

NEIGHBORS

No. 219

June 2023

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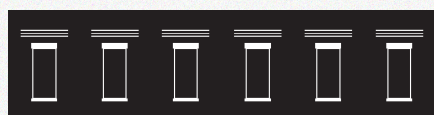
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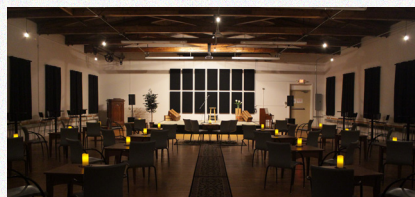
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5.18.23 Photo at top of Kevin Pratt, Jr. (l) and Tom King at the first Willimantic 3rd Thursday Streetfest of 2023. Above right are Sandy and Charles Gallo at the Streetfest. Above left are Rob Dibble and Patricia Jones at the Shaboo Reunion Concert at Jillson Square on Saturday, May 27th.
Pete Polomski photos.

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

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On our cover: The staff of Tri-County Greenhouse in Mansfield Depot: Chris Campbell, Colleen Sweetland, Mary Bacon and Laurie Bidwell. Read Dennis Pierce's article on page 26. Photo by Dennis.

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The Beauty and Power of Community

By Loretta Wrobel

Not one but two affirming gatherings captivated me within the last month, my May birthday celebration month. One was the annual meeting of the Willimantic Food Coop and the other was a celebration of the Keep Ashford Rural group that spearheaded the response to the threat of a mega warehouse in Ashford. I feel honored and proud to be a part of both communities. They are working to create a greener and more equitable world. As Margaret Mead said many years ago, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”



Every year the Willi Coop has an annual meeting where the previous year's sales, growth, profits, and membership is reported. In 2022 over three hundred people joined as new members. Because of inflation, the Coop had to be a wizard, juggling food prices while trying to maintain a viable profit to enable the store to thrive. A daunting task that the staff handled with considerable success.

The one action that left me breathless, this grueling past year, was that our Coop managed to give all employees a raise and committed to a living wage for all workers! A jaw-dropping example of walking your talk. It is one thing to say you are for equality and fairness, and quite another to act on your beliefs and principles in uncertain times. Food prices jumped skyward this past year. The question staring at the store was how much can a shopper absorb?

I am so jubilant that the cooperative principles are taken seriously at the remarkable Willimantic Food Coop. It is not always easy to embrace an alternative business model, especially in hard times. The true test of your commitment is in holding fast your core values, even in trying situations. The combo of ongoing covid issues and ever rising food costs stressed all of us. Food is essential, and how to ensure that healthy, locally grown food is not so expensive that it becomes unaffordable to many of the members is a difficult task. And the Cooperative must keep paying constantly higher prices for supplies and inventory. Our Coop managed to do this in 2022, despite a most troublesome year.

As I sat at our annual meeting of approximately fifty committed, long term Coop advocates, I sensed a feeling of comradery, connection, and pride in being a part of a Coop community that works daily to support local agriculture, provide healthy food, and bottom line, is committed to diversity and inclusion. The Coop is one of the most successful businesses in Willimantic. It helped transform the image of the town. Numerous customers travel from locations far from Willimantic, and these individuals bring energy, money, and vitality to the town. A win-win for all.

I was pleased to attend the party for the Keep Ashford Rural group, as they celebrated their first victory. This small
4 Neighbors

group of dedicated residents worked tirelessly to inform and educate the citizens of Ashford about the potential that a giant warehouse could destroy the natural beauty and resources in the area by Interstate Highway Exit 72 Interchange in north Ashford. As a result of their diligence, hundreds of residents spoke up at the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) public hearings and/or wrote letters to the PZC to express their opinions about the proposed text amendment. That amendment would have allowed zoning regulations to accommodate a hideously mammoth warehouse (over a million square feet and fifty-five feet high) in an area rich in waterways, trees, and wildlife. It supports a cold-water stream habitat managed by CT DEEP (Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) that has Wild Brook Trout. This dynamic group created a website, distributed signs that sprouted mushroom-like throughout our town of Ashford, and provided education about the potential dangers of constructing such a project in our quiet rural environment.

What a monumental task! The Keep Ashford Rural band were present at the town transfer station on several occasions, informing people, answering questions, and expressing passion about the potential for negative outcomes in this area that is home to the headwaters of two major rivers. The area also has abundant wetlands and is about a mile from Lake Chaffee, a densely populated area. These fierce activists wrote letters to the editor, got several articles published in area papers, and mobilized citizens to become involved. What an amazing accomplishment by a small group of people who care about their town and want it to retain its rural character. As it turns out, they are not in the minority, as more than a hundred folks were inspired to take a stand and move out of their comfort zone to speak up. I still shake my head in awe and admiration for the success of Keep Ashford Rural. It affirms that change is possible and that you can make a difference. A grand lesson for all of us in these times of huge controlling corporations and extremely wealthy individuals believing they have enough money and influence to do whatever they want. It points out that we as citizens can have an impact, especially when we come together as a committed body. It is not essential that the group be large, as the numbers are not as relevant as the strength of the commitment. We can be shapeshifters, and assist in working towards a healthier and harmonious environment.

The Willi Coop is a larger group, but it is mostly a small percentage that are working to keep the store operating on cooperative values and rules. The Keep Ashford Rural group is obviously a smaller group, but shows loudly that they can make a big impact against a major well-known developer. The lesson is to listen up and keep your ears and eyes open to what is happening and let your views be known. Giving up and saying, “I cannot make a difference!” is not an option. And surprisingly, you do not have to do it all alone. Seek out your affinity group and take a stand. You (and I) will be elated that you did.

Water, Water, Everywhere or Nowhere to Be Found

By Jude Lovdal

In my opinion, North Eastern Connecticut's (Quiet Corner) needs to ban together to put into place a comprehensive Watershed Resource Plan. It is imperative that we focus on planning and not wait until we reach a crisis point or emergency due to potential droughts and climate change.

I know that other parts of the State have addressed this issue- for example the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition -Rivers, Streams, Ponds. It is a non-profit organization, now based in Woodbury, and is one example of proactive stewardship. This group grew out of the efforts of Dr. Marc Taylor after he saw devastation of the Pomperaug River in Southbury. This devastation was due a mass condominium complex (Heritage Village) sinking wells into the Pomperaug to provide its resident's water. Dr. Taylor's efforts lead to work on the Housatonic and much more.

This group advances stewardship of local water resources through scientific research, community education and environmental leadership. It is focused on Western Connecticut which has its own unique geological history. There is an underlying aquifer which is the predominant source of potable water. The Pomperaug discharges into the Housatonic River. The larger watershed includes not only the aquifer underground but the Pomperaug, Nonnewaug and Weekepeemee Rivers, as well as the farmland that encompasses these water resources.

I imagine that part of the beauty of the Quiet Corner is that we have been blessed with a similar comprehensive system of aquifers in many areas. Many other sections may be receiving their public waters from reservoirs far away. I believe UCONN created a serious water supply issue with the Fenton River and has now drilled more and more wells

in the Spring Hill area of Mansfield. Mansfield has plans for many more apartments at Four Corners and will need to tap into public water systems perhaps that may be sourced from far away. We cannot "Grow Mansfield" without potable water sources being ensured.

Other residents are serviced from private wells- some have problems already with wells running dry. This has required putting in more wells, going deeper into bedrock, conserving water and taking other measures. Some small farms and CSA's have put rain barrels into place, which of course are only helpful IF we have enough rain. Other larger farms have had to truck in pool water.

As a Town and Region, we need to have a clear understanding and management of our total watershed and water supply. The Mansfield Hollow, Army Corps of Engineers, is obviously a critical resource. Eastern Highlands Health District may be another. Every member of the community and every developer should be made aware of where their water supply is coming from and ensure that the water is abundant and potable.

We clearly do not want to wait until we have potable water problems- be it from chemicals or rusting pipes, or "organic flow" from farms. We clearly do not want to wait until we have major drought issues and run into water rights battles or major water diversion issues like so much of the rest of the country is facing. Not to mention the suffering being incurred in the rest of the world that has led to mass migration and famine.

Town Committees are often focused on more narrow concerns and need to be educated about the legitimate concerns and potentials for future disasters so that we are not put into "emergency management" positions or crisis.




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Mothers Against Mother's Day

By Delia Berlin

When my daughter was in preschool, she saw a child playing the violin and decided she wanted to play it too. She was too young to understand that it was not as easy as it looked, and she lacked the discipline that such learning would require.

We lived near UConn, and their Community Music School had a Suzuki violin program for very young children. But I feared that my daughter would be turned off to musical learning if she started too soon. By the time she was five, her interest had not waned and she seemed better equipped to give it a try.

The Suzuki method requires parental investment far beyond the obvious things like driving to and from lessons, paying bills, and communicating with instructors. Parents were supposed to attend lessons and coach each practice session. The time commitment was significant. For working parents, many of whom had multiple children involved in different extracurricular activities, this took up much of their already limited leisure time. I had only one daughter and lots of help from her father and stepfather, but between work, commuting time, pets, plants, gardens, and other family and household routines, I did not have much spare time. The sacrifice was worth it, but not entirely painless.

Although my daughter's violin ambitions were self-determined, and she always played for her own pleasure without any musical career goals, she learned much about music in the process. Years later, when her school band needed a clarinetist, she switched from violin to clarinet with ease. Throughout her life, she has continued to play an instrument occasionally and, being married to a composer, she can critique and make creative contributions to her husband's work. Both my daughter and I are happy and grateful about her early music instruction and the role that the Suzuki program played in it. But as I wrote this on Mother's Day, and now that my daughter is also a busy mother, we reminisced about the Mother's Day experiences that such a program put us through.

The memories we recalled were not so much about the program, but about the annual Mother's Day Recitals. Year after year, I would spend several long hours of Mother's Day afternoon sitting in a bucket seat at a parent-packed von der Mehden Recital Hall. Hundreds of children participated in the recital. Some of the little children were still in the "margarine box" stage of Suzuki, a period during which they learn the dynamics of handling a violin with a practice model made out of a margarine box and a ruler. The next group in the skill gradient had real violins, but still could not play music. Instead, they repeated scales and rhythms, such as "Mis-sis-sip-pi hot dog" (four short notes followed by two long notes) in a seemingly endless fashion. The performances were peppered with speeches, applause, flower-giving, and announcements. Although



it was hard to stay attentive through the program, that was a must. Because if you dozed off or blinked, you could miss your own child's performance. The price you paid for those few seconds was the sheer torture of the rest of the program.

What I remember the most is my bewilderment. I felt at once puzzled, resentful, and guilty. What kind of bad mother was I to experience those feelings? Was not attending the recital even an option? Was I the only working mother in the auditorium who could not wait to get out of there to plant her gardens, after an endless winter and a cold spring, with preciously few weekend hours? Could I even express those feelings to the teachers, who worked so hard to put the program together?

I vaguely recall writing a letter. I do not remember if I ever sent it. I know that Suzuki violin was not alone in this custom, because soon after the Suzuki recital came the dance recital, equally painful. A particularly memorable dance recital by the Richard Risley Dance Studio took place at the Jorgensen Auditorium and lasted all day, literally—parents had to run out periodically to get food and drinks for their children, starving backstage!

Time passed, my daughter grew up, and I am no longer at risk of being swept into those crazy Mother's Day recitals. I do not know if they are still customary. Just in case, I can offer some pointers to any potential planners. Mothers are many things besides mothers. They may have multiple children, plus their own mothers, stepmothers, and mothers-in-law, as well as jobs, pets, interests, and responsibilities outside their already boundless roles. Even without adding recitals, Mother's Day itself is not a gift to mothers, but one more set of expectations and pressures. What mothers need most, then and now, is a break, a little time to themselves, to take care of their own needs, since so much of their time is devoted to taking care of others.

EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD YARD SALE - or 20 of them!

Submitted by Roger Burton

The Fletcher Memorial Library is participating in The 2ND Annual HAMPTON TOWN WIDE YARD SALE FRIDAY, JUNE 23th + SATURDAY, 24th 8am to 3pm

Last year Hampton was bussing with people from all over Eastern CT going from house to house in search of "a treasure" or two. Over 20 houses participated, as well as the library, where individuals who didn't want to host a yard sale at their house, rented a space on the library's lawn. A great time was had by all.

If you're a Hampton resident and want to host a yard sale, contact Terri Warner at 860-465-9166 by May 28th to be included in the event map. Or, contact Roger Burton at 703-738-6333 (cell), if you want to get a space on the library's lawn, or, if you want to donate items to the library for their sale tables.

Take Note! 20th Anniversary Concert

Submitted by Barbara Comstock-King

The acclaimed a cappella ensemble, Take Note!, is hosting a 20th Anniversary concert Sunday, June 11, at 3:00 p.m., at the First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center, 549 Storrs Road, (junction of Routes 89 and 195). The concert is open to the public and promises to be a special occasion, with brand new musical selections along with old favorites, special guests and other surprises. The concert will be followed by a gala reception. Tax deductible donations toward Take Note! outreach will be gratefully accepted at the door.

Take Note! is a 21-voice a cappella ensemble based in Mansfield, and is comprised of select, talented, local singers from diverse backgrounds who enjoy challenging, eclectic musical styles. Under the artistic direction of Linda Tracy, the concert is a way to thank the many Take Note! supporters who make it possible for the group to offer benefit performances for other local nonprofits free of charge, and to help Take Note! maintain and expand its outreach.

Since the group's inception in 2003, Take Note! has helped raise nearly \$300,000 through benefit concerts to help charitable causes throughout Eastern Connecticut. Shelters, food pantries, houses of worship, Hospice, historical societies, libraries, family service organizations, museums, and arts organizations have benefited from the group's mission to help neighbors in need. Take Note! never charges for performances, and provides the community organization sponsoring each concert with marketing materials, concert posters, and programs. All donations collected at the benefit concerts go directly to the designated organization.

Take Note!'s mission statement expresses its vision well: "Through performances in support of charitable endeavors, we are raising spirits, raising voices, raising hope." For more information, visit www.take-note.org, email take-note@earthlink.net, or call (860) 228-2390.

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Hiking Hawaii

By Dennis B. Blanchette

*"Danger hides in beauty
and beauty in danger."*

-Belva Plain

As we approached the Volcanoes National Park visitor center, hoping to peer into the crater for a view of bubbling lava, park rangers were frantically waving people into the building because of high levels outside of volcanic smog, or vog (a haze containing sulfur dioxide, dust, and ash). Being favorably disposed toward our lungs, we decided to skip the crater and headed for the ocean, where the vog levels were lower and we could view the lava flowing into the ocean. It was already afternoon, but the map showed the road ending a scant quarter-mile from our destination. No problem—home for dinner by 6:00, I thought. But three and a half miles from the viewing site, the road was blocked off and we were directed to a small parking lot. I asked the ranger why the road was closed.

"It was constructed by FEMA."

"So what? Looks in pretty good condition."

"It's for emergencies."

"We need to get to the lava before dark."

"The Park Service would love to let you use it, but FEMA won't allow it."

*

Janet had said, "Next trip, Hawaii."

Luckily my back was toward her, so she could not see me picking my jaw up off the floor. But she sensed the delay. "There are nice beaches there," she said.

"That's a long way to go for a beach."

"The snorkeling is supposed to be fantastic."

"I have zero percent body fat. I turn blue after 10 minutes in the water."

"Hiking and kayaking."

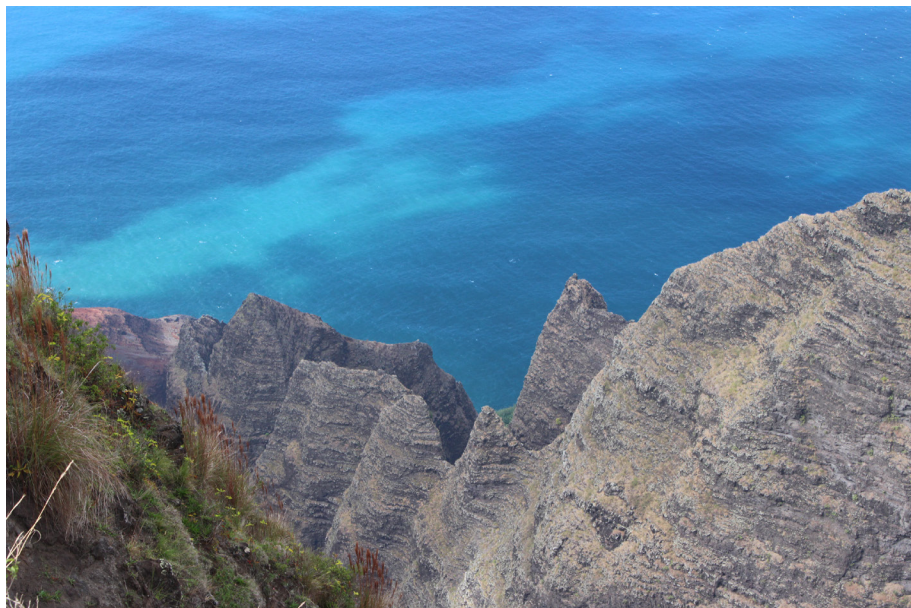
"Meh."

"Kilauea volcano."

I smiled. "When do we leave?"

*

We couldn't convince the ranger that our emergency was of sufficient magnitude to warrant opening the gate, so we began walking down the gravel road toward the plume of steam. After a couple of hours the emergency road ended, consumed by the lava. Signs at this juncture warned of toxic fumes, hot lava, steep cliffs, and hot steam ahead. We followed a rope across the hardened, jagged lava for another two miles to the viewing area and joined a few others already there waiting for the perfect sunset picture. Everyone was staring in awe at the sight of the glowing red lava entering the ocean



Na Pali Coast showing fluted mountains. Taken from end of awa'awapuhi trail.

and the massive white steam plume rising several hundred feet into the air like a giant exclamation point. It was already dark and overland lava flows glowed in the distance like radioactive spiderwebs. I was tempted to poke some with a stick, but that was said to anger the volcano goddess Pele and besides, I was hungry.

Kilauea is the most active volcano in the world. Since the current eruption began in 1983, lava has wiped out 8½ miles of roads, destroyed 700 houses, and created 500 acres of new land (which of course is claimed by the state). Shortly after we left Hawaii, 23 people viewing the lava from the ocean were injured when a "lava bomb" crashed through the roof of their tour boat and the viewing area where we had been standing was completely destroyed.

Captain Cook is credited with the discovery, in 1778, of the Hawaiian Islands. He also discovered that there were already 300,000 people living there. It is said that he had misgivings about his effect on the natives by landing there, showing more self-awareness than most explorers. He did it anyway, but at least restricted his sick crewmen to the ship. He was revered as a god for a while, but, in an epic display of how fast the mighty can fall, he was stabbed to death by the natives in a dispute over a missing longboat. Traders and whalers began arriving, bringing diseases that reduced the population from 300,000 to 40,000. Then the Protestant missionaries arrived and took care of the remainder, wiping out their culture and religion in the name of Christianity and providing the cover to rationalize further conquest. In 1893, American businessmen abrogated the monarchy that ruled Hawaii and deposed the queen, leading to eventual statehood.

The trail to Mauna Ulu ("growing mountain") passes a variety of lava formations: lava tubes, lava trees, and both types of lava: the folded, ropy, or smooth lava called pahoehoe and the crumpled and jagged type called 'a'ā. Hiking up Mauna Ulu, the lava shattered beneath our feet, like that thin white ice you used to love breaking as a kid. The banks at the crater



Author's wife Janet with giant agave-like plant.

Photos by author.

rim were severely undercut, but there were no signs warning of the danger and no railing to keep you a safe distance away. The closer you got to the edge, the better the view, but the greater the danger. Risk versus reward. Your choice. I was beginning to like this place.

