



ALTAR BOY MEMORIES

Of Father John Roach
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OKLAHOMA

At the Shea Theater
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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 6 - NO. 39

also serving Gill, Erving and Wendell

50¢

REPORTER@MONTAGUEMA.NET

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JULY 10, 2008

Department of Education Sets \$16.8 Mil Budget for Gill-Montague

BY DAVID DETMOLD - The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), has set a so-called "1/12th budget" for the Gill Montague Regional School District (GMRSD), allowing them to operate and bill the district towns month by month until a final budget is agreed to. According to a letter the district has received from the DESE, signed by Jeff Wulfson, assistant commissioner for school finances, the state has for the time being fixed the GMRSD's operating budget for the fiscal year that began July 1st at \$16,820,004.

GMRSD business manager Lynn Bassett was quick to point out Wednesday, "That is a \$198,000 decrease from what we asked for at town meetings."

It is, on the other hand, \$721,681 more than the town of Montague appropriated on June 17th to fund their share of the school assessment, and \$137,840 more than Gill appropriated for their share of the school budget on May 5th.

"We can't afford the 1/12th budget," said Gill selectboard member Ann Banash in frustration Tuesday.

see **BUDGET** pg 11

Tines & Tunes at Peskeomskut Park, Saturday

KATHY LITCHFIELD

TURNERS FALLS - It all started as a party for the Fabulous Maurice, who celebrates his 75th birthday on Saturday, July 12th.

Now, "Tines & Tunes" - the day-long, family-friendly, fundraising event for the Shea Theater in Turners Falls - will feature nine different live musical and theatrical performances, plenty of locally-sourced food and drink, a festive beer tent and a day's worth of fun for family members of all ages, on Saturday, July 12th from noon to 8 p.m. in Peskeomskut Park.

Admission is free, and proceeds generated from food and drink sales will directly benefit the Shea's programming.

The Fabulous Maurice, well known throughout the Valley for his accordion mastery, will perform at noon and be celebrated with a big birthday cake



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

The Fabulous Maurice will celebrate his 75th on Saturday

courtesy of the 2nd Street Bakery, to kick off the day's events.

"Everyone worked together to make this happen," said Shea Theater board member Patricia Friedman, bank manager at the Bank of America on Avenue A. "I think the community really believes in the Shea, and the potential for good to come of

this event."

About 40 local businesses contributed products and services for "Tines & Tunes," said Friedman.

"Every little piece is contributing to the success of this event," she said. "It really speaks to what an incredible community this is."

see **TUNES** pg 11

Montague Selectboard Grants Nine Department Heads Raises

BY DAVID DETMOLD - The Montague selectboard voted on June 30th to grant 2% step increases for non-union department heads and employees with personal contracts. The board took this step, according to town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, "to maintain consistency," even though, "we still don't have an agreement yet," with the three employee unions that cover the approximately 63 town employees at the police department, the highway department and wastewater treatment plant, and town hall.

But Abbondanzio said, "There were problems created when town meeting voted (on May 3rd and May 7th) to set line item budgets for personnel costs," equal to last year's levels, in an attempt to hold off raises in a budget year when the town was facing a \$1.5 million deficit. "I think no one realized they in effect wiped out steps from prior to town meeting," that are granted to employees on the anniversary of their date of hiring. If the town followed the budget outline for each department set by town meeting, "it would have eliminated wage increases," that most town employees had

see **RAISES** pg 12

GILL FARM & GARDEN TOUR

BY DAVID DETMOLD -

To a flatlander traveling up Main Road, Gill may seem to be a village lost in time, the nineteenth century New England farming community with its white clapboard town hall and Congregational Church on the common and dairy farms on rolling acreage to either side. But anyone who cared to take the self-guided farm and garden tour sponsored by the Friends of Gill on June 28th would have found a very different kind of agriculture taking root in the fertile soil between the Fall River and the Connecticut. Seven Gill farms and gardens were on display, each as different from the dairy farms that dominate Main Road as they are from one another. A field of lavender ready to harvest, pick-your own strawber-



DETMOLD PHOTO

Christine Bartus of Turners Falls enjoyed her first trip to Upinngil Farm on Main Road, where she picked a flat of berries to use in smoothies and strawberry shortcake during the Gill Farm and Garden Tour.

ries, a farm full of flightless Australian emus, a certified butterfly garden: you could see all

these and more on the Gill farm and garden tour.

In March of 2000, the

Northfield Mount Hermon horse barn caught fire in the middle of the day, and burned,

dining commons in the form of 24 gallons of ice cream.

see **FARMS** pg 8

along with the heifer and bull barns. Two years later, through a cooperative effort between the school and the national Timber Framers Guild, about 50 timber framers came from around the country, and with the help of NMH students, using local white pine from the Cowls sawmill in North Amherst, they spent a week on joinery and another day and a half raising a new 45 foot by 80 foot barn, the centerpiece of the NMH farm.

A tour of the farm takes in many outbuildings, including a greenhouse, sugarhouse, and ciderhouse. The farm produces cheddar and Monterey Jack cheeses, and along with raw milk sales, its three milking cows produce enough cream and milk to work into a mix at Bart's Ice Cream to provide a once a week treat at the

PET OF THE WEEK

Three's a Charm



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PHONE (413) 863-8666
FAX (413) 863-3050
reporter@montaguema.net
Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Montague Reporter
58 4th Street
Turners Falls, MA 01376
Advertising and copy deadline is Tuesday at NOON.
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Local Subscription Rates:
\$20 for 6 months

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Wild Reads Story Hours

BY LINDA HICKMAN
TURNERS FALLS - Wild Reads story hours will be held at the Carnegie Library on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. through August 19th. Children's librarian Linda Hickman will run the wildly exciting story hours, designed for children in grades K - 4. On July 15th, the theme will be knights and princesses. Other themes will include pirates, sharks, dragons and big cats. There will be no session on

August 5th. For more information, contact the Carnegie Library at 863-3214.

Mother Goose on the Loose will be held Saturday, July 12th, at the Carnegie at 10:30 a.m. The free program is an interactive mix of guitar and banjo music, rhymes, stories, puppets, and other visuals, designed for babies through preschoolers and are performed by children's librarian Linda Hickman and musician Michael Nix.

SLATE LIBRARY NEWS

Puppets Coming Saturday

GILL - Rosalita's Puppets will appear at the Slate Library on Saturday, July 12th at 11:00 a.m. as part of the Wild Reads summer reading program. Founded by Charlotte Anne Dore in 1993, Rosalita's Puppets have performed all over the Northeast in a dynamic blend of puppetry, improvisation, music, audience participation and storytelling for

the whole family. Each performance is one of a kind, with the audience invited to answer questions, sing along and actively participate. The marionettes average 20 inches in height and are presented on the floor with the puppeteer in full view of the audience. All voices and singing are performed live by Dore.

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

Wednesday is Kids Day

Wednesday Programs - Group Activities & Programs (All activities are free. Some require pre-registration. Ages listed are guidelines.)
Parent/Child Play Group (0-3 yr. olds) 10 - 11 a.m. all summer. Opportunity for parents to talk and infants to play
Science "School" with Johanna Fitzgerald (3-6 yr. olds) 10 - 11 a.m. all summer. Educational stories, activities and crafts focused on natural world

Wild Art with Ruth O'Mara (7-12 yr. olds) Please pre-register. Wednesdays, July 16th; August 13th & 20th: 3:30-5 p.m. (snack provided). Make exploding volcanoes and other cool crafts.
Creative Dramatics (6-9 yr. olds) Please pre-register. Wednesdays, July 23rd, 30th, Aug. 6th, 3-4:30 p.m. (snack provided). Theater games, role play and creating characters directed by Becca Greene-Vanhorn

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES -- July 14th - July 25th

GILL/MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Council-on-Aging Director is Bunny Caldwell. For information or to make reservations, call 863-9357. Meal reservations need to be made a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Mealsite Manager is Chris Richer. The Center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. A reservation is necessary and transportation can be provided. Trips: Call the Senior Center 863-9357 or 863-4500
Monday, 14th
9-11 a.m. Foot screening Gill and Montague residents only. Advance registration needed. Fee \$5.00.
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
Tuesday, 15th
9 a.m. Walking Club
Wednesday, 16th
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. All About Hospice; Wednesday July 16, 11:00 A.M., Judy Allen from Franklin County Hospice will be at the Senior Center to explain the hospice program and the work this

program does to help people. She will answer your questions about volunteers and eligibility.
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 17th
1 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 18th
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
Monday 21st
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
Tuesday 22nd
9 a.m. Walking Club
Wednesday 23rd
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday 24th
1 p.m. Pitch
Friday 25th
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
Trips: Call the Senior Center 863-9357 or 863-4500.
ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (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 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be provided



CEIL MORAN PHOTO

The Lawn Chair Brigade

Welcoming new members or donations of lawn chairs for the August 9th Block Party Parade in Turners Falls. 863-2730

ERVING LIBRARY NEWS

World Class Frisbee Show & Playshop

On Tuesday, July 22nd at 6:30 p.m., the Erving Library welcomes two-time World Freestyle Frisbee Champion Todd Brodeur. Brodeur will demonstrate some tricks and games that everyone can try. The evening program will be enjoyable to all ages and is a great introduction to Frisbee for

beginners, and brings back some great memories for seasoned saucer tossers. Coming August 8th, the Boston Museum of Science presents Science Magic - the science behind magic and the magic behind science.

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for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity by calling Dana Moore at 413-422-2584.
Monday, 14th
9:00 a.m. Exercise
9:45 a.m. Library
12 Noon Pitch
Tuesday, 15th
9 a.m. Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting
Wednesday, 16th
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
12 Noon Bingo
Thursday, 17th
9 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Pool
Monday, 21st
9:00 a.m. Exercise
9:45 a.m. Library
12 Noon Pitch
Tuesday, 22nd
9 a.m. Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting
Wednesday, 23rd
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
12 Noon Bingo
Thursday, 24th
9 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Pool
WENDELL Senior Center, located in the town offices on Wendell Depot Rd. Call Kathy Swaim at 978 544-2020 for info, schedule of events or to coordinate transportation.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Breaking and Entering in Erving

Wednesday, 6/25
7:53 p.m. Report of two men in the woods dressed in black with masks and guns in area of Old State Road. Searched area; Nothing found. Believed to be youths playing paintball.
9:45 p.m. Accident car vs. deer in Farley area of Route 2. Vehicle left scene.

Thursday, 6/26
1:27 a.m. Arrested [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.
12:00 p.m. Report of breaking and entering and larceny from a motor vehicle at a Forest Street address.

1:26 p.m. Report of breaking and entering/larceny from a motor vehicle at Central Street.
11:08 p.m. Report of suicidal male, transported same to Franklin Medical Center for evaluation.

Saturday, 6/28
12:48 p.m. Report of alarm at an East Main Street address. Building secure; Owner on scene.
11:01 p.m. Report of alarm at French King Restaurant. Building secure; Owner on scene.

Sunday, 6/29
12:43 p.m. Report of trespassing on train trestle. Advised party to move along.
8:45 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a revoked registration, operating a motor vehicle without insurance and for being a minor transporting alcohol.

Monday, 6/30
4:50 p.m. Assist Montague police with search warrant at French King storage facility.

Tuesday, 7/1
5:25 p.m. Report of wires down on Papermill Road. Assisted Erving fire department.

Wednesday, 7/2
12:10 a.m. Assisted Montague police with motorcycle pursuit on Route 63.
4:00 p.m. Landlord/tenant dispute on Northfield Road. Advised of options.

Thursday, 7/3
9:15 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.
12:00 p.m. Report of breaking and entering and larceny from a motor vehicle at a Forest Street address.
12:20 p.m. Report of senior mail scam.
12:29 p.m. Report of large rock in travel lane on East Main Street. Observed that a motor vehicle had crashed into embankment. Removed several large rocks from roadway.

