

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 7 - NO. 29

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 23, 2009

Fire District Sets Aside \$50,000 for New Fire Engine

BY DAVID DETMOLD
TURNERS FALLS – On Tuesday, the Turners Falls Fire District took a half-step toward replacing their 30-year-old Maxam fire engine, by setting aside \$50,000 from free cash in a stabilization account for the eventual purchase of a new pumper. The Prudential Committee had requested \$100,000, to be raised from taxation, toward the purchase. But the fire district's finance committee argued that in tough economic times, taxpayers could not afford a rate increase to pay for a fourth fire truck.

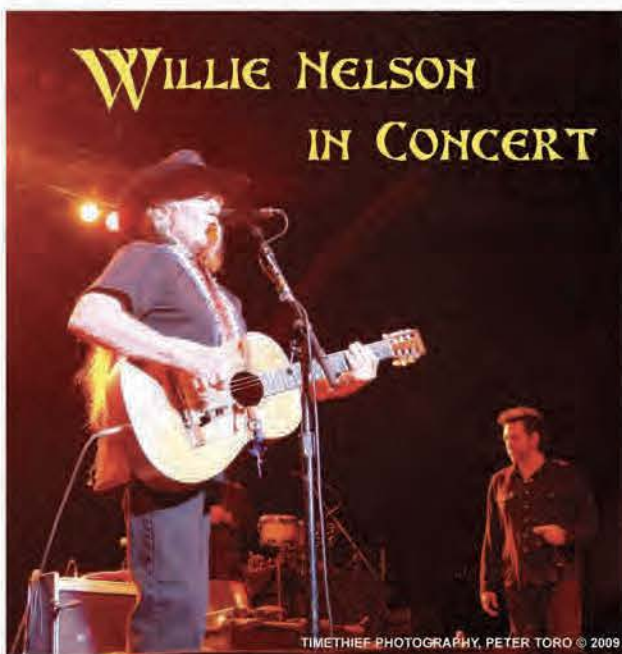
Fire chief Ray Godin told the 30 voters who showed up to the annual meeting at the Hillcrest School auditorium that the 1979 Maxam was "the last piece that goes out the door," to fight a working structure fire. Even so, Godin said, "We used it at least nine times last year. I have no idea how many times we will use it this year."

Godin said the engine's 750-gallon tank leaks; the truck has a rebuilt transmission that is unreliable, particularly in reverse; the engine's water pump failed last year; it has some body rot; and, when leaving the scene of a house fire on New Year's Eve on 2nd Street last year, it had to be escorted back to the station by another truck, lights flashing, when its alternator failed, disabling all its electrical systems.

"It's showing its age," said Godin, who noted the Maxam was a workhouse during the Strathmore Mill fire two years ago, when it provided resupply water for the other engines fighting that fire.

Speaking for the finance committee, Joe Janikas pointed out that with three other trucks in the station, and the availability of mutual aid from surrounding departments, the district had not proven the need to replace this

see **TRUCK** pg 8



Willie Nelson performing at the Mullins Center Friday night; Mickey Raphael, on harp, background

BY DAVID DETMOLD
AMHERST – American Idols come and go, but American Icons just rave on.

That's what country music greats Ray Price, 83, and Willie Nelson, 75, did on Friday, April 17th, at the Mullins Center, at UMass Amherst.

The crowd was not large – Western Massachusetts, despite Bear Country's best efforts – is not a hotbed of country music, but it was devoted. Many of the peo-

ple seated near the stage sang along to almost every song.

Price, who has the bona fides to dispute the title of hardest working man in country music with Nelson, told the crowd he was brought to Nashville by Hank Williams in 1951, and roomed with him for a year before Williams died on New Year's Day, 1953 in the back seat of a Caddy on the road to Canton, Ohio, with a few empty beer cans

see **CONCERT** pg 6

Closed But Not Forgotten

HYRUM H. HUSKEY JR.
MONTAGUE CENTER – What to do with the now-closed Montague Center School building was the focus of a public hearing at the Montague Center fire station on Wednesday, April 22nd. Judging by the 30-plus attendees, the school building's historical role in Montague Center remains vivid in residents' thoughts.

Wednesday's forum, at the Montague Center fire station, was staged as an opportunity to hear reactions and ideas from residents to a building-use feasibility study conducted by Greenberg and Associates of Putney, VT, an architectural firm working on the study in conjunction with Montague's capital improvements committee.

"Unlike the Strathmore and Railroad Salvage buildings," said Les Cromack, the committee's chair, "Montague Center School is owned by the town."

Cromack noted that the school building "has some negatives" and "was not an

easy building to sell, but it does have potential."

Doug Kennedy, a planner and economist from Norwich, VT, opened the consultants' presentation with a brief summation of locational factors, the condominium market for different age groups, and the economic and age demographics of the surrounding area. He noted that the growth in the number of Montague Center residents between the ages of 55 and 75, with incomes over \$75,000, exceeded other towns in the area. That trend, he suggested, might bode well for potential condominium or rental marketing.

Kennedy also outlined the marketing factors surrounding other proposed uses.

Chip Greenberg, of Greenberg and Associates, stated that his initial planning, and the architectural drawings included in his presentation, were based on three primary assumptions: market potentials, the building itself, and the rural

see **SCHOOL** pg 13

Quick Response to House Fire in Montague Center

BY DAVID DETMOLD – In the middle of a severe thunderstorm, at about 1:54 a.m. Wednesday, a lightning bolt struck the recently renovated kitchen of a two-story house at 11 Union Street in Montague Center, home to Ruth Helmich and Katherine Simon. By the time Montague police and Montague Center volunteer firefighters arrived, about eight minutes later, the rear of the house was in flames.

Helmich and Simon, who are both retired, were taken by BHS ambulance to Franklin Medical Center in Greenfield, where they were being treated for smoke inhalation. Simon was reported in good condition on Wednesday afternoon, while Helmich was in intensive care, in serious condition. Four of their six cats perished in the fire.

Assistant chiefs Rick Sawin and Gary Dion arrived on the scene in the first Montague Center fire truck at 2:05 a.m., with three other volunteers. "Fire was showing from the back side of the house," Sawin said. He speculated the lightning strike had traveled down the antenna to the kitchen roof. "It took a wicked hit."

Neighbor Jaye Pope, who lives about a block away on Main Street, said the lightning bolt was so bright it woke her from sleep. "It was like a strobe light. A millisecond later there was this loud explosion. I've never heard anything like it." She praised the rapid response of police and fire personnel for averting worse disaster.

Montague Center volunteer firefighter Ralph Rau

see **BLAZE** pg 6

Lightning Strike on Wills Hill



Jeff Fitzpatrick clears the remnants of a white pine blasted by a lightning bolt on Wills Hill early Wednesday morning

BY DAVID DETMOLD
MONTAGUE PLAINS – "I've seen plenty of lightning strikes before," said Turners Falls water department superintendent Mike Brown on Wednesday. "I've seen the scars run down the trees right to the ground. But I've never seen a tree blown up like this before."

Most everybody in

Montague woke up shortly before two a.m. on Wednesday morning, as a severe lightning storm passed through the area, with booming thunderclaps rattling windowpanes all over town.

One bolt struck a white pine on the water department's road to Wills Hill, and shattered it to

see **STRIKE** pg 7

Erving Paper Mill Files for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy

Stock Market Losses for Pension Funds Cited

BY DAVID DETMOLD – On Monday, April 20th, the Erving Paper Mill filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. According to a press release from Erving Industries and a report in the *Boston Business Journal*, the company is taking the step primarily due to a decline in the stock market value of assets held in its pension fund, leaving the company's pension plans underfunded by about \$15 million.

Company CFO Denis Emmett said on Tuesday, "We are going to continue operating as normal. We're hoping to emerge from bankruptcy by the end of this year. We are not planning any major changes to the workforce. We are operating seven days a week, 24 hours a day."

Erving Industries, the parent company of the paper mill and the adjacent ERSECO water treatment plant, is a family-owned business owned by the Housen family. It formerly employed 1300 workers in several states, but has downsized to a workforce of 130 at the longtime mainstay of its operations, the paper mill in Erving Center.

On the the paper mill's centennial celebration in 2005, CEO Morris Housen looked forward to the completion of MassHighway's multi-year, multi-million dollar bypass of Route 2 around the mill, completed in 2007, as an opportunity to install a fourth paper-making machine, and expand operations at the

see **MILL** pg 9

PET OF THE WEEK

Quick Paw



Odell

My name is Odell and I'm a 7-year-old male black-and-white longhair cat in need of a good home. Quiet but playful, reserved yet so very affectionate, with a very quick paw to catch a catnip mouse – yes, that's me! I was a stray, and it was just my bad luck that the house I picked out to live in already had too many cats. Even the nice person who brought me here said they would have kept me... I was so great, except that they already had those other cats. I'm sure once you meet me, see my beautiful white ruff, and hear my purr when you pet me, you will want to take me home. For more information on adopting me please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email: levrett@dphvs.org.

MONTAGUE CENTER LIBRARY NEWS
Visiting with Baby Emus



PHOTO BY LINDA HICKMAN

Daniela Parpalov of Turners Falls enjoyed holding a week-old emu chick at the Carnegie Library on Tuesday, April 21st. Two baby emus were brought by Diane Mares, who has been raising emus with her sister, Geri Johnson, at Songline Farm in Gill since 1995.

Correction:

Due to an editing error, a passage about the proper way to respond if you discover a tick on your skin in the article on the Politics of Lyme Disease (MR VII #28) was printed incorrectly. Instead of reading: "Pull it off swiftly and gently. Use tweezers or 'tick spoons' preferably. Do not light it on fire. Apply

Vaseline or any other topical agents to the tick while it is attached to your skin," the passage should have read: "Pull it off swiftly and gently. Use tweezers or 'tick spoons' preferably. Do not light it on fire, apply Vaseline or any other topical agents to the tick while it is attached to your skin." Got that?

Visiting Bell Choir on April 26th

If you enjoy Bell Ringers, then plan to attend the 9:30 a.m. service at the First Congregational Church, 148 L. Street in Turners Falls on Sunday, April 26th. The Bell Choir from the Amherst

South Congregational Church will present their music, under the direction of choir director Orca Giarrusso. A coffee hour will follow the service. The public is invited to attend.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – April 27th to May 1st

GILL/MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for activities. Council on Aging Director is Bunny Caldwell. Congregate meals are served on Tuesday through Friday. For information or to make reservations, call 863-9357 or 863-4500. Meal reservations need to be made a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open.

- Monday, 27th**
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:50 a.m. Easy Aerobics
- Tuesday, 28th**
9:00 a.m. Walking Group
10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga
1:00 p.m. Canasta
- Wednesday, 29th**
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
- Thursday, 30th**
11:30 a.m. Volunteer Appreciation Lunch
1:00 p.m. Pitch
- Friday, 1st**
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:50 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1:00 p.m. Scrabble

The Montague mealsite is in need of a volunteer to prepare the Monday meal. This job takes about 3 hours to warm pre-cooked meals, serve and clean the kitchen afterwards.

Gill/Montague Senior Trips, Call 863-9357 or 863-4500 for more information: The Lighthouse Trail, Thursday May 21st, \$71. Per person. Tour some of New England's most beautiful and historic lighthouses! Upon arrival in Portsmouth, NH, our step-on guide will be Jeremy D'Entremont, one of the leading experts on lighthouses. He is the author of several books and hundreds of articles on lighthouse history! He has been photographing and writing about lighthouses for over twenty years, lectured on his favorite topic all along the New England coast, and today he is your guide. The bus returns to First Street Parking lot Turners Falls at 6:30 p.m.

