



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 6 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 1997



Winter's One-Two Punch

Two storms clobbered Cornwall on the weekend of December 6 and 7 with wet, heavy snow that downed trees and wires and knocked out power all over town. The first storm hit on Friday, dumping up to a foot and a half in higher elevations and plunging many homes into darkness. This was followed by a second nor'easter on Saturday that added another six inches or more. By evening the whole town was dark. Phones were also out in northern sections. It was a mess.

Crews worked round the clock. Roads had to be cleared of trees and branches before they could be plowed. Debris on Routes 125 and 128 had to be removed so the ambulance could be reached by its crew. The state crews had their hands full, so we had to do it, but not before First Selectman Gordon Ridgway had gotten Northeast Utilities to kill the power overnight, in case some wires were live.

By Sunday the ambulance was accessible, but power was out in the Firehouse, so operations were manned from the Town Garage. For the first time, the town's emergency plan was used. Selectman Jack Preston kept the power company informed of where there were still outages. Rick Lynn and his successor as Civil Defense Coordinator, Hunt Will-

iams, checked on people who might need help—the elderly, the sick, the infirm. Earl Brecher visited those whose phones were out. Only six people were evacuated, to neighbors or motels. Most chose to stay and tough it out. One woman with an arm in a sling stoked her generator every two hours for 48 hours to keep her well pumping. "Don't worry about me," she said, "I'm fine." Larry Pool evacuated himself—to the Interlaken Inn.

Many vehicles got stuck. Some were struck by falling branches or hit downed trees. Four of the Kent Singers, returning from their concert in Kent, made it back as far as Tom Walker's house, then hoofed it up to the Scotts in the dark and snow.

One plow heading up Cream Hill on Sunday met 50 black Anguses from Hedgerows Farm. Having discovered their electric fence was inoperative, they'd gone for a stroll.

While many homes began regaining power late Sunday night, some were without until Tuesday night. Russ Sawicki of Hedgerows Market stayed open late Monday and Tuesday nights to feed the CL&P crews.

It had been a dangerous and destructive storm—the fourth worst on record in terms of outages—but luckily the temperature never dipped very low, and there were no serious accidents. Things could have been

much worse without the tireless efforts of the town crews and the indomitable spirit of the townspeople. —George Kittle

Can This Marriage Be Saved?

On December 3, one year and a day after the voters of Cornwall narrowly rejected a plan to buy the former Marvelwood dining hall for town offices and thus free up space for the Cornwall Library, the library trustees sat down with the Board of Selectmen at a public session to ask them to consider their plan to expand and renovate the Library Building as a way of solving the space needs of both library and town.

The broader question that emerged was whether the town and the library could peacefully co-exist in the same building complex, or whether it was time for one or the other to move out. Presumably this move would be to Monroe/Bodkin, the former Marvelwood library and classroom building, which had been offered to either the town or the library at cost by the owners, the Cornwall Limited Liability Company (CLLC), over a year ago, but which neither had shown an interest in.

Library Board Chair Audrey Ferman confirmed the preference of the majority of the

(continued on page 2)

JANUARY 1997

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 New Year's Day	2 School Reopens Corn. Br. Nat'l. Iron Bank Jan. Art Show, Ken Keskinen	3 Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4)	4 Town Plan input session 10-noon Town Hall (p.3)
5	6  Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	7 Agric. Advis. Comm. 7:30 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	8 PTA 7 P.M. CCS Library	9 	10 Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4) Park & Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W. Cornwall Firehouse (p.4)	11 Town Plan input session 10-noon Town Hall (p.3)
12	13 P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	14 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Republican Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS	15  Note: Deadline for February Chronicle copy. Tax Assessment Appeal forms available from Town Clerk (p.4)	16 Bd. of Education 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Cornwall Association 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	17 Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4)	18 Town Plan input session 10-noon Town Hall (p.3)
19	20 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	21  Bd. of Selectmen 9:00 A.M. Town Hall HVRHS Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Library	22	23 	24 Internet tutorials 10-noon Library (p.4)	25 Town Plan input session 10-noon Town Hall (p.3)
26 Ben Kilham on Bears 3 P.M. CCS (p.4)	27 Training session for CCS volunteers 3 P.M. CCS Lib. (p.4) Conservation Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Office  ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	28	29	30	31	

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trustees for remaining in their own building but seemed to leave the door open for other options. She stressed the need to "think long-term," and asked the selectmen to "also consider the town's needs, now and in the years to come."

