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in Puerto Rico?

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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 10 - NO. 27

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 5, 2012



## Big Changes at Sirum Equipment

JOSEPH A. PARZYCH PHOTO

Dwayne Sirum (left) and Doug Rehor, CEO of McCormick USA pose in front of a McCormick MTX 141 horsepower farm tractor at Sirum's open house. In comparison, the popular 8N Ford farm tractor was only 18 horsepower.

**BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH**  
MONTAGUE - Sirum's annual open house was again a huge success, with folks flocking in like the sparrows to Capistrano.

The same generous spread of food greeted them, but this year they were also greeted by the C.E.O. of McCormick USA, who shook the hand of every person as they came through the line.

The familiar green of John Deere at Sirum Equipment Company in Montague is being replaced by the red of McCormick, an old name in farm equipment dating back to 1831, when Cyrus McCormick success-

fully perfected a mechanical harvester. He perfected the harvester that his father had developed to replace reaping cradles. Heavy hand-held cradles, used to harvest grain, were slow, cumbersome and tiring to use.

McCormick's first primitive harvester did the work of five men. He made many improvements to create the most successful combine on the market.

In McCormick's first demonstration, the farmer chose his worst field, an uneven lot littered with stones and holes. McCormick's invention successfully harvested the grain despite

all obstacles. Rather than doom the demonstration to failure, the harvester's rousing success impressed the skeptical crowd who had come to witness the reaper's flop.

Family owned and operated, the Sirum Equipment Company will, no doubt, overcome the obstacle of having their John Deere franchise terminated in June. Despite Sirum's remarkable success and solid reputation, John Deere seems to have other priorities, which can only mean inconvenience for farmers.

Doug Rehor, CEO of  
see **SIRUM** page 12

## THE "ARAB SPRING" IN SYRIA



DETMOLD PHOTO

Ed Hines mesmerized the crowd with his guitar-oud before Robert Haddad delivered an incisive analysis of the Syrian uprising at the Wendell Library.

**WENDELL** - Smith College Professor Emeritus of History Robert Haddad delivered the following speech at the Wendell Free Library on Wednesday, March 28th, to a crowd of about two dozen:

"Let me begin by emphasizing an important difference between the Syrian and other manifestations of the 'Arab Spring.'

"The 'Arab Spring' was initiated by Tunisia where virtually everyone adheres to the Sunni creed, the majority expression of Islam. Then came Egypt where Sunni Muslims comprise some 90% of the population. Libya, whose population is virtually entirely Sunni rose next. The gov-

ernments in all three countries were controlled by Sunni Muslims of varying degrees of personal piety but not advocates of Islamic polity.

"If revolution in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya had a sectarian cast, it was only to assert Islam against regimes deemed by many, though hardly all, as insufficiently Islamic. Removal of a minority regime was not at issue.

"In sharp contrast, revolution in the Persian Gulf kingdom of Bahrain pitted the majority Shi'i population against the minority Sunni regime. The 'Arab Spring' has still to effect change in Bahrain, though the game is not

see **SYRIA** page 9

## Fran Hemond, Local Treasure

**BY JANEL NOCKLEBY**  
MONTAGUE CENTER For ten years, Fran Hemond has been delighting Montague Reporter readers with her vivid accounts of scenes from Cold Brook Farm in Montague Center. Among her many observations, she answers the questions, "who has breakfast with me?" at the bird feeder and "who is paddling about on the pond?"

Hemond says, "I write and eat breakfast in front of the window. Just the birds and I."

A wide variety of birds have landed at Cold Brook Farm over the years to attend Hemond's "Breakfast Club." Her favorite memory is of

when a bald eagle flew in and perched on a big oak tree at the farm.

"He was nice and still on the branch for five minutes. He was the greatest thing that has been by," she said.

Hemond also hosts bird conventions at the pond during the late summer migration season. One year a couple of Canadian geese played the role of security guards to make sure people didn't interrupt the particularly spectacular variety of waterfowl.

Many of the birds became so familiar, Hemond gave them names. After a while, they began to feel like members of the family to our readers, too.

Hemond also writes of the history of her home. Cold Brook Farm off of Greenfield Road was perhaps the first place in Montague Center with electricity because of a

small hydro dam installed at the spillway of the pond.

"My father was born here in 1865, which is why I came here," she explained. Hemond moved to Montague Center to settle down nearly 20 years ago after moving about Massachusetts and Connecticut during her earlier years.

The cider mill at Cold Brook Farm was well known across the Valley back in the day, with long lines of horse drawn wagons filled with apples waiting for the press queued up in the winding driveway to the farm, recalled Montague Reporter editor David Detmold, citing one of Hemond's articles.

A ferry slip used to be a point of departure for Deerfield at one end of the farm road.

And, with all of those open farm fields, Cold see **HEMOND** page 12

## Doug Dawson Creates Instant Cult Classic

WENDELL RESIDENTS FLOCK TO FILM IN DELIGHTED DROVES



DOUGLAS DAWSON STILL

Adam Anderson (L) and Rob Tarbox as "Rival Scrappers" in Doug Dawson's cult classic.

**BY J.C. PRODUCT** - There was graveside parking only at the Wendell Free Library's world premier of Doug Dawson's short film, *Donna and Alia Go Scrapping*, on Sunday, March 25th.

Dawson introduced the film by admitting he had only scripted the first scene, and added happily

that with actors capable enough to design their own roles, he was more of a director and consultant than a writer and director. With that responsibility escape hatch in place, Dawson started the reel (okay, it was a computer), dimmed the lights and we were off...

...Or so we thought. It is

a brave director who leaves blank a screen, and that is precisely what Dawson did. While Wendell rapper Jesse Davis delivered a hot original tune, the audience looked nervously about, even glancing over at the director's booth to see if he'd noticed the screen was dark. He ignored us and sat see **CLASSIC** page 16



## PET OF THE WEEK

### Out of the Shadows, Into Your Lap



### Shadow Kitty

I'm Shadow Kitty. I'm a 13-year-old female cat in need of a home. Would you like a quiet, lovable and affectionate companion? Then please come see me! I'm an indoor only kitty who likes to chase flashlights. I'm a bit shy with visitors and will hide when they come but after a while I'll come out to say hello. I would prefer to be your only pet. I've never lived with dogs and I don't really appreciate the presence of other cats. If you're looking for a snugglebug I'm your gal! For more information on adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or email: info@dpvhs.org.

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## THE FRANKLIN COUNTY SPRING PARADE

The second annual parade will be held in Turners Falls on Saturday, April 14th, 2012 (Rain/Snow date April 21st).

Organized by the same people who organized the Franklin County Fair Parade and Pumpkinfest.

The first annual parade was held last year. 700 people marched in the parade and over 4,000 people came out to watch!

The parade will make a three-mile loop, beginning at 1:00 p.m. at Sheffield School

on Crocker Avenue. It will take a left onto Montague Street, travel to the end, and turn left onto Turnpike Road. The parade will go past the Turners Falls High School, and take a left onto Millers Falls Road. At Scotty's Convenience Store, the parade will turn left onto High Street and end back at Sheffield.

This event is sponsored in part by the Montague Cultural Council, a part of the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

## LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS

### Pizza and Poetry

Have pizza with family and friends surrounded by fantastic photos of new trails in East Leverett. Janine Roberts, Leverett author and poet, will lead a workshop in writing nature poems.

### Happy Birthday Joey!



*A hardworking construction man who has since taken up photography and videography. (His photos have been published in the Montague Reporter among other places.) His birthday was April 1st and that's no April fool joke.*

This program is sponsored by the Leverett Trails Committee and supported by a Leverett Cultural Council grant.

The event will be held on Tuesday, April 10th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Leverett Library. For more info email: janine@educ.umass.edu.

## STREET SWEEPING in GILL

The Gill highway department will begin street sweeping in Gill on Monday, April 9th.

The J.W. Cotton company from Hatfield has contracted with the town to do the job in residential neighborhoods, beginning with Riverside. Town administrative assistant Ray Purington said it is likely the company will work from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and complete the work by the end of the week.

Call the highway department for more information, at 413-863-2324.

## SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – April 2nd to 6th

**GILL-MONTAGUE** - Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Kerry Togneri is the meal site manager. Council on Aging director is Roberta Potter. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. For information, meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call 413-863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine if the center is not open.

### Monday, April 2nd

10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle

### Tuesday, April 3rd

10:30 a.m. Seated Health Program

12:45 p.m. COA Meeting  
1:00 p.m. RAD Class

### Wednesday, April 4th

10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
12:45 p.m. Bingo

### Thursday, April 5th

NO Tai Chi  
10:30 a.m. Brown Bag  
1:00 p.m. Pitch

### Friday, April 6th

10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1:00 p.m. Writing Group

**ERVING** Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For Center and program information, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at 413-423-3649. Lunch is daily at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 24 hours in advance. Call Mealsite Manager Rebecca Meuse at 413-423-3308, for meal information and reservations. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Please call the Senior Center to confirm activities, schedule a ride and to find out when the next blood pressure clinic will be held.

The Erving Council on Aging will host a conflict-resolution workshop. The classes will be led by Mediator and Trainer, Mari Rovang and will occur for four consecutive Tuesday afternoons in April from 3:30 until 5 p.m. Call Polly for more information or to register.

### Monday, April 2nd

9:00 a.m. Tai Chi  
10:00 a.m. Osteo Exercise



The Our Lady of Czestochowa Bazaar on Saturday, March 31st was a blur of people as the pierogi and other food quickly sold out.

## WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

### Downloadable Books Training

Confused about how to add free books to your Kindle, Nook, Sony Reader, iPad, smart phone or other electronic reading device? Then this workshop is for you!

Learn how to browse, check out and download e-books and digital audiobooks from the free C/W Mars library network's digi-

tal catalog and the free OverDrive downloadable service. Bring your device if you have one. Please have it registered and ready to receive books.

This free workshop will be on Tuesday, April 10th at 4:00 p.m. at the Wendell Free Library. For details and to sign up, call the library at: 978-544-3559.

## WENDELL SENIOR CENTER NEWS

### Healing Arts for Seniors

Come to the first, free, healing arts session for seniors 65 and over at the Wendell senior center, Saturday, April 14th from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Elaine Reardon will offer polarity therapy - working with the body's electro-magnetic field, gentle touch helps to restore balance and energy flow.

Lori Mars will offer craniosacral therapy - involving the use of light touch to balance the central nervous system, this subtle body work can be profound.

Shelley Hines will offer Shiatsu - similar to acupuncture, but without needles, this tender

hands-on therapy works on the body's meridians (energy pathways).

These therapies facilitate the body's own ability to heal. Please wear loose comfortable clothing. To sign up, call Shelley Hines at 978-544-3082.

This is on a first call, first served basis, since sessions are limited.

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## Local Briefs

**COMPILED BY DON CLEGG** - The Greenfield **Dharma House** will host a benefit party at the Rendezvous, 78 3rd Street, in Turners Falls on Sunday, April 15th, to raise awareness and funds to help build a more diverse and inclusive community. The evening will feature the band of Dharma House co-founder Katie Sachs, and end with a dance party featuring DJ Loren Halman. Donations are welcomed. Nobody will be turned away.

**Dawn Marvin Ward**, nature educator, will provide a unique, hands-on program for children, Grade 3 and younger, and their families, to appeal to their interest in nature. Birds, Beasts and Bugs will be held on Saturdays, April 14, 21 and 28, at the Leverett Public Library, 85 Montague Road, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Put on your spring bonnet or spring ball cap and come on down to Greenfield Savings Bank at 282 Avenue A in Turners Falls on Friday, April 6th from 3-5 p.m. Your child will leave with a beautiful

glossy portrait generously provided by Chad Champoux, a local professional photographer, and Greenfield Savings Bank. Dancing in between the flowers will be the Easter Bunny, reservations are required in order to allow for time and will be taken on a first call, first serve basis at 413-863-4316. Happy Spring to all!

At 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 14th, two buses will be leaving the thriving metropolis of Wendell, heading for the noon **No Nukes** rally on the Brattleboro town common, in support of the state of Vermont's effort to shut down Vermont Yankee. There is still room on one bus, at \$10 a seat, so book yourself a round trip ticket today by calling Susan at 978-544-3758.

Polish up your dancing shoes and bring a friend out for an evening of delightfully accessible rock and roll. Longtime Valley favorites, **the Ray Mason Band** offers a reliably charming take on life and music, with clever wordplay and funky rhythm at the Wendell Full

Moon Coffeehouse.