Upcoming trip: Cape Cod Canal Cruise, Tuesday June 16th, \$69 per person.

WENDELL Senior Center is located at 2 Lockes Village



Stone Dresser, at the recent art opening at Sheffield School

Crabapple Festival Returns

TURNERS FALLS - The sixth annual Turners Falls Crabapple Blossom Festival runs from May 1st to May 17th. Many of the downtown streets and parks in Turners Falls are lined with flowering crabapple and apple trees. Various events are scheduled to encourage people to come and enjoy the flowers and Turners Falls' nature, art, history and architecture, beginning with a GeoTour with geologist Steve Winters on Saturday, May 2nd from 1 to 3 p.m. On Tuesday, May 5th you can enjoy a Cinco de Mayo Children's Festival in Peskeomskut Park from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson will perform a bilingual concert from 10 to 11 a.m. during the festival, which will also include a parade around the park and arts and crafts activities. (Inside the Carnegie Library if it rains.) Look for more events in next week's paper.

During the festival, free self-guided tour booklets and lists of area attractions will be available at the Carnegie Library and the Great Falls Discovery Center. The library is open Monday to Wednesday, 1 to 8 p.m., Thursday, 1 to 5 p.m., Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For info: call 863-3214.

A Celebration of Life for **Tom Simons**
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Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week
Grade 6
Jasmine Richotte
Sara Bradley
Grade 7
Shelbi Williams
Grade 8

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Notes from the Gill-Montague School Committee

A Plan for Spending \$235,000 in Stimulus Funds

ELLEN BLANCHETTE GILL-MONTAGUE – At Tuesday evening's school committee meeting, GMRSD interim superintendent Kenneth Rocke said level-funded Chapter 70 state aid for the district appears to be secure in the House budget, but regional school transportation reimbursement funding for the coming fiscal year is slated to be cut by 50%. The Senate may take a less conservative approach.

Rocke said the first disbursement of federal stimulus funds is expected to reach the district soon, and should enable the GMRSD to make up for cuts in transportation aid. According to the regulations, the district can use 50% of stimulus funds to fill budget gaps. The other 50%

must be used for educational programs.

The budget Rocke presented uses \$67,500 in stimulus funds to offset potential cuts in transportation reimbursement, and directs \$50,000 towards reducing assessments to the member towns. Another payment of federal stimulus funds will come to the district later this year, also for \$235,000, for use in FY '11, and Rocke recommends expending the funds to reduce assessments and cushion cuts to regional transportation for next year as well.

As to the money for educational programs, Rocke said the district should use that money to build capacity for improving teaching and learning, and recommended \$50,000 be put

toward continuing the math consultancy for the elementary schools, \$50,000 for a math coach for the middle school, and \$17,500 for teacher training in "Tools of the Mind," for a total of \$117,500.

In support of the committee's \$16,792,134 operating budget for FY '10, which reflects a 1% budget increase, Rocke detailed how the district could better utilize existing funds by shifting resources. For example, changes in student population would allow the district to eliminate one kindergarten classroom at Gill, and add a new fifth grade classroom at Sheffield. They can also eliminate one sixth grade classroom at the middle school and add a district-wide elementary computer technology teacher. These changes could be accomplished at no additional cost to the district.

Rocke restated the committee's goal of developing an educationally sound and sustainable

budget, with all students engaged, productive and successful in their schools, and all students graduating from high school and ready for college, work and adult life. He warned that cuts to educational services in the future could backfire and create an additional financial loss to the district if more students choice out.

Rocke encouraged the towns and school committee members to continue to look for ways to improve the schools in order to attract new students to the district. "I don't think it's a pipe dream that if we build a better school system, they will come," he said in closing.

The 5th Annual Gill-Montague Gala will be held on Saturday, April 25th at 7:30 p.m. at the Turners Falls High School theater. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Proceeds go to support the Gill-Montague Education Fund.

Henry Waidlich Memorial Services

We'd like to thank all of the people and organizations that made our last months with Henry so bearable. We are going to bury his ashes at the East Mineral Road Cemetery at 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 2nd.

We'll set the gravestone, and install the flag, and then repair to our house for light snacks.

Open House.
Call 413-824-9986 if you have any questions.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Gathering Dispersed at Barton Cove

Thursday, 4/16

4:31 a.m. Assisted Easthampton police locating subject wanted for arrest in our town. Checked location, unable to locate subject.

Friday, 4/17

4:20 p.m. Report of possible illegal burning on French King Highway.
10:01 p.m. Assisted Main Road resident with juvenile issue.
10:45 p.m. Report of a possible disturbance involving large amount of youths on Barton Cove Road. Dispersed gathering from area.

Saturday, 4/18

5:31 p.m. Criminal complaint sought against [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Charged with operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license.

7:50 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with suicidal female subject.

Sunday, 4/19

8:35 a.m. Reported breaking and entering and larceny on Mount Hermon Campus. Under investigation.

Monday, 4/20

12:10 p.m. Suspicious vehicle on West Gill Road, checked on same, all OK.

2:10 p.m. Vehicle complaint on South Cross Road.

Tuesday, 4/21

12:45 p.m. Report of larceny of funds from West Gill Road resident. Under investigation.

1:10 p.m. Assisted United States Navy with applicant investigation.

1:40 p.m. Report of possible distraught subject on side of French King Highway. Checked area, unable to locate.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

Salted Sleeper

Wednesday, 4/1

Highway boss reported someone sleeping in the salt shed last night.

Sunday, 4/5

Montague Road resident reported someone entered his vehicle at 5 a.m. but ran off when the horn went off.

Saturday, 4/11

9:20 p.m. Maple Valley School reported a runaway student. Student later picked up in Orange.

The Sheffield Welcome! Interactive Open House for Incoming 1st Graders and their Parents

An informal opportunity for incoming students and parents to meet the 1st grade teachers, explore the 1st grade classrooms, view 1st grade curriculum materials and enjoy simple "make & take" projects.

**Thursday, April 30th, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
at Sheffield School, 43 Crocker Avenue,
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No appointment necessary, we hope you'll stop by.

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Make Your Voice Heard

BY ANN BANASH –

GILL – The town of Gill will face some difficult decisions at town meetings this year, and it is critical that more citizens attend. Typically only about 100 out of the 1059 registered voters attend town meeting in Gill, but the decisions that will be made this year need a much broader discussion, as the consequences of the votes will affect the services that are available and the way our children are educated.

There are two town meetings and a pre-town meeting information session scheduled. A pre-town meeting and public hearing on education issues will take place on April 27th at 7:00 p.m. On May 4th at 7:00 p.m., we will begin our annual town meeting by discussing all non-monetary articles. The budget, and all other monetary articles, will be presented at the continuation of the annual town meeting, which has been scheduled for June 15th at 7:00 p.m. All meetings take place in town hall.

In January, a Commission for Education in Gill was formed and charged with exploring all possibilities of configuring education for children in Gill, grades K-12. The Commission's initial report will be presented at the pre-town meeting on April 27th. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Associate Commissioner, Jeff Wulfson, will attend that evening.

On May 4th, voters will be asked whether the town should continue and expand on the research carried out by the Commission regarding withdrawal from the Gill Montague Regional School District and the possibility of joining another district. While this vote will not withdraw us from the District, it is important that more than a small percentage of Gill citizens make the decision on how to proceed.

Also on the agenda on May 4th is a vote on selling two pieces of town-owned property,

specifically the old Riverside School building and an empty lot on Center Road. The two pieces of town-owned land are not on the tax rolls and selling them would bring some much-needed cash and tax revenue to the town. However, there is serious discussion needed about whether or not this is a good decision at this time.

The town engaged Seimens Building Technologies to perform energy audits of the town buildings, and there are significant energy savings available on the Riverside building if we enter into an agreement with them to implement their recommendations. This would be a 15- to 20-year commitment, and the selectboard wants to be sure that the town wants to keep the building before we enter into that agreement. The Riverside building is appraised at \$480,000 and currently houses the Four Winds Charter School, the water department and the historic commission's collection of Gill artifacts.

The town budget and other money articles will be presented and voted upon at the June 15th meeting. The budget determines the tax rate, and it is imperative that more citizens participate in this discussion. Decisions on how many police officers we should have, the highway and fire department budgets, and issues like whether the recreation commission should be self-supporting will all be discussed.

State aid is decreasing as town expenses are increasing, and the people in town should want to have more of a say as to how our money is spent. When only a small percentage of the registered voters make these decisions for the entire town it does not give the selectboard and finance committee clear direction. Please attend these meetings and make your voice heard.

Ann Banash is a member of the Gill selectboard.



ANJA SCHULTZ ILLUSTRATION

Earth Day Toast

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lyme Disease Editorial Misleading

The guest editorial by Dr. Emily Maiella (*Politics of Lyme Disease, MR VII #28*) provides much useful information about many aspects of Lyme disease. The comments about acute signs and symptoms are accurate and helpful. The guidance about response to finding a tick on your body is also appropriate. The editorial, however, is poorly researched and potentially misleading in its discussion of chronic Lyme disease.

The approach to a patient who has a constellation of non-specific symptoms, such as relentless fatigue and achiness, is difficult for both patient and clinician. Some doctors, both medical and homeopathic, have treated such patients with very long-term intravenous antibiotic therapy. The most contentious political issue about Lyme disease stems from the different recommendations for diagnosis and treatment of people with these frustrating, chronic, non-specific symptoms.

Maiella disparages the treatment guidelines of the IDSA (Infectious Disease Society of America) while supporting the approach of ILADS (International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society). The IDSA is led by a broad range of experts in the field of infectious disease. They maintain the highest ethical and scientific standards of medical practice and research. The same cannot be said for the ILADS.

Included in the editorial is a brief mention of an investigation of IDSA by Attorney General Blumenthal of Connecticut. The investigation, "spurred by a grassroots initiative," and completed in 2008, revealed no malfeasance, malpractice, or conflicts of interest.

Another misleading part of the editorial is the selective use of quotations from the CDC (Center for Disease Control). Maiella fails to mention that the CDC clearly reports that prolonged antibiotic treatment of

patients with non-specific symptoms is to be avoided because such treatment has no demonstrable benefit. Also, quoting from the CDC, "longer courses of antibiotics have been linked to serious complications, including death." The CDC treatment recommendations, supported by several studies done by the National Institutes of Health, are similar to the treatment guidelines of the IDSA.

I strongly suggest that people who are interested in a more legitimate and comprehensive evaluation of the question read the article that appears on the Quackwatch website (www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/lyme.html). The CDC websites also provide valuable information about the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease (see www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/Lyme/ld_humandisease_treatment.htm).

- Allen Ross, M.D.
Montague

Enter to Win and Support Sk8 Park

The Turners Falls Sk8 Park just received a vote of confidence from the Montague selectboard last week, when they approved spending \$4,000 in program income money to help pave and fence the park's temporary new home on 11th Street and Avenue A. Now, as part of the agreement, the park steering committee (the Skate Board) is working to pay back \$1,000 to the town.

You can support the Sk8 Park by entering to win a raffle of gift certificates from local businesses, including Ristorante DiPaolo, the Rendezvous, Round Here Café, Stampin' UP!, 2nd Street Bakery, French King Bowling, or a set of the Brick House's Ave A Music Project albums. Tickets are available at the Brick House, or

call Ellen Spring at (509) 436-3197.

Your last chance to purchase raffle tickets will be this Saturday, April 25th, from 4 to 6 p.m. at Peskeomskut Park, during performances by the Ghost Quartet and Thaddeus' Hands. The Skate Board will be selling goodies and beverages during the concert.

