

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 27

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MAY 13, 2021

BOOK REVIEW

Through Jennie's Eyes: A New Look at Gill's History

By DONNA PETERSEN

GILL – The new book produced by Pamela Shoemaker and Lynn Stowe Tomb of the Gill Historical Commission reads almost like a historical novel, a real page turner! With love, friendship, struggle, and loss – all set in Gill, and locales we know.

This is the second book by Shoemaker and Tomb about Gill. The first, titled *Riverside: Life Along the Connecticut River in Gill*, offered chapters on everything from the geology of the area to Native American life, settlement, industry, infrastructure, agriculture, and the lives of residents.

I recently talked with Tomb and Shoemaker about their new book and how it came to fruition.

Even before this book was published, there was a kernel of an idea to write about the life of Jennie Williams Bardwell.



Jennie Bardwell's diaries formed the foundation of a new book exploring the history of Gill.

a great deal of supporting material: letters, photos, and documents from Robert Williams, a descendant of Jennie's family. Information about other Gill residents came from official records and the Historical Commission's archives.

"The first story [in the diaries] was intriguing, but we didn't know about the letters that fill out the story," said Shoemaker. Subsequently, photos taken by Sidney Towle and family letters donated by Bob and Carlene Williams made her "more engaged, and the story drew me in – it was too good not to share."

Tomb shared that "other diaries we have found have been men's diaries that mostly are about the weather, crops, and farming details." She laughed, and said that often these diaries are completely devoid of mention of wives or children; it's all about the farming, and "delivering butter to Greenfield!"

So this book is truly from a perspective of a woman's life in Gill, from 1873 until her death. Jennie died in 1930, but there are also letters, photos, and documents about her son, Walter, and other family members up through the 1950s.

Jennie's View

Jennie Williams' story starts on January 1, 1873 with the first entry in her diary: she received a see **HISTORY** page A5

Pamela Shoemaker and Lynn Stowe Tomb, eds., Jennie Williams Bardwell: Life in Gill 1860-1950. (Gill Historical Commission, 2021)

When Conway antique dealers John and Janet Maggs placed the winning bid on an old wooden box at a Deerfield auction, they found an 1873 diary kept by Mary Jane "Jennie" Elnora Williams, soon to be Jennie Bardwell of Gill. They published installments of the diary in their business's monthly newsletter.

A second diary, dated 1876, was then rediscovered on the Gill Historical Commission's shelves, having originally been donated by Susan and Phil Maddern, who had found it in the walls of their old house in 1988.

These two diaries are the foundation of the new book, along with

Public Forum Planned to Discuss Police

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – Next Monday evening at 6:30 p.m. the town will hold a public forum via Zoom to discuss the final reports of the two committees that have been reviewing the police department.

The reports were entered onto public record last week and accepted by the town selectboard, which appointed the two civilian-led committees last summer. On Monday the board discussed the reports' content with the committee members.

"It is our hope that by sharing the process, and sharing [its] high-level findings this week, it will pique the community's interest," said town administrator Steve Ellis, "and really see **POLICE** page A5

Businessman To Purchase Newspapers

By SARAH ROBERTSON

BRATTLEBORO, VT – Pavel "Paul" Belogour, an entrepreneur who made a fortune in foreign exchange software, is purchasing *The Brattleboro Reformer* this week, along with two other southern Vermont newspapers, the *Bennington Banner* and *Manchester Journal*.

"In Vermont, having this wonderful newspaper under-capitalized and feeling that people want to read more better news, perhaps it gave me an idea – why not look at the newspaper as a form of investment?" Belogour told the *Reporter*.

Belogour will acquire the publications from New England Newspapers Inc. (NENI), which will retain see **PURCHASE** page A8

TFHS Sports: Softball Starts Out Strong!

By MATT ROBINSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – On Tuesday, May 11, Powertown's softball scoreboard lit up for the first time in almost two years as the Thunder Ladies hosted the Greenfield Wavers in their 2021 home opener.

Things were different, of course. Bourdeau's Field is now adorned with a new backstop, and the masked-crowd was socially distanced from the field and from each other. But the most significant change was to the lineup.

All those 2020 graduates, whom we've watched play since they were kids, were gone. Off to their new lives as adults, never given the chance to play in their senior year.

This year's crop of players refuse to drop their Championship baton, and came into the game with two road wins under their belts.

The first win came last Thursday, May 6 up in Northfield against the Pioneer Panthers. Blue's bats came alive at the plate, swatting 11 hits to defeat the Cats 13-1. Inside the see **SPORTS** page A6

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Vaccination Slows Down

By JEFF SINGLETON

At the Montague selectboard's May 10 meeting, public health director Daniel Wasiuk announced that the number of new positive COVID-19 cases in the town had dropped to 13 per two-week period, a significant decrease from the previous level of 20 cases.

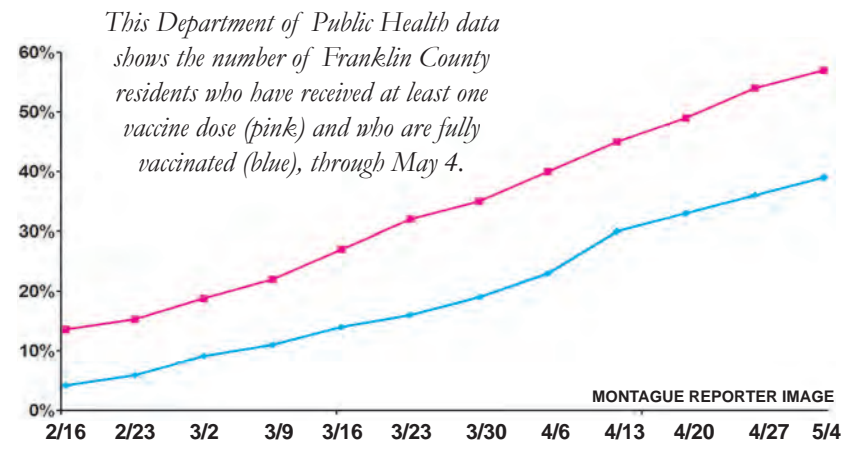
The other good news was that both the availability of vaccinations and the ease of making appointments seem to have improved dramatically. "The availability of appointments has grown significantly," said Wasiuk. "We have a huge reduction in

calls to the board of health asking for assistance to register folks."

Wasiuk said his department had been able to vaccinate 10 "home-bound individuals," and hoped to receive more doses for this purpose "in the next week or two."

At the same time that access may be improving, however, the number of people vaccinated has reportedly begun to plateau.

Until recently, many found the process was slow and frustrating. The state began its phased program in mid-December, and the initial phase targeting emergency responders, see **MONTAGUE** page A7



LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Town Hopes to Accommodate Elders, Investors, Mosquitoes

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett's May 11 selectboard meeting began with a presentation on the "Age-Friendly Communities Program." LifePath's age-friendly program manager, Nour Elkhattaby Strauch, was seeking a letter of support from the board, and the town's involvement in the program.

Among other matters during the two and a half hour meeting, the board heard reports from the sustainable economy committee and the planning board, and discussed the

town's joint-policing arrangement with Wendell.

Elkhattaby Strauch began by pointing to the "unprecedented" demographic shift towards an older population, with local communities following a national trend. He said 22% of Franklin County residents were 65 and over as of 2018, and the percentage of older residents is projected to continue rising.

According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which administers the Age-Friendly see **LEVERETT** page A6

Shady Glen Owner Garbiel Runs Unopposed for Gill Board

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL – Charles Garbiel II, owner of the Shady Glen restaurant in Turners Falls, is the sole name on the ballot for the town selectboard next Monday.

"I moved to Gill five years ago. My wife was raised in Gill and then moved with me to Turners, and then we moved back to Gill," Garbiel told the *Reporter*. "We have a

daughter now who's 3, and we plan to live in the same house the rest of our lives, so I wanted to become part of the community, and help develop the town as my daughter grows."

Garbiel, who currently serves on the cable advisory committee, said he decided to put his name "in the hat" when he heard John Ward did not plan to seek reelection.

"For the last ten years or so, they see **UNOPPOSED** page A8

GILL SELECTBOARD

Ward Praised at Final Meeting

By JERRI HIGGINS

Several more committee members and residents than usual attended Gill's remote selectboard meeting Monday evening, lending their support for opting the town out of the state's mosquito aerial insecticide spraying program, and for its alternatives, as well as honoring retiring selectboard member John Ward.

"I want to take this time to recognize John for his dedication, not to this board, but to the town of

Gill," began selectboard chair Randy Crochier on Ward's 12 years as a selectboard member. Crochier honored Ward for his "leadership and thoughtfulness," and for "advocating strongly" for the things he believes in, which Crochier said "have proven to be a major asset to Gill."

Selectboard member Greg Sneider, town administrator Ray Purington, and fire chief Gene Beaubien all also offered gratitude for Ward's service.

see **GILL** page A6



Turners Falls pitcher Jade Tyler continued to impress during Tuesday's home opener. Tyler struck out seven and limited Greenfield to four hits during the 7-4 Thunder win.

Take Your Coating Off And Stay Awhile

Gill-Montague School Committee.....A2	Valley View: Invisible Brook.....B1
Letter: Country Things.....A2	Gardener's Companion.....B2
Local Briefs: More Letters.....A3	Fly Fishing, Ninja Turtles.....B3
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NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

New Van; Old Asbestos

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Toward the beginning of Tuesday's Gill-Montague school committee meeting, superintendent Brian Beck invited facilities manager Heath Cummings to address the "asbestos circumstances at Hillcrest."

Cummings explained the circumstances in fine detail. Increased ventilation at the elementary school, made necessary during the pandemic, appears to be drying out adhesive holding old-fashioned tiles to the floor, and in a few places the loose ones are crumbling. An outside consultant has confirmed that these crumbs aren't considered "friable," meaning that they do not risk contaminating the building's air with asbestos. Cummings' department has glued some tiles back down, removed small chunks in biohazard bags, and ordered a formal report on the building's safety, but he reassured the committee that in the short run the situation was not any risk to students or staff.

A full-building remediation is recommended in the long run, and could cost half a million dollars. The district is discussing the need with the town of Montague, which owns the building, but it is too late in the town's budget cycle to be approved by this year's town meeting as a capital improvement expense.

Hillcrest's asbestos issues, Cummings said, are not as serious as Gill Elementary's.

Beck reported that the district's COVID-19 pool testing program turned up its first positive test result this week. The five individuals whose samples had been pooled were quarantined and re-tested, and one asymptomatic person discovered to be a carrier of the virus and sent home. "It would have increased the likelihood of transmission substantially," Beck said, if the testing were not underway.

The Franklin County sheriff's department returned this week to administer a second-dose clinic of the Moderna vaccine to school staff.

Business manager Joanne Blier reported on the current year's operations. "We've had pretty significant savings in our special education transportation lines," Blier said, "because less students have gone out of district, and for less days." Overall, it appears that surplus money will be able to pass into the excess & deficiency account, and the district will be able to prepay for some of next fall's special

education tuition fees.

Blier pitched a proposal to create a new position, a "transportation coordinator," who would drive one out-of-district placement bus route that is currently costly for the district, maintain the schools' vehicles, and also manage bus routes, work that takes up a significant amount of Blier's time as well as that of pupil services director Dianne Ellis.

After the first year, Blier said, the position would be largely reimbursable by the state as a transportation expense. During the first year, the district's "rural aid" supplemental fund could help cover it, as Gill-Montague's onerous transportation burden is a function of its relatively large distance from other places, a common rural trait.

The committee approved the position, authorizing Blier to draw up a job description. It also approved the purchase of a passenger van.

Timmie Smith, who earlier this spring had resigned from the committee citing personal circumstances, has enjoyed a reversal of fortune. She submitted the only letter of intent to temporarily fill the seat she had vacated for the remainder of her term, which is until this year's spring election. The committee voted unanimously to appoint her. Smith runs unopposed on the ballot for another three-year term.

Beck reported on a range of efforts to improve equity issues, including summer training of staff, a forthcoming survey from the Communities That Care coalition, and an idea to expand the student Culture & Climate Club to train students to become active bystanders and mentors for younger ones.

He and Ellis also reported on efforts to address loss of learning incurred during the pandemic. "Outside of academic and social-emotional considerations," Beck listed, "gross motor skills, fine motor skills, student stamina for attention," and routines around sleep and time management are all causes for concern at various age levels.

Ellis said the district is "continuing to cross our fingers" that enough teachers will sign up to run a six-week, four-day-per-week summer learning program.

Beck shared that he was becoming less scared of small children, thanks to the students at Sheffield Elementary being kind to him.

The committee's next meeting is scheduled for May 25. The Turners Falls High School graduation will be held Friday, June 4, at 6:30 p.m.



Montague building inspector Christopher Rice thumbs through one of eight large code books in his office at town hall. Rice leaves his post this month. He plans to build a summer home in Wendell, and winter "someplace warm."

Letter to the Editors

Too Much Dwelling

As noted in other articles in the *Reporter*, the old communal farmhouse at what is now the Montague Retreat Center has been demolished. Its role in the physical history of Montague is now over, and its legacy will resonate through the stories and memories and imaginations of those who still remain in the physical presence of Montague.

I did have the privilege of assisting at the final stages of the house's existence. And, though I was not here in Montague at the heyday of the Communal Period, my involvement with the property for a few decades – and my coming of age during the 1970s – made me particularly sensitive to the presence within the building as I prepared it for the inevitable ending.

Bits of clever workmanship were woven within the structure. Old systems of raising plants, and the hopes and optimism of those thoughtful designs, still echoed amongst the peeled paint and overworn wooden floors. The masonry heating system and the woodshed still sent a little chill through the air that hinted of a cold October eventide.

As the window sashes came out, the roar of Spaulding Brook spilled into the empty rooms and carried with

it the exhilaration that filled the heart of a young communal person as they spent their first summer night in that magnificent corner of Montague.

Looking out the back kitchen window, one could still hear the farm family at the kitchen table of even older times, nervously wondering if a cold morning in May would eliminate the apple crop for the coming fall. The patterned, water-rounded stones that caught my eye may have been brought up from the stream to the ancient lodge site by fascinated children who just had to show their mothers how beautiful they were....

The spirit of the house was described well by Robert Frost in what follows:

The Need of Being Versed in Country Things

*The house had gone to bring again
To the midnight sky a sunset glow.
Now the chimney was all of the house that stood,
Like a pistol after the petals go.*

*The barn opposed across the way,
That would have joined the house in flame
Had it been the will of the wind, was left
To bear forsaken the place's name.*

*No more it opened with all one end
For teams that came by the stony road
To drum on the floor with scurrying hoofs
And brush the mow with the summer load.*

*The birds that came to it through the air
At broken windows flew out and in,
Their murmur more like the sigh we sigh
From too much dwelling on what has been.*

*Yet for them the lilac renewed its leaf,
And the aged elm, though touched with fire;
And the dry pump flung up an awkward arm;
And the fence post carried a strand of wire.
For them there was really nothing sad.
But though they rejoiced in the nest they kept,
One had to be versed in country things
Not to believe the phoebes wept.*

The plans for the site of the farmhouse are bright and brilliant, and promise a new chapter of enterprise and hope. The transformed place will lay down a new layer of joy and memory that will add to the rich legacy of this very special place where humans have lived within the natural world for countless generations.

