



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 21 : NUMBER 11 DECEMBER 2011



And Now ... Winter

The consensus is that we are in for an "average season" this winter, a season of "clime and punishment," according to the Farmers' Almanac.

In spite of everything you hear, temperatures and snowfall have not drastically increased over the last 30 years. This jibes with the recollection of lifelong Cornwallian Phill West, who predicts an "average winter, with snow a few weeks after Thanksgiving and ending by Easter."

"Last year was just a freak year ... although this year *is* starting on the freakish side."

Denny Frost has been plowing snow in Cornwall for 45 years and he believes that trying to predict the weather is impossible. He suggested that you could "... watch the squirrels and the caterpillars, but when you get down to it, you just can't tell." When pressed for a prediction he offered that we will "probably have a normal winter; we will have some warmer spells and some snowy spells."

Jim Vanicky, town highway foreman, says we can expect above average temperatures this year. He went out on a limb and predicted 47 inches of snow in total, from mid-December to April 1, not in-

cluding the inches of snow we got in October.

Trish Morrissey, director of customer services at Mohawk Mountain, definitely has a positive outlook regarding her winter prediction. "We anticipate record snowfall, because we make it! Regardless of what is happening in your backyard, our backyard will have mountains of snow."

She added that this is the 65th anniversary year of skiing at Mohawk and they are expecting a yeti to show up. She wouldn't elaborate further, except to say that yetis only appear if there is a LOT of snow.
—Janet Sanders

Election Day 2011

Democrats were the big winners in the town's local elections last month although the word "big" may be something of a reach. There were only a handful of head-to-head contests. However, the biggest



winner was not a candidate but Jill Bryant's mulligatawny soup, a magic liquid straight out of yumsville, served at the parish house Election Day luncheon and good to the last drop.

I will pass on the recipe shortly but first we must go with the election results.

Let's begin with the many unopposed races: Gordon Ridgway, first selectman; Richard Bramley and K.C. Baird, selectmen; Vera Dinneen, town clerk (and top vote getter); John Green, treasurer; Jean Bouteiller, tax collector; Ralph Gold and Celia Senzer, Board of Finance; Maureen Donahue and Jack Preston, Board of Finance alternates.

Now the winners where there were contests: Becky Hurlburt, Tom Levine, and Tracy D. Gray, Board of Education; Natverlal Patel and Roger L. Kane, Board of Assessment Appeals; John Miller and Jill Cutler, Planning and Zoning; Amy Cady and Priscilla Miller, Zoning Board of Appeals; Erin Hedden, Bridget Lynch, Johan Winsser, and Kenneth Considine took the four available seats on the Park and Recreation Commission.

Now for the parish house soups not called mulligatawny. They were all delicious: Pastor Micki's chili, Pat Blakey's corn chowder and split pea and ham, and Nan Frost's ginger squash. And now,

(continued on page 2)

DECEMBER 2011

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Tuesdays: Adult Volleyball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 6-9 pm CCS; Karate 6:30-7:30 pm CCS; Women's Basketball, 7:30 pm CCS gym Sundays: Meditation, 1-2 pm, call Debra for location, 672-0229				1	2 PTA Benefit Bake Sale 7 pm CCS	3 Annual Christmas Fair 9:30 am-2 pm UCC PTA Benefit Bake Sale 4 pm CCS
4	5 ♦ CCS Book Fair 10 am-5 pm CCS Gathering Room ♦ Bd of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Democratic Town Committee 7:30 pm Library ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	6 ♦ CCS Book Fair 10 am-7:30 pm CCS Gathering Room ♦ Inland Wetlands 7:30 pm Town Hall	7 ♦ CCS Book Fair 10 am-7:30 pm CCS Gathering Room	8 ♦ CCS Book Fair 10 am-5 pm CCS Gathering Room	9 ♦ CCS Book Fair 10 am-5 pm CCS Gathering Room	10 ♦ Food Drive 10 am-noon Cornwall Village
11 ♦ Advent Vespers 7:15 pm NCMH	12	13 ♦ P & Z 7 pm Library	14	15 ♦ Bd of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library CANCELED ♦ Deadline: January Chronicle Copy	16 ♦ Kindergarten & Grade 2 Story Hour 1:30 pm Library	17 ♦ Christmas Pageant 7:30 pm UCC
18 ♦ Christmas Pageant Snow Date 4 pm UCC	19	20 ♦ Blood Drive 1:30-6:30 pm UCC Parish House ♦ Bd of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Bd of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	21	22	23	24 ♦ Candlelight Service 5-8 pm N.Cornwall Meetinghouse
25	26 ♦ Harriette Dorsen Reception 1-3 pm Library ♦ Tom Walker Boxing Day Reading 4 pm NCMH ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Town Hall	27	28	29	30	31 JANUARY 1 ♦ Pancake Breakfast 9 am-noon UCC Parish House