A special thanks to the Rendezvous for offering their space for the fundraising kick-

off on Sunday. The folks who attended were quite generous and the Skate Board appreciates all their help! Skate park supporters are invited to call Ruth at the Brick House (863-9559) to find out about our next meeting.

Ellen Spring
Turners Falls

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US FORCES
 Casualties in Iraq
 as of this date

4275

 Afghanistan **679**

 Wounded in Action **31193**

 Missing **1000**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kuklewicz runs as Write In Candidate

I am running as a write-in candidate for re-election to a three year seat on the Gill Montague Regional School Committee. During my two-year term on the committee, I have asked questions to bring clarity and a better understanding to the issues. I've tried to be a voice for questions the general public might have.

If I am re-elected, I will work

with the committee to become more inclusive of all parties, especially the teachers. As I have during my current term, I will work to make decisions based on facts, not emotions. My goal is to work with the committee, the administration, staff and public to improve the GMRSD.

- Linda Kuklewicz
66 Oakman Street
Turners Falls

Write In for Prudential Committee

My name is Meghan Valle. I am running as a write-in candidate for Prudential Committee. The Prudential Committee oversees the Turners Falls Fire District, which encompasses Millers Falls, Turners Falls, and Montague City.

I have been a resident of Turners Falls since March of 2004, when my husband and I purchased a home in Millers Falls Road. Since then I have been active in the community, as a volunteer, voter, and a parent. In 2007, I was a member of a committee appointed by the Prudential Committee that

explored and recommended ways for the Turners Falls Fire District to be more fiscally efficient.

Please take time to vote for me at the district office at 226 Millers Falls Road in Turners Falls on April 28th. Voting will be held from noon to 7 p.m.

To vote for me, you must write in my full name and address as a write in candidate, and also mark an X in the box at the end of the line.

- Meghan Valle
92 Millers Falls Road
Turners Falls

Montague Faces Budget Gap of \$55,000 – \$317,000

BY DAVID DETMOLD – The Montague finance committee and selectboard held a joint hearing on the town's budget prospects for fiscal year 2010 on Wednesday evening, with a small gathering of town employees and a few interested citizens in attendance. The main points of the hearing were that the town of Montague:

- Can expect at least a 2% decrease in state aid this year;
- May see further cuts in state aid in the present fiscal year, before July 1st;
- Has about \$1.3 million remaining in reserves;
- Intends to use at least \$318,000 of those reserves to balance this year's budget;
- Hopes to hold the town's assessment for the GMRSD to \$35,000 less than last year;
- Is facing a budget gap of \$55,170, without considering that the GMRSD is asking for \$262,572 more than the town hopes to pay for the FY '10 assessment;
- Is offering town employees no cost of living increases this year.

"This represents where we are at the present time," said finance committee chair John Hanold, referring to the budget handout. "It is not finished. It's

not even balanced. It is a working document."

Hanold said the police department, "under considerable persuasion," has agreed to pay for a new \$30,000 police cruiser this year out of grant funds, rather than through town appropriation.

The only special articles under consideration at the present time are \$30,000 to heat and maintain the Montague Center School building for another year, \$75,000 for a discretionary equipment purchase and repair fund for the DPW, and \$54,411 for the purchase of a six-wheel dump truck for the DPW. Tom Bergeron, highway superintendent, said, "I've got three trucks that can't even go to the inspection station," and two more that are reaching the end of their useful life.

School committee member Linda Kuklewicz said the tax-

payers of Montague should not have to give up any more services, and that they already get a lot less for their tax dollars than they should. She also spoke against spending more of the town's reserves. "If something happens, there will be no one to bail us out."

Selectboard chair Allen Ross said the town should strive to see **BUDGET** pg 12

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**Lewdness Arrest, Distribution Arrest****Wednesday, 4/15**

8:25 a.m. Report of vandalism at Central Street School.

Thursday, 4/16

9:49 a.m. Report of larceny at a First Avenue address.

11:42 a.m. Report of larceny at the Survival Center, Fourth Street. Investigated.

11:41 p.m. Report of vandalism at an Avenue C address. Investigated.

Friday, 4/17

3:03 p.m. Report of larceny at a Fourth Street address. Services rendered.

4:20 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Montague Street address. Investigated.

5:51 p.m. Report of hit and run accident at a Montague Street address at Griswold Street. Area search negative.

11:12 p.m. Assist Gill police at Barton's Cove.

Saturday, 4/18

12:06 a.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested

Charged with

motor vehicle lights violation, unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle and illegal possession of a class B substance.

1:30 p.m. Report of motor vehicle license plate theft. Services rendered.

5:08 p.m. Report of larceny from a Newton Street address.

8:15 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at an L Street address. Arrested

Charged with two counts of assault & battery, domestic, and witness intimidation.

8:22 p.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested

on a straight warrant.

Sunday, 4/19

7:08 a.m. Report of vandalism at Williams Way. Services rendered.

8:52 a.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Fourth Street address. Services rendered.

5:58 p.m. Officer wanted

in the area of the Railroad Salvage building.

Arrested

Charged with two counts of open and gross lewdness, subsequent offense.

Monday, 4/20

11:06 a.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Bridge Street address. Investigated.

12:11 p.m. Report of vandalism at Food City, Avenue A. Investigated.

3:24 p.m. Report of vandalism at Ristorante DiPaolo, Avenue A. Investigated.

10:27 p.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested

Charged

with possession of class D substance, subsequent offense, possession with intent to distribute class D substance, subsequent offense, possession with intent to distribute illegal substance within a school zone, possession of a class E substance, and

operation of a motor vehicle.

BLAZE from pg 1

said the department "made a really good save. They saved the main building. It was a really good interior attack."

Rau brought the two surviving cats to veterinarian Laurelyn Brown for shelter and treatment.

Fire departments from Turners Falls, Leverett, Greenfield, and Sunderland responded to the scene, with Gill covering the station. The blaze was brought under control by quarter to four in the morning.

A relief fund is being established for Helmich and Simon at TD Bank North of Greenfield. To contribute, make checks payable to the Hemlich and Simon Family Fund, P.O. Box 932, Montague, MA 01351.



Montague Center firefighter Ralph Rau credited his department for a quick response and "a really good save" to the main building at 11 Union Street

CONCERT from pg 1

on the floor, morphine in his veins, and the handwritten lyrics of an unrecorded song – "Then Came that Fateful Day" – by his side.

It was a tough act to follow, but Price picked up the pieces of Williams' band, and went on to record one country classic after another, from "City Lights," to "Release Me," to "Crazy Arms." He sang these and many more on Friday, with his longtime traveling band, the Cherokee Cowboys: a twelve-piece with his son Cliff on acoustic guitar, four fiddlers, a drummer who looked like he was trying his best to stay awake keeping time like a metronome, upright bass, a second guitar, a harp player, a grand piano, and a pedal steel on top of it all.

Price stood impassively at the microphone center stage, crooned in a baritone of molasses, and displayed the sepulchral stage manner of an undertaker in a Dust Bowl town blown away a long, long time ago. The crowd loved it.

After he shambled off stage, Willie Nelson and his band took their places with no fanfare. They looked like they were strolling into their living room to play a few tunes for their friends. The worshipful whisper, "There He Is!" swept the huge arena, and Nelson slung his Martin acoustic on a red white and blue guitar strap around his neck and dove right into "Whiskey River," a ballad to booze and infidelity.

Nelson, who cut his teeth in Price's band in the 50s with Roger Miller and Johnny Paycheck, and has stayed close to him ever since, called Price back out for duets on "Crazy" and "Night Life" to the adulation of the crowd. He let his sister Bobbie take a star turn on piano on "Back to Earth." And his band – Paul English, brushes on snare, younger brother Billie English on a variety of percussion, Mickey Raphael on a very tasteful harp, and Bee Spears on electric bass – put it all together on "Bloody Mary Morning" and showed what a well-honed, stripped down honky-tonk band can do.

They played the hits – they played "Momma Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys," "On the Road Again," "Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain," – but they also played "Georgia," and "All of Me," and other songs that showcased Nelson's well-known jazz sensibility, melodic guitar runs, and distinctive dry gulch vocalizing.

He featured a few new songs, including one he wrote after carpal tunnel surgery on his left hand sidelined him briefly in 2004, called "Superman", that started off, "Too many pain pills, too much pot, tryin to be something that I'm not, Superman...I ain't Superman."

That's a good realization for Nelson, who's been at the forefront of efforts to support family farmers in America through Farm Aid concerts since 1985, and has lately been rambling every corner

of the country on his bio-diesel bus – Honeysuckle Rose IV – to the delight of fans, in a career that began in 1956 and shows no sign of slowing down.

He's still playing Trigger, the most beat-up guitar any major star has ever used to entertain a stadium crowd. The pint-sized 1969 Martin N-20 comes without pick guard, because the nylon strings are meant to be plucked, not picked. But Willie Nelson was never one to play by the rules. He's worn a gash between the guitar's sound hole and saddle that looks to be about four inches long and counting. It's amazing he can still play that thing, and it's amazing the music he can make it play.

According to legend, Willie Nelson will retire when the hole in Trigger's body gets so large it makes the guitar unplayable. But he keeps expanding his legend with every song he writes and every show he plays, even here, in a hole in the wall like Amherst, Massachusetts, where he left the stage in a blaze of glory, with the crowd on their feet cheering and singing along to "I Saw the Light." Long may he rave.

*Just like a blind man, I wandered along
Worries and fears I claimed for my own
Then like a blind man God gave back his sight
Praise the Lord, I saw the light...*
– Hank Williams

**PUBLIC NOTICE
RIGHT-OF-WAY MAINTENANCE**

National Grid, New England Power and/or Massachusetts Electric Company plan to apply herbicides along certain transmission line rights-of-way between April 20, 2009 through September 30, 2009 with follow-up treatments October 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009. A more precise date will be provided if requested. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 132B, Section 6B requires electric utilities to provide certain notices of this work to the public.

Herbicide use for management of vegetation along the rights-of-way is done within the context of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. In right-of-way management the pest is tall growing trees that will grow into the wires causing outages and safety concerns. Biological control is a component of the IPM program. Biological control is achieved by promoting the establishment of low growing plant communities that resist invasion of rights-of-way by tree species. Selective use of herbicides to control tall growing trees allows low growing shrubs, grasses, ferns and herbaceous plants to become established and resist re-growth of tree species.

Accord Concentrate and Arsenal herbicides will be applied directly to the surface of tree stumps immediately after trees are cut. In addition, Accord Concentrate, Arsenal Powerline, Escort and Krenite herbicides will be applied selectively to foliage of the target plant using hand-held equipment.

Transmission lines may be identified by locating metal letters/numbers on a wood pole or painted letters/numbers on a steel structure.

Further information may be requested by contacting (during business hours Mon-Fri. 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.): Dawn Travallini, Forester, National Grid, 25 Research Drive, Westborough, MA 01582. Telephone: 508.389.4295.

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Candidate Debates Scheduled at MCTV

GILL-MONTAGUE – On Sunday May 3rd, the nine candidates in the running for five seats on the Gill-Montague school committee will meet for a debate at the MCTV studios, moderated by Gill town moderator Ray Steele. A panel of reporters – Arn Albertini, from *the Recorder*, Cori Urban from *the Union News*, and David Detmold, from *the Montague Reporter* – will question the candidates on the issues.

