

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

*Tribunus*



*Plebis*

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

*Volume XI, Number 10*

*January and February 2021*

## Doris (Lincovitch) Hryckvich

1928-2020

A TRIBUTE BY  
NINA HRYCKVICH

On December 11, our dear mother, wife, and grandmother died peacefully at 92 years of age at the family farm on South Beech Plain Road. She lived her entire life in Sandisfield.

She is survived by her husband of 67 years, Nicholas (Nick), her two sons, Victor (and daughter-in-law Nina) and Frank (Bud) (and daughter-in-law Sharon), as well as grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and extended family and many friends.

Born on May 4, 1928, Doris was the youngest of eight siblings, all born on the family farm (Homestead) on Sears Road. Her parents, Agathia and Victor Lincovitch, were Russian immigrants from Belarus who settled in Sandisfield to begin a life of farming, Agathia from Vitebsk (also the birthplace of famous

*con't p.4*

## What's Going on with Rt. 57?

### REPAVING PROJECT FACES DELAYS

*By Seth Kershner*

Despite being one of the Town's main thoroughfares, Rt. 57 has not been fully repaved since 1986. It shows.

Select Board chairman Brian O'Rourke has described it as "almost impassable." During her visit to the area in April 2018, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito called Rt. 57 "a public safety issue," with its many potholes significantly slowing the response time of first responders. Shortly after Polito's visit, a motorcycle driving on the road caught its tire in a rut and crashed.

But that was all supposed to change last fall. After months of hard work by the Town's Select Board and State Representative Smitty Pignatelli, MassWorks announced a \$2 million grant for full-depth reclamation and culvert replacement along the most badly damaged stretch of Rt. 57, between New Hartford Road and Gedney Farm in New Marlborough. The grant, to be split between the neighboring towns, would finally allow for the road's much-needed repair.

So, what happened?

Starting on September 16, workers with Belmont-based Tasco Construction began the first phase—digging drainage trenches and replacing culverts along the New Marlborough portion of the project.

In October, work moved into the Sandisfield stretch of the road. Town officials first thought that the work would last for two to three weeks, but on October 28, DPW officials from New Marlborough and Sandisfield did a walk-through of the



*Warning sign by Gedney Farm alerts motorists entering Sandisfield.*

*Photo: Setsuko Winchester*

entire project with Tasco and found several items that were unacceptable and in need of fixing. In a statement to The Times, Sandisfield's DPW Superintendent Brad Curry wrote that in some cases soil was not properly backfilled and compacted. There were also problems with the mortaring and grouting on the concrete culvert boxes. Finally, after a few weather delays, by late November Tasco completed the requested rework.

During this whole period, between mid-September and mid-November, sections of

*con't p.12*

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# Town Meeting and Election

## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK:


We are preparing for the upcoming Town Meeting on May 15 and Town Election on May 17. Nomination papers are available. To run for an elected position, you must be a registered voter in Sandisfield. Only the candidate wishing to run can request the nomination papers. When collecting signatures please make sure the signatures are legible. If they are creative and unable to read have the voter print their name next to their signature. An unrecognizable signature will not be counted. Also unacceptable are P. O. boxes and route numbers as addresses. The address must have the house number and street name. The last day to request nomination papers is March 25, 2021 and they are due back by March 29, 2021.

Any questions, call 258-4711 ext. 2. Dolores Harasyko, Town Clerk

### YEAR 2021 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Mar. 25 Last day to obtain nomination papers.
- Mar. 29 Last day to submit nomination papers.
- Mar. 31 Dog licenses expire, new licenses due by May 31.
- Apr. 8 Town Caucus – Old Town Hall 7:00p.m.
- Apr. 14 Last day to object or withdraw nomination papers.
- Apr. 27 Last day to register to vote for the Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election.
- May 15 Annual Town Meeting at the DPW Garage Building, 3 Silverbrook Road at 10:00 a.m.
- May 17 Annual Town Election, Old Town Hall 10:00a.m. to 8:00p.m.

### OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION THIS YEAR:

Office	Term	Currently held by
Moderator	1 year	Simon B. A. Winchester
Selectmen	3 years	Brian O'Rourke
Board of Assessors	3 years	Kathy Burrows
School Committee	3 years	Billie Anderson Pachulski
Board of Health	3 years	Roger Kohler
Planning Board	4 years	Vacancy
Planning Board	5 years	John Field
Library Trustees	5 years	Kathy Burrows 


## School Options Exploration Committee Being Formed

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

*As posted on the Town Website*

The Town of Sandisfield is forming a temporary School Options Exploration Committee to study, evaluate, and make recommendations on alternatives and/or continued participation in the Farmington River School District.

The School Options Exploration Committee will be led by the Town Manager and consist of five to ten Sandisfield residents. This Committee will meet remotely once per week for approximately three months. Exact meeting times will be scheduled around availability of members.

If you are interested in joining the School Options Exploration Committee and have the time to participate in weekly meetings, as well as conduct outside research, please submit a letter of interest to [townmanager@sandisfieldma.gov](mailto:townmanager@sandisfieldma.gov). 

## Barbara Recovering


*By Bill Price*

Barbara Hotchkiss is very chipper after being on the receiving end of a falling tree last August.

She said she's "much better" and "weaning myself off the neck brace," though she's still in a lot of discomfort and undergoing regular sessions of physical therapy. She hopes to be back "to my old self in a month or two."

During last summer's Tropical Storm Isaias, Barbara was taking a necessary detour down Town Hill Road and was turning around because of a downed tree when suddenly another tree crashed across the roof of her car, pinning her inside. She was rescued eventually by the Monterey Fire Department using its Jaws of Life equipment.

Barbara's friends and her neighbors on Roosterville Road rallied to help, as you would expect. A Go Fund Me site raised over \$5,000 to help her family with expenses.

Barbara said, "I'm very grateful for that help. The bills keep coming whether you're working or not. I'd like to thank everyone who helped out. It felt so good to know everyone was ready to support me and my family." 



### MISSING DOG

*Answers to "Soda Pop." Black lab mixed, white paws, 2 ½ years old, 65 lbs, micro chipped, Slipped out of collar, East Otis vicinity. Reward. Call Kellee (508) 901-1023*

# Two by Simon

By Bill Price

Now streaming on Netflix is a feature film produced from a best-selling non-fiction book by one of your neighbors, Simon Winchester.

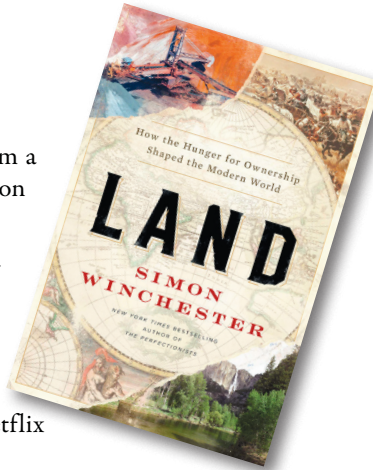
Simon's account of the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary in the mid-19th century, *The Professor and the Madman*, has been transformed into a film directed by Mel Gibson starring himself as "the professor" and Sean Penn in an incredible and heart-breaking performance as "the madman." Intended originally for theatrical release, the film is now streaming on Netflix because of the pandemic.

The film is a fine piece of work, with outstanding performances by Gibson and, especially, Penn. Of the film, Simon said he had "nothing to do with it except selling the option in what seems like a long time ago. But it's a lot of fun to see it on screen."

Not only is Simon's film a hit on Netflix, but his newest book of nonfiction, *Land: How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World*, was published mid-January.

The book explores the idea of property through human history and how it has shaped modern man and what it can mean for our future. *Land* received a full-blown review/essay in the January 18 *New Yorker* that provides accolades for the author while engaging Simon in a serious conversation about, particularly, American property.

Of particular interest for New Englanders, Simon begins the book by telling in detail the story of his own purchase of a small tract of land some few miles from Sandisfield, and how and why he continues to own that tiny fraction of the United States and what it means to him to do so.



