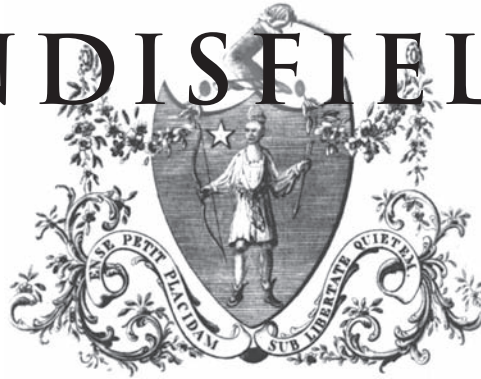


THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume I, Number 3

June, 2010

"WE'RE STEALING FROM OUR KIDS" - SCHOOLS CHAIRMAN

By Times Reporter

The regional school attended by more than a hundred Sandisfield youngsters is currently so strapped for cash that its administrators are having to "steal from our children", cutting back their education and severely limiting their chance to compete.

This charge was made, tearfully and dramatically, during the Sandisfield Town Meeting last May 17 by Laurie Nikituk, chair of the Farmington River Regional District School Committee.

Standing before a record turnout of townsfolk, Ms. Nikituk, an Otis real estate agent, charged that sudden and unanticipated cuts announced from Boston

meant that along with other cuts, the local elementary school could now no longer afford to employ an upper grade math teacher; that its Gifted and Talented Program be suspended indefinitely; that the Social Studies and Science curriculums cannot be updated; and, most poignant of all, that parents of fifth graders have been forced to raise all the money for the Nature's Classroom field trip, a summertime adventure that had long been a school 'rite of passage'.

The Committee had considered "coming back to the taxpayers" to help make up the shortfall, said Ms.



Photo Setsuko Winchester

Nikituk, but added that "since many of you may not even be employed at this point" it was more prudent to "beg, borrow or steal" to make ends meet. The begging and borrowing was bad enough, she said, "but the worst part is stealing." *Cont'd p.2*

WHERE HAVE ALL OUR FIREMEN GONE?

By Patricia Hubbard

The men and women of our local Fire Departments and the Ambulance Squad are our neighbors, and the backbone of our small town safety net, and they are suddenly disappearing. They are disappearing throughout Berkshire County – the work is too hard, the rewards too little. But in Sandisfield the problem is even greater. Many of our surrounding towns provide a financial incentive to their volunteers. Some offer a yearly stipend. Some a tax abatement. Some pay by the call, or by the hour. But Sandisfield does nothing. And so, in increasing numbers, our firefighters are leaving.



We currently have some 20 fire personnel on the record, but only 14 or 15 of them are listed as still active. The rest have taken off. There is a pressing need, fire chiefs say, to help motivate and keep the personnel that we have. Sandisfield Fire Chief Ralph Morrison believes that the town should put together a committee to see just how Sandisfield firefighters compare to nearby towns and recommend steps to help the town keep its active officers, and even attract new volunteers. That committee's decision could then be put to a town vote.

Cont'd p.2

EDIBLE SANDISFIELD

THE GREEN, GREEN LEAVES OF HOME

By Adam Manacher

Greens and eggs may seem an unlikely combination for a delectable meal considering our long history of reading to "Green Eggs and Ham" to our children! Yet I'm here to share with you a wonderful sandwich that combines these ingredients in a simple and delicious manner that is sure to please all.

No need for boiling and slow cooking here. Swiss chard, leaf and stem, kale and collards leaves (all available now both at When Pigs Fly and Snow Farm), lend themselves wonderfully to a swift sauté. Chard will be the mildest, kale and then collards have increasingly strong flavors. Just take your greens and roll the leaf up. Cut into thin strips (about the width of linguini pasta). Heat two teaspoons of olive oil in a skillet or frying pan, toss in the greens. *Cont'd p.2*



STEALING FROM OUR KIDS

Cont'd from p.1

"We need these programs. These children are the reason I have been on the School Committee for many years. It is their right, and truly our obligation, to give them the very best education that we can offer. These treasures, our children, only go this way one time.

We owe them a quality education and all of the resources and support we can give them."

Sandisfield currently has 125 children in the Farmington River Regional School District (about one third of the district's total complement) of which 42 children go to the Farmington River Elementary School, a modern structure in Otis, about an hour's bus ride away from the more southerly corners of Sandisfield. Around half of Sandisfield's total budget - some \$1,200,000 - goes to fund our share of educating our kids, while Otis adds about twice that amount. 🍷

WHERE HAVE ALL OUR FIREFIGHTERS GONE?

Cont'd from p.1



The Department is partly funded by local taxes. It is difficult to determine precise numbers since the requests for funds are scattered through nine different headings on the Warrant. A sum of about \$43,000 appears to have been earmarked for new equipment, though nothing specifically set aside for the reimbursement of firefighters' time or personal gear. Much of the rest of the needed money comes from the Fire Department's fund raising events and donations. But the expenses are huge: how many of us know that it costs about \$4,000 to outfit a new firefighter in their required fire fighting gear (as above)? Or that training an EMT costs over \$1,000? Or that a class in learning about air bag extrication can cost \$900 per person?

There is grant money available through the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters' Association (MCVFA). But someone has to write the grant and apply for the funds - yet nobody here has. This coming year about \$390 million will be distributed nationally through the current Federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program - funds which, if some came to Sandisfield, could be used toward a variety of things, including training.

EDIBLE SANDISFIELD

THE GREEN, GREEN LEAVES OF HOME

Cont'd from p.1

You'll hear a quick sizzling, a few "pops!" as the water in the leaves quickly evaporates. Stir gently to coat the leaves with warm oil and you'll begin to smell a rich aroma and sweetness. Add a pinch of salt - preferably large-grained sea-salt. Stir over a high heat for 2 to 3 minutes. The greens will begin to curl up, a few may even begin to get a little crispy. They're done!

Preparing your egg will be just as quick. Be sure you begin with treating yourself to a fresh egg from a

ON THE NAME OF OUR COMING BIRTHDAY

250th

We all know by now that our town, which was first incorporated back in 1762, is about to celebrate its 250th anniversary.

Many mistakenly call this our bicentennial. But that already happened, back in 1962, when President Kennedy was still in office, the moon was still virgin soil, there were no cellphones and the Internet was probably something used by fishermen or butterfly hunters.

Technically our coming birthday should be called our bicenquingennial. But as that seven-syllable monstrosity is hardly likely to mix well with Fixodent, it is probably going to be better if we call it what we are going to mark our quarter-millennial - which has the added advantage of giving us something really spectacular to look forward to, if we manage to last (as surely we shall) for another seven-and-a-half centuries.

Money is not the only problem. Massachusetts regulations require a constant series of training sessions to maintain certifications. At one time the State sent an instructor to our area to run training sessions. But they no longer do, and our firefighters have to travel to maintain their level of training. Travel can be as close as Great Barrington, but there are also multi-day sessions as far away as Boston, requiring an overnight stay and causing our men and women to give up weekend time with their families and incur expenses for hotels, gas and food.

"There is grant money available through the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters' Association (MCVFA). But someone has to write the grant and apply for the funds - *yet nobody here has.*"

It is possible that a Sandisfield Volunteer Fire-fighter, or a member of the Ambulance Squad may also be on call for other towns, and towns that offer a financial incentive. So, given the geography of Sandisfield, it is possible that a fire in Otis, or an ambulance call in Colebrook, may in fact be closer to our firefighters' homes than a call on the other side of Sandisfield. The result is that they may not be available when a call comes in from the Sandisfield Fire Department. And if they serve two departments, the question becomes one of priorities. And that often that comes down to: who pays? If there is a fire in Colebrook, and that Fire Department offers to pay - our firefighters go. And who can blame them? 🍷

chicken that has been grazing outside on greens and grubs: the yolk will be brighter colored and more flavorful. Either scramble or fry your egg. If you scramble, be sure to cook the egg slowly over a lower heat while stirring them often in the pan. Add a pinch of salt here, too. Once the eggs begin to solidify, and just before you think they are "done" turn off the heat and let them finish cooking another second or two with the heat of the pan. It is important not to overcook an egg; it loses flavor and texture. If you are frying your egg I recommend for this sandwich that you cook it over easy, and let the yolk slightly solidify.

The recipe is pure simplicity. One egg. One cup of cut greens. Two slices of whole grain bread (six or twelve grains give the most flavor). 2 teaspoons olive oil. Big-

crystal salt. Butter (of course!). While you toast your bread, sauté the greens and set aside. Butter the toast and keep warm. Cook the egg to your liking. Build your sandwich: slice of toast, egg, greens and toast. Grab that cup of coffee and enjoy the freshness of summer!