Each candidate will have a chance to answer at least one question directly during the hour

and a half debate, and time will be allowed for rebuttals as well. Questions called in live from the viewing audience will also be posed to the candidates, who will each be given time for uninterrupted closing statements to wrap up the broadcast.

The school committee candidates are: Valeria ‘Timmy’ Smith, the incumbent, running for a three-year seat from Gill against Jenn Waldron, a member of the Gill commission on education; incumbents Kristen Boyle and Linda Kuklewicz (running as a write-in candidate) contesting

two three-year seats from Montague with Jeffrey Singleton, a member of the Montague finance committee; Emily Monosson, a parent of two students at TFHS/GFMS, running unopposed for a two-year seat from Montague; a three-way race has taken shape for the open one-year seat in Montague between educational consultant Garry Earles, Sheffield PTO member Patrick Pezzati, and TFSH resource officer Doug Brown.

On Thursday, May 7th, four candidates for Montague select-board – Josh Gammon, president of the student council at Turners Falls High School, Ed Golrick, Millers Falls resident, Mark Fairbrother, chair of the Montague conservation commission, and Jack Nelson, Turners Falls artist and businessman – will meet for a debate at MCTV, broadcast live on Channel 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Montague town moderator

Ray Godin will moderate, and the same panel of reporters will pose questions, with call-in questions from the audience pitched to the candidates as time permits. The number to call to pose questions to the candidates, or for more information on the debates, is 863-9200. Visit montaguetelevision.org or montaguema.net for the complete weekly program schedule for Channel 17.

Are You the Next Valley Idol?

Register for the 2009 Valley Idol and Valley Idol Jr. competition on the Shea Theater website, www.theshea.org. Click on the Valley Idol logo. Registration fee: \$35. Limit 100 entrants, 18 and older. Auditions for Valley Idol May 8th, competition May 9th, 16th and 23rd. First prize

\$1,000. Audition Night audience tickets \$2 at the door. Auditions for Valley Idol Jr. May 9th, competition May 16th and 23rd. Registration fee: \$20. \$300 savings bond prizes for three age categories. Audience tickets \$5.00. Call (413) 863-2281 for more information.

STRIKE from pg 1

smithereens, hurling one six-foot chunk 150 feet to the side of Millers Falls Road, and other equally large pieces up to 100 feet in all directions. It looked like a bomb had gone off.

The electrical force from the lightning bolt must have travelled down through the tree's roots, said Brown, and short-circuited the department's alarm system, which follows the water

pipes along the side of the road up to the four million gallon domed water tank on Wills Hill. The new alarm system, installed last year, was repaired and operational by yesterday afternoon.

Department employees Jeff Hildreth and Steve Fitzpatrick worked to clear away the debris on Wednesday. Hildreth said he'd never seen a tree destroyed so completely by lightning before.

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Ah, for the Life of a Hermit



John Smith,
Hermit of Erving Castle

BY DAVID DETMOLD

ERVING - For more than three decades at the end of the 19th century, a Scotsman named John Smith lived a hermit's life by the granite cliffs known as Erving Castle, midway between the village of Farley and Erving Center. During those years, people from the towns around would come to visit Smith in the woods, bring him provisions, and stay and listen to his tall tales.

This past Sunday, 31 people from as far away as Royalston and Colrain retraced those steps, and learned that a hermit's life could be unexpectedly crowded, full of interlopers, insects, and incomparable views.

The Hermit's Castle lies about an hour and half hike up the Metacomet-Mondadnock Trail from the small parking lot provided for hikers on private land on Cross Street in Farley, near the home of Henry and Susan Sharbaugh. The Sharbaughs, both 66 years old, have worked for many years to keep the trail from Erving to New Hampshire well-marked and free of brush. Their efforts — and those of many other avid hikers and conservations and private landowners down the line who have allowed the M&M trail to be maintained on their properties since the 1950s — were recognized on March 30th when President Obama signed legislation designating the M&M trail as the first National Scenic Trail to be named in 26

years, and only the second National Scenic Trail in New England, after the Appalachian Trail. Congressman John Olver's office had a lot to do with achieving that recognition, which will bring some federal resources to bear in the effort to maintain and continue the acquisition process for the 114-mile three-state M&M Trail.

Susan Sharbaugh was among the hikers who made the trek to John Smith's old cave on Sunday. While others in the group stopped to rest frequently, Sharbaugh plowed ahead with a pair of long-handled lopping shears, clipping saplings and low-hanging branches that intruded on the trail.

"You wouldn't believe how overgrown this was just a few years ago," she said, without pausing to catch her breath.

Besides celebrating the designation of the M&M Trail by the federal government, and the life of a hermit from the nineteenth century, the hike was a chance to celebrate nature and the coming of spring. Shortly after rounding the bend from Cross Street past a small stone cairn and proceeding uphill on a narrow dirt track, through a short muddy patch bridged by a handmade trestle of pressure treated lumber (one of three such bridges we traversed that day, the work of the Sharbaughs and friends, who dragged the 6 x 6 carrying beams up the path with chains) our party came to a cheerfully flowing waterfall where Briggs Brook cascaded down giant steps of stone and fell away toward the valley of the Millers below. Beside the brook, purple and white trilliums adorned both sides of the bank in great abundance, just coming into bloom.

Our guides were Allen Young, of Royston, and Clare Green, of Warwick. Green called our attention to other signs of spring, like the red buds of maples in amongst the white ash and hemlock, the violet tinged star of the trailing arbutus (Mayflower), and the passing flight of a mourning cloak, whose dusky white-edged wings identify these earliest of vernal butterflies, which feed on the sap of trees.

Smith, who was quite a stoneworker in his own right, judging by the tidy dry stone walls he laid up along the base of Erving Castle, would have been amazed, or perhaps repelled, by the huge stone embankments that rose above the trees on the north side of the trail, halfway to his old hideaway. These towering berms marked the circumference of the Northfield Mountain reservoir, an anomalous sight among the wilds of the state forest. A birch grove had sprung up to the east, the first growth of succession forest on land the excavators had disturbed forty years ago when the mountain was hollowed out and the 300-acre reservoir created just to the west of Hermit Mountain.

As the party crossed Packard Brook and proceeded east along the trail, the ground in front of us leveled off, and the granite outcropping to our left began to rise, and kept on rising until cliffs of several hundred feet loomed above us: John's Smith's fortress in the wilderness, Erving Castle.

"John Smith came to New York City in 1866," said Young, extemporizing from a chapter in his book, *North of Quabbin, Revisited*. "We think he booked passage from Liverpool."

Back in Scotland, Smith had been sort of a professional hermit, occupying that somewhat unusual post on estates where aristocrats were in the habit of exchanging room and board to hermits for the privilege of being entertained by them whenever the fancy took them. As the *Times* of London has it, "Among the landed gentry, a live resident hermit was at one time the must-have accessory in the garden."

But a broken heart given him by a lass named Betsey drove Smith across the Atlantic, and since he disliked the heat of New York City, and didn't care much for Boston, he took up residence in a cave in Rattlesnake Gutter in Leverett, where he picked nuts and berries, wove wreaths, and walked back to Boston to sell them in the market.

On one of these treks, he found his way to Erving Castle, and found it blessed with a spring of pure water (still evident

today), and all he needed to make a home and livelihood.

Over the next three decades, from 1867 until the townspeople of Erving arranged for his removal to the Montague Poor Farm on Federal Street in 1899, where he died a few months later, Smith entertained thousands of visitors at his rustic retreat, and cut a lively figure with his flowing white beard when he came to town to sell the products of his gardens and the work of his hands, including rugs he braided from waste cord from the Erving mills.

When a neighboring hermit took up residence nearby (a cellar hole can still be plainly seen where this man, named Charles Thacher, probably built his home) Smith removed a quarter mile down the slope, and lived in a shack he built there of drift wood and spare boards.

It is strange that Smith, a man who reflexively retreated from human society, should become the object of such interest that, in

placed beside him in the cemetery.

As Young imparted that last poignant anecdote, the brisk tattoo of a pileated woodpecker rang out through the trees, and Joe Parzych, who was watching from a seat on one of the old stone walls, said a little whirlwind blew up a swirl of old oak leaves from the ground behind the speaker.

Trudging to the top of Hermit Mountain for a look up and down the valley, we could see the Millers River like a lazy blue snake coiling 800 feet below, with the train tracks on the north side of the river to our left, near the Center. To our right, the train tracks could be seen on the Wendell side of the river, hemming the skirts of Bear Mountain. We could not see the trestle directly below, hidden by the trees.

Parzych, three months out of coronary bypass surgery, would have left his physical therapist in the dust on this hike. He said



Erving Castle, with John Smith's old stone walls beneath

his own words, "Visitors pour in upon me;" and strange that his wilderness hideaway should become the point to which hordes of visitors have journeyed throughout the years, even to this day. But we'll leave it to the sociologists to explain that paradox.

When Smith died, the people of Erving brought his body to the cemetery off Mountain Road, where they marked his last resting place with a simple stone. The gravestone of his favorite of the many stray felines that kept him company on his mountain estate — a cat named Toby — is

Smith should have brought his long lost love up to this high peak to look over the valley with him.

"She dumped him; he should have dumped her," he suggested.

Anyone who might be inclined to take a similar hike can call Clare Green at 978-544-7421. She is leading a group to the top of Mount Grace on Saturday, May 9th, with a donation to the Ned Green scholarship fund as the ticket price, and a free trip to the Copper Angel bakery for pizza, in the center of Warwick, afterward.

TRUCK from pg 1

engine, nor had they provided an estimate for what it would cost to bring the 30-year-old vehicle back into good repair. "An alternator can go on any vehicle, new or old," he pointed out "We don't see the need to tie up \$100,000 in taxes at this time."

Godin said surrounding fire

departments like Greenfield were suffering loss of personnel, while other towns lacked money to conduct regular training for their crews. Consequently, response time for mutual aid may be impaired.

"We picked up that third engine [in addition to the department's ladder truck] when we merged with Millers Falls, I

don't know how many years ago. We have to rely on ourselves."

But a woman in the crowd said given today's economy, "We need to sacrifice now, more than any other year. I don't see how taxation can afford this, this year."

And Thomas Tela added, "Vehicles can be repaired. We

need to pull the purse strings in this year. Being unemployed, I'm going to say, 'No.'"

When a motion from Pat Allen to reduce the warrant item to \$50,000 from taxation failed by a vote of 6 to 9, Janikas moved to take \$50,000 from the district's free cash account instead. After district treasurer Eileen Tela told the voters the

district has \$340,000 in free cash certified, along with \$58,000 in stabilization, Janikas' motion passed by a large majority.

Godin said it would cost at least \$425,000 to purchase and equip a new pumper this year, and the cost would rise in coming years. He said he was work-

continued next page

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This photo, circa 1920, was part of Erving Paper's centennial brochure

from **MILL** page 1

century old facility. "We will rebuild aging infrastructure, speed up machines, improve our finishing equipment, enhance our recycling capability, and use our energy resources more efficiently," said Housen at the time.

The present CEO is the third generation of the Housen family to own and operate the mill.

Emmett said the company did make a \$5 million capital investment in the mill in 2007-2008, installing a high-density pulper, a detasher unit, and a dispersion unit to upgrade the company's pulping operation.

Erving Paper Mill manufactures rolls of high grade tissue paper used for facial quality napkins for the "away from home market," Emmett said, and the company has been using "100% recycled paper for several decades" in its Erving production facility. The recent upgrade "allowed us to use more assorted office waste papers." in the pulp-

ing operation.

Emmett explained that office waste paper often comes mixed with items like paper clips, plastic binders, laser printer toner, heavy windowed envelopes, and similar items that must be removed in order to produce quality recycled tissue paper.

