

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 33

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JUNE 30, 2022

Literacy Program Promotes Books as a Family Bond



Literacy program director Liliana Moresco welcomes a young participant to the playgroup at MCSM Wednesday morning.

By KAREN GUILLETTE

TURNERS FALLS – Every Wednesday morning at 10:30 a.m., a group of excited toddlers and their parents enter the Montague Catholic Social Ministries (MCSM) building on Avenue A in Turners Falls. They are headed into the Family Center’s playgroup and, in their tiny backpacks, each child carries a copy of the book the program has given them to help develop their interest and skills in reading.

MCSM has received a grant for a number of years from the state Department of Early Education and Care to provide support for families with children from birth to five years old. Dr. Mary King, director of the agency’s family literacy

program, has used these funds – in combination with other resources – to provide a variety of educational and literacy programming.

Popular among these services has been a weekly playgroup for pre-school children in which a majority of the participants are immigrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean.

Literacy has always been a strong focus of the playgroup, which is run by Liliana Moresco, a certified early childhood and elementary level educator and former principal from Argentina.

“MCSM’s family literacy program emphasizes the importance of supporting and strengthening the emotional bond between parent and child through reading

see **LITERACY** page A6

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Two More School Committee Members Step Down

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “We have, unfortunately, to have a discussion about an open Montague school committee seat, and I think if it’s acceptable to the committee, we’ll also discuss the open Gill seat.”

Jane Oakes announced Tuesday night that two members of the regional school committee, which has had an endemic membership problem during the COVID pandemic, had resigned: Cassie Damkoehler of Montague, and Valeria “Timmie”

Smith of Gill.

The news came toward the end of Tuesday’s meeting, but the committee had already referenced the recruitment-and-retention issue while discussing a return to in-person meetings.

“We really need to encourage more parents to get on school committee,” said Haley Anderson, who was voted back on this spring by two write-in votes after no candidates appeared on the ballot for a Montague seat. Anderson recounted

see **GMRSD** page A6

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Garbage Issues, Leaky Sewers, Scrap Metal, Bug Spraying

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard discussed numerous complex, although not notably new, issues during a lengthy meeting Monday night, including missed trash and recycling collections, what to do with a now-redundant metal bridge, costly upgrades to the town’s wastewater plant, and the relocation of phone poles along North Leverett Road.

Public works superintendent Tom Bergeron told the board that in light of the cancellation of the Fifth Street pedestrian bridge project, the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) had agreed to put rebuilding a culvert on Ferry Road in Montague Center on its to-do list. He said the town can use Chapter 90 road funds no longer needed for milling and paving on Canal Street to pay for engineering the culvert.

Town administrator Steve Ellis clarified that he did not believe MassDOT had yet approved funding the Ferry Road project, but that “we’ve gotten very good signals.”

With regard to the Fifth Street pedestrian bridge itself, Ellis said the bridge, which has already been paid for and “cut to size” at a manufacturing facility, can still be given

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Bookstore Purchases Longtime Tavern Property

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – The building and property which formerly housed Hubie’s Tavern and Restaurant at 64-66 Avenue A has been purchased by a bookstore owner, who does not intend to avail himself of the location’s liquor license. The closing was revealed at the Monday’s Montague selectboard meeting, where the previous owner Shawn Hubert was granted the right to keep and attempt to sell the license by December 31.

While the principals involved at that meeting were hesitant to identify the new owner, documents in the county Registry of Deeds reveal the property now belongs to “Un-

malnaebe LLC,” a limited-liability corporation headquartered in Shelburne Falls under the management of an Adam Tobin.

Reached by phone, Mr. Tobin was more than happy to talk with the *Reporter*.

It turns out that Tobin, after working in bookstores for a number of years including on the West Coast, opened one in 2006 in Brooklyn, New York. That shop, which he still owns and says is “doing well,” was originally called Adam’s Books, but he was threatened with a lawsuit by a textbook distribution company of the same name, according to an interview on *Patch.com*’s Prospect Heights section.

see **PURCHASES** page A8



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

The Turners landmark is expected to be converted into a bookstore in the coming year.

Emerging PFAS Concerns Complicate Regional Sludge-Composting Efforts

By SARAH ROBERTSON with MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Limited options for the disposal of the sludge generated during wastewater treatment are beginning to cause a crisis in New England, and a pollutant of growing concern could make recycling the sludge into soil and fer-

tilizer products much more difficult.

“It’s very serious,” said Mickey Nowack, executive director of the Massachusetts Water Environment Association, a nonprofit trade group for wastewater operators. “We’re on the edge of a disposal crisis. Nobody wants the biosolids.”

The state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is

currently assessing how to regulate acceptable levels of PFAS chemicals found in treated sewage sludge, sometimes referred to as “biosolids.” The pending regulations have already cost the Erving Industries paper mill a sludge-hauling contract with Casella Waste Systems, the region’s largest sludge composting company, and they could determine the future of a proposed regional

see **SLUDGE** page A4



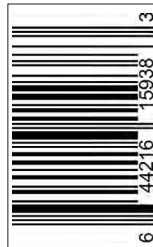
ROBERTSON PHOTO

Casella Waste Systems, which hauls and composts municipal sludge regionally, recently ended a long-running contract to receive sludge from Erving’s POTW#2 treatment plant amid concerns about PFAS chemicals from the Erving paper mill’s operations.

Summer Goblins Knocking At Our Window

Letter to the Editors.....A2
Local Briefs.....A3
On the Road: Hermit Edition.....A3
Op/Ed: Listen to Those Who Do.....A4
10 Years Ago This Week.....A7
Ceramic Mural Installation.....B1
Book Review: The Northern Treeline.....B1
West Along the River: Bear’s Path.....B1

June Library Listings.....B2
Montague Police Log.....B3
The Artist’s Intent Notwithstanding.....B4
Oops Two Elvis Reviews.....B4
Our Monthly Poetry Page.....B5
Montague Cryptojam.....B6
Five Comics and a Music Calendar.....B7
Catalog Customers’ Tirades Preserved.....B8



SUMMER SCHEDULE
VOL. 20 #34: JULY 14
VOL. 20 #35: JULY 28
VOL. 20 #36: AUGUST 11
VOL. 20 #37: AUGUST 25
READ THEM SLOWER

The Montague Reporter

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Must Move On

By CASSIE DAMKOEHLER

Dear GMRSD Community,

Five years ago I was elected by the citizens of Montague to serve on the school committee for a three-year term. At that time the mascot had just been changed and there was a lot of hurt and anger in the community. Although some of the newly elected had the desire to change a past decision made by the board, or just make their work more challenging, my purpose was to simply make our schools better.

My youngest was finishing kindergarten and I was a mostly stay-at-home Mom, working part time out of the house a couple days a week. I was available for daytime meetings and volunteering at the school. I quickly became engulfed in all of the work that has to be done when you're on a school committee.

I did not plan to run for a second term, but realized at the last moment that I did not feel I had done enough. I think it takes almost a full term to understand the processes and procedures of a school committee. At the last moment, I decided to run a write-in campaign, and was elected for my second term.

I took the vice chair position, but my plan was that I would just complete a year and then step away. Sadly, just as we finally had a full board, we lost Mike [Langknecht]. Mike was a mentor to me and taught me so much about the work we were doing. His sudden death still affects me, and I still find myself getting emotional at meetings when I think about what Mike would say, or I hear in my head how Mike would respond. I have done this more than people realize.

There have been few moments when we have had a full board, or at least everyone showing up on a regular basis. Amid all of this, we were still doing the hard work for all the amazing schools, staff, and students in our district. I do not regret a second of this hard work.

My life has changed a lot since I was first elected over five years ago. I went back into education,

entered into a Principal Program at the graduate level, and have recently accepted my own position as an Assistant Principal at the high school level. At the moment, I am also serving as active principal while my long time principal is on leave.

I am fortunate to have learned so much about budget and policy while on the school board. I am also fortunate to have worked with two highly talented superintendents, many incredible administrators, and many dedicated board members.

People do not realize the amount of time and commitment that it requires to be on a school board. The people that sign up to do this work, especially on a volunteer basis, do it because they really do care. I have nothing but respect for all of the members that I have had the pleasure to serve with.

It is with conflicted emotions that I submit my resignation for the Gill Montague School Committee. At this time, with three children spread among two schools and a high school of my own to run, I do not feel I can commit the amount of time necessary to be a productive member. To hold a seat when I can seldom attend does more harm than good. I know far too well how that feels as a member who shows up on a regular basis to do the work. The committee members and this community deserve better.

Thank you to the current members for continuing to do the work while I can not. Whether we've always agreed or not, we have done so in a respectful manner. This is not always the case with every school board.

Please continue to do the work, and know that I recognize the sacrifices you are making for all of the children and staff in our district. It takes a small group of dedicated humans to change the world, and that's what you're all doing in our village.

Cassie Damkoehler is assistant principal at Brattleboro Union High School in Vermont.

CORRECTION

All the way back on May 26, we got two things wrong in our article on the park dedication *Four Generations Honor Mr. Bush* (Page A1). First, Mr. Bush's birthday is Octo-

ber 8, not December 8. And secondly, when he was at UMass he coached the freshman basketball team, not football! We apologize for both errors.

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NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



Madeleine Bonn prepares a sheet of paper for cyanotype printing by covering it with a two-part chemical solution. She will then select foliage from around her home in the Rustic Ridge section of Northfield, place it on the paper, and expose it to light to create a picture. Her creations can be seen at "MadeleineBonn.Art" on Etsy.com. Bonn also serves as artistic director at the Amherst Ballet.

Letters to the Editors

Reply: Towns Do Grow

In reading Joe R. Parzych's letter about Greenfield ("Trouble Across the River," June 23), and as a one-time resident of both Greenfield and Turners Falls, I'm not quite sure what Mr. Parzych is advocating.

On the one hand he seems to feel that "siding with Socialism" is bad; on the other, he has a long laundry list of the things on which he wants public tax dollars spent. In one sentence he thinks that Greenfield should "switch back to select-board like in the old days," and in the very next he says that Greenfield should think about the future, make progress, and move into the 21st century. In one breath he says that Greenfield is getting too big, and in the next he's unhappy about people moving away, and thinks the city should grow bigger.

But at least he's consistent on one point: hatred for the mayor and city council... although he never does get around to setting forth his evidence for that form of government being a disaster.

Problem is that however much

Mr. Parzych has a problem with the concept, towns can grow too big for weekly selectboard meetings to handle. Even in Montague, we've seen the difficulty in getting interested citizens to run for key posts such as Town Meeting members, the Planning Board or the ZBA. One would think that Mr. Parzych, who stated that he doesn't go to town meetings or "get involved," would understand.

Not that he seems to want the system to work at all, given his call for the Greenfield mayor to resign for the heinous reason that she wasn't born in Massachusetts.

(Having been an elected official in Montague while born and raised on the South Shore, I'm unsure how that would prevent her from doing a good, honorable job for the city in which she chose – over 40 years ago – to live and serve.)

But I will answer Mr. Parzych's final question, which was how to remove a local elected official by law? That's simple. At the ballot box. Perhaps next election he might care to get involved.

Robert Traynor
Northampton

Observations

Has anyone noticed the people downtown don't make eye contact anymore? Blame the left, blame the right – I blame those guys on motorcycles who you can hear coming half a mile away and who sound like nothing other than a psychic fart ripping across the fabric of the town.

Loud pipes save lives, ha! Seriously though, intentionally loud vehicles are a half-step up the psychopath warning scale from capturing frogs and pulling their legs off for fun. We know these guys are going to kill us, right? That's why we're supposed to roll our eyes and put up with them? They've got all the guns?

R.F. Pelot
Turners Falls

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

This is our last issue before we start our **summer schedule**, publishing every other week. Our next issue after this one will come out on July 14. Yay! We will enjoy the break after publishing every week for six months.

A shout-out to our friends at **Architectural Components** in Montague who save us a ton of work by cutting our large rolls of brown paper into smaller ones! They have a big bandsaw, and some nice guys who work there cut it into sections for us every few months. We are grateful! We wrap the brown paper around the newspapers we stick address labels and mail out to subscribers.

The Carnegie Library in Turners Falls is having a **used book sale** this Saturday, July 2 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fiction, paperbacks and kids books, DVDs, CDs, and audio books will be available. Proceeds benefit the Friends of the Montague Public Libraries. For any questions, call (413) 863-3214.

The all-day **Music Walk event** in downtown Turners Falls organized by Antenna Cloud Farm, originally scheduled for Saturday, July 2, has been postponed to Sunday, July 3 due to rain in the forecast.

There will be a musical audio station on the Discovery Center's south garden lawn. The day-long, "percussion-forward" festival features free live performances and workshops. See our article on Page B1 of last week's paper for details, or visit antennaclopdfarm.com.

Looky Here, a community art center in Greenfield, is sponsoring a **yard sale at Court Square** in downtown Greenfield this Sunday, July 3 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. "All are welcome to freely participate in this community-wide yard sale,"

they say. "Bring a table and your items to vend!"

The Montague Center Fire Association is once again sponsoring its **annual bonfire** on Sunday, July 3 at the Montague Center ball-park. This community gathering has been ongoing since the 1960s. Bring lawn chairs and blankets. The Association will run a food booth. The fire will be lit around dusk, and the rain date is July 4.

The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association plans a **July 4 concert** featuring the Westmoreland (New Hampshire) Town Band at 3 p.m. in the Blue and White Hall at 10 Memorial Street in Deerfield. The band is made up of area volunteer musicians ranging in age from 12 to 86. The free concert will have marches, movie and show tunes, big band selections, Dixieland, jazz, patriotic pieces, pop tunes, and more.

The Montague Public Libraries will provide two workshops in collaboration with Montague Catholic Social Ministries.

The first, a **workshop on Assistance to Immigrants and Refugees**, will be held in English and Spanish next Thursday, July 7 at 6 p.m. This is a comprehensive training covering topics surrounding rental and mortgage assistance, tenants' rights, workers' rights, and other miscellaneous resources for new residents of the state. It also briefly discusses scams and ID security.

Then on Thursday, July 14 at 6 p.m. a **Workers' Rights workshop** will be held in English and Spanish. This covers wage and hour laws, earned sick time, domestic workers' rights, discrimination in the workplace, and other rights. This training will also teach people where to go for help if their rights are violated.

Locations are to be determined; contact the library at (413) 863-3214 for more information on these events.

After a two-year hiatus from monthly coffeehouse performances due to COVID, the **Great Falls Coffeehouse** is returning with a mini-series of four performances this season. The first of the series will be the Just Fine Thank You Band on Friday July 8, at 7 p.m. at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls.

The band performs electric-ukulele driven arrangements of favorite songs ranging from country to jazz standards to punk rock with Becky Lang and Robin Hoffman on ukuleles and vocals, David Pratt on percussion. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Coffee and tea and refreshments will be served outside in the courtyard. Suggested sliding scale donation of \$6 to \$15 (free for children) are welcome and go towards supporting the free programs at the Center.

The Community Action Family Center in Greenfield announces they are **giving out Summer Family Fun Boxes** every second and fourth Saturday this summer, including July 9. There are a limited number of fun boxes, which will be given out on a first-come, first-serve basis from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at 90 Federal Street in Greenfield. June's themes are "Outdoor Explorer," an interactive hiking kit to promote a love for outside family fun, and "Make a Splash" which has water fun and swimming stuff for youth aged 5 and up. Call (413) 475-1555 for more information.

