



**Helen  
Purple's**  
Cross-stitch  
Fiber Art

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**Banish Misfortune  
on St. Patrick's  
Day**

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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 10 - NO. 24

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

75¢

REPORTER@MONTAGUEMA.NET

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 15, 2012

## What Will Become of the Former Cumberland Farms Building?

**BY PATRICIA PRUITT  
TURNERS FALLS** - Referred to simply as 'the Cumby' since the corporate owner left in 1991 after eight years of litigation with the state of Massachusetts over the lot's taking through eminent domain, the former Cumberland Farms building on Avenue A and 2nd Street has served variously as the meeting place-office of the Montague Economic Development Investment Corporation (EDIC), and briefly as the office for Turners Falls RiverCulture director Lisa Davol, an especially short-lived use ended abruptly by lack of heat and an incipient leak in the roof. In the recent past the Deerfield Valley Art Association revived the Cumby for a couple of month-long spring art shows and sales.

These days, however, the building sits empty and forlorn. Its roof has let in several seasons of

precipitation, ruining the drywall in much of the 2000 foot space. The moisture has done its part and grown mold in the generous dampness. Its exterior has the air of a building with an inferiority complex; and indeed, it does find itself forlorn amid the finer examples of western New England architecture with the town hall across Avenue A, the restored Crocker Building on the corner of 2nd Street and its nearest neighbors, the magnificent Discovery Center complex.

Though not nearly in the state of decline seen in its distant neighbor, the Griswold Cotton Mill, you might say the Cumby exists on borrowed time. Its state of suspension has gone on for decades, one year shy of 30 years, to be exact.

One might say the Cumby has come to a crossroads in time, the moment when it will

either take on new useful life, or be removed for the fatal flaw of uselessness. If it had an interesting roofline, or an historically important cornice, or surface decoration, but it has none of these - it is and was meant to be a utilitarian structure.

It does have two significant virtues. The first is its location at the very end of the Gill-Montague Bridge, one of the three bridge entrances to the village of Turners Falls, hence an important gateway to the town as a whole. This is the one bridge that will be, in less than two years, a marvelously reconstructed, beautiful version of its former dilapidated self. Getting off the bridge, the Cumby is one of the first buildings one sees.

The second virtue is like the first - location. The building is located within the bounds of the Discovery Center Park, as see **BUILDING** pg 8

## Relax - with Joe Parzych

**BY JANEL NOCKLEBY  
GILL** - Joe Parzych's writing career began in grammar school in his hometown of Gill when he "wrote essays for the other kids who didn't have much imagination." For the last ten years, Joe has been stirring the imagination of our readers with colorful articles on everything from the Northfield Mountain silt transfer project to bank heists of yore in Turners Falls, from the barking dogs of Hickory Hill to how to bake a cherry chocolate cheesecake.

In hopes of eventually getting an education, Parzych enlisted in the army, where by age 17 he was serving as a public relations writer in Hokkaido, Japan for U.S. paratroopers after World War II. For Parzych, writing has been a lifelong "form of relaxation" and a

necessary compulsion at the end of the day, even over the objections of his family for his use of a noisy typewriter late at night.

Parzych was the only member of his immigrant farming family to graduate from college. While he's had "a million jobs" over the years (including sales, owning an excavation company, interviewing and photographing writers, and seeking his fortune in California and failing to find it), writing, for Parzych, has been one constant, as evidenced by the very long list of magazines and newspapers that have published his work, including *Yankee Magazine*, *Yankee Books*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Hardhat News*.

Joe's connection to the *Montague Reporter* began with Year One, Number One, with a front page story on the renovation of the Colle Opera House on Avenue A in Turners. "It was at GCC in a creative writing class that I first met *Reporter* editor David Detmold, thinking David

had slipped a cog when he told me he was involved in starting a newspaper in Turners Falls," he recalled.

Parzych's memoir, *Jep's Place: Faith, Hope and Other Disasters*, was published in 2006 and reprinted serially in the *Reporter* as well. In it, Parzych recorded his memories of growing up in Gill, in a family of 13 children with no washing machine. "It was kids, wall to wall," he writes on page one.

Thankfully, Parzych continues to write for our nonprofit community newspaper with the same flair he brought to his memoir.

If there is a story, Parzych will find always it.

You can look forward to his next expose: *FDR at War*, in the very next issue of the *Montague Reporter*.

While you wait, don't misplace that return envelope for the *Montague Reporter's* 10th Anniversary Capital Campaign. We depend on readers like you to bring the work of great writers like Joe Parzych to your door.

## Going Up the Country



Dan and Nina Keller joined local communes in the 1960s. They stayed, and continue to farm the land.

**BY DAVID DETMOLD  
WENDELL** - In a nation torn apart by an undeclared war in Vietnam, by war in the streets of Watts, and Newark, and Chicago, Daniel and Nina Keller joined others of their generation and moved to the hills. Communes sprang up in many parts of America as idealistic college graduates and college drop-outs, hippies and radicals, followed the advice of Joni Mitchell and headed back to the land, back to the Garden.

Here in Montague, and in Wendell, and just over the border in Guilford, VT three of those communal farms took root and prospered in a network of mutual support during a heady time of liberation news, organic composting, and anti-nuke organizing.

Dan Keller, now a selectman in Wendell, where he and Nina still farm the land he moved to after refusing his college diploma in protest of the Vietnam War, took to the podium of a Greenfield Community College senior symposium on Thursday, March 8th, to talk about those utopian days, and to connect their communal model to others that preceded them, like Brook Farm in West Roxbury in the 1840s. And perhaps, in a world where protestors are once again encamped in front of the portals of power, to point the way to a future where the fruits of common labor and the bounty of the land can be shared communally again.

Speaking to a packed hall at GCC's downtown campus, Keller asked, "Why would I do something so silly as to not show up to my graduation?" at Amherst College in 1968, where he had learned not just from his professors but also from student activists like Marshall Bloom.

"I had tried to explain it to my parents back then. Maybe I can explain it better now."

Keller cited two of the seminal texts of his generation, *Walden*, by Henry Thoreau, and *Growing Up Absurd*, by Paul Goodman, as major influences on the back to the land communards of his not quite graduating class. *Walden*, a paean to living simply in self sufficiency in the woods, extolled the virtues of agrarianism (not to mention civil disobedience) while *Growing Up Absurd* rejected the pencil pushing conformity of the 50s and early 60s for a life of individual worth and self expression.

Keller, who summered on a farm as a teenager, said, "The die was cast in terms of my relationship with the modern world by the time I was a freshman."

And he was not alone.

Quoting from Ray Mungo, one of the founders of the Liberation New Service, a collective that provided copy and anti-war fervor to the burgeoning underground press on and off campuses across America in the late 60s, Keller read, "I was

born in a howling blizzard in February, 1946, in one of those awful mill towns in eastern Massachusetts, and lived to tell about it. My parents were and are hardworking, ordinary people lacking the 'benefits' of higher education and the overwhelming angst and cynicism which come with it. I was thus not raised in what most of you would call a middle-class environment, lucky for me. Were I true to my roots I'd now be a laborer in a paper or textile mill, married and the father of two children, a veteran of action in Vietnam, and a reasonably brainwashed communicant in a Roman Catholic, predominantly Irish parish. Instead, I am a lazy good-for-nothing dropout, probably a Communist dupe, and live on a communal farm way, way into the backwoods of Vermont. What went wrong?" (Ray Mungo, *Famous Long Ago*)

Moving from Mungo to Dickens, Keller called the 60s "the best of times and the worst of times," with the violent suppression of civil rights, 50,000 troops in Vietnam, the assassination of Kennedy, King, and Kennedy, above ground atomic testing and a missile crisis in Cuba that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

At the same time, the 60s gave birth to many grassroots struggles: against the Vietnam War, for women's rights, black liberation, gay liberation, and the back-to-the-land see **COUNTRY** pg 12

### PET OF THE WEEK

## Arwen Seeks Her Aragorn



Arwen

I'm a three year old female shorthair cat named Arwen. I am a huge fantasy buff! Not really, but I'm guessing whoever named me is a Tolkien fan. I approve, especially as Arwen is a love-worthy and strong female character. Believe it or not, one of my favorite toys is a laser light – so very sci-fi/fantasy of me, eh? I am a proud and quiet kitty cat who has my sights set on a loving and kind household and my journey won't be complete until I find it.

Come meet me! I'm a member of the Lonely Hearts Club! This means that I've been available for adoption longer than most of the other kitties and my adoption fee is 50% off!

For more info about adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or info@dpvhs.org.

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### LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS

#### Hockey Puck Winner & Civil War Re-enactment

Congratulations to Emma McIntire, age 7, of Leverett who participated in the Leverett Library's summer reading program in 2011. She was a winner of a Boston Bruins hockey puck, which was signed by player Milan Lucic. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in partnership with the Boston Bruins provided prizes to a few lucky summer reading participants from across the state.



Brad Hendricks, Leverett resident and Civil War re-enactor, at the Leverett Library on March 11th. He roasted a chicken while talking to visitors about what life was like for soldiers in camp.

### CARNEGIE PUBLIC LIBRARY NEWS Hands-On Science



Naomi Johnson of Millers Falls found touching a Van de Graaff electrostatic generator a hair raising experience at a recent Homeschool Hands-On Science session at the Carnegie Library. Instructor Jim Klaiber is in the background.

LINDA HICKMAN  
**TURNERS FALLS** - A donation of \$225 from the Northeast Foundation for Children to the Carnegie Library is helping support the Homeschool Hands-On Science series at the Library. According to Amanda Verlander of the donation committee, "Each year, our non-profit is allotted a small



PAMELA STONE PHOTO

At the Books in Action party at Leverett Elementary on March 9th: Craig Martin, magician and Shutesbury parent, entertains Leverett students (l-r) Thomas Dion, Cole LaClaire and Ethan Howard with one of his card tricks.

### The Wendell COA Film Series Presents Two Films: Colossus & The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency


On Sunday March 18th at 7:00 p.m., the Wendell Free Library will present "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency." This quirky whodunit was adapted from Alexander McCall Smith's hit mystery novels, filmed entirely on location in Botswana.

The library will screen "Colossus: The Forbin Project" on Saturday March 24th at 7:30 p.m. The film integrates two familiar themes – a Cold War "Doomsday" scenario, and computers that run amok – to produce a truly engrossing thriller. This is

another film in the monthly series of Science Fiction/Fantasy and Horror/Monster movies at the Wendell Free Library, located in the center of Wendell.

Admission is free to both films. Call 978-544-7762 for more information.

**Great Falls Middle School**  
**Students of the Week**  
**Grade 6**  
 Riley Watroba  
**Grade 7**  
 Amanda Savinski  
 Veronika Sankova  
**Grade 8**  
 Catherine Landers

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### SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – March 19th to 23rd

**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. Appointments are now being scheduled for free AARP tax aid. 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, March 19th**  
 10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
 10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise  
 12:00 p.m. Pot Luck & Bingo  
 NO Knitting Circle  
**Tuesday, March 20th**  
 NO Seated Health Program  
 1:00 p.m. RAD Class  
**Wednesday, March 21st**  
 10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
 12:45 p.m. Bingo  
**Thursday, March 22nd**  
 9:00 a.m. Tai Chi

1:00 p.m. Pitch  
**Friday, March 23rd**  
 10:00 a.m. Aerobics  
 10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise  
 1:00 p.m. Writing Group

**ERVING** Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Ervingside, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregare 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 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.

amount of money in our fiscal budget to give to local groups and organizations that promote education, fight hunger, provide shelter to those in need and that make our community a better place to live in, especially for young children. Our public libraries provide so many valuable resources to adults and children alike, that we are pleased to offer our support." The Home-school Hands-On Science series has been extended through April 10th. It meets on Wednesdays at 1:15 p.m. at the Library. Call the Carnegie Library at 413- 863-3214.

**Monday, March 19th**  
 9:00 a.m. Tai Chi  
 10:00 a.m. Osteo Exercise  
 12:00 Pitch  
**Tuesday, March 20th**  
 8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics  
 10:15 a.m. Senior Business Meeting  
 12:30 p.m. Painting  
**Wednesday, March 21st**  
 8:45 a.m. Line Dancing/Zumba  
 12:00 p.m. Bingo  
**Thursday, March 22nd**  
 8:45 a.m. Aerobics  
 10:00 a.m. Posture Perfect  
**Friday, March 23rd**  
 9:00 a.m. Bowling

**LEVERETT** Senior Activities  
 • Take-It-Easy (Chair) Yoga – Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$4.00 (first class free).  
 • Senior Lunch – Fridays, 12:00 p.m. Call 413-367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.  
 For information, contact the Leverett COA at 413-548-1022, ext. 5, or at coa@leverett.ma.us.

