

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



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How Do WE FEEL...

...ABOUT *SOLAR*?

By Simon Winchester

Shall the fair fields of Sandisfield soon be filled with a new growth of what are being called solar orchards?

Will we soon begin to glimpse, beside our roads, behind old stands of trees, on the far side of hitherto empty vistas – the glints of hundreds upon hundreds of tilted photovoltaic sheets, all straining upward toward the heavens to win clean energy from our life-giving nearby star, the sun?

This question - which excites some, and yet deeply troubles others – is currently on everybody's lips, all across the decidedly green-obsessed Massachusetts, and most especially here, among the more bewildered hills of Berkshire County. It is newly on the conversational agenda because representatives from new-energy companies are here trying to buy up or lease parcels of local land with a view to building arrays of solar panels on them and selling the resulting electric power as electricity quite untainted *Cont'd on p.2*

Hopping the Rails to the Berkshires

By Larry Dwyer

When you have friends who want to visit you here in Sandisfield, how do they get here if they don't have a car? They can fly into a nearby airport, take a bus into Winsted or Lee, or take a train to Danbury. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, they will also be able to take the train directly from New York City right into Berkshire County.



Passenger rail service may be returning to the southern Berkshires courtesy of the Housatonic Railroad. The proposed passenger service will operate between New York City's Grand Central Terminal and Pittsfield, MA. The project hinges on the successful procurement of \$200 million in public and private funding for capital expenses needed to upgrade railways and stations. If funding is approved, the service is expected to boost the local economy and increase employment.

According to a cost/ benefits analysis completed by Stephen Sheppard, Economics Professor at Williams College, 733 jobs are expected to be created during the three year construction phase. They include work in construction, railroad service and such ancillary businesses as food service, car rentals and taxi service. When the project is completed 610 jobs of those jobs are expected to be permanent. The increase in economic activity and the impact on tourism are expected to provide Connecticut and Massachusetts with \$29.5 million and the federal government with \$55 million in tax revenue during the first decade.

Present rail conditions limit freight trains to a speed of 35 mph, but if ninety miles of rail are upgraded, passenger service could reach 59 mph. Stations will need to be upgraded to high-level platforms in order to accommodate modern passenger railcars. Handicap access and provisions for bicycles would also be provided. Some of the older stations date back to *Cont'd on p.3*



GET YOUR FINGERS AND TOES READY FOR THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

Which birds stick around in winter and which ones fly away? Where do the birds that leave go? Will the winter weather effect bird populations this year? Did the birds migrate early or late this year as opposed to previous years? How do various diseases effect different birds in different places? These are just some of the questions that can be answered by the annual **Great Backyard Bird Count**. *Cont'd on p.2*

By Debbie Harris

How Do We Feel About *Solar*?

Cont'd from p.1

by the sorry reputations of dirty coal, foreign oil, or highly dangerous atomic energy.

Here in Sandisfield we are presently being bombarded and beguiled by a Connecticut-based solar energy firm, CTC Electric – the initials standing for Cheaper than Coal. The firm is itself the offspring of a private equity firm, Centerstone Partners, which is making a name for itself investing in healthcare products, pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Three of the firm's principals are Harvard MBAs. Their primary focus, as with any ambitious businessmen, is the making of money. It is the firm's stated belief that by installing fields of solar panels in the small towns of the eastern Berkshires, Tolland, Otis and Sandisfield in particular, and by taking advantage of a variety of benefits for green energy installation in Massachusetts, there are handsome profits to be made.

Don and Mary Turek, local realtors and brokers, are acting as agents for CTC, helping them find land that meets CTC's very specific criteria. Parcels should be at the very least five acres, should be flat, sloping if possible slightly to the south, and close to a roadway with access to three-phase power (which is what most transmission lines here carry). Already a few parcels have been rejected – either because they fail to meet the cri-

teria or because (this being Sandisfield) they are classified as wetland on which it is forbidden to build.

But one parcel of land has been provisionally selected: twenty acres of horse-meadow on the north side of Rte. 57, opposite the fire station, and currently owned by a Norfolk resident, William Bures. CTC is planning to buy this land outright, for an undisclosed six-figure sum, and will then erect on it several score of the cells, each mounted on steel or aluminum poles jack-



hammered into the ground. A modest growth of trees currently half-hides the proposed array from the road, though neighbors would see glare as the sun changes its angle during the day. The company is offering to create berms – raised-earth barriers – to minimize the unsightliness of what PR people are trying to have us call solar orchards.

The town of Sandisfield, unfamiliar with how to deal with this very new phenomenon, has recently decided to require CTC to acquire special permits for the installation work. There may consequently be public hearings conducted either by the Select Board or by the Conservation or Planning Boards, which are more intimately involved with the permitting process.

All told, it seems possible that the townspeople may have some say over whether or not we have solar arrays within our boundaries. Some in authority – like selectman Patrick Barrett – believe otherwise: that the Massachusetts state environmental policy, in favor of solar energy, trumps any opposition that might arise in a small town like ours and that we are essentially powerless.

There are sharp divisions here. Some residents have already accused CTC of behaving with “arrogance and condescension” in their dealings with the townsfolk, and among them there is muted but growing anger. But an informal poll conducted over the holiday period suggested that most villagers do indeed want to end America's reliance on greenhouse-gas emitting fuels, “and if the price we have to pay is a bit of glitter in our fields,” as one resident put it, “then maybe we should say - so be it.”

A long and hard debate is about to begin. We will keep you posted. 🇺🇸

Photos: Wikimedia Commons

Great Backyard Bird Count

Cont'd from p.1

Knowing where birds are at any given time can help scientists learn a lot about them. To do this they need to have eyes and ears all over the United States and Canada. So, every February the Audubon Society, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada conduct the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). They need the help of everyone who would like to be part of this annual event – and that means YOU!

This year's GBBC will take place from Friday, February 17 through Monday, February 20, 2012 and bird watchers of all ages are needed for this project. You don't have to be an expert, but you need at least 15 minutes on any one or more of those days to participate. Count the largest number of individual birds of each species that you see together at any one time. Then enter your findings on a checklist on the Internet. Participants can count birds for as short or long a period as they wish during any or all of the four days. The event is free, fun and easy and helps us learn about the birds.

As the count takes place throughout the continent you can watch its progress on the Internet and find out what is being reported in Sandisfield or any place else in the US or Canada. You can see how this year's count compares to previous years.

To get started simply log on to www.birdsource.org/gbbc/. This site will provide you with information about the Great Backyard Bird Count including downloadable data forms and lists of birds likely to be found in your area (including Sandisfield because you can print a list by simply supplying your zip code). This is also the place where you report your results.



Another part of the GBBC website is a Photo Gallery where you can find pictures of many birds. There is even a photo contest. And there are games and activities for all ages. The site allows you to try to identify birds by their songs, play a word puzzle about birds, make bookmarks with a recipe for bird treats, play with jigsaw puzzles and use your crayons to complete a coloring book.

To get you started here are some of the birds commonly seen around Sandisfield: Canada geese, wild turkeys, hawks, pigeons, owls, crows, chickadees and juncos. There are lots more, but this is a list of some that I've seen.

So, get your fingers and toes ready and start counting! Perhaps you could send us a Letter to the Editor to let us know what your counts are. 🇺🇸

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Looking Backward Toward the Future

About a century ago Shalom Rabinowitz (better known as Shalom Aleichem) wrote in Yiddish about the life he observed around him in the shtetls of Russia. Some of his writings eventually made their way onto the stage in the form of *Fiddler on the Roof*. In that play Rabinowitz talked about tradition, and how it forms the stabilizing basis of Jewish life (“without our traditions our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof”). And that is probably as true today as it was then – without our firm footing in the traditions of the past most of us would be quite leery about going forward into the future.

Of course, the legends of the past are not limited to Jewish life. Over the years I’ve been reading about Native American culture, and their belief in “the spiral”, where all things must be kept in balance. In that tradition natural disasters and wars are viewed as the result of nature moving out of balance.

In today’s world many of us are uncomfortable with the pace that modern technology is moving us ahead. While our children and grandchildren merrily text away, many of us are still struggling with all of the ins and outs of our cell



Berkshire Railroad

Cont’d from p.1

the 1800s when cars were a rarity so stations will have to provide additional space for parking.

A market analysis commissioned in 2010 by railroad management was completed by Market Street Research located in Northampton. Projected annual ridership would be 2,000,000 fares per year with 8,000 daily trips in summer and 3,200 in winter. The estimated one way fare from NYC to Pittsfield should be competitive with intercity bus travel and a one-way fare is expected to cost about \$35. The bulk of the potential riders are expected to take once-a-week trips. Those riders represent second home owners, visitors and students, with a small proportion of commuters taking daily trips. The service would provide eight trains per day and the projected revenue is expected to be sufficient so as to require no annual operating subsidies by the state.

