



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 16 : NUMBER 2 MARCH 2006



## Trucknapper Nabbed

In case you missed it, Cornwall's 2005 Crime of the Year went down on the icy morning of Friday, December 16. Selectman and proprietor of Cornwall's package store Richard Bramley stopped to render assistance to the young driver of a Nissan Altima that had skidded off Route 4, east of Cornwall Bridge. While discussing possible action with Fred Bate, who had arrived moments before, Richard was astonished to observe the stranger making off in Richard's pickup, which he had parked behind the accident scene. Bramley sprang onto the running board, but thought better of this confrontational approach as the carjacker floored the gas pedal, blithely ignoring the persistent permittee clinging to the window inches away. Bailing out at 20 mph, Richard received minor injuries. The truck disappeared toward the west, leaving Richard, Fred, and the Altima (apparently stolen) in its wake.

In subsequent weeks, police reported several sightings of the abducted red pickup in the Meriden/Middletown area, but the alleged perp always contrived to speed away. Finally, on Saturday, January 28, the parked truck was spotted in front of a house in Meriden. According to local sources, a policeman's knock on the door sent one

Shawn Lewonczyk plunging out a side window. He was apprehended after a half-mile foot chase during which he was reportedly shot with a taser, apparently to little effect.

Mr. Lewonczyk is currently being held in lieu of \$100,000 bail, charged with first-degree larceny, possession of narcotics, illegal possession of a weapon in a motor vehicle, interfering with an officer, possession of controlled substances, and breach of peace. Prior to the arrest, Richard had replaced the missing truck.

—Matt Collins

## CCS Girls Wrap It Up

Another banner can now be hung on the CCS gymnasium wall. It will recall and honor the 2005–2006 season of the girls' undefeated basketball team, which topped off its regular schedule by outscoring Kent in the finals of the conference tournament.

The new CCS gymnasium, with its standing-room-only crowd, rocked with the cheers and applause of the enthusiastic fans who, at the final buzzer, swarmed out on the floor to congratulate the players and coaches.

Coaches Burdick and Rovezzi had created a fast-moving and aggressive team that played with enthusiasm and energy. Participation by all players reflected the coaches' intention to give every player her time on the court, and each contributed to the scoring—a fine effort

by a hustling team that included Arielle Betti, Meghan Brown, Camilla Busby, Apryl Classey, Danielle Kearns, Anouchka Sofia, Genevieve Terrall, Shelby Baird, Sabina Busby, Jessie Hurlburt, Kayla Robinson, Kathleen Rogers, and Rebecca Sawicki.

The tournament trophy and banner are proudly on display at the school. Congratulations to the team members, their parents, their coaches, their teachers, their principal—and to CCS!

—Ken Keskinen

## Read Any Good Books Lately?

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was the Age of the Salon. People of intelligence and spirit gathered in someone's drawing room to drink tea and debate important questions that arose from the books everyone was reading that month. But wait! This sounds a lot like our own Age of the Book Group. Cornwall is fertile ground for this phenomenon: at least three adult groups meet regularly in town, and more may be germinating right this minute.

The mechanics vary. The size of Cornwall groups ranges from five to 15; one venue is permanent (a corner of the Library), and two are movable (rotating among members' houses). Book selection is variously determined by consensus or revolutionary coup or *droit du seigneur* (the evening's host de-

(continued on page 2)

