

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 21 – NO. 16

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 9, 2023

## Deb Bourbeau Drops Retirement Bombshell



Montague town clerk Deb Bourbeau hopes to retire this summer, midway through her sixth three-year term. For those who doubt a suitable replacement can be found by the ballot box, the news adds urgency to calls to make the clerk an appointed role.

By JEFF SINGLETON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Montague’s special town meeting was nearing its end last week, and town clerk Deb Bourbeau was explaining why she endorsed a proposal to make her position appointed, rather than elected as is currently the case. She pointed to the increased complexity of the job, and new demands placed on the clerk by the liberalization of election laws.

“I’m lucky enough to have an assistant sitting in the office that is a town resident,” Bourbeau said, “so that when I do retire, which I will say is going to be this year...”

Bourbeau stopped, nodded to those at the meeting, looked up at the ceiling, and put her head in her hands as cries of “Oh no!” coursed through the high school auditorium.

We sat down with Bourbeau

this week to find out the “back story” leading to her decision to retire after nearly 20 years in the clerk’s office. “I have been thinking about retiring for the past six or eight months,” she said. “I’ve been battling with myself about it.”

In addition to wanting to spend more time with her family and traveling with her husband, Bourbeau said that it was “the new election laws that pushed me over the edge. I’m all for giving voters more chances to vote, but when it takes away from everyday issues – when you are always getting behind and treading water – that’s what pushed me over the line.”

Still, Bourbeau said, it was a bittersweet decision when she finally made it.

“This is the best job ever,” she told us. “You get to serve the public, and make people happy by

see **BOMBSHELL** page A4

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Grant Money Floods Into Town Coffers

By JEFF SINGLETON

Less than a week after a Montague town meeting voted to borrow \$2.5 million to facilitate buying new screw pumps at the sewer treatment plant using a combination low-interest loan and grant from the US Department of Agriculture, the town selectboard allocated \$46,800 in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for a survey of part of Avenue A in Turners Falls.

The survey was necessary, assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey told the board, for the town to receive a \$975,000 federal earmark already approved by the US Congress to fund the ongoing “streetscape” project on the Avenue.

The board then authorized Ramsey to apply for another federal earmark, estimated at \$2 million, to

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## School-Age Population Loss Shrinks State Aid to District

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – State education aid figures from the state have been released, and on Tuesday the Gill-Montague regional school committee took a final look over the FY’24 budget before they vote on it next week.

Although enrollment went up this year at both the K-8 and high school levels, the number of students in charter schools dropped, the number choosing in rose, and the number choosing out fell to its lowest level

in over a decade, Gill-Montague officials were dismayed to learn that state Chapter 70 aid will not increase this year as hoped.

The low aid figure can be credited to a drop in the district’s “foundation” enrollment, the total number of school-aged children living in the district, from 1,020 to 947, which puts Gill-Montague back in a category known as “hold harmless,” eligible for a bare-bones increase of \$30 per pupil.

“We are not that far into ‘hold see **GMRSD** page A2

## Town Meeting Slowly Agrees

By REPORTER STAFF

**TURNERS FALLS** – It took nearly four hours for a scant quorum of Montague town meeting members, gathered at the high school, to pass every article on last Thursday’s special town meeting warrant.

A number of articles related to the growing town workforce. Articles 7 and 8 gave a stipend of \$4,000 and a budget of \$2,500 to the Great Falls Farmers Market manager, long a position with an ambiguous relationship to the see **MEETING** page A6

## UMass Unions Decry Privatization Plan



UMass Advancement employee Jay Johnson discusses the university’s restructuring effort at Monday’s rally.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**AMHERST** – Unionized employees of the University of Massachusetts Amherst development office held a rally on campus Monday against a plan to move over 100 jobs to a private, non-unionized foundation. While university officials say they intend to transfer control of the fundraising and marketing staff to the UMass Amherst Foundation to comply with state retirement board regulations, union members dispute that the move is necessary.

“I guarantee you this will not benefit the taxpayers of Massachusetts one penny,” said Gail Gunn, a UMass

employee of 25 years and a member of the Professional Staff Union (PSU). “It’s only being done to curb state regulations so that they don’t have to play by the state’s rules anymore.”

Monday’s rally was held in support of the PSU and the University Staff Association, the two unions that represent staff of the university’s Advancement office.

According to state law, employees of a public college cannot spend more than 25% of their working hours on projects related to an affiliated private foundation, a regulation enforced by the Massachusetts State Retirement see **UMASS** page A5

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Elementary School Makes Modest Ask for FY’24

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting on Tuesday, the Leverett selectboard hosted the finance and school committees to review the FY’24 school budget request. The board also addressed numerous other financial and personnel issues in a lengthy session.

Caitlin Sheridan, director of finance and operations for Erving

school Union #28, of which Leverett is a member, joined members of the Leverett school committee in presenting a Leverett Elementary School budget of \$2,462,957, an increase of 4.42% over FY’23. Sheridan commented that the budget process was “a little more predictable” this year as the committee is not in the middle of contract negotiations with employees.

School committee chair Craig Cohen said some of the increase was due to “fiscal responsibility” – the committee wanted to balance cuts made in previous years, he said, and also thought it would be “prudent to save a little in a piggy bank” to cover unexpected future costs. Cohen said that the committee knew the budget was coming in see **LEVERETT** page A8

## High School Sports Week: Last Local Team Standing

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Franklin Tech Basketball Eagles’ spectacular season came crashing to a halt this week when they were knocked out of the state playoffs by the #1 team in the MIAA Division V.

But don’t cry for the Eagles. According to head coach Joe Gamache, “This was by far the most successful season for girls’ basketball in school history!” Tech finished with a 21-3 record, clinched the Franklin South Conference title

with a 12-0 conference record, and won the State Vocational Championship for the second straight year.

They defeated Saint Bernard last Thursday to advance to the Sweet Sixteen, and traveled to Millis on Monday to challenge the top team in the state.

Also this week, the fourth-ranked Pioneer Valley boys breezed past Keefe Tech 62-31, then edged out KIPP Academy of Lynn by a single point to advance to the Elite Eight in their own Division V tourney.

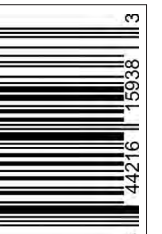
see **SPORTS** page A6



Pioneer’s Kurt Redeker shields the ball from Keefe Tech’s Ashley Coteau during the MIAA Division V Round of 32 tournament game in Northfield last week. The Panthers earned a decisive 60-31 win, progressing to the Round of 16.

### The Official Newspaper of the Montague Reporter Podcast

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# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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**Founded by**  
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold  
August 2002

## Destinations

Local news is only separated from national and global news by the thinnest of membranes. Tuned to a fault to the minutiae of small-town boards and budgets – a legacy of our origins in the rural-rock-bottom dark age of Aughties austerity – the *Reporter's* newsgathering channels are now churning and clogged with info on the pandemic-era government gold rush.

Patterns are discernable. Rural New England towns managed by competent administrative corps are not just well-positioned to take advantage of the cascade of appropriation. They are also newly attractive to investment: in the well-being of their retirees; in their resilience to weather catastrophe; in archives

and surveillance and branding.

Our country is now so polarized around the two-party split that certain state legislatures have begun to pass laws with no strategic purpose beyond repressing the people they see as enemy voters. It's hard to know where this will go in the long run, but we are already hearing anecdotes of people fleeing to more welcoming destinations.

Are our towns welcoming destinations? If you had to flee from Afghanistan, would you find us friendly? What about from Tennessee? In either case, the clearest obstacle might be the lack of available housing here. So here's the tough question: Was this an accident, or did we do it on purpose?

### GMRSD from page A1

harmless," business manager Joanne Blier noted. "But the enrollment really has to flatten at that 947 – it can't shrink any more than that."

Blier presented a revised preliminary budget. A \$271,593 decline in expected Chapter 70 revenue was the largest change, followed by a loss of \$116,972 from Gill's assessment due to a declining enrollment share from that town; increases in transportation reimbursement, Montague's assessment, and other factors amounted to a total reduction by \$113,101 since last month, for a district budget of \$27,475,958.

The biggest impact on education was the elimination of a high school math teacher position, saving \$68,000. Blier and superintendent Brian Beck explained that the position was added using pandemic relief funds to address learning loss, but has largely gone unfilled, and is currently occupied by a long-term substitute.

The school committee will vote on the budget on March 14.

Director of teaching and learning Joanne Powers shared a new 43-page "education plan" for the district's elementary schools, a required submission when the district applies for state reimbursement of construction merging Hillcrest Elementary, an "obsolete building," into Sheffield Elementary.

The combined school is envisioned to have one principal, two cafeterias served by one kitchen, a "community resource center," dedicated classrooms for electives, a makerspace for STEM instruction, a media literacy center, and two playgrounds. The gym, auditorium, and little league fields, "really loved by the town," would be preserved.

Gill member Bill Tomb praised

the plan, but warned: "The first question that's going to be thrown at you is how much is this going to cost?"

Blier guessed the state might reimburse Gill-Montague as much as the "low 80s, percentage-wise."

Beck announced a \$286,752 grant award to improve ventilation in the schools over the next four years.

Four snow days have pushed the last days of school to June 21 and 22.

Students from Pioneer Valley High School will tour the Turners Falls high school on March 13, and a Turners delegation will make a "mirror visit" to Northfield on March 21, in an exchange organized by the Six Town Regionalization Planning Committee.

A citizen proposal to name the high school pool after former swim coach Wes Snapp will be voted on April 11. Beck acknowledged that the pool is "underutilized."

The meeting began with a moment of silence for paraprofessional Eileen Fortin, who Beck called "a dedicated member of our support staff in the district for over a decade," and who died last month.

No volunteers have stepped forward to fill a vacant Montague school committee seat until the May election. Nomination papers are now available. The majority of the committee – Tomb and Cristina Marcalow of Gill, Brooke Billings and John Irminger of Montague, and the vacancy – is up for election.

"All I have is general knowledge," Irminger said. "I'll take out papers on the last day, if no one else does."

Unless the state legislature extends COVID-era allowances for virtual meetings, the committee's March 14 and 28 meetings will be the last two held via Zoom.



Lauren Barton stirs ganache on the stove at the Diemand Farm Store while a pan full of roasted turkey backs waits to be converted into the rich stock they call "liquid gold." Barton has cooked at Diemand for 13 years, making shepherd's pie, pot pies, desserts, risotto, and other yummies, some of which are sold wholesale and some of which are sold to shoppers at the farm store at 126 Mormon Hollow Road in Wendell.

## Letters to the Editors

### To the Point

I so much enjoy Gary Sanderson's column! Great writer...

Richard Brewster  
Cutchogue, New York

### Not Broke...

Congratulations Deb Bourbeau!

I would like to say after the fact that I feel Deb's position should remain elected. It has gone on the ballot every three years. There had never been any questions. I get that she's retiring, but it has always worked before and no one questioned it.

If it's not broke, don't fix it.

Maureen McNamara  
Turners Falls

### CORRECTION

In our March 2 coverage of short-term rentals (*Area's AirBnB Sector Small, and Flourishing*, Page A1), we wrote that there were "a mere 11 local listings active last month" in our five coverage towns according to the analytics firm AirDNA.

The company seems to count "Turners Falls" separately from "Montague," so our reporter missed counting another 6; the total should have been 17, apparently.

Thanks to FRCOG land use planner Andrea Donlon for spotting our oversight and letting us know!

### Rocky Mountain Reader



Way up in the Colorado Rockies, The Montague Reporter has a constant reader. Mike Ritchey, whose daughter Marianna and son-in-law Andrew live in Greenfield, waits by his mailbox for us in Gunnison every week. "It's an excellent example of what a local newspaper should be," said Ritchey, a retired newspaperman himself. "Franklin County is lucky to have it, and I'm lucky I'm not too old to understand what I'm reading...yet."

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The **Leverett Village Co-op** is celebrating "March Madness" with games, give-aways, samples, and chances to win prizes. Each week features a different raffle basket filled with Co-op goodies donated by local businesses. And starting this month, visit the Co-op on your birthday for 10% off.

Find more information on the store's Facebook or Instagram page, or do it the old-fashioned way and call them at (413) 367-9794. The Leverett Co-op sells groceries, beer, wine, household items, bakery and café items, and local crafts at 180 Rattlesnake Gutter Road in North Leverett.

The **Greenfield Garden Cinemas** celebrates its 94th birthday this Saturday, March 11. The theater is offering two free movies that day: *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) and *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985). "These two movies from different generations are both comedy classics – we just love the sense of whimsy they offer," says Garden co-owner Isaac Mass. Both movies will play at 10 a.m.

**Great Falls Books Through Bars** is holding another volunteer day this Saturday, March 11 from 1 to 5 p.m. Help read and respond to letters from incarcerated folks

and send them books. New volunteers are asked to arrive at the 104 Fourth Street location at 1 p.m. If you are just dropping off donations, do so between 12:30 and 1 p.m. Masks are required.

Learn how to **print on Looky Here's risograph printer!** A scan-in collage riso workshop is happening from 1 to 3 p.m. this Saturday, March 11 at the Chapman Street art gallery in Greenfield, and a riso zine workshop will be offered from 5 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 30. Tickets to each are \$45 and are available on the event calendar at [lookyheregreenfield.com](http://lookyheregreenfield.com).

Looky Here also hosts a **kids' craft club** for ages 7 to 10, every other Friday from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Activities range from painting to needle felting. Tickets are \$15 and are available on the event calendar. Little ones ages 1 to 3 also have a craft hour every Friday from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., for a suggested donation of \$5 to \$15 at the door.

It will be staying lighter much later after we **set our clocks ahead this weekend!** There is no avoiding it when our cell phone automatically updates the time at 2 a.m. Sunday morning.

**Erica Wheeler** and **Andre Strongbearheart Gaines, Jr.** are coming to the stage of the Shea The-

ater in Turners Falls from 3 to 5 p.m. this Sunday, March 12 for the event "Deepening the Power of Place: Exploring Cultural Crossroads through Story, Song and Spoken Word."

Wheeler, described as "an award-winning singer-songwriter, a TEDx speaker, a professional development trainer and a creative mentor," will blend stories and songs gleaned from research and firsthand knowledge of Franklin County.

Nipmuc Tribe citizens Andre Strongbearheart Gaines, Jr. and his nephews, Daishuan Reddeer Garate and Miguel Wandering Turtle Garate will perform "The Confluence of Traditional Eastern Woodlands Social Songs and Modern Spoken Word Poetry." They will explore their ongoing relationships to the land and ways they are able to maintain balance between the traditional values of their ancestors and functioning respectfully in today's complicated world. This *Crossroads: Change in Rural America* companion event is co-sponsored by the Nolumbeka Project, and is free and open to the public.

A **newly formed Art Salon is meeting** on the second Sunday of every month, 1 to 4 p.m., in Millers Falls. The description says all are welcome, and that "artists, writers and musicians meet to share and discuss their work and learn about the local art scene. Fun, positive, supportive environment." The location is 14 Grand Avenue. Contact Jen at (413) 824-6086 or [jenlambert1@gmail.com](mailto:jenlambert1@gmail.com) for more information.

The **Hive Community Makerspace** has listed some workshops in March and April. Topics include soft stone sculpting on March 12, online privacy on March 15, and soldering and circuits on March 26, with 3D printing, small engine maintenance and repair, and more to follow.

The space is at 231 Main Street in Greenfield, and online at [www.hivemakerspace.org](http://www.hivemakerspace.org). They have lathes, mills, 3D printers, industrial sewing machines, and other equipment.

This year's **π Day, March 14**, falls on a Tuesday – an inconvenient day of the week to schedule a "π party," but donations of both π and pie are always welcome at our office at 177 Avenue A ...

Valley Community Development and Greenfield Cooperative Bank present a three-part Zoom webinar for **first-time homebuyers** on March 15, 16, and 23. Learn how to manage this important purchase from real estate professionals, attorneys, loan officers, home inspectors, and get tips to improve your credit. The \$50 registration fee covers two adults in the

same household. Register online at [www.valleycdc.org](http://www.valleycdc.org).

**Caroline Wampole** shares her memoir-in-progress, *How to Become a Rock Star in Paris*, at the Montague Center branch library next Wednesday, March 15 from 6 to 7 p.m. Wampole has artwork at the library this month as well. There will be refreshments.

Find out how **naturalist David Small "rewilded" his back yard** at a talk next Thursday, March 16, at 6:30 p.m. at the Second Congregational Church in Greenfield. "Living with Nature in My Backyard" describes the process of turning his one-acre yard in Athol into a thriving, biodiverse native habitat.

Wendell poet and publisher Paul Richmond is **looking for a couple of featured readers** for the March 21 Third Tuesday Word reading at the LAVA center in Greenfield. Richmond also has tables available for vendors at the April 2 Poetry Month Reading and Book Fair at Gateway City Arts in Holyoke. You can rent a table for \$15 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Email [paul@humanerror-publishing.com](mailto:paul@humanerror-publishing.com) if you have interest.