The original Housatonic Railroad was chartered in 1836 and the last passenger train ran on April

phones. My husband constantly complains that caller ID renders it impossible for him to make obscene phone calls. Our post offices are being shut down because people only want the ultra-speedy electronic mail, and not the old fashioned “snail mail”. Good or bad, this is what is called “progress”.

But, progress and evolution are inevitable. The trick is to keep them in balance with the wisdom of the past. One of the gateways to do this can be seen in the so-called green movement. Conservation is certainly a way to at least try to keep our ravaged wilderness from further destruction. And, who among us, doesn’t like looking out of our windows at the nature we have always enjoyed right here in Sandisfield?

So, how to keep the old and the new in balance? In this issue we have highlighted three ways. The first is returning rail transportation to the area. The next is to develop an open space plan for Sandisfield, and the last is to embrace solar energy technology. Returning rail service to the Berkshires meets with little resistance, as it is clearly a remembrance of the past.

An open space plan will, hopefully, be the first step in enabling our town to receive grants of financial help necessary to maintain our roads and schools and to fulfill the dream of Yanner Park. In short, it will let us keep some of the things that have made Sandisfield a great place to live.

Perhaps the epitome of technological change is solar energy. Of course, simply because it is perceived as a radical change, solar technology

30, 1971. In 1983, the line was reopened and the Housatonic Railroad name was used again. Housatonic Railroad is now privately owned. They provided expanded freight service to Pittsfield, MA in 1991 and then expanded again in 1992 to include the line from Derby, CT to Beacon, NY. The entire railroad now consists of 161 miles of rail lines devoted to freight transportation.

Housatonic Railroad plans would provide direct service from Grand Central Station in New York City to a change of trains in Danbury on the Metro North New Haven line or in Brewster on the Metro North Harlem line. Service would continue north of Danbury through the Housatonic tracks in Canaan, CT. and on to Pittsfield with stops in between. Housatonic is negotiating with Metro North to operate some through trains straight through from NYC to Pittsfield without having to change trains in Danbury or Brewster. ☐

is bound to make many of us quite uncomfortable. But, just think about it. Electric lines and cell towers are commonplace sights that spoil our landscape, and yet we accept them for the convenient benefits they bring. Logging and oil spills certainly do their part to ruin our environment. These have all been major technological changes. So why is solar energy such a terrible addition? Solar farms use the oldest of all energy sources – the sun; and who among us has not enjoyed heat from the sun while lounging on the beach or even walking down the road on a cool day? Solar panels, while they might be considered an eyesore by some, can be easily hidden by a screen of trees. They cause neither noise nor chemical nor electronic pollution. And, perhaps one of the best things is that solar energy is less expensive than other forms of energy. It is certainly better for the environment than any other technological progress that we have all come to accept as part of modern life. In most ways it is returning us to the past, and thereby attempting to return balance to our universe, to say nothing about the badly needed tax revenue it could bring to our town.

So, let’s look backward in order to move ahead to the future. Don’t let modern technology pass us by, but rather, encourage it to lead us to a vision that embraces the best of the past.

Debbie Harris

Co-Editor, The Sandisfield Times ☐



OWS

Bless the city
Where the drums begin.
Every fifty years or so
We suddenly hear
Our own self singing.

Time is our idle amnesty.
Forgive our silence,
And our interims.
Bless the city
Where the drums begin.

Val Coleman

Sandisfield, Dec. 7, 2011

TOWN HILL - NORTHWEST GOOD FARMERS AND GOOD PEOPLE

By Ron Bernard

Many of the first settlers of the northwest part of town were engaged in mill work (as well as farming) along Spectacle Pond Brook (also called the Saw Mill River), now the Clam River. The main



Northwest Sandisfield, 1858. (Walling atlas)

families in the 18th century were Hubbard, Fuller, Abbey, Fargo, Jones, Twing, Deming, Heath, Merrill, Deland, Claffin, Wentworth, Smith and Underwood. Historian George Shepard said in 1885 of their subsequent generations, "All of these families are of unquestionable reputation and highly respectable." Some of the best farm land is in this area and these clans grew and prospered. In fact, two of the four original school districts were established in this section.

The principal artery is Town Hill Road, which connects Montville with Monterey, Tyringham and West Otis including Spectacle Pond. The road was established very early on; it is clearly defined on surveyor Jacob Brown's 1764 plan of divisions and lots. The name is derived from the relatively high elevation of the land. Few roads here have been known only by one name, but this passage has mostly been called the town hill road. Generally, roads and highways in Sandisfield had

Cont'd on p.8



Edited by Debbie Harris

Board of Selectmen Meetings Summary

Meeting of November 14, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Richard Campetti and Jeff Gray; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

The first part of the meeting was an All Boards meeting called by Finance Committee Chairperson Kathy Jacobs. Kathy opened the discussion by asking each board to review their FY2012 budget status and FY2013 process and projection. Most boards expect no major increases, but there were a few exceptions. The Planning Board wants more money to increase its secretary's salary and for bylaw work. The Town Clerk's budget has to go up due to the number of elections (state primary, state and federal elections and annual town election). Overall veterans' benefits will increase due to the fact that more veterans are using the program.

Health care and the teachers' union contract were then discussed, as was the town's fuel oil bid.

The town's income is down. Last year's overage was paid for out of the town's savings. At the Finance Committee meeting they voted that they will not support paying any overage for the upcoming budget cycle from savings. They are also suggesting that all boards cut their budgets by 10%. However, this is not possible for several boards due to additional mandated costs and other uncontrolled expenses (e.g., utilities, fuel and health insurance). The town feels we should be working together to find a feasible solution. We have been level funding for several years but the cost of operations has gone up. We are working on bare bones budgets now.

Jean Atwater-Williams suggested a question and answer section on the website for budget questions.

Patrick reviewed the progress the Selectmen have made throughout the year to raise awareness of the financial situation. We have hosted two state reps in an open town meeting forum and we held a regional Selectmen's meeting to discuss similar issues in other small towns.

The Town Clerk reviewed ethics testing, timelines for budget and annual town report submissions.

Following the All Boards meeting the regular Selectmen's meeting began. The Highway Department gave a FEMA update. The School Committee meeting scheduled for December 5 was discussed.

Meeting of November 21, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett and Jeff Gray; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

Lisa Leavenworth was appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Loan documents were reviewed and signed.

The Selectmen voted to accept donations of land on West Street from Jeanne Kent and on Richard Road from Robert Duffy. In addition, Patrick will follow up with Mrs. Gross to see if she is willing to donate her property on Route 8.

The new truck is in and the 1998 has been towed away for trade-in. The new truck should be ready for pickup in 2-3 weeks.

Regarding the Route 183 situation, Steve spoke with Jamie Murphy at Lane Construction. Lane continues to bill us for the work plus surcharges. Mr. Murphy asked if the Board would reconsider an extended warranty on the top coat, but this was rejected by the Selectmen. Steve will let Lane Construction know of this decision.

The Highway Department has placed 30 tons of blacktop on New Hartford Road. Fall grading is almost complete.

FEMA updates and bridge problems resulting from Storm Irene were discussed.

The motor on the smaller roller seized up on it. It is about 30 years old and is not worth putting money into. We are renting a roller so that they we get as much blacktopping done as possible this week. Steve will price a replacement.

Patrick suggested the town hire an outside consultant to review our bylaws. He feels that having our bylaws reviewed would be a proactive effort to protect the town. The approximate cost is \$10,000. He will follow up with a proposal.

Patrick received a call from a company that would like to place solar farms on two parcels in Sandisfield. They are willing to come to a Selectmen's meeting to make a presentation. Patrick will contact the appropriate boards. We will place them on next week's agenda.

The Selectmen discussed revisiting the Open Space Plan.

Cont'd on p.11



AVIAN NOTES

By Margaret O'Clair

Whooo's Looking at You?

Now we are indeed "in the bleak mid-winter" when the dark days are short and the cold nights are long. But quite soon we should be hearing the very familiar sound of an owl hoot and that should cheer us up because owls are the first of our native birds to shake off their winter torpor and realize that spring is just around the corner. Like most birds of prey, owls spend the winter conserving energy and warmth, only hunting when absolutely necessary. Towards winter's end, the male owls start establishing their territory, scouting out a nesting site and calling for a mate. The female owl will be incubating eggs by March, at least a month before our song birds get into the act. Our owls are very difficult to see and species identification is best done by the sounds of their calls or hoots.

The Eastern Screech Owl is horribly named. It does not screech. It makes a whistling sound like an "eerie horse whinny." If you hear anything screeching in the night it is coming from the unfortunate rabbit an owl has just caught. The Screech Owl is usually grey, but unique among owls there is also the Red Morph. A pair of each color produces offspring of both colors.