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Like you, we've had to forgo our activities in 2020, including our 25th Anniversary celebratory events. But, we're looking ahead to 2021 to celebrate our "25 + 1" Anniversary with free virtual events and possible outdoor performances.

**Stay tuned!**

from  
*The Sandisfield Arts Center*



Sandisfield Arts Center  
sandisfieldartscenter.org

## Doris (Zincovitch) Hryckvich

con't from p. 1

painter Marc Chagall) and Victor from Grodno. Doris attended grammar school at the one-room school house on Silverbrook Road. When her father died suddenly while she was in the eighth grade, Doris had to quit school and to help take care of the farm.

In her early years Doris was quite a great hunter and put food on the table during deer season. She was such a good hunter that her family called her "Dead-Eye Doris!" She also was a great fisher woman, catching brook trout in the Sandisfield streams. Lois Platt remembered on Connect-Sandisfield that "as a teenage girl, Doris could drive a team of oxen."



*Doris and Nick on their honeymoon, possibly at Niagara Falls.*

Doris married Nick Hryckvich in 1953 at Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in Pittsfield. Her husband and his brother Alex had a very successful business in Sandisfield, "Hryckvich Brothers Sawmill." Nick and Doris' two sons, Victor and Bud, worked at the sawmill, a thriving, prosperous business on Rt. 8. Doris often brought "the boys" something good to eat as they were either sawing out back or in the woods logging. She fed everyone at the shop, even customers.

Doris was very knowledgeable about the natural world and its bounty. An avid medicinal herbalist, she made healing tinctures and salves for all kinds of ailments. She had a special wild herb that she picked to make a tea with when her Poppy Nick had a stomach ache.

Back in the day, Doris was frequently seen by many picking wild mushrooms. She was a mushroom expert and knew when and where to pick them. Growing up in Sandisfield, she knew every secret spot in the woods for mushrooms and kept them secret. She used to say, "I know my mushies!!" One time she had so many trash



*Doris with her sporty red Nissan Xterra in 2014.*

bags full of mushrooms I had to help her drag them out of the woods. We spent days preparing them for a Russian cuisine.

Doris was a fabulous gardener. Her flowers were always amazing. People would comment on her prize tomatoes, pickling cucumbers, and enormous zucchinis that almost resembled musical instruments. When asked the secret to her beautiful tomatoes she would say, "It's the manure tea. You have to feed them, that's what makes them so beautiful." Manure tea, as she called it, was her secret recipe of cow manure and compost. All natural, of course.

The dill pickles she made in her crock were delicious, as were her bread and butter pickles that she shared with friends. In June she always went strawberry picking in nearby hills and could pick for hours. One time she stopped to see her friend "Ralphie" at A&M Auto. Ralph remembers her opening the back of her Wagoneer, which was full of big ripe strawberries, and offering him some. Ralph anticipated a box full of strawberries but Doris gave him only three big ones!

She loved blueberry picking too, and visiting Gary Pease and picking blueberries at his place. They were slightly tart and made great pies, she would say.

In the spring, Doris loved picking dandelion greens and preparing them for her family. Every fall in apple season, we picked apples and made barrels of hard cider. We shared the cider with neighbors and some of the townspeople. We had quite some hard cider parties in town! Roosterville was never the same when we opened up a jug of hard cider!

A wonderful cook, Doris took pride in her traditional Russian recipes. Her borscht, kapusta, and

potato pancakes were the best. On Orthodox Easter she made delicious babka and a special sweet cheese to go with it. Her Russian Orthodox faith was very important to her and a huge part of her life.



*The Good Old Days. Doris Hryckvich made two cakes so all the kids at her son Victor's 8th birthday party would have enough. From left, birthday boy Victor in the checkered shirt, his best friend Bobby Platt, Eric Pachulski, Barbara Platt, Donny Barto, Dawn Campetti (now married to Eric), Bud Hryckvich, and Bonnie Campetti. Roosterville Road, 1963.*

When her sons were small she was a great cake decorator, making special cakes for their birthdays and other events.

One of the highlights of her life was a trip to Russia with her sister Polly in the late 1970s. The trip was a big deal because neither of them had been on a plane before. They were in Russia for a month and saw the places where their parents had grown up.

Doris was a hardworking resilient woman with a unique personality, always lending a helping hand.

I met Doris, my future mother-in-law, when I was 14 going on 15, a city girl from Manhattan intrigued

by the country way of life. Doris taught me so much. She took me under her wing and turned me into a true country girl. I'll never forget the day she introduced me to her new calf "Swinging Suzy" and showed me how to milk one of her cows at the farm on Beech Plain Road. "Molly Moo Cow" was her name. Doris had nicknames for everybody and every animal. Milking wasn't easy for a 15-year-old city girl, but I did learn after a while.

She told many wonderful stories of growing up in Sandisfield. The one-room school house in West New Boston, where if you misbehaved the teacher made you sit under her desk – the stories of how she was a classmate and friend of my dad, Sidney Pinsky, and how she loved to make him laugh because she loved his warm, sweet smile. She told how she would come down Silverbrook Road with her father on their horse and buggy in the winter and stop at the Pinskys' farm where she'd listen to her father and my grandfather David Pinsky speak Russian as they sipped hot tea with a sugar cube under their tongue. She said that when she was in grammar school she liked following my grandfather, who she called "Mr. Pinsky," into the woods (their farm was right next door to

the school) while he was chasing his cows and how she was intrigued listening to him recite prayers in Yiddish and Hebrew. She told me how nice my grandmother Libby Pinsky was and how she would cross over Pinskys' field to bring the kids at the schoolhouse warm cookies on cold days.

I will always cherish all the amazing folklore, recipes, and family traditions Doris shared with me that I will share with my three daughters and Doris's granddaughters, Theresa, Nicole, and Jessica Hryckvich. Their Grandma Doris will forever be in their hearts. They loved her dearly.

A small private service was held at Kelly's Funeral Home in December. Doris was a member of the All Saints of America Orthodox Church in Salisbury, Conn. Prayers for Doris were conducted there by Father John Kreta and in her honor at the Sunday Service at the church. A graveside service will be held this Spring at the Sandisfield Cemetery, date to be announced. 🙏



*Doris Hryckvich, 1980s.*

*Photos: Courtesy of the Hryckvich family.*

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# New Potential Pot Farming in Sandisfield?

## CONCERNED NEIGHBORS ATTEND COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETING

*By members of West Hubbard Road and Beyond Neighbors: Christine and Michael Bragdon, Edward Brozman, Paul Carbone, Cindy True Cormier, Jim and Cindy Deloy, Leslie and John Garwood, Lorraine and Jay Greenwell, Steve Kahn, Laurie Kanter, Barbara Lynn, Michele and Vinnie Mauro, Myles Reynolds, Jon Riedeman, Jon and Linda Schweitzer, and other committee members.*

On a freezing cold night in December, in a tent set up in the parking lot of Fire Station No. 2 on Route 57, we attended a "Community Outreach" meeting to provide information to residents about a proposed marijuana growing license. As a first step toward application for a license to grow, process or sell marijuana in Massachusetts, the state's Cannabis Control Commission requires such meetings. Despite advance notice in the Berkshire Eagle, on the Town website and via email to some Town residents, only around 15 people were present. This

included one representative from Sama Production LLC, in person, and three others via Zoom. None of the Sama representatives live in Berkshire County, or even in Massachusetts.

A year ago, operating under a different name (Fulcrum) this same group of out-of-state investors proposed to build a huge marijuana growing and manufacturing facility at Van Deusenville Road in Housatonic. They were driven away after a public hearing (held January 13, 2020) due to concerns about environmental hazards, including leaching pollutants into the river. Now they have eyes on a large parcel of land bordered by Abby Road and Town Hill Road. The property may also abut Sandisfield State Forest, but no survey was presented. It not clear, as of this writing, whether they have already purchased the property.