# MARCH 2006

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Every Week This Month:</b> <b>Mondays: Jam Session,</b> 7:30 P.M. Village Meeting House; <b>Adult Basketball,</b> 8 P.M. CCS Gym <b>Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball,</b> 7–9 P.M. CCS Gym <b>Wednesdays: Play Group,</b> 10 A.M. Playscape/UCC; <b>Stretch Class,</b> 5 P.M. Town Hall <b>Thursdays: Meditation for Mothers,</b> 1:15 P.M. UCC Day Room; <b>Tai Chi for Beginners,</b> 7–9 P.M. CCS Gathering Room <b>Fridays: Story Hour,</b> 1:15 P.M. Library <b>Sundays: Meditation Group,</b> 1–2 P.M., Debra Tyler 672-0229 for location; <b>Book Discussion,</b> 4 P.M. St. Peter's †			1	2	3	4
			Hot Chocolate Hour 3:15 P.M. Library	Toddler Time 10:30 A.M. Library		Contra Dance 7–10 P.M. Town Hall †
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sap House Tours 1–4 P.M. †	Park & Rec. 7 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	Inland Wetlands* 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	Red Cross Blood Drive 1:30–6:15 P.M. UCC Parish House † Hot Chocolate Hour 3:15 P.M. Library	Toddler Time 10:30 A.M. Library		Wool Gathering Workshop 12–3 P.M. UCC Parish House †
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Blood Pressure Screening 3–4 P.M. UCC Parish House Region One Bd. of Ed. 7:30 P.M. HVRHS	Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	Deadline: April Chronicle Copy Hot Chocolate Hour 3:15 P.M. Library	Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Lib. Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib. VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	St. Patrick's Day	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	SPRING BEGINS CCS Closed Teacher Conferences	Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Library †				
26	27	28	29	30	31	
Wal-Mart Video 11:30 A.M. UCC Day Room Colbert Slide Show 4 P.M. Library †	ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*		Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse			
					<b>APRIL 1</b> Cornwall Association 9 A.M. Town Hall Active Peacemaking Seminar 9 A.M.–3:30 P.M. UCC † Read-A-Thon Sleepover 7 P.M. Library †	

\* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements

(continued from page 1)

crees the book). Food and drink, a necessity at one meeting, are regarded as a distraction at the others.

But the essentials are pretty much the same from group to group. At the top of the list: members should actually read the book they're going to discuss, which most do most of the time unless the world is too much with them. Equally important, says one veteran, is an atmosphere in which everyone has the expectation and the opportunity of saying something. There should be no conversational monopolies, and discourse should be civil (though another member admits that "we definitely do some rude things like interrupt").

Why so much book-group activity at this time of the world? "I read books that I wouldn't otherwise have read." "It forces me to take the time to read in a life where reading is a luxury." "I get to know people I wouldn't ordinarily see very often." "It helps hold communities together." It seems that book groups provide the pleasures of intelligent sociability in an age of technology-induced isolation.

Current or recent Cornwall favorites: *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson; *The Master Butchers Singing Club* by Louise Erdrich; the novels of Penelope Fitzgerald. And let's not forget the rising generation: the Wednesday Hot Chocolate Story Hour at the Library, which has been gathering third- and fourth-graders to enjoy hot chocolate, cookies, and *The Scarecrow and His Servant* by Philip Pullman, read aloud by Amy Buck.

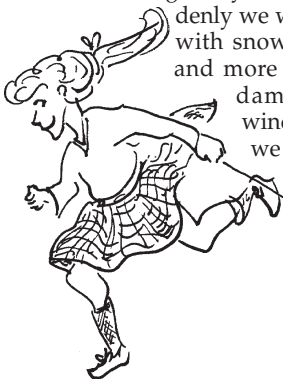
—Franny Taliaferro

## June in January

The early Roman calendar had only ten months, starting with March. Winter was considered a monthless period.

Anyone who has lived in the Northwest Corner for a few years knows there is no such thing as "usual" winter weather. Every winter is unusual in its own way, and this one has been no exception. The first snow fell in November. December was cold and snowy. Then came January. Nationwide, it was the warmest January on record. Ours may have been a record also. Certainly it was more like March than January.

Had the weather been even moderately constant all month long, this report would be brief. But it was about as even as a roller coaster ride. Temperatures fluctuated wildly, sometimes rising eerily at night. Then suddenly we would be zapped with snow, sleet, ice, rain and more rain, and, most damaging of all, wind. On January 18 we got it all. Winds gusting to an estimated 65 mph



knocked down trees all over town: one fell on a house, one on a milk truck parked at the Scoville farm, and one on a power line to a house, causing widespread and lengthy outages. Route 7 was closed in three places. Torrential rains caused flood alerts, and in a freakish occurrence an underground stream washed out a 50-foot section of Town Street. All this in one day.