Barn Owl Photo: Wikimedia Commons

The familiar deep "hoo-hoo-hoo" we all hear belongs to the very formidable Great Horned Owl. An adaptable species found in woods, suburban parks and golf courses, it is extremely well camouflaged but if you see or hear a mob of crows or jays causing a ruckus in a tree, look very carefully and you will probably find a huge, statuesque Great Horned Owl. Like all owls, the Great Horned has highly developed eyesight and hearing but clearly no sense of smell since skunks appear to be a main-



Snowy Owl Photo: Wikimedia Commons

stay of its diet. The "horns" are actually feather tufts that have nothing to do with the ears.

The diminutive Saw Whet Owl is so named because its slow, repetitive whistling notes reminded old-timers of the sound of a saw being sharpened on a whetstone. Along with the usual prey this little owl will also catch insects, grasshoppers and beetles. In winter it stocks up nearly a "freezer" of captured prey which it defrosts by bringing some to its home nest and sitting on it to warm it up.

When I had sheep I would go up to the barn at all hours of the night to check on the lambing. The owl I heard most frequently in the woods beyond the pasture was the Barred Owl. Its distinctive call, with rising pitch at the end asks "who cooks for you?" "I dooo, I dooo" I would shout into the darkness and goodness knows what they made of this strange response.

The Long-Eared and Short-Eared Owls are rare now and alas, the beautiful and once common Barn Owl with its white heart-shaped face is thought to be entirely gone from inland New England. Named because of its attraction to barns as its nesting site, it was long considered the farmer's friend, keeping the yard rodent and pest free year-round.

An unusual visitor to this area (the Winchesters had one briefly a few years ago on Silverbrook Road) is the Snowy Owl, a.k.a. Harry Potter's Owl. Owls are not migratory but the Snowy is dependent on voles and lemmings in its native Canadian tundra. These rodents are known for their population explosions and crashes, much like a volatile stock market. When their food supply vanishes the Snowies are forced south. They have been found on ships at sea, in Bermuda and even Florida! If anyone sees a Snowy, please call me! 🐾

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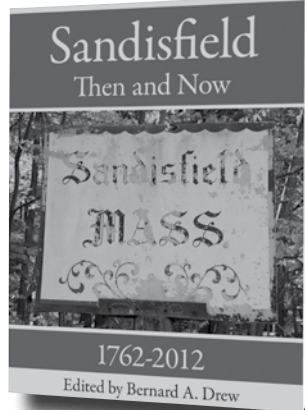
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The Gardeners' Almanac



By Sue Tarasuk

Keeping the Gift Giving Alive

It is always such a treat to receive (or buy) a living plant during the holidays. Caring for them is another thing. But by knowing what a plant needs, you can keep your plants flourishing for months and even years.

Poinsettias are probably the most popular gift plant. The "flowers" are actually colored leaves (bracts) and the true flower is the tiny yellow flower in the middle.

Bright, indirect light and frequent watering are essential. Temperatures of 65-70 degrees are ideal. They will make lovely foliage house plants when the flowering has ceased. Cut the plants back to about 10" when the colored bracts begin to fade in the spring. Repot your plant into a slightly larger pot and feed with fertilizer. Put the plant outside when the weather has warmed. New growth will appear and you will have a nice house plant. In order to get your Poinsettia to rebloom, you will need a very strict regimen of dark and light periods. Very time consuming and not worth it when you can buy them during the holidays and they are perfect plants.

Cyclamen also make beautiful flowering gift plants. They have graceful, winged flowers on long stems above heart-shaped leaves. They prefer a cool (50-60 degree) spot, out of direct sun, but well lit. An



east or north window is ideal. The soil should be kept moist, but don't let the water stand. Cyclamen dislike over-watering as well as under-watering. Watering from the bottom (setting them in a pan of water until the soil is wet) is preferred over top watering. Cyclamen are perennials that require rest after blooming. Gradually withhold water

after blooming until the leaves die back, and do not water again for six weeks. Resume watering and you will see new leaves appearing. Give your plants bright light and cool temps, fertilize them and they will re-flower.

Holiday cactus come in three related species, each in bloom at a different time (Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter). It is difficult to tell them apart. However, all require bright sunlight and moderate moisture. Put them in a south window during the winter and fertilize after flowers have faded. I put my cactus outside in the semi-shade all summer and keep it well-watered, fertilizing with a diluted mix of 20-20-20.

Amaryllis are probably my favorite holiday plants. They are easy to grow, reliable re-bloomers and fun to watch as they shoot up out of the very large bulb very quickly. When you receive an Amaryllis as a gift, it has already been "prepared" for blooming. You will probably see a fat stem pushing through. This is the flower stalk. Place your pot in bright light and keep moist – not wet. Keep turning the pot so flower stalks stay uniformly straight. The flat leaves will soon follow. After it has finished blooming, cut down only the flower stalk, leaving the leaves. Fertilize it regularly and keep watering. I put my plants outside in the shade garden and dig the pots into the soil. You can also take the bulb out of the pot and plant it directly in the soil. If you would like your Amaryllis to bloom again for the holidays, continue to water and feed, but stop feeding in August. When it is time to bring your plants in, usually late September or early October, move your Amaryllis to a cool 50-60 degree dry, relatively dark spot and stop watering. If you want it to bloom for a specific time – say Thanksgiving or Christmas, count backwards 10-12 weeks to determine when to stop watering. After about 5-6 weeks, move your plants to a warm sunny spot and resume watering. The leaves will have dried and dropped off. New stems and leaves will appear and you will have another blooming season.

So, to sum up, as a general rule whichever blooming gift plants you receive, they will do well in bright, indirect sunlight, cool nights (between 50 and 60 degrees) and no more than 10 degrees warmer during the day. Warm air is the biggest enemy, causing flowers and leaves to wilt and drop off. After blooming, reduce water and start feeding using an all purpose 20-20-20 fertilizer.

Enjoy the holidays and enjoy your beautiful gift plants.

If you have any questions, you may email me at susantarasuk@gmail.com.



FINDING COMFORT ON A COLD WINTER'S DAY

By Adam Manacher

In the midst of winter we look for easy comfort food to help us through the long, cold days. By warming our bellies and filling the house with rich aromas, we find strength for our bodies and sustenance for our spirits! Nutritious, delicious, inexpensive and simple to prepare, lentils are the perfect food to nourish the weathered body and the exhausted mind.

Lentils, a type of pulse, are the edible seeds of a plant from the legume family. Chickpeas and such beans as kidney beans, black beans and navy beans, are also pulses. Lentils, a fabulous source of nutrition, contain high levels

of protein, vitamin B1, iron, and dietary fiber, making them one of the healthiest foods available to us. When cooked with aromatic spices they transform the simple meal into a delicious and elegant adventure to far off places in North Africa, the Middle East or Asia. Inexpensive and found in every grocery

store, lentils are quick to prepare so that even at the end of a busy day they can be prepared for a satisfying meal. Served as an accompaniment to meats, as a main dish, as a soup or a salad, lentils are versatile and a good addition to everyone's repertoire in the kitchen.

There are several different types of lentils. When cooked they are different in quality and texture. Brown lentils, the most commonly found variety, are mild in flavor and hold their shape when cooked. They do get a bit mushy when cooked for longer times and that makes them great for lentil soups as well. Green lentils, which don't get mushy as other lentils do, are best for recipes requiring lentils to remain firmer in texture. Le Puy lentils, also known as "French green lentils", are a smaller, more delicate and flavorful green lentil. They are also more expensive. Green and Le Puy lentils are great for salads. Red or golden lentils, which are flatter in shape, are excellent for recipes that require a very soft or mushy texture after cooking. This makes them perfect for making Indian dals.


Lentils cook rapidly. This is one of their great

assets. They do not need to be pre-soaked, although some people find that soaking makes them easier to digest resulting in less flatulence. Before preparing, it is always advisable to wash the lentils in a colander under cool water and to pick through them to be sure there are no small stones. Lentils are simple to cook. Plan on 2 parts liquid to 1 part lentil. You can use stock (beef, chicken or vegetable) or water. To the liquid, add flavor with seasonings of your choice: 1/4 onion, a piece of ginger, a clove of garlic, a sprig of thyme or a bay leaf. Bring the liquid to a boil, add the lentils to the pot, give them a stir, allow the liquid to return to a boil and cover the pot. Turn the temperature down to simmer and cook for 25 to 30 minutes or until the lentils are tender and the liquid has been absorbed. If there is liquid remaining in the pot, yet they are tender to your liking, that's fine. If you prefer them to be softer or mushy you can add a bit more liquid, cover and continue cooking.

Tips for preparing lentils. Do not add salt until they are cooked as adding salt to the cooking liquid lengthens the cooking time

and slows down the absorption of liquid. Adding acid during cooking (tomatoes or wine) will also increase the cooking time.

