



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE



VOLUME 24 : NUMBER 11 DECEMBER 2014

## A Sensible Man, and a Tree

Now that we have enhanced solar lighting on our Christmas tree in Cornwall Bridge, we decided to learn about its origins. Some know it began with an 8- to 10-inch seedling planted by the late longtime dairy farmer Bill Clarke, probably in the mid-to-late 1950s, with the help of young Jim Terrall and Bill's late son Stevie. But some may be surprised to learn that a year earlier, Bill had planted a seedling with his daughter Dody, which accidentally got mowed down—the tree you see now represents a second attempt, moved closer to a rock where the mower couldn't reach.

The tree is part of a larger story about a sensible, contrary man who deeply loved the land around him, says Dody, now Dody Clarke Wolfe, who provided the memories for this story. "It struck my dad as senseless," she says, "to cut down an evergreen each year, haul it, stand it up, decorate it, and then throw it away." It wasn't his only take on efficiency. It wasn't uncommon to see Bill drive by with a few hundred-pound grain sacks on his hood. Why wrestle them into the car when he'd only have to wrestle them out again?

He was ahead of his time in his concern for the environment and the creatures that inhabit it, even if that concern interfered with farming. He wouldn't cut hay until

the bobolinks had finished nesting, and he took pains to mow around the milkweed necessary for the monarch butterflies, and the thistles for finches. "Cornwall's landscape today still bears the marks of Bill Clarke," says Dody. "When his farming was done, he mowed many old hay fields in order to preserve them—he mowed one for years after the owner who paid him had died—and we still have many of these open spaces."

His tractor, now more than a half century old, is still like new and reappears each Memorial Day, driven by his grandson Stephen Greely Clarke. But the Christmas tree itself is the best living memorial to the man who planted it, Bill Clarke.

If you're curious to know exactly how

old the giant spruce is, you can count the rows of branches; each row represents a year. However, you might need to enlist the help of Mike Root or Fred Scoville and their cherry pickers, equipment that is by now essential for reaching those top branches.

—Carol Schneider

## Trinity Isn't Gone Yet

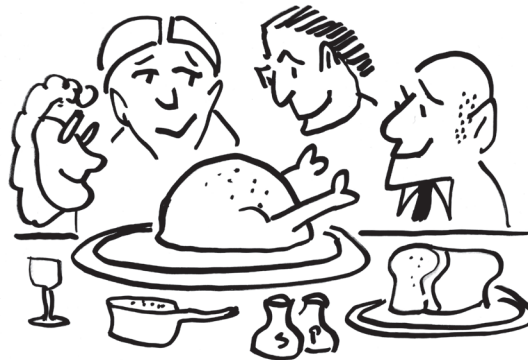
When the first atomic bomb was tested in Alamogordo, NM, the project was code named "Trinity." History records that the test went off exactly as planned.

Not so for the initial test of Cornwall's Trinity. Finding a buyer for the large riverfront site known locally as Trinity has turned out to be a dud, at least so far.

At first, the Sotheby's real estate firm announced it had found an appropriate buyer for the portion of the site with existing residential structures: the Zen Center of Brooklyn. Cornwall's First Selectman Gordon Ridgway welcomed the pending sale and town officials began discussing whether the special zoning permit under which the Episcopal Diocese of New York operated Trinity might apply. All seemed in order.

So when the *Cornwall Chronicle* asked this reporter to write a story about the sale, I contacted Greg Snyder, the designated

