

NEIGHBORS

No. 225

January - February 2024

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Looking Up:

Sky-Dancing Clouds and Egyptian Cosmology

By Bob Grindle

The early Christmas Eve conversation with an old friend who happened to stop by the house reached escape velocity before either of us realized what was happening. It had started innocently enough with a bit of the reminiscing this season is so fabled for...the winter wonderland memories and fantasies that so many of our generation hightail it south to avoid but seem so abundantly to populate our recall of the good times...once upon a time! We hadn't seen each other in several months and after a bit of catch-up, a sharp comment from this longtime friend about losing a son to right-wing conspiracy theories and what sort of world will our generation be leaving to our children and grandchildren spilled out onto the conversational floor as if a secret compartment of some sort had suddenly broken open. My own sense of optimism for the long-term survival of our species exists despite deep and troubling concerns about homo sapiens' flaws, so after a couple of quick conversational k-turns we said our goodbyes and merry Christmases.

Our son, daughter-in-law and grandson recently set out to a nearby tree farm to cut their annual Christmas tree and the picture they took of that tiny, short-lived moment in time reminds me of why hope for the future is every bit as much alive as it has ever been...and why somewhere in even the smokiest, bluesiest, jazz corner of the saddest lament we might have ever imagined, there is a spark of human spirit that refuses to grow cold.

The mid-afternoon walk we set off on across this late December landscape feels almost derelict. How did things get to be such a mess? We have lived on this hillside long enough to have met the beast that breathes in nature's dishevelment. The forces that haunt the lyrical distractions of wind and rain and atmospheric banshees wailing through the darkening, leafless and sodden forests of our scoured and moss-strewn bit of glacial retreat are



The author's grandson and son with this year's tree and perhaps a tree for a later date. Contributed photo.

as old as Earth, as fresh as dawn and as familiar as the sound of our own breathing. Does the swirling crowd of sky dancing clouds celebrate our success at surviving this tempest-tossed slip-slide called life or simply revel in their superior Cosmology—Egyptian-like, perhaps—understanding there is divinity in everything, from seasonally suspended milkweed para-seeds to rain fueled hillside trail washouts and mummified ash trees shedding their decay like woodland zombies?

Across the saturated wetland that just a few months ago we called a lawn, this afternoon's walk leads us downhill toward the naturally occurring springs that have never failed to supply our water, sweet and pure, in more than a half century of tending to and mending the wounds and fractures of this soggy hillside. More pathways beckon but are littered with a feud of fallen trees and branches that the twilight casts in ghostly and ghastly shapes and shadows and caution calls a halt to our ramble. We head back toward the house as the distant drone of the generator chuckles at our pioneering fantasies. Fifty years ago, after the December 1973 ice storm—recently wed and having just moved into our first house—without a generator or a care in the world, we reveled in the quiet beauty of an eastern Connecticut hillside we had just met. As the sound of the generator grows nearer and the flickering lights of the house offer their welcoming glow, it occurs to me that the universe keeps offering our species the same lessons over, and over and over again...in different ways perhaps...I hope we master them soon. The wind is increasing a bit as dark settles in and these raw and bone rattling days when the rain seems almost eternal make our human nesting practices seem worth the effort. Something about the dark woods all around us make the thought of January's full Wolf Moon seem even more chilling than normal and our pace toward the house quickens. I nod to Orion and Taurus as they begin to twinkle into view and smile to think that Jupiter will strut its stuff across the night sky as the Cosmos—in its cold, dark and implacable way—expands violently without a sound.

Back in the house the light of the Moon is enchanting and thoughts of sound and fury fade in the face of evening chores. Despite concerns about the future of our species, I feel encouraged that the hard work of fixing things is in our own hands and that is a good thought to wrap up a late afternoon walk as 2023 comes to an end. Enjoy the coming season when our New England landscape rests up for it Spring Fling.



The Stormy Petrel

Here is the tale of the bravest of seabirds, the small stormy petrel
Who lives her life over the ocean, courageously braving the tempest
Fluttering and flying with rapture upon the fierce winds of the storm
Year after year she will fly miles and miles away over the ocean
Never to rest on land 'til the brief time for mating is near
When the longing for love strikes the wild lonely heart of the petrel
Only in cover of night to the nesting grounds ancient she flies
There she will find her mate waiting for his companion
Then they will disappear in a hole in the ground dug for safety
Purring and murmuring deep in their cave of their love for each other
Flying out only at night to the vast open sea once again

Lifelong they ride on the wind and follow the storms of their namesake
'Til they grow tired of the sky and the wandering winds that compel them
Finally they rest on the water, the waves that are rising and falling
On the savage breast of the sea, their inscrutable mother
Resting afloat more and more as the specter of death overtakes them
Finally to disappear, received by the sea that sustained them
Only to rise again as two spirits united in love
Soaring out over the sea without effort or hunger or sorrow
Souls so wild and free flying home to their loving creator.

Poem and artwork by Kathy LaVallee of North Windham.

At the Connecticut Audubon Society Grassland Bird Conservation Center

218 Day Road, Pomfret Center, CT
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Plainfield Fish Hatchery Bird Walks

Thursday, January 25 at 9 a.m.
Thursday, February 22 at 9 a.m.

Join Andy Rzeznikiewicz as he leads you around the extensive hatchery grounds. This location often has many bird species wintering there, due to the open water conifer trees and dense shrub areas. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members. Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or call 860-928-4948.

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Saturday, February 24 at 7 p.m.

Andy will call in various owls. The most likely finds include Screech owls and Barred Owls. Great Horned are around and will sometimes come in. Fee: \$10 CAS members; \$20 non-members. Register by emailing arzeznikiewicz@ctaudubon.org or call 860-928-4948.

On our cover:

Greg Cichowski (left) and Greg Peck with 'The Magic Phone Box.' Read Mitchell Sibley-Jett's article on page 5. Contributed photo.

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

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The Purpose of Neighbors:

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

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Our Relationship to the Land

By Loretta Wrobel



As we begin a new year, a question nags me. How many years can we continue to live in an unsustainable manner where we view land as property, land and the non-human beings that reside on it as commodities, and land as capital to be used up without regard? In 2024 I will welcome my 80th birthday. I tremble when I remember in 8 short decades how my world has transformed.

The looming presence of dramatic climate change, with the devastating results-- flooding, incessant forest fires that pollute our precious air, and the drying up of important water sources that leave us questioning about our survival. I was listening to an old talk given by Robin Wall Kimmerer, botanist, professor, author, and citizen of the Potawatomi nation, speaking of her mourning the extinction of the once prolific passenger pigeons on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of their disappearance. She offered during that speech that we were losing an average of 200 species every day due to climate change. Other sources indicate we are losing 150 species daily. I add to my long list that rapid acceleration of the loss of species is occurring due to the effects of climate chaos. And again I am concerned about the future of our world.

Robin Wall Kimmerer was talking nearly a decade ago at a Bioneers Conference in 2014, comparing the eradication of the passenger pigeons to the relocation of her ancestors from the forests of Michigan to Kansas during the Trail of Death. Both of these events happened because land was needed, and the original peoples, as well as the birds, were viewed as stopping progress.

Ms. Kimmerer goes on to present us a blueprint for sustainability that is as relevant today as it was 10 years ago, when she initially discussed the wisdom of the Honorable Harvest. The relevancy is not surprising, as she is sharing ancient wisdom passed down from generations of her tribal people. This clear elaboration of ancient ways that indigenous peoples refined and verbally passed on over many generations reflects a path of sustainability. This world view is simple yet complex. It is a model that indigenous peoples followed, since they viewed the land as sacred, home, sustainer, ancestral wisdom, source of knowledge, and the residence of nonhuman relatives.

For us in our highly advanced technological culture, these tenets may be viewed as foolish or primitive. I was impressed when I heard her list these core beliefs, and pray that our generation of young people will see the truth and begin to practice these life-sustaining and enduring practices.

She enumerates ten key principles that allow me to feel hopeful. Here is a method of shifting from our capitalist, unsustainable, disrespectful and destructive course to a sustainable, healthy, and respectful philosophy. Adopting these beliefs can stem the out-of-control flow down the presently well-worn road to extinction that so many now extinct creatures have traveled. We desperately must do this for all living species.

The teachings of the Honorable Harvest are grounded in the reality of our utter dependence on the lives of other beings. The understanding that knowing the ways of the ones who take care of you, such as the plants that surround you, can help you thrive. Our young children can identify over one hundred corporate logos and a much smaller number of plants, average around ten. What does this show us about what is paramount in our society?

As we attempt to embrace these principles, the manner in which we impact our environment will be transfigured. Here is a list of these rules of sensible and compassionate living that Robin Kimmerer sees as a methodology to stop the destruction of climate change: Never take the first one, ask permission, take only what you need, listen for the answer, minimize harm, use everything you take, be grateful, share with others, reciprocate the gift and take only that which is given.

A book can be written about each of these commandments that appear as straightforward and easy. However, for the average person living in America today, these ten principles represent an extremely monumental stretch of thinking, acting and being. For example, when we take only what we need, we stop producing mountains of waste and we keep our houses free from excessive clutter. Instead, we in our western culture accept the idea that more is best. The more we possess, the happier we will be. So goes the mistaken assumption. We all experience the folly of that myth and still buy into purchasing more and more.

One of my favorites is share with others. Pause and imagine living in a sharing culture. How could our daily life be different if we operated on sharing rather than collecting and hoarding our commodities? What kind of world would we create if the status of an individual was counted by the degree of sharing and not by how much money, houses, or cars they possess? It is refreshing to consider how a switch in beliefs and thinking could alter an entire culture.

If you are still in the dark about what is given, consider the sun, whose energy rises each day and is shared freely with everyone. We have the wind, the ocean waves, and the forests. There are abundances of elements and species that allow us to be alive and breathing. Do we remember to thank all of these beings that are always there for us? "Saying thank you" is just accepting our interdependence, and releasing the erroneous idea that we are totally independent and self-reliant.

When we acknowledge that what is broken in our world is our relationship to the land, we are moving on the healing pathway. The deeper we understand having a positive connection to our earth is essential for our wellbeing, the more our chances for survival increase dramatically. Also, the wellbeing of all species on this amazing and diverse planet is vital to our continued existence. All life is intertwined. By vowing to remain committed to the belief that the welfare of other species is necessary to our continued healthy existence, we can invest in the strenuous work of changing how we relate to plants, soil, air, water, and to each other. May we see the sageness before it is too late. We have many ancestors with the answers for us, if we make the intelligent choice to pay attention. First peoples learned by observing, giving thanks, and honoring the land and nonhuman species. Can we follow their lead to combat climate change? I pray we will.

Tai Chi Home

Bringing You Back

By Joe Pandolfo



We've passed through the longest night. Time now to settle into the lap of winter... to look up and see the moon before the sun goes down.

In a healthy autumn we find ways to let go. For balance in the winter, let your self sit still to see the sunset glow. Breathe all the way down below the horizon.

These days when those embers glow longer, the night sky will still grow quiet and deep, bringing you back to the sea of sleep and dreams.

it's a great day for a subway!

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No Time for Mimes (Use Your Words)

By Bob Lorentson

Censorship is telling a man he can't have a steak just because a baby can't chew it. - Mark Twain

Once upon a time, there was The Word, or a word anyway, some first word that opened the floodgates of human communication and learning and eventually led to the building of the first civilization. You might think there would be no stopping words then – they were stepping stones to everything from our deepest souls to deepest space. Without words, books would be useless, and librarians even more so. Our knowledge of ourselves and our place in the universe would suffer. Without words, we would all be mimes, and when's the last time you saw a mime do anything except struggle to get out of an invisible prison.

Well, I didn't think I had the words to describe what is happening today with our books and in our libraries. And then I thought, Am I a man, or am I a mime? Influential people who want to keep large segments of the population in invisible prisons are banning books at nearly twice the rate of last year's absurdly high level, according to the American Library Association (ALA). If we don't use our words now to counter this, we risk becoming a nation of mimes, a frightening thought on many levels.

Granted, it doesn't take a mime to know that words can spoil an illusion. Even people who see threats in words they don't understand and books they've never read know this. They also know that while turning people into mimes is impractical, keeping them in invisible prisons is not. All it takes is a control of words, a fanatical book banning here, a hysterical book burning there, and soon whole populations of undesirables disappear in a fantastic illusion of liberty and justice for all.

Throughout history, these threats have come from books by people of undesirable genders, races, religions, classes, and political affiliations. In addition, historians and scientists have appeared especially threatening, likely because they can spoil an illusion even faster than a mime with free speech. Throughout history, invisible prisons have been crammed with all sorts of invisible people. It doesn't take a superpower to see them. If you can't, you haven't been reading the wrong books.

In recent times, however, the ALA reports that most targeted books have LGBTQ+ themes, evidence, perhaps, that not only are some people threatened by words, but also by letters and symbols. Those people know that these letters and symbols represent their worst nightmare, whole populations of people that have been hidden for so long that no one knows how many other letters might be represented by that ominous + symbol. It is no coincidence that these book bans are coming at a time when many such people are trying to find the courage to express themselves and demand an end to their invisible prisons.

And now, as if symbols, letters, words, and books weren't threatening enough, comes the biggest threat of all – librarians! Obscenity laws are rapidly being enacted or proposed that would fine and jail librarians, in real prisons, for allowing access to books they believe could contribute to the corruption of minors. This potentially covers a lot of territory, none of which has been defined, except in the minds of the people who would keep us in prison for not thinking like them. Think about this while you can – they might be coming for your thoughts next.

Don't get me wrong, books can be dangerous. If you've ever been booked, or had the book thrown at you, you know this. Reading a book while driving is extremely risky, as is reading during sex, and you risk losing more than the plot. But books don't kill people, book bans do, by putting them in invisible prisons. A loaded book is a weapon for freedom, knowledge, and discovery, as Frederick Douglas knew when he said, "Once you learn to read, you'll be forever free." The book banners may not know much, but they do know this, and it scares them more than a country full of librarians.

When I was a child, I would sometimes be so terrified of the boogeyman that I couldn't talk, and my mother would say to me, "Use your words. It will go away."

Don't be a mime. The boogeyman is at your library door. Use your words.

Bob Lorentson is a local writer. And reader. His new book is *YOU ONLY GO EXTINCT ONCE (Stuck in the Anthropocene with the Pleistocene Blues Again).*



Windham Free Library Procures Useful Grants

Article and photo by Bill Powers

"Changing Children's Lives one book at a time" is an expression sometimes used by advocates for the improvement of children's literacy. It is the motto for the Pilcrow Foundation's Children's Book Project Grant based in Oregon. The Windham Free Library applied for and received three different grants last year. In December of 2023, several cartons of children's books selected by the Windham Free Library arrived from the Pilcrow Foundation project. There were 111 high quality hardcover books previously selected by the library to be added to their collection. The books included award-winning and star-reviewed titles from educational and literary organizations. It was the first time the library has received this grant for which the library matched one third of the grant amount with funds they raised themselves. "The grant was an incredible opportunity for Windham's children" said, Kathy Miller the Library's board president.

In December the library received a grant that focuses on children's books and next summer's program for kids. The Leo J. & Rose Pageau Trust benefits local charities, religious, scientific, literary and educational groups or projects in the Windham, Connecticut Community.

Serving the needs of Windham Center's children by the Windham Free Library is not new. The library had its beginnings in 1896 and it was "organized by a small number of citizens as a non-profit association library." There are past accounts of elderly residents who recalled walking with their class from their neighborhood school to the library more than 100 years ago. That tradition is practiced on a regular basis today, when students walk with their teachers from the Windham Center School to the Library to check out and return books. While they are there, they assemble in the historic Dr. Chester Hunt Office to hear a grade appropriate story read to them by a library volunteer.

Janice Patry, the library director told me, "As the Windham Free Library is the smallest free standing public library in Connecticut, grants like those offered by The Pilcrow Foundation and The Leo J. and Rose Pageau Trust go a long way in stretching our book budget allowance. Having received these grants, we will be able to expand our offerings, as well as replace some of our well-loved books in need of repair. Our partnership with the Windham Center School provides the opportunity for students in their classrooms to visit the library multiple times throughout the year, and we are excited to be able to add new materials to the collection for them to choose from."

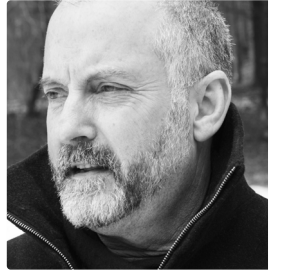
A third matching grant and the largest obtained by the library last year demonstrates the library board's responsible stewardship for the Dr. Chester Hunt Office, a true historical gem that stands on the library's property and was built in 1790. The grant called for the exterior windows to be restored including glazing and painting. Exterior clapboards were repaired as needed and the exterior of the building painted. Preservation Connecticut provided the funding through one of its 1772 Foundation Grants. Preservation Connecticut works to "preserve, protect, and promote the buildings, sites, and landscapes that contribute to the heritage and vitality of Connecticut communities." The services of Mr. Bill Bender from Windham were procured; he has completed other similar restoration projects in the past. A goal was to preserve as much of original wood as possible.

Many thanks to Ellen Lang who was involved with writing the grant applications for the library and who was helpful with providing much of the information for this story.

Bill Powers is a retired Hartford and Windham Public Schools teacher.

From the Ground Up- Buying Local in Connecticut

By Dennis Pierce



It is with regret that my column, *From the Ground Up- Buying Local in Connecticut*, will not be appearing in this issue of *Neighbors*. In 2010 I approached Tom King, Editor and Publisher of *Neighbors*, to see if there was an interest in a monthly column focusing on Connecticut Grown through interviews with local farmers and farmer market vendors and how they bring their offerings to market. In addition, I wanted to draw from my culinary background and include a recipe that would align with the column's topic. Thirteen years later, as we approach 2024, I notified Tom that I would be taking a mini sabbatical from my writings and would not contribute to the January / February issue. You might say I needed to hibernate for the winter. My absence is for resting, resetting, recharging, and figuring out what comes next for my column. That is the sort of energy I need to tap into for the next few months. Sometimes in life you have to hit the pause button, take stock on what comes next and realign your sights for the upcoming years. Thanks to all who follow my column, stop me on the street and share that they look forward to the next feature and those that email with words of appreciation. Lastly, Happy New Year to all. Even though winter is upon us there are still plenty of opportunities to purchase local produce with the abundance of winter farmer's markets. Peas be with you....

Black Night Madonna

By Chamele

She moved like the tide
Pulled by the moon
Undulating flowing captivating the very energy
Within you as you watch her
Flow through the street
A smell
Feral a hint of patchouli holds
Your senses
Your eyes follow enslaved by your other senses
That can't seem to pull away
As her body undulates
Her long braids move
As if under water
The logic of it or the disconnect of it
Holds you even more
She is real
Isn't she
Her skin is black
And in the shadows
She at times seems to
Disappear
A specter
Or perhaps
A fabrication of your dreams
She stops
You freeze
She turns
You stop breathing
Her eyes arrest you
You faltering at a reason
Betrayal
She accused
You accept
Her braids
Float
Medusa
Are you made of stone?
For all motion has changed
Stopped within you
The blackness of her skin
Shadows disappears in the
Night
And you are left
With a dream
A dream
Of the Black Night Madonna

the Neighbors paper
Locally Written
Locally Wread

The Magic Phone Box

By Mitchell Sibley-Jett

Do you believe in magic? You know the kind that I'm talking about right? The kind that just happens, all by itself, with no explanation or reason. Maybe you started to believe in magic as a child.

Maybe it started when you didn't study for that big test and then school gets canceled the next day for no apparent reason? Or the time as a young adult when you really really wanted that cute girl who sat by you in 8th grade study hall to notice you... and she finally did! Again, for no apparent reason.

When we grow up a bit, we tend to think back on our childhood dreams of magic as a moment of time in which we were a bit naive. Now that we are older (and presumably wiser), we can leave these childish things behind. I say, "hold on, wait a minute, not so fast" There's magic in the world and I can prove it to you.

The magic I'm talking about is not from Wizards, or even from wishful thinking. It's the best kind of magic that there is, it's from a human being who was (and is) kind and caring and when he saw a chance to make the world just a little bit better, he took it.