Residents of Wendell, Leverett, Shutesbury, and New Salem are invited to register for Ruth Flohr's popular **memoir writing program**, "Writing to Remember," at no cost thanks to Mass Cultural Council grants from those towns. The group meets on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon. Contact Flohr at (978) 544-6534 to register for the sessions, which begin April 11.

LifePath is looking for individuals, teams, and sponsors for its **31st annual walk-a-thon fundraiser** on May 6. Business-level sponsorships start at \$250. Individuals and teams have time to gather their sponsors and donors by registering now. Email [giving@lifepathma.org](mailto:giving@lifepathma.org) for information about joining the effort to raise money in support of programs that help people age in place in their own homes in Franklin County.

Poet (and Poetry Page editor) **Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno** has offered several signed copies of his new poetry book, *Night Suite*, for the *Reporter* to sell, with proceeds going to benefit our nonprofit community paper. Richard Andersen reviewed this latest volume in our March 2 edition. The books will be available at our office for \$20; please call (413) 863-8666 to arrange a pickup time.

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**NOTICE OF  
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HEARING**

Gill-Montague Senior Center,  
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Date: March 15, 2023  
Time: 6 p.m.

Location of Trees: 201 Ave. A  
28" Cherry, 34" Oak, 26" Maple

Tree Warden Mark Stevens

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Seniors Eligible for Tax Break**

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – If an old-fashioned fuse box is the first thing you think of when you hear the words "circuit breaker," you or someone you know may be missing out on an important but easily claimed tax break! The credit is for Massachusetts residents, ages 65 and up, who own or rent residential property in the state, used as their primary residence.

"Lots more people could benefit from this tax break, if only they knew about it," says Gill-Montague senior center director Roberta Potter. "It's easy to find clear information by searching for 'MA circuit breaker credit,' or by going to [www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-senior-circuit-breaker-tax-credit](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-senior-circuit-breaker-tax-credit)."

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Three Vacancies in Gill Election**

**GILL** – The annual town election will be held on May 15, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., upstairs at the town hall. (Please note that elections are no longer held at the fire station.)

The last day to register to vote in the annual town election is Friday, May 5 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Town Clerk's office.

All ten offices on the ballot this year are for 3-year terms.

Three of the seats – on the **Cemetery Commission**, on the **Board of Health**, and as **Tree Warden** – are completely vacant.

Incumbents plan to run to hold the other seven: **Selectboard/Sewer Commissioner** (Gregory Sneider); **Assessor** (Pam Lester); **Tax Collector** (Thomas Hodak); **Library Trustee** (Megan Bathory-Peeler); and three **Constables** (Fred O. Chase II, Fred O. Chase III, and Craig Gaudry).

Anyone interested in running for

any of the offices above should contact the Town Clerk to obtain nomination papers. Please note we have three vacancies. Now is the time to run for these interesting positions. Throw your hat into the ring! Town government is the best form of government, but it only works with your participation.

Nomination papers are available at the Town Clerk's office. The deadline to obtain nomination papers is Thursday, March 23 at 6 p.m. Candidates who want to run for office need to obtain the signatures of at least 25 registered Gill voters. Nomination papers must be returned to the Town Clerk by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12.

Office hours are Mondays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Wednesdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Thursdays 3 to 6 p.m., or call for an appointment at (413) 863-8103.

Doreen J. Stevens, Town Clerk

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Five Open Gill-Montague  
School Committee Seats!**

**GILL and MONTAGUE** – Nomination papers for the annual town elections to be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, for regional school committee seats are now available at the Gill-Montague Regional School Superintendent's Office, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls.

Completed nomination papers are due in the Superintendent's Office no later than 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29.

Please note that all papers must be picked up and returned to the Superintendent's Office, and not the Town Clerk's Office of either town.

There are two Gill seats open on the school committee, one 1-year seat and one 3-year seat. There are three Montague seats open, one 2-year seat and two 3-year seats.

For more information or questions, please contact Tara McCarthy at (413) 863-9324 or [tara.mccarthy@gmrsd.org](mailto:tara.mccarthy@gmrsd.org).

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## BOMBSHELL from page A1

meeting their needs. I almost always come to work with a smile on my face. If someone comes in and they're really upset, you can change their mood just by fixing the problem and being nice to them."

Bourbeau was raised in Framingham and attended North Adams State College – now called the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts – where she met her husband. They were married in Turners Falls. She got a job in the town treasurer-collector's office in 1997, and when the current assistant town clerk left her position in late 2003, then-town clerk John Zywna encouraged her to apply for the job. When Zywna retired in 2006, the

selectboard appointed her as clerk. "By the way, Jeff," she told this reporter in an email, "I am the first female town clerk for Montague."

Bourbeau won elections for the three-year position in 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, and 2022 – all in uncontested races, except in 2010, when she defeated a challenger 881 to 60. If the position remains elected, her successor must be a Montague resident.

Replacing Bourbeau became a major topic of discussion at Monday's selectboard meeting. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the town is planning to add a new third position in the clerk's office to help handle the growing volume of election work,

and by the 2024 election cycle, which starts in just over a year.

Bourbeau acknowledged in our interview that the time is not ideal for a transition.

Town administrator Steve Ellis told the board that he assumed Bourbeau would retire "at the end of this fiscal year," which would require a replacement be found by July 1. The decision to move from an elected to an appointed position will go before Montague voters at the annual town election in mid-May and then, if endorsed, would need to be approved by the state attorney general.

There is precedent for a hiring process to choose a town clerk even though the position has been elect-

ed: when Zywna retired, Bourbeau was appointed by the selectboard until she ran for the position the following spring. Current treasurer/collector Eileen Seymour, whose position is also currently an elected seat, also went through a hiring process after her boss Patty Dion retired in 2017.

Ellis said that he has encouraged Bourbeau and assistant town clerk Kathern Pierce to develop a plan for the transition, and suggested that Bourbeau might be hired as a consultant on a part-time basis. "There may be a role for her to support operations, not as a town clerk, but as a really trusted and qualified consultant after the fact," he said.

## AT LARGE

# Northfield: Kill 'Em With Sweetness

By CHIP AINSWORTH

**NORTHFIELD** – Whenever I drive to Florida I'll bring some maple syrup to give to friends and use for myself. Lots of places down south use fake syrup or charge by the thimbleful, but there were no qualms when I brought a quart inside a Waffle House in Gainesville a few years ago. I plopped it on the counter, went to the bathroom, and when I returned offered some to the person next to me.

"That's yours?" she asked. "I was thinking this Waffle House really delivers."

Northfield has three maple sugar producers, not counting the backyard operations. Round Mountain Farm boils sap on Warwick Road, Quinn's Sugarhouse gathers sap from over 2,100 taps in places like the maple grove across from the post office, but lately I've been buying from Milt and Steve Severance on Pierson Road.

"This next week is looking real good," Milt said on Sunday morning. As every local schoolkid knows, a good sap run depends on cold nights and mild days. Usually that meant tapping was the first sign of spring, but the mild winter let everyone get a head start. "February 1 we were tapping," he told me. "We actually could've tapped sooner."

Steve had motored off in his half-ton with the big plastic tank on the back to gather thousands of gallons that were stored in steel tanks on Manning Hill and Schofield Mountain.

Nowadays the sap goes from the spigot through a maze of colorful plastic tubing down to gathering tubs that hold between 500 and 1,000 gallons. "No pails – 2018 was the last year we did buckets," said Milt. "My back feels a lot better."

Once Steve gets the sap gathered, it'll go through a reverse osmosis system that can remove 75% of the water from 500 gallons of sap in an hour. As high-tech as the word sounds for such an old-fashioned industry, these systems are as essential to efficiency as haybalers and corn harvesters.

Matt Pollard arrived and waited for the go-ahead to start heating up the 5-by-14-foot boiler. "Matt's my fireman," said Severance. "He does a good job. He stokes the fire."

"What kind of wood, just oak?" I asked. "We'll use a combination of hard and soft wood – oak, maple, pine, ash," said Severance. "We'll go through about 15 cord this season."

If you've ever drunk maple sap straight out of the bucket, you know it tastes mostly like water with just a hint of sweetness. Returning to college from skiing in the Berkshires one night, we were so thirsty we pulled over and grabbed a bucket off a tree. One of my classmates saw a *Springfield Union* newspaper tube and exclaimed, "Wow, great name for a band!"

According to Severance, the sugar content for this year's crop is 1.7%, which means "It'll take 50 gallons for one gallon. If it was two percent, it would be 43 gallons."

Severance said that thus far they'd boiled down 725 gallons, and expect to produce another 1,500 before the season ends.

Asked if he always looks forward to sugaring season, he grinned and said, "Sometimes. Like when I don't get called into work."

Severance is a crane operator. "This week I probably won't answer the phone."



Matt Pollard (left) and Milt Severance (right) wait for Steve Severance to arrive with a load of sap so they can stoke the fire and begin boiling inside the Pierson Road sugarhouse.

### Paying the Piper

Northfield property taxes for the first half of the fiscal year are due on April 1, and homeowners were relieved to see the rate had dropped from \$13.85 per \$1,000 in 2022 to \$13.58 this year.

According to *joeshimkus.com*, Northfield has the third-lowest tax rate in Franklin County behind Rowe (5.18%) and Erving (8%). The five towns that have the highest residential rates are Heath (\$22.88), Wendell (\$21.41), Charlemont (\$20.63), Greenfield (\$19.65), and Colrain (\$19.63).

"Houses in Northfield have been selling for well over the assessed value, and as valuations go up, the tax rates go down," said Northfield assessor Beth Walker.

### C's the Day

An East Northfield resident emailed me: "The C5 meeting last night was pretty upsetting. James Spencer was in true form."

As explosive as it sounds, "C5" is just another of Northfield's many committees, albeit the most alliterative. It's short for Campus Center-Community Collaborative Committee, and it was formed after the aforementioned James Spencer began dropping development bombs all over East Northfield.

Spencer's an out-of-towner with a cell phone that has an Illinois area code. He is the president of the D. L. Moody Center, a Kansas-based non-profit that owns 25% of the former NMH campus. He wants to milk his holdings, and his latest effort after SoulFest tanked appears to be putting a housing development on Pierson Road.

Every rural town struggles to protect its land from shady developers. In Amherst, town councilor Dorothy Pam encapsulated it perfectly in a statement published in the *Amherst Indy* by Kitty Axelson-Berry: "When a neighborhood is an investment, it stops being a neighborhood, it stops being an asset to the town and becomes an

asset to people who are seeing this as a place to invest and walk away."

That, folks, is why the C5 strives to keep James Spencer from getting the cow in the barn.

### Advantage: Public

Thomas Aquinas College recently acquired the tennis courts next to Moore Cottage, and has agreed to keep them open to the public. "Friends of Northfield Tennis" will raise the money and is seeking donations to cover the \$4,800 expense of opening and maintaining the clay courts.

Now more than ever the public should show a vested interest. "There is talk about investing a little more money in landscaping, benches, etc., to make the area a nice pocket park," said one of the college's administrators. "We'll see."

Checks can be made payable to Thomas Aquinas College and mailed to Lucy Livingston, 89 Myrtle View St., Bluffton, S.C. 29910.

### My Two Cents

One of the best ways a public high school can create a high profile is through athletics. Pioneer's enrollment struggles have been well documented, but despite the low numbers, Scott Thayer's boys' basketball team and the baseball team under coach Kevin Luippold have excelled. Superintendent Patricia Kinsella must tell the school committee to give the athletic department the money it needs to build winning programs....

Before Northfield gets serious about building a new library, have a look at the one in Greenfield that's looking more and more like a Macy's Department Store. "You can thank half a dozen power maniacs for that ego monument," says one Greenfield gadabout.

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Recorder, and news and opinion for the Reporter. He lives in Northfield.

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## UMASS from page A1

Board (MSRB). University officials claim that most Advancement employees' work exceeds this limit, and that all the jobs in the office should therefore be transferred to the Foundation.

The unions, meanwhile, estimate that fewer than 10% of their members are out of compliance, and say management is refusing to return to the bargaining table to find another solution.

"Administration was saying to our employees, and to us, from the very beginning that because of mistakes that they had made about the way that Advancement was structured, our members' past pension contributions that were already made are at risk of being lost," PSU co-chair Andrew Gorry told the *Montague Reporter*. "Their solution would be to privatize our members' positions while taking them out of the pension system, and asking the MSRB for forgiveness."

In November, Advancement office employees received a notice from UMass administrators claiming the university had become aware of an oversight that put their eligibility to collect their state pensions at risk.

"[T]his process is solely driven by legal and regulatory compliance requirements," UMass Amherst spokesperson Edward Blaguszewski told the *Reporter*. "The University became aware of the issue as a result of another pension matter and immediately began a review to determine whether UMass employees would be impacted."

Negotiations over the issue began in January, but stalled in mid-February after the unions challenged the claim that most Advancement employees were doing too much work for the Foundation. That's when management "walked away from the table," according to Gorry.

"Our members would tell us over and over again, 'I know what I do at work all day, and what the administration is saying, and that isn't true,'" Gorry said. "A few members did say they were doing more than 25% of their work for the Foundation, and their positions maybe should move over."

On February 18, vice chancellor for Advancement Arwen Duffy sent an email announcing that the plan to move all fundraising positions to the Foundation would proceed. Duffy also serves as executive director of the Foundation.

"Our greatest concern — ensuring your past and future retirement contributions are not put at risk — has been the driving factor throughout this process," Duffy wrote, adding that the university and unions had been "unable to reach an agreement." The unions dispute that most of their members' pension contributions were ever at risk. "The MSRB, to my knowledge, has never represented that they would do that," Gorry said of the threat that benefits could be lost.

Last week the unions filed charges with the state Department of Labor Relations for bargaining in bad faith, retaliation, and anti-union activity related to the restructuring plan.

## Going Private

Around 100 people, most of them students or university employees, attended the rally outside the Whitmore administration building on Monday afternoon. They called on university leaders to return to the bargaining table.

"I and so many of our colleagues



ROBERTSON PHOTO  
Union members and their supporters accuse UMass of exaggerating a legal compliance issue as a pretext for reorganizing their work outside public oversight.

have been incredibly stressed. There are so many things that could happen to us that could affect our lives negatively," said Krista Navin, a UMass employee and PSU member for almost 10 years. "We could be forced to work for an at-will private employer, we could be forced to change jobs if we want to stay on campus, or we could lose our jobs entirely. We've been living under months of uncertainty."

Duffy's February 18 email said the university would "schedule meetings with every impacted employee to discuss their options," including transfer to the Foundation or "pathways to remain at the University."

Kim Fill, a UMass employee of 28 years currently working as assistant director of donor relations for the W.E.B. DuBois Library and a PSU member, said the plan was an attempt to remove the university's fundraising arm from public oversight.

"Stop threatening the livelihoods of our members and our families to carry out your privatization scheme," Fill said. "Who's to say that leadership won't stop at Advancement? Who else might they try to privatize next? That is a threat to workers and community members everywhere."

Amherst resident Max Page, a lecturer at UMass and the president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, described other plans to privatize education, including the opening of a new charter school in Worcester and a proposal to sell the entire Bunker Hill Community College campus to a private developer.

"And here they are at UMass Amherst, trying to get rid of 100 employees — some of you we heard from today — kick them off from being unionized, publicly-funded employees. That stinks, and we won't stand for it," Page said. "We're going to prevent this privatization scheme from happening."

Jeff Jones, president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1459 and vice-president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, said he had attended graduate school at UMass Amherst in the 1980s.

"UMass was doing silly dumb things then, and now they're doing silly dumb things again," Jones said. "This is union busting, folks. There's just no way around it."

Blaguszewski did not answer follow-up questions sent by the *Reporter*, declining to respond to claims that the shift to privatization is a "union-busting" move.

The *Massachusetts Daily Collegian* reported that the university has tried a shift towards privatization like this before. In 2019, the university illegally moved around one dozen state employee jobs to the UMass Amherst Foundation. After the PSU filed an unfair labor practices complaint, the state jobs were reinstated.

## No Paper Trail

Established in 2003, the stated goal of the Foundation is to support private fundraising for the campus's faculty, students, and facilities. Gorry told the *Reporter* its main function has been to handle large donations.

"[UMass Amherst Foundation] provides a bridge between donors and the schools, programs, faculty, and students that make up the university," the nonprofit's website states. "We help to match caring people with meaningful opportunities that support both UMass Amherst's mission and the personal objectives of our donors."

The Foundation's board of directors includes leaders of various banks, financial service agencies, medical companies, universities,

and law offices, and one heir to a professional horse-racing dynasty. Almost all are UMass alumni. Patricia A. Parcellin, the former head of the Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts, chairs the board, and UMass vice chancellor Andrew Mangels serves as treasurer.

The Foundation's operating budget for the 2021 fiscal year was \$4.4 million, when it reported having 29 employees. It raises tens of millions of dollars each year in donations.

Union members at Monday's rally voiced suspicion that the university was using the state regulation, and the alleged threat of lost pension contributions, as a pretext for expanding the Foundation.

"We are stunned by what we have seen by our employer," Leslie Marsland, president of the University Staff Association, said in a written statement. "Our members have been given false and misleading information, making them think that their state retirement benefits were in jeopardy unless their jobs could be transferred from the university to a private employer."