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## DECEMBER 2014

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b> ♦ Region 1 Board of Ed 6 pm Rm 133 HVRHS ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	<b>2</b> ♦ Inland Wetlands 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> FULL ♦ Christmas Fair 9:30 am–3 pm UCC Parish House ♦ Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall
<b>7</b> ♦ Vespers Concert 7 pm North Cornwall Meeting House	<b>8</b> ♦ Blood Pressure Clinic Noon–1 pm UCC Parish House	<b>9</b> ♦ Senior Luncheon 11:30 am–1 pm Wandering Moose ♦ Economic Dev. 8:30 am Town Hall ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7 pm CCS ♦ P&Z 7 pm Town Hall	<b>10</b> ♦ Dance Movie: <i>Erick Hawkins' America</i> 7 pm Library ♦ CCS Winter Concert 7 pm CCS Digital Storytelling Reception to follow	<b>11</b> ♦ Woman's Society 10 am UCC Parish House	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 9 am–1:45 pm UCC
<b>14</b> 4th Q	<b>15</b> ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Library ♦ Deadline: January <i>Chronicle</i> Copy	<b>16</b> ♦ Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	<b>17</b> ♦ Board of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	<b>18</b> ♦ Cornwall Conservation Comm. 6:30 pm Town Hall	<b>19</b> ♦ Family Movie: <i>Elf</i> 7 pm Library	<b>20</b> ♦ Christmas Pageant 7:30 pm UCC Village Meeting House
<b>21</b> NEW	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> ♦ Library Early Closing 5 pm	<b>25</b> ♦ Christmas Day	<b>26</b> ♦ Library Re-opening Noon ♦ <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> Reading 4 pm North Cornwall Meeting House	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 1st Q	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> ♦ Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library	<b>31</b>	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> Mondays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library; Karate, 6:30–7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Wednesdays: Meditation, 4–5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Tai Chi, 5–7 pm Town Hall; ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30–9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30–11:30 am Library; Meditation, 4–5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Mah Jongg 7–9 pm Library; Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30–10 am Library ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9–10:30 am Library		

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updating, visit [www.cornwallchronicle.org](http://www.cornwallchronicle.org)

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spokesperson for the Brooklyn Zen organization. He floored me by emailing back "I do not believe we will be going forward with the purchase of the Trinity property." Snyder explained that they decided the Trinity property didn't really fit the Zen Center's needs and budget.

What happens now? Renegotiation of the price? Finding another buyer? Keep tuned. You'll know when we do.

—David A. Grossman

## Coming Home

You can't go home again, as Tom Wolfe so famously said, but what if you could? And when you did, what if nearly everyone you met on the street did a double take and said, "I know you!"

This is roughly the experience Peter Bishop has been having over the past six months since he bought 36 River Road and came back to West Cornwall Village. Bishop and his wife, Maria Feeley, live in Philadelphia where they have been raising Bennett, 7, and Blaise, 2, in unpromising urban circumstances.

"The school system is in disarray," Peter said in a recent interview.

"The future just doesn't look bright." He remembers

his own boyhood in West Cornwall where his parents, Phil and Jane, owned the general store people still call Yutzler's. Peter and his sister Amy lived up the hill along Route 128 on land so steep that Peter had to flatten out the area in front of the garage just to shoot some hoops.

What was so sweet then was the freedom to roam, to find people to play with or talk to without having to account for every 10 minutes of his day. It's the kind of upbringing that makes a boy independent.

Peter's years at Cornwall Consolidated School began in the first grade. He flourished in the small classes. He graduated from Housatonic Valley Regional High School in 1989 and went to the University of Hartford.

Faced with the deteriorating situation in Philadelphia, Peter wondered why his two boys couldn't have the same growing-up experience he did. Maria, who is an attorney, works for a firm with offices in New York City. Peter himself is a recovering high school English teacher who works in construction and owns Independent Custom Realty in Philadelphia. Given the ease of telecommuting, he and Maria have opportunities to continue their current jobs, or develop new ones that fit with life in Cornwall.

During his high school teaching years, Peter moonlighted as a housing inspector for HUD; he's an expert in iffy old houses. And that's what he found at 36 River Road. Saving all or part of the Greek Revival

structure was hopeless, so it had to be razed. Peter is building a house in its footprint that will tuck right into the neighborhood. He has had help from his trusted Philadelphia framing crew and his roofer, but "the Locke boys" and Brad Hedden are among the local tradesmen also working on the project.