And remember all cooking is personal...recipes are usually given as guidelines not rules. Add any fresh ingredients to this sandwich to make it special for you. Top your fresh greens with goat cheese or add a little garlic while you sauté them. As you like. 🍷

Adam is a trained chef in Boston, with a house in Sandisfield

COMING HOME, TO SANDISFIELD

By Simon Winchester



Photo: Setsuko Winchester

Last week a man with a flat-bed trailer came to take away my tractor, so he could fit it with a backhoe. This sentence, which I found myself writing the other day in an email home to my aged parents in England, is not one I could have ever imagined myself writing, or even thinking of writing, as little as a year ago. Back then I lived something of a dashing existence, either wandering across the remoter parts of the planet or, when settled, inhabiting a world of gritty and costly apartments in capital cities, of business-class travel and fancy cafés and edgy urban chatter. I wasn't at all sure what a flat-bed trailer was, I certainly had no idea of the functions of a backhoe – glory be! – and to my certain knowledge tractors were merely burbling little beasts that chugged around in farmers' fields in that curious beyond one saw from train windows and which was known as 'the country'. The notion that I'd ever own or want to own one, or live and take my ease among those for whom they were a customary form of transport, was well beyond what I prided myself in considering my fairly acute powers of imagination.

Well – that was then and this is now. Now I own a tractor. I own two tractors, in fact. And last week a man with a flat-bed trailer came to take one of them away to fix it up with a backhoe – something which weighs half a ton, needs greasing every week and costs a very great deal more than I expected.

And all of this (which includes learning how to wield a mysterious device that I now know to be a grease gun) has happened because, after fifty-seven fairly exciting, exacting, sophisticated and mainly metropolitan years, I have become – voluntarily and, so far as I can tell, forever and for good – a hayseed. It is a role that I find I have slipped on as easily as a deerskin work glove, and I find also that by doing so I have become as happy as something that I was wont to eat at New York's Nobu, but which has proved as rare as hens' teeth here: and that is, to wit, a clam.

The notion of settling anywhere was to me once utterly alien. I was sixteen when I began to travel seriously; I hitchhiked the entire circumference of populated North America one summer, and it was then that I developed a taste for the risks and rewards of solitary wandering. Over the following years, thanks to the indulgence of a number of newspaper editors, I lived in (or perhaps more appropriately, I was based in) Africa, India, Ireland, China and the United States. I believe I traveled to every country on the planet – except for a scattering of those Central Asian entities that are now

called 'the 'stans' – and I was able for a long while to say with the pride of an inverse snob that I had never been either to Peru or to the Hamptons, (Both I have been to lately and am happy to say that for each, once is quite enough.)

I have had more homes than I can remember, more telephone numbers, more email addresses; and friends who are kind enough to keep me in their little black books grumble at the 'W' page, dominated as it is by so many rubbings-out and fillings-in. Can't you ever settle down? They ask in kindly-weary exasperation. Of course, they add, we envy you mightily.

And for a while I used to think they did, especially if their lives depended on the catching of morning commuter trains and the sitting in office cubes and the looking forward to games of golf on summer weekends. My life, sans both commuter trains and weekends, did seem at first blush quite appealing, I am sure. Except that they saw their daughters' bliss on wedding days, and they curled up at firesides on winter nights; and I suspect if they remembered me at all then, they saw my life a little differently – that my unsettlement and unshacklement was not quite everything, that the solitary and the empty and the rootless can also be co-equal with the joyless, and that the life of the fancy-free was often much more fancy than, in many ways, it was truly free.

And as my years began to tick on I confess that slightly, and only intermittently, I began to ponder such matters

"After fifty-seven fairly exciting, exacting, sophisticated and mainly metropolitan years, I have become – voluntarily and, so far as I can tell, forever and for good – a hayseed."

too, and to wonder at the supposed benefits of endless wanderings. This feeling gradually strengthened until, in a sudden moment of hopeful whim last year, I bought a rambling old house and a few acres of weary farmland in the town of Sandisfield, in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. And in doing so I wondered at that very moment if I too – a little late, perhaps even a little too late – might for the first time take a shot at settling down at last. It might work, I thought. It might not. And if it didn't – well, then at least it would be another adventure out of which I could make another anecdote, to tell in some distant watering hole once the traveling had started once again. That was nine months ago. Since then, aside from two journeys to Java and a mere handful to Europe (which approximates the stasis of a cryogenic state, compared to before), I have not budged. Eight months ago – four weeks into the start of the experiment, in other words – came an epiphany. And this epiphany involved, just as is demanded by the symmetry of classic storytelling (and in this case, by the truth), a tractor.

I mentioned that I now own two tractors. One of them

came with the property. It is not as old as the house (which was constructed a little after what, to me, an Englishman, were those melancholy events of 1776), but it sports a fair half-century of yeoman service. It is a faded blue Ford (model 8N, I mention for the aficionados out there, who I gather exist in healthy numbers). It is a little rusty. It needs to be cranked into life with much care and gentle words.

But once so eased into what passes for mechanical vivacity it runs really quite merrily, chugging and pulsing steadily like a heartbeat. It has a little exhaust pipe that emits what I am sure is the kind of blue smoke that could kill, but which in fact, when borne on country air, seems to have a rare sweetness about it. I wouldn't exactly bend down, and attach my mouth to the pipe, unless feeling exceptionally gloomy, but when the tractor has passed by and I get the faint scent of its exhaust on the breeze, it is, I must say, an aroma most pleasing. When I mentioned this rather dull observation to the farmer who helped me, he looked at me straight in the eye and he did something farmers rarely do: he cracked a smile.

Anyway, attached to the rear of my burbling little Ford 8N, held up by what is known in hayseed-speak as a 'three-point-hitch', and powered by a shaft that emerges dangerously from a connection to what is known similarly as a 'PTO' (a power-take-off), is a spinning blade, covered by a large yellow iron shield, which is known as a 'brush-hog'. This is what people who live in the Berkshires like to use, I was told, to mow their fields. Not to make their lawns satin-smooth, mind you, but merely to get the thistles and crab grass and timothy down to a height in which passing children and small animals don't get totally lost.

One warm early evening, as the sun was going down over the locust trees (one of which housed a big, fat porcupine, contentedly munching twigs), I decided to have a go. I sat on the machine, lit my pipe, gently coaxed and fired up the engine, backed the brush-hog off the two baulks of timber on which it had been resting for the past many months, and set off unsteadily down the meadow.

No sweeter smell have I ever known, in any place I have ever been. In the background – I am sure the scent-makers of Grasse have a name for such a thing – were the commingled aromas of tractor exhaust and my Balkan Sobranie Mixture, with its accents of sweet Latakia leaf. But in the foreground was something nicer still: the smell of new-mown grass – new-mown hay, in fact, for what I was cutting in a wide swathe behind me was tall grass and blue alfalfa, which smells more unimaginably lovely than anything, except what came next. And that came when, after I had directed the pattering little Ford over to a patch of richer, wilder green, there wafted through the air the overwhelming aroma of what I had just mowed flat, and that was fresh wild mint.

In that moment I was utterly hooked, totally transformed. Tractor smoke, fine Syrian tobacco, blue alfalfa and wild mint made a cocktail of, well, probably pheromones, someone will one day write and tell me, *Cont'd p.4*

COMING HOME, TO SANDISFIELD
 Cont'd from p.3

that produced for me a true olfactory epiphany. It was as though - and if this sounds sentimentally unreal, I make no apology for it - in that one instant the earth sang out: Stay here, it said. Dig holes here. Put down roots. Nurture and gentle them with sun and rain and seasons, until, like that old Ford, they burble into life as well, and show that something that grows has more point to it than anything else borne from a ceaseless wandering.

Well, to come down from the magic of the moment, to reattach to a more sober reality, one has to understand a little of farming. To dig holes in which to plant roots either real or metaphorical, one needs a far, far bigger tractor than my dear little 1952 blue monster, which serious farmers refer to only as a toy. So now in consequence, and since the epiphany lasted, and since its effects last still, I possess a great big orange monster of a new tractor, with forty-six wild horses under its hood, a big orange bucket and thick black forks at its front end, and ever since its brief flat-bed-assisted absence of last week, a backhoe attached wherever it is that backhoes hoe.

And with this machine so far, in just the last ten days, I have accomplished much. I have shifted the branches of fifty newly pruned apple trees. I have moved

a ton of clay onto the floors of stalls in a barn. I have moved vast piles of firewood for the coming winter. I have dug out a section of the garden in which one day there may be vegetables. I have helped a neighbor pull out an old stump, and I have worked with another to reshape an old stone wall. I have distributed the better

part of ten tons of sand onto the muddy wren that was my driveway.