Friday, 7/4
1:02 a.m. Report of disturbance on Pratt Street. Arrested [redacted] for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. Arrested [redacted] for disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace, resisting arrest and assault and battery on a police officer.

Sunday, 7/6
1:55 a.m. Report of loud noise in the area of Mountain Road; Neighborhood party and screeching tires up and down street.
10:10 p.m. Report of larceny of stop sign at intersection of River and Lester Streets.

Monday, 7/7
8:00 p.m. Assisted Gill police with suicidal female on French King Bridge. Subject transported to hospital.

Jonathan Tanzer Sentenced

TURNERS FALLS - Jonathan Tanzer, 44, formerly of Chestnut Lane, convicted for setting the fire that burned Building #10 at the Strathmore Mill on May 26th, 2007, was sentenced in Greenfield Superior Court on July 1st, to 12 to 15 years in state prison by Judge Daniel Ford. Tanzer received eight to 10 years for arson, two to three for burning personal property and 12 to 15 years for breaking and entering in the nighttime, the sentences to be served concurrently.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Breaking and Entering in Turners

Sunday, 6/22
9:00 a.m. Report of burglary/breaking and entering at an L Street address, Turners Falls. Investigated.

Monday, 6/23
7:39 p.m. Report of unwanted person in the area of G Street, Turners Falls. Arrested [redacted]. Charged with consuming alcohol on a public way.
9:24 p.m. Following a motor vehicle stop, arrested [redacted]. Charged with operating a motor vehicle with a revoked registration, operating an uninsured vehicle, failure to wear seatbelt and possession of marijuana.

Friday, 6/27
12:28 a.m. Report of general disturbance at a West Main Street address, Millers Falls. Arrested [redacted] on a default warrant. Arrested [redacted]. Charged with assault and battery domestic.

Wednesday, 7/2
12:10 a.m. Suspicious auto investigation initiated by officer on duty in the area of Mark's Auto, Federal Street, Montague. Arrested [redacted]. Charged with operating to endanger, operating under the influence of liquor, operating an unregistered motor vehicle, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and operation of an uninsured vehicle.

Thursday, 7/3
1:13 a.m. Report of accident with property damage. Arrested [redacted]. Charged with operating under the influence of liquor, second offense, operating to endanger and marked lanes violation.
4:56 a.m. Report of burglary/breaking and entering at the Fourth Street parking lot, Turners Falls. Referred to an officer for investigation.

Friday, 7/4
1:01 a.m. Following a motor vehicle stop, arrested [redacted]. Charged with speeding, failure to wear seatbelt, operating under the influence of liquor, third offense, and operating to endanger.

Tuesday, 7/8
3:11 a.m. Report of burglary/breaking and entering at a Dell Street address, Turners Falls. Investigated.



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Tue. Aug 19 - Hinesburg
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Thu. Aug 21 - Enosburg Falls
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Assistant Editor Kathleen Litchfield	<i>"The Voice of the Villages"</i>	Technical Administrators Michael Muller Michael Farrick
Editorial Assistants Hugh Corr David Brule	Founded by Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold August, 2002	
Circulation Suzette Snow Cobb Don Clegg		

No More Money Here, Either

On Tuesday, June 17th, Montague Town Meeting approved the following letter to Governor Deval Patrick, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Senator Stan Rosenberg and Representative Steve Kulik:

Enclosed please find the budget summary and assessment calculation for the Gill-Montague Regional District.

On the basis of these numbers, the district had presented this town meeting with an assessment increase of over \$750,000 to fund our local schools. This request is for a budget that has been described as nearly "level services." Unfortunately, our local revenues available for all town services and assessments generally increase by between \$400,000 and \$500,000. This year is not exception.

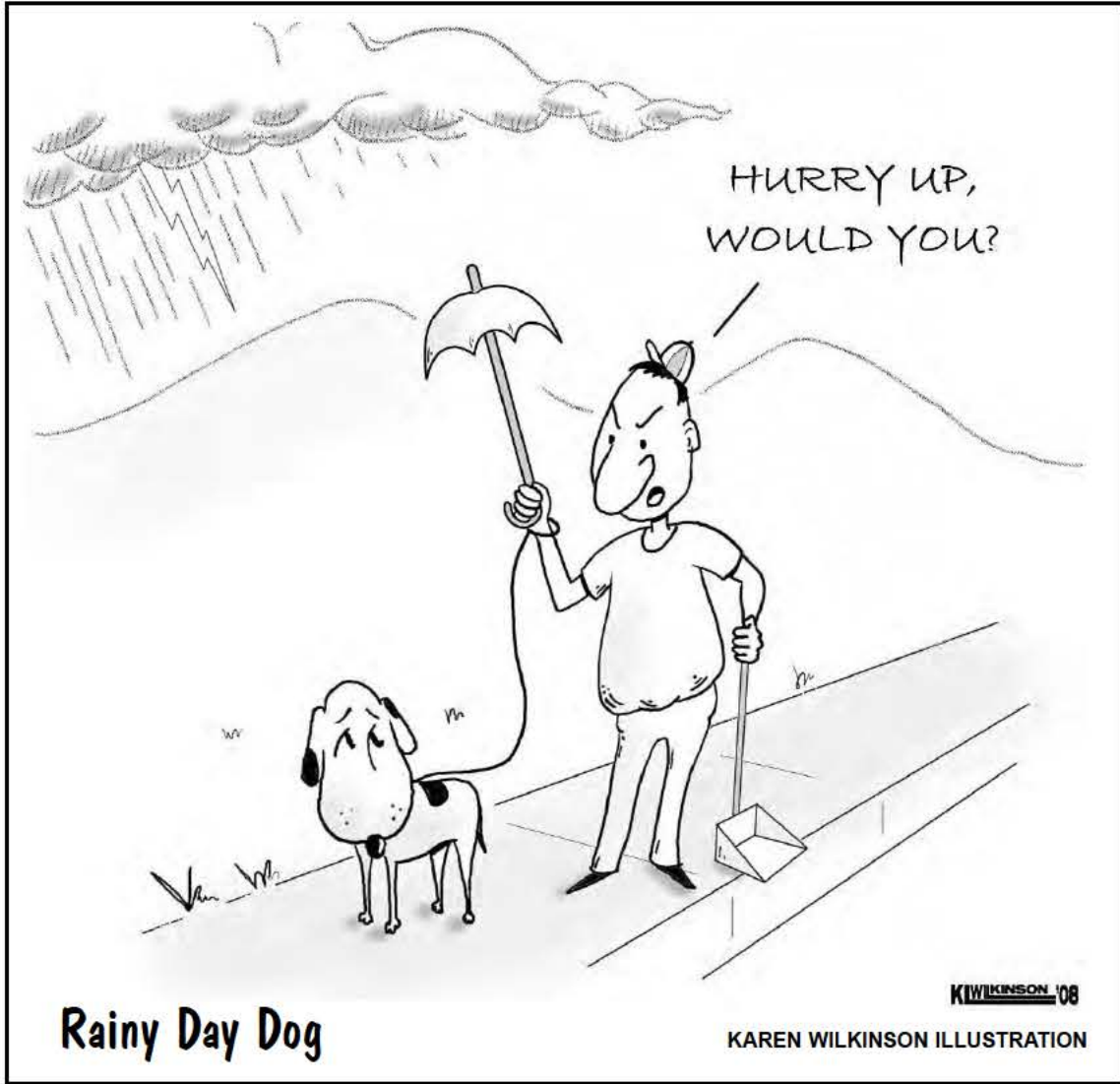
The assessment calculation shows that a central reason for

the unsupportable GMRSD request is that state aid to the district has been virtually level funded. This has been essentially the case for the past seven years. The state has recently completed two reports about the district, which has been declared "under-performing" partially for financial reasons. Neither of those reports presents any evidence that the school district can survive with level-funded state aid, which accounts for approximately 40% of its revenues.

We have heard state officials tell us "there is no more [state] money" for our schools. We appreciate the fiscal constraints at the state level. We wish to report "there is no more money" on our end either!

Wouldn't a collaborative effort to solve this problem be fairer than just dumping it in our local laps?

- Sincerely,
Montague Town Meeting



Rainy Day Dog

KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

GUEST EDITORIALS

Elks Flag Day Ceremony

BY JOE ST. PETER

TURNERS FALLS - The Montague Elks held their annual Flag Day ceremony on Wednesday, June 18th. The ceremony began with the presentation of the colors by the Marine Color Guard Oak Ridge Detachment, followed by the ritual of Flag Day, presented by the officers of the Montague Elks.

Following the ritual was the history of the flag, as members from Boy Scout troops 6 and 14 paraded the different flags while their role in history was read aloud.

The evening's guest speaker was Paul Wasielewski, retired USMC, Army National Guard.

The assembly then moved outside for the retirement of the lodge's flag and the raising of the new flag and new P.O.W.

flag, donated by Leo Parent, veterans agent for the Central Franklin District. Other old and tattered flags that had been collected were then properly retired by the service personnel present. The evening then ended with hamburgers and hot dogs.

The Montague Elks Lodge #2521 thanks all of those present and everyone who thought it proper to give respect to our flag and what it represents.

Plasma Power

BY DAVID BULLEY

MONTAGUE CITY - As yet another budget shortfall looms over Montague, and we prepare to revisit the question of developing a landfill in our town as a means to add revenue, and along with the rest of the nation deal with questions of jobs and security, global warming and greenhouse gasses, there is on the horizon a potential solution if only we have the courage to be a leader.

A company in Atlanta, Geoplasma, is building a plant in St. Lucie county Florida, which will turn trash into electricity. They do it by means of a plasma arc vaporizer. It sounds like science fiction, but the science is solid and results are beyond argument. Two such plants exist in Japan turning trash into electric power at an astonishing rate. The only byproduct is an obsidian-like aggregate that can be sold and used for concrete and road construction. In St. Lucie, the plant will vaporize 2000 tons of fresh municipal solid waste per day, and use another 1000 tons 'mined' from a local landfill, which they project will be totally reclaimed in 18 years!

Plasma was developed by NASA in order to test the heat shields on incoming shuttles. They use super high pressure air over an electric arc in order to produce heat in excess of 10,000 degrees, hotter than the sun. This heat does not incinerate trash. It actually vaporizes it into gas, which is then cooled and sent to a steam generator, much like any natural gas electric generator. Cooling the gas produces enough steam by itself to turn the turbines needed for the plant, so it is entirely self-sustaining. The electricity produced by the gas is over and above what the plant needs to operate, so it can all be sold. The plant in St. Lucie will produce enough electricity to power over 37,000 homes.

The process of vaporization is so complete that even potentially environmentally harmful substances are turned into power and stone. The system is also a closed loop so there are no emissions from the vaporizer itself. There are emissions from the power plant, but they are as clean a power as burning natural gas, which we already do in this country in significant quantities. The methane produced from landfills, on the other hand, goes straight to the stratosphere, and contributes to global warming.

Montague probably could not sustain a plant as large as the St. Lucie project. But what we could do easily, instead of being yet another town paying to take care of its waste, is contract with other towns to take their waste and turn it into saleable power. Montague would profit from that arrangement, instead of some other town. A plant such as this would provide high paying jobs, clean power and a permanent solution to waste management, not just for ourselves but for surrounding towns as well.

I urge townspeople to investigate Geoplasma, and plasma technology, and step into the forefront of the self sustaining environmentally friendly future.

We Welcome Your Letters!
Montague Reporter
58 4th St Turners Falls, MA 01376
FAX (413) 863-3050
reporter@montaguema.net

Old Home Days Auction Sept. 13th

The Montague Old Home Days Committee has announced that the popular auction will be held Sept. 13th at 10 a.m. Auction items are now being accepted. Please - no refrigerators, stoves, washers, dryers, TV's. For info call (413) 265-3013 or 367-2061.

Note to Readers: Summer Schedule

The Montague Reporter is printing on our summer schedule every other week.

The Montague Reporter will print on July 24th, August 7th and August 21st.

Regular weekly publication will resume September 4th.

Have a good summer!