The foundation for a great meal for a winter's day: Lentils and rice. Cook 1 cup brown lentils in 2 cups chicken stock with 1/4

onion, garlic clove and a bay leaf. When just tender, turn off the heat. Carefully (it's hot!) remove the onion, garlic and bay leaf. In a separate, small pan, without any oil or fat, gently heat 1/4 tsp. cumin, 1/4 tsp. coriander, 1/4 tsp. turmeric until they give off aroma and barely smoke (about 1 minute). This intensifies their flavor and removes bitterness, particularly from the turmeric. Add spices to the lentils along with a 1/4 tsp. salt. Grate the skin of an orange using fine grater holes and add a pinch (about 1/8th tsp) to the lentils. Add 2 more cups of liquid and 1 cup brown or basmati rice, bring to a gentle boil, and cook with the cover slightly ajar. Cook for about 30 minutes adding liquid if necessary until the rice is done. While the lentils and rice are cooking, prepare your favorite accompaniment: sautéed or oven roasted vegetables, sweet sausage, or even a fried egg. When finished, don't let the lentil/rice combination become dry. If it does, add liquid just to coat the mixture before serving. Top your lentils and rice with your favorite accompaniment and with a big green salad you will have an easy, hearty, and healthy winter meal. 



Open Sesame

What An Open Space Plan Really Means

By Debbie Harris

As we look ahead to our Annual Town Meeting in May when we discuss and vote on the town's budget for the coming year, it is becoming more and more obvious that we need to raise revenue from more than just our taxpayers. One option is to apply to the state and federal governments for grant money in order to maintain and improve our resources (roads, culture, natural resources, etc.). In order to do this our Selectmen have suggested that we contact the University of Massachusetts' Conway School to help us develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan – a vital step in applying for municipal grants.

The question then becomes, what exactly is an Open Space Plan? The simple answer is that it is a document that inventories our available resources and our goals for them. The Plan would be directed toward protecting both our natural resources and, importantly, the character of our town. How do we want to keep and enhance what we know and love about Sandisfield?

An Open Space Plan has requirements. We must define the historical and current positioning of the town in terms of physical characteristics, history, population and growth and development. Then we need to address the effect of the economy on our open space and recreational needs since changing the use of our open space is paramount. At the same time we must emphasize the preservation of the town's uniqueness. Vulnerable areas that need permanent protection must be identified.

An Open Space Plan requires a complete environmental inventory and analysis, including both natural and cultural resources. It must take into account biodiversity, ecosystems and ecological integrity within the town and the surrounding region. Discussion must be given to geology, landscape, water, plant and wildlife resources. Various land use considerations should be included, especially when they contribute to the town's character and environmental challenges must be spelled out.

The plan should specify the degree of protection that is afforded to both privately and publicly owned land. How much land is set aside for agricultural use, for forests, for water resources, for protection of rare and endangered plants and animals? What lands have been specifically set aside for recreation?

We need to develop a general community vision for how we want to manage our open spaces. The input of our citizens is especially important. At least a majority of our citizens should be on board with what we want to do. Next, we need to summarize what is necessary to achieve our stated goals. What is needed to protect

Cont'd on p.14

TOWN HILL - NORTHWEST GOOD FARMERS AND GOOD PEOPLE

Cont'd from p.4

numerous (even simultaneous) informal and official names through the years. West Street runs parallel to Town Hill Road. Hubbard Road was the only east-west through passage. These roads and Lower West Street, the section's southern boundary, were probably cut, or extended, in the early 1780s.

Over the town's history, the physical character of this area has changed perhaps least of any section. Farms were quite large and the houses were widely scattered.

Another reason is that, except for the early saw mills and a tannery tucked away on river banks, few shops or commercial activities emerged. Timothy Elmore was a shoe maker, and a substantial bakery operated on Lower West Street in the 19th century. The people either trudged up to West Otis or down to Montville for religious services, for buying and trading or for postal service.



Berkshire Mountain House Gate, 1950
Photo: Steve and Lynn Rubenstein

Many of the families were Baptists and two meeting houses were extant here by about 1800. As a result of the Rev. Elezear Storrs's unpopular position concerning Shay's Rebellion in 1786, a number of Congregationalists switched to the Baptists, swelling the membership.

Ironically, one of the first school houses to be built (c.1780, according to tradition) survives. It served families around West Street and Hubbard Road until 1947, the longest tenure of any school building. Since that time it has been the home of the Pachulski family.

In 1876 the northwest corner known as Chestnut Hill was set off to Monterey, taking away several of the old family names and a large cemetery.

STORY CONTINUED IN THE MARCH ISSUE

THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY NEWS

By Laurie Foulke-Green, Librarian

The Sandisfield Library is happy to report that the following are the "new books" list:

- *The Scottish Prisoner* by Diana Gabaldon
- *Inside Seal Team Six* by Don Mann
- *Micro* by Michael Crichton and Richard Preston
- *The Alpine Winter* by Mary Daheim

Coming soon:

- *Death Benefit* by Robin Cook
- *Believing the Lie* by Elizabeth George
- *Red Mist* by Patricia Cornwall
- *Gun Games* by Faye Kellerman

The next genealogy assistance class will be held on January 25, 2012 and will continue through the winter on the last Wednesday of the month from 6:30-8:30 PM.



Early schoolhouse on West Street, now a private residence, 2010.

Photo Ron Bernard

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Henry David Thoreau

Image: Tina Sotis ©2011

FARMINGTON RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BULLETIN

By Tara Beardsley



The holidays are over but there is a lot of upcoming excitement scheduled to start the New Year at FRES!

Back by popular demand, the Farmington River PTO will once again be running a March Cash Calendar Raffle. This raffle was started last year by Tanya O'Brien and Cathy Cardaropoli. It was such a huge success, we're doing it again!

Area businesses, along with one very generous anonymous donor, have come together to purchase days on the calendar offering cash and prizes that all are sure to enjoy! Each day in March a name is drawn to win that day's prize. This year it is filled with over \$2,500 in cash and prizes - from \$25.00 in cash with a \$10 gift certificate to a "Pot of Gold" Prize of \$350.00 CASH on St. Patty's Day! Best of all, each name chosen will then be put back into the drawing for an opportunity to win up to 31 times! You may purchase a calendar for a donation of only \$10.00 from your favorite Farmington River student, or contact Tara Beardsley at dtbear@ymail.com or call 413-717-1427 to arrange a purchase of one or more calendars. GOOD LUCK!!!

Thanks to a grant from the Otis Cultural Council we are delighted to announce a visit from renowned saxophone icon Charles Neville during the week of January 16th. Most widely known as part of the "First Family of Funk" from New Orleans - The Neville Brothers, Charles has played alongside many great artists including James Brown, B.B. King, Bobby Bland and Ray Charles. We feel very privileged and honored to welcome Charles to work with our students during music classes and enlighten us with insight from his musical journey.

The Otis Ridge Ski Area, along with the PTO, began its annual ski program on January 4th. The program is on Wednesday evenings from 5-10 PM for students in Grades K through 6 and their families. It will conclude on February 8th.

Our final big announcement is a Woodworking Clinic hosted by Lowe's Home Improvement and scheduled for Saturday, February 4th from 10:00-12:00

in the school cafeteria. Students, along with their siblings and parents, are invited to attend. Children will be constructing small wooden projects which they will be able to take home with them, along with safety goggles and their very own Lowe's work apron! There is no charge for the event, but registration is required. Please look for paperwork in your child's backpack or contact Sherry DeCelle at frspto@yahoo.com for more information.

The cold weather has arrived! Please remember to send your kids to school prepared to go outside for recess with a hat, gloves, snow boots, and a winter coat. Snow pants are recommended.


In the event of a school closing due to inclement weather, the announcement will be broadcast over the following radio stations and will be for Farmington River Schools:

- WSBS – 860 AM
- WBEC – 105.5, 94.1 FM
- WBEC - 1420 AM
- WFSB – 100.5 FM
- WFSB-TV – Channel 3
- WWLP-TV – Channel 22

You may also visit cancellations.com for closing information.

Please take notice:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Jan. 4th | Otis Ridge Ski Program begins Wednesdays 5-10pm |
| Jan. 16th | Martin Luther King Day – No School |
| Jan. 17th | Musician Charles Neville to visit |
| Feb 4th | Lowe's Free Woodworking Clinic 10:00-12:00 |
| Feb. 20-24 | February Vacation |
| Feb. 27th | All Cash Calendar Raffle tickets due!!! |
| Mar. 9th | Professional Day- No School |

Please call the school directly at 413-269-4466 or visit its new website: www.frrsd.org for more school information. 