Our story begins in England in 1994. Martha & Mitch Sibley-Jett were stationed at RAF Mildenhall UK from 1992-1995. Mitch was an Air Force Officer and Martha worked as the Station Manager for the American Red Cross. At that time, they had 2 children, Nicholas & Erin. They both loved England so much and hoped that they could stay forever.

In 1994, Mitch convinced himself that he wanted a souvenir from England when they returned to the US that next year. Something that would remind them of their time there, all the good friends that they had met, and the journeys that they had taken. In a bit of inspiration that he still finds it hard to explain, Mitch decided what he wanted - a British Phone Box.

Yes, that's right. A British Phone Box! A Model KB5 if you want to be specific. It should be pointed out this 'souvenir' weighed over 2,000 pounds, wasn't in great shape (the door was separated from the hinge). And... how would they ever get it home? So many questions!

Despite these reservations and warnings, Mitch went ahead and bought it! Martha thought that he was a little bit 'kooky' but that was only years when she told him the truth.

In 1995, when they left Britain, this Phone Box came back with them to the states. In 1996, they bought a beautiful home in Beverly, MA and that's where it stayed until 1999 when the Sibley-Jetts moved to Connecticut. Did this 2,000 pound souvenir travel with them? Yes! Mitch had a friend who was a backyard genius who managed to lower the Phone Box down (gently!) onto a flatbed and drive it there! Beautiful!

There the Phone Box stood until the fall of 2022. That's when Greg Cichowski, the Magic Bringer got involved! He was introduced to us by our Friend Carol Sur-

ridge. They had both come over for dinner one night, and when Greg got out of the car and saw it, he was stunned. He looked stricken, almost sick when he said "Wow... what is this thing?" "A British Phone Box" I said.

I later learned that Greg has an attraction to old things in need of some new love. He has restored 2 old homes, multiple old cars, and now (apparently), has interest in restoring an old British Phone Box. That night, Greg convinced both Martha & Mitch into letting him restore this Phone Box back to its original glory!

Within weeks, Greg had sprung into action. He talked his friend Greg Peck (Greg #2!) into bringing over this flatbed truck/ & forklift over, hoisting it onto his flatbed truck, and then bringing it to his shop!

Then, over the next 18 months, Greg worked incredibly hard at bringing it back to life. He took (literally) everything off; every screw, every fixture, every hinge, every shelf, every wire, even the door came off! Then, he replaced everything better than new. He burnished the brass hinges better than new, sanded off the uncounted layers of old paint, and polished the old screws back to where they were better than new. Greg researched companies in England that made new parts for this phone box and ordered them. He found a local company in Tolland that fabricated parts, and then custom ordered 48 window window panels complete with brand new glass. He had a friend who custom made a multi-laminate oak floor to install. All of this work was accomplished by a small yet mighty group of

volunteers wonderfully talented crafts people to help him (listed below). This included laborers, painters, phone box movers, carpenters and backyard mechanical geniuses of every type.

On November 11th of 2023, after being gone for more than a year and a half, the Phone Box returned! It came back on the exact flatbed truck and forklift that it left on! Of all the 6 people gathered there, I think that the person most excited for it to return home was Greg. He was like a kid that was told there was another Christmas - and it was today!

Today this Phone Box sits happily on a newly made concrete pad right in front of our house in Ashford. You may say that this Phone Box is made of steel, glass and wood. But I know different - it has magic in it, all because of one man!

Endless thanks and praise to the following key players:

- Carol Surridge Chief Cheerleader
- Greg Cichowski Master Fixer & Chief People Wrangler
- Greg Peck All Purpose Garage Wizard
- Extraordinaire
- Frank Carbone Painting Guru
- Don Aitken Garage Wizard
- Ken Beers Master Carpenter
- Stacey Gendreau Apprentice Carpenter



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A contra dance is a social dance that one can attend without a partner. The dancers form couples who form sets in long lines. Throughout the course of a dance, couples progress up and down these lines, dancing with each other couple in the line. The dance is led by a caller who teaches the sequence of moves in the dance before the music starts. This sequence is repeated as couples progress up and down the line. Since there is no required footwork, many people find contra dancing easier to learn than other forms of dancing.

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Wonder and Purpose

By Delia Berlin



Every two weeks or so I drive to NYC to visit my daughter and her family. On those occasions, I usually listen to Connecticut Public Radio. If I find the programming interesting, I can get decent reception along most of the drive on three different stations. On my last trip, I caught a fascinating portion of “Where We Live,” centered around saving turtles.

I had a sweet pet turtle in my childhood. I have heard that I selected it from a large group of them at a pet store in Buenos Aires when I was two years old. Apparently that particular turtle was from a different species, belonged to the store owner and was not for sale. But a two-year-old knows how to tantrum, and it produced results. That turtle roamed our patio during the warm parts of the year and retired to hibernate under furniture in winter. When my family left Argentina, the turtle stayed with relatives who had an enclosed garden and after many years abroad I lost track of its situation.

At one point in my childhood, my family also had a water tank with a couple of red-eared sliders, but I do not recall the end of that story. And decades later, my husband participated as a citizen scientist in projects related to marine turtle conservation. So, turtles were not complete strangers to me. I thought I knew quite a few things about them, but this radio program opened my eyes to much more.

While the guests related several amazing facts about turtles, what captivated me was their passion as they talked about them. They almost sounded like me when I discuss parrots. My thoughts dwelled more on that passion than any actual turtle-related information. But some of the turtle factoids mentioned were so fantastic that I must share them.

The radio guests marveled at the incredible resilience of turtles. They cited many stories about turtles that survived devastating injuries and later regained full function, getting well enough to be reintroduced to the wild. Some of these cases required significant veterinary work and ingenuity. For example, one turtle with a fractured jaw that had been re-set kept dislocating it by wobbling (due to other injuries) and rolling over. To prevent this turtle from constantly rolling over, the vet stuck it snugly inside a plastic jug with a handle, head sticking out. By positioning the handle over the tallest point of the turtle, the jug acted as a stabilizer, bringing the turtle back on its feet each time it was about to roll over. The turtle “wore” the plastic jug until its jaw healed and recovered fully.

Another turtle, a baby near the size of a quarter, was found seemingly dead. But the passion of these turtle advocates goes well beyond talk. One of them actually performed CPR on this tiny tot for 35 minutes. And guess what? The turtle lived!

Now, if you are curious about turtle CPR, you will be interested to hear that it is not at all like human CPR. Fortunately, no chest compressions or mouth-to-mouth breathing are involved. If by chance you find a turtle in cardiac arrest, you should take hold of its legs and start crossing and uncrossing them rhythmically to pump oxygen into its lungs. The radio guests did not explain how to take a turtle’s pulse, but based on their described successes, I think one should immediately start the turtle CPR protocol on any turtle that looks dead, as long as it does not smell, and proceed until there are clear signs of life or exhaustion, whichever comes first.

The radio program covered turtles of all kinds, aquatic and terrestrial. One segment was about a very endangered migratory species of marine turtle. As we all well know, the oceans are warming. The Gulf of Maine, where these turtles find themselves at times, is warming much faster than any other part of the Atlantic Ocean. This is delaying the start of the migration of these turtles. When they finally leave for warmer waters they encounter, instead, colder waters. Being cold-blooded animals, they become hypothermic and drowsy, unable to swim or even to come up to the surface for air. Volunteers routinely patrol these Maine beaches after storms, rescuing any turtles that get washed ashore and taking them to warming facilities to be revived. Some of these turtles are then transported more than ten miles on sleds to be released safely.

Many more interesting facts were uncovered during this program, helping my ride to the city feel shorter than usual. By the time it ended, my mind drifted to the sense of commitment and joy that these passionate speakers had conveyed. In these apocalyptic times of cruel wars, cataclysms and extinctions, life manages to continue to offer seemingly endless opportunities to find wonder and purpose if we seek them.

As we start a new year, we can search within ourselves for hidden pockets of refuge from all the horrors around us. Hopefully, we will still find many. They may be parrots or turtles, plants, constellations, or books. We may encounter them walking outdoors, cooking dinner, or creating projects with others. And if we are fortunate enough to get inspired, feel wonder, and find purpose, let us recognize it, embrace it, and savor it with gratitude.

Local Moms and Newborns Abandoned

By Bill Powers

On December 1, 2023, I received an email from the Connecticut State Office of Health Strategy (OHS) that was startling and shocking. It consisted of a December 1st Press Release titled “Office of Health Strategy and Windham Hospital Agree To Study Birthing Center/Enhance Women’s Healthcare As Part Of Agreed Settlement.” In addition to significant contradiction, it also contained important misinformation or possibly disinformation depending upon the intentions of OHS. At face value a birthing center sounds like something that is encouraging and constructive just as nationally and in Windham County there are real concerns about infant mortality rates. Infant mortality is the measure of how many babies die before they reach their first birthday. Nationally, the infant mortality rate rose by 3 % in 2022 based on data released in 2023. It was the largest increase in *two decades* according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Infant health has been a staple of public health from the beginnings of modern medicine. Today infant mortality is a strategic priority of public health.

There continues to be an urgent need to support moms before, during and after birth and there is no question about that. Unfortunately, the OHS Press Release is troublesome in striking ways. It also provides a link to an eight page “Agreed Settlement” revealing that OHS is actually talking about the “Project Titled: **Termination of Inpatient Obstetric Services**”, which incredibly has nothing to do with birthing centers. Curiously, the Press Release informs that “The Office of Health Strategy has rendered a **FINAL DECISION** by way of an Agreed Settlement in Hartford Healthcare’s Windham Community Memorial Hospital Certificate of Need application. **The settlement approves the request to terminate the hospital’s inpatient obstetric services if Windham studies the need for and feasibility of a birthing center and agrees to operate one if needed.**” Those are two “if(s)” worthy of attention. That is because the discussion is for a “final decision” that has been negotiated on Windham Hospital’s application to end inpatient obstetric services. In actuality the services ended three-and-one half years ago, when Windham Hospital/Hartford Health Care (HHC) abandoned our local moms and newborns.

Clearly, the Press Release astonishingly proposes that a *birthing center* can somehow substitute for *Windham Hospital’s inpatient maternity services*. A birthing center can be a good idea for women with expected low-risk births. It is not a full-service institution for situations where moms and newborns are at risk, or when complications arise. It has been advised that a hospital inpatient obstetric service be located in its *vicinity* for required interventions for optimal outcomes for both mom and newborn. (“Healthy Moms. Strong Babies” – March of Dimes)

It is also *astounding* that the Office of Health Strategy would allow Windham Hospital to plan a birthing center with no hospital inpatient maternity service in the *vicinity* of Windham/Willimantic or several other towns. Currently, the one nationally accredited birthing center in Connecticut is located in Danbury, Connecticut Childbirth and Women’s Center, and is located literally across the street from and therefore clearly in the *vicinity* of Danbury Hospital with inpatient maternity services. It seems the OHS somehow accepts the Windham Hospital/ Hartford Health Care definition of “vicinity” (whatever it is) for transporting maternity patients, not across the street or even across town, but all the way to Norwich. This creates a multiplicity of risks, problems, concerns and issues for women and their newborns, especially women in labor who may develop emergent complications.

What is probably the *most astonishing and confusing* thing presented in the December 1, 2023, OHS press release is it purported that “OHS has rendered a **Final Decision** by way of an Agreed Settlement in Hartford Health Care’s Windham Community Memorial Hospital, Inc. Certificate of Need (CON) application.” Recalling that the CON involves the “**Termination of Inpatient Obstetric Services**” at Windham Community Memorial Hospital”, how on Earth can the settlement “approve the request to terminate the hospital’s inpatient obstetric services **if** and when Windham studies the need for and feasibility of a birthing center and agrees to operate one **if** needed,” when in the meantime the **Windham Hospital/HHC**

has already stopped its Labor and Delivery services and did so back in June of 2020? The **ifs** beg the question that a **FINAL DECISION** was reached. A final decision should *not* have been negotiated by OHS with those conditions.

How has Windham Hospital/HHC gotten away with abandoning our moms and their newborns for so long without first obtaining required approvals? Was there illegal or unethical collusion between OHS and Hartford Health Care by some at some level? How powerful have health care monopolies and the Connecticut Hospital Association become in the short-changing of the health care needs of certain groups of Connecticut residents? Why haven’t my state senator and the state representatives from our region assured that the diversity, equity, and inclusion of residents in our region are respected and why have they failed to check the health care monopolies who simply acquire more and more power? Is the abandonment of local moms and newborns by my elected officials and the Office of Health Strategy as well as HHC merely the latest example of closing down local health services? Perhaps it represents just the tip of the iceberg! I expect my state elected and appointed officials to be a voice for their constituents and those who are voiceless by circumstance. When I asked OHS about “who their negotiators were”- the OHS response was simply: “Various OHS Staff and attorneys were involved in the settlement negotiations.” Also, I asked, “Why work a deal with Hartford Health Care for a birthing center when the pre and postnatal services are already offered at Windham Hospital?” The OHS response was “Although OHS was confident in the PDF’s findings of fact and conclusions of law, Executive Director Deidre S. Gifford retained ultimate decision-making authority and was free to accept or reject the PDF based on her own review of the CON record.” Why weren’t the Commissioner of Public Health, the Commissioner of the Office For Early Childhood as well as the Office of the Child Advocate involved? Sounds to me like Gifford should be held accountable for a terrible decision favoring Hartford Health Care while abandoning our moms and their newborns.

Local moms and infants cannot be abandoned and should not continue to be bullied by Connecticut’s health care hypocrites and thugs.

*Note: **bold** and italicized words were mine for emphasis. – BP*

A final note: To date trying to obtain answers to my questions for this story from OHS have been difficult and slow to obtain, and mostly incomplete. A freedom of information request has been filed. The spokesman for Windham hospital has not answered any of my questions simply referring me to the original OHS press release, which I already had. He stated, “At this time, all of the information I have is in the (press) release.” I immediately asked if could expect to have my questions answered and there has been no response. He was referred to me by the office of HHC’s Senior Vice President and East Region President, Donna Handley. There is much more to this story and I hope that by the March Issue of Neighbors there will be a second episode worthy of your time.

Bill Powers is a former teacher, counselor and health care administrator.



a little paper
big on community

Unsung Heroes of Soul:

The Capitols and The Radiants

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 features two vocal groups from the Upper Midwest.

THE CAPITOLS

They formed as the Three Caps in 1962. The line-up comprised Samuel George (lead vocals and drums), Don Storbball (back-up vocals and guitar), and Richard McDougall (back-up vocals and keyboard). After they performed at a local dance with Barbara Lewis ("Hello Stranger") headlining, the group (now renamed the Capitols) came to the attention of her manager, Ollie McLaughlin. He signed them to his Karen label and released the group's debut single, "Dog and Cat," in 1963. When it failed to sell, the Capitols broke up and went back to their day jobs.

Three years later, George, Storbball and McDougall re-formed the Capitols and looked up Ollie McLaughlin. Inspired by a current dance craze called the Jerk, Storbball had written a song about the "Pimp Jerk," done by the neighborhood pimps who danced in the clubs but were too "cool" to do the Jerk. He renamed it "Cool Jerk" to avoid possible bans on the radio. McLaughlin liked the song and had the Capitols record it at Detroit's Golden World Studios on March 14, 1966. Motown's house band, the Funk Brothers, provided the instrumentation. The song was supposed to include a horn section, but the musicians never showed up.

"Cool Jerk" became a solid smash, hitting #2 on *Billboard* magazine's Rhythm & Blues singles chart and #7 on its Hot 100 pop survey. It also hit #1 in both Detroit and Philadelphia. To cash in on their newfound success, the Capitols released two albums in 1966: *Dance the Cool Jerk* and *We Got a Thing*. Both were top-heavy with Motown covers, and were not exactly hot sellers.

The trio followed up "Cool Jerk" with eight additional singles, three of which made the *Billboard* charts. None, however, could duplicate the group's initial success. The Capitols would forever be known as "one-hit wonders." They broke up for good in 1969.

Unlike its creators, "Cool Jerk" has enjoyed a long shelf life. It was used in Cool Whip commercials (changing "Cool Jerk" to "Cool Whip"), and it appeared in the soundtracks of movies like *More American Graffiti* (1979), *Night and the City* (1992), *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* (1992), *Calendar Girl* (1993), and *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* (2012). The song was also ranked at #70 on Digital Dream Door's list of "100 Greatest Rock Bass Performances," and at #48 on "VH-1's 100 Greatest Dance Songs."

Of the group original members, Donald Storbball became a Detroit police officer, Samuel George was killed in an altercation on March 17, 1982, and Richard McDougall's whereabouts are unknown.

Charted singles:

"Cool Jerk" (1966) R&B #2, Pop #7

"I Got to Handle It" (1966) R&B #49, Pop #74

"We Got a Thing That's In the Groove" (1966) R&B #26, Pop #65

"Patty Cake" (1967) Pop #125

"Soul Brother, Soul Sister" (1969) R&B #42

THE RADIANTS

In 1960, Maurice McAlister formed a gospel group with members of the Greater Harvest Baptist Church youth choir in Chicago. He sang lead while Charles Washington handled first tenor, Jerome Brooks became second tenor, Wallace Sampson sang baritone, and Elzie Butler assumed bass duties. Along with gospel numbers, they practiced secular material. After a few months, Washington stepped down and was replaced by Green McLauren.

By 1961, the Radiants had turned exclusively to Rhythm & Blues music. They recorded a demo tape of songs written by McAlister, only to be rejected by a number of record labels. However, their manager knew Leonard Chess of Chess Records, to whom he introduced

the Radiants. Their first recording session was in May 1962. Three months later, Chess issued its first single on the Radiants, "Father Knows Best" / "One Day I'll Show You." It became a double-sided hit in Chicago and briefly made the *Billboard* pop chart.

The follow-up, "Heartbreak Society," came out in February 1963 but failed to make much noise. By the time of their third release, the rollicking "Shy Guy," in October 1963, the Radiants had a new member, Frank McCollum. He replaced Green McLauren, who had gone into the Army.

Due to internal difficulties, the Radiants broke up in 1964. However, Maurice McAlister and Wallace Sampson got together with Leonard Caston, Jr., and the Radiants were reborn as a trio. They employed the three-part harmony made famous by their fellow Chicagoans, the Impressions, on the sprightly "Voice Your Choice." Released in November 1964, it hit #1 in Chicago and soon broke nationally, reaching #10 on the *Billboard* R&B chart and #51 on the Hot 100.

Caston left the Radiants in 1965 and was replaced by James Jameson. McAlister, the group's lead singer and chief songwriter, quit the following year. That should have ended the Radiants, but an odd set of circumstances kept the group alive.

In 1965, Chess had recorded a group called the Confessions on "(Don't It Make You) Feel Kind of Bad." However, the group disbanded before the label could release it. Meanwhile, Wallace Sampson and James Jameson were at a loss following Maurice McAlister's departure from the Radiants. So producer Billy Davis hooked them up with Mitchell Bullock, who had sung lead on the Confessions' recording. They rounded out the new Radiants group with Victor Caston, kid brother of one-time group member Leonard Caston, Jr.

"(Don't It Make You) Feel Kind of Bad" came out as a Radiants release in early 1967. Though it reached only a modest #47 on *Billboard*'s R&B chart, it was a much bigger hit in Chicago and several other markets. By now, Leonard Caston was both writing and producing the Radiants; but his only real hit on the group was the intoxicating "Hold On" in 1968. The Radiants left Chess the following year and broke up in 1972.

Two ex-Radiants, Maurice McAlister and Green McLauren, recorded duets as Maurice & Mac. Their 1968 single, "You Left the Water Running," made the *Cash Box* R&B chart and resulted in a lucrative Southern tour. The duo performed and recorded from 1966-72.

Rock critic Dave Marsh included "Voice Your Choice" in his 1989 book, *The Heart of Rock and Soul: The 1001 Greatest Singles Ever Made*. He also included Maurice & Mac's "You Left the Water Running."