Soon, when the forty tons of topsoil arrives, I will rake and smooth it around the old Vermont carriage barn that I have turned into my library, and I will plant box trees there and hope the Massachusetts winter won't make me rue the expense - for the smell of boxwood is a smell that has always worked for me.

I have plans for a thousand-and-one other tasks, as I try gamely to turn this tuckered out old farm back into a productive little organic clutch of acres. I have plans to send out apple-finished lamb to the local restaurants (many of whom now have a policy of buying only home-made produce from local farms), of sending blossom and clover honey (for the bees arrive any day, just in time to catch the

apple flowers, and I have plans for painting their hives tonight) to friends, and to make home-smoked bacon from the pigs that soon will be snorting and snuffing their way in the pens I am building (with the help of the tractor, naturally) over by a new meadow that I recently cleared of saplings.



Photo Setsuko Winchester

Yes, I have plans all right. And I have plans, at last to stay. I never imagined that there might one day be a place in Massachusetts for a wandering Englishman like me. And I confess I still find it difficult to believe that the wandering will ever stop - for, mistakenly and foolishly

I now realize, there was a long time in my life when such persona as I had was perhaps defined by the fact of travel. I was only useful to people when I wasn't around - amusing to them when I came back and told the tales, but someone to be prodded back to the airport or the dockside, and made to go away again.

Well, that is no more (or more or less no more: I am off to London tomorrow, and Hong Kong in July, and briefly back to Java after that). No, it was that evening of aromas that convinced me, and the simple fact that I was at that moment performing a task that is ageless and eternal, and should, were we all so lucky, be done at some moment by us all. That evening I was *making hay while the sun shines* - as good a way to run a life, I know at last, as any I can suppose. ♡

I wrote this back in 2002. Five years later I met and married Setsuko Sato, who came up here from Washington, and who is every bit as delighted with Sandisfield, and this old house, as I am. So our roots are now firmly dug in; and the two of us will happily stay here just as long as the town, and Providence, allows.



"...in that one instant the earth sang out: Stay here, it said. Dig holes here. Put down roots."



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Henry David Thoreau

The Gardeners' Almanac

Dassy Herman



June to do:

- ✦ Plant anything you want
- ✦ Go on weed patrol often (after a rain is best)
- ✦ Mulch to keep weeds down and crops clean
- ✦ Start harvesting and enjoying cool weather crops
- ✦ Consider the birds if you grow berries or grapes. You have three choices:

1. Share with the birds - You may get a very small percentage of your crop
2. Cover crops with netting - This works best, but if ever the net traps a bird that then dies, this becomes a poor choice.
3. Use a silver patterned, reflective tape called Moire to frighten the birds away - I've had great success tying strips of tape to the tops of stakes that surround my plants at regular intervals (at the height of the top of the plants). I try to set all this up just before my crop is getting ripe, to achieve maximum fear factor in the birds.

Whatever you do, have fun! 🍷

Yay for pansies and violas, which can take a little frost and so, can be planted in April to add a little bit of color to the dreary mud season landscape. For those of us who were seduced by the generally warm weather this spring and badly wanted to plant warm weather flowers, herbs and vegetables, the cold, hail, and, yes, snow of mid March came as an unpleasant reminder of the frost date here in Sandisfield. Different sources put the date anywhere from May 15 to June 15. The date is based on an average of temperatures for the past thirty years. Memorial Day weekend traditionally signals the time to plant warm weather crops (tomatoes, cucumbers, corn, peppers and beans), as well as herbs and annuals.

Arts and Culture Review:

Tina Sotis

PAM JOHNSON'S QUILTS

Color. Light. Joy. Passion. And then, upon closer examination, a precision so fine it could only have been accomplished by an engineer or mathematician.

This was my first impression of the new exhibit of botanically-inspired quilts by Pam Johnson at The Sandisfield Arts Center. Each quilt represents her impressions of different flowers from her Monterey woodland garden. Using fabrics instead of paints or pastels, she brings her garden to joyful life.

"Nasturtium" (51" x 36") is one of the largest pieces in the show. It is a blaze of giant red, orange and yellow forms, sewn on top of a blue/green backdrop. Taking her cue from traditional botanical illustrations, Pam places hundreds of swatches of lighter greens in different tonalities in the upper right and deeper greens in the lower left mimicking angles of light.

"Trillium" (23" x 28") is a superb mix of white, yellow and green forms representing this earliest of springtime blooming woodland plants. These forms are sewn on top of a fabric made up of small shapes in oranges and browns. It looks strikingly like flowers lying on a bed

of fallen leaves.

The flowers in the twin pieces, "Iris" and "Hollyhocks" (each 18" x 36") are made up of deep jewel tones - "Hollyhocks" uses deep, luscious reds, imitating the actual hue I've seen in the hollyhocks in my own garden. (See left-side quilt in the photo above.) The backdrops for each are made up of tonally matching green-grays with the shapes in one continuing into the next piece, like a diptych. One can see in the distance a wheat field perhaps, and a pale blue mountain range.

Pam uses color like the master she is - only she can't use paints to accomplish her astonishing range of gradation. She owns "boxes and boxes of fabrics." - organized in meticulous numerical order. She states that she can't leave a fabric store without buying every shade of green because nature has so many variations of that color. Working in painstaking detail, she uses color that actually mimics the glorious flowers she renders.

Besides her superb use of color, the



Photo Setsuko Winchester

shape of each of the hundreds of scraps of fabric in every quilt brings a sense of perfect geometry to her work. She resists the obvious use of rounded, organic shapes in favor of more angular forms. It is, in her words, "the precision of the process that speaks to the engineer in me." When Pam is not working at her craft, she maintains acres of woodland gardens and - she designs websites! She is also one of the founding Trustees of the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School in North County. She came, you see, from a technological background - Here is an artist who is able to blend her passion for both the botanical and technological worlds into these sumptuous pieces.

Her show is at the Arts Center until June 27th. Color photos of her quilts and information about her working process can be found online at our website www.sandisfieldtimes.org/pamjohnson.pdf. 🍷



THE SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER

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\$10; \$5 UNDER 14

VAUDEVILLE ON WHEELS



KARL SALITER. This wonderful show features high unicycles, juggling, and continuous laughter. An evening for both children and adults!

SATURDAY, JUNE 26TH 8PM
\$15

BOBBY SWEET

His life in the small Berkshire town of Washington is the inspiration for his songs about the loves and lives of those around him.



IN THE GALLERY
THRU JUNE 27TH
FREE

PAM JOHNSON QUILTS

Garden-inspired quilts on display.

THE FINAL RESULTS:

Winners in **BOLD CAPITALS** and write-in candidates in *italics*.

Moderator: **JOHN SKRIP** (33), *Barbara Cormier* (11), *Robert Fredsall*, (1), *Steve Harasyko* (1), *Bob Tarasuk* (1), *Ralph Morrison* (2), blanks (173)

Selectman – One Year: **JEFFREY GRAY** (106), *Kathleen Jacobs* (103), blanks (13)

Selectman – Three Years: **RICHARD CAMPETTI** (155), *Robert Fredsall* (57), *Kathleen Jacobs* (1), *Ed Riiska Jr* (1), blanks (8)

Tax Collector: **EDNA LEAVENWORTH** (191), blanks (31)

Auditor: *Bob Tarasuk* (1), *Bob Minery* (2), *Ralph Morrison* (2), *John Skrip* (1), *Peter Levine* (1), *Barbara Cormier* (1), blanks 214

Board of Assessors – One Year: **THERESA DELLAGIUSTINA** (158), blanks (64)

Board of Assessors – Three Years: **BETHANY PERRY** (181), blanks (41)

School Committee – One Year: **NICHOLAS DELLAGIUSTINA** (161), blanks (61)

School Committee – Three Years: **JOHN SKRIP** (166), *Andrew Snyder* (1), blanks (55)

Board of Health: **MARGARET O'CLAIR** (173), *Lisa Leavenworth* (1), blanks (48)

Planning Board: **GENE RIISKA** (137), *Charles Pease* (27), *Ralph Morrison* (2), blanks (56)

Library Trustee: **ANINA CARR** (106), *Tara Beardsley* (100), blanks (16)

The huge number of blanks cast for the job of Auditor suggests the Town is little interested in maintaining such a post. It would require a change in the bylaws to scrap the position.