**WENDELL** Senior Center is at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Nancy Spittle, 978-544-6760, for hours and upcoming programs. Call the Center for a ride.

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JESSICA LARVIN ILLUSTRATION

# Local Briefs

COMPILED BY DON

**CLEGG** - There are signs of spring in Wendell, and elsewhere. A Mourning Cloak butterfly was spotted at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, March 12th, and a bobcat was seen crossing West Street that same morning. Robins are almost everywhere in our towns, along with cedar waxwings feasting on the crabapple tree buds on Avenue A in Turners Falls. It wasn't much of a winter; we're glad it's almost gone!

The Franklin Conservation District invites all to attend a public meeting about the **Sawmill River Restoration**, to be held at the Montague Public Safety Complex, 180 Turnpike Road, in Turners Falls on Thursday, April 5th, at 7:00 p.m. Come discuss proposed designs and methods of restoration. For more than 30 years the Sawmill River has been prone to jump its banks and threaten bridge safety, damage roads, farmlands and private property. For more information,

contact Deborah Shriver, Franklin Conservation District, at 413-665-8142 or debbieshriver@gmail.com

**Mud season** has also come to Wendell, so be cautious this week when approaching Wickett Pond Road and other dirt roads in town, unless you want to keep the tow truck driver happy. Same goes for residents in other towns - stick to the paved roads, if you can.

The Greenfield Savings Bank, 282 Avenue A, in Turners Falls will offer **pre-St. Patty's Day** festivities on Friday, March 16th, from 10:00 a.m. to noon with Irish folk music thanks to Mr. Raymond MacIntire and his wee friend, Robert Lord. MacIntire plays a "mean banjo" and is always a lively attraction to any event. His good humor, fancy dress, handsome countenance and quick wit are sure to charm the shamrocks off your shoes. That is "no blamey."

A **Polish Easter Bazaar** will

be held at Our Lady of Czestochowa Church, 87 K Street, Turners Falls on Saturday, March 31st, from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., just up the 7th Street hill from Food City. Polish crafts and home-made foods will be featured, along with raffles and more. To rent a table at this popular annual event, or for more information, contact Shirley Webb at 413-773-7202.

Barton Cove in Riverside and the Power Canal in Turners Falls are two great spots to **view migrating birds** in March. Join Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center for "Birding along the Connecticut River" on Saturday, March 24th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. This program will begin indoors at Northfield Mountain, with a brief introduction to field identification tips, and then head out in search of ducks, geese and other migratory birds along the Connecticut River. Bring binoculars and a field guide if available. The program is free but will require carpooling and is recommended for ages 12 and older. Pre-registration is required. Call 800-859-2960.

Send local briefs to: reporter-local@montaguema.net.

## NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE TOWN CLERK Opportunities Abound for New Town Meeting Members

There are many open seats available for Montague town meeting for the May 21st town election. Seats available are as follows:

- Precinct One:** One — 3 year seats open
- Precinct Two:** Four — 3 year seats open  
One — 1 year seat open
- Precinct Three:** One — 3 year seats open  
Three — 2 year seats open  
Two — 1 year seats open
- Precinct Four:** One — 3 year seat open  
One — 2 year seat open
- Precinct Five:** Two — 3 year seats open
- Precinct Six:** Four — 3 year seats open  
Two — 2 year seats open  
Three — 1 year seats open

Consider running for town meeting. The annual town meeting meets every first Saturday in May. Usually, a special town meeting is held in the spring and again in the fall.

It is very easy to become a town meeting member. Nomination papers can be obtained from the town clerk's office. Only ten signatures from registered voters from your home precinct are required to earn a place on the ballot.

The deadline to obtain papers is Thursday, March 29th by 5:00 p.m., and all nomination papers must be returned to the town clerk's office by Monday, April 2nd by 5:00 p.m.

For more information, call the town clerk's office at 413-863-3200, ext 203. Office hours are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Town hall is closed on Fridays.

## This Week on MCTV: Occupy Channel 17

BY CINDY TARAIL

**MONTAGUE** - First in a series highlighting MCTV member-producers and their videos airing on MCTV Channel 17, and online.

Andrea Nasca of Turners Falls created the hour-long video "Occupy Wall Street Meets OccuNoho on Northeast Solidarity Tour: General Assembly," recording the activities of Occupy Northampton during a visit in early February by a contingency of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) from New York City.

Nasca, a new member-producer at MCTV and a member of the Occupy movement, produced the video with the help of MCTV's

technical coordinator Owen Weaver. Her daughter Ayana, a sixth grader, helped crew.

Nasca said, "The video captures a general assembly, in which locals had a chance to connect not only with the OWS contingency but with one another, in many cases for the first time. It was a good opportunity to see just how strong and diverse the local movement has become. Activists new and old spoke in turn about their concerns, vetted various strategies for progress on both the local and national levels and developed working groups for various issues."

Nasca's next segment of programming on this topic will feature "Occupy the Cinema," a col-

lection of short films made by worldwide Occupy activists, and will feature more footage from the OWS visit with Occupy Northampton activists.

For more information, email Nasca at andreamasca@gmail.com and look for Facebook pages on Occupy Greenfield, Occupy Northampton, and Decolonize Western Mass.

MCTV invites members of the community to learn how to make local TV, to borrow equipment and to crew on member productions. Contact MCTV at 413-863-9200 or visit montaguetv.org for the program schedule and to access online streaming of local video programs.

## Video Public Service Announcements at MCTV

Montague Community Cable, Inc. (MCCI) has created a simple and quick news and information service for local organizations, town government and residents.

Cindy Tarail, Montague Community Television's

(MCTV) outreach coordinator, said, "While our regular public service announcements are useful, we know there's so much more to say about elections, festivals, police work, fire safety, what the 6th grade is up to - and

many more topics of interest to our viewers. You could even come in and read a story and have it broadcast on air. We want anyone to be able to make TV with a minimum of fuss... So we set up what we're calling a Quick Shot seat."

**Montague Congregational Church**  
**71st Annual Sugar Supper**  
 Saturday, March 24th, 2012  
 5:30 p.m.

**Menu:**  
**Cornbeef hash, baked beans, Harvard beets, coleslaw, homemade bread/donuts**  
**Sugar on Snow**

Adults \$12.00  
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Call for reservations or for take-out: 413-774-7256

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Owen Weaver, MCTV's technical coordinator, will have the camera set up and ready most weekday afternoons. And since there's no editing - this is one-take recording - he'll start over again if you flub the first try. MCTV staff have some simple guidelines to help people who would like to make these video clips - from what to wear to what you can or can't talk about on public access TV. To sign up, contact 413-863-9200 or vMontagueTV.org.

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# The Montague Reporter

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## Town Government Needs You

We live in a part of the country where democracy is still a vital, living institution. We are privileged to be able to participate directly in shaping the conditions of our daily lives, the education of our children, the paving of our roads and disposition of our tax dollars, even the burial of our dead and the memorials of our departed soldiers. We chafe at mandates set upon us by Boston and Washington, but by and large, we are free to work together to make of our towns vital, thriving communities where our senior citizens are supported, our youth provided with recreational opportunity, our farms preserved, our wetlands protected, our local history documented and made available to all.

If there is another part of the world where democratic rights are as available to all citizens as they are in New England, where town meeting is generally open to every town resident to get up and speak their piece, and, in most towns, vote their minds on any matter that pertains to civic life, we haven't heard of it.

How is it, then, that each year, the citizens who serve on our town boards and committees, who carry forward the institutions that maintain our cherished freedoms, seem to get older and greyer, while the ranks of bystanders who carp and criticize from the sidelines seem to grow larger, younger, and ever more disengaged?

Last year, in Montague, an effort was mounted to reduce the number of elected town meeting members, the people from each precinct who can actually vote on the town's budget and bylaws after debate on each agenda item is closed off to the rest of the townspeople. That effort was narrowly defeated. The tendency to concentrate decisionmaking in fewer and fewer hands is usually advanced in the name of efficiency. But once removed, democratic rights are rarely returned by the few to the many, at any level of government.

Yet today, 26 vacancies

remain for seats on Montague's elected town meeting, vacancies in every part of town, with just two weeks left for citizens to take out papers and collect ten signatures from their neighbors to take a seat on the town's legislative branch.

The incumbent selectboard member up for re-election in Montague this year, Mark Fairbrother, appears to be winning a free ride to another three year term, as no one has taken out papers to give him a run for that most important town office. Without a competitive race, there is little opportunity or reason for the incumbent to even state his position on the issues, his plans for economic development in town, the management of town departments, the maintenance of infrastructure and services, the goals he intends to pursue in a second term.

Is the town so satisfied with Mr. Fairbrother's performance that no one cares to run against him? Or is apathy the winner in a forfeited race?

In Gill, vacancies exist on the capital improvement committee, the conservation commission, the historical commission, the recreation commission, the zoning board of appeals, and again the incumbent selectboard member, John Ward, appears to be running unopposed.

Whatever town you live in, and however long you've lived in it, the truth is you are the recipient of a rare and endangered form of self-government that has been handed down to you through generations in New England.

Before we get too far along as a nation in our campaign to bring democracy at the barrel of a gun to the other parts of the world, we might do our best to make sure democracy is alive and well in America itself. Best to start right where we live.

And as we have often said, and will say again, democracy is not a spectator sport. Go down to your town clerk's office and find out what you can do to get involved. Your town government needs you.

## Tired of the Trillion Dollar Cost? The Thousands of U.S. Soldiers Killed and Wounded? The Korans Burned.... Children Assassinated... Allies Bombed...

Inmates Tortured... Corpses Defiled...

in a Country that has Successfully Resisted Every Foreign Army since Alexander the Great?



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Hats Off at GM Schools

Regarding the hat policy at TFHS, (MR X #22 - Notes from the G-M School Committee). I applaud the students, student council and the student council representative for using the democratic process to try and change the hat policy. I must disagree with the proposals brought forth by the students, which will only multiply the problems if accepted. (The students propose being able to wear hats before school, in the hallways and in the cafeteria.)

Two options come to mind in thinking about this situation. One would be to allow students to wear hats all day in all settings during the school day. The second option would be to keep the current school policy forbidding

the wearing of hats. This eliminates the gray areas that would surely arise if the students' proposal is accepted.

Teachers have so many interruptions during the day, the new policy would only magnify opportunities to interrupt the learning process. Superintendent Ekstrom pointed out the inconsistencies that could arise if some teachers allowed or disallowed the wearing of hats. It would be difficult on the learning process because more time would be spent making certain students comply with the new policy.

There are always those that are going to push the limit and waste more time. By keeping the current policy regarding hats, it's

clear what students should expect.

I believe keeping the current policy in force, and monitoring the removal of hats immediately at the entrance door is the proper procedure. Apply the consequences that currently exist or establish new ones and follow through on them. Once inside the building during the school day: no hats, after the school day: hats could be worn.

In a democracy many ideas are brought before governing bodies. Sometimes the ideas are accepted, and sometimes the answer is no.

—David Yez,  
Monmouth, IL

## More on G-M Hat Policy, and other Concerns

I am writing today to voice my concerns over the conduct of the GMRSD School Committee and its oversight of its own policies.

I tuned into the meeting on March 13<sup>th</sup> just in time to witness the travesty of the 'hat vote'.

The utter lack of collegial respect the committee has for each other was evidenced by the members' facial expressions. The discussion and vote on the hat policy was a stellar example of what is wrong with this committee.

First, when you have a student

initiative that is engaging in the democratic process in a very proactive way, the students should be afforded proper respect. Each member of the committee should have read the policy change proposal before the meeting, not at the meeting. Committee members should have come prepared to discuss the issues on the agenda.

In light of this, Joyce Phillips' suggestion that the committee consult with the Massachusetts Association for School Committees was an embarrassment. Do that before the meeting is called to order, if you want to: it's called research.

Comments by Sandy Brown to the effect of, "I don't know enough about it to vote," should see CONCERNS page 5

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**NOTES FROM THE GILL MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

# Still No Hats for Turners High School

**BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE**  
**TURNERS FALLS** - John Hanold, chair of the Montague finance committee, came before the school committee Tuesday evening during public participation to speak about the issue of declining school enrollment.