Their proposal is for a Tier-10 growing facility with multiple greenhouses of 80-90,000 square feet. (There may also be a manufacturing or processing building planned, as was in their proposal for Housatonic.). In the industry, this is considered large scale. Not many details were offered, other than the mention of "dark sky" lighting that is activated by motion detection, and a new odor control system that would aim fans toward the forest. The presenters provided scant information regarding how they planned to mitigate potential environmental hazards.

Sandisfield town counsel was present and made the point that this is a cultivation facility, rather than a retail store/dispensary. He said the town could expect to collect no more than three percent of their revenue, which might be the equivalent of Sandisfield's expenses for having this facility in our town (road maintenance, police calls and such.) This is nowhere close to the "millions" that Theory Wellness has provided to Great Barrington. It was not reported what the property taxes on such a commercial enterprise would bring to the Town. There were no other monetary incentives that were offered by Sama.

While such outreach meetings require that firms like Sama give information on their "positive impact to the community" and demonstrate how the location will not constitute a "nuisance as defined by law" to the Town, we did not feel they were sufficiently presented in this case. "Positive impact" might be jobs for residents, either during construction or when fully in operation, or, as recently reported, a significant amount of money generated by Theory Wellness retail dispensary in Great Barrington going towards non-profit agencies and the school system, earmarked for drug abuse education and prevention.

"Nuisances" are defined as "conditions that may cause harm or offense to others" such as noise, smoke, dust, odors, fumes, light and excessive traffic and wear and tear to public roads.

We are back to the same situation we were in over a year ago, when the Planning Board agreed to create bylaws to regulate the size and scope of marijuana establishments, sent it to the Select Board who in turn sent it back for revisions. So far, these bylaws have not been voted on by the town. This leaves us vulnerable to entities such as Sama Production LLC who want to use our town for their own profit yet give back no great windfall to the town. Sandisfield is only one of 22 municipalities, out of a total of 351 in the state, who have no ban or zoning law to regulate the scope of marijuana cultivation, processing or retail selling. This means, a marijuana factory could be built right next door to your home. Isn't it time we get together and decide what the residents of Sandisfield want?

The next significant step for Sama is to submit a request for a special permit to operate the facility in Sandisfield. Selectmen would then vote on this request without a town-wide vote. This is what happens when a town does not have zoning. Selectmen would likely seek resident input during a hearing (which should surely take place on a weekend, with ample notice, for all residents, full and part-time to attend.) But, in the end, there will be just the three Select Board members voting to accept or reject this intrusion into our way of life.

Please, let the Select Board know how you feel by emailing them through the Town's website, or by sending letters to the Times. If you would like to join the email list for updated information, send your request to sandisfieldpotinfo@gmail.com. 🇺🇸

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### OUT ON A LIMB: OP-ED

*Subjects should be enthralling to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email editor@sandisfieldtimes.org*

# Covid News for Now

By Bill Price

*AT PRESS TIME: Farmington River Regional School reported enough cases of Covid-19 at the school that the facility will remain closed for two weeks, until January 25, at least. And a small handful of residents, now quarantining, have either tested positive for the coronavirus or been exposed to someone who has tested positive.*

As reported in The Berkshire Eagle in early January, the Commonwealth experienced a surge in Covid-19 cases during and after Thanksgiving. The surge dipped in late December but has risen again through early January.

While vaccines have been approved and are being distributed, limiting the coronavirus as much as possible remains dependent on the willingness of individuals to wear masks in public places and practice social distancing.

This small inconvenience is necessary even in Berkshire County towns where there is so far little spread of the infection.

## NURSING HOMES

Nursing homes are still being hard hit. The Eagle reported that Wingate Residences in Pittsfield experienced the deaths of three patients during the first week of January, while 13 other patients were battling the virus. A rapid-response team from the State Department of Public Health was sent to the facility to help combat the outbreak.

Also in Pittsfield, Springside Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center reported that as of January 5 active cases included 21 patients and two staff members.

Closer to home, the New Boston nursing home, Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center, reported no current Covid-19 cases among residents or staff.


Tim Brown, spokesman for the center, said that as of January 10 “more than 75 percent of its residents and staff had received their first dose of the Covid vaccine, with many more expected to receive the vaccine in the next two weeks.”

He added, “We greatly appreciate our staff’s dedication to their profession and their residents through their willingness to take on Covid-19 since this pandemic began, and the administering of the vaccine is another step in that challenge.”

## GETTING TESTED

If you sense any of the warning signs of Covid-19 and want to be tested for the virus, three testing sites have been established by Berkshire Health Systems. The Eagle reported that tests will be conducted for any reason, with the state picking up the cost. To schedule a test, call the toll-free hotline, 855-262-5465, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily.

Locations are: 505 East St., Pittsfield, St Luke’s Square, adjacent to BHS Urgent Care Center; 98 Church St., North Adams, next to the city library; and 475 Main St., Great Barrington.

Tests can also be obtained through CVS pharmacies by filling out a form online. 

## THE MUSIC

Walking home on 89th Street,  
I chanced to hear  
Three girls singing  
“So This is Christmas,” with cheer.

In years past,  
A common sight,  
But in 2020,  
A bit of a fright.

Chorus, chorus,  
The most dangerous thing.  
So sad, so sad,  
Taking away the sing.

The theater, the restaurants  
I can do without.  
It’s the live music I crave.  
A silent drought.

Amazon music gives us  
Music on demand.  
Yet I miss the Friday night cantor,  
The live band.

The church choir,  
And barbershop quartet,  
Dalton Knights concert,  
A Mozart quintet.

I miss the music most of all.


I miss the music this Winter and Fall.

*Karen Garfield  
New Hartford Road*

# The Sandisfield Times is your community newspaper.

We welcome news from your neighborhood, your family and friends (births, deaths, honors/ awards).

The Times also publishes classified ads (free for 30 words or less, depending on space).

We also welcome your letters to the editor on topics of concern to Sandisfield readers. Maximum 300 words. 

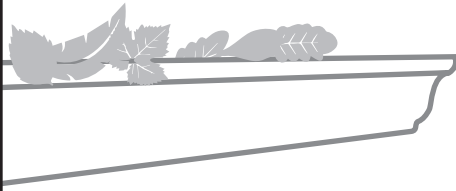
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*Editor's note: In December, our founding editor, Simon Winchester, addressed the controversy over a reporter who acknowledged attributing a quote to a Town official that she hadn't said. In this issue, we print two responses to Winchester's column.*

## GETTING IT RIGHT

*By Hilde Weisert, Hammertown Road*

To the Editors: I believe that Simon Winchester's lengthy "In the Aftermath" misses the point.

The subject of the error was about the voting process in our town – a microcosm of the country – and the important and serious work that the election workers do before, during, and after election day.

This year, when democracy depends on our nonpartisan, hard-working election workers, and a fair and well-understood, well-reported process – not just in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, or Arizona, but in our own town – to treat this issue without recognizing its difference from an ordinary local newspaper/local town dust-up over a routine misquote is tone deaf and a disservice to The Times, the community, and democracy.

I suspect Mr. Winchester was thrown off his usual common sense by the social media and email rancor he first gasps at and ridicules, then, after getting these licks in, advocates for lowering the temperature.

I am a reader, supporter, and appreciator of the Times and the volunteer effort that goes into the generally interesting, reliable, relevant paper that is one of the few town-wide Sandisfield institutions. I have especially appreciated the work of the usually reliable reporter who committed this bonehead error. But if the editors had retained journalistic distance and non-defensiveness, I feel sure they would have recognized that "the complaint" they thought was summarized in Winchester's piece actually provided useful factual details about the voting and vote counting process here in Sandisfield worthy of printing in the paper (details absent from the original article on "mechanics") rather than relegating to the website. I do urge everyone who wants to understand how the voting and election day process works in Sandisfield to read Ms. Harysyko's informative letter.

I understand that sincere apologies have been made, and that's good. Sadly, social media is social

media and will look for opportunities to demonize "the other" even in a small town like ours. I am distressed that our Select Board also seems to be joining the fray in declaring they won't provide their monthly reports – very useful to me as a longtime Sandisfield person and taxpayer, and often reminding me of the good and thankless work they do that my taxes support!

