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NO PAPER
NEXT WEEK

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The Montague Reporter

YEAR 10 - NO. 13

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 22, 2011

Lawrence Krejmas

Presents His Side of the Story

UNLICENSED MAIN ROAD JUNK YARD AT ISSUE

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GILL - "You people are trying to be a bunch of dictators," yelled Lawrence (Larry) Krejmas at the two members of the Gill select-board still seated at the front table Monday, after Randy Crochier recused himself to avoid a perception of conflict of interest.

Krejmas raised his arm in a stiff Seig Heil salute.

Crochier, besides being chair of the selectboard, is also a member of the board of health, and it is that board that has been locked in a multi-year dispute with Krejmas over the state of Krejmas's property at 444 Main Road.

"The appearance of this property is that it is being operated as an auto junk yard," wrote county health agent Glen Ayers, acting on behalf of the town's health board in an order of conditions sent by registered mail to Krejmas earlier this year.

In a meeting of the select-board on October 24th, the board made it clear that Krejmas has no license to operate a junk yard or any other business at his Main Road property. They gave Ayers their approval to impose fines of \$25 a day per vehicle on Krejmas until he clears an estimated ten to 20 unregistered vehicles in sight

from the road or impounded behind a wooden fence on the property.

Additionally, Ayers noted in October, Krejmas's property is characterized by a half demolished, moldering trailer home, a cellar hole only partially covered by the collapsed roof of the former main building, and "large quantities of junk and debris... unusable building materials, rusted metal, broken and damaged appliances and utility equipment, used tires... car parts, engine parts, pieces of machinery stored in the open and exposed to the elements, piles with unknown contents covered by fallen leaves and branches, scattered plastic, rubber and glass materials, and accumulations of many other materials..."

Krejmas was incensed the board had not bothered to inform him of the meeting on October 24th when Ayers presented this written list to the board, and when Krejmas's neighbor at 446 Main Road, Kevin Chickering, pressed the selectboard to take action to resolve longstanding health board complaints about violations of the sanitary code on Krejmas's property.

"I was the star of that show," said Krejmas. "I didn't get word see KREJMAS pg 14

Wickman Defends Her Tenure as U-28 Super



Superintendent Joan Wickman

BY DAVID DETMOLD

ERVING - "We are a different organization, and a lot of change has happened in the last five and a half years," said Union 28 superintendent Joan Wickman last week.

As Erving senior citizens moved furniture and materials out of the first floor senior center into their brand new \$2.2 million building, just up the road from the recently renovated Erving Elementary School, Wickman spent an hour in her drafty offices on the second

floor of the old elementary school on Pleasant Street in Erving, ticking off the accomplishments of her tenure and defending the school superintendency union against charges of excessive spending and opaque bureaucracy that have been mounting in some member towns.

Wickman said since she was hired to replace Linda Driscoll in July of 2006, she has succeeded in reorganizing the central office, consolidated the special education secretary posi-

tion, hired a well respected director of finance and operations to replace Charlie Paulin, updated policies and kept the member school districts informed and in compliance with ever changing state and federal legislation, regionalization proposals and mandates regarding public schools and small school districts in particular.

Under her tenure, the work of the six staff members in the central office has been reorganized see WICKMAN pg 10

On the Spectrum of Doo-Wah-Diddy

A Talk by Mark Vonnegut



DETMOLD PHOTO

At the Leverett Library

auction off some of his own artwork to help the library establish a fund to combat censorship, the younger Vonnegut signed copies of his 2010 memoir, *Just Like Someone with Mental Illness, Only More So*.

On the way, and almost as an off-hand aside, Vonnegut provided his listeners with a harrowing critique of the big pharm mega-insurance dominated health care system he both works in, as a pediatrician in Quincy, and from time to time takes refuge in, when (by his count four) psychotic breaks have led him into and out of various mental hospitals, starting with see VONNEGUT pg 13

BY DAVID DETMOLD
LEVERETT - In a talk that alternated between glib one liners and raw reportage from the annals of a personal psychic hell, Mark Vonnegut, son of famed 60s counterculture

icon Kurt Vonnegut, held a rapt audience of about 60 Franklin County residents in the palms of his expressive hands at the Leverett Library last Thursday. After speaking for an hour and offering to

Leverett, Shutesbury Alums Aid Kenyan Orphans



PHOTO COURTESY OF ABBYANDSHIRA.BLOGSPOT.COM

At the Malia Children's Home

BY ROBIN KEARNS - In these days of global threats and rapacious multinational corporations, '90s dreams of the peaceful global village seem almost quaint. Until you hear about the inspiring, active connections being nurtured

between the children and adults of Leverett Elementary School (LES) and the Malia Children's Home, a home for orphans in Machakos, Kenya, along with other important work being done by two local teens, who on their way to

college found time to first establish a children's library in a Nairobi slum.

As Leverett Elementary prepares for a fundraising concert next month to aid the Malia Children's Home, LES students and see ORPHANS pg 7

PET OF THE WEEK
Giant Personality



Nala

Nala is my name, and I'm a five-year-old female shorthair cat in need of a good home. My designation in the Meet Your Match program is Executive which means that I am in charge and independent. Add to my descriptive labels Feisty Feline and you'll probably get the idea that I'm headstrong. That might be part of the picture, but the other half of the story is that I am friendly and playful. Please take me home if you're looking for a calico who is all cat with a giant purrsonality. I just joined the Lonely Hearts Club. That means I've been waiting to be adopted for longer than most of the other cats here and I can be adopted for half off the regular adoption fee. To find out more about adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email: info@dpvhs.org.

MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

Libraries Holiday Hours

BY LINDA HICKMAN
MONTAGUE - The Carnegie Library will be closed on Saturday, December 24th, Monday, December 26th, and Monday, January 2nd. The

Montague Center Library will also be closed both Mondays. The Millers Falls Library hours will not be interrupted. For more information, call 413-863-3214.

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

After School Drama & Arts for Gradschoolers

After School Drama & Arts for 2nd - 5th graders at the Wendell Free Library is coming soon. Thanks to the Wendell Cultural Council and Friends of the Library, the Wendell Free Library is offering an after school drama program each Wednesday, from January through May. The program will be divided into three seven-week sessions. During the first session, Improv Acting, participants will have fun with the library's youth program director, Abbe Schiowitz, turning short stories and ideas into improvisa-

tional skits. Participants will take turns videoing and reviewing the skits to improve their acting skills.

Improv Acting on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. will begin January 11th. This program is free of charge. Swift River students can take the bus from school to the library. A snack will be provided.

Space is limited to eight participants. For more information or to register, call the library at 978-544-3559 or email rheidkam@cwmar.org.

Winter Concert at Turners Falls



Great Falls Middle School chorus with pianist Artur Wysoczanski

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE
The lovely sounds of sweet music filled the Turners Falls High School auditorium Tuesday night as chorus and band members from the Middle and High School presented their Winter Concert. The evening opened with the Great Falls Middle School chorus performing "Jingle Bell Rock"; their high sweet voices blending beautifully. Students from TFHS chorus joined the middle

school students on stage and the program continued with an arrangement of "Follow Me," with soloists Kayleigh Tum and Nicole Kordana. Conductor and music teacher Scott Halligan led the chorus with energy and joy. The program continued with "Winter Wonderland," and then a rousing rendition of "Lean On Me," with Halligan's own arrangement. Artur Wysoczanski accompanied the chorus on

FACES & PLACES



Pam Kinsmith, of Greenfield, attended the tree lighting ceremony at Peskeomskut Park on December 9th with her son Kris and daughter Kacia. While they were there, what to their wondering eyes should appear but a Turners Falls fire engine carrying Santa Claus! Kacia told Santa she would like a pair of Ugg Boots and a certain kind of computer game. What kind of computer game? "Santa will know," she said. Kris did not ask for a particular present, but seemed to enjoy the chance to greet Santa just the same. Carolers filled the park with song, a fire blazed, and stores were open late as shoppers hobnobbed along Ave.

piano. After a break, the band performed with equal enthusiasm. Halligan led band members playing horns, wind, rhythm and percussion instruments. The band played an ambitious selection, "Simple Gifts," "First Holiday Concert," "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," "Sadegur Khusidl," "The Little Drummer Boy," and ended with selections from "The Nutcracker." Snacks of cookies and punch were provided by the Music Boosters after the performance.

Noreen LeMieux, treasurer of the Music Boosters, made a brief statement in support of the music and arts programs, emphasizing the importance of the arts to students and the community. She read the following quote from an article titled "Art and Music are Key to Student Development," by Fran Smith: "Years of research show that arts education is closely linked to almost everything that we as a nation say we want for our children and demand from our schools: aca-

demical achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity. Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork." LeMieux encouraged people to support their "children, grandchildren and siblings by taking an active and supportive part in their music and arts experiences, just as you have done tonight by attending this concert."

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

- Grade 6**
Carlie Kretchmar
- Grade 7**
Joshuan Torres
- Grade 8**
Savannah Donahue
- Tanner Richardson

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SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – December 26th through 30th

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

Monday, December 26th
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle
Tuesday, December 27th
10:30 a.m. Seated Health Program
Wednesday, December 28th
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:30 p.m. Monthly Health

Screenings
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, December 29th
9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, December 30th
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1:00 p.m. Writing Group

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant Street, Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at 413-423-3308. Mealsite Manager is Jim Saracino. Lunch is daily at 11:30 a.m., with reservations 24 hours in advance. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Please call the Senior Center to confirm activities, schedule and to find out when the next blood pressure clinic will be held.

Monday, December 26th

Center Closed for Holiday Tuesday, December 27th
8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting
Wednesday, December 28th
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing/Zumba
12:00 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, December 29th
8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10:00 a.m. Posture Perfect
Friday, December 30th
9:00 a.m. Bowling
11:30 a.m. Lunch - TBD

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

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

RECYCLE BOTTLES & CANS!
Week of December 27th in Montague

more info? call: 863-2054

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Local Briefs

JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG - The Montague Elks Chapter #2521 of Turners Falls donated 60 complete Christmas Dinners to the Franklin Area Survival Center. The Elks "Christmas Magic" dinner consisted of a turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and a frozen pie. The generous donation will help out 60 families in need this holiday season.

A New Year's Eve Prime Rib Dinner with all the fixings, along with raffles, prizes and entertainment, will be held in Fr. Casey Hall at Our Lady of Peace, 7th Street in Turners Falls starting at 5:30 p.m. Reservations are required. Call 413-863-2585 for details.

Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center present Ray Mason at the monthly Coffeehouse series on Friday, January 13th. This solo performance, featuring the hardest working man in Pioneer Valley show biz and his 1965 Silvertone guitar has a straightforward billing: "It's rock with the roll, just one man and his guitar." A Valley stalwart for decades, Mason has toured far and wide with the likes of The Band, NRBQ, They Might Be Giants, Graham Parker, Warren Zevon, Laura Cantrell, Junior Brown, Fred Eaglesmith, and his own band, The Lonesome Brothers. Check out Ray Mason. You will not be disappointed. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 7:00, with refreshments available. Donations help the Friends support free programming at the Great Falls Discovery Center.

On Saturday, December 31st, the public is invited to a 12-hour, family friendly festival of the arts presented by the Northampton Center for the Arts and PeoplesBank. For the 27th time, the city of Northampton hosts its signature **First Night** event on New Year's Eve, a celebration of creative community featuring a

"constellation of stars" at 20 downtown venues.