On our last night before leaving for Kauai, the lava had risen to within a few feet of the top of the crater and jets of lava were spewing several feet into the air. This extraordinary view of nature in its most primeval fierceness brought the trip to a whole new level.

*

The first order of business in Kauai was to hike a section of the Kalalau Trail, one of the top-rated trails in the world and also one of the most dangerous, down to Hanakapi'ai Beach. At the trailhead there were signs warning of serious injury or death from hazardous cliffs, flash floods, and falling rocks. Further on, an ominous handmade sign warned,

“Do not go near the water—currents have killed 83 people.” Nevertheless, people were hiking in sandals, without any gear save for a water bottle. I realized the need for the signs while at the same time realizing that the people for whom they were meant would never pay any attention to them.

The narrow muddy trail switchbacked down to the ocean through small hanging valleys and dense tropical vegetation. Plants with swordlike leaves that looked like agave on steroids towered over us. Jagged spires of rock jutted skyward from the cliffs above like displaced termite mounds. Breaks in the vegetation offered breathtaking views of the Na Pali Coast. A couple of hours and several hundred vertical feet later, we arrived at the beach where 83 people had drowned. Seconds later, a young man hobbled down the trail, leaning on his girlfriend for support and in obvious distress. They

continued on page 11

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Taste of Mansfield's 2nd Annual Champion Awards for Connecting the Community Through Local Food

Submitted by Margaret Chatey, Communications Specialist, Mansfield Town Manager's Office

The Taste of Mansfield and community partners including the Mansfield Agriculture Committee and Economic Development Commission have selected the recipients of the second annual Taste of Mansfield Champion Awards.

The Taste of Mansfield Champion Awards program was initiated to recognize Mansfield producers, sellers, and communicators/educators who are leaders in connecting the community through local food and have a demonstrated record of promoting the Taste of Mansfield mission. The public was invited to nominate potential champions based on the following criteria:

- Sells or serves local food or an agricultural product with a focus on Mansfield farms and farm stands,
- Educates customers/clients about where local food comes from through various media, or
- Acts as a leader and advocate for promoting local food

The 2023 Taste of Mansfield Champion Award Winners are:

- Chelsea Cherrier, Educator
- Dennis Pierce, Advocate
- George Bailey, Producer
- Julia Cartabiano, Special Posthumous Award

Chelsea Cherrier is described as a local food system warrior by her peers at CLiCK in Windham, where she has served as Education Coordinator for the past three years. Chelsea grew up in Mansfield, attending Mansfield schools, and recently returned from the West Coast after earning a Master's Degree in Nutrition. With a focus on wellness, she develops educational programs and classes related to healthy living focused on food for the community, often interpreting in Spanish for participants. She created the Cooking Across Cultures program at CLiCK, which addresses racism in the food industry and community. Within the past year, Chelsea has also organized a successful effort to increase local food processing for farmers at CLiCK. She is an active partner with Mansfield with the Farms to Families distribution and establishing growing relationships with local farmers and producers. Chelsea is also passionate about food waste management, and has created programs for food businesses on how to build composting into their management culture. Chelsea is instrumental in expanding CLiCK's influence as a food hub for our region.

Dennis Pierce has had a long and winding career associated with local food in Mansfield. He worked as the Market Master for the Storrs Farmers Market, and is still a frequent



Chelsea Cherrier and Dennis Pierce. Contributed photo.

customer there. However, Dennis' influence as a local food advocate has expanded way beyond Mansfield. He has more than 40 years of food service experience, including his influential position as Executive Director of Dining Services at the University of Connecticut, from which he recently retired. In that capacity, Dennis established UConn Dining as the largest user of Connecticut-grown produce in the State of Connecticut. His drive to serve fresh and local produce also inspired establishment of the student-run farm on the UConn campus. He has also served as a volunteer advocating for Connecticut Farmland Preservation. Dennis extends his passion for promoting local food to the wider community, contributing a monthly article to the *Neighbors* paper. He relishes visiting and interviewing local farmers, sharing their stories with the wider community, and advocating for community through local food.

George Bailey has been a long-standing fixture here in Mansfield food circles. He was one of the co-founders of the Storrs Farmers Market in 1994. As a maple syrup and honey producer, George marketed his products at the Storrs Farmers Market and in local stores for more than 40 years. He managed a sugar bush of more than 375 taps, producing 300-400 pounds of honey and 60-70 gallons of maple syrup in a typical year. George's career as a civil engineer took him around the country before he returned to Connecticut to work for the Federal Highway Administration. Described by Taste of Mansfield Champion Award winner Diane Dorfer as "always generous with his time and experience," George willingly spoke to groups of children at his sugarhouse or in their classrooms, and donated his precious syrup to church suppers and other community causes. George entered his Mansfield syrup regularly in Mapparama, the premier New England competition for maple syrups. It is described that much to the chagrin of better-known maple-producing regions, George regularly won the top award

continued on next page



George Bailey. Contributed photo.

and brought it back to Mansfield and Connecticut. Although George has relocated to live closer to his son in Massachusetts, he turned his valuable sugar bush over to another generation of producers here in Town. Those who nominated George said it best: “The sight of smoke rising from his sugar house, George in his suspended overalls and hip boots working on the sap buckets and sap line, his serious discussions of beekeeping and syrup-making at the Farmers Market, and the wintery taste of his Grade A Bailey’s Maple Syrup are sorely missed.”

The nominating committee is also recognizing an additional Champion this year. Julia Cartabiano, who passed in late 2022, was the first farm manager at the University of Connecticut’s student farm called Spring Valley Student Farm (SVSF), and served there for 10 years until 2021. She was dedicated to just and

equitable food systems. Julia began her work at Spring Valley Student Farm as a part-time graduate student when she was working toward her Master’s Degree in Plant Science and Landscape Architecture. She is credited with building up the farm and its organic practices, starting with lean resources and just four students in the first year. The farm expanded to grow small fruits and vegetables, native plants, an edible forest garden, and inspired more than 150 student farmers each year on practicing beekeeping, aquaponics, and planting pollinator gardens. She always encouraged students to follow their own interests and supported them in taking on leadership on the farm. In addition to teaching farming practices, Julia also proudly farmed with her son Spencer and his partner Jackie, operating Willow Valley Farm in Willington. Willow Valley Farm is one of our core Mansfield Farms to Families Program produce suppliers today, and a regular farm exhibitor at the Storrs Farmers Market. Jessica Larkin-Wells, who was one of Julia’s students and is the present Farm Manager at SVSF, says, “Julia worked across disciplines, institutions, and borders to unite people around the common goal of sustainable food and right relationship with the earth.”

The winners were announced at the Farmers Forum hosted by the Mansfield Agriculture Committee, and recognized at the start of the May 22 Town Council meeting at the Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building.

Dennis Blanchette continued from page 9

had no gear, no hiking poles, and seemed clueless about what to do about his sprained ankle. Everyone else was studiously intent on ignoring them, so I offered assistance. We had him soak his ankle in the cold stream for a while, then gave him an Ace bandage to wrap it and some Tylenol. As he began the uphill climb, still leaning on his girlfriend, I gave him my hiking poles and wished him good luck.

The views of the Na Pali Coast from the road were spectacular, so of course we immediately wanted a better one. A quick check of the Park Service website revealed that the most popular trail had washed out several years ago. The Awa’awapuhi Trail was open, but the website warned against hiking any trail or access road not delineated on the map by name and color, as you could end up trespassing on private property. This was followed by the statement, “The trail map is not available for distribution or purchase.” We found the trailhead and set off for the coast, hoping to avoid getting shot for trespassing. The trail ended at a cliff with a sheer drop of several thousand feet to the ocean and stunning views of the Na Pali Coast. The blue ocean sparkled like a sapphire and the land was pleated with deep valleys like a massive fluted cake pan deformed by some otherworldly force. There were no warning signs or railings, but somehow we managed to survive.

The writer Belva Plain said, “Danger hides in beauty and beauty in danger.” Hawaii’s beaches are spectacularly beautiful, but also the most dangerous in the world and a leading cause of death for tourists. The hikes are magnificent but carry risks of falling, drowning, burning, or scalding. Signs and common sense protect most of us, and natural selection takes care of the rest.

Note: This article is dedicated to my good friend Jane Coughlin, who provided valuable information on how to access the lava flows and died suddenly in March at the age of 68.

Dennis B. Blanchette is a travel writer and part-time civil engineer.

Scotland Farmers Market

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Wednesday’s 2:30-5:30

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**Friends of the Saxon B. Little
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members are free.
The sale continues June 3-4
from 9-3, all are free.**

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William Bell

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 William Bell, one of the first artists to record for the iconic Stax label.

He was born William Yarbrough in Memphis on July 16, 1939. His professional name came from his grandmother, whose first name was Belle. As a child, he sang in church and began writing songs at age ten. Four years later, Bell won a talent contest and began singing in Memphis-area clubs. He also backed Rufus Thomas, a popular Memphis radio D.J. and recording artist.

In 1957, Bell made his first recordings as a member of the doo-wop group, the Del Rios. By 1961, he was a staff songwriter at Stax Records. His debut release was one of his own compositions, “You Don’t Miss Your Water” (until your well runs dry). The country-soul ballad became a substantial hit down south and spent a week on the national charts.

Bell made several other recordings for Stax before leaving Memphis for a two-year stint in the military. When he returned to civilian life, Stax released his debut album, *The Soul of a Bell*, in 1967. It produced the chart single, “Everybody Loves a Winner.” That same year, bluesman Albert King recorded Bell’s song, “Born Under a Bad Sign.” It was later done by the British rock trio Cream and has been hailed as a classic of the blues.

On December 10, 1967, a heavy snowstorm in Chicago led to the cancellation of one of Bell’s shows. Consequently, he missed the flight that took the life of his good friend and fellow Stax artist, Otis Redding. Devastated by the loss, Bell collaborated with Booker T. Jones (of Booker T. & The MGs) on the 1968 single, “A Tribute to a King.”

Bell’s duet with Judy Clay, “Private Number,” became a top ten hit in England in 1968. Early the following year, he enjoyed his first top ten U.S. R&B hit with the self-written “I Forgot to Be Your Lover.” In 1986, Billy Idol remade it as “To Be a Lover,” taking it to #6 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.

In 1969, Bell relocated to Atlanta and started a short-

lived record label, Peachtree. During his time in Georgia, he also took acting lessons and played Stanley Kowalski in a stage production of Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

After Stax closed its doors in the mid ‘70s, Bell signed with Mercury and had his all-time biggest hit. “Tryin’ to Love Two” reached #1 on the R&B/Soul chart and #10 pop in January 1977. It was also a certified million-seller.

In 1985, Bell founded the Wilbe label and released his album, *Passion*. Its most receptive audience was in the UK. In 1987, Bell was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame and received a Pioneer Award from the Rhythm & Blues Foundation. After an eight-year hiatus from recording, he released *A Portrait Is Forever*, an album of new material, in 2000. In 2003, Bell received the W.C. Handy Heritage Award. His next album, *New Lease on life*, came out in 2009. Six years later, he appeared in *Take Me to the River*, a documentary film about the Memphis music scene.

In 2016, Bell revived the Stax label to release his album, *This Is Where I Live*. The following year, it won the Grammy for Best Americana Album. This led to a major career boost for William Bell, which included a performance at the BBC’s “50 Years of Soul” concert at London’s Royal Albert Hall. He was also one of the last performers to appear at B.B. King’s Blues Club in New York City

before it shut down in 2018.

In 2020, the National Endowment for the Arts named William Bell one of its fellows, the “nation’s highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. These lifetime honor awards of \$25,000 are given in recognition of both artistic excellence and efforts to sustain cultural traditions for future generations.”

Rock critic Dave Marsh included three of Bell’s songs--“You Don’t Miss Your Water,” “Everybody Loves a Winner,” and “I Forgot to Be Your Lover”--in his 1989 book, *The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made*.

Charted singles:

“You Don’t Miss Your Water” (1962) Pop #95

“Any Other Way” (1962) Pop #131

“Share What You Got” (1966) R&B #27

“Never Like This Before” (1967) R&B #29

continued on next page



“Everybody Loves a Winner” (1967) R&B #18, Pop #95

“Everyday Will Be Like a Holiday” (1967) R&B #33

“A Tribute to a King” (1968) R&B #16, Pop #86

“Every Man Ought to Have a Woman” (1968) Pop #115

“Private Number” (duet with Judy Clay, 1968) R&B #17, Pop #75

“I Forgot to Be Your Lover” (1968-69) R&B #10, Pop #45

“My Baby Specializes” (duet with Judy Clay, 1969) R&B #45, Pop #104

“I Need You Woman” (duet with Carla Thomas, 1969) Pop #106

“Happy” (1969) Pop #129

“My Whole World Is Falling Down” (1969) R&B #39, Pop #101

“Lovin’ on Borrowed Time” (1973) R&B #22

“I’ve Got to Go on Without You” (1973) R&B #54

“Gettin’ What You Want (Losin’ What You Got)” (1974) R&B #39

“Tryin’ to Love Two” (1976-77) R&B #1 (1 week), Pop #10

“Coming Back For More” (1977) R&B #66

“Easy Comin’ Out (Hard Goin’ In)” (1977) R&B #30

“Bad Time to Break Up” (1983) R&B #65

“I Don’t Want to Wake Up (Feelin’ Guilty)” (duet with Janice Bullock, 1986) R&B #59

“Headline News” (1986) R&B #65

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

Dean Farrell hosts “The Soul Express” twice a week: 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 soulxpress@gmail.com.



“Surge” by Joan Sonnanburg

Joan Sonnanburg at Arts of Tolland

Arts of Tolland, 22 Tolland Green will host local artist Joan Sonnanburg during the month of June. A reception will be held on Saturday June 3 from 4 - 6p.m. Refreshments will be served and the public is welcome.

Artist Statement: Growing up in NYC I loved visiting art museums. The painterly brushstrokes of Frans Hals were shockingly contemporary; the expressions on the faces of Aztec sculptures were familiar; the eyes of Greco-Egyptian sarcophagi portraits stared back at me; Vermeer was pure magic. I loved that I could have a visceral communion with artifacts from distant places and eras and thus to the human beings who created them.

My own work is diverse in subject matter and style, playful and at times verging on the surreal. It is driven by a desire to share quotidian epiphanies – like the fact that the woodgrain on sheets of plywood is beautiful and worthy of notice; the painting hanging over every couch is not wallpaper to be ignored; *Still Life* is an art genre, but the words themselves convey multiple meanings; animal skins are beautiful and tragic; the idea of permanence as a motivation for tattoos on fleeting flesh is ironic. Everyday is full of opportunities for wonder, delight, reflection and amusement. I would love my work to evoke a moment of such experience.

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Eversource's Alleged Budget Plan

By Lois Happe

Several years ago, I shifted my payment to Eversource to their budget plan, recognizing that spreading the cost evenly throughout the year would help me anticipate my monthly expenses.

At the time, I understood that the calculation would be made on the basis of the prior year's usage, coupled with the prospective rate for supplying electricity.

I track my usage each month, so I know when I have required more or less energy than the previous year. To my recollection, there have not been significant fluctuations in recent years.

I also research options for other energy suppliers and have often made shifts as circumstances and rates change. I am not averse to paying a premium to secure an energy supplier that relies on renewable sources more than Eversource.

In September 2022, the annual estimate for my budget plan was significantly higher than the previous year, although my usage had not been significantly different. At the time, I believed the increase was related to Eversource's intention to raise their price for energy supply in January. Eversource assumed that my bill would therefore increase, without recognizing that I had in the past often secured a lower rate by opting for another supplier. Nevertheless, I did not challenge the change, thinking that the following September I would see a credit in my account for whatever overage there was.

Then, much to my surprise, I received a bill early this year with another substantial increase, from \$359 to \$490 per month. Again, I had had no noticeable change in usage and, in fact, I had opted to use a supplier that offered a lower rate (with a two-year contract) than the one charged by Eversource. I was completely mystified about this substantial increase.

I was angry because I believed that a budget plan was an annual contract. I was prepared to pay the increase that had been calculated in September. And I had accounted for that increase in my budget for the coming year.

And I was angry because there was no explanation of why the increase was necessary.

I am still outraged. I called customer "service" to have my questions answered. I expected the usual runaround with the phone tree and I wasn't disappointed; it took several false starts to finally reach a person who would listen to my concerns. To her credit, she was courteous throughout, in spite of my increasing irritation at not receiving much information. Her task was to mollify irritated customers; she had no authority to address any of my concerns.

The only answer I received as to why I was charged this increase was that Eversource now reviews "budget" plans midway through the year—by computer—to be sure that payment covers actual usage. The increase, apparently, was based solely on an algorithm and not on information about changes in usage or supply rates.

This is an outrageous practice.

First, a budget plan is not a budget plan if it cannot be relied on as a year's estimate. Calling it a budget plan is fraudulent.

Second, an agreement is an agreement. Any changes in the agreement should be mutually discussed. I was not consulted nor informed as to the reasons for the increase. An automated computer program is not an adequate explanation.

Third, while Eversource is a public utility, it has no competition, so it functions like any other monopoly, charging what it can since there is absolutely no recourse for its customers. I cannot secure electricity from another company, I cannot affect any of Eversource's policies and practices, I cannot even get a satisfactory answer to my legitimate questions about why I am being charged nearly double what I had been paying a year ago.

Fourth, Eversource has collected, to my mind, a surplus each month that is money they can use at their discretion, money that *might* be returned to me later. In the meantime, that money should be in my pocket to be used as I decide, not to support Eversource's cash flow.

Did I mention the outrageous salaries paid to Eversource officers?

It is no solution for me to return to paying actual usage each month as Eversource calculates it. I opted for a budget plan in order to distribute the cost of electricity over a year rather than adjust to the usual fluctuations between seasons.

Neither is the public program for heating assistance a good solution. I understand that it is a benefit to low-income households, but the policy gives Eversource an excuse to maintain rates that are poorly regulated and poorly explained. Rates should be reasonable for everyone; the Connecticut state budget should not be in the business of subsidizing a utility by picking up the tab for some households. A thorough inspection of Eversource finances would be a better approach on the part of the state. And that report should be made public.

So far as I can tell, the state's Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) is toothless. Ostensibly it is supposed to provide oversight to Eversource; its purpose is to be a watchdog to protect the public from price gouging. The fact that Connecticut has the highest electrical rates in the country implies that "regulation" is not especially effective.

It is unlikely that I am the only person in Connecticut who has had this experience with Eversource. The rate increase in the last year bears more inquiry than usual. The legislature should exercise its power of investigation and redress—this is a circumstance that affects every customer of Eversource. The public is not well served by this public utility. The public is not well protected by PURA. It is time the excesses of Eversource are curbed.

Storrs Congregational Church-UCC Installing Senior Minister

Submitted by Annetta Miller

Storrs Congregational Church-United Church of Christ (UCC) will install the first woman Senior Minister in its 286-year history at ceremonies scheduled for June 4 at the church. The Rev. Diane Peterson Seaborn takes over the position left vacant by the Rev. Matthew Emery, who now serves a UCC congregation in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Seaborn was Interim Associate Pastor of the Village Church, a United Church of Christ congregation in Wellesley, Mass. before assuming her role at the Storrs church last fall. She is a graduate of Andover-Newton Theological School where she received the H. Otheman Smith Preaching Award and was an inductee into the Jonathan Edwards Honor Society.

She said she is excited about expanding on SCC's inclusive and community-oriented ministries. While church membership declined nationwide during the pandemic, "there's a curiosity out there; people are still interested in making meaning in their lives," she said. "My passion is to figure out how to meet people where they are and help them find that meaning."