Andrew Napolitano, the deputy communications director for the Office of the State Treasurer and Receiver General, told the *Reporter* that he could not say whether the university had approached the MSRB about the compliance issues, or whether the MSRB had discovered the issue and reached

out to the university first.

On February 20, a lawyer for UMass Amherst and the Foundation submitted an outline of the proposed changes to the MSRB, but according to Gorry, prior to this UMass officials had apparently communicated with the MSRB almost exclusively by telephone.

The unions obtained copies of all email exchanges between the university and the MSRB using state public records law. "They left no paper trail," Gorry said. "Those emails reference they had been talking for quite some time about these issues... They were deliberate about keeping as much of their conversation with MSRB on the phone as possible so it couldn't be discovered."

Blaguszewski declined to comment on the university's reliance on phone calls in communication with the MSRB. He insisted in communications to the *Reporter* that the restructuring plan is moving forward.

The MSRB declined to comment on the situation at UMass as it is currently under review, but will discuss the issue further at its next scheduled meeting on March 30, which is open to the public.

"I do not know who benefits from this privatization scheme," Gorry said. "It's not UMass students, parents, taxpayers, or employees. The whole thing is a mess."



## NOTES FROM THE ERVING STM &amp; SELECTBOARD

## A Painless Winter Town Meeting

By KEITH WATERS

Erving held both a selectboard meeting and a special town meeting (STM) on Monday.

The STM started a few minutes late, as town moderator Rich Peabody had a doctor's appointment that ran a little long. "If the cops are tied up taking somebody off the side of Route 2," he explained, "you can do 90 miles per hour for a good stretch of that, so here I am."

Peabody then apologized for a joke he made at last spring's annual town meeting. "I made a comment... in an attempt for some levity," he said, "but it was inappropriate, and never should have been said on a town meeting microphone."

Seven of the nine articles of the STM were to appropriate more money.

**Article 3** was for \$150,000 for Erving Elementary School transportation costs. A townspeople commented that, as they understood it, it was for transportation of two students at a cost of \$1,100 per day; they asked whether it would be possible to keep the students in district.

Fin com member Daniel Hammock responded that the out-of-district special education services were expensive, and that was the best deal the town could get. The board commented that this article was to cover expenses that have already occurred in the current fiscal year, and that more expenses will be upcoming, and encouraged the town to attend future meetings. The article passed unanimously.

**Article 4** involved three separate bills for a total of \$135,000. One of these, at \$10,000, was surveying Poplar Mountain Conservation Area. A townspeople asked why it needed surveying. The board answered that it had already been surveyed, but the surveyors didn't mark the corners;

this was to mark the corners. A new parcel has also been added that had not been surveyed. The same person who did the original surveying is doing the resurveying.

The other two were \$75,000 for financial software upgrades and \$50,000 for street lamp repair.

**Articles 5 and 6** were for upgrades to, and engineering for upgrades to, the town wastewater and drinking water systems respectively.

Article 5, for \$10,000, would upgrade a monitoring system which is currently analog and often creates costly false alarms. The board clarified that Article 6, \$26,000, was for just the engineering of a system to reduce bacteria growth in the town's drinking water, and there will be a future cost for the implementation of the project.

**Article 7** was for borrowing \$125,000 to inventory the existing lead pipes in the town's water supply. This is mandated by the state, and the costs may be reimbursed.

**Articles 8 and 9** were to change the town rules so the town moderator does not appoint the cemetery commissioners, but the selectboard does instead.

The STM was brief, about 30 minutes. Every article was passed unanimously.

## Selectboard Meeting

The selectboard, meeting prior to the STM, approved a request for proposals (RFP) to spend the \$75,000 they hoped would be appropriated by Article 4 to upgrade the town's finance software. The RFP was to have been sent out by the time you read this. Responses are due in early April, and the board hopes to begin implementing the change in May.

The board also approved a policy for the police department, "Policy 4.32," which establishes guidelines for the proper handling of and ac-

cess to criminal offender record information (CORI).

The board and town planner Mariah Kurtz griped a little about the town's contracts with consulting firm Tighe & Bond, specifically ones to inspect manholes and engineer the IP Mill's demolition. Tighe & Bond is asking for an additional \$5,000, for the manhole inspecting, after an initial \$20,000. The board had thought the contract would have been for the whole job, but on review it was only for as much as could be done for \$20,000.

In regards to the IP Mill, Kurtz pointed out that she had caught a \$200,000 arithmetic error in Tighe & Bond's work towards estimating the demolition cost.

Selectboard member William Bembury pointed out that the responses to an RFP for this will likely be higher than \$4 million, and asked why the estimate matters. Kurtz responded that as the town is paying the firm to engineer an estimate, it is their job to provide correct numbers.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith agreed that it is not expected to have to spend town staff time correcting an engineering report. Member Scott Bastarache said he felt there were more pressing infrastructure needs the town should attend to.

All agreed that asking the townspeople if they want to pay for the demolition, perhaps as a debt exclusion, is a reasonable next step. The town plans to schedule a public information session to explain the possibilities to the public soon.

Finally, the board approved the creation of a "police department canine gift fund," to which members of the public could donate and which would then pass on the money for costs related to the police dog and caring for it. There is no cap on the amount that can be donated.

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**MEETING** from page A1

town via the agricultural commission but now an appointed official.

Article 9 set aside \$2,500 for a new hearing officer, at the request of building inspector Bill Ketchen, to handle building and fire code violations and appeals. This led to debate, including questions about the officer's relationship to the Turners Falls Fire Department, an independent entity. Deputy fire chief Kyle Cogswell said the position would be helpful "when we are told a defiant no," giving the department a faster way than the courts to address violations.

Articles 20 and 21 endorsed making the town clerk and treasurer-collector into appointed rather than elected roles. Members debated the risks of each model, and selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz argued that an inclusive hiring process can be more "democratic" than some elections.

During the discussion, town clerk

Deb Bourbeau announced plans to retire this year (*see article, Page A1*). Both articles were approved by majority voice vote, placing the proposals on the town ballot in May.

Four articles concerned vehicles: an electric van for the Clean Water Facility; a pickup truck and a dump truck for the highway department, both with plows and sanders; and another item that proved controversial, an official car shared by the building department, health department, and assessors. Town administrator Steve Ellis pointed out that these departments might all inspire vandalism, and said he believed personal cars used in the course of town work were not covered by the town's insurance.

Article 1 set aside \$10,000 to prep the woods at Highland Cemetery for the "green" burial of corpses, Article 10 gave the town the power of eminent domain to fix the bridge on South Street in Montague Center,

and Article 11 gave \$1,500 to patch up Unity Skatepark in Turners Falls.

Three articles concerned buildings. \$2,000 was authorized to study the so-called "blacksmith shop" on Station Street, \$230,000 to replace the Colle Building roof; and \$35,250 to study expanding the town libraries. This last article elicited more debate, particularly as background materials referred to a "new main branch library in Turners Falls," though library trustees and director Caitlin Kelley assured the meeting the conclusion was not so foregone.

Five articles were about accounting, moving money between different funds and renaming them.

And Article 14 okayed borrowing \$2.5 million, the meeting's largest sum, to replace the screw pumps at the Clean Water Facility. The debt is expected to be replaced by a combination of a loan and grant from the USDA.

**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD**

# Good Space at Dump; New Platform on Web; Storm Postpones STM

By **JOSH HEINEMANN**

Town project manager Phil Delorey had good news on capping Wendell's former landfill at the selectboard's March 1 meeting. Delorey said the surveyor he had hired found the property line between WRATS land and Audubon land to the west allows Wendell enough space to cut trees, install monitoring wells, and build the necessary road needed around the project. The engineer who will oversee the capping project signed a contract with the town.

Delorey said bids for the town barn roof varied from \$22,000 to over \$100,000. The lowest bidder has insurance, he said, but not quite up to the standard, which he described as being enough to cover building a bridge over homes and might be excessive for the relatively simple roof repair.

Delorey said he was unsure if he could convince the contractor to get more extensive insurance, whether doing so would be legal with the bid description already out, if the town can accept some liability for the project, or if the roof would have to go out for another round of bids. Those details need to be worked out before the contract is signed.

Wendell still holds a \$33,000 retainer for the Mormon Hollow Road culvert replacement, less than 5% of the project's cost. Delorey reported that Davenport Construction wants payment, or at least an amount that would leave Wendell with 1%.

The final repair is waiting for warmer weather, and Delorey said there is still no firm cost estimate, and that he is still talking with Davenport. He suggested a call to town counsel. Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato recommended he keep the call brief.

**More Projects**

The Kentfield Road bridge replacement fund has \$29,000 left, with only a little environmental cleanup needed to finish the job. Treasurer Carolyn Manley said she and accountant Erin Degnan are comfortable with making the final payment for that project.

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad displayed a spreadsheet that showed ARPA funding and spending. He said that a month earlier it had looked like Wendell overspent its ARPA account, but several projects were reassigned to their proper funding sources.

From an original amount of \$262,440.20, Wendell has \$98,922.24 remaining in the account, with funding sources for some projects still undecided. To some extent Wendell can choose which of several sources the town should use to pay for its various expenses.

Board members will continue to sort those expenses and sources at their next meeting. Selectboard member Gillian Budine said she thought the town needs to make a better plan for ARPA spending.

**Website Upgrade**

Website committee members

Sam Birch and Kate Lee came to the office, and member Robert Heller connected remotely, with a proposal for upgrading the town website using a new platform, Proud City.

Proud City's onboarding fee is based on population, and Wendell would be charged the minimum price of \$4,000. Three to five citizens would need to attend training.

Heller said the cost of the present website platform is \$120 a year.

DiDonato said a website member should talk with the finance committee to decide what account the onboarding money should come from. Proud City requires an "owner," and DiDonato suggested Johnson-Mussad, or town clerk Anna Wetherby if she can find time for the training and the work.

Budine said there was \$3,000 in the IT capital expense fund, and \$3,700 remaining in the IT maintenance fund, which started the fiscal year with \$7,500. The money could also come from the selectboard expense account.

The website committee agreed to talk with the fin com and return to the next selectboard meeting.

**Special Town Meeting**

The two board members present, DiDonato and Budine, discussed the weather expected for the coming Saturday, March 4, and whether the special town meeting scheduled for that day should be postponed. The town moderator, Katie Nolan, is allowed by law to postpone or "recess" the meeting remotely.

Nolan was not at the March 1 meeting, but on March 2 she spoke with highway commissioner Phil Delorey, police chief Scott Minckler and selectboard members. With Wetherby's support, she recessed the meeting until this Thursday, March 9, at 7 p.m. at the town hall.

Fin com co-chair Thomas Richardson proposed asking town meeting to pass over the article that would authorize \$21,000 to buy a generator – adequate to maintaining the town hall, where several Good Neighbors freezers are running – to make time for exploring other options.

Board members considered Richardson's proposal, and allowed that he can offer that suggestion at the town meeting.

**Other Business**

Board members approved a change in the memorandum of understanding between Wendell and Hilltown Network that would allow Hilltown 90 days to remove its equipment from the police station if the town tells them to leave. Hilltown provides internet service to a few houses with line-of-sight access to the police station antenna.

DiDonato agreed to write a letter to the owner of a dog about whom a neighbor has made a formal complaint outlining their options. The neighbor wants to avoid a public hearing.

She will also agree to send one to animal control officer Meghan Gallo, who can mediate between the parties.

**SPORTS** from page A1**Girls' Basketball**

FCTS 36 – St. Bernard 26

Millis 67 – FCTS 38

On Thursday, March 2, the Franklin Tech Lady Birds and their entourage traveled to Fitchburg, where they defeated the Saint Bernard Bernardians in a defensive battle.

The Eagles seemed to be playing back on their heels for the first few minutes of the playoff game, missing shots and miffing passes. As a result of these missed opportunities the Eagles found themselves trailing 8-0. But Tech began running their winning game plan, and by the end of the first quarter, they had tied it 8-8.

In the second, Tech's defense took over, allowing only one 3-pointer at the end of the period to give them a 17-11 lead going into halftime. The one blemish for Tech was that intrepid center Lea Chapman had accrued two personal fouls, forcing Coach Gamache to send in relief players to keep her out of foul trouble.

The Saint Bernards are a great team, actually ranked above Tech in the MIAA seedings. In the third quarter they came out firing, and before Franklin could adjust they had pulled within one point, 17-16. The teams played evenly, but with the score 21-20, Chapman committed her third and fourth fouls and was regulated to the bench.

Tech is not a one-note band. They increased their lead to 25-20 with one period yet to play, and maintained that 5- to 6-point lead into the fourth. Then some frustration fouls by the home team sent the Birds to the foul line.

In the game's waning minutes, Bernard's coach kept sending in four or five new players after each whistle. In spite of this rotation, Tech was able to increase the lead to 10 points, and earned their spot in the Sweet Sixteen round against the top-rated Millis Mohawks.

Kyra Goodell (13) led the Eagles in scoring, Hannah Gilbert put up 10 points, Lea Chapman scored 4 points and pulled down 10 rebounds, Kaitlin Trudeau and Lilianna Inman also scored 4 each, and Kendra Campbell banked a foul shot.

On Monday, the Blue-shirted Eagles drove two hours to Millis in an attempt to unseat the Mohawks.

As I walked in, one of the coaches recognized me. He told the ticket takers that I was press, and asked how my ride was. As I signed in, he mentioned that Millis had to travel to Turners Falls in the softball playoffs last year.

"Yes, I remember," I answered. "Turners won 12-2!"

Millis has not had good luck against teams from Western Mass – it seems that the Lady Mohawk basketball team gets knocked out of the playoffs every year by one of the western teams – but they had reversed the curse in the previous game, trouncing Pioneer 79-40.

In Monday's game, the refs were busy from the opening tipoff to the final buzzer. It seemed that every time two players touched the ball at the same time, the refs called a jump. They were also busy calling fouls. Millis committed foul after foul after foul, but had deep enough reserves that no individual player got into foul trouble.

Blue shed first blood, scoring 5 points before Millis knew it, but Millis shot back, taking a 7-6 lead. The Mohawks, with their aggressive play and apt rebounding, then took over. Many times when Tech missed a shot, Millis stole the rebound and moved the ball up the court to score. After one period, Tech was down 19-8.

Franklin made some mistakes in the second quarter, falling behind 28-8 before they hit a three-pointer to make it 28-11. Millis maintained that lead, and at the halftime buzzer, the Eagles were down 34 to 14.



Pioneer's Brayden Thayer drains a trey during last week's playoff game against Keefe Tech. Thayer notched a game-high 20 points in the Panthers' win over the Broncos.

In the third quarter, Tech tried to block the outside shots, but Millis simply bounced the ball inside for the easy hoop. Millis committed more fouls in this quarter, and Franklin was regulated to shooting one-pointers while Millis scored 2 or 3 on their possessions.

Tech was on their last legs going into the fourth, down 52-29. With 2:46 left in regulation and the Blue Birds behind 63-36, Gamache sent in his subs so all the girls could play.

Gilbert scored 12 points in the game, hitting two 3-pointers in the process and going two-for-two from the foul line. Campbell scored 9 points and went 5 of 6 from the line, and Trudeau scored 6 points off two 3-pointers.

Chapman, who had to leave the game at one point because her face was bloody, also scored 6, and she made four steals. Cordelia Guerin and Inman each scored 2 points, and Goodell sank a foul shot.

The 67-38 loss eliminated Franklin Tech Basketball Eagles from the MIAA state playoffs. The players took the loss pretty hard, but their fan base took it in stride, knowing that the gym will have at least two new banners: the Franklin South Conference title and the Massachusetts Small Vocational championship.

**Boys' Basketball**

Pioneer 60 – Keefe Tech 31

Pioneer 60 – KIPP Academy 59

The Pioneer Valley boys' basketball team finished 11-11 last year, but still made it to the Sweet Sixteen. This season the Black Panthers are 20-3 and are still going strong.

Last Friday they doubled up the Keefe Tech Blue Broncos 60-31 in the second round of the Division V MIAA brackets. Brayden Thayer (20), Josh Wood (19), and Kurt Redeker (10) were the team's top scorers.

On Tuesday the Pioneers took on the KIPP Academy Panthers of Lynn. Pioneer built up a nice lead for the first three quarters, but in the fourth KIPP scored 22 to Pioneer's 17, giving the home team the one point win.

Thayer again led Pioneer's attack with 17 points, followed by Wood (13), Alex McClelland (13), and Redeker (10).

This Friday, Pioneer hosts the Maynard Orange Tigers in the Round of 8.



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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

upgrade the town's sewer collection system.

Ramsey told the board that the design for the streetscape project – which will be handed to the firm Berkshire Design, which has designed most of the Avenue A improvements – will cover the area on the northwest side of the Avenue bordering the Discovery Center from Third Street to the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, as well as the area on the opposite side of the street in front of town hall.

Ramsey said the last survey and design of that area was completed “going back four or five years now,” and that “we’ve learned a lot of lessons from the different sections [of the streetscape project] over the years.”

The money would also be used to evaluate irrigation on the adjacent land, the status of vulnerable ash trees, and the potential for expanded outdoor dining in the area. Ramsey said Berkshire Design’s proposal of \$46,800 included \$26,000 “baked in” for allowances for consulting, which “we might not need to fund, we hope we don’t have to fund but we want to build in the budget just in case.”