The Unity Skate Park committee is the proud beneficiary of the famous **Hope and Olive Soup and Game Night** on Monday, January 2nd from 5 to 8 p.m. The committee is still looking for raffle items for the event, and can be contacted at ellenmspring@yahoo.com Stop by for free soup, board games, and contribute to a great cause as the committee kicks off a fundraising drive to help build a permanent concrete skate park in Unity Park, Turners Falls.

Inspired in part by the Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro's series on 19th century rural markets, **Daniel Brown will exhibit 14 photographs** of open-air markets from across the globe, from January 2nd through the 29th at Green Fields Market, 144 Main Street, in Greenfield. Shot over a 22 year period, these images highlight markets found in Spain, France, the Philippines, Israel and the Arab Quarter of Old Jerusalem. Although well known as a landscape painter, Brown returns to his quarter century love of photography with this display.

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

Grange Make-and-Take Fair a Success

BY CINDY TARAIL
MONTAGUE - Attendance and funds raised at the Montague Grange Annual Make-and-Take Craft Fair, recently held by the Friends of the Montague Grange, were higher than ever this year. People of all ages made gifts, enjoyed homemade lunches and treats, and shopped for handmade items.

The organizers thank all of the volunteers, donors and vendors who made the event lively and fun for the attendees. We are very grateful for your support.

MCTV Hires New Staff



MARK LATTANZI PHOTO

Cindy Tarail

TURNERS FALLS - Montague Community Cable, Inc. (MCCI) is pleased to announce the hiring of two new part time MCTV staff: Owen Weaver, technical coordinator and Cindy Tarail, outreach and communications coordinator.

Weaver, who has been involved with MCTV as a community member and previously worked at GCTV, will be responsible for the upkeep of equipment, booking special productions, training community members in shooting off site, using cameras, and editing, running day to day programming, and helping the station stream online content. While Weaver has the skills to produce television programs, he'll focus on making the equipment easy for members of the public to use.

According to Charles Kelly, MCCI board member,

"Community members produce content for public access TV; we help air it."

Tarail, a seasoned community organizer, local resident and volunteer, will reach out to the public - from Montague to Gill to Erving - to encourage individuals and organizations to create homegrown programming for Channel 17 and for the website.

Tarail said, "I look forward to helping schools, the senior center, the library, Riverculture, shop owners, homeschoolers, anglers, chefs, or gardeners access this powerful democratic medium."

What's been missing at the station, said Dean Garvin, administrative coordinator at MCTV, is "someone with the time to go out into the community and develop content. That's what Cindy will do."

MCCI will ask Comcast to install new live drops in town to improve coverage of events at Unity Park such as the Soapbox Derby, to show live music from the Rendezvous and Burrito Rojo, and to cablecast other events live.

"The new hires and new resources will bring MCTV into more people's lives and will increase the conversation between all our residents, bringing the community closer together."

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er," said Mik Muller, MCCI board member.

For more information, stop by the studio, located at 34 2nd Street in Turners Falls, open until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, beginning at noon on Monday and Thursday and 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, or call 413-863-9200.

Creative Economy Summit III:

Fostering our Local Economy - Art and Business in Partnership

Call for Proposals

The Fostering Art and Culture Project is an organization of unique partners working to grow the creative economy in Franklin County, MA. The Creative Economy Summit III will take place on March 23rd and 24th. Building on the outcomes of previous summits, Summit III will work to energize the relationship between the artist and business community. The two-day artist/business conference will be held in a multi-venue format in downtown Greenfield.

Presentations and workshops will promote creative ideas, resources and networking. Presenters and attendees from throughout New England will be included. Workshop proposals that showcase the relationship between creativity and its application in the marketplace will be selected based on the mutual benefit to both communities. Skill-based content, hands-on workshops, media and social networking, collaboration and fundraising are some topics of interest. Proposals must be received by January 6th, 2012. The form is available online: www.fosteringartandculture.org. For more info contact: Becky George, Creative Economy Summit Coordinator at 413-773-5463 or becky@franklincc.org.

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War is Over

2011 was the year the Arab Spring began and the Iraq War came to an end.

The ongoing popular revolt against the repressive dictatorships and monarchies in the Middle East and North Africa, many of which have been armed and aided for decades by America, began almost without notice on December 17th, 2010 with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a 27-year-old street vendor who had worked since the age of ten to support his family. Bouazizi burned himself to death in front of the provincial governor's office in the Tunisian backwater of Sidi Bouzid after being harassed and humiliated for the last time by the corrupt authorities there. Within days, he had become a symbol for the entire country, soon the entire region.

Twenty-eight days after Bouazizi's death, the dictator in Tunis - Zine El Abidine Ben Ali - was swept from power by mass protests, after 23 years in office. Soon thereafter, Egyptians taking to the public square by the tens of thousands forced the abdication of Hosni Mubarak, despite the \$2 billion in annual American aid - most of it military aid - that modern day Pharaoh had relied on to enforce police state tactics and the cruel suppression of human rights during a 30 year reign of terror in Egypt.

These nonviolent popular uprisings inspired similar mass protests throughout the region, within the year toppling repressive oligarchs in Libya and Yemen (in the first instance with the air support of NATO) and leading to

the ongoing standoff in Syria, where more than 5200 people have been gunned down in street protests, and thousands more imprisoned to face the likelihood of torture and death behind bars, in the inexorable struggle against the tyrant Bashar al-Assad.

Israel continues to occupy the West Bank, Bahrain continues to forcibly suppress the aspirations of the Shiite majority, both with American largess and arms sales.

Meanwhile, America's nine year effort to bring democracy to Iraq at the barrel of a gun has come to a halt, with decidedly mixed results.

Whatever the truth of U.S. involvement in Saddam's rise to power, there is no dispute that the Reagan administration actively aided Saddam in his war against Iran, providing the dictator with military intelligence, special ops training, and economic aid.

But our support for Saddam as a bulwark against Iran in the 80s gave way to hostility when, in the aftermath of our invasion of Panama, he took a leaf from America's own playbook and sent his troops to take over oil rich Kuwait, calling it a long lost province of Iraq.

One Bush presidency gave way to another, after the uneasy period of no-fly zones and punitive sanctions under Clinton (with their horrific impact on the Shiite underclass). In the wake of 9/11, charges of weapons of mass distraction gave false pretext for the all out U.S. led invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Nearly nine years, more than eight hundred billion U.S. dollars, 4483 American dead, see WAR page 5



JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

Don't Leave Seniors in the Cold

ROSEANN MARTOCCIA

MONTAGUE CITY - It is fortunate that the fall has been a few degrees warmer than average, because many elders and families who rely on fuel assistance are now facing a long, cold winter.

According to the National Consumer Law Center, the national appropriation for the Low Income Heating Assistance Program, commonly referred to as Fuel Assistance, is likely to be just under \$3.5 billion, assuming the House and Senate adopt the funding agreement arrived at in mid-December.

The Congressional Research Service has provided a preliminary state allocation estimate showing Massachusetts receiving \$132 million of this fuel assistance aid. That compares to the \$184 million Massachusetts received last year.

Last year, the maximum oil benefit was \$1,050, and the maximum electric or gas benefit was \$750. We can only expect these maximum benefit levels to be lower this year, with a \$52 mil-

lion decrease in appropriation to our state.

An elder or family can only expect assistance with about one tank of oil for this heating season. Meanwhile, home heating oil prices are at unprecedented levels compared to previous years.

Just under 250,000 Massachusetts households applied for Fuel Assistance for the 2010-2011 heating season. Those numbers could increase as the economy continues to be difficult, and unemployment rates have not improved much from a year ago. For elders living on a fixed income, high home energy prices and other necessary expenses such as insurance, property taxes and prescriptions threaten independence and the ability to remain in their homes. Seniors need to be supported not only through continued and increasing commitments to the provision of health care, but also through the assurance of secure access to basic energy and utility services.

High energy prices pose ener-

gy security problems for elderly households. Low income seniors tend to own older, less efficient energy-consuming appliances and heating equipment.

The consequences of high energy prices and expenditures are particularly serious for low income elderly households, especially in a Northeast state such as ours. There is movement on Beacon Hill to act on a supplement to this year's state budget for additional resources for fuel assistance. Advocate to your lawmaker to support this supplemental appropriation and not leave seniors and families in the cold.

Benefits counseling at Franklin County Home Care can help people age 60 and older find funds for many things, including fuel assistance. Contact a benefits counselor near you by calling 413-773-5555 x 2258 or 978-544-2259 x 2258. Or email cbaronas@fchcc.org

Roseann Martoccia is the executive director of Franklin County Home Care.

A Novel Idea for a New Year

The holiday season is reaching its height; we are all headed for a new year. Some of us are still looking for last minute gift ideas, others are thinking of resolutions for 2012, a year that promises to be exceptional in many ways.

We Welcome Your Letters!
Montague Reporter
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reporter@montaguema.net



Quite likely, at this time of year, you are thinking of friends or family either nearby or far away from us. There is a way to help them be a part of our community, to help them connect with the new energy we are all feeling in our villages.

Our *Montague Reporter*, entering its tenth year of publication and community service, is proving to be a gem in our part of the Valley. Our newspaper pro-

Looking forward to News from Home

I now reside in Virginia at Vinson Hall, an independent living facility for all retired military officers and spouses. Having been a Navy nurse, I applied and was accepted before I left Turners Falls.

I arranged to have the *Montague Reporter* mailed to me. It arrives every Monday. You publish a great paper. Please let me know when it's time to renew.

- Stella Skrzypek McClean, VA

vides clarity and faultless reporting on the workings of town committees in all their New England idiosyncracies. It keeps us all informed of the state of our gardens, our rivers, our schools, and our village characters. From "the Healthy Geezer" to the police logs, from the Montague Energy Corner to Vermont Yankee, everything that touches our community gets up to the minute coverage and attention.

At the *Reporter*, our lifeblood is our subscribers. The local businesses who advertise with us, and our readers far and near who have chosen to subscribe, keep this ship afloat.

I urge you to make use of our reduced price promotion for this holiday season. Just use the subscription blank to the left. At year's end, give a year-long gift, to help far flung friends stay in touch, to provide neighbors with lively reading, and to help the *Montague Reporter* continue its unique mission.

- David Brule, President of the MR Board of Directors



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GUEST EDITORIAL

BY ELOISE MICHAEL

TURNERS FALLS - I am writing in response to your recent article "New Teacher Evaluation Guidelines Explained," lest readers think Race to the Top exists to help our children or our public schools. Although Democrats introduced Race to the Top, this legislation does not support public school students or public employees in any way. Race to the Top undermines public schools, increases segregation in schools, and creates opportunities for private corporations to profit from our public institutions.

In order to receive federal money, which we desperately need, states like ours promised to evaluate teachers based on test scores, to shut down 'failing'

End the Misuse of Standardized Testing

schools, and to introduce legislation that allows more charter schools. Standardized test scores correlate reliably with socio-economic-status and nothing else. When 'failing' schools are shut down, and many have been, neighborhood residents come out in droves to protest. Why should the federal government take schools from communities that want them? Charter schools have been shown to produce test scores that are the same or lower than those of regular public schools. There has also been an increase in segregation alongside the increase in charter schools.

Why would the federal government push so hard to enact these 'reforms?' Why would they bribe states to implement more testing and more charter schools,

while requiring them to fire beloved teachers and administrators and close down neighborhood schools residents desperately want to keep? There is one simple reason, and that is that Race to the Top helps the 1% drive forward their agenda to privatize public schools.

Though parents, teachers, and administrators everywhere have spoken out against these so-called reforms, the state and federal departments of education have pushed them through because conservative organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council support them, as do hedgefund millionaires and Walton (Walmart) money.