Charted singles:

"Father Knows Best" (1962) Pop #100

"Shy Guy" (1963) Pop #104

"Voice Your Choice" (1964-65) R&B #10, Pop #51

"Ain't No Big Thing" (1965) R&B #14, Pop #91

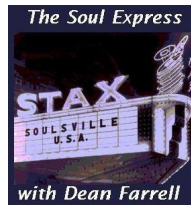
"Whole Lot of Woman" (1965) Pop #116

"(Don't It Make You) Feel Kind of Bad" (1967) R&B #47

"Hold On" (1968) R&B #35, Pop #68

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

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



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Dreaming of Snow: A Climate Change Dilemma

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know...
—Irving Berlin, 1942

By Phoebe C. Godfrey

It is the last day of December 2023 and I am in Vermont to ski, but instead of skiing I am writing this piece. This is not a testimony to my dedication to the Neighbors paper, as much as I support it not just as a writer and a reader but also as one firmly committed to all the different ways it helps to create community across and through multiple modalities. Rather, my writing of this piece instead of skiing speaks to the fact that in Vermont, and across New England (and, I have heard, in many other ski areas across the country, including in Connecticut), there is almost no snow, and the only available snow to ski on is artificial. Furthermore, even the artificial snow is limited, as for almost a week temperatures have not been below freezing and it has done nothing but rain.



The ski resort we have passed to, Mad River Glen (MRG-photo above), located just outside of Waitsfield, Vermont, and next door to Sugarbush, has in the past prided itself on not making snow on more than a few runs. Its slogan, “Ski It If You Can,” includes the understanding that what you ski on is what nature has provided, and therefore the conditions are both better when it does snow and much more unpredictable and varied when it does not, as opposed to other resorts. MRG is also a skiers-owned mountain, in that it is the only co-operative mountain in the country and the only one to have voted, years ago, to not allow snowboarders, as their style of riding changes the contours of the snow to the detriment of skiing. MRG’s other slogan, or mission, is for its members to act as “stewards of the mountain” rather than owners of a for-profit ski resort. This mission, along with its being member-owned, has kept MRG from allowing itself to be sold to Sugarbush, which itself—along with Stratton and many other ski resorts around the country—is now owned by Alterra Mountain Company, based in Denver, Colorado.

However, as much as I and the other members support this mission, it poses a problem for the future of MRG, in that the climate will continue to warm. In fact, one study suggests that “virtually all [U.S. ski] locations are projected to see reductions in winter recreation season lengths, exceeding 50% by 2050 and 80% in 2090” if nothing changes in global carbon emissions.¹ Thus, this year when listening to “White Christmas” in the many shops in which I found myself, the line “Just like the ones I used to know” took on a whole new meaning, making it not only a Christmas song written by the famous Jewish songwriter Irving Berlin (born Israel Beilin in Russia, 1888), but also the first climate change Christmas song.

As avid supporters of co-operatives (such as the Willimantic Food Co-op and CLiCK, the nonprofit we co-founded that is based on co-operative values), my wife and I have become shareholders of MRG and have bought our season ski passes there, as opposed to somewhere else like Sugarbush. Upon our arrival on December 27 we were disappointed to find that MRG had only one short run open, and my first thought was that they should invest in more snowmaking “so we can ski,” “so we can get our money’s worth,” “so we don’t have to go ski elsewhere,” and, for the long term, “so they can financially survive.” However, in returning to MRG’s mission that we are “stewards of the mountain” rather than owners of

a for-profit ski resort, a serious dilemma and contradiction arises, as how can one be a mountain steward and advocate for an increase in snowmaking?

It should be no surprise that snowmaking requires extensive energy inputs, as well as water, machinery, and labor. According to a new study from Canada, that nation’s current annual snowmaking demands the same energy required to power 17,000 homes,² while other studies from Europe have recognized the impact that artificial snow, which is denser, can have on the flow of oxygen to the plant life below, therefore negatively affecting the ecology and biodiversity.³ Furthermore, artificial snow products such as Snomax contain “proteins from a bacteria” whose impact on environmental and human health “are not yet well understood.”⁴ On the other hand, one argument in favor of more artificial snowmaking is that it keeps skiers from getting on planes and looking for snow elsewhere, such as Northeast skiers flying to the higher altitudes of, say, Colorado or Utah. Still, given that hospitality companies are now offering passes that give skiers access to all their mountain resorts across the country (such as Alterra Mountain Company’s Ikon pass), this kind of ski travel is ever more likely. And so, corporate monopolies, the search for snow, and the making of snow all combine into a vicious cycle to increase climate change and thus, tragically, the loss of snow. Of course, this is true of everything we do, including my using a computer to write this piece...

I am not writing this piece to offer any concrete answers, rather merely to muse on the ever increasing predicaments in which we are finding ourselves ensnared. These were illustrated in a cartoon I saw in a local Vermont paper which had a person looking through binoculars at a ship labeled “2023” and saying, “Goodbye to a year of fires, floods, terrorism, and wars.” The person next to them also had binoculars and was looking at the next ship coming into shore, labeled “2024,” and their remark was, “I’m not so sure...” I second that comment on this last day of 2023. In fact, I am sure that 2024 will not be better—not globally, not nationally, and certainly not in terms of climate change. As painful as it may be to our culture and as antithetical to our economic system, the fact remains that unlimited growth on a finite planet does not bode well for all life on Earth, let alone for skiing or the future of “white Christmases.” Thus, all the choices we make, the values we uphold, the truths we defend, the community and love we build matter more than ever.

So, on that note I am going to continue to dream, not just of the future return of more snow (probably not in my lifetime), but of the more equitable and ecologically and socially sustainable world we know is possible. And, more than this, I am not going to merely dream, I am going to find ways to collectively build, even if it means continuing to ski on just one short slope in support of the very values we need now more than ever.

1 Dave Zook, “Climate Study Suggests Grim Scenario for Ski Resorts,” Protect Our Winters, <https://protectourwinters.org/climate-study-suggests-grim-scenario-for-ski-resorts/>.

2 Tyler Hatch, “New Study Reveals Harmful Environmental Effects of Snowmaking,” Snow Brains, June 16, 2023, <https://snowbrains.com/new-study-reveals-harmful-effects-of-snowmaking/>.

3 Federico La Bruna, “Expensive Snow: The Environmental Cost of Fake Snow,” Ecobnb, Feb. 28, 2020, <https://ecobnb.com/blog/2020/02/expensive-artificial-snow/>.

4 Adrian Dingle, “Artificial Snow: A Slippery Slope,” ChemMatters, Dec. 2018/Jan. 2019, <https://www.acs.org/education/resources/highschool/chemmatters/past-issues/2018-2019/december-2018/artificial-snow-a-slippery-slope.html/>.

“‘Tis Herself”

By Judy Davis

Born in 1920, and growing up in Dublin, the actress Maureen O’Hara once said, “I always knew I was going to be a success, and be somebody in this world.

Starting out in the Irish theatre, she became one of the most recognized faces in the history of Hollywood.

It was my mom, Maureen Donnelly, who introduced me to O’Hara’s films – “Miracle On 34th Street,” “The Long Gray Line,” “Hunchback Of Notre Dame,” “How Green Was My Valley,” and my mom’s favorite – “The Quiet Man.”

My mom and I were able to have the great privilege of meeting Miss O’Hara. When my mom told her that her parents had been from County Leitrim, Maureen O’Hara took her hands, saying, “How lucky are we to be Irish?”

Maureen O’Hara brought me so much joy - as did my mom.
How Lucky was I?

Alive

With all our senses fully intact,
we must surely be considered alive.

What then, is that constant internal
struggle to take flight.

To experience more joy, to see more
wonder, to feel more, and to desecrate
that which is a perpetual bore.

We have all been given our own special
melody from the very start, designed by
our creator and gifted especially for you.

Learn to be adept at tuning out
the worlds noise and simply listen
to your own heart.

Focus on your exclusive song, and
give your spirit a voice
that can’t possibly be wrong.

Lynda George Bowen

**TEXT AND
WHATEVER
JUST
DON'T
TEXT
AND** 

STOPTEXTSSTOPWRECKS.ORG



2024 Resolution: Set Your Financial Strategy Now, Benefit All Year (And Beyond)

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



As 2024 gets underway, the resolution routine is in full swing, and that's great! But in addition to planning your new work-out schedule and piecing together your 2024 vision board, make time to set out a strong financial strategy for the year, too. It's one resolution that could pay dividends not just in 2024, but in all the years that follow, too.

There's a lot to consider, but don't let that deter you to help you get started. Here are ten key planning topics to consider adding to your plan.

1) Boosting Your Retirement Contributions

Workplace accounts. Are you maximizing contributions to your workplace plan? If not, now's the time to think about increasing your contribution to take full advantage of any employer match benefit. For 2024, the maximum employee deferral for 401(k), 403(b), and 457 accounts is \$23,000, and individuals ages 50 and older can defer an additional catch-up of \$7,500. For SIMPLE IRAs, the maximum deferral is \$16,000 and the catch-up is \$3,500.

Traditional IRA. Maxing out your contributions to a traditional IRA is another option. The original SECURE Act repealed the maximum age for contributions, so individuals ages 70 and a half and older who earn income in 2024, can contribute to a traditional IRA. Modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) limits for contributions to traditional and Roth IRAs increased in 2024, so be sure to review MAGI eligibility thresholds. The maximum contribution amount to a traditional or Roth IRA in 2024 is \$7,000, with a \$1,000 catch-up for clients ages 50 and older.

New Roth IRA options. Under the recently enacted SECURE 2.0 act, eligible taxpayers will have the ability to contribute to SIMPLE Roth accounts and SEP Roth IRAs.

More changes to come in 2024. You may hear about additional changes to retirement accounts pursuant to SECURE 2.0, such as the indexing of IRA catch-up contributions to inflation, which begins in 2024. We'd be happy to discuss these future changes with you and what they mean for your planning.

2) Maximizing HSA Contributions

If you have a high deductible health plan (HDHP),

now is a good time to explore how you can maximize your health savings account (HSA) contributions this year. In 2024, the maximum contribution for an individual HSA is \$4,150, and the maximum for a family HDHP is \$8,300. If you're age 55 or older, you can contribute an additional \$1,000. Working weekly or monthly HSA contributions into your budget in a way that will achieve those maximum amounts will lower your tax liability and provide more funds for healthcare to help keep you feeling and living well.

3) Managing Your Marginal and Capital Gains Tax Matters

If you're on the threshold of a tax bracket, you may be able to put yourself in the lower one by planning to defer some income to 2025. Here are a few thresholds to keep in mind as the year progresses:

37 percent marginal tax rate: Taxable incomes exceeding \$609,351 (individual), \$731,201 (married filing jointly), \$609,351 (head of household), and \$365,601 (married filing separately)

20 percent capital gains tax rate: Taxable incomes exceeding \$518,901 (individual), \$583,751 (married filing jointly), \$551,351 (head of household), and \$291,851 (married filing separately)

3.8 percent surtax on investment income: The lesser of net investment income or the excess of MAGI greater than \$200,000 (individual), \$250,000 (married filing jointly), \$200,000 (head of household), and \$125,000 (married filing separately)

0.9 percent additional Medicare tax: W-2 earnings and self-employment income above the same MAGI thresholds as the investment income surtax (For clients with W-2 earnings above the MAGI thresholds, total Medicare taxes will be 2.35 percent; for self-employed clients, total Medicare taxes will be 3.8 percent.)

4) Rebalancing Your Investment Portfolio

Reviewing your capital gains and losses may reveal tax planning opportunities, such as harvesting losses to offset capital gains which would mean potentially paying less in taxes.

5) Making Your Charitable Giving Pay Off

If you're older than 70 and a half, you can make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) of up to \$105,000 directly to a charity; if you're married and filing jointly, you may exclude up to \$105,000 donated from each of your and your spouse's IRA.

Under SECURE 2.0, taxpayers may begin to take advantage of a one-time opportunity to use a QCD to transfer up to \$50,000 to a charitable remainder trust, charitable annuity trust, or a charitable gift annuity.

6) Forming a Plan for Stock Options

If you hold stock options, it's a good idea to

develop a strategy for managing your current and future income while considering a potential concentration of the stock across your entire book of business. As part of this, be sure to have your tax advisor prepare an alternative minimum tax (AMT) projection. Keep in mind, AMT exemption limits increased in 2024 to \$85,700 for single tax filers and \$133,300 for married joint filers.

7) Adjusting Your Withholding Amount

If you think you may be subject to an estimated tax penalty, consider asking your employers (via Form W-4) to adjust your withholding to cover shortfalls. The IRS tax withholding calculator can help you with your estimates.

8) Assessing Your Estate Plans

Year-end is always a good time to review and update your estate plan to make sure it's still in line with your goals and accounts for any change in circumstances. Depending on your net worth, establishing a defective grantor trust, spousal lifetime access trust, or irrevocable life insurance trust may be an effective strategy to reduce your estate tax exposure. In addition, take the time to update your beneficiary designations and review trustee appointments, power of attorney provisions, and health care directives.

9) Adding Key Financial Dates to Your Calendar, And Keeping On Top of Your Finances Each Month

Creating a financial strategy for the year isn't much use if you don't stick to it and stay on top of it. Be sure to check out the Monthly Financial Checklist and Key Planning Dates on our website at whzwealth.com/resources to help with your planning now, and to help you stay on track later.

10) Invest In Professional Help From a Trusted Partner

This checklist is a great starting point to set you up for healthier finances in the months and years ahead. But as I noted at the outset, there are many other things to consider and it can get complicated, especially if you have a high income and/or a fair amount of investments already.

That's why the tenth and final thing to consider is reaching out for professional help as you plan your financial strategy to best build and manage your wealth. In terms of your financial health, it's as important a relationship as the one you have with your primary care provider to keep your physical health as great as it can be.

So please feel free to contact us for a complimentary consultation to see how our Plan Well. Invest Well. Live Well.™ process can guide you in creating a financial plan and wealth management strategy that's optimized just for you. You can call us at (860) 928-2341 or book a consultation on our website at whzwealth.com.

Presented by Senior Vice President, Financial Advisor Leisl L. Langevin CFP®, CDFA®. Securities and advisory services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network®, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser. 697 Pomfret Street, Pomfret Center, CT 06259 and 392-A Merrow Road, Tolland, CT 06084, 860.928.2341. <http://www.whzwealth.com> These materials are general in nature and do not address your specific situation. For your specific investment needs, please discuss your individual circumstances with your financial advisor. Weiss, Hale & Zahansky Strategic Wealth Advisors does not provide tax or legal advice, and nothing in the accompanying pages should be construed as specific tax or legal advice.

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**WILLIMANTIC
FARMERS MARKET**
Winter Market Now Open!

Our Winter Farmers Market is open at the First Congregational Church* in Willimantic, 199 Valley St, Willimantic, CT 06226. The market, will be open the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month November to April. It will feature many of our longtime vendors, as well as some new faces. Our hours are shortened to 9am-12pm. If you are interested in joining us this season please email us willfarmersmarket@gmail.com. The full list of dates are below!

2023-2024 Dates:
November 11th and 25th December 9th and 23rd
January 13th** and 27th February 10th and 24th
March 9th and 23rd April 13th** and 27th

* Please note that the church has parking in the rear of the building, as well as accessible entrances.
** January 13th and April 13th the market will move into a smaller space downstairs to accommodate the preexisting repair café. Signs will redirect customers to the market.

Bebbington Road

By Chamele

A rumble of thunder startled her. Looking over the steering wheel into the foggy blackness, she had that sense of when you get to a place but don't remember the drive. Slowing the car down she looked for landmarks in the mist. Up ahead she saw an old woman opening her mail box. As the car lights shown on her the old woman turned and shielded her eyes from the brightness.

Bringing the car to a stop, she lowered the passenger side window. "Excuse me," she said. "I think I'm lost."

The old woman smiled. "Thinking and knowing are two different things."

"Well...I don't know where I am?"

"Ah, well you're right here."

Heavy sigh. "But where is here?"

"Bebbington Road. This is Bebbington Road. Are you confused or really just lost?"

Smiling she said, "I think a little of both."

The old woman smiled back.

"A little late for mail, isn't it?"

"Oh..." the old woman looked a little unsettled.

Then recovered and said, "I'm waiting for news from my grandson. He's on his way home from a tour overseas. Haven't seen him in quite a while." The old woman turned to the mailbox. "Waiting....."

Not sure what to say she tapped the steering wheel. "Could you tell me where this road goes?"

"Sure thing. Just around this bend is the diner. Best apple pie in the county. Good coffee too. Always fresh."

"Well maybe I'll go get a slice. Funny, I don't remember if I ate dinner. Pie sounds great."

"Just around the bend. Tell Sophie that Stella sent you." The old woman checked the mailbox again starring deeply into it almost frozen.

Shifting the car into drive she yelled thank you out the window as she passed by the old woman. Around the bend lights dimly shown through the fog. Slowly pulling up into a parking space by the door she felt like she was in a movie. Not a comedy. Could be horror. Stella and Sophie aren't really horror flick names. Still need to find out where here is. She got out and walked up the steps to the half empty diner.

"Hi sweetie," an older woman said from behind the counter. "You go ahead and sit where you like, I'll be right over. Coffee?"

"Yes that'd be great." She sat at the counter. The place was immaculate. Stainless steel shone. Smelled good too. You know fries and hamburgers, meatloaf and gravy with biscuits. Coffee mmmm. The waitress set the cup down.

Taking a sip she asked, "Are you Sophie?"

"Why yes." The waitress pointed to her name tag.

"Stella told me about this place and your wonderful apple pie and good coffee."

"Well if Stella sent you, I think it's apple pie heated with cheddar cheese ala mode."

"Wow, Sounds dangerous. I want it."

"Coming right up."

The diner door opened and a nurse walked in carrying a tiny dog that squiggled and yapped.

"Morning Jessica," Sophie yelled from the kitchen. "I'll get your coffee in one sec."

"Thanks, and a donut for mom. You know she loves those crullers you make."

"As we speak." Coming from the kitchen she grabbed a bag and a cruller, set the amazing smelling pie with a fork and spoon on the counter and as she reached for the coffee pot and the Togo cup Sophie whispered, "Enjoy the pie."

Inhaling the aroma she reached for the fork and took a bite. Her cheeks flushed. It was wonderful. As she started for another forkful, everyone turned to look out side.

She turned to see what had caught their attention and saw pillars of lights, maybe 6? She heard someone say "What is that?"

BOOM

Tap Tap Tap

"What?" she tried to open her eyes.

Tap Tap Tap "Can you hear me? Mam are you alright?" Tap Tap Tap. "Can you put your window down?"

"What?" Finally when she opened her eyes. She saw a firefighter standing next to the car.

"Mam open the window. Can you open the.."

She put the window down. "Mam you've been in an accident. Do you know where you are? What is your

name?"

"What?....." she tried to get her bearings. "I was just at the diner..." She saw the steam and smelled the antifreeze as it rose out form the front of the banged up hood.

"What diner was that?"

"The one on Bebbington Road."

"But..."

"Sophie gave me the most amazing apple pie. I can still taste it."

"When was this?"

"Just now?"

The firefighter turned to the approaching paramedic. "She's a little confused. Talking about the diner."

The paramedic knelt down beside her. "Do you have any pain? Could you look this way please?" He shown a flashlight into her eyes. "Good," he said. "Any pain?.. Anywhere?"

"No,"

"Good. You've been in an accident I think we should take you to the ER just as a precaution."

"Thinking and knowing are two different things."

The paramedic dropped the flashlight. He starred at her.

"Stella told me that." She said. He kept on staring.

The ambulance arrived and the aides got her onto a board as a precaution and then put her into the ambulance. The paramedic rode with her as they headed for the hospital.

She felt this was a lot over nothing. A little embarrassed by all the fuss, she started a conversation.

"So...do you know the diner on Bebbington Road?"

The paramedic looked at her and nodded.

"Sophie's amazing apple pie and a woman who came in said that the crullers were good too."

The man took a short breath.

"Well actually it was her mother that loved them."

In a quiet voice he paramedic asked, "Describe this woman."

"She was a nurse and she had a little white dog."

His eyes got big. "You saw her with the dog?.....At Sophie's?...."

"Yea Just before all this. Well the white lights outside and then a boom. Hum. Was that the accident?"

He wiped his eyes. "There was an accident.

Different from yours." He took a deep breath. "She was my wife. That silly dog. She just adopted him the night before and was dropping him off at her mothers for the day. We both work crazy hours. She always got her morning coffee at Sophie's."