Seaborn sees her role as the church's first woman leader as an opportunity. "I think it's important to have the different perspective that women bring to their work. In a field that is still male-dominated and where there continue to be societal norms and expectations, women are both nurturing and strong leaders."

About Storrs Congregational Church-UCC

Storrs Congregational Church-UCC is a welcoming, histor-

ic, and progressive Christian community located at 2 North Eagleville Road in Storrs Mansfield, CT.

The congregation has been officially "Open and Affirming" since 1994, meaning that it is committed to welcoming into full participation in the life of the church people of any age, economic status, gender, marital status, race, sexual orientation, and physical, emotional and mental capability.



In 2018, it became a "Just Peace" Church within the United Church of Christ. The Just Peace movement is a call to non-violent action to alleviate systemic injustice of every kind. It affirms the right of people everywhere in the world to basic needs such as food, healthcare, safe housing, employment, and education.

The church regularly sponsors outreach activities in the areas of hunger and food justice, homelessness, refugee resettlement, mental health, environmental stewardship, and more.

In cooperation with Connecticut Foodshare, the state's food bank, it operates an on-site food pantry. The pantry serves more than 100 families from both the University community and the greater Mansfield area.



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East Bay Bike Path (at left) and a view from the William C. O'Neill Bike Path, nee South County Bike Path. Photos by author.

Bicycling in Rhode Island

By Dean Farrell

In previous issues of *Neighbors*, I discussed the various bike paths I have ridden in Connecticut. We will now head east to the Ocean State. Here are the paths I've bicycled in Rhode Island:

Blackstone River Greenway. This 30-mile path runs between South Worcester, MA, and Pawtucket, RI. Unfortunately, it is broken up into several sections. The completed off-road parts include 3.5 miles between South Worcester and Millbury, MA; a 3.6-mile path in Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park; and a second 3.5-mile stretch from Uxbridge to the state line, which repeatedly crosses the Blackstone River. The longest off-road segment connects Woonsocket and Pawtucket, RI.

East Bay Bike Path. Spanning 14 miles between Providence and Bristol, this paved trail offers sensational maritime scenery and a variety of coastal wildlife. You'll ride through eight different parks, as well as historical waterfronts.

Beginning at India Point Park in Providence, you'll ascend a steep ramp to George Redman Linear Park, a pedestrian bridge named for a local bike enthusiast (now deceased). In East Providence, you'll go south on First Street for two blocks and regain the trail. For the next mile, it is separated from Victory Parkway by a split rail fence. From there, you'll head down a steep embankment to the old railroad corridor, which spans Watchemoket Cove on a causeway. You'll have an unobstructed view of the Providence skyline and various shipping facilities. And you'll be near Squantum Woods Park, which boasts 90+ species of bird.

After riding through a mile-long wooded stretch, you'll be in the Riverside community. There is an old railroad depot before Lincoln Avenue. One mile later, you'll cross Crescent View Avenue, where you can turn right and ride one-half mile to the Crescent Park Looff Carousel. Built in 1895,

it sports 62 carved figures and four chariots. For the next six miles, the path veers through the town of Barrington and ends at Independence Park in Bristol.

Quonset Point Bike Path. In a way, I rode this trail by accident. When I looked it up online, I misread it as being 25 miles long. It is, in fact, a mere 2.5 miles in length. Oops!

Located in North Kingstown, the Quonset Point Path begins at Calf Pasture Point Beach and runs along the town's eastern coastline. It offers a quick but pleasant ride through an area that includes many shops, a Navy Seabee Museum, and a ferry to Martha's Vineyard.

Washington Secondary Bike Path. At 19 miles, this asphalt path runs from Cranston to Coventry. Certain parts have their own names, e.g. Cranston Bike Path, Warwick Bike Path, West Warwick Greenway, Coventry Greenway, and Trestle Trail. It is, however, one continuous path.

The eastern leg of the trail is urban, with homes and businesses abutting it, and is not very well maintained. However, it becomes smoother and more bucolic the farther west you ride. Mid-route is the Horgan Elementary School, whose east end boasts a gleaming red caboose from the old New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. It is a mere 200 feet from the path and well worth checking out. Also in the area, though a bit farther from the trail, is Riverpoint Park.

The path proceeds through West Warwick and crosses a number of streets. Not to worry, though. The crossings are clearly marked, have little traffic, and provide several opportunities to grab some food or take a bathroom break. In Coventry, the trail, now surrounded by tall trees, is frequented not only by bicyclists but joggers, dog walkers, and those out for a leisurely stroll. It also crosses the scenic, winding Pawtucket River not once but twice. And the bridges offer eye-popping views.

At Hill Farm Road, the trees thin out into a more open area with a huge parking lot that borders the trail. You also will find interesting signage about railroad history. The path ends 3.5 miles later at another parking lot. The aim is to one day link it to Connecticut's Moosup Valley State Park Trail.

William C. O'Neill Bike Path, *nee* South County Bike Path. Renamed for the senator who spearheaded its development, this path follows the long-defunct Narragansett Pier Railroad. I recommend picking it up at the Amtrak station in West Kingston. The trail heads south under a thick covering of trees. Near the one-mile mark is a side trail that proceeds two miles to the University of Rhode Island campus. This area further abuts the Great Swamp Wildlife Management Area. In the spring and fall, you're certain to see flocks of migrating birds.

At around the four-mile mark, you'll enter the Tri-Pond Park, home to ponds, streams, nature trails, and a nature center. As you come out of the woods in Peace Dale, the trail merges with Railroad Street for approximately 0.2 mile. On your left, about halfway up, is a renovated railroad depot, which now houses a business. You'll cross Church Street and pick the trail back up. Go another 0.7 mile and you'll cross Main Street in Wakefield, where there is a replica of a train station.

You'll next find yourself at the commercial center on Kingstown Road. The path follows MacArthur Boulevard for 0.2 mile, then veers to the right, and you're back on the trail. From there, you'll ride behind Narragansett Elementary School. The path ends in the parking lot of the community center. It is hoped that one day, the trail will include a new section that continues to the town beach.

In a future issue of *Neighbors*, I will discuss the bike paths I have ridden in Massachusetts.

The d'Archive 50

Submitted by Graham Stinnett

The UConn Archives & Special Collections podcast *d'Archive* released its 50th episode on April 24th, 2023 on college radio 91.7fm WHUS and wherever you get your podcasts.

Beginning in August of 2017, the Archives staff began expanding its outreach program to the airwaves by training on sound engineering and radio protocols in order to effectively bring its collections to new audiences. Since then the radio program and podcast has featured weekly episodes drawing from countless collections held by the Archives & Special Collections and amplifying the expertise of over 60 collaborators ranging from past and present archives and library staff, artists, journalists, curators, faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and many others.

The podcast (discoverable on apple podcasts, spotify, whus.org, player fm, and others) has integrated recorded studio interviews, field recordings of events and gatherings, oral histories, archival audio collections, and participant media. Bringing the archives to the airwaves has been a labor of love for its host and colleagues, graphic designers, intro/outro musicians, WHUS station managers, and student talk department directors.

Episode 50 features a new format for the program, integrating field recordings of research sessions within collections to develop critical thinking and information literacy around specific topics of interest.

This episode titled 'Hippie Hobbits' investigates a research question that came out of a donation to the Alternative Press Button Collection in 2022, stemming from the Atlas Obscura article covering these UConn collections. The episode takes a deep dive to investigate the intersection of J.R.R. Tolkien fandom and the late 1960s and early 1970s counterculture.

Noah King, Realtor, ABR, SRS, SFR

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Looking Up

Out of the Rabbit Hole, Onto the Grass and Into the Night

By Bob Grindle

It was our plan this afternoon to inspect the beehives and that meant lighting the smoker. No big deal really, just a quart sized metal container with an attached bellows plus our usual ritual of stoking and lighting it...a bit of paper; some dried pine needles, perhaps a swatch of old burlap and a match, but there is a sort of art to it...this odd palette of fuel creating an exhaust that never quite smells the same from one time to the next and today as I watch the thick smoke rise out of this miniature furnace with a chimney, scenting and painting the surrounding canvas of sky with its cool, pungent and rapidly dissipating cloudiness, my thoughts meander back to a conversation I drifted into recently.

A small group of Hampton neighbors at a nearby organic farm stand were remarking that even in this quiet corner of small towns and villages where we champion the banner "The Last Green Valley," even here, where the landscape of gently rolling hills, unending valleys and hollows hints quietly that perhaps grandeur is overrated...it seems the pace of our lives often moves along at a speed well above what many of us feel is reasonable and prudent. Try as we might to tame this wild, fast paced, beast that most of us try to ride, it is easy to get the feeling we are about to be thrown off at any minute and never quite get comfortable in the saddle.

It happens so easily. Is there a bridge we crossed, some long forgotten deal with the devil we made?...perhaps a lesson we missed while daydreaming, or a societal custom or value we failed to challenge. Chinese proverbs dating back millennia would suggest that simply being alive is to occasionally feel like we are riding the tiger...and getting off safely is the art of survival. From time to time, feeling overwhelmed by the speed of the ride we are all on, I'll take a walk...usually into the woods where I talk with the trees, or around a nearby field listening for the whispering chatter of wind and insect and bird, even a simple sit on the porch helps—shortly after my wife and I were married it was walks at Mansfield Hollow. As a small boy, far from the nearest woodlot, I would climb up onto the roof of our family's house and lie on my back and talk to the stars...sort of a selfie prayer, if you will, plus the thrill

18 Neighbors

of simply being up on the roof. Even in the military, walks into the desert at night were cathartic and healing. A not very well behaved 5th grade student, I would daydream whenever the spirit within me called my name, and it was one of the youngest members of this small group of neighbors that mentioned recently reading that walking barefoot in the grass has been shown to have real value in reducing stress and increasing a sense of connection to the world of nature. However we manage to reconnect or stay connected to our home planet; listening to the Earth's breathing, walking barefoot on her surface or simply standing up for an Earth friendly lifestyle, it is important that we understand that the only ride we get through life is on an Earth that is every bit as alive as we are.

As smoke from the smoker fades to almost nothing, and it becomes clear we'll probably not get to the bees today, Lin is starting to take the wash off the line and it's time to close up the chicken house for the night...twilight is settling over this breezy, chill May late afternoon and Venus is sparkling over the western horizon. The twins, Castor and Pollux in

Gemini and Procyon, the little dog star, are among the first stars to show in the west and it occurs to me that much of my interest in astronomy has always been in the spiritual connection to the world we live in, as much, perhaps more, than the pure fascination with what makes a star work or what keeps a planet in orbit rather than spinning off through the Cosmos.

As the strawberries grow and prosper in this year's abundant rain and sunshine, I look forward as much to the first ripe berry as I do the brilliant midnight light and moon shadows of the full Strawberry Moon of early June. The full moons of summer however are delightful and a walk in a moonlit field or a conversation over a cup of tea or a glass of wine on a bright beach or moon drenched porch can enhance not only a connection to the world around us but the joy of simply being alive. Several decades ago Wendell Berry, a writer and conservationist of almost breathtak-

ing insight wrote the following poem. It seems worth ending with.

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.



AI

Who is AI? I wonder,
It's really hard to say.
He stole my best friend away.
I wish, she could have stayed.

We've known each other,
since the day we were born.
Our friendship, so special
then AI came along.

Our friendship lasted
as time flew by.
We shared our lives
side-by-side.

He drifted in and out,
as he had his way.
Her foundation was bent
when he decided to stay.

We parted at times
each going our ways
as we grew up
that's life, so they say.

We survived,
through thick and thin.
Then AI returned
with his wicked grin.

We've shared our last song.
that's all I can say.
I had to say so long.
As he took her away.

We could talk for hours,
at least that what it seemed.
As we shared our history,
our hopes and our dreams.

As we moved on,
Our lives seem to change.
The past was slipping away.
Life, was no longer a game.

I long, for our friendship.
The memories we shared.
They are only mine now.
As my tears now appeared.

She knows, not me,
it is plain to see.
AI – Alzheimer's
has taken her away.

By Jeanne Esterquest

Tai Chi Home

Laying the Groundwork

By Joe Pandolfo



When it's June in New England the woods have an exuberance - the kind you won't find in the other months. After a good rain you almost see the ferns and buds and crowns of trees growing before your eyes. Blossoms hold the light in a way that can draw you in like a honeybee.

In the Taoist calendar the Wood energy of spring is peaking and summer's Fire energy is close enough to touch. Add the melodies of a dozen birds and the whole world is rising and radiant. The way a little kid feels after warm praise for a new achievement. The way a new couple feels when they discover they're actually in love.

Beneath every blushing bloom, of course, are roots holding ground. Even deeper, the age-old seedbed, generations of seasons and layers of all the fallen petals. That's the wisdom of the woods reminding us to live like it's June, every moment. You never know what any living moment is laying the groundwork for.



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Saturday and Sunday, June 10 & 11, 10 am to 5 pm

Submitted by Suzy Staubach

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For more information and a map, please visit:

ArtGardenCT.com

Ashford

Willow Tree Pottery, 24 Bebbington Road

Set in an old hayfield, this is a welcoming old-fashioned country garden. There are arbors, informal hedges, stone benches, an armillary, and a Szalay hummingbird print on the corrugated kiln shed. You are invited to sit or meander from garden to garden.

Host Artist: Suzy Staubach, garden historian, writer and potter, makes sturdy yet elegant pottery including bowls, mugs, platters, casseroles, garden bells, tiny houses, finials, rain drums and more. Suzy is the author of *A Garden Miscellany* published by Timber Press.

Guest Artist: Barbara Katz, an award-winning ceramic artist, creates ceramic sculpture and pottery, including spirit houses, cat and kitten mummies, large vessels and other pieces for the home and garden.

Guest Artists: Gretchen Geromin and Lauren Merlo work as a team, collaborating on unique, handmade cutting boards and signs made from local wood. A meticulous craftsman, Lauren builds the boards from strips he glues together. Gretchen burns her original art onto each piece - birds, flowers, horses, frogs, dragons and fairies. Gretchen will create a "rock garden" with her painted rocks for the Tour.

Coventry

Barbara Timberman Watercolor Paintings, 1194 Main Street

Step into an enchanting world of colorful flowers, vegetables, berry bushes and herbs in this hillside cottage garden in Coventry Village. There's a beautiful handmade greenhouse, a daz-

zling "Poppy Path" and many charming handmade elements.

Host Artist: Barbara Timberman creates exuberant water color paintings and hand bound journals (perfect for your next garden diary). Her detailed paintings focus on plants, often complimented with a tea cup, vase, bottle or other domestic object.

Guest Artist: Kathleen Lepak's calligraphic artwork and illustrations illuminate and enhance words that inspire and engage. She strives to make language come alive to the eye as well as the mind.

Guest Artist: Richard White was recently named a Connecticut Art Hero by the Connecticut Office of the Arts. Richard is a figurative painter and illustrator and a photographer.

Storrs/Mansfield

Fenton River Studio, 287 Gurleyville Road

This is a highly original garden bursting with sculpture and flowers. A planted "garden lady" greets visitors. There are planted peacocks, a seven-foot lion, a fountain, fairy houses and more, all surrounded by peonies, iris, and roses.

Host Artist: Shauna Shane works in oil, pastel, watercolor and sculpture. Her subject matter includes landscape, still life, figures and animal subjects. Shauna creates cement leaves, cement and planted sculptures, and hyper-tufa planters.

Flying Dragon Farm Studio, 533 Chaffeeville Road

Mary Noonan calls her garden "tangled." It's a lush mix of fruit, flowers and vegetables. There is an unusual aquaponics garden with a goldfish pond.

Host Artist: Mary Noonan creates oil paintings, watercolors and encaustic paintings of landscapes, flowers and animals. She takes her inspiration from the natural world, found objects, music and history. Her creativity is, as she says, eclectic.

Guest Artist: Elizabeth Clark makes a variety of crafts and art with a concentration on Jewelry. She likes to use natural elements and themes in her work. Stones, glass, wood, leather, and metals grace her pieces. Sometimes she adds an insect wing that she has found or a snippet from a plant. Elizabeth creates with a touch of whimsy. "Odd," she says, "can be beautiful."

Guest Artist: Leanne Peters creates vibrant, detailed works in oil, pencil and digital. She recently licensed several of her artworks for puzzles, fabrics, paint by numbers, and more. Through her studio Art and a Little Magic, she offers prints, cards, bookmarks, postcards, and various reproductions of her colorful, detailed nature artworks.

Khuyay Farm, 441 Warrenville Road (Route 89)

This is an alpaca farm with fenced pasture land, a pretty red barn, gnarled old trees and wildflowers. There's a new shade garden. Later in the summer, the farm hosts a stand out front for cut flowers.

Host Artist: Janet Dauphin creates fused glass nightlights,

continued on next page

dishes, and window art in brilliant colors and exciting forms. She continuously marvels at how the heat of her kiln transforms, shapes and colors glass. Magic!

Guest Artist: Nora Charters' canvas and paper prints celebrate the small-town life and people, the farms, woods, yoga, flowers and trucks of the softer moodier side of the Quiet Corner. Her work captures the fleeting beauty of this world.

Michelle Allison: Wood Turned Art, 638 Browns Road

New to the Art and Garden Tour this year, Michelle's gardens include perennials, an entrancing water feature and stunning architectural elements. Her "installation sculpture space," adorned with stacked rocks, walls and paths, showcases recycled agricultural, industrial and architectural metal works, some that she has fabricated herself, some by other artists.

Host Artist: Michelle Allison creates lathe-turned vessels sculpted from local, found hardwoods. She extends the boundaries of the wood medium with thin wall piercing, dyes, airbrushing and a dramatic, color saturated, high gloss finish. A perfect marriage of the natural properties of wood with her modern, irreverent artistic vision.

Scott Rhoades Studio, 422 Browns Road

Ellie and Scott Rhoades have created a head turning garden between their house and Scott's studio. There are stone arches, formal borders, terraces, a pool, fruit trees, a highly productive vegetable garden, a swing and more.

Host Artist: Scott Rhoades' award winning acrylic paintings are predominantly representational in style. His subjects, are based on his experiences and travel: the wilderness, weathered barns, historic buildings, people and animals.

Willington

Holes in the Woods, 17 Lustig Road

A labor of love, this garden features streams, a half-acre pond, a colorful wildflower meadow, and acres of mountain laurel. Two miles of named woodland trails wind through an abundance of ferns, moss and rock. Plus, traditional flower beds. Trail maps available.

Host Artist: John C. Starinovich creates functional sculpted, mirrored, wall hung tree holes with adornments. Working with downed trees, he uses hand and power tools for these avant-garde works of art that are best seen and felt in person.

NC Bunnell Studio, 12 Red Oak Hill

A rock garden, a collection of lilacs, towering rhododendrons, a perennial garden, a fish pond and a quiet stream - there's great variety in Nancy's home grounds. Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to this ever-changing Spring to Autumn flower display. People are too.

Host Artist: Nancy Bunnell works in acrylics and pastels. Her imagery ranges from impressionist formal realism to energetic experimental abstraction. Nancy has spent a lifetime inspiring art in others.

Guest Artist: Aline Hoffman creates gourd art, birch paintings on textured paper and pyrography on wood. She cuts, pierces, paints and sands dried gourds to create her unique brightly colored sculptural art.

Guest Artist: Rich Longmore studied illustration at Parsons School of Design in the long ago pre-digital era. For the last 20 years he has been doing freelance digital illustrations primarily for tabletop role playing games. Most of these pieces are part of his 'Cryptozoography' project. They are drawings of fantasy and mythological creatures inspired by 19th century naturalist's prints.