The trustees submitted two "footprint" sketches (but no cost estimates) for eastward expansion into what is now the Town Offices parking lot. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, noting problems of congestion, ownership and maintenance, future space availability, and compensation to the town for building or property lost, said they would have to "sit down and work out the details." He envisioned another meeting later in December and perhaps a referendum by February or March.

Selectman Earl Brecher expressed concern about spending more money on feasibility studies above the \$73,000 already spent over the years to no avail. He said Monroe/Bodkin would make a "lovely town office," but that "taxpayers have a big investment in the buildings we're in now." Selectman Jack Preston, envying other towns their beautiful library facilities, favored the town moving to Monroe/Bodkin. Former Town Clerk and Library Board Chair Kay Fenn said the real need was for "decent town offices." As for moving, that would break the Library Trust, which is "in perpetuity, forever." Audrey said that while a trust *can* be broken, "it's a complex thing."

During the lively but never acrimonious discussion period questions and ideas came thick and fast from the 50 townspeople in attendance. Did the *selectmen* have a plan? What do the *people* want? What would the cost and the square footage be in the library's plan? What are the town's space needs? Is Monroe/Bodkin better suited for the town or the library? Charlie Hepprich expressed the frustration of many when he said, "We have an unbroken track record for doing the wrong thing" (i.e., nothing). Tim Prentice, believing it was "too late for a marriage counselor," pressed for snapping up the Monroe/Bodkin option, as expanding the present library would cost many times as much. But Barbara Gold cautioned against haste, saying, "We need to think about what the town and the library need for the future, with a capital 'F.'" And CLLC partner Rick Wolkowitz said the company could no longer offer the buildings at cost, though it would consider any *serious* offer.

Ella Clark asked Gordon if it were imperative, in order to provide space for both the library and the town offices, that we acquire, for either, another space. Gordon said that while space was not his number one priority at present, the library plan as presented does not "address town office needs." That sounded like a "yes" to Ella's question.

"If there's a divorce, who pays the costs?" asked Ralph Gold. All agreed the one who remained in what Gordon called "the heart of the town" should compensate the depart-

ing one, but how to put a value on such a building? Hendon Chubb thought the appraisal should be "relatively generous" no matter which party left.

Ralph suggested formation of a "working group" to start dealing with these mechanics. He extracted a commitment from both Gordon and Audrey to get such a committee up and running "within two weeks." And on that note the meeting ended.

While it was just a first step, many left with the feeling that maybe, at long last, the Town of Cornwall would actually get somewhere in solving its space problems.

—George Kittle

[P.S.— On December 11 the selectmen voted unanimously in favor of a "divorce."]

50 Years of Ride and Slide

One half century ago this year Walter Schoenknecht built a base lodge and nine rope towers on the western face of Mohawk Mountain. Today, his original lodge, the oldest free-standing ski lodge in the country, still stands; his family and associates still carry on the business; and the trails which challenged skiers then still lie in wait about where they were first laid out.

Which is not to say the Mohawk Ski Area has remained unchanged. Originally a family business with a handful of helpers, it has grown with the years into a 400-employee Cornwall institution which not only provides significant employment in a season when other outside work is slow, but has become very much a community-minded Cornwall presence. Among other things, Mohawk management generously loans out the main lodge for many nonprofit events during the off season and allows Cornwall children to ski free during selected hours.

In the early years, development proceeded at a relatively measured pace. In 1948, Schoenknecht and friends invented and built the first commercial snow-making machinery for ski slopes. Chair lifts came along in '61 and a new and bigger lodge went up in '65. But the 1989 tornado, which tore down thousands of trees at the site and savaged just about everything man-made, put progress into reverse.