"Morning? It was dark and foggy. Was? You said 'was your wife'?"

"Apparently there had been a methane gas pocket under that whole area. It went."

"Last night? I was in a gas explosion?"

"No. You were in a car accident. There's been sink holes in the aftermath of the primary explosion. That's what happened to you."

"In the aftermath?"

"The gas explosion was a week ago. They've been gone for a week now."

"A week ago? A week ago I was in Nevada. I just met these people. I was with them up until the boom and the fireman tapping on my window."

He wiped his eyes again. "I've been working this job a long time. I've heard a lot of stories.Some near death experiences, some hallucinations, some just stories. But she was there at the diner with the dog only once.... that morning. Was there anything more you can tell me?"

"Yes. There were pillars of lights outside just before the boom. Everyone turned to see them. Is that part of the explosion?"

"No.....Seeing those lights,.... how did it feel?"

"It felt like ...I don't know how to say this....

Home... It felt like home.."

He turned away from her and wiped his eyes just as the ambulance pulled into the hospital. She was taken in on the gurney and processed through admitting. She never saw the paramedic again. It all became a dream of a story. A glimpse into the lives of the final moment of a few that walked there. There on Bebbington Road.

FLASH FICTION

In Our Community

Submitted by Bev York

Windham Arts

Jan 1 through 31 American History through Art, an exhibition of prints of famous American artists at the Coffee Break Gallery.

Open Monday Through Friday from 9 to 5 (guided tours on Fridays 10 to 2) Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

Jan.5 Paint Party create an acrylic painting in one evening. 6:30 -8:30 every first Friday of the month

\$25.00 materials included, BYO refreshments. registration required info@windhamarts.org.

Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

Feb. 5 through 29 Let it Snow and all things Winter in New England. Artist Exhibition and Sale at the Coffee Break Gallery.

Open Monday Through Friday from 9 to 5 (guided tours on Fridays 10 to 2) Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

Feb. 2 Paint Party create an acrylic painting in one evening. 6:30 -8:30 every first Friday of the month

\$25.00 materials included, BYO refreshments. registration required at info@windhamarts.org.

Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic

America Museum

Jan. 11 Meet Dr. Mary Walker, Civil War Surgeon, the only woman to ever receive the Medal of Honor. A monthly LiberTea program by Bev York, held on the Second Thursday at 5:30. Suggested donation \$5

Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. bevhistory@yahoo.com 860-208-0790. In case of inclement weather check America Museum face book for information

Feb. 8 Prison and Prison Ships during the American Revolution: A monthly LiberTea program by Bev York, held on the Second Thursday at 5:30. Suggested donation \$5

Eastern CT Veteran Community Center, 47 Crescent Street, Willimantic. In case of inclement weather check America Museum face book for information

At the Top Shelf Gallery

The January February show at the Top Shelf Gallery will be Rough Drafts, featuring landscapes and images of animals and flowers by Hampton resident Linda Gorman. The show opens the first Wednesday in January and there will be an artist's reception Saturday January 13 at 11 a.m.

Gorman works in oils from both sketches and photographs, and she has recently added some mixed media to her work. Much inspiration comes from memories of her extensive travels and from the desert landscapes of Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she was born.

Like many painters, she was attracted to art early. "I began the artistic side of life, doodling away on my notebooks as I sat in class," she said. From there she began copying the Sunday funny papers, winning a small contest in the process.

Because her family moved a lot, art, particularly oil painting, became one constant in her life. Later as a military wife, she took advantage of travel in the US and overseas to enlarge her knowledge of the visual arts.

"Over a few deployments, and depending on the duty station, I was able to visit dozens of museums," she said. Especially important was her husband's three year tour of duty in London that gave her "a chance to see some of the greatest art in the greatest museums in the world" including favorites like Van Gogh, Michelangelo, Hieronymus Bosch, and Sargeant.

More than anything else, though, Gorman credits "the many saved memories that find their way to center stage as I begin the search for a new painting or mixed media piece."

The Top Shelf Gallery is in Fletcher Memorial Library, 257 Main Street, Hampton CT. Info: 860 455 1086.

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Popular Taste2Towns is Back!

Windham and Mansfield

Invite Diners to Restaurant Week

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

From chef-driven full-service establishments to beloved counter-service favorites, restaurants in Windham and Mansfield will cater to every palate when Restaurant Week returns in 2024. The two weeks of delicious known as Taste2Towns is Monday, January 29 to Sunday, February 11, 2024.

The Towns of Mansfield and Windham have joined up with the Mansfield Downtown Partnership and Willimantic Downtown Neighborhood Association (WDNA) to collaborate on the third year of this popular promotion highlighting an expanded list of local restaurants showing off their best stuff in the two communities. Participating restaurants are finalizing their menu offerings, which will be featured for visitors to preview at Taste2Towns.com.

Participating restaurants will feature something for everyone, from special items as low as \$10 up to multi-course offerings for a single price of \$34-45, known as *prix-fixe*. If dine-in isn't convenient, others are offering creative take-out only dishes. The promotion includes breakfast, lunch and/or dinner menus.

Andy Gütt, President of the Willimantic Downtown Neighborhood Association and owner of Stone Row Kitchen and Bar in Willimantic is one of the lead organizers of the Taste2Towns experience. His restaurant, Stone Row Kitchen and Bar, was recently named 2023 Restaurant of the Year for Windham County, and he is a firm believer in dining establishments as a major economic driver.

"The first year of Taste2Towns, we planted the seed. In the second year the idea began to grow. This year, our third year, Taste2Towns Restaurant Week celebrates a regional food scene that's leaped into full bloom in this Leap Year," says Gütt.

He continues, "By late January, folks are ready to emerge from their homes, meet up with friends, and try something new. By exploring the menus and offerings through the website, Taste2Towns.com, we are confident that neighbors and destination diners from outside our region will find exciting new taste experiences."

Local businesses not directly associated with the food business are signing up to sponsor Taste2Towns, too. Returning sponsors as well as new ones are eager to be associated with such a positive, exciting promotion. Green Valley Tree Service and Green Valley Hospitality have signed up again to be top-tier sponsors. Additionally, Cassella Waste, Windham Theater Guild, Meehan and Daughters, CliCK Kitchen, Coyote Flaco, The Hoot, HST Realtors, Willimantic Brewing, Zlotnick Construction, Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, Anthony Raggi State Farm Insurance, Willimantic Renaissance, D'Elia Auctions, and Quiet Corner Float have already stepped up with their sponsorship support. Sponsors will also be part of the private Kick-Off Party with the chefs and restaurateurs, a happening event of its own. Held last year at the Graduate Hotel in Mansfield, this year the Kick-Off Party will move to the new Community Center in Windham. Sponsorship packages start as low as \$100. Details of the opportunity can be found at the website, Taste2Towns.com.

Both Windham and Mansfield have seen a number of new restaurants lift off in recent months. "We know these new destinations are eager to welcome in customers, and have expressed interest in jumping on board with this event. With Taste2Towns, there is such a wide variety of restaurants and cuisines involved," says Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership who coordinates economic development initiatives for the Town of Mansfield. "The community steps up to sponsor this event on behalf of our restaurants, too. Restaurants drive economic vitality. Finding a new favorite dining spot generates a lot of excitement among friends and families. This is the best way to find that new favorite in the new year," she adds.

Mayors Tom DeVivo of Windham and Toni Moran of Mansfield have already started planning the restaurants where they will meet up to dine together, a tradition they began two years ago.



ABOUT THE TOWN OF MANSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Mansfield is a vibrant, diverse, and caring community that offers its residents and visitors unique cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities. Known for its excellent public schools, community-wide events, inclusive and efficient government, parks and preserves, protected open spaces, and agriculture, the Town is home to the main campus of the University of Connecticut. Principles of sustainability guide zoning and development, preserving the Town's historic character and providing for economic vitality.

Come and enjoy the beauty and historic traditions that Mansfield has offered for more than 300 years and see why it's your place to grow.

mansfieldct.gov

ABOUT MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

The Mansfield Downtown Partnership is a non-profit organization formed by the Town of Mansfield and the University of Connecticut to oversee the redevelopment of Downtown Storrs, a vibrant, walkable neighborhood featuring a wide variety of restaurants, services, shops, entertainment, and more. The Partnership also provides economic development services for other areas within the Town of Mansfield.

<https://www.mansfieldmdp.org/>

ABOUT WILLIMANTIC DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Willimantic Downtown Neighborhood Association was created to make Willimantic's downtown a great place to be. Our goal is to activate every square foot of the neighborhood, strengthen the community, and create and sustain public interest in Downtown.

www.willimanticdowntown.org

ABOUT THE TOWN OF WINDHAM, CONNECTICUT

Windham is an eastern Connecticut community that serves as a hub for many regional services. The Town includes the historic downtown of Willimantic, three villages, and is home to Eastern Connecticut State University. The town boasts numerous eclectic and diverse eating and drinking establishments, visitor attractions such as the Shaboo Stage, one of Connecticut's largest outdoor music venues, the 3rd Thursday Street Fests, the annual 4th of July Boom Box Parade, the Windham Textile and History Museum, the Windham Theatre Guild, and is a prominent destination for users of the East Coast Greenway/Airline Trail.

www.windhamctcodev.com

4-H Camp Open House Sunday, January 7, 2024

Visit the Windham-Tolland 4-H Camp Open House from 1 – 3 PM at 326 Taft Pond Road, Pomfret, CT. Meet the director & other camp staff, take a camp tour, registration materials available. Take advantage of early bird discounts – details available at the open house or on the website. www.4hcampct.org

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"All you need is love."
-John Lennon

Secrets of the Gila Wilderness

To those devoid of imagination, a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part.
-Aldo Leopold

By Dennis R. Blanchette

Every now and then one gets a hankering to wander around a desert. But which one? In the U.S., the Mojave is the smallest and driest, the Sonoran is the hottest, and the Chihuahuan is the largest. The Sonoran also has mountains which form “sky islands” of greater biodiversity and cooler climate. My wife and I looked at a map of the Gila National Forest that showed the road ending in a blank space on the map. That clinched it for us.

It turns out that the Gila National Forest is located in a transition zone of both the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, so a trip there gets us two desert ecosystems for the price of one trip. The road to Gila National Forest led past two beautiful State Parks, Rockhound State Park in the Florida Mountains, and City of Rocks State Park, famous for its rock formations of hardened lava, eroded over the years forming towering pinnacles and bulbous formations.

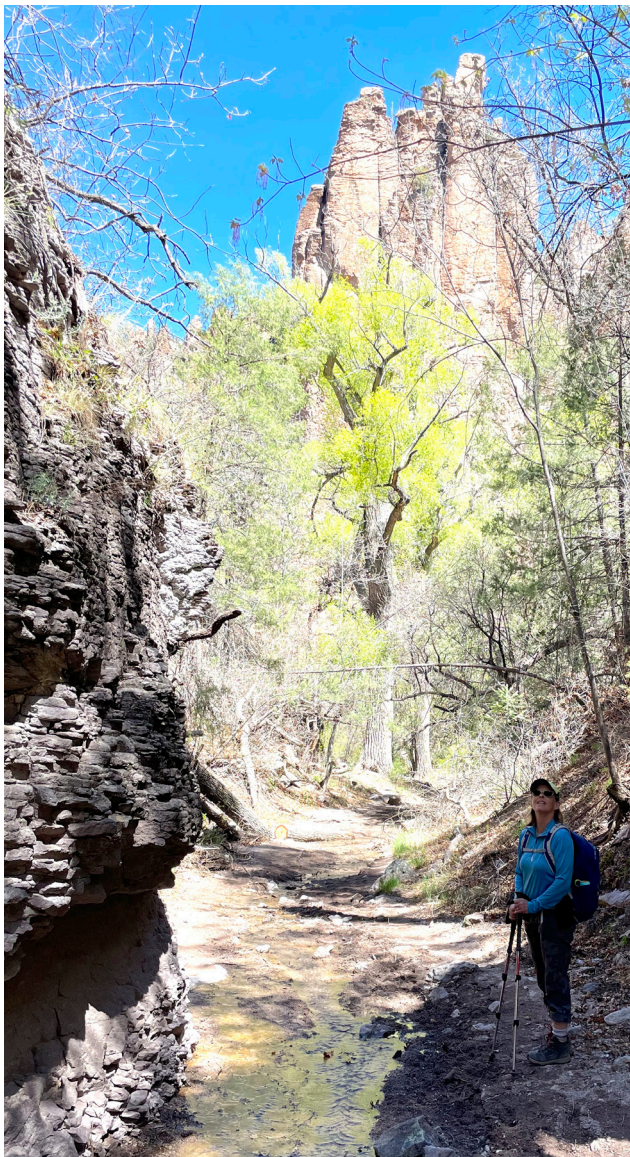
From Silver City, last stop for gas, the Trail of the Mountain Spirits National Scenic Byway switchbacks northerly through the Pinos Altos Range and dead ends 93 miles later at Gila Hot Springs. The village consists of a hot spring, a campground, a corral and the Airbnb we had booked. The deck looked out over the East fork of the Gila River; hoodoos loomed in the distance, raptors rode thermals, and herons descended into the nearby rookery.

Patrice, the Airbnb owner, stopped by to meet us. After she left, I looked through her substantial book collection and found many of my old favorites – Abbey, Krakauer, Matthiesen. But there was one book I had never heard of, *A Song for the River* by Philip Connors. The first page was signed by the author, which piqued my interest. According to the introduction, it was about attempts to dam the upper Gila River, the last wild river in the west. I was hooked. What better way to discover the secrets of a place than by reading something besides a generic travel guide?

The next day we hiked Little Bear Canyon to the Middle Fork of the Gila River. The hiking was tremendous both in views and solitude. Jordan Hot Springs lay on the other side, but Patrice had said it was too high for fording. Nevertheless, we passed a couple of groups with backpacks and guitars optimistically heading for the hot spring. The EE Canyon Loop passed through an area burned in a 2021 forest fire, giving it a stark, otherworldly look. Dead blackened trees, some standing, some fallen, littered the barren landscape. It was ugly. I had no knowledge of forest fire management but that didn’t stop me from opining on what a tragedy it was. Forest regeneration was already underway with green areas of new vegetation showing through the burnt underbrush, but still I questioned why the fire was allowed to ruin this gorgeous canyon.

The Gila Wilderness was the nation’s first designated wilderness. Combined with the adjacent Aldo Leopold Wilderness, there is more designated wilderness here than any other forest in the Southwest. Aldo Leopold got his degree in Forestry from Yale in 1909 and joined the Forest Service that same year. Author of *Sand County Almanac*, he was an early conservation pioneer and philosopher of environmental ethics. At that time the philosophy of the government for forested land was “highest and best use.” The National Parks Service was accomplishing this by building roads and trails to allow as much access to the natural wonders as possible. The Forest Service interpreted “highest and best use” as maximizing timber sales, and fire suppression as a means of protecting that crop.

Leopold saw the over-development caused by the roads constructed into the National Parks and wondered if there could be such a thing as too much progress. He saw that it would be easier to protect wilderness than to create it. Because so little of the original Southwestern wilderness remained without roads, Leopold felt it was imperative that a portion of what was left be preserved in that state,



Janet in Little Bear Canyon. Photos were contributed.

in order to provide a recreational experience that would otherwise vanish. In 1924, his plan to preserve the Gila River headwaters as the nation’s first designated wilderness was approved. As such, it is a place where no roads can be built, no mechanized equipment is allowed and travel is only allowed by foot or horse.

That evening I read *A Song for the River*. Philip Connors was a fire lookout and the book is a tour de force of nature writing, an homage to the Gila River. Connor also recounts the tragic series of events that led to 3 local teenagers getting killed in the crash of a small plane on the way back from viewing a science project to which they had been denied ground access. When I read that one of their parents was named Patrice, a sense of dread came over me. As I read further, the book confirmed what I hoped it wouldn’t. One of the teenagers who died in the plane crash was our host Patrice’s only child. And I realized that some of the events in the book took place in the house in which we were staying. When I told Patrice that I didn’t think I could carry on if I were in her place, she replied, “Yes, you would carry on. Because humans do. And our children want us to.”

“It’s what we learn after we think we know it all that counts,” Kin Hubbard.

The exquisite quality of Connors’ writing drew me to his first book, *Fire Season – Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout*, a philosophical masterpiece on the subject of forest fires. A policy debate erupted among government officials and pro-development forces after the massive forest fires of 1910 in which at least 79 firefighters were killed. Some favored light burning to remove undergrowth and dead wood, some favored development in the form of roads, settlements and timber harvesting. The third option was complete suppression – fire was evil and must be stopped. The latter became policy and prevailed for sixty years.¹

Connors disagreed and wrote that complete



Relaxing at the end of Little Bear Canyon where it meets Middle Fork of the Gila.

suppression leads to a buildup of dead wood, fuel for a forest fire, and he predicted the massive fires of today in 2012. Letting all fires burn can endanger homes, people and ancient artifacts. One course of action attempted was to suppress only man-made fires and allow natural fires to burn. But what happens when the natural fire approaches a stream with an endangered trout population? One answer is to electroshock the stream, capture the trout and then restock them after the fire. The issues are complex, with many competing interests.

It was a great trip in more ways than I expected. I went to see and experience the desert solitude and learned about forest fires along the way. Somehow, I’m always surprised to realize that travel not only opens your eyes to new sights, it opens your mind as well.

Dennis R. Blanchette is a semi-retired civil engineer and travel writer.

1. Connors, Philip. *Fire Season: Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout*. Ecco, 2011.

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Time Traveling

By George Jacobi (reprinted from a Joshua's Trust Blog 42, October 31, 2023)

Like they do every October, Orionid meteors decorate the night sky over the Mt. Hope River bridge. Winding Route 89 encourages slow car travel, and outside of the yips of coyotes, it's a "quiet corner". No one occupies the Church Farm anymore. Not even a cow or sheep remains. But this place embodies a story of one family's journey through time. It was always a tight pocket of arable, workable bottomland snugly set between the Mt. Hope River and a heavily forested northwest ridge, the steepest in the entire valley. A low stream gradient probably encouraged horseshoe bends to form here, and the Trust's ill-fated boardwalk is evidence that there will be more to come. The Nipmucks and Wabbaquassetts spent time long before it became a hardscrabble farm around 1791. Listen: There is soft laughter among the women, and infant giggles, as they firmly set last year's corn kernels into the dark earth. The May sun is warm on their skin and blessedly, a breeze keeps the black flies down. A treasure of Indian artifacts collected from these plowed fields sadly went missing in the 1960s. Very little other land in the valley and northward lends itself to European farming methods; the earlier lifestyle practiced here is better suited to the geography. Nevertheless, on this spot in 1840 a hip-roofed Federal style house and surrounding acres come into the possession of John Church.

For the first time this wild place will be thoroughly tamed. Glimpse: Church stops shoeing his horse, sits, and squints in the sun. He blinks—he can see into the future! There will be a grass tennis court, and horses will share a 2-story chestnut barn with a billiard room, and this will come to be after his newborn son takes the reins.

That vigorous son, John Whitman Church (at right in B&W photo), sustains the sheep farm into the 20th century while building a profitable clothing business, moving to Hartford, and turning his Ashford birthplace into a summer home. The brook is dammed in 1906, forming a pond shared with his neighbor on the south side. In 1968 his own descendant Henry Church conveys the historically significant estate to his daughter Dorothy Church Zaring, who grew up swimming in that pond, and to her husband Joe. Her fond memories, their wisdom and generosity together allow the Church Farm to remain intact and protected well into the turbulent 21st century.

In 1984 the Zarings begin donating parcels of land to Joshua's Trust. They transfer the rest of the property, house, and barn, to Trinity College in 1999, and then again to Eastern Connecticut State University in 2008. Today both universities continue field work on the resource. Joshua's Trust and ECSU together oversee the 250+ acres. A 2010 Bioblitz identified 62 bird species, 20 butterflies, 156 moths, and 11 reptiles and amphibians. The late Dean of Faculty at Trinity, Miller Brown, wrote: "It's a gem. It's just an exceptional example of biodiversity."