American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 7/9/08



(Casualty sign temporarily located next to Wagon Wheel Restaurant on Rte. 2 in Gill)

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The Montague Reporter

58 4th Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376

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Public Notice:

Vegetation next to the Turners Falls Bikeway will be mowed on July 22nd and 23rd from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Weather permitting, FirstLight Hydro Generating Company will mow its property between the 11th Street Bridge and Depot Street on these dates.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Nuisance Cats Back on the Board's Agenda

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Debra Reynolds, of Highland Avenue, returned for a third time to speak with the selectboard on June 30th about the problem of nuisance cats from the neighborhood disturbing her peaceful enjoyment of her home and defacing her property. The board, after consulting with town attorney Donna MacNicol, has decided to seek volunteers to serve on a nuisance animal committee, to see whether the town's newly adopted dog bylaw can be adapted to cover other nuisance pets, like cats that spray neighbors' property. If a clause dealing with other pets were added to the dog bylaw, it would give the police department, or other town departments the ability to impose fines on owners of nuisance cats, according to town administrative coordinator Tom Sharp.

With Linda Downs-Bembury away, and Andrew Goodwin suffering from severe laryngitis, board chair Andy Tessier handled most of the discussion.

Goodwin finally asked Tessier, in a hoarse whisper, whether he could call for a show of hands on votes, rather than asking all in favor to say, "Aye."

The board signed a contract with the Franklin Country Solid Waste Management District for sludge removal from the wastewater treatment plant in Ervingside. Sharp said the contract is expected to cost at least \$2900 in the present fiscal year, with a fuel surcharge added on top of that. The fuel surcharge is currently running at about 30%.

The board signed a business license for a young gardener, Daniel Boyden, of 151 Northfield Road, who will be operating a roadside stand under the name of Dan's Veggies. Daniel is the teenaged son of town assistant assessor Jacquie Boyden.

The board approved a \$15,000 contract with the Franklin Regional Transportation Authority contract to provide senior van serv-

ice for the town's Council on Aging for fiscal '09. The board also agreed to provide life and casualty insurance for police and firefighters who risk injury in the line of duty, with Nationwide Insurance, for an annual premium of \$8942.

The board signed a contract for 6500 gallons of diesel fuel to be delivered by the F.L. Roberts Company. That would cover the expected annual usage for the fire and highway departments, at a contracted price of 30.4 cents above the Boston daily index price.

A prebid meeting was held on July 2nd at the Ervingside wastewater treatment plant, in preparation for the upcoming \$6.4 million renovation project there, to give contractors a chance to review the specifications and tour the facility. The meeting was well-attended, given the favorable construction climate, with bidders from as far away as Connecticut showing up. Subcontractors' bids will be

opened on Friday, July 18th; bids for the general contractor will be opened on Monday, July 28th. Construction should get underway by the end of August.

The board also signed a \$91,000 contract with the engineering firm Tighe and Bond to design an upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant in Farley, a sand filtration system which is failing. The plan is to redistribute the effluent flow to different parts of the system.

The board approved the low bid for \$9,788 from Aztec Office Equipment for a contract on a new copy machine for town hall, which will have the ability to scan documents and send faxes.

Finally, the board received a nice letter from attorney Carole Melis, from Townshend, VT, who travels Route 2 a lot, saying how impressed she was with the decorative streetlights and Welcome to Erving signs along that road. "It's good to have someone say it doesn't look like a runway," Sharp said.

Christmas in July

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For general info contact Lisa - riverculture@montaguema.net, 413-230-9910
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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Wendell to Consider Spending \$89,000 More for Mahar

BY JOSH HEINEMANN - In order to deal with the Mahar Regional High School budget, the Wendell selectboard decided to hold a special town meeting on the week of July 21st, with the actual date to be determined in consultation with moderator Kathy Becker. At their annual town meeting, New Salem approved a 2½% decrease from the budget requested by the Mahar regional school committee, and asked that Wendell follow up that action with an appropriation to support the same level of funding for the Mahar budget. If Wendell decides to do that, it would mean an increase in the amount Wendell appropriates from the \$266,626 authorized at annual town meeting on June 3rd to \$355,708. Town meeting had set the lower figure because that is the amount Wendell would pay under the alternative assessment

for Mahar, which if adopted by all four member towns in the district would allow for each to pay an equal per pupil share of district costs, instead of weighting the assessments in favor of Orange, the largest district town, which has the lion's share of the votes on the school committee.

If Wendell approves the same 2½ percent budget reduction as New Salem and Petersham, it would force Orange to appropriate a figure above the 4% reduction approved at its annual town meeting.

School committee member Dick Baldwin has proposed a process for discussing the assessment method early rather than later in the budget process, in September and October, when the Mahar school committee prepares the budget for the 2009-2010 school year.

Also on the warrant for the

special town meeting would be an article requesting \$6,000 for upgrading the town website to make it easier to use and more interactive.

Chris Morano and Maria Buscaglia opened the selectboard meeting of June 25th, speaking for Court Dorsey. They reserved the town hall for July 26th and 27th from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for a Qi Gong workshop.

Clara Sarr also sought to reserve the town hall on the Tuesday evenings in July to hold an African dance class for children. She and her husband Abdu Sarr plan to hold the classes on the common, although this tends to make for distractions for both drummers and children, but they would like to have the town hall available both for the bathrooms and the possibility of rain. Sarr was hoping to avoid the rental fee, unless the class was forced to move indoors, because they charge a sliding scale, and do not anticipate having so many students as to make the classes profitable if they have to rent the hall each night.

Selectboard chair Ted Lewis insisted that if they charge money for the classes, the board cannot make an exception and let them use the hall for free. Sarr asked if there could be leniency for 'just in case' use. Selectboard member Christine Heard suggested that if a town board supported the program the fee might be waived. She added that if Sarr were to rely on donations rather than a fee for the classes, the town hall rental might be

waived. The selectboard and Sarr agreed to proceed on a week by week basis and keep communication open.

Damning with faint praise, town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said, "The best thing the state has done," was to pass legislation that allows towns to move money from one account to another in the last two months of a fiscal year. The selectboard moved \$3,770 from the town custodian payroll account to the town hall roof account, to pay for plywood not in the original estimate for the town hall roof replacement. When the roof shingles were removed, the original roof sheathing was found to be rotten. The custodian payroll account has extra funds, because the amount of work needed to maintain the new town buildings was less than originally estimated.

No one has volunteered to be the town's representative to the Franklin Regional Transit Authority, making the selectboard chair the representative ex officio.

Marianne Sundell, chair of the open space committee has asked for authorization to buy a picnic table to go outside near the town office building. Heard said highway superintendent Dan Bacigalupo has one available in good condition.

The open space committee has tried to get some Smart Growth money for updating the town's open space plan, but none of that money is available.

Asking for comments by

selectboard members, the planning board forwarded a request for a guest cabin permit on Montague Road. The bylaw allows fewer than four people to stay in a guest cabin for fewer than 30 days, but Lewis questioned whether that means fewer than 30 days a year, or if the people occupying the guest cabin may stay 30 days, vacate for a day or two, and then return for another day. He also questioned who would monitor the occupancy. Selectboard member Dan Keller said those comments were about the law, not the application. Aldrich gave copies of the application to the board members for their review.

The community garden committee was authorized to spend up to \$300 from the town building account on tools that will be shared with the building landscape committee. Aldrich said that as of the end of May, the building account had \$24,000 remaining.

Keller asked Aldrich to draft a thank you letter to the person from Whitney Trucking who, on his own time and refusing to get paid, came with a metal detector and located the shutoff valves for the water to all of the town buildings. He suggested that those locations be marked with dimensions on the architectural plans, and that full size copies be made of the drawings using the construction account money, so the town would have more than one copy on hand. The selectboard voted unanimously to spend that money.

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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill, Bernardston Consider Sharing a Chief

BY ALEX GOTTSCHALK

GILL - On July 7th, the Bernardston selectboard, Virginia Budness, Stanley Garland and Robert Raymond, met with the Gill selectboard to discuss the possibility of Gill police chief David Hastings working in the same capacity for Bernardston. "What we're thinking is that he would be chief of both departments; it's all a matter of scheduling," said Gill selectboard member Ann Banash.

Banash praised Chief Hastings in response to questions from Raymond, Budness and Garland. "How you interact with the public is very important in our town," said Budness.

"We know what kind of a job he does and how he does it. He's open to talking about anything, and he knows Bernardston," stated Banash. "He does everything," she continued, stressing the word. Hastings has been Gill's chief of police for the last thirteen years.

Bernardston's police chief Jason Bunk submitted his resignation last month, for personal reasons, and Sergeant James Palmieri has been working as acting chief in that town for the last two weeks. Both towns have two fulltime officers besides the chief, four cruisers, and share a number of the same part time officers, according to Banash. Hastings, who has served as acting chief in Bernardston on two previous occasions, formerly resided in that town, before moving back to Gill two months ago.

The idea of Gill and Bernardston sharing a chief of police came up in June of 2003, when Bernardston was also between chiefs. At that time, the Gill selectboard said a shared police chief might end up saving both towns approximately

\$20,000 a year, and Banash said that was still a good working number.

In 2003, Hastings said of the proposed shared position, "If anyone can do it, I can." At the time, he said the shared responsibility could work, "As long as everyone can get along and do their jobs." And he said the shared chief position might result in better coverage for both towns, as officers could be deployed to meet the needs of either community at times of high call volume.

If both selectboards agree, Hastings would assume the shared position for a trial year, but would answer to the Gill selectboard as the lead town, since he is under contract to Gill. Perhaps a joint oversight board, comprised of members of both selectboards, would also be formed to monitor the progress of the shared position.

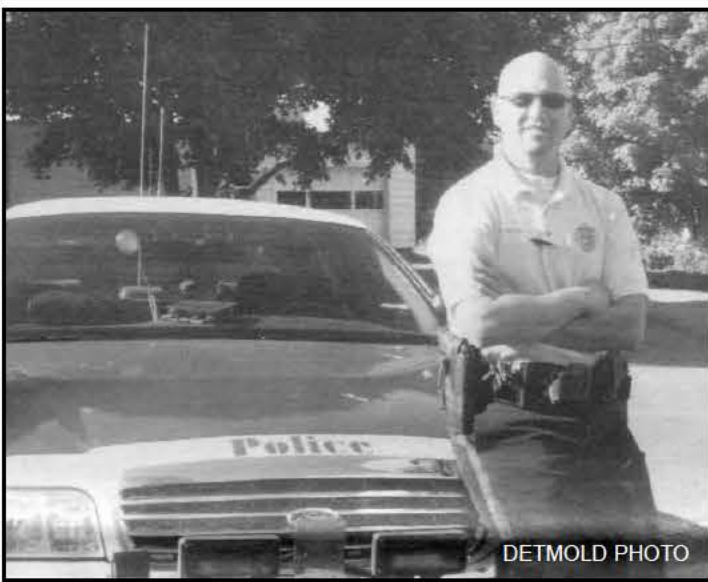
Combining the police chiefs' positions was part of a larger discussion the two boards had about regionalization within the county, "So that we don't have multiple people doing the same thing," said Garland.

Stressing the positive aspects of the plan, Gill selectboard chair Nancy Griswold said, "It would be innovative. It would be the first of its kind out here, and that might make some people sit up and take notice of the deficits out here."

Nothing firm was decided, but Garland said, "I think we have enough information to go back and talk about this."

"Talk about it and get back to us," said Banash.

In other news, the Gill



Gill police chief David Hastings may also become the police chief of Bernardston, in a shared position being discussed by both towns.

cemetery commissioners, Pat Haigis, Connie Stevens, and Bev Demars, inadvertently showed up wearing matching yellow outfits to present a report on their activities to the board. They dubbed themselves "The Yellow Jackets."