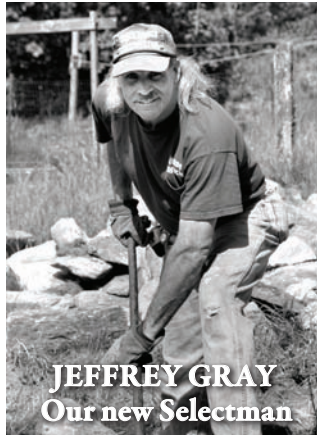


Photo Setsuko Winchester

ELECTION ANALYSIS

THE CURSE OF THE BLANKS

(WITH SOME HELP FROM SCROOGE MCDUCK)

By the Editor

With Jeffrey Gray and Anina Carr squeaking through by narrow margins for the only announced contested posts in the Town elections last May 17 – and with John Skrip winning a modest write-in-only race for Moderator – it might be thought that Sandisfield witnessed the climax of a memorably exciting campaign season.

In fact quite the opposite was true. This was a strangely unsatisfactory election – boycotted by most and disdained by many, and with our town showing itself in a mutinous, dyspeptic frame of mind.

The group of volunteers who oversaw, counted and processed the votes said they had seldom witnessed such a wholesale disregard of the democratic process – evidently reflecting in microcosm what is said to be a nationwide anti-government mood.

Only 222 of our 572 voters bothered to show up – a far smaller number than normal. (By contrast 300 voted last January in statewide polls to elect a successor to the late Sen. Edward Kennedy.)

When they got to the privacy of the booth, many Sandisfield voters either spoiled their ballots (there were votes cast for Superman, Joe Dirt, Mickey Mouse

and Scrooge McDuck), they wrote in candidates without their permission, or else in large numbers they left blanks on the voting paper as a deliberate signal of their dissatisfaction.

There were no fewer than 17 write-in candidates – a far greater number than ever before. Ralph Morrison, the current Fire Chief, found himself being written-in for posts as Auditor and Moderator and for a seat on the Planning Board (he lost all three, though had sought none of them.) Some other write-in candidates did comparatively handsomely: Charles Pease won 27 backers for the Planning Board seat, and John Skrip got 33 for Moderator. But while Skrip did want the post, Pease did not – those voting for him simply wasted their energies.

As did the 57 citizens who voted for Robert Fredsall in what was merely a nominally contested race for the three-year Selectman post. His name was put forward in what the Town called ‘a juvenile prank’ at the Caucus meeting, with Fredsall compounding the farce by announcing his lack of interest only after the ballot was printed. Despite townspeople having been told repeatedly that a vote for him was a waste, a sizable number decided to cast for him anyway.

Complexities of a poll like this, made for some difficulties during the count, which was finished in about 90 minutes – an unusually long time, considering how few voted. “But that was because we had to check to make sure the write-ins were legal residents of town,” said an official observer. “If they were legal, then we had to count the vote. But Mickey Mouse? How childish some people can be!”



MISSING: ONE GLEAM OF COLOR

By Liana Toscanini

I fly my American flag pretty proudly. Maybe it's because I lived in France for a year, in Normandy no less, where they are still thanking us for June 6, 1944. Maybe it's because I live in a house that pre-dates America and its stars and stripes. I like pledging allegiance to our flag, an instant reminder some forty years later of the grammar school ritual. Though now I understand our nation is divisible (into red and blue for example) and liberty and justice aren't always for all (Don't ask, don't tell). Eyes moist, I sing the Star Spangled Banner, one of the few national anthems in the world devoted to a flag.

In 1914, Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, delivered a Flag Day address revealing words he said the flag had spoken to him that morning: “I am what you make me; nothing more. I swing before your eyes as a bright gleam of color, a symbol of yourself.”



TOWN OF and below on two lines 1762 and SANDISFIELD. You can see it on the Flags of the World web site or, as luck would have it, on the cover of our town's Annual Report. What you can't do, however, is see it in person. The original, which hung for years

Sandisfield has its own gleam of color. Our Town Flag, designed and hand-sewn by Rosemary Platt sometime in the 1970's, features a white background with a gold crowned shield with three red crosses and a red zigzag line. Above is written

in the old Town Hall, has been misplaced. Elaine O'Brien, co-chair of the 250th birthday celebration, is actively hunting for it. If you have any information as to the suspected whereabouts of the flag, please call the 250th Birthday Hotline at 269-4465.

Rosemary remembers the day she got a call from Boston inviting Sandisfield to display its Town Flag in the Statehouse. Equipped with excellent sewing skills passed down from her mother, Rosemary set to work painstakingly appliquéing each letter and symbol. A busload of Sandisfield seniors attended the Statehouse ceremony, although no one can quite remember exactly what year this all took place.

Flag day is June 14. Proudly hail the stars and stripes and hope for proof through the night that our town flag is still there...somewhere.

OF A LADY WHO WAS JUST MEANT TO BE

By Rita Kasky



Photo Setsuko Winchester

If you raise chickens in Sandisfield, as many do, and you happen to have a terribly territorial rooster who not only bites the hand that feeds it but tries to take your legs off as well, just call **Elaine O'Brien**, our woman extraordinary, for a lesson in rooster

management. She will tell you how, after a long sparring session with one of hers, she got hold of a plastic bat and thumped her recalcitrant bird on the head. That should have ended the attack, but it didn't. He charged again. She gave him one more chance and he blew that one, too. So, out came the BB gun and a dead-eye shot (literally) laid him out and ended the war. While not proud of this technique, Elaine promises that it works. (For more information on Elaine and the animal world, just ask Margaret O'Clair to tell you about Elaine and the turkeys and the dogs.)

And that's not all that Elaine does that works. As Elaine prepares for retirement, for what she refers to as Chapter 3 of her life (The New Part), we take you back over her years in Sandisfield and you'll understand why the Massachusetts House of Representatives was recently moved to issue a resolution stating,

among other things, that "Elaine has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of all around her and we are all grateful for the service she has provided the town of Sandisfield throughout the years."

Elaine divides her life into three chapters. Chapter 1: Having my Children. Elaine moved to Sandisfield from New Britain, CT in 1981. Although she had attended business school and trained for secretarial work, for the most part she settled in as a stay-at-home mom. She married young, raised daughters Laura and Rebecca, got divorced, led the Brownies and devoted an enormous amount of time to "kid-oriented" activities, efforts that paid off as she and her family became part of the community. As the girls grew, Elaine needed to find work to make ends meet. Her search was satisfied two-fold when, in 1991, she became the town's school bus driver (you've seen her in her red van with her charges piled in) and clerk to the assessors' office. "I was in the right place at the right time. It was meant to be". (Present husband Bill O'Brien will tell you that's her favorite phrase.)

Chapter 2: Finding My Way. The assessors' office was a perfect spot for Elaine. It suited her intelligent and patient temperament to a tee. "I had to help people understand why and what they're being taxed for. Never in a million years did I think I'd end up in the type of office that is so generally disliked. I mean, I LIKE PEOPLE, and here I am in an office where a lot of people come in with a chip on their shoulder. They very rarely have a positive attitude about any tax office. We had to put people at ease, listen to their problems and their thoughts about how they think they should be resolved, and then explain to them why things are the way they are. When we could make adjustments, we did, and when we couldn't, they generally didn't go away feeling misled. They understood how things were. The best part of the job was successfully creating an atmosphere of confidence and

trust in our office." Clare English, our Town Treasurer, talks about her buddy Elaine in glowing terms. "Elaine always put our residents first. She stuck with the letter of the law but everyone felt better for having talked with her. She saw the best in people. It will be difficult without her."

Elaine's mark is found everywhere at Town Hall. Over the years she's established a record as part of the Cultural Council, the Finance Committee, as a justice of the peace, notary public, secretary to the Conservation Commission and the Board of Health, a library trustee and, of course, as a member of the Select Board. And so much more. What does she say about all the family, friends and colleagues that have filled her life these past 19 years? Pointing to her husband, children and grandchildren she says, "That's my blood family" and turning to the crowd at Town Hall when Smitty Pignatelli presented her with the House of Representatives Resolutions: "That's my life family".

Chapter 3: The New Part. Now. Elaine's demands are simple: occasional 2 or 3 week car trips with Bill; time with the children and grandchildren, listening to the birds and watching the garden grow. Once in a while, on a cold, clear early morning, she may drive up on the rise where she used to take the school bus, to capture the crystalline images that sparkle in the quiet dawn. Where better than Sandisfield: a fine place for such things. 🍷



EMS/FIRE BLOTTER

The Sandisfield Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Squad responded to the following incidents during April of this year:

Fire Calls:	
Brush Fires	3
Motor Vehicle accidents	1
Mutual Aid	1
Ambulance Calls:	
Motor Vehicle Accidents	1
Medical calls	5
Total all calls	11

Please contact Chief Ralph Morrison at 258-4742 if you are interested in joining the fire department or becoming an EMT on the ambulance squad. 🍷

Celebrate Tolland!