The coffeehouse is located in old Town Hall at the center of Wendell, and offers a unique opportunity for music, fun and dance and always in support of a good cause. This month the non-profit Montague Reporter is the beneficiary, so y'all come out to enjoy the Valley's only Dessert-o-Rama in an affordable family-friendly venue on Saturday, April 14th. Open mic, part of the evening, begins at 7:30 p.m.

The **Winterberry Farm** lambs will be pleased to demonstrate frolicking on Easter afternoon, April 8th, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the farm. Young angora bunnies, chicks and ducklings will also greet visitors. The farm is located at 21 Teawaddle Hill Road in Leverett. Adult sheep, goats, ducks, geese and chickens will also be roaming around the farm. No fee is charged, but contributions for Right Sharing of World Resources will be gratefully accepted.

The Athol Bird & Nature Club's gift to the town of Athol in celebration of its 250th anniversary, is a program on the **The Quest for the Eastern Cougar** on Thursday, April 12th, at 7:30 p.m. in Athol town hall, 584 Main Street. The program features author Robert Tougias, who explores how officially extinct cougars can be sighted in southern New England.

Montague Congregational Church, 4 North Street, will hold a fundraising pancake breakfast to benefit **Relay for Life** on Sunday, April 15th, from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Enjoy a breakfast featuring three kinds of pancakes, homemade breakfast sausage patties, assorted beverages.

The monthly Great Falls Coffeehouse Series features the **Amanda Chorus** performing songs that celebrate our natural world, struggles for justice, rites of passage, and the strength of community. Amanda's songs are both rousing joyful and deeply meditative. The concert will be held in the Great Hall of the Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, in Turners on Friday, April 13th, with doors open at 6:30 p.m. The concert begins at 7:00.

Send local briefs to: [reporter-local@montaguema.net](mailto:reporter-local@montaguema.net).

## Unity Park Improvements Break Ground on Monday

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**TURNERS FALLS** - The Montague parks and recreation department announced with great fanfare this week that the long awaited groundbreaking for phase I of the Unity Park improvement project will begin on Monday, April 9th.

Phase I improvements will include a new playground, refurbished landscaping, and repaved parking near the field house, which will once again be the year-round home for the parks and recreation department.

However, parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz wants residents to be aware that construction at the park will be ongoing through June 30th, so park users should expect some disruption to their normal activities over the next three months.

Dobosz said, "We anticipate some areas of the park being inac-

cessible at certain portions of this phase. We ask for your patience during construction. Keep track of our progress on the Montague parks and recreation Facebook page. We will be posting construction pictures on a regular basis. We look forward to delivering a new and improved Unity Park to the community!"

Dobosz said it's tough to tell exactly when and which parts of the park will be closed during construction. The parking at the fieldhouse side of the park may be closed starting Monday, but there should still be plenty of room to park along 2nd Street and at the basketball end of the park. The new playground equipment will only arrive in some weeks, so the existing play structures will remain for a while longer.

Residents may call parks and recreation at 413-863-3216 for updates.



## MONTAGUE ENERGY CORNER

### Solarize Montague

BY SALLY PICK - It was still just an idea, but when the Montague energy committee posted an on-line survey to gauge community interest in low-cost solar electric systems, the community responded: 'Go for it!'

In just a few weeks, over two hundred Montague residents took the survey, and 222 of them expressed interest in finding out more about reduced pricing to buy solar electric (also called photovoltaic or PV) systems for their homes and businesses. Of them, 198 residents said that if the terms were favorable, they would install PV systems. As of this printing, 177 were willing to consider installing systems in a year.

One resident said, "This is just what I've been looking for!"

With this level of support, the town of Montague, together with energy committee volunteers, applied on March 21st for a program called Solarize Massachusetts, that would allow residents and businesses to install discounted PV systems.

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC),

which runs the Solarize Mass program, should let town officials know by early April if Montague has been chosen to be one of the ten towns across the state chosen to participate. If so, participants in Montague will have until August 31st of this year to sign up for more affordable PV through the Solarize program.

If Montague is selected, MassCEC will work with the town and the Solarize volunteer core team to help the town decide on a single solar installer that will offer an initial discount below the standard PV cost. Based on last year's pilot program, the installer would also offer additional discounts as the total amount of contracted PV systems in the town reaches certain levels, or tiers, dropping the price for installed systems even more for all participants.

The base cost of the PV systems would be reduced through the power of bulk purchasing and because the town Solarize volunteers market the program for the installer. Because the price would continue to drop as the total PV contracted under the Solarize pro-

see **SOLAR** pg 14



M. DENISE WALLENUS PHOTO

Leo Parent and Bob Wallenius caught some rays while reading the *Montague Reporter* in Vieques, P.R. last month. If you go someplace special and send us a photo of yourself reading the *Reporter*, we'll put you in Local Briefs, too.

So, bring along the paper while you get a suntan in Tahiti, and make the rest of our readers turn red with envy!

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Sarah Duprey - Intern

**Photography**  
Claudia Wells  
Joe Parzyoh

**Editorial Assistants**  
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Shira Hillel  
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**Circulation**  
Janel Nockleby

**Founded by**  
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Harry Brandt  
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**"The Voice of the Villages"**

## Are We Getting the Truth about Afghanistan?

BY DANA LIEBELSON

WASHINGTON, D.C. - When Lt. Colonel Daniel L. Davis returned from his second tour in Afghanistan, he knew that what he'd witnessed firsthand didn't match the rosy progress reports top military officials were giving Congress.

What Davis decided to do next could be called courageous or, perhaps, idealistic. The 17-year Army veteran put his career at risk by speaking out for what he felt was right — he publicly called out his superior officers on their assessments of the war.

Specifically, Davis alleged that top commanders had misled Congress and the public. He briefed four members of Congress on his version of events and sent reports he authored, one unclassified and the other classified, to the Department of Defense Inspector General.

Then, he took the extraordinary step of bringing his story to light. He did an interview with The New York Times and authored an op-ed for the Armed Forces Journal. His unclassified report was linked to by both Rolling Stone and the Times.

With all of this national coverage of Davis' report, which alleged that senior military officials have lied to Congress about conditions on the ground, you would think that Congress would be jumping at the opportunity to hold hearings. At least six members of Congress have come forward publicly supporting Davis, but no hearings have been scheduled.

It's incredible that Congress has virtually ignored Davis' allegations that Congress has been misled. You might expect that the Foreign Affairs, Armed Services, or Intelligence Committees would jump at the chance to hold hearings on Afghanistan and ask Davis to testify. But you'd be wrong.

Why should we listen to Davis? He's a soft-spoken, unassuming soldier who was described in one evaluation as someone whose "devotion to mission accomplishment is

unmatched by his peers." Davis also made the point that he is no "WikiLeaks Guy part II" — he has made a concerted effort to protect classified information.

"Entering this [most recent] deployment, I was sincerely hoping to learn that the claims were true: that conditions in Afghanistan were improving, that the local government and military were progressing towards self-sufficiency," Davis wrote in his op-ed. "Instead, I witnessed the absence of success on every level."

In Davis' 84-page unclassified report, he outlined the misconduct he perceived among senior officials in Afghanistan after interviewing a reported 250 soldiers — from low-ranking 19-year-old privates to division commanders. He alleged that the March 2011 congressional testimony by General David Petraeus on the surge in Afghanistan ranged from "misleading" to "completely inaccurate." Petraeus is now the director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Additionally, according to Davis, the "inaccurate assigning of the reason for the 2007 Iraq surge's success had profound implications for our current war in Afghanistan and doubly so for the surge forces ordered by the President in late 2009." One senior ground commander who led much of the U.S. fight in Anbar province told Davis that "75 to 80 percent of the credit" for the success in Iraq's surge lay elsewhere.

A bipartisan group of representatives sent a letter on February 14th urging House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to hold hearings on Davis' allegations because they are supported by the 2011 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Afghanistan. The 2011 NIE has not yet been declassified, but two members of Congress sent a letter to President Obama in February asking that he declassify it.

According to The New Yorker, which also called for the document's declassification:

## IN SYRIA



Target practice resumes in two hours.

KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

"[The NIE] is said to raise doubts about the authenticity and durability of the gains the military commanders believe they have made since Obama's troop surge began in 2009. The findings also raise questions about the administration's strategy for leaving behind a stable Afghanistan."

The lawmakers' letter is on target. If taxpayers are to get a full picture of what's happening on the ground, Obama needs to declassify the National Intelligence Estimate. Additionally, whistleblowers like Davis shouldn't be dismissed once the media fanfare has died down. His allegations should be seriously considered in congressional hearings. With the cost of the Afghanistan War climbing far past the Obama administration's estimate, the public deserves to hear the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but.

*Dana Liebelson is the Beth Daley Impact Fellow at the Project on Government Oversight. This article appeared in Other Words (OtherWords.org).*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Rally to Support Vermont

On Saturday, April 14th, from noon to 2:00 p.m., residents from throughout our tri-state region of Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire are being urged to attend a public rally on the town common in Brattleboro, VT, to voice our support for the efforts of Vermonters and their elected representatives to close and decommission the Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor. Vermont Yankee's original 40-year operating license expired on March 21st, and the state of Vermont has voted not to let the reactor continue operating beyond that date. Vermont Yankee's corporate owner, Entergy, is suing the state in federal court to keep the reactor running for 20 more years.

At the rally, the keynote speaker will be Vermont's U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders. Also speaking will be Vermont's Attorney General William Sorrell, as well as other key elected officials who have helped to make Vermont the first state in the country to exercise legal authority, on behalf of its people, to reject a license extension for a nuclear reactor

within its borders.

The rally will also feature live music by "Fenibo," the popular 12-piece "afro-beat" ensemble. (For more information about the rally, go to [www.safeandgreen-campaign.org](http://www.safeandgreen-campaign.org).)

This is a very important event. Vermont's leaders need to know that the people of the state and region stand behind them. This is our chance to show them, in person, that we appreciate all they're doing to resist the machinations of the multi-billion-dollar Entergy Corporation, Vermont Yankee's Louisiana-based owner, to undermine the democratically expressed will of Vermonters and their government in order to continue operating their aged, embrittled, leaking, accident-plagued reactor on the banks of our precious Connecticut River.

Please join us on the Brattleboro Common on April 14th! And please bring as many family members, neighbors, and friends as possible.

Thank you.

—Randy Kehler  
Colrain

**WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS!**

**Montague Reporter**

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[reporter@montaguema.net](mailto:reporter@montaguema.net)

**U.S. Casualties in Afghanistan as of 4/4/12**

Wounded:	Deaths:
15,332	1,924



DETMOLD PHOTO

Among the more than 50 area residents who turned out for a caucus of Western Massachusetts affinity groups for the SAGE Alliance on March 31st at the French King Restaurant were Joanna Frankel (l-r), Louis Battalen, (an unknown activist), Sally Shaw and Garret Schenck.

## Sign Me Up!

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# \*\*THE RAY MASON BAND SPRINGS UP AT THE WENDELL FULL MOON COFFEEHOUSE\*\*

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The Ray Mason Band, benefit for the Montague Reporter

## HAPPY 101ST BIRTHDAY TO MAE LAMBERT SZULBORSKI

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH  
GILL - Mae Lambert Szulborski is celebrating her 101st birthday on Friday, April 6th at the Poet's Seat Nursing Home. Volunteer



JOSEPH A. PARZYCH PHOTO

Mae Lambert Szulborski

Gladys Lyman called to invite me to speak on Tuesday in anticipation of Mae's birthday.

Lyman had been reading to the nursing home residents from my memoir, *Jep's Place*, and at the last session, by coincidence, Mae Lambert came rolling in just as she finished reading a section about Mae in my book. Mae had not been coming to the reading hour so it was a surprise for her to hear her name was being mentioned.

Prior to addressing the group on Tuesday, the director of activities, Zenaida, asked me to wait

in another room until everyone was assembled so it would be a surprise to have me walk in.

Mae recognized me immediately and held my hand as we sat side by side. It was nice to see a friend from the days when the roads were not yet paved and kids walked to a one room school that had no running water. Mae is a bit older than I am, but that didn't keep me from having a boyhood crush on her. And I still have a warm spot in my heart for her. She was friendly and had an infectious laugh, as she still does.