1989 was decision time for President Carol Schoenknecht-Lugar and Vice President Steve Hedden. Obviously, extensive tree trunk removal and tree replacement along the trails plus the rebuilding of towers and lifts would demand a massive financial and labor commitment. Add to these discouragements the reluctance of their insurance carrier to pay off the claim that had been filed, and closing down the Mohawk operation was by no means a non-option for a few dark days. Even after their decision to "make a comeback," ultimate success remained dicey. Banks didn't exactly line up to loan

money to a seasonal enterprise dependent on weather—"and with a woman president," Carol adds wryly. In fact, until they got the state's go-ahead to put in trail lights, no loan offers at all were forthcoming.

Looking back at those grim days, Carol Lugar says, "Even with money from banks, from FEMA and from personal re-mortgaging, we never could have made it back without our friends." Skiers and employees alike pitched in with literally hundreds of contributed man/woman hours. "It was like one big family," she says.

Now, more than seven years after the tornado, with night skiing a reality, Mohawk management breathes more easily. They plan to celebrate their 50 years of business later this winter when they reopen the heavily damaged original lodge with their "one big family."

—Scoville D. Soule

Good-bye to Friends

Harry C. Card
Larry Gates
Brigitte Hanf
George Smith

Land Transfers

Cornwall Limited Liability Company to Donald and Margaret S. Bardot, house and land at 9 Pine Street for \$100,000.

Estate of Diantha Deery to Denise H. and James R. Bate, house and 3 acres at 90 Cemetery Hill Road for \$135,000.

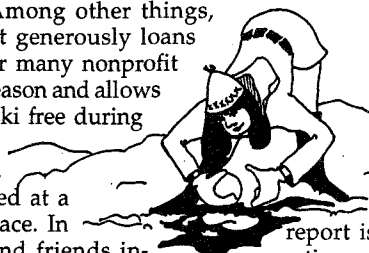
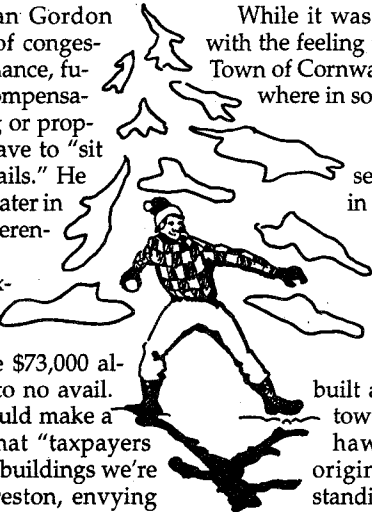
Ben G. Mauldin to Douglas L. and Kathryn C. Weier, house and 1 acre at 16 Cogswell Road for \$158,500.

Raymond J. Leppard to Jeffrey Engel, house and land at 123 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike for \$362,823.

Lending a Hand

Now that the fledgling Cornwall Consolidated School Volunteer Program is going on three months old, a progress report is in order. It all began at a PTA meeting early last spring when CCS Principal William Oros reported that registration in a number of classes was close to the 28-pupil limit set by the Board of Education (above that number classes must be divided). For that reason, he said, a formal program of volunteer help was needed to relieve overburdened teachers, who in the past had relied on occasional help arranged individually with obliging parents.

Two PTA members present, Jamie Monagan and Diane Goldstein, agreed to take on the job of organization, a letter soliciting help went out from the principal's office, and by November the program was up and running. Building on advice from supervisors of volunteer programs in other nearby schools, Jamie and Diane have now recruited about 15 people willing to donate time on a regular basis to help out with the special needs of various classes, and in addition



have compiled a "resource book" of Cornwallians interested in occasionally sharing their knowledge and experience to supplement class studies. These volunteers include a lively array of professionals such as artists, theatrical producers, editors, writers, teachers, and the like. Quite a number of new activities have been made possible by volunteer help, from story-telling for first-graders to reading and recording books on tape for Special Education students.

As Jamie Monagan puts it: "Everyone benefits. But of course it's mainly a matter of giving the kids themselves more individual attention. That's what it's all about."