The Conservation Commission – A MISUNDERSTOOD ENTITY

Article and Photos By Susan Bubenas

The next time you are hiking near or kayaking on Upper Spectacle Pond or fishing in the West Branch of the Farmington River, please take a moment to think about their place in our lives. Next Spring, when the wetlands come alive after the snow melts and the frogs and salamanders are letting us know that Spring is indeed here, please consider the importance of the nearby wetland. In my six years as a resident of Sandisfield, I have never met anyone who does not appreciate or even revel, in some way, in the natural beauty provided by our lakes, streams, rivers, woodlands and wetlands, all of which are inextricably connected. I know how fortunate I am to call this home. But I know as well, that some of the joy I derive from expe-



riences like these is a benefit of the protection afforded by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act & the Conservation Commission delegated to administer it.

These natural connections are one reason I serve as a Conservation Commissioner in Sandisfield and Otis. The role of the Conservation Commission is probably one of the more misunderstood roles in town governance & administration. The Sandisfield Conservation Commission is a group of five volunteers with very different backgrounds, expertise, community ties and reasons for serving. It is an advocacy & administrative body seeking to protect and serve. It is one of the few opportunities afforded by town government where the local landscape, values, economics and an understanding of the needs of the specific community can be considered objectively and under regulations established by the Commonwealth without personal bias or preference.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts pretty much invented the municipal Conservation Commission.

In 1957, the Conservation Commission Act (G. L. Chapter 40 §8C) was passed. It authorized each city and town in Massachusetts to establish a locally appointed municipal agency to plan for natural resource protection, acquire important land and water areas and manage these properties for conservation and passive recreation. The Conservation Commission Act gave cities and towns the author-

Cont'd on p.10

Conservation Commission – A MISUNDERSTOOD ENTITY

Cont'd from p.9



ity by local option to establish a Commission as its official agency. The Act defines that members are appointed, and sets the number of Commissioners and determines the length and clustering of their terms. It sets record-keeping requirements, including an Annual Report.

Once a Commission is established, the municipality may not abolish it. Today, every city and town in the Commonwealth has a Commission with no less than three and no more than seven members. There are no state-mandated age, citizenship, residency, knowledge or experience requirements. Locally, it is my understanding that members of the Sandisfield Commission must be registered voters in Sandisfield.

In 1972, Conservation Commissions were given responsibility for administering the newly passed Wetlands Protection Act (G.L. Ch. 131 §40). Thus the Commission serves the community in a regulatory as well as a conservation capacity. In our town, the primary role of the Commission is the administration of regulatory work associated with the Wetlands Protection Act. The Conservation Commission is under the jurisdiction of the local town government (the Select Board). However, all of the Commission's rulings and permits are reviewed by and can be appealed to the Mass DEP Western Region.

Volunteers man the Conservation Commission and their primary role is to protect eight important public values or functions provided by wetlands and other areas subject to protection – protection of the public and private water supplies, protection of groundwater supply, flood control and storm damage prevention, prevention of pollution, protection of wildlife habitat as well as fisheries and land containing shellfish. Each of these is an Interest as defined by the Wetlands Protection Act.

In addition, the Regulations under the Act and their associated forms to protect those eight interests designate very specific Resource Areas that must be

protected. For our purposes, those resource areas subject to protection under the law include land under water bodies, land subject to flooding, any bank of a river, creek, pond, stream or lake, bordering vegetated wetlands and riverfront areas. In addition, the regulations for “inland” resources establish a 100 ft. buffer zone around all resource areas except land under water bodies, land subject to flooding and riverfront areas. While not protected in the same way a resource area is, projects in a “buffer zone” must be reviewed to insure that the proposed activities will not alter the adjacent Resource Area. ♡

For the Love of Winter on West Street

By Val Coleman

“Of so much beauty such harm”

That powerful contrary was written by the poet Leslie Harrison in the days following the 2008 ice storm in Sandisfield. Her poem “December” is a half-eulogy, half-celebration of that terrible night. She found terror in what she told me were the “broken trees” as well as hope in the rebirth of life in the fruits and leaves that followed. She mourned the owls that fell and died that night: “I think the bones of birds must trouble the earth.” But the poem also celebrates “December’s bright detritus going down in snowflake fire as if a wake could be a lovely thing.”



Ms. Harrison lives in a little house on West Street in Sandisfield and has won a dozen prizes in the tough, rarely-rewarding art of poetry. Born in Germany and raised in New Hampshire, she has two Master’s Degrees in creative writing from Johns-Hopkins University and the University of California (Irvine). She worked for nine years as a photojournalist at the Berkshire Eagle and later for the Berkshire Record. She’s currently teaching English at Berkshire Community College.

I spent a late Fall morning at Leslie’s house and we got to talking about poetry. I asked her why she writes it.

“There is something strange about the world that I notice,” she said. “Why poetry?” I asked.

“I love the sound of language,” she answered. “Poetry, to me, is a little engine of the language. Poems are like small machines, all the words must work together.”

“Can you tell me what you feel when you are writing a poem?”

“Once I start,” she answered, “I get out of the way!”

In 2008, Ms. Harrison won the prestigious “Bakeless Prize” with “Displacement”, her book of poems published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

“Displacement” is surrounded by dark Greek mythology, the book is collection of lyric and often complex poems that roughly follow her adult life. One enthusiast on the cover calls it a “fabulous book about love and betrayal.” The critic and poetry judge Eavan Boland celebrates her “poise and presence” and “engaging contradictions.” I loved it, and find it something of a poetic encyclopedia with poems that describe everything from old schoolhouses and divorce to the seasons. There is even a touch of quantum mechanics, dusty snow, walking dogs and a thread of sadness. But for all that there is affirmation.

Here’s a sample:

*“Everything rhymes. Take a forest of trees,
thousands (each different, but they are lost
in the crowd), and rocks uncounted, a host of bees
in a standing snag. Walking, I pass them all.”*

This is actually the first stanza of Ms. Harrison’s “pantoum” poem, a 15th Century metrical form that requires a series of quatrains with rotating rhymes. Whew!

That’s our poet on West Street. ♡




250th Celebration 4 Months and Counting!

By Laura Rogers-Castro

Nature Activities Highlight 250th Celebration

Two hundred and fifty years ago Sandisfield was likely covered by dense forest. American chestnut trees were found here, providing an important food source for many wildlife species. Wolves, wild turkeys, and mountain lions inhabited the woods. By 1850, as result of habitat loss and persecution, wolves were gone from Massachusetts and by 1851 wild turkeys had also disappeared. In 1900, a chestnut blight fungus was introduced to eastern North America and over the next 50 years this deadly blight caused the death of American chestnut trees.

Landscapes are dynamic and Sandisfield has seen many changes over the past three centuries. The town's interesting natural history will play a part in Sandisfield's 250th Birthday Celebration in 2012. The 250th Birthday Celebration Committee is seeking individuals to lead hikes or walks focusing on the natural history of the area. Examples of potential activities include bird walks, vernal pool explorations, tree identification hikes and wild edibles forays. It would be wonderful for Sandisfield residents to share their interest and expertise with other folks who may not be as skilled at identifying the fauna and flora in the area. Hopefully, attendees at these activities will include children who will help preserve the natural environment of Sandisfield far into the future! If you would like to join the author in leading natural history walks in 2012, please contact Laura at 258-4688 or lrogerscastro@gmail.com. The next two Sandisfield 250th Birthday Celebration Committee meetings will be at the Sandisfield Library on Wednesday, January 18 and February 15 at 7:00 p.m. 

TOWN BUSINESS

Cont'd from p.4


Meeting of November 28, 2011

Present: Selectmen Patrick Barrett, Richard Campetti and Jeff Gray; Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko; Administrative Assistant Dolores Harasyko

Treasurer Clare English presented her letter of retirement effective January 31, 2012. The Selectmen thanked her for her 21 years of excellent service to the town and stated that she will be very missed. They then voted to appoint Teresa DellaGiustina as Acting Treasurer effective February 2012 until the annual town election in May. Clare will continue to be bonded and have signatory power so that she may continue training Teresa and fill in when needed.

Representatives Eric Roddy, Serge Weiss and Kevin Orchard from CTC Electric Company discussed their proposals for solar energy farms. They are looking into purchasing two properties in town, one on Sandisfield Road and one on Norfolk Road. Neither purchase is complete at this time. They would install solar panels that

collect energy from the sunlight and then deliver it to a grid. This power would then be used in Sandisfield. The facility would be completely fenced in and secure. There is minimal sound, which dissipates the further away from the sight you are and no odors. CTC has done appraisals of other projects and have found no effect on property values. However, the value of the property on which they place the solar farm can provide significant income for the town in tax revenues. The lifetime of the panels is approximately 25 years. Betsy Politan expressed her concerns about clearing 45 acres of trees on Norfolk Road as it is not currently an open field. CTC responded that they may only need to cut approximately 10 acres. They are willing to create natural fences with arborvitaes or other trees. Residents from Norfolk Road noted that they are not in favor of this in their area. Selectman Barrett answered that the town does not have much income generated and that this could help by providing tax revenues and jobs. CTC's goal is to use as much local business as possible. CTC will contact the appropriate boards and inspectors for the permitting process.