In fact, it seems that there are at least three hard-working but often unthanked parties in our town – Times reporters, election workers, and the Select Board. Can I thank them all for their good but sometimes flawed work, and hope that The Times will be a place we can go on learning all the reasons why?

## A TEACHABLE MOMENT, PLEASE?

*By Melissa Bye, New Hartford Road*

To the Editors: During these divisive and politically-fraught times, when the institution of a fair and free press has increasingly come under attack, it is unfortunate that a Sandisfield Times reporter chose to sacrifice accuracy on the altar of literary license. While I feel Simon Winchester's editorial honestly and thoroughly addresses the issue and his mea culpa on the reporter's behalf is full throated, it saddens me that this editorial ever had to be written. That said, I am disappointed to write that this is not the first time inaccuracies of this sort regarding town business have been reported in the Times.

I know some of the Times' reporters are journalists and historians by training and trade, and, as such, I would presume these reporters are familiar with the same important basic tenet I was taught when I was a university student majoring in and learning how to write about history – present the facts and support those facts with evidence, not with conjecture, speculation, or opinion. There is a time and place for opinion and editorializing. That place is definitely not in the reporting of significant town developments. Let us hope that this incident becomes a teachable moment, and that going forward those of us who subscribe to and read The Times can do so with confidence, so that The Times can live up to its mission of being "Reliable, Regular, Relevant." 🍷

### *OUT ON A LIMB: OP-ED*

*Subjects should be enthralling to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email editor@sandisfieldtimes.org*

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# New FinComm Chair Seeks Savings

## GETTING TO KNOW ROGER BROWN

By Seth Kershner

One of the greatest challenges facing a small town like Sandisfield is to stay within budget. Hence, the importance of the Finance Committee, a four-member team of volunteers charged with reviewing the budget presented by the Select Board and making recommendations at Town meetings about appropriations.

Roger Brown, the new chair of what everyone calls FinComm, spent most of his career in various areas of the financial services industry. He and his wife, Michelle Arnot Brown, have been homeowners in Sandisfield for more than 40 years. Since his retirement last year, they have been full-time town residents. "After living here so long, I was a little ashamed that I hadn't contributed as much as I should to the Town," Brown told The Times in a recent telephone interview. "Persuaded by Ralph Morrison, I joined the Finance Committee to offer whatever energy and expertise I can to make Sandisfield's financial future as secure as possible."

The Finance Committee sets its priorities at the beginning of each fiscal year. This year, Brown says that they have already reached one of their key goals—getting a process in place to accurately forecast fiscal needs and establish budgetary baselines for different departments. Brown believes this is the first time in the Town's history that it has had such a forecast. "Forecasting is important because with Covid-19, cost overruns are quite possible," Brown explained. "With forecasting in place, department budgets will be based on how much they spend, not on how much you were budgeted in previous years."

Although developing the forecast required significant time and effort on the part of FinComm's members, Brown believes it will bring substantial savings to the Town. "I think we'll get a more realistic budget in the end."

### AN EFFORT AT CAPITAL PLANNING

Another way to arrive at a realistic budget is to protect the Town from unanticipated capital expenditures. Despite the existence of a Capital Improvement Plan, passed by voters at the 2018 annual Town Meeting and approved by the Select Board shortly thereafter, the Town continues to use a one-off, pay-as-you-go model of municipal finance.

Capital planning is intended to help guide and coordinate major capital improvements, defined as anything costing more than \$25,000.

An independent audit of the Town's finances, in 2016, faulted Sandisfield for not compiling records of its capital assets like trucks and other vehicles.

As then-outgoing FinComm chair Kathy Jacobs told the Times in an interview last summer: "Sandisfield does not know what it owns."

Why, even after that 2016 independent audit, does the Town still lack even a basic inventory of its major assets? "There is a crying need for this," Brown acknowledged.

This would be one of the first tasks facing the Capital Improvement Plan committee, which has yet to be formed more than two years after the Select Board approved it. "It is hard to have a capital improvement program," Brown added, "without having an inventory of capital assets."

### IMPROVING THE DIALOGUE WITH FRRSD

Another priority for FinComm is to get a better handle on the school budget and to improve the dialogue between the Town and the Farmington River Regional School District. "It will take time

to do this," Brown says. "We want to be more involved in the school budgeting process so we can better understand what expenses are before the school district presents us with an unchangeable final product." But Brown warns residents not to expect too much. "Does this mean we are going to get changes to the budget? I'm not sure. But it will allow insight earlier in the game."

Sandisfield has around 100 students enrolled in the Farmington River Regional School, a K-6 school in Otis. In the past year, the amount that Sandisfield has had to pay into the district's nearly \$5 million budget rose by around six percent. Sandisfield's annual contribution is based on its share of enrollment, as well as a complicated state education cost-sharing formula based on three-year averages.

As the school district's business manager has pointed out in the past, Sandisfield's education expenditures represent around 43.12 percent of its total municipal spending, lower than the county average of 45.47 percent. Even though Sandisfield may be well within the norm, Brown firmly believes that the district can be run more efficiently. Working with the school committee, he and the other members of the Finance Committee will continue to seek savings for the Town. 🍷



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# Moreover...

## Whose Land is This?

By Simon Winchester

During the last few years that I have been your Moderator, I have opened the Town Meetings in the same deliberate way: I first ask all to join in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, naturally; and then I follow, rather less naturally, by offering a few brief words of respect toward those Native American people who lived here before we white settlers arrived and who still have in my view moral title to the land on which we have built our homes.

Most townsfolk, but decidedly not all, have approved of my little homily. Those who sympathize know well that in doing so I have followed the example of speakers in Australia, New Zealand and Canada who for many years have been paying public respect to their own Aborigines, Maori, and First Nation peoples, and whose various governments have been making tentative steps towards land reform, to give back some of what their predecessors took away.

This brief essay here is aimed not at this tolerant majority, but at the small number of our town's more conservative and traditionalist residents, who feel (as some have told me, loudly and rather forcefully) that to take any notice at all of our native forebears is quite unnecessary and that to do so publicly is an embarrassment and an impertinence.

To which I retort, and very much in the spirit of the more inclusive and kindly attitude which seems to be the hallmark of the incoming administration down in DC: *just hold on, for one moment.*

You have to understand: this isn't really our land. To the extent that anyone can actually own land – most of us don't seek to own the ocean, or the air, though lately we have learned that some greedy hedge-funders are now trading water from the Colorado River – these acres on and in which we live here are really still the lands of the Mohican people, and we should feel immense gratitude to be allowed to live out our days on them.

A scant two centuries ago these forests were hunting and gathering grounds of a people who by all accounts were sophisticated farmers, a kindly, helpful and generous population who welcomed the strangers and offered food and medicine and directions wherever they could. We learn much of them from the diaries of Henry Hudson, who, on a Dutch colonizing expedition in 1609 passed northward along the river that now bears his name and made contact, first with the Lenape people down near what is now New York City, then with our local Mohicans around Albany and to the east, and subsequently with the rather more wary Iroquois who lived further north.


We are told that forty percent of Americans these days do not believe that there are any Native Americans left in this country at all. This would be the view of those in Town who dislike my opening remarks: *They don't exist! Why are you even talking about them?*

In fact of course they do exist – there are hundreds of thousands of Native Americans still - but because of our, white behaviors in the past, they invariably no longer live where they once used to. So, there are Sioux in the northern Great Plains,

there are Cherokee and Ponca and Arapaho in Oklahoma, there are Pueblo Indians in New Mexico (one, Deb Haalan, will be the next US Secretary of the Interior).

And there are Mohican too – but not here, not any more. They, like all too many Native Americans, were shoo'd away from their ancestral homes. Some were shifted forcibly, like the miserable victims of the various Trails of Tears. Some others – like our own Mohicans – were edged off the land by the press of incoming white people, their quietly peaceable lives being drastically affected by the newcomers' more frantic habits. The relict members of our indigenous forefathers, about 1,600 of them, live now in Shawano County, Wisconsin, not far from the football holy city of Green Bay. Senior members of the tribe visit here every year, and keep an office here, pressing for return of their traditional territories..