School committee member Jeff Singleton has brought up the issue of declining enrollment several times in recent meetings, and interim superintendent Nadine Ekstrom has agreed it is an important issue requiring attention.

Hanold said things learned from the past will help the district make changes for the future. He said he knew other towns faced similar problems, and suggested school committees work together to help find answers to the problem of declining enrollment.

As part of her superintendent's report later in the meeting, Ekstrom presented a preliminary evaluation of student enrollment decline by grade level for the period between October 1st, 2010 and October 1st, 2011. At the Gill-Montague schools, the numbers showed the largest decline in 6th grade (20) 8th grade (39) and 12th grade (62).

The school committee will discuss the data further at their next meeting.

School committee elections will be held on May 21st. Available are three seats, one for Gill and two for Montague, all for three year terms.

Three members are up for reelection: Jennifer Waldron from Gill, Kristen Boyle and Jeffrey

Singleton from Montague. All have filed papers to be on the ballot.

Waldron, who will be seeking a second term, appears enthusiastic about her work on the committee, saying she tries to be fair to both sides in an issue.

Boyle, a long term school committee member, is also running for another term.

In an email this week, Singleton said he has reservations about serving for another term, but has filed papers to keep his options open. He said he won't make a decision until closer to the election when he sees what other candidates have to say.

Singleton then tore into the culture of the school committee, saying, "The current condition of the school committee is abysmal. Last night's vote on the [student] hat policy was an embarrassment. There are also serious violations of district policy and even outright legal violations the committee is ignoring. They won't even discuss the issues involved."

Singleton continued, "Last night's vote on the hat policy was an insult to the students who put in a huge amount of work on this. They took two polls, came to numerous meetings, even formed a subcommittee at our urging. The vast majority of students and most faculty at the high school support the change. The current policy is a remnant of old fears about gangs. It serves no current purpose except as a petty insult to students. The whole thing has taken up an absurd amount of time on the school committee

agenda and now the committee wants to spend even more time discussing it."

Singleton, in an unlikely campaign statement for a candidate running for reelection, said, "The committee is totally dysfunctional. You want to stay on to try to change things, but it is like beating your head against a brick wall. There will be a petitioned article on the annual town meeting warrant to change the composition and method of electing the committee. I would urge students - understandably frustrated - not to quit, but to work to change this committee."

The hat policy mentioned by Singleton did get a thorough hearing on Tuesday night, with Sam Danford, student council representative, presenting survey data to the committee about the students' position that the no hat policy in force at G-M schools should be lifted in certain areas of school buildings.

Committee member Jane Oakes suggested the format of the survey led to confusing results numerically, because questions were posed to allow for several answers. A respondent could pick more than one answer under a particular heading, so the results added up to more than 100%. Other members of the committee pointed out the survey's sample size was small, with only 14 teachers taking part.

Nevertheless, Danford got a great deal of praise and support from the majority of school committee members for his hard work.

The request from the students, presented in a format that included the survey, asked that students be allowed to wear hats in the hallways before and after school, in the cafeteria, and in classrooms at a teacher's discretion. Hats would not be allowed in the auditorium during presentations, or morning meetings.

Danford said teachers are inconsistent in enforcing the no-hat policy. He said some teachers tell students to take off their hats when they wear them in the hall, while others don't. Some teachers allow students to wear hats in the classroom, which means they are allowing students to break current policy by doing so. Danford argued that by allowing teachers discretion in the classroom the committee will improve the situation for everyone.

Some committee members balked at the idea of students wearing hats in the cafeteria.

Waldron had done some research on the matter. She said in the past, hats were associated with gangs, but that might no longer be an issue. But she was concerned about teaching social norms to students.

Sandra Brown of Gill agreed, saying historically men never wore hats indoors, although women did.

Boyle said, "There have been a lot of changes, respect seems to have been lost in the shuffle - [it's about] old fashioned manners."

Joyce Phillips of Montague said she felt the policy needed to come back to the school committee, because although the no-hat policy was included in the student handbook there was no parallel policy regarding students

wearing hats in the school committee manual.

Singleton offered a motion to vote in favor of the students' more liberal hat policy, as presented, which failed, 5-3.

An attempt was made to amend the motion by eliminating hat wearing in the cafeteria, but the committee decided to table the matter for another meeting and formulate the policy themselves.

Members assured Danford that he and the students had not wasted their time; the school committee will give serious attention to the issue.

Next was an executive session dealing with two separate matters: one regarding the negotiations with a former nonunion employee leaving the district, and the other regarding an undisclosed matter "to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the committee."

The meeting opened briefly, long enough for Amy Wales to give her report to the committee regarding her company's audit of district business management, then went back into executive session for over an hour, reconvening at 9:15 p.m.

The committee approved warrants, voted to accept the audit report and the recommendations of the Western Mass Electric Company presented at the last school committee for energy saving upgrades.

Meanwhile, students were busy rehearsing for their musical *Bye-Bye Birdie* in the auditorium. Performances are Friday and Saturday night at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday afternoon at 1:00 p.m.

**CONCERNS** from page 4

not be uttered. If they are, it means you are remiss in your responsibilities to prepare for the charge that we, the voters, have entrusted you to execute.

If a high school student does not prepare for a classroom discussion or a test, that would be reflected in his or her grade.

Secondly, the student representatives were made to wait an inordinate amount of time while the committee went into another executive session we might rightly name "Endless Adventures in La La Land". The agenda set aside 30 minutes for the session; it went for over an hour. They made those kids wait to hear a

decision on a school night, until 9:30 p.m.?

So let's review, they care so much about our students the committee completely disregarded the survey results, an appropriate time frame to make the decision, voted it down, and failed entirely to introduce an amended motion. Jen Waldron saying she would have voted for the change if they had included the cafeteria as a "hat free zone," applauding the students' efforts, but failing to reintroduce the amended motion is about as hypocritical as it gets. Par for the course.

These are but recent examples of the committee's failure to function proactively. When has the committee addressed the

issue of the recent playground bullying? When has the committee voted to properly discuss the (possibly unjust) firing of staff? They can't even agree to talk about it, never mind do anything about it. Why should I entrust my children's education to a system that cannot even adhere to its own policies? If I did, would my child tell me in the car ride home that a bunch of kids beat the crap out of him? I want to hear from the superintendent or the school committee that they have addressed these concerns. Not that they "followed protocol," because if that is so, something is terribly remiss in the protocol.

The problem of the GMRSD is the GMRSD. The administra-

tion is so self obsessed and engaged in petty conflict (next time watch the facial expressions or condescending tone on TV), so married to the idea that they couldn't possibly do anything wrong, that they aren't able to do anything productive, not even something as trite as an amended "hat policy," an issue of obvious concern to the students. My mes-

sage to you, school committee and superintendent, is this: you are a real and contributing factor in the Level 4 status of our schools, so do better.

-Kathleen Lynch  
 Montague 


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**NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD****Override Unlikely for Now**

**BY DAVID DETMOLD** – “I’m looking at a \$35,000 surplus, at 1% salary increases for town employees,” town administrator Margie McGinnis told the selectboard on Tuesday, as she gave her best estimate for the town’s balance sheet heading into the coming fiscal year.

Translation – the possibility that Leverett voters will face a Proposition 2½ override this year is fading in the rearview mirror.

McGinnis attributes the better than expected budget forecast to a strong effort by the Leverett school committee to reduce their budget increase, to bring it in line with Proposition 2½.

Back in November, school committee chair Farshid Hajir had originally warned the selectboard to expect a budget hike for the elementary school on the order of \$120,000, with an additional \$29,000 on the town side of the budget to pay the health benefits of newly hired special education classroom aides.

But the school committee has since knocked their requested increase down to \$19,832, for a final number of \$1,731,999, a 1.16% increase over last year’s elementary school budget.

McGinnis said numbers for the town’s share of the cost of employee health insurance also came in better than earlier projections.

The selectboard subsequently voted to grant a 2% cost of living increase for town employees, chipping \$5,000 off McGinnis’s projected \$35,000 surplus.

Hard numbers for state aid await budget deliberations at the legislature, so the town administrator’s forecast remains a best guess.

In addition to the above agenda items, the selectboard discussed capital planning procedures with capital improvements committee chair George Drake and the finance committee on Tuesday, and agreed to

come up with a standard format for department heads to forecast capital planning needs. The town hopes to set aside a sufficient sum in stabilization from now on to cover not only the expected cost of vehicle replacement for various departments, but also items like computer servers for the elementary school, bullet proof vests for the police, and air packs for firefighters. Items like these have tended to show up in the middle of routine budget hearings, surprising the selectboard.

Finance committee chair Don Gibavic said the town has tried to set aside about \$89,000 each year in stabilization, an increase from \$70,000 a few years ago. This money has mainly come from free cash recently, rather than from a budget line dedicated for the purpose of funding stabilization at town meeting.

But under the proposed plan, which would give the finance and select boards a better overall picture of departmental needs projected forward for five years, the dollar amount to be set aside in stabilization may rise above \$100,000 a year, and the amount of free cash at the end of each fiscal year may no longer meet this need.

The selectboard met with Hajir and took up a discussion of the structure and enrollment policy of Union-28. Board member Peter d’Errico wanted to know why the town of Erving is able to count Erving upper school students as 1/10th of a student for purposes of determining how many students Erving has enrolled in the elementary school union.

At present, Erving has 60 upper school students tuitioning into various area high schools (Erving does not have an agreement to send its students to one particular high school), so going by ‘past practice,’ Erving is able to count

these as the equivalent of six more students in Union-28. Whichever town in the union has the most students enrolled becomes the lead town, and sets the rate of benefits for union employees, at present. Erving has a more generous benefit package for employees than other U-28 towns.

D’Errico said the fact that Union-28 is providing some support services for upper school students from Erving is “a contracted service,” but not something that should be allowed to weigh in determining how many elementary students each town has enrolled in U-28 schools.

Hajir said special legislation is expected to clear Beacon Hill soon to allow a change in how benefit levels are agreed to by the five towns that make up Union-28. But he said a kink in the union’s structure has the towns of Leverett, Shutesbury, and Erving sharing equal representation on the U-28 advisory committee with the towns of New Salem and Wendell though the latter towns have formed an odd hybrid, part union part regional school, in their joint Swift River elementary school.

Hajir said he did not know for certain whether it would be the selectboards of the five towns that would meet to determine how benefits will be allocated to union employees, if the special legislation passes as expected, or whether it would be the selectboards of Leverett, Shutesbury and Erving meeting with the Swift River school committee to make that decision.

Hajir said about half a dozen students have left LES recently for the Chinese immersion charter school, bringing anywhere from \$12,000 to \$16,000 in state aid with them. Hajir said the school committee is planning to survey parents to find out why they have chosen to leave LES.

**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD****Operating Budgets on the Rise**

**BY KATIE NOLAN**  
**ERVING** – On March 12th, senior center director Polly Kiely presented a FY’13 budget request for \$94,463, an increase of \$8,997 over last year, with no increase for Kiely’s salary.

Selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin questioned Kiely about a 55% increase in the senior center maintenance budget.

Kiely told the board the maintenance worker had been using the allotted ten hours per week for indoor tasks, and she wanted to be prepared for grounds maintenance activities in the spring and summer, as well as winter snow removal, in case next winter is not so easy.

Selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin remarked, “We have a huge budget issue,” and suggested the senior center “make do” with the current \$6,000 maintenance budget.

The selectboard also asked Kiely to prepare a detailed list of tasks done by the maintenance person along with estimates of the time needed for each task, so the senior center’s budget request could be based on hard evidence.

A 75% increase for senior center electricity also warranted comment.

Kiely said the bill is approximately \$1,600 per month, and the geothermal heat pumps use a lot of electricity.

Noting that architect John Catlin estimated much lower electricity usage for the building, Goodwin asked, “Why was the architect so wrong in the estimate of electrical use?”

Town administrative coordinator Tom Sharp said Catlin “admits that he blew it.”

Contacted after the meeting, Kiely said, before hiring the maintenance worker, she had prepared a list of daily, week-

ly, monthly, and seasonal maintenance tasks, and would be preparing time estimates for the tasks and forwarding those to the selectboard.

Kiely said she thought the senior center would be returning approximately \$10,000 to the town from this year’s budget, in part because the move to the new senior center was delayed until December, resulting in fewer months of costs for running the building. She added, “Until we’re here for a year or two, we won’t really know how much is required to run the building.”

