

**VOLUME 6: NUMBER 1** 

**FEBRUARY 1996** 

## Riding the Plow

I spent most of January 8 plowing snow in East Cornwall with Jim Vanicky, a sevenyear veteran of Cornwall's road crew. When I met up with Jim at the Town Garage at 8:30 A.M., he had already been driving since seven the night before, as had the rest of the town crew: brother Rick Vanicky, John Malahan, Jr., Foreman Don Reid, and 19-year veteran Stephen Clarke.

Outside, the blizzard was in full force, as it had been all night. Most of the time drivers drive alone, day or night, and the men were looking forward to company and help from the selectmen. We selectmen were all there, and my ride that day with Jim would be spent chiefly wiping condensation from the inside of the truck's windshield so that Jim could see to plow. How the drivers had managed alone, at night and with visibility zero, was difficult for me to imagine.

Don Reid came to fuel up while I waited for Jim to put chains on. I asked Don how long a driver could operate a truck before becoming exhausted. Don allowed as how, in a big 1978 storm, he had driven 37 hours straight before coming in. During a big storm, if there is a lull, Cornwall's snow crew may sleep sitting up at the garage. They once had a cot to sleep on, but state regulations took it away from them.

an angle plow, but he was switching now to one which had a roll-back plow that could throw snow higher and further off the road. Once we were back on the road, I looked out my window as the big roll-back curled snow to the right like a bow wave. Four passes with the plow were needed to clear each road to a full two-lane width. The last passes, to my unpracticed eye, seemed to graze mailboxes and guardrails. Jim's accuracy was uncanny. "I plow by feel more than sight," he told me.

Frequent hazards faced by drivers are people on skis, parked cars, and kids on sleds or kids playing in snowdrifts. "It would really help us if people kept a close watch on their kids when the plows are out," Jim said.

Once when I put my windshield-wiping cloth down, I spotted a white glove tucked down next to Jim's seat, and I asked him what it was for. "Steve calls it his Michael Jackson glove," he said, laughing. "The hydraulic unit for the sander gets so hot you can't touch it with your bare hand."

We broke two bolts on the plow frame just before noon on Great Hollow Road. Jim made a temporary fix, but we had to return to base to do the thing properly. Then we went out again.

At about three, after clearing drifting snow beyond Kubish's farm, we turned right to clear the long push into Harriet Clark's

and got stuck in Harriet's dooryard. The house, buried in snow to the windowsills, afforded a warm refuge from the storm while we waited for Rick Vanicky and his truck to pull us out. Inside we sipped hot coffee and ate Christmas cookies in a kitchen that seemed lost in time, while we listened to Harriet, 101 years old last fall, tell us about what real snow had been like -Earl Brecher when she was young.

#### **Mohawk Tornado Settlement**

When the tornado (or tornadoes) struck in 1989, one of the hardest hit locations in Cornwall was the Mohawk Ski Area. It was covered by extensive insurance policies, but the insurance company, American Home, quibbled about words in the contract. For instance, the word "tornado" in the contract was singular, and the company was willing to pay for the damage caused by only one tornado. (The National Weather Service said that at least two and maybe even five tornadoes hit our area.) American Home also focused on the word "occurrence"-suggesting that more than one tornado still equalled only one occurrence.

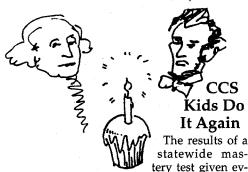
Mohawk sued the insurance company when it refused to pay more than the damage from one tornado. In a jury trial ending last December 15, Mohawk was awarded the full amount it had asked for. But American