Everyone always liked Mae, except for one old skinflint who yelled at her when she approached him while collecting money after my father had a heart attack when our barn burned down.

Mae immediately recognized the farmhouse on the cover of *Jep's Place*. "That house was across a field from where I grew up," Mae said.

I worked for Mae's father on their farm during the summer and after school milking his cows. One day Mae came out to the barn to tell me that one of my favorite sisters, Emaline, had called to say she was back from Colorado and would soon be at our farm for a short visit. I had finished milking and thrown hay down from the hay loft to feed

the cows. When I hurried to distribute the hay, Mae said, "Go along; I'll finish feeding the cows."

She was still dressed in nice clothes from her job at Rist Insurance, but she took over feeding cows the hay, just the same. I never forgot her kindness.

Mae bought a nice new Model A Ford coupe. It was tan with a windshield tinted light brown. She had the car all dolled up with mud flaps, and a chrome grille. The holes in the grille were too big to keep bugs out, but it gave the car a classy look. A quail decorated the radiator cap. I guess that was because Model A's made a sound similar to a flushed quail fluttering away.

Mae's father, Fred, was a great guy. When I went to Mount Hermon School, I rode with him part way to wait at a gas station for a Mount Hermon employee to pick me up. Mr. Lambert never charged me. One morning, an ice storm kept his Packard from

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## & MORE LETTERS

### Praise for Ferry Meadow Farm

I've really been enjoying the work of serialized fiction "Ferry Meadow Farm" by Eloise Michael that has been running in the Montague Reporter for the past several months. Thank you for printing local fiction in the old-school newspaper style.

Every week, when the paper arrives at my house, the next installment is the first thing I read before flipping through the rest of the news. The story combines dystopian futuristic sci-fi, suspense, romance and economic activism.

The idea of having a body double that allows you to be awake and well-rested 24 hours per day explores an alluring fantasy for today's pressure-cooker go-go-go world. When it's all done, I wonder if the author could make the entire story available for late comers to check out.

I look forward to seeing how Michael will tie it all up!

—Shira Hillel  
Greenfield

### Looks Forward to Every Issue

I have been a subscriber for several years although I am not a citizen of the towns represented by your paper.

The Montague Reporter covers so many important issues of our area in depth, and with understanding.

Your writers and reporters serve a real need for our area

towns and offer a clear perspective of current affairs and topics that are never covered anywhere else.

I look forward to the next issue every week.

—Helen Gorzocski  
Northfield

making a steep hill. He sent me back to his farm to get his Ford 9N farm tractor to pull his car up the hill. He told me to have his wife call riders to let them know he'd be late. I could only think about driving his tractor and forgot all about the call.

"You've got a mind like a tom cat," Lambert said in disgust. I

never forgot that, either.

I don't know how Mae made it to work that day over the ice covered roads, but Model A Fords were agile under any road condition. There was a saying that a Model A could climb a tree if you put chains on it, which wasn't far from the truth.

Happy birthday, Mae!

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**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD****Wendell Signs Seaboard Solar Contract**

BY JONATHAN  
von RANSON

**WENDELL** - At a special meeting on Wednesday, April 4th, the Wendell selectboard voted 2-1 to sign a contract with Seaboard Solar, of Danbury, CT which will allow Wendell to enjoy financial benefits of hosting solar photovoltaic arrays that will likely be located outside town borders, in an area to the east of Wendell where demand is higher.

The arrangement is made possible by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities' municipal net metering program.

On March 28th, the Wendell energy committee had continued to engage the selectboard on what they perceived as flaws and shortcomings in two separate drafts of the time-pressured solar energy contract.

The board had initially bypassed the energy committee while considering the deal, for which Wendell would receive \$40,000 - 60,000 a year for no visible investment.

The energy committee had pointed out that the contract promised flat net metering credits to the town for the electricity to be generated, and suggested these credits be indexed to the cost of power, which will presumably rise.

Energy committee members also discovered that the draft included no performance date by which Wendell would begin to see benefits. Finally, the committee recommended the town hold onto 3.3 megawatts of the town's maximum allotted ten megawatts of state energy credits, for use in other possible energy projects, seeing them as a hidden value in the transaction.

But a second draft, returned for the March

28th meeting, still essentially allowed Seaboard to control all ten megawatts, although the company only has leases in place for enough surface to install 6,679 megawatts worth of solar panels. Under the wording, any smaller-size project would hinge entirely on Seaboard's ability to find other sponsors for the extra 3.3 MW the town was thinking of retaining.

As energy committee chair Nan Riebschlaeger observed, "It didn't give them any incentive to (relinquish the credits)."

The revised contract did specify that if the project isn't up and running by a date certain, Seaboard will start to pay Wendell. (That performance date was entered as March 20th, 2013, but Seaboard's principal, Dave Thomas, asked the selectboard if it could be moved forward to the following December 20th.) The draft did contain an indexed payment figure for the net metering credits, so what Wendell receives from that accounting category will follow the price of electricity.

The proposal is part of a "scramble," as Thomas put it, among entrepreneurs and developers to capitalize on the state's new alternative energy incentives and quotas, based on renewable energy credits assigned to municipalities. At the meeting, Thomas repeatedly stressed the need for hurry, explaining that the assignments are limited and go to those who get their projects up and running first. He added that the whole program may be extended, in which case the apparent rush will have been unnecessary.

Dave Arsenault, a Wendell Depot Road resident who had been in negotiations with

Seaboard for a separate solar project on his own land, attended the meeting and warned, "He (Thomas) was the first to come with his offer. It'd be a good idea to check with others. They, maybe, have a better offer."

Arsenault said he had broken off his own negotiations with Thomas after finding a better offer.

Only two members of the selectboard, Heard and Geoffrey Pooser, were present on the 28th. Dan Keller was absent, but had left a letter praising Thomas' cooperation and urging that the Seaboard contract be signed, in full, at the special meeting on April 4th. Heard also said at one point her "inclination is to do the whole 10 (MW)." Pooser, too, said he was inclined to assign Seaboard the whole 10 MW.

But Pooser eventually voted against the contract, dissatisfied with the procedure by which the three extra credit megawatts would be assigned through Seaboard.

Following Wednesday's vote, Keller said, "The selectboard felt there were plenty of opportunities for other companies to get involved at other levels without interfering with this opportunity with Seaboard Solar."

In other matters, the selectboard discussed the idea of putting an article about the Community Preservation Act on the warrant of the annual town meeting. The CPA would have to also be ratified by a townwide referendum vote, but, "It's better to do it at town meeting first," Heard said. "It allows discussion."

However the grassroots committee of local citizens working to advance the CPA proposal in Wendell, meeting elsewhere the same night, see **WENDELL** pg 13

**NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SCHOOL COMMITTEE****School Choice Debate Continues**

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Farshid Hajir, chair of the Leverett school committee, gave an overview of highlights from Monday, April 2nd in a phone interview following that meeting.

Hajir said the main topic at that meeting was a discussion on the merits of continuing the Leverett Elementary School's school choice program.

Leverett Elementary allows a quota of school choice students from surrounding towns and districts to fill any seats left open by Leverett students, to a combined maximum of 15 students in K-3 classrooms, or 18 in grades 4-6.

At the present time, Leverett Elementary has 22 school choice students out of a total population of 147. Five school choice students will be graduating from the sixth grade this year; next year, when the double fifth grade reaches graduating age, ten more school choice students will be in the graduating class.

Each school choice student brings \$5,000 in state aid with them from the sending school district. Leverett has used the state aid that attaches to school choice students as a kind of revolving fund to supplement program needs in the middle of fiscal years, and to offset increases in the school's annual operating budgets.

But over the last two years, the school committee has engaged in a lively debate about the moral dimension of accepting school choice students; with school committee member Kip Fonsh comparing school choice funds to an addictive drug that should be shunned.

On Monday, Hajir said, "Kip Fonsh made his usual very strong arguments against school choice. In particular, the same argument we make against charter schools taking money away from our district applies with school

choice [taking money away from neighboring districts], just the amounts are different."

The topic was raised when principal Ann Ross notified the school committee of five open seats, with six potential school choice applicants for them, in next year's incoming class of ten Leverett kindergartners.

The school committee voted three in favor of opening five kindergarten seats to school choice (Hajir, Pam Stone, and Dawn Sacks) to one against (Fonsh), with one abstention (Sarah Dolven).

However, the committee will vote again on the issue at their May meeting, when a decision will be taken as to whether Leverett Elementary will remain open to school choice students in general. Hajir said he hopes to continue a dialogue with the selectboard prior to this meeting, to determine if a consensus can be reached on this issue to inform the school committee's debate.

Hajir stressed that even if the committee were to decide not to allow future school choice students to enter LES, such a decision would not affect the school choice students currently enrolled there.

He noted that some school committee members saw school choice as a positive thing for the school committee for reasons other than financial ones. "School choice kids enrich our school by increasing the number of kids and the diversity of kids we have."

Hajir said he had been on the fence in Monday's vote, but chose to support opening the kindergarten seats to school choice because the committee and the selectboard had not had time to prepare, on a policy or budgetary level, for the loss of school choice funds that would result from a negative vote.

"The vote was a lot closer

than it appeared," said Hajir. "We wanted to send a message to the selectboard and the town that we may wish to move away from school choice."

Pam Stone is completing her three year term on the school committee this month. Hajir urged interested residents who might be willing to serve on the school committee to come to a candidate's night at the Leverett town hall at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 24th, or simply raise their hand at the annual town meeting on April 28th, when nominations are called for.

Hajir said, "The other big news from the meeting is that we now have Pre-K, kindergarten and first grade teachers all retiring by the summer. We will be conducting searches for the entire early grade teaching staff. These teachers have been in our school for decades. Given the size of our school, this is an historic shift; we hope to hire faculty who will be here for decades."

On Monday, the committee unanimously endorsed a new hiring policy and protocols, which give more power to the principal in future hiring decisions. In the past, the principal had forwarded the top candidates for a position to the superintendent for a final decision. Under the new policy, which was drafted with input from administrators, Hajir said the principal will forward only the top pick from the search committee for the superintendent's review and approval.

"In Leverett, community participation in hiring teachers is valued, and I think we've instituted policy and protocols that will honor that," Hajir said.

The search committee for new teachers will include Ross, two teachers, and two parents. Interested parents should contact the principal's office.

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**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

# Plenty of Interest in Former Senior Center

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** The toss up over who gets to move into the former home of the Erving senior center got a new contestant this week, when Roseann Martoccia, executive director of the Franklin County Home Care Corporation, dropped by Erving to inspect the space.

Martoccia is looking to find a more central location to install propane ovens, sinks, coolers and refrigerators to heat meals prior to delivery for FCHCC's Meals on Wheels program. Orange, where FCHCC currently heats up the precooked meals, is too far to the east to conveniently serve all the clients of that popular program, Martoccia told town administrator Tom Sharp this week.

But the first floor of the former elementary school on Pleasant Street in Erving, which the Erving senior center vacated in December when they moved to their new 1750-square-foot quarters off of Northfield Road, has more than one party interested in moving in.

The Erving Library, jammed into a small cinderblock building next door on Moore Street, is seeking funding from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners to renovate the first floor of the old elementary school to turn it into an inviting space for a new, expanded public library.

The town recreation department and the town emergency planning department have both expressed interest in occupying the space, in a bid to get out of their cramped closets in the basement of town hall.

But on Monday, selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin told the recreation commission, with emergency management director Luke Hartnett also present, "I'm in favor of not having the town own that building. There is a lot of history in that building. But we just built a brand new senior center. We're renting the top floor to Union 28. But it's another building to maintain."

Nonetheless, Goodwin proposed holding a hearing to get

residents' and town departments' ideas on what should be done with the old elementary school building.

After Goodwin thanked the recreation commission for stopping by, commission member Shawn Johnson quipped, "We'll be in our closet if you need us."

Erving Entertainment Center owner Erik Semb asked the board to consider waiving the building permit fee when he and his dad, Ralph Semb, put up a new convenience and package store, anchored by a Subway and a Dunkin Donuts, at the site of the former Countree Living Restaurant, across Semb Drive from the bowling alley. The younger Semb noted that their current establishment pays thousands in property taxes and contributes through lottery sales to town revenues as well.

The board expressed sympathy with Semb's request, and asked him to put it in writing.

Erving is seeking special legislation to allow a third package store license in town, since the two already allocated to Erving are already taken by the Pocket Saver in Erving Center and the Franklin Grocery in Erving.