The Art and Garden Tour is a member of the Last Green Valley and participates in CT Open House Day. Several of our gardens are on the Pollinator Pathway. You can follow us on Facebook at ArtandGarden-TourofNortheasternCT. For more information Visit ArtGardenCT.com

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5 Steps to Managing an Inheritance for High-Net-Worth Individuals

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



Receiving an inheritance brings with it a wide range of emotions - grief for the loved one you lost and a sense of gratitude for the lump sum you're about to receive that may afford you new opportunities. But as you tackle the responsibility of managing a large inheritance, it's important to remember that it can too easily be squandered away.

In fact, up to 70% of people who receive an inheritance or other large sums of money (such as a lottery win) will lose it within a few years.¹ Fortunately, as a high-net-worth individual, you and your family may already have a solid sense of responsible saving and spending. But when the time comes to manage an inheritance, there are five steps you may want to consider taking to make the most out of your loved one's final gift.

Step 1: Coordinate With Your Trusted Team

Before making any sudden movements, you should assemble a team of financial professionals you can trust to have your best interest at heart. If you do not yet work with financial professionals, take your time finding those who are familiar with your situation or who have worked with others in similar situations. When a large amount of wealth is involved, you need to know you have professionals with the right intentions. You'll likely want to coordinate with your:

Financial Advisor: With this important change in financial status, you'll want to speak with your financial advisor regarding the effects this inheritance can have on your total financial picture.

CPA: You'll want to work with your CPA to understand the possible tax implications this new inheritance could have on the upcoming tax season.

Attorney: You may already be well aware of the liability and life insurance measures that should be taken, but it won't hurt to work with your attorney to make sure you, your family and your money are protected.

Insurance agent: Beyond a lump sum, some high-net-worth inheritances could include art collections,

classic cars, jewelry and more. To keep your new collections protected, you may want to meet with your insurance agent to discuss these inherited valuables.

Step 2: Understand Your Tax Obligations

According to the IRS, individuals can leave up to \$12.92 million to their heirs without paying any federal estate tax, as of 2023. But if your loved one is leaving you more than that, the estate could be hit with a 40% federal tax bill.² The good news is, there is no inheritance tax at the federal level. However, there are six states that currently employ a state inheritance tax: Nebraska, Iowa, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland.³

Receiving an inheritance from a high-net-worth individual means you could be receiving physical gifts such as vacation properties, family homes, cars, antiques, jewelry, art, and more. Should you decide to sell any of these valuables at a later date, you will be responsible for a capital gain tax. This tax is the difference in value (only if it is an increase) of the item from the date of death of your loved one and how much it sold for. As an example, if you received a vacation property that was valued at \$500,000 and sold it three years later for \$750,000, you would be taxed on the long-term capital gains of \$250,000.

To avoid any tax pitfalls, you may want to discuss all of the tax implications receiving an inheritance could have in the upcoming tax year and later down the road with your financial advisor or CPA as soon as possible.

Step 3: Keep Quiet About Specifics

When receiving a large sum of money, you could easily be tempted to post about it on social media, tell your friends and neighbors or discuss it with extended family. But resisting the urge to talk about your inheritance could be beneficial for several reasons. Making it well known that you've recently received a large sum of money could make you especially susceptible to unwanted business or investment pitches, or it could set an expectation that you're willing and able to pay for friends and family in social settings (going out to eat, vacationing, etc.).

Additionally, especially in the case of high-net-worth families, wealth may not be distributed evenly among the deceased's children and grandchildren. For this reason, you may not want to be too specific with your brothers, sisters, aunts or

continued on next page

uncles in regard to how much inheritance you received.

Step 4: Avoid Making Sudden Decisions

You may be accustomed to living a financially comfortable lifestyle, but almost no one is immune to the emotional excitement of receiving a large lump sum of money. But before you head to the car dealership or book an exotic vacation, stop and take some time to digest your new financial standing and think about your options. In the heat of the moment, you can be much more prone to making rash or unwise financial decisions instead of weighing your debt repayment or investment options.

Whether you get a one-time payout or payment over multiple years, you may feel a sense of sudden financial independence that entices you to quit your job or retire early. This is why working with a team of level-headed, unbiased professionals can help you make financially sound decisions that are not emotionally charged or impulsive.

Step 5: Pay Off Debt Strategically

Maybe your first instinct isn't to purchase a fancy car or buy a beach house, it may be to pay off all your debt - mortgages, car payments, student loans, credit cards, etc. This could be a good choice to make, but you want to be strategic about what debt you decide to pay off and which you end up keeping. For example, it may be beneficial to pay off high-interest debt such as student loans and credit cards. But for loans with lower interest rates, such as mortgages or auto loans, you may be better off using that money to invest instead. Because in some cases, the interest made on certain investments can be greater than the interest you're paying on certain loans. Seeing as everyone's unique financial standings are different, these options are best discussed with your trusted financial professional.

Making your inheritance last takes proper management, discipline, and teamwork. As you move through the five steps above, remember to take your time and ask your team of trusted professionals any questions you may have. You may have spent decades accumulating a high net worth, but when it comes to handling a large influx of wealth, you may not have all the answers. That's why it's important to take your time now to preserve your inheritance for years to come.

If you'd like help with managing your inheritance, [get in touch with us](#) at Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors. We act as fiduciary wealth management advisors to help our clients build and pass along wealth to future generations through our [Plan Well, Invest Well, Live Well™](#) process. You can request a [complimentary consultation](#) on our website or call us at (860) 928-2341.

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1. <http://www.huver.com/MiscResources/Windfall%20Nefe.pdf>
2. <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/estate-tax>
3. <https://taxfoundation.org/state-estate-tax-inheritance-tax-2018/>

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Tip of the Iceberg Phenomenon and Covid

By Bill Powers

A LIFE OF ITS OWN

The January/February edition of *NEIGHBORS* contained an article by Delia Berlin titled “Beating the Odds” where she endorsed folks rolling up their sleeves to receive COVID vaccine boosters. In the March issue Dr. Gregory B. Park, a physiatrist, countered her main ideas by offering what he called some “healthy skepticism”. Historically, healthy skepticism has been an essential feature in the advancement of science, but it can become unhealthy and dysfunctional when out of control. In this issue of *NEIGHBORS*, is another episode about COVID. COVID might very well be compared to the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” idiom where only 10% of its actual mass is easily observed above the water line. With COVID it is critical to learn as much as possible about the 90% that is still hidden and therefore difficult to comprehend. After all, COVID is still amongst us and will continue to raise critical questions about our personal health and public policy. Perhaps discussions about COVID and its implications for our neighbors will be regularly featured in the upcoming editions of *NEIGHBORS* in the near future, for the next year, or even the next decade.

There were elements in the March, 2023, article in *NEIGHBORS*, written by Gregory B. Park, that I found “disconcerting”. When reading his article, what popped into my head was the now infamous article published in *Lancet* (1998) about a connection of MMR Vaccine and autism, and eventually it was retracted (2010).” I reacted to Park’s article in the April issue. Then in the May, 2023 issue of *NEIGHBORS*, Park responded to some of my concerns, and he briefly discussed the obvious differences between COVID and MMR inoculation. He also wrote: “The MMR has been in existence since 1971. I do not dispute its safety record.” Unfortunately, he ignored my basic point that stressed the following view: “The *Lancet* article, even though officially discredited, has for many years fueled the false beliefs of deniers, who have refused to have their children vaccinated.” The issue is that it sadly took 12 years for the fraudulent report to be retracted, and during that time the misinformation about the connection between MMR and autism festered among deniers and resisters, and continues to be used by some to justify that position.

Further, one of my concerns was whether some of Dr. Park’s remarks might be similarly harmful. He concluded in his March article: “The COVID-19 vaccines either provide a net benefit or they do not.” The situation is simply not that black and white. He failed to address benefits for some groups of patients, such as those with underlying comorbidities, weakened immune systems and older adults for whom COVID-19 inoculations appeared to be reducing risk for the need of hospitalizations, advanced life support and deaths. Later, I welcomed what I read in Park’s May, 2023, conclusion, when he apparently modified his position by writing: “I think there is a rationale for

vaccinating against COVID-19 for many individuals.” Unfortunately, he lumped everyone together and neglected to identify groups who can benefit from vaccination. Dr. Park’s opinions written for a general audience ought to be clearly expressed so as not to be misconstrued as medical advice.

POLITICIZATION

Is it possible to discern Park’s political views from reading his two recent articles in *NEIGHBORS*? As one reads, it seems that many of the ideas he expresses with his words and those implied reading between the lines, reflect his political views that ooze like sap from a broken pine tree branch? For instance, in attacking the CDC director, Rochelle Walensky (in the May *Neighbors*), Dr. Park supported the summary of the lead author of the *Cochrane* review article about the ineffectiveness of masks during COVID. Is this politically motivated by Park as opposed to actual science? Park ridiculed Walensky about a statement she made before Congress concerning the use of masks for protection. The fact is, contrary to Park’s claims, Dr. Walensky had not misrepresented what the editor-in-chief of the *Cochrane*, Dr. Karla Soares-Weiser, who actually said: “that it was an inaccurate summary.” Soares-Weiser is later quoted with the following comment about the article: “Many commentators have claimed that a recently-updated *Cochrane* Review shows that ‘masks don’t work’, which is an inaccurate and misleading interpretation.” It appears Walensky’s statement was not as erroneous as Park would have us believe, as evidenced by the editor-in-chief who continued: “It would be accurate to say that the review examined whether interventions to promote mask wearing help to slow the spread of respiratory viruses, and that the **results were inconclusive** (emphasis mine). Given the limitations in the primary evidence, the review is not able to address the question of whether mask-wearing itself reduces people’s risk of contracting or spreading respiratory viruses.” In an interview with ‘the New York Times, Soares-Weiser was also critical of (the lead author) Tom Jefferson’s comments, which she said were “not accurate.”

Dr. Park, it seems, put his money on the wrong horse by embodying what Jefferson, the lead author, had to say to the media including the New York Times. Jefferson is quoted as saying “Walensky is plain wrong. There has been no retraction of anything.” **Fact:** The editor-in-chief of *Cochrane* is quoted as saying: “Many commentators have claimed that a recently-updated *Cochrane* Review shows that ‘masks don’t work’, which is an inaccurate and misleading interpretation.” **Fact:** Information presented in a publication can be retracted by the author or by the editor.

The language used in Tom Jefferson’s summary about the wearing of masks has been criticized by many for other reasons, and certainly not on the basis that they somehow represent some sort of “healthy skepticism”. But it does represent questionable science! “Experts all agreed that it was incorrect to conclude that the review shows masks ‘don’t

continued on next page

work’.” The statistical analysis for the meta-analysis study was not interpreted appropriately by the authors, and did in fact show that there was a difference between wearing a mask and not wearing a mask. Additionally: 1) The Cochrane meta-analysis study involved 78 trials and only a dozen of them evaluated the effect of mask intervention and only 12 of the main studies were actually conducted during the COVID epidemic; 2) Some of the trials combined the results for both flu and COVID; 3) Many trials included in the Cochrane study were performed with different research questions in mind. It looked at aggregated experiences with masks across different settings with different diseases, most prior to the COVID pandemic. Should not the actual research question address the effectiveness of masks used by compliant subjects during peak periods of a COVID pandemic?

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

The questionable summary that appeared in the Cochrane article about the ineffectiveness of wearing masks would most certainly be championed by the controversial Dr. Scott Atlas, a radiologist, who was brought on to advise about health policy by Donald Trump for the COVID epidemic in the summer of 2020. He was not in favor of using masks and vigorously supported the notion for developing “herd immunity”, as a mass infection strategy and the primary strategy against COVID. The faster COVID could spread, the better, with no isolation, no masks, no wasted time for vaccines. In other words, it advocated for the **survival of the fittest**, individuals who were the healthy and young. Didn’t he advocate for letting the disease spread in order to achieve the needed level of immunity? He actually predicted that only 10,000 Americans would die from COVID! The 80 million Americans with co-morbidities would be on their own!

Public policy about public health ought to be formulated by scientists within the domains of

public health and infectious diseases, who are specially trained and who are not willing to be compromised by political purposes. Dr. Atlas, a radiologist had no prior experience with infectious disease or pandemic response before joining the White House. He was an aide to Donald Trump and was actually allowed to insert language and alter the guidance provided by CDC (Washington Post from the Majority Staff Report of the House of Representatives). There are good reasons why cardiologists don’t do plastic surgery and anesthesiologists don’t practice psychiatry. In the same vein, why then should a radiologist be formulating policy on public health and a deadly infectious disease during a brutal pandemic.

LEMONADE FROM LEMONS

I believe that Dr. Park is correct in some cases with respect to the failings of the CDC. Clearly, at times, the CDC director cherry-picked research trials to support her perspectives. In retrospect should the CDC have quickly initiated large randomized multi-center trials for COVID to determine effectiveness of vaccinations? - absolutely. Could vaccination schedules for different age groups have been studied versus the one-size-fits-all policy? - certainly. Finally, this comment by Dr. Park is both essential and beneficial about the present time: “an **opportunity** for federal agencies, academic institutions, pharmaceutical companies, and healthcare workers to take a step back and assess the successes and failures of the vaccination program to figure out what worked and what did not. How have vaccines compared with prior vaccination programs?”

Like the enormous portion of an iceberg that lurks below the waterline, there is so much more to be discovered about COVID-19’s makeup, treatment, and the best methods to protect us in the future. COVID-19 will remain an important challenge for scientists, public health officials and our legislators for some time to come.

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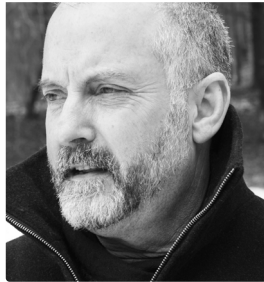
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On Ticks and A Local Treasure

“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.

- Alfred Austin



By C. Dennis Pierce

The garden bug has hit.

Now, don't be confused that I mean an attack of aphids. Or those bugs with the chewy mouth parts that think your plants are a God given salad bar, I am referring to the inert desire for human beings to dig in the soil. It is that evolutionary need derived from our hunter-gatherer heritage. Knees in the soil, crusted dirt in your fingernails, bees circling your head, all can be a source of existential meaning. In gardening we grow hope. Each year, we learn, we try, and then we try again and sometimes we are rewarded by producing the best tomato that has found a home with some bacon and lettuce.

As we begin to discuss gardening, we must begin with the menace of them all, ticks. The milder season this past winter in the Quiet Corner has kept ticks from going dormant and thus reducing their mortality rate, leading to a population increase. I would say that it is more like an explosion than an increase. So how do those darn pests seek out your pant leg? Ticks can't fly or jump, but many tick species wait in a position known as "questing". Ticks are some smart critters. They hold onto leaves and grass by their third and fourth pair of legs. They then hold the first pair of legs outstretched, waiting to climb on to the pair of legs that belong to you! Recently, I have been helping at the Goodwin Forest Garden, which is part of my UConn Master Gardener volunteer hours. There I observed a practice that helps in attracting ticks while volunteers are working on paths or in the gardens. Lynne Warren, Friends of the Goodwin Forest, head gardener, showed us that by constructing a "flag" made from a pole or broom stick and then tying it on a white cloth like a flag you then would pass the flag / cloth over grasses and bushes. Ticks who are "questing" will then jump on for a ride not knowing that you will be picking them off and placing them to their demise in a glass jar with alcohol. Make sure that you use a white cloth. You are trying to imitate the white belly of a deer or a mouse on which ticks seem to be attracted to. Here are some additional tips that I have found and followed while working outdoors:

Avoiding potential tick-filled places like high grassy or wooded areas

Tucking pant legs into socks

Walking along the center of wooded trails

Checking your clothing for ticks upon return

Showering less than two hours after being outdoors

Doing a full body check to search for ticks that may have bitten you.

This month's visit is to Tri-County Greenhouse, located at 290 Middle Turnpike in Mansfield Depot. Snuggled in the corner of UConn's Depot Campus, it is one of the best secrets of the Quiet Corner. It would not be fair to call it a "secret" since every surrounding gardener makes a few trips to this horticulture destination at least a few times a season. Tri-County Greenhouse began in the 70's as part of the Mansfield Training School offering vocational opportunities in the horticultural field to adults with intellectual disabilities. In 1982 the Greenhouse continued after the Training School closed as a vocational program. Originally operated by Hockanum Industries, a nonprofit based in Rockville, the program was later absorbed into Tri-County ARC of Columbia and then merged with Whole Life Inc. of New London, creating one of the largest nonprofit agencies in the state providing residential, recreational and employment opportunities to people with development and intellectual disabilities.

Tri-County has expanded over the years with an estimate of 5,000+ customers and a significant mailing list. A favorite of residents some of which have been a customer for over twenty-five years. Over the years they have received numerous awards to include Mansfield Business of the Year. So how does this tight-knit community of proud, dedicated, and helpful staff provide gardeners with a variety of healthy plants year after year. As a longtime customer, I truly believe they are the masters of the art. Through the consumer lens they appear to be a well-run greenhouse, but they are more than that.

Let's begin with the operational side. Chris Campbell is the Business Manager and reports to Whole Life, the nonprofit that oversees the operation. While not going into details his responsibilities are extensive. There is the planning, growing, taking requests, fighting the elements with limited growing space, and ultimately having everything ready for Memorial Day weekend each year. Chris arrived in 1994. He was attracted as a customer because he was never able to find a source for black pansies and the greenhouse had them. He also had another important need. Chris's ex-partner, godmother's, sister's husband, Manny, who was Portuguese and from Rhode Island, grew amazing plum tomatoes. Chris had several of these tomato seeds and did not want to be the sole individual that would be responsible for Manny's plum tomatoes. So, as he approached the greenhouse to persuade them to grow them, he also persuaded them to provide him with employment. When I asked Chris what he would like to share with our readers and some of their customers he said customers should know that greenhouse always wait until Memorial Day weekend to begin garden sales. He was disappointed that the Big Box

stores started offering plants in late April. The philosophy of the operation is that they want you the consumer to be successful. "There are no stupid questions, gardening is too meaningful", said Chris. You see, as a rule of thumb, fifty degrees is a good benchmark for cool-season crops, and the soil should be 60 degrees or more for warm-weather plants like tomatoes, peppers, and basil. Starting out creating a garden? Chris says, start small. He shared that during COVID too many individuals went in over their head and their garden got the best of them. Another item he wanted to share was that Whole Life provides income for the work that his vocational team performs. That income pays for the salaries of the full-time staff. The income from the sale of plants and fund raising then pays for their vocational staff. While this may be confusing it encourages the consumer to purchase plants now knowing what the proceeds support.

As you can imagine there are two sides to the greenhouse, the operation and the programing which is the segment that creates an amazing occupational opportunity for the sixteen individuals that learn the basic skills that they are provided. Collen Sweetland, who has been an employee since 2005, is the Program Manager. Her responsibility is to work with the team to create yearly goals and track their performance, audit, and abide by the State of Connecticut protocols.

Caring is a term that does not do justice to the team at the greenhouse. While I did not list everyone that supports the greenhouse whether they are part-time or volunteers they all are a dedicated group that contributes to the greenhouse's success. When I asked about what they enjoy about working at Tri-County the responses ranged from what great customers and the customer relationships that they have developed over the years, the rewarding experience of witnessing the individual staff learn new skills and grow into productive individuals, the ability to work outdoors and lastly the camaraderie they have developed over the years. Next time you are in search of that special plant or need an idea for your yard or garden stop by as they will not only pair you up with the perfect choice but also stand behind their product so you as a gardener will be successful.

While the following recipe is not from Manny it does make use of his amazing plum tomatoes that have a long history with the Tri-County Greenhouse. As you can see it is very simple to prepare but it is not disappointing.