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	RUARY WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Note: Deadline for March Events & Announcements and Calendar listings is February 15.   4 12 18 26	The second second			Art show thru 3/9 Library Robert Andrew Parker (p.4) Stretch Class 5:30 p.m. Town Hall Art show, Feb., Nat'l Iron Bank Cornwall Bridge, Pat Rimany	2 Judy Gafney Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library	3
4	Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	Ag. Adv. Comm. Potluck dessert & video 7:30 p.m. Firehouse (p.4) Park & Rec 7:30 p.m. Town Office Inland Wetlands 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	7 W. Cornwall Merchants Assoc. 10 A.M. Cadwell's	8 Cornwall Housing Corp. 4:30 р.м. Kugeman Village Stretch Class 5:30 р.м. Town Hall	Judy Gafney Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library	10 Cornwall Assoc. 4 P.M. Osbornes', 82 Sharon- Goshen Turnpike
Okefenokee Swamp Slide Show 5:15 p.m. Cornubia Hall (p.4) Poetry Reading 8 p.m. Cadwell's	12 Lincoln's Birthday  Monday Skating 7:30–8:30 p.m. Salisbury School Rink	Repub. Town Comm. 7:30 p.m. CCS Housatonic Civer Comm. 7:30 p.m. CCS Library P&Z 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	14 VALENTINE'S DAY CCS PTA 7 P.M. CCS Library mine	15 Bd. of Education 5 P.M. CCS Library Stretch Class 5:30 P.M. Town Hall Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	16 Judy Gafney Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Travelogue by Barbara & Denis Curtiss on International Schools 7:30 P.M. CCS Library (p.4)	17
18	19 PRESIDENTS' DAY	20 Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	21 HVRHS Board of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS	22 Washington's Birthday Stretch Class 5:30 p.m. Town Hall	23 Judy Gafney Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library	24 1
25	ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall* Conservation Commission 7:30 P.M. Town Office	27	28	29 Stretch Class 5:30 р.м. Town Hall	Jan	

(continued from page 1)

Home again declined to pay and appealed. Almost exactly a year after the verdict, the company dropped its appeal and agreed to settle for the full amount the jury had awarded-just under \$1 million. The money has now been paid and Mohawk has used it to pay its attorneys and to pay off loans taken out to repair the storm damage. It's a happy ending for Mohawk after a long struggle.

-John Zinsser



ery year since 1984 to fourth, sixth, and eighth graders proved once more that Cornwall grade schoolers are receiving a solid educational foundation. On this state test, devised to determine students' proficiency in reading, writing, and math, all of our sixth and eighth graders achieved state benchmark scores in reading and math, while 94 percent of the sixth graders and 85 percent of the eighth graders reached that level in writing. Our fourth graders overall did almost as well.

In some past years CCS's performance on these mastery tests has led all other schools in the state. This year, though the comparative test scores are not yet available, it is a certainty that Cornwall will rank right up there again.

As a further indication of CCS's high standing in the state, principal Bill Oros, representing Region 1, was recently asked to join two other "success story" schools, Norwich and Simsbury, in discussing their respective grade-school programs before the state Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and, later, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. Bill found that there were at least four areas of "commonality" in the three school presentations: an emphasis on basic disciplines, high expectations by both teachers and students, an understanding by the staff of their own accountability, and parent encouragementkey to the all-important attitude a student brings to school every day.

A major satisfaction to Bill this year was CCS's improvement on the writing test-a weak point last year. The priority that test scores gave to speed and volume as opposed to construction and grammar had caught CCS students (and teachers) unaware in 1994. This year all hands were prepared for these weighted criteria and the students did

very well.

Lest principal, staff, and parents take all the credit for CCS's satisfying test results, we must remind ourselves, "Hey, the kids had a hand in them too." ---Scoville Soulé

## Counting the Birds

Sunday, December 17, was a cold day and the ground was covered with snow. It was the day of the Christmas bird count and three intrepid Cornwallians ventured out at about 7:15 A.M. to start counting.

First a little background: the object of the exercise is to count the number of birds by species visible or audible on that particular day. The data accumulated from these counts all over the country for the past thirty years have been compiled into a huge database which shows much about the winter bird populations and how they change from year to year.