Paul Voiland
Montague Center



The cellar hole at the Montague Farm house, with a pile of its beams and a dumpster in the background.

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By NINA ROSSI

May 15 through June 6.

There's good news about the recreation facilities owned by FirstLight Power. They have added an outdoor viewing area to the fish ladder by the dam in Turners Falls so that it can be open this year with social distancing. A monitor will show a live feed of the fishway so folks can check out the spring migration that makes it through the ladder.

Check it out from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

FirstLight's campgrounds at Barton Cove and Munn's Ferry are now accepting reservations for summer camping starting May 28. Half of the campsites will be left empty to allow for social distancing, and the group sites will remain closed.

Visit www.firstlightpower.com/recreation or call (413) 863-9300 for reservations, and for the new rules.

FirstLight's Barton Cove paddle rentals are also reopening May 29. There are 50 watercraft available including canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddleboards, and they can be rented for two hours or for the day.

Rentals come with personal flotation devices and paddles, and are available at 82 French King Highway (Route 2) in Gill, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

Cruises on the Quinnetuket II from Northfield through the French King Gorge on the Connecticut River are not yet available, but will hopefully start later in the summer as state guidelines ease. Check www.firstlightpower.com for updates.

Musica Franklin Community Night is tonight, Thursday, May 13, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Join an online concert and discussion with cellist Nathaniel Taylor, an active chamber musician and a biracial performer who has struggled through discrimination and undergone a professional journey of personal empowerment.

"I have learned the concept of self-love, not depending on others for happiness, and finding that happiness within myself," Taylor says. "I have stepped into my power not only as a cellist, but also as a mentor, teacher, guide, and healer."

The concert will open with a recorded performance by Musica Franklin students. Email info@musicafranklin.org for a link.

The Amherst College music department presents a "Black Music Matters! Marathon" this Sunday, May 16 at 3 p.m. This virtual performance showcases a multitude of unjustly neglected masterpieces by Black composers for the concert hall. Watch for free at www.amherst.edu/go/musicstream.

Northfield Mountain's education coordinator Kim Noyes presents Upriver Journey, a virtual program about American shad and sea lamprey, on May 18 at 5:30 p.m.

These fish play an important role in our river ecosystems as they migrate to and from the sea. Author John McPhee nicknamed American shad "our founding fish," and sea lamprey have been called the "hero of our rivers and vampire of the sea." Find out why these keystone species are misunderstood and under-appreciated. Cosponsored by the Northfield Bird Club.

To register, go to www.bookeo.com/northfield before May 17.

Support local farming and efforts to create food justice by giving on Valley Grows Day 2021 on Wednesday, May 19. This collective effort among small, community-based nonprofits throughout western Massachusetts has a goal of \$97,900. (Find out more on Page B5.)

The Polish Genealogical Society of Massachusetts will hold a Zoom talk about "Finding Vital Records from Poland Online" on Sunday, May 23, at 1:30 p.m.

Records from Poland are becoming increasingly accessible online through a variety of databases. In this lecture, Julie Roberts Szczepankiewicz will explore some of the major repositories for Polish vital records, review US records that contain the specific places of origin of your immigrant ancestors, suggest resources to decipher misspelled

place names, and identify the registry or parish offices that kept the records for your ancestral towns. If you are not certain exactly where your ancestors were from, Julie will begin with a brief overview of the process used for determining origin.

This is a free joint Zoom meeting with the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston. Register at www.jsgsb.org.

Volunteers are needed at the Friends of the Wissatinnewag property in Greenfield for raking, mulching, fertilizing, weeding, trail clearing, and more. There will be work days on Wednesday, May 26 and Saturday, June 5 at 10:30 a.m.

In addition to volunteering at Wissatinnewag, the Nolumbeka Project has opportunities for people to volunteer for the Pocumtuck Homelands Festival and other events, and help with the website, fundraising, grant writing, public relations, research, graphic design, and other tasks. To learn more and to receive directions to the property, write to nolumbekaproject@gmail.com.

Also through the Nolumbeka Project: "Indigenous Voices of the Berkshires," a Zoom talk about Native American herbalism with Dr. Jus Crea Giamarino and Rhonda Anderson on Saturday, May 22, from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Register at nolumbekaproject.org.

Three Wabanaki poets share their work online on May 23 at 1 p.m. Cheryl Savageau (Abanaki), Jason Grundstrom-Whitney (Passamaquoddy), and Alice Azure (Mi'kmaq) will be introduced by Dawnland Voices editor Siobhan Senior. The presentation is free. Register at www.nature-culture.net.

Take a free memoir writing class with Ruth Flohr called "Writing to Remember." The workshop is available through the Village Neighbors organization, which serves elders in Leverett, Shutesbury, Wendell, and New Salem. This class is open to fledgling writers as well as seasoned writers and meets on Tuesdays for six weeks via Zoom. Classes include instruction, reading samples, discussion, and impromptu writing exercises with feedback.

There are two sessions. The first one starts May 25 and the second one starts on August 17; both run from 10 a.m. to noon. For more information or to reserve your spot, call Flohr at (978) 544-6534 or email pr@villageneighbors.org.

Mohawk Trail Concerts' 51st summer concert season will run from June 13 to July 31. The eight free concerts will all be held outdoors at three locations. Bring your own chairs, blankets, and picnics.

Performers at the Montague Center ballfield will play on a trailer with listeners sitting in the round, under trees. The bandshell in Shelburne Falls has excellent acoustics, and space to spread out picnic blankets. At the Federated Church in Charlemont, the Steinway grand will be in the coffee room and five large windows and a door will be open for the audience outside on the lawn to hear.

All information on the concerts is available at www.mohawktrailconcerts.org.

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OP ED

Pond Mistreated by Certain Friends

By M. SILVER

LEVERETT – I want to thank the *Montague Reporter* for following the story about Leverett Pond's current situation. It has been very important as avenues of discussion are often met with defensive positions and strong statements backed up by weak evidence, and in some cases suggestions that such discourse needs to be taken elsewhere though no "elsewhere" seems to exist.

So I would like to address some points that continue to be brought up to me again and again:

- "You are against us! Friends of Leverett Pond has done some good things in the past!"

The idea that anyone opposes Friends of Leverett Pond because they do not like the motivations of one or two individuals is equivalent to saying that you are "unpatriotic and hate your country because you don't like its president!" No one who is criticizing or trying to stop the current leadership of a small group of property owners on the west side of the pond has any-

thing against the organization as an entity. I consider myself a Friend of Leverett Pond.

- "We have to stop the invasive with herbicides and hydro-raking! Are you against trying to control invasive weeds that are threatening our pond?"

Well, no. But the FLP members have been poisoning the pond year after year, claiming afterwards each year that it was a success. Then you hydro-raked and removed native species in front of your properties, so much so that the naked squares of zero vegetation near Cider Mill Road properties could be seen on a Google Map of Leverett Pond.

You "dosed the dreaded Milfoil" with herbicide... at the same level as Watershield, a native plant that actually prevents Milfoil from spreading. You said in print that it would not hurt other plants. And when all was done, you had the herbicide company do the post research and declared the results, once again, "a great success."

I never said I was against an herbicide's use. Just its abuse.

- "We have so many nuisance plants, now strangling the fishery!"

Really? Just 18 months ago the FLP said, in print, that the "fishery was healthy." Yet why are you now talking about the fish? Because Leverett Pond belongs to the State.

You can't just start removing wildlife habitat because you like a clear surface to look at, or need better access to your boat launch. It's an aquatic wildlife habitat and you need a reason to continue your ineffectual and very poor management.

Ouch. And why do I say this? Because in management, you solve problems, not create them. In constantly damaging and raking areas of vegetation, guess what? You actually make it easier for Milfoil to spread.

After all these years, the FLP's "expert" still can't tell one Milfoil from another, or the difference between Water lilies and Watershield, or even the benefits of Bladderwort in mosquito control.

You don't know your plants, you don't understand Limnology (freshwater biospheres), nor do you

do your own studies. Yet you wish to continue the same management, adding in a "winter drawdown" of the pond's level of five feet to kill "Milfoil," which grows down to 15-foot levels.

So let's say the pond was a business, and I was the owner, and the current leadership of FLP was the manager. I know what I would do: I would fire you and look for someone else. As the state owns Leverett Pond, not a few disgruntled property owners who don't like Water-lilies, Cattails and other Pond life, I hope the State feels the way I do.

"Let the Pond be a Pond?" Yes, I said that. It doesn't mean that some management is not required. But not management that seems bent, year after year, on willy-nilly tactics to remove as much of the life of the pond as they can.

That's not restoration. That's not conservation. It's called destruction.

M. Silver is a member of Ducks Unlimited, a lifelong environmentalist, and a friend of Leverett Pond. He lives in Leverett.

AT LARGE

The Exercises of Democracy

By CHIPAINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – When I was growing up in Deerfield my father was the town moderator. I never saw him at the podium, and never attended a town meeting until my neighbor Barb Richardson asked me to support the Schell Bridge Replacement Project.

The Schell Bridge spans the Connecticut River and connects East and West Northfield. It was completed in 1903, the same year the Red Sox played their first season in the fledgling American League. It was closed and barricaded in 1985 and left to rust until Friends of Schell Bridge took up the cause to restore it.

After nearly two decades of effort, Monday's Town Meeting vote for the town to pay the remaining \$25,000 for right-of-way and other issues all but closed the deal. The bridge will include parking places, picnic areas, and a 550-foot walkway across the river. "Any reasonable person would vote yes but you never know," wrote Richardson. "I'm optimistic but nervous."

I was guilt-tripped into it, bad hip and all, and showed up feeling like the churchgoer who only attends mass on Easter Sunday.

The town meeting was held in the Pioneer Valley Regional School gymnasium amidst a backdrop of scoreboards, championship banners, and rules for sportsmanship. We went in single file and volunteers checked our names off the voting roll. Copies of the Annual Town Report and Town Meeting Warrant were stacked on a table. I grabbed one of each and took a seat in the last row of the bleachers.

Including everyone – 148 registered voters and town officials – almost 200 townsfolk were in the building, men in blue jeans and baseball caps and women clad in sweaters and slacks. Seated in front of them were town administrator Andrea Llamas, town clerk Dan Campbell, and selectboard members Bea Jacque, Heath Cummings, and Alex Meisner on one side of the moderator's podium, and the finance committee on the other side.

"We do have a decent number of people coming in, so let's wait," said moderator Nathan L'Etoile.

While we waited I browsed through the Town Report, noting there were 20 deaths in Northfield last year, together with 13 births and 13 marriages. The town sold 825 dump stickers and issued 586 dog licenses. Animal control officer Kyle Dragon responded to 103 calls regarding dog bites, lost dogs, barking dogs, and other canine mischief.

The police department reported 153 arrests and 147 motor vehicle violations, the fire department responded to 39 fire alarms but only two

structure fires. The bulk of its work was 77 calls to clean up storm damage and downed wires.

Restricted by COVID, the Dickinson Memorial Library reported that visits dropped from 23,106 in 2019 to 1,352 Zoom visits in 2020. "January and February seem a lifetime ago," wrote director Deb Kern. "[The first two months] there were over 100 people in the library each week. Neighbors visiting, kids hanging out.... It all came to a screeching halt."

Last year's presidential primaries reflected Northfield's collective political leaning. Bernie Sanders garnered 298 votes to Elizabeth Warren's 192 votes and Joe Biden's 186. Only 94 registered voters cast a Republican primary ballot. Donald Trump got 77 votes and William Weld got the other 17.

L'Etoile asked the assembled to rise and (for those so inclined) say the Pledge of Allegiance. The man sitting to my right and his companion remained seated. He had two books beside him; one of them was titled *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck*.

Microphones had been placed at both ends of the bleachers. Nancy Ames thanked the town for its help building the trail that her husband Bill had named in honor of their son, Gunnery Sgt. Jeffrey S. Ames. A resolution of gratitude honored outgoing officials, and the funding for Schell Bridge was overwhelmingly approved by acclamation and loud applause.

Mostly the meeting was about money: where to find it, and how to spend it. Funds were approved to fix the town clock, buy a new stove for the town hall kitchen, and install a new heating and furnace system for the town highway garage.

Motions were read, seconded, and approved by voice vote. Those in favor would say "Yea" and those opposed "Nay." After a unanimous "Yea" someone in the stands absently-mindedly muttered "Nay" loud enough for everyone to hear. The anonymous voice said "Oops" which was followed by laughter.

It was a short-lived and welcomed moment of levity, because town meetings can get raucous. In Deerfield years ago, a town meeting member dropped dead of a heart attack during a heated debate.

Article 33, submitted by the board of assessors, authorized the selectboard to take payments in lieu of taxes on three proposed solar arrays on the L'Etoile property off Pine Meadow Road – that's if the planning board approves the special permit.

The development is Nathan L'Etoile's baby, and it has run into stiff opposition. Four years ago L'Etoile stayed at the podium while the town voted to re-zone his family's land from agricultural/res-

idential to industrial, but this time he recognized the conflict of interest, and selectboard chair Alex Meisner temporarily presided. The article passed, but without much gusto from the yea-sayers.

There was mildly heated discussion about Articles 34 and 36, both submitted by the selectboard. The former sought to impose a local sales tax of three-quarters of a percent on locally prepared food, and the latter asked for a six percent occupancy tax on room rentals.

The owners of the Centennial House, Steve and Joan Stoia, said their business would bear the brunt of that burden. "We are the only B&B in Northfield and have no enforcement to run at the illegal B&B's," said Ms. Stoia, who added that COVID caused their establishment's occupancy rate to drop 73 percent in 2020.

Joe Graveline and others took the floor and said it was a bad time to impose a tax on local businesses. The occupancy tax failed, but the food tax passed. Afterward I heard someone say, "At least we got to throw some tea in the ocean."

The next day the polls opened at noon, and 238 ballots – exactly 10% of the town's 2,384 registered voters – were cast in the annual town election. There were no contested races, in part because the selectboard was expanded from three to five members. Meisner probably wondered how first-time candidate Mary Sullivan Bowen could out-distance him by 40 votes (206 to 166). Another newcomer, Bernard Boudreau, garnered 158.

The intrigue was the write-in race for the vacant planning board seat. Incumbent Joe Graveline had decided not to seek re-election until he realized the vote on whether to give BlueWave Solar its special permit for the Pine Meadow Road project wasn't going to happen until after the election.

Graveline is opposed to putting solar arrays on 70 acres of tillable farmland, enough so that he re-entered the race as a write-in candidate against another write-in candidate, Alexander Strysky, an environmental analyst for the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office.

Without time to actively campaign, both sides used social media to get out the vote. Graveline defeated Strysky, 53 to 45. "I want to ask [the other four planning board members] to convince me why putting solar arrays on beautiful farmland is a good idea," he said. "I want the public to know what the hell's going on."

The planning board usually meets the third Thursday of every month, but as of Tuesday a May date had yet to be posted on the town website.

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Greenfield Recorder and commentary for the Montague Reporter. He lives in Northfield.

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HISTORY from page A1

letter from her “darling George,” and noted that “This book is a gift from Geo.”

So began her lifelong – and often difficult – long-distance relationship with George Bardwell. They were married September 9, 1873, though a May 27 entry reads “I miss my George so much, for O! How I love him (yet I kinder dread being married).”

