



BEYOND SALVAGE
Griswold Mill Roof Collapse
see page 3



BLASKET ISLAND PART II
Ruins of the Village
see page 16

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS GILL ERVING WENDELL

Year 4
No.18
50¢

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

FEBRUARY 9, 2006

Hearing on Lake Grove Continues

BY DAVID DETMOLD
WENDELL - The planning board's site plan review for the Lake Grove School at Maple Valley's proposed therapeutic farm animal program continued for an hour on February 7th, and will continue again, for a fourth, and hopefully final meeting on February 21st, at 7 p.m.

This week's continuation was held to allow time for Lake Grove's executive director, Roland Paulauskas, enough time to gather supporting documents. Lake Grove at Maple Valley provides on campus programs and comprehensive treatment services for up to 71 emotionally disturbed boys and young men, ages 10 - 21, at the school on the corner of Depot and Mormon Hollow Road.

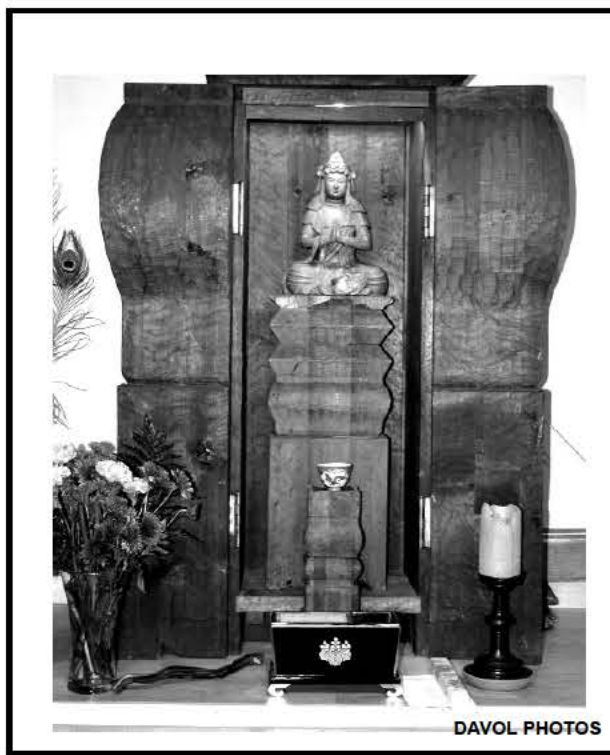
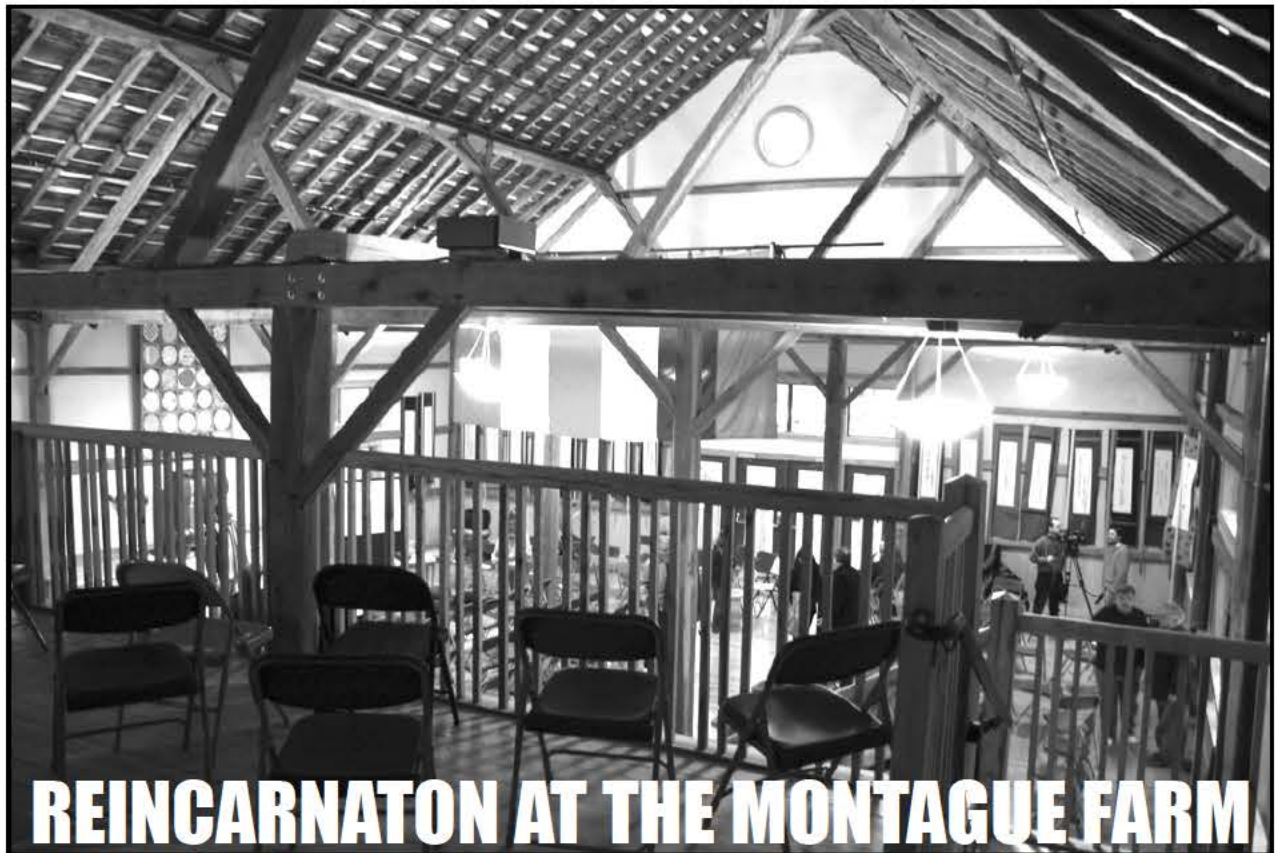
Planning board chair Deirdre Cabral said the applicant had forwarded structural information on the proposed barn - to be constructed on the former Fiske property to the north of the school's administrative offices -

where the farm program is to be located. He also submitted a letter from TMG Architects and Planners stating they believed "the proposed uses will make good use of the property." A supporting document from local engineer Bob Leet, detailing how the barn will conform to structural standards, is still forthcoming, necessitating the further continuation of the hearing.

On the 7th, Anne Diemand, speaking for the Wendell police department, said she had consulted with Chief Ed Chase several times since the last hearing about the school's expanded use of property. She said, "As far as the expansion due to animal therapy, Ed is not opposed to it at all."

Building inspector Phil Delorey supplied written comments saying the barn needed to conform to all state building codes regarding egress and fire detection devices. He wanted to know if the existing house on the property will be used as a

see GROVE pg 7



Zen Peacemaker Center Opens on Ripley Rd.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH
BY DAVID DETMOLD

Institute at the House of One People is about to take place on Saturday, February 4th. A statue of Buddha forms a centerpiece on the altar strewn with flowers, candles and peacock feathers.

Old friends greet new; Buddhists from far and near bow in reverence; locals on bicycles shake the afternoon mud and rain from their coats; everyone takes off their shoes. Long banners hang from the walls, telling in hand-lettered calligraphy of the many Buddhist peacemaker communities represented here today in symbol or in person: Swiss Circle, Northampton Circle, Bay Area Circle, Zen Community of Staten Island, Treetop Zendo.... Someone plays a melodic raga on a guitar as the gathering takes their seats for the launch of the Zen Peacemakers new educational center on Ripley Road, in what is undoubtedly the most beautifully appointed and serene conference space in Franklin County, a converted dairy barn.

The western edge of these sixty acres is defined by a quick-running trout stream listed on the old county maps as Gunn's Brook. The eastern border (when you look out the farmhouse windows real early in the morning) is drawn by the rising sun in the morning, a beam of clear light like a finger tracing the silhouette of the hill itself, the rocks and trees. The top half of the land is open at first, but do not be deceived: the land

see ZEN pg 10

Sweeney Defends Runway Extension

The following are excerpts transcribed from the MCTV videotape of the airport commission hearing at the Montague town hall on Tuesday, February 7th, regarding the runway repaving and expansion at the Turners Falls airport. As at other recent meetings, airport manager Mike Sweeney laid out the advantages of the proposed 1200 foot runway extension, a \$7 million, two-year construction project that would cost the town only \$175,000. The remaining 97.5% of the project's cost would be covered

by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission.

Sweeney said the airport was established in 1936 with a 600-foot long dirt runway. The current 3000-foot runway was built in 1960, and repaved once in 1978. Since then it has had crack repair performed in 1987 and in 2001. Since 1996, the FAA and the MAC has invested a total of \$1,653,125 in grant funds at the airport.

Besides extending and repaving the runway,

see AIRPORT pg 8

"CHESTNUT HILL ..."

a dirt road cuts across it like a scar that never healed properly. The road runs east to west, the bottom part of the hill drops sharply and comes to an abrupt halt at land's edge. Then a narrow river forms its natural border. This southern, lower half of Chestnut Hill is open, cleared land ringed with a perimeter fence of maple trees whose sap runs free in February."

- From What the Trees Said, 1971
by Stephen Diamond

The old barn has been beautifully renovated, and that is putting it mildly. Channel steel reinforced beams reinforce the old chestnut timbers, drawing the eye up to old skip sheathing through which the white underbelly of the new roof shows through. New energy efficient windows in every wall hold the cold out and let the sunshine in. The bamboo floor gleams with a natural finish, a staircase of eight-quarter sawn chestnut treads leads part of the overflow crowd up to a spacious balcony, from which they get a barn swallow's view of the dais where the opening ceremony of the Maezumi

PET OF THE WEEK

No Gilligan



Skipper

Skipper is a 2-year-old longhair orange and white hair cat in need of a good home. Skipper is aptly named, since he's the boss. No Gilligan about this cat! He will share space with other cats, as long as they understand who is in charge. A good natured, all around nice, outgoing cat. For more information on adopting Skipper contact the Dakin Animal Shelter in Leverett at 548-9898 or via email at info@dakinshelter.org.

LIBRARY NEWS

Valentine Party at Carnegie Library

There will be a Valentine Party at the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls on Saturday, February 11th from 2 - 3:30 p.m. Children of all ages and their families are invited to the free program. Fun activities will include decorating Valentines with Bev Whitbeck. Refreshments will be served. For more information, please call 863-3214.

SALSA DANCE IN WENDELL

There will be a Salsa Dance at the Wendell Town Hall on Saturday, February 18th. A salsa lesson, taught by Marilyn Marks and Richard Adams, will begin at 7 p.m. Following the lesson will be a hot dance for a cold night. Admission is \$5 - \$10. The dance is sponsored by the Friends of the Wendell Free Library and the Community Policing grant. For more information, call the Wendell Free Library, 978-544-3559.



PHOTO BY LINDA HICKMAN

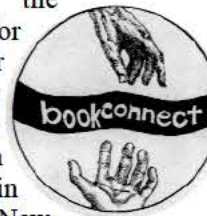
MILLERS FALLS- Katarina Lenois of Turners Falls and Zachary Kelly of Millers Falls were among the nine children who made dioramas of animals in their environment in an afterschool series at the Millers Falls Library. The children worked with contemporary clay artist Ruth O'Mara of Wendell. The series was supported in part by a grant from the Montague Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

St. Alban's Fire in New Salem and Wendell

The New Salem and Wendell Libraries are again sponsoring a community reading program. Everyone in the two towns is invited to borrow a copy of the same book, read it, then gather to discuss the book. Over the next two months, you're invited to join your neighbors in reading *St. Alban's Fire* by Vermont author Archer Mayor, using copies of the book provided through the Book Connect program. You can even meet the author at a special reception on March 23rd. Book lovers in New Salem and Wendell are

welcome to attend either discussion group. Speaker phone participation in the events will be available for those unable to come in person. Everyone is invited to the reception for Archer Mayor for a chance to speak with the author in person. Call New Salem or Wendell Library for more information.

New Salem: 978-544-6334
Wendell: 978-544-3559



Back to the Land Film Series in Wendell

Thursday evenings at 7, Free at the Senior Center
February 16th, *Living the Good Life*
(about Helen and Scott Nearing)
March 16th, *Ruth Stout's Garden*
(about no-dig gardening)
April 20th, *The Close to Nature Garden*
(about Fukuoka's One-Straw Revolution)
Discussion after each film.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES Feb. 13th - Feb. 17th

MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth St., Turners Falls, is open Mon. - Fri. from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Make meal reservations a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on the machine when the center is closed (863-9357). Mealsite manager is Chris Richer. The center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. Transportation to the center can be provided. Special trip coordinator is Jean Chase. Make trip reservations by calling 772-6356. Payment and menu choice is due three weeks prior to trip.

Monday, 13th
10:15 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. PACE Aerobics
1 p.m. Canasta
Tuesday, 14th

9:30 a.m. Tai Chi
Wednesday, 15th
10:15 a.m. Senior Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 16th
10:00 a.m. Coffee/conversation
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 17th
9:15 a.m. Tap and soft shoe dance, open to the community, reservations and fee apply
10:15 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11:00 a.m. PACE Aerobics

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at (413) 423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by

FACES & PLACES



DAVOL PHOTO

AFSC's Francis Crowe at the Maezumi Institute in Montague Center last weekend.

POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

The Root Barn



Courtesy of the Montague Historical Society

LILLIAN FISKE, MONTAGUE CENTER

Another view of this barn was with an article on farming in *the Recorder*. I had several phone calls asking where the barn was located. The barn was on the east side of Federal

Street in Montague Center opposite the home owned by Henry Root and now owned by the VonKreis family. It is the second oldest home in Montague.

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CORRECTION

Last week, we incorrectly identified Frank Abbondanzio in a photo caption as the town moderator. He is, of course, the town administrator.

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Roof Collapse Closes Power Street

BY PATRICK RENNICK

THE PATCH - Across the power canal in the Patch, an abandoned building struggles to stand against the odds. The surrounding yard is overgrown with weeds. Strewn across the blacktop lie mounds of garbage. Graffiti tattoos fading paint on brick walls with random messages. One is the insignia of an ill-fated Montague rock group, Sweet Rachel, whose lead singer Alison Mace died in a drunk driver collision in 1996. A particularly eerie message is spray painted across the collapsing entrance to what was lately known as the Railroad Salvage Building. It reads, "I opened my wallet and it was full of blood."

Last week, following a routine inspection by the fire department, the town learned that after years of rain damage, a large section of the main building's roof has collapsed.

"A big chunk, 50 feet by 70 feet, went through five floors and into the basement," said Montague building inspector David Jensen. According to the official report, three other roof sections, 50 feet by 30 feet, and two 20 feet by 50 feet, have also collapsed onto the upper floor. Inside the building, advanced decay threatens to bring the entire structure down.

The Railroad Salvage building is within 20 feet of a public way. For this reason the town has ordered the Power Street bridge and road closed. The Bailey bridge from Canal Street over to Power Street is one of only two ways onto or off the peninsula, where hundreds of people work and live.

The Turners Falls fire department had known, prior to the recent collapse, that there were large holes in the roof. However, the extent of the recent damage led them to take action.

"Last Thursday, during a drill, we discovered that sections of the roof had passed through five floors of the building," said Turners Falls fire chief Ray Godin. Because parts of the exterior walls were no longer

attached to the main structure, Godin contacted town highway superintendent Tom Bergeron at 2:30 that afternoon, telling him of the potential danger to the road. Bergeron had the road closed off the same day.

"We have set the blockade on the bridge up with Jersey barriers and a 10-foot wooden sawhorse barrier in the middle, that can be removed in case of an

emergency," Godin said. Nancy Aubrey, of I Street, is concerned about the road being blocked off.



Sections of the roof of the Railroad Salvage building have collapsed into the basement.

"In case of an emergency, I would have to go all the way around to the other bridge," said Aubrey. "The only good thing about this is the decrease in traffic."

Hyrum Huskey, of H Street' expressed concerns about the derelict structure. "Kids are always wandering around in that area. I am concerned that the building might collapse."

The building's current owner, Gary Kosuda of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, has been contacted by Jensen and ordered to take steps to secure the hazardous structure. "Mr. Kosuda has had a number of ideas for the building, none of which have been put to use yet," Jensen said.

Kosuda claimed to be taking steps to address the structural failure. "We had a problem there, and I am working on it. But I will

need a few more days before I can give any specific information," Kosuda said when reached by phone. According to Patty Dion, Montague tax collector, Kosuda is currently up to date with his taxes on the property. A structural engineer has been called in to assess the risks the building poses to the public and the nearby roadway. After an analysis

has been made, the town will have the option to close off the entire road - or one lane of it - until the building is deemed safe again or taken down.

Although the 126,890-square-foot property has changed hands many times through the years, it was originally the Griswold Cotton Mill, built in 1874. The mill was built by Joseph Griswold, a successful industrialist who owned two other cotton mills in nearby Colrain.

The original building stood four stories tall and was at the time considered one of the most modern mills in the state. Under Griswold, the mill produced cotton bandages, cheesecloth, and bunting.

Mary Remillard of Northfield spoke about her husband Robert's grandmother, who worked at the Griswold Mill.

"My husband's grandmother lived in the Patch and worked at the cotton mill. She told of working by candlelight for 12 hours a day."

"They were always worried about working by candlelight," said her husband, Robert. "The cotton dust could have easily exploded."

Paul Sulda of Turners Falls had a sister who worked at the mill. He remembers the Romper Shop, a wooden building located where Miskinis Television stands today. The shop sold clothes manufactured at the mill.

In 1932, the Kendall Company settled into the Griswold Mill, installing 23,000 new and more efficient spindles. Kendall employed about 200 people, 44% of whom were women.

In 1952, the Rockdale Company, a subsidiary of a clothes manufacturer, acquired the building. Brian SanSoucie of Turners Falls worked at the Rockdale Store with his mother and aunt.

"I would stock clothing and whatever items they had. We had a cafeteria where everyone went for break. It was not a stressful job. It was actually kind of fun." SanSoucie remembered the department store's truck driver 'Ace' fondly.

"He was quite a guy. He would always have a half-pint of Scotch in his back pocket."

One of the last owners of the building, the Railroad Salvage Store, closed in October of 1994. In later years, customers shared display rooms on the second floor with rambunctious squirrels.

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August, 2002

A Community Appeal

The newly formed board of the *Montague Reporter* has decided to focus first and foremost on a circulation drive to boost subscriptions and newsstand sales of the newspaper. Board chairman Woody Brown has called on board members, the Friends of the Montague Reporter, and all our readers to help. After three and a half years of largely volunteer effort to get the paper off the ground, it is time to lay a firmer foundation, so our efforts to establish a community voice for the villages will continue to bear fruit in decades to come.

Unlike daily newspapers, which are recycled as soon as the ink is dry on the next day's headlines, weekly papers tend to sit around on readers' coffee tables and office break rooms, where a single issue is read by the entire staff before the week is out. Issues get passed from hand to hand, and we often hear of readers routinely mailing the paper to friends and relatives who live far afield. The thought that we could mail the paper more cheaply and reliably if they would buy a gift subscription for those readers may not have occurred to them. Even so, we would consider this 'recycling' of the paper a compliment to our work, if it did not so seriously undermine our ability to continue it.

At this point, we need to increase our subscription base substantially to achieve a revenue stream sufficient to make the *Reporter* self-sufficient. We need to increase sales on the news stands in the villages as well. We can't hope to continue if so many of our readers are reading the paper for free each week. So we ask you simply, if you value the weekly news and views, the community notices, the poetry, the photos, the reviews and columns, and all the goings on we cover around town each week, buy a subscription. If you already subscribe, buy a gift subscription for a friend or relative who may enjoy reading the hometown news.

In an era when all other costs appear to be rising, we have actually reduced the cost of subscribing to the *Montague Reporter* in many neighborhoods. We have walking routes in Millers Falls, Erving side, Montague Center, on the Hill, and in downtown Turners Falls. With a few more subscribers, we plan to establish a new route in Montague City, and driving (or bicycle routes) in Wendell and Gill, reducing the renewal price for all in those communities.

If you are able to afford more than the \$20 subscription price, or the \$10 cost in neighbors with walking routes, considering along an extra contribution to provide subscriptions for schools, libraries, and individuals who may not have funds to afford the cost but would like to receive the paper each week.

The list of people volunteering on each week's issue, or receiving a small stipend for their work, is long and growing. But that does not mean the paper is printed, laid out, or mailed each week for free. Like every small business, our production costs are growing. We need your long-term support if we are going to make the paper a long-term success.

Like public radio stations that mount regular on air fund drives, the *Montague Reporter* is a community supported non-profit. What's more, we are community owned. We do not fill the airwaves with quarterly pleas for funds, but we need your backing just the same.

We are grateful for your support over the years. We are glad you value the paper enough to pass it on to other readers. But if you really want to keep the paper growing, the best way to do that is to buy them a gift subscription, or encourage them to buy a subscription of their own.

We welcome your letters.

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BORDEAUX WHINE

BY DENIS BORDEAUX 06



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Montague Parks and Recreation Department and the Parks and Recreation Commission would like to thank the following partners and co-sponsors for their generous donation of time and financial support towards our 6th Annual

Winter Carnival: Greenfield Savings Bank, Montague Center Firemen's Association, Sirum Equipment Company, the Brick House, Renaissance Builders, and St. Kaziemerz Society. Your assistance and community spirit is greatly

appreciated. We look forward to working with all of you in the future.

Jon Dobosz, Director
Montague Parks &
Recreation Dept.

Further Comment on a Five Member Selectboard

I have waited to follow up on the editorial I wrote in the December 15th, 2005 *Montague Reporter*, calling for a Five Person Selectboard. In the weeks following, I have heard from six town residents who indicated some preference for a five member board, some with a few reservations.

One prior selectboard, Clark Edwards, indicated he was "on both sides of the three member / five member issue." He had specific reasons, but felt the five-member board "too cumbersome."

Doug Dziadzio, chair of the planning board, sent a lengthy email, and published his statement. "I tend to think that having a three-member board encourages individual members

to more effectively interact with the community and solicit outside opinions, because they can't meet in private sessions, or talk amongst themselves off the record."

I believe this shows only a lack of experience in working with a five-member board. After all, if we elect people to represent us in these positions of trust, we should at least consider them trustworthy enough to do an honest job.

A reply from current selectboard member Patricia Pruitt, who was also a member of the selectboard study committee, whose report I reviewed, stated, "at least two members of that group saw changing to a five-member board as interesting only as part of a greater charter

change to the town government. At least one member was interested in getting more minds on the board to spread the work."

At a town meeting vote held on May 3rd, 2003, members voted 49 yes, 41 no in favor of appointing a committee to study the pros and cons of increasing the size of the selectboard to five members.

In future, if the town commissions any more studies of this type, it is my opinion town employees should not be appointed to the study committee. It would be too much like interviewing an employee about whom to hire to be his boss.

Where do we go from here?

- Art Gilmore
Precinct 2, Millers Falls

Young Adults Writing Group Forming

I am a transplant to Montague from Boston, where I lived for almost 25 years, via Northampton, where I lived for 11 months. Upon my arrival in Montague Center, I decided to inquire whether anyone might be interested in joining me in creating a weekly writing group. I love to write fiction, but find that I only do it in the context of a group. Our writing group has been meeting regularly since November 1st. It's possibly the best thing I've ever been a part of creating. I feel completely free to explore my creativity among the six people who gather.

I never remembered to take down the fliers I had put up in Montague and Greenfield about the group. About six weeks ago, a 15-year-old student from Greenfield called to inquire about it. I was so moved by her interest in writing and her courage in making the call that I decided to try to facilitate a

writing group for young adults. The librarians at both the Montague Center and Greenfield libraries have been helpful in bringing the idea to fruition.

My hope is to work with a group of eight to ten high school students from Franklin County who are interested in writing prose and poetry. We will meet on Wednesdays from 3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. at the Montague Center Public Library over a nine-week period from March 1st through April 26th. If there is interest, the group may continue in eight- to 10-week cycles on an ongoing basis.

I have no specific professional training as a writing instructor, just a passion for fiction and an interest in enabling others to write. Anyone interested can reach me, Claudine Mussuto, at 413-367-2687 or by emailing claudine_trudi@yahoo.com. If transportation is an issue, please contact me anyway. Although I

live car-free, I'm hoping to be able to arrange car-pooling among those who are interested in making a commitment to the group.

- Claudine Mussuto
Montague Center

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Early Days of Turners Falls - Part II

From a speech given by Charles Hazelton to the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, February 23rd, 1926.

Mr. William P. Crocker, engineer, brother of Colonel Alvah Crocker who acquired the Turners Falls Locks and Canals and founded the Turners Falls Company in 1865, was brought to the village to help with the development of the planned industrial village in 1867, the year after the dam was completed. Charles Hazelton, the other of this historical paper, came with him to assist in laying out the village in that year.

"Mr. Crocker, the engineer, at once began his work of laying out the proposed new canal, which, to a great extent followed the lines of the old one, also to formulate ideas and lay out streets for a village. That was our work during that fall and winter. The first plan of the same was made during the winter of 1867 and 8, and was entitled "Plan of the projected city of Turners Falls, Massachusetts. By Wm. P. Crocker, Civil Engineer. Dated 1868."

Early the next summer, after the plans for the canal and village had been accepted by the company, preparations were made for the beginning of work on the canal, and the selling of building lots for the village.

The office of the Company at that time, was in a small old building, located where the present hotel building, formerly the Farren House, stands, that at one time had been used as a schoolhouse, there having been several children in this district when the navigation canal was in operation. But at this time, both school and schoolhouse had been abandoned.

I well remember the day when Col. Crocker and B. N. Farren, who had just finished the work of constructing the Troy and Greenfield Railroad, from Greenfield to Hoosac Tunnel, came into the office, after looking over the proposed plan and location for the new canal; and Col. Crocker said to Mr. Farren, "Mr. Farren, make your price for doing this work." Mr. Farren made the prices for various classes of the work to be done. Col. Crocker said, "Begin the work tomorrow." That is all the contract that was made for the beginning of developing water power at Turners Falls.