Manny's Plum Tomato Classic Pico de Gallo (Salsa)

Ingredients:

1 ½ pounds of ripe, plum tomatoes. Remove seeds if any, cut into ¼ to ½ inch dice (about 3 cups).

Kosher salt

½ of a large white onion, finely diced, about ¾ cup.

1 to 2 serrano or jalapeno chilis, finely diced. Seeds and membranes removed for a milder salsa. Note, either wear gloves or wash hands thoroughly after dicing chilis. Do not touch your eyes!

½ cup of finely, chopped fresh cilantro leaves

1 to 2 tablespoons of fresh lime juice.

Directions:

Season the tomatoes with 1 teaspoon of salt and toss to combine.

Transfer to a fine mesh strainer or colander that is set in a bowl and allow to drain for 20 to 30 minutes.

Discard the liquid.

Combine the drained tomatoes with the onions, chilis, cilantro and lime juice.

Toss to combine and season with salt.

Mixture can be stored for up to 3 days in a sealed container in the refrigerator.

Variations: Depending on your taste, you can add minced garlic, ground pepper or wine vinegar to your salsa.

If you have a suggestion for a farm or a local grower or even a recipe that would feature a local ingredient, please let me know. I will do my best to share your suggestions in a future column. Drop me a line at Codfish53@Yahoo.com. So, 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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Some Helpful Advice and Words of Wisdom: A Graduation Speech for All Ages

By Jesse R. Clark

During this time of year there are countless graduations, and with these graduations come graduation speeches given by valedictorians, faculty members, or famous people who may or may not have attended the school. These speeches are reserved for middle school, high school, and college graduations. Like some other traditions, they end once the graduates enter adulthood, which is a shame because adults experience a lot of transitions in their lives. So this is a graduation speech for everyone, regardless of age, written especially for you personally. It's a speech you won't experience anywhere else but here, completely unique, all the while seeming very familiar to other speeches you may have experienced.

Congratulations! You made it! After all the hard work you put in, here you are. Time to celebrate, although you probably have been celebrating already. Now here you are about to go to another stage of life. You probably are nervous about the next chapter, but you've been here before. Ever since you were born, you have been experiencing changes in your life. And, as far back as you can remember, people have been giving you advice, telling you what to do, trying to prepare you for another stage of life and what comes next. Of course, the truth is, none of us knows what comes next, and that can be scary. But as you sit here on the precipice of a new part of your life, it's a good time to look back at all you have accomplished. Not just in the last few years, but throughout your life. You should be proud of what you've done. Each one of you has had your own struggles along with your own talents and personality, and, hopefully, you feel that you have been supported, because we all want you to keep growing and learning. It does not stop here. We want you to keep blossoming into your true self, working each day to become the best you, whatever that may look like.

I know, you think you know all the answers and don't have to listen to others who are a different age than you. But trust me on this—I know. That's why I am sharing these clichés you've probably heard a thousand times, filled with motivational quotes and sentiments you've seen on posters and Facebook posts. But that's not going to stop me.

There is an expression, "failed miserably." I don't care for this expression, along with calling someone a "miserable failure." This makes failure seem negative when really, it's a gift. By "failing," you've tried something, and that takes guts. The key, as you may have heard before, is to learn from it. It sounds like a cliché, but it's true. I want you to succeed at failing. Fail time and time again, but make sure you are learning. Change your approach, change your mindset, maybe even your perspective. Action, they say, is mostly reaction. How do you

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react when things in life go wrong? How do you react when people or things don't seem to agree with your mindset? Do you give up? Do you blame others? Do you even blame yourself and get stuck? It's these actions that are the true failure. But failure is not the end. Jazz musician Miles Davis once said, "It's not the note you play that's the wrong note—it's the note you play afterwards that makes it right or wrong." Sometimes we need to stop and try something else. Maybe the path you are on isn't the one for you. Not all of us are traveling the same path. Life would be boring if we were. Do what's right for you and be a successful failure.

Speaking of traveling down paths, don't be in such a rush. Yes, it's good to be determined and work hard, but slow down and enjoy life. The destination is the same for everyone, so enjoy the journey. These years right now, these are the real golden years. Make the most of them. Now. Yes, you'll get frustrated that you won't accomplish everything you set out to do, and you'll face the trials and disappointments of life, but this is the time to *enjoy* life. Do what makes you happy now, whatever that may look like.

I'll be honest. The problem with these speeches is that each and every one of you is different, with different life experiences. I don't know where each of you are on your particular journey. As a result, this speech may not resonate with you right now. But give it time. Maybe in a few months, or years, you'll look back and think about a line from this speech, or one similar to it, and that line may give you inspiration or motivation, comfort or peace. Behind all the pomp and circumstance of life is a bunch of people trying their best to get by, and nobody, no matter how young or old, really has all the answers. But that shouldn't stop any of us from sharing our story in the continuing quest to help and inspire others. As the Frank Sinatra song says, "Who knows where the road will lead us? Only a fool would say." I don't know what lies ahead for you or what changes will happen, but every year there will be a new graduating class like yours and every year there will be a speech like this one with one person sharing their perspective and wisdom of life. It doesn't matter how old you are, middle school or middle age, for a senior is still a senior and it's never too late to learn something new.

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

Testimony

We are moving through moments, but none of the clocks anymore, can tell time
Destiny the reason for grasping at straws, no longer existing
Speak less amidst countless dancing winds
that remind no one of anything before or since

Yet, far below the frost line of some thawed half-baked notion
those we seek to exalt have managed to gather most of our hope,
to be safely present when hell breaks loose,
and all we find in our smoldering quivers are doubtful dastardly deeds

Mirrors of what we once thought were our righted reflections
Tempests and teapots and all sorts of distractions
Nothing remains, nothings ever the same

Sleep near the fire, the stench of redemption
baked into the pores of a quiet that is unable to extinguish
anything 'except
all we seemed to cherish
and declare sacred

Pass the offering plate to God awful pretenders
perhaps they are all that we don't really need
Pews now polishing and punishing and perfecting
Fulfilling all your hoped-for requests

With your dying wish, seek the shofar
Listen for the answers you will never, not even once, be able to hear
in the silenced void between your ears
Genuflect, keep holy rolling
Worshipful old men in golden robes await to hide you away



Poem and photo by Wayne Erskine

In The Footsteps of Sam Huntington

Submitted by Bev York

Our United States is fast approaching its 250th Birthday. The purists will call it the semiquincentennial. Historians and families will head off to witness magnificent events in Boston, Philadelphia and Valley Forge. But, you don't have travel far to stand on the very spot where some history unfolded.

In the Footsteps of Sam Huntington is a tour of four places including where Huntington was born and raised, lived, worked and died. The special event will be Saturday, June 17, 2023. Visitors will start at the Huntington Museum in Scotland and carpool or caravan to Windham Center and then Norwich town Green.

The tour will begin at Sam's birthplace in the Scotland parish of Windham. The homestead is a fine example of a typical 18th c. farm. Huntington was

raised here but not one of the sons to be sent to Yale for higher education. So, he walked and studied with the local minister and prominent attorneys in Windham Center. Huntington relocated to Norwich to begin his practice and his political career. The tour will drive to Norwichtown to walk around the neighborhood of his home where he lived with his wife, Martha. Huntington would be elected to serve on the Continental Congress and become a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, President during the Articles of Confederation and later Governor of Connecticut. The tour will walk to his final resting place in the Norwichtown Burying Ground.

The "Footsteps" tour will include remarks by Kevin Ring, president of the Huntington Trust; Bev York, director of the America Museum; and Damien Cregeau, historian who portrays Samuel. The event is aimed at promoting the important

contributions of Huntington and is a benefit for the Huntington Homestead Museum. The museum is celebrating the 300th year of the building of the home and many special events are planned for the season. An endowment fund will be started and donors are asked to contribute \$17.76 or more. The museum is seeking new members and volunteers as they prepare for 2026 which is 250th year since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The tour starts at 10:00 a.m. at the Huntington Homestead in Scotland. The tour is \$25 per person and tickets can be purchased on-line at the Americamuseum.org. Click on the "Footsteps of Huntington." All proceeds will benefit the Governor Samuel Huntington Trust, Inc. which owns and operates the Huntington Homestead Museum. For more information bevishistory@yahoo.com or call 860-423-1878 and leave a message.

What, or Who, Is “Invasive”?

From Knotweed to Plastics to Us

By Phoebe C. Godfrey

Too often, he told me, people speak about knotweed as if it were a virus: “It appears in the metaphor of ‘itadori infestation’ or ‘itadori as pest.’” The truth is, he said, that humans are responsible—for setting knotweed loose across the planet, and then for losing their minds about its presence. “The itadori is not guilty,” Watanabe said. “It is just living.”

—Koichi Watanabe quoted in “The War on Japanese Knotweed,” by Samanth Subramanian, in the *Guardian*, May 16, 2023

As you drive around eastern Connecticut (and perhaps throughout the state), you are sure to notice large patches of brown plants that have been poisoned by the spraying of the herbicide glyphosate, also known as Monsanto’s Roundup. The plant that is being sprayed is Japanese knotweed, a non-native plant that came to the USA in the 1800s from the UK, where it was introduced from Japan as an ornamental plant, much like, say, the rhododendron that came from West Asia and has spread profusely. Known for being like bamboo in that it spreads rapidly underground as well as by seed, it has increasingly been seen as global and local plant enemy #1. In this role, it is described in news reports and gardening blogs with extreme terms such as *colonizing*, *virus*, *scourge*, *infestation*, *pest*, and even as a *plague* that can threaten house prices, destroy riverbeds, wipe out native plants, and generally cause havoc. All this may well be true, but, as plant photographer Koichi Watanabe so aptly states, “humans are responsible—for setting knotweed loose across the planet, and then for losing their minds about its presence.”

And yet we seem to want to solely blame the plant, which I see as trying to solve one problem by creating an even greater one. This greater problem is the fact that the preferred method for controlling knotweed is to spray it with what is deemed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to be a carcinogen, or poison, regardless of the location, be it on public lands, open spaces, residential areas, riversides, or roadsides (see photo). According to the *Guardian* article quoted above, the World Health Organization (WHO) thinks glyphosate is “probably carcinogenic to humans,” and, as reported by many other news sources, Monsanto, its manufacturer, has over the last few years paid out more than \$10 billion in cancer lawsuits even while the product is still sold commercially (Roundup accounts for 17 percent of Monsanto’s total annual sales of \$9 billion).

Ironically, the EPA still deems glyphosate “not likely to be carcinogenic to humans,”¹ but this difference of opinion with IARC (and, no doubt, WHO), according to a peer-re-



The author collecting trash on Rhode Island beach.

viewed article in *Environmental Sciences Europe*, is because “IARC’s evaluation relied heavily on studies capable of shedding light on the distribution of real-world exposures and genotoxicity risk in exposed human populations, while EPA’s evaluation placed little or no weight on such evidence.”² In other words, the EPA only looked at hypothetical lower levels of exposure, as opposed to higher-level real-world exposures that are much more likely given that glyphosate is “the world’s most widely used pesticide ever, [and] such relatively high-exposure episodes occur tens of thousands of times on a daily basis in the US and hundreds of thousands, if not millions of times globally,” including, of course, in our local area.³

These links to cancer are just glyphosate’s effects on humans, as of course it also has a significant impact on insects, including the pollinators much of our food depends on. In fact, a 2021 study from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health noted, “The finding that glyphosate appears to have an adverse effect on insects by interfering with their melanin production suggests the potential for a large-scale ecological impact, including impacts on human health.”⁴ Another study cited in a *Guardian* article from June 2022 states that glyphosate damages the “critical ability of wild bumblebees to keep their colonies at the right temperature,” kills wildflowers by the roadside that provide a vital food source, and has “been shown to harm honeybees [a different species of bee] by damaging larvae and the senses of adults.”⁵

On the other hand, Japanese knotweed is a great

source of food for bees, including honeybees, as it blooms in September and therefore provides bees with ample food before winter and enables them to make great-tasting honey. This is why, despite the challenges, we keep a small patch of knotweed in our garden and have done so for 14 years. When we moved into our small Victorian in Willimantic, much of the back of our property (one-third acre) was knotweed, but we cut it down to size and it has remained the same size ever since. Of course, we must continually pull it up as it likes to grow beyond its allotted space, but it is doable, and I have even taken to cooking the new shoots, as instructed by my neighbor (they are best in spring and taste much like rhubarb). This neighbor, though, does “lose their mind” over it and has indicated that they would like us to eliminate our small patch, but, as stated, we keep it for the bees.

Another way we are “losing our minds” is that we are continually creating our own form of invasives—ones that don’t serve any life forms, can’t be eaten, have no medicinal properties (unlike knotweed)⁶, and are in fact doing all that knotweed is said to be doing (colonizing, acting as a virus, a scourge, an infestation, a pest, and even a plague). In this case, the “invasive” is plastic!

Last weekend, my wife and I went to Block Island. Having driven past many sites of sprayed knotweed in Connecticut and Rhode Island, we finally arrived at Point Judith to take the ferry across. Once on the island, as we biked up to the north end, I was happy to see that the small patches of knotweed there had not been sprayed (or at least not yet), nor had the other invasives such as mugwort (also medicinal), raspberries and autumn olive (both edible berries). We got to a beach near the North Lighthouse and went for a walk. We did not have to go more than a few steps before seeing the first plastic bottle, then a milk carton, then a sandal, then a toy, then another bottle, a plastic lid, a syringe, and so on and so on. We collected about 30 pieces of plastic in a 20-minute walk and made a basket to hold them from a washed-up lobster net that we tied together with some found rope (see photo of me and my bundle).

The estimate of the yearly impact on marine life by plastic is about 100 million animals dying because of eating plastic and 100,000 dying from getting entangled in it, according to the nonprofit Plastic Oceans International.⁷ This is horrifying, and yet it is not talked about in the same way as knotweed, nor it is being addressed to the same degree. Of course, with the prevailing approach of spraying poison, I would not want the same thinking to find a solution for plastics, as, once again, it would only cause further problems. What we

need instead is radical new thinking, such as stopping to make these products in the first place and in the meantime holding the corporations that profit from them accountable. Additionally, we need to spend more time in outdoor spaces to monitor and care for the land in ways that are good for us and good for other living beings, by working together to clean up beaches and remove excessive amounts of invasives by hand. A good example is the community bittersweet removal event that the Charles River Watershed Association will hold on September 16, with the goal to “free our trees.”⁸

So, next time you are at a garden store, instead of buying more Roundup to spray on your knotweed or on any other culturally declared “weeds” (many of which are edible or have medicinal properties), stop and think for a moment about what you are doing and why, including who you are ultimately poisoning. Then, speaking of *who*, take time to ask the knotweed who they are and what they have come to teach us, an idea explored by Robin Wall Kimmerer in the chapter “Learning the Grammar of Animacy” in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*.



Roadside and residential sprayed knotweed.

Contributed photos.

Maybe they have a lesson for us if we are willing to

listen. For as Watanabe said, “The itadori is not guilty. It is just living,” whereas in contrast we—the responsible culture—are so often just mindlessly killing, making us perhaps the most “invasive” threat of all.

For a detailed expose of the relationship between Monsanto and the EPA, see the film *The World According to Monsanto* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ho0BWYzHQ5Y>) and the book by the same name by Marie-Monique Robin.

² <https://enveurope.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s12302-018-0184-7#Ack1>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2021/ingredient-in-common-weed-killer-impairs-insect-immune-systems-study-suggests>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/02/glyphosate-weedkiller-damages-wild-bumblebee-colonies>

⁶ Knotweed is good for bronchitis, cough, gum disease, and sore mouth and throat. It is also used for lung diseases, skin disorders, and fluid retention and has been used in Chinese medicine for thousands of years.

⁷ <https://plasticoceans.org/the-facts/>

⁸ <https://www.crwa.org/events/bittersweet-23-2>

Famous People I've Met - Part 1: the 1950's

By Robert Joy

Starting when I was six, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, our parents would take me and my brother from our little mountain town to the big, exciting city of Pittsburgh. It was 25 miles northwest of us. Once there, we'd visit Kaufmann's Department Store. Kaufmann's still looms large in my memory as the most elegant store I've ever seen: 10 stories decorated to the hilt for Christmas, filled with exciting sights, smells, and the sound of Christmas carols. You could even eat there, in the cafeteria. And Kaufmann's had escalators. Escalators! I'd never seen them before. I had a blast just riding them up and down between floors. It was like being in an amusement park!

On the sixth floor, you'd find Kaufmann's enormous toy department. It has assumed mythic proportions in my memory. It had anything and everything a child could dream of. We spent a lot of time touring that floor. You could touch and play with some of the display toys. This would give us an idea of what to ask Santa for. And you could ask him right there, as he was usually sitting on his throne somewhere in the toy department.

A young seminary student named Fred worked in the toy department. He had a wonderful way with children—not talking down to them but treating them as equal, intelligent, imaginative beings. All the kids enjoyed talking to Fred. He was fun, personable, and he really listened to you.

The administration at Kaufmann's realized that Fred was a gem; he was truly talented and he possessed a charismatic effect on children. They sponsored and enabled him to have a 15-minute program on WQED (channel 13) in Pittsburgh, the very first educational television station in America. His show had a limited run between Thanksgiving and Christmas. He was on once or twice a week, more often as Christmas Eve approached. His show was called *The North Pole Report*. He told stories about Santa, Mrs. Claus, his workshop, his elves, and the reindeer. (And of course there was a little plug

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about Kaufmann's, too.) On Christmas Eve, Fred would give us updates on what part of the world Santa was flying over with his sleigh full of toys.

The higher-ups at WQED also realized what a true talent Fred was. They gave him a weekly half-hour show. He had full control over the show's content. He wrote the script and was assisted during broadcast by a young lady named Josie Carey and a young musician named Joe Negri. Fred completed his seminary studies and became an ordained Presbyterian minister, but he did not end up seeking a church or pulpit. He believed his show was his ministry. He taught children important life lessons, how to cope with difficult situations, how to accept everyone—even families who were different from theirs. Most importantly, Fred taught children that they were perfect and special just as they were. Just be yourself, he encouraged them.

He wrote songs and sang them with Josie and Joe. My favorite was "I Like You as You Are": "I like you as you are. / I wouldn't want to change you / or even rearrange you, / not by far. / I like you, yes I do. / I like you, Y-O-U. / I like you, like you as you are." He created puppets which he operated and voiced. They'd have conversations with Joe and Josie. These conversations also included lessons for children.

Fred's show, with his lessons, guests, and famous puppets King Friday and Daniel the Tiger, was so popular that it was moved to a daily time slot, Monday through Friday. Later it became nationally syndicated and Fred became very well known. With the passage of time, he wrote books, became a lecturer, won a Lifetime Achievement Emmy, and was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom. PBS made a documentary about him. There was even a Hollywood movie in which Fred was portrayed by no less a star than Tom Hanks.

He was an amazing man, one of a kind. Have you figured out who Fred is? He's Fred Rogers of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. And I feel so fortunate that I met him when he was in his twenties and I was only six.

The Pirate Queen

By Judy Davis

Granuaile – called Grace O'Malley by the 16th century English – was known as Ireland's Pirate Queen!

Granuaile loved nothing more than to bedevil England. She went into a trade - piracy business for herself. She monitored foreign shipping along Ireland's west coast, and offered a choice of either service for a price.

From those ship captains who refused either offer, she plundered the cargo.

She lived in a castle known as Rockfleet, on the shore of Clew Bay. With the wealth she had, she ran weapons for fellow Irish rebels, including Red Hugh O'Donnell.