**Saturday,
July 10 - 11am**

**BICENTENNIAL
PARADE**

Followed by

**FESTIVITIES
on the GREEN**

Noon: Awards, Presentation
of Town Flag
Burial of Time Capsule, Booths,
Food & Much More!

2 pm: Historical Presentation at Church
2 pm: Kid's Games on the Green
3 pm: Bicentennial Cake
and program by Bruce Mandel

Happy 200th Tolland!

❦

HATCHED, MATCHED & DISPATCHED

**David A. Kelley
1930 - 2010**

Former Sandisfield Selectman David A. Kelley, 79, died April 30, at his home on Viets Road.

Born in Westfield on Nov. 30, 1930, son of Andrew and Ever Kelley, he graduated from Westfield High School in 1948.

He served in the Army and was stationed in Korea. After the service, he apprenticed and then worked on his own as a traveling farrier for over 40 years.

He leaves his wife of 59 years, Gertrude. In addition to his wife, he leaves his daughters, Jaque Kelley-Uyeoka of Kailua, Hawaii, Roberta Lasch of Sandisfield and her husband, Paul, Patricia Lamont of Becket and her husband, John, and also his son, David, Jr. of Carlisle, Pa., and his wife, Ellen. He also leaves his sister, Theresa, and her husband, Ross Rogers, and his brother, Peter Kelley, and his wife, Barbara. He also has thirteen grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

He was selectman for the Town of Sandisfield for over 21 years and past president of Berkshire County Selectmen's Association. He was a life member of the American Legion and VFW and past commander of the Legion Post 456 for over 20 years. He was also past president of the Westfield Riding Club and a member of the Connecticut Trail Riders Assoc.

Those who wish may make memorial contributions to the Lee Regional VNA or HospiceCare in the Berkshires, both in care of Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230. Remembrances, memories and reflections may be sent to the family: www.finnertyandstevens.com

And the dog's name is...? TALES FROM THE DUMP

By Forrest Hull

This month marks the first year anniversary since I have taken over at the Transfer Station, and what an experience I have had. I have met some incredible people, but learning everyone's name has proven to be a daunting task, but nonetheless I have been able to manage. When I took over a little over a year ago there was much work that needed to be done. Permits needed to be purchased and brought with you to the dump, and we needed to clarify what is recyclable and what is not.

They claim that you cannot teach old dogs new tricks, but here in Sandisfield, we have proven that you can. It all started with the Bulky Waste Collection and large amounts of construction debris. Bulky Waste is a service provided by the town for the residents to get rid of that old couch that has been on the back porch for years, or the mattress that you just cannot sleep on one more night.

Recycling was and still is the big issue that needs to be addressed. In the United States people throw 80% of what is recyclable into the trash and our recycling rate is only 28% of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW). I would say roughly 90% of the residents here recycle, but the young able-bodied adults are all too willing to throw everything into the crusher, whether it is in one bag or it is all separated. Meanwhile I watch our senior citizens

struggle to make sure everything gets disposed of properly. Aluminum cans are the number one item that Americans choose to throw into the garbage, but one aluminum Coca-Cola can, if recycled, create enough energy to run your flat screen television for three hours. Over the course of one month enough aluminum cans are thrown away to rebuild America's entire fleet of Commercial Airplanes every three months. So please do us all a favor and put the recycling where it belongs so it doesn't go in the landfill.

Did you know that if we recycle one ton (2000 pounds) of paper we can save 17 trees, two barrels of oil, and 4, 100 kilowatts of energy. That's enough oil to run your car for 1,260 miles, and enough electricity to run your house for six months. But the best part is we will save 3.2 cubic yards of landfill space, and sixty pounds of pollution every month. If you don't want people to read your old bank statement or credit card information shred it. Shredded paper is still recyclable. And save space by breaking down the boxes, it won't affect their ability to be recycled!



Photo Setsuko Winchester

Is recycling a thorn in your side? Do you find it difficult to separate everything before it goes into the garage? Well here are some helpful tips that hopefully will encourage you to recycle. Keep containers for collecting paper in your main work area, avoid pests and odors by rinsing out the container, and recycle aluminum foil that has been used for wrapping, not for cooking, as it is soiled with grease and food.

So what's the name of the dog? That is the million dollar question that everyone asks! Her name is Dixie! 🐕



IN THE IDLE HILLS OF SUMMER

Lauren Paul practices acupuncture in Sandisfield, and is fascinated by the intricacies of the Chinese concepts of yin and yang. Here she explains how they relate to our seasons, and our lives.

The longest days of the year are upon us. We can usually count on the summer solstice being a time of light and warmth. We are outside and active, social, playful and outgoing – these are the qualities of what the Chinese ancients called yang.

But even at the pinnacle of yang – the summer solstice – the seeds of its polar opposite, yin, are in play.

The idea of yinyang is all about comparison along a continuum – things are relatively darker or lighter; colder or warmer; more open or more closed; angrier or more peaceful. The fullness of the solstice, the warm

sun, the emotion of joy, action, partnership, the process of maturation, these are also the qualities of the Chinese fire element. Fire is born of and nourished by another of the 'famous five', the wood element. In this we have the energy of spring, being able to push up and out, the motivation for our creative urges, the ideas, visions, imagination, problem solving and decision-making ability that feeds fire's flowering. Wood, being from a seed, is born ultimately of the element of water. This third element is representative of the season of quiet, of listening – the seeds of our ideas, the foundation for our ability to act.

The metal element – the minerals deep within – feeds this well of potential. Think of the autumn harvest, and of compost. In the coming fall season we let go of what no longer serves us, pruning out the non-essential while retaining that which is valuable. As the tree releases its leaves, letting them fall to nourish the earth, so we appreciate the season of acknowledging what is; we mourn at what is lost and we move along our way.

In the center of this imaginary circle of life we have the fifth and final element: the earth. And in this warming earth lies the fruit of summer's maturity. We share it with one another and celebrate the plenty. But we also celebrate what earth stands for: stability, security – and home.

So at this time of solstice we are full of light – and yet we ready ourselves for the gradual darkening coming. That's why yin is also in play. In the medicine based on yinyang it is this ability to adapt to change, a quality of resiliency, that is recognized as health. To be in healthy balance we need to recognize the simple self-regulating mechanisms of the earth as it turns and changes. We need a balance of rest and exercise. We need good nourishment and plenty of pure Sandisfield water. We need good friends and the ability to balance hanging on and letting go. We also need a creative outlet for our visions and ideas. Let us nurture the positive energy we have within us and celebrate the season. Happy solstice to us all. 🌞

The Traveling Salesmen Val Coleman

Come along Sandisfield!
We got old together!
All these years we've been selling
Our poems and songs
To one another...
Some sacred, most profane.
We're like two old railroad whisky drummers
In a town without a train.



Country Diary

Mick Burns

On one of those long, light-filled June days I spotted a deer, a doe, stationary among the roadside brushy trees. It was right between the old Monterey firehouse and that town's early parsonage, built in 1750. I immediately pulled over and killed the engine. She stood motionless for a few moments, then took a halting step forward. Stillness. A turn of the head and motionless again. The June grasses were tall and further back from the road there were no trees to retreat to. This went on for several minutes; quick steps and a slight adjustment of the head, then stillness for a minute or so in between. Ordinarily I would have expected her to have retreated or moved on by now. Then my confusion was answered when I saw a slight movement in the grass behind her: She has a young one! I watched as two young ones appeared to elevate slightly and make their way for about 15 feet or so and then collapse to the ground. Exhaustion? Obeying orders? A few minutes later they repeated this sequence which landed them at the top of the short bank just beyond the shoulder of the road. At this time my brain went into high gear: "She's not going to lead them...That's a blind corner...What kind of mother are you?...She doesn't know any better...Can't you see?...Oh, boy..." Sure enough, Mom walked down the bank. "Oh, no, will this next segment get them across? I don't think so." Now, in plain view at the edge of the road, the twins move directly into the oncoming lane. Brain: "Come on, come on...you can do it." Mom was already across, she knew better than to dally there. I could sense her exhorting them to keep going. The two little ones moved haltingly towards her on their yet unsteady legs. Then, wham, they suddenly col-

lapse in a heap right on the double yellow lines. In a flash I was out of the truck and running, still not knowing what I would do. Should I run around the corner and be a traffic cop? How will I move them? Will Mom attack me? Man, are they small! The next thing I know, I see my hands reaching down to grab one and Mom comes trotting toward me. I grab one around the middle, my fingers and thumbs meeting around its girth. I feel its tiny fragile ribs in my palms and its body stiffens as it holds its stick-like legs in the same position they held as when it had lain there on the road. It made no sound but I felt a tiny heart beating impossibly fast, and I smelled the pup-like scent of new life. A few quick, giant steps to the other side of the road, then I place it gently on the ground. Quickly, I go back to the other one. Still I hear no cars, thankfully. I grab number two in the same manner. As I lift it off the road, this one starts writhing and flailing its legs uncontrollably and bleating startlingly loud. I think, "Is this one a male?" Mom circles me and I see in her eye the concerned look of a helpless parent. In a couple of seconds I set this one down next to the first and speed walk back to my truck. I turn and see Mom sniffing them. After resting a minute or two they rise shakily and continue their progress as before. A vehicle comes around the corner, slowing briefly to glance at the down. The little family slowly make their way into the woods and out of sight.

