

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

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April, 2010

ROUTE 8 HOUSES: A SOLUTION AT LAST?

Simon Winchester

The two forlorn and much-dilapidated houses that blight the Route 8 gateway into Sandisfield may shortly be torn down, and the river bank could be transformed later this year into a town-owned public park, filled with late summer flowers.

A possible solution has finally been reached in the more than twenty-year-long battle that has raged over the twin properties. Voters will be asked at next month's town meeting formally to consider the cost of razing the houses and creating an empty plot in their place, which will later be planted. "It is now up to the people of the town," said Dolores Harasyko, the Town Clerk. "There is a proposal on the table, at last."

If voters agree – and the Town acts to spend the demolition money – they will in all likelihood bring to end an unedifying saga that began back in July 1990, when the Sandisfield Board of Health first

moved to declare the houses, numbers 93 and 95 South Main Street, a health hazard.

Neither property had at the time been inhabited for at least the previous decade, and neither had electricity, running water or septic systems. Moreover, since both houses were even then beginning to decay and sag alarmingly over the bank of the Farmington River, it seemed likely they should be declared dangerous as well, since anyone trespassing in them would risk injury.

But in the twenty years that followed little substantive changed – until now. Many reasons and excuses will be put forward for what anyone seeing the houses would justly regard as an unconscionable delay – it took eighteen years, for instance, for the



Photo: Setsuko Winchester

properties even to be formally condemned.

The principal reason, however, is simple: the owners of the two houses, though long absent from Sandisfield and now living in other states, always paid their taxes. *con't p.3*

LAMENT FOR A MYSTERY NEIGHBOR

Jerry Herman



Photo: Jerry Herman

I often used to wonder, as I drove up Route 57, about the big red barn with lots of windows picked out in white trim just past the cemetery. South of the Silverbrook Cafe, and on the same side of the road, it sits next to a big grey clapboard house. On some nights I would see activity, with light blazing out from all the windows, but I haven't seen that light or any activity in quite a while. And there's a reason: a sad one.

At 45 Sandisfield Road, this was the Carr Metal Products factory. But I say "was" because the factory is now out of business. They closed down without most of us really knowing

what they ever did. So I tried to find out. Though several telephone calls to Paul Campagna, the firm's President, went unanswered, there was information available from other sources. When the company was operating it was privately owned and was categorized – believe it or not, Sandisfield! – under Space Propulsion: units and parts. Highly-skilled machinists working in what looked like a big red horse barn in fact constructed small but vital pieces of metal that went into aircraft and space vehicles. *con't p.2*

AVIAN NOTES

Margaret O'Clair

COME THE BLACKBIRDS



For many of us the sight of robins hopping about the lawn in search of worms and insects is one of the first signs of the awakening spring. For others it is seeing a bluebird on top of the nest-box, squeaking his little heart out for a mate.

In fact, these two so-called 'spring' birds have been with us all winter long. When the ground freezes over they form small flocks and head deep into the woods where they forage for insects in the leaf litter, in rotten wood and behind old tree-bark, and only reappear months later, when the world thaws. *con't p.2*

LAMENT FOR A MYSTERY NEIGHBOR *con't from p.1*


According to the internet the shop was capable of something called "CNC machining", and produced aircraft mechanical equipment, such as exterior and interior aircraft lighting, aircraft windshield wipers, onboard defrosting and defogging systems and aircraft doors and windows. The CNC metal cutting system is used for the design and precise cutting of metal shapes with the so-called Torchmate computer guided laser system – not at all the kind of thing you ever imagined on the side of Route 57 next to the Silverbrook Café.

Incorporated in 1992 in Massachusetts, Carr Metal at its peak had an annual revenue of about a million dollars, and a staff of between five and nine people. According to Kerry Sullivan, Legislative Aide to Representative Smitty Pignatelli, Carr was a sub-contractor for Hamilton Sundstrand, and when the recession hit Hamilton stopped ordering.