The Christmas bird count started in 1900 when Frank Chapman of the American Museum (now the American Museum of Natural History) went out into Central Park with a group of people armed with opera glasses to see what species of birds were around in Central Park in the middle of winter, and how many. The count is now sponsored by the National Audubon Society through its local chapters and there are so-called count circles dotted over the United States and in foreign countries where U.S. servicemen are stationed.

The circles are 15 miles in diameter and our particular circle is centered on the Hotchkiss School. Each circle is divided into segments. Art Gingert was the leader of the Cornwall segment, which is notorious for its lack of a competitive spirit in the bird-counting game. Carla Bigelow and I were the followers. The segment covers the area between the river and Cream Hill Road; south to West Cornwall and north to the area around Music Mountain Road in Falls Village.

Just as we started our count, a brown creeper, not an easy bird to see, flew in to investigate the suet on one of our pine trees. Most fortuitous! And a barred owl called at least once. So we were off to a good start. We headed down to West Cornwall and along Lower River Road, where we found one belted kingfisher and a goodly number of blue jays. We then headed for another Cornwall "hot spot"—Cream Hill Farm. There we counted at least 50 crows, a flock of about 40 horned larks, pigeons, starlings, and various sparrows.

Over in Falls Village we found some golden-crowned kinglets, two red-tailed hawks, American goldfinches, and a red-bellied woodpecker.

We finished at 6 P.M., in the dark, and in the middle of the snowfields on top of Cream Hill, listening for owls. And we did hear a great horned owl-it was TEMPEST probably in Sal-SNOWS OF isbury, but

we heard it in Cornwall!

The competitive aspect of the day rears its ugly head at a potluck supper held at the Sharon Audubon Center. Everyone reports on the day's activities, vying for bragging rights. Art went to Sharon to turn in our count, which included an adult bald eagle, brown-headed cowbirds, American robins, eastern bluebirds, a ruffed grouse, just one wild turkey, and hundreds of crows.

We were proud to have seen 35 separate species although not many individuals in any one species. It was the most seen in Cornwall in many a year. -Celia Senzer

#### Welcome

Giulio Emmanuel Christen Cilona to Charlotte and Christen Cilona

## Good-bye to Friends

Arthur Getz

Robert M. Griggs

## Congratulations

Richard Kearns, Jr., to Elizabeth St. John

#### **Land Transfers**

Estate of Carolyn B. Fields to Stephen S. and Jane M. Garmey, a house and land on Cogswell Road for \$305,000.

Edward H. and Elena H. Dodd to Hector P. and Erica C. Prud'homme, 20 acres on Lake Road for \$152,500.

Lonnie Carter to Cynthia E. Bianchi, house at 377 Town Street for \$110,000.

William and Joanna Seitz to Adrian and Margaret Selby, Lot 2, six acres on Whitcomb Hill Road for \$70,000.

## Recycling Update

Here is what Cornwall is now recycling: Plastic containers #1-6 except #4, glass jars and bottles, auto oil and batteries, corrugated cardboard, household batteries, used clothing (good condition), plastic flowerpots, and scrap metal.

As for paper, we recycle newspapers, magazines, catalogues, junk mail, faxes, photography paper, white/colored paper, envelopes (with or without labels), post-it notes, nonmetallic greeting cards and wrapping paper, brown paper bags, NCR paper (carbonless carbon paper), school paper, and textbooks (without hard covers).

The rest is solid waste, which costs about \$100 a ton to dispose of via incinerator.

—Eliz. Tobin Terrall

#### Small Farm

On the kitchen table where we sat, there was a copy of a large unslick magazine—Small

Farmer's Journal Featuring Practical Horse Farming. I was talking with Chris Hopkins and Debra Tyler about Local Farm, their small farm. And after looking through the journal, I knew I was hearing about an American phenomenon.

They are not the only ones farming in a fashion reminiscent of another age.

As they described their work, I kept hear-

TALE

ing a word repeated. The word was "kind." "It is kind to the forest floor," said Chris, "to use horses for selective cutting. The tires of heavy machinery compact the ground and as one works animals one slows to a pace kind to them and that pace in turn is kind to the human. Besides, there is no noise, no vibration, and no frustration due to mechanical breakdown."