Town administrator Tom Sharp reported the town of Montague would be paying proportionally more for the Erving side wastewater treatment plant, because they were sending a greater amount of wastewater for treatment. The selectboard agreed it would be a good idea to meet with the Montague selectboard for a continued discussion of costs for the improvements at the Erving side water treatment facility, completed in 2010. In the fall of 2010, Erving asked Montague to discuss sharing costs for the \$5.6 million upgrade, according to a decades old agreement to share capital costs at the shared facility.

The Montague selectboard balked, saying they had not been contacted in advance of the upgrade, and has since explored the possibility of sending sewage from Millers Falls to the Montague treatment plant, via a forced main.

Usher plant re-use committee member Gary Burnett reported on a site inspection at the former boiler building. The major problem he saw was the former fuel tank in the boiler room held 43 inches of liquid in it.

“The water was pretty dirty,” he said.

Burnett said it looked like pipes in the boiler building were covered with asbestos and the grout used on the brick surface of the boilers might also contain asbestos. In addition, he reported that the copper pipes and antique brass gauges and metalwork from the boiler doors had been stripped from the building. Although he saw two leaks in the building’s roof, he said he thought the roof could be patched.

Asked by Sharp about scheduling another meeting with the school committee about the FY’13 Erving Elementary School budget, Goodwin said, “If they’re coming with the same budget, I wouldn’t want to waste their time.”

He noted the school committee’s budget had remained unchanged at their second meeting with the finance committee, after a request from finance to reduce their proposed 13% increase over last year’s budget. Goodwin wondered if the selectboard could simply use a different budget number than the one presented by the school committee when the town meeting warrant is prepared.

In their role as water commissioners, selectboard members considered the revenue shortfall for the water department. Goodwin suggested water rates could be raised by 20 cents per 1,000 gallons. He said some neighboring towns have lower water rates, and wondered what the drivers were for Erving’s rate. “Maybe we’re over-staffing,” he said.

The board decided to ask superintendent Pete Sanders to call other local towns and compare their staffing levels and costs to treat water with Erving’s.

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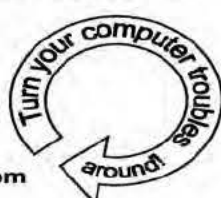
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NOTES FROM MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Right-to-Farm Bylaw Causes Discussion

BY JANEL NOCKLEBY - Members of the recently re-grouped Montague agricultural commission and town planner Walter Ramsey presented a draft right-to-farm bylaw, in hopes of getting it on the warrant for the May town meeting.

Selectboard members Mark Fairbrother and Chris Boutwell (Pat Allen was absent) approved placing the bylaw on the warrant, but revisions may be needed before the bylaw lands in the town meeting members' information packets at the end of the month.

There was a bit of a dispute over how to deal with disputes.

Donna Francis, member of the agricultural commission, explained the new bylaw, if approved, would include "no zoning changes or new rights given to farmers." Instead, the right-to-farm bylaw is intended to "show support for farming and recognize the economic and social benefits" of the farming community in Montague.

What the bylaw would do is "establish an avenue for new residents to be notified that living in a farming community may involve odors, noises, and slow moving vehicles," Francis said. "The agricultural commission can also help with disputes between neighbors and farmers."

Ramsey added that by

adopting a right-to-farm bylaw, the town would save money on agricultural preservation restrictions (APR) transactions.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, the APR program "offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the 'fair market value' and the 'agricultural value' of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability."

The town has had to pay twenty percent of that difference in value in past APR transactions. But by having reformed a working agricultural commission, the town will now only have to pay fifteen percent in future APR transactions. Adopting the right-to-farm bylaw would reduce the burden to the town further, to ten percent.

However, the draft bylaw prompted director of public health Gina McNeely to write a letter to the selectboard detailing her concerns, and building inspector David Jensen attempted to bring his concerns up during the meeting as well.

Regarding the resolution of potential disputes between farmers and neighbors, McNeely wanted to the selectboard to be clear that only the

board of health has enforcement abilities in the resolution of the type of disputes that are likely to come up in a farming community. Jensen also expressed concern that the town (in the form of the agricultural commission) might be trying to overstate its legal authority in resolving disputes through the right-to-farm bylaw. Jensen also wanted to make everyone at the meeting aware there has been a history of "downsides to farming" in the Pioneer Valley, "with serious environmental effects from pesticides, animal manure, and fertilizers."

While trying to discuss the importance of farming regulations, Jensen was interrupted by selectboard chair Fairbrother, who told him, "You are finished. The bylaw makes no change in compliance with any agency. There are no new rights, and there are no fewer responsibilities," for farmers, Fairbrother said.

"This appears as advocacy for whatever is happening," said Jensen. He stated his preference that the right-to-farm bylaw should support best practices in farming.

Jensen also noted that zoning changes in Montague may be needed, especially in agriculture/forestry zones, because they have become "de-facto residential areas see MONTAGUE pg 9

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Police Chief's Contract up for Renegotiation

BY DAVID DETMOLD The renewal of police chief David Hastings' contract landed on the selectboard's agenda on Monday, April 12th. Chief Hastings' current three year contract is up on July 1st.

Town administrative assistant Ray Purington said this week that Hastings earns \$61,782 a year, with a \$500 annual longevity bonus, and whatever annual cost of living increase other town employees receive.

Purington said that total reflects a \$29.42 per hour rate of pay for Hastings, who works 40 hours a week. Fire chief Gene Beaubien receives the same hourly rate for his approximately nine hours a week of regular duty. Both police and fire fighters face danger in the course of performing their jobs; their pay rates reflect this fact.

The next highest paid town employee after Hastings is police sergeant Chris Redmond, who takes home \$27.52 hourly, for a total of \$57,792 annually.

The last time the police chief's three year contract was up for renewal, the town finance committee raised questions about whether the town could afford to guarantee the chief's salary for three years in recessionary times. Questions regarding the chief's schedule, the need to hire reserve officers, and extra pay for the chief to be on call when no other officer is on duty in town, have also been perennial concerns for the finance committee.

One section of the chief's contract specifies, in addition to his base pay, "The town shall provide the chief straight time pay for 25% of his on-call status hours during the hours of 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. on days when no coverage is provided by active patrol

in the town of Gill, during which time the chief must maintain his presence within a 15-mile radius of town boundaries."

Joining the meeting via conference call from her Florida vacation home, selectboard member Ann Banash said of the coming renegotiation of the chief's contract, "I think this is important. The three of us need to take a look at this, and then meet with him."

Exercising a clause that requires either party to notify the other three months in advance of the expiration date, to avoid an automatic one year renewal, the selectboard directed Purington to notify Chief Hastings the board intends to renegotiate.

The board will discuss strategy around the police chief's contract in closed session on Monday, March 19th, at 5:30 p.m.

In other news, the selectboard authorized chair Randy Crochier to sign a 5-year lease agreement with Western Mass Electric Company to share a side of the road mower with the towns of Northfield, Erving, and Greenfield.

The board also approved WMECo's request to place a new utility pole near the home of Brian Donahue on Bascom Hollow Road. But they made the approval conditional on the power company working together with Verizon to first remove a pole the board considers dangerous because it is just inches from the pavement, just south of the entrance to Northfield Mount Hermon on Main Road. The board also requested stepped up action on removing orphaned "double poles" no longer in use at various locations in town.

A faulty valve in the recently renovated pump station in Riverside did not

need replacing after all. When workers arrived to replace the valve, they discovered the source of the problem: a mop head had become entangled in the apparatus. After removing the mop head, the valve worked just fine.

The selectboard expressed some bewilderment as to how many flushes it would have taken to send a mop head down the sewer to that location.

Three aging 110 gallon steel water storage tanks in the basement of the elementary school may soon need replacement, Purington reported. There is about \$10,000 remaining in the town's building maintenance fund for this fiscal year; replacing with similar fiberglass tanks would cost about \$5100.

The town was awarded a \$2800 grant from its insurance company, the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Agency, to pay Heath architect Brian DeVries to conduct a survey and report on the condition of the roofs of town buildings.

Purington said once that report is finalized, the selectboard may wish to act quickly to replace or repair the town hall roof, which is for the most part covered by 35 year old asphalt shingles. Missing and water damaged ceiling tiles suggest the town hall roof is no longer completely covered by those shingles, which most likely had a 25-year life expectancy when first installed.

Jason Edson's resignation from the capital improvement planning committee was accepted with regret.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency reimbursed the town \$766 for emergency personnel who responded to the June 1st, 2011 tornado in Springfield.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Breaking & Entering; Domestic Disturbance

Wednesday, 3/7

8:15 a.m. Warrant arrest of [redacted] on Main Street.

5:43 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Third Street. Advised of options.

Thursday, 3/8

9:46 a.m. Open gate at Railroad Salvage build-

ing on Power Street. Investigated.

10:35 a.m. Warrant arrest of [redacted] on Park Street.

2:42 p.m. Breaking and entering attempt on Burnett Street. Report taken.

4:57 p.m. Assault at Sheffield Elementary School on Crocker Avenue. Report taken.

Open door, window at Great Falls Discovery Center. Investigated.

Friday, 3/9

2:03 a.m. Domestic disturbance on H Street. Services rendered.

8:48 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Poplar Street. Advised of options.

Monday, 3/12

8:45 p.m. Officer wanted on Avenue A. Peace restored.

Tuesday, 3/13

7:41 a.m. Burglary, breaking and entering on Eleventh Street. Services rendered.

3:54 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Dry Hill Road. Investigated.

5:53 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Avenue A. Advised of options.

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## PAINTING WITH THREAD

### An Exhibit of the Cross-stitch Works of Helen Purple

**BY CINDY HARTWELL** - The Wendell Free Library is proud to present its premier show of fabric art, with an exhibit of cross-stitch works by Helen Purple.

For the months of March and April, the Library is hosting an exhibit of 12 her counted cross-stitch pieces. Helen Purple, of Petersham, stitched these pieces over a ten-year period, from 1998 to 2008.

Cross-stitch is a popular form of counted-thread embroidery in which x-shaped stitches in a tiled pattern are used to form a picture. The stitcher counts the 'squares' on the fabric and stitches the crosses horizontally across the fabric in each direction so the stitches are of uniform size and appearance.

Purple's first piece, completed in 1999, is of a B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft, which she made for her husband, Bill. Her second piece is called "Three Sisters," reminiscent of Purple and her two sisters. She then completed ten pieces depicting

birds commonly found in her back yard in Petersham.

Purple, who demonstrated an artistic flair in everything she took a hand to, had done a variety of needlework including knitting, needlepoint and creweling over the years.

It was not until she was in her early 70s that she discovered cross-stitch. She found it kept her busy and her fingers nimble. She particularly loved creating the bird pieces, as each piece is quite detailed, with accurate representations of each bird and the flower or tree it is perched on.

The smallest and least complex piece is the Purple Finch, which has just over 6,000 stitches and used 23 colors. Her most complex piece is the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, which has a total of 37,436 stitches and includes 42 colors. Each piece is striking and realistic and could be mistaken for a painting at first glance.

All of Purple's cross-stitch pieces are done on fabric called aida cloth, which is an open

even-weave fabric made of 100% cotton. The fabric is 14-count aida cloth, which means it has 14 squares per linear inch. In all of her work, the design is not stamped on the fabric, but was created by Purple following a paper pattern, painstakingly counting each square on the pattern and stitching them on the fabric.

Purple's work was submitted to the Wendell Free Library during the summer of 2011, and her work was selected by the library committee to display shortly thereafter. Purple was extremely proud of her work, and was very excited to have an opportunity to exhibit at the library. However, Helen Purple passed away unexpectedly in December.

To remember her and celebrate her work, her family is presenting this exhibit in her honor.

To officially kick-off the exhibit, a public reception hosted by her husband, Bill Purple, and daughter, Cindy Hartwell, will take place on Saturday afternoon, March 17th, from



Cardinals by Helen Purple; photo by Mike Phillips

1:30 - 3:30 p.m. in the Herrick Room of the library. Refreshments will be served. Come see the beautiful pieces of "Painting with Thread" stitchery Helen Purple created.

The exhibition runs from March through the end of April in the Herrick Room at the Wendell Free Library. Library hours: Tue: 3-6; Wed: 10-8; Sat: 9:30-3:30.

#### BUILDING from page 1

the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) calls it.