Jennie’s life was not an easy one. Every day there were chores on the family homestead like sewing, cleaning, and animal care, plus challenges like keeping warm, managing money shortages, and more. And ironing! Tomb and I commented on and laughed about the amount of ironing that seemed to be required.

After reading about all the work and chores women had to do, Tomb said she was “gratified to read how the women in the community supported each other. Together they shared midwifery, child care, berry picking, and more.”

It is a good thing the women supported each other. The diaries and letters illustrate how hard life could be, with many illnesses and losses and a lot of hard work. And their area of town seemed to have more than its share of illness and death. Also, when Jennie wrote that a woman was “sick,” it might mean that they were pregnant, about to give birth, or having their menstrual period; one did not write those words down, or even say them.

Tomb said that most of the 19 diarists she has cited have been men, and she “was surprised how much information was provided in one year’s worth of entries, giving a good picture of day to day life from a woman’s perspective.” How much fabric, ribbon, buttons, cups, and everyday items cost – often pennies.

When Jennie complained or gossiped about someone, it was done



This photo of Jennie’s husband, George Bardwell, was taken by C.L. Howe & Son Photographers of Brattleboro on April 8, 1883.

quite politely. After a Christmas dinner at a neighbor’s home: “I do not like their style... I must say I thank the Lord tonight I am not obliged to associate with those that I have today.” Ouch – dissing the neighbors, but with polite words.

Jennie had to work throughout her marriage to George Bardwell, as he was not a reliable source of support. She went to work in a button factory in Easthampton and lodged there, even after she had a son, Walter, who she left in the care of her mother. George continued to live and sometimes work in Brattleboro, where he was originally from.

George comes off at first as a “ne’er-do-well,” according to Shoemaker, but his later letters to Jennie and his son Walter certainly express caring and affection. But that unfortunately doesn’t pay the bills. He “took the pledge” of no drinking, but it certainly seems that his pledge was broken at some point, and alcohol was likely a problem for him.

I found myself rooting for Jennie and hoping things would get easier for her. She eventually became the postmistress in Deerfield, but life

was never easy; her son Walter did not respond when she begged him to come to her as she grew older and unable to care for herself.

Going through all the diary entries and letters makes one wonder who Jennie really was. Are there undiscovered or destroyed diaries from 1874 and 1875?

I think you will enjoy and savor the journey of Jennie’s life, and the day-to-day life of the residents you meet in the book. You can see Jennie go from having “the emotions of a young girl full of hope and excitement to an older woman who is practical and a little severe,” as Tomb describes her.

Despite Jennie’s disappointment, Shoemaker and Tomb both feel that she and George – “the lover of my youth,” as Jennie called him in a 1900 letter – “loved each other throughout their lives.”

Community Portrait

The primary focus of the book is certainly on Jennie and her life in Gill through the diaries and letters. But she lived in a small agricultural community, and her neighbors, friends, and locale are also well represented in the book through pictures and text in sections called “Jennie’s Neighbors,” “Greenfield & Turners: Going ‘Up Street’ to Shop,” “Riverside: Visiting Friends and Buying Lumber,” “The Stonemasons: Building With Stone in the Valley,” “The Williams Men: Following the Extended Family,” and “Walter George Bardwell: Growing Up in Gill.”

These additional chapters are interesting, and have some great photographs from the 1870s to the 1950s. We see how much has changed, but much has also stayed the same. Some buildings and farms look familiar: they are places we may drive by or even have a nice dinner at, such as the Gill Tavern, once the Gill General Store.

Jennie Williams Bardwell Life in Gill 1860 - 1950

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GILL HISTORICAL COMMISSION



The D.O. Paul general store on Main Road, the present site of the Gill Tavern.

We also meet some of the descendants of the Williams family and their friends, who contributed a fair amount of material for the book. Some of the names are familiar and pretty common in the Valley. Bob and Carlene Williams provided letters and more to the project from family archives.

The “Building with Stone” chapter reveals who created the many stone structures that were built in the region. Bridges, dams, churches, and libraries were built by local masons from stone quarried in Northfield, and some nice photos show the craft involved in producing these structures, which are still standing strong today.

Other sections offer glimpses of rail travel, the button factories and mills in Easthampton, and the Bardwell family’s life in “urban” Brattleboro.

For both residents and non-residents of Gill, this book will be very interesting. There is so much information to be gleaned and enjoyed. I believe it will cause some to ponder, “I wonder who lived in my old house back in the 1800s, or even earlier?” Is there an old diary or something of interest hidden away in your walls?

You may also discover something surprising, as someone in Brattleboro did within the pages of Shoemaker and Tomb’s first book

about the history of Riverside. They found a picture of their great-grandfather in it, a likeness they had never seen before.

Shoemaker and Tomb will be on the Gill town common on May 17, voting day in Gill, selling copies of the book and handing out the pre-orders. The book is 8 inches by 10 inches, with 180 pages with primarily black-and-white or sepia photos. The price is \$45 for orders made before May 21, and \$50 after that. Copies of the Riverside book will also be available.

Shoemaker said this book “differs from *Riverside* because we had so many primary sources and so it can be used for research by, for example, a Women’s Studies student.”

I asked if they expect to have folks come forward with information on people and places in the book, and Tomb said “it is inevitable.” After buying or sharing the book, people often provide information or stories, and the two researchers will keep a file of new information.

Readers can contact Lynn Tomb at Lstomb@gmail.com to order the book or for additional information. You may mail a check for the price (plus \$5 for shipping, if required) made out to the Gill Historical Commission, 325 Main Road, Gill, MA 01354.



Jennie’s son, Walter Bardwell, pumping gas at his station on Main Road in the late 1920s or 1930s.

POLICE from page A1

engender a terrific turnout in terms of the conversation we can have next week.”

“Both groups really came up with the same answer,” said Chris Pinaridi, who facilitated the group that reviewed community engagement, “and that is we didn’t find a systemic problem, in terms of race relations, racism, those kind of things, and equity in policing.”

“Level-funding, or defunding, the police department maybe didn’t do what some people wanted it to do, and in fact maybe hurt us,” Pinaridi argued. “There’s a need for more bodies in that department.”

Pinaridi said that his committee “may not have reached as many people as we wanted to” with its survey, and “not everybody was happy with the way those questions were posed, but

given the fact that we’re not experts in the field – we’re community members, asking questions the way I think we would want them to be phrased – I think we did a good job.”

“We could benefit from having an actual independent organization come in and do their assessment work as well,” Brick House director Kwamane Harris, who served on the same committee, suggested.

“I hope that the town takes this as an opportunity to think of this as a beginning for this kind of work, as opposed to an end,” said Colin Mitchell. “If there are people who didn’t have faith in our process who have grievances with policing, we haven’t heard them [yet].”

“I knew nothing about our police, and came in as an open book,” said Ariel Elan, who facilitated the group that looked at use-of-force

and equity issues. “I have to say that I was very surprised, pleasantly, to hear them state that their approach to the work – the whole team, the approach to the work – is deescalation under all circumstances.”

Elan said that the department fields roughly 19,000 calls a year, and that “one-tenth of one percent” culminate in the use of force, and 2% in arrests.

“It does feel important for me to point out that the community didn’t define the frame of these reports or these committees,” her fellow committee member Maddox Sprengel said. “The framing matters... I don’t think we got to a lot of the deeper questions around what are the impacts of policing on people in the town.”

Member Faith English suggested that the town could attempt to collect anecdotes about

the use of force.

In response to an audience question, Pinaridi noted that the “group that had the highest level of dissatisfaction,” according to the survey results, were white women.

“I don’t think that there was much significant difference when we broke it down by race,” said Mitchell, “but... we definitely have a sample size problem, when we break down our sample results into any subgroup.”

“I think the results are very positive,” police chief Christopher Williams said of the reports, when asked to share his opinion. “The best that I thought we could do was break even – I think we did better than that.”

The Zoom link for Monday’s forum was not available on the town website as of press time.



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LEVERETT from page A1

program nationally, “The AARP network of age-friendly states and communities is the United States affiliate of the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, an international effort launched in 2006 to help cities prepare for rapid population aging and the parallel trend of urbanization.”

Elkhattaby Strauch said Massachusetts was the second state to join the national network, and that over 70 towns are already involved. He described it as a collaborative effort to develop programs and facilities to benefit older citizens, citing a senior exercise park in Dalton and a home-sharing advisory service in Brookline as program successes.

LifePath of Greenfield, which is administrating the program locally, was seeking support from the Leverett selectboard as a minimum requirement for the town’s participation, but emphasized that there were opportunities to do much more.

The board commented favorably on the project, and newly-elected member Melissa Colbert volunteered to take the lead in drafting the letter of support.

Economic Development

Members of the town’s “sustainable economy” committee presented recommendations in pursuit of their mandate to “explore, examine, and

recommend” sustainable revenue opportunities. Co-chair Tim Shores said the committee is planning a survey to identify residents’ priorities to use in planning, and would like to commission an economic development study, if grants could be found.

The committee’s current recommendations include pursuing a master plan for Leverett, restoring and maintaining of historical assets, and taking an inventory of land parcels that might be appropriate for development. Shores also suggested forming a subcommittee to meet with outside developers, and having the selectboard take the lead in dealing with state funding for education, which has a large impact on planning in the town.

Melissa Colbert asked what definition the committee was using for “livability,” and what survey methods it planned to use. Shores replied that the committee had only begun discussing the idea earlier that day, and wants to recruit new members and bring them up to speed before defining the term. He said the survey should be simple, and that community feedback would help with definitions.

A resident commented that he has been one of only a few people who grew up in Leverett who has been able to build a house in town in recent years, and that he was only able to do so because his family owned land. He said high costs, and the

number of hoops people must jump through to build in town, should be part of economic development planning.

Police Regionalization

A report-back from a meeting of Wendell’s police regionalization committee spawned a number of questions as Leverett and Wendell move forward with joint policing. Selectboard chair Julie Shively, who is not on the committee but had attended the meeting, said the group is working with consultants to come up with a new interim agreement between the towns by July 1, as another step toward a permanent agreement.

Aaron Buford said he didn’t think enough conversation about policing was going on, and he wanted to encourage more intentional efforts by the Leverett police department to discuss its policies, such as what is meant by “community policing.” Buford also commented that regardless of the timeline for the agreement, the fact that police cruisers with Leverett decals are seen in other towns is “a big deal,” in that they represent the town, and it was important for Leverett residents to know more about the department’s policies.

Colbert commented she knew through her own discussions with chief Scott Minckler that there are nuances involved in these subjects, and she was hearing the need to

create space for more transparent discussion.

In a related development, Minckler said that the state has mandated eight new policies that the Leverett department needs to put in place by July 1 or it will lose accreditation, and that he was working on them.

Bugs, Floods, and Dirt

The board voted to opt Leverett out of the new statewide mosquito spraying program. Residents and members of town boards and committees were unanimous in expressing their opposition to the program, citing the low risk of contracting Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE), which the spraying is designed to guard against, as well as the dangers to humans, wildlife, and ecosystems, and the availability of more direct and effective responses under local control.

A quorum of board of health members were present, and they recommended the town opt out of the spraying and develop a local plan for mitigating the mosquito population instead.

“We don’t need their poison,” said Shively.

Planning board member Richard Nathorst informed the board that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the state are finishing up a revision to Franklin County’s floodplain maps, and that he has been going through the “ponderous” 27-page bylaw Leverett will be required to adopt in order to qualify for FEMA’s flood insurance.

Nathorst said the maps would not be completed until 2022, and the town should be able to adopt the bylaw at next spring’s town meeting.

The board postponed a decision about requests to remove a pile of debris from the end of Old Mountain Road until it receives clarification on the road’s status as a “county road.”

Highway superintendent Matthew Boucher said he knows both parties in the dispute personally and

did not want to be involved in the determination, but that if official boundaries and responsibilities are defined, the highway department wouldn’t mind moving it.

The exact status of what were once, and may still be, “county roads” was at the heart of the dispute, with no one present having a clear answer. Shively agreed official determinations were needed before any action on the dirt pile was taken.

Other Business

The board expressed hope that the deputy fire chief Brian Cook would be interested in replacing chief John Ingram, who has resigned to become fire chief in Belchertown.

Member Tom Hankinson informed the board that he’d heard from two families of residents who were disappointed with the lack of recognition of long-time town workers and volunteers at town meeting on May 1, including Ingram. It was suggested the next town newsletter include an article with such recognitions.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis reported that the town’s insurance company has changed its policy regarding town officials providing private notary services to residents, and would need to increase Leverett’s yearly premium by \$900 if they continue to do so.

Board members expressed a desire to return to in-person meetings as soon as possible, but made no decision. Shively said the board had earlier set a tentative date of September for a return, but will review the matter monthly.

Shively commented that hybrid meetings, with the members meeting in person and residents participating remotely, were “extremely difficult,” and she did not favor that option. A suggestion was made that the board and people with town business meet in person, and the meetings be broadcast without remote participation.

**GILL** from page A1

Ward answered by sharing his appreciation of them, and said of his time on the selectboard: “You have all made it really easy.”

“Okay, enough with the love fest,” he said with a laugh. “Let’s get this meeting going.”

Next Year’s Budget

A late agenda item was requested by finance committee chair Claire Chang. Citing a letter the fin com had sent to the selectboard, Chang pressed the importance of a timeline for the budget process, and to schedule joint meetings between the fin com and the selectboard.

Fin com member Sandy Brown shared her frustration that the committee was “not able to do anything.”

“We get no information,” Brown said, and described how past fin coms she had served on started their annual budget meetings each January. The fin com is required by law to meet with the selectboard and other board heads to make budget recommendations each year.

“I agree with you, Sandy,” said Crochier. “We do need to have that process.” He continued saying that it was the selectboard’s goal to have department head meetings this year, adding that “last year did not work for anybody, but we got through it.”

Tupper Brown, also on the fin com, said that the letter to the selectboard “envisions going back to ground zero.” He recommended an early-year planning meeting to allow time to work through the budget process, and accommodate schedules.

Crochier said that the selectboard would plan for a full discussion on the matter during the town’s first budget hearing for FY’22. A date had not been set as of Monday’s meeting.

To Spray Or Not To Spray

A new Massachusetts aerial spraying program for mosquito control includes an opt-out process for municipalities, which must provide the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRMCB) with an alternative plan for controlling mosquitoes in their localities.

According to the state Department of Public Health, out of about 50 mosquito species found in the state, 12 are known to carry arboviruses. Two more concerning viruses, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), and West Nile Virus (WNV), have increased in recent years.

Massachusetts reported 11 confirmed cases of EEE in 2019, with three reported deaths, and three cases of EEE in 2020, with no deaths. Although deaths are rare, EEE can cause lasting neurological damage. There were also five cases of WNV in 2019, and six in 2020, with no reported deaths.

The opt-out deadline for the mosquito control program has been extended to May 28, allowing towns like Gill more time for their residents and committees to inform themselves about the implications of

remaining in, or opting out of, the program.

Crochier said he believes education is key, and getting mosquito control information and practices out through as many avenues as possible will increase that goal.

Chang shared her concerns about other non-disease spreading insects being killed through the insecticide spraying, and the compounded effects to larger animals or mammals who feed on those insects. She told the selectboard that all the members of the conservation commission supported opting out of the aerial spraying program, as well as the members of the energy commission, on which she also serves.