This was a stunning surprise. It seems that Paul Campagna is a veteran, and in accordance with their federal contract Hamilton Sundstrand had to have 3% of their work performed by a veteran-owned company. So Carr Metal had every reason to think they were secure. But the savage state of the economy trumped that one clause, and once Hamilton bailed, the firm just couldn't survive on the tiny remaining customer base.

They did their best to hang on for as long as they

could. A notice on iBerkshires.com, on January 14 of this year, noted that both State Senator Downing and State Representative Pignatelli had announced that Carr Metal Products had been awarded a loan by the Massachusetts Community Development Finance Corporation to help continue the growth of the business in the Berkshires. Representative Pignatelli was quoted as saying "In these tough economic times any grant awarded to a small business is certainly welcome news and I am thrilled for Carr Metal Products." Further, Paul Campagna said, "The people of western Massachusetts are truly fortunate to have such a beneficial resource as the CDFC. I'm grateful for this opportunity which rewards both my business and my community. Without this loan, I faced moving my company out of town, and out of commuting distance for most of our skilled workers. These employees, many of them my neighbors, have been with the company a long time."


But it all came to naught. The loan simply delayed the inevitable. Dan Love, a former employee, who worked there since the 1980's said he was laid off last summer, and the rest of the machinists went over the remainder of the year. Now the lights in the big red barn are off for good, and Sandisfield's little-known flirtation with aviation and outer space has come to a quiet but melancholy end. 

COME THE BLACKBIRDS *con't from p.1*

For me, the true avian harbinger of spring is often heard before being seen. The first raspy 'scree' of the red-winged blackbird lets me know that the new season is finally here. These birds usually arrive before their wetland habitat can supply them with sufficient insect life to sustain them; but being blackbirds they are very adaptable, and will join our winter-round friends under the winter seed-feeders, happy to eat whatever we put out for them.

The serious spring and summer visitors – warblers, for instance - arrive in the southern states from their sojourn in Central and South America at the beginning of April, and make their way up to us by the end of this month and during the first weeks of May. By then the air will be alive with their sounds, and the dawn chorus will be deafening.

The nectar-feeders are the last to make their way here. I always put out a hummingbird feeder by May 1st, just in case we get an early arrival.

They are creatures of habit, and evidently of memory, too. One year I forgot to put out the feeder and looked out of my window to see a frantic Hummer hovering around the spot where I should have placed it: the poor little guy had flown thousands of miles, counting on me to give him an energy boost in a backyard he considered every bit his own as much as I thought of it as mine. I felt I had let him down. So now I plan ahead. But whatever happens in my garden, the first hummingbird sighting is not truly a indication of spring - it is more an encouraging sign of what we all really yearn for: the eventual coming of the summer, and the bliss of heat and endless daylight. 



ATTENTION LOCAL BUSINESSES:

If you're interested in a monthly business listing in *The Sandisfield Times*, starting with the June issue, please send a check for \$60 for 12 months (that's only \$5 per month!) to: PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255. Include five lines of text with your business name, address, phone, email and website if applicable. If you do not have a website you may substitute a tag line or short description of your services.

Sandisfield Turns 250!

Elaine O'Brien

Roadster Ponies, Calf Roping, a Tour of Homes with a Silver Tea following the Tour at the New Boston Inn, a Costume Block Dance from a Parachute Jump, a Variety Show, Children's Games, a Magician's Show, a vast Parade, Fireworks and a Military Band Concert. All the while there was an ongoing Carnival, an Antique Furniture Show at the New Boston Inn, and an


Sandisfield is busy preparing for another birthday. In the year 2012, we will be 250 years old – fourteen years older than our United States, no less!

Fifty years ago we went positively wild: a Clover Leaf Race,

Exhibit of Maps and Pictures of Homes at the Town Hall.

How on earth do we follow all that?