He said there was stiff competition for recycled paper worldwide, with shipping containers heading back to China and India filled with waste paper at nominal cost, which has driven up the price of Erving's raw material. Electricity and fuel prices also peaked last year, negatively affecting the company's bottom line. But he focused on the problem of the company carrying fixed-benefit pension plans for 900 participants, including 450 retirees currently collecting pensions, and 300 "terminated vested participants," former workers for the company who are currently employed elsewhere, or not yet eligible for their pensions, along

with the 130 employees still on the job at the mill.

Emmett stressed that all of the participants in the company's pension plan have benefits guaranteed by a quasi-federal agency called the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC), to which Erving Industries makes regular payments.

But he added, "We need to negotiate with the unions and we need to have discussions with the PBGC. We are still the sponsors of these plans," but they are subject to negotiation as the Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing proceeds, Emmett said.

Four unions represent the rank and file at Erving Paper Mill. The largest unit is the Paper Allied Chemicals and Energy (PACE) union. Two units, the maintenance workers at the mill and the ERSECO workers at the treatment plant, are organized under United Electrical Workers of America (UE). A small unit of the International Union of Operating Engineers covers the four workers at the paper mill's power plant.

David Cohen, the international representative for UE, said he would be actively engaged in the forthcoming negotiations between the bargaining units and Erving Paper.

"They want to end the pension plans," said Cohen. "This seems to be what they want to do. There's an elaborate procedure they have to go through. We will be examining their books."

Cohen added, "Every pension plan in the country has taken a hit." But he said the company has

to prove that the pension plans are the source of their present difficulties, and that alternatives such as renegotiating the rate at which they pay into the PBGC would not allow enough time for the stock market to make a recovery, before altering the present agreements.

"This is the first time that this is happening locally," said Cohen, "but it's part of a nationwide trend. To be frank, there are some large corporations that are using [the economic downturn] as an excuse to terminate their benefit pension plans. Workers wind up without a pension, and the companies reap the benefit of that."

Don Keith, of Warwick, president of UE Local 269, representing 29 maintenance workers at the mill, said of the company's bankruptcy filing, "We've seen it coming for a long time. The market has made things worse," along with government regulations determining how much the company has to put aside to fund the pension plans.

"They've come to us to freeze the pension, but we haven't allowed it."

Keith said in past years a committee made up of management and workers used to negotiate about where pension funds would be invested, but that system had fallen by the wayside. "Now we have no say about their investment strategy," Keith said.

"I know they're having a hard time. But we're not looking to go through their hard time and give back everything we've worked for, in my case for 38 years. At

the same time, we want to work with them; they employ us."

Speaking of the company's prospects for navigating through Chapter 11 reorganization, Emmett said, "We're hoping to move forward as painlessly as possible. There will be pain, of course."

Among the liabilities enumerated in Erving Industries' bankruptcy petition, the subject of initial filings before bankruptcy judge Henry Boroff in Worcester on Wednesday, the town of Erving is listed among creditors owed a total of \$138,924 for the treatment plant's side of the operation. Administrative assistant Tom Sharp said the \$30,000 debt owed to the town was the quarterly payment due for Erving's share of the proceeds from third-party waste haulers using the town-owned treatment plant.

Sharp said the paper mill paid their second half tax bill promptly, after it was mailed out earlier this April, and the mill is current on its taxes to the town. Erving Industries pays about \$40,000 annually in taxes to Erving, Sharp said.

The liabilities listed on the bankruptcy filing for the paper mill's side of the operation are steeper. They total \$1,212,872, with the electricity wholesaler Constellation New Energy the lead creditor at \$479,706.

Sharp called the bankruptcy filing by Erving Industries "troubling economic news. They are our signature industry. When people think of Erving, 99% of them think of the paper mill."



TRUCKfrom page 8

ing on his fourth Homeland Security 'Assistance to Firefighters' grant in the last six years, in an effort to get the federal government to pick up the tab for a new truck, but the odds were long.

"I'm glad we're making progress on this," said Godin, after the meeting. "It's important to put it in front of the voters. I respect everyone saying, 'It's not a good year.' It's never a good year. I'm happy we're taking a step forward."

In other business, the voters

unanimously approved spending \$250,000 received by the district four years ago, from the sale of a parcel of land near the water department office on Millers Falls Road to the Hallmark Institute, to pay for the construction and testing of a new production well at Hannegan Brook.

Water department superintendent Mike Brown, reached by phone on Wednesday as he worked to restore the alarm system at the office, said the water department estimated about three-quarters of a million dol-

lars in additional spending would be required over the next several years to bring the new well on line.

The alarm system had been knocked out during a storm the night before, when a lightning bolt pulverized a pine tree that stood a few hundred feet away from the building, on the road to Wills Hill.

At Tuesday night's meeting, water commissioner Ken Morin said the department planned to spread the remaining expenditures on the new well - which is located on land owned by the

water department between Lake Pleasant and Route 63 - over the next five years or so.

Voters approved a motion to declare as surplus a 20-by-40-foot parcel of steeply sloped land where a storage shed used by the former Lake Pleasant water district was located, on Montague Avenue. The .03 acre parcel will be auctioned; an abutter has expressed interest in purchasing it.

Asked why a sum of more than \$2,000 had been included in the water department's budget this year to maintain street

lights in Lake Pleasant, Brown explained the Turners Falls water department had recently taken over the Lake Pleasant water district, and accepted responsibility for the street lights in the village. Since Turners Falls fire district taxes are not paid by Lake Pleasant villagers, who are members of the Montague Center fire district, the money to pay for the maintenance of their street lights will be raised, as it has been in past years, by a small surcharge on their water bills.



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the poetry page

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

- William Carlos Williams

Poetry Page edited by Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno, Janel Nockleby and Jamie Berger

Readers are invited to send poems to the Montague Reporter at 24 3rd Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376; or email us your poetry at reporter-poems@montaguema.net

design by Boysen Hodgson

Monthiversary.

For Rebecca Sheir.

Somewhere dear, sheer summer freaks on without us. Such a time machine I've climbed into, banyan syrup seeping from my Bat mask. Somewhere, pure eagles share their lunches with each other. Massachusetts shares its lunch with New Hampshire in summer. Brotherhood is easy above 70 degrees. When your bike careens into September, you enter bother-hood. That's no good. A blood cloud bursts with ice inside it. Right now I'm staring down an ice goat. Not an animal but an actual iceman made of goat. It's right there where Lowell and Summer streets converge. I could sing to you about this but I'd rather sing about porch bells gathering their pennies together. Somewhere, pointy horse music steals into the reeds, O friend of August, you don't know what it means to watch such music goad itself along for no reason. What is the opposite of an ice queen? I'd call you it, sitting in my ice truck. I'd call you "angel" if I hadn't already. I know! I'll call you Snowy Urola - a moth the length of an oak leaf. It floats from green to green; mum. Why say anything this engineless morning? I'll sing. I'll share my five-months-ago lunch with you, beautiful habit. I'll lean in and lick the salt off of your green lunch. I'll rub these sandwiches together to make music we can climb into like a July balloon. Oh man what savage music I could make with this Summer mood I've imagined.

--Sean Cole
Somewhere Around Boston

Many many more than that
(after Wallace Stevens)

- 1 Awkward through same front door with suitcase and bag, he bends and hugs and starts: "Hi Ce-" then stops realizing it is mother
- 2 And in between a dinner and drive the small nervous car-woman (a road, a steering wheel, a mother are one, almost).
- 3 The cat stupidly searches the kitchen for a disappeared fly looks at the mother, who thinking her hungry, says "Not now, stupid!" then feeds her anyway.
- 4 "... last time you'll be home on vacation" mother says and hugs and cries "I love you too" he mumbles back and realizes how many times to someone else and easily how few and difficult to mother.
- 5 The mother goes to exercise class comes home - "I don't do the aerobic part, all that jumping, it makes my bones hurt, I just sort of bounce." - still wearing overcoat and gloves takes the sponge and wipes the clean kitchen table clean.
- 6 The cat watches for a moment, then glides upstairs, to the foot of the mother's warm bed curls and sleeps.
- 7 -Knock knock- shakes son from sleep "You UP, sunshine?" he jumps up too alert always says yes to mother.
- 8 On return from station mother handles one more highway drive opens door and hangs up coat looks around kitchen sponge in hand removes last smudges of the son.
- 9 TV off the house seems empty cat upstairs in cat dreaming mother sits with a sigh scratches things off her list.

--Jamie Berger
Turners Falls




Museum & Thrift

Hummers blend into backwash inspecting desert flowers in the backyard - burrowing miniature owls stand guard in hundred teen heat - family photos mainly posed all smile but for mine - I giggle at that wounded seriousness knowing even if Trojan he wouldn't have let that wooden horse in the house - snakes or gods be damned - Virgil was a creep within the telling and unlike Eliot threatening - it was another penalty kick failure - another four aces - another constipated gleeful vacation - and that too shall remain a mystery the Colorado's rapid currents nearly dashed me 'pon some rocks - but I swam hard - that not being one of my strengths - you're supposed to just stand in the water to yr waist - drink Tecate - describe the passing features of speedboats - and that too shall remain a mystery - the friendly feral kitty unused to being touched - the actual pepsis wasp as found in Desert Holes - the gate possibly occupied by killer bees - the quail family across the street - the lack of beer - retractable illumination - roach karate - this charming relief unable to be interpreted with certainty - soft shoulder - ruthless rebel forces - and that - that too

--Anselm Berrigan
New York City

A.
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"Now With 20% Extra"

--Sean Cole
Somewhere Around Boston

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES:

Anselm Berrigan lives and writes in New York City, where he was raised and continues to be so. He is teaching at a few schools as a part-timer and considers teaching a noble trade though it makes him feel crazy. Some time this spring he will be officially a person who has written poetry for more than half his life. He recently put out a longish poem called Have A Good One in which the phrase Have A Good One is used slightly more than eight dozen times as a repeating title. Dana Ward had the where

with all to publish and circulate this work, which tells you something about him. Berrigan has a book called Free Cell coming out later in the year from City Lights, and hopes his less-than-two-years-old daughter continues to improve his poems.

Dana Ward is the author of Goodnight Voice (House Press, 2008), the Drought (Open 24hrs, forthcoming 2009), & Roseland (Louis Wain Editions, forthcoming 2009). Recent work has appeared in Try!, the Brooklyn Rail,

With+Stand, & Typesetter. He works as an advocate for adult literacy at the Over The Rhine Learning Center.

Sean Cole's poems have appeared in such magazines as Court Green, Black Clock, Carve, Torch, Pavement Saw, Magazine Cypress and Pom Pom. He has a chapbook out on Pressed Wafer press called "Itty City," and full-length collection of postcard poems called "The December Project" that was published by Boog Literature. He's also a

reporter for the public radio business show Marketplace and other programs. Now and then, he is called upon to write short autobiographical statements like this one.

Jamie Berger lives in Turners Falls; writes poems and fiction, co-owns the Rendezvous and blogs for the Valley Advocate. These poems are for his mother Sheila Berger who passed away earlier this year. Of his mother, Jamie wrote: "one of the aspects of my mom that I most admire, was her moral and ethical

beliefs that she never compromised and represented in word and in action as a member of countless organizations -ACLU board member, community activist, the list is long-and tirelessdiscusser and arguer. But what always meant the most to me, that I try to live up to, is that my mother's values were almost never based on what was best for her team."