The *New York Times* reported on November 6th that Tennessee, the first state to win Race to the

Top money, is now mired in the same paperwork and evaluations they agreed to in order to win the money. Teachers in Tennessee report little of the money awarded the state has actually made its way into classrooms. Instead it has paid for the testing, evaluations, and paperwork schools are required to waste their time with in exchange for the money.

Recently the Association of California School Administrators announced they will not support applying for a federal waiver from No Child Left Behind that requires the adoption of Common Core Standards and the fixing of 'low performing' schools, but will focus instead on changing the law that creates these harmful requirements. In New York State 658 principals signed a letter

protesting the use of student test scores to evaluate teachers.

People are beginning to speak out everywhere against high-stakes testing and the damage it has done to the morale of students, teachers, and communities. Testing is expensive. Fewer people are pretending it is a good idea to use our tax money to pay for tests instead of paying for teachers and buildings. When the state department of education tells us teacher evaluations will "promote teacher and leadership growth and development," we should respond by protesting, like the California and New York administrators, like the growing number of people involved with Fair Test's Assessment Reform Network, who are working to "end the overuse and misuse of standardized testing in public education."

WAR from page 4


32,200 wounded, and over 100,000 Iraqi casualties later, that war has finally come to a close.

We honor the troops for their sacrifice. We honor their families for their sacrifice as well, and think particularly at this time of parents in our neighborhood who will not be welcoming their sons home for the holidays this year: Kathy Belanger, of Deerfield, whose son Gregory, a cook in the Army Reserve, was killed when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle in Al Hallia, five days short of his 25th birthday. Jon Weeks and Karen Brown, of Leyden, whose son Ari died in 2007 when the five-ton truck he was traveling in with other soldiers tumbled off an overpass near Baghdad. Two of the other soldiers who died in that crash had gone public with their criticisms of the war less than a month earlier in an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*. Joyce and Kevin Lucey, of Belchertown, whose son Jeff, a Marine corporal, hanged himself in their basement in 2004, shortly after being discharged from a four-day stay in the V.A. hospital in Leeds with a diagnosis of mood disorders and alcoholism after serving in Iraq. The \$350,000 wrongful death settlement the Luceys received from the U.S. government this year does not replace their son.

When he first came to national prominence in a speech denouncing America's run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Barack Obama called the coming conflict a "dumb war." Nine years later, as president welcoming home the troops, Obama said, "Iraq's future will be in the hands of its own people."

That could have been said with equal truth before we committed so much blood and treasure in Iraq. If the Arab Spring has a lesson for the dictators of the world, it has a message for us as well. There is no stopping the will of a people in their quest for freedom, dignity, and justice. Ultimately, neither bullets nor the bulwarks of oppression will stand in their way.

Obama, the Nobel Peace Prize winner who promised hope and change when he entered the world stage, has fallen far short of that promise. The money and human lives poured out on foreign sands would far better have been saved and invested in our own ravaged economy, rebuilding our own divided nation.

It is time to call for Peace on Earth, an end to the war in Afghanistan, and a renewed commitment to the institutions of peace - U.N. peacekeepers, global aid for education, public health, democracy building and programs that lift up people's lives abroad and at home. 

NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Dodge Tapped for Staff Sergeant

BY DAVID DETMOLD - "It will be a tough decision," said selectboard member Pat Allen. "We have a very strong department, made up of very thoughtful people who have a lot of experience and a lot of dedication to the community."

But in the end, the Montague selectboard had to pick from the three candidates who applied from within the police department to fill the post of provisional staff sergeant and from the four who applied to fill the post of provisional sergeant.

The vacancy in the staff sergeant post was created when Chris Williams was promoted to the position of acting chief of police, on the retirement of Ray Zukowski last month.

Promoting up the chain of command, the board gave the provisional staff sergeant job to sergeant Chip Dodge, and moved detective Lee Laster up to the vacant sergeant's position. These appointments will take effect on January 1st, and will remain in effect until the civil service exams and the process of hiring a permanent chief, staff sergeant and sergeant are completed later in 2012.

In other business, on the rec-

ommendation of wastewater treatment plant supervisor Bob Trombley, the selectboard held a hearing to change the rates the town charges to dispose of septage at the treatment plant.

In order to increase the amount of septage brought into the plant, which is operating below capacity, Trombley recommended dropping the rate from \$90 per 1000 gallons for in town (and Gill) septage and \$95 for 1000 gallons from out of town to \$75 from in town (and Gill) and \$80 from out of town. The board concurred.

Trombley said the plant has been successful in reducing the amount of nitrogen discharged to the river by about 60% just by adjusting the natural process of breaking down solids at the facility, and he said introducing more septage into the primary treatment loop will help in that effort, without costing the town any large sum of money. An earlier estimate for instituting a nitrogen reduction program at the treatment plant ran in the millions of



Charles Dodge

dollars, Trombley said.

"Montague is on the cutting edge of nitrogen reduction," Trombley said.

Allen complimented him on the holiday lights at the plant.

Selectboard chair Mark Fairbrother was also in the holiday spirit, sporting a large green and red button that read, "Bah, Humbug!"

Even so, the board responded positively to a plea from Rendezvous owner Mark Wisniewski to allow bars in town to stay open one hour later on December 31st to welcome in the new year.

Closing time on New Year's Eve will be 2 a.m.


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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

If Dogs Run Free

GILL TO PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL KENNEL PROGRAM

BY DAVID DETMOLD

Gill will participate – at least for a three month trial basis – in the Franklin County cooperative kennel program being developed by the sheriff’s department.

Under the program, stray dogs picked up and unable to be returned immediately to their owners would be transported at certain hours by sheriff department staff to the kennel on Sandy Lane, in Montague, and held there until their owners can be located.

Towns that join the program, like Erving, and now Gill, would pay into a fund to maintain the kennel and pay the operating costs of the program.

Meanwhile, the sheriff’s department is seeking grants and donations of dog food and other means of defraying the costs to the towns of running the cooperative kennel.

Since it will cost Gill only about \$100 to participate for the remaining six months of this fiscal year, the selectboard agreed to go ahead on a trial basis, understanding that a three month notice would be required to pull out of the program.

Administrative assistant Ray Purington told the board there were sufficient funds in the town’s dog revolving fund to cover the initial program fee. The dog fund comes from annual dog licenses at the town clerk’s office.

In the next budget cycle, it will probably cost the town \$700 to participate in FY’13.

Sergeant Chris Redmond told the selectboard his department may run into the problem of stray dogs whose owners are unable to be located about once every two months, or six times a

year.

Ann Banash supported the idea of the cooperative kennel, but said, “I think it’s a little hard to justify \$700.”

The town has not had an animal control officer for approximately the last five years, so when calls come in about strays, it is the police who respond to those calls. Redmond said on the occasions when the dog’s owner cannot be located, dogs are held at the garage at the police station, or sometimes at Bernardston’s facility.

Selectboard chair Randy Crochier said, “I’m all for,” the program, but “\$700 a year for a half dozen dogs is a little hard to justify.”

Turning from the general to the specific, the board heard from Joseph Fuller, a resident of 7 Riverview Drive, about numerous complaints that his half pit bull, half mastiff Bella had been running loose in the neighborhood, scaring children.

Fuller said some of the complaints had actually been caused by his ex-roommate’s Rottweiler, now removed from the premises. He called Bella “the sweetest dog in the world,” and said she had been on her best behavior since her master had been called up before the magistrate in Greenfield to answer the neighbor’s complaints. Fuller said that since he had installed an electric fence in August, Bella had not gotten loose, except once when the battery died.

The board required Fuller to keep the dog from getting loose from now on, and not to appear before them again on similar complaints at pains of further consequences.

Tracy Rogers, former town administrative assis-

tant, will work with Purington and fire chief Gene Beaubien to develop a disaster recovery plan for Gill, as part of her Homeland Security grant funded regional disaster planning effort at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Rogers said once a disaster occurs, it is too late to plan for it, and, “As you know, disasters happen in Franklin County.”

The board seemed put out to first learn from newspaper reports that the Gill-Montague bridge would be closed to truck traffic from December 21st to January 2nd, while four gusset plates are repaired near the Gill approach. That exclusion will include fire trucks responding to a call for mutual aid.

Banash called for a strongly worded letter to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation protesting the poor communication. “That’s ridiculous we didn’t know.”

Gill will hold a special town meeting on January 17th, to vote on a method of financing approximately \$10,000 needed to fully fund replacement of a leaky boiler at the safety complex, and upgrades to the heating system in that building. The entire cost of the project is estimated at \$55,000. Purington said the remainder of the funding will come from \$20,000 previously approved by town meeting, \$10,000 contributed by Entergy Vermont Yankee, which uses the facility for disaster preparedness planning relating to the nearby 40-year-old nuclear reactor in Vernon, and, with town meeting approval, from \$14,875 in supplemental

see GILL pg 12

NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Green Community Status Awarded

BY DAVID DETMOLD

The town of Leverett is now officially a Green Community, and the state will back that designation with a \$138,000 grant towards meeting goals set out in the town’s 20% energy reduction plan, or the development of new sources of alternative energy in the town.

The selectboard will meet with the energy committee in the coming month to determine how best to spend that money, within the guidelines set by the state Department of Energy Resources.

“We’d like to get some solar panels,” offered selectboard chair Rich Brazeau.

The town also took a big step forward toward the goal of bringing high speed internet access to residents’ homes and businesses, by awarding a \$40,000 consulting grant for the design and financial planning of last mile connectivity to Omaha-based G4S Technology (formerly Adesta). This is the same company that is working with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to bring middle mile fiber to the 123 underserved communities of Western and Central Massachusetts, including Leverett.

Selectboard member Peter d’Errico noted, “We have basically come to the conclusion it makes the most sense to do fiber to the home rather than stopping at the curb. It’s a small but important advance in our thinking.”

Good thing too, because curbs along most Leverett roads are hard to find.

D’Errico said it was possible construction of middle and last mile connectivity could proceed in tandem, once a design is approved and a financing package passed by

town meeting.

In other news, Julie Shively represented the selectboard at the first meeting of planning committees from the towns of Amherst, Pelham, Shutesbury and Leverett, which are considering various options for regionalizing their elementary schools. Those four towns have already regionalized their upper grades.

The committees decided to apply jointly for a \$50,000 planning grant from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to consider the financial and educational pros and cons of regionalization.

Commenting on her report to the board, Brazeau said, “There are still some territorial things people need to work through.”

A water committee, looking at the possible solutions to the problem of contaminated private wells at five homes on Teewaddle Hill Road, down gradient of the town’s former landfill, will meet on December 22nd. A majority of town meeting voters approved spending \$28,000 on October 25th to pay for an engineering study to run a four-inch water line down Cushman Road to the eastern end of Teewaddle Hill, to hook up the affected homes to the Amherst water supply, but that vote fell shy of the two-thirds majority required. The estimated price tag for that project would be in the ballpark of \$2 million. A number of town meeting voters called on the selectboard to examine other options for solving the problem, but the hydrogeology of the area limits the options for drilling new wells that can confidently be pre-

dicted to lie outside the affected zone.

Members of the selectboard have decried suggestions to take the affected properties by eminent domain as too damaging to the fabric of the community. The board maintains the cost of eminent domain takings would at least equal the cost of hooking up the homes to the Amherst water supply.