Relics of these Mohicans' local lives are everywhere, artifacts to be discovered in the woods all around. In our next issue my colleague and local historian Ron Bernard will tell you what he has lately discovered, partly in the hope that by learning of the success and longevity of their settlement here we can continue to honor their memory. To know them, one might say, is to better understand them.

To help in that effort I plan to continue to say a few words about them at the start of each Town Meeting, both to jog our collective memories, maybe to guilt a few of our number, and maybe to help persuade those who think all Indians are extinct, or else should be, to open their minds to one singular reality: *This is their country. We are their guests.* 

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## Recreation Committee News

### SANTA AT THE FIREHOUSE

By Lynn Rubenstein

Santa was right in his element (lots of snow) during the Recreation Committee's Holiday drive-through event in early December.



*Santa Claus with masked helpers Lynn Rubenstein (left) and Chrissy O'Brien.*

Being the gregarious and generous soul he is, Santa spoke with every child (reminding them of the importance of cookies and carrots) while their sleigh drivers were given hot cocoa reindeers to cozy up with later while their children opened their prizes.

Many thanks to those who volunteered to help out during the event: Sandy, Barbara, Laura, Nina, Steve, Caleb, and Gary. A big shout out to Chief Ralph Morrison for offering Firehouse #2 for our magical event.

As the vehicles pulled into the firehouse driveway, up went one of the big bay doors and what a sight to behold: Santa in his toy shop, decorated politically correctly, with his elves scurrying about.

And a really, really big thank you to Santa for helping us spread holiday happiness in our town.

Our next event will be Valentine's Day, to be held in the Library parking lot, Saturday, February 6, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. (Yes, it will also be a drive-through). We will hand out kits for making your own Valentine's Day cards and goodies.

Our event is available to everyone ... kids from one to ninety-nine. We hope to see you there.

Our committee now has a rollicking number of five members with plenty of room for more. You don't even have to join the committee to help – you can simply volunteer for temporary events.

From the Sandisfield Recreation Committee: Roger Kohler, Dawn Lemon, Laura Messina, Chrissy O'Brien, and Lynn Rubenstein 🍷

## Sandisfield Wants Some Help

### TWO PART-TIME ADMIN POSITIONS

The Town Planning Board and the Conservation Commission are looking to hire administrative assistants to help with meeting duties, taking and transcribing minutes, and other detailed work that is currently being carried out ad hoc by members.

The Planning Board job is estimated to require 6-8 hours per month with a pay of \$1,500 per year. Meetings are generally monthly, the second Tuesday evening of the month. CONTACT: If you have questions, email: rkohler.sandisfield@gmail.com. APPLY: If interested, submit your resume or Town Employment application to: Town Manager, P. O. Box 90, 66 Sandisfield Rd., Sandisfield, MA 01255. Email: townmanager@sandisfieldma.gov.

The Conservation Commission job possibly requires more hours and more detailed knowledge of procedures and systems, all of which can be learned "on the job." The pay is \$15.60/hr. If interested, submit the Town Employment Application to: Town Manager, P. O. Box 90, 66 Sandisfield Rd., Sandisfield, MA 01255. Email: townmanager@sandisfieldma.gov.

More details are available at the Town website, www.sandisfieldma.gov. Go to Employment in the "Citizen Action Center," scroll down to the individual attachments for each position. 🍷

**What's Going on with Rt. 57?  
con't from p. 1**

Rt. 57 were closed to traffic on weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and around 4 p.m.

In a follow-up interview with The Times, Curry said that while inconvenient, the road closings were intended to "make the construction phase move faster."

Although the Town tried to inform residents by posting updates online about Rt. 57 detours, one local business owner says this was not enough.

"No one ever contacted us regarding the extended closure," Andy Snyder wrote the Times in an email. Snyder and his family run When Pigs Fly Farm, growing and selling a variety of flowers and organic produce from their farm stand on Rt. 57, about one-and-a-half miles from the New Marlborough line.


"The closure basically put us out of business for the end of the harvest season and totally killed our holiday season," Snyder wrote, estimating

that sales for the end of the harvest season were down almost 90 percent from previous years.

"We have been a business in Sandisfield for over 20 years," he added. "We should have been contacted or a public hearing should have been held where we could have voiced our concerns prior to the start of the project."

**WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS**

In the spring, Lee-based LB Corporation will handle the second phase of the project, which involves removing the existing asphalt and repaving the roadbed. While the paving will take approximately two weeks to complete, DPW chief Curry said that the road will be drive-able most of that time. Residents should expect Rt. 57 detours for only a few days, at most.

Curry also added that he would participate in a construction meeting in April to discuss the concerns of business owners and other issues – like inadequate detour signs – that came up during the first phase of the project. 

**One-Person  
Clean-up Crew**

*Editor's note: Many Town residents carry their garbage to the Transfer Station in open containers on the back of their pickup trucks. Of course, Rt. 57 being a bit of a bumpy ride, some of their trash inevitably winds up on the side of the road. Until locals put a lid on it, or at least secure their bouncy trash bins, the problem will continue. Meanwhile, one Montville resident is taking action. Marcella Smith shares this report with The Times.*

"At first, I thought it was the white of a birch branch, but the glint of metal gave it away. It's a beer can, one of many I have retrieved from the side of Town Hill Road or Rt. 57 between the entrance to the cemetery and the Post Office.



Trash can be found up and down Rt. 57, in the vicinity of the Transfer Station.

Photo: Marcella Smith

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Recently, on a walk from the Transfer Station to the entrance of the cemetery and back again, I filled 30-gallon trash bags with beer and soda cans, McDonald's plastic cups, half-ounce shot bottles of whiskey or lemon-flavored vodka, carry-out containers, food wrapping, and the ever present plastic bag. The town has no sanitation department, so we have to be our own sanitation crew. The clean-up campaign is good motivation for my daily two-mile walk. Of course, I'd prefer to enjoy the beauty of the countryside here, and not be distracted by the glint of metal, or the sun bouncing off plastic." 

# Police/Fire/EMS Logs

NOTE: North Main Street is Rt. 8 north of New Boston Bridge; South Main Street is south of the bridge.



**Police Reports for November and December were unavailable at press time**



## November 2020 Incidents

- Nov 2 . . . Power line down, area of 112 Sandisfield Road
- Nov 7 . . . . . Fire alarm activation, false alarm
- Nov 13 . . . Utility pole fire, Beech Plain and Cold Spring Roads
- Nov 15 . . . Three-car motor vehicle accident, Engine #1 responded

## December 2020 Incidents

- Dec 1 . . . Fire alarm activation, faulty smoke detector
- Dec 5 . . . Power lines across road, notify Eversource and stand-by
- Dec 26 . . . Car into water on Sandybrook Turnpike, no injuries
- Dec 31 . . . . . Fire alarm activation, false alarm

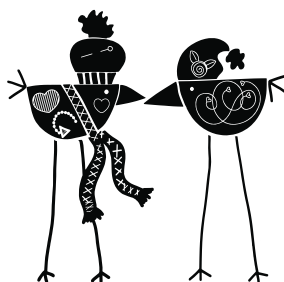


## November 2020 Incidents

- Nov 1 . . . . . Medical call, no transport
- Nov 13 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital, Great Barrington
- Nov 15 . . . Three-car motor vehicle accident, transport to hospital
- Nov 15 . . . . . Medical call, Tolland, transport to Charlotte-Hungerford Hospital, Winsted
- Nov 17 . . . . . Medical call, Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance responded
- Nov 21 . . . Medical call, Tolland, transport to Baystate Noble Hospital, Springfield
- Nov 23 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Charlotte-Hungerford Hospital
- Nov 24 . . . Medical call, Tolland, Otis Ambulance dispatched
- Nov 26 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital

## December 2020 Incidents

- Dec 12 . . . . . Medical call, no transport
- Dec 13 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- Dec 13 . . . Medical call, Tolland, transport to Noble Hospital
- Dec 14 Medical call, transport to Berkshire Medical Center, Pittsfield
- Dec 25 . . . . . Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital



# Otis Library & Museum Receives National Grant

## \$3,000 GRANT WILL HELP THE LIBRARY PROMOTE DIVERSITY

The Otis Library has been selected as one of 200 libraries to participate in Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries, an American Library Association initiative that helps library workers better serve their small and rural communities.