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the poetry page

Mom, remem-

ber that time me driving us through the park deadened after a winter storm and suddenly spinning slow but out of control a wide arc

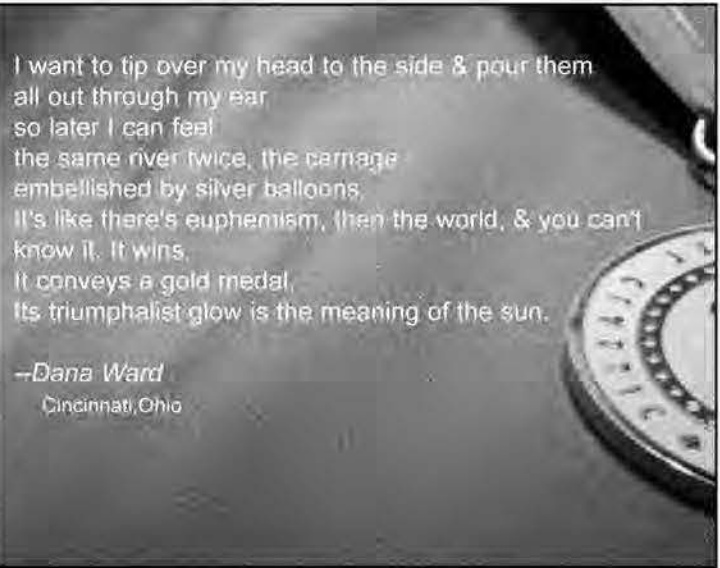
five six seconds before finally thumping gently into a snowbank and laughing laughing at safety.

--Jamie Berger Turners Falls

7/2/06

That mockingbird is a flirt Those drama queen clouds coming through knocking out the power - Its none of his business who's speaking or what's aiming to crawl on he, my beer an Old Testament prophet - with disease settling in permanently again it was time for another dog - Tippy, Varmint and Critter had their times, and the cricket livening the kitchen each eve wouldn't ultimately be enough I could be, wondering aside about what that torn out page said, organizing my thoughts through affection doing my job, too, through that filter managing prosody that way even if the surfaces get aggressive - would you know it but would I care is the wrong question - but one anyway I'm afraid there's no single salient fact monsieur disorder - we will go up the river and win big tonight just after this rented steering wheel cools down

--Anselm Berrigan New York City



I want to tip over my head to the side & pour them all out through my ear so later I can feel the same river twice, the carnage embellished by silver balloons. It's like there's euphemism, then the world, & you can't know it. It wins. It conveys a gold medal. Its triumphalist glow is the meaning of the sun.

--Dana Ward Cincinnati, Ohio

Everyday

This will be finally less than reportage this will be the most extravagant thing I can think to do Facebook it's almost your birthday I was almost about to finally send you the wish more boring is it already too like is it already too like something that you'd not have me do what are the debates exactly that get carried over from the comment box to the space of my walk through almost spring I didn't want to but I'll have to wear a sweater tonight thinking just this morning the cold would maybe have ended it hadn't & would not I got to thinking about a nebulous feeling of being more out of control than before or that something so recently seeming to be treating me mercifully some cloud it seems like that's there that works me over or leaves me I've always believed in it haven't I it was the phone that rang that stopped me from typing my wish onto your wall I was going to change my status in fact I conceived of this what I'm now typing as a status update arranged for diminishing returns just because of scale wonder why now that amount of words & spaces is permitted why another larger area or not what constitutes is this maybe more like or the I can't give up on what some say is the burdensome excellence of prosody maybe its Over the Rainbow for me yet it makes me up I don't take it as a thing one has to pursue or not pursue this with its negotiations & precipitating detente could be some form of the comment-box mind I nurse at work when three words of Dante moves me too much to be still so I live between blog posts the rancor & serious intelligence & always unforgiving so funny today someone was denying that something like code exists while they were explicitly coding something code in fact is what they coded as non-existent it isn't even really as funny as it seems I kept thinking you're telling me code isn't there it isn't there this almost ruins my day or upsets me past the point where I feel if I dipped a toe in in protest I wouldn't be up for it later in an hour say or more I'd be over it or I'd rather be married to it make the space of soreness endemic a life of something else it becomes obvious to me that if my imagination is to really survive I'm going to have to write things I won't love,

it's that I actually WANT to give it to someone that makes it mean that I don't think its worthless that I want nothing back for it shows me its value as itself

--Dana Ward Cincinnati, Ohio

My friends inhabit the thoughts I want to have

o loose eyeballs staring horribly at one another wild-eyed a la hello heart pursuing the truth as puny you and I know it to behead leaping off the brink of wellness formula staring down the supermist

--Anselm Berrigan New York City

Poem

I am heir to the Max Factor fortune sometimes the silver balloons of Warhol's Factory fill up my mind until family & friends are obscured beyond them, penitentiary glamour. A giant cigarette hovers above the head of Miichael Phelps In the future this will mean hospital, vineyard refugee camp. A tender way of feeling for the door in the dark not a grope but the absence of predation that has made the local fauna Utopian, no in-wrought fear of being eaten. That's how I feel when I see the last resort, & beyond it, the ocean, family & friends, the silver balloons in a cluster let go toward Oahu the door opens up like a flood of endorphins

--Dana Ward Cincinnati, Ohio



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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Juggling Finances as the State Drops the Ball

BY JOSH HEINEMANN – The finance committee has been checking in with the Wendell selectboard at virtually every meeting in recent months. As state revenue is dropping, and state aid to the town along with it, town expenses are staying the same or increasing.

Finance committee members have also been attending Mahar

school committee meetings, and reporting back about their continuing and fruitless efforts to persuade the Mahar committee to return to the terms of the contract by which Wendell originally joined the Mahar district (the so-called alternative method of assessment), by which each of the four member towns would pay the same per student costs.

Going into FY '10, Wendell is projected to pay by far the highest per pupil cost among the member towns: \$8,565, compared to Petersham's \$7,812, New Salem's \$7,044, and Orange's \$5,183 cost per pupil.

Before meeting the finance committee, the selectboard discussed the location of the backup generator to serve the town hall, and decided it should be placed near the front of the building, to the left of the front door. They agreed to reclassify the highway garage's obsolete generator as surplus equipment, to be auctioned in the fall.

Tom Chaisson built two of the three electrical boxes for the town common, and has since built the third. Board members agreed they should be painted green, like the boxes they replaced.

Board member Christine Heard announced that town librarian Rosie Heidkamp was honored by the state as one of 100 Unsung Heroines of the Year for her extraordinary and largely unpaid effort coordinating the building of the new Wendell Free Library.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich described the Hampshire Council of Governments' cooperative purchase program for electricity, by which the town of Wendell can contract with the Hampshire COG to purchase electricity jointly with other towns, paying a constantly changing rate as determined by demand. Overall savings for Wendell are estimated at around \$1,000 a year. So far, no town that has signed up with the Hampshire COG has lost money.

Board members agreed to sign up for the program.

Aldrich reported that the Wendell-New Salem school committee is looking to establish a committee on school regionalization, consisting of members from the selectboards, the finance committees, and the general public, for a total of eight committee members, to examine different regionalization options and be ready to act before the matter is forced by the state, or by other outside forces.

Town moderator Kathy Becker will not be available after June 10th, so the selectboard tentatively set June 3rd as the date for the annual town meeting. That will be tight timing for the finance committee, because the town has not yet received its state aid figures.

The selectboard went into a brief executive session to discuss litigation, and returned to open session to talk with the finance committee.

The finance committee reported that last year the town received \$415,310, and this year Governor Patrick is proposing \$379,912 in state aid for Wendell. The House Ways and Means Committee is proposing even less than the governor, but they are suggesting the town can make up \$19,000 with meals tax revenues, and another \$3,000 with hotel room tax revenues. The Senate has not yet produced a budget proposal.

The House plans to cut school transportation reimbursement, and is reportedly opposed to tapping the state's rainy day fund to reduce the loss of local aid. PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes for state property in towns) are frozen at 2009 levels in the House budget; the governor is proposing a slight increase.

The finance committee has been sending at least one member to Mahar School Committee meetings lately, and after men-

tioning the above figures, they spent a good deal of time talking about proposals to bring Wendell's per-student assessment at Mahar more in line with the per-pupil assessment of Orange. Going by the state formula, Wendell is hurt by several methods the state uses to create the per-student assessment, by the so-called statutory method. For one thing, 4% of Wendell's population is of high school age, while in Orange 8% of the population is of high school age. Wendell has taxed itself at \$17 to \$18 per \$1,000 of valuation, as opposed to Orange's tax rate at \$11 to \$12. Wendell has a relatively large stabilization fund. The Mahar School Committee chair, Maureen Donelan, and Reza Namin, superintendent of the Mahar district, noted that Wendell has excess levy limit capacity, a sign of its great wealth.

Finance committee member Jim Slavavos has worked on a method of assessing the four towns in the Mahar district that would not require more state money, and would reduce the discrepancy of payments among the four member towns. The alternative method of assessment has yet to gain a serious hearing by the Mahar committee, which is no closer to considering it than they were last year, when the committee postponed a decision because it was too late in the budget process. Once again, Wendell's representative, Dick Baldwin, is being told it is too late in the budget process to consider the alternative method of assessment this year.

There will be an open budget hearing before the annual town meeting, at a time and place to be announced. The selectboard and the finance committee members will attend, along with the school committee and Namin.



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BUDGET from pg 5 maintain an excellent school system, with a good reputation. "It is a valuable asset for the town, and affects all our property values," he said.

Kuklewicz responded, "If we have good schools, that's fine. But if the town is going

under, it doesn't make any sense."

A reduction in the number of hours for the position of senior center director will allow the town to avoid the cost of paying benefits for that post, and a switch to a private contractor to haul recycling from the

curbs, one week for paper, one week for glass and cans, should eliminate the need for at least one job at the DPW, and allow the DPW to sell the town's two recycling trucks, for a hoped for total of about \$55,000 to \$60,000.



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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

Ask Questions Before Going Under the Knife

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ – This is the second in a two-part series on surgery. In the last column, we discussed surgeons and healthcare facilities. In this column, we'll cover the surgery itself.

I view surgery as the last possible solution for a health problem. I'm sure most of you agree.

It's best to look into alternatives such as medicines, treatments, lifestyle changes and watchful waiting before undergoing anesthesia and scalpel work.

Do your own research before undergoing surgery. One area of study should be laparoscopy. In this type of surgery, small cuts are used instead of a large incision. These incisions allow the

surgeon to insert a laparoscope – a thin tube with a camera – into the body. Then the surgeon uses small tools to perform the surgery.

There are many advantages to this type of surgery. It can allow you to have a procedure in the morning and then go home the same day. Some laparoscopies require that you stay only one night in the hospital. Usually, you will recover from this type of surgery more quickly. And, instead of a having a large scar, you will have only a few small scars.

If you are faced with the prospect of surgery, you should have many questions. Here is a list of significant questions you can ask your doctor before the surgery:

- Why do I need the operation?
- Do I need it now, or can it wait?
- What happens if I don't have the operation?

- What are the benefits of having the operation?
- How long will the benefits last?
- What are the risks of having the operation?
- Are there alternatives to surgery?
- How will the surgery affect my quality of life?
- Where can I get a second opinion?
- What experience do you have performing this surgery?
- Where will the operation be done?
- Will I have to stay overnight in the hospital?
- Is it possible to have same-day surgery as an out-patient?
- What kind of anesthesia will I need?
- What are the side effects and risks of having anesthesia?
- How long will it take me to recover?
- Will I be in pain? How long will the pain last?
- When will I be able to go

home after the surgery?