But this second virtue is more complicated than the first; it was complicated by the creation of the Discovery Center at its inception. The town was eager to keep its hand in the mix of those entities with interest in the Park. These included the then Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the state government, and the town's economic development arm, the EDIC. An agreement or memo of understanding was approved by the EDIC on November 7th, 1984, passed by a special town meeting on December 6th, 1984 and signed onto by the state and DEM on March 24th, 1986. Although Cumberland Farms did not lose its legal battle until 1991, the agreement allowed the building to remain standing. Aside from the uses the town has made of it, there have been

no formal agreements made with DCR since about its use.

Not that no one has tried to change that status quo. Certainly former EDIC chair Jay Dipucchio and former town planner Robin Sherman tried hard to negotiate clear lines of use and responsibility for the Cumby. It just has not been a priority for DCR. At best they saw the building as useful to them as a parking garage for their landscaping equipment.

Montague's current town planner, Walter Ramsey, is now exchanging language with DCR, in an effort to get an agreement on the fate of the Cumby. The concept of the Park is central to these negotiations.

The Cumby sits on one of six parcels that make up the Discovery Center property. Its land extends to the corner of 2nd Street and along part of Avenue A, and to the parking lot to the rear of the building. At the moment, if the building were to be torn down, as some

have suggested it should be, it appears the town would lose its interest in a commercial, public and cultural gateway at the entrance to the village. The lot could simply be absorbed into the Park and become part of the Discovery Center's lawn.

In the past, possible reuses of the building have been put forward by various groups, such as a visitors center, an information center, a café, an office and display area for local artists and for RiverCulture, a display area for Native American exhibits. At one point UMass landscape architecture grad students presented an array of innovative ideas for using the lot for public art.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible for the town or the EDIC to pursue any of these ideas for the Cumby building, in large part because the agreement with DCR is unclear about the possible future uses and control of the building.

At present, the EDIC feels it needs to gather the facts, and

awaits a finalized agreement between the town and DCR before weighing in on the building's future use. Some on the EDIC are said to favor demolishing the building.

As for the selectboard, chair Mark Fairbrother also feels strongly the building, rife with mold and water damage, should come down. He said Ramsey has an estimate of \$15,000 to demolish it. He has had no discussion of the Cumby with the other members of the selectboard yet. He acknowledges that any talk of what to do with the building is on hold until the agreement between DCR and Montague is finalized.

According to Fairbrother, the EDIC is searching for records to document the past 30 years of thinking and action regarding the Cumby.

Town planner Walter Ramsey says the town is continuing email negotiations with DCR's lawyers

Other entities such as the Montague Business

Association, River Culture, and Montague Community Cable, Inc. see potential for their cultural and business organizations to find working space — 2000 feet of it — where now they have none, or not enough. They are readying a proposal for the building's reuse.

Although it is clear the Cumby has sustained water damage, the building inspector believes it is still salvageable and structurally sound.

Until a positive legal agreement is worked out, the Cumby, and the town, and all interested parties must wait for a decision on its legal fate.

Meanwhile, Montague Community Cable board member Michael Muller is confident a public entity such as MCCI, crowded in its current quarters, with money in the bank and the ability to make a renovation happen, could help salvage the building, saving the town at a minimum the cost of demolition.



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**MONTAGUE** from pg 7 with increased problems with neighbors and animals.”

Members of the agricultural commission, including Francis, Bob Mizula, and Diane Flynn, said they were open to ideas and revisions suggested at the meeting, and promptly met with Jensen and Ramsey afterwards in the hallway to hash out the details.

After that discussion, Ramsey noted that adding a provision about supporting best farming practices seemed likely, and said the agricultural commission would hold a public forum on the right-to-farm bylaw in order to gather more input.

In other news, water pollution control facility superintendent Bob Trombley reported that his department had 11 items that should be declared surplus, and sold to bring in funds for the department. The selectboard agreed. The list of items includes fluorescent light fixtures, a washing machine, an answering machine, radiator hoses, miscellaneous mechanical parts, a non-standard welder, and more.

The selectboard approved sending a reserve fund transfer request on to the finance committee for final approval. The \$15,000 transfer request is to help cover legal expenses associated with the Strathmore mill complex, as well as lawsuits between the town of Montague and Jeanne Golrick, and also the Turners Falls Fire Department and Jeanne Golrick.

The Montague energy committee drafted an op-ed piece, on behalf of the selectboard, that it would like sent to local news media to be published in March on the topic of energy efficiency. The selectboard voted to approve the editorial, with minor revisions anticipated.

John Reynolds reminded the selectboard there are a number of committees in town that need members, such as the zoning board and the historical commission, and possibly others. He also reminded them, as they were about to head into executive session regarding lawsuits at 30-34 East Main Street, in Millers Falls (properties where Jeanne Golrick also once had an interest) that legal expenses seemed to be piling up. He encouraged the board “to talk some of it away.”



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# Anatomy of a Triple Meltdown



Arne Gundersen, a former nuclear engineer, spoke at the River Garden, in Brattleboro on March 1st.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

**BRATTLEBORO** - As the 220 marchers who trekked from the gates of Vermont Yankee, carrying pots and pans and backpacks, tugging rolling suitcases and dogs on leashes, arrived footsore from their mock evacuation to the River Garden in Brattleboro on the first anniversary of the meltdowns and explosions at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear reactors in Japan, they were met by supporters from the Safe and Green Campaign, given water to drink and food to eat, and chairs to rest on. This hospitality was welcomed by the footsore travelers, who were weary after seven miles in the unusually warm winter sun.

Then, they sat in silence as Arne Gundersen, a former nuclear engineer turned expert witness against the nuclear industry, told them in exacting detail about what really happened on March 11th, 2011 in Fukushima, as far as scientists have been able to reconstruct those calamitous, ongoing events.

Here is what he told the crowd.

Gundersen, during his time working for the nuclear industry, managed more than 70 projects at commercial nuclear reactors across this country.

Gundersen, who said up until the disaster at Fukushima he still believed there was a place for

nuclear power in America's energy portfolio as our nation transitions to Green technology, has now become convinced that nuclear reactors cannot be designed to handle everything Mother Nature is capable of throwing at them, in the form of tsunamis, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, ice storms, etc.

"I hope your march sends a message that Vermont

Yankee should be shut down," he said. "I am on record that all these Mark-I reactors should be shut down."

America has 23 operating Mark-I boiling water reactors of approximately the same age, make, and model as the three reactors whose containment systems failed catastrophically in Fukushima last year. Vermont Yankee is one of them. Pilgrim, in Plymouth, MA, is another.

Gundersen recalled walking with his wife Maggie, near their home in Burlington, VT, where he teaches math at Burlington High School, in the month before the Fukushima meltdowns occurred. She asked him, "Where do you think the next accident is going to occur?" And he told her, "I don't know where it's going to be, but it will be at a Mark-I."

After disaster struck not one but four of the six reactors at Fukushima Dai-ichi in the wake of the massive earthquake and tsunami, Gundersen said, "U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu, and nuclear experts told people for weeks that the accident hadn't risen to the level of Three Mile Island. I knew right away meltdowns were in progress at Fukushima."

Gundersen said that after the core melt at Three Mile Island, in 1979, which happened while he was still working for the nuclear industry, he saw "serious person-

al injuries" that he believed occurred as a result of the radiation released from that accident.

He said, "I will dedicate my life to making sure Fukushima will not get blown over by the industry the way that TMI was blown over."

He said it was fortunate that the earthquake and tsunami struck the northeast coast of Japan on a Friday, when there was a full workforce at the nuclear complexes at Fukushima Dai-ichi and Fukushima Daini. Meltdowns were only narrowly averted at the four reactors at the Daini complex, due to the efforts of 1000 workers who were available to deal with the aftermath of the natural disasters. Had the earthquake and tsunami struck on a weekend, a skeleton crew would have been on hand to deal with the crisis.

"If it had happened on a weekend, we would have had four more meltdowns," said Gundersen, who added the nuclear industry should rethink the practice of keeping a skeleton crew on at nuclear reactors on weekends in this country.

This is just one of the lessons Gundersen said the United States has failed to learn since Fukushima.

"If there's a nuclear accident,

you need hundreds of people there," to deal with it, he said.

Gundersen called the 50 workers who remained behind to try to contain the catastrophe at Fukushima Dai-ichi, "My personal heroes," without whose efforts the entire country of Japan would likely have been destroyed.

He noted that as early as 1972, internal memos at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission cited the Mark-I containment system for being too small to adequately contain a loss of coolant accident at an operating reactor. "Fukushima was an accident waiting to happen for 40 years," he said.

The first fix the NRC put in place in response to concerns about the inadequacy of the Mark-I design were straps to physically hold the dry well torus down, so it would not shatter in the event of a sudden heat dump during a core accident.

Following Three Mile Island, the disastrous potential of a hydrogen gas explosion capable of shattering a reactor's containment was finally realized. The NRC responded by backfitting Mark-I reactors with vents, an odd fix, Gundersen said, since reactor containment systems were designed to keep radiation from being released into the environment, while the vents were

added in order to release built up radioactive gas into the environment. But in any case, all the vents at Fukushima Dai-ichi failed that crucial test.

Eight days before the 60-foot tsunami struck Fukushima Dai-ichi, the reactors' owner, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) rejected a study saying a tsunami of this magnitude could strike the coast, and called for further study of the problem, saying there was no need to modify the plant in the meantime.

Gundersen said that in Japan, as in America, "We've got a regulatory agency that has been captured by the industry it is intended to regulate. Every single commissioner at the NRC has been approved beforehand by the Nuclear Energy Institute," he said, including the recently appointed William Magwood, who managed nuclear policy for the Edison Electric Institute in Washington, and worked in Westinghouse's nuclear division, before being unanimously appointed to the NRC by Congress over the objection of more than a hundred environmental organizations in 2010.

Gundersen noted that the International Atomic Energy Association, often referred to in press reports as the United

see **FUKUSHIMA** page 14

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

### Neighbor Dispute; Shooting BB Guns

Tuesday, 2/28

6:15 a.m. Report of alarm at Lester Street. Same secured.

7:44 a.m. Report of a truck bed liner in the roadway on Route 2 near Old State Road. Unfounded.

1:06 p.m. Report of two suspicious males walking around Weatherhead's Storage. They advised that they were waiting for the bus.

Wednesday, 2/29

4:55 p.m. Motor vehicle crash into guardrail on North Street. No injury. Report taken.

9:05 p.m. Assisted with a motor vehicle lockout at Central Street. Entry gained.

Thursday, 3/1

10:23 a.m. Motor vehicle crash on Northfield Road. No injury. Report taken.

Friday, 3/2

1:50 p.m. Report of low wires on West High Street and River Road. Verizon

contacted.

10:33 p.m. Assisted Orange police with search for armed robbery suspect.

Saturday, 3/3

10:35 a.m. Dog in roadway on Route 2 near Christina's. Unable to catch same.

12 p.m. Mutual aid to Grout Circle in Millers Falls for neighbor dispute. Report taken.

9:40 p.m. Criminal application issued to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] for operating a motor vehicle without headlights after sunset and operating a motor vehicle after license suspension on Route 2 at Forest Street.

10:25 p.m. Report of disturbance on Mountain Road. Vehicles screeching tires. Spoke with resident. Advised of complaint.

Sunday, 3/4

11:30 a.m. Flagg Hill resi-

dent concerned about injured animal. Provided environmental police number.

Monday, 3/5

4:15 p.m. Responded to Forest Street for distraught resident. Same transported to Franklin Medical Center.

Tuesday, 3/6

11:15 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with unwanted person at Main Street residence in Northfield.

Wednesday, 3/7

1 a.m. Noise complaint on French King Highway. Quiet upon arrival. Spoke with resident who said he would keep the noise down.

1:30 a.m. Arrested [REDACTED] for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and possession of a high capacity rifle magazine without a permit on Route 2.

Thursday, 3/8

12:45 a.m. Suspicious female walking on River Street.

Same was reunited with friends at Renovators Supply. 8 a.m. Larceny of gas from Gunn Street vehicle. Report taken.

12:24 p.m. Report of kids shooting BB guns behind West High Street residence. Checked same. Was shooting at a target. All set.

Friday, 3/9

12 am. Report of tractor trailer idling at French King Bowling Alley parking lot. Same will move.

Saturday, 3/10

10:30 p.m. Suspicious vehicle at Freight House parking lot. Same moved along.

Sunday, 3/11

12:05 a.m. Report of loud party at Gunn Street residence. Same quieted.

2:45 p.m. Report of loose dog on Gunn Street. Dog returned to owner.

Monday 3/12

3:30 p.m. Report of past hit and run. Report taken.