Kathy Jacobs and Elaine O'Brien have been appointed by the Selectmen to prepare the celebration events. Committees will be needed for all the activities, fundraisers, publicity and all the innumerable facets of what promises a splendidly complex party. The more committees and sub-committees there are, the lighter the load, the better for everyone.

We hope that you, the readers, will consider getting involved. A meeting of those interested will take place on April 15 at the Town Hall Annex at 7PM. If you have ideas to share and can't make the meeting, or just want to share sooner than later, call Elaine at 269-4465 or Kathy at 258-4535. 

Sandisfield, Massachusetts

By Val Coleman

*You take a small town with two rivers
And no middle...*



*You fill it up with honey bees
And uncorked wine,*



*Which means it is...
All things considered...sweet,
With vinegar not far behind.*

*The
Gardeners'
Almanac*



Dassy Herman

Who would have thought, in January, when it was 6 degrees and the wind was howling at 50mph that it would ever warm up again. Yet, here we are in April, getting our gardens ready. Spring preparation has taken on new meaning since I moved to Sandisfield over 20 years ago. I grew up in New York City and had no idea about gardening. I started slowly and badly. I had to read everything I could get my hands on and I had to question every competent gardener I met about anything relating to gardening. I'd like to share what I have learned and offer some tips on monthly garden tasks in the form of a "to do" list and a question and answer portion. So, here goes.

April to do:

When the forsythia bloom -

✂ Cut back any dead, weak, or crossing branches on rose bushes.

✂ Early summer raspberries should be trimmed to 4-5 sturdy branches cut to 12-18 inches from the ground.

✂ Late summer raspberries should be cut uniformly to 6 inches from the ground.

✂ Ornamental grasses should be cut back now, too.

Please email any questions to gardening@sandisfieldtimes.org and I will get back to you.

Happy gardening.

Rte. 8 Houses: A Solution? *con't from p.1*

Since no back taxes were ever owed, the Town was unable ever to place a lien on the properties. And – since there are no zoning regulations in Sandisfield – without a lien, Town officials were legally hamstrung in their ability to act forcefully to right what all agreed was a thoroughly disagreeable situation.

The legal owners of the properties are Jeane and Mary Wilbur (No. 95 South Main) now living in Warren, CT; and Charles Gross (No. 93) who lives in North Carolina. An inspection of the voluminous correspondence in the Town Hall files suggests that neither owner has been especially cooperative with the community; the sporadic episodes of negotiation that were started from time to time by the Town invariably ended with the owners saying that they had neither the time nor the money to deal with the problem.

Moreover, both owners had long been hoping that the State Department of Transportation's long-awaited plan for repairing and possible relocation of the bridge taking Route 8 over the Farmington River would prove an Eminent Domain windfall for them. If, they calculated, they held on to the properties until the State released its formal construction plan, they could both be compensated handsomely for the forced demolition of their properties.

But their wait turns out to have been in vain. The State bridge plans, still unpublished but now widely known, have the newly-aligned roadway bypass the two houses by several hundred feet – an ironic situation that means neither the Wilburs nor Mr. Gross would ever be likely receive any compensation, since the State would have no need for their houses. It is possible that the realisation that any further delay was likely to be fruitless helped both owners to abandon any pretense of a legal fight to hold on to their houses – a change in attitude that allowed the current situation to develop.

Sandisfield has now been able, formally, to declare as condemned, both houses, on the grounds that they are uninhabitable and consti-

tute a public and environmental danger. Providing that the townspeople agree next month to the costs of their demolition – and three formal bids have been received at the time we went to press – the bulldozers and backhoes will move in in a matter of weeks, and, with considerable caution in order to avoid polluting the river waters – they will remove the houses, return the land to grade, and clean up the site entirely.

However, at this stage the land will still belong to the house owners. But, in an astute move that ensures the residents of Sandisfield will win either way, the Town plans to then bill the owners for the cost of demolition.