## The Crooked Tap

The board signed an all alcohol license for the soon to be opened Crooked Tap, on Route 2 at the corner of North Street, in Erving Center.

Simone Cristofori, co-owner of the Crooked Tap with her husband, Michael Driscoll, said this week the couple hopes to get their new business up and running by the end of May, though that date may get pushed back by a few weeks.

"It's going to be a casual atmosphere, with an emphasis on comfort food," said Cristofori.

The Crooked Tap will serve from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., with sandwiches, soup, salads, and blackboard specials complemented by more than a half dozen brews on tap, wine, and the occasional Bloody Mary special, Cristofori said.

Relatives work at the

Berkshire Brewing Company, so look to see BBC among the featured beers on tap.

Sporting events will be on TV for customers to enjoy in a "comfy atmosphere," Cristofori added.

The couple moved to Erving recently from Northampton, and live above the commercial space, handsomely renovated by Jeff Dubay

## Department Reorganization

Moving forward with the reorganization of town departments and employees, Goodwin told the recreation commission he would like to see **ERVING** pg 14

# Austerity Budget or Mutual Aid?

## SWIFT RIVER SCHOOL ASSESSMENT AT ISSUE

**JONATHAN VON RANSON WENDELL** - New Salem, the town with which Wendell shares the Swift River Elementary School, faces a fiscal squeeze between unusual rising costs and Proposition 2½ taxation limits, with little perceived possibility of passing an override of Proposition 2½.

New Salem's dilemma is caused in part by a sudden increase of roughly \$95,000 in its Swift River assessment... caused in turn by the anomaly of Wendell sending ten fewer children to this small school than last year, and New Salem three more. (Simultaneously, Wendell's assessment declined by \$42,000.) According to New Salem

school committee representatives, the squeeze means some, though not all, of the shortfall would have to come out of the school budget and, they warn, educational programs would suffer.

As a result, New Salem's selectboard and finance committee have both suggested the Swift River school committee use the state's statutory method of assessing school costs - a method not used by the two towns since 2008. But this year, using the statutory method would make a positive difference for New Salem.

The Swift River school committee has resisted the pressure, see **SWIFT RIVER** page 8

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## Fervor from the Truth



**TURNERS FALLS** - "Fervor from the Truth: Spiritually Obsessive Works by Edite Cunha, Gina Vernava and Others" opens Thursday, April 5th at Nina's Nook, 125-A Avenue A, in Turners Falls.

Cunha and Vernava combine mosaic techniques with repurposed and recycled materials to create unique commentaries on their reli-

*Our Lady of Don't Push My Buttons*  
by Edite Cunha,  
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gious and spiritual cultural experiences.

Cunha's series of "AlterVirgins" are an "artistic response to my early Catholic upbringing combined with more recent spiritual explorations."

Vernava's pieces deal with "the absurdities of Spirituality. Some are humorous, all are political commentary due to my own personal opposition to the rise of the political Christian Right."

Pam Allan, Lauren Paradise, and Elise Vegliante also contribute to this multimedia exhibit in the tiny Turners Falls art space.

The show runs from April 5th to May 12th at Nina's Nook, 125-A Avenue A, with an artists' reception Saturday, April 7th, from 4-6 p.m. at the nearby Burrito Rojo restaurant, 50 3rd Street, in Turners Falls. Nina's Nook is open Thursdays, 4-6 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays, 1-6 p.m., and by appointment: call Nina Rossi 413-834-8800 (or email: naban@verizon.net) for more info., or: www.ninasnook.com.

**SWIFT RIVER** from page 7 sticking with a vote earlier this year to again use the alternative method of assessing - dividing costs according to enrollment numbers. The school committee considers this the fairer method. This method is also authorized by the state, but it must be voted on each year, giving it a less favored, more precarious status.

At the invitation of Michael Idoine, chair of the Wendell finance committee, a meeting was held on March 28th in Wendell to discuss the matter. Three representatives of New Salem's selectboard and finance committee came, and five Wendell elected officials attended along with Nancy Aldrich, town coordinator for both towns.

There Randy Gordon, selectboard member in New Salem, said the proposed change to the statutory method of assessment would "make it more likely for the budget to pass" in his town. "I have three kids in school - I want the highest quality of education possible," he said. "But the people have to approve... we're kind of caught."

A distinction was soon made. "You're struggling with your overall budget," Idoine pointed out - "not the question of fair-

ness. Historically we've both paid the same amount per student. If we go to the statutory method, Wendell pays \$1,200 more," per pupil than New Salem.

Gabrielle Voelker, member of the New Salem school committee, agreed. "It's not fair to ask you to pay more. It's just that we can't afford" the current "\$93,000 hit."

New Salem school committee member Wayne Hachey said the school board's vote went as it did this year, "because Wendell's position was entrenched and New Salem people felt they had to vote that way. Dick (Baldwin, Wendell member) can't listen to the other side of the coin. But voting the other way would show some flexibility. You could've balanced it out knowing New Salem was taking a bigger hit."

Idoine responded, "The state's formula has skewed this process. There are these unhappy meetings that happen all over. But do we have a haphazard agreement or do we come to an agreement that's fair and continue?"

"If the enrollment evens out you'll be paying a lot more," warned Doug Tanner, Wendell finance committee member.

Jim Slavas, also on the Wendell finance committee,

noted, "The alternative method is in our original agreement." Figuring by the statutory method, there were stretches of years he listed during which New Salem's assessment would have been higher than under the alternative method. "I'd rather reduce the budget than change the method. If the issue is the budget, deal with the budget. Changing method is moving the burden from one town to the next."

Before the meeting, Slavas had worked out assessment figures using a five-year averaging of enrollment figures, which would reduce unexpected fluctuations, and he presented that concept as an alternative. It seemed to find favor with New Salem representatives at the meeting. Another idea he presented - to equally share fixed expenses like heat and administrative costs - also seemed popular, but neither could be instituted in time to be effective this year, and no resolution was found.

In the end, Aldrich was asked to schedule another meeting, after the coming town meetings, so some of New Salem's main proponents of the statutory method, who weren't available on March 28th, could attend.



## Montague Votes \$25 K for Montague Center School Upgrades

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** - On Wednesday, Montague moved one step closer to sealing a deal with Mark Zaccheo, principal of the Greenfield-based Olive Street Development company, to sell the former Montague Center School building and its three acres of land for \$50,000. Zaccheo hopes to convert the former elementary school into about two dozen energy efficient, solar powered, one and two bedroom and studio apartments.

Although Zaccheo told town meeting members, "It's not a guaranteed deal," still a two thirds majority voted to approve spending \$25,000 from stabilization to install an eight inch water line to support a sprinkler system for the building, and to drain and remove a 30-40 year old in-ground fuel tank with about 500 to 1000 gallons of heating oil in it.

Town manager Frank Abbondanzio told meeting members the town was spending up to \$30,000 a year to heat, maintain and insure the building, which returned to town control in 2008 when the Montague Center School was consolidated into the Sheffield-Hillcrest campus (now the Montague Elementary School). Abbondanzio said almost any future use of the building would require the installation of a sprinkler system. He said if Zaccheo's project comes to fruition, the town would expect to see a tax bill of about \$20,000 annually from the project, after Zaccheo invests approximately \$2 million in the renovation.

Zaccheo, who has recently

completed the development of the former Mix and Match building on Olive Street in Greenfield into 16 high energy efficiency apartments and two commercial spaces, with enough solar power on the roof to supply power to four adjacent buildings, also owns more than a hundred other apartments in Greenfield.

He told town meeting it is difficult for developers to "make the numbers work," in renovating old buildings in rural areas of New England, where rents are comparatively low.

"One of my ideas was to use energy efficiency to increase my profit. It's worked out really well. This is a path we need to take," said Zaccheo.

After two non responsive requests for proposals on the vacant property, town meeting was willing to agree.

"We're looking at cost avoidance, and revenue creation down the road," said Abbondanzio.

In other business, town meeting approved spending \$18,000 to fund a wage and classification study to address the pay scale of town employees in comparison to other towns in the region; set \$10,000 aside in the Henry Waidlich Conservation Trust to provide local matching funds for future land conservation efforts; allowed the Turners Falls Airport to spend \$12,500 from retained earnings to build another section of perimeter fence; and OK'd spending \$14,000 from stabilization to install energy efficient LED lights at the town owned Shea Theater.



Mark Zaccheo at the Montague Town Meeting

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**SYRIA** from pg 1  
yet over.

"Syria, like Bahrain, also witnessed the majority rising against a minority regime in effective control of the armed forces and security apparatus. That majority is Sunni while the minority is Alawi.

"Constituting around 10% of the Syrian population, as opposed to the 70% commanded by the Sunnis, Alawis are centered in Latakia and in the mountains above the city. In their area of concentration, they make up about two thirds of the population. They may also be found in smaller numbers in cities throughout Syria, in part the result of emigration during the period of Alawi hegemony in Syria. Alawis are also located in the province of Alexandretta in Turkey.

"Tracing their origins to ninth century, the Alawis are a secretive and very heterodox offshoot of Shi'i Islam. Their doctrines represent an amalgam of Islamic, Christian and pre-Christian elements. They reject Sunni Islam's sacred law, the Sharia, and most of the restrictions and rituals contained therein. They pay little attention to fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage ceremonies of Islam. Traditionally, they maintained no formal places of worship.

"The specifics of Alawi doctrine are still kept secret from most of the rank and file. The most singular of Alawi doctrines, however, attributes a Christ-like divinity to Ali, the paternal first cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. From "Ali," we get "Alawi."

"Sunni Islam views the Alawi creed as a heresy of a heresy. Historically, most Sunni scholars have regarded the Alawis as no Muslims at all. The great Sunni scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) wrote of them: 'They are the worst enemies of Muslims. Jihad (holy war) against them is an act of piety.' Nor do mainstream Shiites, such as those constituting about 97% of the Iranian population, consider Alawis their own.

"Alawis had been the insulted and injured of Syrian society, the generally despised servant class. In view of this, we can better understand the sentiment expressed by a high Alawi official to a cousin of mine in Homs, in the full flush of Alawi hegemony. Having had enough drinks to loosen his tongue, he said: 'We used to be servants in the houses of the Sunnis and we won't rest until they are servants in our houses.' Hardly the stuff of communal harmony.

"How then did a minority, still

reviled in 1920, come to dominate firmly the Syrian government and armed forces by 1970?"

#### The Rise of the Alawis.

"The end of World War I saw the League of Nations award to France the so-called 'mandate' for Syria and Lebanon, entities whose borders had been but recently defined by the victorious Allies. French rule was never popular with the Sunni majority and so the Mandate authorities turned to minority elements to help sustain their position.

"The state of Latakia was set up

### The Tunisian origin of the Arab Spring has inspired the sickest joke I know – "How do you start a revolution in Syria? Set fire to a Tunisian."

in July 1922; in the same year the Alawis also gained legal autonomy, as the French ended Sunni control of court cases involving Alawis and transferred these cases to Alawi judges. The short-lived Alawi state — it lost its autonomy in December 1936 — also enjoyed lower taxation and a substantial French subsidy.

"Not surprisingly, these changes were accepted enthusiastically by the Alawis. In return they provided a disproportionate number of soldiers in the new military that was designed to bolster French rule. They made up about half of the eight infantry battalions serving as police and supplying intelligence. They broke up Sunni demonstrations and strikes and helped quell uprisings. As late as May 1945, when French rule in Syria was fast dissolving, the vast majority of these battalions remained loyal to France. Right up to the emergence of Syria as an independent state, Alawi leaders continued to submit petitions to the French in favor of retaining French patronage.

"Nonetheless, it was the Sunni majority, especially the urban elite and great landowners, who inherited the government when the French mandate ended in 1946. By 1955, after some resistance and much anguish, the Alawis became reconciled to the new Syrian state. They also began their own rise to power, using as their bases their position in the military and in the Baath Party, a pan-Arab nationalist party that was

the ideological concoction of an Orthodox Christian from Damascus. Their strong position in the military, then, did not lapse with the French departure.

"Alawis and other minorities continued to be over-represented in the army and security forces. The acute British student of modern Syrian history, Patrick Seale, observed that the Sunni landed families and, I would add, the Sunni urban elite "being predominantly of nationalist sentiment, [had] despised the army as a profession: to join it between the wars was to serve the French. [The Military Academy] to them was a place for the lazy, the rebellious, the academically backward, or the socially undistinguished." Seale might have added that for many Alawis and other non-Sunnis, the Military Academy was a place of opportunity for the ambitious and talented.