A **Death Café**, a casual group discussion of death with no agenda or themes, will be held at the Gill-Montague Senior Center on Fifth Street in Turners Falls next Monday, July 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. The organizers write that the objective is to "increase awareness of death with a view to helping ourselves to make the most of our (finite) lives. Get together, have tea and cake, and talk."

The Café is cosponsored by the senior center and the Council on Aging. Registration is required; contact Suzette Snow-Cobb at suzettesnowcobb@gmail.com or (413) 824-0232.

You can join award-winning author and national public speaker Susan Blauner as she teaches the last two weeks of the **6-week writing series** via Zoom. Blauner

is a resident of Turners Falls, and also currently has an art exhibit up at the Rendezvous (see our exhibit listings). All experience levels are welcome on the last two Mondays, July 11 and 18, of this workshop series. To register, email library-director@montague-ma.gov or call (413) 863-3214.

Learn **campfire songs** on the **ukulele** under the tent at the Carnegie Library at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, July 12. Julie Stepanek will show you the fundamentals of ukulele playing. No experience necessary. Bring your own ukulele, or borrow one of hers.

Each year the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center awards one **Climate Change Artist Residency** to an individual or group. The nature of the residency is flexible and may include providing actual residency accommodations in Vermont; creating opportunities to engage with the public here in Vermont or elsewhere; presenting exhibitions or other public-facing activities; or facilitating connections to other artists, curators, scientists, educators, and activists tackling climate change.

The residency comes with a \$6,000 stipend. Find out more by contacting director of exhibitions Sarah Freeman at sarah@brattleboromuseum.org.

We are putting out a **Call for Artists for our second Special Wrapping Paper Issue!** We are looking for submissions for another wrapping paper edition to be printed in November. Seven artists will be selected to design seven double-sheet spreads of the newspaper, 20 by 22 inches, in full color.

Propose a design to us, and send up to three samples of your artwork as jpeg files, to features@montaguereporter.org by September 1. Put "Wrap" in the subject line.

Artists will receive a \$200 stipend and 10 copies of the edition, courtesy of the Cultural Councils of Gill, Wendell, and Montague, and the generosity of an anonymous donor. The wrapping paper edition will sell for \$5 each in local stores and online, and serves as a fundraiser for this newspaper.

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MONTAGUE REPORTER



Sunset over Casco Bay:

Adele Smith-Penniman brought the May 26 edition of the Reporter with her camping on Hermit Island in Maine earlier this month.

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SLUDGE from page A1

composting facility in Montague.

“I anticipate sludge hauling and disposal to be a continued problem for many wastewater facilities all over New England,” Montague’s water pollution control facility (WPCF) superintendent Chelsey Little told the *Reporter*. “I believe we need to be looking at other options for disposal, such as composting.”

Montague sent 196.5 tons of biosolids to a composting facility in Canada in 2021, according to data provided by Nowack. Little said sludge-hauling cost the town about \$170,000 in the fiscal year ending this week, but that in the coming year, higher fuel prices and other factors could push the cost as high as \$342,000.

Montague’s sludge is currently hauled by Casella, who won a formal bidding process, at a cost of \$215.50 per wet ton.

In light of the increasing expense associated with shipping sludge further away, local towns and the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) have been working to create a local solution. A proposal to build a sludge digester in Greenfield has stalled, and attention has turned to Montague, where a pilot sludge-composting project is currently underway.

On June 3 MassDEP officials met with Little, Montague town administrator Steve Ellis, and FCSWMD executive director Jan Ameen near the transfer station off Sandy Lane, the prospective site of a scaled-up composting operation. In a follow-up letter summarizing the visit, Kathleen Fournier, acting service center manager for MassDEP’s western office, cast doubt

on the viability of the project if PFAS contamination is present in the residual sludge.

“The future regulation of PFAS levels in wastewater, wastewater residuals, biosolids and compost is not yet finalized,” Fournier wrote. “MassDEP cannot speculate as to not-yet developed regulations or potential regulatory limits for PFAS. As discussed, future PFAS limits or uncertainty over future PFAS limits may affect the ability of Montague to market the compost material.”

Spreading Uncertainty

“Everybody wants to talk about PFAS in biosolids these days,” Casella Organics operations manager Clark James told the *Reporter*. “This has been on our radar for probably longer than it’s been on the public’s radar, or getting as much media attention as it’s getting now.”

Casella has been Montague’s sludge disposal contractor “off and on for the last ten years,” according to James.

Half of all sewage sludge generated in the United States is eventually applied to land as biosolids, according to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) data. The material is used as fertilizer for crops, erosion-resistant soil for site reclamation, and as soil for private lawns and gardens.

“It’s shameful to put biosolids in a landfill,” said James. “Why are we throwing away all these nutrients when we’ve invested so much money to treat them?”

Of the 164,186 wet tons of biosolids generated in Massachusetts in 2021, 46% was land applied, 40% was incinerated, and 14% was sent to a landfill. And 72%, according to

Nowack, was shipped out of state.

“It’s an interesting moral issue,” Nowack said. “If we consider it to be such a problem, we don’t seem to have a problem sending it out of state.”

“Massachusetts simply doesn’t have the in-state disposal and recycling options anymore, so a tremendous amount of waste ends up being transported long distances out of state,” James explained. “Unfortunately, we don’t want to get into a situation where states feel like they’re being dumped upon because other states don’t have a good waste management integration program. And that’s starting to happen.”

Nowhere to Hide

“We really are just extremely limited in disposal capacity,” Ameen, executive director of the FCSWMD, told the *Reporter*. “Everything is going to continue until you have a localized, regional option.”

FCSWMD expects to pay nearly \$1.3 million in the upcoming fiscal year to send sewage sludge from local towns to a water treatment facility in Lowell. That represents an increase of about \$300,000 over the last four years, Ameen said. Previously, the sludge was sent to treatment facilities in Fitchburg and Millbury, but a closure and then lack of capacity forced the FCSWMD to find another, more expensive outlet.

Roughly half of the 7,578 tons of biosolids generated at the Lowell treatment plant last year were land-applied, according to data reviewed by the *Reporter*. Casella picks up dewatered sludge from the Lowell treatment plant, just as it does from Montague, and delivers it to a composting facility in Unity,

Maine. The rest of Lowell’s solids go to landfills in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, or to the reuse facilities Synagro in Rhode Island and Envirem Organics in California.

When the Lowell facility closes for maintenance, Ameen said, it’s stressful for the FCSWMD to find other outlets. A regional biosolids composting program in Montague could provide up to eight member towns with a local sludge disposal option. Montague is currently applying for a grant to fund a more in-depth study, which Little said would take about a year, on the feasibility of a larger composting operation in town.

Ameen, who is helping Montague assess whether it should design a municipal or regional facility, says the decision will have to wait until MassDEP regulations on PFAS are finalized.

In July 2020 the state implemented new quarterly PFAS testing requirements for land-applied biosolids, and is using that data to decide whether to introduce regulations. Massachusetts currently does not limit acceptable levels of PFAS in biosolids.

“It is too early to know how and whether MassDEP will amend its regulations for land application of residuals,” MassDEP press secretary Edmund Coletta told the *Reporter*. “MassDEP is following the latest science while also receiving advice from a Stakeholder Committee while considering this important issue.”

According to Coletta, the committee consists of industry groups, water treatment plant operators, environmental organizations, agricultural experts, academic researchers,

see **SLUDGE** next page

OP ED

Roe Ruling a ‘Definite Wake-Up Call’

By LIZZY POLATIN

GILL – As I’m sure many of us have heard by now, the Supreme Court has decided to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the law protecting the right to a safe, legal abortion, earlier this week. This gives the power to all of the states to put bans or even make abortions illegal. Now as our protests, walkouts, social media stance, and other efforts have fallen on deaf ears and have been ignored, I think we can all agree it’s time for a change.

My name is Lizzy Polatin. I am a 14-year-old who lives in Gill and, most importantly for this topic, I have a uterus. My entire life people have told me what to do with my body. I am no stranger to being controlled, but now a basic, fundamental human right has been taken away from me and so many others, so it’s time to act.

I would first like to address the way we talk about who this affects. I would agree that this overturning is a personal attack directed at controlling women; however, this will affect anyone with a uterus which by no means includes only women. This can include anyone who has a uterus but doesn’t identify as a woman, such as non-binary people, trans men, and others. The term “woman” doesn’t really work in this part of the conversation; therefore, in this piece of writing, I will not be specific about gender, but rather focus on people with uteruses.

We first need to acknowledge that this court decision will drastically affect people of color and people in poverty, especially in states that make abortions illegal or put bans on them. Rich white people who live in affected areas will still have access to safe abortions, given that they have the money to fly out of state to a different area. Most people do not have the same kinds of opportunities, which will make pregnant people seeking abortion turn to unsafe abortions, which could seriously harm or even kill them.

26 states are likely to ban abortion, and the majority of Black cis women in the United States live in those states. Data from the CDC back in 2019 says that Black cis women are almost four times more likely to get abortions than white cis women.

This will also affect members of the LGBTQ+ community. Many of us rely on gender-affirming healthcare and assisted reproduction, which could all be at risk because of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned. According to the HRC’s analysis, lesbian and bisexual cis women are more likely to get abortions than heterosexual people. Due to restrictions on abortion, nearly a third of pregnant transgender individuals have considered ending their pregnancy by themselves, and 1 out of 10 of those same individuals have gone through with it. If you don’t feel this overturning affects you, please check your privilege, acknowledge your

privilege, and do something about it.

61% of people in the United States think that abortion should be legal in all or most cases. This should be a definite wake-up call to the people who still believe America is a democracy.

The Supreme Court did not make this decision with our well-being and safety in mind. It was a choice blatantly focused on controlling our bodies and putting the life of a clump of cells before ours. In fact, the world in which children can’t be aborted will be harsh. There will be a significant rise in poverty, given that the people who will be forced to give birth might not be in the financial situation to take care of children as well as themselves.

Like so many other people in this country, I am wondering why the government gets to control bodies they don’t even care about. Safe abortion is healthcare, and it should be available to anyone who wants or needs it. No one should be forced to carry and give birth to a child that they don’t want. I feel as if this is a simple statement, although others do not agree with me.

I have a small tip for the people out there who want abortions to be illegal: listen to us. Only we know what’s good for our bodies. Not the government. Not you. Us. So, please. Let’s try this one more time. Just *listen*.

Lizzy Polatin lives in Gill.

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PHOTO SUBMITTED COURTESY OF CHELSEY LITTLE

This press, recently installed at the Montague WPCF, reduces the volume of sludge the town must pay to have hauled away.

SLUDGE from previous page and other state agencies.

“Right now everybody is kind of tiptoeing around and waiting, waiting, waiting, and seeing where things land,” Ameen said. “It doesn’t make any sense to invest in a sludge-composting facility if the state sets a limit, and you’re just going to end up burying that sludge anyway in a landfill somewhere.”

“We’re still waiting to hear from DEP on what they’re going to do with regulations,” Little said. “Maybe we will have a better idea in a year.”

Paper Chase

According to the EPA, facilities in Franklin County that have either handled PFAS or continue to do so include several paper mills: Erving Industries and the International Paper Company in Erving, and Southworth, formerly Paperlogic, in Turners Falls.

Fortunately for Montague’s treatment plant, which used to serve as an industrial treatment facility for Southworth before the mill ceased operation in 2017, quarterly testing has been showing non-detectable or small amounts of residual PFAS in sludge.

“Paper manufacturing produces a lot of sludge, which composts very nicely,” explained Nowack, who added that PFAS chemicals were frequently used by the industry. “Of course there was no testing for PFAS years ago,” he said.

“It’s probably a blessing in disguise for Montague,” Nowack said of the Southworth closure, “in regards to PFAS in their sludge.”

Various other manufacturing companies and municipal landfills also made the list of 60 facilities that handle or have handled PFAS in Franklin County.

The wastewater treatment facility at Erving Paper, the last operating paper mill in the region, was the third-highest producer of biosolids in the state, according to data analyzed by the *Reporter*, generating 15,242 wet tons of sludge last year. Erving Industries contracts with the town to operate the POTW#2 municipal plant, which also accepts residential sewage from Erving Center, through its subsidiary Erseco.

“It’s everywhere, and it’s a huge problem,” operations manager Mike McAuliffe said of PFAS. “Everybody wants a clean world – me included – but this is something that has popped up and gotten real big in

the last few years.”

McAuliffe explained that the Erving mill only recycles paper into new products, and does not manufacture any new paper products with PFAS. “Anything that gets added to the process is PFAS-free,” he said, “but that does not mean that the paper we recycle doesn’t have PFAS.”

A 2019 MassDEP letter approving Erseco’s sludge for land application stipulated that it be tested for PFAS compounds once per year.

At an August 2020 meeting of the Erving selectboard and water commissioners, Erving Industries president Morris Housen explained that in order to meet standards for land application of the facility’s biosolids by 2021, new sludge-drying equipment would need to be installed at the plant. The meeting minutes stated that the facility generates 45,000 tons of biosolids annually.

Borrowing for the dryers was approved at a special town meeting that fall, but amid concerns over whether the town or company would be responsible for paying off the loans if the mill were to close, Housen updated the board in November 2020 with the decision that the company would pay for the dryers itself.

However, according to James, concerns over PFAS contamination in paper mill sludge led Casella to end a “long and pretty fruitful” business relationship with Erving Industries sometime between 2020 and 2021.

“The difficulty for us,” he said, “was there was so much concern about emerging contaminants, and with the decline in farms, and the decline of land that is available for this type of application.... we were concerned the program just wasn’t sustainable.... We couldn’t provide that commitment anymore without going to a landfill, and that wasn’t something we were willing to entertain.”

McAuliffe declined to say who Erving Industries contracts with now to dispose of its sludge, though he said it is being transported to Canada “at a huge expense.” When asked whether the paper mill still tests residual sludge for PFAS, he said, “That’s an internal question.”

Looking Upstream

Maine banned land application altogether this year after high levels of PFAS in milk forced dairy farms to close, and agricultural sludge-spreading has been linked to groundwater contamination in Vermont.

For years farms in Greenfield, Hatfield, Sunderland, Northfield, and Westfield, and a parcel of land in Orange, have been fertilized with biosolids made with Erving Paper Mill residuals, according to MassDEP records reviewed by the *Reporter*.

Massachusetts officials are researching the impact of land application on groundwater before introducing new biosolids regulations, Coletta said.

“We are required to test for PFAS in our sludge quarterly,” Little said in an email, “and new EPA permits throughout the state are requiring monitoring of PFAS in the raw sewage, sludge, and the effluent that is discharged to the receiving waters.”

In Massachusetts, water is currently deemed safe to drink if the sum of the six most common PFAS chemicals – a class of thousands of synthetic molecules – remains below 20 parts per trillion (ppt).

While the federal government has not set a limit on PFAS in drinking water, it has recommended 70 ppt of total PFAS as a threshold of concern. Two weeks ago, however, the EPA issued a new health advisory regarding safe “lifetime exposure” levels of two PFAS chemicals in particular. The advisory for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) is now .004 ppt, and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) is .02 ppt – levels which are “near zero and below EPA’s ability to de-

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tect at this time,” according to the agency’s June 15 press release.

The EPA plans to release drinking water regulations this fall based on those levels.