Today Professor Kristen Epp's biology classes from Eastern track the biomass and the secret lives of red-



back salamanders (and in this case, a marbled salamander). The hillside spring, site of Church family picnics, still tumbles down to the brook. The ridge overlooks fall colors across the valley and its second growth forest is home to natural inhabitants aplenty.

The former sheep pasture and orchard along the river (where the Trust's boardwalk got washed away) continues to grow in, half a flooded wetland and great habitat for migratory birds. Don't peek: Work done, Dorothy and her friends run pell-mell across the road and the meadow to the deepest hole in the river, gleefully shed their clothes, and jump in. None of this would be safe from progress or climate change without the Zaring family's decision to save it. The Church Farm has become an example of a local conservation organization and a local university finding common ground, thus multiplying the value of a historic and ecologically significant gift.



What would hard-working ambitious Whitman Church think of the present, of preservation and woodland walkers, of his home and barn on the National Register of Historic Places, of nature gently interrupted by academic research? This pocket of house, barn, and fields, woods, earth, water, and stone—and memory—safely continues the slow geologic process of crumbling and washing away south toward the future. Of which, only time will tell.

Walk the beautiful Church Farm loop on your own (<https://joshuastrusttest.org/church-farm-2/>), or watch for guided walks on this and other Joshua's Trust properties at <https://joshuastrust.org/events/>.

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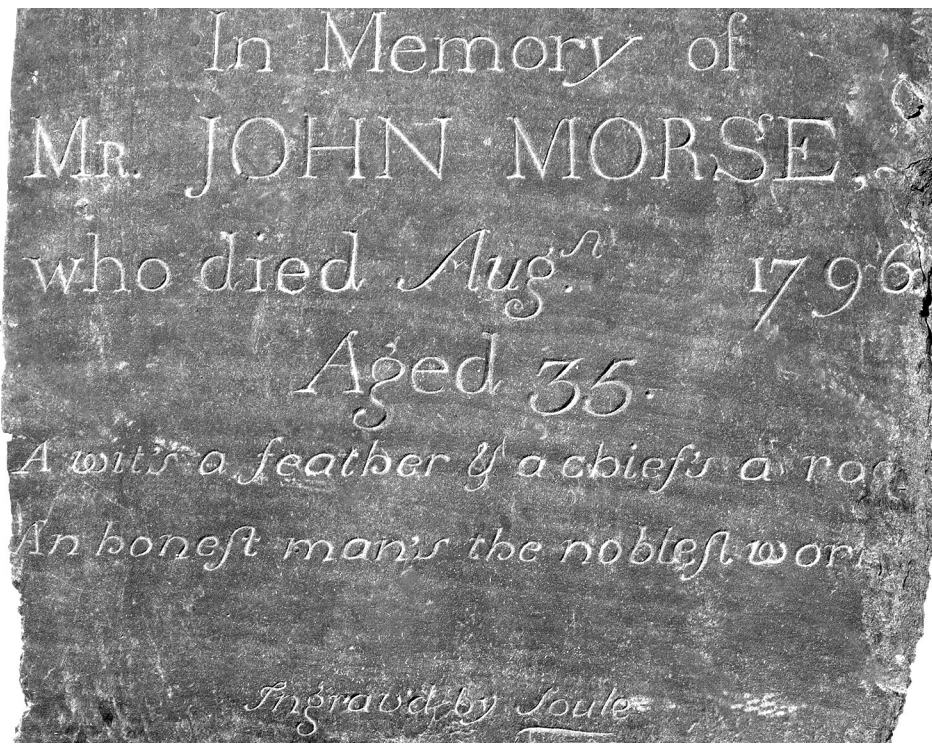
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12.14.23 Returning John Morse's gravestone to its rightful place.

Photo at left by Hunter Neal. Photo at right by Janet Booth.

Missing Gravestone Returned to Abington

By Donna Dufresne



Pomfret First Selectwoman Maureen Nicholson gets some mighty strange calls, but the one she received from Becky Lamb of Killingly in October takes the cake. Ms. Lamb had found a gravestone in her backyard which she thought might belong in the Old Abington Burial Ground. The inscription, for John Morse, who died at age 35 in 1796, provided enough information for Ms. Lamb to Google his vital data and determine that the Old Abington Burial Ground cradles his bones.

It's not known how the gravestone ended up in Killingly. It was left behind by the house's previous owners. Regardless of how its journey from Abington to Killingly came about, John Morse's headstone will be reunited with his burial site on December 14 at the Old Abington Burial Ground.

Unfortunately, it's not unusual for gravestones to be stolen from neglected burial grounds in New England. Interest in the occult surfaces in every generation. After the movie *The Blair Witch Project* played in 1999, a few gravestones at the Randall/Higginbotham Cemetery disappeared. Even though it is against the law to sell them, Connecticut gravestones have been found in antique shops as far away as New York City. One has to wonder who would buy such contraband. Ancient burial grounds should be regarded as archaeological sites and deserve the protection of the law. They are as valuable as the Pyramids for research, but the artifacts, with their funerary art and vital data, must remain in situ to be of any use. It's nothing short of a miracle that John Morse's stone found its way home thanks to Becky Lamb, who did the right thing.

The first step in this inquiry was to determine where to place the headstone. According to a 1950 map of Abington Burial Ground drawn by Ms. Dorman Weaver, John Morse is buried with the Sharpe family. I found references to Ms. Weaver's map while preparing for a Walktober workshop in the Old Abington Yard in September. Her 40-page book about the Old Abington Burial Ground was donated to the Rhode Island Historical Society, which kindly scanned it and sent me the PDF. Knowing the location of John Morse's bones was an important clue in uncovering his story. According to Pomfret vital records, John Morse married Sarah Sharpe on March 15, 1795. In February 1796 their infant son died, and Morse died on August 20, 1796, age 35. However, there isn't any data about where he was born.

Connecting the dots in historical research requires the tenacious spirit of a terrier and mega files of data dancing in your brain. Although the family trees on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch are notoriously inaccurate, I always make a pit stop there to see what others have found before I dive into the real stuff. I found a John Morse who had married a Sarah Sharpe, but his birth record said he was born in New York City, which didn't sit right. It wasn't until I had explored the land and probate records in Pomfret that I had enough data to find the John Morse I was looking for. While constructing his story, the birthplace question became a daily nag. I wouldn't find the answer until I had more information about his very short life in Abington.

While scouring the Morse genealogies, I investigated the Pomfret land records. The first and only reference

to John Morse is in 1795, when he bought 8 square rods of land with John Phipps which included a building. They bought the property from John Maguire, a tailor, for 44 pounds. I traced the deed back to 1781, when the same 8 square rods was sold to Elizabeth Williams by Alfred Hurlbutt of Windham, also a tailor. The property included a "shop." The deed descriptions place the property on the corner of Clinic Road and Route 97 in Abington. There was also a second "store," which included the widow's dower of the south end of the shop with the chamber above, half the cellar, and the use of the oven to bake in the kitchen. The property abutted that of Dr. Elisha Lord and Ephraim Ingalls, placing it next to and across the street from the Old Abington Burial Ground.

The land records going back to the end of the Revolutionary War indicate that the building was a tailor shop, a millinery shop, and then a store. Several deed transactions between 1796 and 1800 indicate that whatever business Phipps and Morse had in Abington, it went bust after Morse's death. The probate records clarify that John Morse died "insolvent." Lemuel Ingalls, administrator of the estate, divided the personal effects and real estate among the widow, Sarah Morse, and Morse's only living heirs, his two sisters. The ten-page inventory has three pages of merchandise including a variety of imported fabrics, which caused me to buy a dictionary of American textiles from 1650 to 1850 to decode the names. There were also hats, spices, medicine, tobacco, pipes, silver utensils, pewter, redware, teapots, china plates, cups, and saucers, and what appear to be chemicals and pigments for paints. The remaining seven pages consist of debt obligations and notes from the unpaid accounts of local patrons. The debt far outweighed what was owed.

It was the widow's one-third share that helped to solve the mystery of where John Morse was born. John's sisters were Sarah (1756–1799), married to Dr. Joshua Richardson, and Hannah (1750–1824), married to Benjamin Prentice. They lived in Holliston. Sarah Morse Richardson and her husband filed a lawsuit against widow Sarah Morse that went to Windham Superior Court, stating that they thought the widow's dower was "excessive." John Phipps joined the lawsuit, which eventually became the ruin of the business.

Finally, after weeks of research, I found the *Genealogical Register of the History of Sherborn and Holliston* by Abner Morse, 1856. Our John Morse was born in Holliston, 1760/61, to Benjamin Morse and Sarah Clark Morse, both born in Sherborn/Holliston. The same Hannah and Sarah are listed as his sisters, and John is noted as having settled in Pomfret.

A little digging into the Phipps genealogy in the same book verified the existence of the mercantile store in Pomfret. The Phipps clan of Sherborn/Holliston descended from Governor William Phipps through his adopted son, John Phipps, Jr.—the grandfather of our John Phipps—who was born in Douglas on October 8, 1765, and became a merchant in Pomfret. He died in 1820. He married Hannah Coolidge, who was the granddaughter of Hannah Morse of Sherborn. The connection between Phipps and Morse appears to be familial. They were cousins by marriage on both sides. Furthermore, John Phipps's grandfather, John Phipps Jr., was a "Trader" and may have been the same "John the Trader" who supplied Samuel Nightingale's store in 1745. The Post Road passed through Pomfret and Holliston on the way to Boston, a conduit for merchants.

The settling of the Morse estate was complicated by the lawsuit against his widow. The widow Sarah Morse married David Day of Killingly in October of 1798. She and her husband sold her widow's dower back to John and Francis Maguire on December 7, 1798. In October of 1798, John Phipps paid Sarah Morse Richardson and her husband 200 pounds in a quitclaim to relinquish the title to the property with the shop, which they must have been granted in the lawsuit. By 1799 the debts accrued by the lawsuit caught up with the little shop, and Phipps, who likely borrowed money to pay the debts, lost the shop and property by execution to John Holbrook, a lawyer who lived in the large house next door. After that the shop became Holbrook's law office and was absorbed into his house lot until it was once again subdivided in 1977 with a shared driveway and well.

The Phipps & Morse store is not the first mercantile I've found in Pomfret. I have transcribed the inventories of two other Pomfret store owners and the account book of Samuel Nightingale, which convey invaluable information about the material culture of an eighteenth-century rural village between 1745 and 1815. Each store sold imported and domestic textiles and other British products from the East and West Indies trade. The budding desire for fancy things suited the well-appointed citizens of Pomfret. The account books read like a "Who's Who" of Pomfret society. The Boston Post Road and Providence Turnpike opened the way to the addiction to American consumerism pushed by merchants and traders. Eventually, keeping shop became the folly of educated young men who couldn't quite find their place in a rapidly changing world. It was the dawning of the age of commerce. The economy was in transition from English pounds to American dollars, and imported textiles were about to be replaced by an American industrial revolution. And so a deep dive into a tiny shop in a tiny village reveals the tail end of our ties to the West Indies trade and slavery, which can only be understood by dissecting the material culture and following the money.



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It's Not about You (or Me): Reflections on *Doppelganger*: A Trip into the Mirror World, by Naomi Klein

By Donna Nicolino

Who are we, really? Who are we as a society, and as individuals? And to what degree have we lost touch with who we are at our core in our modern, social media-driven culture? These are some of the questions that writer and thinker Naomi Klein grapples with in her most recent book, *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World*.

For me, the book was very thought-provoking, and helped me contextualize and put words to aspects of our modern culture I'd observed but hadn't thought deeply about. This is not a review of the book—which I do highly recommend—but some thoughts on the concepts raised in it, which I found very intriguing and which feel important for us as a society.

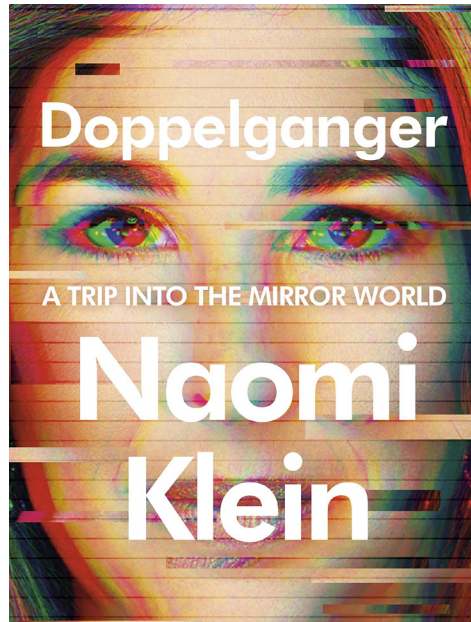
Klein is best known for her books *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, in which she critiques the pervasive and increasing practice of branding almost everything in our society, and *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, in which she identifies and explores the corporate practice of taking advantage of social shocks such as natural disasters or even terrorist attacks to increase private wealth at the expense of the public good. In *Doppelganger* she gets more personal, first exploring how she has often been confused with writer Naomi Wolf, who came to prevalence as a liberal feminist in the 1990s and has since taken a hard turn to the right. Klein then zooms out to look at how we as a society have been affected by social media and how many of us have come to perform our lives for others, creating our own online “doppelganger” which we feel the need to live up to, creating a sense of dissonance in our own psyche. The doppelganger can also serve as our mirror-opposite, a sort of photo-negative of ourselves onto which we project everything we reject in ourselves, as depicted in popular works from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to Jordan Peele's 2019 film, *Us*.

Klein, a Canadian, delves into many separate but interconnected phenomena in current American and Canadian society: vaccine skepticism, wellness culture, psychology, the emotional underpinnings of fascism and authoritarianism, surveillance culture, antisemitism, capitalism, and much more. She identifies how our constant striving for exceptionalism has actually created a kind of blandness, where almost everything seems to be competing for our attention by being dazzling or shocking in some way and how “homogenization takes the form of individuals all competing to stand out as quirky and utterly unique.” It is a testament to her abilities as both a thinker and a writer that she is able to weave these disparate threads together in such a captivating and accessible way.

One of the eye-opening moments in the book for me was Klein's discussion of the emphasis in wellness culture on “optimizing” our lives. As a therapist and someone who is part of that community, I have encountered this in many ways, including clients who have somehow been convinced that they should strive to never feel sad or always think positive thoughts. We are told in many ways to be the *best* we can, to live our *best* life, to be as fit as we can, make as much money as we can, be as *happy* as we can. The subtle message in this is that who you actually are isn't enough. You may eat healthy, but you should be eating healthier. You're not happy enough, or spiritual enough, or positive enough.

Klein correctly identifies the con-

sumerist message in this: you need to buy this product, or join this gym, or hire this stylist, or take this self-actualization course for only \$999! Of course this is not to say that we shouldn't take care of ourselves, or seek to be content with our lives. But maybe, just maybe, that contentment is not to be found in constantly chasing self-optimization. Do I really need to be the “best” I can be? Or can I just *be*? Do I have to live my *best* life, or can I just live my life? And maybe shift that energy to something outside of myself, something that can help me connect with others or benefit others in



some way. As feminist writer bell hooks said, “I am often struck by the dangerous narcissism fostered by spiritual rhetoric that pays so much attention to individual self-improvement and so little to the practice of love within the context of community.”

Klein explores how North American culture has created a “mirror world” where so many of us have come to define ourselves in opposition to whoever we decide we are *not*. If *they* think something is true, it must be false, because they're always wrong! I have seen this in both my liberal friends and my conservative, Fox News-watching family. If one group says that the Covid virus may have been created in a lab in Wuhan, the other group will say that's ridiculous, without considering the evidence. If one group says vaccines are backed by science, the other group will say it's a conspiracy because *they're* just sheep!

Klein uses Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny to describe the familiar-yet-strange feeling of encountering something that you know, but which has become twisted. This can lead to some strange situations. For example, as someone who has been on the political left for my whole adult life, I'm aware of numerous examples of the FBI and CIA infiltrating and undermining organizations such as the Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, and others. I first encountered the term “deep state” in the early '90s in the context of CIA-backed overthrows of democratically elected governments in Latin America and the Middle East. So it was rather disorienting for me to hear those on the right, who have traditionally defended those agencies, begin criticizing them, leading liberal Democrats to defend them. I suppose it's not surprising that for many, hearing the likes of Steve Bannon talking about the evils of the “deep state” sent them right into the arms of the FBI and CIA. *If he thinks they're so bad*, the reasoning seems to go, *they must be okay*. (Helpful tip: “the enemy of my enemy” is not necessarily my friend!)

Klein delves even deeper, exploring how humans frequently show a tenden-

cy to split off aspects of our personalities and psyches that are deemed unacceptable and project them onto others, then treat those others with denigration and fear. This can happen on a deeply personal level, such as the now not-uncommon phenomenon of a staunchly anti-LGBTQ public figure who is found to have gay tendencies. It also happens on a larger cultural level, such as how white fears of Black violence against them, especially against white women, have reached hysterical levels in the past, in some cases leading to massacres. In reality, the vast majority of violence between white and Black people in North America has been perpetrated by whites against Blacks, including hundreds of years where white men raped Black women with impunity.

What is the antidote to this? Circling back to bell hooks's thoughts about community, Klein refers to the concept of “un-selfing”: becoming less focused on ourselves and more focused on each other and on us as a whole. This doesn't mean that we lose our sense of self or that our selves are not important, but rather that we can balance out our need to individuate with the good and overall health of our communities, society, and world. We can stop performing our lives for others on social media, worrying about our “personal brands” and how we look on Instagram or Facebook, and devote more time genuinely connecting to those, and the world, around us. As a friend of mine said when she introduced me to the fact that I could hide my self-view in a Zoom meeting, “You can stop looking at yourself so much, and get to see other people more.” As Klein notes, “We were not, and never were, self-made. We are made, and unmade, by one another.”

For myself as a Zen Buddhist, this makes perfect sense. We say that “there is no self,” which doesn't mean that each of us isn't real, but that, as Vietnamese meditation master Thich Nhat Hanh was fond of saying, we are made up completely of non-self elements. There is nothing that is a part of us—not physically, mentally, or emotionally—that hasn't been influenced by countless other elements. There is no way to fully separate ourselves from the world around us, including each other. And because we are so deeply connected, another person's well-being is part of our own, because each person's well-being adds to the whole. In addition, Klein quotes writer John Berger: “Calm is a form of resistance.” When our culture is so full of distractions, and so much of what passes for our political discourse is designed to activate our feelings of anger, outrage, and fear, *not* getting sucked into that drama is something of a revolutionary act.

And we need that calm. Our world is in crisis. In addition to wars and terrorism, the reality of climate breakdown is upon us. We need to keep our minds clear and our wits about us, and we need each other. The myth of the rugged individualist needs to go the way of the cowboy who fought the Indian, into the dustbin of history. We won't survive as isolated individuals, but as communities. We need to support each other, listen to each other with openness, communicate with honesty, and challenge each other where needed, not with the goal to “own” the other, but with the goal to continuously grow as a whole. To quote the great James Baldwin, “If the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it.”

(StatePoint) Good foot and ankle health is critical for good overall health, so no matter what your wellness goals are for 2024, be sure to start from the ground up.

“Feet and ankle issues can be signs of overarching health problems like diabetes, arthritis and cardiovascular disease, so paying attention to them is vital for early diagnosis and treatment says Michael Coyer, DPM, FACFAS, a foot and ankle surgeon and Fellow Member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS). “Additionally, many common New Year's resolutions related to fitness and weight loss are difficult to tackle if you're experiencing foot and heel pain, making it important to fix these issues first.”

Get a jumpstart on your 2024 health resolutions with these foot health facts from ACFAS:

“I want to lose weight”: Obesity aggravates foot problems, like heel pain and flat feet, making it hard to exercise. And, without exercise, obesity worsens, potentially increasing the progression of serious health threats. Break the cycle by seeking evaluation and treatment for chronic, activity-limiting foot and ankle problems. Once cleared to begin exercise, don't do too much too soon. Follow a gradual routine of low-impact exercise until your body adjusts to the stress of regular physical activity.

“I want to build strong bones”: Osteoporosis is a bone-thinning disease affecting more than 28 million Americans, and your feet can present clues that there's a problem. Early symptoms can include increased pain with walking accompanied by redness and swelling on the top of the foot, as well as unexplained foot fractures. Don't ignore foot pain. Visit your foot and ankle surgeon who can detect osteoporosis through a bone densitometry test. Once you have a diagnosis you can take steps to prevent stress fractures, such as wearing shoes that provide support and cushioning, and using custom orthotics.