What drew him to the property aside from his own childhood memories? "The opportunity of having flat ground in West Cornwall was too good to miss," he said. "My boys can run around without having one leg grow shorter than the other." Peter, whose two legs seem to be the same length in spite of the hill he grew up on, is ready to move in the day the house is ready.

The boys will go to CCS and move along the timeline that has made their father want to come home again.

—Lisa L. Simont

## Staying Young in Cornwall

Some people in Cornwall refuse to bow down to age, and why should they?

One septuagenarian who still thinks she's a teenager is Brenda Underwood. She recently walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain, a 500-mile walk, to usher in her eighth decade.

The Camino de Santiago is an old pilgrim trail said to have been walked by Saint James himself. It has many branches. The one Brenda chose starts at Saint Jean Pied de Porte in France (the Camino Francés), crosses into Spain, meanders across the north of Spain and finishes at the tomb of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela.

To prepare, Brenda walked five miles a day for months carrying a full backpack, looking at times like an Appalachian Trail through-hiker. That pack became her umbilical cord for the 33-day walk with a change of clothing and two liters of water. At night, she stayed in *albergues*, former monasteries, and even one night in a fort that dated back to the time of Roland. She shared rooms with 40 or 50 other pilgrims, sometimes 200.

"The first day was very challenging," she said. "Imagine walking up and down Dibble Hill Road 40 times for ten hours. Add to that mud, loose shale, and heavy mist and you'll get a good idea." That's not quite right; I checked the numbers: it's a climb of 4,000 feet in 13 miles. That's more like "up and up and up" Dibble Hill Road.

On average Brenda walked 15 miles a day with several 20-mile days thrown in to keep her on her toes. "It's extremely difficult; you honestly don't know whether you can keep on going. In the beginning, you start each day barely recovered from the previous one. I never knew where my gluteus muscles were until this trip."

Evening rituals took up a lot of time. With only two sets of clothes, one had to be

washed, feet needed attending to, and water bottles had to be filled. After that, time to relax with other pilgrims. "We sat around long tables sharing bottles of Rioja and conversing in English, French, Spanish, and German. Somehow we made ourselves understood."

Brenda walked the Camino de Santiago alone, only to find there were more women than men doing the same. "It is an extremely safe walk for women. People respect that you are on a pilgrimage. I often walked in the dark for several hours (in the morning) and was never afraid. My main concern was avoiding the heaps of cow manure left by the four-footed pilgrims as they were moved from field to field."

She says she would do it again, "in a heartbeat. From the moment I set foot on the trail, I was on a sacred journey following in the footsteps of others who had walked it before me. Metaphorically, they and the present-day pilgrims held my hand."

Brenda's blog and pictures are at <http://bettyhigden.blogspot.com>.

—Graham Underwood

## Goodbye to a Friend

Jenny Simont Ireland

## Land Transfers

Daniel S. Pool to David Boyum, 14.078 acres on Cherry Hill Road for \$215,000.

Joanna Schultz, Susan Klaw, Rebecca Klaw and Margaret Klaw to Carl R. D'Alvia and Jacqueline M. Saccoccio, 24.62 acres on Cream Hill Road for \$235,000.

Andrew B. Ross and Sarah Ross Mallery to Carl R. D'Alvia and Jacqueline M. Saccoccio, 24.62 acres on Cream Hill Road for \$235,000.

Anita W. Brean to James P. Lynch, land with improvements thereon at 7 West Drive for \$250,000.

## Old Is the New Young

What if age is nothing but a mind-set, asked a recent *New York Times* headline before giving the answer: 75 is the new 55! Nice thought. Could it be true?

We thought we could put the proposition to the scientific test. On bicycles.