The first auction sale of building lots was held in September of that year, 1868. The sale had been widely advertised as the beginning of the building of a manufacturing city, and a large crowd had gathered. The first lots sold were on Third Street, midway between Avenue A and L Street. Just as the auctioneer was to begin operations, Col. Crocker said, "I want to say a few words to the gentlemen who are gathered here. We are now going to begin an enterprise that is to have large results. Whoever buys a building lot here today will get large return for his money. We have just made arrangements for the transfer of the Green River Cutlery works from Greenfield to Turners Falls, and we are about to begin the construction of a cutlery plant that will employ 1200 people who will come here to live and help build up the place. We are also to begin the construction of a pulp mill, which will be followed by a paper mill, and within a few years you will see here a second Holyoke."

Continued next week

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Various Disturbances

Wednesday 2-1

7:10 a.m. Assisted with disabled motor vehicle at Gill lights.

8:19 p.m. Arrested [redacted]

[redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and speeding on French King Highway.

Thursday 2-2

9:50 a.m. Report of suspicious vehicle in area of golf course on West Gill Road.

1:15 p.m. Report of parking problem on Walnut Street. Owner advised to move vehicle.

2:45 p.m. 911 mis-dial on Walnut Street, all o.k.

4:30 p.m. Report of a larceny from a French King Highway residence, report taken, under investigation.

Friday 2-3

4:31 p.m. Assisted Montague Police with group of disorderly subjects on Ave A.

Saturday 2-4

12:05 p.m. Assisted Erving Police with a possible breaking and entering in progress.

11:05 p.m. Responded to burglar alarm on Saco Lane, all secure.

Sunday 2-5

12:10 a.m. Assisted Bernardston Police with disorderly subject at Bella Notte restaurant

6:15 p.m. Court Process served on Munn's Ferry Road.

Tuesday 2-7

7:45 a.m. Responded to disturbance at French King Highway residence.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Assault & Battery

Thursday 2-2

7:00 a.m. Report of a breaking and entering at a Turnpike Road address. Reporting party thinks someone tried to enter a motor vehicle overnight. No damage. Report taken.

11:00 a.m. [redacted] was arrested on a default warrant and a straight warrant.

Friday 2-3

3:29 a.m. Walk in to station reported a fire in the dumpster in back of the Pizza House. Referred to Fire Department.

4:28 p.m. Report of an assault in front of Jay K's on Avenue A. Found to be a group of kids about to fight. Officer sent them on their way.

10:11 p.m. Report of an assault at a 4th Street address. A fight between 2 male juveniles. Officer spoke with parents.

11:10 p.m. Report of an assault at a 3rd Street address. Argument between two women. Found to be verbal only. Both advised of options.

11:19 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at an Avenue A address. [redacted] was arrested and charged with assault and battery and domestic assault and battery.

Saturday 2-4

8:22 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance by Chinatown on Avenue A. Officer transported woman to residence in Erving.

Sunday 2-5

4:04 p.m. [redacted] was arrested on 5 warrants.

Monday 2-6

1:02 a.m. Report of an

assault at the Exxon on 3rd Street. Female subject put in protective custody.

7:33 a.m. Report of a motor vehicle accident with person trapped in front of the airport on Millers Falls Road. Vehicle rolled over. Person got out. Report taken.

7:55 a.m. Report of a larceny from a 4th Street address. A sign was stolen. Caller wanted it on record.

Tuesday 2-7

6:07 p.m. Report of an assault at the corner of 3rd Street and Avenue A. Found to be kids horsing around. Told to knock it off.

11:13 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a 2nd Street address. Male subject left for the night.

WORD ON THE AVENUE

What is your favorite winter activity and have you done it this winter?

COMPILED BY LISA DAVOL



Our favorite activity is snowmobiling, but we have not been able to do it because it has been so warm. Our mobiles are sitting on the grass right now. We haven't given up hope yet.

-Dennis (left) and Cody Booska Turners Falls



Yes, I have had snowball fights! When there is ice, it hurts so bad!

-Josh Lewis

We have had snowball fights when I clean off my car. We like to spend time together in the snow with our dog.

-Janet Lewis, Turners Falls



I like to go ice skating but have not done it this year.

Teri Lovely (left), Greenfield

I love to go sliding in the snow and I have done that with my son.

-Regina Sherman, Turners Falls



I like ice skating although I have been doing roller skating instead because it has been so warm.

-Beth Gingras, Shutesbury

I enjoy reading a book by the fire and I have been doing a lot of that!

-Vicki Davey, Shutesbury


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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Greenfield, Montague to Study Combined Dispatch Services

BY JOHN HANOLD On Monday, February 6th, the selectboard heard a presentation from Greenfield's mayor, Christine Forgey, and police chief, David Guilbault, who joined Montague police chief Ray Zukowski in seeking approval to explore the possibility of sharing dispatch services for emergency services in the adjoining towns. Mayor Forgey and the two police chiefs foresaw greater efficiency and possible future cost savings if their dispatch units were consolidated.

Forgey opened the presentation by emphasizing that Greenfield is already planning to consolidate its police, fire and emergency response dispatch functions. The idea gained momentum in part due Greenfield's experience launching an emergency response during the October flooding in that town last year. That event, and the river rescue above the Turners Falls dam in Montague, dramatized existing obstacles to effective communication and response between departments.

Chief Guilbault continued the presentation, and observed "we are at a stress point now." Five years or more ago a joint dispatch function would not have been feasible, due to technological limitations. In recent years, however, expanded and coordinated radio and telecommunication systems, and higher expectations for disaster response, have spurred a re-examination. Guilbault pointed out that Greenfield and Montague have worked together successfully on a narcotics task force for over seven years; their departments have maintained an excellent working relationship. He feels that co-operation between the towns' public service personnel, including police and fire departments within each town, make a joint examination worthwhile on both sides of the river.

The presentation repeatedly stressed the value of training and professionalism in the dispatch function. "Dispatchers are professionals," Forgey said, "trained to handle all types of emergencies." Guilbault added police officers are not as good at the job as dispatchers, but are often called upon to step in and out of the function on demand, though they are not as familiar as specifically-trained dispatchers to respond to an emergency.

A number of questions followed, ranging from cost issues to the participation of affected groups in the study. Zukowski admitted, "Change is a scary thing. Everyone will be involved in the process." Several Montague dispatchers were in the audience; supervisor Angela Flanders spoke up to say, "We have a lot of questions, and the officers have a lot of questions." The group was

pleased by Guilbault's high regard for the Montague staff, and the selectboard's recognition of the scope of their responsibilities. After the meeting she mentioned her department had talked about the study, and agreed to participate in it. Two of their members will attend the first organizational meeting, scheduled for Monday evening, February 13th. The chiefs hope to include a selectboard representative and citizen representatives from both towns, on a team totaling fifteen to twenty members.

In response to board member Pat Allen's question, Turners Falls fire chief Ray Godin said he was interested in the study, but had some concerns which he'd shared with the police chiefs. He went on to say emergency 911 calls in Montague go first to the police dispatchers and are then relayed, if appropriate, to either his department or the Montague Center fire department.

The potential for cost savings is enhanced by the increased attention paid to regionalization of public service by funding agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security. Grantors are likely to view requests to fund capital and training needs more favorably if they support co-operative approaches to public service needs.

When asked from the audience which factor was most critical in the eyes of the police departments, Guilbault ranked efficiency ahead of cost savings. At present each department in each town has its own operation, deals with its own staffing issues, and develops its own coordination methods. In sketching out a possible future command structure he described a Dispatch Manager accountable to a Dispatch Management Board, and responsible for a staff equipped and located in one place. Since Montague has begun evaluating a possible public service complex, which may combine the location of the police department with the Turners Falls fire department, that complex might be a candidate for the joint dispatch function as well. However, in reply to questions from board chair Allen Ross, Guilbault stated that location is less important than structure and control, and that the initial location would probably be in Greenfield.

The Dispatch Board would have to present its plans and resource needs to the towns, similar to regional functions such as solid waste management and public transit, and would identify training, policy, and community-availability needs. Zukowski acknowledged that personal reception for walk-in reports is desirable, and that he

See DISPATCH
page 9

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Vassar Way Still No Go for Town Fire Trucks

BY DAVID DETMOLD

Two years after sending a letter to the six households who live on the private road called Vassar Way, the selectboard wants to notify the residents of that lane again that Gill firetrucks will not respond to an emergency at those homes, due to concerns about the carrying capacity of the privately owned Vassar Bridge. After SVE Associates of Greenfield inspected the bridge in January of 2004, the engineering firm reported the 20-foot one lane span across Dry Brook had a safe load capacity of 20,000 pounds. "Vehicles weighing more than 25,000 pounds will create conditions where the support beam may fail by compression flange buckling. A truck with a gross vehicle weight in excess of 39,500 pounds will produce stresses in excess of the yield stress of the steel and the bridge will collapse," the SVE report said.

Administrative assistant Deb Roussel told the board there has been no formal response from the residents in the two years since, "although I heard they did work on the bridge. It

behooves them to supply us with this information."

The board instructed Roussel to send a follow-up letter to the residents, with copies to regional inspector Jim Hawkins and town attorney Donna MacNicol, telling them only the small 'brush truck' would be able to respond to emergency calls on Vassar Way, until certification the bridge could support the heavier trucks was obtained.

While on the subject of the fire department, the board deliberated about how to make up for the \$1000 deductible in the insurance settlement for the loss of the rescue boat and police and fire department personnel equipment during a rescue on the Connecticut River in last October's heavy rains. The board will ask Chief Beaubien to temporarily expend departmental funds to make up the difference in purchasing the new boat and equipment, until either the Mass Emergency Management Agency provides reimbursement funding or the town takes the money from the Northfield Mount Hermon annual fund for emergency services.

Police chief David

Hastings's contract is up for renewal at the end of March. Ann Banash said, "We should look at it. We made most of the changes we wanted the last time." The contract renewal term is for three years.

Roussel reported about a problem of communication between recreation commission chair Nathan Duda and the Gill - Montague school district office, over Duda's reservation of the gym at the elementary school for basketball games. Duda had followed the school's new policy to reserve use of space, and sent a reservation fee to the district office as stipulated. But Roussel said the check had apparently been mislaid and not cashed. The school told Duda he would not be able to schedule activities in the gym until payment had been received, leading to some frustration on Duda's part.

On another matter, the board gave permission for Duda to conduct ticket sales for a Mother's Day weekend bus excursion to a Red Sox game at Fenway Park, a popular annual

See FENWAY
page 9

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Senior Housing for Erving

Fourteen residents turned out to talk with Representative Chris Donelan, during his office hours at the Erving town hall on January 30th. Carol Lyman, among others, asked Donelan to help the town establish more senior housing, so folks who had lived in town all their lives could find affordable homes to live in during their retirement. Many senior citizens no longer need nor can afford to hold onto the houses they raised families in, with children grown and gone, but hesitate to sell them due to a lack of suitable living space for seniors in town. Donelan promised to help Erving explore the alternative for creating more senior housing.

The Erving school committee is calling for the budget for

elementary education to increase 5.9% in '07, to \$1,767 million, an increase of \$98,914 over '06. Secondary education would increase by 14.3%, or \$101,900. According to Union #28 superintendent Linda Driscoll, the increase at the Erving Elementary is being driven by rising utility costs and negotiated step increases for employees. Erving sends upper grades students to Gill-Montague schools, the increase at the secondary level is being driven by increases in special needs placements and transportation.

Driscoll said a search committee has been formed to interview applicants to succeed retiring elementary school principal, Ann Dee Sousa. A public forum

will be held to hear the finalists for that position, on April 5th at 6:30 p.m. at the Erving school.

Gary Weiss, of Northfield, received a business license from the selectboard to operate the Smookin' Hippo barbecue restaurant on Route 2, at the location of the former Starlight Diner. His liquor license application was also approved by the ABCC.

On February 6th, residents of a recent subdivision off of Old State Road, discussed a warrant article for the town to accept private Laurel Lane as a town road. That article will appear on a special town meeting warrant on February 27th at 7:30 p.m., along with articles to purchase a front end loader for \$107,285 for the highway, and other matters.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Stuck in a Snowbank

Wednesday 2-1

11:15 a.m. Assisted subjects at a French King Highway address with keeping the peace with a landlord tenant dispute. Subjects had been evicted. Assisted subjects with contacting area shelters.

2:30 p.m. Report of annoying phone calls at a Pratt Street address. Unfounded.

6:39 p.m. Report of an elderly woman stuck in a snow bank in the east bound rest area on Route 2. Assisted motorist. Vehicle moved along.

7:15 p.m. Took a lost dog in at the station. Dog was found in Montague. Dog brought to Hatchery Road in Montague until owners come forward, per

Montague Police.

8:00 p.m. Report of a sleeping bag on Route 2 east past the papermill disrupting the flow of traffic. Item gone on arrival.

9:59 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Pratt Street address. Found to be verbal only.

Friday 2-3

4:15 p.m. Officer picked up lost dog at a Forrest Street residence and brought it to station to locate owner. Dog list shows it lives on Pratt Street. Dog driven home.

Saturday 2-4

10:05 a.m. Assisted Northfield Police with suspicious person at Northfield Mountain.

4:15 p.m. Report of a motor

vehicle accident on Route 2 west. One car, no injuries. State Police handled accident. Arsenault's towing was called.

Sunday 2-5

After a motor vehicle stop on Route 2, [redacted] was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license.