Debra said that her ten Jersey cows now respond to their names and Chris said their ox is learning voice commands.

Of course, theirs is the story, too, of continuously replenishing the soil, the story of avoiding chemically formulated fertilizers

and pesticides.

Their dairy is organic. For organic grain (corn and soy) they buy from a farm in upstate New York (delivered twice a year in ten-ton batches which they then grind fresh every other day). Their hay and pasture is untreated too, except for a liberal feeding of manure and some limestone.

Their plans for the future include their five Devons, the first breed of cattle brought to this country by Europeans. There are only 600 left in America. Debra and Chris want to breed them to help preserve them as well as to use them for beef, dairy, and draft. They

want to complete training their ox to pull a cart for hauling manure, or whatever.

Before I left we drank tea, using their milk

and their honey. "We didn't grow the tea leaves," Chris said with a chortle. They lent me a couple of copies of Small Farmer's Journal and later when I read through

them, I felt pleased and proud that we have a "small farm" right here in Cornwall.

—Anne Zinsser

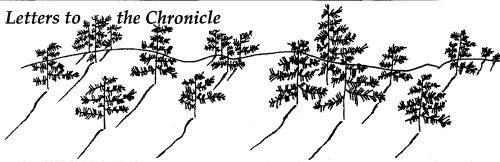
## Dems, Reps Caucus

The Democratic Town Committee has five new members. Elected at a caucus in January were Carla Bigelow, David Grossman, Hannah Grossman, John Zinsser, and Julia Scott.

Also elected were incumbents Earl Brecher, Doug Carlson, Anne Chamberlain, Hendon Chubb, Ella Clark, Deirdre Fischer, Ken Keskinen, Barbara Klaw, Spencer Klaw, City Lansing, John Miller, Charlie Osborne, Philla Osborne, Asher Pavel, Anne Peterson, Marie Prentice, Gordon Ridgway, David Samson, Celia Senzer, Steve Senzer, Jim Terrall, and Phyllis Wojan.

At the Republican January caucus, Ray Augustyn resigned from the Town Committee, and Adam Fischer was elected, joining 17 incumbents. They are: Denton Butler, Don Bardot, Don Hedden, Ed Whitcomb, Ruth Ohmen, Bill Hurlburt, Joan Thitchener, Lisa Cruse, Scoville Soulé, Paul Baren, Frank Kesl, Sue Simons, Philip Bishop, Klaus Edler, David Harmon, Vera Dinneen, and Jack Preston.

— John Miller



FROM GUGGLE TO ZATCH

On behalf of the Friends of the Cornwall Library, I can only rave in reviewing Tom Walker's extraordinary reading—eloquently introduced by Marc Simont—of James Thurber's The Thirteen Clocks. In the candlelit North Cornwall Church, Todals gleeped, a Duke slit suitors from guggle to zatch, Hagga wept and Zorn of Zorna triumphed.

Bravo!——Ella Clark

#### STALE BREAD

The other day when I held the stale end of a loaf of bread, eyeing it to toss it in the garbage, it dawned on me that it should go instead to an animal starved by the blizzard.

But how and to whom?

The answer came soon. Just outside my kitchen window at eye level an opossum appeared on a high snow bank. He looked weak and wobbly and I guessed that he was either rabid or starving.

Quickly I sawed up the bread, went outside,

and tossed chunks to him. His nocturnal eyes were pink and obviously useless in the glare of the sun on the snow. But his nose worked and, lurching across the snow, he found his food. At first he had trouble picking up the bread chunks and eating them and I was convinced that he had rabies, but before my eyes he regained his coordination and became lively (for an opossum) and after licking his odd pink claws and cleaning the fur on his ears and neck he left.

I watched him make his way across the snow...towards the road!

Horrors! I couldn't let him get run over after all that and so I dashed to the road and directed traffic until he was safe.