“Because the advisory for the safe levels is so low in drinking water, I think a lot of facilities are going to be forced to treat for PFAS in drinking water, so I’m concerned the same will happen to us,” Little said. “If we had to have removal [of PFAS from sludge], that would be devastating, infrastructure-wise and capital improvement-wise. It’s really expensive to have PFAS treatment.”

While activated-carbon filters or reverse osmosis can remove PFAS from drinking water, these systems do not work on wastewater. Other possible treatment technologies include separating PFAS from water through a process called foam fractionation, or a form of thermal treatment pyrolysis that leaves behind a “bio-char” with reduced levels of PFAS.

Little said that Montague recently signed onto a lawsuit to potentially help the town recover some of the costs that may soon be associated with removing PFAS from sludge.

“The cost to dispose of this is going to really hurt our users and our town, so I’m trying to be proactive,” Little said. “I want to have a backup, if we do have to put in treatment to remove it, and make sure that there is some financial gain.”

Little added that other contaminants the traditional water treatment process does not destroy – including heavy metals and pharmaceuticals – may also become an issue in biosolids. A 2018 report by the EPA Inspector General concluded that the agency is unable to regulate hundreds of chemicals found in biosolids.

According to Nowack, Massachu-

setts’ current approach to biosolids management is “very risk-averse.”

“I don’t want people to think that .004 equals cancer,” he argued. “When you look at levels in food wrappers in McDonald’s, they might have levels that are 200,000 parts per trillion.... [PFAS is] pretty ubiquitous in people’s lives as consumers.”

“The bottom line is, MassDEP is going to have to take a stand on biosolids,” he continued. “Towns are going to pick and invest in processes that have to be paid back with loans over 20 years, or 30 years, and they want some assurance that what they invest in is going to be allowed.... The way to get to lower levels is not going to be something treatment plants can do. It’s going to be legislatively banning these chemicals.”

The state’s PFAS Interagency Task Force, on which state senator Jo Comerford sits, recently released a report identifying the need to reduce or eliminate the use of PFAS in consumer goods, and is considering legislation to do so.

According to Little, 23 companies in the country are still producing PFAS chemicals. “I wish they would be regulated before they regulate us,” she said. “We aren’t the polluters – we’re trying to clean it up.”

James compared class-action lawsuits currently being pursued against companies like 3M and DuPont with earlier efforts against the tobacco industry.

“Casella is a receiver of these products,” he said. “We’re trying to work with the wastewater plants to ensure they have good practices in place, to make sure they’re not receiving extraordinary qualities of these emerging contaminants.... If we don’t want these chemicals in our waste products, we need to stop distributing these products.”



ROBERTSON PHOTO

An Erving Industries spokesperson said that the company’s sludge is now being hauled to Canada, “at a huge expense.”

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LITERACY from page A1

bilingual books together,” says Moresco. “Young children need love and connection with their parents to grow, and reading together can help to strengthen that bond.”

Literacy is a process that begins on day one, Moresco explains, noting that children often begin their relationship with books by chewing on them. By nine months they are opening and closing books and looking at the images. The literacy program at MCSM helps parents understand that they can become teachers of their children – even if they themselves are not literate.

For example, Moresco says, parents can start pointing to images in the books, and saying the word for the image. They can also talk about numbers, colors, and other key elements within the books. According to Moresco, the program carefully selects books with positive messages and illustrations that allow parents to creatively “read” the text with their child.

In the interest of reinforcing the idea that reading is important and special, the program urges parents to create uninterrupted time to read with their child. Other agencies and organizations have contributed in a variety of ways to this effort. Valley Quilters donated small quilts to each family to add to the quality of that time reading together. The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts has also provided the families with books, as wells as small backpacks for the toddlers to carry their “book of the month” to and from home.

When the pandemic began, MCSM didn’t want to lose touch with any of the participating families, as they were concerned with the language and educational gaps that would likely result. They started to extend outreach to families by going to their homes and speaking with them on their porches. MSCM staff would bring books on these visits, as well as parenting information, and craft materials for the children. The initiative began to be called “Love2Grow.”

This outreach was very successful, and at some point staff began to also provide playgroups over Zoom. In addition to a variety of learning games and art activities, they made YouTube videos of themselves reading

books, and posted them on the video-conferencing site. Parents were very appreciative of these efforts.

“During the pandemic, everyone shut their doors, but MSCM staff continued reaching out to us,” says Audi Gonzales, a young mother whose children have participated in the program for a number of years. “It helped a great deal.”

According to Damaris Morales, “My children really enjoyed hearing Liliana read both on Zoom and in person because she reads with a lot of expression.” Morales says her youngest son loves the books, and her older children are also eager to read each new book as it comes into the house.

Since many of the families do not have books in their homes, a program goal of Love2Grow has been to help families create home libraries. Toward this end, King has sought additional funding to provide high-quality, bilingual books.

Earlier this year, Pat Hynes, a board member at the Traprock Center for Peace & Justice, read an article about the Love2Grow program and realized the work of MCSM was well-aligned with Traprock’s mission. Since 2016, the Center has provided \$1,000 grants to libraries in Greenfield, Orange, and Montague, as well as a peace center and school in Sierra Leone, to purchase stimulating, award-winning books for preschoolers through young teens that promote peace, justice and environmental awareness.

Hynes notes that her organization’s Children’s Book Collaborative is informed by the words of African American abolitionist Frederick Douglas: “It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men.”

In early 2022, the Traprock board awarded MCSM’s Family Literacy program a \$1,000 grant to purchase and deliver high-quality board books to eight immigrant families, every month, over the course of a year. This grant has helped King and Moresco to purchase the board books they consider to be crucial for the Love2Grow Program. It makes no sense, says Moresco, to give an infant or toddler a paper book, since it can so easily be destroyed.

The books purchased with these funds are selected with stories and images that teach



Liliana Moresco and Pat Hynes review new board books for the Love2Grow program.

young children how to handle their strong emotions in constructive ways, and help them develop a love of nature. According to Hynes, “researchers of how young children learn have concluded that what society does for preschoolers can be so powerful that it will affect not only the lives of those children, but the future of the world as well.”

King and Moresco say that they are immensely grateful for the funding from Traprock. “Not only does it give our program validation,” says King, “but it gives us the license to do what we feel best serves this community.”

Hynes also gives great praise to King and Moresco, noting that they are both highly knowledgeable about child development, particularly with regards to brain development and literacy. Program participants are

fortunate, she says, to have these skilled and dedicated professionals providing this much-needed program. Hynes invites others who are inspired by it to also help provide resources to the program.

While the Love2Grow program has been entirely digital during most of the pandemic, as case counts eased a bit, it began to add an in-person meeting one day a week and a Zoom meeting on another day. Recently they have begun to meet in person once or twice a week, on Wednesdays and sometimes Mondays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

During this week’s meeting of the Love2Grow program, each of the families received a bookshelf. MCSM staff will visit the homes to help parents set the bookshelves up for their libraries.



MEMORIES: JOGGED



Ask, and ye shall receive! A few weeks back on June 9, we ran this photo John Carey said he had saved from the former Knights of Columbus hall, and asked our readers if they could identify anyone. Well, Mike Cadran seems to be the lucky winner – he dropped off a marked-up version of the photo.

Top row from left: Bebe Parenteau; Len Desantels; “Brud” Girard; Bernie Cadran; Norm LaPointe, and Cliff Bassett.
Front row, from left: Pete Miner; Bob Murley; John Drago; Foggy Bourdeau; Frank Galvis; and Bernie Niede.

“My uncle: Bernie Cadran,” Mike wrote, and he cited Help – Ed Gregory, Bob Zamojski, Stash Koscinski, Don Girard, George Bush, all TF boys.”

GMRSD from page A1

having to pay a babysitter at times so she could attend in-person meetings, and suggested continuing to meet via Zoom, as the committee has now done for two years, might make membership more accessible.

“I’ve heard, in the public, that people would like to see us meeting in person,” said Jennifer Waryas of Montague. “There maybe is an equity issue around accessibility, being able to attend if one wanted to – it’s harder for some folks, digital challenges et cetera.” Waryas added that she was amenable to whatever worked best for her colleagues.

“I understand what the public wants and expects,” said Gill member Bill Tomb, “but I also respect my own needs, and other people’s needs, to be safe. I have specific events in my life that put me more at risk than most people.”

Emergency measures passed early in the pandemic, which have since been extended, allow public boards and committees in Massachusetts to meet via videoconference, but they are set to expire July 15.

Oakes said she had heard there was an effort in the state legislature to extend the remote option through the end of 2023.

The committee will continue to meet twice a month through the summer, with its next regular meeting via Zoom on July 12. Any volunteers interested in filling either Damkoehler’s Montague seat or Smith’s Gill seat are urged to contact the superintendent’s office; after it receives a letter of interest, the committee may appoint a member until the annual town election next spring.

Damkoehler told the Reporter she was stepping off the committee due to her day job. A former teacher in Greenfield public

schools, she was hired this year as a dean of students at Brattleboro Union High School in Vermont. This month she has been appointed assistant principal, and the principal is on an indefinite leave of absence, making her the only administrator at the high school.

Damkoehler was first elected in the spring of 2017, a contentious time for the Gill-Montague committee, which had recently come under public fire for voting to eliminate the “Indian” logo at Turners Falls High School. She was entering the final year of her second term.

An attempt to reach Smith, who has represented Gill for a number of terms, was unsuccessful as of press time. Superintendent Brian Beck emailed the committee Tuesday morning to share the news of her resignation.

Tuesday’s meeting was otherwise fairly uneventful, despite being the committee’s first in a month. Beck reported on the hires of Dr. Walter Huston as the new principal at Gill Elementary and Molly Brooks as the district’s food service director.

The committee delivered its official evaluation of Beck as superintendent, collating individual ratings under various categories and goals and determining that his overall rating boiled down to “proficient.” This will be duly reported to the state.

“It’s always awkward to be publicly evaluated,” Beck noted.

Beck also reported that a process was underway to rename the high school softball field after longtime coach Gary Mullins, and that the “period of consideration should extend at least through the summer” to ensure an opportunity for public feedback.



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MONTAGUE from page A1

to the town if it wants the structure.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, as he has in the past, advocated giving the pieces of the unneeded bridge to the Franklin County Technical School for welding practice. Kuklewicz sits on the school committee. The board did not take a formal vote, but member Chris Boutwell said he agreed with Kuklewicz “100%.”

Member Matt Lord said he was “not on the same page, but I’m not going to fight about it.”

Trash Talk

Tyler Finnegan, a representative of the waste disposal firm Republic Services, once again came before the board to report on potential progress in resolving the problem of uncollected trash and recycling in town. “There were a few hiccups recently,” Finnegan said, “but over the past few weeks, it has gotten better... But, you guys tell me.”

Ellis replied that he had “not been counting calls, because we are still responding to them.” He went on to say that the town has “moved away from the edge of a cliff,” but that the “failure-to-collect rate remains far higher than it should ever be.”

Finnegan said that he was only recently made aware that residents attempting to make complaints and inquiries to Republic’s customer service line have been put on hold for as long as 45 minutes. He also said the company has hired a new general manager, “who we are very excited about.” Finnegan indicated that he would provide a telephone number for residents to call with problems, and that the company was in the process of creating an online application to communicate with Republic.

Steve Ellis told the Republic representative that the “failure-to-collect rate remains far higher than it should ever be.”

Ellis said he had received a 25-page PowerPoint presentation explaining the application, but that something more user-friendly would be needed for the “average resident.” He later told the *Reporter* that concerned residents should email him at townadmin@montague-ma.gov, or the public works department at hwycompliance@montague-ma.gov, leaving the date of a failed pickup and whether it seemed to apply to one residence or the whole street.

Sewer Systems

Bergeron said his department, with the assistance of the engineering firm Wright-Pierce, will be “smoke-testing” sewer lines, primarily in Millers Falls but also in adjacent villages, during the week of July 11.

He said the purpose of the testing will be to identify leaks and infiltration, but also inflow resulting from residents pumping basement water or attaching roof drains into the sewer system, which is illegal. Over the past few years, Millers Falls sewage has inundated the plant in Erving where it is treated.

After a technical discussion of changes in the game plan for installing new screw pumps and a

new bubble-blower system at the water pollution control facility (WPCF), funded in large measure by two state grants, WPCF superintendent Chelsey Little requested an amendment to the plan for the bubble blowers, which have already been funded, and approval to officially apply for the second grant of \$107,000.

The board approved both requests, as well as the inclusion of a “cost share” of \$9,000 from the WPCF budget on the second grant application.

The board informally decided to reduce the number of COVID reports requested from the health department to one a month.

Public Health

Board of health member Melanie Zamojski reviewed the latest COVID-19 case counts. She said the number of cases recorded by the state is “way down,” but questioned the accuracy of the data, since they do not include results of the at-home “rapid tests” which are now the “vast majority” of tests.

Zamojski also said the health department “was looking at” the possibility of testing for COVID in municipal wastewater, an initiative already underway in the city of Greenfield and elsewhere.

The board informally decided to reduce the number of COVID reports requested from the health department to one a month.

Zamojski then reported that she had “great news,” which was that Montague has been approved by the state to “opt out” of aerial spraying for mosquitoes this year. She said that the town’s application was one of the 25 approved by the state, but reporter Julian Mendoza of the *Greenfield Recorder* said that five of the 25 had actually not been approved.

Economic Development

The board approved a request for the second “tranche,” or portion, of Montague’s federally-approved COVID relief funds, some of which come directly to the town and some as the town’s portion of a county allocation. The two allocations total \$1,227,312.

Ellis updated the board on plans, which he called “not massive, but complex,” to refurbish the town hall roof. He proposed that the town hire a consulting firm, CMS Inc., to manage the project.

The board did not take a vote, though Kuklewicz said he felt the projected cost of the service, \$15,000 to \$20,000, was “high for a project like that.”

Carla Trosino-Laramy, an engineer with the power company Eversource, presented a request to place jointly owned utility poles along North Leverett Road. She said three of the poles were being moved from next to the Sawmill River at the request of the state, and two new mid-span poles would be added.

The board approved the request, but not without expressing concern about redundant telephone poles in Montague and the region.

Ellis reported that the state legislature has “stripped out” all projects

funded by federal COVID funds from a bond bill proposed by the governor. These projects, Ellis said, include a \$5.5 million proposal he had submitted for the partial demolition and stabilization of the Strathmore complex in Turners Falls. He told the board he would continue to advocate for the proposal.

Town Staff

The board discussed draft job descriptions for two new positions at town hall: the assistant town administrator, and the assistant to the executive assistant. Ellis said the proposed descriptions reflected the “historical basis for job grades,” as well as “the boundaries of the public conversations” that led to their approval by town meeting.

“Hopefully you are not seeing surprises,” he said.

The description for the executive assistant’s assistant will need to be approved by the union, the National Association of Government Employees, and added to the union contract.

The board appointed Albert Miller as a custodian at the department of public works, and Mitchell Alexander Ryan as summer help at the WPCF. Little said Ryan, who attends Franklin County Technical School, will work with the facility’s licensed plumber for the summer.

The board also approved a long list of appointed positions, including to volunteer boards, for one-, two-, and three-year terms.

Other Business

The board granted Kathy Lynch, owner of the Montague Center Village Store, an entertainment license for July through October, and the Shea Theater a beer and wine license for four dates at the same location.