The committee that will consider possible solutions to the problem includes Skip Fournier, a biochemistry professor who lives on Teewaddle Hill to the west of the affected zone, Peter Reich, a retired public health professor and former chair of the board of health, Steve Ball, a PhD geologist and the sanitarian for the board of health, and Mike Williams and Sheila Seaman, geology professors at UMass who are also abutters to the affected zone on Cushman Road.

“I’m still working with the town of Amherst,” said Brazeau, who has a meeting scheduled with the Amherst planner in January to go over questions raised at town meeting about which town would maintain the proposed water line extension. Brazeau said the town would conduct an income survey in the affected neighborhood to determine if a project to ameliorate the condition of the private wells caused by leachate from the town’s former landfill could be eligible for loans or grants from the USDA or the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Brazeau said a suggestion that a new well or wells could be drilled on the Mitchell Farm in con-

see LEVERETT pg 12

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ORPHANS from pg 1

staff enjoyed an unusual all-school assembly this past Thursday, December 15th, featuring a brief but exciting chat with Shira Kaufman, 18, an alumna of LES, and her friend, Abby Tuominen, 19, an alumna of Shutesbury Elementary.

The chat was exciting because though the two young women are currently in Kenya, the Leverett elementary students, with the help of LES tech coordinator Karin Gravina, were able to see and speak to them through a live video-conference on Skype (an internet phone service), projected on a big screen in the auditorium.

The chat was brief, because the connection only lasted about five minutes due to poor internet service in Nairobi. But it was fascinating for the kids, who got to ask Kaufman and Tuominen about the time difference (9:30 a.m. in Leverett and 6:30 p.m. in Nairobi), whether they had seen crocodiles (no, only giraffes on the roadside), and, most importantly, about the Kenyan children, whom LES students have been coming to know since the beginning of the school year through photographs and stories.

Kaufman and Tuominen are currently volunteering at the Malia Children's Home in Kenya, which was established by a retired businessman and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Nindi, who have been supporting destitute children in the home they founded out of their own savings.

Kaufman noted, "Mr. Nindi told us of his vision to create a very good primary school, with a nice building and qualified teachers - and have the school be self-sufficient. When I was a student at Leverett, we had so many book drives and backpack projects... I knew that the spirit of community is one of volunteerism and generosity, and that the Leverett students and parents alike would be excited by a sister school proj-

ect that offered a way to help less fortunate children and forge a cultural connection to Kenya!"

Seeing the obvious educational opportunities for LES students, and the benefits for the more disadvantaged children, principal Anne Ross agreed the school community could help.

Kaufman said, "Since I proposed the idea to Ms. Ross and Karin Gravina, they have really taken it into their own hands and transformed it from a mere idea into a real project."

Gravina created a colorful display board featuring photographs and biographical information of the children of Malia Home, so LES students can learn more about them, their school, and Kenya. Each LES grade classroom has 'adopted' one or more of the home's 13 children as a class friend. They have written them letters and made drawings for their friends in Kenya.

Kaufman's mother, Danielle Barshak, attended the recent video-conference assembly, and will bring the items from the LES students, along with 20 Leverett Elementary t-shirts donated by the PTO, to the children of the Malia Home when she travels to Kenya to visit her daughter.

The story of Tuominen and Kaufman's volunteer work at the Malia Home for Children is part of a much larger philanthropic venture already the two young women began during the summer between their junior and senior years at Amherst Regional High School. They started out volunteering through a small Kenyan organization called Touch Kenya. While working at the Machakos Girls Rescue Center for a life-changing six weeks that summer, the two young women met Kenyan girls, who captured their hearts and inspired them to create scholarships for three of the girls.

One surprise for them when they arrived at the Rescue Center

was that the children there were absolutely deprived of books. This lack of reading material had not occurred to Kaufman and Tuominen when they packed colored pencils and games and musical instruments for the children. They could not have known how difficult it would be to actually buy books there, even in the capital, Nairobi. One young girl named Betty "was so eager to read that she resorted to reading our copy of *Out of Africa*," said Kaufman.

After locating the first Harry Potter book, which they gave to Betty, "It was her excitement to read that inspired us to create a library at the Rescue Center." So, the girls set their sights on coming back to Kenya after high school graduation.

Back home, they worked in a variety of ways to raise funds to buy their book collection.

Kaufman said, "In exchange for our volunteer hours at a local art gallery, the owner and artist, Ani Rivera, allowed us to hold an exhibit of our own to fundraise and collect books for our cause. Our exhibit, *Machakos: Through Their Eyes*, displayed photographs the girls of the Rescue Center had taken on our cameras, and we used the funds raised to ship the donated books to Kenya. In addition, we held book drives throughout the year, and by the end of the summer, had collected over 2,500 books."

Both of the young women graduated last year from Amherst Regional High School. Tuominen deferred attending Macalester College, and Kaufman deferred attending Carleton College, in order to go back to Kenya to realize their dream of establishing the library.

The women had met the Nindi family during their first visit to Machakos, shortly after the home had started, when the Nindis had only taken in two orphans.

When Kaufman and

Tuominen returned in August to install their library at the Rescue Center, they were barred from working there due to a national scandal. A two-page article in the *Saturday Nation* printed a blistering exposé on corruption and abuse at government-run homes in Kenya just prior to their arrival. In response, the government banned international volunteers from working at the government-run homes.

Casting around through their contacts, they again came across the Nindis, who graciously offered to host them. They were grateful and began volunteering at the Malia Children's Home, which by then had grown to hold the Nindis, a housemother, a teacher and thirteen orphans, many of whom had heartbreaking backgrounds.

In the meantime, Kaufman and Tuominen have officially opened their library, which they have named the Kupanda International Library (*kupanda* means 'climb' in Swahili), in the Kiambiu slum area of Nairobi.

After seeing the amazing response of local children, they hope it will be the first of many such libraries with the non-profit they are working to create, also called Kupanda International.

Yet, Kaufman, Tuominen and the students at LES aren't the only ones who are reaching out to help the children of Kenya; the broader community can help as well. A benefit concert and bake sale is being organized to raise money for the Malia Children's Home. It will take place on Saturday, January 14th at the Leverett Elementary School gym from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Initially, Kaufman wrote from Kenya to Senegalese percussionist Tony Vacca, a Valley favorite, to invite him to bring his band and play at the benefit concert. Ross then tapped the talents of professional festival organizer and LES parent, Bush-I Harvey-

Ahmai to organize the rest of the concert.

Harvey-Ahmai called Vacca "an extraordinary percussionist," and said that Leverett should prepare for an exciting performance. Harvey-Ahmai has worked tirelessly to coordinate the concert. He said he hoped to create the benefit concert as a template for other events to come, including fundraisers for the Leverett Elementary School itself.

Several musicians associated with LES will also play at the benefit, in a variety of musical styles including folk, jazz, and possibly reggae or calypso. LES extracurricular music teacher Brian Bender has arranged for two bands made up of current and former LES students to perform. Kindergarten teacher Dorothy Cresswell and music teacher Daphne Bye will play a piano and guitar folk duo. The Khalsa Jazz Trio may make it on the bill as well.

Tickets for the event are \$10 for adults and \$15 for couples. Children under the age of 12 get in free, but if they are LES students, they are encouraged to bring some baked goods to contribute to the bake sale. Tickets are available in the school office. Only 200 tickets will be available so get them while they're hot.

An additional fundraising effort for the Malia Children's Home, called "Change for Change" was initiated by LES library teacher, Susan Wells. The coin collection buckets are placed around the school as a way of empowering children to participate financially, while learning about money, math and charity. These collection buckets have provided teachable moments about the relative meaning of material wealth. Leverett residents and others are also welcome to deposit spare change in the large collection jar in the LES lobby.



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West Along the River

The December Journals

BY DAVID BRULE
MILLERS FALLS,
ERVINGSIDE

December 8th - The morning after a heavy rainstorm dawned gray and icy. The temperature has fallen but it did not bring the promised snow. Instead, the Millers River has risen to high spring freshet stage, flooding the banks and woods as much as April's high water.

The footbridge across the north end of the frog pond is almost underwater. The firewood on the island, wisely stacked out of reach of any potential flood, will have to wait weeks now before anyone can cross over to bring it up to the house.

Squirrels ice skate across the back porch on the way to fresh seeds. I crept out to the feeder at the edge of the porch and I swear my toes were instinctively gripping the slippery surface even through my shoes.

Our boarder, Salty Sawyer-Pruitt, of the West Highland Terrier lineage, spent the morning launching herself in pursuit of the cheeky squirrels, her feet spinning over the icy surface, her little legs whirling pinwheel fashion, toenails clicking on the ice, getting no traction to catch up with the bushy tailed intruders who were sticking out their tongues, giving her a loud raspberry, just out of reach!

December 10th - A hard frost this early morning. The doves sit on the edge of the frozen birdbath and gaze at the ice, reflecting on the season at hand. The full Wolf Moon had passed the night shining and peering into every window of the house.

One poet called the moon a pale and wistful bachelor, the

man in the moon passing, melancholy and alone, down the lane where his love lives, wistfully singing his lonely song. It was something like that last night. Or else it could have been wolves or coyotes howling, depending on your mood and if you were actually paying attention.

Every room in the house was

rate it, polish up the woodstove, drive down to Logan to pick up our wandering son, home for the holidays, and then there's always firewood to cut, a constant daily task.

Amid all this seasonal bustle, the villages of Millers Falls and Erving side took pause yesterday to remember one of our own, a

nesses which have become veritable local landmarks over the years. She always impressed those who met her with her stature and force of personality; we do not often see the likes of Helen Prondecki in a lifetime.

December 12th - Most old houses have a room where castoff objects, old shoes and clothes, books and photographs accumulate, finding their way to spend their days waiting to be called forth once again. In this house, we call it the Cold Room. This is the north-facing bedroom where

tossed to them.

Up here in the Cold Room, neighbors' rooftops etched in frost are visible through the icy swirls on the windows, and the welcome sun begins its journey down Mineral Mountain, first starting with the evergreens high up on the ridge when the redtail suns, to reach the valley floor, the silver turning to golden light.

Why is it some of us prefer this season? It may be the primitive simplicity of the outdoors at this end of year, maybe an ancient echo of long ago ancestors who began to face the coming yearly return of the glacier. For others, this is the time of year when a window opens into the past, when we can see things that are obscured at other times of the year, when visitors long since passed on can visit once again.

December 14th - To help the season, and to pace ourselves, each date has its ritual.

Today, for the morning coffee read, Washington Irving's *Old Christmas*, makes its way down from the special Christmas place on the Cold Room bookshelf to the kitchen table.

This book contains accounts by Irving of his time spent in December in England in the 1850s. Just opening the first pages sets the tone for the day.

This is a ritual begun in 1974 when wife and son gave me the book one Christmas. But the connection goes back even farther than that.

By the time, in a few days, that I reach the chapter called "The Stage Coach," one ghost of Christmas past, my early English teacher of long ago, will pay a visit through these pages.

That'd be Bill Connelly. He had us study, in our freshman year, this Christmas account by Washington Irving, and that locked all three of us, Bill, Washington and me, into a

see JOURNALS page 9



lit in silver; outside the kitchen and living room windows the river danced and sparkled in the cold.

By 6:30 a.m., however, the yard had sprung to life, along with the cedar waxwings. The waxwings had spent the night in their favorite rhododendron, not far from their supply of this year's crop of crabapples.

Morning coffee out of doors provides the jolt to get on with morning chores, as Christmas approaches. There's always something to do: schedule time to get the tree, bring it in and deco-

formidable lady who at times seemed bigger than life.