Doug Edson, of Gill’s board of health, and Crochier – in his last week serving on that board – advised the selectboard to opt out of the statewide aerial spraying program.

A motion to opt out of the program was unanimously approved.

The selectboard and other meeting attendees discussed joining the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD), a \$5,000 per year state program that uses integrated pest-management control, but the matter was tabled for a future agenda to give the board time to gather more information on the PVMCD’s methods and practices. Western Massachusetts is not currently in an area of high concern for EEE and WNV, though milder winters and wetter mosquito breeding seasons are expected to increase the prevalence of arbovirus-carrying mosquitoes in the region.

Other Business

Chief Beaubien informed the selectboard that the fire department’s Engine Number 1 primer pump broke. “I have no idea what the cost will be,” said Beaubien. He said the truck is still in service as a pumper, but “cannot draft water from a water source without the primer.”

Baubien said he heard at an earlier meeting with the Federal Emergency Management Agency that grants would be awarded by July, and that he hopes his department will get an Assistance to Firefighters Grant this year to replace Engine Number 1.

Crochier was unanimously authorized, as chair, to sign the 20-year lease agreement between the town of Gill and the Gill-Montague Regional School District for the use of the Gill Elementary School.

Purinton was approved to sign contracts for highway products bids received through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. The products include gravel and stone, as well as services such as chip-sealing and asphalt paving. Crochier abstained from the vote due to a family member being among the contract bidders.

The board set a date of Saturday, June 26 for the annual town meeting, which will be held outdoors.

**SPORTS** from page A1

circle, Jade Tyler showed no sign of rust as she clocked 15 K’s and gave up only two hits.

Then on Monday, Blue traveled east and beat the Athol Red Bears 7-2. Against Da Bears, it was Tyler’s offensive prowess that shone through. She hit two home runs in her first two at-bats, and Turners coasted to a 7-2 victory.

In Powertown’s home opener, Greenfield threatened Blue’s mini-win streak early. In the very first inning, Green went on top 1-0 off a passed ball.

But Turners answered in the bottom of the first, and took back the lead for good. Leadoff batter Olivia Whittier blasted a stand-up double, and Taylor Murphy batted her

home. Then, with one out, Madison Liimatainen parked one over the fence to break the brief tie.

In the third inning, a couple of walks, a sacrifice, a passed ball, and RBIs from Holly Myers and Whittier put Blue up 7-1. And in the seventh, Greenfield made a game of it, scoring three additional runs to make the final score a respectable 7-4.

Turners’ next game will be held at TFHS this Friday, May 14 against the Franklin Tech Eagles. On the same day the Turners Falls baseball team will host the Tech Boys.

Donations will be collected for the Western Mass Food Pantry at both games. After all, high school athletics is not just fun and games – it’s a way to give back to the community!



Homecoming: Powertown’s Madi Liimatainen plates after pounding a two-run homer over the outfield fence as Blue hosts the Green Wave for the home opener.

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MONTAGUE from page A1
medical workers, and other small groups proceeded smoothly. But beginning in January, as governor Charlie Baker's office opened up eligibility to successively larger groups, often with little warning, registering for a shot seemed to require endless frustrating hours at the computer.

As many more doses arrived from the federal government and smoother registration methods were introduced this spring, access at community-based locations, pharmacies, and hospitals improved significantly. However, one reason the appointment logjam seems to be ending may be that fewer people are seeking vaccinations.

According to state data, the total number of Franklin County residents with at least one shot stood at 57% on May 4. The percentage in Montague was 51%, and Greenfield/Leyden was 56%.

The vaccination slowdown is a phenomenon much covered in the national press. According to a *New York Times* report on May 4, the number of Americans receiving their first doses had declined by "about fifty percent" since an April 13 peak. Experts quoted in the article said the slowdown was "inevitable," given that the remaining eligible population includes more people isolated from distribution centers, less at risk from the virus, or resistant to vaccination.

There is also a growing concern that so-called "herd immunity," where the virus can no longer survive in the population, may no longer be attainable. A May 3 *Times* article raised the possibility that "the virus will most likely become a manageable threat that will continue to circulate in the United States

for years to come, still causing hospitalizations and deaths but in much smaller numbers."

Baker has called Massachusetts' vaccination program a success, reaching the targets set in December. At a press conference on May 3, he estimated that 4.1 million residents would be vaccinated by the beginning of June. He then added, without noting the decline in new vaccination, that the program would pivot to "be more targeted and shift vaccines to smaller scale operations that will focus on particular communities or particular populations."

There is also a growing concern that so-called "herd immunity," where the virus can no longer survive in the community, may no longer be attainable.

In Franklin County, however, smaller vaccination centers including the Jon Zon Center in Greenfield will close mid-May, consolidated into a larger drive-through center at Greenfield Community College. There was uncertainty at Monday's meeting whether GCC vaccinations would be by appointment only.

Wasiuk agreed on the need to include more data in his weekly report on the progress of vaccination, as well as discussion among Montague's emergency management team about increasing the percentage of the population vaccinated.

In response to the decline in local cases, the selectboard voted to expand the activities offered at the Gill

Montague senior center – where the Council on Aging will now sponsor three exercise classes – and expand branch library hours to two days a week. The Montague Center library will be open by appointment Mondays and Wednesdays, and the Millers Falls branch without appointment but with limited occupancy Tuesdays and Thursdays. Both will continue curbside pickup on the days they are open.

The Carnegie Library in downtown Turners Falls will remain in its current status, with curbside pickup and entry by appointment. "I do anticipate opening up the Carnegie more fully in the not-too-distant future," library director Linda Hickman told the *Reporter*, "as long as local COVID numbers are low."

Town Election

The board approved the warrant for the annual town election on June 22. There are few contested races, and every precinct has at least one empty opening for town meeting which may be filled by a write-in candidate.

The notable exception is a race for the board of health seat currently held by Chris Boutwell. Boutwell is opposed by Melanie Zamajski, a nurse and health educator at Greenfield Community College. There are also four people running for three positions on the library board of trustees.

Town clerk Deb Bourbeau told the board that voters can once again request ballots to vote by mail. "The ballots are here," she said. "They can get applications, and we'll send the ballots right out to them." Applications can be picked up at town hall or sent by mail on request.

On June 22, Precinct 1 will vote

Info Session on Town Meeting Focuses On Police Budget, Mosquito Question

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – The Montague finance committee held a public information session on Wednesday to review the upcoming May 22 town meeting warrant. The meeting only drew perhaps six town meeting members, beyond the fin com, selectboard, and capital improvements committee members in attendance. The discussion addressed several of the potentially controversial articles on the warrant.

A recording of the meeting should be posted soon on the website of Montague Community Television (montaguetelevision.org).

Local resident Ian Tapscott began the discussion by saying he was new to town meeting. "What's the process?" he asked. "I need to know more about where all this comes from."

Fin com chair Jen Audley then reviewed the town's budget process, which is generally conducted through collaboration between the fin com, selectboard, and capital improvements committee. According to Audley, this group, with the assistance of the town accountant and town administrator, begins making revenue estimates in the late fall and requests budgets from departments, as well as assessments from the school districts.

Audley said that this year, the fin com requested "level services budgets" from virtually all departments. "The process is pretty collaborative," she said. "We're required to produce a balanced budget."

The first article to receive sustained attention was one that would allow the selectboard to join Montague with the recently created Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD). The following article includes an appropriation of \$10,000 for mosquito control. A number of attendees at the meeting have expressed the concern that in an emergency such as the Eastern Equine Encephalitis outbreak in 2019, the PVMCD might require its members to implement aerial spraying of pesticides.

Audley said the article "came in late" and that the finance committee did not have enough information to

make a recommendation.

Town administrator Steve Ellis stressed that there was a great deal of uncertainty about Montague's recent application to "opt out" of statewide spraying, what level of mosquito control services it needs to provide instead, and what the policy of the regional district would be. He went on to say the town was "hedging its bets" by allowing the selectboard, which has voted to opt out of aerial spraying, to make the decision in an emergency.

Ellis also explained that the \$10,000 could be used either for joining the PVMCD or for other mosquito-control measures, such as cleaning culverts. Town meeting member Ariel Elan said she was "very appreciative" that Ellis said the money was not tied to joining the district.

The longest discussion of the evening concerned the police department budget, which is proposed to increase by roughly 6.5% over the current year. The fin com has voted unanimously to endorse the increase, which Audley said was primarily due to negotiated wage and benefit increases, and to compensate for training eliminated when the department was level-funded at town meeting last year.

Tapscott questioned the wording of the fin com's budget narrative, which seemed to suggest that town meeting had cut police training. Audley said she was "comfortable" with the wording, which to her suggested that the training cut was the police chief's decision in response to the vote to level fund his budget.

The meeting also discussed the Gill-Montague school district budget assessment, which is based on a formula that allocates 48.5% of Montague's revenues to the district, and whether the new public works facility is actually saving money in the budget.

The meeting reached its time limit before attendees could discuss the large proposed increase in the airport budget, a variety of special articles for capital projects, or the allocation of cannabis revenue funds, among other articles.

Audley stated that fin com was answering questions over email at montaguefinancecommittee@gmail.com.

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at the Montague Center fire station on Old Sunderland Road; Precinct 5 at the senior center on Fifth Street in Turners Falls; and Precincts 2, 3, 4, and 6 at Franklin County Technical School, located in the industrial park off of Millers Falls Road.

Bourbeau, who introduced the warrant to the board, was asked by member Michael Nelson whether she is still interested in consolidating the town's six precincts during the coming redistricting process, an idea shot down by town meeting when it came up a decade ago. Bourbeau said she was not going to "go forward" with the idea this time, because she is "really happy with having four precincts under the roof" at the tech school.

Don't Forget The Streets

The board approved a request from town planner Walter Ramsey to authorize "procurement services" with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to manage bidding on the latest state-funded Complete Streets project. The project includes new sidewalks on Montague Street, Keith Street, and Turnpike Road.

There was a good deal of discussion of the virtues and relative cost of concrete versus "hot mix asphalt" sidewalks. Ramsey had substituted the latter on at least one sidewalk to keep the project within cost estimates, but selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz objected, saying asphalt tends to degrade much more quickly than concrete, and threatened to vote against the plan. Ramsey said the town would seek bids with both options.

The board also authorized Ramsey to submit a grant application to the state to make the temporary improvements on Third Street, which primarily involve painted crossings, permanent. He stressed the main crossing at the bottom of the hill leading into downtown Turners Falls, designed to discourage speeding near Unity Park.

Town administrator Steve Ellis reported that the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) had responded favorably to the town's concerns about traffic over the Fifth Street bridge from Greenfield, particularly at the intersection of Canal Street. MassDOT will investigate traffic mitigation scenarios, which are already on the table due to the

state-funded relocation of the pedestrian bridge at the same site.

During the meeting's public comment period Terri Cappucci, a resident of Country Club Lane near the Thomas Memorial golf course, complained about cars frequently speeding on her short street, which has numerous residents with children. "We actually had drag racing going on two weeks ago," she said.

Cappucci said that the street's current speed limit of 25 miles per hour was too high for a short street, and asked that it be reduced. She noted, however, that the police department might not be allowed to enforce a lower limit.

Kuklewicz agreed to investigate the issue, and put it on the board's May 24 agenda, but warned that it was "quite a process" to change a speed limit.

Other Business

Half an hour of the meeting was devoted to reports from the two police review committees, as well as questions from the board and the public. The board was also presented four new department policies by chief Chris Williams, which will be placed on a future agenda. (*See article on Page A1.*)

In response to a question from this newspaper, Kuklewicz clarified that when the selectboard discusses police issues, it changes its identity to the "police commissioners." "We are also the sewer commissioners and the personnel board," he said.

Operating as the personnel board, the selectboard approved the appointment of Charlene Langenback as assistant treasurer/collector and Patricia Holloway as the water pollution control facility administrative assistant. It was not clear why the board did not assume the identity of sewer commissioners to appoint Holloway.

Ellis announced a state legislative hearing at 5:30 p.m. on May 24 on congressional redistricting, required by the latest US Census. He said the hearing would focus on the 2nd Congressional District, which includes Montague and is represented by Jim McGovern.

The next selectboard meeting on May 17 will be primarily devoted to a public forum about the police review committees' reports.



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PURCHASE from page A1
ownership only of the *Berkshire Eagle* in Pittsfield, MA.

The newspapers are Belogour's latest investment in the region, where he has spent over \$3 million in commercial property over the last two years, *The Commons* reported this week. He now owns the Brattleboro Outlets Center on Canal Street; Vermont Beer Makers in Springfield; a former Knights of Columbus hall in Rutland; Norm's Marina in Hinsdale, New Hampshire; a farm in Bernardston; and a number of other commercial properties. He is also developing a Viking-themed resort on 3,000 acres in Guilford.

"With the hyperinflation that has taken hold in the US, I do believe any tangible asset, including dilapidated property, is a better investment than money in cash," Belogour told the *Reporter*. "It's better to invest in the local community than invest in cryptocurrency."

The cost and terms of the sale were not disclosed publicly. The newspapers, which come with a bimonthly tourism magazine *Up-Country*, will be owned by the limited liability company Vermont News and Media, which Belogour incorporated on January 22. The sale is set to be finalized Friday.

Belogour said that while he plans to use his technology and business background to help the papers, he will leave all journalistic and editorial decisions to the newspaper staff. Belogour added that he plans to hire more employees and invest in "human capital" to enhance the quality and quantity of local news stories.

A native of Belarus, Belogour moved to the United States in the early 1990s to attend Northeastern University, and then worked in banking and foreign exchange in Boston. He moved into software development, eventually developing the currency exchange software UniTrader, which he told *The Commons* this week is the "backbone" of his wealth.

Belogour now manages a worldwide network of businesses, including real estate management in the United Arab Emirates, a mutual fund exchange in Hong Kong, and a soccer team in Eastern Europe.

Belogour says he would like to see Brattleboro's population and economy grow as a result of his investments. Part of his strategy for the newspapers is to increase local coverage, with an emphasis on youth sports, in order to give people a sense of community and belonging.

"The sale will allow us to devote all of our energy and resources to *The Berkshire Eagle*," NENI president Fredric Rutberg announced in the *Reformer* on May 4. The company was purchased in 2016 from Digital First Media, a media subsidiary of Alden Global Capital, by a group of Stockbridge-based investors who wanted to return the *Eagle* to local ownership. Later that year the *Reformer's* printing press was relocated from Brattleboro to Pittsfield when Digital First sold the building.

Little will change regarding the Vermont publications' day-to-day operations within the next five years, Belogour said, but he plans to eventually move the papers' headquarters and employees back

to Brattleboro. In the meantime pagination, layout, design and editorial tasks will continue from the *Eagle's* Pittsfield office.

All of NENI's Vermont staff will remain with the paper through the transition, but printing will remain in Pittsfield for the foreseeable future, Belogour said, because it makes sense financially.

"More and more people are reaching out to their local newspapers to see what's happening in local communities," Belogour said. "My belief is newspapers of 2021 and 2022, the newspaper industry, will be very different."

"I hope that there is an infusion of energy and resources that can not only sustain the paper but help it thrive," Starr LaTronica, director of Brattleboro's Brooks Memorial Library, told the *Reporter*. "I know nothing about the fellow who has bought it, except for his story in the *Reformer*."