—Jean F. Leich

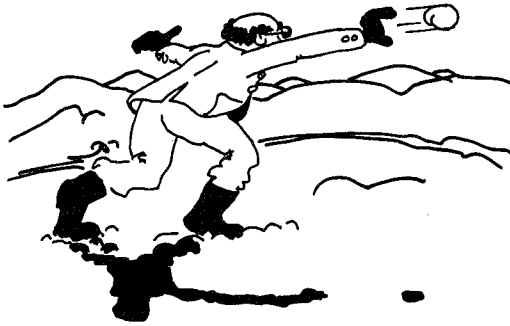
Gravel Mining— More of Same

FSB Associates has filed a new application, received by the Planning & Zoning Commission at its December 9 meeting, to mine gravel on the Kent Road Strobel property. This application, the fourth mining petition for that site, was augmented by a proposal to build a 50-by-100-foot industrial building on the property.

The Strobels are in court appealing the rejection of a previous application. There has been no resolution of that appeal, which is being heard by Superior Court Judge William M. Pickett. But Judge Pickett did disapprove a petition by Leonard Blum, the lawyer representing Strobel neighbor Peter Stiglin, seeking to intervene in the appeal litigation.

P&Z has set February 10 as a hearing date for the Strobels' latest application.

—Charles Osborne



Planning the Ten-Year Plan

The State of Connecticut requires that each town produce a Town Plan of Development every ten years, which means that Cornwall must now produce one to replace the current plan, adopted May 1, 1987. On December 5, 1996, a town-wide forum was held at CCS for the purpose of securing citizen input into the new Town Plan. Under the direction of Planning & Zoning Chairman Bill Lyon, the citizenry was divided into seven groups for the purpose of developing ideas in three areas: Assets, Issues, and Hopes for the Future. The conclusions of the seven groups were remarkably similar. Among our assets were, first of all, the beauty of our environment, our location with respect to other centers of population, the hospitableness and willingness of our citizens to volunteer, and the number of weekenders. The issues therefore naturally took the form of preservation of

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Letters to the Chronicle

LEAN ON LAUREL

Sometime soon all subscribers to Laurel Cablevision will get, along with their monthly bill, a questionnaire asking what other programming we might like. Laurel does not promise to deliver everything requested: some channels are unavailable, some appeal to too few viewers, and channel space is limited.

But there is one channel we can have. That is WNET, the PBS station out of New York, often referred to as Channel 13. It is quite different from Connecticut Public Television, offering many premier arts programs and documentaries ignored by CPTV. WNET carries all the great PBS programs, but getting it from Laurel will not mean losing CPTV and those wonderful Lady Huskie basketball games. We would get both stations. Does Laurel Cablevision know we want it? Only if we tell them—so don't throw away that questionnaire.

—John Miller

A CALL TO ACTION

Our library is in crisis. It is Cornwall's library and Cornwallians will be asked to pay for its expansion, so I would suggest we stop fiddling about with grandiose schemes and get on with the task at hand.

The present Town Hall/Library building is a pleasant example of the architecture of its era, but to renovate the existing structure and build the additional space required to provide a modern and useful library will be costly indeed. To do so in the same architectural style will be prohibitive in today's market, and not to do so will be monstrous.

A perfectly good library building—functional and efficient, with the necessary space, electrical power, HVAC, plumbing, etc., already in the building—is going to waste. The main body of the library could move in with minor adjustments, and the needed renovation to the classroom side of the Monroe/Bodkin building will cost far less.

What makes a library outstanding, in my opinion, is what is inside, the programs it offers, its outreach to the young people. One nearby library has become a gathering place for teenagers to do homework; we could do worse. We owe a debt of gratitude to those who have kept our library viable over the years, but it is still a public trust and a shared responsibility. Mr. Calhoun was obviously a generous and forward-thinking man; we should be the same for today's Cornwall.