The total amount also includes funds for bidding and construction oversight. As it is under \$50,000, the town is legally permitted to award the design contract itself without a bidding process.

After approving the project and the use of ARPA funds for it, the board directed Ramsey to work with the engineering firm Wright-Pierce on a grant which could total \$2 million dollars to upgrade the sewer “collection system.” Ramsey has stressed the need for upgrades to the town’s two “sewer overflows,” where water-borne wastes spill into the Connecticut River during large rain events, but also more generally to the town’s sewer lines and manholes.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said that local officials needed to sit down with the staffs of representatives in Congress to “have a conversation” about the “politically feasible” amount to apply for.

“Sometimes, you ask for too much, you get nothing,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz. “Sometimes you ask for the right amount, you get it all.”

According to Ellis, this earmark has been placed in the budget of the federal Environmental Protection

Agency, rather than that of Housing and Urban Development, which will fund the streetscape project.

**Big News at the Airport**

Not to be outdone in the field of multi-million dollar grants, Brian Camden, manager of the Turners Falls municipal airport, came before the board to ask that it endorse a \$4.15 million grant to establish an Aviation Maintenance Technician Chapter 74 training program. The grant, which involves a collaboration between the airport and the Franklin County Technical School which sits next door, had been discussed by the selectboard during the application phase.

After the board had endorsed the project, Camden announced that the airport has recently put out a request for proposals to construct a “photovoltaic generation facility” on a portion of the northeast corner of the airport that loops around the industrial park.

He said the applicants would be reviewed by the airport commission, by legal counsel, and finally by the Federal Aviation Administration.

**Funds Roll In**

On the heels of the new maintenance training program, the board authorized a much smaller contract valued at \$14,231 between the town and an organization called the Alliance for Green Heat for equipment and a storage shed for the town wood bank.

The wood bank is administered by the town tree committee, and the Alliance passes on federal funds from the US Department of Agriculture, according to the contract in the meeting materials.

And more state money flowed into the town as the board executed a \$6,850 “Recovery for Organizations” grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto said the grant was the last COVID-related money to come from the state cultural council, and that “we can use it any way we want.”

**Elders in Motion**

The board established a working group to evaluate data being used to implement the state program Mass in Motion, and appointed three local residents and four department heads to serve on it.

The state website defines Mass in Motion as “a statewide movement that promotes opportunities for healthy eating and active living in places people live, work and play.” Montague’s version, implemented in collaboration with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, has a focus on elderly residents.

Council on Aging director Roberta Potter presented the board a long list of “tasks” the group will accomplish, but said it will meet no more than four times.

The board also executed a consulting agreement with Colleen Doherty, who will work with Potter to facilitate the working group. Doherty’s resume included a graduate degree and significant experience in student advising, student retention, gender equity, and professional development for staff and faculty, primarily at the community college level.

**FY’24 Budget**

Finance committee chair Franca Wisniewski and members Dorinda Bell-Upp and John Hanold joined the meeting to review the process of developing the next fiscal year’s

budget before the May annual town meeting.

Ellis introduced the discussion by noting that the selectboard has completed its review of requested department budgets, and made recommendations. The fin com considered those recommendations and met with department heads, Ellis explained, and “we’re now at the point where the process begins to knit itself back together again,” in joint “reconciliation” meetings.

Wisniewski described the next steps from the point of view of the fin com, which will involve meetings with the capital improvements committee and then reconciliation meetings on March 22 and 29 with the selectboard.

After a brief discussion, the selectboard agreed to briefly revisit its “bottom-line” recommendations for each department budget in the coming weeks, but not spend time on line-by-line evaluations.

“I have every level of confidence in the finance committee, and we’d certainly like to hear their thoughts,” said Kuklewicz. “There’s a lot of work that goes into the budget.”

**Other Business**

Ellis reviewed the results of last week’s special town meeting, where all the proposed articles passed, and the status of proposed state legislation to extend COVID-era virtual meetings through March 2025, which has passed the House.

He reviewed the town’s options for filling both the town clerk position and that of clerk’s assistant, in light of the surprise announcement by current clerk Deb Bourbeau that she will soon be retiring. (See article, Page A1.)

Ellis noted that the General Pierce Bridge is now open “in both directions,” but that the enhanced lighting which the town requested may need to be dimmed or reduced at night due to its impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

The selectboard authorized the use of public property in downtown Turners Falls for an “Eastern Collegiate Cycling Conference” event between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 16. The event will start at Unity Park and involves closing of portions of First, Third, and L streets. Event coordinator Alan Atwood said the route was the same as in 2018, the last time the race was held.

Ellis reported on discussions of a “Fall Festival” to replace the discontinued Great Falls Festival, originally known as Pumpkinfest. The parks and recreation department and a number of local businesses are playing a prominent part in the planning.

He also gave a rather dismal report on the state of negotiations over FirstLight Power’s federal hydroelectric licenses. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has mandated that negotiations with official stakeholders must be completed by the end of this month, but a number of key stakeholders have not approved agreements, including on “fish and flows,” ensuring a certain amount of water be left in the Connecticut River below the Turners Falls dam.

“I believe we’ll either have something to share out next week, or the process will have disintegrated and the selectboard will share what we have to share and say ‘this is going nowhere,’” Ellis told the board. “Maybe you will want to encourage public input before making that decision yourself.”



**LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

*Here’s the way it was on March 7, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.*

**No Consensus on School Regionalization**

Over 80 people showed up to an informational forum on the possible regionalization of Leverett and Shutesbury elementary schools with the Amherst and Pelham regional school district last Thursday.

Judging by the questions and comments from the crowd, the proposal, which has the support of members of the selectboard, is still viewed skeptically by some members of the general public, among them parents of children in the Leverett elementary school.

**Forum Held on Future of Baystate Franklin**

A public forum was held on Wednesday at the Greenfield High

School to discuss the impact of the erosion of services at Baystate Franklin Medical Center (BFMC), and to share ideas and strategies to ensure BFMC remains a community hospital able to provide a full range of services close to home.

Over the last decade, Baystate has been cutting services at BFMC and intensifying its outsourcing of patient care to Springfield, nearly 40 miles south of Greenfield. These cuts include the elimination of pediatric and home care services, reduced lab, urology and cardiovascular services, and cuts in the direct care staff.

Franklin County Sheriff Chris Donelan recommended enlisting the help of legislators to ensure community health care, not corporate health care. He said communication between the nurses and Baystate should be greatly increased. He said he saw a great need for mental health and substance abuse care in this county because these services are in crisis.

**20 YEARS AGO**

*Here’s the way it was on March 6, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.*

**Taxing Farmland**

Farmland in Montague is valued as commercial property because farming is commercial by nature, say the board of assessors, and they want to remind our state representative of that fact. In a letter delivered to the selectboard at their March 3 meeting, the assessors took issue with representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington)’s support of a bill to remove agricultural land from the category of commercial property in towns with split tax rates.

“It is unfortunate that he has not sought the input of local officials,” they wrote, “since he is support-

ing yet another reduction in tax revenues for already financially strapped communities.”

**Wendell Votes No to War**

The Wendell selectboard unanimously issued a declaration supporting tough United Nations inspections in Iraq, but declaring that “President Bush’s rush to war is dangerous and unnecessary,” last Wednesday.

Wendell was the third town in Franklin County to approve a resolution opposing war with Iraq. Leverett town meeting members did the same two days earlier, and the previous week Greenfield Town Council approved a resolution citing the costs of war to resident taxpayers as grounds for opposition.

**150 YEARS AGO**

*Here’s the way it was on March 12, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.*

**Local Matters**

The sap begins to circulate in the maples.

Col. Crocker was in town yesterday, looking as fresh as ever. Welcome home.

The ice crop has been all but harvested in this place. It will be dealt out next summer as reminders of what we had to stand during the winter.

The small-pox scare is over. After two weeks’ “putting on airs,” friend Bartlett has come down from his high estate and mingles with the inhabitants of the lower region with perfect familiarity. Our devil was rejoiced to meet him again. He don’t want anything said about chicken-pox, however.

The interest which is attached to

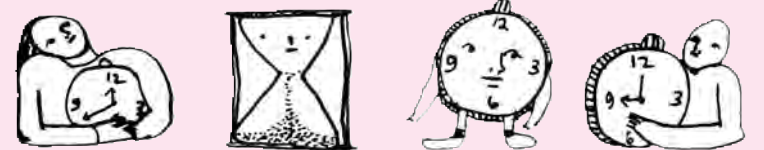
our place as a manufacturing and mercantile center is by no means secondary to its historical importance. How seldom do we think, as we pass through our streets in pursuance of our daily avocations, that the ground we now occupy was once the favorite resort for the Red Man and the scene of the memorable battle in which Capt. Turner was killed, thus giving name to the place.

Almost within a stone’s throw of our thrifty village we see the sandy knoll where were interred the bodies of the slain Indians.

As we look on these beautiful hills surrounding us, or take a stroll along the river banks, how aptly are we reminded of the passage,

“There’s music in babbling brooks,  
Sermons in stones,  
and good in everything.”

A large cotton mill will be built the coming season, and various other enterprises are contemplated.



**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Sewer Bills Are Correct, Despite Date Range Error**

MONTAGUE – The most recent sewer usage bills that went out and are due on March 23, 2023 have a clerical error where it says the usage dates. They read “from 10/1/20 to 4/1/21” and should read “10/1/21 to 4/1/22.”

The bills are correct, it is just the dates printed for usage that are incorrect. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Thank you.

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**LEVERETT** from page A1 under the selectboard's suggested maximum 5% increase, but chose not to bump up against that number.

One individual item Sheridan commented on was the revival of the after-school program, which was put on hold in March 2020. She said the program should be self-sustaining, but that \$5,000 was budgeted for possible "bumps in the road" in re-starting it.

Questioned on a rise in the "extraordinary maintenance" budget line, Sheridan said it went from \$4,000 to \$15,000 because things in the building need to be fixed "more and more frequently."

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis asked Cohen about three budget discrepancies from prior years, totalling roughly \$66,000. McGinnis said that the deficits affected the town's accounting, and that if they were not properly accounted for the state would reduce the town's certified free cash.

Cohen said he was unaware of the issue, and would bring it to the school committee for discussion.

**Broadband Managers**

All three members of the Municipal Light Plant (MLP) board, which manages Leverett's town-owned broadband network, presented a statement to "clarify" remarks made by resident Martha Jane Corcoran at the February 21 selectboard meeting.

The MLP said Corcoran was incorrect in stating that the full board had not been present at a meeting conducted over the phone regarding a billing dispute over her account, and that she had misattributed statements made at the meeting. The statement acknowledged that the meeting "did get heated and voices were loud," but added that "Ms. Corcoran was as loud and argumentative as the MLP members."

Selectboard member Patricia Duffy responded that it was important for officials not to allow people to "escalate our tempers" at public

meetings. She also reminded board members they have the authority to table discussions if they become too heated, to give time for things to cool down.

**Highway Department**

The board voted to institute a "step raise" or longevity bonus for highway department employees of \$1 an hour every three years, with the addition of an associated performance review.

The board also gave the title of supervisor to highway department worker Doug Depault. Highway superintendent Matt Bouchier lauded Depault's responsibility and work ethic in recommending the move.

The selectboard and fin com voted to authorize \$15,000 for the department's purchase of salt. Bouchier said the salt budget is not currently overspent, and that he expects to only need a couple thousand dollars, but that the department needed to do "whatever we need to do to keep the roads safe" this season.

**Fire Department**

Fire chief Brian Cook requested that the minimum amount of paid time for firefighters responding to calls – one hour, regardless of the time of day – be raised to 1.5 hours for responses between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., and to three hours between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Cook said the one-hour rate lags behind other area towns, and behind Leverett's highway and police department minimums of three and four hours respectively. He explained that he was concerned about a trend toward fewer members of the volunteer department responding to calls in recent years.

"Nighttime is what's hurting us the most," he said. "It's tough, for \$19, to get out of bed at 3 in the morning."

The selectboard agreed to a compromise, increasing the nighttime minimum rate to two hours but leaving the day rate the same.

**King Philip's War in Your Backyard: from Sokwakik to Peskeompskut, 1675-1676**

**Saturday, March 11 at 5:00pm  
Trinitarian Church, 147 Main**

This presentation by David Brule will be centered on events that occurred during King Philip's War in Northfield and in the region of Peskeompskut Falls (now encompassing the modern-day towns of Greenfield, Gill, Montague and Deerfield). The talk is intended to review the context of that war, to revisit local events that marked the history of our region, and to share the latest findings of the battlefield study now in progress.

*David Brule is a local historian deeply engaged in exploring and sharing the histories and persistence of Indigenous peoples in our middle Connecticut River Valley. He is the president of the Nolumbeka Project, Inc, the project coordinator of the on-going study of the massacre and counter-attack that occurred at the Peskeompskut falls (Turners Falls) on May 19, 1676. This study is in its 10th year and is funded by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. David is also a member of the Nehantic Tribal Council.*



Scan here for more info.



**Other Business**

The selectboard discussed plans for an upcoming townwide budget hearing scheduled for March 21.

The board voted to create a special stabilization account to better segregate and track money received in the initial round of a national opioid settlement in FY'22. McGinnis said more money is already scheduled to come to the town from the original settlement, and that others are pending. While further accounting changes may take place in the future, she argued, the move makes sense.

McGinnis announced she had signed a heating oil contract for FY'24 at \$2.3867 per gallon.

Justin Maynard was appointed to the position of conservation commission agent. Pay for the position was changed from \$22 per hour for 10 hours per week, to \$28 per hour for six hours per week.

Cassie Steig was appointed to the position of transfer station attendant. Linda Hoer was appointed to the Council on Aging.

The personnel board elected to give McGinnis a \$10,000 a year raise, to \$82,754. Selectboard chair Tom Hankinson said McGinnis has not asked for a raise in over 20 years,

receiving only cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) each year.

The board voted to approve a request from the Franklin Regional Retirement System to add a one-time increase of 2% to the automatic 3% COLA for retirees in the system.

Members of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (RGT) asked the board to

keep them up to date on the potential sale of a certain property under Chapter 61 tax protection as forest land. The town holds a right of first refusal on the sale, and the ability to convey the property to a non-profit. RGT said it wasn't sure it was interested, but wanted to make sure it was notified.

**Montague Community Television News  
If You Go To Town Meeting...**

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – Special Town Meeting is always hours of fun, and this week we captured three hours and 17 minutes of delightful democratic debate and dialectic. Motions were passed, questions were asked, members were out of order, speakers waited in turn, and a surprise retirement was announced.

The Montague selectboard met on March 6, and the finance committee met on March 1. The Gill selectboard met back on February 27.

All MCTV videos are available on our Vimeo page, and all com-

munity members are welcome to submit videos to be aired on Channel 17 and featured on the Vimeo page. Think of what you would like to make and come see how we can help! MCTV is always available to assist in local video production. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for check-out, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

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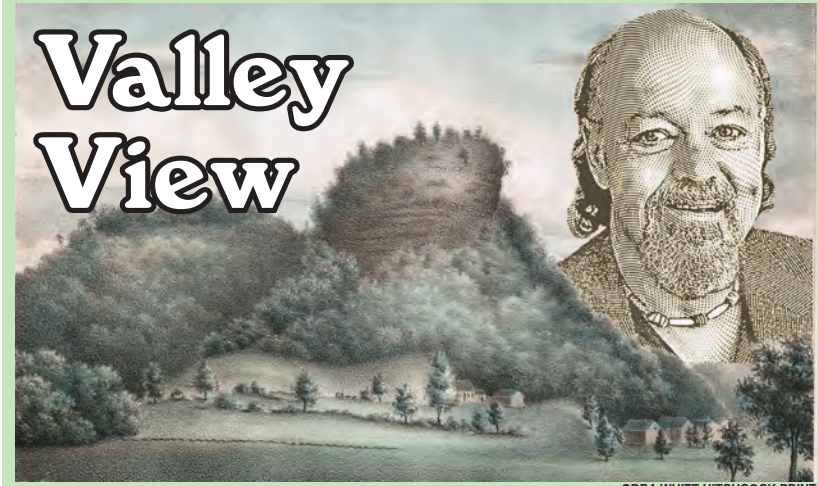
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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER MARCH 9, 2023



# Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

**GREENFIELD** – The first day of March brought with it an inch of fresh overnight snow, a rarity here this winter, as East Palestine, Ohioans live in fear that each breath inhaled is shaving away hours of their lives.

The morning is gray and gloomy, dark, dreary and warming, a light patter of rain detectable even to old ears, which have no trouble hearing that familiar scraping, sliding sound of snow tobogganing off the slate roofs, followed by a rattling tremble.

I've settled into my winter work station, seated on a bow-back Windsor at an oval farm table with thick reeded legs nestled into a kitchen nook, my back to the windowed south wall. Seems like as good a day as any to come up with something for my looming biweekly column. Never too early to get a jump on it. Sometimes somber mornings like this can stimulate thoughts, get the wheels spinning, so to speak – especially when unsure of a topic.

Beware: the route can be circuitous.

