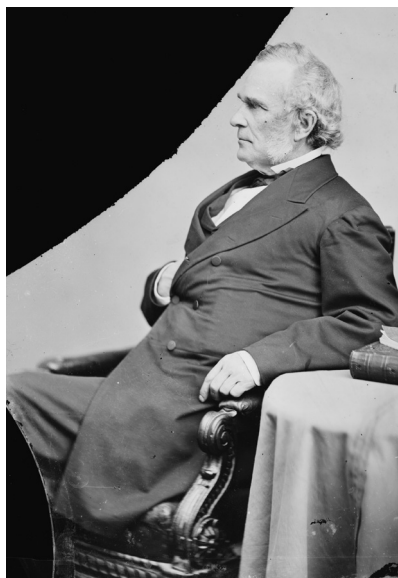
The reasoning behind the affinity for the South held by the soon-to-be Peace Democrats of CT was varied. Perhaps they had family in the South, were against the industrializing and rapidly changing life in CT, marketed their goods to Southern States, were against emancipation or pro-slavery, or somehow benefited from slave labor as discussed above (Cowden 540). The split in the Democratic party was evident in the Connecticut 1860 presidential election results where Democratic candidate Stephen A. Douglas received 17,364 votes and the more South-aligned Democrat John C. Breckinridge received 16,558 votes. The sole Republican candidate, Abraham Lincoln, won CT easily by a margin of 32.36% with 43,486 votes. The 1860 Connecticut election for governor was far closer. Both parties ran one candidate, with the CT Democrats choosing Thomas Seymour, who sympathized with the South and would become a Peace Democrat leader. He lost to incumbent Republican, William Buckingham, by a mere 0.3%, only 538 votes. Evidence that even on the eve of war, nearly half of Connecticut did not fully support fighting the South.



Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance, Inc.

History

The disagreements between war supporters and opposers turned ugly in Connecticut. Protest gatherings by Peace Democrats sprung up around the state as war supporters tried to break them up. Newspapers such as the *Litchfield Enquirer*, *New Haven Journal*, *Hartford Courant*, *Bridgeport Farmer*, and others, wrote inflammatory comments and half-truths about competing papers based on political beliefs (Cowden 546). The *Bridgeport Farmer*, a markedly pro-South newspaper, was struck by mob violence in August of 1861, destroying one of its printing presses and causing the discontinuation of the newspaper entirely (*Litchfield Enquirer* Aug 29, 1861). The first year of the war also saw violence between neighboring Connecticut towns. Anti-war townspeople of New Fairfield raised a white peace flag near Charcoal Brook in that same month of August. A few Union Soldiers home from the war in Danbury decided to gather supporters and march to the neighboring town to tear down the flag. New Fairfield caught word of this and prepared with farming implements. The forces, roughly 50 from Danbury and 200 from New Fairfield, met in this battle of "Charcoal Run". The Danbury residents were beaten back and retreated that night. Thankfully, only some injuries occurred (Miller). A similar altercation happened in Ridgefield, in which two men were shot trying to take down a peace flag. Over the course of the war, these violent clashes became less common, although the debate was still tense on the political stage (Warschauer, connecticuthistory.org).

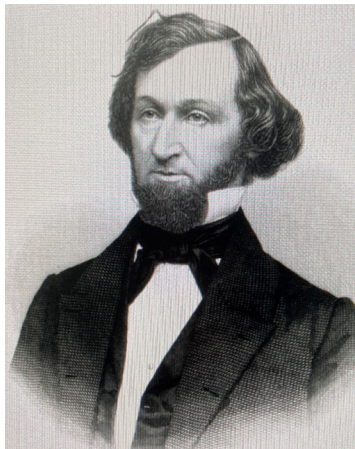


William Buckingham

Cont. photo

In 1863, the Union's fortunes were bleak. Democrats in Connecticut saw this as an opportunity to run staunch Peace-advocate Thomas Seymour again in the election for governor against the incumbent Buckingham. Once again, the margins of Buckingham's victory were narrow: 2,636 votes. There is evidence that the soldier vote was the deciding factor in Republican victory, as in other states, soldiers voted Re-

publican by huge margins (Cowden 548). Democrats accused the Republican party of fraud, stating that the number of votes that separated Buckingham and Seymour was quite close to the number of soldiers furloughed home and that Democrat soldiers were not allowed to return (Warshauer; Cowden 547). Regardless of these close and contentious 1860-1863 elections in Connecticut, Buckingham remained Connecticut's



Thomas Seymour Cont. photo

governor throughout the war and a massive aid to President Lincoln, who wrote fondly of him and his State's efforts. As the war began to move in favor of the Union, the Peace Democrats of Connecticut's Democrat party either joined the moderates or were relegated to the sidelines (Cowden 553).

It is clear that most people of Connecticut supported the war effort, which has been shown multiple times throughout this article series. The purpose of this article was to shed a small bit of light on the fractured and complicated politics of Connecticut during the Civil War. Anti-war, pacifist, or pro-Southern Peace Democrats did not appeal to just a small vocal minority, but a sizable chunk of the population. After the war, returning Connecticut veterans had a great deal of respect for Buckingham. He was instrumental in recruitment for the Union and in raising money to equip CT's regiments. He was known to take out personal loans in order to pay soldiers on time (Lucian). A statue of William Buckingham sits in the West atrium of Connecticut's State Capitol, placed there in 1884.

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.