The competitive award comes with a \$3,000 grant that will help the library to open lines of communication and create opportunities to develop an appreciation of racial and cultural diversity throughout the Otis community. As part of the grant, Otis Library trustees Gloria Mamokhin, and Susan Ebitz will take an online course in how to lead conversations, a skill vital to community work. They will then host conversations with community boards, and residents and educators about racial and cultural diversity and use the grant funds to enhance the library collection in these areas for all ages from children to adults.

Anyone interested in getting involved or taking part in the conversation, please send a note of interest to [info@otislibraryma.org](mailto:info@otislibraryma.org) or call 413-269-0109 for more information.

# Winter Snowfall to Date

2020-2021 Snowfall as measured at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station.

October 30	4.0"
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	
November 3	1.0"
November 5	2.0"
November 14	1.0"
Total November	4.0"

<b>DECEMBER</b>	
December 14	1.0"
December 16-17	13.0" Nor'easter
Total December	14.0"

<b>JANUARY 2021</b>	
January 2	ice
January 3	4"
<b>Season to date</b>	<b>26.5 inches</b>



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# Comings and Goings



Val Coleman, 90, died December 20 at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington. He lived his last thirty years in Sandisfield and, as well as anyone can, made them count.

From the time he arrived in Town in 1989, he was an early advocate for the creation of the Sandisfield Arts Center. Beyond advocacy, he volunteered at the Center until it closed its doors last spring to wait out the pandemic. Whether serving on the Program Committee and Board of Directors, being featured in a play he had written, acting in another, opening and closing the place on cold winter nights, or sweeping the floors, Val was always present, serious, and fun. He created the "Burma Shave" signs on Rt. 57, guided cars into parking spots, and was one half of the Coleman/Bill Cohn series of talks on American life and culture. He presented elegantly researched papers on everything from Abraham Lincoln to the genesis and development of American poetry.

His memoir/drama titled "The Stamp Collection" was produced at the Arts Center by the Sandisfield Players in 2017, drawing full houses for both performances. Hannah Van Sickle, writing in *The Berkshire Edge*, said of Val that "the eccentric character cum poet turned playwright who, through 'The Stamp Collection,' brings the poetry of life and another era to all who are lucky enough to witness his tale unfold on the stage."

Val's real-life tale began in Charleston, a small town in Coles County, Illinois (the same county where young Abraham Lincoln was raised a century before; in fact, an aunt wrote a distinguished biography of Lincoln.). Val graduated from Antioch College and served in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953. He worked



**VAL COLEMAN**  
1930-2020

as a publicist for United Artists Corporation in New York City before joining the Civil Rights Movement in 1960.

He stayed active in the movement the rest of his life. His arrest at a New York demonstration in the early '60s was pictured in the *New York Daily Mirror*. Later he became press secretary for the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). He worked at Mobilization for Youth, the New York City Commission on Human Rights, and the NYC Housing Authority. He joined the faculty of



*Val, arrested at a civil rights protest, 1960s. The New York Daily Mirror.*

Columbia University in 1980 where he taught urban planning until his retirement in 2001.

In New York, he became friends with fellow activists Sid Pinsky, Marilyn Gore, and Danny Kronenfeld, all from

Sandisfield. When he retired, he bought a log cabin-style home on Town Hill Road, and he and Sid worked with others to form the Sandisfield Arts Center.

In 2010 he was one of the founding parents of *The Sandisfield Times*, helping the editorial staff understand their sense of worth and value as a voice for the Town. As the paper reported in a tribute published in November 2020, Val was "our poet, reporter, cheerleader, and from the start the guy who delivered the paper throughout New Boston. With his skills as a community leader, he encouraged a sometimes reluctant Sandisfield to accept us."

Val was the author of two collections of short stories, "The Sandisfield Stories" and "Beverly & Marigold." A few of his presentations at the Arts Center are available to be viewed or listened to at [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org).

Val is survived by his son, Charles Coleman, a composer, orchestrator, and vocalist in New York City and a sister, Dr. Mary Coleman of Florida.

The Arts Center, together with Val's family, plans a celebration of Val's life and writings "when it is safe to gather later in 2021."



## Four Friends of Val

**COURTNEY MAUM,**  
**FORMERLY OF TANNERY ROAD**

The eight years I lived in Sandisfield, working chiefly as a writer, I loved knowing Val was up the hill from me, working on his own writing. Val imparted a love of storytelling to everyone who knew him and to those lucky enough to attend the holiday extravaganzas at the Arts Center every winter. Val's passing is a great loss to the community – but he gave us so much while he was here.

**ROBERTA MYERS,**  
**FORMERLY OF COLD SPRING ROAD**

Val Coleman enriched our community and our lives in so many ways. We met years ago, when my husband Ronny was president of SARC and Val was favored to write a fundraising



*A round of applause for Val from the cast and audience of "The Stamp Collection," 2017.*

*Photo by Ali Uzpervis.*

letter. We walked and talked each day for years in a friendship that outlasted both Ronny's death and my leaving Sandisfield. There were wonderful Thanksgiving dinners featuring Val's famous and spectacular turkey or ham dinners at his log house on Town Hill Road. Now I think of Val somewhere deep in conversation with his great friend, Maggie Howard, whose recent death devastated him.

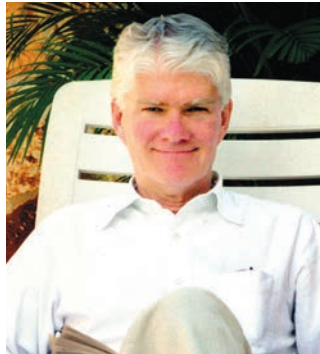
Val was passionate – about life, history and the written and spoken word. He believed in discourse and analysis and in his musician son, Charlie. Barbara Penn described him perfectly in her 2017 rave review of "The Stamp Collection." Val Coleman, poet, playwright, social activist, philosopher, and rumpel, brilliant guy ... We are so lucky to have [had] you, your talent and insight in our midst."

**BARBARA PENN,  
HAMMERTOWN ROAD**

I could talk about Val's remarkable mind or his lifelong commitment to fight for the rights of others or his transformational writing – poems, lectures, a play – but what I will always remember and miss is his gutsy kindness. Whenever and wherever he saw me he'd say, "Hello, beautiful," and hug me. I'm sure this was said to many others and, yes, I know it was hardly true, but the simple gesture of reaching out is a rare quality these days. No matter how I was feeling or whatever I was thinking, Val's greeting always made me smile and stay in just that moment, everything OK. I will miss my dear, dear friend Val enormously.

**HILDE WEISERT,  
HAMMERTOWN ROAD**

Val's email address of "trochee" was a signal of how important poetry was to his being. He read, understood, and wrote poetry with a very rare and deep understanding. A conversation with Val about poetry was sure to open my eyes and inspire me with what a good poem could be. Several of Val's talks are on the Sandisfield Arts Center website ([www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org)), and "A Story of Poetry" is recorded, so you can hear his inimitable voice and the passion and insight he brought to the subject. Val was as true a poet as any I have known, and his last poem in *The Times*, though bleak, is as true a picture of this year as any I have read. Losing him is a huge loss.



**JOHN GRAMMER**  
1935-2020

John Albert Grammer, Jr., 85, died December 18 after a long illness, surrounded by family at home on South Beech Plain Road.

John often said he was thrice damned: he was born in Newark, he lived in New York City, and he was a consultant.

To walk down New York's Park Avenue with him was an adventure and took time. If you had a train to catch, you might not make it because he would be constantly greeted by colleagues and friends whom he couldn't resist chatting with and giving advice. He always had business and 3x5 cards in his pocket.