If they are able and willing to pay, then the cost of the houses' removal will turn out not be a burden on the taxpayer. If they decline, then the Town will issue a lien against them. Subject to the final judgment and approval of Court, the local public will then assume ownership of the parcels of riverside land.



Photo: Setsuko Winchester

Once this has happened then it is most likely, say Town officials, that the parcels will be amalgamated and turned into a small riverside park, – providing a suitably attractive and long-awaited flower-filled entranceway to the village. Few will challenge the view that the current state of the properties represents a blight on the image of Sandisfield to motorists passing by on Route 8. "This is the gateway to our town," said one resident. "As it stands today, it gives a very poor impression of who and what we are."

Patrick Barrett, the Selectman whose election last year helped bring this situation to what seems likely to be a happy conclusion, told *The Times* that the houses were clearly an eyesore, drastically hurt town property values and posed potential health and environmental issues. "For the past twenty years members of the Sandisfield community have expressed a desire to remove the dilapidated houses on Route 8. By placing this issue on the May warrant the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen is putting the decision regarding the future of these houses where it belongs, in the hands of the voters."

SANDISFIELD HISTORY BOOK IN THE WORKS

Ron Bernard

A committee has formed in the Town of Sandisfield to guide development of a commemorative book which will honor all those who have helped shape this largely rural community from its founding in 1762 until today. Slated for completion in 2012, the town's 250th anniversary, this comprehensive history will cover the principal institutions, historical personalities and key events that influenced everyday life through the years and created the Sandisfield we know today.

Bernard A. Drew, a highly respected and well-known local historian, will edit this book, provisionally entitled "Sandisfield Revisited: 1762-2012." The book is intended to be the definitive historical reference for Sandisfield, preserving the heritage for future generations and fostering pride among old and new residents. The committee aims to create a high-quality product with lively text



Photo: Richard B. Migot

and abundant photographs to be treasured as a keepsake in every home.

The committee is seeking material for the book, including histories of Sandisfield institutions, businesses, and civic groups as well as sketches about the everyday life of Sandisfield's 'old-timers,' new-comers and colorful personalities. "Then and now" chapters will feature older homes, farms and distinct sections of town. Important traditions such as the roles of farming, religious communities, immigration, news events and town government will also be featured. Residents and others are requested to submit old photos of houses and people and recollections of bygone days.

If you would like to contribute photographs or family histories, contact Ron Bernard at 413 269-0012 or Ronbernard@aol.com or Liana Toscanini 413 441-9542 or liana@communityaccesstothearts.org.



Country Diary Mick Burns

First Swarm

A swarm in May is worth a load of hay.

A swarm in June is worth a silver spoon.

A swarm in July isn't worth a fly.

--Traditional saying

The issuing of a swarm of honeybees is an amazing thing to observe. Last summer, as a beginner beekeeper, I was lucky enough to witness just such an event. The sound I heard, which I initially mistook for the far off whine of some machine, had an ominous, yet, purposeful ring to it. A river of bees, including the queen, had poured out of the hive entrance and formed a dense cloud, perhaps ten feet in diameter. They soon ascended high up, affixing to an ash limb and settling into a calm mass about the size of a basketball.

I had read that the swarm can be caught in a box with a quick jerking of the branch to which they are attached. Nope. Too high up. A call to a local expert resulted in my raising an empty hive, by means of a rope and pulley attached to a tree limb, about 20 feet off the ground and some 100 feet from where the swarm rested. Before dark that night I could see the scouts buzzing around the empty hive. After work the next day the swarm had taken up residence.