That summer, I see the three of them occasionally, then in August I see just two young ones together. In September while driving along a dirt road I spy a single fawn. It seems confused and curious, lost. I exit the truck, it takes a step towards me. Over the next 20 minutes, as I do my best browsing deer impersonation, the curious one and I slowly make our way toward each other. Stretching out its neck and I my hand, we come within a few feet of each other. Then, suddenly, its whole demeanor changes and it bounds away for 100 feet or so, stops to look back, then scurries through the meadow and into the forest. I think, "Baby's growing up." - And then wonder... 🐾

COOKIES, CULTURE – AND CASH!

By Courtney Maum

Many of you might not be aware that Sandisfield has a cultural council, but if you've ever attended a concert at the Sandisfield Arts Center, a watercolor class at the library, or participated in an educational event at the Farmington River Regional Elementary School, you've experienced the ways in which the Sandisfield Cultural Council (SCC) supports arts, humanities and interpretive science programs in our community. As a local branch of the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), each year the SCC receives an allocation from the MCC and an appropriation from the Town of Sandisfield for distribution to deserving individuals and organizations across the Berkshires. This past year SCC awarded a total of \$5,014. The largest grant was \$1,000, awarded to the Sandisfield Arts Center. The average grant is around \$300.

In order to qualify for an SCC grant, the activity must contribute to the cultural vitality of the community as a whole and be based locally. This year we received 26 applications and elected to fund 14 of them. Several funded proposals included: Laura Lin's **Moving Me to Learn**, an educational dance program; Diego Ongaro's film, **Sandisfield: The Tale of a Town**, a documentary film (in which I am involved; naturally I had to recuse myself from the vote); and Bernard Drew's **Sandisfield Then and**



Massachusetts Cultural Council

Now, a history of the town to be written in time for our 250th anniversary. In addition the SCC also funds "Pass Grants" to help cover the costs of educational field trips for local students.

The next grant deadline is October 15th, 2010. Submission guidelines are available through www.mass-culture.org

Currently, the SCC only has five members. By contrast the Otis Cultural Council – which disburses only a little bit more than we do, \$6,700 - has eleven. We need new members in order to qualify for continued funding from the state. The duties are not onerous, nor is the work arduous: maybe 12 hours a year, much of the time spent talking and munching cookies. With the Sandisfield 250th anniversary rapidly approaching, this is an exciting time to be part of the SCC. So if you want to have a say in our town's cultural future, contact joinscc@gmail.com today! 🍪



THE BOOKISH HEART OF TOWN

At last month's election there was more voter interest in electing a Library Trustee than for any other position in town. Clearly we feel passionate about the future of the little red house on Route 57. Charlene Peet helps explain why.

Our very first library was just a one-room structure, on the corner of the Pease property on Route 8, started sometime after the war. It was staffed by volunteers or trustees. Twenty years later mold and mildew had rendered much of its permanent collection unusable. Many books had to be discarded. But after a thorough cleaning and painting and with the help of the Western Massachusetts Regional Library it was restored to use and became a regularly scheduled location for the Bookmobile Stop.

But then, around the time of the Bicentennial, a movement for a new and larger library got underway. A plaque on the stone wall in front of the present building indicates the property was given by Angelo and Carol Campetti in 1977. Another and larger plaque in the same stone wall

designates the building as the Sandisfield Library and Community Center – an important distinction, since an application for state matching funds was rejected until the word “and Community Center” were added. The building of the library became a community project through and through. Many people living in Sandisfield, both tradesmen and men and women with willing hands still recall with pride, “I remember helping build the Library”.



Photo Setsuko Winchester

Due again to space limitations, the Sandisfield Library's permanent collection would be characterized essentially as “recreational reading”. Since December 2008, Laurie Foulke Green, as Librarian, is the person behind the desk who welcomes you to the Library and helps you find what you need. Eugene English is that person on Wednesday evenings. Prior to Laurie, Pat Richard became librarian when Ruth Dwyer retired in mid-2004. Ruth Dwyer served as librarian for at least a full generation of patrons. It was during her tenure that the computer came of age. Ruth was initially reluctant to become computer-literate, but soon overcame it. It opened the doors to an elaborate system of inter-library loans through the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System (WMRLS). These loans are the principal way a small library with a limited permanent collection can serve broader interests. Ruth soon found great delight in filling requests for books from Sandisfield patrons that ended up arriving from all over the state and beyond. Laurie Green indicates that is one of her pleasures, as well. Laurie is especially pleased with a new acquisition. Thanks to a gift the library now has a second computer which is fully dedicated to patron use.

There are other people who make the Library work. In addition to Clare English as Chairman, the Library Board of Trustees includes Anita Wirth and Anina Carr, elected on May 17th to succeed Elaine O'Brien. While the trustees determine overall policies of the library, Sadie O'Rourke, as Library Director addresses the more operational issues. She is currently preparing a questionnaire for every household in Sandisfield asking how the library can better serve us. Please do not ignore it -- it is your way to have a voice in Library matters.

“The Friends of the Sandisfield Library” an informal and enthusiastic group of volunteers, have

done extraordinary work on the new community center downstairs: It has been painted, there are gopod bathrooms, attractive new carpentry, comfortable new stacking chairs, attractive new drapes. It is probably one of the town's best kept secrets - a really neat year-round meeting place available downstairs in our library.

There's always a down-side. Presently in the State of Massachusetts, the recession and the attendant budgetary cuts are creating a crisis for the various Regional Libraries that support small communities like Sandisfield. While the Western Massachusetts Region has put up a strong resistance to the idea, the likelihood remains that these services may very well become centralized nearer to Boston. While every effort will be made to preserve the Interlibrary Loan program, the administration and delivery system for this vital service will feel much more remote.

What we do know from history is that while change is inevitable, libraries are here to stay. We go there to gather facts and information and glean knowledge for living our lives now. And it is through our literature that we come to know who we are and where we have been. To preserve and seek it out is the beginning of wisdom. ♣

Current Library Hours are:
Mondays- 9:00AM - 12:30PM
Tuesdays - 9:00AM - 1pm
Wednesday- 6:30PM - 8:30PM
Thursdays- 9:00AM - 1pm
Saturdays - 9:30AM - 11:30AM



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

AVIAN NOTES

Margaret O'Clair


MOM, WE'RE PLAYING FUNERALS NOW

This is the time of the year when many a parent gets that "OH NO" sinking feeling when they see their child, hands cupped in front, coming home with a "rescued" baby bird. Of course parents want to encourage the nurturing instinct of their children, but unless there is someone in the household who can regurgitate worms and insects on demand, the chances of successfully raising a wild chick are just about nil. The best thing to do is to return the bird to the place where it was found. If it has feathers and especially if it is chirping, it is very likely the parents are in the area, will hear it and continue to feed it until it can fend for itself.



Some birds, Phoebes, Barn Swallows, Robins for example, often build nests in manmade structures. If the nest is readily accessible simply put the chick back in the nest. There is an old wives tale that the adult birds will smell human contact and reject the chick but since few birds have a developed sense of smell this is not the case.

Very young birds do not fall out of their nests, they are usually pushed, given the heave ho by an older stronger hatchling who wants no competition for parental attention. Fratricide among birds of prey is quite common. Parasitic egg layers, such as the Cuckoo and the Cowbird lay their eggs in smaller bird's nests and as these alien chicks grow and grow they will push the real chicks out. The ubiquitous yellow warbler is the only bird I know that recognizes the foreign egg and abandons its nest to start over.

Leaving the nest at any age is a risky business and the younger the bird the more perilous it becomes. Perhaps the parents of the would be "baby bird rescuer" can find an opportunity to explain some of life's harder lessons. As the poet wisely observed "Nature, red in tooth and claw." 