Once in Venice a friend and colleague saw John sitting in a wine bar and asked his advice. John gave him a list of names and possibilities and told him, "It's not a job you want, it's a career."

John graduated from Northwood School, Harvard College, and Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. He proudly served in the U.S. Army, attaining the rank of sergeant, and trained in Arabic at the Army Language School in Monterey, California, where he also visited jazz clubs and enjoyed the local scene. He served in Germany, where he met his first wife, Ursula Keuler. Their daughters Katharina and Julia gave them much joy.

He began his professional life with the United National Relief and Works Agency in Beirut, helping to coordinate relief efforts for Palestinian refugees.

John then joined First National City Bank (now Citibank) and served the bank not only in New York but in Jeddah, Beirut, Manila, Rio de Janeiro, and Taipei.

In 1984 John founded Grammer and Co., where he developed and led banking seminars as a consultant in management and credit/risk analysis around the world. John frequently opened his office to recent college graduates or business colleagues making mid-life career

changes. In response to those he helped, he would say, "Don't thank me for my time. Thank me for my ideas."

John met his second wife Mary Anne Nelson through a former girlfriend who was amused that John and Mary Anne had bought similar paintings. They soon discovered they had more in common and were often found at the Metropolitan Opera and the NY Philharmonic. They would often say, "I'm more in love with you than the day we were married." Their love for each other grew even stronger after the birth of their son, John Lawrence.

Before their marriage, they bought a country house in Sandisfield in 1985. Their place on South Beech Plain Road was where they escaped the noise of the city. Driving up the road in the winter, they entered Narnia. In the summer, the firehouse steak roast introduced them to their Sandisfield neighbors who were always willing to lend a hand to the city folk.

John always dreamed of retiring to Sandisfield for the quiet and beauty. With his immense love of music, he especially enjoyed going to Tanglewood, The Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and for dance to Jacob's Pillow. The Sandisfield Arts Center was another favorite for the lectures, art openings, music, and performances.

Due to health reasons, John and Mary Anne moved to Sandisfield in July of 2013. On their first morning as full-time residents, Mary Anne looked out the window and said, "Where are the people?" Soon they met the people of their new hometown, people who were always welcoming and friendly.

John served on the boards of the Turtle Bay Music School and the Taipei American School and on the vestry of the Church of the Holy Apostles in New York. He also devoted himself to development projects for Harvard and Columbia. John considered himself a fortunate man, blessed with education, opportunity, and a loving family. Sometimes witty, acerbic, and certainly not shy, he held himself accountable to the same high standards he held for others.

John is survived by Mary Anne, his wife of 34 years; his son, John Lawrence (Lilli); his daughters Katharina (Ricardo) and Julia (Noah); and grandchildren Fabio, Ursula D., Charlotte, and Emilie.

He will be greatly missed by his family and the numerous friends he advised through his generosity. A memorial service will be held when it is safe to gather. Please consider a donation in John's memory to Grace Church in Great Barrington, [graceberkshires.org](http://graceberkshires.org) or Berkshire Immigrant Center, [berkshireic.org](http://berkshireic.org).



# Comings and Goings



## IVAN FIDDELKE

1936-2020

Ivan Henry Fiddelke, 83, died at his home on Dodd Road, December 18.

Born December 25, 1936 in Amityville, New York, he was the son of the late Herman and Anna Bruns Fiddelke, who bought the former Thomas Dodd farm in Sandisfield in 1959.

Survivors include his wife, Virginia Rosseter Fiddelke at home, his daughter Wendy Fiddelke of Connecticut, and his stepdaughter Rebecca Snyder of Florida.

No services have been scheduled. Remembrances to his family can be sent by visiting [www.finnertyandstevens.com](http://www.finnertyandstevens.com).

## DAVID FIDDELKE

1963-2020

David Michael Fiddelke died December 29 in Tucson, Arizona. His father was Ivan Fiddelke of Sandisfield, who died December 18. His mother was Elizabeth Lou Fiddelke, also deceased.

David grew up in Sandisfield on Dodd Road. He attended Sandisfield Elementary and Searles Middle School and Monument Mountain Regional High School.

While he was a vagabond most of his life, he settled eventually in Tucson. His future truck driving career was foretold by the fact that he learned to drive by the time he was six years old.

He is survived by his son, Kyle Fiddelke of North Carolina, a sister, Wendy Fiddelke of Connecticut, and a niece, Nichole Archer of Connecticut.



## PAUL FERREIRA

1954-2020

Paul Ferreira of West New Boston died at the age of 66 on Christmas morning.

Born January 25, 1954, he lived most of his life in Sandisfield. He was a valued and respected carpenter. A notice of his death on ConnectSandisfield received nearly forty comments of admiration for his life and sympathy for his family. MJTuckers on Rt. 8, which referred to him as their "good friend and the backbone of Tuckers," closed for the weekend in his honor.



## SCOTT BRIGNOLO

1957-2021

Scott Brignolo, 63, died at his home on New Hartford Road, January 7, 2021. He built the home nearly 20 years ago.

Scott is survived by his wife Pam; a son Jeremy and his wife Katie of Litchfield, Connecticut; two sisters; a brother; and two grandchildren, Smith and Gabriella. He was preceded in death by a son, a third sister, and his parents, Gildo and Bruna Brignolo of Torrington. Members of the Brignolo family has resided in Torrington since before the 1920s.





# Parents as Teachers

## WORKING WITH YOUNG MATHEMATICIANS, PART II

By Maxene Kupperman-Guinals

*A teacher for 35 years and the parent of a teacher for the last 15, Maxene, a resident of Town Hill Road, offers tips and support for parents helping their kids learn math.*

*"I'm just no good in math!"*

*If you have said that, you are wrong. You would be amazed at how much math you know and how often you use it, even when you are not dealing with numbers.*

*Working with Young Mathematicians, Part I" was published in the November 2020 Times.*

Memorizing is sometimes essential. Help your youngsters memorize times tables and equivalents (3 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon). Although some people deride memorization as boring and dull, knowing these math facts saves time. In addition, brain studies indicate that this helps keep synapse activity lively!

Math should be done in pencil. There are times that calculations need to be changed or adjusted. Have a lot of sharpened pencils, with good erasers, both at home and in your children's backpacks.

Discuss how things are measured. Eggs come in dozens; sodas in liters, milk in quarts, fabric in inches, carpet in square yards. Air conditioning is measured in British Thermal Units. Children need to be familiar with both the terminology and the reason. You and your children can make a list of measurements and post it on a wall to look at.

Part of math is logic. There are many ways to arrive at a conclusion: one of the ways is linear, which means that one step must come before the next step. This is not numerical, but it is mathematical. Talk about the "why" of arriving at a conclusion.

Discover interesting stories about mathematicians. If you do not yet know about Gauss, look him up in the library or on the Internet and find out how he confounded his math teacher! There are a lot of biographies of mathematicians other than Albert Einstein, and most of them were rebels in their time. Kids love to read about rebels!

There are books that are math-based and fun to read. Anything by Madeleine L'Engle, *The*

*Phantom Tollbooth*, *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll, *Flatland*, and *Sphereland* are some suggestions of reading materials that are both amusing and mathematical.

Give children and teens math gifts. Holiday giving can include games like Monopoly, which encourages counting. Checkers and chess deal with spatial relationships. Backgammon, oware (an African counting game) and card games teach math thinking as well. There are lots of books that have activities that sneak math into the puzzles—not to mention Sudoku!

Music and math are connected. If your children or teens are into music, they are also learning a higher form of math. Be certain that they are aware of the connection between notes and signatures, counterpoint, tempo.

Sometimes you have to slow their thinking down. When a problem gets too confusing and overwhelming, you may have to coach your children to go through it little step by little step—and out loud. Even if you are not sure exactly what they are saying, you can encourage them to tell you what happens in sequence and to write down each step as they say it.