I awoke at daybreak and was downstairs before the clock struck six to revive the woodstove and finish reading a poignant *Rolling Stone* tale about Alabama coal miners enduring a two-year strike that finally ended last week. I was about halfway through it the previous evening when my wife came into the room to watch the nightly news. Choosing not to battle TV distraction, I calmly marked my place in pencil and set the magazine aside till morning. It could wait. Plus, I was ready for the Celtics game before catching up on the Murdaugh trial or latest Trump sideshow.

A couple of minor chores were awaiting me upon completion of the *RS* article. A stack of outgoing mail resting on a chest of drawers had to go out to the mailbox along with bags of stickered trash and paper recyclables left overnight on the small inset porch. I hate it when critters tear up my trash bags and scatter the contents out by the road. So, I've learned to wait till morning to lug them out there.

On my way back to the house, walking empty-handed over wet, sticky snow, I heard a bird singing a happy tune from its hidden burning-bush perch. I could not identify

the song, but knew it wasn't a cardinal, robin, or blue jay. Probably some sort of drab-colored sparrow, warbler, or wren invisibly perched and foraging the dense ornamental bush's red berries.

Though able to identify few birds by sight and even fewer by sound, I could decipher the mood, and it was joyous. I had to wonder why it was so happy on this damp morning? There didn't seem to be much to sing a happy tune about. Could not that innocent feathered creature detect the air- and rain-borne poison in the air from the faraway, black, toxic cloud of smoke we all saw billowing out of that train wreck along the Ohio/Pennsylvania border? Did it not know that, in the name of greed and profit, humanity is destroying most everything dear to it?

Ooops. There I go again, spouting blasphemy. Or is it heresy? I'm not supposed to say such things. You must be aware that some scientists paid handsomely by the captains of industry still claim humanity shares no responsibility for global warming. I'd hate to be outed as Woke by that new flavor of the month, Florida governor Ron DeSantis, and his band of hypocritical holy warriors. If they can shut down Dr. Seuss and Harper Lee, no one is immune.

But enough of that. I'd hate to rile folks of a different political stripe with my opinions born of the Sixties. That kind of talk doesn't play well at St. Kaz and K Street? Maybe even some at the Voo will object. Heaven forbid I ruffle "conservative" feathers.

Which, for some strange reason, brings me to the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission meeting I attended on a whim at the Conte Lab in Turners Falls on February 17. Having lost track of CRASC's mission after five years of retirement, I wanted to see what it was up to with salmon-restoration in the rearview.

I suppose I could have devoted this entire column to that meeting, but in all honesty, there wasn't that much there. Just a routine morning meeting with Zoom participation, chaired by two familiar old characters from my past – Ken Sprinkle and Andy Fisk.

I first knew Sprinkle as the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Connecticut River Coordinator. Today see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

Above: Detail of work by Brattleboro artist and musician Jonas Fricke, who died unexpectedly on Sunday, out on tour. Jonas put his boundless energy into building revolutionary, artistic community, and for many of us this loss is unfathomable. - Eds.

## TV REVIEW

# Running From the Fungus: *The Last of Us* Crosses Over

By W. KAIZEN

**AMHERST** – Having lived through the recent COVID pandemic, it's not hard to imagine the dystopia where the new HBO TV series *The Last of Us* is set, a world where, instead of a virus, a fungal infection has turned half of humanity into mutated zombies while the remainder cowers in isolated, dysfunctional communities fighting to survive.

The premise of *The Last of Us*, which is based on the 2013 videogame of the same name, is that the real-life cordyceps fungus, known for parasitically infecting ants and then controlling their nervous systems, has adapted to humans. Once infected, human hosts sprout mushroom-like protuberances and lose all ability to reason, attempting to propagate the fungus by biting anyone who hasn't been infected.

Neil Druckmann wrote and directed the videogame and is doing the same for the TV show. The game was released at the tail end of the post-millennium zombie revival, when games like *Resident Evil* and *Left 4 Dead* invented the horror-survival genre and comic books like *The Walking Dead* reinvented living-dead stories by focusing on the



Bella Ramsey and Pedro Pascal, veterans of HBO's hit *Game of Thrones*, return for the network's adaptation of the first truly adult zombie videogame.

downtrodden people forced to eke out a life in a post-apocalyptic world. Druckmann ran with this idea, creating the only blockbuster videogame whose story feels truly adult.

The problem with so many videogames that attempt to tell serious stories is that their storytelling is poorly integrated with their gameplay. Academics have used the phrase "ludonarrative dissonance" to describe this, meaning that a game's play ("ludo-") conflicts with its story ("narrative") in nonsensical or inconsequential ways.

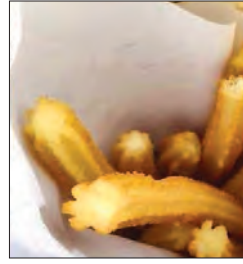
An example is how Nathan Drake, the amiable lead character modeled after Indiana Jones in the *Uncharted* series – which Druckmann also worked on – cold-bloodedly killed thousands of people over the course of a single game with no perceptible effect on his psyche.

Druckmann solved this problem. In the *Last of Us* videogame, death had narrative consequences and emotional resonance. The characters killed reluctantly, from necessity – knowing that it was their see **LAST OF US** page B4

**FACT CHECK:**  
How real is the threat of a fungal pandemic? See Page B5 for a follow-up interview with our own neighborhood toxicologist!

## NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE BY TROUBLE MANDESON

| TAPAS                |      |
|----------------------|------|
| TORTILLA DE CAMARÓN  | 350  |
| TORTILLA DE PATATAS  | 400  |
| CROQUETAS            | 400  |
| PRESA A LA BRASA     | 500  |
| GAZPACHO o SALMOREJO | 375  |
| TORTILLA DE CAMARÓN  | 350  |
| ESPINACAS            | 425  |
| PINCHITO DE POLLO    | 500  |
| ENSAJADILLA RUSA     | 400  |
| DORADA A LA PLANCHA  | 1600 |
| COSTILLAS DE CORDERO | 1900 |
| GAMBAS AL AJILLO     | 1400 |
| BERENJENAS CON MIEL  | 1100 |
| ESPAGUETIS           | 900  |
| PECHUGA DE POLLO     | 500  |
| ALCACHOFRAS          | 400  |



MANDESON PHOTOS

A typical tapas menu and a few plates in Seville, Spain. Note the churros (center), deep-fried to order at the local churreria.

**GREENFIELD** – *Hola!* I just returned from two weeks with my wife in Spain, where the food was fresh and delicious no matter what or where we ate. We ate most of our meals at the first café we chose, and did our best to work our way down the tapas menu. We never had a bad meal.

I noticed that in Spain people don't eat while walking on the street. Instead they gather with friends and family throughout the day to consume meals communally. I didn't see any food or drink consumed on the streets – nor much trash, for that matter. The five mealtimes a day seem to give everyone a chance to take breaks and gather socially.

A light breakfast of coffee and pastry happens between 7 and 9 a.m., with a more substantial breakfast consumed between 10 and 11 a.m. Lunch is big, at 2 to 3:30 p.m., after which everyone takes a *siesta*. Many businesses close to reopen at 5 p.m. for *merienda* or mid-afternoon see **HEARTFELT** page B8



# Pet of the Week



## “OLIVIA BENSON”

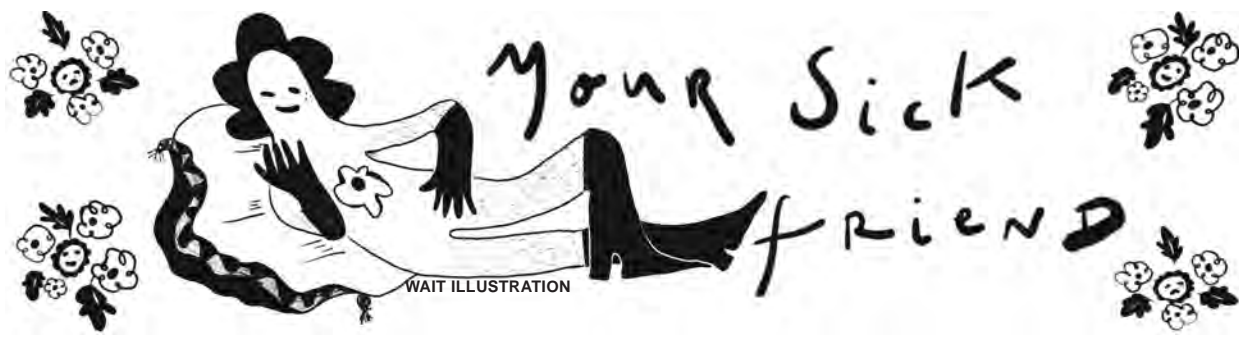
Life is full of surprises.

Imagine you buy a foreclosed property you haven't really seen, but it sounds like a good deal. You go to move in and you find out there are two unexpected furry tenants, who come running up to you right away. You're their hero. You're going to take them away from overflowing litter boxes and an opened food bag left behind when the last owner took off.

So goes the story of Olivia Benson and Jakova, who has since been

adopted. Since she has been at Dakin, she has been very affectionate and will come right up to you, happily rubbing against you. Olivia Benson is a grateful, beautiful cat who is waiting for a new home.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are currently available only in Springfield. Contact adoption staff at [springfield@dakinhumane.org](mailto:springfield@dakinhumane.org) and include your name and phone number. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org).



By CASEY WAIT

**TURNERS FALLS** – Hello friends,

And a hearty thank you to those of you who participated in the event I co-facilitated last weekend, *Surviving COVID, Together: Peer education on COVID resources and strategies*. It was so wonderful to be with a group of people who still care about COVID protections and brainstorm ways we can continue to keep each other safe.

Another big thank you goes to the Finders Collective, who provided a very COVID-safe space for this conversation to happen. It is increasingly rare to find public spaces that prioritize multiple layers of protection and, subsequently, there are very few spaces open to those of us most vulnerable to bad COVID outcomes. Simply by requiring masks and using a DIY Corsi-Rosenthal box (CRB) air filter, you ensured that more people would feel safe participating in this important community discussion. Other local businesses and community spaces should follow suit!

I especially want to thank the disabled and chronically ill folks who came to the event, as I know how much labor goes into leaving the house. It is essential that our voices are not only heard but prioritized in community discussions around public health and safety. Your contributions were invaluable. In the words of many disability justice activists before us, “nothing about us without us!”

If you missed the event but would like to explore some of the information we covered, you can find a list of resources on my website, [caseywait.com/covid-19-resources](http://caseywait.com/covid-19-resources). There you will find everything from what COVID-19 is, how it spreads, and how and why layers of protections work and are important, to finding local vaccine and testing locations and more. I plan to update this page regularly!

I am thrilled with how this event went, especially considering how much I struggled in the weeks leading up to it. Unfortunately, I somehow contracted my third COVID infection in early February. I am on immunosuppressive medication to manage one of my autoimmune conditions, and this infection really put my system through the wringer. I had a fever of 100 degrees for four days, broke out into a gnarly rash all over my chest, and am still dealing with painful mouth sores nearly a month later.

My fatigue – already intense from an ME/CFS flareup in January – has taken an even bigger hit, and I barely managed to make it to the event at all. Even writing this, I can feel my brain struggle to organize my thoughts. I can't adequately express my frustration and anger at how difficult it was to gather the energy to make this COVID safety event happen *because* I got COVID yet again, my

second time in less than six months!

I'm not sure how I got sick this time, and in some ways it doesn't matter. I am one of the more COVID-cautious people I know, but I don't blame whomever I contracted the virus from. None of us should have been put in a situation where constant reinfection with a novel virus is the norm. I refuse to stop dedicating my time and energy to the things I care about, but I shouldn't have to risk what remains of my health to do them.

The government is ultimately to blame for the situation in which we all find ourselves, and it's to them that I will direct my anger. But there are concrete things we can all do to make sure the most vulnerable among us are still able to do the things they love without literally risking their lives in the process.

If more public spaces like restaurants, schools, municipal buildings, and salons implemented layers of protection, people like me would be able to more safely take part in society and contribute valuable knowledge and skills to our collective effort to beat this pandemic once and for all. We could also risk having fun outside our homes – imagine that! Simple things like mask requirements, the use of HEPA filters or CRBs and ceiling fans, and greater access to accurate public health information would go a long way towards keeping us all safer and preventing infection, disability, and death.

In April of last year, my friend Beatrice Adler-Bolton published a piece in *The New Inquiry* titled “Mask Off.” “The debate about mask mandates is actually a debate about the human, social and economic rights of everyone, not just the medically vulnerable,” she wrote then. “It is a conversation about the value that our society wishes to place in protecting each other from sickness, about the value of recognizing or rejecting our interdependence, and about the worth of the people whose suffering may soon be minimized as ‘deaths pulled from the future’ or merely the ‘cost’ of reopening. The broad rejection of masking as a solidaristic act, and the turn of the United States’ Covid response towards individualistic frames of personal responsibility, is ultimately a rejection of the right to ‘social life’ for all those who are well within their rights to refuse to consent to needless and repeated Covid infections.”

A year later, her words are, if anything, even more relevant. I fear we are in great danger of fully normalizing the death and debility happening all around us. I've lost count of the times I've said it before, but I'll say it again: the pandemic is not over. Do not accept sickness and death as the norm. My life matters, and so does yours.

With love and rage,

Your (increasingly) Sick Friend

## Senior Center Activities MARCH 13 THROUGH 17

### 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](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us).

### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are available. Contact Jonathan von Ranson (978) 544-3758.

### 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. The AARP Circuit Breaker Tax Aide is available March through April. For more information please call 863-9357.

### Monday 3/13

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
12 p.m. Potluck

### Tuesday 3/14

9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters  
1 p.m. COA Meeting  
3 p.m. Tai Chi

### Wednesday 3/15

9 a.m. Veterans' Hours  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

11:45 a.m. Friends' Meeting  
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo  
1:30 p.m. Western Mass Food Bank  
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

### Thursday 3/16

9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
1 p.m. Cards & Games

### Friday 3/17

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
2 p.m. By The Seat of Your Pants

### ERVING

Open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily. Brown Bag lunch is the first Thursday of each month. Veterans' Services are the first Wednesday of each month. For more information, please call (413) 423-3649.

### Monday 3/13

9 a.m. Interval  
10:15 a.m. Seated Workout

### Tuesday 3/14

9 a.m. Good For U  
10 a.m. Line Dancing

### Wednesday 3/15

9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact  
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics

### Thursday 3/16

9 a.m. Core & Balance  
10 a.m. Barre Fusion

### Friday 3/17

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

## EXHIBITS

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Crossroads: Change in Rural America*, Smithsonian on Main Street exhibit. Through March 18.

**Rendezvous, Turners Falls:** *Montague at Work and Play: Illustrations from the Montague Reporter, 2019-2023*, fifty-two full-color illustrations by Nina Rossi of people at work and play in the villages of Montague. Through March 29.

**Montague Center Library:** *Carolyn Wampole*, paintings and collages. Through April 12.

**Looky Here, Greenfield:** *Mystic Art Show!* Artwork by Dawn Cook, J. Burkett, Nora Charters, Shannon Ketch, Erica Pinto, Troy Curry, Andi Magenheimer, Phineas Roy, Ariel Kotker, and more. Reception this Friday, March 10 at 6 p.m. with music from Junk Orbit, Wednesday Knudsen, Arkm Foam, Allysen Callery, Dusty Miller, and Tarp Big Band.

**LAVA Center, Greenfield:** *No Somos Maquinas (We Are Not Machines)*, words and portraits of

farmworkers in Western Mass, bilingual. *Joseph Ackerman*, photographs. Through March.

**Artspace Gallery, Greenfield:** *Painting With Fabric*, textile art by Sandra Rosenberg. Through March 25. Reception this Friday, March 10, from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

**Geissler Gallery, Stoneleigh-Burnham School, Greenfield:** *Another Way to Experience Winter*, mixed-media work by Malika Ross. Through March 17.

**Wendell Free Library:** *Stephen Dalmass*, photography. Through April. Reception this Friday, March 10, from 6 to 8 p.m.

**Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls:** *Through a Window*, group show by members. Through March.

**Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield:** *Figuratively Speaking*, art featuring the human figure. Weekends through March 19.

**Augusta Savage Gallery, UMass Amherst:** *Portraits in Red: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls*, paintings by Nayana LaFond. Through May 12.

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *Sculp-*

*tures in Wood*, three-dimensional carvings by GK Khalsa. Through March.

**Anchor House of Artists, Northampton:** *Order and Chaos*, contrasting works on paper and wood by mother and daughter Nan Salky and Helen Murphy; *Absence and Fondness*, poetry and art by Mary Dunn; *Sanctuary*, Leilah Cohen's life work; *Glass Factory*, multimedia work with social relevance by Yaning Xing. Reception this Friday, March 10, at 5 p.m.

**Oxbow Gallery, Easthampton:** *Kate Spencer and Stephanie Vignone*, paintings of Mount Toby. Reception this Thursday, March 9 from 5 to 7 p.m. during Art Walk. Artist discussion from 1 to 4 p.m. on March 26 with Spencer and ecologist Peter Grima.