I had further been advised that on the first night the hive could be moved with little chance of any bees exiting or attacking, apparently needing a day to establish order and post a guard. After dark that night, with the aid of a friend to hold the flashlight and give me the courage to go for it, I donned my best improvised bee suit. The mid-summer night was warm, the quilted overalls made it warmer. I was sweating and the adrenaline was flowing. At the first movement of the hive the buzzing became louder. I had one of those moments when I realized that what I'm doing is a little crazy. I slowly lowered the hive to the ground. Still loud buzzing. Now all I had to do was carry the 40lb box of perhaps 20,000 bees through the woods to the base I had prepared next to the hive. Not a single bee emerged during the move, much to my relief. It was a short yet exhilarating episode which left me energized and even more hopeful, having now two hives, that come next spring there would be....bees.

Casting Call!



Photo: Courtney Maum

Documentary Film Project Gets Underway

With a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, filmmaker Diego Ongaro will capture oral histories of local residents on film and create a documentary to be completed for the town's 250th Anniversary celebration in 2012. If you would like to be filmed, have suggestions as to which residents should be filmed, or can pitch in as an interviewer, please call Liana at 413 441-9542 or email liana@communityaccesstothearts.org.

EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday, April 3rd

11am

Yanner Park

For information, call

Robbin Campetti at

258-4615



Did you know Sandisfield has a blog? Visit <http://sandisfield.blogspot.com> to view articles and photos, archived articles, make comments, and links to local businesses.

The Sandisfield Times Explained

Liana Toscanini

Only a few months ago, this newsletter was nothing but a delightful fireside fantasy shared by a few dinner guests on a cold winter's evening. That this first issue is now in your hands is a tribute to Simon Winchester, whose passions for journalism and Sandisfield are finally blissfully wed. With the help of several willing neighbors, Simon led several work sessions in which the format, design, content and tone of this publication were hammered out. A few brave souls agreed to write about serious issues facing our town, while others, such as local artist Tina Sotis, devoted hours to the paper's design. Through each existential discussion, Simon remained true to the mottos of his creation, "Tribunus Plebis" and "Reliable. Regular. Relevant." The result is a periodical far more interesting than any of us imagined possible. We hope you enjoy reading it and contributing to it down the road. We also hope you will support it financially so that we can concentrate on content rather than fundraising.

ABOUT THE MASTHEAD



At the center of *The Sandisfield Times* masthead is the seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Seals were widely used many centuries ago because most persons, even of high rank and wealth, did not read or write. Wax impressions eventually evolved to documents of state containing a seal that bore witness to their authenticity. The motto in Latin, "Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem" loosely translated means "By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty." It was written about 1659 and is attributed to the famous English patriot, Algernon Sydney. The arms,

Letter from the Editor

Simon Winchester
Editor-in-Chief




Photo: Setsuko Winchester

Ours is a most unusual town – one of the largest in Massachusetts in area, and yet with one of the smallest populations. Most of us will probably agree that, delightful though it is to live here, we are not blessed with a powerful sense of community. Geography is one reason: there is no identifiable town center, and our high green hills and deeply-carved river valleys separate us one from another. Moreover, though many of our residents are from families that have been here for generations, a growing number are either newcomers or seasonal or weekend dwellers. All of these reasons have conspired to keep us somewhat distant from each other, and have prevented us from forging the kind of communal connections that are so very evident in many of our neighbor villages.

So it is the goal of our new newspaper to try to change this - though only for those who would like to see it changed – and to forge a wide realization that all of us here in this very old highland town share a set of aims and aspirations that we both hold dear, and hold in common. All of us want this to be an amiable, pleasant and civilized place to live – a place with good and responsible government, with clean land and waters, with safe roads, an environment in which our children can grow without fear or worry, and where the rest of us can live amongst our abundant natural beauty in peace and serenity.


Our newspaper, which will take no political stand other than as a tribune of the people – which will be our motto, in Latin – seeks only to voice our support for all of these things, and to hold up what I hope will be a faithful and flawless mirror to ourselves. It is our newspaper, it is your newspaper, and everyone is invited to write articles or letters, to take or make pictures, or in other unimagined ways, to help assemble the monthly mosaic that each issue will turn out to be.