Some background: Being less than 75, we can't speak with authority about the accuracy of the *NYT* Age-Parity Theorem, which we shall express mathematically as 75=55. At 62, we are only able to conduct a more modest comparative experiment. On a lovely fall day two years ago, we rode our bikes from our Upper West Side apartment to our house on Dibble Hill Road. What if we did it again? Does 62=60?

On September 19, we determined to find out. There we were, fighting a chilly north wind in the early-morning dark, riding north on Riverside Drive. As before,



we jolted along the track in Van Cortlandt Park that leads to the off-road bike trails through Westchester and Putnam counties. We retraced our route to Pawling, where milkshakes revived body and spirit, then pedaled across the Connecticut line toward Bull's Bridge.

At Kent School, we corrected a mistake we'd made on the first trip: riding on Route 7. Instead, we decided to climb gently through the traffic-free woods of Macedonia Brook State Park and then, at mile 90, to tackle the steep ruts of Westwoods Road #2 across the mountain toward Sharon. The reward: the glorious swoop down Route 4 to Cornwall Bridge. A diversion through Cornwall Village brought us to our last rest stop at the end of Pine Street. Then it was up Dibble Hill Road to the top, where the bike computer registered 101.02 miles.

Sixty-two, it turned out, was not quite the new 60. Knees ached a little more. Elation glowed a little less. We're not sure we contributed much to science. Still, there's always philosophy. "It ain't braggin'," Dizzy Dean supposedly said, "if you really done it."

We did.

—Bonnie and Jonathan Landman

## 2014 Annual Town Meeting

Although I arrived somewhat late at the Cornwall Consolidated School for the annual town meeting, I was there for the best part! A woman up front, perhaps Nita Colgate, said she had been in West Cornwall and met some tourists admiring the Covered Bridge. They told her they had come to Cornwall because it was listed as one of the 25 prettiest towns in New England. Gordon Ridgway, with an impish grin on his face, said the information the tourists had was wrong. Cornwall is *the* prettiest town in New England!

The town report, which is required to publish the audit of the town financial records, has become a great deal more than that. Barbara Herbst, town financial officer, compiles the report, and she likes to let each section reflect the person who wrote it. There is humor in the voices of our small town on almost every page, and this year the cover was especially dramatic with Lazlo's superb photo of the team of Belgian draft horses at the Agricultural Fair.

The meeting was both short and good humored, with discussion and comment on taxes, repairs to bridges and roads, and a five-year capital spending plan. All present agreed Cornwall is indeed the prettiest town in New England and went home content!

—Terry Burke



## Writers' Workshop

If you were in the Cornwall Library on Wednesday evenings earlier this fall, you may have seen eight budding writers gathered for the Creative Writing Workshop. The group met for six weeks to explore various genres of writing, from personal essays to memoirs to poetry, to the elements of creating fiction (think character development, scene writing, story structure, dialogue, and point of view), to tips on getting your work published. Each class began with the writers reading a short piece of their assigned work aloud to receive helpful feedback from the instructor and fellow writers.

Debra Devins, the workshop instructor, has been teaching writing for 24 years. Inspired by a high school teacher, Deb got her start in the early 1970s writing for the Parade of Youth section of the *Hartford Courant*. She went on to earn a B.A. in English and secondary education. After writing professionally in business and technical settings and attending grad school, she began to offer workshops in both private and adult education settings. She also pursued her own writing with the CT Writers Guild, something she continues to do today. Over the years, Deb has enjoyed sharing her love and knowledge of writing with many students, some of whom have gone on to see their stories in print. "It's just a thrill to see somebody get their work published," she says, though hastens to add that, for many, writing is a strictly private exploration of their creativity with as much validity as publication. As for the recent cohort of eight in Cornwall, Deb said, "There's a lot of creativity in the room!"

Library Director Margaret Haske can personally vouch for the instructor, having taken about a half dozen classes with Deb in the past. She says the writing workshop is a "win/win" for all parties involved. Library patrons can take classes in their library instead of driving to Torrington's Adult Education Connection with the added advantage of a reduced class fee. The library is able to increase programming that truly appeals to the community. Judging by the waiting list of seven, this workshop certainly struck a chord.