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

Jill Bryant's Mulligatawny Soup

- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 chopped medium onion
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 1 carrot chopped
- 1 tbs parsley chopped
- 1 cup canned tomatoes
- 1 potato diced
- 1 cup cooked chicken chopped
- 1 quart chicken broth
- salt and pepper to taste.

Sautee the veggies in butter for 10 minutes, stir in the flour for five more minutes, add the rest, and simmer for an hour.

—John Miller

The October Snowstorm

When it was over, when the snow melted and the green, green grass reappeared, it was difficult to believe that Cornwall and the rest of Connecticut had just spent almost a week back in the 19th century. Winter Storm Alfred left all 1,186 local CL&P customers without power for at least five days.

The town's response was "Cornwall at its best," according to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. "Everyone pulled together for 106 hours straight, volunteering at the CCS shelter or working with 55 volunteers in the fire department."

The snow began Saturday afternoon, October 29, and quickly accelerated. Ridgway and Nev Dunn, the town's emergency management director, "decided it was going to be bad" and took the first steps to set up a shelter at CCS. School custodian Tom Brown fired up the building and Saturday evening 12 people slept on cots in the gathering room.

Snow of the consistency of wet cement tore up trees, particularly in Cornwall's lower-elevation villages where about eight inches collected. Oaks were badly damaged because they still wore their bronze leaves, which trapped the heavy snow branches. Higher elevations got as much as 24 inches but cooler air dried the snow so that the storm's winds cleared most of the upland trees.

The sound of branches and trees snapping in the dark was one of the first things the town's volunteer emergency crew heard when they met at the West Cornwall Firehouse Saturday night. The town was cut off. Routes 4 and 7 were blocked by fallen trees; 30 cars had spun out on Bunker Hill Road; and eight cars were abandoned. There would be no access for the town ambulance to a hospital for over 24 hours. Between 3 that afternoon and midnight, the CVFD answered 45 calls for assistance.

Drivers diverted from the major state routes decided to try local roads and were quickly bogged down. People from Sharon, White Plains, N.Y., and Massachusetts were among the CCS shelter's clients. Popple Swamp Road became the alternate route for Furnace Brook Road and residents suffered four days of speeding 18-wheeled trucks and frustrated motorists.

"Somebody actually passed me," one resident said. "They were driving way faster than we do."

State plows were quickly overwhelmed, their plowing equipment broken by the heavy snow. Cornwall highway crewman Fred Scoville, working with the rest of the crew through a 24-hour stretch, plowed Route 7 south as far as he could and then opened up Route 45. Jack Malahan plowed Route 7 north of West Cornwall until he was stopped by the first of 30 downed trees and wires which closed the road for days.

Furnace Brook Road was the site of the biggest snarl; the storm broke three utility poles and yanked the crossbars from several more. Another series of snapped wires lay in the snow at the end of Grange Hall Road and Route 4, cutting off power to West Cornwall Village and Cream Hill. Most town roads were open by Sunday afternoon.

Reaching out to isolated houses and to residents with medical needs was a major concern of the emergency workers. Many in need of help had no means of contact with the rest of the town.

"On Saturday when I called the list of 31 people who have asked to be checked," said Town Clerk Vera Dinneen, "I couldn't reach about one-third of them. Their telephones didn't work." First Selectman Ridgway said that in the end, every one of the 31 houses was visited.