Monday 2-6

2:45 p.m. Report of a larceny of property at a Maple Street address.

7:25 p.m. Report of a medical emergency at a North Street address. Orange Ambulance transported subject to FMC.

A Cold Appraisal of New Town Buildings

BY JOSH HEINEMANN

WENDELL - A number of winter-resistant Wendell residents met at 8 p.m. on February 7th in the town hall for a site plan review before the planning board about the planned new town office and library buildings. It was cold in the town hall because the furnace for the main part of the building was not working. A small, early model space heater provided less than a hint of warmth.

As the hearing opened, highway commissioner Harry Williston asked the engineer from Dufresne Henry about drainage for the new office building. A foundation drain will go from the basement section down gradient to where it intersects the existing slope. The rest of the building will have a stone filled ditch, with a pipe leading down gradient to the existing slope, and the surface graded to disperse storm water from the

roof. A similar drain is planned for the new library on Wendell Depot Road. At the request of abutter Bob Shulman, the drainage pipe there will be directed straight back, and not towards Shulman's property.

Parking for the library has been revised to approximate the current configuration, with eight parking slots there and three across the street on Depot Road, marked by bump outs so that extra parking on Depot Road

will be discouraged. Overflow parking during special events will be on Center Street, across the common, or even at the town office lot.

Gradually, people in the room tightened their jackets, put on their hats and stood up. Margo Jones, the architect for the building projects, stood, shifting her weight from foot to foot while she and selectboard member Dan Keller talked about lighting for the town office parking lot.

Departing from the agenda, selectboard chair Ted Lewis said next year the town should separate its bid request for heating oil from the bid request for furnace service.

The hearing continued in the cold until 10:15, and was then continued to February 28th at 7:00 p.m., at the selectboard office, which has heat. That date will allow all town departments a full month to submit comments on the plans.

LAKE GROVE

continued from pg 1

dwelling space.

Security was still on the minds of the half dozen residents who showed up for the hearing. Abutter Richard Mackey said, "Last week, there was another escape from the school. A car and an individual on foot appeared in my driveway. I have requested that Mr. Paulauskas instruct his staff not to trespass on my property. I called Ed Chase, but he did not respond. I called the Athol State Police and they did respond, but they said they cannot physically respond to all such calls because they have only 14 officers to cover the entire Route 2 corridor from here to Athol."

Mackey said he had called the District Attorney's office and was told that after informing Lake Grove officials not to allow their staff to trespass on his land, repeated incidents "constitute criminal trespass," "but I am finding it difficult to enforce" that ruling, he said. Mackey said he planned to contact the state agencies that license Lake Grove to advise them of repeated infractions on his property during student AWOLs.

Juanita Sears said the AWOL also led to staff trespassing on her property last week. She said she activated the phone tree, but did not hear from Lake Grove officials themselves about the AWOL or the reason for staff being present on her property until 45 minutes after she had received a phone call about the incident from Mackey, at 10 minutes to 6:00 in the

evening on Monday, January 30th. The AWOL boy was found in Montague, and returned to the campus; a call from Lake Grove notified the phone tree of this at 7:00 p.m. Sears pointed out the phone tree system, originally set up by Anne Diemand to address neighbors' concerns, had been agreed to by Paulauskas at a selectboard meeting some years ago, but had been seldom used recently.

Paulauskas offered to provide statistical information about student AWOLs to the planning board. "The number is really very small. I did inform my employees not to trespass on any of the neighbors' property."

On Thursday, January 19th, this reporter observed what appeared to be another AWOL attempt from Lake Grove school at about 5 p.m. A number of men standing in the middle of Depot Road, a few hundred yards north of the Lake Grove administrative offices, were directing traffic northbound over to the southbound lane with flashlights, while other men were in the act of hauling a young man out of the woods beyond the power lines to the east. No police were visibly present as traffic was being diverted.

On February 7th, abutter Mary Gilman asked if the planned expansion for the farm program would result in any change in the traffic patterns near her house on Depot Road, to which Paulauskas answered, "It will not create a significant increase in traffic." He said some of the 26 community transition program students housed

in Greenfield and schooled in Athol will occasionally use the farm program, which is designed to create "another therapeutic activity for our students." The farm will house a number of animals, including dogs, pigs, chickens and a Jersey cow. A fulltime caretaker will live on the second floor of the existing house, where the first floor will become adminis-

trative offices. A skate park is planned nearby, but a proposed soccer field under the power lines is on hold, for now.

Gilman asked if the farm program is a first step in a larger planned expansion for the school. "I think they are big enough for a small town like Wendell."

Paulauskas replied, "We don't plan to exceed our current license capacity," of 71 students

on the main campus. The school owns another house in Wendell, now vacant, which has room for nine more students to be housed.

Mason Phelps asked if the wetlands near the proposed barn had been flagged by someone properly trained to delineate them. Cabral replied the conservation commission still has time to address such concerns to her board in writing.

INTERSTATE AUTO REPAIR

OPENS IN TURNERS FALLS

A new automotive and truck repair business has opened in Turners Falls. Conveniently located at 147 2nd Street, Interstate Automotive proprietor John Emond has over 30 years experience in the vehicle repair field. John relies on reasonable pricing, honest estimates, and reliable trained technicians to assist him in growing a good reputation throughout the area.

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AIRPORT

continued from pg 1

the scope of proposed improvements would include new taxiway surfaces, increased runway to taxiway separation, removed aviation obstructions, improved runway safety zones, and updated runway lighting and navigation area.

Sweeney said if the town does not replace the runway, the town would likely no longer be eligible for more grant monies, and the FAA would enforce safety compliance, which may result in repaving the existing runway at 100% town expense; loss of position in the state and federal funding cycle for 7 to 8 years; and a possible reduction in funding from 95% to 90%, truncating the airport's ability to increase future revenue. He said if the airport were to close, the town would have to reimburse the FAA nearly \$9.5 million.

Sweeney anticipates a 17% increase in airplane traffic at the airport by 2010. Today, four types of aircraft use the field: single engine piston airplanes, twin engine piston airplanes, turbo props and helicopters. With the extension, the airport will be able to accommodate jets of a certain weight. But Sweeney said, "We're forecasting only 65 of those [flights] projected will be jets beginning in 2010," or "one every six days." He said, "There are only 188 jets that weigh 12,500 pounds or less in the US, and only three are in Massachusetts." He anticipates "no significant jet traffic, regardless of what we do at the airport."

Sweeney summarized the noise impacts of the project as follows: "No change in noise profile for a craft departing over Millers Falls, and improved noise profile for a craft departing over Turners Falls, because they will be 500' higher when they depart the airport. There will be no change in landing aircraft noise," he said.

Mark Burnham of Montague Center said, "I dispute a lot of what you're saying. First with the noise factor, I don't believe the noise won't increase. As a resident of Montague who would like to live here in his sil-

ver and golden years, I find it highly obnoxious - the noise factor - as it is already when I have a day off and want to lay in my hammock in my backyard. Essentially, you've got somebody with more money than I do, who can own an airplane, buzzing around up in the sky because they'd rather be doing that than kayaking or hiking somewhere. I think the townspeople should ask themselves do they want to see a 20 or 30 percent increase in the air traffic coming from this airport in the next ten to twenty years and ask yourself if that's what you want the town to begin to look like and sound like. In my opinion it's not a good thing. I resent being asked to subsidize your entertainment when it's such an imposition to my entertainment. And I think the whole back door thing of doing an end run around all those FAA regulations: that's pretty sneaky. Nobody was told that if these improvements weren't made the town would have to pay the FAA back. Why weren't the townspeople informed years ago that this would be the result if this money was taken? You've set us up so it's nearly impossible to feel good about saying no. I kind of resent that."

Sweeney replied, "I'd be happy to share with you the noise profile we have. It was done by a reputable firm and included some planes that can't even use the airport. I didn't make the numbers up. The study very significantly concludes that there will be no significant change in the noise profile. It doesn't mean the noise doesn't bother you."

Patricia Conway and her husband Peter recently purchased property in Riverside, in Gill. "We're right where the flight path goes. We enjoy seeing the planes and the birds and everything else. We've been reading local news and we were concerned when we saw this one article about jets. People in Riverside will be impacted; it does affect your neighboring communities."

Sweeney replied, "Riverside

was part of the noise study. I believe the results were the same as for Turners Falls. Or better."

Conway continued, "We're at the highest point. We wanted you to know we're interested in not increasing the noise. We're not against the airport. I go to birdwatch at the airport. But this is a quality of life issue for a number of people. This is a retirement issue for us."

Sweeney promised to get her the Riverside numbers on noise impacts. "Jets represent seven tenths of one percent of the total population of airplanes that will be able to use the field. That doesn't mean they won't be

I think the townspeople should ask themselves do they want to see a 20 or 30 percent increase in the air traffic coming from this airport in the next ten to twenty years and ask yourself if that's what you want the town to begin to look like and sound like.

Mark Burnham
Montague Center

here. We anticipate they will be here."

Conway asked about the increase in numbers of flights.

Sweeney replied, "We're looking at a 17 percent increase in airport activity between now and 2010, in all categories."

Peter Conway said, "I can hear when turbo props come in. You know that plane is coming. That's the only one I'm aware of that makes a lot of noise. Overall that type of plane will change the noise level of the flight path we are under. We don't have a vote in this because we're on the other side of the river."

Sweeney said the airport had instituted noise abatement programs at the airport. Airplanes taking off from Millers Falls heading towards Turners Falls, as soon as it's safe turn to a heading which will take them out over the dam. They try to

keep the planes over the river as long as possible while they are climbing to altitude. They try to keep from flying over the populated areas of Riverside while climbing at high power.

An argument ensued when Ed Dawson, of Turners Falls demanded to see documentation from the airport commission on the \$9.5 million Sweeney said the town would be required to repay the FAA if the airport were to close. Sweeney said he had taken that figure from a conversation he had with a contact at the FAA, who said the town would be required to pay back the fair market value of the airport land. He promised to get some documentation on that from the FAA.

Joe Janikas said, "You seem to imply that the safety improvements, the resurfacing and the runway lengthening were mandated by the FAA. Is that the case?"

Sweeney replied, "Yes, and in this case I happen to have it here in writing."

Janikas disputed his interpretation of the FAA regulation, citing a report in last week's *Montague Reporter* quoting an FAA official who said the Turners Falls Airport meets safety standards for the types of aircraft using the field now. "I'm

confused by that," Janikas said.

Sweeney replied, "The airport today is a safe airport for the kinds of planes that use it. What has happened now is we are at the point we've been given a safety standard that is part of the requirement for receiving grant money. We can choose to reject the safety standard out of hand, or we can ask the FAA to give us a waiver of the safety standard. But that will have other consequences downstream. The safety standard is in place because of the kind of airport we are, and the length of the runway is a consequence of the standard. So, if we have an opportunity to bring the airport into compliance of FAA safety standards, and we choose not to, then there is a potential problem if something goes wrong later on."

Janikas persisted. "Is John Silva, of the FAA, in error

[when he claimed to the *Montague Reporter*] the airport meets current safety standards?"

Sweeney said, "It meets safety standards because nothing there has been changed. But it's a 45-year-old airport and essentially it's a grandfathered safety standard. It does not - the current airport today does not meet this specification. Now that's not what John was saying. John was telling you that it's a safe airport, and it is. But John did not say that it met this specification."

"Do they accept everything in the project other than the runway lengthening?"

Sweeney replied, "We don't know what they'll accept. But if we don't do the 4200 feet, we will have to get them to give us a safety waiver."

Janikas said, "It wouldn't hurt to ask. I think the taxpayer or the town meeting could weigh things and make a rational decision. I think it's your duty to give the people in this town a choice."

Sweeney responded, "The commission, of which I'm a representative, has made a decision that we're recommending to the community that because we're being given 97.5% of the funding on this, we should meet the published requirements."

"So you're saying, 'Take it or leave it?'"

"The community can ask us to go to some other standard and we'll have to of course consider that. But we don't see how it's the right thing for us to recommend to the community, that they reject the safety standards."

Janikas responded, "You can make your recommendation, that's your job. But if the community doesn't want the extended runway, at least you can find out whether or not the standard can be waived or not. I think you have an obligation, because I'm sure it's going to be asked again. I'm a former highway superintendent and there are roads all through Montague that don't meet either Massachusetts or federal safety standards. It's the same thing. They're just fine."

See AIRPORT
next page

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continues to support a community-based concept for public service. The selectboard voted to endorse the study effort.

Electronic Voting in Montague

Town clerk John Zywna brought the board up to date on the need to install electronic voting machines following the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, commenting, "There are some murky waters about how this will unfold." Zywna said firmly he considers voting practices in New England untainted and extremely efficient, while voting irregularities in other parts of the country have brought clerks' offices into disrepute. Montague is one of 71 towns, among the 351 in Massachusetts, that continue to use paper ballots. Each precinct has accommodations for disabled voters - in addition to the availability of absentee voting - Zywna pointed out, meaning that the installation of electronic machines, meant to make voting easier for voters with certain disabilities, would likely benefit few, if any, voters.

Massachusetts intends to come into compliance with the law by the September primary

elections; Montague would have to install an electronic machine in each of the town's six precincts by then, and although the state would pay for the initial installation and programming for state-level elections, the cost of programming for local elections would be \$1,000 per machine per year. Also, wardens would have to be paid for their training time. The cost of the town's May elections would rise from about \$3,000, to over \$9,000, Zywna estimated, a figure he has not yet reflected in his '07 budget request.