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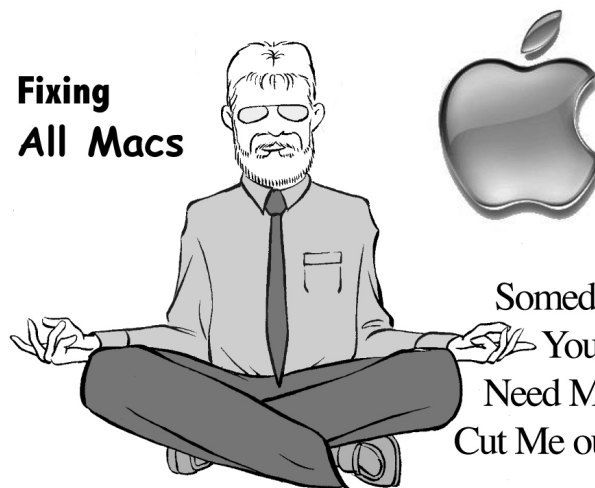


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'Spirits of Place' Show at Dye and Bleach House Gallery

By Sarah Moon

On March 4, the Dye and Bleach House Gallery in Willington will open its second show of the year. The show, "Spirits of Place," draws attention to the energy and presence that places and objects hold in and of themselves, without humans or after humans have abandoned them. The show, featuring both photography and mixed media art, comprises the work of the three different artists: Mark Bilokur, Kelley Martinez and the "shopping carts of Willimantic."



Each collection of works asks the audience to think about places or objects stripped of their day-to-day human use context and thrust forward as their own entities, holding within and around them a spiritual energy. The show can be viewed through the lens of psychogeography, a term defined in 1955 by artist Guy Debord, as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals." By absenting or recontextualizing places and objects, they are freed from mundane, functional associations and can be seen differently, seen into. The works in "Spirits of Place" help us perceive how things and places hold the emotional life of the people who use, inhabit and move about them, even long after those people are gone.

"House Portrait P" by Mark Bilokur shows a white Willimantic Victorian with a wraparound porch covered in greenery appearing to float in space with gold star stickers in the background. The house is situated on top of the torso of an astronaut, replacing the head, who appears to walk on the moon. Above the house flies a cow and a spaceship. The house, unmoored and planted in a fantasy landscape, is read differently than it would be viewed in its everyday neighborhood context. Instead, we see the house as magical, a site for enormous dreams that can't be contained by earth.



Kelley Martinez's photographs focus on abandoned places: a hair salon, a bathroom, the corner of a bedroom. Her images are heavy with shadow contrasted with sharp-lit definition that shows every crack on the wall and piece of detritus on the floor. In her work, the interiors of places are made strange by their extreme disuse. We view them through layers of neglect. But there is nothing haunted-house about her images.

Instead, the photos project an incredible stillness and calm that allows us to view the objects shown coolly. All the heat of life has gone out of these places. But spirits still remain. In the photo of a row of 60s-era salon hair dryers, we see each hood set at a different angle, suggesting that life left these chairs abruptly. They weren't put in order and packed up. Someone walked away from them on a busy day and never looked back.

"River Cart" from the shopping carts of Willimantic shows a cart half submerged in a shallow waterway.

The water appears caramel-colored with rotting vegetation visible at its sandy bottom. The cart, so obviously out of context, and lit up by the bright sun, takes on a very different air than when viewed in the grocery store parking lot. Its spirit life is both sad and noble as it resists decay even though discarded and out of place.

Together, the three sets of artwork powerfully strange-make ordinary things and places. What is exciting about them is the way they leave space for the viewer to enter. What does each observer see when the subject is made strange? What spirits animate these places?

Mark Bilokur started drawing as a child and has continued making art ever since. He is inspired by the paradoxical relationships of signs and symbols, perception and description, of word and image and fascinated by dreams and dreaming, and their relationships with creativity. He works in a variety of mediums including painting, photography, pen and ink and digital. He has a BFA from the University of Connecticut, and an MFA from the Center for Cartoon Studies in Vermont, and is currently practicing in Mansfield, Connecticut.

Kelley Martinez grew up in Georgia and North Carolina, and is now a naturalized New Yorker. Self-taught with an ancient 35mm Praktica, Kelley's photography spans more than three decades of lightbending. She has always had a fascination for the lost, the forgotten, and the abandoned, and she began photographing abandoned buildings, Urbex-style, in earnest in the early 2000s. Kelley's work explores the narratives surrounding the decay of structures and institutions, the passing of time, and the inevitable incursion of the natural environment into human places. In documenting the beauty in devastated surroundings, she invites a dialogue on the ephemerality of all things, even - especially - those that are assumed to be permanent. She currently resides on Long Island.

The anthropomorphic shopping carts of Willimantic are a symbol of both prosperity and poverty. They have their own Instagram account: @shoppingcartsofwillimantic.

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.


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~ Sunday, March 5th ~
Hugh Blumenfeld & Faithful Sky
Kala Farnham
 4:00 pm ~ \$20

~ Sunday, March 19th ~
Kerri Powers
Patty Tuite & Her Band
 4:00 pm ~ \$20



~ Sunday, April 2nd ~
Rory Block
Lisa Rich
 4:00 pm ~ \$45

~ Sunday, April 16th ~
Atwater Donnelly Trio
Mad Agnes
 4:00 pm ~ \$20



~ Sunday, April 30th ~
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 4:00 pm ~ \$20



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