Weather & Stars

Randy Siddell

MOST NEVER KNOW

I often think about how much time I spent as a child looking at the night sky. There was a sense of wonder that even now I can't define, about laying on the grass in the pasture behind my house in Iowa and staring up at the stars. I didn't know the names of any of the constellations. I didn't even know there was such a science called "astronomy." That great, sprawling white mass of stars overhead, the thing I would much later in life know as "the Milky Way" filled me with awe, wonder and even a little fear. But little did I know then what I know now: that those nights when I would gaze for hours and hours up at the night sky would become rarer and rarer. For slowly and insidiously, that same sky would become lighter and murkier, less willing to give up its beauty - because of something we now call "Light Pollution."

I was one of the lucky ones. In his book "Nightwatch," astronomer Terrence Dickinson tells of a strange phenomena that occurred in the aftermath of the 1994 earthquake in the pre-dawn hours in Northridge, California. Power was knocked out over a massive area of Los Angeles and when tens of thousands of people rushed out of their homes in the wake of one of the most powerful earthquakes to rock that part of the world, they all witnessed something spectacular: They all saw a starry sky against a velvety blackness that most had never witnessed in their entire lives. In the days and weeks that followed, local media were under siege from phone calls from concerned citizens wondering if that "eerie silvery cloud" (the Milky Way) might have been the cause of the quake.

Light Pollution, according to the Dark Sky Association, is "excessive and inappropriate artificial light." The four components of light pollution are often combined and overlapping:


Urban sky glow—the brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas. **Light trespass**—light falling where it is not intended, wanted, or needed. **Glare**—excessive brightness which causes visual discomfort. High levels of glare can decrease visibility.

Clutter—bright, confusing, and excessive groupings of light sources, commonly found in over-lit urban areas. The proliferation of clutter contributes to urban sky glow, trespass, and glare.

And humans are not the only ones effected by Light Pollution: Wildlife and fish experience this same disorientation of time when there is too much artificial light at night. Behavior governing mating, migration, sleep, and finding food are determined by the length of nighttime. Light pollution negatively disrupts these age-old patterns.

As individuals we can stop from keeping lights on in unoccupied buildings, keep outdoor lights from pointing up to the sky or into a neighbor's yard.

Here in Sandisfield we have our own nightly glow to the east and south of us - probably from Springfield or Winsted - or Lee. Anyone who has gotten onto the Turnpike in Lee during the night hours has experienced the almost daylight conditions caused by the overkill of street lamps. Still - we are luckier than most towns in that we are pretty spread out and we have relatively few street lights. We are higher up than many of our neighboring towns, so the air is clearer. And, on those cold, dry winter nights, even though the Milky Way is less visible than it was in my younger days, I am still astonished by a sky so black it is studded with stars.

As was the Rev. Edmund Sears, who was born and raised in Sandisfield on Silverbrook Road. In 1840, so black were the skies he wrote the Christmas carol: *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*. He'd be hard pressed to do that today. 

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P.O. Box 584
Sandisfield, MA 01255



OUR OLD HOMES: HANDING ON THE PAST TO OUR FUTURE

Many of the homes in Sandisfield are very old, and very wonderful. Most who are fortunate enough to own such properties like to think they are caretaking them for succeeding generations.

We all cherish our privacy, of course – but every so often a home-owner is happy to lift the lid a little, as we do now, and share with our readers the marvels of inhabited history.

The John Stewart House 250 Cold Spring Road

This land was first settled by Lemuel Dunham from Wilbraham, MA, around 1785. Sixty years later his grandson Gamaliel gave the land to John Stewart, a young man from Monterey who was betrothed to his daughter Susan. Stewart was probably a carpenter and was the man who built the two-story modified Greek Revival style house in about 1848.

He had grand plans. He installed an unusually large staircase and fluted moldings around the doors and windows, fancier trimmings than most country places of the time. Stewart lived there for sixty years - then sold it to a neighbor, Frank Hawley, in 1908, telling him that the fancy materials had been reserved for an elegant new home on South Beech Plain Road but that his contracting customer "was very motivated to depart the State rather suddenly." Hawley then lived in there for 22 years, eventually transferring title to his daughter Ada and her husband Alford Rowley, who died in 1963.



It was on Mr. Rowley's death that the house was put on the market, and Dr. Ronald E. Myers, a dentist from New Jersey, bought the property as a "rustic vacation place." It was in poor condition - there were few windows, a leaking roof and no electricity, indoor plumbing or septic.

Ron Myers did however discover remnants of an early Dunham family enterprise, a slaughterhouse – in a field now heavily wooded. According to legend the meat was sold from a wagon on the road. In 1967 the Myers exchanged land with the town, a move which reconfigured the old farm road further away from the house.

Dr. Myers, with second wife Roberta Baxter and a combined family of 7 children, began renovations and expansion once power became available in 1971, and found it possible to live there full-time in 1975. But central heating wouldn't arrive until 1988.

Barns and outbuildings were also repaired or newly constructed on both sides of the road, recreating a bucolic, small family farm atmosphere, with chickens and sheep to complete a picture of perfect small-town elegance.

We are going to try to sketch the history of all of our old homes for **Sandisfield Then And Now: 1762-2012**, a comprehensive history of our town slated for publication in the summer of 2012 to mark our 250th Anniversary celebrations. The book will be edited by Bernard Drew, the well known Berkshires historian. Anyone with knowledge or stories about an old Sandisfield house is urged to contact Ron Bernard, co-chair of the book project. Email us at Info@SandisfieldThenAndNow.org. Or, call Ron: 413 269-0012.

For more about the project please visit this website: www.SandisfieldThenAndNow.org



HIGH NOON IN SANDISFIELD

Sandisfield, town of endless surprises, turns out to be home to one of this country's most honored revolver shooters. Craig Buckland, 45, an analytical chemist from South Sandisfield, has just won, and handily, the North East Regional Contest of the International Confederation of Revolver Enthusiasts held on May 2nd. He goes to the national championships, due to be held in Oklahoma city this summer: all of us here cross our fingers.



Photo Setsuko Winchester



OUR TOWN ELECTION

To the Editor:

I would like to complain publicly at how little we seem to regard democracy here in town - forgetting it is the bedrock of our Constitution.

I was at a meeting in the Town Hall a while back, when candidates for election were being chosen - and a pair of jokers put forward the name of a guy named Fredsall, saying he'd like to be Selectman. Then I read in your paper (excellent, by the way) that this was all a big laugh, and no-one should vote for him because he didn't want to be considered.

Now I see this Fredsall person - a nice guy, I'm sure - got 57 votes! Sure he lost, but why on earth did anyone vote for him? Why on earth did anyone put his name forward, and then admit later they were just fooling around?

This is making a mockery of our system, and I hope it doesn't happen again. Take voting seriously, people! Behave yourselves!

Good wishes (and please don't use my name in the paper)

NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED.



To the Editor:

Participating in the election process was a wonderful experience. During these past weeks I have meet so many of you in the community and had many interesting and fun conversations. We were not successful this year ... I would like to extend a big "Thank you" to everyone who voted for me on Election Day.

Many Thanks!!!

Kathleen [Jacob]

BACK YARD JUNK

To the Editor:

I would like to add my thoughts to the "junk cars" by-law issue. I've lived in Sandisfield for over thirty years and their appearance has always bothered me. I know that my feelings are not shared by all, but I

think that a discussion about the effect they have on property values, the environment, and the natural beauty of the town is long overdue. I don't think we should single out any one property. Instead, I hope that "The Sandisfield Times" can be a forum for an open discussion.

Sincerely,
Anina Carr



To the Editor,

I've been coming to Sandisfield for almost fifty years now, and in some ways I still feel like an outsider. My reasoning for this is that I yield to the families who have lived in Sandisfield for many generations. Anyone who truly understands Sandisfield views these old families as the true representatives of Sandisfield. This is the way it was a long time ago in many towns across America, but Sandisfield is one of the last holdouts in this area where this tradition has survived. It provides the town with a rich heritage that is still alive, unlike many towns where their long held traditions are on the endangered list. However, maintaining this way of life has trade-offs in which the town can look a little raggedy at times, as opposed to the surrounding towns, which have seen much more progress. Of course I'd like to see Sandisfield spruced up at times, but I prefer maintaining the town culture rather than seeing it gentrified.

Gentrification is generally associated with our major cities, but this process is also taking place in towns all across New England. As small towns gentrify, property values increase thus making it unaffordable for the former residents. Perhaps this will be the future of Sandisfield, but the monetary value gained, will not be worth the character that was lost.

As long as we keep a dialogue going between the new and the old residents, we can make improvements to the town, while still maintaining affordability. Sandisfield is a unique town, and this quality is why we call it our home.

Larry Dwyer
37 West St.

ROAD SALT

To the Editor:

I am pleased to offer a response to a letter received from Richard Friedman & Ruth Dec-Friedman last month concerning the high salt content in their well water. The letter conveyed their frustration and sought advice so they could stop hauling bottled drinking water, bathing in saltwater and living in fear that their appliances and plumbing would rust away.