Helen Prondecki, born in Millers Falls one January long ago in 1921, was laid to rest. A strong and powerful woman, she had been valedictorian of her TFHS Class of 1939, and post-mistress of our Millers Falls post office during the war years. She and her husband Edwin built the French King Motel and Restaurant in 1954, and founded the Franklin Grocery in Millers Falls.

Her sons Frank and Michael, respectively, still run those busi-

nesses which have become veritable local landmarks over the years.

Decidedly, silver is the color of these December days. The north light, greatly valued by painters for its gentleness and simple clarity, filters through the morning frost, coating the heirloom wooden storm windows.

Earlier in the morning, outside the windows, shadows of winter birds moved in from the pines. Small voices from the juncos and tree sparrows tinkle and chime like delicate silver bells as they flit about the porch, gleaning their favorite seeds from the mix

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Construction Halted for Six Weeks at Beaver Lake



JOSEPH A. PARZYCH PHOTO

Construction work in progress across the Beaver Lake at the top of Richardson Road, in October

BY DAVID DETMOLD MONTAGUE & LEVERETT
The construction of four new metal towers to carry the 345 volt power line over the 20-acre wide beaver lake at the top of Richardson Road, on the border of Montague and Leverett, has fallen behind schedule and will be suspended until February, according to Frank Poirot, spokesperson for the Western Massachusetts Electric Company. Poirot said the site had been cleaned up and secured, heavy equipment removed, and the four metal pylons would be stored on location until warm weather returns and construction resumes on February 1st of next year. The project is now scheduled for completion for late

April. "Severe weather drew away our resources," said Poirot, referring to the late October snow storm that knocked out power throughout the region. "That window closed this week," said Poirot on December 15th. He explained the utility company had a specific window of time during which it could deactivate the power line and transfer it from the old wooden poles to the new metal pylons, which will stand 90 to 150 feet tall. The work was necessary because the beaver lake had submerged the base of the wooden poles for years, rendering maintenance to the line difficult. The line that crosses the

beaver lake is "critical to this area," said Poirot. "We can maintain the flow of energy while they're out," but mid-winter, when frequent unpredictable storms may cause other lines in the area to go down, is not the time to be deactivating the power line at the top of Richardson Road, he said. He said other than the delays caused by the severe weather and fall power outage, work at the beaver lake went "pretty smoothly. Drilling crews ran into more rock than anticipated at one or two of the foundations, and that added time to the schedule," but all four foundations are now in place and ready for the resumption of construction in late winter, and early spring.

JOURNALS from pg 8

Christmas ritual for life. High up in a classroom of that wonderful old building with its oak floors and ceiling-high windows framing the oak trees and maples on Crocker Avenue, Bill had us read, the week leading up to Christmas vacation, one or two of Irving's essays. Many years later, I had a chance to share with Mr. Connelly the importance taken on in my Christmases by the passages and the book he had introduced us to that one December long ago. He gave me that wry Irish smile, and made the philosophical remark of many a retired English teacher: "You may well be the only one who remembers that!" Maybe so, but I think not. *December 16th* - The gathering of our far-flung family is fast approaching, and it's no small task to whip the homestead into shape. This old house loves to accumulate dust and all manner of clutter and debris we've brought in from outside over the past few weeks. We are constantly on the move here, going in and out with muddy boots, bringing in artifacts from the river: beautiful dried flower heads, pearly shells of river clams, small skulls, snake skins, various leaves, not to mention whatever comes in on the soles of our boots. My own assignment, however, is cleaning the cook stove. Those few of you who grew up

with a massive cook stove in the kitchen know what I'm talking about. Five hundred pounds of black cast iron, the Glenwood C is a marvel of engineering, with its labyrinthine channels for heat, smoke and soot that need regular cleaning. So on come the gloves and dust mask, and off come the six burner lids, open the trap under the oven door, and start shoveling out the soot. Some of it is fine powder; some has formed puffy dust lions attached to the inner walls. In spite of all precaution, a fine black haze is raised over my job site. After a lot of sweeping, brushing and scraping, the lids go back on, and it's time to activate the elbow grease and smear on the stove black, get this old pile of cast iron polished up. Then to shine up the chrome. The ornamental silver edging pops loose. Each piece has its date and origin: "Glenwood Range Co. Taunton, Mass. 1912." I do enjoy reading that legend. Not only was it made here in Massachusetts (and not China for example) but it dates back to 1912. The historian in me associates all kinds of disparate events from that year: that date is on the wall of the Millers Falls Tool Co. building I pass each day, that's the year grand uncle Doug Smith pitched in the new Fenway Park for his Red Sox debut, that's the year the Titanic went down, and

so on. Some of us inherit the need to remember things like that, and to keep old things. This stove, abandoned and then salvaged from the back of a barn up in Whately, is now entering its 100th year. Soon the stove will be covered with the myriad of potluck dishes and desserts due to arrive for the annual family homecoming. But for now, it's bright and shining, ticking contentedly like a big black cat as the cast iron heats and expands, sharing the warmth of the crackling oak in the firebox, brought up from the woods last winter. *December 21st* - This day is a true December day. The skies are gray, with a hint of snow, or sleet, or freezing rain. Or all of those. We could either get out and scrape ice off the car, shovel snow, or rake the leaves. We won't know for a while yet. Time now accelerates as we approach Christmas Eve. The house is in order, restored after the tidal wave of family swept through on December 18th. The gathering was as it always is: a house full of cousins, wives, husbands and their children, sister Sue and Mother, two Alberts (one Junior and one Senior), all come back to the Smith homestead as we have done for close to the last 40 years, and two generations before that. As in most homes in our villages at one time or another during this season, the rooms filled with laughter, family talk and old stories, here and there an

empty chair where some of the elders sat, now present as spirits in this old house, but present nonetheless. But today we will finish our Christmas cards, still choosing the beleaguered US Postal Service to electronic cards, perhaps some last Christmas shopping, maybe just sit near the fire in the newly-becalmed house, waiting for the weather to make up its mind. *December 22nd* - This shortest day of the year will find me making the Christmas rounds, in a way. I'm one of those who brings this newspaper to the outlying districts of our readership. After a quick stop at Benny Rubin's, greeted with his "Take a break!" and Greg William's smiling salute, I swing by David James's Lake Pleasant post office for a chat about existentialism or maybe the weather, or both. Next stop is Montague Center, where patrons have filled the Lady Killigrew over the roaring waters of the Sawmill. I breeze into the Book Mill, collect my weekly warm hello from Susan Shilliday, drop off the newest edition of our paper, and I'm off. There will be another Susie at the Montague Mini-Mart, a stop at the Leverett Coop and a brief chat with Hugh Corr, our proofreader who volunteers long Wednesday nights reading and re-reading each week's edition. A slow drive by Lake Wyola, placid in the late afternoon, smoke rising from the few

chimneys of lake shore cabins still occupied this cold December off-season. Car radio tuned to WHAI where the Christmas carols are recycled, not yet reaching the point of saturation, but it's coming! Riding higher and higher up to the Wendell Country Store, the weather always changes, getting progressively more like January up here, while lower down it's still December. Snow swirls as I drive past the Von Ransons'. This brief plateau in Wendell Center gives one a 360 degree view of the lowlands and forest stretched out below to the horizon. Down to the endangered Wendell Depot post office, a time capsule in itself where postmistress Anny Hartjens has a warm greeting as always. My route across the top of the East County is about finished. A few more drops in downtown Erving, then a quick stop to see Eric and Ralph Semb in their rejuvenated and jumping Entertainment Center. I replenish the Reporter stand, check the payment can, and then I'm down the road to Prondecki's, my last stop. Whisk in and out after a quick chat with Mike and the boys, then, whew! Home. Feeling not unlike a certain Santa Claus, I've finished my modest rounds for the year. Time to sit back, enjoy a cup of tea, maybe spiked with a little something extra, wait for snow, and wish you all a Merry Christmas!



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WICKMAN from page 1
so that the financial staff are now supervised by the manager of finance and operations. That position is now held by former Greenfield town accountant Mike Kociela, whose quick grasp of the financial complexities of the five town, four school district union (which includes the Swift River school district of New Salem and Wendell, along with the elementary school districts of Erving, Leverett and Shutesbury) and clear budget expositions have won praise from boards who roundly criticized his predecessor for inconsistent spreadsheets and confusing data.

Wickman said she restructured the secretarial positions for special education, which formerly consisted of part time staff in each school, and now has been consolidated into a single post at the central office – adding a seventh staff person there, but reducing the number of hours a week devoted to this task from 52 to 40 union wide. “This has resulted in a cost savings for each of these schools,” said Wickman.

On the topic of special needs students, the superintendent said the overall number of children with special needs appears to be holding steady in the union, “but the intensity of their needs has increased.”

To help meet those needs, the union has recently hired an inclusion specialist, to assist the schools in mainstreaming students with special needs, so they receive more of their educational services in the classroom with their peers, rather than in expensive out of district placements.

Wickman said holding the number of out of district placements down (there are just two now in the union) and hiring classroom aides instead represents a huge cost savings for the union. It can cost on average

three times as much to educate a special needs student outside the district, Wickman said.

Still, the hiring of the inclusion specialist, paid for initially with federal stimulus funds, set off a mild furor among the member towns over the legalities involved with hiring a shared employee, and determining how that person’s benefits would be paid. A similar brouhaha developed over the retirement benefits for Paulin last year, since his benefit package, according to past practice of the union, was set by the town with the highest percentage of students in union schools.

At this point, that town is Erving, which offers far more generous benefits for employees than do the other towns in the union, leaving towns like Shutesbury and Leverett to protest that their own town employees are getting 50% benefits paid by the town on retirement, while at the same time they are being asked to contribute 79% to retirement benefits at Union 28.

Anomalies like this have caused more than a dozen town officials from across the union to meet together for hours on end struggling over contradictory legal interpretations from the Department of Revenue to settle a dispute on a single retiree’s benefits, fanning the flames of discontent with the union in Erving, Leverett and Shutesbury.

All five towns have signed onto a petition for the legislature to create a special act to allow the towns of the union to contribute to a U-28 employee’s benefits at the same percentage they contribute to their own employees’. Wickman said the union is now awaiting the legislature’s approval of that special legislation, and she expressed hope that when that controversy is finally behind them, the towns may look

more kindly on the century-old, horizontal union structure that allows each town to maintain an equal level of autonomy over their elementary grade schools.

Yet within that structure, Wickman takes her role as superintendent seriously, attending up to 120 night meetings a year with each of the four school committees, and trying to keep communications open with town accountants, finance committee chairs and selectboards in the member towns. Her job involves approving hiring decisions at the school building level, and signing off on home schooling applications, among many other tasks – and Wickman has not taken a rubber stamp approach to any of these matters.

“I have to live within regulations and mandates established at the state level. Some staff think there is still a continuum in terms of how rigidly a superintendent adheres or doesn’t adhere to them,” Wickman added.

Though members at a recent Leverett school committee meeting talked of Wickman’s reputation as a hardliner when it comes to home schooling, for example, still the most recent home school application was approved by the superintendent and the committee in less than a month, to everyone’s apparent satisfaction.

The cost of Wickman’s salary – \$124,790 plus a \$6000 annuity in lieu of health coverage – has also come up for critical comment at Leverett selectboard meetings recently, but Wickman defended her annual package as justified by her advanced degree (she has a doctorate in education), her busy night meeting schedule, and her five plus years of experience on the job. Yet Wickman maintains she is still the lowest paid school superintendent in Franklin County.

She points with pride to the accomplishments of the schools

in Union 28.

“When we track our students, they tend to do extremely well compared to other 7th graders. That tends to be the feedback we hear from the high schools.”