Sean Hubert asked the board to allow him to continue to hold until December 31 the liquor license assigned to the former tavern he owned at 64-66 Avenue A, Hubbie’s. Hubert sold the property this week to a bookstore business that does not intend to serve liquor (*see article, Page A1*), and he said he intends to sell the license by December 31, at which point it would revert to the town.

The board approved this request, noting that the license’s new owner would need to be approved by the board and the state.

The board extended by a year an agreement with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments for substance abuse prevention-related services, primarily family support services funded by cannabis community impact revenues.

A request from Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority to allocate unexpended funds from the FY’21 Community Development Block Grant to the housing rehabilitation program, a key recipient of the town’s block grant money, was endorsed by the board.

At the request of town treasurer Eileen Seymour, the board executed a three-year contract with Vadar Systems to provide tax software to her department at an annual cost of \$6,784.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired into an executive session to discuss union contract negotiating strategy. The next scheduled meeting will be held Monday, July 11.



MONTAGUE PLANNING BOARD RECRUITING ASSOCIATE MEMBER


The Montague Planning Board is recruiting a Montague volunteer to be an associate member. The Planning Board helps shape the community through land use related plans and policies. The Board meets 4th Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM. This position is great entry point for new municipal volunteers. Training opportunities are provided. Interested? Sit in on a meeting or contact the Town Planner: planner@montague-ma.gov.


LOOKY WRITE HERE

EIGHT-WEEK WRITING WORKSHOPS

LAST WEEK TO SIGN UP!

The World Split Open:
The Power of Personal Narrative
with Sarah Wisby
Tuesdays 6 to 8 p.m., July 5 to August 23
In person at Looky Here, Greenfield





The Strange Page:
Experimental Writing Workshop
with Vanessa Brewster
Thursdays 6 to 8 p.m., July 7 to September 1
Remote via Zoom (no class August 4)

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on June 28, 2012: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Shad Rebound in Annual River Count

This year’s anadromous fish migration in the Connecticut River, particularly shad, surged in numbers, exceeding expectations.

This past spring the Connecticut River had the highest run of shad returning upriver to spawn in two years, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. As of June 21 a total of 489,571 American shad made it past the Holyoke dam via a ride in the Holyoke fish elevator. As of June 17, 26,888 of those shad successfully bypassed the Turners Falls dam.

Since the count has been kept, only in 1983, 1991, and 1992 has the shad run exceeded 500,000.

Anadromous fish, including shad, salmon, Atlantic sturgeon, blueback herring and other species, are born in fresh water rivers, migrate to the ocean as adults, and return upstream to spawn in the river of their birth. The physiology of the shad, salmon and lamprey eel undergo incredible metamorphoses to survive in the disparate salt and freshwater environments.

According to the annual count, many more fish bypass the Holyoke dam than Turners. The Turners dam is further upstream, requiring an added journey of several days to a week. But critics have also pointed to the difficulty shad in particular have in negotiating the long concrete fish ladders below the Turners dam, to say nothing of the turbulent currents created by the Northfield Mountain pumped-hydro facility, an added barrier to successful fish passage.

The Turners Falls ladder opened early this year because of an earlier-than-usual fish run. Researchers believe low flows and unusually warm temperatures in March signaled the fish to make their way upriver earlier than usual; migrations usually take place in May.

Despite this spring’s encouraging run, the East Coast’s native American shad population is generally struggling. Shad have been categorized as a “federal trust fish,” protected by government agencies.





Gill Approves Level-Funded Budget

With a promise from the selectboard to revisit the budgets in the fall after more thorough vetting of some departments for supplemental spending, Gill voters at annual town meeting approved an omnibus \$1,374,338 operating budget for the schools and town for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

That figure is actually down \$9,635 (0.7%) from last year. But selectboard chair Ann Banash all but guaranteed “we will come back to you with a supplemental budget in September” for the highway, library, cemetery, and possibly other budgets, after several more months of in-depth review of the line items of individual departments by the selectboard and finance committee.

“This budget season was compressed,” explained Banash, who had come back from an extended vacation in April to find a packed agenda for the finance and select boards did not allow enough time for analysis.


“I have more questions than answers now,” she admitted at annual town meeting. We didn’t have enough time to get the info we needed, and I apologize for that.”



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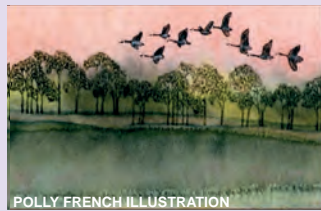
Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER JUNE 30, 2022



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

EARLY JULY ON TURTLE ISLAND

By DAVID BRULE

*I pledge allegiance to the soil
Of Turtle Island
And to the beings who therein
dwell...*

– Gary Snyder

PAGUAG RIVER – Mornings have dawned here on this patch of Turtle Island, clear, cool, and green. There is the promise of heavy heat for later in the day, as it should be as we enter true summer.

My green metal Paris café table is set up under the ancient apple tree, grass and dog cool underfoot. This is a good place for writing.

The July cherry tree, the Montmorency, is taking a pass on sharing its fruit, taking a rest this year. The last two years this tree has produced bumper crops, with our household gathering cherries from the lowest branches while the waxwings, grosbeaks and thrushes took their share from the topmost branches in a continual, noisy feeding frenzy. Four mason jars now occupy shelf space in the cherrywood hutch, full of those past summers’ fruit, swimming in Swedish vodka. We are well-stocked for December desserts.

Various feathered families have brought their young to teach them about the feeders that will help out in wintertime, or afford them a treat when they are too lazy to seek out and forage their own sustenance in summer. Not to overdo it, we toss out only a few handfuls of store-bought sunflower seeds early in the morning, or just after dusk for the late-feeding cardinal families.

A bear or two have been frequenting the yard, crushing down the wire fence, easily lifted up and straightened out after each visit. That flexible fence is more meant to keep Nicky the Siberian in than to keep the bears out.

Besides, when a bear decides he wants to come through, he will literally come *through*, whether fence, door, or clanging pots and shouts from the humans standing on the porch.

Awashooks the Bear may simply be reclaiming ancestral rights

to follow this path regardless of some recent human structures now inconveniently located where bears have an age-old right to walk. He typically visits the yard or porch and finding nothing, moves off past the rhododendron hedge to the spot where he – or she – climbs over the wooden part of the fence. Citizen Bear then heads down the path to the frog pond and beyond to the river, as his people have always done.

Soon it’s time to put down the pen and notebook, leave the early morning shade, and walk in our own ancestral woods, with dog carefully leading the way. He continually sniffs the air and checks every branch and leaf of grass. Messages have been left there by bear, coyote, or fox, and only Nicky can interpret them. He doesn’t share his information with us; we just have to read his signs and attitudes and try to guess what he’s finding out, what he has learned about the night’s activities here in our woodlands.

This whole season, spring unto summer, the wood thrush has been singing, beautiful arpeggios and vibrato, much of which is beyond human ability to truly hear, audible only to other thrushes. But what we hear gives us deep pleasure. With his gift of two voice boxes, he passes on his song as an offering to us but keeps some to himself. We thank this melodious voice from the sun-dappled depths of our modest forest.

The west-flowing river is low, although it still makes its way over boulders warming in the sun, creating riffles among the river stones. Bass and rainbow trout hunker in the deeper pools, but can be coaxed out and onto the kitchen table for our lunch. Coaxed and tricked out, that is, by our angler son, who inherited the fisherman’s sixth sense from my grandfather Abe, former patriarch of this house. That special sense skipped a generation or two – I didn’t benefit from that strand of the family DNA!

We may, for sure, want to retreat to this rural felicity and

see **WEST ALONG** page B3



Citizen Bear, in the author’s backyard.

Above: Chickens, on South Cross Road in Gill. Thanks to roving photographer Joe R. Parzycki!

New Ceramic Mural Celebrates Leverett’s Past, Present, and Future

By NINA ROSSI

LEVERETT – “Past is Present is Future” is the title of the large ceramic mural by Judith Inglese that was recently installed by the front doors of the Leverett Library. The mural shows slices of Leverett history combined with scenes from the local landscape and various characters who make up the town’s past, present, and future.

Inglese proposed the mural to the town as part of its 250th anniversary celebration coming up in 2024. She got it done early, she explained, “because I’m older.”

Inglese has created ceramic murals for public art installations since 1978. She initially sculpted abstract forms in wood and steel; the switch to ceramics happened due in large part to her becoming a mother and needing work that could be done in smaller pieces, and in shorter chunks of time, to fit in with domestic life.

As a resident of Leverett for many decades, Inglese said she felt like giving back to the community. After consulting with members of

see **MURAL** page B6



Judith Inglese of Leverett with her ceramic mural, recently installed at the town library.

BOOK REVIEW

Ben Rawlence, *The Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth* (St. Martin’s Press, 2022)

By DONNA PETERSEN

MONTAGUE – We here in western Massachusetts are blessed to be surrounded by trees. Leafy, wind-dancing, bird-filled, autumnally colorful, lusciously green maples, oaks, birches, spruces, pines, firs, Ents, ashes, and more that comfort, cool, and soften our lives. Carbon dioxide-absorbing, oxygen-releasing lovelies.

Plus the maple syrup thing.

Last year I wrote about a sci-fi book by Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, a novel about an abrupt, severe climate event that is a wakeup call for global governments, who institute a Ministry for the Future to attempt to address climate change. Better late than never, but meanwhile fossil fuel interests are still subsidized – sound familiar?

A new non-fiction book by Ben Rawlence, *The Treeline: The Last Forest and the Future of Life on Earth*, takes a look at the changing circumpolar boreal forest in arctic regions from Scandinavia to Russia, to Alaska to Canada, and finally to Greenland.

The author, a Welshman, started in northern Scotland where there are attempts to reforest long-cleared forests. While he visited the forest treeline regions he met with scientists, field researchers, native subsistence people, and anyone who lived with the tundra – I will use tundra generally to discuss the treeless area mostly north of the treeline – and forest edge or

ecotone, and who depended on the conditions there.

They all saw the changes that warming has caused in the formerly stable systems.

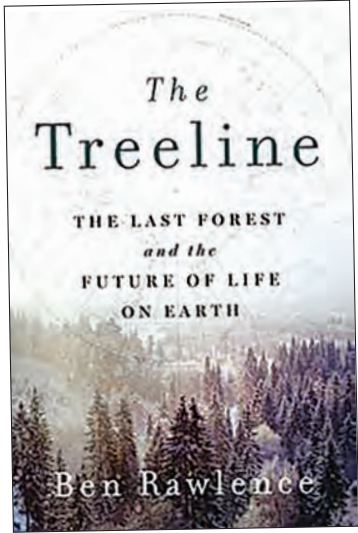
Each of these regions has its own unique forest that has adapted over centuries to the soil, water, ice, frozen unrotted dead vegetation in permafrost, snow, gravel-rock substrate, latitude, and altitude, along with other factors. It was fascinating to learn about the different tree species in each region, from birches in the reindeer-herding Sami culture in north Scandinavia to the great larches in the Russian *taiga* forest, to the dominating spruce in Alaska, to the varied forests in Canada.

And due to warming, the species range is changing, and new species are taking hold.

Each species has its unique properties, and the author writes of the benefits that may be unknown to most of us. The evergreens – spruce, pine, and firs – release healthful aerosols into the air, and like some of the deciduous trees have numerous medicinal properties that native tribes and peoples have used and known about before modern medicine realized the benefits of the tree pharmacy.

One particularly interesting researcher the author spoke to was Diana Beresford-Kroeger, an Irish-born Canadian who has done decades of work in the forest and with the native tribes in Canada. She was the inspiration for a character in the Pulitzer Prize-winning

see **TREELINE** page B6



Pet of the Week



“STRAWBERRY”

Isn’t Strawberry adorable? He is one of Dakin’s Tiny Spirit Kittens. A Tiny Spirit Kitten is a feral or extremely shy kitten that had no socialization with people in their first few months of life. These kittens will vary in terms of becoming social in their new homes; some may become very sweet and outgoing, while others may only ever trust you and no one else.

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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.

Senior Center Activities JULY 4 THROUGH 15

WENDELL Foot care clinic the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are now available. Contact Jonathan von Ranson at (978) 544-3758 to set up a ride.	Tuesday 7/12 9 a.m. Walk With Ease 1 p.m. Chair Yoga 3 p.m. Tai Chi Wednesday 7/13 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. BYO Lunch to Bingo 4 p.m. Mat Yoga Thursday 7/14 9 a.m. Walk With Ease Friday 7/15 11 a.m. Chair Exercise
LEVERETT Chair Yoga classes are held on Zoom on Wednesdays. Foot Care Clinic is held monthly. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 2, or coa@leverett.ma.us .	ERVING Erving Senior Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily. Fitness room open daily. Erving van services available (must call 24hrs in advance for a ride). For more information, please call (413) 423-3649. Monday 7/4 <i>Closed</i> Tuesday 7/5 9 a.m. Walk With Ease 1 p.m. Chair Yoga 3 p.m. Tai Chi Wednesday 7/6 9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent Hours 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. BYO Lunch to Bingo Thursday 7/7 9 a.m. Walk With Ease 10:30 a.m. Brown Bag Friday 7/8 11 a.m. Chair Exercise Monday 7/11 <i>Closed</i>
GILL and MONTAGUE The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information please call 863-9357. Monday 7/4 <i>Closed</i> Tuesday 7/5 9 a.m. Walk With Ease 1 p.m. Chair Yoga 3 p.m. Tai Chi Wednesday 7/6 9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent Hours 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. BYO Lunch to Bingo Thursday 7/7 9 a.m. Core & Balance 10 a.m. Barre Fusion Friday 7/8 9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew Monday 7/11 9 a.m. Interval 10:15 a.m. Seated Workout	