The strange weather placed a heavy burden on the town crew: from December 26 to January 20, they worked every day except one. It also caused problems for private workers, who time and again saw a window of opportunity for doing a long-put-off job, only to have it shut in their faces. The weather gods fooled with Mother Nature, too. Phil Hart reported "early bud swell" in the hard maples, a sure sign that sap was running, and presaging a short syrup season.

One balmy (59 degrees) Saturday in early January, three kayakers, rushing the season a bit, embarked upon the swift, icy Housatonic waters. One man capsized in 34-degree water, and, as he clung to his boat, hypothermia set in. Just as the situation looked bleak, around a corner came our brand-new, inflatable Town Rescue Boat on a training run. Suddenly boat and crew had a real-life test. They passed with flying colors: the man's life was saved.

In February the weather turned wintry again, but there's still March and April. Whatever the weather gods bring, it's a safe bet that it will be "unusual." —George Kittle

## Revaluation Is Here

The revaluation of real estate in Cornwall for the 2007 Grand List will start this month. Town Assessor Barbara Bigos has, in addition to her regular duties, contracted to reappraise property in town and to perform all the analysis necessary to reassess property values.

In March, Bigos will send out letters asking property owners to check the data on enclosed assessment cards.

In July, August, and September, Bigos will visit the 1,371 properties in Cornwall, not all of which have houses on them. Expect her on Tuesday or Thursday in a four-wheel drive vehicle (to combat long and tortuous drive-ways) driven by her assistant (to save turn-around time) and armed with bear-alarms and angry-dog dissuaders (for obvious reasons). Most visits will be short—a site inspection looking at views, ponds, pools, gorgeous landscapes, and not-so-gorgeous landscapes; photographs where necessary—and will not include house visits.

In November, after the new assessment notices have been received, Bigos will hold a public information meeting to explain the process and to answer questions. There will be opportunities for one-on-one interviews with the assessor to discuss the new assessments. If the outcome is still not satisfactory, there is the Board of Assessment Appeals.

The price of real estate has increased substantially in the last few years, and the prop-

erty assessments will inevitably go up, too. But an increased assessment does not necessarily mean increased taxes. Revaluation will bring uniformity to property assessments and ensure that property owners pay their fair share, and only their fair share, of the town's tax burden. Increased taxes, should they occur, will be a result of the town budget, not of increased assessments.

—Celia Senzer

## Good-Bye to a Friend

Edward J. Kelleher

### Land Transfers

Linda K. Lucas to John R. and Carol H. Waldman, property at 380 Sharon Goshen Turnpike for \$270,000.

John F. Ashton to Emanuel T. Stern, property at 78 Flat Rock Road for \$730,000.

NWI, LLC, to William Paley, 10.354 acres on Poughkeepsie Road for \$186,171.05.


John C. and Edward L. Warner to Todd Hill Properties, LLC, 32.461 acres on Sharon Goshen Turnpike and Todd Hill Road for \$400,000.

## Following History's Footprints

Michael Gannett remembers walking the bounds of the Gannett property on Cream Hill with his father while the first Charles Gold, from whom the Gannetts had bought their land, blazed trees with an ax as they walked. "I fantasized," says Michael, who was seven at the time, "that the original Gold land was given to them by the King of England—and I bragged ours was included in that grant." Nearly 80 years later, he has long been disabused of his theory. As Cornwall Town Historian, he has clarified, organized, and described many aspects of our town's more than 250-year history.

The position of Town Historian is a creation of the state legislature and is filled by the selectmen. Appointed by Patsy Van Doren after his retirement to Cornwall in 1980, Michael is Cornwall's first and, so far, only Town Historian. Current First Selectman Gordon Ridgway calls him a Town Treasure, though Michael himself would insist on recognizing others' knowledge and contributions.