"The content is great, because the content is truly local and that's what people need," she said of the paper. "It's certainly gotten thinner, and I think that has a lot to do with advertising – the expenses of printing a newspaper, and the decline in need for people to have a print newspaper."

"Any kind of major change to a newspaper is very scary, so I wait holding my breath for a good future," said Brooks Memorial information services librarian Jean Walsh. "Our local newspaper is one of the most important reference sources that we offer, period. More reporting, more reporters with journalistic standards

UNOPPOSED from page A1

had a group of three guys that everyone seemed to be happy with, so I didn't want to run against somebody last year, or the year before," he said. "If it's not broke, don't fix it."

Garbiel said he did not think Gill is facing any "major huge issues" currently, but that they do come up.

Turnout on Monday may be low. "We do not have any races," town clerk Doreen Stevens reported.

Incumbents Isaac Bingham, Thomas Storrow, and Joan Pillsbury are running for moderator, board of assessors, and cemetery commission respectively, while Anna Hendricks and Tara Savoie are offering to be library trustees.

Stevens herself is running for town clerk as an incumbent, though she is not running for re-election.

The one apparent vacancy is on the board of health, from which Randy Crochier, who also works as a regional health agent, is step-

ping down.

"I have not heard whether anyone's writing a write-in campaign," Stevens said. "We'll see what happens on Election Day – it should be interesting."

Voting will take place from noon to 8 p.m. on Monday at the town hall.

Stevens said she had received "a few, but not many," mail-in ballots as of Wednesday. "I think it could be that there's just no races," she said, by way of explanation.

On the school committee ballot, Valeria "Timmie" Smith, who stepped off and then back onto the committee toward the end of her current term amid changing personal circumstances, is running unopposed for reelection from Gill; no Montague candidates are yet known to exist.

Gill and Montague voters vote for representatives from both towns, and usually hold elections on the same day, though this year Montague's will be held June 22 instead.



working hard to get the information and report it accurately on a timely basis – that's really important."

Walsh, who helps library patrons access the town's newspaper archives, said the first iteration of the *Reformer* dated to 1879.

Belogour told the *Reporter* he anticipates a "significant reversal in how people see the media" over the next several years, spurred by the pandemic and the work-from-home phenomenon. Having traveled and

lived all over the world, Belogour says he has a passion for Vermont and calls the state his home.

"Vermont to the US is like Switzerland to Europe," Belogour said. "You make the same comparison. In Switzerland you have cows, milk, cheese and chocolate. In Vermont you have cows, milk, cheese, and maple syrup."

Belogour says he plans to open his Viking Village resort to the public this summer.



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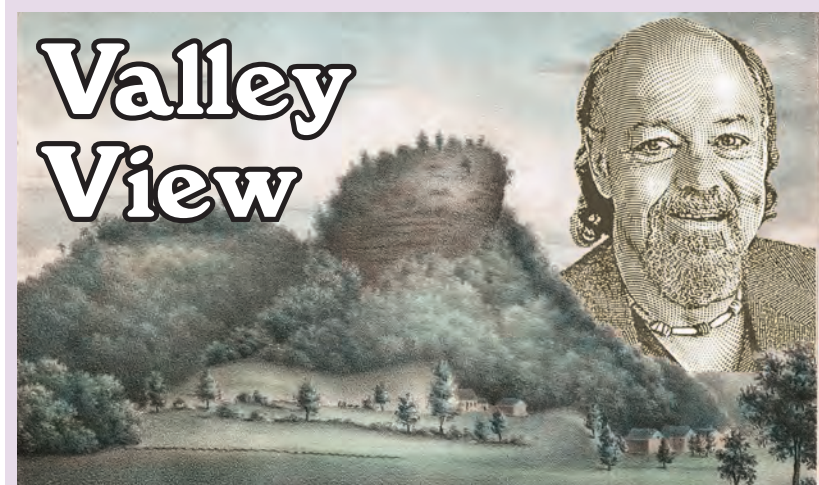




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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER MAY 13, 2021



Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – For months now, I’ve been jumping back and forth from old Greenfield newspapers, Registry of Deeds land records, and various other sources and field trips in a concerted effort to fine-tune my understanding of the land I traveled as a boy and young man, and which I still explore.

I would describe my focus area as South Deerfield spilling into Whately. It is the land of my forebears, deeply stained with my father’s DNA.

The most exciting newspaper discovery I stumbled across appeared while keyword searching the *Gazette and Courier* for my third great-grandfather, John Chapman Sanderson (1804-86), a major Whately landowner and gentleman farmer who built his mid-19th-century home on the west side of River Road on the lot of today’s Pasiernik’s creemee stand. Next door on the south stood the original Sanderson homestead of his great-grandfather, Joseph Sanderson, the second settler to set his stake in that Hatfield village earliest known as Canterbury.

The key information I found appeared under a Whately heading in the January 1, 1872 newspaper, publicizing notice of Rev. J.H. Temple’s forthcoming *History of the Town of, Whately, Mass.: Including a Narrative of Leading Events from the First Planting of Hatfield, 1660-1871*.

What grabbed my attention were the second and third sentences of paragraph No. 2, which read: “The frontspiece will repre-

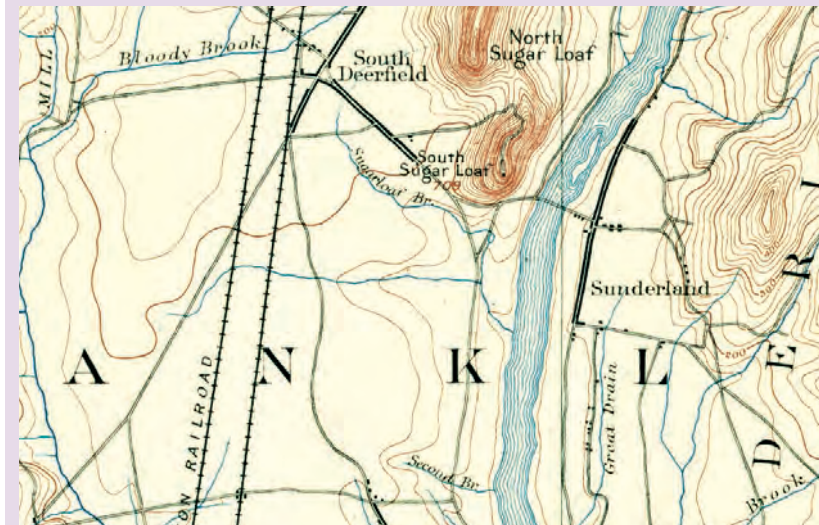
sent the scene of the Swamp Fight, which occurred on Aug. 25, 1675 west of the residence of J.C. Sanderson, Esq. This sketch was drawn by Mrs. A.H. Hall of Ashfield.”

More detailed than most town news stories of the day, the 450-word filing was written by none other than James M. Crafts, then a community news correspondent, later the author of his own *History of Whately* (1899). Crafts, who descended from many of Hatfield’s founding families, sang praise of Temple’s credibility as a Whately historian, writing:

“For this work we are confident there are but few men so competent as Mr. Temple to do justice to the topic. Thirty years ago, he was settled in Whately over the Congregational society. At that time there were some old men more than 90 years of age still living, whose minds were clear with truly wonderful memories. With these men Mr. Temple enjoyed such intimate relations that he drew from them very much of inestimable value to lovers of history.”

If you do the math, Temple had been in town since about 1840 and had spoken to sources born as early as 1750, only 75 years removed from the Swamp Fight. Which means those people had access to venerable sources who were alive when the Swamp Fight kicked off the Connecticut Valley campaign of King Philip’s War (1675-76), that placed what would become Franklin County in grave danger for at least 10 months.

The new revelation was not the Hopewell Swamp battle site, which has long been recognized by



This 1885 topographical map published by the US Geological Society shows a brook running west to east, from the train tracks to the Hopewell Swamp.

Above: Fifty trees delivered to the DPW in Montague for planting efforts made possible by a grant from the US Forest Service and state Department of Conservation and Recreation, in partnership with the Montague tree committee, Montague DPW, and Franklin Land Trust. These trees will provide important shade on sidewalks and streets, making Montague a bit cooler and more walkable for residents and visitors alike.

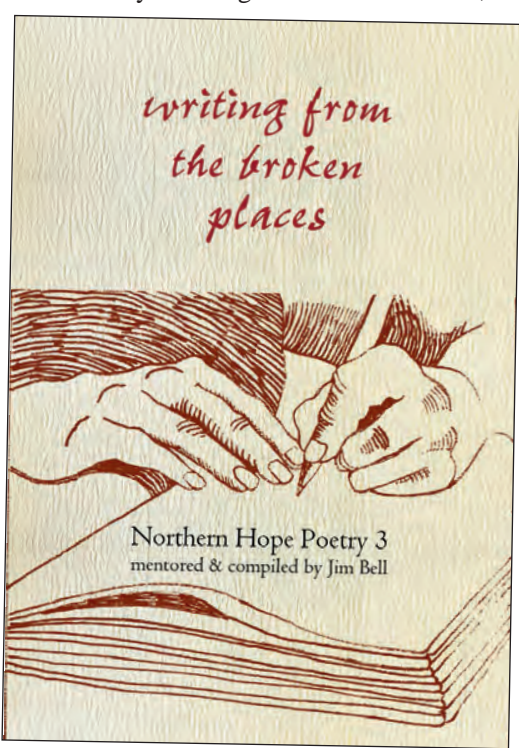
ArtBeat by Trish Crapo

Writing From the Broken Places

NORTHFIELD – When Bernardston poet Jim Bell wanted to produce an anthology of poems by people he’d been working with at the Northern Hope Center, a two-week residential rehab program formerly housed at the old Lunt Silversmith factory building in Greenfield, the first person he thought of was master letterpress printer Ed Rayher.

Bell knew Rayher from the very beginning days of Slate Roof Press, a member-run press in Northfield, now in its 17th year. Slate Roof’s original mission was to publish chapbooks by local poets, and Bell thought his proposed anthology, titled *Writing from the Broken Places*, pushed that mission even deeper, giving back to the community by giving voice to those who might not normally have a voice.

Slate Roof book covers, overseen and printed by Rayher, who also runs Swamp Press, are always eye-catching. And the cover of *Writing from the Broken Places* is no exception. The soft, textured paper feels good in your hands, and is deeply imprinted with a woodcut illustration by Rayher’s wife and oftentimes creative partner, J. Hyde (pronounced “Heidi”) Meissner.



“though I’ve been sober for forty years. So it’s an experience I feel I know something about.”

She hopes that what she describes as the “rough and crude” quality of the cover illustration, which shows two hands, one of them clutching a pen intently held over an open notebook, conveys the sense of effort that writing can entail.

“Especially if you’re a person in recovery who’s never written a poem before,” she said.

Two other woodcuts, one a sunrise, the other a moonrise, bookend the poems, and are, in her words, “references to AA, in a way.”

“The poems have a lot of pain in them,” she added, “so I think of the sunrise and the moonrise as being sort of like, one day at a time.”

A line drawing, depicting a person walking away, echoes that with the idea of “One step at a time.”

Meissner was drawn to the project because it resonated with her experience working as a psychotherapist, a career from which she is now retired. She often worked with people in recovery, she said.

“I am also a person in recovery myself,” she added,

Making a Difference

Though his trust in Rayher meant that he expected the book to look good, Bell said he was really impressed when he first saw a finished copy.

“It gives the poems a certain authenticity,” Bell said. “It looks professional.”

Throughout the book, the poets are identified by first name only – and sometimes last initial – to protect their privacy. But each poet’s name is followed by

see **ARTBEAT** page B4

Surviving Breast Cancer

By Julie Cunningham

Part 1: Staying Positive During the Testing and Staging Process

AMHERST – On April 19 I was diagnosed with Invasive Ductal Carcinoma, the most common breast cancer for women. About 80% of women who receive a diagnosis of breast cancer have this kind of cancer.

This began what I can only describe as two weeks of hell in testing. The staging process of cancer, especially in a young woman like myself, is intense.

First, we waited for the pathologist to come back with what kind of hormone receptors I had. Hormone receptors, as I understand them, are a good thing when you’re talking about breast cancer. I have

estrogen and progesterone receptors, which makes the cancer easier to suppress for five years after my treatment is complete.

I am also HR2 negative. HR2 proteins make the cancer more aggressive, and I would need more treatment time if I had HR2 proteins. The pathologist also alerts if there seems to be any spreading into the lymph nodes, and determines the grade of the cancer which is how aggressive it is.

I have a grade two cancer, which is middle-of-the-road. A grade one cancer is the least aggressive, and a grade three cancer is the most aggressive. Basically, I was diagnosed

with a middle-of-the-road common breast cancer, and that made it a little easier. I was told that young women often are diagnosed with highly aggressive, rare cancers in their breast.

After the pathology was complete, I went in for an MRI to determine whether the cancer had spread to lymph nodes, the skin around the tumor, the nipple, or the bone. Luckily, it looked like from the MRI none of that was the case.

The MRI was a scary test. I didn’t know how long I had this cancer, or what the chances were that it had spread. I was a wreck on the way,

see **SURVIVING** page B5

Pet of the Week



COURTESY DAKIN HUMANE SOCIETY

“Coco”

Meet Coco! She is an adorable little dog looking for her next home.

At first, she is very nervous and will not allow new people to touch her; if she feels cornered she is likely to bite. Once she is comfortable with you, she is an in-your-pocket kind of dog, loving to be pet all over and leaning for more rubs. She is housetrained and crate trained.

The prerequisite for adopting Coco is that you have had a fearful dog in the past. She would prefer a

home with adults only, and any other dogs in your home should meet her before adoption. She has no experience with cats.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at springfield@dakinhumane.org and include your name and phone number.

For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.



MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK PRINT

By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – Every spring in New England is different. Sometimes we have late snows. Other years we have an extended spring, and then suddenly it is hot as anything and summer is here.

This year we have what seems to be an early spring with peepers in the marshy bits along the bike path, a full expanse of daffodils which we add to every fall, and a luxurious blooming on my retirement yellow magnolia. The pollen count is high, but I simply take more antihistamine and keep on sneezing. I would describe my allergy injections as semi-effective.

All is forgiven since everything is so gorgeous with delicate shades of green and yellow. The lilacs are weighted down with heavy blooms. Their fragrance comes in all the windows. It is divine.

Spring is perhaps the brightest season. When it evolves into summer it is too hot and stultifying, with heavy weighted air unlacing itself with thunder and lightning.

THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

Spring in the Garden

The charm of the mating birds; their enjoyment of the dried mealworms I have put out in their special feeder. They don't really need to be fed any longer, but since the mother birds are working hard to feed both their babies and themselves it is a pleasure to supplement their diet. The bluebirds especially enjoy this special treat.

And they are such a special bird, with their azure blue feathers, perkiness, and an attitude which says thanks for all this bounty. For thanks we will enchant you with our extraordinary colors and our persistence at your feeders. Your job is to keep the household cat in check.

In truth, she has not ever brought us home a dead bird. She is more than well-fed enough, and rather lazy. We got her at the animal shelter where she was huddled at the top of the cat tower, covering from the bigger kitties and underfed for this reason. It is true that she despised the ride home to our house in a cat cage and even peed in anxiety.