- What will the recovery be like?
- Can you draw a diagram and explain how you do the surgery?
- Can you please mark the part of my body you will operate on?
- Is there anything else I should know about this surgery?

There are many steps you can take to make your surgical experience less taxing.

Before surgery, arrange for home healthcare that you may need; this may include medical equipment, prescription drugs and a visiting nurse. Line up someone to drive you home and stay with you for the first 24 hours after surgery.

When you go to have your surgery, leave your jewelry at home, and don't wear make-up or contact lenses.

You should always carry the following information with you:

- your doctor's name and phone number

- family names and phone numbers
- ongoing medical problems
- medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs
- allergies to medicines
- health insurance information and policy numbers

Make copies of this information to keep in your wallet and glove compartment of your car, just in case you need emergency care.

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

SCHOOL from page 1



Reflecting on the Montague Center School

nature of the community.

This led into his presentation of four potential uses of the former school, including: use as a professional office building, a possible private institute, a shared housing or independent living facility, or as private rentals or condominiums. The options would involve varying degrees of remodeling, of widely varying cost.

When the floor was opened to comments or questions, there

was no shortage of response. The previous community support for the building as the traditional home to a village school appeared to be alive and well, albeit in new form, with some residents questioning why a prohibition against competing with the GMRSD should guide the building's re-use.

Brian Pierce questioned whether the nine or ten street parking spaces assumed for the building were not actually on his

property, rather than on town property. Mary Melonis, a retired schoolteacher, questioned whether condominiums or rental units would be affordable for senior citizens "when they are taxed out of their homes."

Mark Beaubien asked if a cost analysis had been done for each of the preliminary proposals. "With an unidentified buyer," Greenberg said, it was too early in the process to make it feasible to cost out the various options. He commented, however, that the building was one of the best-maintained structures he had seen of its age.

Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio has said he expects to place a \$30,000 warrant before town meeting this year to pay the continuing costs of maintaining and heating the Montague Center School building through next winter.

An unidentified attendee questioned whether rentals might bring "UMass right into Montague Center" and noted that

would destroy "the nature of our community." Robin Sherman, director of the Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, countered that newcomers bring new ideas and vitality to a community.

While not exactly a little red school house at fourteen thousand square feet, the Montague Center School building found plenty of nostalgic supporters, as in previous school years, as the question shifts to whether that public support can be channeled toward finding a new role for the old school building.



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JEP'S PLACE: Part CXX

Working Overtime



BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL - Working on the tracks was a dangerous job. Dropping a rail could smash toes or break a leg. Sometimes a train bore down on a different track than expected, catching trackmen unaware, especially when fatigued while working around the clock. Mr. Calaboosa, a track inspector riding on a little put-

put car, was run over by an unscheduled train when he failed to check with the office. Whenever the foreman wanted to take a chance on not calling the office to see if the track would be clear, a cry went up, sounding like a slogan, "Remember Calaboosa!"

Not only was railroad pay higher than what other occupations paid, but after eight hours we got paid time and a half, and after sixteen hours we got paid double time. Then it went back to straight time and started all over again. When it snowed, the section gang's job was to keep the rail switches clear of snow and ice. If a switch didn't close all the

way, a train could derail.

We lit kerosene smudge pots to keep the rail switches from freezing. If it snowed all night, we worked all night. The railroad lunch counter closed about ten o'clock, but Smitty's Diner never closed. Smitty sold a delicious bowl of beef stew and a big chunk of crusty bread for 40 cents. It felt good to have a pocket full of folding money, eating out instead of carrying a lunch bucket, working all night with the section gang doing a man's job even though I was only sixteen. My classmates looked up to me. Working on the railroad was heady stuff.

When it looked like a snow storm was letting up and we might not work all night and we might lose out on the time and a

half and double time, the gang would take up a collection to take Casey out for a few drinks. While they were getting him mellow, my job was to fire up the coal stove in the railroad shanty. With the shanty warm and cozy, Casey would soon doze off and snore through the night.

The men took turns checking the smudge pots and switches while the others curled up on benches to catch a snooze, on double overtime. I stoked the pot bellied stove though the night between snatches of sleep.

At about two o'clock in the morning, a train came thundering by making a horrendous noise. It shook the shanty, and threatened to take the shanty with it.

Someone stirred, "There goes the bootlegger."

The Montreal train got named "the bootlegger" during Prohibition, when people took the Montrealer to Canada to bring back whiskey. The train roared off into the night and quiet descended on the shanty. The foreman's snoring continued unabated.

The next morning, Casey was grouchy, until the crew took him out for breakfast and a cup of Irish coffee. My first week's paycheck equaled more than what my sister Irene earned in a month as a store clerk.

I never did buy a striped railroad cap, but whenever I saw a train rumbling by, or heard a whistle blow, that old railroad feeling stirred in me.

- Continued Next Week

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, continued

Gathering Support for Simple Living

A great group of people has formed the Wendell Rural Simple Living Committee. As the name suggests, its members believe in the benefits and the inherent

legality of simple living, and have already begun working toward approval for a "test case" for the non-electric apartment we have proposed. The board of health agreed last week it would consider a proposal for a test case, given assurances that it - the test case process - is legal.

The group's first initiative is a petition to demonstrate public support:

To Wendell town officials:

We the undersigned support the request of Susan and Jonathan von Ranson to build and test a small (750-sq-ft), low-impact apartment. We anticipate that this experiment will demonstrate how a non-electric home, using a customized greywater septic system and composting toilet, heating and cooking with wood and

hand-pumping water from a dug well, will meet or surpass all environmental standards of the building and health codes. We ask you to work together to see that it goes forward, with appropriate monitoring of its health and environmental performance.

The petition will be available for signing at the Wendell Country Store and at our home, 6 Lockes Village Road, plus wherever someone's willing to carry it. This weekend we hope to get people out with clipboards and petitions at the library yoga class, at WRATS, the community garden, Earth Day, and the Fiske Pond cleanup, all on Saturday, and at the Spring Fling at the Deja Brew and free food pickup at Good Neighbors on Sunday. If you'd like to help gather signatures, get in touch with us - or come by Saturday morning before 10 a.m.

- Susan and Jonathan von Ranson Wendell

Montague Business Association Meeting

There will be a full Montague Business Association membership meeting on Thursday, April 30th at 8:00 a.m. at the MCTV studios on 2nd Street. Coffee and donuts will be provided. Questions and suggestions for agenda items can be directed to jkliquor@verizon.net.

Arena Civic Theater Presents

The Diary of Anne Frank April 24th, 25th, May 1st, 2nd at 8 p.m.
April 26th and May 3rd at 2 p.m.
At the Shea Theater
Tickets: \$12 adults, \$10 seniors and students.
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



THURSDAY, APRIL 30th
Jazz at DiPaolo's, Turners Falls: *Joe Belmont & Dia Silverstein*, guitar and sax, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Zydeco Connection* 9 to 11 p.m. Come on out, shake it loose and party down to some hot zydeco.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Love Bomb*, dance rock & roll covers, 9:30 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ghost Quartet*, \$3 cover, 9:30 p.m.

THURSDAY TO SATURDAY, APRIL 23rd to 25th
The Green Trees Gallery presents Louise Link Rath's *Heavenly Floral Landscapes*. These large oil paintings bring us into a stunning botanical world that will satisfy our lust for new spring growth. 105 Main St, Northfield, (413) 498-0283 www.greentreesgallery.com

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, APRIL 24th to 26th
The Diary of Anne Frank performed by The Arena Civic Theatre, directed by Sondra Radosh at the Shea Theater, Turners Falls. \$12/\$10 students & seniors. 4/24 & 25 at 8 p.m. 4/26 at 2 p.m. Continues 5/1 to 5/3.

Staged Production of *My Antonia* at the Deerfield Teachers' Center, 10 Memorial Street, Deerfield. As part of this year's Big Read Project, Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association and Lady of the Lake Productions will present *My Antonia*, a play for the stage by Charles Jones, adapted from Willa Cather's novel *My Antonia*. Fri. & Sat. at 8 p.m. Sunday at 2 p.m. \$12/\$10 for seniors, and \$5/students.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 25th
Turners Falls Spring Clean-up. Community members are invited to help --sessions from 10 to 1 p.m. and 1 to 4 p.m. Meet to get started at the Great Falls Discovery Center. Join our DCR staff to roll up your sleeves in a great outdoor experience on the grounds of the Great Falls Discovery Center, Unity Park, Peskeomskut Park, Woven River Project and the Community Garden. Swing by, introduce yourself, and find out what is happening. Volunteers have a choice of many tasks that keep our parks beautiful. Call (413) 863-3221 for more information. Live music celebration in Peskeomskut post clean-up at 4 p.m.

Harmony Sounds at the 5th Annual Gala. Two fabulous a cappella groups from the area, *The Zumbies* from Amherst College and *The Heart of the Valley Chorus*. 7:30 p.m. in the Turners Falls High School Theater. www.thegmf.org. Tickets \$20 at the door.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *James Montgomery* blues band, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mother Turtle*, soul rock, 9 to 11 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Otis Grove*, organ funk/rock/jazz. No cover.

SUNDAY, APRIL 26th
Family Dance, Montague Grange, Montague Center, 4 to 6 p.m. Family-style contra dancing, caller Tim Van Egmond and live music from traditional contradance band *Shingle the Roof*. Simple contras, circle dances, and singing games, easy instruction for beginners of all ages, especially those with little feet. \$4/person or \$10-15/family, includes a light snack. Info., (413) 367-9608.

Spring Fling fundraiser: on the lawn behind Deja Brew, Wendell. Multiple bands, BBQ, craft vendors, children's activities! Benefit for someone near and dear, \$5 to \$10 donation. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Deja Brew will be open for beer and wine, partial proceeds donated. (Rain date 5/3.)

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*, Acoustic Trio, Warped Americana, 7:30 to 10 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open Mic*, come play with us! 8 p.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 27th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps, A Night of Spoken Word*. Open mic 7

p.m. *Future Car & Enjoy the Ride* are two short clips about how we get around. In *Future Car*, Alan Alda test-



Richard Chase at the Wendell Full Moon Coffee House, Wendell Town Hall on Saturday, May 2nd, 7:30 p.m.

research labs, Germany, California and Iceland where we learn about efforts to build future vehicles that use clean, domestically produced fuels *Enjoy the Ride*. is a story on the rise of bicycle transportation and recreation in the Pioneer Valley.

Super Fun Bowling Club - Noncompetitive bowling club open to all abilities and ages! Revenge of the Nerds - Are you proud to be a dork? Grab your pocket protector and let it show! 7:30 p.m. French King Entertainment Center, Erving. www.superfunbowling.com

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Montague Phantom Brain Exchange*, 9 p.m. \$5 cover.

THURSDAY, APRIL 30th
Jazz at DiPaolo's, Turners Falls: *John Clark*, solo guitar, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Radio Free Earth*. Roots Acoustic Duo, Crossover music, 8 to 10 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *The Early Show*, 7 p.m. 90 min of acoustic music with Steve Sanderson and Freddie Freedom of the *Drunk Stuntmen*.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Jim Olsen's Rendezvous Ramble*, honky-tonk dj, 8 p.m. no cover.

FRIDAY, MAY 1st
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *The Highbeams*, classic rock & roll, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mass Production*, Obadiah Sun, Simon White, Joe Cunningham, Jay Stanley and Christian

p.m.

Guest Readers 8 to 10 p.m. Special Poetry night menu available.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29th
Deja Brew, Wendell: Knitting & Crafts Night, 7 to 10 p.m. Any craft/skill level.