JULY LIBRARY LISTING

Montague Public Libraries <i>Turners Falls: Carnegie</i> (413) 863-3214 <i>Montague Center</i> (413) 367-2852 <i>Millers Falls</i> (413) 659-3801	Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348 Gill: Slate Library (413) 863-2591 Leverett Public Library (413) 548-9220 Northfield: Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455 Wendell Free Library (978) 544-3559
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MONTAGUE 1st Saturday: <i>Used book sale.</i> Fiction, paperbacks, kids’ books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks. Sponsored by the Friends. Carnegie Library, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Every Wednesday: <i>Story Time Outside.</i> Meet Meghan Doyle for stories, songs, and a Take-and-Make craft. Carnegie Library tent, 10 a.m. Every Thursday: <i>Playgroup Plus.</i> Guided and free play with music & activities. Designed for preschoolers; older kids welcome. Carnegie tent, 10 a.m. Thursdays, July 7 and 14: <i>Workshops for Immigrants and Workers (English/Spanish).</i> July 7: Assistance to Immigrants and Refugees. July 14: Workers’ Rights. Led by state attorney general’s office, co-sponsored by MCSM. Locations TBA. 6 p.m. 2nd and 4th Friday: <i>Summer STEAM.</i> Hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math activities for grades K to 4. Dress for possibly messy activities. Carnegie tent, 1 p.m. Mondays, July 11 and 18: <i>Creative Writing Zoom workshop</i> with award-winning author Susan Blauner. All experience levels welcome; space limited. Call (413) 863-3214 or email librarydirector@montague-ma.gov to register. Tuesday, July 12: <i>Campfire Songs on the Ukulele.</i> Join Julie Stepanek and try a fun, easy instrument. No experience necessary, loaner ukes available. Carnegie tent, 11 a.m. Multiple days: <i>Paws to Read.</i> Read to therapy dogs Emmy or J-Lo to improve literacy skills. 3rd Monday, 3rd Thursday. Call (413) 863-3214 to reserve a 15-minute spot for your child or teen. Carnegie tent, 4 to 5 p.m. 3rd Tuesday: <i>Camp iREAD Crafts.</i> Children and teens are invited to stop by to make a summer-camp-themed craft. Carnegie Library tent, 3 p.m. Fridays, July 22 and 29: <i>Let’s Tell Stories.</i> Lillian Moss facilitates workshops in becoming a more comfortable storyteller, sharing stories we live and tell each other every day. No sign-up required; masks optional. Carnegie tent, 10 a.m.	ERVING Sundays, July 10, 17, and 24: <i>Harmonica Lessons</i> with Rob Fletcher. Sign up by June 30 and we’ll supply the harmonica. 2 to 3:30 p.m. 2nd Monday: <i>Paws to Read.</i> A great opportunity for reluctant readers to read with a therapy dog. Call (413) 423-3348 to reserve a spot. 4 to 5 p.m. Sunday, July 17: <i>Film Noir: Read & Watch.</i> For July 17: <i>Hitch-Hiker.</i> Pick up a copy to read and/or join us for the movie and popcorn. 1 p.m. Sunday, July 17: <i>Gardening in Different Size Gardens:</i> watching, watering, weeding tips with the Western Mass Master Gardener Association. Call (413) 423-3348 to register. 2 to 4 p.m. Thursday, July 24: <i>Travelin’ Shoes:</i> a multicultural storytelling extravaganza. 2 p.m. Sunday, July 31: <i>Butterflies & Bees.</i> Workshop with master gardener Larri Cochran of the WMMGA. Call (413) 423-3348 to register. 2 to 4 p.m.	<p>and cycling, while we picnic at the library. First 20 children to arrive on bicycle earn an autographed copy of <i>The Adventures of a Girl Called Bicycle</i>. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>1st Saturday: <i>Puzzle Swap.</i> Dozens of new-to-you puzzles for kids and adults. For more info, friendsofdml01360@gmail.com. 10 to 11:30 a.m.</p> <p>Every Tuesday: <i>Drop-in Knitting.</i> Join fellow knitters and crocheters to chat and share projects. 6 to 8 p.m.</p> <p>1st Wednesday: <i>Readers’ Choice.</i> July 6: <i>Smilla’s Sense of Snow</i> by Peter Hoeg. Pick up a copy at the library. 10 a.m.</p> <p>Friday, July 8: <i>Roadside Revelations in Western Mass.</i> Author, teacher, and explorer Rob Weir shares curiosities found in nearby towns, esp. Northfield and Conway. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>2nd Wednesday: <i>Readings: Nonfiction, Fiction, and Poetry.</i> July 13: <i>Old New York</i> by Edith Wharton. Pick up a copy at the library. 3 p.m.</p> <p>2nd Thursday: <i>Environmental Awareness Group.</i> July 14: <i>Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet</i> by Thich Nhat Hanh. Pick up a copy at the library. 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Friday, July 15: <i>Library Trivia Night.</i> Teams of 1 to 6; three rounds of 10 questions; drinks available for purchase. Northfield Golf Club, 6:30 to 8 p.m.</p> <p>Saturday, July 16: <i>Protect from Ticks and Lyme Disease.</i> Bring a pair of boots or shoes for free Permethrin treatment. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.</p> <p>3rd Tuesday: <i>Friends of the Library.</i> 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Friday, July 22: <i>Fantastic Frogs.</i> Learn about local frogs, and practice singing and moving like them, with Mass Audubon teacher Laura Beltran. Feel free to bring a picnic. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Friday, July 29: <i>Cave Painting.</i> After learning about ancient cave paintings, we’ll create our own at the library, with Mary Mayshark-Stavely. Wear clothes you can paint in. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Saturday, July 30: <i>Deadline for raffle tickets</i> for Summer Library Program reading prizes. Bring in your reading logs before August for a chance to win.</p>
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LEVERETT All June: <i>Story Walks.</i> Find a new Story on the trail behind the library every Thursday. Every Monday and Wednesday: <i>Online Qigong.</i> Free class, everyone welcome. More info on leverettlibrary.org , or email Dvora: CommunityQigong@gmail.com . 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Every Saturday: <i>Tai Chi.</i> Free, everyone welcome. Space limited, masks required. Call Dennis for info: (413) 367-9760. Intermediate 10 to 11 a.m., beginners 11 a.m. to noon. Wednesday, July 13: <i>Storytime with a Fire Truck.</i> Join the CNC and Leverett fire department for a different kind of story time. Meet the firefighters, check out the truck, and hear a story. 10:15 a.m. Tuesdays, July 19 and 26: <i>Music on the Patio.</i> July 19: Same Old Blues. July 26: Sawzaphonic. Bring a chair and join us on the patio for local music and good friends. 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays, July 20 and 27: <i>Mucho Gusto Family Concert.</i> Bring a blanket or chair for this interactive bilingual concert for the young that will engage the whole family. 10:30 a.m. Saturday, July 23: <i>Happier Valley Comedy Show.</i> Interactive improv, perfect for kids 5 to 13 and their families. 11:30 a.m.	NORTHFIELD Friday, July 1: <i>Picnic with an Author.</i> Christina Uss talks about perseverance, writing,
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Montague Community Television News

Saved for Posterity

(Check Out 74 Min. In)

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Jimmy Just Quit played all of the hits at the Unity Park Makers’ Market earlier this month, and if you missed it or wish you could go back, MCTV will be playing their set on Channel 17 and our Vimeo page.

You can also find the most up-to-date town meetings there, including the Gill selectboard meeting from June 22, a rare Wednesday meeting.

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on TV and featured on Vimeo, which is linked to *montaguenv.org* under the tab “Videos.”

MCTV is always available to

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

We have some fresh faces around the Zoom table. However, MCTV is still looking for even more board members, so if you would like to stop in for a meeting, email *infomontaguenv@gmail.com* for a link! The next meeting is Thursday, July 21.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or *infomontaguenv@gmail.com*.



WEST ALONG from page B1

pastoral peace when the upcoming July Fourth holiday is celebrated in town, with all the ear-splitting fireworks and burning burgers some citizens have in store for us whether we like it or not.

Speaking of patriotism, back now to Turtle Island for a new lesson.

The Indigenous creation story of Skywoman can lead us to some different perspectives about our national assumptions. This First Woman arrived here when this globe was nothing but water. She fell through a hole in the clouds, likely falling to her death if not for being saved by winged beings, geese and swans, who flew up to catch her and slowly set her down on the back of a giant sea turtle.

The hard shell of the turtle provided a secure spot for her feet to rest upon, but no soil to plant the trees she had grasped as she fell, no place to plant the seeds she had in her garments.

All the creatures around the turtle tried to dive deep under the water to bring up some soil or mud for Skywoman to plant what she had brought to this new world. The only one who succeeded was muskrat, who died trying, but not before his body reached the surface with a ball of mud clutched in his paws. *Muskquash*, his Native name, is revered by tribal people for his sacrifice.

Skywoman began to spread the mud on the turtle’s back with her feet. Gradually she began to dance and dance, the quantity of mud growing and growing on the shell.

Now, when we dance to the Earth’s heartbeat of the great drum, we acknowledge the First Woman and all the creatures who helped her. We remember to be grateful, to remind ourselves of the cooperation of all the creatures who contributed to create the island on the turtle’s back.

Robin Wall Kimmerer shared her stories of Turtle Island with a packed auditorium of 1,000 people in Greenfield just last week. A citizen of the Potawatomi Nation with a PhD in Botany, Kimmerer combines Indigenous knowledge with modern-day science. She reminded us of our allegiance to Turtle Island and of the balance and sense of reciprocity that we need to work to restore.

Kimmerer notes in her book, *Braiding Sweet-*

grass, the puzzlement she had as a young Indigenous woman in participating in the ritual of the Pledge of Allegiance. She asks us now whether “liberty and justice for all” is something of a questionable premise. She feels that this pledge, as we know it, involves expressing loyalty to a political system, and asks how love of country can omit recognizing the actual land, Turtle Island, upon which this Republic sits. How can we live in this culture of one-dimensional patriotism without participating in a national hypocrisy?

The concept of country that we pledge allegiance to, that we idealize as a political system dedicated to liberty and justice for all, contains only half of the equation. What about including the rest of Creation?

The boundaries that some of us honor are bigger than the Republic. The next time you recite the Pledge of Allegiance, consider pledging allegiance to the land itself, and all that it encompasses. When your eyes tear up at the Pledge or the National Anthem, how about extending your patriotism to acknowledge the land under your feet?

For some of us, what is under our feet is Turtle Island. We humans have been given the gift of a varied and beautiful ecosystem that should not simply be a forgotten part of a self-serving political system. We have been given so many gifts, yet look what we have done with them.

We have a responsibility as human beings to fight to restore what has been damaged. We have a responsibility to participate in a system of balance and reciprocity with our landscape and the non-human beings that inhabit this place with us. Only then, maybe, we can talk of justice and liberty. We are all in this together. What are we going to do with what has been given to us?

*I pledge allegiance to the soil of
Turtle Island
To one ecosystem
In diversity under the sun
With joyful interdependence for all.*

(Adapted from the poem
“For All” by Gary Snyder)



MONIQUE BRULE PHOTO

Just passing through, as bears always have...

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Devices Stolen From Cars; Shotgun Or Backfire?; Valor Stolen By Pandhandler; Boa Constrictor

Monday, 6/20
12:07 p.m. Caller from East Main Street reporting that someone destroyed her plants outside of the apartment building. Caller stated that the building managers have it on camera, but will not give her the name of the individual. Referred to an officer.
1:50 p.m. Officer advising that a vehicle had leaked out a bunch of oil and fuel in a parking spot in front of Subway on Avenue A. Shelburne Control advised.
8:52 p.m. 911 caller concerned that a cat somewhere in Lake Pleasant does not have any food or water. Call left in animal control officer’s box.
10:13 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road reporting that a dog is barking and

howling somewhere in the neighborhood; stated it has been going on for approximately five hours. Caller called back and stated that her neighbors across the street just got home and the dog stopped barking.
Tuesday, 6/21
3:57 a.m. Caller from Randall Road states she has someone wandering around her house again. Officer advised. Unfounded.
3:13 p.m. 911 caller from Marshall Street reporting a bear in the neighborhood.
7:53 p.m. Caller reporting that she was parked at Barton’s Cove and went for a hike; when she came back, it looked like her car was gone through, and her phone is missing. Phone number to Gill PD provided.

Wednesday, 6/22
12:08 a.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states that a car in front of his house might have hit something; the driver is out walking around the car looking at damage to the vehicle. Eversource pole was sideswiped; looks to be structurally sound, but should be looked at. Rau’s and Eversource contacted and on scene.
10:40 a.m. 911 caller reporting she was in an accident with another vehicle at Montague and High Streets; possible injuries. Officer advises airbag deployment. Traffic diverted onto High Street; no traffic up L Street either. Tow requested for both vehicles. One driver taken to hospital by AMR; other driver taken to hospital by TFFD. Roadway reopened; vehicles towed.
1:26 p.m. Caller from Federal Street would like it on record that some trucks she owns as part of her business were egged last night.
4:31 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states someone just parked a vehicle in the parking lot and then put on a hoodie and walked away. Vehicle was left by boyfriend at girlfriend’s house; nothing suspicious.
4:51 p.m. Caller states she found a puppy that was running in Turners Falls Road; attempted to knock on some doors and get him home, but no luck. Caller has the dog at her house for now and he is doing fine. Received call from female stating she lost her dog; description matches above. Officer picked up puppy to take it home.
6:02 p.m. Caller states there is a tree down across West Mineral Road; wires are sagging, and road is not passable. Tree is blocking access to multiple houses. Eversource contacted and on scene.
8:20 p.m. 911 caller from Third Street calling to have children thrown out due to abuse.

Thursday, 6/23
2:10 a.m. Suspicious person report on Randall Road. Officer advises nobody in area.
2:52 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that there is a white car behind this address and they are selling drugs. Unfounded.
11:08 p.m. Suspicious person report on Randall Road. Officer advises he checked the area; no one around.
Friday, 6/24
7:34 a.m. Caller from Crocker Avenue reports a bear in her yard, and she is locked out of her house. Bear left the area. Resident back inside her house. Officer located the bear in a yard on Davis Street. Officers out with bear on Marshall Street.
11:26 a.m. Caller from Central Street reports that a male with a blue beard put a bag in the bushes and took another bag from the bushes. Male storing some property under the bushes. Residents do not want him there. They will call if he returns.
11:53 a.m. Caller believes her neighbor just shot a shotgun in his backyard. She heard the shot, and her juvenile neighbor told her he saw the male shoot a gun into the air. Resident from Federal Street called in to report he was working on a derby car and it backfired. Info given to officers. Neighbors reporting fireworks. Officer will speak with involved male when he returns home later.
3:33 p.m. Caller from Connecticut River Liquor and Wine reporting that a female just stole the charity jar for the Dakin Humane Society off of the counter. Units attempting to make contact with involved party at an apartment building on Avenue A. Officer out with party. Officer advises the item was located in the dumpster off Avenue A in the First and Second Street alleyway. Container is empty. Summons issued.
Saturday, 6/25
1:42 p.m. Caller reporting that a male party is outside of the Creemee right now in his wheelchair, begging people for money and lying about being a retired veteran. Officer spoke with male and advised him to stop.
2:39 p.m. Caller from Rod Shop Road reporting two parties on motorized bicycles breaking into the abandoned commercial property next door. Caller did not get a good look at them. Officer advised that it was a couple of kids poking around. Property owner will follow up.
3:51 p.m. Caller reporting a male party with a boa constrictor at Unity Park letting it play in the water. Officer checked area; negative findings.

4:24 p.m. Caller reporting a male in a wheelchair aggressively asking people for money on Avenue A. Officer spoke to party and advised him of the complaint.
8:34 p.m. 911 caller reporting a bear sitting by the side of the road eating something. Officer advises that bear is out of area, went into the woods.
9:02 p.m. Caller from Grove Street reporting that her Macbook Air was stolen out of her vehicle. Could have been stolen when she was parked on Grove Street or when she was at the Bookmill earlier this evening.
9:14 p.m. Party into station to report that her tablet and cell phone were taken this evening at Ja’Duke Center for the Performing Arts.
Sunday, 6/26
1:11 a.m. Caller from Avenue A reports that approximately ten minutes ago she heard a loud bang; she went to check and noticed her screen door had been kicked in. Caller indicated this happened a month ago as well. Officer checked area; nobody around. Damage to screen door noted. Officers will patrol area.
10:12 a.m. Caller reporting he struck a deer on Millers Falls Road; he later discovered damage to his vehicle. He will come to the station and meet with an officer to observe the damage. Deer is deceased and disposed of over the banking.
1:51 p.m. Caller from Masonic Avenue reporting 17-year-old foster child took off from her residence; last seen around 7:30 this morning. Referred to an officer.
3:58 p.m. Caller from Crocker Avenue reporting someone was parked outside his house taking pictures. When confronted, he wouldn’t give an explanation or tell them who he was. Officers will continue to check area.
4:13 p.m. 911 caller reporting neighbor disturbance on East Main Street. Situation mediated; parties will stay separated.
9:31 p.m. Two calls reporting a male party on Third Street; first call reported party broke a window on the second floor of the building next door then jumped out and started banging on the caller’s door. Second call reports that a male party just broke caller’s door and is inside his house acting crazy; caller wants him out. Shelburne Control contacted. Gill, Bernardston, and Erving are tied up. Greenfield PD sending an additional unit. A 52-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with vandalizing property, breaking and entering for a misdemeanor, and trespassing.