"Furthermore, the Sunni inheritors of the French mantle paid scant attention to the army as an instrument of state. Fearing its power in domestic politics, they kept it small and begrudged it funds and so rendered military careers unattractive to the relatively well-off.

"In contrast, the poor economic situation of the Alawis and other minority peoples meant their families could not pay the fee to exempt their sons from military service. Their sons, for their part, continued to regard military service as a means of earning a living and upward mobility. While the proportion of Alawis entering the Military Academy declined somewhat after Syrian independence, the Alawis remained over-represented in the officer corps.

"In 1949, officers derived mainly, though not exclusively, from the Alawi community commanded all units of any importance in the Syrian military. Alawis also represented a plurality among the rank and file and some two-thirds of the non-commissioned officers. In an astounding flight of fantasy, Sunni leaders apparently believed that reserving the very top positions for themselves would suffice to control the military and, for some years, Alawis and other minorities found difficulty in ascending beyond the rank of company commander. Ironically, this discrimination served the Alawis well.

"As Sunni senior officers passed the years between 1949 and 1963 engaged in a dreary succession of military coups leading to resignations and ousters that depleted their ranks, the Alawis especially benefited from the repeated purges. As Sunni officers eliminated one another, Alawis

inherited their positions. And as one Alawi rose higher he tended to carry his kinsmen along with him. For them, Alawi solidarity offered a more enduring basis of cooperation than the shifting alliances formed by Sunni officers.

"As they occupied themselves in gradually taking over the military, the Alawis enhanced their position by expanding their influence within the Baath Party, whose secular emphasis appealed far more to minorities than to Sunnis. The Baathi brand of pan-Arab secular nationalism promised minorities release from the marginality they had long endured in societies governed by Sunnis. One might add that Baathi advocacy of socialism, however cloudy and ill-defined, appeared to offer economic opportunities to the Alawis, still the nation's poorest community.

"In the wake of the Baathi coup of March 1963, in which Alawis played a major role, the Alawis assumed many of the key government positions. And, following the coup, when 700 vacancies opened in the army, Alawis filled half of them.

"Between 1963 and 1966, sectarian battles pitting minorities against the Sunnis took place within the army and the Baath Party. By relaxing admission requirements, Alawis flooded the party with their fellows.

"In February 1966, Alawi Baathi officers, in the bloodiest yet change of government, drove the Sunni president from power and, once in office, purged officers from the military as well as the Baath who belonged to other religious groups, notably of course the Sunni.

"Throughout the late 1960s, two Alawi leaders fought for supremacy, a struggle that culminated in November 1970 in the triumph of Hafez al-Asad, father of the current president, Bashshar. This, Syria's tenth military coup in 17 years would be the last for a long time to come.

"Hafez al-Asad graduated from the Military Academy in 1952 and, in the same year, entered the Aleppo Air School. He became a combat pilot in 1954 and distinguished himself in that capacity. He studied in Egypt and, for 11 months in 1958, in the Soviet Union where he learned to fly MiG 15s and 17s. He assumed command of the air force in

1963 and made it the military base for his rise to power. His political base would be the Baath Party.

"He had joined the Baath Party soon after its creation in 1947 and his rise in party ranks paralleled his ascent in the military. Hafez al-Asad's coup of November 1970 marked the culmination of the Alawi rise to power in Syria.

"It should be clear that one cannot view the al-Asad regime primarily in terms of its Baathi or military nature. To do so is to ignore the key to Syrian politics: religious affiliation. Before (and perhaps during) the current insurgency, widespread Sunni opposition to Alawi rule has manifested itself in a challenge from the Muslim Brethren. The most notable confrontation came in 1982 when at least 10,000 residents of the city of Hamah, not all of them, by any means, members of the Muslim Brethren, were slaughtered by the forces of Hafez al-Asad. Today, Homs seems to be accorded similar treatment.

"But the 1982 uprising was largely confined to Hamah. Today the insurgency has erupted throughout Syria.

"The first outbreaks against the Syrian regime took place in March 2011 in the town of Daraa, close to the Jordanian border. The instigators did not respond to anything as heart-rending as the Tunisian event when a street vendor, repeatedly humiliated by municipal authorities, set himself on fire and perished as a result.

"The citizens of Daraa rose after local authorities had cruelly manhandled a few teenagers who had scribbled some anti-government graffiti. The insurgency in Daraa was put down ruthlessly and with significant loss of life.

"From there, anti-government risings spread throughout Syria and were put down with similar violence. I believe the city of Homs emerged as the epicenter of overt hostility to the regime because, interspersed among a largely Sunni population, stood neighborhoods inhabited by fairly recent Alawi arrivals. Only days ago, government tanks rolled into

see SYRIA page 11

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# the poetry pages

It is difficult to get the news from poems  
yet men die miserably every day for lack  
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

Poetry Page edited by  
Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno, and Janel Nockleby  
design by Claudia Wells

## Pocket Trumpet

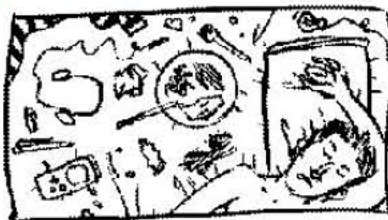
I saw it in the window  
it was snowing at that time  
the instrument was floating and somehow fixed on the blue velvet in its wide open case  
two white lines were lying on the glittering cadmium orange slurry  
fluid but solid  
I knew I couldn't play it  
but I could almost hear Mr. Botti's Steps of Positano  
it sounded beyond captivating, yet easy to play  
It was calling me to own it  
I had the money  
I bought it  
I should've known that the instrument was in melting red,  
burning on the background, in a different layer, for a reason  
because I could never play it.

-Do?u Yürür  
Istanbul, Turkey

The editors would like to thank the following for their generous financial underwriting of The Poetry Page: -

**Klondike Sound,  
Green Fields Market,**  
Carlin Barton, Michael Muller and  
Dr. Robert Koolkin Montague Dental Arts

Readers are invited to send poems to the Montague Reporter at  
58 4th Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376; or email us your poetry at  
reporter-poems@montaguema.net



Château

Without stone steps and torches  
It would only be rooms.

-Do?u Yürür  
Istanbul, Turkey

## Sometimes

The times I don't seem to fail

-Do?u Yürür  
Istanbul, Turkey

## Bed

Nighttime  
Daytime  
Anytime

Sleeping is the last thing you  
do on it.

-Do?u Yürür  
Istanbul, Turkey



# Help Good Neighbors!

This year's annual Food-a-thon, sponsored by the North Quabbin Community Coalition will be held on April 10, from 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. This event unites volunteers from several local food pantries and meal sites in an effort to raise funds and food to support these programs. Funds raised in the North Quabbin area Food-a-thon are divided, depending on pantry size, among participating programs.  
This is our greatest contributor of food funds for the year.

Good Neighbors is the food pantry that has been serving the residents of Wendell and New Salem for 23 years. More than a third of Wendell's population has joined Good Neighbors, with new residents joining every month. The pantry is volunteer-driven and offers free food as well as information and referral services to anyone in need. We also operate the Family Network program, providing food and other necessities to families with children ages six and under from Wendell, New Salem, Erving, Shutesbury and Leverett.

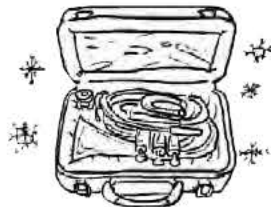
We need our community's support now more than ever. Plans are underway for fundraising events, and we ask anyone interested in holding a fundraiser to start planning now in order to hold the event in April. Call Adrian Montagano at 413-325-3172 or Lola Hess at 978-544-2109 to schedule a fundraising event to benefit Good Neighbors, so that we can coordinate advertising.

The Alan Feinstein Foundation 15<sup>th</sup> Annual \$1 Million Giveaway to Fight Hunger will match a percentage of any money we raise through April 30. Checks and donations can be made payable to Good Neighbors and mailed to P.O. Box 222, Wendell, MA 01379.

The Deja Brew Café and Pub in Wendell has generously agreed to donate 10% of your total bill for meals and drinks during the month of April to Good Neighbors; coupons to present to your server to take advantage of this offer are available at locations throughout Wendell, and at the Leverett Village Food Coop. The Deja Brew's 10% donation from your bill will be matched when you enjoy great food, drinks and the talents of local musicians at Deja Brew in April.

## Waking Up to a Dawn in the Backseat of Your Father's Car (on the road)

Everything will go wrong  
It may snow and it may smell like burning coals in a tin bucket  
Its fume may slip through your throat all the way down to your lungs  
As it may crack the capillaries and leak thin blood, let it mix the smoke  
It may keep you choking for hours and hours  
And even more hours after it's been too long  
you had finally seen the sun through the branches of pine trees  
Then it all may pass  
Then you may have a sleep  
In dreams you may find power and fear  
as you may be an immortal volcano god  
In dreams, you may see things that you may not tell  
your parents because they are obscene  
You may feel like you have started an inspirational trip  
But I can guarantee this  
Everything will go wrong.



-Do?u Yürür  
Istanbul, Turkey

## Contributors' Notes

Do?u Yürür's poems and illustrations from *Time Space* are a tribute to Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*. Do?u Yürür was born in Istanbul in 1987. In 2006, after finishing his secondary education in Istanbul, he went to Vancouver, Canada to study Game Art and Design at The Art Institute of Vancouver. After a year there, he returned to Istanbul to study literature. He's now a senior, studying American Culture and Literature at Kadir Has University. He writes short stories and poems and continues to draw. He has recently completed an adaptation of the *Odyssey* as a graphic novel.

**[Pam Veith  
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**SYRIA** from page 9

Bābā Amr, a Sunni neighborhood in Homs, to administer the final blow to the insurgents huddled there. Nor has the work of the government tanks ended.

"Residents say that areas bordering Sunni and Alawī neighborhoods in Homs resemble ghost towns. Even neighborhoods free of Sunni-Alawī hostility feel keenly the breakdown in security and services.

"The Syrian capital, Damascus, is a city transformed, with prices more than tripling in the last few months and power cuts up to twelve hours a day. A story making the rounds to amuse the desperate, underscores the problems confronted even in a city still relatively free of violence. A man brings home a chicken for his wife to cook, but she tells him there is no gas for the stove. 'What about the microwave?' No electricity! 'How about the heater in the main room?' No fuel! At which point the chicken jumps out of the bag and cries: 'Long live Bashshār al-Asad.'

"In cities throughout Syria, particularly in Alawī and minority neighborhoods, there exists mounting resentment toward the mainly Sunni opposition.

"Asked where the place of Alawīs would be after the regime falls, a Damascene Sunni replied: 'All those that killed must be killed.' It is unlikely that he speaks for all Sunnis, but he probably echoes the sentiments of enough of them to make the Alawīs nervous. And, obviously, Sunni resentment has only been sharpened by the brutality of the government's continuing crackdown.

"This caveat: Sunnis, not to mention Christians and other minorities, occupy high positions in the Syrian state. To cite but a few examples: the Foreign Minister is a Sunni, the Minister of Defense a Christian, and by no means has a majority of the Sunni army officers and rank and file abandoned their posts. At least not yet.

"Today, the Syrian regime can boast few friends. Internally, it obviously retains the support of all but a minority of Alawīs. Most Christians (some 10% of the population) and other minorities would lament the passing of a secular regime that had provided stability for some 40 years and brooked no sectarian bias against them.

"This kind word for Bashshār al-Asad. Since succeeding his father in 2000, Bashshār has carried out a modest economic liberalization that fueled the growth of the middle class. Foreign banks, international boutiques, café chains, Western-style malls and hotels mushroomed

across Damascus. But the poverty of the rural populations and the urban working class, has been alleviated but little.

"I am not entirely convinced that Bashshār is or has ever been fully in charge. He had, after all, not been groomed to succeed his father. He was a trained ophthalmologist pursuing advanced studies in England at the time of his father's demise. Succession would have fallen to his elder brother, the heir apparent, had it not been for his weakness for fast cars even when driving on a fatally icy road near the airport in Damascus.

"The hapless Bashshār inherited not only the throne but a court replete with Alawī officers and politicians quite solidified in their attitudes and prejudices. There was no way he could free himself of the old guard.