Rockfleet Castle still stands.

Legend has it that lights can still be seen in a window, in the Irish nights she loved so well.

Ireland Forever!

Music at the Fletch

The Fletcher Memorial Library is happy to present the calendar for this year's Summer Music Series. All concerts are free and open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs/blankets. Donations are welcome.

June 14 SALLY ROGERS AND HOWIE BURSEN

Rain/heat date: Sat. June 17

July 5 CLAUDIA SCHMIDT AND FRIENDS

Rain/heat date: Sat. July 18

July 26 'THE FAUX NELLIES' band

Rain date: Sat. July 29

August 16 'FIDDLES & FRIENDS'

Rain/heat date: Sat. Aug 19

August 30 'BACH IN THE GARDEN' with guitarist Mark Davis

Rain/heat date: Sat. September 2
To BENEFIT the Fletcher Memorial Library's music fund

Organic Roots Farm



at Popover Hill

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Café Trio+

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The Café Trio+ specializes in "café music" of many lands.
Experience French vals musette, Italian marcias & polcas, Brazilian
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Tickets \$10

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Enjoy our outdoor cocktail bar!

Please do not bring any
beverage other than water.
Please bring your own chair.
We encourage you to bring a
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A Summer's Palette

at Westford Hill Distillers



JUNE 24

10AM-4PM

Rain Date June 25

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Art & Flowers

ART SALE
LIVE MUSIC
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PAINTING
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Calling All Neanderthals

“Give me the good ol’ days when a man carried a club, walked semi-erect, and had a brain the size of a walnut.”

-Gary Larson

By Bob Lorentson

America is a divided country. No one needs me to tell them that. No one needs me to tell them anything, really, but if I don’t say the things that make people scratch their heads regardless of the side they’re on, who will?

Perhaps there is no more contentious issue dividing the country these days than the Neanderthal issue. To be sure, it’s a sensitive one, and no one needs to be hit over the head with it. But as a scientist AND a newly outed Neanderthal, I confess to being slightly aggrieved by all the Neanderthal deniers out there. I apparently come from a long line of Neanderthals, and if you don’t believe me, I have the genetic test results to prove it. Or you could just keep reading. It’s hard to keep the Neanderthal in me quiet for long.

If you haven’t heard, some incredible scientists have recently managed to sequence the complete Neanderthal genome. This amazing feat appears to show how a few little indiscretions 40,000 years ago can really come back to haunt you. In what some have looked at as a surprise reveal, and others as all the proof they needed to say ‘I told you so,’ the scientists say we all carry a little Neanderthal DNA with us. Some as much as 2 percent. It just shows up better on some people.

This isn’t enough to convince the Neanderthal deniers, however, who are usually quick to retort, “Did the Neanderthals ever put anyone on the moon?” While this often makes the scientists back up a few more steps, it’s true that they really don’t know much about what the Neanderthals did or didn’t do, other than to get busy with some of our distant ancestors before being driven to extinction. I guess they needed some way to pay for the ride, but who’s paying now?

Granted, this is a hard truth to accept. Even 40,000 years later it’s enough to make at least 98 percent of my DNA wonder about the other 2 percent every time I look in the mirror. But isn’t it time we let go and moved on? Maybe our ancestors were lonely, maybe it was closing time, maybe the Neanderthals double-arched brow ridge wasn’t so prominent. Haven’t we all woken up some mornings and wished we had either less alcohol or more light the night before?

To the Neanderthal deniers, though, such thinking is anti-human, and they are demanding a gene recount. Their accusations that the sequencing machine was rigged and the genome manipulated are threatening the very fabric of society.

Then again, the whole issue is threatening the very idea of what it is to be human in the first place.

The scientists say that Neanderthal DNA is 99.7 percent identical to the DNA of us modern day humans. While that seems modern enough to some, to the Neanderthal deniers it seems like the scientists are trying to make monkeys out of us. It does make me wish I could see their reaction though when they hear that 98.8 percent of our DNA is identical to chimpanzees. Maybe we’re not as human as we think we are. Or maybe there’s room for all in our DNA. Even the Neanderthal deniers.

To my thinking, being part Neanderthal is no reason to be afraid or embarrassed. It’s all a matter of how you look at it. If you think that people are talking behind your back about your elongated skull, your lack of a chin, or your habit of carrying a club with you everywhere you go, there are things you can do to alter their perceptions. Wear a hat, grow a beard, or threaten them with the club. Or you could just stand as tall as your short, stocky legs will let you, look them square in the eyes, and grunt that THIS Neanderthal will not be pushed to extinction. Own the look. Be all the Neanderthal you can be.

While scientists looking to put a damper on such fun note that it’s actually unclear if our Neanderthal DNA accurately codes for such specific human traits, it hasn’t stopped the finger pointing. It also hasn’t stopped commercial genetic testing companies from trying to find the money in both your jeans and your genes. 23 and Me, for instance, claims it can determine the number of Neanderthal markers in your genes. While this might not be useful information on most dating sites or job applications, it could open up some doors for you in places like the WWE, or in politics.

Some researchers though do believe that certain Neanderthal genetic markers have the potential to reveal important evolutionary information about things like cognitive development, energy metabolism, immune systems, and even our general mood. This is important research, with the potential to explain a lot more than why some humans are slow, tired, sick, and angry. I’m hopeful it will even explain why some humans embrace the Neanderthal in them, while others do not.

Until then, I’m calling for both the Neanderthals and the Neanderthal deniers to lay down their clubs, and come together in the knowledge that there is strength in unity. Of course, there’s always the chance that 40,000 years from now, our descendants will look back at this time and also wish there had been either less alcohol or more light.

What is Butoh?

Submitted by Deborah Butler

On June 16th and 18th, the beautiful new artspace, Manifest Station (12 Merrow Roady, Storrs, CT), will host an evening of performance and a day workshop in two Japanese Authentic Movement practices, Noguchi Taiso and Butoh. What are these practices, who are the performers and teachers, and what might you get from participating in the workshop and seeing the performance?

You may have heard of Butoh, the post WWII Japanese dance form that embraces shadow and absurdity, where dancers cover themselves in white body paint and move in extremely slow and low to the earth gestures. The “dance of darkness” began in Japan in the 1950’s as a radical response to the Westernization of Japanese culture and, specifically, dance. Since then, Butoh has traveled the globe and opened up an international inquiry: How do we dance with our soul? How do we embody different energies and images so that we create our own dance that is from our own unique body? Butoh embraces both beauty and the grotesque of life.

Noguchi Taiso may be less known and is currently taught in combination with Butoh all over the world. Julie Becton Gillum, an American artist living in Turkey and touring in Europe the past few years, will be visiting Storrs to teach Noguchi Taiso, also known as “water body practice”, and perform with local Butoh artist, Deborah Butler, at Manifest Station.

“Noguchi Taiso water body practice feeds and prepares the body, releasing unnecessary tension and creating the conditions for movement to emerge as a natural response for life, dance, performance and sports. The Noguchi Taiso system as well as butoh training help to eliminate socially and culturally derived habits and behaviors, creating a more open and fluid vessel through which natural and free impulses can flow with minimal resistance” (Julie Becton Gillum).

“Butoh has been a healing and transformative practice for me. I first encountered it when I was 21 and an undergraduate at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. I took a workshop with Doranne Crable, a performance art professor and student of Kazuo Ohno, one of the creators of Butoh. We walked silently and slowly across the floor of the studio as she led us through natural landscapes where we transformed into bones, rock, water, and fire, a little girl in a field of flowers, a boy in waves breaking on the shore, an old dog, a baby searching for the light. For a full hour we moved and it seemed like no time at all and like eternity. I felt freedom in this space, where I could journey inward, free of form and tap into my inner landscape and connect with my body. There was no expectation about “dance”, the walk WAS the dance. This was a space of breath and imagination, of shadow and embodiment. I was hooked.

“Butoh challenges us to bring shadow to light - to embody imagery and make our own dance with the body we have as our body is, not as we wish it was. There is something truly radical about being with yourself, exploring your inner

landscape through movement, in community with others. Butoh expands the capacity for empathy by challenging us to embody other life forms. For example, and an image I will bring to the workshop, how can we explore the cycle of life of a flower? How do we “become” and embody the seed that goes through stages of growth into the full bloom and then into decay, only to begin again? To play with this image is challenging, delightful, transformative and moving...to witness this is an absolute honor. This IS the dance. Imagine a group of humans exploring this image in their own imaginative ways, moving on their breath, slowly with intention, in their unique bodies - no prescribed set forms or movements - in my experience, this is so incredibly moving and vulnerable that I have been brought to tears and hysterical laughter. Butoh makes me feel fully alive in all my beauty and grotesqueness. It is a devastatingly beautiful experience. I would love to share this with you and hold space for your own process to emerge” (Deborah Butler).

We’d love to share these body practices with you so that you can expand your self awareness, enhance your own body acceptance, practice mindfulness and movement together and have fun doing it! For more information and tickets, please visit www.mfsstation.com/butoh.



**Japanese Authentic Movement
Noguchi Taiso and Butoh
Performance & Workshop**
Friday & Sunday, June 16th & 18th
Manifest Station
12 Merrow Road, Mansfield/Storrs, CT

**Performance:
An Intimate Encounter**
Friday, June 16, 7-9pm,
\$15 advance tickets

Noguchi Taiso and Butoh Workshop
Sunday, June 18, 10am-4pm, \$85
More info and tickets:
www.mfsstation.com/butoh

Regional Media and Arts News

By John Murphy

Quote of the Month (from Mark Twain's Notebook, 1935)

"Of all God's creatures there is only one that cannot be made the slave of the lash. That one is the cat. If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve man, but it would deteriorate the cat."

He's right. I've lived with a few cats over the years, and it is always a journey in the miraculous. This could be a cool conversation outside by the firepit, with political implications for 2024, but I digress. I have a deadline to meet for this media update, the litter box of ideas is full and it must be cleaned before my Editor sees it!

Two things for this month:

1. *On the Homefront* radio update—did you miss any recent shows?
2. A struggle for local democracy continues in Ashford and across the state

ON THE HOMEFRONT IS ON RADIO AND YOUTUBE ANYTIME!

The *On the Homefront* series is available on YouTube for 24/7 access anywhere. Subscribe and you will automatically get every new program in your inbox. Guests get links for their own media sharing!

Programs air live on Wednesdays from 5-6 pm on WILI AM 1400 and 95.3 digital FM. They are videotaped and posted on the radio station's YouTube channel. To share information or be a guest use email—the studio doors are wide open at john@humanartsmedia.com. Don't be shy, get your butts into our studios!

May 3: <https://youtu.be/vWpSCf5OQzk>

1. President Elsa Nunez—Eastern Connecticut State University
www.easternct.edu
Year in review, current budget challenges, the future of liberal arts education

36 Neighbors

2. Digital Windham – history website launches online May 4!
Jamel Ostwald, Professor of History and Department Chair
Paula Hernandez Aulet
<http://www.easternct-digitalhistory.com/>

3. Moulton Lava Gallery—New art show May 5-7: *Trigger Warning! Shadows and Reflections*
Phoebe Godfrey
Sasha Bajjo
31 Moulton Court,
Willimantic

May 10: (a short program this week due to Red Sox coverage, not posted)



Phoebe Godfrey and John Murphy
Contributed photo.

May 17: <https://youtu.be/zLwREQOW-Mt4>

1. WRCC Series Part 3 Windham Regional Community Council
Jeffrey Beadle, Executive Director
Bill 'Woody' Woodbury, Windham Veterans Advisory Center
860-423-4534/872 Main Street
www.wrcc.online

2. Thread City Classical Dance—summer programs + Spring Show May 27
Amy Chibeau, Program Director
Abigail Boice, 2nd year student
www.threadcityclassicaldance.com
A rebroadcast from earlier that day on my WECS program



May 24: https://youtu.be/2Uhp_rCwZA

1. 52nd Shaboo Reunion Saturday
May 27—gates 4pm, music starts 5 pm
David Foster, Shaboo Production/Lester & Phyllis Foster Foundation
5 pm = Dennis Polisky & Maetro's Men www.willimanticstreetfest.com
8 pm = D.A. Foster & The Shaboo All Stars; Christine Ohlman, Uptown Horns, Jeff Pevar
Rain date Sunday 28th /tix & Co-Op

2. Bradley Playhouse in Putnam—Nuts opening June 2-11
Bill Corriveau, Director
Brittany Kimlingen, Cast Member
www.thebradleyplayhouse.org

3. 5th Annual Veggiestock—Saturday June 3 at Lauter Park in Willimantic
Sydney Clements, Director, Grow Windham
www.growwindham.org
Chelsea Cherrier, Education Coordinator, CLiCK!
www.clickwillimantic.com

WILI YouTube Channel for all M-F local talk shows:

<https://www.youtube.com/@wiliradio7000>

Subscribe and you will automatically get every new show!

**A STRUGGLE FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACY CONTINUES IN ASHFORD
THIS IS HAPPENING ACROSS OUR STATE—PAY ATTENTION!**

History happens every day in moments of quiet manifestation. As much as we try to predict, we usually notice or understand change later, after

continued on next page

looking backward to reflect on the impacts. The people of Ashford are living through a historic time this year, as they are facing a possible manifestation of what they wished for—significant economic development to raise new revenues for the town as an alternative to raising property or auto taxes. This is the core challenge for all towns in our state—as the struggle between preservation and development reaches higher levels every year.

I have covered the Ashford situation for many months, and it is important for everyone to understand and appreciate what is happening there. Inform yourselves! This challenge is rising across Connecticut—the process is apparently working well for some towns but not all, and in some the heat is very high. Ashford is hot!

Some background and context: to encourage business interest in Ashford, the town changed some of its rules governing an area of land that was identified as an economic development zone. To their surprise, a very large mega-warehouse and distribution center was offered as a possible use of that zone, but for that project to happen the recently changed rules had to be modified again to allow a much larger size and scale of construction and operation. Therefore, the developer proposed a change in text of those previously modified rules to enable the project. The text change was necessary for the project to be formally proposed. That text change was denied last month by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

As this issue goes to press town leaders are waiting to learn if they will face a legal challenge from the developer. To my knowledge, the Economic Development Commission did not formally vote on the matter, but members had differing opinions. My previous columns provided some history of this issue along with links to radio interviews about this issue and the legal processes involved.

I am planning for an update

program in June after the next P&Z meeting. If you would like to participate, please contact me asap at my email address.

Our local journalism is limited and compromised these days, unfortunately at the very time when it is needed the most to protect the public interest as it finds an appropriate balance with private interests. With historic decisions being made in the meeting rooms we need the citizen's "flies on the wall" more than ever, to be our eyes and ears to watch how our leaders do their jobs. Support your local news organizations of any kind!

HOW TO CONNECT TO OUR REGIONAL MEDIA NETWORK

The following link will take you to the WILI Radio YouTube channel, where the local weekly programs are posted—airing live on Monday through Friday from 5:00-6:00 pm. *Subscribe* to get all new shows! https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFY4_TDRh_jING5Z0k6pmKg

To access our regional network—to learn more or be a guest:

WILI Radio 1400 AM and 95.3 Digital FM—my 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)
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.

Always keep the faith, reading Twain always helps,

John Murphy
john@humanartsmedia.com

AAAC Members' Show at Vanilla Bean Café

Submitted by Debra Gag

Come to the Vanilla Bean during the month of June to view and perhaps purchase a special gift for that special someone (Father's Day?), made with love by our talented Ashford Area Arts Council artists.

Our artists: Christine Acebo (photography), Deb Aldo (mosaics), Lance Arnold (glasswork), Joseph Burger (watercolor painting), Cindy Curry (photography), Alison Ciarlante (dot painting), Judy Doyle (acrylic and oil painting), Dot Drobney (photography), Deb Gag (oil painting), Sharon Garrison (acrylic painting), Steve Gerling (oil painting), Anna Harding (stained glass), Michael Hughey (calligraphy), Maggie Kendis (hand-colored block prints), Karrie Kirchner (collage), Frietha Lawrence (oils, watercolors, pen/ink), Kathy Lepak (calligraphy), Charles McCaughtry (watercolor painting), Lori Smolin (watercolor painting), Joseph Szalay (photography), Marian Vitali (pastels)

Over the last 30 years the Vanilla Bean has been honored with multiple awards including Best of Connecticut, Best of New England, and UConn's Family Business of the Year award. The arts have always coincided with their fresh foods and homestyle atmosphere, as they pride themselves on being "a friend of the arts".

The Vanilla Bean is located at 450 Deerfield Rd, Pomfret, CT 860) 928-1562 (call for hours of operation)

Windham Concert Band '23 Summer Series

Submitted by Terry Cote

Enjoy an outdoor concert on a warm summer evening. The Windham Concert Band will be performing summer concerts in parks and on town greens throughout Eastern Connecticut between the last week of June and the first week of August. Audiences are invited to bring lawn chairs.

The concert series starts on June 22nd at 6:30 pm at the Betsy Patterson Square in Downton Storrs. Raindate is June 27th. Additional June concerts are scheduled on June 23rd at 6:30 pm at the Shaboo Stage in Willimantic, on June 24th at 6 pm in Garrison Park in Chaplin, raindate June 25th, and on June 29th at the Kibbe Fuller Pavilion in Somers at 6:30 pm, raindate June 30th. For more information: www.windhamconcert-band.org or www.facebook.com/Windham-Concert-Band.

To Kill a Tree

An Unnatural History

By Mark Mathew Braunstein

After living for 26 years in the Connecticut College Arboretum, I was expelled from paradise. Seeking some piece of turf akin to nature, I moved to a house that borders a deep woodland. The concept of owning a stately tree bigger and older than I still mystifies me, yet according to the town clerk the flora surrounding my new home all came with the deed. One towering oak tree whose trunk was anchored ten feet from my front door hovered over my home like the sword of Damocles. Too close for my comfort, I could have covered my ass with homeowner's insurance, but money does not grow on trees. For a one-time payment, I hired arborists to fell the tree. A tree-hugger at heart, I memorialize the fallen oak by its stump as its tombstone. As it lacks any chiseled inscription of birth and death dates, I tried counting its annual rings, but lost count after ninety.

Diminutive younger trees growing in the front yard include more reasonable American dogwoods and Japanese maples. As they will never loom over my rooftop, like a king granting life or death over his subjects, I have duly granted them clemency. In the same spirit of royal magnanimity, I have refrained from mowing a portion of grassy lawn in my backyard that has transformed into a patch of meadow. Wildflowers and wild raspberries now abound. Robins and catbirds pluck the ripened berries. Rabbits and sparrows take refuge in the thicket. Some saplings have sprouted up, among them a big surprise.

My dearest of trees native to my corner of Connecticut is the erect and majestic tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). Sometimes spelled as one word, its alternate spelling is the only thing compact about it. It stands out among Connecticut's tallest trees, towering up to 150 feet. Its leaves resemble the outline of a tulip flower sketched by a child's unskilled hand. Also tulip-like, its flowers bloom into nectar-rich replicas of its earthbound namesake. It is honored as the official tree of three states, though sadly not Connecticut's.

I gaze in awe at all tulip trees, regardless of their age or stature. I especially admire the colossal specimen that stands sentry at the entryway of Connecticut College. Three

miles from my home as the crow flies, that tulip tree had long been the closest one I knew. A half mile past that gatekeeper another equally majestic tulip tree presides over the campus of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum. Their shared cultural pedigree exalts that pair into a privileged class that extends beyond mere birthright.