Spring Film Series & Discussions with Experts. Held at the Greenfield Public Library, 6:30 to 8:30

p.m. *Future Car & Enjoy the Ride* are two short clips about how we get around. In *Future Car*, Alan Alda test-



the perfect fast, safe, exciting, and non-polluting car. His search takes us to the Big Three

research labs, Germany, California and Iceland where we learn about efforts to build future vehicles that use clean, domestically produced fuels *Enjoy the Ride*. is a story on the rise of bicycle transportation and recreation in the Pioneer Valley.

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Marano, 9:30 to 11:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 2nd
Wendell Full Moon Coffee House, Wendell: Richard Chase with Seth Hoffsommer, John Miller, & Bryan Barstow, 7:30 p.m. Warm and engaging stage presence, heartfelt lyrics, seasoned guitar-work, smooth singing: all add up to Richard Chase. A veteran singer-songwriter well worth experiencing. To benefit Wendell Old Home Day. Sliding scale \$6 to \$12 (978) 544 - 8022, www.wendellfullmoon.org.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Bus Drivers*, classic/southern rock, 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MAY 1st & 2nd
Pothole Pictures, Shelburne Falls: *Groundhog Day* - a comedy starring Bill Murray. Special guest, the Assistant Director of *Groundhog Day*, Conway resident Mike Haley on Saturday night.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, MAY 1st to 3rd
Ja'Duke's production of *The Wiz* makes it possible for you to journey down the yellow brick road without having to travel all the way to Kansas. 7 p.m. Greenfield High School, Greenfield. 5/3 at 2 p.m. \$12/\$10 for under 12 / over 65.

SATURDAY, MAY 2nd
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Exhibit Opening. Meet the Photographer, Regis Paris, 1 to 3 p.m. His Landscape Photography Exhibit on display in the Great Hall through 5/31.

FRIDAY, MAY 8th
Friends of GFDC Coffeehouse present *Katie Clark* and friends! Heavenly vocal harmonies with guitar, banjo & dobro, offering original material mixed with old-time country & bluegrass! 7 to 9 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Baked good available, donations welcome.

ONGOING
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: UMass Ventures in Science Art. Exhibit of student photographs of microscopic organisms! Taken using a variety of scientific methods, including Electron Microscope. See the world around you in a whole new way! On display through **April 30th**.

Hallmark Museum of Contemporary Photography, Turners Falls; In Gallery 52: *Blake Fitch - Expectations of Adolescence*, a ten-year photographic project documenting the emotional and physical growth and emotional maturation of two young girls. In Gallery 56: *Founder & Museum Collections - Selections II*. Museum Curator, Paul R. Turnbull has selected a limited overview of some of the Museum's collection. And in Gallery 85: *Stan Sherer - Life Studies*. Three documentary projects. 'Albania' and 'Shopkeepers' are straightforward studies of people & places. 'Lantern Slides' is a personal visual interpretation and construction by Mr. Sherer. Exhibits on display through **June 14th**.

AUDITIONS
The Country Players auditions for *Oliver!* **Sunday, April 26**, from 2 to 5 p.m. at GCC Downtown, Greenfield & **Monday, April 27**, 6 to 9 p.m. at the Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Attend either or both sessions. *Oliver!* will be produced at the Shea Theater July 10, 11, 17, 18 & 19. The cast includes 10 men of all ages, 6 women in speaking roles, and a chorus of children & adults.

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- SUNSHINE CLEANING DAILY 6:30 9:00 R in DTS sound FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- X-MEN: WOLVERINE PG13 MIDNIGHT APRIL 30TH
- MONSTERS VS ALIENS PG DAILY 6:30 9:00 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- 17 AGAIN PG13 DAILY 6:45 9:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- FAST AND FURIOUS PG13 DAILY 6:45 9:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- CRANK 2 HIGH VOLTAGE DAILY 7:00 9:30 R in DTS sound FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
- STATE OF PLAY PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 7 9:30 DAILY 12:30 3:30

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Friday, 4/24 9 to 11 p.m. *Zydeco Connection*
Saturday, 4/25, 9 to 11 p.m. *Soul Rock Mother Turtle*
Sunday, 4/26 7:30 to 10 p.m. *Acoustic Trio, Warped Americana Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*
Monday, 4/27 Open Mic 7 p.m. *A Night of Spoken Word*
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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

BY LESLIE BROWN MONTAGUE CITY

Suddenly everything is in bloom. Daffodils at the edges of the yard and in the woods, the bloodroot transplanted from the river's edge, the forsythia bush, the flowering quince and soon to be open full, the apricots. The peepers sing in the marshes; the phoebe is back, singing its unmistakable notes.

It seems early, this sun-struck short-lived season of first bloom. As I check the garden log, I find I am mistaken. In general, my records indicate this third week

of April as the usual time for this beautiful outpouring. In fact, one truly early year, 1999, the daffodils first appeared on April 9th.

However, we have had lovely warm days, interspersed with the expectable cool, damp ones. Frosty mornings are still common, but the birds and blooms seem undis-

mayed. Still, the rush to garden unchecked can often result in disaster. My log notes frosts as late as May 20th, 2002; May 13th, 2005; May 5th, 2004; and April 26th, 2006. And these chills came by the side of the river, not in the hills!

So the wiser gardener waits a bit longer to plant tender and marginal crops. I have put in the English roses which arrived last week, and kept my fingers

crossed. The chance of a light frost is less threatening to their future well-being than waiting too long for planting, with the risk of thoroughly drying out the roots. As recommended for our colder climate, I have placed the bud union a good four inches below the ground level.

I look forward to these new roses, which I cherish for their repeat blooming and lovely scent. Although I've lost some to cold and more to the tunneling of root-hungry voles, I persist because these are some of the most beautiful of any rose I've grown, and they are much less fussy than their cousins, the tea roses.

For the roses already planted in your yard, this is a good time for judicious pruning of dead growth. Also, an application of Epsom salts (a couple of tablespoons) around the base of the plants will encourage summer growth and bloom.

The tomatoes which were barely an inch tall a few short weeks ago have their true leaves now, and

stand proud in three- and four-inch pots. For the past two week-ends, I have worked quickly to transplant them into dirt that is designed for longer periods of growth. I chose a container mix which is heavier than the original starting soil but without the usual denominator of added fertilizer.

I want a light food for my sun-room tomatoes. They won't be garden-ready until the end of May, so I want to limit huge spurts of leggy growth. Instead, I have been giving them a light application of liquid seaweed, about one teaspoon per quart of water. They have responded well to this light feeding, and to the additional root room. Also, I chose cloudy days for transplanting, so my plants would be less stressed.

Next, it's time to do the same for my tiny sweet pepper seedlings. They are also sporting true leaves, and roots spreading from the bottom of the starter cells.

I think I'll clean up these mini starter greenhouses and jumpstart some early flowers I was given for Christmas: lobelia, verbena and marigold. That way they'll be garden-ready by the end of May.

Hopefully, a ring of strongly scented marigolds will deter some of the flying garden pests, and, who knows, maybe the woodchuck as well!

The recent dry spell will be tempered by a few days of rain and showers. I'll wait now for the latter part of this week to plant my cold crops. Then the earth will be damp and sun-warmed, the perfect combination for early seeds set right into the garden soil.

I'll plant lettuce, spinach, kale, radish, carrot and peas. If you enjoy broccoli, beets and snow peas, it's also timely to put them in. I will also set out my onion and leek seedlings alongside of the garlic. Those cloves, planted at the end of last year's garden season, are now hearty, about six inches tall, and ready for liquid fertilizer.

This is the beginning of the busy garden season, with the greatest pleasure: the planting of new crops. Soon it will be time to remove the mulch from the strawberry bed and snip the dead flowers from the late winter blooming bulbs. The time to mow the lawn and weed the garden beds can't be far behind.

Farmers Market Opening Soon

BY DON CLEGG

GREAT FALLS – The Great Falls Farmers Market on the corner of 2nd Street and Avenue A, next to the Great Falls Discovery Center, will open for the season on Wednesday, May 6th.

The market will be held each Wednesday afternoon,

rain or shine, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. through October 28th.

The market includes the sale of produce and plants, but also offers and encourages crafters, baked goods, meats, fresh eggs, and preserves. Civic groups are always welcome to put up tables and distribute infor-

mation. Entertainment from local musicians is frequently offered. If you are interested in participating in this mid-week market please contact Don Clegg at sealeggsdc@yahoo.com or greatfallsfarmersmarketturners@gmail.com. Weekly events are posted on www.MontagueMA.net then click on Farmers Market selection.

Get the Lead Out

WITH A GEOLOGY FIELD TRIP THIS SATURDAY

The Athol Bird and Nature Club will hold a geology field trip on Saturday, April 25th, meeting at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street, Athol, at 9 a.m. and then heading out to Southamptton. Participants should dress for a day in the field and bring a geology hammer, magnifying glass, collecting bags, and lunch.

The field trip will be led by ABNC founder Bob Coyle. Severe weather cancels the outing.

The specific destination will be Loudville, once a busy mining village and the site of what was once the largest lead mine in the United States. Galena, the principal ore of lead, was

first discovered there in 1679, and by Revolutionary War times the mine was producing large quantities of lead for bullets. Besides the lead, each ton of galena from this deposit also produced over 12 ounces of silver.

The mine was operated by several different companies but apparently without great financial returns during the first half of the 19th century, and was closed down after 1855. About 1862, the Manhan Silver-Lead Company was formed and the mine reopened. Extensive buildings were erected, and expensive machinery installed. The company failed, however, when the price of lead fell

at the close of the Civil War. Work ceased about 1870, and since then no mining operations have resumed there.

The main shaft is near the northern boundary of the town of Southamptton. Minerals found here include barite, pyromorphite, amethyst, fluorite, quartz, cerussite, sphalerite, azurite, malachite, wulfenite, chalcopryrite, and calcite, in addition to galena.

More information about the ABNC is available on the web at www.millersriver.net. New members are welcome.

For more information on the field trip, call (978) 249-6083.

Celebrating Arbor Day in Massachusetts

NEBRASKA CITY, NE

This year, residents of Massachusetts will celebrate Arbor Day on April 24th. While some states choose to celebrate Arbor Day on a date that coincides better with their growing season, national Arbor Day is celebrated on the last Friday in April by many states, including Massachusetts.

The Arbor Day Foundation encourages everyone to plant a tree to celebrate this special holiday. The Foundation's Web site (www.arborday.org) offers many helpful tips, from how to plant a tree to selecting the right tree for the right place.

The first Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska on April 10th, 1872, thanks to a resolution proposed by Nebraska City resident J. Sterling Morton.

Morton, a civic leader, agriculturist, and former newspaper editor, urged Nebraskans to "set aside one day to plant trees, both forest and fruit." The tree-planting holiday was so popular that by 1920, more than 45 states and U.S. territories annually

General George Washington took charge of the Continental Army. He did so underneath an American elm on Cambridge Common in 1775. (Today, the Elm Research Institute in Keene, NH, has developed a Dutch Elm disease

resistant cultivar of the American Elm with a lifetime warranty; for more information go to info@elmresearch.org. - ed.)

The Arbor Day Foundation

is a nonprofit conservation organization of nearly one million members, with a mission to inspire people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. More information on the foundation and its programs, or ways to celebrate Arbor Day, can be found at www.arborday.org.



celebrated Arbor Day. Today, Arbor Day is observed in all 50 states and in many countries around the world.

The state tree of Massachusetts is the American elm, adopted in 1941. This particular tree was chosen to commemorate the occasion on which

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