No formal job description accompanied his appointment, says Michael, so he has created his own voluminous one. The most obvious task is to answer questions—from all over the country—mostly about family genealogy and Cornwall information. In file cabinets at the Historical Society on Pine Street are clippings of Cornwall-related articles that Michael has culled from various sources over the years.

And then there are his publications. One of the first concerned the story of the Cream Hill Agricultural School, whose buildings have been moved to Kent at the site of the Connecticut Antique Machinery Association. 

Others are transcriptions of various historical records, such as town meeting minutes, Grand Lists, two previously unpublished town histories, and family group sheets that provide genealogical information on some 80 local families. Seeking new source material, Michael engaged the help of Gordon Ridgway to drill open an old vault in the Town Hall for which the combination had been lost for decades.

One of Michael's favorite publications is a description of the division of the common land. At the time Cornwall was established, the Colony sold at auction proprietary rights to its common land—except 300 acres previously granted to Yale College. The purchasers, most of whom never settled in Cornwall, then divided the land among themselves over the course of many years. So much for the King of England! It took Michael several years to collect the data and complete the project. One of his resources was a map created by George Chandler Harrison, who used only the words of the deeds (no surveyor's tools) from the division of the common land. Harrison spent 40 years on that project; history is not recorded quickly!

Michael comments that "there are footprints all over the place." They have led him to uncover the record of what he believes was the first divorce in Cornwall and have allowed him to bring together two brothers (not Cornwall residents) who did not know the other existed. Michael's current project is collecting and indexing, with the help of Jill Bryant, the vital records (baptisms, marriages, deaths, and funerals) of Cornwall's two Congregational churches, a task that has consumed three winters and is complicated by challenges such as variant spellings and barely legible handwriting. Following the footprints continues. —Barbara Gold

## Unbearable Traffic

Sounds of screeching brakes and squealing tires are familiar to anyone who lives or works on Route 128 in West Cornwall. Anxious village residents have watched its traffic getting worse over the years.

Route 128 is plowed, maintained, and policed by the state. State Trooper Ed Kapowitz reports only one accident in the village in the last two years—a non-injury collision above the market. But many see the traffic as multiple disasters waiting to happen. "We've been fortunate so far, but there have been some close calls," says Barbara Farnsworth; the front porch of her bookstore has been demolished twice by vehicles out of control.

"Everybody's in too much of a rush," says Sharon Sawicki of the Wandering Moose Cafe. "During the tourist season, it's just horrible." Pedestrian traffic has become busier in the last few years. The safety of the children is everyone's greatest concern: "This village is a neighborhood, with families and children and dogs and cats," says resident Tom Bechtle. "What if a little kid darted out into the road?"

Observers report a definite increase in speeding by all vehicles over time, and it goes on into the early hours. Cars come



## Letter to the Chronicle

### CCS PEACE DAY

The staff of CCS is planning a World Peace Day on Friday, April 7. We are still in the planning stages and welcome your participation, input, and/or ideas. We envision a morning of workshops approximately one to one-and-one-half hours in length (Tai Chi, drumming, dance, woodworking, etc.), which will help the students reflect on the topic of Peace. The afternoon celebration will include all-school performances.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in being part of our day, please contact us at the school (672-6627).

—CCS Staff

down around the curve on the hill and speed through the village. The bridge saves the town from heavy trucks because it doesn't allow them through. Still, even ordinary vehicles are bigger than they used to be: SUVs and Humvees are common. "That's a lot of weight barreling around the corner," Barbara says. Commuters start zipping past early in the morning. Some say that State Police cars roar up and down through the village, and their lights are not flashing.

The bridge itself is a hazard. Sight lines are poor in both directions, and the speed limit sign on the West Cornwall side often goes unnoticed. As Tom describes it, "The bridge is almost like a launching pad as the floor boards rumble, cars come shooting out, and you just hope there's nothing in their way."

On Saturday mornings, the parking lot between K. C. Baird's West Cornwall Market and the post office is jammed with cars. Shoppers who can't drive forward onto 128 must back out at the "blind spot," where traffic comes around the bend above the market. Some drivers use the uphill window in the bookstore as a mirror to reflect cars coming down the hill out of sight.