The eight writers, some with previous creative writing experience, others true novices, were all Cornwall residents. Over the six weeks, they explored their creativity in a relaxed, supportive, and yet structured environment. One student offered that the class was a place where it was "safe to explore and disclose" under the "calm guidance" of the instructor. Another said, "The participants are fun to get to know, interesting, and full of literary surprises. Cornwall is lucky to have such a worthwhile group endeavor!"

Plans are in the works to offer the workshop again with perhaps even more writing class offerings.

—Kathy Martin-Ocain



## Be Prepared for Winter

Winter is coming and although beautiful, the season brings storms and cold. The best way to ensure that you and your family will come through whatever winter throws at us is to be prepared. Not for nothing is "Be Prepared," the motto of the Boy Scouts, and in simple terms this means having: water and food for a few days in your house, flashlight and candles, wood for your fire, and gas for your generator, if you have one. Weather and other alerts will be posted on the Cornwall town website and, if you are prepared, then you can help others in our community! —Terry Burke

## Cornwall Briefs

•**Christmas Tree Credits:** You gotta admit it's a beauty, a smashereroony, a dazzler-on-the-green. Could it possibly be the tallest, live solar-powered Christmas tree in America? The western hemisphere? Planet earth? The universe?

Last month this column anticipated work on the tree's enhanced lighting, mentioning the participation of Scoville Landscaping, Cornwall Electric, and Litchfield Hills Solar. Add to those names: Root Tree Service. We should also mention that the Cornwall Energy Task Force (headed by our own Queen-of-Green, Katie Freygang), with the Board of Selectmen, initiated the idea and contributed \$1,000 toward the cost of wiring and the many strings of new lights. Thanks to all and to our little bank branch that collected private donations. (Also please see story about the man who planted the seedling that became our giant Christmas tree in this issue.)

•**Snow Season:** It's already here and that means cars and trucks must be parked at least six feet from the "traveled or paved portion" of town roads so as not to interfere with snow plowing activity. This notice stays in effect until March 30. You heard it here so no crybabies if your naughty vehicle isn't there when you wake up in the morning.

•**Grant for Trinity Site:** The Cornwall Conservation Trust has received a grant of

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\$400,000 from the State of Connecticut to help it purchase and preserve about 300 acres of the Trinity property in Cornwall owned by the Episcopal Diocese of New York City. To complete the acquisition, the trust estimates it will need to raise an additional \$200,000. The trust has begun fundraising to help meet that goal.

**CCS Concert:** The annual winter concert by the school band takes place on December 10 in the gymnasium at 7 P.M., under the direction of music teacher Alicia Simonetti-Shpur, also known as Mrs. S. if you have trouble saying Shhh/Purr.

And if you're wondering about the holiday vacation dates for CCS: dismissal on December 23, back on January 5.

—John Miller

### Events & Announcements

**Community Contra Dance** will be held Saturday December 6, at 7 P.M., town hall. Live old-time music by Still, the Home-grown Band and calling by Rachael Gall. All dances taught, all ages welcome. Suggested donation. For information contact Jane Prentice, 672-6101.

**United Church of Christ Christmas Fair:** Saturday, December 6, 9 A.M. to 3 P.M.



### Another Year Down

Here at the *Chronicle*, December is a time to pause and celebrate what we've achieved during the year with the help and support of the Cornwall community. This year is no exception. We've added new writers, editors, and artists to our ranks and, we think, delivered lots of informative and entertaining stories. But success is achieved only with the kind of financial support that has brought the *Chronicle* to the brink of its 25th year. And that means checks: from you, the readers. Please think of us as you spread good cheer in this holiday season!

**Vespers Concert:** Sunday, December 7, at 7 P.M., North Cornwall Meeting House, Town Street. Advent Vespers Service presented by the Chapel of All Saints and featuring Cantus Excelsus, directed by Bruce Fifer.