When Union 28 went through its most recent Educational Quality and Accountability audit, a system wide measure of the educational capacity and performance of public schools in Massachusetts, in 2007, Wickman said the U-28 schools were found wanting in only one category out of about 50 measured. That one shortcoming, the placement of a special needs classroom in the Leverett Elementary Library, too far from mainstream classrooms, was quickly corrected, and the state has not considered it necessary to return to Union 28 schools for follow up audits since.

Wickman also noted, “We had a pretty phenomenal special education audit in 2009,” and she said she has recently received a call from the state department of elementary and secondary education commending the union for

the quality of their school anti-bullying plans.

Wickman said the role of such central office personnel as the curriculum coordinator and special education director, to say nothing of the more routine functions of payroll clerks, will be more appreciated by hard working school principals burdened with an increasing array of state mandates around such things as teacher evaluations and school bullying policy enforcement. In many ways, Wickman insists, the Union is there for the member towns and their schools.

To get a better sense of the public’s understanding and support for Union 28, the joint supervisory committee of the union has prepared a union wide survey, which will be available starting in January online via links at each town’s website. School employees can access the survey through their principal’s offices, and hard copies will go home with students. Wickman said the union hopes to have the results compiled and made public in February.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Domestic Assault, Harassment, Larceny

Wednesday, 12/14 2:20 a.m. Arrest of [redacted] for domestic assault and battery on Avenue A.	Street. Summons issued. 7:43 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Bridge Street. Services rendered. 9:20 p.m. Domestic disturbance at The Montague Inn on Federal Street. Investigated.	Road. Peace restored. Saturday, 12/17 2:09 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Summons issued. 3:33 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Services rendered. 5:22 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Avenue A. Services rendered. 7:12 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Avenue A. Referred to an officer. 10:59 p.m. Restraining order violation on Fourth Street. Investigated.
Thursday, 12/15 1:02 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Services rendered. 8:14 a.m. Illegal dumping at Montague Center by the park. Services rendered. 3:56 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Third Street. Services rendered. 3:57 p.m. Threatening, harassment on L Street. Services rendered. 4:46 p.m. Restraining order violation on fourth	Street. Summons issued. 7:43 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Bridge Street. Services rendered. 9:20 p.m. Domestic disturbance at The Montague Inn on Federal Street. Investigated. Friday, 12/16 10:31 a.m. Arrest of [redacted] for domestic assault and battery, assault with a dangerous weapon, and resisting arrest. 5:39 p.m. Larceny at Jay K’s Liquors on Avenue A. Summons issued. 7:38 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Old Stage	2:09 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Summons issued. 3:33 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Services rendered. 5:22 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Avenue A. Services rendered. 7:12 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Avenue A. Referred to an officer. 10:59 p.m. Restraining order violation on Fourth Street. Investigated. Sunday, 12/18 7:47 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Old Stage Road. Peace restored.

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The poetry pages

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

- William Carlos Williams

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

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

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

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

The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted night
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

—Thomas Hardy
England

Like Brooms of Steel

Like Brooms of Steel
The Snow and Wind
Had swept the Winter Street -
The House was hooked
The Sun sent out
Faint Deputies of Heat -
Where rode the Bird
The Silence tied
His ample - plodding Steed
The Apple in the Cellar snug
Was all the one that played.

—Emily Dickinson
Amherst

The Visionary

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the
groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong
and far:
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire! chide, my angry dame!
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame:
But neither sire nor dame nor prying serf shall
know,
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen
snow.

A Christmas Prayer

Some say you died for my sins,
But I say you just died.
They killed you then,
and they would kill you now.
Breathe the living cosmos
into their moribund minds.
Make everyone a hero,
and be crucified on the cross
of ritual slavery
to money, machines, markets, and militarism.
Who knows when you were born?
But your death lingers long, like nativity.
Cultures praise you in Heaven,
from sepulchers for the living
where your head is mounted
on Mammon's mantelpiece.
We celebrate your birth,
the potlatch turned inside out
and squeezed dry for one day
at the altar of take.
And somehow you still weather the beating,
be you martyr, messiah, or masochist.
And guilt's garden,
garnished with worm-eaten apples,
is more than just the manure of clerics.

—Kevin Smith
Turners Falls

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn, then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear—
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air:
He for whom I wait, thus ever comes to me;
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust thou my
constancy.

—Emily Brontë
England

The Old Year

The Old Year's gone away
To nothingness and night:
We cannot find him all the day
Nor hear him in the night:
He left no footstep, mark or place
In either shade or sun:
The last year he'd a neighbour's face,
In this he's known by none.

All nothing everywhere:
Mists we on mornings see
Have more of substance when they're
here
And more of form than he.
He was a friend by every fire,
In every cot and hall—
A guest to every heart's desire,
And now he's nought at all.

Old papers thrown away,
Old garments cast aside,
The talk of yesterday,
Are things identified;
But time once torn away
No voices can recall:
The eve of New Year's Day
Left the Old Year lost to all.

—John Clare
England

Contributors' Notes:

Thomas Campion lived in England 1567- 1620

John Clare lived in England from 1793 - 1864.

Emily Brontë lived in England from 1818 - 1848.

Walt Whitman lived from 1819 - 1892 in New York.

Charles Boudelaire was born in Paris and lived from
1821- 1867.

Emily Dickinson lived in Amherst, MA from
1830 - 1886.

Thomas Hardy lived in England from 1840 -1928.

Rainer Maria Rilke lived from 1875- 1926, living
throughout Europe.

Kevin Smith is 52 years old, a Turners Falls resident,
tubist and therapist as well as poet.

GILL from pg 6
FY'12 state aid the town has received.

The selectboard will hope to meet with the finance committee on this warrant article on January 7th.

Tax Rate Set

The board held a tax classification hearing, and approved Purington's recommendation on behalf of the board of assessors to retain a single tax rate, which for FY'12 will be \$14.55 per thousand dollars of valuation.

Purington said that amount represents an increase of \$0.65 from last year's rate of \$13.90. He accounted for the increase by saying ten cents of the hike comes from a debt exclusion approved for paying off the loan on the Mariamante property, 34 cents comes from the annual increase allowed under Proposition 2½, and new growth, at about \$31,000, adds roughly 21 cents to the tax rate this year.

Purington said, "Townwide, property value has declined very slightly, about \$320,000 on total value of \$152 million." The valuation of property is based on "arm's-length sales" recorded in the past two years, and has been approved by the Department of Revenue.

Purington said property sales in Gill have been holding steady at about eight to ten a year, with some properties selling above their assessed value, some at par, and some below.

"Gill still seems to be holding its value, based on recent sales," summed up Purington.

One value that is still eluding the selectboard is the amount it will cost to put up partition walls on the first floor of town hall, to divide up staff offices in a way that will allow privacy for taxpayers and employees. This project, for which town meeting previously allocated \$10,000 to pay

for materials, has been years in the planning stage, and would also allow the assessors to move their meetings and records up from the frequently damp town hall basement.

The town had hoped to interest the Tech School in using the project as a demonstration opportunity for students in the building trades program. But word came back the Tech School could not take on the project.

Although Purington spoke about the possibility of organizing a volunteer work bee to raise the partition walls, the selectboard asked Purington to get quotes from private contractors, to see what the project would cost.

Video Stipends

After a brief hiatus in videotaping the Gill selectboard meetings, volunteer Rick James was back behind the camera again this week for MCTV, Channel 17, and the selectboard spent part of the meeting discussing ways to ensure the continuity of video recording of their meetings.

The town has been piling up funds in an account to pay for local cable access programming. Purington said that fund, which every cable subscriber in Gill pays into through an automatic fee on their monthly bill, has now totaled up \$32,000, "with more coming in quarterly."

John Ward, who campaigned for selectboard two years ago partly on a pledge to open up the selectboard meetings and town meetings to video coverage on the cable access channel, said he was pleased to see the board agree at the end of the discussion to commit to a \$25 stipend per selectboard meeting for whomever operates the camera.

Purington said the board hoped that more people could get trained to run the equipment, to give James some backup so that

he would not have to videotape every single meeting (as he has been doing for the last two years, with few exceptions, until the middle of the fall). Purington added that if more residents became familiar with the camera equipment, they might be more likely to video other events or meetings in town and get them on the air as volunteers.

MCTV, located on 2nd Street in Turners, offers regular free trainings for volunteers to learn camera skills, editing, and production; to find out more about those trainings call 863-9200.

Speaking of the recent hiatus in meeting coverage in Gill, Ward said, "It's very interesting that that interruption in service made everybody on the selectboard feel like they were missing something. The idea of broadcasting the meetings was not warmly received initially."

Ward said he would like to see volunteers trained and willing to get out in the community to tape other meetings, like the finance or conservation committee, or events like concerts on the common, or the Gill crafts festival.

Speaking of the conservation commission, the selectboard accepted with regret the resignation of Ted Castro-Santos from that board after eight years of volunteer service. The town is seeking someone to fill that open seat, and also volunteers to serve on the town's open space committee - call 863-9347 and speak to Purington to find out more.

The lighting upgrades are complete at the elementary school; a leak in the steam pipe to the radiators in the multi-purpose room is fixed; but the new boiler is giving the town problems. Siemens Building Technologies is working with the contractor to resolve the heating dilemma at the elementary school.

LEVERETT from pg 6
junction with with the town's planned acquisition of a conservation restriction on much of that property is unlikely to come to pass, because yields on private wells on that section of Teewaddle Hill are already low.

Eddie Field briefed the selectboard on plans to approach the community preservation committee for funding to provide for a comprehensive historic rehabilitation of town cemeteries.

The cemeteries in Leverett

are maintained by private associations, but those groups do not necessarily have the wherewithal to pay for the restoration of damaged stones, fences, gates, and the like.

Field told the board the associations would work together in the application process, in the interest of preserving an important historical and genealogical resource for the town.

The board gave their blessing to the proposal.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Suspected Cyberbullying, Animal Cruelty and Fraud

Tuesday, 12/13

8:50 a.m. Report of bullying situation on Old State Road. Juvenile received internet threats of injury. Under investigation.

9:11 p.m. Report of erratic white box truck. Same pulled over at the Box Car Restaurant. Vehicle gone upon arrival.

Wednesday, 12/14

11:50 a.m. Report of animal cruelty at West High Street residence. Checked same. Animal appeared healthy. Did have injury. Advised to bring same to vet.

2:30 p.m. Structure fire at North Street residence. Assisted with traffic on scene.

Thursday, 12/15

12:20 a.m. Assisted Northfield police with warrant arrest on Millers Falls Road in Northfield.

11:05 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with vehicle rollover at Northfield/Erving town line on Gulf Road.

Friday, 12/16

6:50 a.m. Report of motor vehicle off roadway in area of Old State Road. Found to be motor vehicle

accident. State police handled same. 11:10 a.m. Fraud reported on Strachen Street. Under investigation.

12:30 p.m. Report of suspicious motor vehicle at River Road residence. Checked same. Found to be all set.

Saturday, 12/17

12:55 a.m. Criminal application issued to [redacted], for expired license and inspection sticker violation on Route 2.

10:25 a.m. Alarm at Christina's Restaurant. Building secured.

6:47 p.m. Report from Montague police of suspicious male subject on Bridge Street Bridge. Checked same, is all set. Just getting fresh air.

Sunday, 12/18

8:10 p.m. Criminal application issued to [redacted], for operating a motor vehicle after a suspension on Moore Street.