"At all events, most Christians and other minorities prefer the incumbent regime to a Sunni-dominated one in which sectarian bias would obtain. Does this mean that a successor Sunni-dominated government would inevitably be marked by such a bias?

"We cannot say with certainty but a glance at the other Arab governments that ushered in the 'Arab Spring' seems less than encouraging. Tunisia, once adorned by the likes of St. Augustine, has for centuries been free of Christians, or for that matter Shi'ah, and the elections that followed the Tunisian revolution produced a legislature with a significant Islamist turn. Libya is also free of minorities, but its unruly militias are engaged in a campaign of revenge against those suspected of having supported Qadhafī.

"Closer and more relevant to Syria, Egyptian elections returned a majority of Islamists, ranging from moderate to extreme, and the anxiety of the Coptic Christian minority deepens daily. Even Hamās, the Palestinian Islamist faction governing Gaza, has abandoned its headquarters in Damascus and its leadership has spoken critically of the Syrian government.

"The al-Asad regime, however, so far retains the support of Hizballah, the Shi'ī group dominant in south Lebanon. This because Hizballah has as patron the Shi'ī Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been allied to Syria since its war against Iraq in the 1980s.

"In the halls of the United Nations, Syria enjoys the support, however reluctant, of Russia and China, neither of which nation, for its own internal reasons, is prone to support internal insurgencies elsewhere or is prepared to see Western influence

envelope a post-al-Asad regime.

"Nonetheless, the position of the Russians and Chinese, perhaps moved by the estimated 9,000 Syrians killed during the uprising thus far, appears to have softened somewhat. But days ago, they lent support to the Kofi Annan Peace Plan that calls for the government to withdraw troops and heavy weapons from population centers, and for all parties to allow for a two-hour pause in the fighting in order for humanitarian aid to reach affected areas. The plan also asks the authorities to release those detained since the inception of the insurgency.

"The Annan Peace Plan, however, certainly does not call for Bashshār al-Asad to step down. The response of the opposition has been, understandably, lukewarm. A spokesman for the opposition has said: 'A peaceful transition means that the regime must be changed. And that starts with the removal of the head of state.'

"Opposition to the regime is manifest throughout the largely Sunni Arab world, but nowhere is it more pronounced than in Saudi Arabia and in its neighboring emirate of Qatar. A prominent Sunni cleric in Saudi Arabia is currently offering \$100,000 to anyone who would assassinate Bashshār al-Asad, an offer that would have been impossible without official Saudi approval.

"Apart from their instinctive sympathy for their fellow Sunnis in Syria, the Saudis see in a collapse of the Syrian regime a devastating blow to Iran's policy in the Middle East. Saudi fear of Iran rivals that of Israel, although for different reasons. Israel fears Iran's development of nuclear weapons, while Saudi Arabia fears Shi'ī Iran's influence on the increasingly restive Saudi Shi'ī minority.

"How has the Syrian opposition organized itself? The Syrian National Council, formed in August 2011 and based in Istanbul, claims to seek a democratic state featuring an independent judiciary, press freedom and political pluralism. As of January 21st, the SNC had won the support of 12 UN member states, including the U.S., France and the U.K. The Council has the unofficial support of the Turkish government as well.

"Let us note, however, that the SNC also boasts the support of the exiled Syrian wing of the Muslim Brethren and such bastions of democracy and free expression as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Funding derives in the main from the latter two.

"Secular leftists, nationalists and independent dissidents, based in Syria and abroad, are less than

enthusiastic, likely because of the Islamist and foreign elements supporting the SNC. Only about a week ago, a leading member of the SNC resigned in protest against the expanding Islamist influence in the Council. In any event, the Syrian National Council remains a nebulous group about which we know little.

**"Syria's elite military units continue to be composed of Alawīs or controlled by them, and most Alawīs, fearing with reason retribution at the hands of a successor regime controlled by the Sunni majority, appear to have persuaded themselves they must fight to the last."**

"We have also the Free Syrian Army, formed on July 29th, 2011 and composed of men who have defected from the armed forces. The FSA's command is located in southern Turkey, close to the Syria border, where there are now about 14,000 Syrian refugees. That the FSA, as well as the Syrian National Council, is headquartered in Turkey speaks worlds about Turkey's attitude toward the al-Asad government.

"The FSA traces its origins to soldiers who refused to fire upon unarmed protestors. Some of these troops were summarily executed. The FSA's leader, a colonel, has stated that the FSA is non-sectarian and has no political goals other than the liberation of Syria from the al-Asad regime.

"It is a certainty that the FSA is an overwhelmingly Sunni force. At this juncture, not enough is known about its actual goals beyond that of ridding the country of the regime. By mid-January 2012, the FSA reported a total of 40,000 in its ranks. Western intelligence sources would put the number at closer to 10,000, including a handful of high ranking officers.

"The FSA is operating throughout Syria although its main concentrations are in the central region around Hamāh and Homs. They have but recently been driven from their Bābā Amr enclave in Homs, leaving behind them the devastation wrought by the

loyalist forces. The FSA admits that it still lacks the resources necessary to occupy and take control of territories — its failure in Homs amply demonstrates this — and instead relies upon hit and run attacks to wear down government forces.

"Time will tell whether the army's elite units, composed largely of Alawīs, will prove capable of moving effectively from city to city to quell insurgencies mounted by the FSA or by random demonstrators who have armed themselves. Indeed, many of the civilian deaths reported by activist groups are armed civilian insurgents. Thus far, the government's campaign against the insurgents has been successful, although it may be a matter of winning the battles while, ultimately, losing the war.

"A few weeks before the emergence of the Annan Peace Plan, the government, in a limp effort to mollify the opposition, held a referendum on a new constitution. Where the current constitution defines Syria as an Islamic state, the new one stipulates that the president must be a Muslim, and while president's tenure is now limited to two seven-year terms, that provision does not apply to years already served by Bashshār. Since the constitution would not go into effect until elections to be held in 2014, Bashshār could run for election at that time and, should he win, remain in office for another 14 years. The new dispensation also promises an end to the one-party rule of the Baath. Not surprisingly, the new constitution leaves the Syrian opposition less than impressed, and voting in the referendum inspired only spotty participation.

"What of the future? Virtually from the time Hāfīz al-Asad seized power, most observers, I among them, have predicted the eventual demise of the minority regime he established. I do not back off this prophesy but I'm not at all certain that the demise is imminent. While the Sunni majority will have its day, whether in quasi-secular or Islamic guise, only outside intervention could upend the regime in the short term, and I am unable to identify the source of such an intervention.

"Sunni Turkey would seem to be a possibility but I do not believe that Turkey is at all inclined to assume that onerous task. Interventions of that nature appear to be the special prerogative of criminally incompetent American governments. That the regime will endure for a time is a distinct possibility but it would be presiding over a failed state and a woefully fractured population. A successor regime, alas, might fare no better."



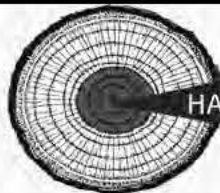
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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP



from **SIRUM** page 1

McCormick International USA, feels confident that the same solid business practices and customer satisfaction that enabled the Sirum family to succeed with the John Deere line will result in continued success with

McCormick.

"McCormick wants to provide the same friendly, family service of long standing that the Sirum family offers," Rehor said. "Farmers feel more confident in doing business with a local family operated business, rather than a

big corporate operation a long way away. When a farmer's tractor is down, it costs him time and money. He wants to be back up and running as soon as possible. That's what a family owned business like Sirum's offers, and that's why they'll succeed with McCormick."

When asked how the change will affect customers, Ed Sirum said, "We'll continue to offer John Deere parts and service to our customers, and when the farmer decides to buy a new tractor, we'll take his John Deere tractor or equipment in trade. We'll do the same with the John Deere lawn and garden line, replaced by Simplicity. For landscapers, we have a Ferris commercial mower line."

Tractor and engine manufacture are an international business with many ties between companies. In recent years, there have been shake-ups and mergers of manufacturers of farm tractors. In 1972, Britain's largest tractor company, David Brown, sold their tractor operation to Tennessee Gas Transmission, owners of J. I. Case which, over many years, ultimately merged with New Holland-Ford and International Harvester.

Now McCormick's flagship mid-range tractor, the MTX, is a Case-IH design built in the same factory in Italy where all of McCormick's AG and Utility range tractors are built. The MTX, along with all other six cylinder models that go up to over 200 HP use engines made by Fiat Industrial, and are the same engines used in Case-IH and New Holland brand tractors of similar horsepower. David Brown now makes transmissions for Bradley Fighting Vehicles. The McCormick Utility tractors are powered by four cylinder Perkins diesel engines. McCormick's smaller tractors are built in Korea, where many name brand tractors are built today.

"Korea's reputation for building outstanding value in automobiles and construction equipment further insures the Sirum family's success with the McCormick line of tractors and farm equipment," Rehor said.

Ed Sirum said all medium sized tractors, including John Deere, are now manufactured overseas in India, Japan, Korea and Germany. More factories in

China and Russia are under construction for the manufacture of tractors for export. Only the big John Deere tractors are made in the U.S. and these use parts made abroad.

On any make of tractor, big or small, the components are 80% universal, Sirum said, including the engines, transmissions, bearings and other components. Any lawn or garden tractor is assembled of components made by other manufacturers, so Sirum can buy these parts, and parts for bigger tractors, direct from the component manufacturer. Only the paint and decals are different, Sirum added.

"Sirum Equipment will stock McCormick parts so that farmers who buy McCormick tractors will have the same prompt parts and service as in the past," he promised.

This coming week, Ed Sirum is bringing McCormick tractors to several area farms where customers expressed interest at the open house. There will be demonstrations and an opportunity for farmers to try the tractors out themselves, under field conditions.

Some nice features of the McCormick tractors are fiberglass hoods that open at the front to a vertical position, allowing easy engine access for service or repair. The hood latch can be locked to guard against vandalism. Tractors are offered in both two wheel and four wheel drive.

McCormick offers either open style tractors with rollover protection or tractors with roomy cabs. All have a standard three point hitch\* to take any three point attachment. Through a partnership with Oregon, Illinois-based Woods Equipment, McCormick offers a full range of loaders, backhoes, cutters, finish mowers, stump grinders, post hole diggers, discs, box blades, tillers, seeders and snowblowers; all painted McCormick red and branded "McCormick by Woods." This means that Sirum Equipment can offer a complete McCormick solution for a wider range of small and utility tractor applications.

The Sirum family looks forward to the challenges and rewards of the big changes in their company's future; they welcome customer inquiries.



## FOOTNOTE

For those who may be wondering: the three point hitch was invented by Harry Ferguson, a mechanical genius, who was the first Briton to build and fly his own airplane. The hydraulically operated three point hitch made hooking up attachments a simple one man job. More importantly, the three point hitch resulted in a weight transfer so the weight of the plowing was transferred to the rear wheels increasing traction, so that light tractors, like the David Brown, could do the work of heavier ones. (I once owned a backhoe with a David Brown diesel engine. It used about half the fuel of any other make.)

In 1938, Ferguson entered into a "handshake agreement" with Henry Ford so the system could be used on the Ford 9N tractor. In 1948, Henry Ford II came out with the Ford 8N using the Ferguson three point hitch, but refusing to pay royalties. Ferguson won a lawsuit despite the lack of a written agreement, for the largest settlement in Ford Motor Company's history, up to that time.

The patents eventually ran out and the three point hitch is now used universally on farm tractors.



## HEMOND from pg 1

Brook Farm is a wonderful place to stargaze. Hemond has written often about the planets and stars, the solstices and equinoxes, and the holidays that attend the seasonal cycles. And who better to tell you about old time Fourth of Julys, the birthdays of the presidents, and how they celebrated Hallowe'en in time gone by than Fran Hemond?

Hemond writes for the paper in part because she loves it and recognizes its value to a community she has also come to adore. "The newspaper is an introduction to the people of Montague, and it includes all of the lovely villages," she said. "As far as color and flavor are concerned, this area is quite something, isn't it? This is a fabulous place to be, and the newspaper connects you with the town in a special way." Thanks to writers like Fran Hemond, it certainly does!

Help us keep her stories coming to your door. If you haven't had a chance to mail in your gift to the Montague Reporter's 10th Anniversary Capital Campaign, take a moment to send it in today.



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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. I keep hearing about how good fish oil is for you. Could you separate fact from fiction on this?