The failure of CL&P to prepare for the snowstorm and to deal with its aftermath filled area newspapers. The Hartford Courant printed a discouraging little map every day which showed Cornwall and its neighbors to the east literally in the dark until Thursday, November 3. Press reports recited CL&P's corporate history of gaining customers over the past 25 years and reducing the number of emergency response crews. The salary of the CEO was revealed to be in the millions of rate-payers' dollars. No out-of-state crews had been kept on stand-by. CL&P had failed to pay its bills for extra help in Storm Irene in August.

In Cornwall, a CL&P liaison appeared at the Selectmen's Office on Monday October 31, and went away again. CL&P then called Richard Boulli of Torrington, a retired 40-year line crew boss, and asked him to come back to work. "Just give me Cornwall," Boulli said he told them. "I know it like the back of my hand." Boulli

got to work at 10 A.M. Wednesday and by 6 P.M. Cornwall Village had power again.

Ridgway said that he and Boulli mapped out "a village-a-day" plan. On Thursday West Cornwall came back to life and Friday Cornwall Bridge followed.

Boulli worked with crews from North Carolina and West Virginia—"I think there were some guys from Ohio too"—to put the town back together. They hauled downed cable and electric lines by rope up into trees so that Route 4 and other roads could be opened to traffic.

The last house in Cornwall to be restored on November 8 (Day 10) was Katie Gannett's, far down River Road from West Cornwall Village. Her power line comes across the Housatonic from Sharon. "So I'm really at the end of the line," she said. A crew from Hydro Quebec found her house and cleared away fallen trees and remounted lines.

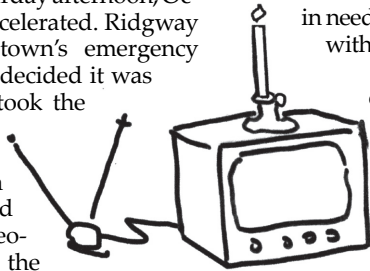
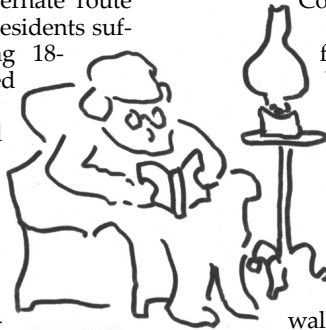
"What did we learn?" mused Gordon Ridgway. "That staying in touch during a storm like that is really important." Problems with telephones made it clear that an effective emergency alert system is critical. Generators, set up to run a test once a week, were not prepared to run for five or six days.

President Obama declared the state a major disaster area which will allow the town to recoup about 75 percent of storm costs.

Cornwall's businesses lost a week of revenue and lost inventory, as much as \$100,000, agreed Richard Bramley at Cornwall Package Store. The General Store lost some food in its coolers in spite of a generator's boost. Susan Fox of Milkhouse Pottery, who passed the time playing Scrabble against herself, lost a week of production.

"Those losses are a good reason to do your Christmas shopping in Cornwall," said Ridgway.

—Lisa L. Simont



Goodbye To Friends

Frederick J. Bate, Jr.

Laura Van Doren Brazee

James Knapp

Christopher Stanley Smith

Land Transfers

Frederick V. Bronner and Judith Starr Bronner to John E. Powers III and Cynthia Williamson Powers, land together with improvements thereon, at 39 Great Hollow Road, for \$262,000.

Daniel D. Hubbard and Ellen O'Toole Hubbard to Frederick B. Warder and Quynh T. Thai, land with all buildings thereon, at 235 Dibble Hill Road, for \$1,054,000.

**Generators and Phones:
What We Learned**

Next time you'll be prepared, right? Especially since you now know that CL&P won't be. Here are some important things to know about generators and telephones.

Generators may seem the ultimate in preparation, but they are powerful pieces of equipment, and this unprecedented outage confirms that they present risks and problems. Portable gasoline models have to be frequently refilled and probably won't keep you very comfortable in a long outage. Brenda Underwood said, "Graham tried to get gas for ours in Cornwall Bridge, Kent, and Sharon without success; finally succeeded in Millerton. We had to ration ourselves to about six hours a day just to keep the house a bit warm. Hot water bottles also worked."