The board asked about the possibility of establishing one polling place for all precincts in Montague, or of reorganizing the town into one precinct. Zywna considered the first idea impractical in view of the space that would be required, and the second idea is not compatible with the town's representative town meeting structure. He also raised the issue of generator backup if there is a power failure on voting day - a vulnerability not encountered with the manually-operated ballot boxes. The sentiment in the room seemed to be that a system that isn't broken is being 'fixed,' at considerable cost and with negligible added benefit.

Used Car Sales in Turners

Robert Tobin, who leases the

former Williams Garage on Second Street to operate Interstate Auto Repair, has seen enough expansion of business that he brought a request for a Class II license to enable him to sell used cars. Initially he would stock one or two, but he hopes to expand to six or eight and might want to conduct that part of his business at a different location. Although he repeated his desire to comply carefully with regulations, he admitted he only recently learned about the licensing requirement, and has not yet fully discussed his plans with Tim de Christopher, his landlord, or the landlord's property manager. Board member Patricia Pruitt advised him that a license is associated with a specific location, and he should return after he and his landlord have reached an agreement.

Updates to Familiar Topics

The selectboard's decision at the January 9th Howe dog hearing was appealed to a court hearing on February 1st, attended by Ross, but in the absence of neighborhood witnesses it was continued to February 15th. According to the attorney, witnesses must be present or the appeal will succeed. The dogs in question are kenneled in Amherst at the moment, and

owner Kevin Howe hopes to place the dog that menaces other animals in another location, and expects to euthanize the one that menaces people. Ross was authorized by the other board members to re-assert their prior decision that both dogs be put down, if the judge asks for reconsideration.

The General Pierce bridge from Montague City to Greenfield has been declared safe by Mass Highway for loads up to 36 tons, but wTe Recycling on Cheapside receives 40 ton trucks, so a circuitous route to avoid both the bridge and a low overpass farther west on Cheapside will still be necessary. The question of liability for any reconstruction of the long-closed Greenfield Road bridge is still unresolved. The town's insurer is not comfortable with the risk, and Mass Highway's insurer has not responded to inquiries. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio expects to have more information at next week's meeting. Abbondanzio also reported that the Railroad Salvage building, recently affected by a collapsing roof, has been secured but that the Bailey bridge to the Patch neighborhood will continue to be closed as a safety precaution until the owner, presently in Florida, determines his next

step with his engineer and architect.

The special town meeting tentatively set for early March will be re-scheduled to March 23rd. Previously forecasted articles for the warrant include endorsement of a collective bargaining agreement with a new union representing town employees, and consideration of a possible joint facility for the library, senior center and other town social services.

Expanded Evacuation for VY

A non-binding article also will be added by vote at this meeting. The Gill-Montague Regional School District has requested that added funding be provided by Entergy Nuclear LLC (owner of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant in Vernon VT), since evacuation of residents within a 30-mile radius of the plant, not 10 miles, seems called for in light of lessons learned from the Chernobyl disaster. Improvements would include multiple methods of alert, and expanded planning to include all schools in the regional district. Turners Falls High School is the designated gathering point for the entire region of Montague, Wendell, Gill and Erving, and 100% coverage will require more preparation.

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Suzette Snow Cobb of Turners Falls asked, "Say we increase the runway and the weight standard is higher, could larger planes be able to land here then?"

Sweeney replied, "One of the things I want to remind people of is that there is a pyramid of planes that use the airport today, and as we're telling you, for the future. The base is made up of those single engine airplanes, the Cessna 172, there are 24,000 in the US. As you get higher up in the pyramid the volume drops off very significantly in terms of the number of airplanes. So to do things that would try to help track those bigger airplanes is counterintuitive in terms of what we should be trying to do as an airport to make ourselves self-sufficient. That's one of the reasons why in this presentation you've heard nothing from us about trying to attract these

larger airplanes. There's no aviation jet fuel being proposed. The only infrastructure we're talking about putting in place is to support small airplanes. While a larger, heavier plane might be able to land on a 4200-foot runway, those larger airplanes are going to have great difficulty taxiing on a 35-foot wide taxiway. We are not talking about making any dramatic changes to the kinds of airplanes that are using the airfield today.

"You said the airport commission and the town do not plan to sell any jet fuel. Does that include a private operator?" Janikas asked.

Pioneer Aviation sells fuel now. They actually have exclusive rights to sell fuel. You would have to ask them what their intentions are."

The airport commission plans to hold another public hearing on the proposed airport improvements in Millers Falls on Tuesday, February 28 at 6:30 pm at Millers Falls Library.

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event. The board will allow the advance ticket sales in the front hall of the town hall, at a date to be determined.

Gary Bourbeau has taken a new job with the railroad, and has asked, therefore, not to be reappointed to the planning board when his term is up this year. The planning board needs to reduce its number from seven to five, according to recently approved bylaw changes. The zoning board, which is taking over the responsibility of site plan reviews and special permit applications, will increase to five members from three.

Jim Greenleaf has asked to be appointed to the town's Council on Aging, and the board enthusiastically agreed to the appointment.

The personnel board has

recommended a 3.5% cost of living increase for town employees, in accordance with personnel policy. The personnel board also recommended higher grade levels for the positions of highway superintendent, the highway foreman, the administrative assistant, and the police sergeant. The selectboard agreed to support the grade increase for the latter two, but not for the highway superintendent position or the highway foreman. Selectboard chair Phil Maddern said the position of highway superintendent was an important job, but should not be compensated at an equal rate to the police or fire chief, because it was not a job that placed the employee in physical danger. "Unless he drives his plow into someone's mailbox," he added. The board supported step increas-

es for the two highway positions, instead of a grade increase.

The town has received a check for \$2,297 for the first quarter of receipts from its recycling contract. Banash said town residents had recycled more than 80 tons in the contract's first quarter, only 10 tons less than Shelburne, a larger community. "We have done comparatively very well," Banash said.


Bids have been opened on the Main Road reconstruction project. The three low bidders were all from Holyoke, and, coincidentally, all were headquartered on the same block, Maddern said. The low bid was from F & J, Inc. for \$3,750,000. The reconstruction of Main Road from Wood Avenue to the Northfield line is expected to get under way this spring.

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ZEN

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does not end where those trees begin but continues traveling into the woods, higher, deeper, past the clean edge of the trees which resemble the receding hairline of a fifty-five-year-old man, forehead, widow's peak, and then the straight-back hair; those tall trees with many thin arms and a multitude of naked crooked fingers (in winter).

Fall: red and brown, brown leaves like dreams curling crisp just beyond reach yet crackling loud under your shoes

Winter: white and black, burning, freezing heat of dry ice and the forced glare of too many mirrors

Spring: cold water; the streams and rivers swollen and rushing headlong downhill, finding relief at last many miles from here

Summer: the fire time, flies,

"I want to welcome you to the latest reincarnation of the Farm. Hopefully it will be a long one," he said. Then he gave a pocket history of the property.

"The farm here was assembled by Washburn Ripley around the Civil War, 100 acres of fields, 30 cows. In the 1920s, the farm with the two big farmhouses you see along the road here was passed on to his sons, Rob and Lucien." Referring to the house behind him, Lovejoy said, "This one belonged to Lucien."

The brothers were supposed to run the dairy farm together. But, "Sometime in the 30s, Rob decided to get a real job. He became highway superintendent for Montague, at which point Lucien decided he would never communicate verbally to Rob again." When communication was absolutely necessary, one brother would leave a note in the mailbox for the postal service to pick up and carry a few feet over to the other brother's mailbox. And so it went until Lucien died in the 1960s, and remnants of the Liberation News Service fled New York City for the country, purchasing the farm for \$26,000 in August of 1968.

They face each other; this farmhouse and this barn. Between them, like a line drawn on some imaginary battlefield, is the dirt road. They are like two old codgers, these buildings, marking the minutes and hours of each other's lives, noting the changes ("Do you think they'll get round to fixin' the leaks in the roof this summer?" asks the house of the barn "Don't rightly know," replies the barn, "but it's gettin' a mite drafty up here"), keeping careful record of the details of their histories.

The conference hall we are seated in today, Lovejoy explained, "used to be the barn. Thirty-two cows were housed on the level we're in now. Underneath, everything fell," perhaps providing the building's first taste of green energy in the form of methane. The narrow stone steps still stand at the basement level, as they have for 150 years. Up these stairs, the cows walked to and from their stalls each day. The rest of the vast interior space was a huge hay barn, with the summer's harvest packed down by neighborhood kids jumping in it for play. The original structure was

built by an itinerant family of barn builders, one of many such who traveled the country in the 19th century offering to raise a barn for a set fee, with materials provided from the land. In this case, the framing was of American chestnut, beams the like of which will never be seen again, since the chestnut blight wiped out the mature trees in the early 1900s.

He told how the hay was gathered in horse drawn wagons, brought in through the eastern doors, and carried along with hay tongs the length of the barn, on a track that still runs along the peak of the roof.

Down the road from where the house and barn hold hands is a small wooden building, the garage. In front of this structure is a rough patch of cement on which formerly stood two gasoline pumps. The inside floor of the garage is also cement, though it wasn't always that way. The first week we were here, Marshall and Lazarus spent two days pouring concrete in the garage in order to house the little offset press... Liberation News Service of the New Age mailings Nos. 100 to 140 were produced from that worn garage. But we were get-

ting further and further away from it, away from the draft resistance news, birth control articles, Abbie Hoffman in Chicago, the poetry of the "revolution," the short news items culled from regular press services only turned around to read correctly - we were running out of time in that garage and running out of things to say to those we'd left behind.

"Liberation News Service moved here because of a split in the anti-war movement," Lovejoy explained, "between the so-called vulgar Marxists and the cultural revolution people. The cultural revolution movement people wound up here. But LNS couldn't sustain itself in the country. By '69 - '70, the anti-nuclear movement showed up, and we decided to stop them" from building nuclear plants on the Montague Plains. "No Nukes in Montague did well. We got into organic farming." But by the 90s, a changing core group felt they



Academy Award winning actress Ellen Burstyn MC'ed opening day proceedings.

could no longer sustain the organic farm commune at the Farm. After one of the early communards, Harvey Wasserman, contacted Roshi Bernie Glassman, a transition of ownership was worked out and the trustees handed over the farm to the Zen Peacemakers.

"I'm happy to say, the new incarnation is booming," said Lovejoy, looking around at the wall to wall crowd.

Academy Award winning actress Ellen Burstyn (the Last Picture Show, the Exorcist, Alice Doesn't Live Here Any More) played MC for the proceedings. Before bringing up Glassman, the Zen Peacemakers' founder and co-spiritual director, she said a few words.

"I met Bernie in the early 90s. He was taking people on retreat in the streets of Manhattan, where they live for a week as homeless people. I thought, 'that sounds like the scariest thing I've ever heard of in my life.' I was terrified of it, so I knew I had to try it. I booked myself in for a retreat, and then I got a job and couldn't go." Each year, Burstyn told the crowd, she would book herself on one of Bernie's street retreats only to find job conflicts intervening to prevent her from attending. "It was the best way I ever found to get a job."

"But one year I finally went. It was one of the most spiritual retreats I've ever been on." After asking friends to provide money to donate to homeless shelters where they would sleep at night, she spent a week on the streets with Glassman and other Zen practitioners. She told of one moment that stood out for her, when she summoned the courage to ask a woman at an

see ZEN pg 11



Sam Lovejoy

breakfast out behind the house over an open flame, the smoke dissolving into the all-encompassing passing sun.

Tucked away here on the short end of Ripley Road, this state-of-the-art geothermally heated, photovoltaic electrically powered conference space and office building gives the hundred or more gathered for the opening a view through the north windows of the old green and white painted farmhouse with the attached solar greenhouse, where the radical journalists of the anti-Vietnam war era came to get back to the land and form an anti-nuclear family. In the late 60s through the early 90s they toppled towers, spawned a worldwide safe energy movement, and learned the basics of organic farming. One of their number, former Montague selectboard member Sam Lovejoy, gave an opening oration to the gathered Buddhists, providing a bridge from past to the present.



Dairy cows climbed these stone steps to the upper level of the barn for more than a century. The modern facility will be heated geothermally -- with 50-degree water piped from beneath a nearby hillside, year round -- to aid in summer cooling. In winter, the 50-degree water will be used for heat, brought to room temperature with the help of a heat exchanger.

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outdoor café to give her a dollar for the subway. "The woman reached into her pocketbook without looking at me and handed me a dollar. As I crossed the street I felt tears rise up in me... because she hadn't looked at me. I realized one of the most basic human impulses is to be recognized by another human being."

Outside the road is soft and white in the dim twilight made darker by the heavy snow-falling blanket. Two tire tracks run parallel down the road; a car had driven by earlier, Trout Fishing Jesse in his white (winter camouflage?) Falcon station wagon out on patrol, just making sure everything's all right on Chestnut Hill tonight.

From outside I can see the house, music now from the record player floating out to me in the middle of the snowstorm. I turn away from the house and look down the road toward Ripley's place. Though I can't see too far because of the snow, I can just make out the garage, a couple of hundred yards from where I stand.