Residents suggest many solutions (though not all are practical as to state vs. local jurisdiction). What about pedestrian crosswalks with white stripes and markers? "If they can do this in Kent," Barbara asks, "why not here?" Other ideas: set up a digital speed trailer from time to time on the hill above the village; reinstate the speed sign with flashing yellow lights that used to be at the curve; station a policeman to watch for speeders; place a 20-mph speed sign on the Sharon side of the bridge, with a warning saying "reduce speed." K. C. Baird suggests posting signs at the roadside edge of the parking lot next to his market—Enter at the top, Exit at the bottom—to create a U-shaped traffic flow and eliminate backing out.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway believes the only way to reduce the speed of the traffic in West Cornwall is to encourage the State Police to get more involved. The town has a good relationship with the police, who use the West Cornwall Firehouse as a substation. Gordon has reviewed the traffic situation with the State Traffic Commission and says, "They know it's a problem." People have

been talking about this problem for 25 years—a whole generation—but solving it is still in the talking stage. —Ann Schillinger

## Preserving Our Farm Heritage

Straddling Route 7 at the southern boundary of Cornwall, the Lorch farm stands as a statement of Cornwall's agricultural heritage. In 2003 Art Lorch sold 100 acres of his farm to the State of Connecticut as part of its program to buy the development rights to farm acreage and thus preserve farmland. While the "seller" maintains ownership of land thus preserved and may sell it at some future time, the land must remain in agricultural use in perpetuity. Now the Lorch family is selling its farm: the 100 acres for which the state bought the development rights on the east side of Route 7, a 13-acre field with a federal scenic easement for the Appalachian Trail on the west side, plus a 6-acre piece with house and barn, also on the west side and abutting the 13-acre field.

The Cornwall Agricultural Commission and its supporters are anxious to maintain what the Town Plan calls our "southern gateway" as an active farm (as opposed to something like Goshen's Action Wildlife Park, considered agricultural by the state) as well as to continue past years' efforts by the town to promote agriculture. To realize these goals, an account will be established at The National Iron Bank, with the money deposited to be used by the selectmen to negotiate the purchase of the 100-acre site. The town would own the land; the Cornwall Agricultural Commission would administer its use. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway envisions leasing the acreage to a farmer, creating plots for community gardens, even arranging with Housatonic Valley Regional High School for student projects. At the same time, a local farmer is negotiating to buy the two lots on the west side of the road. The Lorch family is supportive of the overall concept of keeping the property as a working farm.

Should both efforts be successful, both the Lorch family and the Town of Cornwall would benefit, and another piece of our farm heritage will be preserved. Anyone with questions and/or contributions should call Bill Dinneen (672-0035), chair of the Cornwall Agricultural Commission. —Barbara Gold

## Events & Announcements

**Blood Drive** will be held Wednesday, March 8, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M., at the UCC Parish House. For an appointment, call 1-800-GIVEBLOOD; walk-ins are welcome.

**The Friends of the Library Readathon Sleepover** is rescheduled for 7 P.M. on Saturday, April 1, to 8 A.M. on Sunday, April 2. This event is open to fourth- through sixth-graders who find three reading sponsors (\$5 per sponsor recommended). Bring your sleeping bag, toothbrush, and a good book (or borrow one). Money raised will support kids' services at the Library. Call Deirdre Fischer (672-1123) or Bridget Lynch (672-0176) for more information.



**Second Sap Open House**, sponsored by the Cornwall Ag Commission, will take place on Sunday, March 5, from 1 to 4 P.M. (pending sap flow). Viewing and tasting will be at Whale's Tail Farm, 62 River Road; Harts' Cherry Hill Farm, 64 Cherry Hill Road; and Ridgway Family Farm, 142 Town Street. For more information, call Bill Dinneen (672-0035).

**Slide Show:** On Sunday, March 26, at 4 P.M. at the Library, David Colbert will show slides of his trip to Ethiopia (to visit a humanitarian doctor friend) and Cameroon (to help install a Tim Prentice sculpture).