You may be considering a larger, permanent generator. These will power most of your home, run on propane, and start automatically when power fails. One Cornwall Village resident, who asked not to be identified because of generator envy, told us, "I ordered a good-sized Kohler over the Internet and had it installed just four days before the storm! My wife pooh-poohed it but changed her tune very quickly after the lights went out."

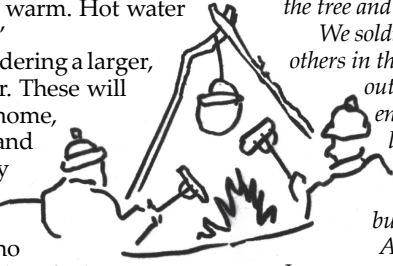
These generators can give you peace of mind but also heartburn, since they are far from foolproof. Make sure you know how to test it, to start it manually if the transfer switch fails, and to check and add oil. Several units in town failed from lack of oil. Some would not work when the propane tank fell below 40 percent; check with your gas company about this.

Such generators are expensive to buy and run. A 12- to 15-kW model, which will power most essential appliances in an average house, can easily cost up to \$10,000. And it will use about \$80 of propane a day.

Always locate a generator outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, or vents. Never use one indoors, including garages and basements. Two Cornwall households had CO issues that required medical attention. This odorless, colorless gas can cause serious problems if inhaled for even a short time. You should be aware of its symptoms and install CO detectors.

If you do plan to install a generator, you must check first with Paul Prindle, the town's building official, and get his approval.

Phone communication is critical during a long outage, but new technology leads to problems. Cable phones are mostly useless unless you have the double miracle of



A NIGHTMARE RIDE HOME

I was on grandma duty in Hawaii. I left Friday night on the red eye and was pleasantly surprised when the pilot told us that although there was some snow and fog at Bradley, he would deliver us safe and sound. I arrived at 8:30 P.M., about three hours late.

Jeff met me and we started out and made great progress. There was a tree across the road at the bottom of the hill approaching Riverton and despite our best efforts, we slid into it smashing the windshield, crumpling the hood and demolishing the front grill. Fortunately all of this happened in front of one of the only houses on that lonely stretch of road. The owner had a chain saw and a friend with a tractor who cut up the tree and pulled us out.

We soldiered on gathering a small caravan of others in the same straits. The men would jump out of their vehicles when we encountered trees and hold up the limbs as each of us crept under branches. We finally encountered a huge downed tree that wouldn't budge. We were stuck.

As if on cue, two young men in an old Jeep appeared and told us that they knew a back road to Winsted. The narrow lane flanked by sagging branches and the raging snowstorm made us feel like we were participants in some diabolical video game. Our journey was halted once again by an extremely large tree laying across wires. At midnight we threw in the towel and spent the night in our car, catching a few catnaps and slowly running out of gas using the engine to keep warm.

About 5:30 the next morning a snowplow guided us around the blocked road to downtown

retaining cable service and having battery backup. Your cell phone will work only if you have kept it charged (keep a charger in your car) and the cell tower has not failed.

More than 200 towers statewide were damaged by the storm, and many others gave spotty service. The FCC mandates battery backup of only two to four hours for towers.

Your safest bet is traditional landline service. Make sure one of your phones is not cordless; they require power and will not work.

Finally, follow the advice in our November issue, and go to the Cornwall Association website to list your mobile or other phone numbers and sign up for Reverse 911 service (cornwallassociation.org). —Ed Ferman

Oasis in the Storm

The wrath of Storm Alfred determined the immediate necessity for Cornwall's first-ever emergency shelter, which opened on Saturday night, October 29. In the past, severe weather has caused more localized

Letters to the Chronicle

Winsted. Then the tire that hit the tree at 9 P.M. and had held all night long finally gave up the ghost and went flat. The spare was out of air and Winsted was out of electricity. There was no way to inflate it. We were without options.

Fred Bate answered our SOS, drove up and rescued us. When we got home we found that the drive belt in our generator had broken, rendering it inoperable. Friends fed us and loaned us their shower.