Outside there is the wind, the wind building up and driving the snow every which way, first west, then south, then east. "And nothing stops the wind," Ray said to me in a very solemn voice a few nights ago, "nothing stops the wind." Snowflakes now like dark silver dollars, thick cotton puffs in rapid succession.

I decide to go on walking. Funny, I don't feel anything in my legs, in fact I am amazed to find that I don't feel the cold, don't feel the icy wetness in my face, my overcoat drenched and sopping through to the sweater underneath. As I walk I am digging that my spirit seems to be rising; the pain in my head has gone somewhere else and I feel higher than I've even been before. As I walk, with each step, I feel myself coming to new levels, the best way to describe it is like a set of stairs, first one then the other; each putting you on another plane in an ascending direction. My body was slowly leaving the vibrational reach of the house,

and all that it had meant to be inside it, seconds or minutes before. I didn't look back but could see the house nonetheless, lights up in Marshall's bedroom on the second floor: I didn't look back as I walked away from the farmhouse but in my mind I could see it all very clearly, the farm getting smaller and smaller; the house falling back into the tiny space it occupies on the circumference of this planet.

Introduced with accolades by Burstyn, Roshi Glassman spoke very humbly about his work, though he is one of the generally acknowledged leaders of American Buddhism. "I'm actually a boy from Brooklyn," he said. "I grew up there, or failed to grow up..."

Burstyn had talked of his work in Yonkers, where he persuaded Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream to build a bakery to hire homeless people to make brownies for one of their best selling brands. Not content to give them employment, Glassman soon set up a 'mandala' of services for the employees, including child care, health care, housing, and drug counseling. Then he turned over the

ly," he told the assembled Buddhists and local well wishers.

Glassman told the crowd, "Early on I found out about the interconnectedness of people." He said his social enterprise work since then has been based on the simple precept that all beings are part of one family. "If you cut yourself, you heal the hurt. If you are hungry, you feed yourself. You can't see someone hungry or bleeding without taking care of that person."

Glassman's organization is fostering the development of 'peacemaker circles' internationally, faith-based collectives of social activists creating dialogue in places such as Northern Ireland and the Middle East.

in Peacemaker centers throughout the world come through here," Glassman promised.

Sister Clare Carter of the nearby Leverett Peace Pagoda, dressed in saffron robes, said after the speeches, "You can feel the spirit of the House of One People, bringing people together. It feels large and open and invites people to come together with a framework for the good of humanity."

Doug Danell, a builder who has lived on Chestnut Hill since 1997, was the general contractor for the barn renovation. He said when he first looked at the barn, "the roof leaked, the floor was sagging, and it was full of stuff that had piled up over the years. We hauled out ten to fifteen 30-yard dumpsters of stuff to clear it out, the flotsam and jetsam of all the people who lived here, everything from wood, to old tools, to Mr. Natural comics. We stripped it to the frame, poured new foundations, replaced the floor and the roof and put in a 3000-gallon-a-day septic system. It has not been easy, but it has been very rewarding. I'm very proud to have been part of the whole process."

Zen Peacemaker president Jim Bastien said the entire renovation totaled nearly \$2 million. The town enforced stringent code requirements for the installation of the septic system, he said. The Maezumi Institute is permitted to house 50 or more

guests overnight, and up to 200 for a concert in the main hall. Parking, around the barn and in a lot on a higher field, will be easier to establish for large events once the mud season is passed, Bastien said.

In the midst of the gala opening, the crowd of admirers could not help noticing the weathered hand-routed wooden sign tacked to the outside of the barn. An honored relic of the commune days, it still proclaimed, "Better Active Today than Radioactive Tomorrow."

Think I'll just sit here on this flat rock awhile. The land spreads out flat before me into a mild valley, the ground is cold and flat and the way the light hits it, gray and yet shiny, we could be on the high seas, the farmhouse with its windows ablaze with flickering movement of bodies bending the light like portholes, the farmhouse is our ocean liner (two brick chimneys pumping smoke like the vessel's smokestacks.). It's the grand voyage, it's a risk, the ones you love leave you in the dark and then bounce back as babies reach for the light. (And the farm women, exhibiting such faith in the future of the journey as to bring new life into our world, Susan with baby Alpha, Cathy now nine months' pregnant with Laz's kid, Nina with Chuck's, Janis, radiating, slowly back and forth in the rocker by the stove as she nurses Sequoiah; the giant step higher.) Where are we going? Who knows? It takes a lifetime to get there.

Someone is standing on the very peak of the barn roof, from the top of the hill I can barely make out his figure in the dark-

see ZEN pg 12



Sister Clare Carter, visiting from the Leverett Peace Pagoda



Bernie Glassman

bakery to them, and they still run it successfully. We sampled some of the wares from the Greyston Bakery downstairs after his short speech, and they were delicious.

"I was in a period of divesting myself of things," Glassman explained. "I was the abbot of a number of Zen centers, but I wanted to put energy into being a clown." Glassman works with an international group called 'Clowns without Borders,' that performs at refugee camps in troubled areas of the world, such as Chiapas. "It is important not to take yourself too serious-

The global network's hub is centered in Montague now, on Ripley Road, in this renovated dairy barn. Glassman envisions the center as "A place where people of diversity could come maintain their diversity but, being who they are, realize they are all one people." The Peacemakers plan to use the conference center to develop the practice of Zen, to develop social enterprise work, to advance the work of peacemaking locally and globally, to advance the work of faith, and to celebrate the sacred arts. "You will see many people involved

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ness, the twilight, arms dangling for balance. It's Sluggo, he's been perched up there all afternoon, staring off into the sunset, now it's dark and Sluggo's still up on the roof. (He and Tony finished laying the last sheet of tin on it three days ago and just in time as the snow will fly hard within the week, it's December.) What's he thinking about up there? Waiting on the evening star, I guess.

You might think this is the way the tale ends, but do not be deceived: we've barely begun this voyage, the ocean liner bravely making its way through the storms and brilliant sunny days of the New Age, though everyone knows its as old as the hills.

And it takes a lifetime to get there.



Stephen Diamond
Photo courtesy of Nina Keller



The House of One People

Stephen Diamond, one of the seven original members of the LNS collective that purchased the Ripley Farm in

California on the morning of February 4th, on the day of the opening of the Maezumi Institute, in the old cow barn. He was the one who raised the \$20,000 for the downpayment on the farm, by arranging for the first American showing of

the Beatle's Magical Mystery Tour at Bill Graham's Fillmore East in New York. The italicized passages were taken from his book about the Montague Farm, What the Trees Said, which can still be borrowed from the Wendell Free Library.

Fishers on the Rebound in Massachusetts

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GREAT FALLS - Tracker and naturalist David Brown spoke to a crowd of more than 50 nature enthusiasts at the Great Falls Discovery Center on Thursday, February 2nd. His presentation was titled, "On the Trail of the Fisher Cat," an animal whose legend has grown in recent years as it has gradually reintroduced itself to woodland habitats throughout New England, after being pushed out during the height of forest clearing in the 1800s. As New England's farm economy waned and fields grew up to woods again, the fisher, like many other woodland mammals, returned. Now, tales of this elusive predator lurking behind suburban homes, crying like a baby in the night and committing murder most foul on domestic kitty cats have followed in the fisher's wake. Brown dismissed a number of those reports as suburban myths.

First of all, they aren't cats and they don't fish. Secondly, there are recordings of fishers making

emanating from a fisher's mouth. "Red fox have some pretty weird vocalizations," he suggested. "They have a repertoire of shrieks and screams that would raise the hair on your neck." He mentioned black bears, barred owls, and raccoons as other candidates for the weird nocturnal cries some ascribe to fishers.

As for the murder of innocent kitty cats, Brown said it may be that fishers occasionally come upon a cat by coincidence and kill it. But, "they are not stealth hunters. Fishers are hunters of opportunity. Often, squirrels at people's bird feeders attract



Stuffed fisher cat at the Great Falls Discovery Center lecture last Thursday

culprits. And he took a swipe at people's conception of their own pets' innocence: "At the end of the asphalt, different rules apply. Your cat becomes a wild animal at night, hunting prey, and comes back in the morning and meows on your doorstep."

Oh, and fishers don't tend to hunt at night. They are crepuscular, meaning they hunt mostly at dusk or dawn, although they will hunt by day, when squirrels are out and about. Until fishers made inroads in recent decades, Massachusetts was characterized by a very "naïve squirrel population," Brown said.

Fishers are but one of a growing number of well-established predators in the state, and Brown spoke favorably about predation in the natural scheme of things.

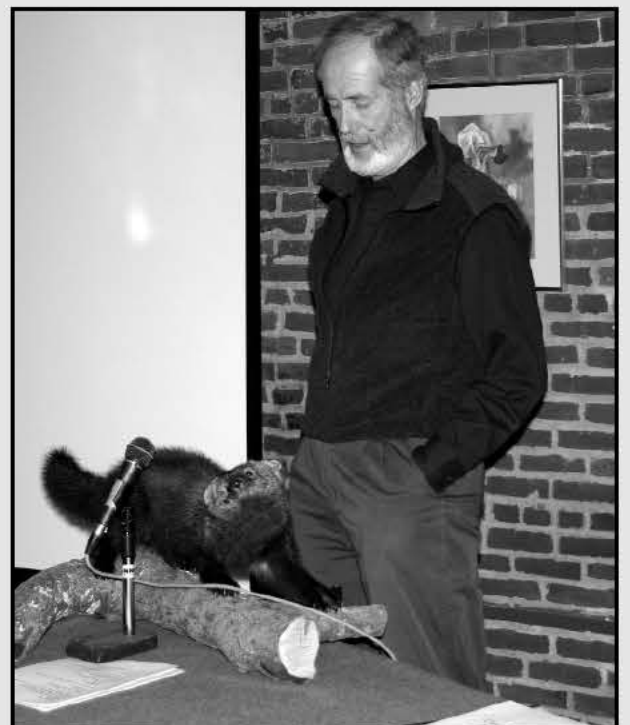
"Predation is a process essential to any habitat. We'd be up to our necks in diseased and starving animals without predators." Fishers help to keep the natural balance, by culling weaker or diseased animals from the habitat, ensuring survival of the fittest. "Nature is ferocious; it is beautiful, but not always pretty." The fisher is a handsome,

weigh up to 12 pounds. It is built like a dachshund, with a powerful head, long body, and bushy tail. The male is half again larger than the female." A grizzled appearance of the fur around the muzzle indicates a mature fisher. One male fisher will hunt a territory of approximately 10 square miles, although a number of females can inhabit the same range. The male takes no part in the raising of kits, which are typically born in March or April, in litters of two or three. They do not live in an established den; but

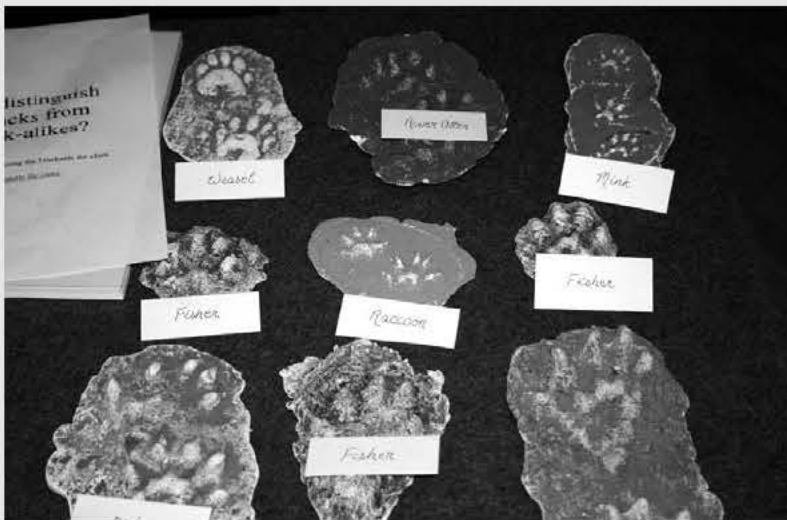
dark-brown, furry member of the weasel family, like the smaller ermine or otter, or the large mink or marten. Fishers are larger than these, reaching 30 inches in body length, (add another twelve inches for the tail) and may

are nomadic. They will hole up temporarily in the hollow of a log or tree, and sometimes cache their kill and return for further feeding.

Brown showed slides of the fisher's distinctive five-toed track, with short claws leaving a tear-drop effect at the tips, and taught how to differentiate it from its near relatives. The fisher often leaves tracks in a bounding gait across deep soft snow, with the hind feet landing directly in the prints of the front feet, in a repeating slant. They like to run along the tops of felled trees. Brown said there is no mystery to this aspect of their behavior.



Tracker and naturalist David Brown speaking about fisher cats



Sample animal tracks similar to those of fishers were on display

"grunting, hissing, or even growling sounds," but nothing in the scientific record to suggest anything similar to a baby's cry

them. Seldom do fishers decide, 'Today is the day I'll eat that cat.' He pointed to great horned owls, foxes and bobcats as more likely

They run along the tops of felled trees because it gives them a chance to look around the woods.

The program was sponsored by the Northfield Mountain Environmental Center, the Great Falls Discovery Center, and the Pioneer Valley Institute.