(Note: The complete minutes are public record and available for viewing at the Town Hall Annex.) 

Sandisfield Planning Board Summary of October 11, 2011 Meeting

Attending: Gary Bottum, Sr., Gene Riiska, Kathleen Segrin, Willard Platt

Guest: Douglas Segrin

Old Business

Revisited "Right to Farm". Discussed inclusions, exclusions, by laws, special permits and change of land use related to the issue.


Discussed follow up from Select Board to find out when an electrician will install sensor/motion light for the front door of Old Town Hall.

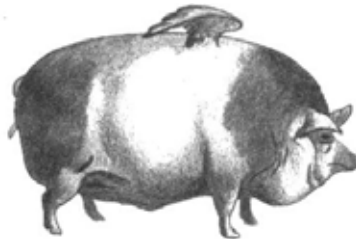
Viewed CD of the Sandisfield Planning Board Handbook for 2011 from the Berkshire Regional Planning

Commission (BRPC). A hardy thank you to Brian Domina for obtaining the information for us.

New Business

Discussed cost effectiveness of making hard copies of the Planning Board Handbook. Decision made to have one hard copy printed. BPRC is happy and pleased to see that Gary Bottum and Kathleen Segrin have attended their monthly meetings and seminars and are sharing information with other members of our Planning Board. They recently attended a fall workshop seminar on Special Permits and Variances. We will continue our involvement with BPRC.

Our November meeting will be waived as the Finance Committee has called for an all boards meeting on November 14, the date of our next scheduled meeting. 



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HOW WILL YOU BE REMEMBERED IN 2262? SANDISWALL 2012!

Article and Photo by Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals



On the 500th birthday of Sandisfield, people will look back and congratulate themselves on keeping the town alive. Perhaps some of the buildings will still be around as monuments; perhaps the burial grounds will still be extant. Maybe they will wonder about the lives people led and what they did for money, for fun, for recreation. In 2262, children might dig up some small round metal thing with an engraving of Thomas Jefferson and ask their parents, "What do you think this was, Mom?"

We don't know who they will be, but we can influence what they know about us at Sandisfield's 250th birthday celebration this coming summer. You can make sure your name is included in SANDISWALL 2012!

Sandisfield Fire and Rescue is sponsoring a huge art undertaking conceived by Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals and created by Ruth Dec Friedman. SANDISWALL 2012! will include the name of each person who lives and/or works in Sandisfield on an installation of about 23 "walls" made of card-stock bricks.

Each wall will be 8' high and 4' wide, and each brick will have the name of one of the 3300 residents of Sandisfield, whether full-time or a 2nd-home resident. It will be unveiled during the Sandisfield 250th Birthday celebration and also at the annual Fire Department Steak Roast.

At the end of the year, the wall will be dismantled and stored in perpetuity so that in the future the history of our town will include all our names and details. History becomes interesting by the details we know.

Your brick will have your name on it, and if you want to include another detail, you can either let the artist know in advance or write it in permanent marker during the celebration. Maybe you want to be remembered for the novel you wrote or the 200-year-old house you live in. Maybe you want to include that you married your childhood sweetheart right here in town, or that you have 4 wonderful children. Perhaps you want to include a small photo or drawing of something important to you. You decide what you want

to be remembered for.

We need your help! It is pretty easy to know who the homeowner is but often we don't know the names of the others who live in the house. Whether you are a part-time resident or have been here for six generations - whether you pay the taxes or are the four-year old grandson - it is important that you are included if you live here!

There are a few ways you can help us include your family's names:

- Call Maxene at 258-4030 and leave a message
- Email Maxene at maxenekg@aol.com
- Write in your details on the sign-up sheets at any one of these places:
 - the post office
 - the dump
 - When Pigs Fly Farm

During the next few months, we'll show you a sneak preview of SANDISWALL 2012! here in *The Sandisfield Times* as well as locations around town. Any of the people involved in the project might ask for your help as well, so if you see Teresa Bills, Katrina Campetti, Ralph Morrison, Sandra Snyder or Ana Snyder just remind them of how YOU want to be remembered.

We'll be asking you for your name to make sure we can make a brick for you. We'll also try and get the updated lists out so you can be sure you are included. This is going to be so exciting! And it is free to all residents, so what are you waiting for? Become a part of Sandisfield history! 🇺🇸



WIRED-WEST UPDATE

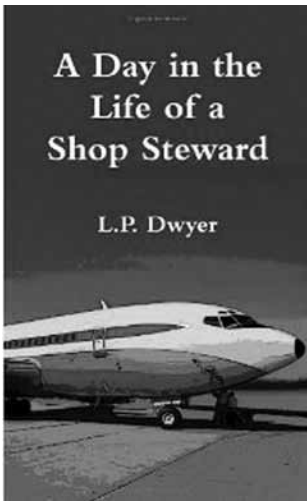
By Jean Atwater-Williams

As 2012 begins, WiredWest continues to work diligently to bring 21st century broadband to the doorsteps of its communities' residents and businesses.

Milestones accomplished in 2011 include: establishing the cooperative, with 24 towns officially joining and another 20 expected to join by mid 2012; bylaws, policies and a preliminary budget were drafted and adopted; articles of incorporation were approved by the Secretary of the Commonwealth and a working pro-forma has been developed. While still an all volunteer organization to date, WiredWest has been greatly aided in its efforts by the following: a \$50,000 planning grant from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), a \$2,500 grant from the Central Berkshire Fund, pledges of \$105,000 of matching funds and in-kind services to support the project, and \$9,000 in direct donations and underwriting.

2012 will be another busy year for WiredWest, focusing initially on the business plan and engineering survey, which are expected to be completed by April 1, 2012. Additionally, partners for financing and the operation of the network will be identified and procured. It is WiredWest's intent to build out its network in 2013 concurrent with the MBI. 🇺🇸

Arts and Culture: Book Review



A Day in the Life of a Shop Steward
Aviation History Museum
 New York, 2011. 75pp.
 by L. P. Dwyer
 No price given.

After reading this slim behind-the-scenes account of life as once it was at Kennedy airport – a riveting account, it has to be said, impossible to put down and taking no more than thirty minutes to read – I am tempted to say one thing: I'll never fly again. At least not until I have it on good authority that JFK today is a better place than in the 1970s, the time when this book was set. (And reading recently about an epidemic of thievery and drug-smuggling among the airport's baggage handlers, I am tempted to suspect that matters are still very much the same.)

Since the first rule of writing is write about what you know, one has to assume that our Larry Dwyer (for the author is he, hiding behind his initials) is basing this fictional account on what actually once went on among the machinists and maintenance men and ramp-rats (a new term to me) who work invisibly to most of us, down on the merciless tarmac of Kennedy airport.


And what actually went on was a little short of horrendous. Men who worked on aircraft got drunk, forgot to put pins where pins were meant to go, drove fork-lifts through fuselages, played elaborate and dangerous practical jokes on one another and on occasion moved aircraft around and accelerated them to near take-off speed while having neither the ability, license or permission to do so.

LOCAL AUTHOR FLYING HIGH AFTER PUBLISHING FIRST NOVEL

By Simon Winchester

And if such revelations are hardly designed to instill confidence, then how about this – presumably drawn from experience too: one of the drunker members of the maintenance crew took it upon himself one morning to urinate on the parking ramp in full view of horrified passengers waiting to board his plane, then drove crazily away to a girly bar in Astoria to drown his sorrows – and all the while barely able to be fired, however, because he's a union man.

And that, in a sense, is what makes this slight book more than especially chilling. The specter of unions gone mad underlies much of this brief account, the tale of a rather weak but essentially decent shop steward named Kevin Gallagher who surveys the cast of violent, foul-mouthed, feckless and irresponsible workers, and who accepts, if somewhat wearily, that despite their wholesale inadequacy and lack of respect for the work they are doing – they are protected and cosseted and endured because of the power of the union to which they all belong.

Maybe Mr. Dwyer did not intend this at all, but the portrait he paints – compelling, fascinating and appalling, all at the same time – will be read by some as a profound indictment of the power that unions once had. And while in some highly unionized workplaces – print shops, washing-machine assembly plants, government ministries – bad behavior can to be tolerated without public alarm, the same is not true when it comes to the workers who look after our airplanes. We who fly need to know that those who prepare a great modern transport jet for take-off have worked on it with kid-glove care and tenderness. Larry Dwyer reveals that, at least thirty years ago, they did anything but – and to that extent, and perhaps unwittingly by writing this book, Mr. Dwyer has performed a considerable public service, even while scaring the daylight out of every flying one of us. 