By doing so we hope, month by month, to be able to tell or remind each of us in Sandisfield and beyond just who we are and what we wish for, and why we should feel proud and privileged to live in this idyllic and mysteriously overlooked little corner of our American world. 



Members of the editorial team and volunteers at Simon Winchester's home on Silverbrook Road. Back row (left to right): Val Coleman, Rita Kasky, Jean Atwater Williams, Jerry Herman, Ron Bernard, Simon Winchester. Front row (left to right): Patricia Hubbard, Tina Sotis, Dassy Herman, Liana Toscanini, Courtney Maum Ongaro, and Setsuko Winchester. Photo by Richard B. Migot.

which form the central part of the Great Seal "...shall consist of a shield, whereof the field or surface is blue, and thereon an Indian dressed in his shirt and moccasins, holding in his right hand a bow, and in his left hand an arrow, point downward, all of gold; and in

the upper corner above his right arm, a silver star with five points. The crest shall be a wreath of blue and gold, whereon is a right arm, bent at the elbow, and clothed and ruffled, the hand grasping a broadsword, all of gold." 

WHY ALL THE SAND IN SANDISFIELD?

Patricia Hubbard with Rita Kasky

As we begin to recover from a brutal winter, one question haunts us still:

The roads in Sandisfield are not as easy to drive on as those in our neighboring towns. Just why is that?

Why, when you drive down West Hubbard Road en route to Monterey, do you get to the town line and see hard pack on the Sandisfield side and a clean road on the Monterey side?

The answer is actually simple: they do things differently. And it all has to do with a continuing argument between those road experts who like to use salt, and those who use sand. We, perhaps because we're Sandisfield, use sand.

It helps to understand all of the available options for road treatment. (*These options are available for viewing on the Road Treatment Primer on our webpage www.sandisfieldtimes.org*). There are advantages and disadvantages to the different products that are used to treat the roads.

Chris Rines, Sandisfield's new Highway Superintendent was hired in August.

He knew that Sandisfield had a history of problems with the roads, and he had a scant four months of experience before the snow began to fall. In previous years the roads in Sandisfield were treated with a 2/1 ration of sand to salt. Sand is inexpensive, but it doesn't melt ice or snow. It creates hardpack. It clogs the drainage areas. It requires excessive spring clean up. It stays around long after the snow has gone.

This winter, Chris used the materials he had available, but altered the mixture to a 1/1 sand to salt ratio. (He uses a slightly different combination on the dirt roads). We do have less hardpack on our roads this year. And Chris has found that this new method has helped him use his materials more efficiently. But our roads are still not as clean

as those in Monterey.

What does Monterey do that we don't? Monterey has 50 miles of road, and half of those are also dirt. They don't use sand at all on their paved roads. They use a solution of salt (magnesium chloride) and magic salt, (which helps it stick).

The Sandisfield "Salt Cathedral"



Photo: Setsuko Winchester

It is a major difference. They began the switch ten years ago. According to Maynard Forbes, Director of Operations for Monterey's Public Works, the accident rate went down, the complaint rate went down, and although their product costs were slightly higher, they had to spend less in man hours, less on spring cleanup and less in overtime.

To be fair, Monterey has newer trucks than Sandisfield. Their trucks have built in computers, which determine the correct amount of product to be applied to the road. Sandisfield has older trucks, which still rely on "Driver Judgment". The driver has to determine how much prod-

uct to apply to the road following a prescribed formula. Monterey also sends its drivers to a training program held at UMass each fall to keep them up-to-date on the latest information.


Chris and his crew (Joe, Bill, Billy and Dave) have worked hard this year. And the roads show improvement. However, as long as they are dependent on using sand, we are going to have hardpack on the roads. We are not going to have perfectly clean roads. We are going to have clogged catch basins. We are also going to have to live with the residual sand until spring.