### Senior Events

**Free Blood Pressure Clinic:** Monday, December 8, noon to 1 P.M., UCC Parish House. For information contact VNA Northwest, 860-567-6000 or vnanw.org.

**Luncheon:** Tuesday, December 9, 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M., the Wandering Moose Cafe. No reservations necessary. Questions? Call Jane Prentice, 672-6101.

### Eighth-Grade Digital Storytelling Reception:

To celebrate the CCS eighth-grade class and its writing and photography workshop called Digital Storytelling: Telling My Story, a reception will be held on Wednesday, December 10, 7 P.M., in the gathering room after the annual CCS Holiday Music Recital. The project is sponsored by the CCS Fund for Excellence.

**Red Cross Blood Drive** will be on Saturday, December 13, 9 A.M. to 1:45 P.M., UCC Parish House, Bolton Hill Road. To schedule an appointment, call 800-Red Cross or visit online at redcrossblood.org.

**The Annual Christmas Pageant:** Calling all angels, shepherds and neighbors! The pageant will be on Saturday, December 20, 7:30 P.M. (snow date Sunday, December 21, at 4 P.M.) at UCC Village Meeting House on Bolton Hill Road. Traditional readings and carols will culminate with the giving of "white gifts." Please bring a toy wrapped in white paper to donate to children in need. Cocoa and doughnuts will follow in the Parish House. Those interested **MUST** be at the rehearsal at the church at 5:30 P.M. on Friday, December 19, or call Jane Prentice at 672-6101.

**Park & Rec:** The third annual 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament will be held on Saturday, January 10, at Cornwall Consolidated School. This year there will be divisions for seventh- to 12th-grade players, as well as 18 years and older. Teams must be registered by December 29. Registration cost is \$20 per team. For more information, contact Becky Hurlburt at prcornwall@gmail.com or 672-4071.

**The New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast** will be held, as it is every year, in the UCC Parish House, 9 A.M. to noon. Buttermilk pancakes, sausage, Cornwall maple syrup,

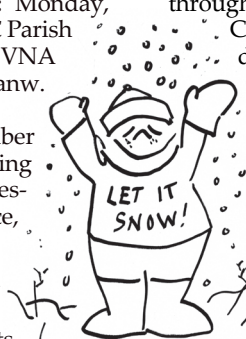
orange juice, coffee, cocoa, and tea will be on tap. Donations will benefit the church outreach programs. Everyone is welcome.

### Art in Cornwall

**Art at the Library:** A Stitch in Time: Contemporary Cornwall Quilters continues through January 3. Among the quilters of Cornwall whose works are on display: Nancy Calhoun, Catee Gold Hubbard, Anne Hummel, Corinne Levy, and Ann Schillinger. A few quilts will be available for sale.

**At the Souterrain Gallery:** Corbeaux & Dark Horses, an exhibit by Danielle Mailer and Louise King, runs through January 4.

Lauren Kendrick's artwork will be on display at the National Iron Bank through January.



### At the Cornwall Library

To celebrate Boxing Day, Tom Walker will read from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, December 26 at 4 P.M. at the North Cornwall Meeting House.

**Dance Movie:** *Erick Hawkins' America*, Wednesday, December 10, at 7 P.M.

**Family Movie:** *Elf*, December 19, at 7 P.M.

**Holiday hours at the library:** The library will close at 5 P.M. on Christmas Eve and will reopen at noon on December 26.

**Save the date:** The library's annual winter Jazz Dinner will be held on Saturday, February 14, from 6 to 11 P.M. Bring your sweetheart and come enjoy home-cooked Southern cuisine and dance to the music of Bob Parker's Jive by Five. Dinner tickets are \$25 and should be purchased in advance at the library because of limited seating. Wine and beer will be \$5 and soda \$1.

### CORNWALL CHRONICLE cornwallchronicle.org

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