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Letter From The Selectmen

By Patrick Barrett

In December 2011, Sandisfield Town Treasurer Clare English announced her retirement effective January 1, 2012 after 21 years of dedicated service to our community. Clare was a vital member of a core group of citizens who put together a program that helped rescue the town's finances. As watchdog of Sandisfield's funds, Clare has worked with state accounting officials and given sound advice to the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen. On a personal note, Clare graciously donated her time helping to bring me up to speed on the complexities of municipal finances. The residents of Sandisfield owe a debt of gratitude to Clare for her years of outstanding work. Clare will continue to serve our community in her roles on the Sandisfield Conservation Board and as a trustee of the Sandisfield Library. The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen give sincere thanks to Clare and wish her a healthy, happy retirement.

Assistant Treasurer Teresa DellaGiustina has been appointed to fill in as Sandisfield Town Treasurer until a new candidate is officially chosen by the voters at the May election. Since assuming the position as Assistant Treasurer, Teresa has been a quick study, learning the nuances of the job from her mentor, Clare English. We appreciate Teresa's willingness to assume this important position as budget time and the Annual Town Meeting draw near. Lisa Levenworth and Deborah Harris have been appointed to the Sandisfield Zoning Board of Appeals. We thank these two women for stepping forward to be on this town board. There are still openings on this board so for anyone who might be interested in joining please write or call the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen. We would also like to thank Dominic Campetti for his willingness to assume the position of Sandisfield Cemetery Commissioner. Dominic will be working at a job that was done for many years by his father, Angelo Campetti. We look forward to his continuing the fine services provided so astutely by his dedicated father.

The regional Selectmen's forum slated for January 11, 2012 at 7 P.M. at the new Emergency Management building in Tolland has been postponed until Wednesday February 15th due to scheduling difficulties. This meeting is open to the public so any interested parties are welcome to attend. The first meeting was extremely beneficial to the representatives of the participating towns of Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Sandisfield, Tolland and Tyringham. We look forward to another opportunity to discuss and problem-solve many of the difficulties facing small communities throughout the Commonwealth.

John Field Tree Service recently took down five large compromised trees on Dodd Road, Route 57, and Rood Hill Road. We appreciate the work put in by this crew as the town continues to work on being proactive in dealing with trees that might pose a danger to town residents. We would also

like to thank the Tryon Construction Company, in conjunction with the Sandisfield Highway Department for the work they have put into fixing roads damaged during Hurricane Irene. To date, extensive work has been done to fix problems on South Beech Plain Road, Rood Hill Road, Norfolk Road, Viets Road and Sears Road. It is our belief that the new material placed on these roads will go a long way towards preventing future washouts.

In February, the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen will be reviewing the budgets for the various town departments for the upcoming fiscal year. We will be scheduling two nights of budget hearings at the Old Town Hall and sincerely hope that members of the Sandisfield community will join us for these discussions. This is an opportunity for the department heads to explain their needs and will also allow residents a chance to become familiar with perspective line items prior to the Annual Town Meeting. We will be posting the dates and times for these meetings on the town website and town bulletin boards as soon as a schedule is formalized.

In order to help better serve the residents of Sandisfield this year, the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen is requesting that members of the community who are asking the Board to take action on an issue to either attend a Selectmen's meeting or make a written request. This procedure will allow residents' concerns to be heard by the whole Board and entered into the official minutes. As a matter of practice, our Board periodically reviews old minutes to ensure that we are following through on items that are brought forward. With trying to juggle full-time jobs, families and other responsibilities, as well as running town government, it has become increasingly difficult to follow through on the myriad concerns expressed while stopping at the Sandisfield Transfer Station, the post office or in passing conversations. By bringing concerns to our Board in a more formal fashion we hope to be able to better serve to our constituents.



Massachusetts Cultural Council

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Open Sesame

What An Open Space Plan Really Means

Cont'd from p.7

our natural resources and/or to restore our ecological network? Are there any special needs for people with disabilities that should be taken into account? Are there any opportunities for recreational activities that have not been previously explored?

Finally, we need to synthesize all of this into a five-year plan of action, with a year-by-year timetable for what we want to accomplish and when we want to accomplish it.

So, you see, an Open Space Plan is a thorough evaluation of where we come from, where we are, and where we want to go. It pays attention to preserving what we love about Sandisfield and what needs to be done to take Sandisfield into the future. It is the first important step toward obtaining grant money that will help us realize our goals for our town.



The
Sandisfield Times
gratefully
acknowledges all
those who helped
make
us a success
this past year.



Ringling Out the Old

By Ron Bernard

A nearly full house enjoyed an evening of cheer at the Sandisfield Arts Center's holiday Extravaganza on December 10. The 9th annual variety show was kicked off by local singer/songwriter "Santa" Jeff Folmer. His playful "Jolly Offerings" set the mood for the next two hours. The always jovial Karl Finger and his guitar enticed the crowd to sing along to holiday favorites while traditional carols were led by Jean Atwater-Williams with piano accompaniment by Herb Burtis.

The energetic Berkshire Pulse Dancers inspired the audience with their rendition of "Shout Joyfully." Next came a surprise -- a treat especially for the children from Ali Uzpurvis and her "glow-in-the-dark" hula hoop. She whirled about, dazzling everyone to beat of the bongo tune, "Jungle Bells," a spectacle not soon to be forgotten.

Judith Gray, a music teacher and internationally known soprano, wowed the audience with arrangements of three beautiful carols. She was followed by young solo trumpeter Gabriella Makuc. Story-teller extraordinaire, Val Coleman, had the audience's rapt attention to his tale, "A Christmas Racket."

The program this year was produced by Liana Toscanini with the support of David and Phyllis LeBeau, Connie Canty and Dassy Herman. Intermission refreshments were provided by Hannah Barrett, Alice Boyd, Rosy Campbell, Cassie Marsh and Susan Van Sickle. Thanks to all and especially to Liana, for a delightful and memorable time!

The program was funded in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council.

Extravaganza Photos by Richard Migot



Berkshire Pulse Dancers, Above and Right

Gabriella Makuc, Below



*Aii Uzpurvis, Above
Jeff Folmer as Santa, Right
Karl Finger, Below*





Walter, Arturo and Walfredo Toscanini

WALFREDO TOSCANINI

A LINK BETWEEN FAME AND SANDISFIELD

Walfredo Toscanini, who died at age 82 in New Rochelle, NY in the very final hour of last year, was the vital middle link between his internationally-famed conductor-grandfather, Arturo, and his locally-famed

fact he had a stellar career as an architect and was an influential member of the Democratic Party, leaving a lasting stamp on the city and administration of his adopted hometown.

While living in New York City he met and married Elaine Troostwyk, a pianist. They had three daughters: Maia, who lives in Maryland, Cia (named for her grandmother, former prima ballerina at La Scala and later ballet mistress at the Metropolitan Opera), and our own Liana, who has long chosen to live in Sandisfield.

Besides his three daughters Walfredo Toscanini is survived by his wife of 53 years, Elaine, and two grandsons, Wyatt and Liam McBride.

daughter, Liana, devoting much of his life to preserving the legacy here and around the world, of the Toscanini name. He often described himself, with unnecessary modesty, as merely “a professional grandson” but in



Comings and Goings

KENNETH CIPPERLY

1952 - 2011

Kenneth Cipperly of Sandisfield passed away suddenly on November 17, 2011. He was born November 7, 1952 in Minnesota, the son of Donna Beers and the late Arthur Cipperly. Kenneth leaves two sons: Adam Cipperly and Anthony Cipperly. He also leaves a sister, Chris Cipperly Malott.



*Good-night! good-night! as we so oft have said
Beneath this roof at midnight, in the days
That are no more, and shall no more return.
Thou hast but taken up thy lamp and gone to bed;
I stay a little longer, as one stays
To cover up the embers that still burn.*

*~from Three Friends of Mine
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*





Puttin' a Harness on Ol' Sol

To the Editor,

I am thrilled to hear about the solar arrays in Sandisfield. We have a 4.4kw system in Connecticut and it is a total joy. Our horse grazes under it while it silently produces the clean energy that lights our home and heats our stove. On days when we use less power than we are producing, the excess electricity goes to our neighbors and we get credit on our bill. We call it "feel-good" energy because no nuclear waste, no oil spill, no "fracking" water pollution are its by-products.

Judi Friedman, Sandisfield and Canton, CT

Hello to the current Editor!

The solar farm issue is really a big deal and needs some attention. Imagine the land next to your home having steel poles pile-driven into the ground – how is that effecting your well, foundation, walls?

The word is that they have carte blanche from the state to put a farm anywhere they can buy or lease. Imagine that the view of the woods or farmland out your window is replaced with a thousand stands of solar panels and/or the eight-foot fence that surrounds them. What does this do to your view and your home value? Their incentive is huge profits. It's happening fast and it's happening now. So fast that towns are not prepared to know what to do about any of it, including how to tax these farms.

Diane Swartz, Sandisfield

What They Are Saying About Us

To the Editor,

You ask all the right questions for the local news.