The Long and Short of February Holidays

BY FRAN HEMOND

In the days when the twelfth of February was an official holiday in honor of Abraham Lincoln's birthday, and the twenty-second was a second school holiday in recognition of George Washington, the popular belief was that a birthday in this month of the year guaranteed a brilliant mind. For were not our greatest presidents a product of these winter days?

An axe was surely the February tool. The Kentucky log cabin and the Virginia cherry tree and their lessons of humility and industry, courage and truth-telling were dependent on these symbols, and a less sophisticated generation of children found them colorful and instructive.

Treasure the days of fine skating, skiing, tobogganing or ice sculpture and the month

becomes a prize to remember. Add a few popular holidays to keep it interesting. No one is quite certain what Ground Hog Day is all about. The sun is still fairly low in the south and the woodchuck casts a fairly long shadow. If he sees it, tradition has it, there will be six more weeks of winter. If the day is overcast, the groundhog takes it as a sign spring will be here soon.

The groundhog tradition stems from similar beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe, and for centuries the custom was to have the clergy bless candles and distribute them to the people. Even then, it marked a milestone in the winter and the weather that day was important.

According to an old English song: If Candlemas be fair and

bright, Come, Winter, have another flight; If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, Go Winter, and come not again.

In its earliest incarnation, Groundhog Day was Imbolc, a pagan fertility celebration. The word Imbolc is Gaelic, the language of the Celts. There is a strong association between Imbolc and Brigid, a Celtic fertility goddess, and when pagan rites gave way to Christianity in Northern Europe, Imbolc, midway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, became St. Brigid's Day.

Whatever its origins, Groundhog Day is a fairly easy holiday. No presents are expected, and it doesn't matter if you forget to look to see whether the groundhog sees his shadow or not. In Montague, this year, the day dawned overcast, but the sun

broke through mid morning. Either way, if the winter continues to be as mild as January was, we'll see snowdrops and crocuses blooming before too many more weeks pass.

St. Valentine's Day is more demanding. The mystery of loved is captured in heart and verse, and its absence may be a broken dream.

To add to February revelry, every four years the shortest month adds a day. Our lovely natural world, that piques tightly organized folks with times and motions that do not coordinate with marching precision, has to add the 29th day to make the year fit. It was Julius Caesar's astronomers who worked out the system. Almost everyone knows someone who was born on the 29th of February and has a true birthday once every four years when the 29th rolls around

again.

Generally speaking, leap years are those divisible by four; the next leap year will be 2008.

And here we come to another complication that will send some looking for shelter. It is said on questionable authority that it is quite proper for the ladies to court men of their choice in leap year, or maybe just leap day. The custom does not seem to have a known basis, but apparently in the 13th century in Scotland a ruler proclaimed this as a ladies' prerogative, and men who resisted either had to prove they were already promised or pay the lady off. Britannica will tell you that the custom can be found in those mid-centuries in other areas like France and Genoa.

Indeed, February's unique make-up is rather provocative.

THE HEALTHY GEEZER

My Aching Back

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. Have you ever thrown your back out? I hear an awful lot of geezers complain about their backs. How common is back pain?

Yes, I've had back problems most of my adult life, and I know how debilitating they are. When I was 30, I put myself in bed for a week by carrying heavy stacks of newspapers to the curb. Back problems have been a recurring problem in the decades since then.

The first attack of low back pain usually happens to people between the ages of 30 and 40. Back pain becomes more common with age.

Back pain is very common. It affects about 8 out of 10 people. This affliction incapacitates so many people, and the subject is so extensive, that I'm going to do a three-part series on back pain. This first one is

about causes.

Back pain is more common among people who are not physically fit. Weak back and abdominal muscles may not properly support the spine. If you're sedentary most of the time and then exert yourself on rare occasions, you are more likely to injure your back than someone who exercises daily.

If you're carrying a big belly, you put added stress on the muscles in your lower back and are a candidate for agony.

Some back pain, including disc disease, may spring from your genes. Race can have an influence, too. African-American women, for example, are two to three times more likely than white women to develop spondylolisthesis, a condition in which a bone - vertebra - of the lower spine slips out of place.

Your job can be a major

influence on back health. If your work requires heavy lift-



ILLUSTRATION JESSICA HARMON

ing or sitting all day, you risk hurting your back. Many sanitationmen and writers suffer from back troubles.

Once again, cigarette smoking is a health hazard. While smoking doesn't cause back pain directly, it increases your risk of developing sciatica, a

pain that runs down the back of your leg from spinal-disc pressure on a nerve. Smoking can block the body's ability to deliver nutrients to the discs of the lower back.

Mechanical problems can cause back pain. Perhaps the most common mechanical cause of back pain is disc degeneration. The cushioning discs between the vertebrae of the spine break down with age. If there is stress on these compromised discs, they press against spinal nerves and you may experience what feels like a toothache in a buttock. At almost any age, an injury can force these discs to bulge or rupture causing the same kind of pain.

Spine injuries such as sprains and fractures can cause either short-lived or chronic pain. Fractured vertebrae are often the result of osteoporosis,

a condition that causes weak, porous bones.

Many medical problems can cause back pain. They include scoliosis, which causes curvature of the spine; various forms of arthritis, and spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal column that puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves.

Your emotions have a major impact upon back pain. Never underestimate how they can tighten muscles and elevate your awareness of pain. I vividly recall being free of sciatica when I received some troubling news. Within minutes, I couldn't put my left foot down because the pain in my leg was so intense.

If you have a question, please write to fredcicetti@gmail.com.


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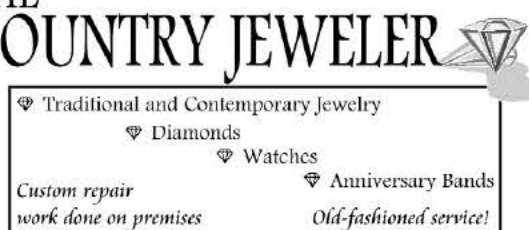


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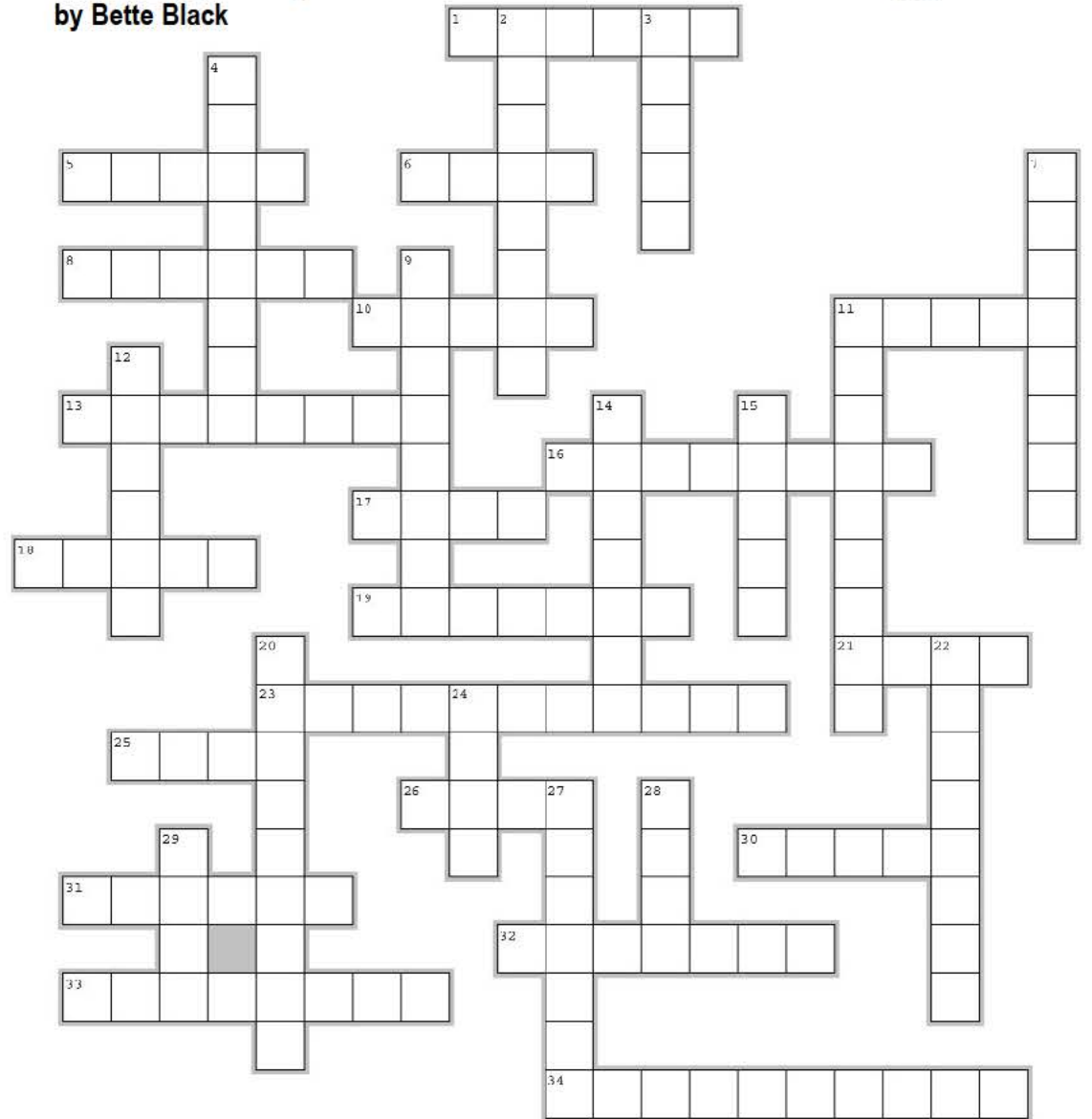
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Many Splendored Thing

by Bette Black

**Across**

1. World famous relationship and sex therapist Westheimer
 5. Organ sometimes worn on the sleeve.
 6. Old fashioned word for the boy you are currently sweet on.
 8. Robin Hood's lady love.
 10. He melted hearts world-wide singing *Love Me Tender*.
 11. Roman god often depicted as a naked cherub with a bow and arrow.
 13. This Venetian's name is passed down through history to describe an extreme psychological type of love outlaw.
 16. The qualities idealized by knighthood, such as bravery, courtesy, honor and gallantry toward women.
 17. Love is like a really red one of these.
 18. Woman of Troy known for her face.
 19. Ms. O'Keefe known for her

femme-phallic flower paintings.
 21. Pop psychology term for the period of early marriage when the romance needs to realign or else, called "Four-year ____."
 23. A drug or food having an arousing effect
 25. *Besame Mucho* is a Velazquez/Skylar song recorded on The Beatles' *Anthology 1* and is sung by this most romantic bandmember.
 26. Mick Jagger's most notable physical feature.
 30. Famous Shakespearean wooer whose last name is Montague.
 31. Seventy-year-old Ben Franklin was wildly appreciated during his stay in France as a master of the high art of flirtation while American history prefers to consider him to have been a lecherous chaser of these.
 32. Popular gift for the woman you love.
 33. Poetess who wrote in her Sonnet #43, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways."
 34. Diane Ackerman, in her book *A Natural History of Love*, calls these hormones "mental comfort food."

Down

2. Byron, Keats, Shelly and Wordsworth were considered great poets of this period.
 3. An agreement to meet at a specific time in a private place.

4. According to the tourist trade, this state is "for lovers."
 7. Traditional wedding ring of the Irish.
 9. A highly publicized event of 1929 called a "massacre" was intended to whack rival Bugs Moran to the ultimate benefit of this famous crime boss.
 11. Pair bonding is the contemporary academic term for this quaint social pathway to marriage.
 12. Elton John's song of homage to Marilyn Monroe ____ in the *Wind*.
 14. Famous work of art by Gustav Klimt, ca. 1908 in oil paint and gold on canvas.
 15. Most famous model for romance novel cover illustrations who happens to still be unmarried.
 20. Patron saint of lovers.
 22. Contemporary film based on the sensuous book by Joanne Harris starring Juliette Binoche and featuring Johnny Depp.
 24. Author of The Art of Love during the reign of the Roman Augustus who was banished possibly due to attracting the admiration of the Emperress.
 27. Slang word for the one you hold on to.
 28. Romantic 70s hit by Roberta Flack, *First Time Ever I Saw Your ____*.
 29. Carthaginian Queen who fell head over heels for Aeneas.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY FEBRUARY 10TH, 11TH & 12TH

Pioneer Valley Regional High School presents Suessical the Musical at the school, 97 F. Summer Turner Drive (just off Route 10) in Northfield. Performances Friday at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday & Sunday at 3:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH Boxed chocolates? Store bought cards? Limp bouquets? No way! Valentine's 'Sweet Art' Sale at the Montague Grange. Free Admission. Treat yourself and your sweetheart to fine art and delectable edibles at the Valentine's 'Sweet Art' Sale at the Grange on Main Street in Montague Center. Local artists and specialty food creators are offering unique, quality gift items for you and your beloved. An affordable alternative to the been there, done that world of store-bought sentiment. Our locally produced gifts are unique and high quality. We put a lot of heart into our work and it shows! The Valentines 'Sweet Art' Sale is artist-run, created by local artists. The sale runs from 10-4, snow or shine. For more information call Mark Lattanzi at (413) 367-0042. Directions to the Montague Grange are available at www.TheAlchemyStudio.com.