“I want to age gracefully”: Taking good care of feet and ankles can improve balance, coordination and stability to reduce a senior's risk of a life-altering fall. Examine your feet regularly. At the sign of bumps, lumps or other changes, or if you're experiencing pain, make an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon. Maintain foot strength and mobility with simple stretching exercises. Your foot and ankle surgeon can recommend appropriate exercises and discuss options for insoles and special footwear for additional protection.

“I want to feel my best”: Having persistently cold feet is not just uncomfortable, it could be a sign of a medical condition that causes poor blood flow in the legs or feet, such as peripheral vascular disease, Raynaud's phenomenon and heart disease. It could also be an indication of hypothyroidism, adrenal insufficiency or an autoimmune disorder, such as lupus. If your feet are persistently cold, follow up on it with your foot and ankle surgeon to determine if there's a greater issue to be addressed.

“I want to manage my diabetes better”: Foot care is fundamental to diabetes management. Visit your foot and ankle surgeon for guidelines on diabetic foot care to help prevent problems like ulcers, cracked heels and bone infection that can lead to serious complications, including amputation.

For more information on foot care or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org, the patient education website of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

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).

BEST OF 2023: Climate change has hit CT hard this year. Are we ready for more?

CT Mirror. "Last year it was drought; the year before was drought followed by floods. This year so far has seen everything. Even ignoring the slower grind of rising temperatures, sea levels and other climate change-related problems world-wide, just since the beginning of 2023 in Connecticut, weather extremes have reached from one end of the spectrum to the other...Planning for future effects of this sort of climate change-driven weather these days certainly requires physics and meteorology but also probably a crystal ball. Even climate scientists can't always predict how the many climate change-induced conditions will compound on each other...most of the weather patterns we're seeing would be happening without climate change. But climate change is driving their intensity, frequency and other abnormalities..." "The new reality is that as climate change is accelerating, we have to carve out additional bandwidth to be able to also manage and respond to these emergencies that are becoming perpetual. We're also going to be in a perpetual emergency-like response mode for incidents that are occurring that are unfamiliar," she said. "We've identified what these possible risks are, but no one has a crystal ball to know when they're going to occur and how they're going to compound."



Gov. Lamont accuses GOP of fear-mongering over electric vehicles and 'range anxiety'

CT Insider. "Gov. Ned Lamont on Tuesday accused opponents of his administration's efforts to transition away from traditional gas-powered cars of overblowing common fears about performance and viability of their electric counterparts. "They're all gnashing their teeth about range anxiety,"...In a series of closed-door meetings over the last month, the state's Democratic leadership has sought to smooth over concerns among members on a range of issues such as the price of EVs and plug-in hybrids, as well as the availability of charging infrastructure in inner-cities. Lamont himself addressed a virtual caucus of moderate Democrats earlier this month in an effort to win over support, according to one member present at the meeting. "After holding conversations this week, [Rep Joe] Gresko said that legislative leaders will likely meet around the holidays to determine whether there is enough support to call a special session in January focused on the issue of the California regulations — instead of waiting for the regular legislative session to begin in February. "If it doesn't have a heartbeat, then we won't have a special session," Gresko said. "Plus: Getting a tax credit for buying a new electric vehicle will soon be simpler

John Breunig (opinion): Former CT Gov. Ella Grasso was driving electric car movement back in the 1970s

ctpost. "...cars maintain a powerful grip on the American consciousness. People may not know what most of those fluids do that leak on the driveway, but don't you dare try to take them away...A few weeks ago, The Kid, my wife and I went to the Connecticut International Auto Show at Mohegan Sun. The pamphlet for the show reminds guests that Europe and China are kicking our tailpipes when it comes to EV sales, but notes that EV registrations in Connecticut rose by 20 percent since the start of 2023, bringing the total in the state to about 36,000...New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey are already on the road to the 2035 goal to ban gas car sales. (Really? New Jersey is lapping us?) And 2035 is just a goal, folks. No one is going to take your keys away on New Year's Eve 2034 if you don't buy an electric car. Though by then some Connecticut lawmakers will probably succeed in reviving horses as our primary mode of transit."

Despite setbacks, states are still counting on offshore wind

CT Mirror. "In recent months, East Coast states' plans to

install massive new offshore wind farms have been battered by bad economic news, canceled contracts and newfound uncertainty about the projects officials are counting on to reach their clean energy goals. Despite the setbacks, state leaders say they don't intend to dial back their offshore wind ambitions. They're planning new strategies and investments to help the industry weather its rocky start. And they're holding fast to mandates that offshore wind make up a substantial portion of their future power supply."..."There's no denying the challenges the industry is facing at this particular moment," said Dykes, commissioner of the Connecticut agency. "But we have some of the best offshore wind resources in the world just off of our coast, and we have some ambitious goals for decarbonization. Those fundamentals remain just as true today as they were in 2018." "Plus: Huge Turbines Will Soon Bring First Offshore Wind Power to New Yorkers (NYTimes)

Lawmakers Consider Boosting Heating Assistance As Study Points to Worsening Energy Affordability Gap
CT News Junkie. "Legislative leaders will consider allocating more resources to assist struggling households with heating costs, House Speaker Matt Ritter said Thursday as Operation Fuel released a study finding a widening energy affordability gap in Connecticut... The study, conducted by the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, concluded that the gap between the energy costs Connecticut families could afford and what they were asked to pay grew by 37% since 2020...more than 424,000 Connecticut households were struggling with unaffordable home energy costs... Asked about Connecticut's expected budget surplus and the state's flush rainy day fund, Ritter said the \$15 to \$30 million ask seemed doable, though the timing may require lawmakers to act before they are scheduled to return for regular session."

CT's building trades support transition to EVs – and want to build the infrastructure

CT Mirror. "Connecticut is readying to meet this challenge by adopting new regulations that would phase out the sales of most gas-powered vehicles by 2035. We applaud Gov. Ned Lamont and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for their commitment to deliver more zero-emission vehicles to Connecticut drivers while also increasing consumer protections...We support the administration's intent with the proposed regulation on the sale of electric vehicles by 2035...we are simply asking to build the infrastructure to support them. The Connecticut State Building Trades should be at every table where decisions regarding development are being made. We must be a part of the transition to clean energy. Put us to work."

Eversource wary about attracting investor capital as Connecticut moves to forefront of PBR trend

Utility Dive. "Connecticut regulators and stakeholders are building a new utility regulatory framework to achieve state policy goals and make electricity more affordable but utilities say they could be misguided...Connecticut's "legacy business model," and traditional regulation of utilities are "fundamentally at odds" with today's technologies, policies, and accelerating adoption of distributed energy resources," the [PURA] decision said. The state's utilities and regulators fully agree on this premise but differ over the resolution. "There is potential for PBR [Performance Based Regulation] to work out well," but "the current regulatory environment seems overly punitive," said Douglas Horton, [Eversource] vice president..."Utilities should welcome PBR because it gives them tools to earn from better performance," responded PURA Chair Marissa Gillett. "It specifically tells utilities what is expected of them and how to demonstrate that performance, which is a level of certainty they have never had," and "more helpful guidance toward earnings than how to achieve cost recovery in a rate case," she added."

Tesla showroom, first of its kind in CT, opens at Mohegan Sun

Connecticut Public. "Mohegan Sun announced Friday the opening of the Tesla Electric Vehicle Showroom, which allows customers to directly buy vehicles from the EV manufacturer...Currently, state law prohibits manufacturers, including Tesla, from selling vehicles directly to consumers. Instead, manufacturers must sell vehicles through licensed car dealerships. But the Mohegan EV sales space is unique. That's because Tesla's shop is located on tribal land, where state car dealership laws don't apply...The new arrangement means Connecticut customers looking to buy a Tesla will no longer need to drive to an out-of-state-dealership to do so. Instead, they can purchase and pick up their Tesla vehicles at the showroom, which is located in the Shops at Mohegan Sun."

Massachusetts Just Took a Big Step Away from Natural Gas. Which States Might Follow?

Inside Climate News. "Natural gas may be on the way out in Massachusetts. State utility regulators on Wednesday issued a sweeping ruling that sets a framework for reducing the use of gas for heating as part of a larger strategy to address climate change. The Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities rejected arguments from utilities and the gas industry that had urged the use of "renewable natural gas" and hydrogen as lower-carbon alternatives to natural gas. Instead, the department ruled that the state should encourage a transition to using electricity for heating and other functions gas currently serves. Massachusetts is the first state to take such a clear step to phase out natural gas, but it likely won't be the last...Environmental and clean energy advocates view the ruling as a victory and, they hope, the beginning of a broader shift away from gas. For gas utilities and their industry groups, the decision is a major defeat. "As far as I know this is the first time a utility has been required to decarbonize..."

Dan Haar: Eversource asking customers to pay \$634M bill for storms in Connecticut

CT Insider. "Through years of rising storms, the ones that strike from the heavens and the political ones over how Eversource keeps the lights on in Connecticut, we always knew the bills would come due. Now the financial reckoning is here for electric customers from the storms of 2018 to 2021...Why the rise [in cost]? Three main reasons. First, global warming brings not only more super-intense storms but sometimes, more storms period. That's why they call it climate change. The other two reasons are related. Customers have little patience for even brief power outages in the modern era. And Eversource in the past has shown operations and communications problems leading to a backlash by regulators and lawmakers...The submission will kick off what's called a prudency review, in which PURA decides whether each expense was justified. That's been fairly routine in the past but PURA under Gillett has a much tougher stance against the utilities, so we'll see...This review will lead to debate about how much the state should allow in storm costs as part of our regular rates...Whatever the number, it's yet another cost of global warming."



DEEP hopes \$1M in grants will help CT replace older diesel trucks with electric versions

CT Insider. "DEEP has made about \$1 million available for grants to local and state governments, businesses, and organizations to replace large, older diesel engines with electric vehicle equivalents or newer, cleaner-burning engines. Provided through the federal Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA), the funding covers up to 60 percent of the cost of new technology that can reduce pollution as much as 80 percent while saving operating costs through reduced fuel consumption, according to DEEP...Diesel engines are a significant contributor to air pollution, emitting high levels of nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter that especially affect communities near transportation hubs and highways...Residents suffer from exposure to sooty exhaust emitted by trucks, buses, and other diesel-powered vehicles that can make breathing difficult, particularly for children, the older residents, and other sensitive groups."

Maine Turns Its Heat Pump Focus To 'Whole-house' Systems That Can All But Eliminate Fossil Fuel Use

CT News Junkie. "New state incentives are pushing Mainers to adopt "whole-house" heat pump systems, making efficient electricity the primary home heat source and discouraging the secondary use of oil or gas..." "Customers are then able to turn off their old central furnace or boiler, relegating it to an emergency backup system When that happens, (heat pumps) are able to meet their full potential..."...This past summer, the state hit an initial target of installing 100,000 heat pumps relative to 2019. Now, it's working toward another 175,000 more units by 2027...This fall, Maine walked back an earlier requirement that old fossil-fired systems be disabled or disconnected from electrical service entirely, with locks on their switches..." "Our research shows that the majority of heat pumps installed in Maine will save significantly less money and emissions when they are operated concurrently with a central furnace or boiler than when they operate alone,"...heat pumps need to be carefully tailored to a home's needs to maximize their efficiency..." "To the extent you oversize a heat pump system, you're creating a situation where it's beginning to resemble, more and more, an old-fashioned heating system." "

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.



Happy Solstice everyone!

*Here comes the sun, doo-doo-doo-doo...
Here comes the sun, and I say
It's alright.....*

I know some of you just sang that, as I did while writing this. Some may have intuitively continued with the guitar lick that came after the words, also as I just did.

Speaking of intuitive, in the past almost 13 years that I have been in the industry, one of the many trends that I have noticed is that winter is a counterintuitive time of year to say yes to solar! In Suess-Land and referring to solar, it would be referred to as Backwards Day or The Season of backwards thoughts.

There's an old joke in the industry that goes like this. Question: "When's the best time to go solar?" Answer: "The first time you thought about it."

OK so really, When is the most advantageous time of year to say yes to solar?

In reality, anytime is a good time since if you're working with a professional, they will share with you all of the advantages, and if they are honest, they will also share any disadvantages if any apply to your project site. *Let's look at a couple of factors before I answer the question.*

A typical solar install takes on average 90, to 150 days to have a system installed and turned on after someone signs a contract to get the ball rolling. With that said, I have seen the entire process go as fast as 60 to 90 days and take as long as almost a year. There are so many factors involved with the process. In a recent presentation I gave to my business network group (BNI) of local professionals I meet with weekly, I walked them through all of the back-end, out of customer view process that takes place in order to get a solar system designed, through engineering, utility and town approvals, installed and then turned on. They were amazed at what they actually didn't know about the process.

One of the topics covered was, "When is the best time of year to say yes to solar." With the timeframe mentioned above, **the quick answer is: The best time of year is during the winter months** when the sun is lowest in the sky and shining the least throughout the days. Counterintuitive, yes?

Here's why >> When I design a solar project, amongst many other things, I'm looking at a balance of what a homeowner uses for electricity for an entire year. I add up the low and high kilowatt months and use that for a yearly usage foundation to see what solar offset is needed to cover a full year of Eversource bills. I design a system using the allowable roof or ground space and then have my software do a 365 synopsis on what solar will produce for

the entire year. Adding the low production months (winter) and the high production months together to see how many kilowatts the system will produce annually. I then match a homeowners yearly kilowatt usage to the annual production of the system and then we know what percentage of offset solar can provide, along with what financial options and savings will be best for the homeowner. There's a lot of math and science involved. Thankfully we have moved from me doing this on a note pad and a calculator to using very sophisticated software.

When you go solar, a net meter is installed as the last step before the solar software is activated to go live. That meter tracks all of the extra energy your solar system produces over what your home is using at any given time. This accumulated energy shows up as credits on your Eversource bill. The credits are used at night and through the winter as energy that the utility owes you at no charge! Net metering is basically a free battery.

To sum this up: When you say yes to solar in the winter, the system is typically installed in the beginning of the springtime when the sun starts to produce the most energy from mid-spring to mid-fall. This allows those net metered credits to be accumulated to get you through that first winter with solar covering all of your energy needs with the kilowatts that your system created and were saved as credits on your Eversource account through the high production months. I hope this makes sense for you.

Talking about the Sun, here are a few fun facts:

This is an excerpt from: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/power-sun/>

The sun is the closest star to Earth. Even at a distance of 93 million miles, its gravitational pull holds the planet in orbit. It radiates light and heat which makes it possible for life to exist here on Earth.

Plants need sunlight to grow. Animals, including humans, need plants for food and to breathe the oxygen they produce. Without heat from the sun, Earth would freeze and there would be no winds, ocean currents, or clouds to transport water.

Solar energy has existed for as long as the sun has, for about five billion years.

While people haven't been around that long, we have certainly been using solar energy in a variety of ways for thousands of years. *"end excerpt"*

Including using its energy to power our homes, businesses and communities.

If you, or anyone you know, would like to learn more about capturing the sun's energy to power your home, please reach out to me directly.

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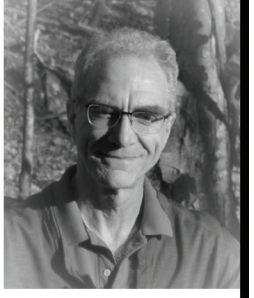
Thanks for reading my article and let's make every day Earth Day!

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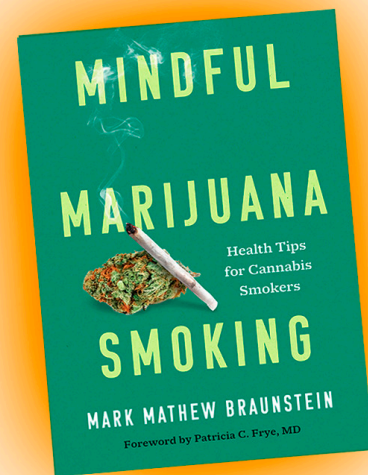
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Dear Reader-
Please consider contributing to Neighbors-
Write an article about a person you admire or a local program you believe is important. Take a photo of a friend, loved one or pet. Write a poem or a piece of flash fiction. These pages would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

T. King, Publisher

Search for Ashford's Poet Laureate

Submitted by Christine Acebo

The Ashford Area Arts Council (AAAC) requests applications for consideration as the Poet Laureate for the town of Ashford. Applicants should be recognized for a long-standing involvement in poetry and should demonstrate passion and expertise in poetry.

The Poet Laureate, in coordination with the AAAC, will be expected to fulfill a number of duties over a 3-year appointment, **some of which may include:**

-organize and / or participate in poetry readings open to the public

-read a poem at AAAC and town events

-write or find poems about the community, historical events, figures, etc.

-visit schools and work with students

-present poetry workshops for the AAC

-facilitate the publication of an anthology of poetry by community members

-work with the local library to create a poetry corner or collection of poetry books by CT authors

-other initiatives developed by the Poet Laureate

An Honorarium of \$600 (\$200 per year) will be provided.

Applications due by February 1, 2024.

Please request an application or contact for questions: Christine Acebo (leave voicemail at 860.617.5609 or email cacebo@mac.com)

AAAC Poet Laureate Committee
Christine Acebo – cacebo@mac.com
Marian Matthews, Debra Gag, Kathryn Eidson, Marian Vitali
AAAC, Partnered with Windham Arts Org/CT Office of the Arts

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The Newly Reopened Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum

By Ryan Elgin

The Eastern Connecticut Center for History, Art, and Performance (EC-CHAP) nonprofit organization is happy to announce that the Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum had its Grand Reopening on December 2nd, 2023, after months of planning, renovations, and upgrades. The local museum is housed at The Mill Works facility, formerly the Gardiner Hall Jr. Company thread mill (1860-1954) located at 156 River Road, Willington CT. Back in late February of 2023, EC-CHAP was selected as one of twelve organizations in the state to be awarded the Museum Makeover grant offered by Conservation ConneCTion and supported through a partnership with the Connecticut League of History Organizations with a grant from the CT Cultural Fund by CT Humanities and funding provided by the Connecticut Office of the Arts from the Connecticut State Legislature. The grant provided funds to upgrade the museum space along with expert advice from a team of museum curators.



Above: The view from the museum entrance after the makeover. Photo taken during the Grand Reopening on December 2, 2023. Below: The enlarged, high-resolution image of Gardiner Hall Jr. Company dressing room employees circa 1920. All photos contributed.



Before: The view from the museum entrance before the makeover. Photo taken in September, 2023 before the former exhibition layout was removed for carpet install.



Before & After: A view of one part of the Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum before the makeover (above left) and after the makeover (above right).

After an initial visit by traveling curator Stephen Bartkus in March, planning began on a new museum exhibition layout. The “before” images of the museum with the blue flooring show that while there was an array of historical objects on display, the space certainly could benefit from a makeover. The priorities for the project would be focused on providing a more informative and enjoyable experience for guests while also improving the facility in order to optimize the preservation of historical artifacts.

The first step was to create six larger, professional text panels to tell the story of the mill, employees, the Hall family, and South Willington. Many weeks were spent on historical research followed by creating, editing, and designing the text panels now seen in the museum. In addition to the new text panels, one of our favorite photos of company employees was chosen to be enlarged into a 10-foot hanging fabric photograph - bringing a still image of 1920 work conditions to life. To enhance the presentation of historical objects, modern display cases were graciously donated to the cause from the Fairfield Museum & History Center and the Seymour Historical Society. The museum space now hosts multiple display cases featuring products of the Gardiner Hall Jr. Company and future businesses that occupied the mill, personal items of the Hall family, and relics from employees. More is to come as new pieces are put on display and the museum expands.

One of the most visually pleasing facility upgrades to the Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum was changing the flooring. Previously, the blue tile floor was showing its age. Every piece of the museum was removed and put into storage so commercial carpeting could be installed.



Carpet being installed (left) after the museum was cleared out and artifacts placed in storage. Museum pieces being moved back into the museum (right) after carpeting installation. A final day of planning and layout decisions.