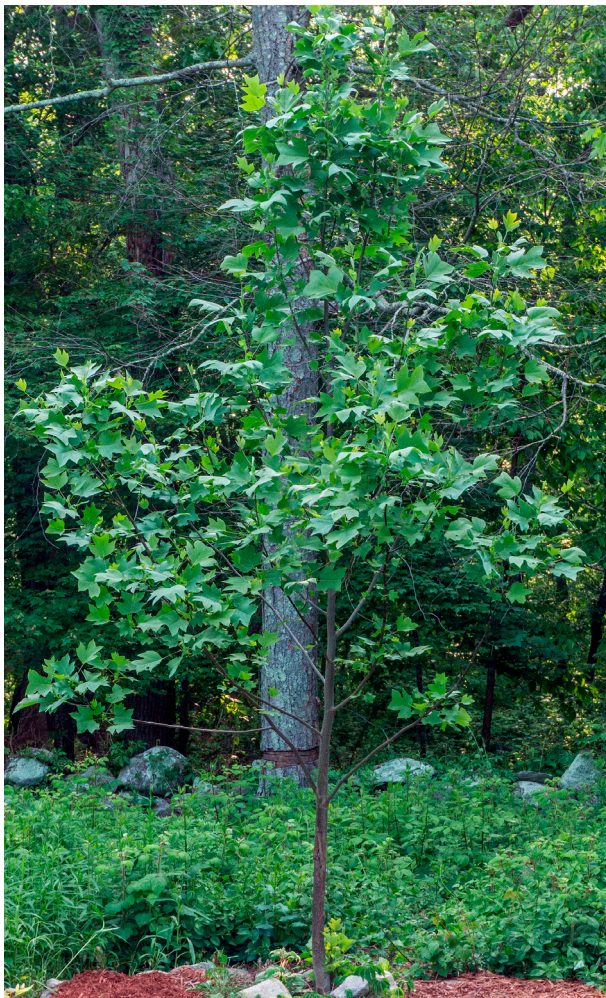
Seeds of Change

Sometime in 2020, an angel or a stork or some avian creature delivered into my backyard's budding meadow some tulip tree seeds, perhaps descendants of that college gatekeeper. In spring 2021, one seed took root. By early summer, I recognized the sapling by its signature tulip-shaped leaves. Nurturing it, I thrashed away the thorny brambles that threatened it. By fall of 2022, despite some browsing by deer, it already had grown to twelve-feet tall. So now call a tulip tree all mine. Or so I delude myself into believing. In reality, once it survives the perils of youth, this tulip tree will outlive me. It hardly belongs to me at all. In spirit I more belong to it. If my dead body were so consecrated as to be buried under its canopy, its roots will claim me as its own.

My backyard abuts a tract of deciduous forest of the Waterford Land Trust. A tumbledown stonewall marks my yard's porous perimeter. On my side of that wall, a mature birch tree that loomed over the tulip tree sapling grew in solidarity with countless other birches beyond that wall. I rationalized that the walled-off birch tree contributed nothing to the biodiversity of the woodland whereas the tulip tree could. Shading the tulip tree, the birch would stunt the growth of that vulnerable sapling. If a Wild West sheriff were in cahoots with the tulip tree, with his pistols drawn he would warn the birch that this forest is not big enough for the two of them.

Hiring a professional arborist to axe that birch would make too much sense. Instead, I chose to use my own two hands to create a snag, a loathsome name for a dead tree still standing. Snags contribute to the ecosystem by providing habitat and food for insects and birds alike. While that's a loss of one birch tree amid a forest teeming with birch trees, snags are wins for the insects, the birds, and the tulip tree. And a flourishing tulip tree and abundant birds would be enormous wins for me.

How to create a snag? A YouTube instructional video
continued on next page



that might show the way. What keywords to search? While I hit a snag with “How to create a snag,” I hit pay dirt with “How to kill a tree.” Shunning toxic herbicides, I learned how to girdle a tree. To Girdle: “To cut through the bark all the way around a tree, typically in order to kill it.”

The Ax Murderer

With a saw, you carve a two-inch-deep incision around the circumference of the tree, and then carve a second circular cut several inches alongside the first cut. Between the two parallel cuts, you chip away the bark and underlying fleshy layer of cambium with an ax.

Mano-a-mano, armed with bow saw and hand ax, I engaged in hand-to-hand combat. The tree put up stiff resistance. It long held its ground, but I persevered. One circular incision was enough for one day. The next day, I returned to the scene of the crime to inflict the second circumcission. The third day, I hacked away the bark and cambium between the two lines, creating a single girdle. I completed these Shakespearean unkindest cuts in March of 2022, but my right arm and shoulder ached long after. Nursing my self-inflicted wound, for my next move I sat on my duff. I waited. Some trees take as long to die as we humans take to live. To deliver my fatal blows, I labored for three days. To fatally succumb, my victim languished for nine months.

Posing as an innocent bystander, I was witness to the execution. For two months, nothing was perceptible during the tree’s slow but inexorable decline. In June, leaves began withering. In July, leaves began yellowing. By mid-August, yellowed leaves began falling. During September, waves of fluttering leaves stripped the treetop bare. By October, when other nearby trees gleamed in colorful regalia, the boughs had shrugged off all leaves. The birch stood naked before me. If bereft of leaves for an entire growing season, trees can still recover the next year, as occurred in my neck of the woods when a gypsy moth infestation defo-

liated the oak trees. A question hung in the air. Might a coroner pronounce the birch tree dead at the scene? Or do I press my ear against the trunk to listen for a pulse?

On warm January days of 2023, chickadees and nuthatches poked around the birch’s twigs and branches. Downy woodpeckers and piliated woodpeckers jabbed its trunk and limbs. All were telltale signs that insects had taken up residence. In February, a rogue polar vortex from the Arctic blasted New England with subzero temperatures and angry high winds. A volley of newly liberated limbs and branches came tumbling down.

The Eternal Return

In the Boy Scouts, I learned what trees to chop down for firewood. Those four D’s still resound. Dead, Diseased, Damaged, or Dwarfed. Gathering those fallen branches, I can certify that they indeed were deadwood worthy of this aging Boy Scout’s campfire. Perhaps also fit for feeding the birch tree’s own funeral pyre.

Sacrificed upon the altar of forestry expediency, the now lifeless birch tree stands as a testament to my human arrogance. Over time, more limbs and branches will fall victim to gravity, leaving only a stark-naked trunk. When its rotting mainmast eventually topples, it just might crash upon my beloved tulip tree, in which case both of their downfalls will testify to my human stupidity. But should the tulip tree survive that trunk’s collapse and any other calamity that nature might throw at it, then long after I am dead and buried my beloved tulip tree will serve as my living memorial.

Until, after a succession of homeowners after me, one family fears the tulip tree will come crashing down onto the house, and so chops it down.

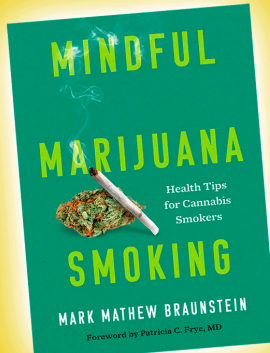
Mark Mathew Braunstein’s writer rap sheet numbers six books, including two books of botany, *Sprout Garden* and *Microgreen Garden*. www.MarkBraunstein.Org

Photo by author.



Old general store featuring:
 Take and bake home-cooked meals
 Fresh-baked breads & desserts
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 CT honey, N.E. maple syrup, jellies,
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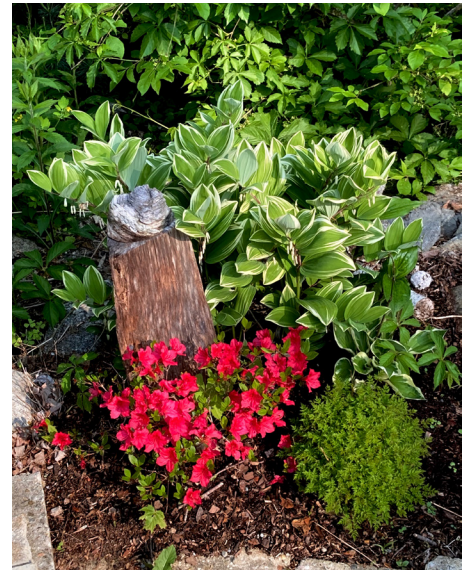
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2022

“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

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Country Gardening



Photos left to right: Contrived pink and orange planting in my garden; daisies by the mailbox - it's summer!; red azalea accents green perennials.

By Brian Karlsson-Barnes

Ah, Spring! May's issue of *Neighbors* ushered the season with:

-Delia Berlin's *Windham Garden Club Tour* after moving from acres of natural sanctuary in Windham Center to a fifth-acre in Willimantic, hazardous oaks supplanted by flowering trees;

-Susan Eastwood's poetic "*Where We Live*" in Ashford: "*As spring arrives, the trees bud red to lime and leaves unfurl!*"; and

-A *Microforest* of birch, redbud and serviceberry that I planted in Boston.

As June becomes early summer, the growing season is celebrated from Willimantic to Boston. A city boy from NYC and Minneapolis then Boston, I escaped urban density five years ago to a 1750 farmhouse with two acres near the Natchaug. Some lawn, mostly woods and thickets. And weeds.

Trees welcome us with *Phytoncides*, volatile organic compounds that reduce our pain, stress and anxiety as we walk the woods. Japanese "*forest-bathing*" has been popular since the 1980s. Thickets and weeds are also transfixing.

WEEDS I'm impressed by the beauty and persistence of weeds, and their place in our web of life. Noting our uses of weeds in past issues, they are also food source and sanctuary for birds who feed on bugs, and for critters, our newfound pets. Bunnies burrow beneath my garden shed and nibble at ornamentals. I sow clover (*Trifolium*) in the lawn to feed the rabbits and "fix" nitrogen in the soil, feeding the lawn. We coexist.

40 *Neighbors*

My greater concern is the ethics of herbicide use in manicured gardens. I don't mind most botanical volunteers. Chemicals kill weeds, microorganisms and soil vitality. Sometimes dogs.

(Style, however, is yours and yours alone. I plant contrived garden beds, and delight in nature's incursions. That's me. It's always prudent to suit the site, fit the space, and plant with care -- and to coexist.)

The weed issue also relates to **Native versus Non-native** (aka *Exotic*) plants – and reminds me of America's immigration issue. Purists want to eradicate plants that are not native, but many are here to stay, adapting to the web of life.

EXOTICS Now naturalized are spring harbingers *Forsythia* and *Lilac* (*Syringa*) that survive an original planting at a larger house built behind the farmhouse in the 1800s, long gone except the hump of a buried foundation. Both large shrubs are now large thickets. Neither is native, but both are floral staples in ornamental landscapes.

Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*) is called *Winged Euonymous* for the corky ridges or "wings" along the branches. A non-native shrub marketed for its bright red fall color, pink in shade, it can grow into a 20-foot tree. I like the open branching on the shady north side of my house reaching for the sun, striving to be canopy.

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora* AKA Japanese Rose) has invaded North America. It was introduced as a "living fence" for erosion control. It's "rose hips" are edible with medicinal uses, and multiflora was promoted as food and shelter for wildlife. Good rose.

continued on next page

Ten feet tall and wide, multiflora is an impenetrable mound of arching stems with cascades of fragrant flowers, charming small white petals with yellow centers. My bunnies like it; the dense thickets keep the fox out. Birds avoid hawks. Good rose.

Very aggressive. When the tips of the stems touch ground, they root to form a new crown. If near trees, the rose behaves like a vine, climbing 20 feet. Thorns are nasty! Bad rose.

NATIVES **Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)**, on the other hand, is a small native tree growing 20 to 30 feet from the Midwest through the Appalachians to the Northeast. Considered ornamental throughout the temperate world for its fruit and fall color, America considers it a weed because it adapts to dry barren spaces.

The compound leaves appear tropical and have fiery fall color, purple, red and yellow. The fuzzy red fruit (technically a *drupe*) that resembles a staghorn was used to flavor a Native American drink; soaked in water and strained, the tart pink “lemonade” was sweetened with sugar or honey.

Oaks (*Quercus*) With over 90 species (some 435 globally), *Quercus* is the Northern Hemisphere’s largest tree genus. Save if you can. Delia Berlin lost the shade of large oaks that threatened homes and were removed. A greater loss was to the many species of life that oaks support.

“They are magnificent,” writes Margaret Roach (*Why You Should Plant Oaks*, NY Times, 31 March, 2021), noting Douglas Tallamy’s book, “*The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees.*”

“We are at a critical point of losing so many species from local ecosystems that their ability to produce the oxygen, clean water, flood control, pollination, pest control, carbon storage, etc, that is, the ecosystem services that sustain us, will become seriously compromised,” writes Tallamy, Entomologist and University of Delaware Professor.

My back woods are mostly **Maple (*Acer*)** species and some **White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)** after the demise of **Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*)** due to blight, and of oaks devastated by gypsy moth in Eastern Connecticut. Caterpillars alerted Tallamy to the power of oaks! Caterpillars fuel the food web. Birds forage longer in oaks for them, prime baby food. Oaks provide food and protection for bears to birds and bugs.

(Don’t treat an oak with systemic pesticide to kill gypsy moth caterpillars; rather, improve the horticultural situation. Most feeder roots are in the top 6 to 12 inches of soil, so reduce turfgrass competition, perhaps seed clover. Fertilize organically and mulch the root zone out to the drip line. Water in drought.)

Oak trees support 897 caterpillar species in the United States. At Mr. Tallamy’s 10-acre property in Pennsylvania, he has recorded 511 interactions with caterpillars, dwarfing



A coral pink rose I couldn’t resist (above) and yellow iris with multicolored leaves of Heuchera and Salvia.



the number supported by other native trees, including maples (295). An oak can produce three million acorns in its lifetime — tons of protein, fat and carbohydrates — and a mature tree can drop 700,000 leaves a year. The resulting leaf litter is habitat for many beneficial organisms. Leaf mulch is a tremendously rich resource, but fastidious sub/urban land management foolishly removes leaves.

Better to compost leaves or mulch with a mower, feeding the turf. Bag pulverized leaves for garden beds when autumn leaves are too deep.

Oaks also help the environment. The tree’s large canopy and root system help rain to percolate down, not run off, filtering in the process. Large trees sequester carbon, reducing global warming.

MY LAND Maple and beech are the primary trees in Eastern Connecticut’s forest succession after the disturbance of settlement and farming, but my two acres had no **American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)**. Five small (3 to 4-ft) trees were planted at the edge of the woods five years ago; four survive. I’m nursing small oaks to plant this spring. Better, Tallamy says, is simply burying acorns.

Caterpillars attacked my birch and serviceberry a few years ago; I hand-removed or sprayed off with water daily. Three native cultivar (aka nativar) ‘**Whitespire**’ **Birch (*Betula populifolia*)** have fared much better than the exotic **Himalayan Birch (*B. utilis* var. *jaquemontii*)**; one of four survived, not recommended).

My gardens are contrived with horticultural vignettes of preferred plants and weedy incursions. From my kitchen window, I see beyond the wilding of my gardens to the crest of a grassy path, to the ups and downs of the back acre, mimicking the hills and dales of the Quiet Corner. A trail leads to my back corner’s unnamed brook to the Natchaug and nearby Diana’s Pool. Ah, summer...

MORAL of the story is Coexistence. Love your weeds. Love your neighbor.

Brian Karlsson-Barnes, Master gardener / designer, Chaplin CT and Boston MA. KB garden design. briankarlssonbarnes@gmail.com

Photos by author.
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The Death of Privacy

By Gary Bergquist

Tossing back a cold one as I watched the game at Dave's place, I sensed movement out of the corner of my eye. It was FedEx making a delivery to the front door. Since Dave was fixing nachos in the kitchen, I roused myself from the couch to bring in the package. A few minutes later, Dave brought in the food.

"FedEx showed up while you were in the kitchen. The box is over by the door."

"I know. I've got a porch cam and app." He swiped on his phone and displayed a picture of me hoisting the package from the stoop. Dave had installed the camera and app as a precaution against porch pirates. Motion-activated, the camera snaps a few shots whenever there's movement on the porch and sends the pictures to Dave's smartphone.

It makes sense, but I felt violated. Here was a picture of me on his phone with mouth open and a crazy look in my eyes as I grabbed for the box. My first thought was, what if I had been picking my nose or scratching my butt, or worse? What happened to my privacy?

My expectation of privacy is admittedly naïve. Each time we venture into the world, whether going to work or the grocery store, our images are captured dozens if not hundreds of times. Traffic cameras get us, as do store cameras, porch cameras, dash cams, and who knows what else. Cameras have become so inexpensive and pervasive that they are as much a part of our environment as utility poles and mailboxes.

Fictional dramas on television portray law enforcement personnel sitting at their computers tracking the movement of criminals as they make their way through city streets. "I've got him at 45th and 10th, crossing the intersection." While stretching dramatic license a bit, implying the agency has live feeds from all cameras in the city, the writers understand that they cannot bend the truth too much if they want viewers to believe the narrative. Cameras do exist everywhere in the city. We all know that. They're just not interconnected.

Yet.

When you attend an event, say a wedding, in which someone snaps your picture on the dance floor, and posts the picture to Facebook along with the names of those in the picture, then you're in the system. With the advent of face-recognition technology, it's a simple matter for computers to associate your name with your face, and to track your progress as you move from camera to camera. The cameras need only be connected with one another. How long before they are?

As we watch our privacy evaporate, it may be time to assess what we mean by privacy. At its simplest, our privacy is what we know or do that we keep from others. Privacy is our collection of secrets. We believe that we have the right to choose what to keep secret and that others should not violate our secrecy. The notion that we have a "right" to privacy implies that if others violate that right by discovering and/or revealing our secrets, they should be punished. Legal punish-

ment can come in either of two forms, criminal penalties (jail) or civil penalties (money).

In this country, the first notable discussion of legal considerations of privacy rights appeared in the December 15, 1890, edition of the *Harvard Law Review*, in an article titled "The Right to Privacy," authored by Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis. In the article, they write,

Recent inventions and business methods call attention to the next step which must be taken for the protection of the person, and for securing to the individual what Judge Cooley calls the right "to be let alone." Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life; and numerous mechanical devices threaten to make good the prediction that "what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the house-tops."

Even back then they could see what was coming on our front porches. They go on to define the "right" to privacy:

The ... general right of the individual to be let alone ... is like the right not to be assaulted or beaten, the right not to be imprisoned, the right not to be maliciously prosecuted, the right not to be defamed.

There's a right you won't find in the Bill of Rights, the right not to be beaten. Like privacy, it's a right we'd like to feel we have, but it's a little hard to justify the source from which we derive it. One reason for this difficulty has to do with the term *right*. Contrary to simple intuition, the concepts of *freedom* and *rights* exist on opposite sides of the fence.

By convention, rights are granted to those who are *not* free. Wardens grant inmates the right to see visitors on Tuesday mornings. Communist party officials grant comrades the right to buy three rolls of toilet paper each week. Teachers grant students the right to use a calculator during the math quiz. Rights cannot be granted to someone who is free, since freedom means you make your own decisions.

This rights-are-contrary-to-freedom idea is ironically reflected in the Bill of Rights, which are the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution. In these amendments, the writers oddly do not grant any rights at all, understanding that to do so would imply a despotic level of power held by the government. Instead, the amendments contain words like, "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom," or "... the right of the people ... shall not be infringed." The amendments are not about granting rights, but about constraining the power of the government from abridging the freedom of its citizens. The Ninth Amendment is most revealing on the topic of rights: "The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." In other words, as free people we have all the rights we choose to exercise.

Exercising our right to privacy, however, is a lot like exercising our right not to be beaten. The practice is not in our hands alone. In fact, it's not in our hands at all. If our right is

continued on next page

violated, our only recourse is to appeal to the judicial system for criminal or civil remedy. We cannot undo the violation of our rights and get unbeaten. We can only punish the violator, which may provide small comfort. The practical enforcement of such rights, then, depends largely on the empathy and consideration of others as they deal with us while hopefully not violating our rights.