Yes, there is controversy about moving to a straight salt solution. Some people are concerned about the salt infiltrating their wells. The DOT chart (on our website) seems to indicate that the environmental impact of sand is greater than the impact of using liquid calcium chloride or magnesium chloride.

They say that the grass is greener on the other side, but as long as Sandisfield remains dependent on the use of sand, the roads will definitely be cleaner on the other side. Cleaner, and probably greener.

THIS JUST IN...

From an article on Public Works in the March Monterey News:


"It was agreed that that town residents should be made aware of the implications of our black (clear) winter roads policy. We spend more money on plowing, sand, and salt than any other Berkshire town, and according to Select Board member Jon Sylbert, we spend more on the roads than on the school budget. The voters will have to decide whether to continue having black roads, which, if costs do not change, will lead to loss of our levy limit, and to an eventual tax override." 

A VISIT FROM YE OLDE LEBANON TOWNE MILITIA

John Kuzmech

*On the 18th of April 1775,
hardly a man is now alive
who remembers that famous day and year...*

Did you know that the town of Sandisfield sent 225 soldiers to answer the alarm at Lexington and Concord? Come and see a living history exhibit to commemorate the event. On May 8th and May 9th, a Connecticut-based reenactment group of soldiers and colonists, Ye Olde Lebanon Towne Militia, will be present for the first edition of what is hoped to be an annual event. **This militia encampment will take place at the field behind the Farmington**

River School in Otis on Rt. 8. There will be drilling and musket fire as area men are mustering for the walk to Boston. FRRS 5th grade teacher, Chris Keller, will also be outfitting his students in period-correct clothing, and apprenticing his students to the accompanying colonial artisans and craftspeople. Please show your interest in, and support of, our local students with your presence. Thanks to a generous grant from the Sandisfield and Otis Cultural Councils, this event is free, and will run from **10 am on Saturday May 8th until Sunday morning May 9th.** Contact **John Kuzmech** if you need more details at 258-4906. 



Pet Partners

Kim Spring

My name is Kim Spring and I'm the Animal Control Officer for Sandisfield. Times



of economic stress are upon many of us and I have been working with Pet Partners of The Tri-State Berkshires bringing

food for dogs and cats in need. Pet Partners exists to help pet owners care for their furry pals so that owners won't have to surrender their pets to a shelter or rescue group. Pet Partners helps with distributing food for dogs and cats, helps with reduced-rate spaying and neutering and assists with basic veterinary care for qualified pet owners.

Pet Partners of The Tri-State Berkshires is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization under the umbrella of the Scientific Alliance for Education (S.A.F.E). Funding for Pet

Partners comes from tax deductible gifts, grants and donations. All monies received by Pet Partners are used for the care of animals. Pet Partners has donation canisters in many local businesses throughout the Berkshires.

For more information about this program and how we may be able to help you and your pets please call me @ 258-4450.

For donations for this program visit www.petpartnersberkshires.org.

People Get Ready: Elections Are Coming

Rita Kasky

If you're a registered voter in Sandisfield, and you want to help determine who should be in leadership positions here in town, you've got to exercise your right to vote in our local elections. Below are several important events that lead up to the final day. Watch for the finalized list of candidates and their profiles in our May "Election" issue.

- April 7: Town Caucus: Town Hall, 7pm
- April 13: Last date to object to or withdraw nomination papers.
- April 26: Last date to register to vote at the Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election. Registration will be held at the Town Hall Annex from 2:00-4:00pm and 7:00-8:00pm.
- May 15: Annual Town Meeting: Town Hall, 10:00am
- May 17: Annual Town Election: Town Hall, 10:00am to 8:00pm