The selectboard has decided to schedule appointments to check in with all town boards and commissions, to keep apprised of their work, and the cemetery commission was first in line. The cemetery commissioners told the board they have completed surveys of all the three town cemeteries, employing Roberge Associates of Greenfield to come up with usable maps and plot plans for the gravesites. These records are now stored on computer files,

and are available for genealogists at the town clerk's office, or by appointment at the Riverside Historical Museum (call 863-4792). In addition to the privately owned Riverside Cemetery (across from the Mariamante property on

Main Road, distinguished by the prominent arrowhead marker on the grave of an Indian artifact collector named Smith who is buried there), the town has three cemeteries: the Center Cemetery, behind the library, the North Cemetery, on Main Road heading toward Northfield Mount Hermon, and the West Gill Cemetery, on Hoe Shop

Road next to the Oak Ridge Golf Course, where for the purchase of a burial plot you are likely to get free golf balls for all eternity.

The commissioners reported the receipt of a \$1,000 donation from Virginia Warner, of Lexington, whose ancestors, the Munns and the Stacys, are buried in North Cemetery. According to Demars, Warner's husband is buried in that cemetery, and she comes each Memorial Day to put a flag on his grave. The money was put into a special donation account the board designated for the cemetery commission.

The commissioners plan to spend the \$20,000 town meeting allocated for erosion control at Center Cemetery, where Unadilla Brook is threatening the integrity of several graves, in November, when the work to shore up the stream bank is less likely to interfere with the habitat of several species of concern along the brook, including the Midland Clubtail Dragonfly, the Long Nosed Sucker, and, of course, the Wood Turtle.

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FARMS from pg 1

At the end of June, the NMH farm's fields were awash in gentle lavender. Thirty five hundred plants, a mixture of English and Grosso varieties, cover an acre of sloping hillside overlooking the Northfield Mountain range. The English lavender, planted on three quarters of the plot, was ready to harvest, and students working with farm manager Richard Odman would begin that process, working by hand with scythes, two days after the tour. The Grosso variety would be ready in early July, and though only a quarter of the plot is planted in Grosso, Odman said it would produce more lavender oil than all the rest.

With the students' help, Odman would distill the lavender oil in the ciderhouse, using water and steam to volatize the oil, then put it through a condenser to produce up to three gallons of oil from the crop. The oil will be used to make soap, massage oil and body scrub, or just sold as is. Lavender oil is reputed to have a calming effect on the nervous system, and may be good for students preparing for final exams.

Founded in 1879 by

work requirement has been reduced from ten hours a week to four. Odman relies on student helpers throughout the year, even in the summer months, when students can earn a full semester's work credit in one week.

Harriet Booth, a student from Gill, had just completed her next semester's work requirement, helping Odman make cheeses the week prior to the tour.

Besides dairy products and lavender, the NMH farm produces maple syrup, cider, raspberries, asparagus, flowers, and a number of other products, while helping to provide students from around the world who attend the school a hands on agricultural education, in addition to their academics.

Just down the road, dozens of local residents were getting a hands on education in the joys of berry picking at Cliff and Sorrel Hatch's strawberry patch at Uppingil Farm.

"It's been a terrific season," said Cliff Hatch, as he weighed another flat of berries on a scale on the back of his vintage farm vehicle. "The rain didn't come till the afternoon, so we were able to get people out in the fields every day. The U-pick did well.

strawberry pickers were out in force.

"This is my first time here," said Christine Bartus, of Turners Falls. "I've heard about it, growing up in Turners like I did. But this is the first time I've been up here." Bartus said she planned to freeze some of the berries she picked, and use the rest for smoothies and strawberry shortcake.

Armand and Deborah Prevost, on the other hand, were regulars at the U-pick fields. "We've been here three weekends in a row," they said. They said this year's picking was "Real choice!"

Hatch said favorable conditions had allowed the U-pick fields to stay open for three weekends this year. "In fact, we could have opened sooner, in time for the alumni weekend at NMH, if we'd known. The berries were ready before we were."

Now, with the daisy fleabane poking up in two-foot spires between the strawberry plants, the picking season was heating up and winding down.

"We get about seven and a half tons of berries per acre," said Hatch, who has about three acres planted in berries. For those concerned about pesticides on strawberries, a problem at many commercial farms, Uppingil maintains a separate field of certified organic berries, while the rest of the crop is "extremely low spray," Hatch said.

His daughter, Sorrel, who co-manages the farm, said it is a cumbersome process to get organic certification, and they don't bother to apply for the smaller vegetable fields. But none of the vegetables you'll find at the Uppingil farmstand at 411 Main Road have been sprayed with pesticides; they are, for practical purposes, organic. In their season there will be sweet corn, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, and potatoes. Coming soon: Uppingil's locally famous cantaloupes and summer raspberries, perfect companions in a midsummer fruit salad.



Liz Bocon and Kathleen Raczynski by their butterfly garden on West Gill Road

The farmstand will also feature organic tomatoes from Coyote Hill Farm in Bernardston. Uppingil offers fresh milk and cheeses from their Ayrshire cattle, year round.

One of the beauties of the tour was in bringing visitors not only to some of the larger Main Road locales but also to some charming out of the way places, such as Liz Bocon and Kathleen Raczynski's butterfly garden. Tucked away on the corner of Atherton and West Gill Road, their cheerful perennial beds bordering a quiet pond are an example of the pride many villagers take in backyard gardening, with showy day lilies and hydrangeas taking turns with fading pink weigela, and the promise of blue spirea yet to come. A mock orange shrub, with its citrus scented white blooms, holds a central place in one bed, in memory of a departed friend.

By the back door, more beds are tended with butterflies in mind: beard's tongue, the brilliant flame of Maltese cross, and the more demure delphinium, standing among the snapdragons, sweet Williams and salvia. The gardeners say the designation from the North American Butterfly Association is no empty honorific; their garden is a frequent way station for monarchs and swallowtails, and while we watched a viceroy appeared briefly in the wings. Hummingbirds are also numbered among the garden's guests.

You never know when visitors

will drop by the garden, even on an official tour day, so it is best to be prepared with a plate of pesto by the pond, as Bocon and Raczynski were. Their lunch was interrupted only briefly, and with more ado, by a snake sliding through the grass seeking luncheon of its own. Bocon insisted it was a corn snake, and consulted a field guide to prove it, but subsequent investigation limited that serpent's likely range to the northern reaches of New Jersey, and may have favored Raczynski's supposition that it was indeed a milk snake, traveling incognito.

Just down the road, John Barry can be found wandering through his arboretum, in a former Christmas tree farm turned into an arborist's dream, where Barry tends an ever expanding array of ornamental shrubs, unusual trees, and even a small stand of hybrid American chestnuts which have born fruit for the last five years.

You may think he's nuts, but Barry seems perfectly content to cultivate his tree farm free from any care of commercialism or profit margins.

The remainders of his Christmas tree farm still stand about his sloping hillside acreage, where white spruce, blue spruce, Fraser fir, and Norway spruce mingle with Douglas fir, balsam fir, and many varieties of pine: red, white, Virginia, Dutch, and Austrian. But Barry doesn't sell Christmas trees anymore; he gives them away.

"I gave about 50 to Montague Catholic Social Ministries last year, to give to people downtown (in Turners) who can't afford them," said Barry. "I'm weeding them out and replacing them with shrubs and small trees." Like the dappled willow, a native to the Orient with "unbelievable foliage."

Barry has a fondness for lilacs. He has 55 of these heavenly scented beauties planted in his arboretum, although their blooms had all gone by on the day of the tour. Except for the unusual Ivory Silk tree lilac, which grows to a

see FARMS pg 9



Richard Odman, in the lavender fields at NMH

evangelist Dwight Moody, the Northfield Seminary for Ladies and the Mount Hermon School for boys combined in 1970 to form NMH, which consolidated on the Gill campus in 2005. True to its origins as a private school for students who lacked economic opportunity, NMH continues to require manual labor from all students, though the

There was no road construction this year."

Last year, a full depth reconstruction of three miles of Main Road had berry pickers baffled as to the best route to reach Uppingil. Those who did find their way needed four wheel drive to access the Uppingil parking lot. But the road paving is done, thankfully, and the

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FARMS from 8

height of 25 feet and bears delicate white blooms from late June through July.

Among his other favorites is a dawn redwood, an unusual conifer that resembles the sequoia but is actually the only living species in the ancient redwood genus *Metasequoia*. It was known only through the fossil record, up until World War II when Chinese botanists discovered a stand growing in a monastery in Sichuan, China. From these, seeds were taken for cultivation, and now the tree is a popular ornamental variety world wide. It is unusual in another respect: although it is an evergreen, it drops its leaves in the fall.

Dawn redwood can grow very tall, 100 feet or more, very quickly. Though Barry's is planted on a hillside, dawn redwoods also have the capacity to grow in standing water, like a bald cypress tree. Barry has a bald cypress in his arboretum, for good measure.

Ginkgo, another ancient tree, had also been headed for extinction, but was tended in monastery gardens by Chinese monks, who revered it for its healing properties. Ginkgos are thought to be the oldest living tree species on Earth, 200 million years old. They thrive now in adverse conditions on city streets, and are even said to have survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Barry has planted ginkgos on his tree farm in Gill, where conditions are considerably more favorable.

He also cultivates, though does not spray, several varieties of apple, including red and golden delicious. They provide mottled fruit for "myself and the deer," Barry said. He has 35 viburnums, not to be confused with laburnums, which he also cultivates, with their brilliant chains of yellow foliage.

He has a specimen of the American cranberry bush (10 - 12 feet high), and a number of other varieties that seem likely to attract butterflies flying south from the gardens at the corner of Atherton Road. But none of his recent purchases are calculated to attract buyers: Barry's arboretum is open to Master Gardeners and other interested members of the public to walk through, but none of his trees or shrubs are for sale. He's done with all that. Barry's arboriculture is a pastime for his own enjoyment, the beautification of the land, the delight of birds and bees, but decidedly not for profit.

What does his wife think of all this? "She gave up on me a long time ago," said Barry ruefully. "It keeps 'em off the street."

A little further down the road, the tour stopped at Turkey Ridge Farm, where no turkeys were in view, but plenty of sheep and chickens to make up for them.

Here, Bill and Betsy Burnham have a real working family farm, right down to the treadle spinning wheel from Australia with which Betsy spins the wool they get - about three pounds from the Shetlands and seven pounds from the Romneys - after Kevin Ford, from Charlemont, comes by with his hand

clippers to shear the sheep. Betsy, who is taking advantage of the steamy weather to weave a blanket, uses no dyes in her wool, preferring the natural hues of grey, brown and black, the colors the sheep sport in their coats.

A visit to the Burnhams gives you two for the price of one: a working farm and a lovely garden. Pansies and primroses adorn the front beds, with flox coming soon. Daisies, coreopsis, towering hollyhocks, and, of course, blanket flowers keep Betsy company while she spins on the front porch. These blanket flowers don't appear to agree with her sentiments on dyes; they have all the hues of a Navajo blanket - red centers blending to



John Barry beneath his hybrid Chestnut

has charmed many a yearly crop of first graders at Hillcrest School.

The Burnhams keep seven or eight linden trees, favorites of the honeybees that cluster in three hives in their back yard. On the side of the hill, a sugar shack waits for next February, stacks of slab wood piled by the door, the stainless steel evaporator dreaming of sweet sap from winters past.

The Burnhams have been making syrup for the past ten years, sometimes with their son's help, sometimes by themselves, using sap from their own sugar maples, and sap from neighbors' trees, for which they barter syrup in return.

It's share and share alike in Gill, and that goes double for the woodchucks. They have leveled a crop of peas already this year, and have made vast inroads on the cucumbers. Bill tries a variety of methods - fencing, greenhouses, and Havahart traps - to discourage the critters, but after a lean winter they are insatiable. Hell, they're insatiable no matter what the weather.

Of all the stratagems the Burnhams have employed, the one that seems most likely to succeed in this battle of wills is their plan to plant more and more gardens. Some of them wind up as decoys, ravaged by the invader, while the others seem well on their way to bearing fruit. Still more are in the planning stages, just in case, as the Burnhams do hate to mow and there is still at least an acre of lawn left to plow and plant in vegetables.