Monday, 12/19

10:05 a.m. Report of credit card fraud on River Street. Under investigation

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. Is erectile dysfunction a possible symptom of heart problems?

Erectile dysfunction (ED), which is inadequate erection for sex, can indicate that something is wrong with your heart. Here's why:

Blood flowing to the penis creates erections. Plaque buildup narrows and hardens arteries (atherosclerosis) reducing blood flow through-

out the body. The arteries supplying blood to the penis are smaller than those for the heart. So, ED can be an early sign of atherosclerosis, which can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke.

The risk factors for heart disease signaled by ED include age and genes.

Younger men are more likely to have heart disease with ED. Men under 50 are at especially high risk. ED in men over 70 is probably not a sign of heart problems.

It's more likely ED could be a sign of heart disease if you had a close relative with heart disease at an early age.

Other risk factors include: high blood pressure, elevated LDL or "bad" cholesterol, obe-

sity, diabetes, smoking, inactivity and depression.

Ian M. Thompson, MD, a urologist at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, did a study that showed a strong association between ED and heart disease.

"Our data suggest that older men in this group (with ED) have about a twofold greater risk of cardiovascular disease than men without erectile dysfunction," Thompson said.

Dr. Thompson's study involved 9,457 men over a seven-year period. All were aged 55 or older.

Dr. Thompson found that men who reported erectile dysfunction for the first time during the study carried a 25% increased risk for developing

subsequent heart disease during follow-up. In men who had ED from the beginning of the study, the risk of developing subsequent heart disease risk was 45%.

German researchers also reported that men with ED are twice as likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease.

Dr. Michael Bohm, a cardiologist at Germany's Saarland University, and his colleagues studied 1,519 men from 13 countries who were involved in a study of drugs to treat cardiovascular disease. The men were asked about their ED at the beginning of the study, two years into it and at the end at five years. There were 55 percent with ED at the beginning of the trial, nearly double the

normal incidence of about 30% in the population at large.

The team reported that, in the five years of follow-up, men with ED were 1.9 times as likely to die from heart disease, twice as likely to have a heart attack, 1.2 times as likely to be hospitalized for heart failure and 1.1 times more likely to have a stroke.

The studies in the U.S. and Germany are just two of more than 100 studies linking heart disease to ED. Cardiologists urge men with ED to get a complete medical exam to screen for coronary artery disease that can lead to heart attack.

If you have questions, write to fred@healthygeezzer.com.

VONNEGUT from pg 1

Hollywood Hospital in Vancouver, a descent into the maelstrom of madness he recounted in his first book - 1975's *Eden Express*.

Vonnegut is an ambiguous figure, at once brave and fascinating in the mode of a celebrity willing to lend the world his experience as a lens into the prevalence and ravages of mental illness, and yet at the same time standing to one side, ambivalent about his experience and the drugs he credits in some degree with leading him into or out of it. In the choppy wake of Nassir Ghaemi's 2011 discourse on the supposed correlation between mood disorders and leadership in politicians like FDR and JFK (*A First Rate Madness*), Vonnegut wryly cast himself in the company of such epochal personages as Abraham Lincoln and brilliant

artists like Van Gogh.

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars. Or perhaps the Hollywood Stars.

"Van Gogh never sold a painting in his life, and now his work is selling for \$53 million, which goes to show there's an upside to acquiring the art of the mentally ill while they're still alive," he offered with trademark Vonnegut irony, hoisting one of his paintings aloft for public inspection.

Shading from deprecating insight to serious social commentary, Vonnegut described the artist's path as a way out from the labyrinth of a tortured mind. He talked about his great grandfather, Bernard Vonnegut, bursting into tears during a long ago inventory at Vonnegut Hardware in Indianapolis and crying, "I want to be an artist!" "Art is lunging forward with

no certainty about where you're going or how to get there," said his great grandson. And "Mental illness is like a train going faster and faster and you don't know when it's left the tracks."

Bernard went on to a career in architecture, designing some of the great edifices of Indianapolis. His son, Kurt Sr., designed chessboards and furniture. Kurt Jr. became the writer beloved by millions for works like *Cat's Cradle* and the *Sirens of Titan*. And so it goes.

Speaking of the muse that beckoned and the disease that haunted his family, Vonnegut said, "My father wrote as well as he did by clawing his way back from the illness and finding something he could call truth."

He said, "My mother was out of her mind a large part of the time, but she didn't let it define her."

And he acknowledged, "I've had to be hospitalized. I meet diagnostic criteria. I don't think there are very many people who are not at some time out of their minds. That's why people need people."

Vonnegut spends his days now defying the ten to fifteen minute per patient diagnostic obstacle course prescribed to doctors by insurance companies, and doing whatever it takes to help young people find a way back to physical, mental and social health in his pediatric practice.

He spoke about the impossible math of health insurance, where families pay "\$16,000 a year trying to get some of it back." He talked about the impossibility of providing good pediatric care in an era of attention deficit television disorders and \$100 pills.

Talking from experience as a

patient and as a doctor dealing with mental illness, Vonnegut said, "You can be so fearful about relapse that you medicate someone so heavily they can't get well."

He scattered bon mots like non pareils on a grindhouse floor.

The crowd leaned in close. And for a time, Vonnegut held them in his expressive palms that seemed to wing their way ahead of his thoughts in hapless, attenuated flight, like the hands of Billy Bibbit, or Billy Pilgrim, homing to some radar signal few could hear and fewer still would wish to follow, as the audience strained to listen, gathered close about him in the hushed room, part of the same karass, refugees from the same asylum, on a fishing trip for troubled meaning in the high seas of modern times.



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FALL INTO SOME SAVINGS!

Ferry Meadow Farm - part XX

San Jose, CA & Boston 2017

BY ELOISE MICHAEL - Before we leave for California, I practice having both bodies awake at once. Jason wakes the Body at Rest while I am sitting in the living room. I find I can have my eyes open in two places, but I really can't do two things at once. I can't even stand up with both bodies at the same time. I am dizzy enough to fall down.

During the trip Jason is awake for four or five hours out of the time I am awake. We talk about old times, and he lectures a lot about politics.

The first day he says to me, "You sure do sleep soundly in the back of a car. I can't do that - especially not for twelve hours."

"Sleeping is kind of different for me now," I say. "If I'm restless, or thinking about something, then the Body in Motion thinks about it for me. The Body at Rest really has nothing to do but sleep. It's pretty relaxing."

"I'll bet it is."
"No really, everyone should sleep that way, even without a doppelganger. If you could just leave all the thinking and doing - and worrying - for when you're awake..." I trail off.

"Only no one is able to do that," Jason says.

"Yeah, I know," I say. "Also, you are motivated to stay asleep - to avoid having both bodies awake."

Jason doesn't answer. Both bodies will have to be awake while I install the software, but we don't talk about it.

I drive to Boston the day before the meeting. It's confusing to drive west by night and east by day. I almost forget which one of me is which during the drive, but luckily it's only two hours to Boston.

The morning of the meeting I wake up in my hotel room. I get to the office and then to the conference room.

I need to be settled by 9:10 so the other body can be awake. Jason has promised me that no one will ask me a question during the meeting. I just need to sit there and look normal. I wonder how many people at the meeting know what is actually going on. Just one? Or more?

He doesn't tell me. It's better not to know, he says.

So I greet my coworkers, make small talk, arrange my things on the table in front of me.

"We should get started," my boss, Alissa, says at 9:03. She is good at keeping people on task. I wonder if she is the one working with Jason.

A man begins a presentation, and a few minutes into it, the doppelganger wakes up. I need to look alert in Boston but give all of my attention to the body in San Jose.

I wake up in the car outside an office building. I go in alone. We don't want security to identify anyone else.

Jason has helped me henna my hair, pad my body to look a little fatter, and put on some makeup.

I am supposed to look like someone else pretending to be me.

I show my badge at the door, and the security guard looks at

me questioningly. It is 5:00 in the morning, after all.

I resist the urge to explain myself. That would seem suspicious. Instead I walk through like I have every reason in the world to be there. People test applications in the middle of the night. They switch over servers, as well.

I walk down the hallway looking for the right place. I have run over the plan many times with Jason.

I pause at the door and swipe my badge in the reader.

The door clicks, and I open it. There are security cameras in the hallway and also in this room. I know that people will be scrutinizing these videos later and purposely don't turn my face toward any of them.

The door clicks shut behind me.

- Continued Next Issue

KREJMAS from pg 1

from you people that there was a meeting, so I could be here. Behind the scenes dealing I don't like."

Krejmas launched into a lengthy peroration about how he had never had any complaints about his property before Chickering moved in, how he had attempted to appease Chickering's complaints with a new 10-foot high fence, and how he had saved the town money on more than one occasion in the past as highway boss, as when he beat out the state bid on reconfiguring West Gill Road "through the woods" to Main Road, using his local crew. Or how about the time he worked all weekend at the town garage using his own tools to fix the blown gaskets on the new fire truck's tank?

John Ward cut him off. "We have established you as being a good guy. That's not why you're in front of us. Let's move forward to how we can work with you and for you and your neighbor."

"Throw me in jail!" retorted Krejmas. "This is getting to me, and it's getting to me bad. I've been in a doctor's care since 1986," with a heart condition.

Krejmas took out a bottle of prescription pills and hurled them in the direction of the selectboard's table, just missing Ann Banash.

Turning to Glen Ayers, he said, "White man speak with forked tongue!"

He offered to sell his property



444 Main Street, Gill

DETMOLD PHOTO

to the board on the spot, and quoted an obscure scriptural verse that ended, "I can't wait to brush the dust off my shoes when I leave this town for the last time."

Banash retained her composure, and said, "There are issues that need to be dealt with. We need to work them out one by one."

Ayers said he had been working with Krejmas to clean up 444 Main Road for two years, and in contrast to other health agents in the county, Ayers said he had not only taken a voluntary compliance approach with Krejmas at first, but had extended his willingness to work out a voluntary solution for nearly two years. Ayers noted the file his predecessor had left about the property was a thick one, dating back years.

Krejmas said, "There's a whole new fence. The property has been cleaned up."

Ayers disputed that. "There really has not been significant change. There are still piles and piles of debris."

Earlier, Krejmas maintained that the cars on the property were all parked there legally, "within the bylaws. They're all antiques. They're all runnable."

Ayers disputed that. "We're not talking about antique cars here. We're talking about junk. A cellar hole with a collapsed roof. It needs to be cleaned up. It's dangerous. Everyone agreed at the beginning - we're going to clean this place up. Honestly, the trend is not a positive one."

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Breaking and Entering on West Gill Road

- Monday, 12/12**
11:25 a.m. Civil process served to resident on Lyons Hill Road
- Tuesday, 12/13**
8:05 p.m. Breaking and entering reported on West Gill Road. Officers from Erving and Bernardston assisted.
- Wednesday, 12/14**
7:10 a.m. Security check on Grist Mill Road.
- 8:50 a.m. Responded to elementary school for bullying issue.
- 11:00 a.m. Responded to River Road for an immigration issue.

There's just as much junk as there was two years ago."

"Between now and spring it'll all be cleaned up," said Krejmas, taking a different tack.

"We need a date," replied Banash.

"I'm not going to have you hold me to it," parried Krejmas.

Banash said, "We've had the discussion about you cleaning up your property for the last five years."

Ayers said, "The final step is to go to court to enforce my order. If you disregard the court, you'll be found in contempt of court. The court has the ability to force you to comply."

Banash offered to help Krejmas locate a source of grant funding to help him clean up his property.

"I'm not looking for anybody to do my work for me," he answered.