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# The Nightmare of Fukushima



CATE WOOLNER PHOTO

Chibo Kaneko, at the River Garden in Brattleboro, on the first anniversary of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster at Fukushima, March 11th

BY CHIHO KANEKO

**IWATE PREFECTURE, JAPAN** - I am from Iwate prefecture, Japan, one of the prefectures most damaged by the earthquake and the tsunami on March 11th, 2011. A year ago today, I woke up to the news of the massive earthquake in northeastern Japan. The ensuing days, weeks, and months, have been an emotional roller coaster ride of anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, hopefulness, depression, and gratitude. I have traveled to Japan three times since last March, and witnessed how people are coping with the situation forced upon them.

The tsunami carried away everything in an instant: lives, cars, houses, and the entire downtown. A year later, people are being tested for their resilience more than ever. Even though rebuilding is happening slowly on the coast, it will be a long time before people can feel life is back to normal.

I am convinced that having a strong community is the key to our survival. Natural disasters happen no matter what - but having an intact community goes a long way in coping with the challenges of the aftermath - and you could say that it can actually prevent huge disasters from happening, because some disasters are

exacerbated by man-made factors. Some of those factors can be eliminated if the soundness of the community is the collective priority.

The southern part of Iwate is 120 miles north of Fukushima Dai-ichi. My sister and her family live in this area, in Oshu City. The capital of Iwate, Morioka City, is about 156 miles away. This is where my parents live. Both cities are inland, so they were not affected by the tsunami directly. However, my sister's city is one of the radiation hot spots in my prefecture.

My brother-in-law is an elementary school teacher, and the soil of his school grounds was scraped and removed last summer in an effort to reduce the radiation level. Oshu City is famous for its brand of Maesawa beef - but it was banned from the market from July to August after some feed hay was found to contain a high level of cesium. Last month, dried shiitake mushrooms from my sister's region joined the list of banned agricultural products.

Just the other day, Iwate prefecture conducted urine testing of some three to fifteen-year-olds. The number of testing slots was limited, but the government was inundated by applications from parents who are concerned about

internal radiation exposure of their children. Of 132 samples tested, including 36 samples from my sister's city, 119 samples - that is 90% of all samples, contained cesium-134 and -137.

If you believe as I do that any amount of radioactivity in one's body, especially for children, is unnatural and therefore unacceptable, you would understand how serious this is.

I saw my sister on February 26th - two weeks ago - in Morioka City. My sister told me that although some families moved out of her community due to the radiation concerns, she has concluded that worrying about radiation is more detrimental to their well-being.

After all, her family's food comes mostly from local sources, including her mother-in-law's garden, and I sense that she is trying to balance many factors - concern about her young children's health; responsibility to behave calmly and properly as a parent and as a school teacher, the physical and economic feasibility of sourcing food from afar, and sensitivity toward local farmers who would go out of business if consumers reject their products based on radiation data, or worse, out of speculative fear.

During my three-week stay in Morioka, I found myself not being able to express my concern about the food put in front of me by others. It was partially an act of solidarity. But it was also due to confusing and conflicting information about what is safe and what is not. You don't know how badly contaminated your food is until you test it. And most people don't even want to know. This is a form of coping, I suppose.

I took small comfort in knowing that at least the seaweed I was eating had been harvested before the Fukushima Dai-ichi accidents. It's not that easy for someone like me who is in the area temporarily - who has a place to go back to in Vermont, to openly express ambivalence about their food.

The day before I left, my mother's cousin's son, Mr. Kudo, visited my parents. He is a dairy farmer in his 60s. He brought us gifts of a bag of his own rice and a two-quart bottle of fresh unpasteurized milk from his cows.

While we were chatting over coffee, I politely asked, "So, you

must be relieved that you are exempt from the turmoil of cesium-contaminated grass and hay, since you are further north of Morioka?"

He replied, "Well, in fact it's in our grass, too." I didn't know what to say. He continued, "We test the milk twice a month, and so far, the radiation level is below the government-set temporary limit. But come April, the limit will be lowered, and who knows what will happen."

This is but a very small example of what is happening in Japan. As you can imagine, the situation is a lot worse in Fukushima.

It's said that 100,000 people are displaced in Fukushima. While some of them are temporarily living in other towns within Fukushima prefecture, an estimated 60,000 people moved further away. This includes many women with small children. Often, husbands of those women chose to stay in Fukushima for jobs, maintaining two households. The family is united maybe two weekends a month. As the separation prolongs, stress and fatigue mount.

What's worse, in many cases, these women are considered to be 'voluntary evacuees' with not much support from the government. They are constantly pressured from their husbands, their in-laws, or their friends, to return home. Mothers who left wanting to protect their children, feel guilty for breaking the unity of the community and family. They feel guilty for stigmatizing their own hometowns.

Some mothers chose to stay - and they, too, struggle with a different kind of guilt - feeling they are putting their children at risk. They suffer now, and they will probably suffer for the rest of their lives.

There are many cities and towns outside of the evacuation zones, where radiation levels are several times higher than the NRC's 'dose limit for individual members of public'. Fukushima City, population over 280,000, is among those cities.

Most people in Japan would agree that the government has been trying to cover up the facts and downplay the seriousness of what's going on at Fukushima Dai-ichi. However, some choose to cling to the more optimistic evaluations of the radiation levels in the air, soil, water, or food -

even some people from the most contaminated areas hold out hopes of returning to their homes soon.

We must keep our eyes open to the reality of a nuclear disaster. Here are some of the facts.

In the village of Iitate, or as far as in the city of Date, which is 31 miles away from Fukushima Dai-ichi, dairy farmers are experiencing a sudden surge of miscarriages and stillbirths of their herd since last year's reactor accidents.

The enormous amount of debris created by the tsunami in northeastern Japan needs to be disposed of somehow - buried or incinerated. However, very few municipalities throughout Japan have agreed to accept such debris. Many citizens oppose incineration of debris from the northeast in their backyard, because they fear it might send radioactive materials into their air.

During the first six months since last March, the number of childbirths in Fukushima declined by 20% compared to the previous year. This is primarily due to the fact that women are afraid of bringing their newborn babies into the radioactive environment - many of them are opting to give birth elsewhere at their own expense. Also, many young Fukushima women, including high school girls, today feel a sense of resignation that they should never have children.

A tsunami wipes out towns in an instant. A nuclear disaster, on the other hand, is hard to see at first. You cannot see radioactive particles. You cannot smell them, nor taste them. And yet, they quietly seep into every nook and cranny of your life. They descend on your mind. They sow seeds of discord among family members. They destroy communities.

Without including the physical or environmental impact, the damage that a nuclear disaster causes is vast. And it lasts for a long time.

While I was in Japan, I was disturbed by how some people still seemed to accept nuclear power as a necessary evil of modern time. They cite steady supply of electricity, jobs, money for the local towns.

Furthermore, I was disturbed how victims fight against each other, rather than directing their

see JAPAN page 13

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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP

from COUNTRY page 1 movement, all strains of a counterculture rebellion Keller called, "very positive in reaction to the negativity going on."

"Also, there was sex and drugs and rock and roll, which many of us remember," he noted.

"In the 60s, people were more comfortable in their bodies. There was lots of experimenting with sex and relationships, and a lot of talk about sex, which was quite different than the 50s. Rock and roll was upbeat and hopeful; it defined the catchphrase, 'Give Peace a Chance.'"

As for drugs, Keller said, "They were much maligned, then and now, but they did contribute to the culture; they were mind expanding and pretty prevalent."

He cited a study by the Veterans Administration, back in the day when LSD was legal, which found that psychedelic drug use increased the subject's ability to love, to withstand hostility, and to communicate.

He cited Steve Jobs, who in his own words, "learned a lot from," psychedelics, "and had a hard time communicating with people that hadn't tried them."

As to women's liberation, and the role models girls of today

have to look up to, Keller noted that girls sports and women judges were rarities until 25 years ago.

Turning to his own personal liberation movement, Keller said that when he left Amherst College in the spring of 1969, "There was quite a group of people who didn't want to join the workforce or go to graduate school."

So.... "We pooled our resources, and bought a farm in Wendell."

Among the group who moved to an abandoned farm at the end of Cold Brook Road, on acreage that came to be known as Jimmy's Popcorn Farm, were a number of visual artists. Though their days on the farm are far behind them, these four painters, amazingly, are still making a living from their painting today, Keller said, as he displayed some of their work.

"We were artists who wanted to live together and create works of art."

Among the hundreds who cycled through the three rural communes in the Valley, in the days just before the Renaissance Community brought the joys and bummers of communal living to

hundreds more in the urban setting of Turners Falls, Keller recalled, "There were some romantic relationships there, as you might expect," with Smith and Mount Holyoke grads joining their beans from Amherst on the farm.

At some point, Dan, in fact, met Nina, a Philly native living on the Montague Farm, the first of the three communes, purchased in 1968 with money shuffled from the first showing of the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* at the Fillmore East, in a benefit for the Liberation News Service. The LNS had undergone a split between the "virtuous caucus," and the "vulgar Marxists," and the former, in a bold daylight heist of their own printing press, collator, typewriters, and files, decamped from New York City to the country, where they planned to run the nation's underground press from a drafty dairy barn on Ripley Road.

Needless to say, when winter came, the ink froze, and that aspect of the movement promptly fell by the wayside. To be replaced with organic gardening, recycling, and the tower toppling birth, at the hands of Amherst grad Samuel Lovejoy, of a world-

wide movement to stop nuclear power.

And the rest, in a very real way, is history, with many a mover and shaker moving from the placid hills of Western Mass and Southeastern Vermont to trouble the calculations of corporate titans, as Lovejoy's brainchild Musicians United for Safe Energy brought hundreds of thousands to Battery Park to sing and play for a world free from the threat of nuclear meltdowns, as Anna Gyorgy's group Women and Life on Earth inspired the German Greens to greater efforts to finally break the hold of the nuclear power complex on Germany and much of Europe, and as Harvey 'Sluggo' Wasserman continues to this day to prod and propagandize a movement for Solartopia in America on talk shows, op-ed pages and Free Press blogs across the land.

"Why are we still here?" asked Nina Keller, who spoke briefly during the two hour symposium. "We were really some of the very lucky people to show up in this area when the agricultural community found its children migrating to the cities.

Nina said, "We were inexperi-

enced farmers," who learned a lot from the elder generation of farmers who became their new neighbors when the communes were young.

Last year, Nina accepted an honorary role as 'Ambassador to New Gardeners,' for the Wendell energy committee, and the cycle turns.

The Kellers continue to farm the land the commune colonized on Cold Brook Road in Wendell in 1969, where they have fended off the spraying of herbicides along power lines, helped with the conservation of town coffers on the finance committee, guided the town's deliberations from the selectboard, and prepared the local populace for the possibility of evacuation in the event of a nuclear accident in Vernon, VT from the emergency planning committee. The work is never done.

But sometimes, in early spring, you get a chance to take a break. And if you do, go listen to the Kellers give a reprise of their talk, complete with amazing archival film footage from the communes that once graced our fair Valley, at the Wendell Free Library, on Tuesday, March 20th, at 7:00 p.m.



## Energy Committee Responds on Solar Contract

BY KATIE NOLAN

WENDELL - At the March 5th Wendell energy committee meeting, chair Nan Reibschlaeger told Dave Thomas of Seaboard Solar she had not found a performance date in Seaboard's draft contract with the town.

A performance date clause would allow Wendell to end the contract if Seaboard fails to start commercial operations by a specified date. This sticking point has stalled the process of a potentially lucrative energy deal for the town of Wendell.

The February 28th special town meeting authorized the selectboard to enter into a solar

power purchase or net metering credit purchase agreement. The selectboard, finance committee, and energy committee have been reviewing a draft contract that would make Wendell a host community for 10 megawatts of electricity generated by Seaboard's solar installations in eastern Massachusetts.

Seaboard would sell the electricity and reap the solar energy credits, while Wendell would be allocated a certain amount of electricity for municipal use, perhaps 200 kilowatt hours, at a reduced rate. Wendell would also be able to 'rent' payments of 0.005 cents per kilowatt hour for

the electricity generated.

Thomas estimated the net advantage to the town, between reduced electricity costs and 'rent' payments would be approximately \$70,000 per year.

At its March 12th meeting, the energy committee developed recommendations to present at the March 14th selectboard meeting that would iron out the details of the contract and protect the town of Wendell from possible losses.

Reibschlaeger said that Seaboard has shown it has leases in place that could be used for a wind installation in Wendell or a town contract with another solar energy company.