**Brattleboro Museum and Art Center:** *Keith Haring: Subway Drawings*, eighteen works from NYC subway stations, through April 16. Four new exhibits open March 10: Daniel Callahan, *En-MassQ*; Mitsuko Brooks, *Letters Mingle Souls*; Juan Hinojosa, *Paradise City*; and Cathy Cone, *Portals and Portraits*.

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DINNER  
FRIDAY & SATURDAY – 4:30 TO 9:30 P.M.

CALL TO CONFIRM: (413) 423-3328



**VALLEY VIEW** from page B1  
his title has changed to Project Leader of Connecticut River Fish and Wildlife Conservation. Same job, different title.

Fisk has followed a similar path from executive director of the Connecticut River Watershed Council, which had morphed into the Connecticut River Conservancy before he left in October for greener pastures. He is now employed by the State of Connecticut, for which he is Bureau Chief for Natural Resources at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

I must say I was surprised to learn of an ambitious American-eel restoration project, known as the CRASC Connecticut River American Eel Management Plan, aimed at protecting habitat and encouraging population growth. Google it for further details.

To be perfectly honest, I didn't know that what I call brown river eels were migratory, and likewise had no idea there was a viable sport and even, I think, a small commercial fishery for them.

Yep, that was news to me.

The only person I ever knew who valued river eels as table fare was a late Polish man from my younger days. This man, a notorious game bandit, swore that these eels were the best-eating fish from local waters. I also learned from research that the slimy river critters were highly regarded as a Native American food source. Still, I didn't in my wildest imagination believe there to be a significant eel fishery of any kind.

I guess I'm wrong. A post-meeting report emailed to attendees by Sprankle shows a proud fisherman holding up a gargantuan eel caught in the Bellows Falls, Vermont neighborhood.

My only personal experience with these eels occurred quite by accident during an overnight fishing journey to one of my favorite trout streams. I went to this Deerfield River tributary with a friend,

two young women, tents, lanterns, food and drink, fishing and cooking equipment – the whole nine yards – in search of trophy brown trout summering in a gorge's deep, dark, cold, underwater stone chambers.

I had learned of these huge browns from another friend who had bought a house in the neighborhood and checked out the gorge with scuba gear and an underwater light after I told him of the many nice trout I had caught there during summer rainstorms. Curious, he hiked into the secluded gorge and discovered huge browns in the five-pound class. He saw them with his eyes and touched them with his hands, hidden and comfortable in small, dark, underwater overhangs.

Because I had fished there many times and never caught such a fish, I figured they must be nocturnal feeders, and planned an ambitious overnight adventure, which failed miserably. This failure was driven by voracious eels, a foot and less in length, that aggressively competed for every nightcrawler we plunked into the deep pool. Their commotion created an unnatural disturbance that telegraphed our presence and prevented us from hooking into any big browns – akin to flushing partridge unknowingly warning deer that a hunter is passing through.

One must wonder if those Deerfield River browns in their cold, deep, summer refuge get so plump by eating eel progeny. They eat mice, frogs, and small snakes, so why not eels in the six- to eight-inch category? There are plenty of them there for the taking.

All I can say for certain is that my creative plan went bust in a hurry, and the steep, uphill, morning trek back to our Toyota Land Cruiser was strenuous indeed, and no fun at all.

Whew! So, there you have it: another winter-doldrums column in the rearview. I have written many over the years. The trick is to absorb the moment, and let the spirit move you.



**MOVIE REVIEW**

**Son of the South (2020)**

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – The movie *Son of the South* is based on Bob Zellner's autobiography, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek: A White Southerner in the Freedom Movement*. Zellner was a real-life individual who was quite involved in the Civil Rights movement. The movie focuses on how he got involved with it – it was in 1961, when he and some of his friends interviewed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks about racial issues for a college research paper they were writing.

One example of how Zellner was involved with the Civil Rights movement was his involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). This group is also largely featured in another movie called *Freedom Song*, about the African-American side of the movement.

Bob as a young man is played in the movie by Lucas Till. Speaking of the paper that got him started, he went to a Black church with his friends for the research, and they were told there was a good chance they would be arrested for doing that.

The movie shows these individuals being a little surprised at that, because they were just writing a paper, and not choosing any side in Civil Rights matters. Given that they were Southerners and knew what was going on at the time, they maybe shouldn't have been so surprised by that. In real life, there was a cross-burning incident at Zellner's school because of the research, and they show that in the film. On top of that, he was asked to leave the school, but refused.

I don't want to spoil too much of the film or tell you outright what happens next,

but he ends up meeting more of the type of people that get involved in the movement. One is an African-American woman who was educated in Paris; her father was a professor. Another was a young fourth-generation Japanese American man who pointed out what he had to deal with due to World War II.

The film shows Zellner getting into serious, life-threatening trouble by becoming involved with the movement. He was told to stay away from it, but he didn't stop even after the trouble started.

At the end of the movie it is noted that he was arrested dozens of times in the next five years, so we know he had a fair amount of courage. I think Joan of Arc would be proud of him. Zellner is asked in the film how she could do what she did, with so many people being against her, and still remain strong. This is a good reference for someone



who has to be strong in possibly dangerous situations.

Let's just say Zellner gets an answer to that question. He said in real life that his involvement with SNCC was "the greatest thing that ever happened in my life." Here is a man who had relatives in the Klan, and yet had a father who supported the Jewish resistance during World War II.

I think that the times, and his father being the way he was, probably led to Zellner being someone who took part in the Civil Rights movement.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**

**Hurt Hawk; Automatic Crash Notification; 911 Misdials; Hit & Run at Route 47 Crossover; Icy Roads; Bar Assault**

**Monday, 2/27**

10:23 a.m. Two parties into station to speak with an officer about issues with a family member. Parties were given some advice.

3:35 p.m. 911 caller states she was driving on I-91 North and saw an injured hawk about eight miles before the Route 2 turnoff. Information given to Massachusetts State Police.

3:52 p.m. 911 caller from Keith Apartments requesting officers as her neighbor is screaming. Officer advises water is coming through the ceiling and puddling into the smoke alarm. Requesting FD and building maintenance be contacted. Officer advises upstairs apartment is flooded. FD and maintenance on scene.

9:20 p.m. Three parked cars at Unity Park; no operators seen in the area. All vehicles owned by same resident. Parking for overnight winter storm.

9:24 p.m. 911 hangup from K Street. Upon callback, caller states she has a new telephone and doesn't know how to use it. No emergency.

9:37 p.m. Shelburne Control received a 911 misdial mapping to Grant Street. Male states his young son is playing on his phone. No emergency.

**Tuesday, 2/28**

7:41 a.m. 911 caller from Deerfield reporting an electrical issue with their panel; feels hot to the touch, and there is a burning smell. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

10:25 a.m. Caller requesting an officer come to Industrial Boulevard; advised a former employee has left threatening voice-

mails against the caller and another current employee. Referred to an officer, who is *en route*.

5:32 p.m. 911 caller from Coolidge Avenue requesting FD as the chimney she doesn't use has been producing black smoke all day. Transferred to Control.

7:30 p.m. 911 caller from East Taylor Hill Road states his carbon monoxide detector is going off. Transferred to Control.

**Wednesday, 3/1**

3:08 a.m. Caller states that Turners Falls Road is a sheet of ice. DPW contacted; will be heading in.

6:01 a.m. Control reporting they got an automatic crash notification in the Industrial Boulevard area; vehicle is a 2010 Hyundai Sonata. Officers checked area; no sign of a car off the road or any sign of a crash.

11:54 a.m. Caller from Avenue A advising that someone stole her TV that she had left outside of her apartment door in the hallway overnight. Caller is asking building management if they can look at video footage for her; she will call back when she has more information.

2:27 p.m. 911 caller reporting a two-car accident with injury and possible entrapment on Wendell Road. Shelburne Control notified; EMS and FD responding; Rau's *en route* to tow both vehicles. All parties declined medical attention. Received call from possible witness stating that the small possibly silver car was "flying" past her house just prior to the accident; wanted officers to know it was most likely this vehicle at fault; believed to have three people inside. Sum-

mons issued for speeding; operating to endanger; and marked lanes violation.

5:03 p.m. 911 misdial; young child states he was trying to take a photo and hit the wrong button, so it triggered the emergency number.

**Thursday, 3/2**

12:50 a.m. Caller states her boyfriend is at her apartment and took her phone and house keys; she wants him gone. Male party left with property. Officer will check the area and see if he can get the property back. Caller does not want to press charges for larceny if we are unable to locate the party and the items.

3:34 p.m. 911 caller states she was just hit from behind at the Route 47 crossover; when the other driver went to her car to get her license, she took off instead. Unable to locate other vehicle. Report taken.

4:39 p.m. Caller from Third Street states kids just came to her house to try and fight her son; caller states she told them to leave, and they did, but caller would like to file a report. Second caller states the first caller came to her house and was yelling/threatening her child and attempted to jump onto the porch and swing at the children. Officer advised of second caller. Report taken.

5:52 p.m. Party stuck behind locked gate on Migratory Way. Services rendered.

6:54 p.m. Party stuck behind locked gate on Migratory Way. Services rendered.

**Friday, 3/3**

10:19 a.m. Report of a needle on the ground next to a tree on Seventh Street. Services rendered.

11:36 p.m. Probation requests an officer check a male's ankle strap on Griswold Street to make sure it has not been tampered with and is working properly. Officer advises he spoke with involved male and checked out the ankle monitor. Nothing was tampered with; all in working order. Probation advised.

**Saturday, 3/4**

1:20 a.m. Winter weather parking ban; vehicles ticketed, towed, and/or moved by owners throughout morning on Avenue A, Fifth Street, J Street, Fourth Street, L Street, Third Street, and Bridge Street.

6:14 a.m. Caller states he was involved in an accident on Route 2 in Erving; vehicle severely damaged. Caller left scene and went to work while talking to Control. MPD officer out with involved vehicle on Industrial Boulevard. Details added to call for other agency.

6:45 a.m. Caller reports a low-hanging wire on

Montague Street, pole to house. Officer requesting Eversource be advised. Eversource on scene.

8:15 a.m. Motorist reporting a large tree limb in the road across a lane of traffic at Seventh and L Streets. Officer advises DPW will have to come out and move it; too big to move by hand. DPW advised.

8:47 a.m. Officer contacted directly about power being out in the Greenfield Cross Road area. No obvious signs of lines down or trees on wires.

8:57 a.m. Report of a tree down blocking most of Thirteenth Street. DPW advised.

9:39 a.m. DPW reporting a fire on the power lines in the area of Meadow and South Ferry Roads. Shelburne Control and Eversource notified; MCFD on scene with Eversource.

12:09 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road advising of a long wire down across the sidewalk and her yard. Shelburne Control notified; TFFD to respond.

12:35 p.m. Caller states that two wires are down across both lanes of traffic on Turners Falls Road. Phone lines down; moved by FD.

7:33 p.m. Caller from Turnpike Road states someone hit a parked car in her driveway. Referred to an officer.

8:03 p.m. 911 caller from Keith Apartments states a female party is banging on the walls and yelling. Party advised of complaint. Caller advised of options.

**Sunday, 3/5**

9:22 a.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road reports an Amazon package stolen from her porch. Caller called back and reported that the package was left at a different address. She will call Amazon to correct the issue.

12:47 p.m. Report of a piece of rebar sticking up on the White Bridge. MassDOT contacted and advised.

2:41 p.m. Report of loose white dog in the woods near the Mohawk Ramblers in Lake Pleasant.

5:23 p.m. Caller states she was rear-ended near Unity and Chestnut Streets. Officer requesting Rau's for tow.

8:40 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Road states her two German shepherds ran away. They are not wearing tags, but are wearing shock collars. Shelburne Control advises they received a call from someone who saw the two dogs on Randall Road. Caller called back in stating she found her dogs.

**Monday, 3/6**

12:29 a.m. 911 caller states she was just assaulted at Between the Uprights; states she was not injured and denied any need for EMS. GPD officer assisting. Investigated.

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## Nothing 'Universal' Anymore in This Universe: Pondering Portable Phone Power Possibilities

By RYNE HAGER

**TURNERS FALLS** – At least one of the staff here at the *Reporter* has been wondering about USB power when it comes to charging phones – or, potentially, other devices, given the new ubiquity of USB Type-C. It might seem like a simple idea: Just buy whatever power pack, battery, portable charger, or whatever you want to call it has the correct port, and you should be okay, right? Wrong. Unfortunately, there's a little more to it than that.

First, be sure to consider the kind of receptacle you'll need. Most Android devices and laptops these days charge with USB Type-C. Apple still holds onto its proprietary Lightning charging for iPhones, but the company's laptops and tablets also use USB Type-C now.

Some other gadgets you might need to charge on-the-go, like drones, certain laptops, or other specialized hardware, could still use barrel-style receptacles that need a higher input voltage. In those cases, you might need to stick with the provided charger, so a battery or portable charger with an AC outlet could be the way to go. However, there are some batteries from companies like Omni that have a configurable DC output that you can use with those barrel connectors.

Once you know what sort of connector you'll be using, you're not out of the woods yet. Even though many devices use the oblong and omnipresent USB Type-C ports, it isn't a guarantee that you can use just any charger, as some devices, unfortunately, use slightly different specifications. However, most of your gadgets should be able to pull power using the USB Power Delivery specification if they are built correctly.

What this means is that most phones, tablets, laptops, etc., meet a set of standards developed by the body that manages how USB works, and they should be able to charge at some level using any connected charger that meets those same standards. In some cases, as with OnePlus phones and some older Samsung phones, that won't

actually be the fastest charging speed available because these devices use proprietary charging methods on top of this basic standard to hit a higher rate.

The best idea, in any case, is that you should look up the specifications for your device to see if it uses USB Power Delivery or not. If it does, a charger that meets the standard is your best choice to charge as fast – and safely – as possible. If not, while those Power Delivery chargers might work, you may get a better experience with something else.

There is one unfortunate complication here: All this assumes that the person who made your gadget met the specifications required when they did it. In this modern era of cheap, fly-by-night Amazon brands importing white-label goods from the cheapest possible sources, that's not always a guarantee. In fact, one of my favorite recent purchases – a portable retro game emulation system from a company called Anbernic – has a USB Type-C port for charging, but *doesn't* meet the USB specifications for charging, and can't receive power from your typical Type-C charger as a result. I have to use a specific cable connected to an older-style USB charger for it to top up correctly.



Any of these logos on a product should mean that it has been certified to meet USB-IF standards.

Cables can muddy the waters further, as there are specifications that *they* need to meet to operate safely, with certain requirements in wiring, e-mark chips, included resistors, and gauges for specific power levels. I highly recommend only buying USB cables from big-name brands.

With the USB Power Delivery specification now supporting up to 100W to 240W of power, using a cheap cable doesn't just introduce the possibility of incompatibility – failure could be a *spectacular* fire hazard. Stick to big-name brands with lots of reviews, and avoid the no-name Amazon specials.

Lastly, if you really want to get the most out of your USB Type-C chargers, make sure to check the voltage levels for the so-called PDOs ("power-data objects") it can provide. Laptops often need PDOs of 15V or 20V, while phones often ask a charger for 5V, 9V, or 12V. Device manufacturers on both sides will sometimes list the voltage input or output levels they support, and if a charger matches what a device needs across all the various levels, you'll have a better – and faster – experience.

Some devices and chargers also support a relatively new standard called PPS. This allows for variable voltage between these preconfigured levels – which should mean even faster charging, and some degree of future-proofing if the charger supports it.

If you really want to be safe, the USB IF, which is the standards body behind the USB specification, maintains a list of approved products that have been tested to meet its specifications. The presence of this organization's associated logos on a device's packaging *should* mean that it has been certified to those standards – buy a charger or battery with one of the logos pictured here, and you should be set.

If you have more questions about consumer technology, how gadgets work, or which doodad to buy if you need X, Y, and Z, shoot Ryne an email at [deviceadvice@montaguereporter.org](mailto:deviceadvice@montaguereporter.org).

LAST OF US from page B1

lives or those of their assailants – and they were plagued by it. Filled with regret, they bottled their pain to survive, turning to alcohol or anger as a release.

These games were not for children. Nor is the TV show, whose story closely follows that of the game.

Both open with lead character Joel, a single dad who works construction, coming home to grab his teenage daughter in an attempt to flee from Austin, Texas with her and his brother. Over a single day, cordyceps has infected the world. Panic has set in. Zombies are attacking everywhere, from all directions. The National Guard has set up a perimeter blocking escape routes, controlling who can get in and out. Just as they seem likely to escape, his daughter is shot and killed by a soldier and dies in his arms.

Flash forward 20 years. Joel, played on the TV show by Pedro Pascal, is a hardened survivor with a raft of psychological baggage. He has crossed the country to Boston and paired up with the equally damaged Tess. Caught up in intrigue that soon leads to Tess's death, he's saddled with transporting Ellie (played by Bella Ramsey), a girl the same age as his daughter when she died, across the country.

Pascal and Ramsey, who both appeared on the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, are carefully matched to the characters in the game. Pascal is almost a dead ringer for the ruggedly handsome videogame Joel. Ramsey has videogame Ellie's attitude and intonation down, although she looks like she stepped out of a Vermeer painting.