—Jane Giddens-Jones

LET'S HEAR IT FOR OUR TEACHERS

In a recent Lakeville Journal article regarding teachers' contracts, our first selectman expressed criticism of contract arbitration, complaining, "We spend one third of our municipal budget on teachers' salaries and benefits and the system is stacked against the town." There is a fallacy in that perception of the teachers as against the town. Why must it be framed to pit us against them? These highly trained professionals are extremely important to us and to the future of our society. Shouldn't their efforts on our behalf be well supported? I entrust three children to these individuals. They are almost



surrogate parents, responsible for the best interests of my children and providing for them things I cannot. I want to recognize our teachers for their valuable service.

Reform of the arbitration process may be needed as Mr. Ridgway states, but I wish he would facilitate more problem solving, create more forums and avenues that allow the town to proceed on more than just good roads, bridges, and salt storage sheds. Education is costly, but far more fundamental. We can't afford to polarize our community again, to be divided and stymied, particularly when we still haven't resolved our town hall, library, and school gym space problems.

—Ben Gray

THANK YOU, AMBULANCE SQUAD

On behalf of my mother, Dorothy, and my sister, Jean, I want to thank the Cornwall volunteer ambulance squad for coming to the aid of my mother when she broke both arms on Election Day. Too numerous to mention, I want the many individuals who responded to know that their expedient, professional, concerned, and compassionate aid is greatly appreciated.

I feel that we all need to remember what a good thing we have with our volunteers and to remind our elected representatives that we don't need bureaucratic meddling on behalf of some profiteering individuals.

My heartfelt thanks again.

—Leon Bouteiller

ODE TO A HERO

Salute New Space, sweet nature's proof
Of triumph over walls and roof.

Hail Hero who with wrecker's ball
Made order from Neanderthal.

Holier thou than Kings and Popes,
Fulfilling dreams and prayers and hopes.

Nelson's fray and Waterloo
Pale beside thy derring-do.

Each Cornwall Man and Dame and Mutt,
Dance in the dust of Pizza Hut.*

—Lee Moore

[*Former Marvelwood dorm, recently demolished.]

BIKERS BEWARE

From my office window most nice days, I can see Cornwall's youngest practicing their bike skills in the Town Office parking lot. Some of them still have training wheels to keep them steady, but all of them are in danger. People who drive (often very fast) into our parking lot are intent on searching a title, getting a fishing license, or paying their taxes; they're not on the lookout for small people struggling to pedal out of the way. As everyone knows, the sightlines are terrible around the corners of the Library building. Please, parents, supervise the young bikers somewhere safe and not around the Town Office parking lot.

—Lisa Lansing

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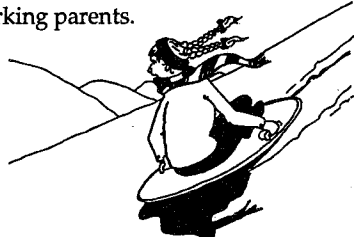
our environment, how to manage future growth, and how to develop jobs and affordable housing for our young people. The overwhelming sentiment was that as far as possible we should stay "just as we are today." The product of this grassroots effort now goes to P&Z, which is scheduling four informal Saturday morning sessions on January 4, 11, 18, and 25, from 10 to noon, when two P&Z members will be present to record the citizens' suggestions, just so that no one need ever feel left out. Thereafter the full commission will hold final hearings, and the Town Plan will be submitted to a town meeting for final approval.

—John Leich

Events & Announcements

Attention, Working Parents: The Board of Directors of The Cornwall Child Center is studying the feasibility of a summer program in July and August of 1997. This would be specially directed towards working parents who need full-time child care. Any parent who is interested should contact Sarah Paul at 672-6961 by the end of this month.

The Child Center also announces that, in September 1997, opening time will be at 7:30 A.M. instead of 8 A.M. to further accommodate working parents.