Carol Ginsburg, Sandisfield

To the Editor,

Thanks for keeping us informed and bringing us together.

Miriam and Bill Karmel, Minneapolis, MN

To the Editor,

Have you considered an iPhone/iPad app in the "newsstand"? It would be a very cool way to distribute the paper to everyone.

Richard Gurfein, New York City

To the Editor,

Keep up the good work. I believe that it is time for our town to be accountable for what they spend. A voice like your paper is just the way to do it. I don't live in Sandisfield. We have a small home there we use from time to time – when we are out that way we always pick up the Sandisfield Times. So much info for a little town.

Fred and Virginia Weston

Thanks for the Memories

To the Editor,

The residents of Berkshire Rehabilitation would like to express their heartfelt appreciation to the staff, volunteers, as well as some local merchants for making their Christmas holiday a very special one.

Individual gifts were purchased by Secret Santas (facility staff). Scarves, gloves and hats were knitted with love by members of St. Mary's Church in Otis and stockings were stuffed by Barbara Spring, longtime friend of the facility. The VFW of Dalton was also very kind in providing mittens for our guys. They also host an annual Christmas party for many of the veterans of Western MA.

A wonderful holiday was had by all residing here at the facility.

The residents & staff of the facility want to especially thank Norton Fletcher of the American Legion of Sandisfield for his generosity. He has donated his time to calling monthly Bingo for the vets.

Additionally, he and the Legion are thanked for their Christmas generosity towards the gentlemen.

Several of our local merchants so generously donated to a Christmas fund-raiser to help buy additional gifts for the residents, most of whom are veterans. Among those donating were Tucker's Pub, New Boston General Store, and the Silverbrook Cafe.

With the combined efforts of all of those mentioned above, Christmas was a pleasant holiday for all.

THANK YOU ALL!!

Lisa Valente, Berkshire Rehabilitation

Thank you!

We acknowledge with gratitude donations from the following kind persons:

*George & Anne Apostolatos
Michelle Arnot & Roger Brown*

Ron Bernard

Marion Bernstein

Bruce & Elra Beyer

Jeff & Mary Bijur

Teresa Bills & Carl Codling

Eva & Jean Paul Blachere

Herb Burtis

Anita Carr

Kathryn Clarke

Bill Cohn & Rhee Kasky

Susie Crofut & Ben Luxon

Josephine Davidson

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Margaret O'Clair

Sandy & Flora Parisky

Lucille & Paul Siegel

Barbara Steen-Elton & Nick Elton

Kitty & Ray Stollerman

Nilda Torresola

Liana Toscanini

Paul & Susan Van Sickle

Tasim & Miradije Klenja (Villa Mia)

Frederick & Virginia Weston

June & Walter Wink

NOW HEAR THIS!

*If you have an event that you would like to see listed here, please email calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org.
We reserve space for those events that involve Sandisfield residents or that take place in
Sandisfield and neighboring communities.*

JANUARY-FEBRUARY EVENTS

Wednesday, January 25, 7 PM, Farmington River Regional School Board Budget Hearing, Farmington River School. Snow date February 1.

Wednesday, January 25 and Wednesday February 29, 6:30-8:30 PM, Genealogy Class, Sandisfield Library. Please note that this class has been extended and will continue to meet through April.



ONGOING EVENTS

Town Meetings (Info call 258-4711)

Selectmen, every Monday at 7 PM, Town Hall Annex.

The Children's Health Program Play Group, every Monday when school in session, 9:30 AM - 11 AM, Farmington River Elementary School music room. Led by Laura Mesina. For more information call 413-644-0104 X 1159.

Farmington River Regional School District, first Monday of the month, 7 PM, Farmington River Regional School, Rte 8, JoAnn Austin, Superintendent. Public Welcome.

Planning Board, second Monday of the month, 6 PM, Old Town Hall.

Senior Lunch Program, every Tuesday when school in session, 12:15 PM, Farmington River Elementary School. For more information or reservations call Lynette 413-269-4466. Cost \$2.

Board of Assessors, second Tuesday of the month, 5 PM, Town Hall Annex.

Conservation Commission, third Tuesday of the month at 7 PM, Town Hall Annex.

Otis/Sandisfield Kiwanis, every Wednesday, 6:30 PM, Otis Town Hall. For more information call Andy Pyenson, President at 413-269-6060.

Board of Health, first Wednesday of the month, 6 PM, Old Town Hall.

Boy Scouts, every Wednesday, 6:30 PM, Otis Town Hall, Elizabeth Kuzmech, Scoutmaster 258-4906 kuzmech5@verizon.net.

Council on Aging, every Wednesday, 11 AM - 2 PM, Senior Center - Town Hall Annex. Pot Luck Lunch at noon, Bingo at 1 PM. Free blood pressure screening every fourth Wednesday.

Finance Committee, second Wednesday of the month, 7 PM, Sandisfield Library. Public welcome.

PTO, second Thursday of the month, 3:15 P.M., Farmington River Regional School. Child Care provided.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday and Tuesday 9 AM-12:30 PM, Wednesday, 6:30-8:30 PM, Thursday, 2:30-5:30 PM, Sat: 9 AM-12 noon 258-4966.



OF INTEREST

Saturday, February 11, 7 PM, Jazz Singer Vickie True, Knox Trail Inn, 269-4400. This is the first of the Knox Trail Inn Concert Series and has a Valentine's Day theme. Admission free. Supported by a grant from the Otis Cultural Council.

Wednesday, February 15, 7 PM, Regional Selectmen's Meeting, Emergency Management Building, Tolland. This is an open meeting and all who are interested are encouraged to attend.

ELECTION WORKERS WANTED:

Send a letter of interest to PO Box 90, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or email the Board of Registrars at sandisfieldtownclerk@verizon.net. Requirements are that you are a resident of Sandisfield and a registered voter, and that you attend a workshop. 🗳️

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SANDISFIELD TOWN DIRECTORY

AMBULANCE: 911 Non-Emergency: 258-4742

ANIMAL WARDEN / DOG OFFICER

Kim Spring: 258-4450

ASSESSORS OFFICE: 258-4701

Office Hours: Tu-Th 9:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Meets second Tuesday every month at 5 PM

BOARD OF HEALTH: 258-4053

Office hours Mon 11-3. Meets first Wed at 9 AM

Meets at the Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Rd.

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

FRRSD **SCHOOL COMMITTEES** meets first Mon, 7 PM

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 O'Brien: 258-4701 John Skrip: 258-4788

LIBRARY: 258-4966

Monday & Tuesday: 9-12:30

Wednesday: 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Thursday: 2:30-5:30, Saturday: 9-12:00

MA. POISON CONTROL CENTER 800 682-9211

OLD TOWN HALL, 3 Silverbrook Road - 258-4170

PLANNING BOARD

Meets second Monday every month @ 6 PM

Meets at the Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Rd.

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: 258-4979 Steve Harasyko

SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER

5 Hammertown Road

PO Box 31 258-4100 www.sandisfieldartscenter.org

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 Representative.: 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@verizon.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: Teresa Dellagiustina: 258-4712

Mon, Wed 9 AM – 3 PM

VETERANS SERVICES Laurie Hils

Great Barrington Town Hall: 413 528-1580

Mon – Thurs: 7 AM – 3 PM

(January 1, 2012)

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

P.O. Box 584
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www.sandisfieldtimes.org

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The Sandisfield Times is an independent nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

The Sandisfield Times does not yet have a 501(c)(3) designation, therefore donations are NOT tax-deductible at this time but **donations of all sizes are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper**. Please send checks to: *The Sandisfield Times*, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255. For more information visit our website www.sandisfieldtimes.org.

Copies of *The Sandisfield Times* are available in Sandisfield at A&M Auto, the Dump, Post Office, Town Hall, the New Boston Store, the New Boston Inn, the Silverbrook Café, Tuckers, and Villa Mia. Copies are also available in Otis at Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Southern Berkshire Realty, Otis Library, the

Farmington Elementary School (during the school year) and Terranova's. Other locations include the The Roadstore Cafe in Monterey, Monterey General Store (There is a box affixed to the front of the building containing *The Sandisfield Times*.) and the Southfield Store.

The Times can be mailed to your home by paid subscription (see form below) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org.

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor **BY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR**. We may edit for space, style or clarity. We will try to publish Public Service Announcements when we have room, with priority given to Sandisfield organizations. No portion of the *The Sandisfield Times* may be reproduced without permission.

Editorial Staff for this issue:

Co-Editors: Debbie Harris and Setsuko Winchester
Copy Editor: Rhee Kasky
Graphic Design: Tina Sotis

Contributors: Jean Atwater-Williams, Ron Bernard, Susan Bubenas, Val Coleman, Larry Dwyer, Debbie Harris, Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals, Simon Winchester and our Regular Columnists.

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