Both the game and the show are episodic. The show does a particularly effective job of encapsulating a fully realized story every one or two episodes, and it deviates from the game by telling the characters' detailed backstories.

One early episode recounts the love story of Bill and Frank, played in heart-rending detail by Nick Offerman and Murray Bartlett. Whereas their story in the game was a hard-bitten but minor sideline, in the show it captures how the best traits of humanity – compassion, caring for others, love – can persist in the most horrific circumstances. This episode is so good that it stands alone; if you're only going to watch

one episode, watch this one.

What the show does better than the game, perhaps to a fault, is tug at the heartstrings. Much like the new season of FX's *Reservation Dogs* – which I can't recommend highly enough – every episode of *The Last of Us* is a gut punch. I don't cry very much, but much like *Reservation Dogs*, boy, did this show trigger lots of tears. It's brutal, almost manipulatively so.

The overarching theme of *The Last of Us* is the familial relations that form when people are thrown together without their chosen or birth families. That curmudgeonly, justifiably ill-tempered Joel, who starts out wanting nothing to do with Ellie, will come to love her as if she were his own daughter, is inevitable. Seeing what happens to them and the people they encounter on their cross-country journey, as they are torn apart from one another, is painful.

The game took so long to play that though painful moments did come, they were fewer and further between the many tense episodes you spent actively guiding the characters in their struggle to survive, which became your struggle. This heightened level of direct participation in Joel and Ellie's plight tempered in the game the sense of emotional manipulation that the show falls prey to.

On the other hand, while the game looked amazing for its time – its textures and lighting effects remain spectacular – its character models fell deeply into the uncanny valley, alienating the player from some of its emotional impact.

Of the various parts of *The Last of Us* franchise, I'd recommend the videogame sequel, *The Last of Us Part II*. It dealt with the motivations for and consequences of human-on-human violence even better than the first game, and so much better than any other videogame.

The TV show, which is very, very good, is still in progress. Not all of its nine episodes have been released. Where it ends will be significant. The second videogame opened with a scene that is arguably more horrible than the opening of this season. How a second season will handle this, if it does, will be engaging and probably great TV, although not much fun to watch.



The TV show deviates from the videogame by delving into various characters' backstories, including that of 14-year-old survivor Ellie.



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# Fungal Debunker: Ask a Toxicologist!

By EMILY MONOSSON

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – In the summer of 2019, just before the COVID pandemic, I started writing a book about fungal pandemics. By the winter of 2020, as we struggled with the first major viral pandemic in our lifetime, I wondered if anyone would want to read about a fungal pandemic – which could be way worse.

Then came *The Last of Us*. Now, fungal pathogens are having a moment. That one show has done more for raising awareness about the dark side of fungi than some of the most prominent scientists in the world.

The questions in this fungal debunk were asked by W. Kaizen, who reviewed *The Last of Us* TV show and videogame in this section (see Page B1).

**WK:** *The premise of The Last of Us is that global warming has led the Cordyceps fungus to mutate such that it can infect humans. On the show, they say that global warming has caused the fungus to be able to live at the body temperature of humans, which was previously too warm for it. How possible is this?*

**EM:** It is, and it isn't. First, one of the reasons we are relatively unfamiliar with fungal pathogens – compared with bacterial or viral – is that most fungi do not tolerate our warm bodies. A few do, and some of those can make us sick. And many of those fungi are opportunists, meaning they infect those of us whose immune systems have become compromised. This can happen because of disease, like HIV, or because of life-sustaining medications.

That said, it may be possible that a fungus which historically could not survive at our bodies' 98.6° F (or 37° C) can evolve to tolerate warmer temperatures because of climate change.

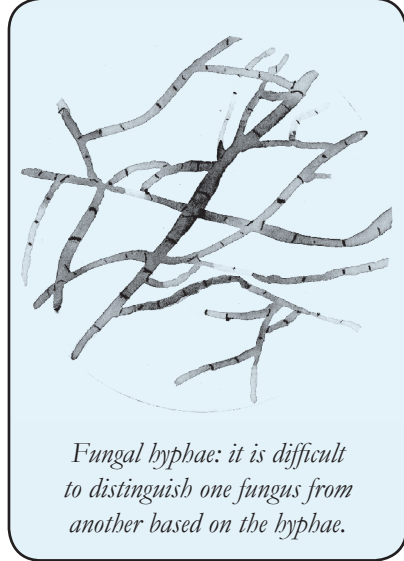
A recent example of this, and possibly the first, is the emergent fungal pathogen *Candida auris*. This is a yeast which emerged over the past few decades. Infections can be lethal and difficult to treat. When the fungus emerged, some of its strains were already resistant to our antifungal drugs – but that is another story!

*C. auris* tends to infect critically ill patients, including those in long-term care facilities or who are already hospitalized. Scientists don't know where it came from; several different strains emerged in different places around the globe almost simultaneously, so it is a mystery. But some scientists have proposed that it may have been living at temperatures just below ours – perhaps in the environment – and that warmer environmental temperatures have enabled it to evolve to flourish in humans.

Back to the original question: can *Cordyceps* do this? Probably

unlikely. The kind of *Cordyceps* fungus that turns insects into zombies has two huge hurdles before it can infect us. As a fungus that normally infects insects, it would have to be able to thrive in a very distantly related species – us. And at least for most of us, to control our brains as it does insect brains – which appears to be through secreted chemicals; it does not actually invade the brain – would require quite a bit of change, too.

I don't know the preferred temperature range for all *Cordyceps*, but some, including some that turn ants into zombies, prefer temperatures around 77° F (25° C) or lower, so they would also have to really, really bump up their temperature tolerance to live in us.



*Fungal hyphae: it is difficult to distinguish one fungus from another based on the hyphae.*

**WK:** *Why do you think they chose Jakarta for the start of the infection? Is this just "racism" in the sense that in the US/West we think all potential pandemics start in Asia, or is there some truth there?*

**EM:** That is a good question. There is no doubt that some pathogens, including some devastating fungal pathogens, originated on the Asian continent, in particular the Far East. These include the fungi which drove the American chestnut tree into functional extinction, another fungus which has killed off dozens of frog species to date, and a fungus that is causing widespread devastation to the Cavendish bananas which we love.

In their natural settings in Asia, these pathogens and their hosts evolved over hundreds of thousands or millions of years to maintain an uneasy peace. But when plopped down in a new region and given the opportunity to infect new susceptible hosts, their infections can become catastrophic.

That said, we humans really are largely to blame, because we move animals and plants around the world – along with whatever pests or pathogens live on them.

And we here in the West have exported pests and pathogens, too. Notably, when North American grape vines were brought to Europe in the late 1800s, they harbored an insect native to the States called *phyllox-*

*era*. This little louse killed grape vines across hundreds of thousands of acres throughout Europe. It remains a problem today, which is why most of the grapes grown in France and elsewhere around the world come from vines grafted onto North American root stock.

Another example of a pathogen which may have originated either here or Europe, and then spread around the world, is syphilis.

For centuries humans have wanted stuff from far away and have engaged in trade and travel. In the past century we have traded and traveled like never before in history. This means we may all be potentially responsible for spreading pathogens, including fungi, from one place to another.

**WK:** *Is Cordyceps the only candidate, or the best candidate, for a fungal takeover of humanity?*

**EM:** Hmm. Well, fungi belonging to the genus *Psilocybe*, if it were to somehow become widespread in our food system – I am not sure how that could happen – might cause widespread hallucination. Not that I have tried it, but given the state of the world today, maybe that wouldn't be such a bad thing?

**WK:** *Could a killer fungus spread via a polluted food supply, as it did in the show, where it spread by infected flour? Could it spread in a single day, as it does in the show, thus preventing it from being contained?*

**EM:** Sort of? There are already fungi which infect grain crops which might not kill us outright, but can cause disease. One example is *Claviceps purpurea*, a fungus that infects rye and related species and makes a chemical that causes ergot poisoning.

Another interesting fungus is *Aspergillus flavus*, which releases potent cancer-causing chemicals called aflatoxins – some are more active in causing cancer than others – and is associated with liver cancer. The mold commonly infects peanuts, and some other nuts and grains.

Here in the US shipments of peanuts and tree nuts like Brazil nuts and pistachios are monitored for aflatoxin levels; if more than 20 parts per billion of the toxin is found, the entire shipment may be destroyed, depending on the type of aflatoxin, so probably no need to look at that next PB&J in horror.

The fungus grows best in warm, humid climates, and some wonder if our changing climate might encourage growth of this *Aspergillus*. Conceivably, if no one paid attention and these molds were allowed to flourish in staple crops we all consume like grains and nuts, a lot of us could be affected, though probably to varying degrees.

While consumers tend not to worry about aflatoxin here in the US, it is an important problem in

some parts of the world.

Could there be an unstoppable fungal apocalypse? Probably not... though, you know, never say never.

The toxins made by these fungi are not sudden killers. There certainly are fungi which do kill – each year nearly 1.6 million people die from fungal infections around the world, and billions more are infected; those most at risk for deadly infections tend to be immunocompromised.

I am not a mycologist, and so I am not familiar with the world of fungi beyond those I wrote about, but there are millions of fungal species. Who knows what some could do, given a chance?

**WK:** *What relation, if any, does Cordyceps and its portrayal have with COVID and other viral or bacteriological threats to humans?*

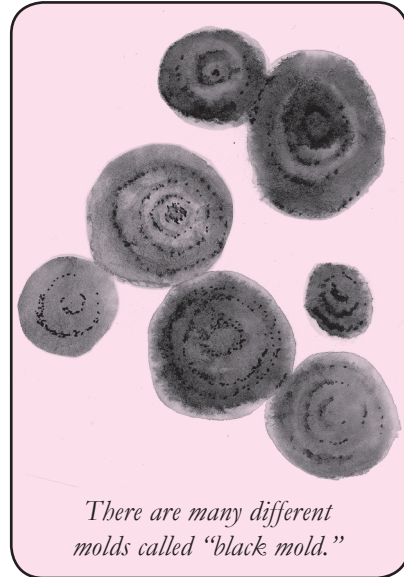
**EM:** Well, as you noted, this *Cordyceps* apocalypse happened so suddenly there wasn't an opportunity to manage the disease. What sets that apart from COVID or other infections is that there wasn't the opportunity for misinformation – like, "don't worry about those zombies next door, those mushroom heads won't bother you. Just keep on doing what you are doing." It just happened that fast.

And I suppose if someone didn't believe they were a threat – well, they're a zombie now!

In this portrayal, not in real life, it might have something in common with the rabies virus, since the fungus in the show is spread by a bite. But most of our diseases are not spread because we are biting each other.

One thing that is odd about the *Cordyceps* zombie behavior I have noted is the zombies' seeming need to eat people. That would mean they consume and then digest us. Most fungi digest first, and then consume. They do this by releasing digestive enzymes. So, it might be more realistic if the zombies spit on people, let them decompose, and then slurped them up.

**WK:** *Could a fungal infection be spread by airborne spores? These are a big issue in the game, but seemingly not in the show.*



*There are many different molds called "black mold."*

JULIE KUMBLE ILLUSTRATIONS



*Aspergillus flavus releases potent, cancer-causing chemicals known as aflatoxins.*

**EM:** Definitely yes. This is the main way many fungi spread themselves around.

What makes fungal pathogens particularly nefarious are the spores. They can send out millions of spores, and not only do they reproduce and spread through spores, but depending on the fungus some spores stick around in the environment for days, weeks, or years.

This would mean in that show, wherever zombies are or were, there would be the potential for infection. That is something that to me the show was lacking – no worries about spores! But I get it. It would be a bummer if Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey were wearing masks all the time.

**WK:** *What are other examples of the beauty and horror of fungi?*

**EM:** That's a tough question. Are you saying there is some beauty in those zombies?

Just considering the life cycles of these organisms, many of them are amazing – even if they can be killers.

One topic you didn't ask about was, is there really nothing we can do if a fungal pandemic were to happen in humans?

It is true that there are no vaccines – yet – for fungi. Some are in trials, but scientists think they are a ways off. One problem many scientists point out is that the most susceptible population is those who are immunocompromised, and that vaccines tend to work by provoking the immune response.

And though there are antifungal medications, fungi can become resistant to them, rendering them ineffective. There are far fewer classes or types of antifungal medications than antibiotics, which means fewer options each time a particular fungus evolves resistance.

Once a disease-causing fungus evolves to resist all our antifungals, we are in trouble.

*Emily Monosson lives in Montague Center. Her next book, Blight: Fungus and the Coming Pandemic, will be published by W.W. Norton Press in July.*

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# The Children's Page

YONDERNOD ILLUSTRATION

## THE LOVELIGHTS HIT HARD TIMES

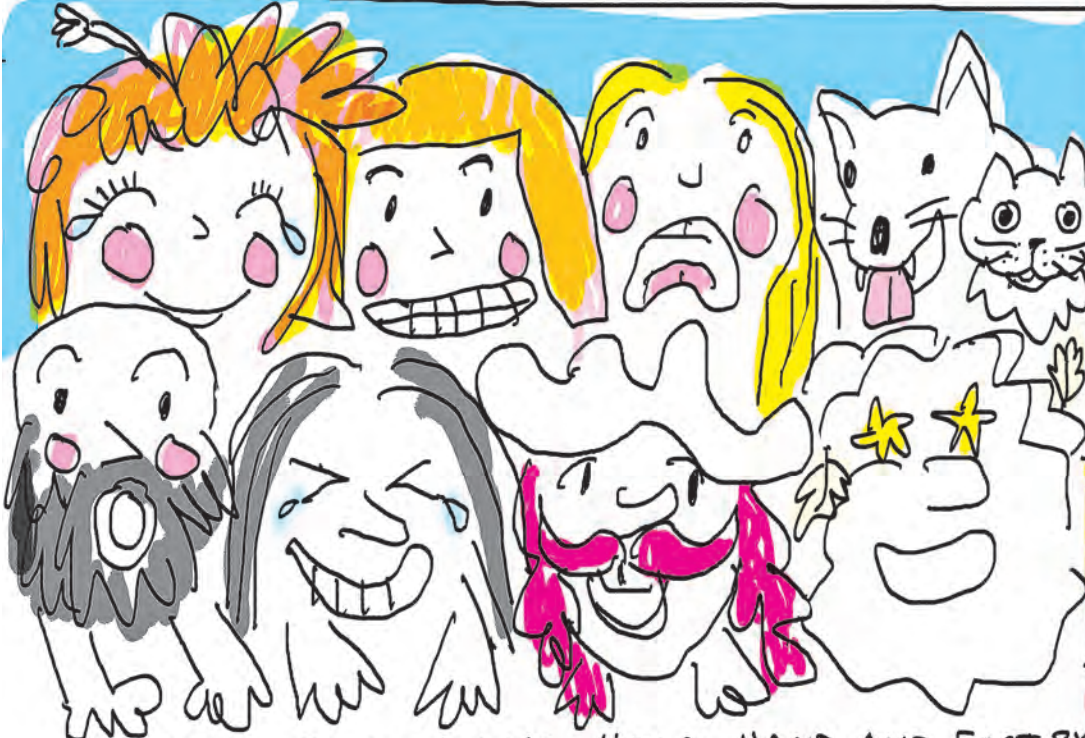
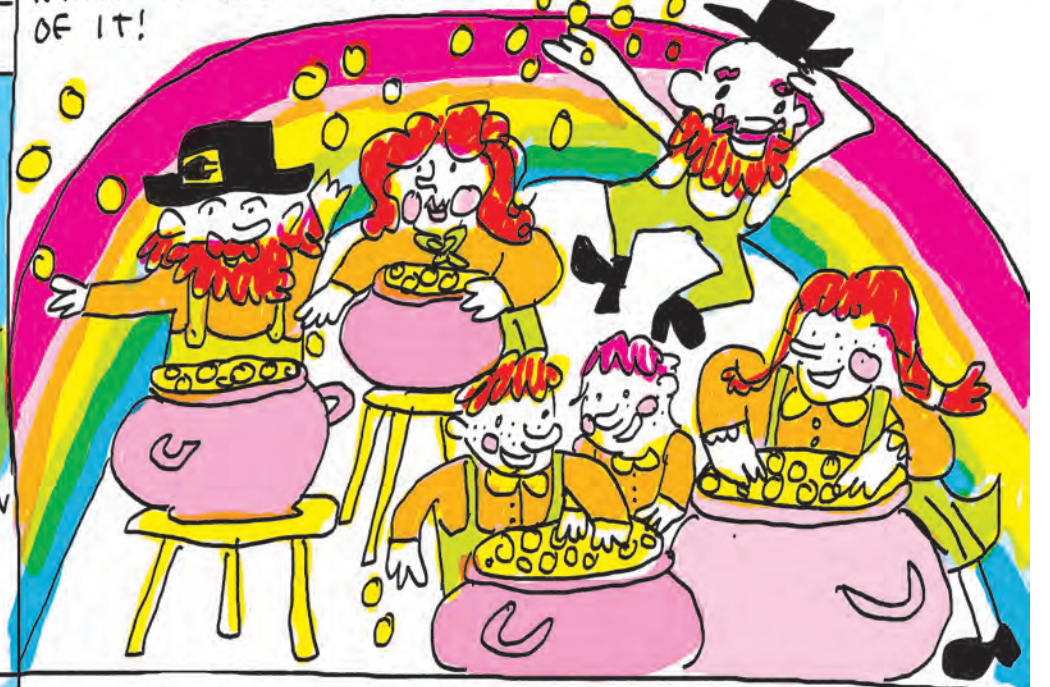
PART 7