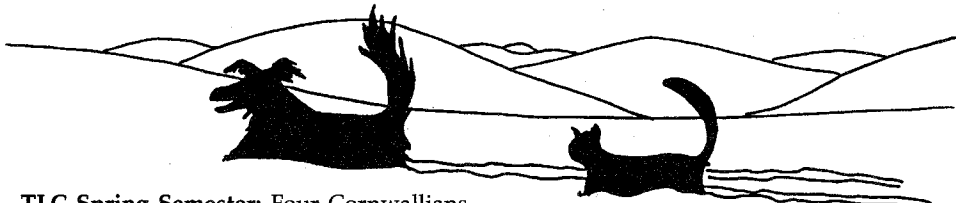
Park and Rec.'s Game Night, first noted in our November issue, will be held at the West Cornwall Firehouse, 7 to 9 P.M., Friday, January 10, and if attendance warrants will continue through the coming months to help Cornwallians combat the winter blahs. Players of all ages are invited to bring their favorite board games or to use those provided. For further information call Deirdre Fischer at 672-2255.

Photographs by Nick Jacobs of Ukraine, Prague, and Ireland are on view at the Cornwall Library through February 8. To be reviewed in the February issue.

1997

The new year seems pregnant with possibilities. Will we finally conceive a new town office? A new library? An end to the gravel conflict? A bugless summer?

Won't you please resolve to send us a donation so we can continue to deliver the answers to these and many other questions.

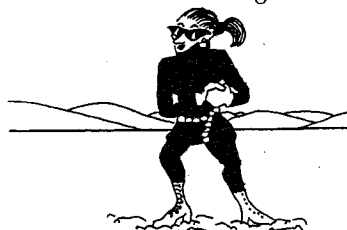


TLC Spring Semester: Four Cornwallians will be teaching in the Taconic Learning Center's spring semester, which begins January 20. On Mondays John Zinsser will give a continuation of his well-attended course on the opera, at 10 A.M., in Noble Horizon's Lifelong Learning Center. Jean Leich will conduct a new class called *Comedy Takes the Stage*, which will explore the origins and development of comedy in the Western theatre from ancient Greece to 17th century France. This class will meet on Thursdays at 10 A.M., in the Scoville Library, Salisbury, from April 10 to May 22. Ken Keskinen's writers' seminar will meet again, on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7 P.M. in Cornwall. For those who feel that they can deal with Lermontov and Turgenev in the original, John Leich welcomes them to Russian IV on Mondays at 3 P.M. at the Congregational Church in Salisbury.

For registration forms and information about other classes, please call TLC at 435-2922, and leave a message.

Update on the 'Net: The new computer system at the Cornwall Library will be put to good use this month as Wallace Harding conducts one-on-one tutorials for novices interested in getting on the Internet. She will be on hand from 10 to 12 Friday mornings through January 24 and would-be cruisers are invited to sign up for half-hour sessions. This program is sponsored by Friends of the Cornwall Library.

Bear Tracker: Due to (unprintable) weather conditions last month, Ben Kilham has been re-scheduled to speak at the annual meeting of the Cornwall Conservation Trust at 3 P.M. on Sunday, January 26, at CCS. Kilham is an authority on the habits and habitats of black bears (the only ones that live in New England) and will be able to tell you all that you ever really wanted to know about them. A native of New Hampshire, he is a nephew of architect Walter Kilham, also a wildlife enthusiast (it runs in the family) and a long-time resident of Cornwall Bridge.



Tax Hearings in March: The Board of Assessment Appeals reminds us that we must file the required written appeals by January 20, if we wish a review of our assessments on real property, personal property, or vehicles at hearings to be held in March. Appeal forms will be available from the Town Clerk from January 15. Dates and times of the March hearings will be posted in the Town Office and will be published in the next issue of the *Chronicle*.

Swamped with Xmas Catalogues? Call their 800 numbers or fill out and return the mail preference forms. To keep off *new* lists, send all your addresses and signature to Direct Marketing Assn., Mail Preference Service and/or Telephone Preference Service, P.O. Box 9008, Farmington, NY 11735-9008.

Calling All Volunteers: There will be a training session for newcomers to the volunteer program at CCS on Monday, January 27, at 3 P.M. in the school library. A film also will be shown, stressing the need for confidentiality and providing instruction on care of children in emergencies.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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