Jeff has a theory that you never remember the perfect trip. Since he left home for Bradley at 3 P.M. Saturday and arrived home at 9 in the morning Sunday, this will be a trip he never forgets. —Gail Jacobson

RESPITE

What a haven of peace, security, and helpfulness was the shelter in the gathering room at Cornwall Consolidated School during the days following our early storm! From the many volunteers to the happy little children who adjusted to their new home with contagious smiles spreading good will, to the concerned citizens and local restaurants who sent donations of delicious food—all helped make the shelter experience a happy one.

EMTs from our Volunteer Fire Department, church members, family volunteers all made this a positive time to remember.

As one who was privileged to be one of the beneficiaries of this good planning by town officials and community members, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks.

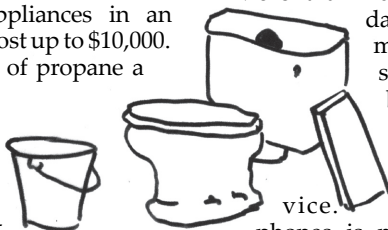
While Mother Nature sadly earned less than a passing grade, all those involved in the shelter have certainly earned an A plus! —Marion Blake

need, leaving townspeople to eat and sleep with friends or relatives. The immensity of this storm required more.

The CCS building, designed to be a shelter in its expansion plans, was an oasis of comfort for those who needed refuge. Under the aegis of a committee (Nev Dunn, Jayne Ridgway, Mark Hamilton, and Annie Kosciusko) Hotel Cornwall (or Camp Alfred) functioned successfully until Friday, November 4, when power at last came back to most of the town.

As many as 18 people spent the night, mostly on cots provided by the fire department, with special beds and wheelchairs provided by the UCC. Several volunteers elected to remain throughout the night, and were eventually joined by VNA nurses who oversaw those with medical needs. The head count reached 50, including emergency personnel, for meals. A similar number appeared for hot showers.

"I went to bed early when it became dark," said John Miller, "and didn't rise until the morning light many hours later. The darkness was very depressing." On the third day of the blackout, he went over to the shelter and liked what he found. "No



darkness there!"

Pat and Debbie Elias saw the need for kitchen help and volunteered, producing breakfasts from scratch, with food provided by The Cornwall General Store. The Wandering Moose provided the shelter's main meals.

People came by to rev up cell phones or other devices. Jeanette and Jose Sosa brought their puppy Chewy, in training as a therapy dog, to warm up. He and they remained as volunteers, entertaining the many children who spent time in the shelter. John Bevans installed satellite TV which provided welcome news of the world outside Cornwall.

There is a picture journal of Camp Alfred, with contributions from some of the guests. Now in the Selectman's Office, it tells only a small part of this unique experience. *—Nan Frost*



Cornwall Briefs

• **Work on the washed-out West Cornwall bridge**, which had cut off four households on Lower River Road, was completed November 15, some kind of record. In case you didn't notice, the construction crew was on the job through the October storm and the blackout that followed, Saturdays included. The ticket on the new strand is expected to come in just under half a million dollars.

• **Free Solar Panels:** Several months back we mentioned that a company was offering free solar panels to local towns and that Cornwall had signed up for a couple with great anticipation. Well, forget about it. It ain't gonna happen. Gordon Ridgway told this briefer that the ultra-generous company has gone out of business. *—John Miller*



Neither Snow, Nor Hail

The *Chronicle* keeps coming, every month, every year. We count on our readers and our out-of-town subscribers to make it happen with donations. Thank you all and warm, happy holidays to everyone!

Events & Announcements

The UCC Christmas Fair, Saturday, December 3, from 9:30 A.M. to 2 P.M. at the Parish House on Bolton Hill Road in the Village offers locally made crafts, holiday food, and gift baskets. There will be a hot lunch, with servings from the apple pie and chili contests. A shopping room for children will be upstairs. For last minute wreaths, please call Bobbie Tyson at 672-6762.

Advent Vespers will be sung at North Cornwall Meeting House Sunday, December 4, at 7:15 P.M. Performed by Cantus Excellus and presented by the Chapel of All Saints.

A Music Concert by the upper grades at CCS will be presented Tuesday, December 6. Please call CCS for time at 672-2939.