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REVIEW

An Inkspiration

by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno

By RICHARD ANDERSEN

MONTAGUE CENTER – It takes two to tango. It also takes two to create a work of art, music, or literature: the person who applies the brush, composes the notes, and writes the words, and the person who views the painting, listens to the music, and reads the stories and poems.

Because each viewer, listener, and reader approaches every created work through a lens that has been crafted by the influences in his or her life – family, friends, teachers, books, movies, travel etc. – each of us tends to analyze and judge the work of another’s imagination differently. No two people see, hear, or read the same creations of art, music, and literature the same way. Similarly, the extent of our individual imaginations determines what we like and what we don’t like.

Therein lies the rub. We want our artists, musicians, and writers to be free to go wherever their imaginations lead them. We don’t want them to be shackled to any specific tradition or school of thought. We praise those who have had the courage to be different, who have struck out on their own, determined their own destinies, and succeeded in their chosen fields.

But when we come across a work that differs from what we are used to, there’s a tendency to retreat into the comfort of what is familiar. We forget for the moment that Van Gogh never sold a single painting, that Mozart is buried in an unmarked grave, that Emily Dickinson died with all but a handful of her poems in bedroom drawers.

We don’t give the artist, musician, or writer a chance. We judge their works too quickly. If we can “relate” to it, it’s good; if it doesn’t “speak” to us, it’s not. And we frequently don’t limit our lack of appreciation to a specific individual. In a matter of seconds, we can dismiss whole generations of creative output. Worse: we find ourselves taking pride in rejecting what we may have very well failed to understand.

Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno’s *Learning to Use Black* is an unspoken invitation to suspend our inherited beliefs in what constitutes “good” and embrace what formerly we might have considered “not.” His book is a collection of eleven abstract images done in Japanese ink, a medium he was introduced to while working for Time Life in Tokyo in the early 1980s. The visuals introduce us to sensations that can’t be articulated in words alone.

As Christopher tells us in one poem: “Each measure a measure/of language outside speech.” Nevertheless, he creates through poetry a companion piece for each abstraction. These poems, as you might expect, are almost as abstract as the paintings that inspired them.

To appreciate the impact of Christopher’s authentically original and strikingly creative accomplishment, experience what takes place with the second illustration and poem, *Violet cobwebs fingers extend* (see above).

Christopher’s combination of images and words is not merely different; it is recognizably original. And more than merely clever; the combination is truly creative. It takes time and effort on our part to recognize and understand his choices of concepts and expressions.



Violet cobweb fingers extend,
become a center.
The inclusive sense of rejection
creates an ejection:
a way of remaining.

Christopher’s work is also authentic. There’s nothing artificial about the way his communicative materials are constructed. Each and every expression is existentially real. What we see and what we read are not just representations of Christopher’s thoughts and emotions; they *are* his thoughts and emotions.

But what’s it all mean? The meaning is initially determined by Christopher. They are his images and words. But once we experience them, these same images and words also become ours. We too become part of the creative process Christopher started when he delved below the surface of his consciousness and brought back what he wanted to share

with us, the way he wanted to share it. The result is a genuine work of art, and a significant contribution to today’s discourse on what it means to be human.

Over the course of 28 years, Alyscamps Press in Paris has published more than two dozen works by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno. These include original collections of his many poems as well as translations of works by Rafael Alberti, Federico Garcia Lorca, Louis Aragon, Man Ray, Paul Éluard, and Max Ernst. When not contributing to France’s status as the intellectual center of western civilization, Christopher serves as the Poetry Page editor for the *Montague Reporter*.

YOUR FILM CRITIC

Baz Luhrmann, *Elvis* (2022)

By REBECCA TIPPENS

COLRAIN – I really liked the film *Elvis*, written and directed by Australian director Baz Luhrmann, whose films have a focus on musical cinema (think *Strictly Ballroom* and *Moulin Rouge*). In telling Elvis’s story, Luhrmann chose a social angle, focusing on how racism, commercialism, the corruption of money, the general pitfalls of the fame game, and the violence of our culture, including the crushing assassinations of MLK and Bobby Kennedy, can shape and/or warp an artist in the course of his life.

The telling begins with Elvis as a young teen when, drawn towards the sound and peeking into gospel tents, he became a convert to that music that spoke to him spiritually as well as musically. Later, exploring Beale Street in Memphis, he fell in love with rhythm and blues that he experienced from Little Richard, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Big Mama Thornton (from whom he learned “Hound Dog”), and especially BB King, whom he befriended.

This was at a time in our history when white folk were not to mingle with the Black folk and, as he grew in fame, there were forces that consequently demonized him for having these connections that both informed his music and his movements. But we learn that Elvis stood up to that demonization, refusing to tone down his style in dress, movement, or musical choices.

That decision of his can be seen as bringing homage to and greater awareness of Black culture in the

wider culture, though, of course, it is debated: issues of appropriation, the media’s favoring of the white over black performers, etc. are raised.

Luhrmann holds the former vision, as did BB King. That he chose to bring focus to such issues brings relevance to the film for giving perspective to the racially discordant issues of our day. And, he reminds us how much of Black culture is appreciated by all folks no matter their skin color, and that Elvis played a key role in transmitting that culture to the larger world.

One scene I especially loved shows the scope of Presley’s musical genius. He is contracted to perform on a huge Las Vegas stage and he realizes that he alone would be completely lost on it. He brings in a *big* orchestra to back him up, with arrays of instruments, multiple horns, quartets, etc.; he becomes their conductor in rehearsals, and evidently loves and excels in this role, as portrayed by the outstanding Austin Butler.

From the start, Butler paints a picture of a person who was a kind, gentle spirit in thrall with music, considerate of others, and unafraid to express his deep love for his mother. Indeed, early in his life he promises his Mom that were he to “make it” as a musician, he would get her a Cadillac! (She is loath to see him leave home.) Not only does he give her that, but also the keys to the mansion he buys for her, Graceland. And he ultimately supported a large entourage.

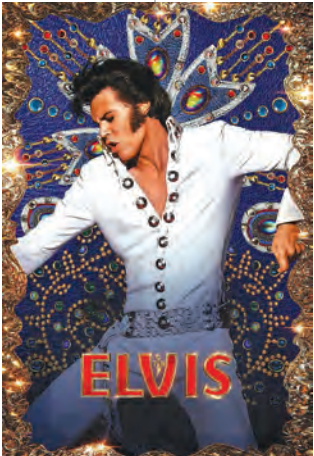
The tension, the dynamic of the film, plays out over the complicated relationship between Elvis and his

promoter, agent Colonel Tom Parker – played by Tom Hanks, donning a fat suit and abetted by some rather extraordinary facial prosthetics. This man did, arguably, steer him onto the road of fame, supporting Elvis’s quietly held dreams, but he also arguably brought about his contractual slavery and addictions, causing the breakup of his marriage with a woman he deeply loved.

Parker would call on doctors to pump Elvis with morphine and other drugs when the exhausted idol was unable to perform on his own stamina. Parker had tremendous self-interest in pushing his protégé, as he wrangled contracts that would give himself a salary commensurate to Elvis’s!

We are first introduced to him as a fairly small-time country music promoter who is turned on to Elvis and witnesses the incredible hold he had on his audiences. Parker is determined to make Elvis his only client, and is convinced that he can bring him fame. He is right – hence the tension, despite the technique and motivations.

See the film to witness this dynamic, ranging from friendship to exploitation, and see it to get a good serving of Elvis’s many tunes, his liberated performance style, as well as an appreciation of his cultural contributions.



COMPARISONS

Three Lives of Elvis

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I saw the movie by Baz Luhrmann about Elvis that premiered on June 23. It featured some historical inaccuracies about Elvis – like things that never actually happened, like his being friends with B.B. King. However, they got a couple of pieces of history right – just like Travis LeDoyt does when he is performing.

Ledoyt is an Elvis impersonator from Greenfield. I have seen him perform. The man wears a pink jacket, like the real-life Elvis did a couple of times, and he also has worn a leather jumpsuit like Elvis did. When I saw him, this man drew crowds like crazy to his performance. It was quite a crowd. He also sings gospel music like Elvis liked to do.

The clothes they had the actor Austin Butler wear in the movie are the same as what I mentioned Elvis liked to wear. Just like what happened with Elvis, the actor is shown on the screen drawing vast crowds of people, going crazy for him. This actor really did sing some of the music and play the guitar in the film, so I guess that made his portrayal of the musician especially good.

Tom Hanks played Elvis’s promoter Colonel Tom Parker in the film, and narrated it. One of the

things they were right about with the history was that the Colonel was interested in Elvis because he was a different kind of musician. Also, they got it right that Elvis met his wife when he went into the Army, as well as how he liked to hang around Beale Street, and went to a tailor there for clothes he had always wanted once he got the money for them.

One more historically accurate point is Butler’s portrayal of how Elvis’s movie career basically went nowhere, because they only wanted him in films where he sang. Some of the other pieces of history weren’t too far off target. He is shown to be affected by the loss of Martin Luther King in the film. In real life, this man wrote a song called “If I Can Dream” in tribute to King and the March on Washington he had helped organize.

One more thing that they got right was that Elvis did have some controversy surrounding him, which is shown in the movie.

I should point out that unlike when Travis LeDoyt performs rock ‘n’ roll today, I believe rock ‘n’ roll wasn’t viewed as okay by many people then. I believe people were bothered by how the real Elvis performed on stage. Travis LeDoyt doesn’t have those problems when he performs.

So with that said, it seems that Austin Butler captures the image of this man as well as LeDoyt appears to do in his shows. I said that about Travis because of the crowds he drew the time I saw him. That, to me is the important part of playing someone, when making a film on a historical individual of any kind.

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

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
Readers are invited to send poems to the
Montague Reporter at: 177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376
or to: poetry@montaguereporter.org

Our June Poetry Page

Slipping into slumber

old voices and meanings buckled and broke through
preventing what should have been relaxing muscles.

She loved that body. Swore to protect it or at least respect it.
Give it its food and it mattered not to her what the food was.
Touch? Scent? Warm breathing just above the skin seeping into the arms?

Whatever that was.

On a cool day with sun there was food:
a small brief shark-like wind cut through
the glow of the sun spot boring into her cheeks.

Yes but go get something for your blaring glaring white Irish skin.
Even a rag could be food for this today.

She began to dream everything that caught her skin alive was food.
Anything that washed over it visible or myth was food
Engaging her to come back.

The world of slumber, old voices and meanings let her buckle and break.

- Edna French
Turners Falls

I Buried Dinosaurs

I buried dinosaurs
I buried dinosaurs once
Beneath the valley’s sandy soil
Their bodies were tragically lifeless
Sliding from the steel bucket
The steel age but a moment to their existence
I had once called them friends
Touched their leathery skin
Looked into their eyes
Saw times of fire and ice
Saw creatures of all shapes and sizes
Walking, flying, swimming
Most faded away, lost forever
Their remains slivers hidden between layers of stone
But these ones endured
Hidden far below infernos raging
Below a world encased in ice
Waiting, surviving but never changing
A perfect life form, primordial
Their existence finally threatened
The most destructive of all beasts emerged
Setting in motion cataclysm
The symmetric patterns rendered
I watched them suffocate, fading
Tears clouding the sight of their forms coalescing
A collage of our short time together
Each distinct but now one
I bade them farewell, covered them
Breaking down until they were part of the soil
Joining their ancestors
And ours

- R.M. Garcia
Erving

Picking up

First day of spring a poem she hadn’t (yet) written
chewed away at her.
All morning she suspected too much coffee.
God forbid you try to write it.
Eating away at the back of her neck
it shredded Friday night into small bites
and dropped to the floor in a pile:
spoken snatches of the evening
mingled with water from the dog’s breakfast.
“Are you going to leave it there?”
“Are you going to get some spine and pick it up?”
That got her moving.

The grifters at the bar drew them in quick
like a slide (who picked up who?).
“Oh we thought we’d see what’s over the bridge.”
They saw her coming.
They gummed the surface, as grifters do an open sore
(she thought she picked them up).
The cheap Old Fashioned was refused.
Their fun was cut out for them because
losers never come from big cities.

God forbid you should come from a small town
and be promised “big money” someplace else.
Always someplace else.
God forbid you find yourself young
and dreaming in some pittance of a place
taunted by scripts, affirming deserved joy awaiting you,
And bleating, and blurring, the sucking sound of ambition.
Always right here.

“Losers never come from big cities”.
“Ms. Fake It ‘Til You Make It” sold real estate
and pre-fab homes on dry bluffs that nobody wanted.
“Mr. Subscription Marketer Guy’s” steady drip of web links
to your in-box incentivized renewal, captured aging women
(their collagen smoothie regimen was already set in stone).
The long running brotherhood’s singular appeal –
to heal suffering of any kind, mind you –
crafted dreams of succulence in eternal life
the price embedded in submission and shame always right here.

She straightened up, mopped.
Picked them up hating what was wrong with them.

- Edna French
Turners Falls

Yellowstone

Somewhere, in a place between Wonderland and wild,
all the blue in the world is poured into a pot,
and reduced to make an enriched emulsion.

Painted on feathers, it makes me shiver.

Here among last summer’s grasses
I watch blue lights weave through a swarming gray hatch,
stirring up the spring meadow with pieces of sky.

Defying gravity and the English language simultaneously,
they cross the borders of possibility.

Like no simile you dare to name,
they do not belong with familiarity.

Bewildered by the outrageousness of their color,
dizzied by following their back and forth,
my mind lets go.

The Bluebirds weave me back together.
My heart rises up and flies away.

- Judy Hall
Wendell

Contributors’ Notes

Judy Hall has a deep relationship with wild places and their inhabitants. For 12 years she has lived within the Eastern Forest on an off-grid homestead in Wendell, possibly on Pocumtuck hunting grounds. Most of her writing has been as a career grant writer and community project developer. She also worked in Idaho for 10 years as a guide and dream-tender, where she wandered and camped in many wild places off-season.

Edna French has lived in New England, and in the town of Montague, for years. Also a photographer, a recent focus included urban structures imprinted by human nature: “Town Without Pity” and “Town Without Pity (next door).” Professional success includes proposal writing and research for education, arts, and community health fundraising.

R.M. Garcia, when not cooking gourmet meals for his family and friends, wandering through the woods, writing the occasional poem, or watching the river run and the hawks and eagles soar, works at the USGS Silvio Conte Anadromous Fish Research Laboratory.

ALEXANDER ROTONDO PHOTO

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TREELINE from page B1
2018 book by Richard Powers, *The Overstory*, and is very respected by scientists and native tribes.

One of Beresford-Kroeger’s areas of interest is called in this book “the forest in the sea” because some of the nutrients forests provide through their photosynthesis and biomass eventually end up in the ocean, feeding the microorganisms that ocean life depends on.