—Anne Zinsser

#### WOLF! WOLF!

Saw Larry Pool's wolf-sighting note in the January issue and would like to advise that I believe I saw two wolves in woods off Route 341 in Warren last year. I watched them for five minutes in wintertime. Much bigger than coyotes and Husky-like.

—Paul Hotchkiss

## The Kaye Fund and All That

An insert in last month's *Chronicle* listed all the town's committees and their members, old and new. In reading over the entries, I realized there were a few groups whose function was a mystery to me, even though I've spent a major part of my life in Cornwall. What, for instance, is the Sydney M. Kaye Fund?

It is, I discovered, an unrestricted bequest of \$20,000 that Mr. Kaye, a former Cornwall resident, left to the town when he died in 1979. The interest from the money goes to fund various town projects after requests have been approved by both the fund advisory committee and the selectmen. The fund, for instance, paid for much of the cost of restoring the Sedgwick Monument. This last year the fund put up the money requested by Park & Rec for an umbrella to shield the lifeguard at the town beach (but turned down another Park & Rec request for money to buy a water slide for the kids). Ellen Lorch, the committee chair, told me that the fund receives about \$2,500 a year in interest and that it gets about three requests a year for funds.

Another puzzler to me was the Cornwall Grange #32 Trust Fund. Ed Whitcomb, a Grange member, explained that when Cornwall's Grange seemed to be dying out, the members decided to sell the Grange Hall. It brought \$20,000 in 1983 and \$10,000 of this sum was put into the Grange #32 Trust Fund mainly to support agricultural and conservation projects in Cornwall.

Whitcomb said that the fund contributed seed money for the new ambulance and has paid for plantings around the town beach, the Town Hall and Library, and the firehouses. All the ribbons and prizes given at the Agricultural Fair have been paid for by the Grange Fund.

I also wondered about the role of the Civil Defense Coordinator. Remembering hours spent keeping an alert eye out for enemy planes after WWII from the spotting post on Town Street, I called our coordinator, Richard Lynn, to find out what the job entails these days. The coordinator, he told me, is a volunteer who assists the first selectman in responding to natural disasters such as tornadoes, major flooding, damaging winter storms, or prolonged loss of power. Last winter, for instance, Lynn assisted Gordon Ridgway when an ice jam on the Housatonic threatened the Covered Bridge. They got in state experts who ruled that no drastic action was necessary.

The job of our tree warden, George Brown, is less puzzling. He is in charge of all our municipally owned trees—on the road-sides and in parks. He condemns trees when they are dangerous. Unfortunately the town has no budget for pruning or maintaining trees, Brown says.

Recently, when CL&P offered the town a lot of flowering cherries to plant alongside our roads, Brown politely turned them down. Such low-growing trees might be great for CL&P, he said, as they wouldn't in
(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3) terfere with overhead power lines, but they would be a hazard to drivers, since flowering cherry is a tree that "deer just love."

—Barbara Klaw

### Who's in the Parish House Now?

The HVRHS Alternative High School, consisting of 13 students and two teachers, has been meeting since September in the Parish House of the United Church of Christ. Now in its 15th year as an alternative high school, it is a model for others in and out of the state and has a waiting list each semester.

The school offers a chance to succeed to students who, for a variety of reasons, otherwise might not. Work-study programs, independent study, and community service, all within a family context of adult and peer support, are for many a welcome alternative that works.

Graduation requirements are the same as those at HVRHS. Students must want to attend the school and survive a rigorous selection process before being accepted. Each semester they sign an education contract and must maintain 90 percent attendance and a passing grade each year in courses totaling 20 credits.

The program works. These are extremely motivated and hard-working students who graduate and go on to college or to jobs. And, as a visitor who is a member of the older generation commented recently, they are also the most pleasant, interesting, and polite young people he has met in a long time. —Anne Baren



Now We Are Five!