Gifts from the Kitchen. Students in grades kindergarten to 5 are invited to the CCS Gathering Room December 5 through 9 for a holiday baking course taught by Child Center After School enrichment staff. The goodies produced will be donated to local organizations. Each child will create a cookbook. To register or for more information call 672-6989 or email cornwallchildcenter@yahoo.com.

Cub Scout Pack 15 will conduct a food drive on December 10 between 10 A.M. and noon in Cornwall Village. The Scouts will be in uniform, chaperoned by their leaders and parents. They will go door to door collecting much needed food to donate to the town's Food Pantry housed at the UCC. Hot chocolate will follow the drive at the Parish House.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, the exhibits "Homer Page: Photographs 1949" and "Dorothy Lapham Ferriss: Illustrations 1915-1929" will continue through December 10. Beginning December 13, the Library will show photographs by Harriette Dorsen. A reception will be held on Monday, December 26, from 1 to 3 P.M.

Nunwell Glass will continue to be displayed at the Wish House through the holidays.

Cornwall Consolidated students' art can be viewed at the National Iron Bank for the month.

Library News: On Boxing Day, December 26, Tom Walker will read selections from Sholom Aleichem, the "Yiddisher Mark Twain", at 4 P.M. at the North Cornwall Meeting House.

Library Story Hour will be held on

Friday, December 16, at 1:30 P.M. for kindergartners and second-graders.

The Cornwall Library Parent Child Book Group is reading *Drizzle* by Kathleen Van Cleve. The book discussion will take place on Monday, December 12, with the author present. Please call Amy Buck for details at 672-6874.

Calling All Angels, shepherds, and neighbors for the annual Christmas Pageant on Saturday, December 17, at 7:30 P.M. (Snow date Sunday, December 18, at 4 P.M.) at the UCC Village Meeting House on Bolton Hill Road. Traditional readings and carols will culminate with the giving of "white gifts" for needy children. Please bring a toy wrapped in white paper to donate. Cocoa and donuts will follow in the Parish House. Those interested in being in the pageant will please arrive for rehearsal at 5:30 P.M. on December 16 at the church or call Jane Prentice at 672-6101.

A Red Cross Blood Drive will be held in the Parish House of the UCC on December 20 from 1:30 to 6:30 P.M. Donating blood, especially at this time of year, is one of the best presents one can give. Please call the Red Cross at 1-800-GIVE LIFE.

The "Cornwall 2012" Calendar features Alec Frost's photographs of favorite Cornwall buildings, costs \$15, and is available at: Berkshire Country Store, Cornwall General Store, Cornwall Package Store, the Library, Wandering Moose, Wish House, and the Christmas Fair. Sales benefit the Cornwall Historical Society.

The New Year's Day pancake breakfast will be on Sunday, from 9 A.M. to noon at the UCC Parish House to benefit the UCC outreach programs. Buttermilk pancakes with Cornwall maple syrup, sausage, orange juice, milk, and coffee will be served.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

DECEMBER ISSUE

Tim Prentice, Illustrations
Lisa Lansing and Janet Sanders, Editors

JANUARY ISSUE

Ginny and Bob Potter, Editors
gntpotters@optonline.net

MANAGING EDITOR Ruth Epstein

CALENDAR EDITOR Erin Hedden
Mom917@sbcglobal.net

CIRCULATION Nan and John Bevans

Lucy and Jack Kling

DIRECTORS

Annie Kosciusko PRESIDENT
Paul De Angelis VICE PRESIDENT
Audrey Ferman TREASURER

Tom Barrett • Tom Bechtle • Edward Ferman • Erin Hedden
John Miller • Bob Potter • Janet Sanders • Lisa L. Simont

THE CHRONICLE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy this on-line edition of the Cornwall Chronicle. Remember that all our revenues come from readers like you, and we need your help to continue producing this electronic edition along with the print edition. If your contribution is \$15 or more, we'd be glad to mail the print edition to any out-of-town address. Please mail your tax deductible gifts to: Cornwall Chronicle Inc. 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796. Comments, letters and news may be E-mailed to the publishers at: elfhill@aol.com.