In each of these regions, warming is changing the forest and tundra, and the effects have been detrimental to people, wildlife, and biomes. Shrubs and trees are moving into tundra areas, negatively impacting the reindeer herds of the Sami. Snowfall and rain amounts and timing are changing, with ice formation beginning later and melting earlier.

Many arctic areas are dependent on ice roads and snow for transportation, and that is becoming unreliable. Less snow means less solar energy reflected back into space, further warming the planet.

Fishing has also changed, and the methane “burps” in Russia’s Siberia are indications of scary things happening in the melting permafrost. Can we expect ancient viruses to be released with the melting? Even ocean currents seem to be changing, reducing the driftwood in a few areas that depend on that wood.

The effects are varied and numerous, and researchers mentioned in the book have found that expected effects predicted by models may

come to pass, but some are also bafflingly off target.

The last region Rawlence visited was Greenland. Yeah, no forest! But people there are watching the huge ice cap melt, and vegetation is changing. Sheep farmers have new problems keeping their sheep fed and healthy.

There are folks who are trying to prepare some of Greenland for the changes to come. They are planting trees in some fjord areas, where they can hopefully survive, and Greenland will become partly green as the white ice cap slowly melts.

Most everyone loves trees, I think we can say. After reading the book, I found myself looking at the trees around my home with new, even more appreciative eyes. Not just beautiful but more complex, more vital, and even more sentient. The book is science-heavy, but readable and accessible.

So, WWTBD? (What Would Treebeard Do?) I think we know. Less use of fossil fuel, less buying of disposable plastic stuff, more reusing, repurposing, all that good stuff. Questioning the rationale for cutting large swaths of forest. Is it science, or the “management science” foresters have been taught – because we humans have been so good at managing things...

We can perhaps aspire to be tree shepherds, protecting them even from afar if possible, so they can protect and sustain the planet. Enjoy the book, and go hug a tree.



MURAL from page B1
the historical commission, library trustees, and the local cultural council, she was encouraged to go ahead with her idea for the mural. Key to the project was securing funding, something she knew the town could not afford to provide. With the help of her neighbors she applied for a craft fellowship grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council to cover the cost of materials, kiln firings, and installation. She donated her labor.

Inglese felt that the library was the best location for the mural. “I considered the school, but there are many people who don’t have children,” she said. “The library is something that brings all these different ages together. People really use the library – there are classes, exhibits, and people coming in and out all the time.”

She also thought about incorporating a poem into the artwork, but instead, Janine Roberts of Leverett wrote a poem inspired by the mural scene (*see sidebar at right*), which is displayed in a nearby window.

Inglese wanted to create not just a historical mural, but one depicting “a flow of history.” “The past is the present is future, flowing and evolving,” she said. “We make history now with what we decide to do.” A variety of people are depicted, some from the past, such as Erastus Field (1805-1900), a painter who lived in Leverett, and the Pocumtuck female *sachem* Mashalisk, who lived there in the 1600s.

“I also wanted to make sure it represented a diverse community – for if not at present, in the future it will become more so,” said Inglese, who included children of different races to represent this diverse future. Generational relationships are represented by an elder reading to a child.

Structures in the scene include a one-room schoolhouse, done from an old photograph; the Congregational church; the old box shop building that is now the Leverett Crafts & Arts Center, and the Peace Pagoda.

People and animals are shown within the natural environment. In fact, there are numerous little details everywhere in the mural, making it rewarding to see over and over again – part of the artist’s intent.

The bas relief, glazed tiles are mortared together to create the mural scene bound by a wooden frame. It is a very heavy creation – perhaps 300 pounds, Inglese guessed – and it was done at her Amherst studio and then transported as a whole to the library. The terra cotta colored clay is left unglazed in some areas, glazed in others.

Inglese says she works the clay through a slab roller, then takes a cartoon of the design and lays it on top to determine how the tile pieces are cut. Unlike mosaic work, where the design is fractured into pieces that merge into a whole, her method allows many sections

to follow the form, akin to the way stained glass is divided. Hands, faces, beaks, frogs, flowers, and such are whole pieces, and divisions are smartly made to add rhythm and pattern in flat areas or serve to emphasize sections of the bodies of animals, plants, and people.

A firm believer in the value of public art, Inglese said she doesn’t really want to have her work in galleries. She noted that most public art is installed in urban centers. “Rural America really doesn’t have a tradition of public art, and I felt it was really important to do that because it really can bring the community together,” she said. “Art is not a luxury, it’s as important as clothing and food. It can inspire us, heal us... it gives us an identity beyond brick and mortar, beyond just structures.”

“You know, New England doesn’t have a public art tradition,” she continued. “We are Puritans – we have green grass commons, and nothing in our churches, it is very unembellished. I think [public art] allows people to think more about something beyond their daily lives.”

Inglese shared a quote from Pablo Picasso that represents her feelings: “Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

And now, the town of Leverett has one less dusty, everyday corner – and one more beautiful public art installation, a perfect blend of history, nature, and community, thanks to Inglese’s ingenuity, hard work, and generosity.



The Land Stories Us

Skywriting glints from pagoda
spire, inviting all
to ceremonial stones, Native
trails on *Quaquatchu**,
waters of glacial kettle pond
where peepers trill, bass leap.

Place, common ground, *nekit**,
“Pleased to know you, *netomp**.”
Open doors, welcoming hearths.
Peace.
Aqueene

* In Nipmuc, *Quaquatchu* is Brushy Mountain; *nekit* is “home”; *netomp* is “my friend.” Pocumtuc people along with Quaboag Nipmucs, Nashaway Nipmucs, Norwotuks, Agawam, and Sokoki Abenaki are the six historic Nations living in Kwinitekw (central CT river valley). The land now called Leverett is more Pocumtuc territory. Pocumtuc, an L-dialect of the Algonquin language family, is no longer spoken. Nipmuc is a combination of N- and L-dialect of Algonquin, and close to Pocumtuc. Nipmuc is still spoken.

EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Pollinators and Predators of Massachusetts and Costa Rica*. Bart Bouricius’s photographs feature insects and arachnids. Through July 5.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Everything Can Be Fixed*. Abstract multimedia works by Turners Falls resident Susan Blauner. Paintings, sculpture, fabric, colored pencil compositions. A portion of sales will benefit Ukrainian relief organizations, with 100% of sales of Blauner’s greeting cards going to benefit animals of Ukraine.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Smoky Puddle*, works by Cathy Wusocki and Wayne Hopkins. Through August 27.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Unseen Rhythms*. Jude Danielson presents quilted textiles that navigate the realm between pure color perception and recognizable form. July 1 through August 31. Opening reception this Friday, July 1 from 5 to 9 p.m. with live music by the Intangible Shirt Company.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Staying Connected*, a multimedia exhibit of art as an expression of cultural heritage. Through July.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Lisa Beskin*, underwater photography; *Julie Crabtree*, embroidered scenes inspired by the Bridge of Flowers. Through August.

Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Dare to Dream*, photographs of the New England landscape by Theirry Borcy. Through July.

Local Art Gallery, Mill District, Amherst: *Valley Artist Portraits*. Isabella Dellolio photographed 20 local artists for a project putting their portraits on Valley Bike kiosks. Through August.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Painting*. Evelyn Pye. Pye surrounds the viewer with landscape paintings, ranging from 6 feet to 6 inches, in oil on linen, canvas, and wood. Through July. Reception next Thursday, July 7, 5 to 8 p.m.

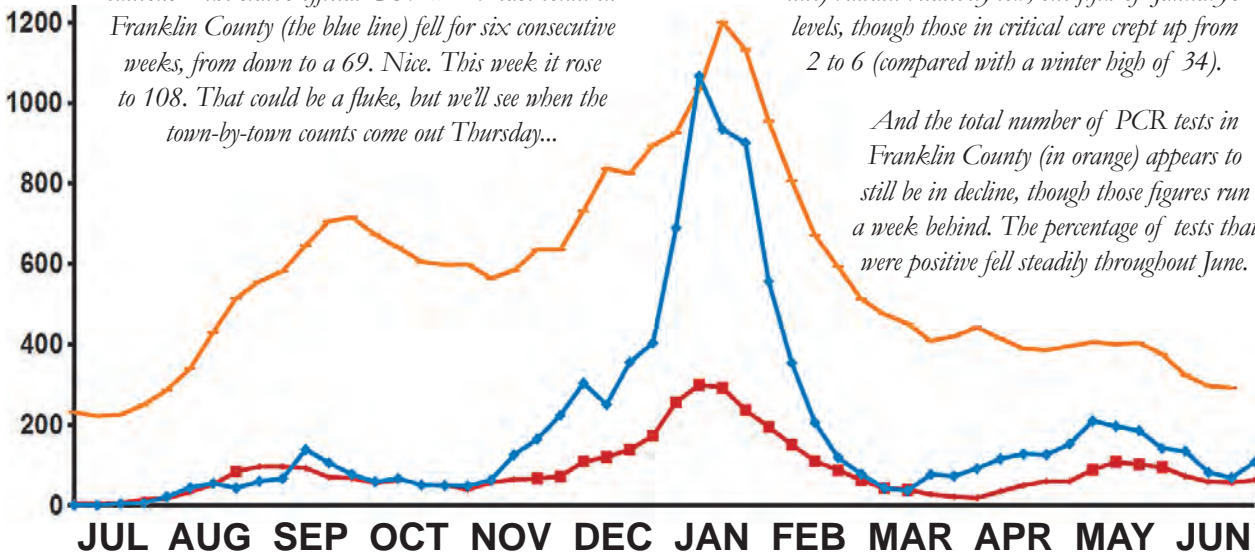
Anchor House of Artists, Northampton: *Looking after 66 years*, retrospective of paintings from David Rohn’s career in Putney, Vermont and NYC. Through July. Reception next Friday, July 8, 5 to 8 p.m.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: Through July 3, *Chloe London*. In residence, London is rehearsing for work premiering next February. In this piece, London is interested in color theory, how hues and pigments move through the body, and transforming what we perceive as visual into sensation. July 4 through 10: *Warp*. Olivia Brandwein and Sarah Miller-Bartley create an installation about the properties of raw canvas through cutting, twisting, tying, and unraveling small squares of the material, painting them, and pairing them with mass-produced objects. The work aims to inspire a sense of play, increase accessibility of art, and explore what art is and who can make it. The public is invited to participate; hours at apearts.org.

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center: *Felt Experience*, group show of felt artists. Also exhibiting: Beth Galston, Frank Jackson, Mie Yim, Nebizun, Roberley Bell, and Oasa Duverney. Through October 10. www.brattleboromuseum.org.

BIOPOLITICAL FEEDBACK DEPT.

We didn’t bother to print this chart for the past couple editions – the state’s official COVID-19 case count in Franklin County (the blue line) fell for six consecutive weeks, from down to a 69. Nice. This week it rose to 108. That could be a fluke, but we’ll see when the town-by-town counts come out Thursday...



Hospitalizations in the Baystate system (the red line) remain relatively low; one-fifth of January’s levels, though those in critical care crept up from 2 to 6 (compared with a winter high of 34).

And the total number of PCR tests in Franklin County (in orange) appears to still be in decline, though those figures run a week behind. The percentage of tests that were positive fell steadily throughout June.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



HEY! DO YOU READ THIS?

The *Montague Reporter* is looking for volunteers to help us curate this ongoing listing. Interested parties may contact editor@montaguereporter.org.

THURSDAY, JUNE 30

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Gentle Field and Hill, Elsa, Good Morning, DJ Lucie R.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 1

Main Street outdoor stage, Gallery Walk, Brattleboro: *Thus Love, Gift.* Free. 6 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Apollo Suns, Lush Honey, Lemon Street.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

The Perch at Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Circus Trees, Signal Pine.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Cloudbelly, Grammerhorn Wren, This Could Be It.* \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Give.* Free. 9 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Woolly Mar, Tender Spot, Dutch Experts*, shadow puppets. \$. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 2

The Drake, Amherst: *Carinae, Boyfriend Machine, DJ Quills.* \$. 7 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 3

Downtown Turners Falls: *Music Walk* featuring taiko drummer Kaoru Watanabe, XY Duo, Lily-Rakia Chandler, Jo Sallins & The Rhythm Queens, and

more. Rain day. 1 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *A.P.E., Film & Gender, Owen Manure.* \$. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Anxiety* feat. DJs *Lucie R., Kashmere Champagne, TallGirl.* \$. 8 p.m.

MONDAY, JULY 4

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Open mic with *Just Jim.* 8:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6

Montague Center Common: *Becky and John.* Free. 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 7

Mystery Train, Amherst: *Wes Buckley, Mia Friedman, Vex Party, Zamzax Goom.* Free. 4 p.m.

Forbes Library lawn, Northampton: *Flung, Blue Toed, Father Hotep.* Free. 5:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Seed, Rong, Chained to the Bottom of the Ocean, Fed Ash.* \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bridge of Flowers, Luxor Rentals, Human Pontiac.* 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 8

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *Gravity Hill* feat. *Georgia Beauty, Webb Crawford, Koni Michi*, more. 7 p.m.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *The Roots.* \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Fennario.* \$. 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Mike Gangloff, Liam Grant*

& *Grayson McGuire, Tony Pasquarosa.* Free. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 9

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *Gravity Hill* feat. *Koni Michi, Forbes Graham*, more. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Staged reading, *The Gentle Villainy of Richard III.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Basher, Bobby Ganache, LoSax.* \$. 8 p.m.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem.* \$. 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Films of *Maya Deren* with live soundtrack by *Rob Schwimmer.* \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *John Sheldon.* \$. 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied.* Free. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 10

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Babehoven, Field Guides, Sailor Down.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

Montague Center Common: *Ken Lively.* Free. 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 14

The Drake, Amherst: *Track Meat, Chimneys, Trash Rabbit.* \$. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Michael Cormier, Aisha Burns, Nat Baldwin.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Ad-*

die, High Tea, Adelaide Fay. \$. 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Michah P. Hinson, Wes Buckley.* \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 15

256 Pleasant, Northampton: *Brit Brideau, The Leafies You Gave Me, Almost Almost.* \$. 6 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Tommy Fuentes Band.* Free. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Aubrey Haddard, Ciarra Fragale, Kalliope Jones.* \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Slambovian Circus of Dreams.* \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 16

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Wendell Reggae Fest.* feat. *Rhythm Inc., Wheel Out, Equalites*, many more. 1 p.m.

Antenna Cloud Farm, Gill: *Matt Evans' Aquatic House.* \$. 6 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Shirese, Slyne and the Family Stoned, Post Moves.* \$. 6:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Vimana.* Free. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 17

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Thus Love, Scout Gillett.* \$. 7 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Mary Lattimore, Michael Roberts.* \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 20

Montague Center Common: *Mu-*

sic By Mr. C. Free. 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 21

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Drivin' N Cryin'.* \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Underground System.* \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 22

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Freestone or Ooze*, feat. *Gary Higgins, Gracious Calamity, Anthony Pasquarosa, Federico Balducci, Wednesday Knudsen*, and many more. \$. 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 23

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Dear Mr. Ward*, staged reading of new book by Evan H. Gregg. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *clairerousay, Matchess.* \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Oompa, Chris Focus, Ajiggy, Allie from the Valley.* Hip-hop. \$. 10 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 24

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Laura Veirs.* \$. 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, JULY 26

Look Park, Northampton: *Regina Spektor.* \$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 28

Look Park, Northampton: *Ani DiFranco.* \$. 7 p.m.