WRITTEN BY BEVERLY KETCH AND ILLUSTRATED BY HANNAH BROOKMAN



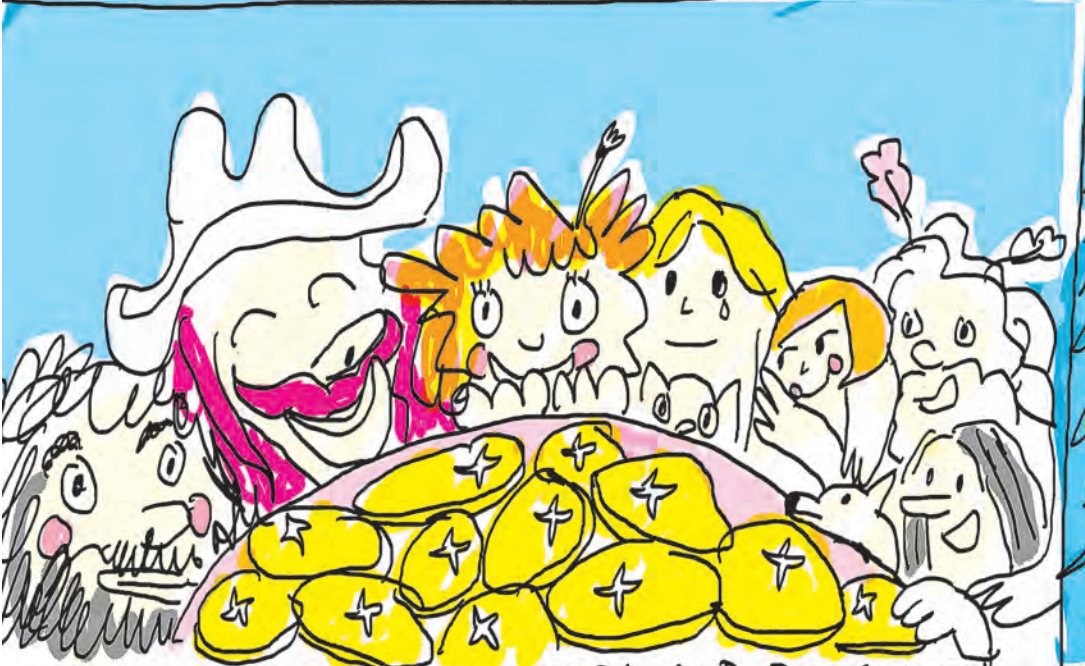
NOW, YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THAT IF YOU CATCH A LEPRECHAUN AND DON'T LET GO, YOU CAN FORCE HIM TO BRING YOU HIS POT OF GOLD. BUT OUR MOTLEY LITTLE GROUP HAD COME UPON A LEPRECHAUN WITH HIS GOLD IN HIS HAND!

THIS WAS A VERY GREAT ADVANTAGE, AS LEPRECHAUNS ARE EXTREMELY CLEVER, AND IT IS VERY RARE TO SUCCEED IN GETTING THEM TO PART WITH THEIR GOLD, WHICH IS ONE REASON WHY THEY HAVE SO MUCH OF IT!



THIS LITTLE FELLOW WAS HELD HAND AND FOOT BY THE WHOLE GROUP, AS EVERYONE WAS DESPERATE FOR THEIR OWN REASONS. ALL WERE ON HARD TIMES, AND THEY HELD HIM AS TIGHTLY AS THEY HELD THEIR SUDDEN HOPE THAT ALL THEIR TROUBLES WERE ABOUT TO END!

WELL, THE SMART LITTLE LEPRECHAUN KNEW VERY WELL THAT THE GOLD WAS NOW THEIRS, AND HE TURNED IT OVER QUITE EASILY IN EXCHANGE FOR BEING LET LOOSE. HE DISAPPEARED AS QUICKLY AS THE RAINBOW, WITH A BEMUSED CHUCKLE AS HE WENT, LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER AT THE STRANGE LITTLE CROWD.



THEY WERE ALL IN TATTERS AND RAGS, WITH THE SHINING GLOW FROM THE POT OF GOLD LIGHTING THEIR ASTOUNDED FACES. THEY LOOKED VERY FUNNY INDEED.



SLOWLY THEY ALL CAME TO THEIR SENSES AND BEGAN THE TREK BACK TO TOWN, HAPPIER WITH EVERY STEP, AND TAKING TURNS CARRYING THE POT OF GOLD TWO AT A TIME. IT WAS GETTING TO BE EVENING AS THEY EMERGED FROM THE WOODS. TO BE CONTINUED...

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



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**THURSDAY, MARCH 9**

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Suzanne Ciani, Jesse Beaman*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Consider the Source*. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Goldseter, Topsy and Co*. \$ 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10**

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Mystra Art Show* reception with music by *Junk Orbit, Wednesday Knudsen, Arkm Foam, Allysen Callery, Dusty Miller, Tarp*. Free. 6 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Don LaCoy, Rich Stratton*. Free. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Y2K Dance Party* feat. *DJ Both Hands, DJ Poptart, DJ Corixa*. \$ 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem*. \$ 7 p.m.

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *Ruth Garbus, Nick Bisceglia, Blue Dish*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Thank You Scientist, Hot Dirt, Clock Serum*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bliss 42*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 11**

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open Mic*. By donation. 6:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Bon Appetit Burlesque*. \$ 7 p.m.

River Garden Marketplace, Brattleboro: *Little House Blues*. Free. 8:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Enter the Haggis*. \$ 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Big Takeover, Lush Honey*. \$ 8 p.m.

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

**SUNDAY, MARCH 12**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Deepening the Power of Place*, with *Erica Wheeler, Andre Strongbearheart Gaines*, more. Free. 3 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Zydeco Connection*. \$ 3 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown*. Free. 8 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Young Dubliners*. \$ 8 p.m.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 16**

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Bee-tle 7* feat. *Joel Paxton, Kevin Smith, Steve Koziol, and Leo Hwang*. \$ 5 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Padded Waltz, Screensavor, St. Intel*. \$ 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 17**

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rave in Pisces, with Counseling, DJs Pinky Promise and Maysee Morpho*. \$ 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Eli Lev*. Free. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Ruby the Hatchet, Ice Giant, Jeopardy, Coma Hole*. \$ 8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 18**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Mud Season* with *The Love Crumbs, Dave Bulley Band, the barnRocket Imagineers, Jenny Burtis Band*, more. \$ 11 a.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Pleasure Coffin, Nurse Joy, OrangePeelMystic, Agua Viva, DJ Robbie Dean Rhodes*. \$ 7 p.m.

Mount Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Court Dorsey*. \$ 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Adams: *Luci Dead Limb, Faucet, Dysnomia*. \$ 7 p.m.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Lucy Wainwright Roche*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jimmy Just Quit*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 19**

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Miners, Toby Summerfield*. \$ 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Dutch Experts, Orange Peel Mystic, Roost World*. \$ 7 p.m.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 23**

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Done,*

*Death Defier, Sink, Bricklayer, Valley Gals*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Le-land Sundries, Daring Coyotes*. Free. 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 24**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Patch Production presents Drag Hamlet*. \$ 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Ca-jun Two-Step Night* with *Les Taiauts, Honky Tonk Angels*. Dance lessons and country karaoke. \$ 7 p.m.

Roos-Rohde House, Amherst: *Beam Splitter, Cursed Image, Milarepa Dorji, Playbackers*. \$ 7 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene, NH: *Jeopardy, Kurtosis, Vale End*. \$ 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Bella's Bartok, Dr. Bacon*. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Heavy Blanket* (feat. *J. Mascis*), *Willie Lane, DJ Matt Krefting*. \$ 8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 25**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Patch Production presents Drag Hamlet*. \$ 3 and 7 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Rock201*. Free. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sunset Mission, Olivia Nied, Kim Chin-Gibbons*, more. North Star benefit. \$ 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *King Tuff, Tchotchke*. \$ 8 p.m.

looking forward...

**SUNDAY, APRIL 2**

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Deerhoof, Sound of Ceres, Zannie*. \$ 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 14**

Palladium, Worcester: *Carcass, Municipal Waste, Sacred Reich, Creeping Death*. \$ 6 p.m.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 21**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Iain Matthews, Pairedown, Allysen Callery*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 29**

Daily Op, Easthampton: *Large Professor*. \$ 8 p.m.

**SUNDAY, MAY 14**

The Drake, Amherst: *Acid Mothers Temple, My Education, Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$ 8 p.m.

**SUNDAY, MAY 28**

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Bridget St. John, David Nagler, Stella Kola*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 10**

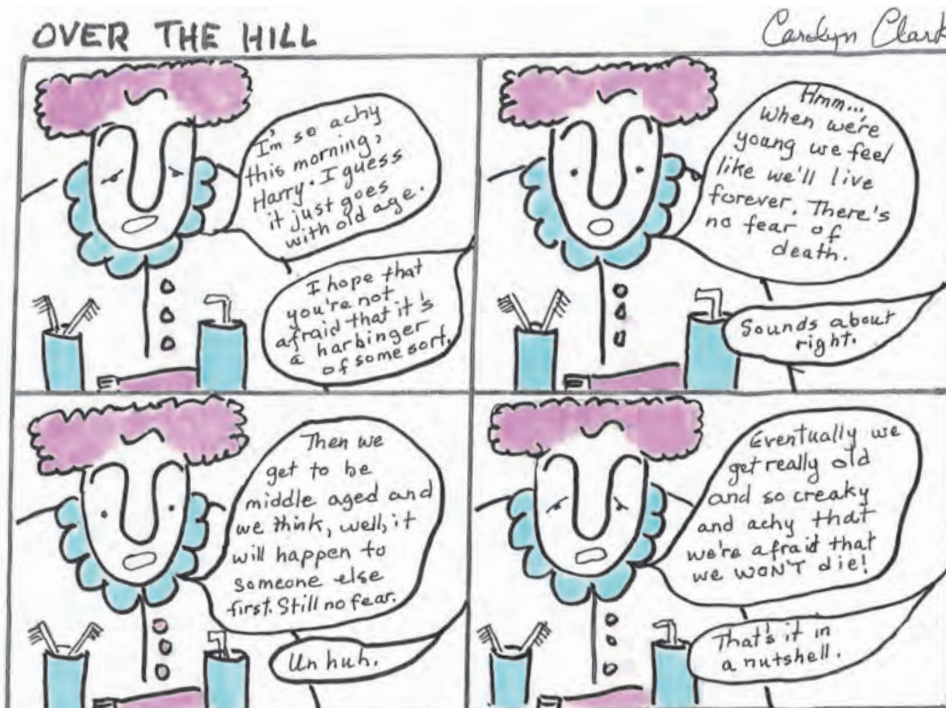
Bombyx Center, Florence: *Iris DeMent, Ana Egge*. \$ 7 p.m.

**FRIDAY, JUNE 16**

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Souls of Mischief*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, JUNE 17**

Pines Theater, Northampton: *Gin Blossoms, Toad the Wet Sprocket, Juliana Hatfield, Kay Hanley*, more. \$ 1 p.m.



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**HEARTFELT** from page B1

snacks. Before dinner, an aperitif of tapas and drinks is possible, followed by a light dinner no earlier than 8:30 p.m.

Sundown would bring the sounds of silverware clinking, voices murmuring, and delicious scents of cooking food to us, lying in our hotel room. We were listening from our room because we'd already eaten our big meal by 6 p.m. The restaurants in the tourist section operate at different hours for those of us who want a big breakfast at 7 a.m., or don't eat dinner so late. I tried one late-night meal, and found it uncomfortable to try to sleep on a full belly.

Tapas are the way to go in Spain. We could order two or three to share. Each plate was beautifully arranged, dotted with sauces or garnish. Even an inexpensive four-euro plate was as beautiful as if it came from a fancy eatery. It's very appealing to eat something that looks like a work of art – each bite feels special and exciting.

As for the ham, *jamón*, this is a story unto itself. It's venerated in Spain, and the center of their cuisine. The most common type found throughout Spain is Serrano, which comes from white pigs and is cured and dried. When boiled or baked it becomes Yorkshire ham, or Jamón de York. The Iberian hams, Jamón Ibérico and Ibérico de Bellota, come from a

centuries-old breed of Iberian black pigs, and are considered the finest in the world.

Meat stalls and restaurants feature rows of curing legs, hanging above counters or secured into *jamonera* stands to be sliced paper-thin. Each leg still has a hoof attached, and a tag to ensure its authenticity. A cup is affixed to catch the dripping fat as it cures; this is essential to the curing process and turns the saturated fats in the meat into healthy, monounsaturated fats high in oleic acid. The only fat higher in oleic acid is olive oil, which we already know is a vital part of a good diet.

The Jamón Ibérico and Jamón Ibérico de Bellota have very complex flavors. The fat is exquisitely marbled, and packed with natural antioxidants. The de Bellota (Spanish for "acorn") costs twice as much, since the noble Ibérico swine must spend their lives in oak-tree-laden pastures, consuming up to ten kilos of acorns per day. They gain up to two pounds of fat per day and double their weight during the *montanera*, the three- to four-month period until their "sacrifice."

In Spain, ham is served on charcuterie boards with Manchego cheese, spicy Spanish olives drizzled with orange peel, and a nice glass of wine or sherry; in small, dried chunks with breadcrumbs sprinkled on *salmorejo*, a cold tomato-based soup similar to gazpacho; and sliced on *bocadillos*, sandwiches on fresh baked bread drizzled with olive oil and, if preferred, *queso* (cheese) and *tomate* (sliced or crushed tomatoes). I had this combination for breakfast every day.

And then there are the tapas, many of which contain some type of ham, but seafood is also very available and very fresh in Seville. I ate a lot of seafood after the first few days of eating salty ham.

I did wonder why Spaniards aren't plagued by hypertension from all the ham, and it turns out that dry-curing produces bioactive peptides that actually reduce hypertension. And, like most things that taste so good, it should be consumed in moderation.

Some of the tapas we ate, many of which are served over steamed or fried potatoes, included fried anchovies served up in a paper cone or laid out in a pool of creamy *salmorejo*; crunchy fried croquettes stuffed with meat; big fat white asparagus spears; oxtails in a rich brown gravy; shrimp fritters, looking like big brown chips; grilled chicken filets over French fries; octopus or tuna over

## CROSS-CUT ROASTED ZUCCHINI


*2 medium-large zucchini  
olive oil or butter  
salt and pepper to taste  
crumbled feta  
chopped mint*

Preheat the oven to 400°. Slice the zucchini lengthwise, and make diagonal cross-cuts in both directions down the cut side, slicing halfway down through the width. Season with salt and pepper. Heat olive oil or butter in a pan and sauté the cut side until lightly browned, two or four minutes.

Lay the cut side down on a baking sheet or roasting pan, and cook in the oven for five minutes on each side.

Sprinkle with feta, mint, and olive oil, and enjoy as a side, appetizer, or entrée for a vegetarian meal. Try it with different herbs and cheeses.

MANDESON PHOTO



*A simple recipe for a delicious side dish of this popular vegetable.*



*Jamón Ibérico dry air curing in the central mercado, or market. The black hoof ensures its authenticity as a black pig from the Iberian peninsula. The meat is shaved off of the bone much like prosciutto.*

potatoes; and one of my wife's favorites, a puff pastry shell (the French *vol-au-vent*) filled with creamy sauce, chicken, and corn, atop an artichoke heart with a steamed prawn balanced on top.



*Delectable fried anchovy tapas come in a handy newspaper sleeve to sop up the grease. "I ate the entire fish while watching someone at a nearby table carefully strip all of the meat off of teeny-tiny bones so his 10-year-old would eat them," recalls Mandeson.*

Of course, we ate lots of ham, lots of cheese, and lots of olives. I did try the *paella* once, from the Valencia region, featuring saffron-flavored rice with seafood, meat, and vegetables. It wasn't my favorite – I don't care for the unique flavor of saffron, and the rice and seafood seemed stale and old, like it had sat out all day. One of the reasons I didn't take any of the many available cooking classes was because they mostly featured *paella*, which didn't interest me.

If you walk through one of Spain's central markets – we visited them in both Seville and in the ancient seaport of Cadiz – you'll see dozens of fish, meat, cheese, and produce vendors, all with their wares on display. You can buy ingredients for your meals on a daily basis. We purchased two beautifully tender beef filets, which I cooked in the small kitchenette of our hotel suite.

I had recently seen the above zucchini recipe on social media, so I tried it with our steak, and the next day after I posted my photo on social media, a family member made it and posted her version.

What a small world that connects and inspires us. *Salud!*

*Trouble lives in Greenfield with her wifey and energetically wrangles a farm office, loves to copyedit, write, and read, volunteers everywhere food is served, and has recently taken up painting.*

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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*



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