Half the corn is still standing. The peppers and tomatoes in one

greenhouse seem to be thriving. The garlic and onions are doing well. Although the woodchucks may have ideas of their own, Bill plans to open his roadside road farm stand shortly: look for "Bill's Wagon" at 95 West Gill Road.

Meanwhile, on another hillside, the Burnham's chicken coop is bustling. As if he doesn't have enough on his hands, Bill maintains a Saturday egg run, with six customers in the neighborhood, and no time for any more.

Speaking of egg runs, you'd likely need just one to the customer if the eggs came from the Songline Emu Farm. After all, one emu egg is the equivalent of eight to twelve chicken eggs, and one's enough to make an omelet for six.

Emu eggs are available seasonally from Songline Emu Farm, generally December through May. Owners Dee Dee Mares, Geri and Stan Johnson recommend on their website to approach the egg with proper respect.

"The best way to 'attack' your egg is with a power drill. If you drill a small hole on one end so that you can fit a straw up into the egg, you can blow the insides out with a can of compressed air (normally used for cleaning electronics), or you can drill two holes - one in either end - and shake the insides out into a bowl."

Emu eggs are lower in saturated fats than chicken eggs, and the taste is very similar. Once the insides are emptied out, you'll have an almost intact green eggshell as a souvenir.

But the main products offered for sale at Songline Farm are therapeutic emu oil, said to have anti-inflammatory properties when used to reduce swelling and pain of arthritis, bursitis, and tendonitis, and 97% fat free emu meat, which contains beneficial Omega 3 fatty acids. Try an emu burger at the Wagon Wheel, and then stop by Songline and pick up some emu breakfast sausage, prime fillet, or ground emu patties for yourself.

Songline Emu Farm is another

example of the diversity of farms and gardens on the Gill tour. Where else in these parts can you find 18 brooding pairs of prehistoric flightless birds like the ones that have been roaming the Australian outback for the last 80 million years?

Emus are ratites, like ostriches cassowaries, and kiwis. They are fast runners, with vestigial wings and compact bodies balanced atop powerful, three-toed hind legs. They grow to more than six feet high!

If you missed the farm and garden tour, don't fret. Tours of Songline Emu Farm can be taken any Thursday, Friday or Saturday from noon to 5 p.m., through October, and it is well worth the trip. These are the strangest birds to roam Riversides since the Paleozoic, we guarantee you. The females make a distinctive booming or drumming noise by vibrating air through a sac in their chests. Reversing common avian stereotypes, male emus sit on the nest, for up to 50 days, once the female has laid at least five eggs. During his brooding period, the male will cease to eat or drink, surviving on body fat, and losing up to 20% of his weight.

On June 28th, Mares was excited to show one brooding male who had just completed this ordeal: this was the first time baby chicks had been hatched at Songline outside of the incubator. Indeed, we witnessed the first steps these week-old babies had taken outside their nest, one of the highlights of the tour.

We weren't able to visit the seventh tour stop, Laughing Dog Farm, which was only open in the afternoon, but for interested readers, we recommend their colorful and informative website at www.laughingdogfarm.com.

Though these were the seven stops on the official tour, they by no means exhaust the beauty or the bounty of Gill. Take a bike ride there at your next opportunity, or travel however you like to appreciate the many lovely gardens that dot the way, and the great farms that still bear testimony to this town's proud agricultural past, present, and future.



Bill and Betsy Burnham, with a little corn the woodchuck left them.



DETMOLD PHOTOS

First steps outside the nest at Songline Emu Farm



VILLAGE SKETCHBOOK

You're a Good Man, John Roach!

BY DAVID BRULE

TURNERS FALLS - If you were a churchgoer at St. Mary's in the 1960s, you would have been part of Father John Roach's flock. He came to Turners Falls and St. Mary's fresh from the seminary, intense and full of fervor, just as he was last Sunday when he retired from St. Joseph's in Shelburne Falls.

The young curate appeared on our horizon early in his vocation and before long began making his mark on our parish. One of his early projects was to convince and recruit a good number of our Hill Gang of unruly and free-roaming eleven-year-olds to become altar boys. Many of us, myself included, took a lot of convincing, but like any adolescent, once the bandwagon started rolling somehow I wanted to be on it too. Besides, as all of us familiar with Father Roach realize, he drives a hard bargain, and is especially hard to resist. He employed all sorts of psychology, calling upon the sacred and the divine, as well our primitive sense of societal and parochial duty. So the trajectory of our lives and his converged and we all became altar boys, for life it seems.

Our training was as intense as our curate's passion for his new church. There was a lot to learn. Timing in serving the Mass was everything, to get all the genuflecting, bowing, incense burning, bell ringing and Latin, for which we Roman Catholics were known, just right.

Training a bunch of foolish boys such as we were took time and patience on the part of our mentor. As we practiced and practiced, I can still picture our pastor, Father Paul O'Day, rolling his eyes heavenward, not only at our growing incompetence but also, I'm sure, at the intensity applied by his young curate in taming and training us.

Father O'Day had long before established his role in our congregation. An elderly priest,

although he was only getting into his 60s (which doesn't seem that old now), he had an athlete's physique. The word was out that he had been a boxer in a former life before the priesthood, which gave him tremendous stature in our eyes. We kept on his good side, for sure. He had a sly smile and a c r i n k l e d laugh lines in the corner of his eyes, and spoke out of the side of his mouth like any streetwise kid brought up in a tough neighborhood. He could have played any of Cagney's roles, or been a Boston Irish politician if he had wanted. He loved his big black car and his vacations in Florida. We heard that he loved to play the horses, among other things, and we imagined he had all kinds of fun down there when he had his yearly holiday from running the parish.

So the day came when two of us served our first Mass. Was it Francis Dobosz or Jimmy Higgins and me, I'm not sure. Francis and I were great friends with a tendency for foolishness, so Father probably put Jimmy and me on for our first go at it. Big mistake, as you shall see.

We had been assigned the 7 a.m. Mass for the first three days of the week. So, down the Hill we walked in the early light of an October morning. You may recall walking? We all walked everywhere; if we wanted to go somewhere, we walked. From home to the skating rink, from home to the Robustelli pizza parlor in Riverside, to school and back. Soccer moms hadn't been invented yet, and the one car you had got your father to work, so you walked.

So Jimmy and I arrived in the sacristy at 6:30 a.m., where we

had to begin laying out the vestments just so, coiling carefully the rope-like belt just as Father Roach had drilled us to do. Father arrived, checked out



PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM HIGGINS
Altar Boy Reunion, TFHS Class of '64. l-r: Bill Maynard, David Brule, Fr. Roach, Jim Higgins, Francis Dobosz.

our preparations with the hawk-eyed scrutiny that is his trademark. Father O'Day came by too, probably to reassure us, and I'm sure rolling his eyes when he turned away.

So far so good. As soon as we stepped into the sanctuary and faced the altar, things went downhill. I hesitate to say all hell broke loose, given the circumstance, but it seemed to us something akin. Luckily, there were only a few devotees of the 7 a.m. Mass in attendance.

Succumbing to stage fright and butterflies, Jimmy and I were off to the races, serving a sort of Mass that was different from the one Father Roach was doing. Kneeling on either side of the priest, we began our Latin, "*Ad Deum Qui Laetificat, juventutem meam.*" As in mayhem. Our heads were bobbing towards Father as we knelt, but at different times, and we were bowing and genuflecting totally out of sync, first Jimmy, then me, instead of as a well rehearsed pair. We flew through our memorized Latin as though we were running the hurdles, eager to get to the end and move on to the next obstacle ahead.

I was the one who was supposed to go to the side of the altar and strike the chimes, both solemnly, musically, and at the right moment during the service.

Having no musical ability, and with the little bit I remembered from the hours of practice, I was hitting the chimes a bit too hard with the mallet and coming up with something resembling "The Three Blind Mice." Jimmy got one of those early adolescent giggling fits, the kind where if you're not careful something could shoot out of your nose.

At that moment our good Father Roach shot a glance at us that could have turned us both into pillars of salt. We were pretty sure priests could do that if the situation called for it.

Somehow it all got a little better after the point in the Mass where we all took a break and sat on the side of the altar in the special chairs, one of us on each side of Father. It gave us all a chance to collect ourselves: Father Roach got back to thinking about the business of the transubstantiation, while Jimmy and I reflected on our next altar boy moves. We needed to redeem ourselves in the eyes of Father Roach, who we feared would surely get an earful from Father O'Day after our awful performance. But by the grace of God, we got through the rest of the service without too many more mistakes, and soon we were out the door and up to school, feeling a little bit holier and more mature than when we had started out that morning.

We were given tardy excuses because we were serving Mass, and besides, our 7th grade teacher, Rita Kersavage, was good friends with the Church. It helps to have contacts.

We got through the rest of the week, and the timing of our moves and our Latin got better and better. By the time our careers as altar boys ended, years later when we got to be seniors at TFHS, Father Roach had helped us master all sorts of ceremonies from weddings and funerals, High Mass, First Communions and Confirmations, Holy Thursdays, Good Fridays, Easter Sundays, and everything in between.

Father had become a part of our lives by then. In those days in Turners Falls, the Church, the

School, and the Scouts formed a triangulation that kept you in line. Your teachers, priest, parents, and neighbors turned up in all three of the triumvirate groups, and every adult kept the others informed as to what you were up to. If you did something wrong, the news got home before you did.

So it was with Father Roach. When we were kids, he organized picnics, outings to Look Park, and counseled us, in the confessional and out. When we were getting ready for college, he took us to visit a variety of Catholic colleges (of course) including his alma mater Holy Cross. He convinced me Fairfield was the choice for me, although others went to Boston College, Creighton, St. Louis U, Providence, and all. None of us made it to Holy Cross, though.

Eventually Father Roach moved on, and we had to share him with Greenfield, Pittsfield, Amherst, and finally, Shelburne Falls. He has been an activist all the while, involved in issues from the Vietnam war through the AIDS epidemic, bringing the same intensity and fervor to every activity and goal in his life. We kept up a correspondence through all my time in the Peace Corps, and we met up from time to time in Amherst, when he was pastor at St. Brigid's. He came back to town for weddings and funerals, helping send off the souls of many of his former parishioners, including my father, just four years ago.

So when, last Sunday, it came time for him to retire from his final parish, hundreds of people turned out, and I took my place in line, not far from Ron Dobosz (another ex-altar boy from St. Mary's), sensing my role as a footnote in a small part of parish history. Someone from his first parish from long ago, waiting to shake his hand and congratulate him as he left his last parish. His handshake and embrace were as strong as ever, as strong as they were 50 years ago. Firm jaw and piercing eyes, he's already got the next ten years of projects and service planned out. More power to you, Father John Roach!

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TUNES from 1

The 300-seat Shea Theater needs a fundraiser because of the steadily increasing cost of utilities, said Friedman, and the community theater's board is reluctant to raise ticket prices.

"Just to open the doors, we need \$3,000 a month," she said. "It costs \$36,000 a year for lights, heat or air conditioning."

The Shea Theater's board of directors, with eight members, is hoping to raise \$10,000 from "Tunes & Tunes" event, Friedman said.

The board, led by president Robin Paris, is presently running the theater in lieu of an executive director. Steve Stoa ran the theater briefly in January of 2008. Debra J'Anthony served as executive director of the theater for the 16 years before that, since the community theater's inception, before resigning in December of 2007.

"Tunes & Tunes" will begin at noon on Saturday. Jamie Berger of the Rendezvous will serve as Emcee, with stage manager J.D. Keating and sound and lighting by Paul Interlande. Following the

Fabulous Maurice and his accordion, Valley Idol winner Erin Richman will perform at 12:45 p.m.; Ja'Duke Productions will present a preview of upcoming shows at 1 p.m.; Montague resident Jen Tobey and her band will perform at 2 p.m.; the Country Players will preview *Oklahoma!* at 3 p.m. (their two-weekend run at the Shea begins July 11th); Ed Vadas & the Fabulous Heavyweights (reunited for this performance!) will play blues at 4 p.m.; the rock trio Honky, Thumbelina and the Skinny Man will perform at 5 p.m.; Lin Preston's Musical Time Machine will perform classic rock and songs from the British invasion at 6 p.m.; and the Alchemystics (heavy heavy dub) will perform at 7 p.m.