After purchasing our home located on RT. 57 in New Boston village in 1988 we lived with its shallow-depth well along with the same concerns and water problems until about two years ago when we had a new deep-depth well dug only to find that the salt content, although reduced, continued to persist. That's when

we turned to the MassDOT's Highway Division and applied under the agency's Salt Remediation Program. Established in 1986, the program allows private homeowners the opportunity to apply for assistance.

Under the program the agency investigates your well water over a 12-month period that involves personnel from UMASS taking samples and sending it to a professional lab for testing its contents for salt and other contaminants. If the results are conclusive and the agency deems that your well qualifies under this program, you as the homeowner may agree to allow the agency to take appropriate action to remediate the salt contamination. In the case of our property, this resulted in a new 600' depth well replacing the one we installed two years ago. Although we continue drinking bottled water out of habit, we no longer are showering or subjecting our appliances and plumbing to salt water.

For information on MassDOT's Salt Remediation Program on the web: www.mhd.state.ma.us/downloads/environ/Salt_Brochure0110.pdf

Sandy & Flora Parisky
99 North Main Street

POOR HONEY BEES

To the Editor:

I wanted to say how moved I was by Mick Burns' depiction of the loss of his bees over the winter due to starvation. I wondered if there was anything that we, as his neighbors and members of this community, could do to help his bees (and, of course, all bees in general) endure the following winters. There's not much we can do about freezing temperatures or hungry, marauding wild animals of course, but I thought that maybe we could do something about providing materials the bees need to make their food.

A website called www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation-gardens, provides a short list of things we can do to enhance pollinators' ability to produce honey: 1) provide a range of native flowering plants that bloom throughout the growing season, 2) create nest sites for native bees and 3) avoid using pesticides. The Great Sunflower Project (www.greatsunflower.org), claims that honey bees are wildly attracted to sunflowers, bee balm, cosmos, purple coneflower, tickseed and rosemary. This same website also claims that "One of every three bites you took probably came from a plant pollinated by wild pollinators."

Bee balm, tickseed and purple coneflowers I already have aplenty, so this year I am planting sunflowers - four raised beds-full. They will look magnificent in my front yard and have the added benefit of providing a feast for the bees (not to mention the birds!) After all, they provide so much food for me, the least I can do is contribute the building blocks for the honey they so desperately need to get through our freezing winters.

Tina Sotis
10 Stump Road



SANDISFIELD TOWN DIRECTORY

All meetings take place at Town Hall Annex unless otherwise posted

AMBULANCE: 911

Non-Emergency: 258-4742

ANIMAL WARDEN / DOG OFFICER

Kim Spring: 258-4450

ASSESSORS OFFICE: 258-4701

Office Hours: M-Th 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Meets second Wed every month at 5 PM

BOARD OF HEALTH: 258-4053

Meets first Wed every month at 9 AM

BOY SCOUTS (Local): 258-4460

BUILDING INSPECTOR Eric Munson Jr.: 258-4590

CONSERVATION COMMISSION: 258-4712

Meets third Tues, 7pm

CONSTABLES

Nazario Sanchez: 258-4705 Joseph Zeller: 258-4836

COUNCIL ON AGING

Mary Slater 258-4778

Wed: 11 AM – 2 PM Senior Center/Town Hall Annex

DUMP HOURS

Wed: 1 PM – 4 PM Sat/Sun: 9AM – 3 PM

FINANCE COMMITTEE Kathy Jacobs: 258-4487

FRIENDS OF YANNER PARK Robbin Campetti: 258-4615

FIRE DEPARTMENT Emergency: 911

Ralph Morrison, Fire Chief: 258-4742

FARMINGTON RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOL

North Main Street, Otis, MA

Jo Ann D. Austin, Superintendent: 413 269-4466

SCHOOL COMMITTEES

FRRSD meets first Mon, 7 PM

Policy Meeting meets third Mon, 7 PM

School Council meets third Wed, 8:30 AM

GIRL SCOUTS

Tara Beardsley (413) 717-1427

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 513 Meets 2nd Saturday of every month

Norton Fletcher, President: 258-4520

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Elaine Zeigler: 258-4701 John Skrip: 258-4788

LIBRARY: 258-4966

Mon & Tues: 9 AM – 12:30 PM Wed: 6:30 – 8:30 PM

Thurs: 9 AM – 1 PM Sat: 9:30 – 11:30 AM

MA. POISON CONTROL CENTER 800 682-9211

PLANNING BOARD

Meets second Mon every month @ 6 PM

POLICE – LOCAL Emergency: 911

Michael Morrison, Police Chief

258-4742 Non-Emergency: 258-4742

POLICE – STATE Lee Barracks: 413 243-0600

POST OFFICE: 258-4940

Window Hours: Mon – Fri: 8 AM – 12:30 PM &

1 PM – 4 PM: Sat: 9 AM – 11:30 AM

Lobby Hours: M-F: 8AM – 4:30PM Sat: 8AM – 12 PM

ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Chris Rines: 413 717-7627 (c)

Email: sandisfielddpw@wildblue.net

SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER

PO Box 31 258-4100 www.sandisfieldartscenter.org

Barbara Elton, President: 258-4019

SELECTMEN: 258-4711

Mon at 7 PM except July & August on alternate Mondays

STATE OFFICIALS

Benjamin B. Downing, State Senator: 413 442-4008

Email: Benjamin.Downing@state.ma.us

Smitty Pignatelli, State Rep.: 413 637-0631

Email: rep.smittypignatelli@hou.state.ma.us

TAX COLLECTOR: Edna Leavenworth: 258-4977

Mon – Wed: 9 AM – 12 AM

TOWN CLERK: Dolores Harasyko

PO Box 163 sandisfieldtownclerk@wildblue.net

Town Hall Annex: 258-4075

Mon-Thurs: 8AM – 2PM Mon: 6PM – 7pm

TOWN GARAGE: 258-4979

TOWN HALL ANNEX: Mon – Thurs: 8 AM – 2 PM

Secretary: 258-4711; Fax: 258-4225

TOWN TREASURER: Clare English: 258-4712

Mon, Wed 9 AM – 3 PM

VETERANS SERVICES Paul S. Edelman

Great Barrington Town Hall: 413 528-1580

Mon – Thurs: 7 AM – 3 PM

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JUNE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE 9 Sandisfield Cultural Council Mtg 6:45pm
Library

JUNE 11-13 Otis Bicentennial Celebration Picnic,
fireworks, parade, contests, Performances, demonstrations
& more <http://townofotisma.com>

JUNE 12 Alexander Technique, \$15
10am-Noon Sandisfield Arts Center

JUNE 12 Sandisfield Historical Society 11am at the
Meeting House, Rt 183

JUNE 12 Social 6pm Sandisfield Arts Center

JUNE 12 Vaudeville on Wheels 7pm Sandisfield Arts
Center \$10 Adults/\$5 children under 14

JUNE 15 - 7pm. Meeting of the Women's Book Group.
The Book Selection is "All the Pretty Horses" by Cormac
McCarthy. Multi copies of the book should be available
for readers by June 1. At the Library.

JUNE 17 250th Birthday Committee Mtg, 7pm
Town Hall Annex

JUNE 24, 6:15pm - Jacob's Pillow
FREE "Inside/Out" Performance - Viewpointe
Inside/Out Helen Heineman's contemporary ballet
company perform Collage, full of graceful balletic
movement, and Bluegrass, a sprightly work set to music by
American banjo artist Béla Fleck.

JUNE 25, 6:15pm - Jacob's Pillow
FREE "Inside/Out" Performance - Dancewave Company
Inside/Out This company of young student dancers
performs energetic works from internationally renowned
American choreographers

JUNE 25 Last day of School

JUNE 26 Sandisfield Recreation Committee
End-of-school celebration 11am
Tolland State Forest RSVP required! 258-4615

JUNE 26 Bobby Sweet, \$15 8pm Sandisfield Arts
Center

JUNE 27 "A Swift Summer Evening" Berkshire Bach
Society 4pm New Marlborough Meeting House
Berkshire Bach Ensemble & Ben Luxon

JULY 3 - 1pm. The Kick-Off for the 2010 Summer Read-
ing Program. Sadie O'Rourke indicates the happening
will include a Magician's Show. The Reading Program
is open to all elementary school age children. Last year
twenty four students registered.

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

P.O. Box 584
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www.sandisfieldtimes.org

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available in Otis at the Farmington Elementary School and Terranova's. Other locations include the Monterey General Store, the Southfield Store and Bizational's French Cafe.

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