In February 1991, Tom Bevans published the first issue of the Chronicle, with the help of Margaret Bevans and a few others. Since then it's grown into a remarkable community effort, with lots of volunteer workers and a steady stream of financial support. The paper hasn't changed much in five years, which may mean that Tom got it right in the first place, but we still need you to send your ideas and suggestions, and remind you not to let that stream of donations dry up.

# 

#### Extra Road \$\$ for Cornwall

The State Bureau of Housing has designated Cornwall as a member of the Housing Partnership Program; therefore, the town will have 25 percent added to its road-grant funds for 1996, and for up to three more years in which Cornwall must continue to demonstrate progress in providing affordable housing.

Six homes in Cornwall are now occupied under the Parcel Program of the Housing Corporation. The most recent homeowner is Cynthia Bianchi, who has bought and, with her son Corey, has moved into the house on North Town Street. Two assigned sites on Pierce Lane will have construction under way soon. Building on the Valley parcel has been delayed because of an appeal by Cornwall Castle, Limited, challenging the variance issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Negotiations continue

The Corporation wants all landowners in Cornwall to know that parcels of land are still very much needed for middle-income applicants. Landowners who wish to donate or sell a parcel (one-acre lots are permitted for affordable homes) are urged to call either 672-4439 or 672-6486.

—Ken Keskinen

### Parker Exhibits at Library

Robert Andrew Parker is exhibiting a selection of imaginative paintings and etchings now through March 9 at the Cornwall Library. Parker's ability shows in the breadth of style, color, and subject matter in this collection.

Parker likes aerial views, as we see, for example, in *Coyotes*. A pack of flying coyotes sails above a snow-covered landscape with the moon in the background.

His exhibit includes a series of English city-scapes, sometimes with historic airplanes flying above, sometimes with flying dogs. Take special note also of the exquisite etching, Chester Johnson and Myself.

—Alfred Bredenberg

### **Events & Announcements**

Sweets for Sale: Watch out! Infamous chocolates from See's Candies will soon be for sale around town to benefit Cornwall Extras for Kids.

Buses to Torrington: Northwestern Connecticut Transit, a government-funded bus system, offers a round-trip ride to Torrington from Cornwall on weekdays. Bus picks you up at home. Choice of Torrington destination is yours. Call one day ahead for reservations. Rides are free for seniors but a fifty-cent do-

yeah!

nation is requested for each leg of the trip. Non-seniors pay a dollar each way. The system is paid for by federal, state, and local governments; support from Cornwall taxpayers was budgeted at \$441 in 1995–96. For reservations and more information, call 489-2535.

Travelogue: Barbara and Denis Curtiss will talk about their experiences teaching in international schools in Africa, Greece, and Saudi Arabia. CCS Library, February 16, at 7:30 P.M.

From the Registrars: State statutes require the Registrars of Voters to conduct an annual survey to update names and addresses. This year we have decided NOT to send out canvass cards to everyone-we know Ralph and Thalia live on Town Street, Harriet Clark on Clark Road, and the Lorches down in Cornwall Bridge on Hickory Lane. However, we are going to send cards to those who move frequently, whom we have not had the pleasure of meeting, or some whose addresses we need to clarify. Please send back your card if we send one. For those who do not receive a card, please let us know if there are any changes (address, names) or if you want your name taken off the list. For some this will be your only correspondence from us. Thanks, Lisa Cruse and Jayne Ridgway.

Okefenokee Swamp Slide Show: Dave Colbert will share his passion for this National Wildlife Refuge. Cornubia Hall, February 11, 5:15 P.M. Potluck supper to follow.

CCS Seed Sale: During February, CCS PTA is sponsoring a seed sale from Shepherd's Garden Seeds, a good source of unusual vegetable, herb, and flower seeds. If you're interested in placing an order contact your nearest CCSer or Cheryl Evans at 672-0094. Profits will benefit school enrichment programs.

**Agricultural Advisory Commission:** Come to the Firehouse Tuesday, February 6, at 7:30 P.M. for potluck dessert followed by a video (at 8) of the first leg of a six-horse team's trip across the U. S.

#### **CORNWALL CHRONICLE**

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