If they can teach it to YOU, they have learned it themselves. Ask your teenager to teach you a concept. Do not be afraid to ask questions, which is a skill you want them to be able to master, anyway. When you have learned the topic, so have they.

Go to the bank with your children. They do not necessarily have to open a savings account (although if they can, all the better), but they can meet a customer service representative to learn about checking accounts, credit lines, Christmas/Chanukah/Kwanzaa Clubs, savings accounts, mortgages, how a bank loans money, interest rates. When they are ready to deal with a bank on their own, they will already be familiar with banking practices and terms.

Want a new game? Create your own measurements. M.I.T. students decades ago measured a bridge in lengths called a "Smoot," which was the last name of the student they laid out for the measurement. Your children can measure things in Catherines or Freddie's or Yuris or Shaniquas!

There are free math games on your child's computer that are fun and the graphics are riveting. Encourage your child to play these games that emphasize spatial relations and logic.

Praise your children for their efforts. Math requires skill and time – and often the learning process involves failure in order to be successful. To work at math, even math you think is easy, is complicated when a person first tries it out. Let your children know that you appreciate what they are attempting. 🍷



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# A Wheel Rim, Lost in the Woods

By Brigitte Ruthman

Searching for wild things, hunters turn up the weirdest things in arbitrary places. Many a missing body has been found that way, and lost and stolen stuff, too.

As a coastal hurricane peels away sand to reveal sunken wrecks, heavy November rain washed away just enough of the thick metal edge of a wheel rim in a remote area of a state forest for me to trip over.

My shotgun (safety on) went flying and I hit the leafy forest floor. I was somewhere between Dodd and South Sandisfield Roads, near the swamp below Cherry Brook.

It took half an hour to unearth and disentangle roots from what had tripped me, a five-foot diameter rim. Beneath it were layers of partially rusted sheets of metal, and further still more wagon parts rusting and rotting and burying themselves deeper into the ground.

Who might have left a wagon here, unhitched his team of oxen, and walked home behind them in a foul mood. Or did he leave in a snowstorm, finally grinding to a stop in a low drift. Or maybe the wagon was left here on purpose, as an old car might today be abandoned to avoid the cost of towing it away.

Or did it just need a new wheel. And time, weather, and other tasks got in the way of the intention to return for it, as did the trees that grew around it.

It's the second such rim I have found. The first was left farther up the hill in what seems a more logical place: near what had been the old Dodd Road schoolhouse.

Given that some of the trees around this latest find were a century old or nearly so, it seemed hard to imagine a roadway anywhere nearby. But there was a kind of road that very likely followed Cherry Brook from Sage Road, a farmer's path not significant enough to be noted on early maps.

Local historian and author Ron Bernard reminds that many of the town's rough-hewn paths, some previously used by native Americans, were abandoned in the "torpor" from abandoned farms. In many cases the roads were named after the farmers who first used them or maybe even built them: Whitney, Hubbard, Nash, and the extension of what is now Hammertown Road north of Cold Spring Road which once ran to North Beech Plain Road. Those are just

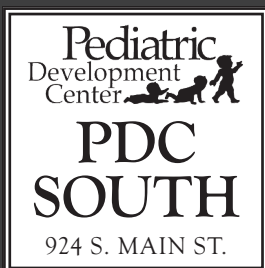


a few. Others remain on town maps, but aren't maintained, if only because they must reach remote house lots.

In Ron's history of the town, *Sandisfield, Then and Now*, writer Lorraine German noted that the town owes its existence to a path that needed to be a road. By the 1750s, our roads splayed south off the "Great Road" that stretched from Albany to Boston. Our roads carried troops and weaponry, farmers and commerce to various degrees. Carving any of them out of the woods required tree cutting and stone removal to achieve a substantial enough width to accommodate sleighs and wagons. They tended to avoid marshy areas that mired many a wagon wheel, Lorraine noted.

Time wants to give the land back to the forest, but the subtle clues of a busier time remain. Ruts left by skidders 25 years ago can be picked out relatively easily. More subtle are the wheel ruts left by farmers who repeatedly passed through openings in old stone walls that once bordered former fields and pastures. The echoes are here too, of the clatter of wagons and teams of oxen stepping through mud and over rocks and the voices of teamsters whose challenge was the elements and travel itself. Their presence still haunts these forests, and I am glad for it. 🍷

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## OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



Everyone driving to or from Great Barrington from Sandisfield has passed the **Cassilis Farm** property on Rt. 57. The house is the large Gilded Age property with a portico between two buildings not far west of downtown New Marlborough. It stands alone on a wide expanse of lawn behind what once was a row of 150-year-old oak trees. The **John Dewey Academy** of Great Barrington just bought it and this summer, Covid-19 willing, will move the academy, currently housed in Searles Castle in Barrington, to the New Marlborough site. The academy has a student population of about 25 from grade 10 through college level.

Readers can learn about the work facing the academy (rehabbing many of the rooms, planning



layouts, modernization of bathrooms) in the January issue of the New Marlborough 5 Village News. Any Sandisfielder who has rehabbed an "old" house knows a degree of the challenge the school faces.



# NOW HEAR THIS!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro. Please send notices for Now Hear This! to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.*

## JANUARY AND FEBRUARY EVENTS

*Please note: Be sure to check to see if the events are still scheduled as listed due to the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic*

**Sandisfield Select Board Meetings** are by telephone conference. Please visit sandisfieldma.gov or call 258-4711 for call-in information.

**Chair Yoga** on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

**COA Business Meeting** on Wednesday, February 3 at 10:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Route 57.

### EVENTS/OUTDOOR FUN IN OTHER TOWNS

**Hike & Seek** self-guided scavenger hunt at American Legion and Peoples State Forests in Barkhamsted (Riverton), Connecticut. Download the Seek lists which include everything from historical spots to trees to overlooks and more. Different lists for different age levels. Take photographs and submit for fun prizes! Visit falps.org for the Seek lists and more information. Free.

**Winter Farmer's Market** on Saturday, February 20 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at Camp Eisner on 53 Brookside Road in Great Barrington. Featuring locally grown and produced foods and gifts, including fruits and vegetables, cheeses, meats, breads, yarn, and more. Please wear a mask and socially distance.

### ONLINE EVENTS!

**Taconic Learning Center Online Classes.** Registration is now open for the Winter Term beginning mid-January. Classes include: exploring the creation of theater events, literature and its impact on diseases, Shakespeare, and the novel coronavirus. Registration and information is available on <https://taconiclearningcenter.org> or call 860-364-9363.

**Online Photography Lectures with Thad Kubis**, sponsored by the Lee Library on Wednesdays, January 20, February 3, and February 17 at 6:30 p.m. Please contact Rosemarie Borsody (rborsody@cwmars.org) to register for the series. Free.

**Learning to Enjoy Classical Music with Warren Whitaker** sponsored by the David M. Hunt Library, Falls Village, Connecticut, on Saturdays,

January 23 and 30 at 4:00 p.m. A two-part Zoom online event. Join from your home. The first part will feature how to approach classical music for enjoyment and the second part will be a discussion of the major composers and their most accessible works. Register at [huntlibrary.org](http://huntlibrary.org) or call 860-824-7424. Free.

**American Sign Language Basics Class Series** on Thursdays, February 4, 11, 18, and 25 from 1:00 to 1:45 p.m. sponsored by the Bushnell-Sage Library in Sheffield. This will be a virtual zoom opportunity and participants must register (413-229-7004). Free.

**Cultivating Memorial Geographies and Collective Memories in Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Ancestral Homelands Online** sponsored by the Bidwell House Museum on Wednesday, February 24 at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Rose Miron will discuss the heritage tourism trips organized by the tribe's Historical Committee in the late 20th century, which brought busloads of tribal citizens back to the Northeast to learn about Mohican history. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.bidwellhousemuseum.org>. \$10



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*The Times is grateful to readers who  
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*Please see page 11 for donors.*



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The Times can be mailed to your home (non-Sandisfield addresses only) by paid subscription (see form below left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at [www.sandisfieldtimes.org](http://www.sandisfieldtimes.org).

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