Food for the event has been generously donated by the event's sponsors, Friedman said, including the Rendezvous, Ristorante DiPaolo, the Wagon Wheel, the People's Pint, Holy Smokes and Australis.

"Papa" Lou Ekus, his wife Leslie and son Seth will cook up ribs, pulled pork and garlic

chicken wings from Hatfield-based Holy Smokes. Beer-battered barramundi fillets from Australis will be cooked by John Carey, formerly of the Shady Glen who is coming out of retirement for this event. The "secret family recipe" for the beer-battered fish comes from Gilberto "Hilton" Dottin, chef at Ristorante DiPaolo.

Quarter-pound burgers, foot-long hot dogs and soft drinks will be served by the Turners Falls and Gill Firemen's Auxiliaries.

Ice cream will be donated by Snow's Ice Cream.

Locally grown corn-on-the-cob from Warner Farm in Sunderland will be featured alongside French fries from the Wagon Wheel and Foster's Supermarket.

A festive summer beer tent will feature microbrews from the People's Pint in Greenfield as well.

Town hall is getting into the act, with selectboard secretary Wendy Bogusz and her husband

Bob serving drinks; town clerk Deb Bourbeau working the ribs booth; and town administrator Frank Abbondanzio also on hand for a volunteer shift.

"So many people stepped forward asking how they could help," said Friedman. "Residents here need to know what a nice, family centered community this really is. People stick together to help one another. That's a gift."

For more information, call the Shea Theater at 863-2281.



BUDGET from pg 1

John Hanold, Montague finance committee chair, said the town appeared to have no good options left for bridging the nearly three quarter of a million dollar school budget deficit, after voters turned back an override attempt one fifth that size in June.

Montague has an estimated \$1.25 million remaining in the assessors overlay account, the last major reserves available in the town's coffers. "If we use the greater part of the overlay

reserves," said Hanold with characteristic understatement, "that makes the problem much worse next year."

Finance committee members Jeff Singleton and Mike Naughton have called on the town to notify the state it cannot pay the 1/12th budget.

Singleton said, "It is imperative that the upcoming district meeting vote down the budget as it stands. Otherwise we will once again pay for a contradictory and unworkable state policy."

The school committee is

seeking consensus on a date to hold the district meeting, at which all registered voters from Gill and Montague will have a say on the school budget. Proposed dates of July 31st and August 13th have met with objections; the meeting may be postponed until September.

If the towns and the GMRSD cannot agree to a budget, the GMRSD can run on a 1/12th budget until the December 1st, at which point the DESE will set a final budget for the schools, which the towns will have to meet.



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RAISES from pg 1 already been granted.

Finance committee chair John Hanold said he had talked to Abbondanzio about the problem a few days ago, and the town administrator had offered an example to illustrate the point.

Say an employee earning \$50,000 a year received a \$2,000 raise on the anniversary of her hiring, midway through the fiscal year. The line item for that employee's salary for fiscal '08 would show the median wage paid during the year: \$51,000. So if town meeting attempted to hold the level of pay for that employee to the same amount that was budgeted for '08, it would mean that employee would take a pay cut of \$1,000 for fiscal '09.

Abbondanzio said it was the board's feeling that town meeting had not intended to cut the wages of employees, therefore the step increases that had been granted midway through the last fiscal year would likely stand.

After the meeting, selectboard chair Allan Ross explained the board's June 30th decision to grant pay raises to seven non-union department heads and two employees under individual contract - the police chief and the town administrator - in these words.

"Town meeting voted a certain budget level calculated to eliminate cost of living (COLA) increases and step increases, and a fraction of health insurance payments, so the town could only afford an 80% split (instead of

the current 90% - 10% split). You can't just take away these things from the unions and contracted employees. We are in negotiations with all three employee unions. Some employees have personal contracts. Some employees are non-contracted. The unions have not agreed to give up steps or COLAs; all unions are in contract negotiations. There's a general assumption that non-union employees get what union employees get. It might apply to salaried employees also."

Ross continued, "Because the unions are still in negotiation, and Carolyn (Olsen, the town accountant) had to write checks as of Monday (July 1st, the start of the new fiscal year), we had to assume since there was no taking away of steps... so we agreed to steps for contracted employees and also non-union people get steps as well."

The seven non-union department heads who will receive step increases by the board's decision are: the town accountant, the wastewater treatment plant superintendent, the highway superintendent, the

library director, the health agent, and the selectboard's secretary. Abbondanzio said these employees, and the police chief will receive step increases equal to two percent of their salaries. Abbondanzio said his own contract is written in such a way that if unionized employees receive a step increase, he receives the same increase, and if they receive no step increase, neither does he. But for now, he will receive a 2% step increase like the other department heads.

Salaries for elected officials, the town clerk and tax collector, were fixed at last year's levels by town meeting.

Hanold said if the unanimous decision by the selectboard to grant step increases to non-union department heads and employees with personal contracts leads to the granting of negotiated two percent step increases across the board on the townside of the budget, that will add up to approximately \$64,000 in pay raises that are not included in the departmental budgets approved by town meeting. Hanold said a number of scenarios could then play out, including individual

departments trying to shift costs to cover step increases, cutting hours for staff, reducing services, or asking the finance committee to grant reserve fund transfers to cover departmental shortfalls later in the year, which would soon exhaust the finance committee's available reserves. Or, Hanold said, a pitch could be made to town meeting to increase the appropriations for personnel costs.

Mike Naughton, who has returned to serve on the finance committee, was the author of many of the town meeting amendments reducing personnel line items in May. He had this to say about the selectboard's June 30th vote.

"It seemed to me the intent of town meeting was not to spend any more money on personnel costs this year than last year. If someone was paid \$100 a week in July, but got a raise to \$120 in January, it seems to me you could just continue paying them \$120. The town administrator and the police chief should have gotten the same next week as they got last week. It sounds like they have gone further than that."

He continued, "They've created a problem for themselves. They could have sent a message to the unions, 'Hey, paychecks are not going to change.' To start out by saying, 'We assume you're going to get a 2% increase,' it sounds like they sent a pretty clear message saying this is what's going to happen."

Naughton added, "Town meeting took a stand. We've gotten ourselves into a hole and we have to dig our way out of it. The selectboard has basically said, 'Well, I guess we can't do that.' They had the opportunity, now they've made things worse. They can come back to town meeting for more money, but I'm not inclined to roll over at all."

Over at the Gill-Montague schools, negotiations with the teachers unions have taken a break for the month of July.

If the 230 GMRSD employees were to receive a 2% step increase this year, that would add approximately \$170,000 to last year's personnel expenses for district schools. The GMRSD has included a 3% to 5% wage hike for employees in the '09 budget.



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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - [In my last column, I wrote about homosexual parents. Today's column is about health issues faced by homosexuals.]

I was trying to persuade an editor of a gay publication to carry my column. He said he would be interested only if the column were dedicated to health issues that affect gays and lesbians. I had to admit that I was ignorant about this subject. He told me I should write a column

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

Gay Health Issues

some day about gays, lesbians and their health to inform my readers. So here is a primer in alphabetical order.

AIDS

Sex between men increases the risk of HIV infection, a chronic medical condition that can be treated, but not yet cured. There are effective ways to prevent complications and delay, but not prevent, progression to AIDS. Most people infected with HIV will progress to AIDS if not treated.

Alcohol

There is a common perception, probably based on old, flawed studies that gays and lesbians have a much higher inci-

dence of alcohol problems. However, the scientific literature on this subject doesn't give a clear picture.

Cancer

Lesbians have the highest concentration of risk factors for breast cancer of any category of women. Lesbians have higher risks for many gynecologic cancers. There are increased rates of anal cancers in gay men.

Depression

Alienation, discrimination and fear of discovery are all components in creating depression and anxiety in both gay men and lesbians at greater levels than the general population. Adolescents and young adults may be at par-

ticularly high risk of suicide because of these concerns.

Drug Abuse

Gay men and lesbians use drugs more frequently than the average person. One of the most popular drugs among gay men is amyl nitrate, known as "poppers," which is amyl or butyl nitrate. The vapors of the liquid drug are inhaled. The drug alters the perception of time and heightens sexual arousal. Longterm use can lead to delirium and impaired respiration.

Heart problems

Smoking and obesity are the most prevalent risk factors for heart disease.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) occur in sexually active gay men at a high rate. These include syphilis, gonorrhea,

chlamydia, hepatitis and human papilloma virus.

Tobacco

Recent studies seem to show that gay men use tobacco at much higher rates than straight men, reaching nearly 50 percent in several studies. Research also indicates that lesbians may use tobacco and smoking products more often than heterosexual women use them.

Weight

Problems with body image are more common among gay men than their straight counterparts, and gay men are much more likely to experience an eating disorder such as bulimia or anorexia nervosa. Research confirms that lesbians have higher body mass than heterosexual women.

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

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MCTV Program (Ch. 17) Schedule: July 11th-July 17th

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Friday, July 11
 8:00 am Montague Update: Mural Project
 8:30 am On the Ridge: Green River Bowman's Club
 9:00 am Select Board (6/30/08)
 10:30 am Senses of Place
 12:00 pm Songs for Wee People
 6:00 pm Montague Update: Mural Project
 6:30 pm Memorial Day Parade & Ceremony
 7:00 pm GMRSD (6/24/08)
 10:30 pm Independent Voices#36
 11:00 pm Common People Concerts: Fall Town String Band

Saturday, July 12
 8:00 am Common People Concerts: Fall town String Band
 9:30 am Chronicles: Mass for Capt. Charles J. Gibowicz
 10:30 am Changing face of Turners Falls
 12:30 pm Carlos W. Anderson: If all God had ever done
 6:00 pm Chronicles: Mass for Jason Ball
 7:00 pm The Western Mass Democrat #6
 7:30 pm The Spirit of Lake Pleasant
 9:30 pm Montague Update: Mural Project
 10:00 pm On the Ridge: Fins, Feathers and Fur
 11:00 pm Over the Falls: Linda Rollins

Sunday, July 13
 8:00 am Chroncles: Mass for Capt. Charles J. Gibowicz

9:00 am Children's Mental Health
 9:30 am Coffee House Series: Pat & Tex LaMountain
 11:30 am Fossil Tracks
 12:30 pm Montague Update: Mural Project
 6:00 pm Women, Girls & HIV
 7:00 pm Wisdom Way Solar Village
 8:00 pm Chronicles: Mass for Jason Ball
 9:00 am Common People Concerts: Fall Town String Band
 10:30 pm Open Mic Night
 11:30 pm Encore Body Art

Monday, July 14
 8:00 am Enjoy the Ride
 8:30 am Falls Table: Michaelangelo
 9:00 am Franklin County Matters: Community Action
 10:00 am Independent Voices
 10:30 am Living in the Shadow of Vermont Yankee
 11:30 am Mohawk HS Band at Disney
 6:00 pm Poetry Music Jam for the Reporter
 7:00 pm Select Board Meeting (Live)
 10:00 pm Montague Update: Mural Project
 10:30 pm Fabulous Maurice

Tuesday, July 15
 8:00 am Chronicles: Mass for Jason Ball
 9:00 am Coffee House Series: Ferne Bork, Dan Tinen, Bruce Kahn Trio
 10:00 am Montague Update: Mural Projects
 10:30 am Western Mass Democrat #6
 11:00 am Discovery Center: Pop Rockets

12:30 pm Encore Body Art
 6:00 pm On the Ridge: Gary Sanderson
 6:30 pm 9-1-1 People, Facts and Stories
 7:00 pm GMRSD (6/24/08)
 10:30 pm Living in the Shadow of Vermont Yankee
 11:30 pm Memorial Day Parade of Ceremony