I, too, have seen fish oil touted so often that it's beginning to sound like a cure-all sold in little brown bottles off the back of a wagon.

[Warnings: Taking high doses of fish oil can be dangerous. Always check with your doctor before changing your intake of foods or supplements.]

You get fish oil from eating

## THE HEALTHY GEEZER: Fish Oil Salesman

fish (surprise) or by taking supplements made from oily fish. Fish loaded with beneficial oils known as omega-3 fatty acids include anchovy, bluefish, herring, mackerel, menhaden, mullet, salmon, sardines, sturgeon, trout and tuna.

Fish oil is recommended for many conditions. These include: high blood pressure, elevated triglycerides, heart disease, stroke, depression, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, Alzheimer's disease, glaucoma, macular degeneration, menstrual pain, diabetes, asthma, dyslexia, obesity, kidney disease, osteoporosis, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, atherosclerosis, heart arrhythmia, cancer... and more.

Holy mackerel!!!

How effective is fish oil? The Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database provides ratings for fish oil. Here are many of them:

### Effective

High triglycerides, blood fat related to cholesterol. Researchers believe that fish oil can reduce triglyceride levels by 20 to 50 percent.

### Likely Effective

Heart disease. People who already have heart disease may be able to lower their risk of dying from it by taking fish oil.

### Possibly Effective

High blood pressure. Seems to produce modest reductions of high blood pressure.

Rheumatoid arthritis. May ease morning stiffness faster.

Menstrual pain. Might reduce pain.

Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). May improve thinking and behavior in children.

Stroke. Consuming fish once or twice a week seems to lower the risk of having a stroke.

Weak bones (osteoporosis). Fish oil seems to slow bone loss

rate and increase bone density at the thigh bone and spine in older people with osteoporosis.

Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis). Fish oil seems to slow or slightly reverse the progress of atherosclerosis in the coronary arteries, but not in the carotid arteries that bring blood up the neck to the head.

Kidney problems. Long-term use (two years) of fish oil 4-8 grams daily can slow the loss of kidney function in high-risk patients with a kidney disease called IgA nephropathy.

Bipolar disorder. Taking fish oil with the usual treatments for bipolar disorder seems to improve symptoms of depression, but doesn't seem to improve manic symptoms.

Psychosis. Taking a fish oil supplement might help prevent full psychotic illness from developing in some people with mild symptoms.

Weight loss. Some evidence shows that eating fish improves weight loss and decreases blood sugar in overweight people and people with high blood pres-

sure.

Endometrial cancer. There is some evidence that women who regularly eat about two servings of fatty fish per week have a reduced risk of developing cancer of the endometrium, the lining of the uterus.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD). There is some evidence that people who eat fish more than once per week have a lower risk of developing this disease that destroys your sharp central vision.

Blocked blood vessels. Fish oil appears to decrease the rate of re-blockage after heart bypass surgery or "balloon" catheterization (balloon angioplasty).

Psoriasis. There is some evidence that administering fish oil intravenously can decrease symptoms.

Asthma. Fish oil seems to improve airflow, reduce cough, and lower the need for medications in some children with asthma.

If you have a question, write to [fred@healthygeezers.com](mailto:fred@healthygeezers.com).

WENDELL from page 6

decided it may be premature to bring the matter to town meeting this year. They would prefer to do more community outreach and education first, according to Marianne Sundell, a member of the organizing group.

Adopting the CPA would bring substantial state monies to Wendell for historic preservation, open space protection, recreation and affordable housing, but it also impacts the town tax rate by levying a voluntary surcharge of not more than 3% on local property tax bills - approximately \$37 on an average property assessment of \$169,000.

The first \$100,000 of a property's assessment is exempt.

The selectboard has street numbers on hand but they will

not be directly distributed to homeowners at this point, despite an earlier promise, out of concern that homeowners might take them and forget to put them up. Instead, town coordinator Nancy Aldrich will look into getting the Franklin County Sheriff's office to bring prisoners to town to install them at properties that currently lack street numbers.

Road commissioner Harry Williston reported the bids for replacement of a bridge on Cooleyville Road will be advertised April 11th, with a bid opening May 3rd. The selectboard will review bids on May 9th. "The timing is crucial so we can be (working) in the brook in July when it's dry," Williston said.

The project was postponed from last year because of new

regulations involving the buffer area and bridge opening that resulted in a contractor dropping out. It will be paid out of Chapter 90 state monies, but its increased cost will mean less money available for other projects, Williston said, like replacing the small bridge on the curve of Wendell Depot Road down in the Depot.

### Locke Hill Tower

The planning board has received an application by American Tower, the owner of the communications tower on Locke Hill Road to put a communications facility on the currently idle tower. Riebschlaeger, who is also chair of the planning board, said "They'll push the issue of it being a pre-existing use, but it doesn't meet the 1000-foot (minimum) distance

to the nearest house. The ZBA gave them a permit in 2005 with a variance for the distance, but it expired in 2007."

In another communications tower issue, Verizon has notified that it wants to change equipment and add three more antennas on the tower located off of Mormon Hollow Road on Diemand Farm property. "We told them they would need a special permit," said Riebschlaeger, "but since then there's a new state law that makes it legal for them to make changes that do not substantially change the dimensions of the tower."

Jeoff Pooser brought a supply of peanuts and, although I am a backup, I helped myself to a small handful in honor of the usual writer of this report.

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Ferry Meadow Farm - part XXXIV

Turners Falls 2017

**BY ELOISE MICHAEL** – People start going to bed pretty early, and I realize they will all have to get up for farm chores in the morning. My doppelganger will have to get up in the morning, too. I can't miss work again.

That body has been asleep twelve hours, and I can feel her getting restless.

As I stare into the fire, she opens her eyes and looks around my bedroom. I am two places at once in a dreamy kind of way. I tell myself — the self that is at home in bed — to roll over and sleep a little more.

I don't want to be up all night and then have to work for the bank all day. Also, I don't want to

be alone in my house when I could be here with other people.

I'll wait until the last person goes to bed, I tell myself.

The fire feels more and more like a dream I am having. I am startled when Dave speaks to me. "I guess I should go to sleep, too," he says. "You'll be OK in the tent?"

"I think I am sleeping on Marissa's floor," I say.

"Oh, OK," he says, looking at me like he wants to ask a question. "You can find your way?" he says finally.

I nod.

"See you tomorrow then," he says.

Now that I am alone, it is hard

to stay awake. It's been a long day of farm work, and this body did not sleep all that well in the tunnel. When I can't stand it anymore, I tip-toe into Leah's room and slip into the blanket on the floor.

I am awake again pretty much instantly, only now I am in bed at home. I sit up in the dark and reach for the light. It's only midnight. I will have to stay up until morning comes and then work all day.

I take a shower, get dressed, and eat breakfast. Then I go to check my email. My inbox is full, mostly with messages from people at work. There are four from Diana. I read the last one first.

"Wow, you must be really sick to go this long without checking email. Let me know whether you need anything," she writes. I

open the previous three messages. She is trying to get me to visit her in Philadelphia this weekend.

She says that she has found the perfect apartment and wants me to see it before someone else takes it. She even suggests that I take Friday off so that I won't miss this opportunity.

She describes the apartment in so much detail that I suspect something is not right. Halfway through the second email, I realize that the FBI must have been to Diana and Neil's house, too. I will have to go to Philadelphia, if I want to find out what they said. I know better than to talk about it on the phone or in an email. The FBI are probably watching both of us.

So I email back and ask whether there is a bathtub or just a shower.

I get a response right away.

diana722: bathtub.

theresam: what street is it on?

diana722: penn. how are u feeling?

theresam: ok. better now. yeah, i'll come to phila. can u make the appointment?

diana722: already made it just in case.

She's a good actor. I hope that our exchange fools the FBI, though I think probably they will know that something is up.

It occurs to me that I can get rid of the doppelganger while I am in Philadelphia. Then I can go back to having a normal life with nothing to hide from the FBI. It's so simple, I am surprised I didn't think of it sooner.

I will definitely take Friday off from work.

– Continued Next Issue

**ERVING** from pg 7

move a \$6,000 line for grounds and park maintenance out of their budget, as the board consolidates all grounds maintenance under one, soon to be hired full time, benefited, highway department staff. Similar moves are underway for the grounds maintenance lines at the wastewater treatment plant, cemetery, and senior center.

The recreation commission had no problem with the transfer of responsibility.

Goodwin said the reorganization, which began last month with the elimination of the environmental supervisor job at the wastewater treatment plant, and the promotion of highway supervisor Paul Prest to the newly created post of "interim director of public works," to oversee highway, wastewater treatment, and the water department, will soon result in an estimated savings of between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year on personnel costs.

Goodwin said a next step in the reorganization will involve a

performance management plan, and a "scorecard for employees, so raises can be based on merit." The board plans to meet with departments on a regular basis "to track progress."

No date has yet been set for the annual baseball game between residents and the fire department, but the topic generated a lot of lively banter at the selectboard meeting, with Hartnett, speaking for the firefighter's team, badly outmatched in the most recent contest, saying, "The seniors could probably beat us."

Among the more than 30 warrant articles being prepared for annual town meeting, the board discussed one, to retire the remaining \$180,000 in a \$650,000 USDA loan the town took out in 1984 to build the water tower north of Route 2 in Erving, by paying the remainder out of stabilization, and allowing the water enterprise fund to pay back that balance to the town at a lower interest rate.

**SOLAR** from pg 3

gram in Montague reached certain tiers, there is a built-in incentive for people getting PV through the program to promote it to others.

For people who might want to go solar without paying the big upfront cost, it is likely the solar installer would offer a way to make PV more affordable, with limited upfront costs, through

what is called a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), a loan-to-own option, or financing options.

To let the Solarize team know of your interest in this program, residents and business owners in Montague can take an online survey and leave their contact information through the survey; the link is under News & Notices on the town web page: [www.Montague.net](http://www.Montague.net).

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Fire at Erving Ppaer Mill; Out of Control Subject

Tuesday, 3/27	7:50 p.m. Call to keep the peace at Old State Road residence.	under the influence of alcohol, reckless operation of a motor vehicle, and marked lanes violations at the Route 2 bypass.
10:35 p.m. Fire at Erving Paper Mill. Assisted on scene.	Friday, 3/30	Sunday, 4/1
11:45 p.m. Arrest of [REDACTED] for no inspection sticker, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, and a warrant, at Pratt Street in Erving.	11:30 p.m. Arrest of [REDACTED] for third offense of operating	7:30 p.m. Out of control subject at Old State Road residence. Transported same to Franklin Medical Center for evaluation.
Wednesday, 3/28	Saturday, 4/31	Monday, 4/2
7:50 a.m. Assisted Northfield police with warrant arrest on Millers Falls Road.	3:07 a.m. Arrest of [REDACTED] for a warrant on Route 2.	7:30 p.m. Arrest of [REDACTED]

TOWN OF LEVERETT  
PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing will be held at the Leverett Town Hall on Thursday, April 12th, 2012 at 7:00PM to discuss proposed changes to the "Code of Leverett" as follows:

To add a section to Chapter 78: Dogs, which would address the outdoor confinement of dogs. These proposed changes would prohibit dogs from being chained to any stationary object for more than two (2) hours. Dogs could be attached to a cable run or enclosed in a pen or fence for up to eight (8) hours daily. No dog could be kept outside between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a. m.

The full text of these proposed changes is on file at the Town Clerk's office.

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## ALL THE TIME:

### EVERY TUESDAY

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Craft Night*, 7 p.m.

### EVERY WEDNESDAY

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### EVERY THURSDAY

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Acoustic open mic*, with Dan, Kip and Shultz from *Curly Fingers* DuPree hosting. 8:30 to 11:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Open Mic Night*, 9 p.m.

### EVERY FRIDAY

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Song Shop Open Mic*, 8 p.m.

### EVERY FRIDAY and SATURDAY

Montague Inn: *TNT Karaoke*.

## ART SHOWS:

### NOW through APRIL

Leverett Library: *Photographs from the East Leverett Trails*.

Wendell Free Library: fabric arts exhibition, *Painting with Thread*, by Helen V. Purple of Petersham.

### NOW through APRIL 29th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Sculpture by David Flood* in the Great Hall. Open Fridays & Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.



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### NOW through MAY 12th

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Fervor from the Truth: Spiritually Obsessive Works* by Edite Cunha, Gina Vernava and more.