The carpet also extends into a newly created presentation room to be used for historical lectures and demonstrations. Lastly, the large early-20th century mill windows on the West wall of the museum received UV treatment. Upgraded blinds now span both windows and fully block the harmful effects of sunlight to sensitive museum artifacts.

After nine months of progress thanks to the Museum Makeover grant, members of EC-CHAP along with traveling curators Stephen Bartkus, Ben Gammell, and Rich Malley completed the installation of the permanent exhibition *Threads in Time* in November, 2023. *Threads in Time* explores Willington’s history, the impact of the Gardiner Hall Jr. Thread Company, the contributions of South Willington residents and employees, and the Hall family. EC-CHAP invites everyone to stop by the Gardiner Hall Jr. History Museum to see the renovated space and take in a

part of Connecticut’s rich local history. We wish to give our sincere thanks and acknowledgement for the assistance, guidance, and support received from Conservation ConneCTion Director Kathy Craughwell-Varda and assigned Traveling Curators Stephen Bartkus, Ben Gammell, and Rich Malley; for donated design services provided by Graphic Designer Leslie Buccino; for printing services by EC-CHAP Sponsor - Anything Printed Copy Center; for flooring materials and installation by EC-CHAP Sponsor - Booth Flooring; for the donation of eight display cases by Heather Brown, President of the Seymour Historical Society; for the donation of one large acrylic display case by Chelsea Garth, Curator of the Fairfield Museum & History Center; Home Depot for providing \$100.00 Donation; Susan Schur, Treasurer, Willington Historical Society for providing the original photograph of mill workers for scanning; and for project coordination, and assistance from Tyler Hall, descendent of Gardiner Hall Jr., for content development.

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

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

How to Limit Indoor Air Pollution in Your Home

(StatePoint) On average, Americans spend 90% of their time indoors, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, making indoor air quality critical to the health of families. The level of some pollutants in indoor environments can be two to five times higher than outdoor concentrations.

Through the new Healthy and Efficient Homes campaign, the American Lung Association is raising awareness of common sources of indoor air pollutants -- including gas-, propane-, oil- and wood-burning appliances -- and promoting practical short- and long-term solutions to address the associated health risks.

The Problem

In addition to cleaning products, mold, moisture and pests, the household appliances you use on a daily basis can impact indoor air quality. According to a comprehensive review of existing research, the American Lung Association has found that using appliances that burn methane (also known as “natural”) gas, wood, propane and heating oil can release harmful pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide, benzene and carbon monoxide in homes, while also contributing to outdoor air pollution and climate change. The review also found that the pollutants from these appliances increase the risk of breathing problems, asthma attacks, respiratory infections and other health harms, especially in children and older adults.

“Using these appliances can sometimes worsen asthma symptoms, cause wheezing and result in reduced lung function in children,” says Katherine Pruitt, national senior director of policy for the American Lung Association.

Solutions

If you rely on combustion appliances for heating, hot water or cooking, there are some immediate steps you can take to reduce your risk from exposure to harmful pollutants:

- Make sure your gas appliances are in proper working order.
- Install carbon monoxide monitors.
- Avoid unnecessary wood burning in your home.

- Use ventilation, either a range hood that vents to the outside or an open window or both, when cooking on a gas stove.

- For homes that rely on wood burning for heat or cooking, an air cleaning device that uses HEPA filtration can provide some protection from the soot and smoke.

As Pruitt notes, gas was once considered the cleaner, more appealing choice of fuel for heating and cooking, but now, healthier and more efficient appliances are available in the United States, such as heat pumps and



induction stoves. Efficiency standards are helping make appliances cleaner, while local, state and federal incentive programs exist to provide rebates and other financial incentives to those who choose to install modern electric appliances.

“The goal is not to force anyone to make the switch. It’s to make doing so easier and more affordable for those who choose to,” says Pruitt.

To learn more and get involved, visit Lung.org/Healthy-Efficient-Homes. For additional information about how to improve your indoor air quality, visit Lung.org/Clean-Air.

Clean air is essential for healthy lungs. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to improve the air you and your family breathe at home.

PHOTO SOURCE: (c) fizkes / iStock via Getty Images Plus

Cats on the Table!



Photo by Diane Rutherford



The Ashford AREA Arts Council is looking for a Chairperson.... is it you?

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StaceyTheAAAC@Outlook.com

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Lebanon Senior Center: Tue 4-5p, Thu 6:30-7:30p

Call or text Joe Pandolfo: 959-444-3979

The Windham Mill Museum

will be temporarily closed Jan. 5, 2024 until Feb. TBD, 2024 for cleaning and installation of new exhibits.

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Regional Community Media & Arts News

By John Murphy

Happy 2024, whatever you are! My best wishes to all *Neighbors* readers for a better year ahead, we need it!

The coming year will be a turning point for establishing sustainable funding for this project to develop a regional media ecosystem in eastern Connecticut. We have built a new and unique media life form in our region that merges the best assets and capabilities of local radio, print, and YouTube working together in unity. We are well past the proof-of-concept stage of development, we have a strong foundation for operations at WILI Radio, and we are ready to grow with strategic partners in the year ahead.

I have produced *On the Homefront* at WILI Radio/YouTube for the past three years, as a form of volunteer community media service—producing over 150 shows and more than 400 conversations with people and groups from across the region. A big thank you to co-producer Matt Rugar for his contribution of time, energy and expertise. Before WILI, the program existed for over 20 years and 750 episodes on Charter/Spectrum cable access TV. It has been a great honor to share the studio with so many good people doing cool things all around us, every day, for so many years. If only we look!

This issue covers January and February—and among other things I will preview the priorities for local coverage and connection to people who are making a difference for Life in our region. But first a few prophylactic reflections for coping with the mass media virus and related political destruction that is happening at historic levels across the nation. Both will surely continue during the coming election year; the fog and smoke will continue. Staying aware and connected with your community will be one effective way to stay safe and sane.

As we look back on the last year of inanity in the mass media universe, a few classic memes from World War Two come to mind. FUBAR and SNAFU. I will not translate them here because this is a family paper, but most adults in the room will understand and relate. (Ask Siri or go to Google.)

After decades of conglomeration and globalization the core mass media industries that existed before the Internet are FUBAR. They do not look or feel the same today. There are new masters in different countries, and they wave their light sabers with different values and goals than the originators in the last century. The money game of ownership and control has changed, probably forever, and the tyranny of the next fiscal quarter investment returns is trumping the judgment and experience that lives on creative risk and collaboration. Pull up the beautiful corporate logos, the view under the rocks is not so pretty.

SNAFU can describe the new normal for media consumers, who ultimately pay for almost everything in the media. Free media is full of ads to make it free, but people pay for those ads on the back end as consumers. Yes, Homer, they are so media-agnostic they will follow content across all the channels based on the most profitable platform available at the time. A maze of search windows. People have been trained to expect music for free, so they hesitate to pay directly for the content they like—and the artists are denied the necessary support to continue. It is a vicious cycle that is hurting the creative community. Streaming services are still among the worst offenders for artist compensation.

Local communities are where our precious media technologies were born, one by one, since the mid-1800s. Each one was a steppingstone forward (or a replacement of one) to improve the human connection in some way. Networks were collective efforts by individual stations (services) to reach audiences and the constellation of networks that travelled the radio and TV airwaves, and cable TV wires later, defined the media spaces for our nation before the Internet. This constellation was absorbed through corporate ownership changes over three decades through conglomeration and globalization into new business life forms that we are only beginning to understand. They are out of our control now and the struggle is how to deal with that loss of control.

I believe one positive way forward with exciting potential is to restore and regenerate what was lost in the new global media environment—local life in all its beauty. By re-seeding the soil with properly scaled resources back at the local levels where it all started. Only now, we all have the basic production tools in our hands, and we no longer need access or permission from the new gatekeepers. Slow, steady, focused, devoted, and with grace, the good work continues!

For the first half of 2024 our coverage priorities will include:

1. Continuing full coverage of the arts community in all its forms across the region.
2. The increasing impacts of recent structural and financial changes to the system of health care delivery
3. The growing imbalance of our housing market economy and the growth of tenant unions
4. Assessing the Limits of Local Government, for example, in Mansfield and Ashford
5. More episodes in our social service series with WRCC/Windham Regional Community Council
6. Direct support for live music in all venues across the region—interviews, tour info, websites



VALUABLE ARTS RESOURCE: ASSETS FOR ARTISTS AT /MASS MoCA

Assets for Artists at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art offers an ever-evolving selection of online and in-person workshops to address the most urgent needs, challenges, and opportunities facing artists in our region. Molly Rideout is the Assistant Director, and she has been a guest on my program several times, sharing important arts news and information updates about training and funding opportunities. Her next radio visit will be to WILI on Wednesday January 17 (between 5-6 pm).

I am sharing the link to the Winter/Spring workshop season with loads of arts information! Take a look. <https://www.assetsforartists.org/workshops>

Two highlights below for Connecticut artists—registration is free but limited so sign up *now* if this is for you!

#1/Submitting to Literary Markets and Magazines w/ Yasmine Ameli Wednesday, February 28, 2024, 12:00 - 3:00 PM (in Zoom)

Ready to press submit on your poem, essay, or story? With a focus on paying markets, this workshop covers the basics: finding the right journals for your work, creating a Submittable account, writing a cover letter and author's bio, navigating tiers of rejection and conditional acceptances, assessing costs and payoff, and goal setting. This workshop will also help writers understand why they might choose to publish their work and the many factors that go into that decision. Writers will leave this class with lists of journals to check out, drafts of cover letters and author bios, plans to help them take next steps, and additional resources. This will be a lecture-based workshop with writing/reflection prompts and time for Q&A.

Yasmine Ameli (she/her) is an Iranian American poet and essayist whose writing has appeared in *POETRY*, *Ploughshares*, *The Sun*, the *Southern Review*, and elsewhere. A fellow A4A grantee, she coaches creative writers on the business of thriving as an artist.

#2/Artistry & Enterprise: Building a Sustainable Creative Business w/ Chelsea Gaia Thursday, March 28, 2024, 12:00 - 3:00 PM (in Zoom) Presented in partnership with the US Dept. of Agriculture.

As an artist builds toward an income-generating practice, it takes planning and care to maintain artistic authenticity while navigating the business world's complexities. In this workshop, Chelsea Gaia offers a comprehensive blueprint for artists eager to explore the business logistics of expanding one's creative practice, while addressing the common complicated emotions (and misconceptions) that surround thinking of one's practice as a "business." This workshop will cover basic business topics, such as legal structures (e.g., LLC vs. sole proprietorship), determining the best studio space for your growing needs, and when is the right time to hire help. Money, of course, threads through all of these considerations, and Chelsea will invite participants to consider how a basic budget can help one plan around slow and busy seasons, as well as best practices for paying oneself and recommendations for good financial hygiene. This workshop will be a combination of lecture and individual prompts.

Chelsea Gaia is a multimedia artist, fellow A4A grantee, and life-long business professional. Over her lifetime, she has personally owned and assisted in opening over 350 businesses.

ON THE HOMEFRONT IS ON LIVE RADIO AND YOUTUBE ANYTIME AUDIO PODCASTS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

The *On the Homefront* series is available on YouTube for 24/7 access anywhere. Just search on "WILI Radio." Subscribe and you will automatically get every new program in your inbox. Guests get links for their own media sharing! Let us help you with your media outreach.

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 to plan the best date for your event calendars—the studio doors are wide open at john@humanartsmedia.com.

WILI YouTube Channel for all Monday-Friday local talk shows—all programs below are available here: <https://www.youtube.com/@wiliradio7000>. My program has its own playlist with all the shows. Subscribe!

The *On the Homefront* audio podcast archive is available 24/7. Subscribe to get every new program! <https://www.wili.com/on-the-homefront-podcast/>

Below is the archive of programs, topics, and guests for December. Many conversations are not dated, and they provide good local information that can be useful anytime.

December 6:

- 1/Dianne Nadeau—Willimantic Chamber of Commerce, The America Museum
- 2/Ginny Walton—Recycling and special program on new home solar storage options
- 3/Tom King—Publisher, of *Neighbors*, its history and community resource/service

December 13:

1/ Health care in eastern Connecticut—a series with Windham United to Save Our Health Care Coalition

Re: continuing coverage of Latino, community and immigrant impacts of closing of maternity unit at Windham Hospital three years ago, and a review of the recent decision by the OHS concerning birthing units.
--Rose Reyes, Windham Town Council, Teacher at Windham High
--Jose Salas-Blanco, The Neighbor Fund

2/ Swift Waters Artisans' Cooperative

--Pat Miller, founding member, artist, photographer
--Robin Ritz, new member artist

December 20

1/Willimantic Public Library—Holiday and Winter Events and Programs

--Joseph White, staff librarian

2/ Health care in eastern Connecticut—Windham United to Save Our Health Care Coalition

A special repeat of last week's interview, by popular demand.

December 27

1/Health care in eastern Connecticut—Windham United to Save Our Health Care Coalition

A new update to explain the OHS decision and responses from the Coalition
--Brenda Buchbinder, Windham United to Save Our Health Care Coalition
--Bill Powers, writer for *Neighbors* and Chair of the Town of Windham Ethics Commission

2/Live music in eastern Connecticut at The Side door Jazz Club/New Year's events and 2024 preview

--Chris Beaudry, manager—programmer, Old Lyme Inn

Thank you very much for reading *Neighbors* and for listening to or watching *On the Homefront*. I appreciate your interest and support for local media—and hope you will stay connected with this project and join me in the studio when you have news to share!

Always keep the faith,
John Murphy
john@humanartsmedia.com



Book Reviews

Hold the Apocalypse and You Only Go Extinct Once

both by Bob Lorentson

A Stand-Up Comedian Posing as a Sit-Down Scientist

Hold the Apocalypse

Pass Me a Scientist Please

published 2021

ISBN 9798454735616

200 pages, \$9 paperback, \$3 eBook

You Only Go Extinct Once

Stuck in the Anthropocene with the Pleistocene Blues Again

published 2023

ISBN 979-8-218-26203-7

218 pages, \$11 paperback, \$5 eBook

<https://BobLorentson.wordpress.com>

Book reviews by Mark Mathew Braunstein

Humor! Literature! Philosophy! Psychology! The fine arts! The natural sciences! These two books explore all of these. While Bob Lorentson is a Humorist, he writes not just to make us laugh, but also to make us think. So add to his résumé, Satirist, because his two books are best summarized as social satire.

Social satire is often associated with political commentary, such as the skits on nighttime TV shows broadcast live. Lorentson steers clear of politics, a narrow feature of human society. Instead, he sets his sights on the deeper and broader entire human condition. And not just our role in society, but humanity's place on the planet Earth.

When he takes aim at lofty subjects, he reveals truths that you would not expect to find in a book of humor and satire. Along with all the fun and laughs, we learn a lot from him. And for the academically inclined, both books provide bibliographies, so naysayers who might suspect the author of steering from the truth can see that all the author's assertions and conclusions are based on solid science.

Lorentson's books are collections of eclectic essays whose medley is akin to the diversity of the articles in *Neighbors*. In addition to its many random contributors, *Neighbors* features several regular columnists. From among them, you can gain insightful views of nature and civilization through the socio-political lens of eco-feminism. Or you can be dazzled by stellar philosophical meditations inspired by the simple act of stargazing. Or you can be brought back down to earth with visits to our local farms. Or you can learn about the practicalities for maintenance of your car. Or you can study the technicalities of solar energy for your home. And all in a freebie monthly newspaper whose pages can still smudge your fingers with newsprint ink rather than only strain your eyes with computer screen fatigue.

While not as a columnist, Lorentson has been making regular guest appearances on these pages, yet his many short articles have been easy to overlook. As they never puff themselves up across an entire page, they can get lost among other short articles. Their titles rarely are provocative, so garner little attention. Neither flashy photos nor clickbait graphics ever illustrate them. Only recently have bylines concluded them to connect them with the author's previous articles. Lucky you, now you know to keep a watchful eye for his byline in future issues.

Meanwhile, to read what you've been missing, you can poke around the PDF's of past issues of *Neighbors*. Or support the local arts by buying the dang books. Or muck around the author's website. I should not tell you this (meaning, I'm going to go ahead and tell you this), but some of the chapters from both books can be found lurking on his website.

Published only two years apart, each book contains 50 short chapters. Their essays are interchangeable, so the differences between one book and the other are slight. If pressed to recommend one to read first, I suggest *You Only Go Extinct Once*. Lorentson's writing shines brightest among his menagerie of animals, and animals populate *Extinct* more than in *Hold the Apocalypse*. By no coincidence, the essay, "Food Fight at the Bird Feeder," first published without fanfare in *Neighbors* and later republished in *Apocalypse*, alerted me to thereafter be on the lookout for Lorentson's writings.

In his 2021 book, *Hold the Apocalypse*, no subject is too insignificant or small for the author, as evidenced in an essay about bonsai trees. Nor is any subject too broad or complex, as in its opening chapter, "The Complete History of Humankind." Even at less than four pages, it is the longest essay in the book. Thus each chapter can be read in a single sitting. Or if you like to read yourself to sleep, in a single reclining. Perfect for those of us whose brains have become atrophied by videos on unsocial media and by soundbites on old news shows.

As if to provide comic relief to *Apocalypse's* al-

ready comical 29 essays, 21 poems are sprinkled around. Don't let that dirty four-letter word "poem" scare you. They are lighthearted and limerick-like. They never fill the page, so like all poetry they waste a lot of paper. Some are so pithy and witty that they could be mistaken as posthumously published by my dearest of all philosophers, Dr. Seuss. Outside my home, I travel unplugged, so little wonder that one of my fav poems is this little ditty, "Who's Smarter?": "My smartphone gives me the world / Yet I feel like a martyr. / I give it my life / But don't feel any smarter."

This great debut anthology is nevertheless undermined by its two genres mixed into the same vat and by the apparently random arrangement of the chapters. Organizing the essays thematically would have greatly improved my reading experience.

In his 2023 book, *You Only Go Extinct Once*, deleting the poems and arranging the essays into categories are exactly what the author has done for his second anthology. Maybe he was reading my mind, or maybe only my reader review on Amazon. The 50 essays are categorized into two broad topics, the first 25 into "The Plants and Animals," and the remaining 25 into the most dangerous and destructive of all animals, "The Humans."

Without providing empirical evidence to support his claim, Lorentson describes himself as a retired environmental scientist. As a job description, that sounds elusive and evasive to me, so I conducted an extensive background check (meaning, I googled his name) and found his allegation to be true. He retired from the environmental arm of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

By no surprise, the author's writing excels among "The Plants and Animals" where he ponders flora and fauna, and mostly fauna at that. Here are excerpts from *Extinct* of three topical animal essays of special relevance to us in Connecticut.

About Roadkill, the author instills humor even into a deadly serious matter for which we all share blame. "Why did the chicken cross the road? It didn't. A 2,000-pound vehicle turned it into pavement pizza. ... It's Carmageddon out there! ... Please give animals a brake."

About Dairy Cows, we gain insights into the tenets of veganism through an interview with Elsie. "If I don't make my quota, I'll be inside a bun rather than a barn. ... We give you milk, butter, and cheese, but instead of saying thank you, you eat us and turn our children into veal."

About Black Bears, we learn their habitat and habits. "Most make their homes in forests, except those that do so in zoos. ... Cubs are weaned at six months, then forced to eat grubs and garbage until they learn to like it. Afterwards they leave in search of picnic baskets and refrigerators. ... They can track a refrigerator for miles."

And let's not forget the essays in both books specific to Connecticut. One very funny chapter is titled, "Is Connecticut Funny?" Another, "The Connecticut State Animal You've Never Seen." Two of Lorentson's essays were recently published in the paywall-protected *Hartford Courant*, so let's be thankful for what we read here for free.