Accordingly, the right to privacy rests not so much in the hands of the legal system, but in the ebb and flow of social discourse. As the respect for privacy expands or shrinks, so does our right to it. At present, there are indications that the desire for privacy is waning. Social media web sites have provided a platform on which we can and do reveal as much about ourselves on our home pages as the world's appetite can tolerate. We are encouraged to trade our privacy for "likes." As citizens who are free to make our own decisions, we seem to be getting more joy from sharing our secrets than hoarding them. Our respect for privacy in general shrinks as we dispense with our own.

To further illustrate the subtlety of the right to privacy, let's run an imaginary exercise. Suppose you answer a knock at your door and find a detective wanting to speak with you.

"As you know, there's been a murder in the town. We have narrowed the list of likely suspects to those in this neighborhood. There was DNA left at the scene of the murder, and we're going door-to-door seeking DNA samples from residents. In this way, we can eliminate the innocent and narrow in on the perpetrator. May I swab you for DNA?"

If you consent, you are helping law enforcement apprehend a murderer, but you are paying the price in privacy, as your DNA is going into their database. If you aspire to be a criminal, you should refuse. But even if you don't, you may feel that agents of the government have overstepped their bounds, and you may refuse on the grounds that the swab would violate your right to privacy. You can then cite the article by Warren and Brandeis and send the officer on his way.

You will of course move to the top of their suspect list.

Trade-offs. This is what privacy is about. This is what freedom is about. As technology continues to race ahead, our collection of secrets shrinks. Privacy is harder to come by. Even within our homes, we wonder whether Alexa is evaluating the words we speak, whether the refrigerator is anticipating our midnight snack, and whether the thermostat is evaluating the wind we just broke. For those who have come into this world most recently, technology has been their everyday companion. The younger generations are more likely to downplay the value of secrets and of privacy.

For those of us whose upbringing predates the computer and internet revolution, we will always feel a bit nervous about sharing our secrets. Still, there's no holding back the tide of technology.

Pass the nachos, Dave. Fetch your own damn packages from now on.

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

America Museum and Windham Arts Events

Submitted by Bev York

June 2 Swift River Art and Music Festival Artists and Makers display and sell their wares. Music by The Fabulous Clones, Sal Tarantino and Room to Move. 4 p.m. to Dark. Heritage Park along the River, 322 Main Street. near the mills and Garden on the Bridge. Bring lawn Chair, Food and soft drink available. Suggested Donation. Kids are free. Presented by Windham Arts with support from CT Humanities. director@windhamarts

June 4 Cabaret Concert Tom Callinan: the first troubadour in Connecticut 4 p.m. Eastern CT Veteran Community Center at 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. \$10 suggested donation

support by the Leo and Rose Pageau Trust

June 10 CT Museum Open House Day. America Museum has free admission and free demonstration on colonial Apple Pie includes implements, recipes, and techniques! 1 to 5 p.m. Eastern CT Veteran Community Center at 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic.

June 12 Opening Reception for "What We're Made of - Stories Told by our Threads" Textiles Exhibition 5-6:30 p.m. Coffee Break Gallery. Eastern CT Veteran Community Center at 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. (6 p.m. creative consortium-announcements for the artistic community) Sponsored by Windham Arts. director@windhamarts

June 17 *In the Footsteps of Sam Huntington* -see article on page 29.

June 26 Liber Tea Program on William Penn. 4 p.m. Eastern Connecticut Veteran's Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. The monthly LiberTea program is sponsored by the America Museum and shares stories and encourages discussion about people who have made significant contributions to American democracy and liberty. director@windhamarts.org

JILLSON HOUSE

June 3 Anita Sebestyen presents "The Loomer Opera House." Discover the history of Willimantic's great Vaudeville Days. 2 p.m. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic CT free, donations appreciated.

June 28 Tavern Night at the Jillson House Museum. Meet Francis Scott Key. 5 p.m. (program 5:30) Discover fascinating facts and his favorite food and drink. Jillson House Museum, 627 Main Street, Willimantic CT Suggested donation to the museum \$10.

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).

Senate passes bill to reform utility regulation in CT

CT Mirror. "If passed by the House, the rewritten Senate Bill 7 could strengthen the standing and power of Marissa P. Gillett as chair of a divided Public Utilities Regulatory Authority as she pushes for a more adversarial posture to regulated utilities. With a unanimous vote, the Senate essentially gave a vote of confidence to Gillett, placing in statute some of the policies she has advocated, which have angered the state's largest utility, Eversource, and rattled stock analysts...Among other things, [the bill passed on Friday] directed PURA to establish performance-based regulation that is tied to specific goals and metrics, not simply the cost of providing service...A bipartisan amendment rewriting the bill, which was co-sponsored by 33 of the 36 senators, also offered a ratification of Gillett's insistence that full-blown rate cases that provided deep inspections of utilities are preferable to settlements."

New Britain Gets New Electric School Buses

NBC CT. "DATTCO has 10 new electric school buses that will be used to transport students across the state...They're very quiet, they definitely give you a lot of acceleration, and they don't slow down on hills," said Ronnie King, the product director for DATTCO. "I've had from the drivers that they enjoy driving them, they like the quietness, they like the smooth acceleration, and they feel safer driving them because the buses have regenerative braking, which means as you lead off the throttle, it takes the momentum and puts it through the motor back into the batteries....The electric buses are considerably more expensive than standard diesel buses, but DATTCO applied for funding through a grant from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. That helped lower the cost from what DATTCO would traditionally have paid."

Coventry farm begins producing electricity from biogas

Hartford Business Journal. "A new biogas facility in Coventry has been commissioned to begin producing renewable electricity. The facility at Hytone Farm converts dairy manure and food waste into power using an anaerobic digester...The Hytone Ag-Grid facility produces electricity that will be sold to municipalities via virtual net metering through Eversource. The project is expected to produce up to 4.4 million kWh per

year...Ag-Grid, based in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, develops and operates small-scale renewable electricity projects and currently has five projects in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Is CT's largest offshore wind project headed for the shoals?

CT Mirror. "Connecticut could be in danger of losing its biggest offshore wind project — the more than 800 megawatt plan known as Park City Wind. Its developer, Avangrid...is trying to rewrite, renegotiate, rebid or otherwise alter its offshore wind contract with Connecticut, according to industry sources. Avangrid has cited inflation and high interest rates, along with their causes — COVID, supply chain problems and the Russian invasion of Ukraine — as the factors necessitating more revenue to ensure financing to build Park City. It's a development that has the potential to send Connecticut back almost to the starting gate on offshore wind ..."This is going to happen. It makes too much sense," he said of the adoption of offshore wind broadly. "There are hiccups. There are problems we are planning around, but I don't think it's going to be a series of dominoes that stops everything in its tracks."

Building emissions are the climate change contributor you hadn't heard of — until now

CT Mirror. "Several bills, including one proposed by the governor, that would have addressed building emissions more substantively are now dead or gutted...Part of what may be hampering more robust action is that most folks — legislators included — have only a vague idea of what building emissions are. It's not as if buildings have tailpipes, like cars, right? "There absolutely is a tailpipe on a building," said Melissa Kops, laughing...But now lowering building emissions includes more than the initial easy stuff, like switching to more efficient lighting and beefing up insulation in older buildings. ..Other than GreenerGov, however, there has been no broad-based move by this or previous administrations to deal with emissions from existing buildings — which are typically old and inefficient, as is much of New England's aging building stock...Connecticut doesn't really have a roadmap. "I think the comprehensive energy strategy is intended to help to establish that kind of a roadmap," said Katie Dykes, commissioner of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection."

We see promise in geothermal heating and cooling

Commonwealth. "This Earth Week, National Grid and UMass Lowell embarked on a critical step of investing in our planet by breaking ground on the first geothermal borehole on UMass Lowell's campus. A geothermal network uses piping and pumps to pull the Earth's heat out of the ground to warm buildings in winter and pump heat from buildings back into the ground to cool them in the summer."



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.

Electric Bill Relief coming July

1st: Connecticut Residents to see price cut on the supply side rate and an increase on the delivery side.



All in all, this is good news. It seems that the supply side rate is going to go back down, close to where it was before the massive 100% price increase we saw in January. The new supply side rate will be 0.1382 cents per kilowatt hour (kwh), compared to the 0.1219/kwh it was last summer. So, the supply side rate is pretty good.

The delivery side however will be going up a small amount from 0.11751/kwh to 0.14107/kwh. "They" are claiming that an "average" home that uses 700kwh of electricity per month, should see about a \$56.00 per month decrease in energy costs.

How does this equal out to last year's rate? The increase we saw in January increased an average 700kwh/month users bill by about \$80.00 per month. The new July rate will decrease by \$56.00/month for the 700kwh. The difference is \$24.00 per month higher than July – December 2022. Once again, **EVERSOURCE FOR THE WIN!** In the 12 plus years I have been watching utility rates, I have never seen the end user consumer come out ahead.

From Eversource:

"Eversource does not earn a profit on the cost of electricity," the company said in a written statement. "The company only charges customers what it pays generators for producing the power and there is no markup."

What are your thoughts about that statement? If you read enough of my articles, you can probably guess what my thoughts are on it.

3rd Party Energy – If you signed up this year, PLEASE READ THIS!

If you signed up for third party supply side energy, you may want to take a look at the rate you signed up for! Since Eversource raised their rates, so did the third party suppliers! Hence, your rate is probably higher than the supply side rate that Eversource is going back down to July 1st, 2023. IE: **I signed up for THINK Energy at 0.158/kwh, the new Eversource rate will be 0.1382.

In June, I am going to shop for a lower rate than 0.1382/kwh. If

it's not available, I will temporarily go back to Eversource for my supply side rate.

REMINDER>> To change from the different suppliers, including Eversource here's 3 things to consider:

First – It takes a until the end of your billing cycle for the change to take effect. You can see the day of your bill cycle on page 2 of your bill. It states it as: Bill cycle, then it lists the day of the month. Sometimes you have to cancel one, wait a month and then re-assign unless you are simply going back to Eversource.

Second – There is NO penalty or fee in CT to break your third party agreement. It's against CT state law.

Third – If you have 3rd party energy, make sure you know the end date of the agreement. Your rate will raise dramatically if you don't catch it and cancel or re-negotiate a rate with them.

**You may remember that I do have solar from 14 years ago that covers about 60% of my usage. Hence my need to still play the supply rate game.

How do you get off the utility roller coaster?

One way to help yourself with this continual roller coaster ride is to switch to solar! Solar is a locked in cost that does not go up unless you have a lease. Even leases only go up about .05/kwh per year and it's not a predicted cost, it is a set cost so you have peace of mind of what you will be paying. Loans have fixed monthly costs and are simple principal where you can pay off the loan principal with no penalty, like a mortgage. And of course with a cash purchase, you gain the best ROI over a very short amount of time. Each home and homeowner has their particular situations that suits them best. If interested, make sure you work with a local trusted installer that is clear and transparent about the process.

If you'd like to know more about Solar and how it could possibly help you to save money, 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

NEIGHBORS
Locally Written
Locally Wread

Three Vignettes

By Tom King

Will

Will stands on a street corner waiting for a delivery truck to drop off his bundle of daily newspapers. A boy approaches on a bike.

“Hi Will, how’s it going?” asks the boy.

“Whoa,” says Will, “You got a new bike.”

“Yeah, I finally saved up enough. Took over a year.”

“It’s beautiful. Hand brakes. How many speeds?”

“Three. The brakes took some getting used to. I keep wanting to push down on the pedal, but the crank just spins backwards. Then it hits me, ‘Duh’, this bike has hand brakes. Then I have to remember to use both brakes at the same time or I’ll fly over the handlebars.”

“What happened to your old bike?”

“It’s in our garage.”

“Want to sell it?”

“It has only one speed. Coaster brake. Needs new tires.”

“I don’t care. I like that bike.”

The following week Will rides his new bike to pick up papers for the first time. He thinks of how only a few weeks earlier a girl up the street taught him how to ride. His parents didn’t want to teach him. They were afraid he would have an accident. Balancing a load of papers in his shoulder bag while riding takes a little practice, but he gets the hang of it. As the route goes on the bag lightens and his speed picks up. His foot taps the kickstand back against the frame for the last time. It’s time to take a circuitous route home. He finds new hills to coast down and flat straight stretches to leisurely pedal.

Later that day he’s off with baseball glove hanging from the handlebars. His dad used to drive him to little league practice and just about everywhere else. Will can’t help but smile. His new wheels take him wherever he wants to go.

Josh

Josh is studying hard for a final exam. He needs to do well to pass English and graduate with his high school class. He should have spent more time hitting the books during his senior year, but he was busy working after school and weekends. He needed money. He wanted to drive. His parents didn’t want him to get a license. He might get in an accident. Little did they know Josh had already completed an afterschool driving course. He could not take the DMV exam without their approval.

Weeks before graduation Josh negotiates a deal with a classmate to buy his car for \$100. It’s a ‘59 Rambler American, a ‘grandfather’ car, but he doesn’t care. It has a six-cylinder engine and a 3-speed manual transmission with a stick on the

FLASH FICTION

steering column.

Josh confronts his parents with his plan. They reach an agreement. If he graduates and can pay for the insurance, he can drive the Rambler.

The summer of freedom has begun. Josh is now working two part-time jobs to keep the Rambler on the road. He bolts an eight-track tape player under the dash and mounts a pair of six-by-nine inch speakers on the rear deck. He listens to The Doors, Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin more while moving than he ever did at home. His car has become his new public personal space.

“Where are you going?” asks his mother, as Josh heads for the door. “What about supper?”

“Out with my friends, Mom. Don’t worry, I’ll pick up something later at McDonald’s, that new restaurant.”

His mother returns to her kitchen counter to cut vegetables. She looks out the window over the sink. She wasn’t ready for this. How this blue hunk of metal, glass and rubber would change her family. Its presence has left a profound emptiness in her home. And her heart.

Martha

Martha sits at the kitchen table checking her lists. Groceries to pick up. Doctor’s appointment. Lunch at the senior center. Books to return to the library. See an ill friend.

It’s a cloudy day. She backs the Buick LeSabre into the street, pulls the shift lever into the ‘D’ slot and ever so slowly moves away from her home. A tear slides down her cheek.

The clouds part and Martha pulls over. She grabs her huge sunglasses and places them over her bifocals to combat the bright sunlight streaming through the windshield. Although her tank is three-quarters full she pulls into a convenience store for gas. She carefully maneuvers between parked cars and the pump. “Twenty dollars on pump six, please,” Martha tells the clerk.

She walks slowly to the car and removes the gas cap. “Only four gallons?” she whispers and heads back into the store for change.

Martha pulls into her mechanic’s garage and rolls down the window. He stops working on a car on a lift and approaches.

“Hi Martha, don’t tell me, the brakes are squealing again?” asks Henry.

“No Henry, the brakes are fine. Could you please check the oil?” asks Martha as she pulls the release lever.

“Absolutely,” replies Henry as he pops the hood. He studies the engine compartment, pulls the dipstick.

“Oil is fine, brake fluid is topped off, windshield washer reservoir is full. You’re good to go.” He drops the hood.

“Thanks for all your help, Henry.”

“Happy driving Martha.”

Martha has endured the sneers of countless drivers over the years. Riding her bumper, flying by her in passing zones, honking if she takes an extra moment when the light turns green. She never let them bother her. This is her ride and she is going to enjoy it at her pace.

After her busy day Martha takes the long way home. She drives up a long winding road. At the top of the hill she pulls into an overlook facing west. She rolls down the window and feels the wind buffeting the car.

“I miss you, Fred. I miss you so much. Remember when we would pull over, in this spot, and watch the sunset? I still feel your arm around me. I still feel your lips.”

Martha turns the Buick into the driveway, pushes the lever into the ‘P’ slot and turns the key. Another car pulls into the drive. She can see in the rear-view mirror it’s her son, Jim, and granddaughter Susan. She steps out of the car.

“Hi, Mom, how was your day?” asks Jim.

“Busy, but good. The price of gas just keeps going up. Can’t somebody do something? Cost me almost ten dollars and I already had over half a tank,” replies Martha as she begins to unload groceries.

“Let us give you a hand with those, Mom,” says Jim.

They enter the house through a side door and place the groceries on the kitchen table. Jim turns to his mother. “I’m sorry we have to do this, Mom. (Pauses) But it’s the right thing.”

“I know, son,” replies Martha. “Had another close call this afternoon. Other than macular degeneration, I’m a pretty healthy 80-year-old. I’m thankful for that. And for my family and friends.”

Martha pulls a tissue from the cuff of her sleeve. She takes one of her granddaughter’s hands and places the keys in her palm. She gently folds over the youthful fingers and rests her hand on top. The women stare at each other through eyes bathed in tears. “Your Grandpa and I had a lot of good times with that car.” (She pauses) “Treat her right and you will, too.”

Martha watches the Buick’s taillights disappear into the horizon from her bedroom window.

“Watch over her Fred.”

Reflecting with Gratitude- The Leadership of Two Connecticut Mothers: Karen Hobert Flynn and Donna Fox Parson

Submitted by Irene Q. Brown

Early in March Connecticut citizens learned of the untimely death of one of our most accomplished public spirited fellow citizens, **Karen Hobert Flynn**, a resident of Middletown. For decades she had been active in **Common Cause**, both in our State and nationally and in 2016 she became its President. In our fast-paced and significantly divided news culture, soon after her death came a flurry of mostly brief notices from other organizations and leaders. Recently more extended tributes of appreciation for her many years of commitment to improving our political culture, first in our State and then in the nation appeared. Our Hampton Town Committee invites you to reflect on **Karen Hobert Flynn’s** leadership and on that of **Donna Fox Parson**, from our small Eastern Connecticut town.

Young and old who seek to improve our complex political life may benefit and take heart that one individual, working with many people and organizations over many years, can have a major impact. **Karen Hobert Flynn’s** efforts on behalf of the **Citizens Election Program [CEP]**, a voluntary system of public financing for state elections was passed in a special Connecticut legislative session—with bipartisan support—in 2005. **CEP** remains important today. Its success contributed to her promotion to major responsibilities in Common Cause nationally. One of her predecessors as President of Common Cause, and also one of her mentors, was the former CT Secretary of State **Miles Rapoport**. Please read the fulsome and varied set of tributes to her on the national Common Cause page: <https://www.commoncause.org/democracy-wire/read-tributes-to-karen-hobert-flynn/>

Our **Hampton Democratic Town Committee** joins this lively chorus of appreciation. We also want to remember a link between our small rural community and the national stage on which Karen made such a notable mark.

The nation, our State, and our small town lost another woman nearly a decade ago, one who had been instrumental in supporting people committed to improving democratic politics, strengthening elections and public life, and improving the natural environment. **Donna Fox Parson** (1941-2014) worked for years on legislative reforms and, like Karen Hobert Flynn, mentored future leaders for Common Cause and similar efforts. See: <https://www.commoncause.org/democracy-wire/in-memoriam-donna-parson/>

We, the members of the Hampton Democratic Town Committee are grateful for the devoted and influential work on behalf of our democracy exercised by these two leaders. Born elsewhere, **Karen Hobert Flynn** and **Donna Fox Parson** both gained experience in our small state and raised their families here. Their caring motherhood included the public good and the natural environment. Both recognized the power of an engaged citizenry, and sought ways to strengthen it. Their work is of crucial importance as we enter another election cycle in a period of serious, even violent, challenges at home, abroad, and—to an unprecedented degree—in relation to our environment and the climate forces that surround us all.



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