She however did not need the psychiatrist, as once in her new home she settled right in and now is the queen of the household, since we have no other pets. She insists on a lap at all times – either parent will do – her run of the yard, and choice of her bed at night. She knows what

time we get up in the morning and if we don't, she jumps on the bed and nudges or pokes us. Who needs an alarm clock?

And anyway, in this spring season, we awaken to the early birdsong welcoming the new day. Whether cloudy or sunny or they are happy to be up, to be alive, mates and all, babies in the nest; all as it should be. It is a mild and friendly season: at times balmy. Yet often cool enough to merit a fire in the woodstove at the end of the day – perfect, really.

We have bought a charming small camping trailer built by a young neighbor. It is a half-pint, as he calls it. We have parked it at the back of the yard next to the bike path where it has become an item of interest.

It will be a perfect housing for one or both of us when we have visiting family who would otherwise end up in a motel. We can start the day with a coffee, sit out in the yard or settle our guests out there.

I imagine myself out there on the large double bed, brewing a cup of coffee on the small gas stove and opening the windows to the birdsong, unburdened by the requirement of visitors who will, after all, have full accommodations, including shower and bathroom and full kitchen. What more could you need on vacation?

MUSEUM ANNOUNCEMENTS

VT Museum Celebrates New Exhibits

BRATTLEBORO – The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) will host a free celebration of its spring exhibits, with many of the artists and curators in attendance, this Saturday, May 15, at 5:30 p.m. in the galleries and under a tent on the front lawn. Refreshments will be served, and two new exhibits, “Scott Boyd: Endangered Alphabets” and “Delita Martin: Between Worlds,” will be on view, in addition to five that opened in March. All are welcome. Visitors will be required to wear masks and maintain appropriate social distance inside the museum.

“Because of COVID, we were unable to have a proper opening reception for our spring exhibits,” says BMAC director Danny Lichtenfeld. “Now that the weather is nicer and we can spill outdoors, we’re looking forward to celebrating the artists and curators whose work we have the honor of sharing with our community this spring.”

“Scott Boyd: Endangered Alphabets” is a 10-foot-high obelisk on view in the BMAC Sculpture Garden May through November. Boyd inscribed characters, symbols, and scripts drawn from the writing systems of endangered languages into the four sides of the obelisk.

According to curator Mara Williams, “While most obelisks are reverential monuments commemorating the dead and honoring great leaders, Scott Boyd’s stands for what we are about to lose.... As writing systems and whole languages vanish, cultural diversity narrows. Unique expressions of community, of humanity, are lost.”

Boyd became interested in endangered alphabets after a presentation by Tim Brookes, founder of the Endangered Alphabets Project, a Vermont-based nonprofit organization that supports endangered, minority, and indigenous cultures throughout the world by preserving their writing systems. Brookes helped Boyd to research the alphabets on the obelisk, which include Nūshu, Tifinagh, the Samaritan alphabet, and the Cherokee syllabary.

“Delita Martin: Between Worlds” is a year-long installation in the seven large window bays extending across the front and north side of BMAC.

“In her colorful prints created from original mixed media work, Martin reimagines the identities and roles of Black women in the context of collective Black culture and African history,” says exhibitions manager Sarah Freeman. “Using symbols and patterns as a visual language, she redefines notions of beauty, strength, and connection to sacred space, and offers new narratives for women who have been historically marginalized.”

BMAC’s spring exhibits include “All Flowers Keep



Scott Boyd, “Endangered Alphabets Obelisk,” 2020 (carved ash wood). At BMAC through November.

the Light,” a group exhibition exploring the use of flowers as spiritual and emotional touchstones; “Jennifer Mack-Watkins: Children of the Sun,” which celebrates positive representation of African-American children and was inspired in part by the life of Vermont storyteller Daisy Turner; “Kenny Rivero: Palm Oil, Rum, Honey, Yellow Flowers,” a collection of autobiographical drawings with themes including masculinity, love, depression, sexuality, Afro-Caribbean faith, Anglo-Caribbean sensibilities, and Afro-Futurism; “Adria Arch: On Reflection,” a kinetic installation in the museum’s Mary Sommer Room; and GLASSTASTIC, BMAC’s biennial collaboration between K-6 students and glass artists.

BMAC is open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is pay-as-you-wish. Located in downtown Brattleboro at the intersection of Main Street and routes 119 and 142, the museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information, call (802) 257-0124 or visit www.brattleboromuseum.org.

Senior Center Activities

MAY 17 THROUGH 21

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center is closed and will reopen when advised by state and local authorities that it is safe to do so. This measure is taken not lightly but with the utmost concern for the most vulnerable in our community.

The Council on Aging staff will be available for referrals and information from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays, at (413) 863-9357 by telephone, and coa@montague-ma.gov by email.

ERVING

Senior Center director Paula Betteres writes:

“Erving Senior Center is still closed to the public. We are here daily taking calls and doing outreach work for seniors and their families. Call with any questions or concerns, need help with SHINE, SNAP. We are also taking calls to help seniors sign up

for their COVID vaccine. We are here to help make a difference.” Paula can be reached at (413) 423-3649 or paula-bettters@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

Leverett senior activities are currently canceled. Further updates are being distributed via TTY telephone and email. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is open for a foot care clinic the first-Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Otherwise, there are no activities. The Senior Health Rides is also suspended until advisories change. For more information, call Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

Local Supermarket Senior Accommodations

Supermarkets in Massachusetts are now required to provide special hours for seniors and immunocompromised shoppers. Call ahead – this information is accurate as of November 30, 2020; hours and accommodations are still changing.

Big Y: Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 772-0435

Foster’s: Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 773-1100

Green Fields Market: Senior hours from 8 to 9 a.m. Monday-Saturday and 10 to 11 a.m. on Sunday. Curbside pickup available. Order by 8 p.m.; order ready for pickup between 1 and 5 the following day. Delivery also available. (413) 773-9567

McCusker’s Market: Curbside pickup only 10 to 11 a.m. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Email pickup@franklincommunity.coop (413) 625-2548

Stop and Shop: Senior hours from 6 to 8 a.m. (413) 774-6096

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LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Local Comic Writer Talk!

GREENFIELD – Meet your neighbor Steve Murphy, a local comic book and graphic novel writer, for a “Fun to Funky: My Life In and Around Comic Books,” a virtual discussion on Thursday, May 20, at 7 p.m.

Murphy is an American comic book writer whose work has been nominated for both the Harvey and Eisner Awards. He has written *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* comics and animation, along with other

projects designed for older readers. *Rolling Stone* magazine includes his *The Puma Blues* amongst its list of “the 50 greatest graphic novels of all time.” Steve lives in Greenfield with his family and their very bad dog.

The program, made possible by the generosity of the Friends of the Greenfield Public Library, is free and open to the public. For more information and to register for the Zoom link, contact librarian@greenfieldpubliclibrary.org.

CONCERT REVIEW

The Sixth “Immigrant Voices”

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I have reviewed the Immigrant Voices concert before, and decided to do it again this year. It streamed online for people to see, broadcast from the Shea Theater, on May 2 at 7 p.m. When I wrote about this last time, I ended having a ton of things to say about it. In fact, it was practically too much to say. Watching it online wasn't a great undertaking at first.

Petr Chopik played the Star Spangled Banner very well on his violin. The five women who made up Las Guadalupanas, originally from Mexico, looked beautiful in their different colored dresses. They sang all right as well.

The next performance was Rose Coquillion and Esdras Dinatsil, and I found I liked their singing better. The song she sang was “Ayiti Cherie.”

A video of one performance, Yordanos Gebryohanes & Family, wasn't very clear.

I had the same reaction to Javier Luego-Garrido's singing that I did to Las Guadalupanas. I liked his guitar playing a little better. A

dancing group of children called The Children's Troupe, from Ecuador, danced reasonably well. Raquel Artiga did some dancing and singing. My favorite of these was the Children's Troupe.

One performance was a little different than just a song and dance number. Eleidys Guerra explained that what she was doing with all of the singing and dancing was kind of telling a story. That is what the person after her, Bian Salas, also did. Most of these individuals were from Spanish-speaking countries. Guerra and Salas were from Venezuela.

One singer, Lan Nguyen, was from Vietnam. She sang a love song. It was a very unique song for me to hear, and felt different from the various other people who sang before her.

Petr Chopik returned to perform again with his family. The song performed was called “Argentine Tango.” His family played a piano and another fiddle while he played his. All three played very well when it came to being in sync with each other. Both of his performances were nice to hear.

A class of students who are English learners recited a poem called “The Hill We Climb” in a couple of different languages. This was another something different that occurred during the event.

I'm not usually a fan of classical music, but I found I liked Petr Chopik's performances best out of the evening. It was nice they didn't make the whole thing just feature song and dance numbers. A couple of different things in the show, like that poem, were cool. It was a good concert!

Learning to Fly Fish: Part V

Ariel Jones, who recently passed away, penned a series of 14 articles in the Montague Reporter in 2005 on her experiences learning to fly fish. This is the fifth in the series. Jones was a pioneer of the local art scene when she moved to Turners Falls from NYC and opened a photography studio on Avenue A in 2000.

BY ARIEL JONES

MONTAGUE – One of the ongoing problems I've had since moving to western Massachusetts from the city has been the fear of getting lost. The driving part was fine, but the navigating was terrible. If you are not afraid of being lost, or you have lived here all your life, it would be hard to understand the anxiety driving out alone onto winding, unmarked roads with an innately bad sense of direction can give one.

The only motivation strong enough to get me out there seemed to be my love of learning to fly fish.

I was now facing the fact that I couldn't always drive an hour away to fish a known water with Tom. I would have to go exploring for local spots so I could go out more often.

Before I Discovered Maps

How do you know where to go? What was private, and what was public? Where were the trout?

I began by talking to Richard at Pipione's, and began asking around to get a general idea of what roads ran alongside local rivers. I was advised to look for turn-off spots where cars, presumably those of other anglers, and not lunatics straight out of *Deliverance*, had parked.

In early August, I spent one Saturday doing this. I was often “lost,” but was having such a marvelous time it didn't seem to matter. I was fi-



An Orvis Mid-Arbor reel.

nally beginning to realize just how truly beautiful this part of Massachusetts is. I followed roads, found waters, saw turnoffs. I often parked my car and tramped down to a riverbank to examine the depth, search for pools, check out the riverbed, just like a pro.

When I got home later that day, I felt an enormous sense of accomplishment. One more unnecessary mental obstacle was slipping behind me. The ability to just go out on my own was getting easier. The trick was to not think about it too much and just do it. And, I found a spot.

Here's the first of many tips I intend to give to prospective fly fishers: *Look At Maps*. They not only show roads and rivers, but contain other helpful information, like a section on fishing that includes a table of rivers and which fish are in them. There are also many books on trout fishing in New England that give a lot of helpful information about where to go.

More about all this later. I'm off to Arkansas for two weeks; I'll be checking out the fishing spots there, and may correspond with you while I'm on the road.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

“In This Day And Age,” Suspicious Caller Points Out, “You Never Know What Someone Is Doing.” (Plus: Anti-Masker Smashes Post Office Computer)

Monday, 5/3

6:27 a.m. Caller from Randall Road states that a neighbor just threw a bunch of trash all over her car and was yelling at her from the driveway. Peace restored.

7:41 a.m. Caller requesting that Environmental Police relocate a family of foxes that regularly cross Route 63. Foxes are living in a culvert under the road. Caller is concerned that the foxes will be struck or that there will be an accident from someone trying to avoid hitting them. Provided caller with contact number for EPO dispatch.

9:59 a.m. Report of patron at the Turners Falls post office who is upset about

being told he has to wear a mask due to being in a federal building. Patron is throwing things in the lobby and has reportedly broken a computer monitor. A 35-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon; disorderly conduct; and malicious destruction of property worth less than \$1,200.

4:16 p.m. Caller requesting officer to Carnegie Library to listen to a strange voicemail they received over the weekend. Referred to an officer.

7:06 p.m. Report of two dirt bikes that just passed the caller on the bike path; one red, one white; both operated by males. Units advised.

Tuesday, 5/4

4:37 a.m. Report of loud vehicle driving up and down West Main Street since 3:30 a.m. Officer monitored area for some time; no loud noises heard. 10:14 a.m. Report of trailer that came apart while being towed partially obstructing roadway at Edward Avenue and Turners Falls Road. Rau's requested to assist lifting trailer up; may be able to be re-attached. Trailer back on; road clear.

11:20 a.m. Caller from Avenue A reporting that the tenant below him is banging on their ceiling, the caller's floor, and the vibration is moving the caller's chair and causing it to squeak. Officer spoke with tenants; no noise heard. Officer advises to refer caller to property management if he calls back.

11:22 a.m. Caller from Avenue A reporting lead in her apartment and the apartment below hers; advises landlord has not made repairs in a timely manner, has put a tarp on the roof but has not repaired the roof or the structural damage. Caller expressed health concerns for herself and her child. Referred caller to board of health.

2:15 p.m. Report of on-

going issue with speeding on Country Club Lane and multiple incidents of drag racing last weekend. Caller requesting officers to monitor area; also requesting to speak with Chief Williams re: lowering the speed limit sign on that street. Connected to Chief Williams' office and advised caller to call when in progress when possible.

5:34 p.m. Caller states that a person is driving a green and white dirt bike at a high rate of speed on the bike path. Officer speaking with someone matching the description on Depot Street. Advised

of complaint.

6:22 p.m. Caller from Keith Street states that a vehicle has crashed onto her property. Shelburne Control notified; AMR and TFFD responding. One party removed to hospital.

6:34 p.m. Caller from Franklin Area Survival Center states that the security cameras show that some kids are playing inside the recycle dumpsters on the property. Area checked; no one located.

Wednesday, 5/5

3:20 a.m. Caller reporting tree down across one sidewalk and part of the roadway at Turners Falls and Swamp roads. Officers moved a few pieces out of the road. Road now passable. Message left for DPW to check area in daytime.

6:06 a.m. Calls to dispatch with recorded messages regarding religion.

1:17 p.m. Report of two loose cows on Old Stage Road. Area search negative.

1:58 p.m. Shelburne Control requesting MPD unit to check the First Street/Unity Park area for Gill PD; subjects have reportedly been swinging on the substructure on the Gill side of the bridge. Area search negative.

2:56 p.m. Message left in general mailbox requesting contact information for animal control officer; caller is looking to speak with him re: a woodchuck that has been under a woodshed by the community garden. Caller provided with contact information and hours of ACO.

8:19 p.m. Caller from Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter advising that there was a sick raccoon falling down in the parking lot; raccoon then made its way to the town dump. After observing it for a while, he determined it was in bad shape, so he put it down with a single shot from his handgun. He is now placing it in a bag and putting it in a dumpster. No police service necessary.

Thursday, 5/6

10:13 a.m. Caller from Montague Housing Authority would like to speak with officer about an ongoing issue with a tenant. Caller advised to have neighbors call the police while the disturbance is happening.

10:22 a.m. Caller from Old Greenfield Road states that someone drove through his hay fields overnight and tore them up. Report taken.

1:35 p.m. Caller states that someone hit her vehicle in the Food City parking lot and left but then came back. Report taken.

8:27 p.m. Caller from H Street states that she can hear a female yelling “get off me” and a male yelling back. Caller states that it sounds like it is coming from somewhere down the street, but she can hear it clear as day over her movie. Officers spoke with some people outside in the area who stated they had not heard anything. Voices may have been carrying from a group of kids playing a couple of streets over.