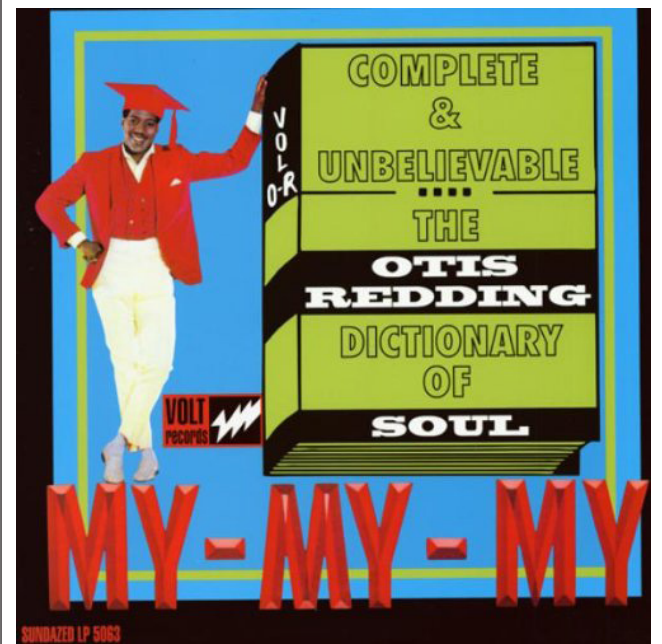
Speaking of Hartford, America's great humorist Mark Twain lived for 18 years in Hartford in a 25-room mansion, now an historic museum. Some 22 miles south-east of Hartford you'll find East Haddam, the town that is home to Lorentson, our local author in whom a century later Mark Twain's literary spirit lives on.

The book reviewer, Mark Mathew Braunstein, is the author of six books. www.MarkBraunstein.Org

How to read these two books:

You can't tickle yourself. To make yourself giggle, someone else must tickle you. Laughing out loud, too, is a shared experience. In a movie theater, when the audience around you laughs out loud, you are more prone to join in the laughter. In a movie theater, a scene might get you laughing so hard that you almost pee in your pants. But that same scene when viewed alone at home streamed on TV will leave you silent and dry.

Reading is an equally solitary act. In response to something funny, you might chuckle inwardly and silently, but never aloud. Yet someone nearby who can hear you just might provoke you to verbalize your appreciation by a guffaw or two. So I recommend that you read aloud some chapters of either book to your friends or family. Their LOL's will get you, too, roaring in laughter. — M.M.B.



Classic Soul Albums

The Dictionary of Soul
Otis Redding (Volt, 1966)

By Dean Farrell

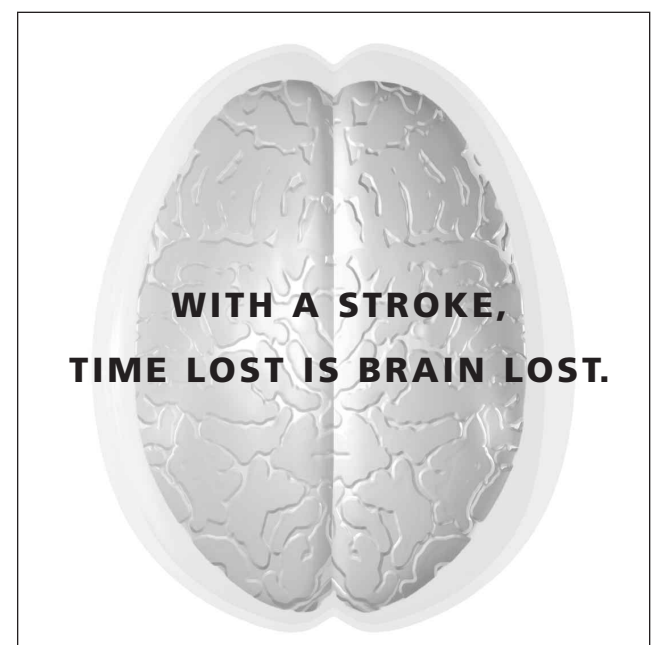
Late one night, a phone call jolted Phil Walden (Otis Redding's manager) out of a sound sleep. It was Redding, who asked, "You know that song you've been on my ass about recording, 'Try a Little Tenderness'? Well, I did it. It's a new song now." Truly one of the great understatements.

The track begins slowly and tentatively, as if Redding is uncertain of where to take it. But as the bridge gives way to the final verse, the tempo shifts into high gear. Al Jackson's drumming keeps the pace as the Memphis Horns bolster Redding's testifying, almost scatted, coda. Then the record ends. Otis Redding has, indeed, made a 33-year-old pop snoozer into something new and unique.

Redding was a versatile singer who could infuse damned near anything with soul. On *Dictionary*, he tackles the Beatles' "Day Tripper" and the country standard, "Tennessee Waltz." While these re-castings are not as revolutionary as "Try a Little Tenderness," they proudly bear the Redding imprint and can even make the listener forget (at least for their respective running times) any other versions.

Redding either wrote or co-wrote seven of these twelve songs, including the profoundly nonsensical "Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa-Fa (Sad Song)," the gritty "I'm Sick Y'all" and "Sweet Lorene," the gorgeous "Lover's Prayer," the ecstatic "Ton of Joy," and the down-home blues of "Hawg for You." The deepest track on the album is Redding's re-do of Chuck Willis' "You're Still My Baby," an R&B torch song that takes a leisurely (for the time) four minutes to play out.

Otis Redding made several fine albums in his short lifetime, but *The Dictionary of Soul* is my favorite for the sheer diversity of its material.



the Neighbors paper
black and white
and read all over!!!

No.1 Planet Press

News, Articles, and Opinions Impacting Our Planet

Issue 1
January / February / 2024
!!!Happy New Year!!!

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The Planet Press Mission



We're Looking For Stories!



We are dedicated to fostering a resilient and informed community by delivering timely, accurate, and engaging environmental news. Driven by the belief that a well-informed community is a powerful force for positive change, our mission is to illuminate the environmental news and issues that impact Northeastern Connecticut. We are committed to providing a platform for diverse voices. Together with our readers, we aspire to create a community united in its dedication to preserving the natural beauty of Connecticut, ensuring that our region remains a vibrant and resilient place for generations to come.



Submit your stories or questions here:
the.planet.press.contact@gmail.com



Where Is All The Snow? This Winter's Forecast

Connecticut is in a snow drought. I am in shock every time I step outside and feel the air. Many major Northeast cities last experienced plowable snow almost two years ago now. Could it finally come to an end this winter? Where is all the snow?

A snow drought does not mean zero snowfall. This season, snowflakes fell across the Northeast, but with minimal accumulation. Boston is an exception to the drought; the city saw 0.2 of an inch of snowfall so far this season. Boston leads the way among all major cities along the Interstate 95 corridor.

Here in Connecticut, this winter season has just been flurries here and there. We haven't seen an above-average snowfall for six years (2017-2018).

El Niño vs La Niña

The standard answer for the forecast is the jet stream pattern differences called El Niño and La Niña.

El Niño is a climatic occurrence characterized by elevated sea surface temperatures and atmospheric changes, representing the warm phase of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation. This phase in the Pacific Ocean marks the starting point for most seasonal outlooks, it can have an impact on weather patterns worldwide.

This season, the strong trade winds that blow westward across the equator and upwell cool water have weakened. The result is water over the eastern Pacific warming for several months, placing us firmly in El Niño.

So what does this mean? During an El Niño winter, a dynamic sub-tropical or Pacific jet stream becomes active, potentially leading to increased storm activity along the East Coast. During El Niño winters in the Hartford area, there is generally a below-average snowfall.

However, the El Niño of this year might not unfold in the typical manner of a robust one. Sea surface temperatures are elevated across a significant portion of the Pacific, extending beyond just the vicinity of the equator. This diminishes the contrast between the El Niño region and the rest of the basin.

The MEI index, which considers both oceanic and atmospheric variables to gauge the intensity of El Niño, is registering lower values. This implies that the impact of El Niño on the weather pattern may not be as pronounced as usual. Therefore, it is crucial to consider additional factors as well.

North Atlantic Oscillation

When the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) exhibits a negative phase, it leads to the blockage of the jet stream over the North Atlantic and Greenland. Consequently, a dip forms in the jet stream over the eastern United States, causing storms to decelerate and occasionally giving rise to significant snowstorms in this region.

During most winters, the NAO alternates between negative and positive phases, typically resulting in milder weather in our region. Predicting these shifts can be challenging, often requiring advanced notice of a couple of weeks.

Since July, the trend has predominantly been negative. In contrast, last winter saw a positive phase, shielding us from significant snowstorms. This shift could contribute to a few more substantial storms this winter.

The Polar Vortex

A positive correlation exists between the extent of cold and snow in Siberia during October and the winter conditions in the eastern United States. An increase in cold days and snowfall in October weakens the polar vortex, making it more probable for cold air to disperse and move southward to impact our region.

Siberia experienced relatively low snow cover for a significant portion of October, although there was a slight increase towards the end of the month. This pattern indicates a likelihood of a stronger polar vortex throughout the winter, potentially leading to fewer episodes of severe cold outbreaks.

The Forecast

Anticipate a gradual onset of winter, characterized by above-average temperatures in December and January. However, this doesn't imply consistent warmth throughout; instead, intermittent cold spells are expected between periods of milder weather.

February is the critical month to monitor for temperatures below the seasonal average, with an increased likelihood of cold air extending southward.

We anticipate snowfall amounts to hover around the average mark. This may be significant, especially in coastal areas where there was minimal snowfall last year.

Bald Eagle Nesting Season Approaches

The time is drawing near when the skies of Connecticut will soon welcome the presence of one of America's most iconic symbols. During the colder months, residents can observe the birds as they prepare for the hatching of their eaglets.

Bald Eagles begin building their nests from the middle of January through the middle of March.

The laying of eggs occurs from mid-February to mid-March, with incubation from mid-February to mid-April. The hatching of the eggs happens in March and April.

The nesting period extends from January to July, with fledging young departing the nest by mid-summer.

Loud noises can prompt chicks to leave the nest before they are old enough to fly. Please resist the temptation to approach the birds. Disturbing them will startle the eagles and lead to embryo mortality. Engaging in such behavior could also result in local and federal penalties.

Population

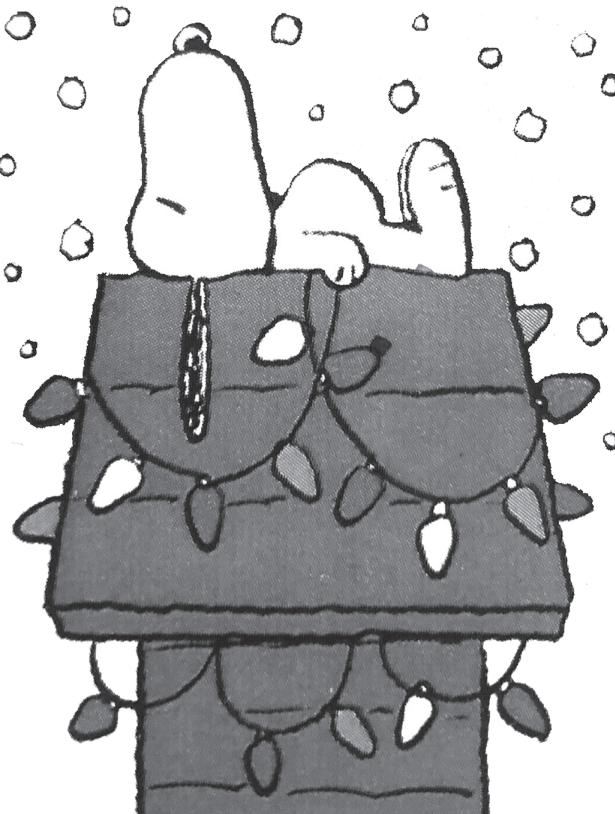
In the late 1970s, bald eagles were included in the nation's first endangered species list. The extensive use of the pesticide DDT posed a particular hazard to eagles during this period. As DDT made its way up the food chain, affecting insects, fish, and other prey of bald eagles, the toxin resulted in female bald eagles laying eggs that were too fragile to endure.

Over the past few decades, there has been a resurgence in the bird population. In 1999, Connecticut had only two active nesting territories, and no chicks were born that year, as reported by DEEP.

In 2015, five years following the official removal of bald eagles from the nation's list of threatened and endangered species, Connecticut wildlife authorities documented 30 bald eagle nests.

As of today, DEEP has identified approximately 75 nests sustaining a population ranging from 150 to 200 bald eagles.

The Wildlife Division participates in a midwinter eagle survey in January for the United States Geological Survey. Volunteers are always welcome to help in this effort.



Talks On The Path To No Gas Cars By 2035

In late November, Governor Lamont and Democratic legislative leaders acknowledged they did not effectively present their case for the gradual elimination of new gasoline-powered vehicle sales by 2035. During this talk, they committed to promptly identifying an alternative approach.

This defense was notably absent in October and November, a period during which Republicans campaigned against the goal, citing bureaucratic overreach.

House Speaker Matt Ritter, D—Hartford, said he arranged a caucus for the House Democratic majority in early December. This suggests legislative leaders are considering passing a zero-emissions bill (the specifics of which are yet to be defined) in a special session before the General Assembly resumes its annual session in February.

According to Ritter, Connecticut’s dedication to the 2035 deadline should persist, contingent upon ensuring residents that the transition away from gasoline-powered vehicles is both feasible and economically sustainable for consumers.

The attendance of key legislative leaders aimed to affirm that Connecticut is steadfast in its commitment to the updated

“Connecticut has some of the worst air quality in the country, and our kids in our vulnerable communities, especially environmental justice communities living near highways, industrial zones, are disproportionately experiencing asthma and respiratory illness, disruptive lives, and high medical bills”

- Katie Dykes

clean-air standards established by California and endorsed by New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and other states.

This commitment persists despite the inability to implement the required regulations for Connecticut to formally align with these standards. Each state faces a choice between adhering to the California standards or those established by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA has established a less ambitious timeline for the gradual phase-out of gas-powered cars.

In 2020, the administration embraced an ‘electric vehicle roadmap,’ followed by a strategy to enhance the accessibility of charging stations in 2022. Additionally, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority has initiated a docket on grid modernization.

Lamont Allocates \$10.7M for Low-Income Energy Efficiency Upgrades

Governor Ned Lamont has declared the allocation of \$10.7 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funds to support Connecticut’s energy efficiency programs. These initiatives aim to offer state residents weatherization, energy retrofits, and rebates.

The federal program ARPA, designed to offer relief to those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, will allocate \$7 million, while the remaining \$3.7 million will come from RGGI program revenues. ARPA funds will focus on enhancing energy efficiency in the residences of eligible individuals, with an emphasis on multifamily projects that adhere to prevailing wage standards.

Efficiency programs overseen by Connecticut’s utility providers, guided by the Conservation and Load Management (C&LM) Plan from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), have proven effective in lowering energy expenses for consumers in the state and curbing greenhouse gas emissions. The RGGI funds will sustain the progress of the C&LM plan’s successful residential programs.

One of the state’s energy efficiency initiatives, Home Energy Solutions (HES), offers home energy audits and essential weatherization measures, including air and duct sealing.

“We need creative solutions to improve energy affordability in Connecticut, we’ve previously used RGGI funds to support these very effective energy efficiency programs. The use of the ARPA funds in this way is new, and it aligns with the core purpose of the federal program, and adds workforce, climate, and air quality benefits. The energy efficiency programs provide attractive, reliable work opportunities for Connecticut’s clean energy workforce”

- Governor Lamont

Income-eligible customers may qualify for a no-cost energy assessment through this program. The growing popularity of these initiatives is evident, with household energy assessments rising by over 80% in the last five years.

Beyond allocating ARPA and RGGI funds, DEEP is pursuing approval to enhance assistance to the state’s energy efficiency programs by utilizing contract termination fees. The recent conclusion of the Park City Wind contract necessitated a \$16 million penalty from the project developer. DEEP and the Office of Consumer Counsel are urging the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to reassess its previous decision and allocate the termination fee funds to Connecticut’s energy efficiency programs, delivering a direct advantage to residents and small businesses in the state.

Recent Methane Talks

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, approximately 30 times more effective than carbon dioxide in trapping heat in the atmosphere. Human activities contribute to about 60 percent of global methane emissions, constituting a quarter of all warming.

Unlike carbon dioxide, methane has a shorter atmospheric lifespan, making the reduction of human-induced methane emissions one of the quickest methods to mitigate the planet’s warming rate.

There is economic merit in utilizing methane as a fuel, creating a financial motivation to capture and combust it instead of allowing it to dissipate.

Over 150 countries have presently endorsed the Global Methane Pledge, obligating them to reduce methane emissions from human sources by 30 percent compared to 2020 levels by the decade’s end. Achieving this goal has the potential to prevent 0.2 degrees Celsius of warming by 2050 (equivalent to 0.36 degrees Fahrenheit).

During COP28, various nations, including the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Egypt, outlined their strategies for achieving their targets. Additionally, countries declared the allocation of over \$1 billion in new grant funding aimed at facilitating the reduction of methane emissions.

Ranked third globally in methane emissions after China and Russia, the United States has introduced fresh regulations targeting the oil and gas sector.

Recently confirmed by the Environmental Protection Agency during the conference, these regulations are expected to prevent 58 million tons of methane pollution from 2024 to



2038. The mandate also mandates equipment enhancements and routine inspections of pollution control systems.

The regulation even won praise from an oil company: “We appreciate the collaborative way EPA, NGOs, and industry worked together on this rulemaking,” BP America president Orlando Alvarez said in a statement. “In the spirit of COP28, input from a broad range of stakeholders makes for more durable and effective policies.”

At COP this year, several businesses pledged to reduce their methane emissions. As part of the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter, 50 companies representing 40 percent of global oil production have committed to eliminating their methane emissions by 2050, along with a pledge to cease flaring by 2030.


However, the majority of the actions that have been announced do not address the most significant contributor to methane pollution: our dietary choices.

Soil cultivation, crop planting, fertilizer use, livestock management, manure handling, harvesting, transportation, waste disposal, and food systems contribute to 34 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. Livestock raised for food production contributes to 32 percent of methane emissions caused by human activities.





FERDINAND'S FLOWER PATCH


JANUARY / FEBRUARY





Snow Drop
An early spring flower native to Europe. It blooms as early as January.



Alstroemeria
A beautiful Valentine's Day flower native to South America.



- FERDINAND -
THE CAT



THE PACKING HOUSE

1870

HISTORIC VENUE FOR PERFORMANCE & EVENTS



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

January 2024 Performance

13th



TWICE AROUND
FOLK/INDIE

20th



Apostates, PA
By Sarah Moon

SARAH MOON
AIR-PLAYWRIGHT

27th



KALA FARNHAM & JENNA NICHOLLS
FOLK/INDIE

February 2024 Performance

10th



CHRIS SMITHER
FOLK

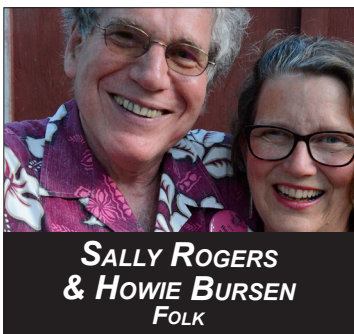
24th



THE HALL MONITORS
JAZZ

March 2024 Performance

2nd



SALLY ROGERS & HOWIE BURDEN
FOLK

16th



JACQUI NAYLOR
JAZZ

23rd



JULIA AUTUMN FORD
WITH JEFFREY HOWARD
INDIE

April 2024 Performance

6th



MAD AGNUS
FOLK

13th



PATTY TUITE BAND
JAZZ/BLUES

19th



MAURA GEIST
SPIRITUAL MEDIUM

27th



CHERYL WHEELER & KENNY WHITE
FOLK

Recurring Monthly Events

"TALENT SHOWCASE"



2nd Wednesday

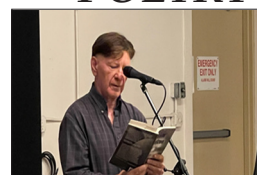
7:00 - 10:00pm
Call to Schedule: 518.791.9474

"EC-CHAP FILM SERIES"

Curated by WECS "Musical Myriad" Host, Arthur Rovozzo

January 19: "Don't Look Back" - Bob Dylan
February 2: "A Bigger Bang Tour" (Brazil) - Rolling Stones
March 1: "Stevie Ray Vaughn and Friends"
March 22: "Jamming the Blues with Eric Clapton"
April 12: "British Invasion"

"THE PACKING HOUSE POETRY SERIES"



3rd Thursday

6:30 - 8:30pm
Sign-In at the Door