In addition, the energy committee also wrote to the selectboard, "We recommend using some, if not all, of the proceeds from Seaboard for micro loans and grants for Wendell residents to use for home energy production and efficiency so we can move toward producing more of our own electricity in town."

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### Correction

An error in last week's press release regarding the Turners Falls spring parade gave two dates for the event. The correct date is Saturday, April 14th. For more information, contact Michael Nelson at 413-522-0712 or michaelnelsonmba@aol.com.

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BY FRED CICETTI

**LEONIA, NJ - Q.** *A friend of mine in her 60s was diagnosed with "fifth disease." I've never heard of such a thing. What can you tell me about it?*

Fifth disease in children is a mild viral infection caused by human parvovirus B19. The name was given to the malady because it was listed as the fifth of the illnesses that, before vaccines, caused rashes in children. The other four are measles,

chicken pox, German measles and roseola. Fifth disease is also called "slapped cheek disease" because of the rash that may appear on a child's face.

About half of the population gets fifth disease sometime during childhood. It is contagious. Once you've had fifth disease, you will not be at risk of getting it again.

A child with fifth disease commonly has a rash on the face, trunk and limbs. An ill child may have a low-grade fever, malaise, or cold-like symptoms a few days before the rash breaks out. The child is usually not very ill, and the rash goes away in 7 - 10 days.

An adult without immunity who gets fifth disease can develop not only rash but swelling and pain in joints. The joints most frequently affected are the hands,

wrists, knees and ankles. The pain and swelling can last several months, but usually goes away in a couple of weeks. There is usually no long-term disability from the disease.

Although many childhood illnesses are rare today because of widespread vaccination, they are still health threats, especially for adults who may have never been immunized.

There's a general principle that illnesses which are mild in children tend to be much more severe in adults. While having the disease as a child generally confers immunity as an adult, there is still an estimated five percent to 20 percent of the population susceptible to one or more of these ailments.

Here are some contagious childhood diseases that are worse

in adults:

**Chicken Pox**

If you get chicken pox as an adult, you are more likely to suffer from congestion, high fever and intense itching. In addition, you are at greater risk of contracting pneumonia and other diseases because of a weakened immune system. The virus that causes chicken pox can be dormant in the body and resurface years later as shingles, a painful skin disease.

**Measles**

Measles (rubeola) causes a high fever in children, but most recover with no ill effects. Adults suffer from more fever, pneumonia and arthritis when they get measles. Encephalitis, a brain inflammation, is also seen more frequently in adults with measles. German measles (rubella) can cause miscarriages, stillbirths and a variety of birth defects.

**Mumps**

The main symptoms of

mumps are swollen salivary glands, fever and headache. Adults who get mumps are at risk of complications that include the brain infection meningitis, miscarriage in the first trimester of a pregnancy, and problems with sex organs. Swelling of the testicles is frequently so painful that hospitalization is required. For women, inflammation of the ovaries occurs in about five percent of the mumps cases.

**Whooping Cough**

Whooping cough (pertussis) is highly contagious. Again, whooping cough can be prevented with a vaccine. Unfortunately, vaccination does not provide life-long immunity. The American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP) says adults up to 65 years old should receive the special adult vaccine for whooping cough, even if they were vaccinated as children.

*If you have a question, write to fred@healthygeez.com.*

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG**

**Breaking & Entering; Hit with Paint Balls**

**Monday, 3/5**

9:35 a.m. Requested assistance on French King Highway for suspicious activity.

**Tuesday, 3/6**

7:35 a.m. Called to assist residence with suspicious, threatening text message.

7:35 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with unwanted subject at Brattleboro Rd. residence.

8:20 p.m. Missing person report on Walnut Street.

**Wednesday, 3/7**

7:55 a.m. Suspicious party on Franklin Road. Checked OK.

12:10 p.m. Party spoken with from Greenfield regarding suspicious, threatening text message from earlier in the week.

**Thursday, 3/8**

11:30 a.m. Breaking and entering at French King

Highway residence. Under investigation.

5:20 p.m. Reported subject on the French King Bridge. Ambulance transported same.

6:40 p.m. House alarm sounding at residence on Hill Road. Set off by new resident.

**Friday, 3/9**

8:55 a.m. Reported cyber bullying situation reported from elementary school. Under investigation.

9:30 a.m. Suspicious motor vehicle and activity. Resident reported a truck had driven over her back lawn on Boyle Road. Under investigation.

9:50 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with report of breaking and entering at residence on the Gill town line at North Cross Road.

10:15 p.m. Resident on North Cross Road reported a truck driving across his lawn, no suspects at this time.

**Saturday, 3/10**

3 a.m. Reportedly a large party on Ben Hale Road. 11:10 a.m. Requested to locate a large amount of smoke somewhere along the French King Highway. Permitted burn located.

1:45 p.m. Resident on Ben Hale Road reported a suspicious truck about 1 a.m. Unknown direction of travel, but pulled into her driveway.

3:45 p.m. Resident reported his truck being hit with Paint Balls. Suspects cleaned all affected area.

7:50 p.m. Reported suicidal party in area of Gill-Montague Bridge. Subject walked over to Montague..

**JAPAN from page 11**

anger to the true source of their woe.

Some say this infighting is the result of the government propaganda. For many decades, the Japanese government has repeated how safe nuclear technology is. Today the Japanese government keeps telling us that the level of radiation we are exposed to right now is safe. People are skeptical of what the government says, but it takes a lot of energy to counter the prevailing force.

When I was in Japan, I felt so helpless.

Then I read a book by the philosopher and professor Tetsuya Takahashi.

He said, "The system of nuclear power cannot exist without assuming the sacrifice of some. The sacrifice includes: people who mine uranium while

risking exposure; communities who house nuclear power plants; and workers at nuclear power plants who subject themselves to the risk of exposure each day. They are all sacrificed for the sake of corporate profit and people in the distant communities who use the electricity."

Professor Takahashi continued, "If you think human prosperity requires certain sacrifice, I would like to ask you, then, who decides to sacrifice whom? Who has the right to make that decision? Do you have the courage to be the sacrifice yourself?"

"What we have to do now is to envision and to work to create a society free of sacrifice. We have to find ways to abandon the system of sacrifice, which is nuclear power."

He has articulated what I had been feeling.

Having witnessed the faces

and nuances of sacrifice in the aftermath of the Fukushima Dai-ichi accidents, I feel so clear in my mind that we have made a mistake by allowing nuclear power to exist. Besides, nuclear power has the potential to destroy, therefore sacrifice, all of us and everything in the world.

Whether in Japan or in the United States, I want to emphasize that it is our fellow humans who work at nuclear power plants. They are our neighbors, friends, and families. It is the responsibility of each of us to build a community where no one is sacrificed.

As I said earlier, I would like to believe that the soundness of our community is our collective priority, because being part of a healthy and intact community is crucial for our survival in this ever-changing world. It is our only hope.



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# Ferry Meadow Farm - part XXXI

Turners Falls 2017

# BACK TO THE LAND

**BY ELOISE MICHAEL** - It doesn't take long to get to Ferry Meadow.

Though we are not far from my house, it feels like a different world. I catch glimpses of the river rolling along behind the trees that line it. The fields are damp and dewy this morning, each drop of water reflecting the sun, which is already beginning to feel warm.

There are cows in one field, goats in another. "They're growing wheat here," Marissa points out like a tour guide.

She pulls the truck up to a house and parks it. "I think someone will be expecting you," she says, "but I don't actually know."

Marissa gets out of the truck and walks up to the big house. There are many smaller ones scattered around and even more tents. I follow.

She opens the door and walks in calling *hello* as she goes.

We pass a bunch of shelves and coats on hooks before entering a large open room.

One wall is almost entirely windows with sliding doors opening out onto a large deck. Inside there is plenty of furniture, enough chairs for a large group, and several tables.

Everything looks well-worn but clean. One end of the room is a large kitchen. A man about my age turns from the sink to face us. He looks surprised, dries his

hands on his pants and comes over to greet us.

"Marissa," he says, "home early?"

I am surprised to discover that she lives here, but I keep quiet.

"I'm still on duty," she says. "I'm just dropping Theresa off, and then I have to run."

"Theresa," she says, turning to me, "this is Dave. Meet Theresa," she says to him. "She's a friend of Leah's and needs a place to stay."

"Hi," he says, smiling and holding out his hand, which I shake. "Have you worked on a farm before?"

"Well, no."

"That's OK, most people haven't. If you don't mind working hard, you'll do fine."

Marissa has to leave in a

hurry, and I am left alone with Dave, who seems to think I have come here because I want to learn how to farm.

I spend the morning doing farm chores, also getting to know Dave. He doesn't seem surprised that I have come to stay and asks me whether I have a tent. I tell him I don't.

"We have a few in the barn no one's using, but mostly, if they're in there, it means they leak. Why don't you take off early this afternoon. I'll give you a repair kit, and you can work on getting one of them waterproofed." Then he adds, "Have you ever fixed a tent before?"

"Not really," I say. "I mean, no, I haven't."

He looks at me for half a second, then asks, "Have you ever

slept in a tent before?"

"Yeah, sure, of course," I say, though I have only camped out a few times when I was a teenager.

"Just checking," he says, grinning. He has a nice smile.

I grin back at him, though I am not sure why.

"You still work for Comcast?" he asks, nodding at my uniform.

"No, I never did," I tell him. "I just borrowed this from Marissa."

"You borrowed a uniform?" he asks, raising one eyebrow.

How do I explain that I was hiding in a dirty tunnel in my pajamas? "It's complicated," I say. I know that I will have to tell him something. After all I will need to explain why I am up at night and sleep during the day.

- Continued Next Issue

**FUKUSHIMA** from pg 10 as the second article of its charter a mandate to promote nuclear power.

Gundersen talked about what he called, "the myth of safe shutdown," following a core melt accident, when the chain reaction is finally halted, but at least 5% of the heat remains, for five to seven years, as the fuel continues to break down.

In a 12 foot cubed vessel, the core of a nuclear reactor contains a quarter million horsepower of heat. In a loss of coolant accident, that core needs to be controlled by dumping the equivalent of a quarter million horses in a hurry, Gundersen said.

He noted that before the tsunami hit, Fukushima Dai-ichi Unit 1 experienced damage from the earthquake that led to spikes in radiation at the fence line, but the actual sequence of events remains a mystery.

Unit 1 had just received government approval to operate for 10 more years past its original operating license. One month later, the earthquake struck, registering a magnitude of 8.9 on the Richter scale offshore, but 7.9 at the Dai-ichi station, a level the reactor was supposedly designed to handle.

"What does it mean for seismic calculations at Vermont Yankee?" asked Gundersen, if an earthquake of this magnitude caused a loss of coolant to the core at Fukushima Unit 1?

When the tsunami struck 40 minutes later, it knocked out the back-up diesel generators, which had come on to keep the reactors' cooling systems operating after offsite power was lost. But even if the diesel generators had been positioned appropriately on higher ground, to be sheltered from a tsunami of this size, Gundersen said the giant wave had also taken out the nuclear complex's heat suppression pumps, which would have therefore failed to cool the diesel generators had they been operating, causing them to fail anyway.

"Every plant in the world is subject to the same problem," he noted.

After the failure of the heat suppression pumps and back-up generators, the reactors functioned for a short time on battery power, until the batteries ran down. At that point, the pressure release valves for the core containment vessel would not open, since they run on electricity, and the coolant systems ceased to function, so the core rapidly began to overheat. The superheated fuel reacted with the coolant water by sucking the oxygen out and transforming it into hydrogen.

Gundersen believes the pressure inside the containment cores soon became so intense due to the fury of the chemical reaction that the pressure actually stretched the bolts on the containment lids, allowing radioactive

gas - including hydrogen - to vent into the containment buildings, where only a spark was needed to cause the hydrogen to explode.

Meanwhile, "brave men were sent to manually open the pressure valves," but it required 300 turns each to open them. These men were working in the dark, in the rubble, in extremely radioactive conditions, said Gundersen. But the vents failed, three for three.

One after the other, the reactor buildings blew up, scattering fuel as far as half a mile from the site, and releasing vast amounts of their radioactive inventories into the air and ocean.

Gundersen said the condition of the spent fuel pool at Fukushima Unit 4 is still insecure, and a further seismic event there could yet rupture this pool, and "split Japan in two."