**Wanted:** Information about the Narrow Valley Pottery and/or work by Vincenzo Rondinone for an exhibit in May. Please contact Todd Piker (672-6545 or tpiker@optonline.net). The exhibit will be in memory of Nick (son of Vincenzo) and Florence Rondinone, former residents of Cornwall.

## Spring Tonic

March means Madness at Mohawk and mud most everywhere else. It's the month that never ends. It's Winter teasing us with Spring. No wonder old-timers in Cornwall reach for some kind of spring tonic. Rhubarb is said to thin the blood. And if there's no rhubarb at hand, try writing a check to support the *Chronicle*. The uplift thereby produced is said to work wonders.

**Art in Cornwall:** At the Cornwall Library, the Poetry/Tapestry Wall, featuring rugs by Margarito Hendón and poetry by Cornwall writers of all ages, will continue through March 18. Beginning March 21, the Housatonic Camera Club will be showing photographs at the Library.

At the Outsiders Gallery, the rotating show of Connecticut artists will continue.

**What's on the Calendar?** Your organization is planning a community event—a fund raiser, a forum, or some other wonderful project. Have you first checked the date with the Cornwall website calendar to see if it's free? (You can check months ahead by clicking on the month.) Have you then sent your event and date to the Cornwall website calendar to reserve the date? If a group also sends an E-mail with a planned event and date to Anne Baren at pbaren@optonline.net, she will plug it into the calendar to avoid conflict.

**A Contra Dance** will be held Saturday, March 4, from 7 to 10 P.M. at the Town Hall, with Cornwall's own Homegrown Band. Renowned caller Paul Rosenberg will preside over the festivities.

**Four Social Issues**—war, peace, poverty, and racism—will be the subjects of Sunday afternoon book discussions led by the Rev. Christopher Webber, Lisa Simont, and others: March 5, 12, 19, and 26, at 4 P.M. at St. Peter's. Everyone is welcome; you needn't have read the book. Further information: Christopher L. Webber, 364-1139.

**Auditions** for the Town Hall Players' production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be held at the Town Hall on the following dates: Sunday, April 2, from 2 to 5 P.M.; Monday, April 3, from 6 to 8 P.M.; Tuesday, April 4, from 6 to 8 P.M. Call Bobbie Tyson (672-6762) for more information.

**Cornwall Democratic Town Committee** will hold an organizational meeting on Tuesday, March 21, at 7:30 P.M. at the Library. Committee officers will be elected, and delegates to the conventions in May will be selected.

**The Cornwall Community Tennis Association** is preparing its roster for Intermediate and Advanced Junior Clinics (ages 8 to 18) for summer 2006. Contact Todd Piker (672-6545 or E-mail to: tpiker@optonline.net) for more information about this intensive Tournament Play program. Players will be chosen on the basis of previous participation and/or demonstrable commitment to the game.

**Old-Style Life Skills Series**, Saturday, March 11, from noon to 3 P.M. Participate in a wool-gathering at the UCC Parish House. Southbury-based farmer Liz Tapester will demonstrate the carding and spinning of wool with the help of her cashmere goat, Pooka. Cornwall talent will lead knitting-needle making, knitting, weaving, and felt-ing lessons. Cost for this Motherhouse event is \$35 per family. Call Debra Tyler (672-0229) to register.

**A Peacemaking Seminar** on "Active Peacemaking: Building a Culture of Nonviolence" will be held at UCC on Saturday, April 1, from 9 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. The keynote address, *The Transformation from a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Nonviolence: Necessary and Possible in Our Time*, will be given by Dr. David Adams, a designer of the Culture of Peace Program of the United Nations. Workshop leaders will be Joanne Sheehan, Chair of War Resisters International; Allie Perry, teacher of Nonviolence at Yale Divinity School; Jeremy Brecher, author and historian; and four others. The seminar will include lunch and a children's workshop. The cost is \$15; registered children (ages 5 to 10) free. Registration by March 27 is required. Call the church office (672-6840) for info and registration.



## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

### MARCH ISSUE

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