Wendell Full Moon Coffee House presents *Blame it on Tina*, an act that covers the spectrum of music; rock, pop, country, folk, with even a taste of world music and jazz. These four talented local musicians have come together to put on an awesome evening of original music to thaw the chill in our February bones and release their first CD "A Good Story". Jen Spingla, Bob Rosser, Adam Bergeron, and Tina Horn welcome their talented guests; Kellianna, Alyssa Kelly, and Ethan Stone to join them on stage for this incredible evening of musical entertainment. Partial proceeds to benefit Good Neighbors, an organization dedicated to providing free, wholesome foods for local community members. Full Moon Coffee House is inside Town Hall on the common in downtown Wendell. 7:30 p.m. sharp. \$6 - \$12, kids 6-12 \$2; under 6 free. (978) 544-5557, www.wendellfullmoon.org

Leverett Crafts & Arts takes a trip back to the 60s with A Black Tie Dye Affair, a gala evening to benefit the arts center. A concert by Marsia Shuron Harris of Mother Turtle, wine tasting by Amherst Wines & Spirits and psychedelicious hors d'oeuvres are among the evening's attractions. Fine and fancy dress with a touch of tie dye is appreciated. Tickets are a donation of \$20 or more and can be reserved by calling Leverett Crafts & Arts, (413) 548-9070. 8 p.m. at the Barnes Gallery, 13 Montague Rd., Leverett.

Chocolate Festival Sponsored by the Turners Falls Chapter No. 181 Order of Eastern Star. Items include: chocolate dipped strawberries, decadent chocolate cakes, chocolate dipped fruit, fudge, candy and more. Plus valentine gifts and silent auction, at Mechanics Lodge, 20 Masonic Ave., Turners Falls (across from the Farren). 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 413-774-6685.

Family snowshoe adventure by the light of the moon! Learn how to navigate like nocturnal creatures at Northfield Mountain Recreation Area, Route 63 in Northfield. For ages 6 and older, pre-registration required. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. 800-859-2960.

The Montague Center School PTO presents the band Curly Fingers DuPree for an evening of dancing. Songs from the 60's to the present as only Curly can play them, plus your "Pub Favorites". At St Kazimierz Hall on the avenue in Turners Falls. 8 p.m. to Midnight. There will be raffles and door prizes. Admission is \$7.00, Cash bar, adults only. All proceeds benefit Montague Center School. Call 367-9502 for ticket information.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH Scandinavian Dancing Second Sundays at the Montague Grange #141, 34 Main St., Montague Center. Great live music played by Andrea Larson, David Kaynor and friends. David Kaynor will also teach basic Swedish dances. Dancers with all levels of experience are welcome. No partner necessary. \$10 suggested donation. Musicians wishing to play or for more info call Andrea at (603) 878-4332, or email ALLarson56@aol.com or call

Alice at (413) 774-7771 or email kling63@yahoo.com.

Double bill Hilltown Folk show at Memorial Hall in Shelburne Falls. CD release performance by subversive traditionalistas The Mammals (www.themammals.net) and modern country duo Sarah Lee Guthrie and Johnny Irion (sarahleeandjohnny.com). Tickets are \$18 advanced, \$20 at the door and \$10 for under 18-yr-olds. Tickets available online at hilltownfolk.com or at The Hempest in Northampton (413) 585-9707, Boswell's Book in Shelburne Falls (413) 625-9362 or World Eye Bookshop in Greenfield (413) 772-2186.

Hearts on Fire Fundraiser - A festive evening of comedy, music, auction and food. Annual benefit supports Artspace programs. Featuring Artspace's very own funny lady Ellen Villani and music by Jennie McAvoy and Brooks Williams. Held at The Pushkin, at the corner of Main & Federal Sts. in Greenfield. 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. 413-772-6811.

Moonlight is for Lovers: snowshoeing and mating strategies of winter mammals. Spend an evening with your sweetie on snowshoes. Learn how to best navigate in the night and find out which nocturnal creatures are in a mating mood this time of year at Northfield Mountain Recreation Area, Route 63 in Northfield. For ages 12 and older and pre-registration is required. 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. 800-859-2960.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH 4th Annual Breakfast and Service Auction "Give With Your Heart to the Community Meals" to benefit the Franklin County Community Meals Program It's going to be a long, cold, snowy winter - This year your help is needed more than ever! Held at Bill's Restaurant, 30 Federal St., Greenfield. 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. 413-772-1033.

10th Annual Valentine's Day Chocolate Festival Extravaganza to Benefit Baystate VNA & Hospice. Featuring all sorts of chocolate treats! Baked goods and confections from the best

bakeries, restaurants, shops and friends and a quilt raffle. Held at Franklin Medical Center in conference rooms A&B to the right of the hospital lobby (164 High Street, Greenfield). 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 413-773-2070.

Smith College presents acclaimed poets Charles Bernstein and Jerome Rothenberg at 7:30 p.m. in Stoddard Hall Auditorium. The reading is free, open to the public and wheelchair accessible. The event coincides with the exhibition "Too Much Bliss: Twenty Years of Granary Books" at the Smith College Museum of Art, which features the work of both poets through Feb. 19th. The readings will be followed by a book sale and signing in Stoddard Hall. Afterward, the Smith College Museum of Art will host a reception in the museum atrium. For more information, contact Cindy Furtek in the Poetry Center office at (413) 585-4891 or Ellen Doré Watson, director, at (413) 585-3368.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

Pioneer Valley Regional High School Winter Concert, at Martin Auditorium in the school, 97 F Summer Turner Drive (just off Route 10) in Northfield. 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH

Contra Dance with *Tomczak Productions* at Guiding Star Grange Hall, 401 Chapman St., Greenfield. 8:00 p.m. to midnight. 802-387-9380.

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17TH & 18TH

Ja'Duke Productions presents *Annie*, one of the world's best-loved musicals. Performances at The Shea Theater, Ave. A, Turners Falls. 8:00 p.m. 413-863-2281 x2, also Friday and Saturday, February 24th & 25th.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

Salsa Dance! in Wendell from 7 till 11 p.m. at the town hall. Listen for the beat of Conga drums! At 7 p.m. Marilyn Marks and Richard Adams will teach beginners this saucy Latin dance. So come out and dance those winter blues away. This event is a

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These programs are free (except some trips) and open to local teens. Some require permission slips. For more info: Jared at 863-9559.

Hot Spot Teen Center is in The Brick House Community Resource Center, 24 Third Street, Turners Falls, 01376.

fundraiser for the Wendell Free Library. Admission price is on a sliding scale: \$5-10. This dance is sponsored by Friends of the Wendell Library and Community Policing.

Sunday at 7
THE DEAD OF WINTER

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High Noon

At 7:30 p.m. 1952. This taut, minimalist film, often interpreted as a comment on Red baiting stands above most Westerns. Gary Cooper plays a retired marshal who, duty-bound, and with out help from the cowardly or self-interested townspeople, defends a frontier town from outlaws.

Music at 7: Fri - Resistance Blue Duo, creative experimentation; Sat - Chuck Coman & Becky Asbenden, accordion & tambura Balkan music.

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2. **BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN**
DAILY 6:30 9:30 R in DTS sound
- MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:30 3:30
3. **MUNICH** R
DAILY 7:30
- MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:00 3:45
4. **BIG MAMA'S HOUSE 2** PG13
DAILY 6:45 9:15
- MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:15 3:15
5. **WHEN A STRANGER CALLS**
DAILY 6:45 9:15 PG13 in DTS sound
- MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:15 3:15
6. **THE PINK PANTHER**
DAILY 7:00 9:10 PG in DTS sound
- MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:00 3:00
7. **FIREWALL** PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 7:00 9:10
- MAT SAT, SUN, WED 12:00 3:00

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WEST ALONG THE RIVER

A Day in the Great Blasket Part II

BY DAVID BRULE

MILLERS FALLS - Crossing to Ireland by armchair, snug in a corner near the glowing Glenwood C, may be just the best thing this damp and grey Sunday in February. Outside, the blue jays swirl through the yard, their clan now numbering up to thirty, tree sparrows and juncos tune up their songs in this false spring morning. Inside, the stove ticks as its heat spreads into the room and the old dog shifts in his sleep.

A far cry from a dark New England day, it's a sunny July 4th once again, six months back in time and I've got a day in the Great Blasket stretched out before me, with nothing to do but ramble on the island and do as I please.

The Great Blasket, the last parish in Ireland before America, is the farthest point west in Europe. It stretches from the tip of the Dingle Peninsula with a cluster of smaller islands trailing behind her in the foaming Atlantic.

After landing and visiting the ruins of the only village (see Part I, MR IV #16), the broad path leading up and around the treeless island beckons. Hiking west up to the first shoulder of the island, the turf path switches back and heads off to the top of the island, but this will be my first stop. The island falls away just here, the grass close cropped as a golf course putting green, by the sheep. The cliff edge is hidden by the steep curve of the island, down and away. Blue sea and white caps, a towering rock stack island in the distance - the Tiaracht - and nothing beyond but open sea and America, 4000 miles away.

This is a good spot to stretch out and lean back on an elbow, contemplate the scenery and reflect on the 364 days gone by since I last reached this precise spot on the planet. That's what



Ruins of the Great Village on Blasket Island

vacations are for, and Ireland does strange things to the traveler. This is after all the land of the leprechaun, the Tuatha De Danaan, the Salmon of Wisdom, the singing stones, banshees and holy wells. Ages ago, Fionn Mac Cuhaill fought the King of the World, and helped decide the fate of the Irish peoples, just a few miles away from here, over on the other side of the mainland. Ireland draws the physical world in close to the spiritual world, and it's easy to fall under the charm it casts.

Time passes slowly when you're stretched out on your back in the warm grass, cap pulled over your eyes and the empty Atlantic rolling a hundred feet below the cliffs. However, the New Englander in me gets me up and pursuing the objective of the day, which is perambulating the island, following the path that angles around the Blasket like a belt. In spite of the warmth of July, lines from one of the island's writers, Tomas O'Crohan, come to mind: "It's a winter's day and it looks it... the grass that was green yesterday is withered today... Sheep that have been blown out of their resting places in the hills are trying to force their way into the houses. The young

woman who was as spruce as the swan on the lake, when she comes in with a bucket of water, the comb has been snatched from the back of her head by the wind, her hair is straying into her mouth, there is mud on her clothes, the water is half spilt, and she is as cross as someone who is out of tobacco... there are

... there are many cures in fine weather and much harm in hard."

-Tomas O'Crohan

many cures in fine weather and much harm in hard."

Lucky for me, it is a rare, fine day, though even in summer gales can shut the island off from the mainland for days at a time. But the weather is bright and sunny, I'm far from the fireworks and cookouts of the 4th as well, celebrating the independence of the open path.

Once having rounded the far corner of the island, I find my spot on the landward side, where the sun shines brightest. The vast Bay of Dingle and all of Kerry stretches out in the sunshine. Time for a serious

lunch and more lolling in the grass. Out of the backpack comes organic Dingle Bay salmon, soda bread from my B+B, and a bottle of Guinness. All of the principal Irish food groups. Feeling smug and fortunate on such a fine day, the thought of a letter received back in Millers Falls in the 30s comes to mind: my grandmother's aunt wrote asking for help, clothing, and mittens for the family's men out there fishing on Dingle Bay that winter. A poignant letter kept in a drawer all these years until I found it, and I wonder what became of those men and their families, part of my extended family, out there on the sparkling bay and Kerry headlands on the horizon.

By sitting still and moving slowly, I blend into the hillside enough to reassure the dozens of rabbits living in the surrounding 100 yards, and before long they're out of their holes, preening and stretching, then sprawling out lazily full length in this rare sunny day. With no predators on the island, they breed, well, like rabbits! An occasional raven or black-backed gull glides by, and far out on the bay, brilliant white gannets plummet into the sea like javelins falling from 50 feet up, diving repeat-

edly into shoals of fish near the surface. You could feel like you've died and gone to heaven on such a day!

Eliminating that option, however, I'm back up on my feet and wandering downhill to the village, still out of sight around the curve of the island. Back down to the boat slip, the day's pilgrimage completed, soon leaving this western-most island on the Tir na nOg. The young man who is piloting this bounding bark called the Land of Youth, turns out to be a college student from Cork who has lived most of his life in the village on the mainland. He has a great summer job. He sets his course through the Blasket Sound, attaches the wheel with a cord, and takes out his fiddle to practice as we churn through the waves. The schoolteacher in me rises up and I head to the pilot cab to help keep an eye on things while this seemingly carefree youngster nonchalantly steers with one foot while he fiddles. I ask him does he know the "Mist-Covered Mountain," since just in the distance the line of mist is beginning to cause the top of Mount Eagle to disappear. He says he doesn't, but I do, and we make it a point to meet in Kruger Kavanagh's pub later on to swap fiddle tunes.

And in fact, that very evening, walking from my B+B to the village pub, the mantle of mist was hovering over the top of the island where I had spent my day, smoky and creamy in the moonlight. Resembling so stunningly I might add, the rich and creamy head on a fresh pint of Guinness, that the inspiration came upon me to quicken my step a bit to get a little sooner to the glowing and beckoning pub over there in the soft evening distance.

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