MONDAY, AUGUST 15

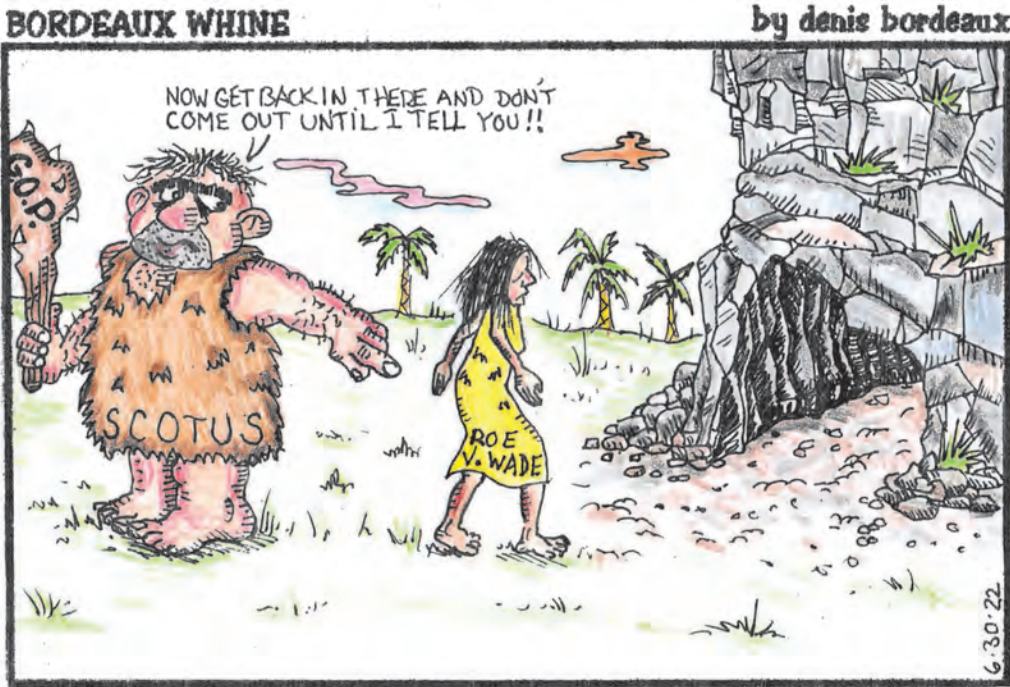
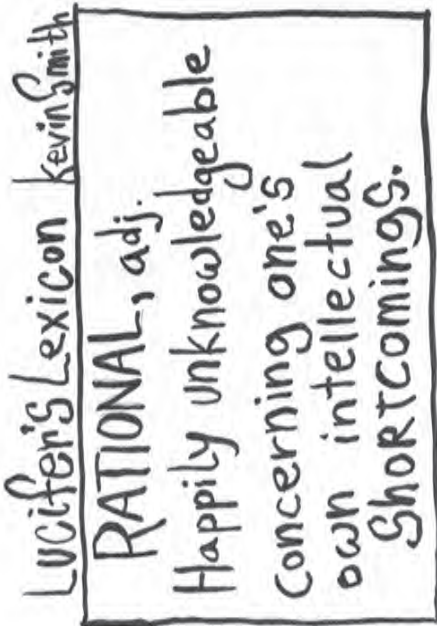
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Bonnie Prince Billy, Footings, A.P.I.E.* \$. 8 p.m.



Three Degrees of Warming
By Janice Rowan



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EVENT PREVIEW

Save Your Complaints!

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – In the early days of the pandemic, Evan Gregg finally found what he had been looking for: a black binder, stored away by his late father, full of entertaining letters his grandmother had saved during her days working in the complaints department of the Montgomery Ward mail-order catalog.

“Dear Mr. Ward,” one of the shortest reads. “I sent for a blanket in the big catalog sometime ago. Am dissatisfied with it. The old man swallowed a whog ofi [sic] one nite and nearly choked to death. It sheds so terrible. What shall I do about it. Can’t use it.”

Verna Sylvia Gregg spent 1931 to 1941 at the catalog’s offices in St. Paul, Minnesota from, working her way up from a complaint stenographer to a complaint correspondent, and returned briefly in 1942. She smuggled her favorite letters out and eventually retyped the collection on onionskin paper, lovingly preserving the customers’ typos and misspellings.

As did his forebears, Gregg began to share the letters around, and friends encouraged him to publish them in book form. Two years and a successful Kickstarter campaign later, *Dear Mr. Ward* is on the verge of its third small print run, and Gregg is preparing to host a staged reading of the material on Saturday, July 23 at the Shea Theater, live actors and all.

For more on the book and that event – there’s a package deal! – and sneak peeks of more letters, readers can check out dearmisterward.com. Gregg and I chatted about the project this week; here’s an edited-down version of the highlights.

MR: *So Montgomery Ward was a huge catalog that a ton of regular people had access to, and it was the first thing like that for a lot of people?*

EG: It was the first full-service mail order catalog. Mail order had been around for a while, but it was a lot of individual companies selling their products to mostly farmers on the “frontier.” Aaron Montgomery Ward was really the first one to put everything in one catalog. It started about 40 pages, it was pretty small, and very quickly grew significantly.

Ward’s focus was on getting basic stuff to rural families that they couldn’t get by going to the local store. Local stores were basically monopolies, and could charge whatever they wanted. They would get people in these really terrible credit deals where they would sign for credit and couldn’t pay it off. A lot of farms were lost to credit from small local stores, not just to the banks – people would get so far in debt they couldn’t afford to pay anything.

So he was a traveling salesman who went around and met with a lot of farmers, and he was wandering around the countryside at the same time the Granges were starting to formulate. He would go to Grange meetings, and he would offer a way for them to buy in bulk, so they could place an order for the whole Grange and save on shipping. He was really trying to get a good deal for these rural families that had no access to anything else. That’s how it started.

Obviously, things were a little different by the ‘30s – but not that different, especially in these tiny little towns where it still remained one of the only outlets for people to get stuff. Some of these towns don’t exist anymore, they’re ghost towns, really small towns in North Dakota and Minnesota.

It was the biggest catalog; Sears came along later, and they had a back-and-forth for about 100 years, a long rivalry. Montgomery Ward was more based in the Midwest, and really everywhere but the Northeast... most of the Midwest, Southwest, Northwest, and West Coast.

MR: *It was basically the Amazon of its time?*

EG: Everyone says that, but in some ways it was the opposite of Amazon. If you want to use the disruption concept, then yes, but he was

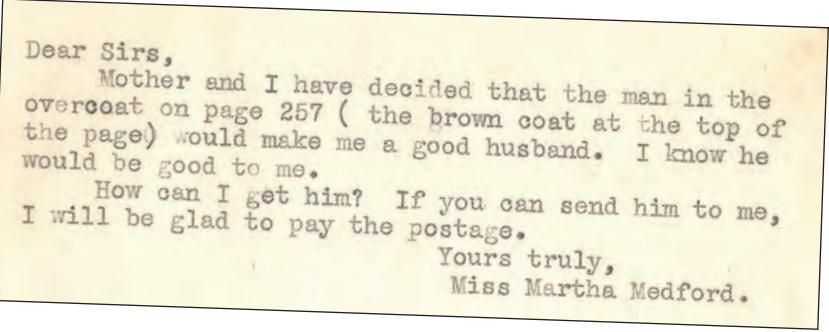
actually fighting against monopolies. So in some ways yes, it was the first place you could get everything from, but in terms of morality, no.

MR: *So there was actually a Montgomery Ward, but the company was 60 years old when your grandmother was hired in the complaint department. Did they have like a personification, like a logo of the dude, that prompted people to feel like they were writing to “Mr. Ward” ?*

EG: It’s one of those questions I have about the letters. What I like about them so much is I find them kind of inscrutable in terms of how much of it is serious, how much are they joking around, how much is tongue-in-cheek. I genuinely do not know! Some of them you can tell it’s serious; some you can tell it’s funny. And some of them are in this weird in-between zone where they could be serious or they could be putting them on little bit, having a little fun with the catalog.

But there was no one like Ronald McDonald, or anything like that...

Most of the people that I’ve found so far were not first-generation immigrants, which was kind of what I assumed at first. It seems like they were at least second- or third-generation, for the most part, so I don’t think there’s a lot of people



ple being aw-shucksy about it and not knowing.

MR: *How were these letters kept?*

EG: The originals were in a box, and then my grandpa brought home a binder and told my grandmother to type them all up, because he wanted to bring it to Mason meetings – he wanted to bring them to parties and stuff, and he wanted to have them preserved better. She typed them all up, from the originals, onto six-by-nine pieces of paper in this black binder. It was easier for them to keep track of them that way...

There were a lot more letters than these, obviously, these were just the ones that she picked. As best as I can tell, she actually recreated typos and misspellings in the letters. In the back of the book she has a glossary of all the misspelled words.

MR: *And you were helping clean out a house when you found them?*

EG: My dad died in 2018, and my mom died 2019. The first time I saw them was when I was starting to go through my dad’s stuff in 2018. I found a letter from a woman who was going to get married to a silver-fox farmer on Prince Edward Island, and she’s basically asking what she needs to start a household. The letter is on bigger onionskin paper, like old duplicate paper, and I’m not sure if that was the original or why it’s on the piece of paper. I found that in a box and I had no idea what it was, I thought it was some weird relative I didn’t know about or something.

I asked my mom about it, and she said that my dad had held on to the letters and that I’d never seen before... and I didn’t know [my grandmother] worked at Montgomery Ward at that point, it didn’t come up.

So I was I was going through their storage unit, and then after mom died I moved to Turners and I basically threw all my stuff in the garage, and it wasn’t really until lockdown that I had time to go through stuff. Like everybody else, I was trying to find things to occupy myself. I finally started digging through the boxes, and found the rest of the letters.

MR: *How many letters were in the collection, as you found it?*

EG: About 50... 54? My uncle actually found one later that isn’t in the book, that I haven’t published yet because it’s a letter from a mother and father to the catalog, thanking them for all the stuff they’ve bought over the years and sending pictures of their new baby. They weren’t ordering anything, they weren’t complaining, they were just sort of corresponding with them.

I haven’t posted that one yet, because that baby is still alive as a person. I’ve been trying to get in touch with her or her family, but nobody checks their Facebook messages.

The book was the first part of the project, and now I’m starting to figure out how to work on a documentary, and I’ve done a lot of research on the people. I’ve found a lot of the people....

I actually did find the marriage record for the woman who married the silver-fox farmer in PEI. I always assumed it was kind of like a mail-order bride situation. Turns out they were second cousins and knew each other, and the woman who was living in Minnesota had been born in Canada.... They got married, and they were married for 40 years, so apparently whatever she ordered for her household worked out all right!

MR: *Are there dates on any of the letters?*

EG: No, that’s been a challenge, I don’t know exactly. Some I’ve been able to figure out... I haven’t seen any evidence of ones being from before ‘36 or ‘37, and she obviously was a stenographer at first so I don’t think she was saving letters when she was doing that – my guess is that these are the ones when she was autonomous enough within the department to be able to sneak them in her pocketbook or whatever.

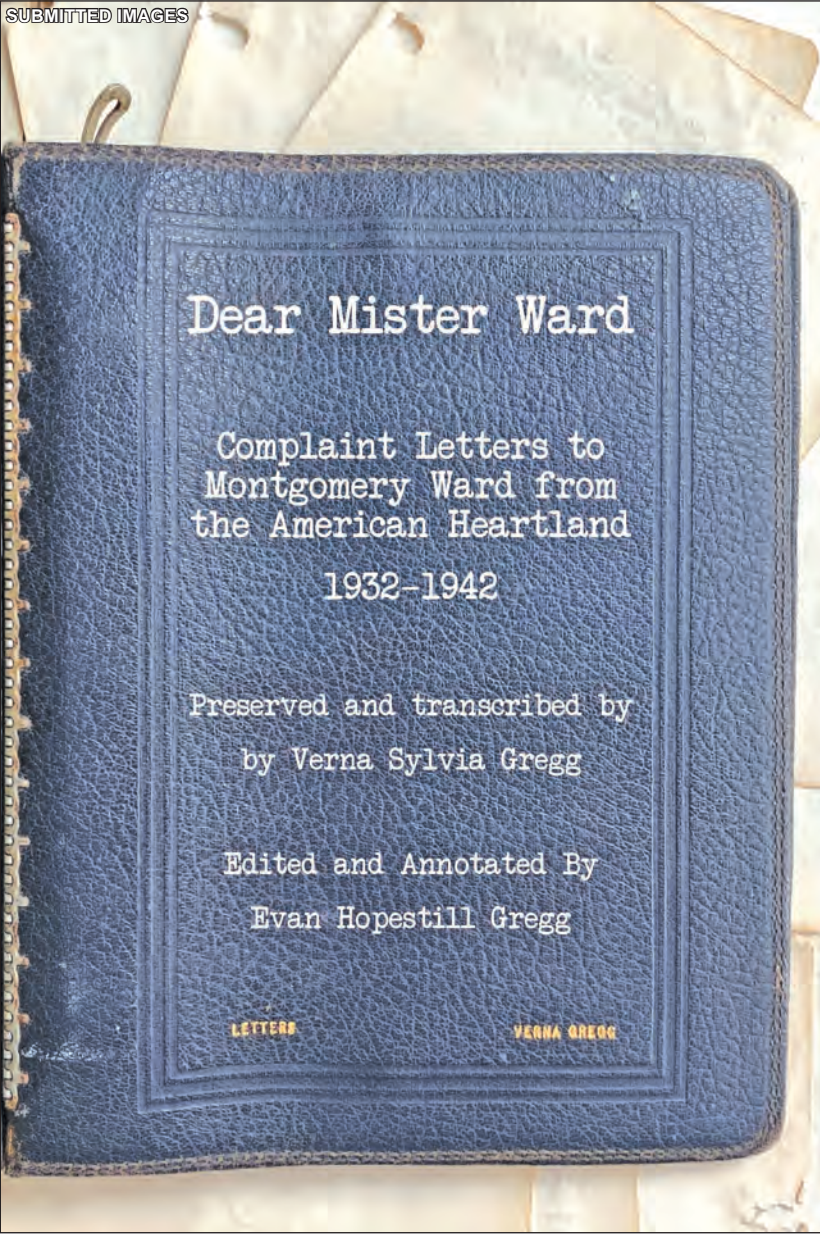
MR: *So these weren’t from the depths of the Depression, necessarily...*

EG: Kind of coming out of the Depression, but you know, there was already anxiety about World War II starting up... it’s definitely an interesting kind of transitional period.

MR: *How have people responded to the project?*

EG: Everybody’s really been enjoying it! I actually got the idea for the staged reading because I got a lot of feedback from the Kickstarter backers. I managed to get it out in time for Christmas, so a lot of people were reading it to each other over Christmas dinner... everybody seemed to really enjoy reading them to each other.

And I’m a terrible dramatic reader, it’s not really my thing – I thought it would be more fun to have other people reading it. My ultimate goal is to go to a couple places in the Midwest, maybe some of the towns where the letters came from, and get people there to read them. It’s kind of my pipe dream at this point, to do a little Midwest tour with the book. The Shea is kind of like my dry run for that.



Gregg sold 300 copies the day after a video on the project aired on TV in St. Paul. Ticket pre-sales for next month’s Shea show will help him figure out how many more to print.

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