### APRIL 13th through JUNE 10th

Gallery at Hallmark, Turners Falls: *Images from the 50's*, by Martin Karplus. Opening reception 4 - 7 p.m. on Friday, April 13th.

## LOCAL EVENTS:

### THURSDAY, APRIL 5th

Montague Public Safety Complex: *Sawmill River Restoration*, a public meeting regarding the proposed design and methods to restore a portion of the Sawmill River in Montague that will help reduce erosion and sediment loads, improve water quality and habitat for fish and other wildlife, 7 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Collected Poets Series* featuring Lea Banks & Jeff Friedman. 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Fall Town String Band*, 7:30 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Relics*, 8 - 10 p.m.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 6th

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton's 1940's Hit Parade*, 7 p.m. Free.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Rupert Wates*, 8 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: *Kath Bloom, Arborea, 200 Years*, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Equalites*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Moose & the High Tops*, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bunwinkies & Chicopee Family Moose Project*. 9:30 p.m.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 7th

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *Seventh Annual Peter Cottontail's Eggstravaganza*, for ages 4 - 12. Face painting, egg coloring, pictures with Peter Cottontail, & our Egg Hunt where kids will have the challenge of finding approximately 5,000 candy & toy-filled eggs in

Unity Park. Bring your own basket. Bake sale & cotton candy too! Rain or shine. 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Lindsay Lou & The Flatbellys*, 8 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Old-time square dance* with caller & live music, 7 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Fervor From the Truth*, opening reception for *Obsessively Spiritual Works*, a new exhibit at Nina's Nook on Avenue A. 4 - 6 p.m.



NRBQ (above) and Lux Delux play at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls on Thursday, April 12th at 7:30 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Square dance*, old-time music with *Put Your Hoe Down* and caller *Ralph Sweet*, 7 - 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *DJs Tommy TBA and DJ K*, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Captain-Salls Orchestra*, 9-11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Caught In the Act*, 9:30 p.m.

### SUNDAY, APRIL 8th

Millers River Environmental Center, Athol: *Early Birding with Jeff*, 7 a.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*, 9 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11th

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Special craft night* theme: *spinning*, 7 - 10 p.m.

### THURSDAY APRIL 12th

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Signature Sounds* presents *NRBQ & Lux Delux*, 7:30 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Irish Music*, John Hohl Kennedy & friends, 6 - 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Uncle Hal's Crabgrass Band*, 8 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *TNT Karaoke*, 8 - 10:30 p.m.

Boswell's Books, Shelburne Falls: *BosBuzz*, Jane Roy Brown, reading and discussion, *One Writer's Garden*: Eudora Welty's *Home Place*, 6 p.m.

Athol Town Hall: *Quest for the Eastern Cougar*, talk, 7 p.m.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 13th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Coffeehouse* featuring the *Amandla Chorus*, 7 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Carrie Ferguson* with Darelle London, 7:30 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: *The Ivy Leaf*, 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Home Body & Rabbit Rabbit*, electro-pop, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, 9 - 11 p.m.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 14th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Terrariums*: join us to make a miniature habitat that fits in a jar! Bring any special containers, plants, or rocks that you would like to include, 10:30 a.m. - 12

p.m.

Montague Grange: *Gender Role Free Contra*, with benefit supper, 4 - 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Lenny's Lounge*, croonin', free, 6 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Chinese Folk Arts Workshop*, Lively and colorful performing arts troupe presenting traditional Chinese dance and drumming, 3 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Lux Delux* with Dan Blakeslee, 7:30 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: *Tiny Radar* presents *Redwing Blackbird*, and *Bunny's a Swine*, 8 p.m.

Wendell Town Hall: *Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse*, Ray Mason Band, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Richard Chase Group*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass Open Jam*, and then 10 p.m. show, both with *Blackjack Crossing*.

### SUNDAY, APRIL 15th

Millers River Environmental Center, Athol: *Early Birding with Jeff*, 7 a.m.

Montague Congregational Church: *Relay For Life Pancake Breakfast*, walk is between 8 and 10 a.m., three kinds of pancakes.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sunday Locals*, a benefit for the Greenfield Dharma House, Katie Sachs and the Murmurations, and then dance party with DJ Loren

Halman, starts at 6 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*, acoustic trio, warped Americana, 7:30 - 10 p.m.

### MONDAY, APRIL 16th

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo*, free, prizes, 8 p.m.



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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

BY LESLIE BROWN

**MONTAGUE CITY** - After a mild and practically snow-free winter we are experiencing an early spring. Sugaring, the return of the early birds, daffodil blossoms and bloom on many fruit trees have run about two to three weeks ahead of normal, or whatever passes for normal here in New England.

Just a hundred miles "too far North" where my sister lives, the season is more typical, with more snow and fewer days of unusually warm weather. They are in full mud season now. The peeper frogs sang for just a few days and

## THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

### April's Fool?

now have fallen silent again as the cold has returned.

We southerners returned to a week of true March temperatures after a couple of very balmy weeks. However, my roses have leafed out just the same, and since it's been such a dry winter, mud season looks to have been abbreviated, unless Mother Nature plays us for a fool.

In the garden the garlic has shot up several inches and definitely deserves a watering with a light fertilizer. While I had seeded in lettuce and spinach last fall, no plants emerged, in part because there was not much snow and little rain to encourage the seeds.

Now I am planting again, this time in earnest, because leafy crops thrive in the cool weather. This is the time to plant lettuce, spinach and kale seed if you love those crops, also carrots and beets, since who knows when we

will have a heat wave again.

In fact, I have gone out on a limb and put in several rows of pea seed.

While the soil is not warm, it can be worked, and peas are not afraid of a chill now and then.

What is the downside of this foolhardiness? Well, we often have killing frosts well into May, and even the hardy pea plants will likely not survive those.

However, the upside is an early crop of sweet garden candy that will be all the more vigorous for starting out with a variety of cool and warmth, not to mention the typical April showers. And we'll be able to enjoy this special treat a good two weeks earlier than usual.

Worse case, I'll be out a couple of dollars worth of seed and will need to start again.

In the sunroom the tomatoes thrive. We started 40 seeds of seven varieties of tomatoes and now have twice as many plants. They all sport their true leaves and are three to four inches tall.

The sweet peppers are a bit

behind, having sprouted later. This is fine since they cannot be put out in the garden until the soil is warm and summery temperatures are established.

The tomatoes have all been transplanted from their starter cells to three inch pots and are enjoying a light feeding with seaweed emulsion every third watering. On sunny days, the sunroom often warms to 80 degrees or so for during the day and cools to 50 or 60 degrees at night. This range mimics what these plants will likely experience out in the garden and doesn't harm them.

This should result in hearty, thick-stemmed plants of ten or twelve inches when it is safe to plant them out in late May. The timing for this next step in their lives will depend on the prognostication of frosts and on the advent of calm, non-windy weather. While they can tolerate a little unexpected chill of high 40s, the tomatoes cannot handle strong winds.

One year I lost several plants from breakage due to a sudden change in weather in late May.

This shouldn't be a problem this season as I'll never get ten or twelve plants in all at once. There should be plenty to spare. We plan to grow extra fruit to share and give away plants to friends and neighbors.

Speaking of transitions, after our return from South of the Border and the resultant nostalgia, we have now resettled into our northern home routines. We have burned brush, attended pancake breakfasts on two occasions, enjoyed the syrup of the season, and feasted on sugar on snow at a hill town church supper. We have hiked in the softening mud and sometimes ice glazed woodlands. We have worn shorts and sandals as well as turtle-necks and warm slacks. We have both paid the chimney sweep for a spring clean-up, and then, as the sleet and wet snow fell, resumed fires in the woodstove.

In short, we are back in New England and are comfortably settled in to the familiar. That doesn't mean that we haven't also begun planning for next winter's excursion south.

## CLASSIC from page 1

down, so we let the lyrics of Davis engulf us.

Another brave pause, then fade into Wendell's Claude Monet landscapes, Mother Earth's fertile beauty in full screen glory. By then the audience was near anxious to get the show on the road and finally Dawson did so, first mildly and then suddenly with shockingly adult humor and camera angles.

Clearly that was not a problem for the sold-out Wendell crowd. From the first sight of on screen humans to the last dancing angel, the crowd roared with laughter, they so enjoyed the show.

Dawson knew his audience and spiced the film with local in-jokes, references that cracked up us outsiders if only because the more than 50 people around us were laughing so hard. There were cheers and guffaws during every scene as the Wendellites supported their own. It was a love-fest, on-screen and off, and I felt privileged to be enclosed in such an intimate circle. I imagine this film will be the talk of the town for weeks to come.

The action nearly defies description, but the characters stand out. The gang of poker playing pals is sensational,

delighting viewers both as game changers and eye candy. And Miss Genevieve should be in neon lights batting her lashes at us from the highest electronic billboards in Hong Kong, New York's Time Square, Tokyo's Ginza district and *Blade Runner's* L.A. Hair and make-up earn the Oscar on this flick, and, yes, I absolutely include the boys-to-men Tarbox clan hair and make-up in that award. Don't worry, Wendellites: they'll get their own paragraph. This is just a transition...

'Cause them Tarbox boys are quite the lads. That young one strikes a delicate balance between Mad Max's critter kid in *The Road Warrior* and Andy Griffith's red headed television son - the one who went on to act in, direct and produce a range of films and television shows from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and *Curious George*, to *The DeVinci Code* and *Arrested Development* (due for a comeback soon!) No pressure on the Tarbox family, but hey - why don't they keep going with this movie bit? They're all so good they'll only get better. The camera loved them, the story needed all three of them, and each of those Tarbox actors should have

more screen time to shine.

Their characters, their fisticuffs, so ludicrous and comic, made them a fun dumb hilltown clan on the big screen. Congratulations, to the Tarbox's, and to the director who signed them on - three cheers for Wendell's diamonds in the rough.

Director Dawson and his motley crew of characters certainly had the essentials of hilarity down in this debut. The pair of knockabouts in the other truck was fun, too, though their cussing and repetitions slowed them down.

Nevertheless, one cannot but hope that this cast continues to go forth and exploit their comic veins for cinema gold.

A strong feminist perspective allows the men and boys portrayed in this film to leave the complex task of higher order thinking to the on-screen wonder women. More celestial than Charlie's Angels, these ladies can handle and execute the big ideas. Conceptually, this is Dawson's film, and he clearly believes women are powerful. I imagine Dawson, after the world premier, telling him with irony but no sarcasm, "Dougie, you've come a long way, baby."

Dawson's film could have used a dialogue coach, giving more direction to truck cab chatter, but overall, he was right to trust the instincts of his actors, whose characters were a delight.

And what about the title gals: Donna and Alia? They simply rock in their roles as scrappers!

Well, technically, they are rocked by higher beings who know how to groove. But wherever Donna and Alia's cool comes from, it is sublimely mundane and artificial, and so plausible as to cause giggle fits.

Alia is dorky and studly; she is absurd behind the wheel; and her command during conflict is unquestionable. She is so funny, and what a super mama she turns out to be!

And, Oh-h-h, Donna, with her already perfect nails, is the definition of languid on a summer's day. We see a believable interpretation of a well loved woman who adores her life to the fullest extent she knows how. Who wouldn't want to buy French imports for Donna's picnic basket, or give her a lift into a big-wheeled truck? That pair of dames is quite a pair.

Speaking of trucks, they are the fun-loving co-stars, and they would satisfy any pick-up lover.

Big, red, shiny, full of real firefighters and, well, scrap metal - these trucks are the Millennium Falcon and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang of this break-out hit of the modern day sci-fi-mythological-high-jinx-infomercial-sit-com-action-Gaia-praise genre.

There is no glut in the market for what Dawson has orchestrated, and I do hope he sticks to his opening night promise: "Yes, there will be a sequel."

Wendell's homegrown proves once again to be a unique kind in Franklin County.

A quick post-script: I believe I witnessed folks being turned away at the door for the first show, and later learned both viewings were sold-out. Because there is dire need for the entire Wendell, Montague, and Franklin County community to see this film, there will be another showing of *Donna and Alia go Scrapping* at the Deja Brew pub on Tuesday, April 10th. A reception, with cash bar, begins at 7:00 p.m. and the free film (with a suggested \$3 donation, to benefit the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse and the Wendell Fire Department) starts promptly at 8:00. Get there early, folks. This is one you do not want to miss.





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