He noted that far more used fuel is stored in a vulnerable seventh story, unhardened pool at Vermont Yankee than was stored at Fukushima that day. The 700 tons of spent fuel at Vermont Yankee contains, he said, "as much cesium as was ever released in every bomb ever tested in the whole world."

The loss of offsite power at any American reactor could cause coolant systems at US reactors to cease functioning within four to eight hours of a natural disaster, he added.

He said after the Mark-I con-

tainment vents failed three times out of three at Fukushima, the NRC recently announced the commission had decided to improve the design of the vents, a response he derided as inadequate.

"I realized within a day of the accident that it would be as severe as Chernobyl, something that Secretary Chu and the Japanese did not admit for weeks," Gundersen said.

Fukushima left ten reactor cores exposed, including the equivalent of seven cores' worth of fuel in Unit 4's storage pool.

Still today, web cameras show the steam escaping night after night at Fukushima, as radiation continues to leak into the air and sea. In addition to noble gases, the reactors have released massive quantities of reactive isotopes like iodine-47, cesium and strontium-90.

Gundersen explained the human body cannot distinguish between the iodine it needs, and the radioactive isotope of iodine, which is taken up by the thyroid, where it can lead to later cancer. Similarly our bodies treat cesium as if it were potassium, storing the radioactive isotope in muscles, and strontium as if it were calcium, storing it in the bones, where it can cause leukemia and other cancers.

Gundersen estimated the accidents at Fukushima would lead to "one million excess cancer deaths" around the world.

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3  
The Town of Montague reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

Turners Falls: *The Puzzle of New England's Predators*. Join naturalist John Foster for a slide show of New England's predators. Let's demystify these animals, 1 - 2:15 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Gender-role free Contra Dance*, 7 - 10 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie & The Mud, Blood & Beer Band*. Singing all your Johnny Cash favorites, 9 - 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Turn it Loose*, 9:30 p.m.



Michael Robins reads his poetry at *The Rendezvous*, on Sunday, March 18th at 5:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer with DJ Greg 2000*, 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 18th  
Academy of Music, Northampton: *Celtic Heels' Irish Dance Company* Production, 2 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Michael Robins*, poetry reading, 5:30 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Marlene Lavelle and Friends*, 7:30 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *John Sheldon*, 8 - 10 p.m.

MONDAY, MARCH 19th  
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo*, 8 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21st  
Leverett Library: *Dr Dan Bennett of the Leverett Historical Society* will read and discuss a letter sent from the battlefield by a soldier from North Leverett, followed by the singing of a Civil War march by the Leverett Community Chorus under the direction of Anne Louise White. Book discussion of *March*, by Geraldine Brooks at 7 p.m.. Dessert potluck, 6:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Quiznite with Quizmaster Alex*, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Harmaniac Brothers*, 8-10 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 22nd  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Kelianna*, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 23rd 7:30 p.m.  
SATURDAY, MARCH 24th 8:30 p.m.  
Shelburne Falls: *Pothole pictures presents, Fiddler on the Roof Sing-along*, 1971, G.

FRIDAY, MARCH 23rd  
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Birds of Prey*, Come listen to stories about birds of prey. Ages 3-6. 10:30 a.m.

Episcopal Church, Greenfield: St. James Coffeehouse featuring *The Annual All Coop-ed Up Concert, A Sneak Preview of This Summer's Line-Up*. 7 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: *Heather Maloney*, 8 p.m.

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

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Jen Kearney*, 8 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *TJ & The Peepers*, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Atom Planet & Medicine Warriors*, folk, 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24th  
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Investigation Station: native species underneath a microscope!* Between 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Montague Bookmill : *Tiny Radars Bookmill Residency Series #04, featuring Trials & Tribulations and 23 Quartet*, 8 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Zydeco Connection*, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Now & Then*, Acoustic Rock, 9 - 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Afterglow*, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Zombie Nurse 1st Zombiversary Party & Show*, 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 25th  
Montague Grange: *Vintage & Antiques Market*, quality vintage and antiques vendors bring their wares to the Grange, 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Wendell Free Library: Filmed on location in Wendell, Montague, Greenfield, & South Deerfield, and with an all Wendell cast, *Donna and Alia Go Scrapping* (36 minutes) features original music and eye-popping choreography! Shows at 7 & 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Mad Men Season Premier Party*, and pre- and post-show Karaoke & DJ'ing from TNT Karaoke Productions, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Le Chéile*, an Irish Session, 8 p.m.

MONDAY, MARCH 26th  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps, A Night of Spoken Word*, 7-10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Dada Dino's open mic*, 8 p.m.

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SAT 3/17 9:30 \$3  
ROCKIT QUEER

SUN 3/18 FREE  
5:30 Poetry: Michael Robins  
7:30 Music: Marlene Lavelle

MON 3/19 8pm FREE  
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EVERY TUESDAY  
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Craft Night*, 7 p.m.

EVERY WEDNESDAY  
Winterland, Greenfield: *TNT Karaoke*, 9 p.m.

EVERY THURSDAY  
Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Acoustic open mic*, with Dan, Kip and Shultzzy 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*.

NOW until March 31st  
Gallery A3, Amherst Cinema Bldg.: *Seeing Into Metal*, photography by Wendell's Gloria Kegeles. Shooting with a vintage Nikon camera, she combines skill, instinct and humor with her in-camera compositions.

MARCH  
Elmer's Store, Ashfield: *The Eye, The Lens, The Hand*: B&W views from Wendell photographer Morgan Hoyle-Combs.

MARCH through APRIL  
Leverett Library: *Photographs from the East Leverett Trails*. The Leverett

Trails Committee sponsored an East Leverett Trails Photo Contest, and the photographs are on display in the Community Room.

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

NOW through APRIL 1st  
Gallery at Hallmark, Turners Falls: *Imitating Art*, a student photographic exhibition featuring attempts to photographically reproduce an original work of art.

NOW through MARCH 28th  
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *East to West-Stories, Games, and Festival*, an exhibit in the Great Hall. Art, history, and literature converge in this exhibit of Chinese-inspired student art. As part of our valley-wide BIG READ of the *Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan.

THURSDAY, MARCH 15th  
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Bird Migration*, Join UMASS Biology professor, Bruce Byers, for a discussion on ornithology and bird migration, 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *48 Solutions, Planemo, Goat Boy*, rock/indie, 9 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Tommy Filiault & Friends, Acoustic Rock*, 8-10 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 16th  
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, 9 p.m.

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

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Chickenwire*, 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Freres & Pere (Roland) Lapiere*, folk, rock, Free, 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 16th and SATURDAY, MARCH 17th  
Turners Falls High School: *Bye Bye Birdie* presented by Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School, 7 p.m. Also matinee Sunday, March 18th at 1 p.m.

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Syrup, One Sweet Performance Festival*, A delicious potpourri of world class theatre, music, and dance for all ages. See website for details: ptco.org.

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# Irish Sketchbook

## To Banish Misfortune

### St. Patrick's Day

BY DAVID BRULE

**NORTHAMPTON** - Ah, now if ye're at all like me, this is the season to be Ireland dreaming. And also, if ye're like me, you can't afford the budget-killing prices Aer Lingus is asking these days to get back there once more, to quell your longing for Galway Bay, the Lakes of Killarney, or the hills of Donegal.

I'll tell you what I'll do this St. Paddy's time of year, and you can join me if you like. (Sure, I charmed the editors of this rag into giving me a pass on the strict rules of objective journalism they normally maintain, just for this one important occasion.)

So come with me as I unpack me fiddle and roisin me bow, and settle in for a few hours with the Banish Misfortune Boys and we'll sing ourselves silly with the songs and dance tunes of Old Ireland.

I'm talking about a band of gents who tap into that vein of music that keeps the memories of Eireann alive. We settled on the name Banish Misfortune for our motley crew of six, mostly because it evokes that kind of poetic whimsy and optimism that can only be Irish. Besides, it's one of our favorite tunes and we crank it out each and every session.

The six of us have been playing together for 20 years or more now, along with any number of 20 or more friends in informal music sessions up and down the Valley. But at one point, it occurred to us we could tolerate getting just a bit more organized and still keep the tradition alive.

We got ourselves a fine invitation to play at the Brewery in Northampton on Sundays, and in exchange for our music there'd be a steady flow of pints and a modest sum of pocket money. So we have settled into a weekly band-in-residence status.

So if you can't afford the price of a seat on a flight to Shannon, drive over to 'Hamp and be transported back to the

Shamrock Shore on the wings of music and a little imagination.

You'll not be disappointed. There'll be our man Tim on the concertina, a fine tall Irish boy from Hungry Hill, a man with a heart as big as a tent, as only the Irish can have. And when he's not popping up to work the room of regulars like some silver-haired Irish politician running for the Senate, kissing the ladies whenever he can and complimenting the babies, he'll be launching us into the bouncy *Dingle Regatta* and *Chase Me Charley* on his little squeeze-box. Or perhaps it'll be the heart-felt, oldest love song in the Irish repertoire, the *Eileen Aroon*, or a totally irreverent song for an Irish wake:

*"Look at the coffin,  
Bright golden handles,  
Isn't it grand, boys,  
To be bloody well  
DEAD!"*

And we won't mention here what he has to say about the mourners, the preacher, and the widow! You'll have to come to hear it for yourself.

It may be that death and taxes are inevitable but no one is to say you can't have your fun with it first. But you've got to keep that sly twinkle in your eye, just so some of those touchy people won't be offended.

Then there'll be your man Seán about whom I've written plenty here over the years, when we spoke of the Spring Street Bridge, the Children of Lír, and the swans, a while back. And you can be sure that his version of the exile song *Isle of Inishfree* will set the room to staring into the foam on the pints of Guinness and promising to get back there before it's too late. If you're paying attention and not blathering away, you may well find yourself shedding a tear for Ireland.

The prodigy of the band is our young man TJ, who if he doesn't play it, the instrument hasn't been invented yet. He's a grad of the Berklee College of Music, and he makes us all look



DAVE MEUSER PHOTO

*Banish Misfortune (l-r): Walter Carlip (fiddle), T.J. Ezold (accordion, flute, banjo, whistle), Sean Burke (mandolin, bouzouki), Tim Donoghue (concertina), David Brule (fiddle). Not pictured: Dave Meuser (guitar).*

good, what with his youth, his brash attitude and the array of instruments he brings with him. He'll launch out with a sharp tune on the banjo, the flute, the penny whistle, accordion, bouzouki, he'd even bring his tuba if we let him. He's been honored by the establishment, they've named a beer for this gifted young man with attitude: the "Weizenheimer"!

The chair next to TJ is occupied by a number of virtuosos. There'll be, depending on the week, Walter, our pony-tailed professor of mathematics who produces the most soulful and rich sounds from his masterpiece of a violin. He brings a twisted sense of humor and often unleashes killer quips or brilliant plays on words that either make us fall to pieces with mirth, or moan in pain.

When Walter is away, the chair is turned over to Kira, an all-Ireland fiddle champion who can challenge Seán with her equally heart-wrenching slow airs, or charm the house with her lilting hornpipes. Sometimes there's Ted instead, a fellow musician from Millers Falls whose *Geese in the Bog* set gets the youngsters age three to ninety five (hats off to Jane our eldest regular!) up and jig-tapping toes or high-stepping

heels.

Professor Ellen can also be found filling in when one of us is away. Another all-Ireland champion musician on the flute, she could charm the birds off the bush, or have the house on its feet with a driving reel. You can see, there's no lack of volunteers to join us.

Finally, on either end of the line-out there are the bookends who both happen to be named Dáithí, or David, to you. Dave on the guitar takes care of trying to organize us, that is to say about as much as you can organize a gaggle of céili cats. He takes care of our schedule, our account books, and he does the worrying for all of us. More than that, it's his job to keep us musically in line with his steady, subtle guitar.

A fine singer himself, his

*West Coast of Clare* adds to our list of sad songs, just the way the Irish like them. They say of the Irish that all our songs are sad, and our fighting merry! So it won't be long after one of those sad ones, that the mischief will start again and we'll slip in our Belfast jump rope song *I'll Tell Me Ma* or dash the sadness with the anthem *Dirty Old Town*.

As for me, well, I'd like to think as the saying goes, I'll tune me fiddle, roisin me bow, and I'll be welcome wherever I go.

Like I started out telling ye's, the music is the thing. It'll get you, get us all, back to where the heart is ever yearning, at this time of year. If you're ready to drive the cold winter away, to banish misfortune, then you'll be as welcome as the flowers in May, or as a glass of good Whiskey on a Sunday.

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