Krejmas said he would have the property cleaned up by July.

An argument ensued about whether that meant July 1st or July 30th.

"I won't clean it up in winter. I won't be hiring anybody," warned Krejmas.

The board insisted on a date of July 1st for the property to be cleaned up according to the list in Ayers' conditions.

Krejmas said he had not studied that list. "I don't know what's in there, so I don't know whether I intend to agree with it."

Ayers offered him another copy of the list of conditions, but Krejmas, with hands shorn of a number of fingers from a life of hard labor, waved it away.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

p.m. - 1 a.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *New Year's Eve Comedy at the Shea with Joe Wong and Rick Canavan*, reservations strongly suggested, beer and wine available, 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1st
Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *M.R. Pouloupoulos & John Rice*, 3 p.m.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Relics*, Brian Mallet and Lefty Cullen playing all your favorite oldies from the 50's & 60's, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Equalites*, reggae fantastic, 9 - 11 p.m.

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 13th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Coffeehouse featuring Ray Mason*, 7 - 9 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Glenn Roth*, fingerstyle guitarist, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14th
Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *M.R. Pouloupoulos*, acoustic singer songwriter, 8 p.m.

Wendell Town Hall: Full Moon Coffeehouse presents *Trailer Park*, 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAYS, JANUARY 14th & 21st
The Dance Studio, Orange: Auditions for *Lincoln: The Musical*, directed by Genevieve Fraser, 2 - 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Le Cheile*, an Irish session, 8 - 10 p.m.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Wood Comes from Trees and other fascinating revelations*. How much wood do we use? How do our local forests fit into the picture? Join Forester *Peter Grima* from DCR to learn about the consequences of our wood consumption, & take away some bits of knowledge that may enable you to make better wood purchases, 7 - 8:30 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21st
Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Marc Pinansky*, country, folk, melodramatic pop, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Wildcat O'Halloran Band*, high energy guitar based blues, 9 - 11 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27th
Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Ray Mason*, indie rock, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28th
Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Luke Mulholland Band*, classic blues rock 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20th and 27th
SATURDAY, JANUARY 21st and 28th
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Country Players presents *Play On!* Matinee also on Sunday, January 29th.

AUDITIONS!
Montague Grange: *Mutton and Mead auditions!* Saturday, January 21st through Monday January 23rd. Mutton & Mead is a Robin Hood-themed theatrical event & festival held in Montague at the Millers Falls Rod & Gun Club on June 23rd & 24th. We will create a medieval shire & tavern, populate it with characters, and then

The Miles Band, 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24th
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Second Annual Christmas Eve Get Together*, 5 - 8 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps*, a night of spoken word, 7 - 10 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28th
The Grille, Greenfield: *Pat & Tex LaMountain* & their band celebrate the release of their new CD, *Sweet Chabango*, 7 - 10 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Contra Dance*, David Kaynor calling, with *Montague Center Band*, 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp*, country blues, 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Patty Carpenter* sings solo.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Shag of Sunshine*, Span of Sunshine vs. Shag, 9:30 p.m. Free.

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

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31st
Village Common, Montague Center: *Sawmill River run*, 10 a.m. start, 9 a.m. registration begins.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Voo Year's Eve Prohibition Speakeasy*, dinner specials, *Drew Paton* croonin' 7 - 9 p.m., *Nobody's Fat* at 9:30 p.m., champagne toast at midnight, free dance party after midnight, open until 2 a.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *New Year's Eve with Ruby's Complaint*, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *New Year's Eve Party with John Sheldon & Friends*, 10



Start the New Year off right at Mocha Maya's in Shelburne Falls with M.R. Pouloupoulos (above) and John Rice, at 3 p.m. Sunday, January 1st.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7th
Montague Grange: *Square Dance*, Craig Edwards will call, and Virginia reels to live old-time music by *Ainley's Melody Makers*. 7 - 10 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Jennie McAvoy*, Celtic singer songwriter, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Dedicated to Delilah*, 60s - 80s cover tunes, 9 - 12 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8th
Leverett Congregational Church: *Songs for a Winter's Day*: the winter concert of the *Leverett Community Chorus*. 4 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11th
The Third Place, Turners Falls: *Open House at The Third Place*, a new afternoon program for at-risk youth, at 56 Avenue A, 2 - 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13th and SATURDAY, JANUARY 14th
Memorial Hall Theater, Shelburne Falls: *Pothole Pictures* presents *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, a stunning documentary. Backed by a haunting musical score, we follow an expedition into the nearly inaccessible Chauvet Cave in France, home to some of the most ancient visual art created by humans. 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 13th until APRIL 1st
Gallery at Hallmark, Turners Falls: *Imitating Art*, a student photographic exhibition featuring attempts to photo-

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

EVERY THURSDAY
Thrive Project, Turners Falls: *Ping Pong*, 7 - 9 p.m.

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

EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY NIGHT
Montague Inn: *TNT Karaoke*.

NOW until JANUARY 29th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Artwork by Leonore Alaniz*.

NOW until January 31st
Ursa Major Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Paintings by Michael Katz*.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22nd
Northfield Mountain Recreation Center: *Solstice Headlamp Hike*, Ages 12 & older. 6 - 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Uncle Hal*, funky-tonk, 8 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Guberman & Paradis*, classic rock duo, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23rd
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Rhythm Inc.*, reggae, 9 - 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls:

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On Books – *Nuked: a GI Memoir*, by Bob Ellis Levellers Press (Amherst, 2011)

REVIEWED BY JEFF SINGLETON

WENDELL – “One day in the early 1950s a young man was driving fast up a rural dirt road in the state of Virginia to visit a friend named Ed. He was driving too fast, in fact, and nearly smashed into the rear of a school bus moving slowly ahead on the other side of a curve. To avoid the disaster, he swerved the car off the road and up a steep incline. The car rolled over on its side, the young man crawled out, and, as was custom in the 1950s when traumatized, lit a cigarette. At this point a helpful

passing motorist shouted that the kid should get away from the car, which might explode. The young man, now even more traumatized, ran for his life in the direction of the bystander.

Soon Ed arrived at the scene and, as was also the custom in those days when a young man was confronted with the need to make many adult decisions, the kid proclaimed, “Nothing left to do now but join the army.”

Thus begins Bob Ellis’ first book, *Nuked: a GI Memoir*. The subject is the author’s experiences in the Army during

the mid-1950s. Ellis, now a resident of Wendell, is the motorist who joins the army. The Korean War ends just as he completes basic training. With a bit of ambition and a minimal sense of the realities of the Cold War, he signs up for work on something called “special weapons.”

Today words like “special weapons” would cause alarm bells to go off, but not for most young men in the 1950s. Not even when Ellis transferred to a base in New Mexico whose raison d’etre was extremely vague. Not even when Ellis and his colleagues realized they were being trained to assemble nuclear warheads.

Reality emerged very slowly for Ellis and, appropriately, emerges slowly for the reader of this book. Indeed, at the end, when Ellis escapes his situation in the military it is not clear that he is entirely aware of the totality of what that situation has been.

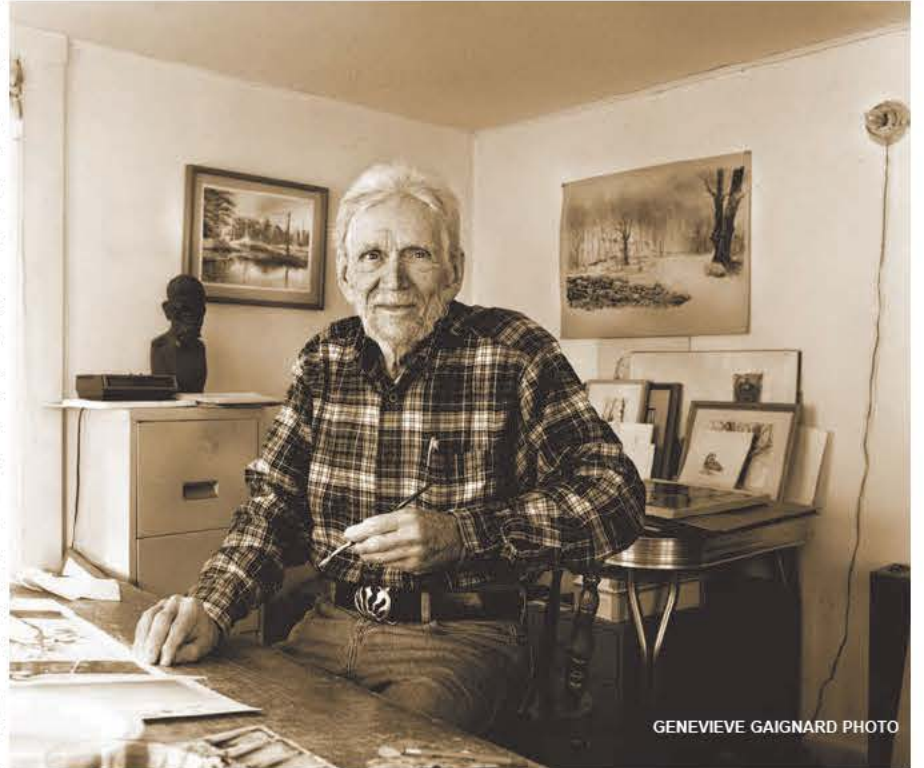
The reality seems to have emerged over the past 50 years for Ellis, a conservationist and prolific local nature artist. In a telephone interview the author told me he decided to write the book just over a decade ago to confront “mental suffering.” He said, “I have been writing that book without knowing it all my life. Those bombs were terrible.”

Those terrible bombs that Ellis was assembling were designed to be mounted on what we now call “battlefield nuclear weapons,” combat weapons designed for use at short range. We now view this as a rather bizarre period of our military history, before the impact of radiation was well

known. The impact is better known now, in part due to experiments on American soldiers at the very time and region where Ellis’ story takes place.

Ellis recounts some hair-

1950s. There were some serious distractions to keep him from confronting the reality of nuclear war: starting a small landslide by pushing an old car off a mountain; waking up in the morning to see a mountain lion staring down at him; discovering something called Tennessee Sour Mash Whiskey (aka Jack Daniels); a vicious brawl in a roadside hush puppy joint; lost in the rain in Juarez



Bob Ellis

GENEVIEVE GAIGNARD PHOTO



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raising drills assembling live warheads near downtown Albuquerque, NM. At one point he almost falls out of an airplane that is dropping a nuclear prototype disguised as a water trailer. Why the disguise, Ellis asks the top Sergeant of the 14th Ordnance Battalion:

“Dunno really – maybe a booby trap...”

“A booby trap? For what?”

“Dunno – a city maybe.”

Ellis recounts, “A shocked response was in my mouth but wouldn’t come out.” Why? A full paragraph of conjecture follows without a clear answer. Ellis concludes that he was simply “ignorant of possible contexts, of potential nuclear scenarios, to ask the ‘right’ questions.”

No doubt true but Ellis in this memoir was also a young man in the spectacular American southwest in the

searching for the prostitute he has fallen in love with.

To complicate matters the young Ellis is an atheist, struggling for a source of moral values without (in his mind) a god telling him what to think.

All of this creates a certain moral haze and an inability to clearly evaluate the predicament he is in. It also can create some confusion in the reader’s mind. This is a first book and in some ways a rough book. But the confusion works very well for me. It captures the mind of a rather naïve young man caught in a potential nuclear nightmare. It captures the struggle of an older man trying to sort it out decades later.

I found the memoir a creation that encouraged serious thinking, not just about nuclear weapons in the 1950s but about youth, morality, and memory. I recommend it.

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