Scholarships Announced

Elaine O'Brien

The Sandisfield Scholarship Committee has been helping college-bound Sandisfield students for almost the last quarter century. Back in 1987, a fund was established with an initial investment of \$7,734. The interest earned from this fund has been awarded through the years to the qualifying scholarship applicants. The names of the award recipients offer us a portrait of the town and our people: Sonja Ancharico, Shannon Carr, David Riccio, Jennifer O'Brien, Krista Cinkala, Laura Ziegler, Tony Cohutt, Jason Brown, Jodi Lundgren, Melissa Adams, Rebecca Ziegler, Robert Manyak, Aaron Ancharico, Michael Murray, Brian Adams, Shanna Richard, Bonnie Cadoret, Megan Murray, Hanna Harbor, Nicholas Ferreira, Michelle O'Brien, Robin Rock, Jacob Gonska, Aviva Cormier, Donald Pimental,

Adam Gonska, Paul Lasch Jr., Rachael Rock and Chelsea Ferreira. (I hope we didn't overlook anyone, do write to me if we did!)

The basic goal of the committee is to increase the principal so that the invested dollars will earn a higher yield. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Marge Gulick, her annual Rabies Clinic has been our main source of income: for many years fully half of her fees have gone to the Scholarship Committee. However, we would now like to increase the invested amount by starting a new fundraising project this year. So we will be sponsoring the "Penny Auction" table at the annual Christmas Fair held in Fire Station #2. We will be asking for donations and volunteers to make this event a huge success.

We are also looking for volunteers to sit on the Committee. Call one me at 269-4465 to find out what membership entails.



A Letter from Patrick Barrett, Selectman

The Board of Selectmen is delighted that *The Sandisfield Times* is now helping to fill a communication void that has plagued our Town for many years; we greatly appreciate the invitation to let residents know some of what we have been working on.

We recently received a \$162,484 reimbursement check from FEMA for the Ice Storm cleanup. Town Clerk Dolores Harsyko filled out the endless paperwork associated with this project. We owe her a huge debt.

From July 1st town residents will again be able to participate in the Household Hazardous Waste Collections Program. More details in the next edition of *The Times*.

We have received three bids for a town website. A committee will choose the winning bid and funds for this venture will be sought on the annual Town warrant.

The Board of Selectmen has received estimates for tearing down the infamous Route 8 Houses [see page 1].

We also recently finished negotiations on a new one year contract for the Sandisfield Highway Department.

Finally, we would like to congratulate Elaine O'Brien on her retirement. Sandisfield is a better place because of Elaine's hard work: her jovial presence will be missed by the entire Town Hall staff.



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P.O. Box 584
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www.sandisfieldtimes.org

Inaugural Issue!



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We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor **BY THE 10TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR**. We reserve the right to edit. No portion of the *The Sandisfield Times* may be reproduced without permission. Submit copy by email to editorial@sandisfieldtimes.org. Contact Liana Toscanini with any questions at (413) 441-9542.



Weather & Stars Randy Siddell

April is the cruellest month... Poor T.S. Eliot didn't know the half of it: the weather in past Aprils has dealt some spectacularly cruel blows – a super-outbreak of 148 tornadoes in the Midwest in 1974 (on April 3rd), 26 inches of snow in Maine in 1982 (5th), lightning that set an oil depot on fire in San Luis Obispo in 1926 (8th), a powerful and fiercely whistling dust-devil in Dracut, MA in 1957 that lifted a child three feet into the air (18th), and in 1899 three people were carried along a quarter mile by a tornado, and remember noticing a horse go flying by, and landing a mile further along the road (24th).

And on April 18, 1906, San Francisco was rocked by its most spectacular earthquake – with most residents today wondering if it is past time for the next.

The heavens are fairly peaceable by contrast: on the 21st the Lyrid meteor shower will be visible in Lyra, which rises in the northeast at about 10pm; and two fingers-width below and to the right of the first star in the handle of the Big Dipper will be seen M51, the great swirling object known appropriately as the Whirlpool Galaxy.

So - happy April star-gazing – but make sure you keep yourselves warm, and firmly rooted to the ground.