Wednesday, July 16
 8:00 am Mind Control
 8:30 am Power Canal Draw Down
 9:00 am Preachin the Blues
 10:00 am PVRS vs TFHS
 12:00 pm RTR Extending Treatment to Everyone
 6:00 pm Peoples Harvest
 7:30 pm Common People Concerts: Fall Town String Band
 9:00 pm The Western Mass Democrat #6
 9:30 pm Tapping Maple Ridge
 10:30 pm Turners Falls vs West Bridgewater (State Finals)

Thursday, July 17
 8:00 am Turners Falls vs West Bridgewater (State Finals)
 10:30 am Montague Update: Mural Project
 11:00 am Naturalist Laurie Sanders
 11:30 am On the Ridge: John Dawicki
 12:00 pm Chronicles: Mass for John Dawicki
 6:00 pm The Western Mass Democrat #6
 6:30 pm Women Girls & HIV
 7:00 pm Select Board (7/14/08)
 10:00 pm Valley Idol Finals

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JEP'S PLACE Part LXXXV

Magrini

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL - Raymond was close to graduating from grammar school. We talked about going to Mount Hermon School, at length. His parents were going to pay his way. A year older than me, he was admitted as a day student. If I qualified, I could go tuition-free, but I had to get money together for books, lab fees and lunch money. A suit coat and tie were mandatory for chapel and dining hall. Most of the boys

came from affluent families. I had neither a suit coat, nor a decent looking pair of pants. The other kids in grammar school weren't much better off than we were, so I felt like a big shot when I came to school sporting a pair of wing tip shoes that I had purchased with my own money. But I was far from getting together the amount of money I would need for Mount Hermon. I began to get discouraged, until I got a demonstration of determination from Helen's husband, Magrini

They had continued to urge me to get an education, with each visit. The idea took on more appeal after the paper mill tour. I think Pa sensed my attitude and took it as a rejection of his values. Though Helen's husband name was Ludovico Magrini, everyone called him "Magrini," even Helen. My father didn't want Helen to marry Magrini because his right arm was gone, blown off when he had hammered on a live artillery shell that he and his friends had found on a World War I battlefield in Italy. The exploding shell blew Magrini's arm off, and blinded a

companion. Magrini was lucky to survive. He always wore long sleeved shirts to cover the artificial arm. Only a gloved hand showed. Pa warned Helen about marrying him. "You'll end up on welfare with that one-armed cripple." The prediction turned out to be true. Ironically, Magrini's first job after graduating from college was administrating a welfare office. When they came to visit, Magrini always came inside to greet the family, and after a little while, would excuse himself. As long as he was in the house with

them, they'd struggle with English. They took no offense at his leaving and were undoubtedly relieved that they could then begin speaking freely in Polish. Magrini talked to me, man to man. He continually encouraged me to get a good education, and go on to college. He had worked his way through college polishing furniture and assured me I could also find a way. I hated to tell him about getting such poor grades in school, that there was little chance of me ever attending Mt Hermon, much less college.

- Continued next issue

Elder Lore

BY FRAN HEMOND
MONTAGUE CENTER - The morning sun lights up the west bank of the pond. The shining white flowers assure us that July is well under way. Not so many this year, I wonder? But by afternoon, the east shore basks in the warm sun's glow and it's obvious the elderberry bushes are in bloom on every side. Last fall I made a bit of elderberry jelly from the little black berries that develop from the florets that make up the elder's flat round flowers. It was very fine, but picking many little berries on a slippery slope with a pond waiting below is

hazardous; it was a trial run. The experts suggest picking elderberries by the flower-full when all are ripe, and I shall try that this year, if the birds will wait. It is the black berries we eat. Another elder with red berries is poisonous, definitely not for eating. In earlier days the elder furnished fun and food. Elderberries were apparently cooked pancake style, in a batter, using both flower and berry stage, and also made into wine, pie, and jelly. One source suggests a cooling summer drink made from an infusion of elderberries in lemon juice, left overnight. The hollow elder branches were used to blow heat into a fire, collect maple sap for

syrup, fashion musical instruments and whistles, and they still offer these same services today. Medicines were developed from elders for almost any ailment one might acquire. Cough syrups for spring colds and hay fever were popular. The Egyptians as well as Hippocrates were among the many who sang the praises of the elder. Many horticulturists have suggested elderberries are preferred by birds to your favorite fruit, and might well be planted to lure them from an orchard. To the superstitious, a thicket of elder trees is prized for good spirits to offer protection from witches and discourage thieves. Modern landscapers need not be impressed by the elder's casual ways and happy reputation, but still may find its informal spread handsome and its aura of goodness a plus. Even on the narrow bank by my causeway some elder bushes emerge year after year. They are a reminder of 'way back when.' An eight-year-old child had joined the extended family Sunday gathering for the first fishing day of the season. It was March, so kids still wore their heavy winter coats. She sat on the narrow rail fence, fish pole in hand. A tug? A splash! And she was in the drink. It must have been the elder branches on shore that were strong enough to enable her to claw her way out of the pond. She will champion them forever.

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BY SUDI NIMMS

NORTHAMPTON - The eighteenth season of New Century Theatre has begun in Theatre 14 of the Mendenhall Center for the Performing Arts on Green Street. By default, the focus of this season seems to be about family. Producing director Sam Rush says, "I didn't start out with this aim, but I can't deny that my brain works in odd ways, and if I step back and look at what we're doing, there does seem to be a thread that connects them all somehow."

Rush credits composer Anthony Brandt with saying, "Other things may change us, but we start and end with the family," and this season certainly underlines that with a bang. Rand Foerster directs the season opener, *The House of Blue Leaves*, by John Guare. Foerster notes that this play, "...is a deeply human jumble of comedy, realistic drama, farce and social commentary. All this is craftily designed to entertain, inform and engage us in an explosive experience of live theatre."

Guare himself claims *The House of Blue Leaves*, which was first produced in 1971, is a play about humiliation. "Everyone in the play is constantly being humiliated by their dreams, their loves, their wants, their best parts... and I think avoiding humiliation is the core of tragedy and comedy and probably of our lives."

Director Foerster gives us a look at the historic tableau of the United States in the 1970s: "...we were suffering from a troubled economy, a worldwide monetary crisis with a devaluation of the dollar, a war in Vietnam, and a national debt due to the war running into the billions of dollars, and the Pope had recently visited with an appeal for peace. The American dream was in trouble. Sound familiar?" The dramatic struggles of Artie Shaughnessy and his family and friends, and the uncanny resemblance of past history to present reality grabs the audience from the first scene and won't let go.

In the program notes we learn that playwright Guare, who wrote his first play at the age of eleven, "became dissatisfied with traditional kitchen-sink dramas in which everything was 'real' right down to the kitchen sink. He yearned for a theatre that would proclaim inner truth rather than surface reality."

The House of Blue Leaves grabbed its audience of the time, too: It won both an Obie and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the Best American Play of 1970-71, and received four Tony Awards during its 1986 revival. Guare is also the author of *Four Baboons Adoring the Sun*, which was produced at the Lincoln Center Theater in 1992 and was nominated for four Tony Awards and *Six Degrees of Separation*, which received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1990 and Olivier Best Play Award in 1993.

Sam Rush's portrayal of Artie Shaughnessy is dead-on. As the

New York husband of a schizophrenic wife, known only as 'Bananas,' the father of an AWOL son with devious plans, and a keeper at the Bronx Zoo awaiting the birth of a diversity of animals, he's a busy man. Add to that his frustration of not being able to write songs - his first love - and dreading the impending loss of his youth, Artie exclaims, "I'm too old to be a young talent!" He desperately wants to escape his wife and run away to Hollywood to sell his music with his girlfriend, Bunny Flingus.

The play opens the day the Pope is visiting New York. Guare, as was his goal, has expertly interwoven the tragicomedy of everyday life into the drama - which can be extraordinary - as is the time we spend in the Shaughnessy's cold apartment in 1965 Queens. Rush gives us Artie in flying colors: the love he had for his "lost" wife, his dream to write music fulltime, his desire to marry Bunny and fly off to California, and the desperation of watching life slip away from him.

The supporting cast is top-flight. We have a love/hate relationship with Lisa Abend as Bunny Flingus, we feel for LisaRowe-Beddow as Bananas Shaughnessy, we cry for and cringe at Justin Fuller as AWOL Ronnie Shaughnessy, and we wonder at the lifestyle of Brian Smith as Artie's long-time friend, Billy Einhorn. The added element of passive/ aggressive nuns amid tragedy and slapstick brings the full array of feelings to this production.

The House of Blue Leaves will have you laugh until you cry - and back again. The play runs through the 28th of June, so hurry and go see it.

Next in the season are: *Well* by Lisa Kron, July 3rd - 12th; *Rabbit Hole* by David Lindsay-Abaire, July 17th - 26th; and *Arsenic and Old Lace* by Joseph Kesserling, July 31st - August 9th.

For the kids, there is *Paintbox Theater*, featuring three shows this summer: *The Princess and the Pea*, July 9th - 12th; *The Great Race of the Tortoise and the Hare*, July 23rd - 26th; and *Aladdin*, August 6th - 9th.

For more information and reservations, please log onto www.newcenturytheatre.org or call the Box Office at (413) 585-3220.

Enjoy the show!

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

FRIDAY, JULY 11TH
Great Falls Coffee House: **Fall Town String Band** and **Rust Knuckle Raptor**. Fun and old-time music. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., concert begins at 7 p.m., Museum is open during intermission, homemade baked goods available, sliding scale suggested donation of \$6 - \$12. Accessible facilities. For more information, call (413) 863-3221 or visit www.greatfallsma.org

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: **Dance or Die (Electro/Indie DJs)**, \$3 cover.

Deja Brew, Wendell: **A Ghost Quartet** - Jazzy Blues with a taste of Fist Fight Swing, 9 to 11 p.m.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JULY 11th & 12th
Pothole Pictures presents: **DIVA**, the intricate, stylish French thriller from 1982. **DIVA** concerns an opera-loving mailman (Frederic Andrei) who surreptitiously records a concert by a secretive soprano. When his tape gets confused by one sought by the mob, intrigue, romance, and a delightfully insane plot ensue. French with English subtitles. R, 7:30 p.m. Music before the movie at 7 p.m. - Big Bart Bales sings light opera both nights. \$6/\$4 for kids under 12.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, JULY 11th TO 13th, 18th TO 20th
At The Shea Theatre: The Country Players present **Oklahoma!** Fri. & Sat. at 8 p.m., Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. \$12/\$10 tickets. More info www.countryplayers.org

SATURDAY, JULY 12TH
Mycotopia Farms presents: Mushroom Walks in Wendell. Explore the amazing diversity of the fungus world. Mushroom foray 2 to 5 p.m. \$30 per person, participation is limited, call to reserve (978) 544-7668 (foray also on 7/19)

Tines & Tunes: A family-friendly day

in Peskeomskut Park, Turners Falls to benefit the Shea. Free admission, live music, performances from our resident companies, great food, microbrews and fun! 12 - 8 p.m.

Explore Lawrence Brook, Royalston, 1-5 p.m. Gentle paddle several miles upstream and back through a meandering, protected landscape. Bring your own boat, safety gear, etc. Please register with the Millers River Watershed Council, council@millersriver.net (978-248-9491). Meet at Tully Lake Campground, Royalston.

Deja Brew, Wendell: **Richard Chase Group** - Acoustic Folk/ Singer Songwriter, 9 to 11 p.m.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: **YARN**, a country-tinged bluegrass/folk band. 9 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 13th
At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls; **TNT KARAOKE**, 8 p.m., no cover.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse: **Second Sunday Comedy**, 3 Comics for \$5. 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Info. www.LaughAtDave.com/SecondSunday

Deja Brew, Wendell: **Adam Bergeron** - Classical Piano Improv, 7 to 10 p.m.