8:44 p.m. Report of assault at ServiceNet housing on Central Street. Peace restored. Will be handled internally.

9:38 p.m. Caller states that there is a suspicious bike leaning up against a telephone pole on Montague City Road. Caller states it just seems weird to him, and that in this day and age, you never know what someone is doing. Referred to an officer.

Friday, 5/7

10:36 a.m. Caller from Third Street complaining of a neighbor who keeps letting his dog out of his apartment off leash and unsupervised. ACO notified and will be responding.

3:02 p.m. Caller states that he received a call from a conductor that a female was walking her dogs down the middle of the train tracks in Lake Pleasant. Caller states she did end up moving and the train was able to pass, but would like officer to check area. Nobody found on tracks at this time.

4:43 p.m. 911 caller stating that a male is accusing her of hitting him with her vehicle at the Route 47 crossover and that the male is being verbally aggressive. Male called in on 911 stating his leg is injured from being struck by the vehicle. Units and Shelburne Control advised; report taken.

Saturday, 5/8

3:28 p.m. First of two requests from Greenfield PD for an MPD officer to assist with the search of females taken into custody. Services rendered.

9:11 p.m. Officer located four unoccupied bicycles by the basketball court at Sheffield Elementary. Checking area. Officer made contact with bike owners; no issues.

Sunday, 5/9

8:45 a.m. Caller playing recordings citing Bible verses and talking about hell, the afterlife, and Satan. No voice contact.

8:24 p.m. Car vs. deer at Federal Street and Woodland Drive. No smoke, fluids, or injuries. Deer is deceased on side of road. MassDOT advised.

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ARTBEAT from page B1

the title, "Northern Hope Poet."

"At some point it occurred to me that if I could give these people a positive label – 'Northern Hope Poet' – it could make a difference for people who may not have done a lot of positive things in their lives, or been given a lot of positive feedback," Bell said.

Bell had worked previously with the sheriff's department to print two simpler books of Northern Hope Poets' work.

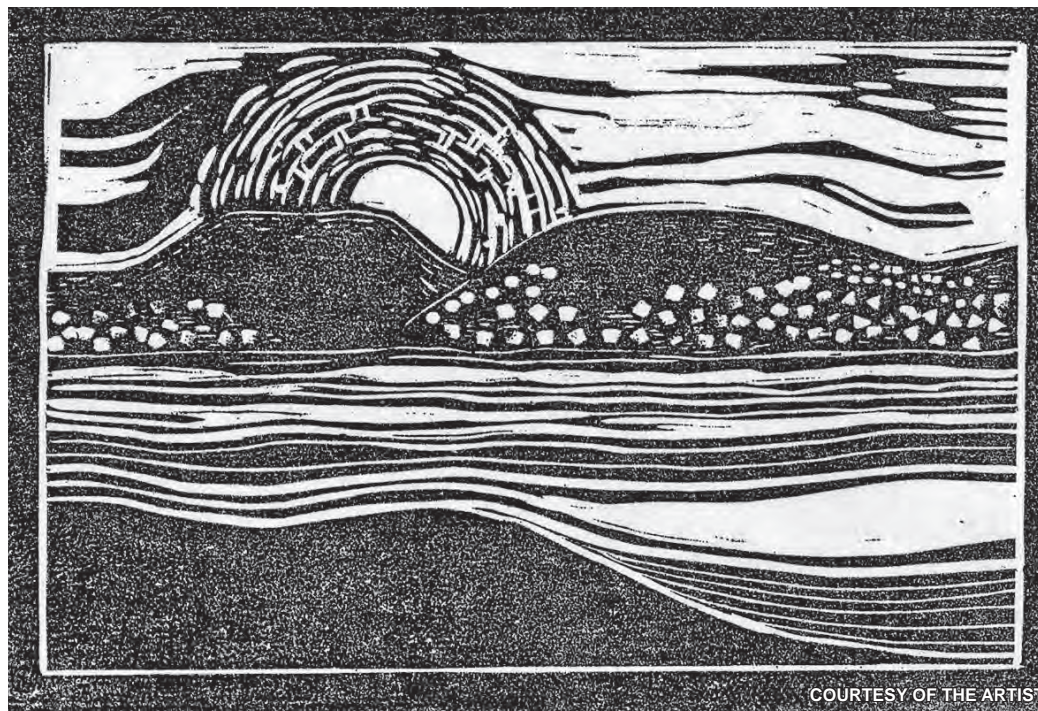
"For the poets seeing those books, it made a difference," he said.

A Rough Road

Bell, a track and field coach at Pioneer Valley Regional School, acknowledges with mild amazement that he has "close to half a century of experience teaching and coaching."

In addition to leading workshops at Northern Hope, he taught writing at the Franklin County House of Corrections for about five years. In all situations, whether he's teaching a kid to pole vault, or leading a writing workshop for people in recovery, Bell says his goal is always "setting up a situation that allows that person to perform in the best way they're capable of doing."

Thinking back on his experience at Northern Hope, Bell said, "I went in there wanting to do a poetry group, or a writing group, and I felt my way through. After a while, it became a normal part of their process there. It was a room with thirty chairs or so — women on one side; men on the other. More men, usually, and they were in different stages of recovery. Many of them have come from de-



J. Hyde Meissner's woodcut, *Sunrise*, is one of two that bookend the poems. Meissner says the two together convey the idea of "one day at a time."

tox, some are heavily medicated."

The groups met for 55 minutes, about half an hour of which was dedicated to writing. Sometimes Bell would give participants a prompt like "Should I stay, or should I go?" Or the group would first read poems, sometimes by other Northern Hope Poets, and talk about them before beginning to write. Poets were encouraged to share what they'd written, and after they did, the group would clap.

"I wasn't severe with them," Bell said. "I get it. If they need to sleep, if they need to

be distracted, if they need to read something else while we're reading, I understand that."

Recovery is a rough road, Bell said. "I'm going on 40 years of recovery, but I'm still fucking crazy," he said with a laugh. "But I have tools available; I have like-minded people I can turn to."

He still remembers what it felt like: "When my life was absolutely falling apart, I was newly sober, my family was falling apart."

Attending AA meetings and knowing who to call at a desperate moment got him

through those earlier, rough times. He hopes that the writing, and the self-awareness it brings, can help the people he works with.

"I know how important writing is to me," Bell said. "And how important writing has been to my recovery."

He recounts the experience, early in his recovery, of taking a class on human development at UMass. He wrote a book report "on one of those 1950s books on adolescents," he said, and his professor, who went on to become a mentor to him, told him it was the best piece of writing he'd seen on adolescents in a long time.

"When I was in early recovery I felt like shit," Bell recalled. "I felt I had let everybody down – which I probably had. And that paper made me feel I had done something."

He hopes that seeing their poems in this new anthology makes the Northern Hope Poets feel the same.

Copies of Writing from the Broken Places: Northern Hope Poetry 3 can be ordered from Slate Roof Press at slateroofpress.com.

Slate Roof received a grant from the Greenfield Cultural Council to help with publication, and will donate \$3 of the \$17 cover price of each book to the North Quabbin Recovery Center, under the umbrella of the North Quabbin Community Coalition.

An online reading will be held in late spring or early summer, with Slate Roof alumni poets and perhaps members of the North Quabbin recovery community reading the poems.

**MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN****#34: Owen Manure & #35: Bridge of Flowers****Interviews by J. BURKETT**

TURNERS FALLS – This week our column is a little different. Instead of interviewing one artist or band, we are interviewing one artist and one band. These guys are all friends, and do shows together, so it made sense to put them together.

Owen Manure is a solo musician who sometimes has a back up band. His music could be called punk or hardcore, but is really much more than that.

Bridge of Flowers is a newer band from far-west Mass. They are more of an "Indie Rock" style band, with similarities to '90s bands... but are much more than that, too. They have a new LP coming out soon! Check them all out...

MMM: So what are your earliest music memories?

Owen Manure: My earliest childhood memories are my parents listening to Steve Winwood in the living room, and them hanging around with my uncle and smoking,

and my dad collecting guitars. But he couldn't play. I remember that.

I learned to play guitar because I had my dad's guitars in my room. I don't remember exactly how long it took to learn to play, though.

MMM: Do you have any fave musicians, actors, or movies?

OM: My favorite movie is called *Scrooged*, with Bill Murray, because it didn't make any sense and was funny at the same time. I also like the *Hot Shots* movies, and *Goodfellas* and *Casino*. My favorite actor is Nicholas Cage, because of *Leaving Las Vegas*.

MMM: What kind of music do you like to listen to?

OM: I used to love blues music. My mom played bass in a blues band, and when I was like 10 to 15 they played in the basement. When I was booted from punk at 17 I started to listen to just blues 100 percent of the time.

I like folk blues like Skip James, but I like improvising parts as well. I like the call-and-response blues

like Otis Rush or Freddie King, because it was like a long solo sorta.

MMM: Do you like any visual artists? We have heard that you do drawings...

OM: Artists I like: Francis Bacon and Robert Crumb and George Condo.

MMM: Do you like any Elvis movies?

OM: I like Elvis movies because I lived in a nursing home with old ladies, and old ladies from a certain generation love Elvis, and they watched stuff like Elvis movies and I liked it. Elvis became less lame than he used to be, was lame to me till later.

MMM: Do you like comedy? Have you ever done any? Do you know any new jokes?

OM: I can't really think of anything funny anymore. Those people who do comedy at Bishop's [Lounge]... I think did that watching me before when I did comedy. They may deny it, they may not.

MMM: Do you want to talk about your music? How do you get ideas for songs?

OM: When I write lyrics I mostly write songs about nothing and then keep changing them around. I write songs better when I don't sleep for a few days. Sometimes they come to me completely done, if I stay up long enough.



Top left: Owen Manure. Here: Bridge of Flowers.

MMM: What do you like most about West Mass? Thanks for talking to us!

OM: I'm so western Mass. I know no different. But I mostly like it.

MMM: When is the new *Bridge of Flowers LP* coming out? How many copies will there be?

Shane Bruno: Sometime this summer. 250.

MMM: Who made the cover?

Jeff Gallagher: I made the cover, after getting skittish about two other ones from artists we considered.

MMM: Have you guys jammed with Owen Manure before?

SB: That show at Dollhaus (a defunct house venue in Amherst) when Jeff got up and left before we started playing, and Owen came up and sang.

Jon Hanson: We started jamming out some kinda punk riff, kind of fit his vibe. I don't think we had even met him at that point, besides seeing him and his band chilling outside.

SB: Might have been the same night we found out that Leonard Cohen died.

MMM: Do you have a favorite venue?

Chris Wojtkowski: Sierra Grille (RIP).

JH: BOF hasn't played there, but separately we have had good

times at Pauly's in Albany.

JG: All Asia bar in Cambridge.

CW: Any place where we've had a good time. What's that place in Worcester?

JH: Hotel Vernon.

SB: The Lichtenstein in Pittsfield is kind of our home base. The Spotty Dog in Hudson was pretty cool, too. Kind of cramped, but that's what makes it fun.

MMM: What's your favorite ESP release, other than your own?

JG: "The Fugs First Album."

JH: I haven't dug into the catalog (yet), but we definitely have a lot of respect for a lot of the artists that ESP has done releases of: Pharoah Sanders, Sun Ra, and Albert Ayler to name a few.

MMM: Will you tour when people start doing that again?

JG: We're gonna tour down the East Coast. We'll play by the beach and end the tour in Miami. No more New England shows, we're oversaturated. We've overstayed.

JH: Definitely down to tour again once things are clear. I don't know about no more New England shows, but it would be a good idea to play beyond western Massachusetts more often though.

MMM: So... Lady Gaga, or Bob Dylan?

CW: Lady Gaga. It's apples and oranges.

SB: Having seen both, Lady Gaga is a better performer, but Bob Dylan is a better song writer.

JH: They have both had an impact on their respective generations.

MMM: Anything else?

SB: We're grateful for the attention.

CW: I agree – it's always been an outlet and for fun, and it's pretty incredible that people want to hear us. It's pretty crazy.

JH: We're really proud of this new record coming out. Maybe we'll make some weird videos to go along with the album.

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1

authoritative historians, but instead the identification of the artist who sketched the woodblock illustration appearing at the front of the book. Hall's depiction of the site where the fight began had for decades confused me. Looking west from the depths of the swamp, the sketch portrays a deep, narrow ravine supporting a small brook, with the distant Whately/Conway hills in the background.

The vexing issue was that never in my lifetime has a brook sliced through the plain traversed by Long Plain Road in East Whately. So, what was going on? Was it a simple case of artistic license, or had the terrain been altered? For years, I assumed the former. Now I know better.

The sketch is still remarkably accurate if you know the site from which the Hall perspective was born.

I began to form this realization shortly before my June 2018 retirement. The first clues were revealed on the earliest topographical maps of Whately published by the United States Geological Survey in 1885, 1890, 1895, and 1900.

The old maps show a small brook that no longer exists, running west to east across Long Plain Road. The stream flowed from a spring just west of the railroad tracks, and was tunneled under the tracks, crossing Long Plain Road between today's Fairview Farms office building and the livestock auction. From there it crossed the vast plain before dropping into a deep ravine entering Hopewell Swamp. After making its way through that dense marsh and

pulling in a boggy spring, the brook crossed Chang Farm, traveling under River Road to meet Sugarloaf Brook just north of Herlihy Park.

The section of that brook running from the tracks to Hopewell Swamp never existed in my memory or in that of anyone else I queried, including the current landowners, brothers Alan and Brad Sanderson, slightly younger distant cousins of mine. Topographical maps published since 1935 bear us out. On the 1935 map published after a 30-year hiatus, the brook has vanished and the plain appears as the one I knew as a farm hand, pheasant hunter, and wayward teen seeking nighttime privacy from the public eye.

Most likely, shade-tobacco farmers at some point tunneled the small stream through pipes and buried it to open up and level off the entire farming plain. Today, the spring still flows through buried pipes, exiting a concrete and stone-framed 14- to 16-inch pipe in the very ravine artist A.H. Hall depicted in her sketch – the western hills gracing the landscape. In my younger days, there was a farm dump there, and many a cock pheasant came cackling out of the surrounding brush, not to mention the mucky, cattail swamp below and beyond.

This buried spring brook exits the aquifer that gave us what is today known as Tri-Town Beach, a swimming hole that bubbled up in the early 1960s during Interstate 91 construction. I remember its beginning. We called it Manmade Lake, and used it as a private swimming hole

popular as a school-skipping site.

So, yes, there is a brook running through that plain traversed by the Native trail known as the Pocumtuck Path, leading travelers from Hatfield to Deerfield in the earliest days. You just can't see it anymore.

When Hatfield and Deerfield were being settled in the 17th century, this was the trunkline path from which all others branched, whether going to the river on the east or the mountains to the west. In later years, this path became a county road established as the dividing line for the earliest land divisions of Deerfield, Whately and Hatfield.

When the Hatfield Norwotucks fled their village in the dark of night and were pursued on the morning of August 25, 1675 by Hatfield troopers, they took this path northward and sprang an ambush from the wooded brook ravine crossing the path. A skulking battle continued through the swamp for several hours before the shooting stopped and the blackpowder smoke cleared. Ten colonials and an estimated 26 Indians died.