Sundays in the Park Concert Series: Featuring Brooks Williams with Sloan Wainwright. Greenfield Energy Park, Miles Street in Greenfield. Bring a chair or blanket. 6 - 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY, JULY 14th
At The Great Falls Discovery Center: Junior Rangers/Explorers, hands-on environmental education program for 5 to 7 year olds. A four-part series, Monday and Tuesday, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., for 2 weeks. Free. Space is limited. For more information or to register call 863.3221 or interpreter@greatfallsma.org.

At the Montague Book Mill, Montague Center: **The Wailing Wall** with Trevor Wilson. Led by songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Jesse Rifkin, the Wailing Wall is a NYC-based collective of musicians that unite in various combinations in order to present Rifkin's songs through a wide variety of lenses. Info. www.montaguebookmill.com



The Fall Town String Band along with Rust Knuckle Raptor at the Great Falls Second Friday Coffeehouse on Friday, July 11, 7 p.m. Come for an evening of roots & old timey music with two bands that span the generations. Acoustic music with a strong sense of place, with unique interpretations of old favorites combined with original tunes. Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls. Doors open at 6:30 p.m

TUESDAY, JULY 15th
Undergrowth Farm presents, **The Fourth World War** a documentary film. Shot on the front lines of struggles spanning five continents - **The Fourth World War** is the untold human story of the men and women who resist being annihilated in the current global conflict. At the Brickhouse, 24 3rd st. Turners Falls. 7 p.m. Free. Donations to the Hot Spot teen center gratefully accepted.

Common People Concerts, Gilll Common, 7 p.m. **Amanda Chorvis**: Music from around the world. Refreshments.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16th
Great Falls Farmers Market, 2nd Street & Ave A, Turners Falls. Fresh farm products in season. 3 to 6 p.m.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Quizmastah Chad's Quiznite Quiz! (bring your crew and get trivial, yo!) 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 17th
Deja Brew, Wendell: **Watin' Dave Robinson and Tommy Fillault** - Blues based roots music, 8 to 10 p.m..

Concerts by the Pond, Bernardston: Pioneer Valley Brass, 7 to 8 p.m. In case of rain, the concerts will be held

Neighborhood Movie Night
St. Andrew's Church, 2 Prospect St., TF
FREE

July 25, 2008
"Cars" (2006)

August 1, 2008
"Nanny McPhee" (2005)

August 8, 2008
"Parent Trap" (1961)

August 15, 2008
"Charlotte's Web" (2006)

Films begin at dusk (approx. 8:30pm), weather permitting, on the lawn.

Snacks and juice provided. Bring a chair or blanket to sit on.

Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

in the Bernardston Unitarian Church. Info. cushmanlibrary@yahoo.com, (413) 648-5402

FRIDAY, JULY 18th
At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: **Studebaker Hawk** - Disco/Funk/Rare Groove DJ. 9:30 p.m., \$3 cover.

Deja Brew, Wendell: **Josh Levangie** - Josh pays tribute to the late Johnny Cash with his amazing Cash like voice, 9 to 11 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 19th
Mycotopia Farms presents: **Mushroom Walks**. See 7/12 listing.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: **ROCKIT QUEER** - dance party!! \$3. Deja Brew, Wendell: **Karaoke Night** - TNT Productions will keep us all singing and dancing all night. Try out your vocal skills, 9 to 11 p.m.

MONDAY, JULY 21st
At the Montague Book Mill, Montague Center: **Vikesh Kapoor and Nicholas Beaven**. Vikesh Kapoor's music tells stories - stories of common people; stories carefully balanced on a beam of classic and current; stories to be told and retold. Vikesh Kapoor is a necessary reminder of folk music's resurgence and relevance. Show 8 p.m. \$5-10.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23rd
At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: **KG Fields, Jeremy Latch & Raymond Morin** (singer songwriters local and from Philly) 9 p.m., \$3 cover.

THURSDAY, JULY 24th
At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: **Led Heflin**, (solo gypsy jazz and guitar from the founder of Wood Green Empire w/ guest vocalist Amy Heflin) 9 p.m., \$3 cover.

THROUGH JULY 31st
Great Falls Discovery Center,

BRICK HOUSE CONCERT
FRIDAY JULY 11 7-10 (\$5)
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THE MOTEL MATCHES
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THE POINTS NORTH
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THE BRICK HOUSE 24 THIRD ST. TURNERS FALLS

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Thursday 7/17, 8 - 10 p.m.
Watin' Dave Robinson & Tommy Fillault
Friday 7/18, 9 - 11 p.m.
Johnny Cash tribute: **Josh Levangie**
Saturday 7/19, 9 - 11 p.m.
Karaoke Night: **TNT Productions**

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2. HANCOCK PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00
3. THE INCREDIBLE HULK PG13
DAILY 12 2:15 4:30 6:45 9
4. GET SMART PG13
DAILY 12:15 3:15 6:40 9:20
5. WANTED R
DAILY 12:15 3:15 6:40 9:20
6. JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH PG in dts sound
DAILY 12:30 3:30 7:00 9:30
7. HELLBOY 2: THE GOLDEN ARMY PG13 in dts sound
DAILY 12:30 3:30 7:00 9:30

The Rendezvous
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Oklahoma! Coming to the Shea

BY ANNE HARDING

TURNERS FALLS - It is 'Hell Week' at the Shea Theater - the grueling five days before the curtain opens on the latest production by The Country Players - Rogers & Hammerstein's classic musical *Oklahoma!*. Opening night is Friday, July 11th at 8 p.m., with shows on July 12th, 18th, and 19th, as well as a 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, July 20th. You might wonder why there is such frenetic activity the week before the show, since the Country Players have been a resident company at the Shea since 1990, and their productions always seem so flawlessly professional once the audience is seated.

Tuesday evening I stood behind the scenes learning firsthand what it takes to meet the deadline, as director Bob DuCharme ran the cast and crew through their paces. This is the first time DuCharme has directed the Country Players, though he is no stranger to the Shea and has more than 100 productions under his belt.

His skill and patience were evident as he stopped and started the cast and crew to fine tune lighting touches and set changes. Actors and actresses were pacing off steps, looking as though they had stepped on the stage for the first time.

In a sense, that's true, as rehearsals for their biggest show of the year take place beginning in May at offsite locations. This year rehearsals were held at Greenfield Community College, the basement of Our Lady of Peace, the United Church in Bernardston, and the Congregational Church in Northfield.

It's not until those last five days the theater company actually gets to bring it all together in the performance venue. *Oklahoma!* will be an especially challenging production, as music director Amy Roberts-Crawford will play the piano and lead a live pit band, with only a few days to actually rehearse with the cast

and coordinate with the choreography of Melanie Reneris.

Meanwhile, the still-to-be-finished sets were constructed in sections by Steve Woodard from the director's sketches and brought in pieces to the Shea, just last weekend. The set crew has worked hard to assemble, paint and add the finishing touches to this ingenious multi-purpose creation that pivots while the curtain is closed. Depending on the scene, it transports the audience to different parts of Laurey's farmhouse, the smokehouse, or the Skidmores' porch, and may roll out of sight when not needed.

Down below, the Green Room was another scene of organized chaos, but Gail Villeneuve took a few minutes away from her sewing machine to talk about costuming. A passion of hers since 1992 when her children were students at Turners Falls High School, Villeneuve learned from veteran faculty member Marsha Smith and has been making costumes ever since. Although she said the costumes were basically complete, there were plenty of last minute alterations to make, and details to add.

A stickler for period authenticity, Villeneuve was fortunate the Country Players' collection of costumes contained quite a few from the right era. Nonetheless, she took a full week off work and and sewed non-stop, with the help of Judy Delaney. I wasn't there for dress rehearsal, but I could see from the racks the cast has been outfitted in fine style.

Sara Campbell of Millers Falls was editing the program while she talked about her introduction to the Country Players, another member who went from being a stage mom to board member and now business manager and first-time producer. She knows better than most how tight the budgets are in community theater - between royalty costs that must be paid up front, theater leases, insurance costs, and other production costs, TCP counts on its summer program to pull in a

broad audience. Ticket sales alone are simply not enough, and Campbell is grateful for the help of underwriters and program sponsors.

Campbell believes "community theater is all about giving everyday people a chance to be someone else for a few hours. The cast includes a New Hampshire district attorney, bankers, executive assistants, an optometrist, a chiropractor, and a few young people who want to find a career on the stage."

Hailing from four states and a dozen Franklin County towns, the cast includes many actors who return year after year for a few weeks of summer fun with families and friends. Sue MacDonald of Conway (Aunt Eller) has been acting with the Country Players since their debut show of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* in 1979. She has enjoyed acting with her daughter Keara in the past three summers. Jack Arnot (Andrew Carnes) of Orange met his wife while acting in *Gypsy* in 1985, and has returned with his sons in past years. Valley Idol favorites Dave Peck (Jud) and Cayla Plasse (Laurie) are singing their hearts out in this production.

Bob DuCharme said he is delighted to be able to bring the experience of live theater to Turners, with all the talent the community has to offer, but without the outrageous prices of Broadway. When *Oklahoma!* opened in 1943 it was wildly successful in large part because it was an escape from the realities of World War II. The Country Players hope you will come leave behind the issues of today for a few fun-filled musical hours. Tickets can be purchased at the World Eye Bookstore or by calling the Shea Theater box office at 413-863-2281.

For a sneak preview, members of the cast and chorus will be performing in Peskeomskut Park at 3:30 p.m. at the Tines and Tunes Benefit for the Shea Theater on Saturday, July 12th. See you there!



MARVIN SHEDD PHOTO

Jack Arnot, as Uncle Andrew, and Sue McDonald, as Aunt Eller get in step at the Box Lunch Social as *Oklahoma!* comes to the Shea Theater in Turners Falls.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Stolen Property Returned

- Thursday, 6/26**
 - 1:03 p.m. Assisted with medical emergency on Mountain Road.
 - 6:33 p.m. Alarm at Main Road business, all o.k.
- Friday, 6/27**
 - 11:10 p.m. Report of past assault on Oak Street.
- Saturday, 6/28**
 - 1:50 a.m. Checked suspicious subjects at Main Road business.
 - 4:58 p.m. Arrested [redacted] charged with operating a motor vehicle after license suspension and unlawful attaching of license plates, operation of uninsured and unregistered motor vehicle.
 - 9:10 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police department with large party in woods.
- Sunday, 6/29**
 - 1:44 a.m. Criminal complaint sought on [redacted] charged with violation of the junior operator law (unlicensed) and speeding.
 - 10:25 a.m. Report of disabled motor vehicle in traffic at Gill lights. Same removed from travel lane.
 - 12:40 p.m. Report of erratic operator on Gill-Montague bridge.
- Monday, 6/30**
 - 6:25 a.m. Loose cows on West Gill Road.
- Wednesday, 7/2**
 - 7:31 a.m. Animal complaint on West Gill Road.
 - 12:17 p.m. Motorcycle accident on French King Highway at Riverview Drive.
- Thursday, 7/3**
 - 7:55 a.m. Alarm at elementary school, all o.k.
 - 8:31 p.m. Assisted Northfield police department with arrest.
- Friday, 7/4**
 - 9:01 a.m. Assisted state police with vehicle stop on French King Highway.
 - 10:40 a.m. Report of loose cows on West Gill Road.
 - 1:45 p.m. Report of disturbance at Main Road residence.
 - 10:29 p.m. Report of subject burned on Ben Hale Road, assisted fire department and ambulance.
- Monday, 7/7**
 - 7:33 a.m. Report of coyote at a farm on Main Road, checked same.
 - 6:05 p.m. Report of a larceny from a residence on Oak Street.
 - 7:55 p.m. Report of possible jumper on French King Bridge. Subject located on bridge and taken into custody for psychiatric evaluation.
- Tuesday, 7/8**
 - 7:55 a.m. Assisted Montague police returning stolen property on Main Road.
 - 6:39 p.m. Assisted with fire alarm at library on Main Road.

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