Although I have learned that you can't believe everything you read in the newspaper, take it to the bank that A.H. Hall set up her easel where the Swamp Fight began. The mystery of that hidden brook has sown confusion far too long. Now that we know there was indeed a brook where early accounts seem to place one, the rest of the story falls into place nicely. That skirmish "below Sugar Loaf hill" fits like a tailored suit.



This sketch by Mrs. A.H. Hall of the Hopewell Swamp battle site, which appeared in Temple's 1872 history of Whately, shows a brook running into the swamp from the west.

SURVIVING from page B1

and a wreck when I received my results because I didn't understand them. All the medical language was confusing to me.

After the MRI, I went for a meeting with the oncologist to talk about treatment and then with the surgeon to talk about what kind of surgery I would want. I met with the plastic surgeon who discussed options if I wanted a complete bilateral reconstruction with implants. After those meetings, I had an EKG, a meeting with the dermatologist to look at my moles on my body as a precaution, and a meeting with my primary for anti-anxiety meds, and then I went for something scary called a PET test.

My anxiety level during this whole process was very high. I felt alone and scared. For a few nights, I was only able to take medication and try to sleep and shrug off the thoughts of doom that were clouding my judgment. I honestly felt like a sitting duck. This cancer inside me was eating me and wrecking my body.

Every test got me closer to treatment, and every test gave the oncologist more information. And now, I am glad I did every single test. Here is why.

My PET test did show something on my liver that needs a look. But because I did all of these scary staging tests, MRIs and PET scans and blood work, she was able to tell me that this was highly unlikely to be cancer based on what we knew about my cancer, how it was spreading, and what breast cancer usually does before it spreads to the liver. Now I'm glad I pushed through all these scary tests, because these kinds of questions are easily answered and we know the difference between a precaution and something that is serious. Plus, on the PET test scan the doctor indicated that this was only mildly suspicious.

The first couple of weeks after a cancer diagnosis is one of the layers of hell. Perpetual worry and anxiety of the unknown is a plague of the mind. What gets me through it is the possibility of something better at the other side. A better version of me. What still scares me is the unknown. This is a new version of me that will last beyond my diagnosis. Surviving cancer is a state of mind.

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

A Vital Day for Giving: Valley Grows Day!

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Food access and farm organizations across western Massachusetts have worked rapidly and tirelessly responding to the rising rates of food insecurity which have been exacerbated due to the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are disproportionately impacted, including low income individuals and people of color. You may show your support for farming and food justice in western Massachusetts by donating to local food access, farming, and food justice organizations who are working to ensure that the food here reaches those most in need.

Wednesday, May 19 marks Valley Grows 2021, a day of giving and unity. This is a collective effort among small, community-based nonprofits working to grow just and sustainable food systems for our communities. Participating organizations this year are Just Roots in Greenfield; Grow Food Northampton, Abundance Farm, and the Pioneer Valley Workers Center in Northampton; Gardening the Community and All Farmers in Springfield; and Seeds of Solidarity in Orange.

These seven groups expand access to healthy local food for everyone, and create opportunities for the next generation of urban and rural farmers. Valley Grows Day offers the community an opportunity to support them as they move from pivoting to persisting in their critical food access work.

Valley Grows Day started in 2018 when two local community farm nonprofits, Just Roots and Grow Food Northampton, teamed up to create a new day of giving in the Pioneer Valley. Due to the impact of COVID-19, Jessica O'Neill of Just Roots and Alisa Klein of Grow Food Northampton decided that now, more than ever, our local farm and food access organizations need to raise funds.

"On a normal day there is already so much innovative and critical work happening around food, land, and access in western

Massachusetts, but in the wake of a persisting pandemic and rising food insecurity, we are all even more pressed to ensure food and resources get to where it is needed most," said Just Roots executive director O'Neill.

Each organization has its own goal for Valley Grows Day which will be promoted on each partner's page on the valleygrows.org website. Combined, these total a collective goal for the day of \$97,900. Some organizations have match commitments from their own donors and business supporters. You can find that information on each participant's giving page if you want to double your impact.



(If it's more convenient for you to give in advance of May 19, this can be done through each organization's giving platform. Just indicate that your gift is intended to contribute to the Valley Grows Day initiative.)

Just Roots is a women-led, equity focused organization with a goal to change the food system. They developed and operate the largest SNAP-enrolled, low-income Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm share program in Massachusetts. www.justroots.org

Gardening The Community is a Springfield-based food justice organization engaged in youth development, urban agriculture, and sustainable living to build healthy and equitable communities. Healthy, locally grown food has been even harder to access in Springfield as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our food systems. GTC strives to grow the nutritious food our community needs and provide a safe outdoor space for young people to learn and grow,

while continuing to operate their Farm Store and subsidized farm share program. www.gtcspringfield.org.

Grow Food Northampton provides access to land and nutritious local food; stewards productive and sustainably-managed farmland on their Community Farm; and fosters meaningful involvement of community members around gardening, farming, and creating a sustainable and just local food system. www.growfoodnorthampton.org.

Seeds of Solidarity Education Center innovates programs that awaken the power among people of all ages – from toddlers to teens to people who are incarcerated – to "Grow Food Everywhere," to transform hunger to health and create resilient lives and communities. The organization is based in Orange on a solar-powered farm that uses ecological methods to regenerate soil, restore climate, and build community food resilience. Seeds of Solidarity organizes the North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival with their neighbors, an event that ignites regional art, agriculture and economy. www.seeds-ofsolidarity.org.

Pioneer Valley Workers' Center builds power with low-wage and immigrant workers throughout western Massachusetts. pvworkerscenter.org.

Abundance Farm offers earth-based, community building experiences that integrate Jewish tradition, regenerative agriculture and food justice. www.abundancefarm.org.

All Farmers works with refugee and immigrant farmers to build a food system organized and run by and for the community. Originally from central and eastern Africa and central Asia, the farmers already feed over 500 low-income families annually with produce that is part of their cultural diet, as well as sustaining their families. www.allfarmers.world.

Visit www.valleygrows.org for more details, and to make a donation.

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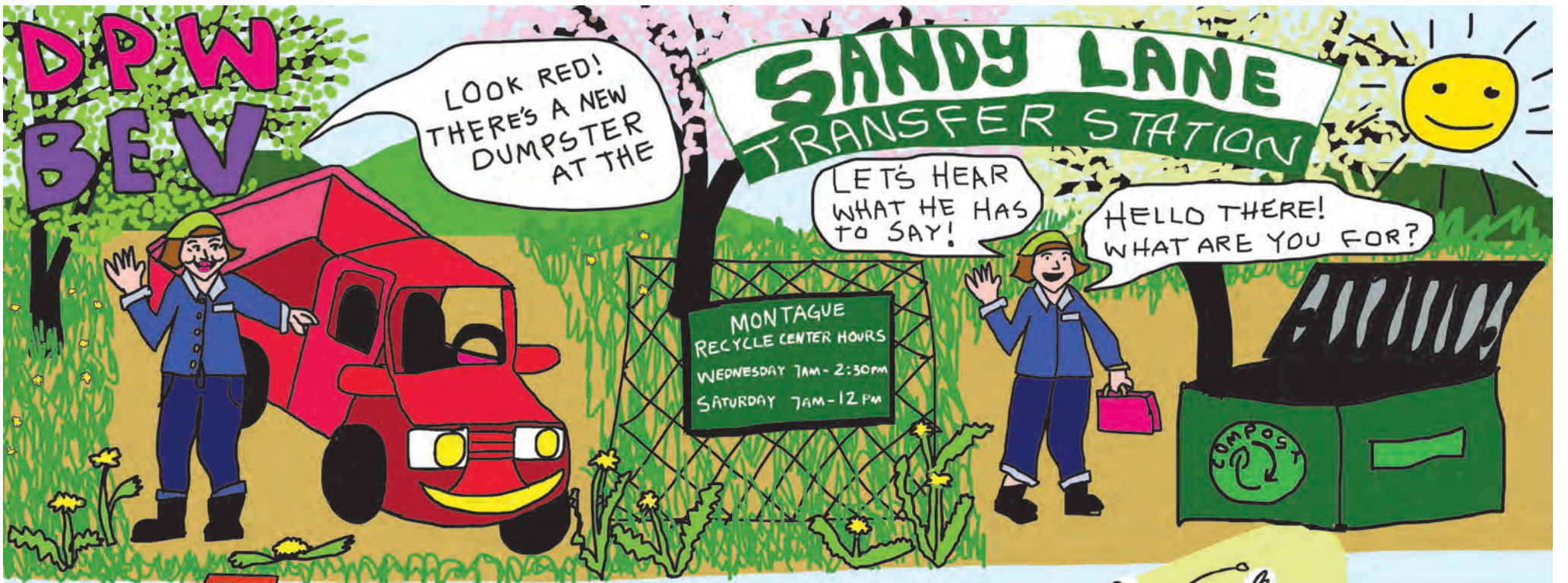
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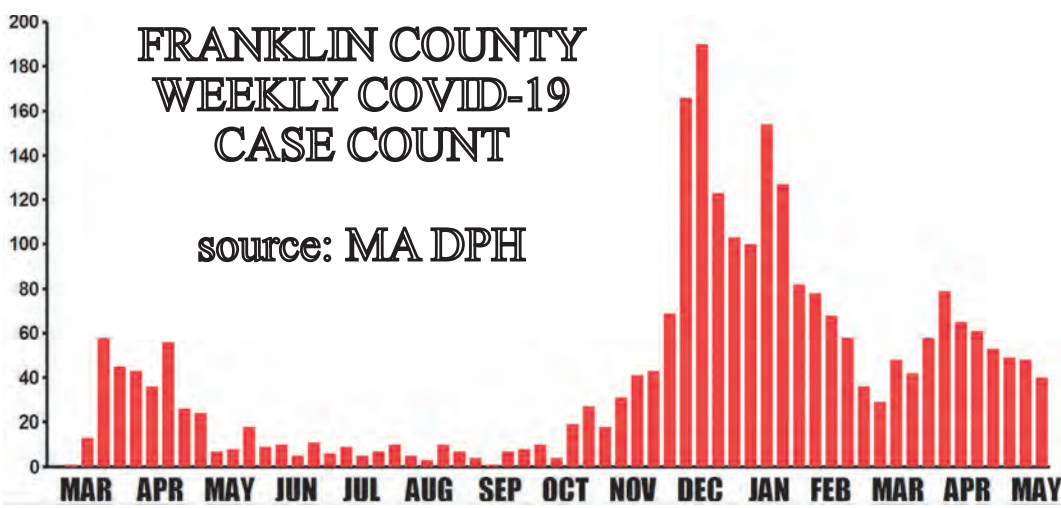
TURNERS FALLS – Massachusetts Public Service Announcements about tick and mosquito spray will play on Channel 17 as well as the MCTV Vimeo Page. The Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee has posted a new meeting, as has the Montague selectboard.

All our videos are available on the MCTV Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the MCTV website, montaguetv.org, under the tab "Videos." All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as featured on Vimeo. MCTV is always available to assist in-

cal video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

The MCTV board is looking for new board members, specifically someone interested in filling the role of treasurer. The station is also looking to hire a producer to make Spanish-language content. Please email infomontaguetv@gmail.com with a resume to schedule an interview!

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NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE

BY TROUBLE MANDESON

GREENFIELD – A mere thirty miles south of us lies Hadley, Massachusetts, known as the “Asparagus Capital of the World,” because of its prodigious harvest of the green spears. Asparagus can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, where it was used for medicinal purposes as a diuretic and as an aphrodisiac. Images have been found in ancient Egypt showing asparagus used as an offering, and one of the oldest surviving recipe collections from the first century includes a recipe for asparagus.

The emperor Caesar Augustus would often bark “*Velocius quam*

asparagi conquantur!,” which translates to “faster than cooking asparagus,” or “Get going already!!!” He was such a connoisseur of the vegetable that he organized elite military units to procure it for him, with the fastest runners employed to carry the fresh spears back to him. In slightly more modern times, Britain’s Queen of England II loved her Hadley grass and often ordered copious quantities of it to be shipped overseas to be served at her annual spring feast.

Asparagus is a tamed wild vegetable, an herbaceous perennial that is one of the first green plants we see poking up from the ground af-

ter a long winter. It’s winter’s cold that gives the spears their incomparable sweetness, as does the deep fertile layer of sandy loam, the remains of a glacial lake in our geographical area, where the standard Mary Washington variety can produce for 30 years or more.

Since asparagus originated in the sandy, often salty soils of the Mediterranean basin, it tolerates salinity better than most. The original herbicide used on asparagus by early farmers was actually rock salt, but it would dry out the soil and often destroy the plants around it.

It takes three years from planting to harvest before one can pick and eat the spears, about the full diameter of a pencil when ready. Did you know that asparagus is a 50/50 mix of male and female plants? The flowers look slightly different on each, and with the female plant expending more energy to produce a red berry, the male clones are used in commercial growing.

Although Hadley is the largest asparagus producer in the US – don’t let Oceana County, Michigan tell you otherwise! – we are fifth in asparagus production, preceded by China, Peru, Mexico, and Germany.

Fun Asparagus Fact: Although everyone can make asparagus pee, not everyone can smell the pungent, sulfurous urine that follows an asparagus binge, a genetic trait similar to the one that makes cilantro taste like soap for some people.

A drive through the western Massachusetts countryside in spring will carry you past many homemade roadside stands selling the freshly picked spears just as local stores and farmers markets are bursting with bundles. Asparagus is so important to this area that

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CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

Asparagus is in season now.

people come from miles around to attend the annual WGBY Asparagus Festival in Hadley celebrating everything asparagus.

In addition to games, music, and food, the events include the “Spear-it Luncheon,” featuring menu items devised by area chefs. One year’s menu included chilled smoked asparagus in potato soup, poached monkfish with grilled ramps and asparagus, cider-brined pork roulade with asparagus farotto (a type of risotto made from spelt), and strawberry-rhubarb jam crepes.

I found information on the WGBY website that this event is tentatively planned for June 5, 2021, but it cannot be confirmed.

Asparagus does not require much, if any, cooking. The sweet, juicy, delicate crunch of a newly picked spear plucked from the sun-warmed dirt and quickly devoured is a rite of springtime. A quick snap at the natural bend and the harder, fibrous end can be sent flying into the compost bucket, leaving the tender part of the stem to consume. If cooked, a quick steam or blanch followed up with a drizzle of lemon juice and olive oil and a sprinkle of salt and pepper is as basic as it gets.

Asparagus is lovely used in quiches and salads, drizzled with balsamic vinegar, wrapped in prosciutto, and baked, roasted, broiled, grilled, sauteed, or steamed. It pairs well with cheese and other dairy (like a cream sauce), with chicken or pork, and does particularly well with eggs and truffles (not the chocolate kind) for their shared sulfurous note. If you do cook it, be careful not to overcook – once asparagus becomes mushy, it loses the crunch factor and seems less flavorful overall.

I’ll leave you today with the words of a poet rather than a recipe. It’s easy enough to find ways to prepare asparagus yourself, so I’ll share a line of Anne Sexton’s “O Ye Tongues: First Psalm” which seems appropriate:

“Let there be seasons so that our tongues will be rich in asparagus and limes.”

Trouble lives in Greenfield with Wifey and Mama Catt Elliott and volunteers at many local agencies working with food-insecure populations. She loves to talk, read, write, garden/farm, cook, and make art.



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