

# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 14 : NUMBER 1 FEBRUARY 2004



## "Curtain Up!" for Town Hall Players

A new Cornwall theatrical group will revive the Town Hall stage February 27, 28, and 29 with a production of A. R. Gurney's *The Dining Room*. The piece is a series of comic sketches exploring what director Jandi Hanna calls "the role played by the dining room in our lives."

The Town Hall Players have been organizing since last fall, led by Fred Thaler, Molly Hinchman, and others, to bring theater back to the old stage, scene of many thespian adventures over the past 96 years. *The Dining Room* will be the group's first production.

The Cornwall Historical Society will decorate the auditorium and foyer with old posters advertising some of these entertainments to celebrate the re-dedication of the stage.

The stage was built into the stone structure erected in 1908 by the Calhoun family as a gift to the town to house both the Cornwall Free Library and the town offices. The stage was planned as a way to help finance the operation of the Library, which then had no endowment.

Over the years, the stage has had a variety of uses. The performances have included birdcall imitations, minstrel shows, lectures (Learn about Bulgaria.), concerts (banjos and innumerable singers), and politics (Should women have the vote?).

Performers ignored the constricted space on stage and changed costumes without recorded complaint in two tiny, dank dressing rooms beneath the stage. These spaces will not be revived; building codes forbid it.

For a time, illumination throughout the building—including the cellar dressing rooms—was acetylene gas lamps (a scary thought in our era of strict fire codes).

As time went on, the entertainment included cabaret nights, with patrons in the 1940s sitting at small tables and sipping wine as they took in the action on stage. Plays—largely amateur productions featuring local casts—were also popular. In the 1970s, a juvenile troupe, including this writer's children, worked with teenager Gail Bury, who produced well-made plays with boffo titles like *That's What You Get for Jumping on the Bed*.

Some in town remember Dodie Prentice as the star of *The Male Animal* (from a story by James Thurber). In a 1920's production of *Romeo and Juliet*, player Bill Hubbard electrified the audience by exiting out the offstage north window and re-entering on the stage's south side, having charged up the stairs to what later became First Selectman Gordon Ridgway's office.

As a government workplace, the stage proved even more cramped than as a dramatic platform. Its new role was an outcome

of population growth in the building, which had been shared for many years by the growing library and more active town government. The first selectman took over the stage in 1992 in preference to the rented trailer occupied by his predecessor.

After the Library moved to its new quarters in the spring of 2002, Ridgway took over a roomy new office in the vacated space. When the stage receives its finishing touches—including stage lights and a brand new, forest green curtain—the Town Hall Players can mount their inaugural production.

Performances of *The Dining Room* are at 8 P.M., Friday and Saturday, February 27 and 28, and at 6 P.M. on Sunday, February 29. Tickets are \$10; \$8 for seniors. For further information watch for posters or call Jandi Hanna at 672-6079 or Fred Thaler at 672-0014.

—Charles Osborne


## Democrats Decide

Registered Democrats can vote at the Town Hall March 2 between 6 A.M. and 8 P.M. for the presidential candidate they favor to be their party's nominee. There is no Republican primary.

The registrars report a flurry of unaffiliated electors asking to register as Democrats. The law allows people who have had unaffiliated status since before December 1, 2003, to join a

(continued on page 2)

## FEBRUARY 2004

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. W. C. Firehouse Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Selectmen's Office	3 Blue Mt. Satsang Every Tuesday 6:30-8 P.M. UCC Day Room Jam Session Every Tuesday 7:30 P.M. Town Hall or Library Inland Wetlands* 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	4 Play Group Every Wed. 10-11:30 A.M. UCC Parish House Stretch Class Every Wed. 5:30-6:30 P.M. Town Hall	5 Meditation for Mothers Every Thursday 1:15-2:15 P.M. UCC Day Room	6 Preschool-K Story Hour Every Friday 10-11 A.M. Library Park & Rec. Game Night Every Friday 7 P.M. W. C. Firehouse (p.4)	7 Chess Club Every Saturday 9:30-11 A.M. Library Mother/Daughter Retreat 9:45 A.M.-3:15 P.M. (p.4) Valentine Card-Making Workshop 11 A.M.- 12:30 P.M. Library (p.4) Talk: <i>The Sense of Smell</i> 4 P.M. Library (p.4) Swim Night Every Saturday 7-8 P.M. Hotchkiss (p.4)
8	9 Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Parish House Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS	10 P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	11 Hot Chocolate Hour 3-4 P.M. Library (p.4)	12 LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY Bd. of Ed. 4 P.M. CCS Lib	13	14 VALENTINE'S DAY Cornwall Assoc. 9 A.M. UCC Day Room American Girls Club 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Library Movie, <i>My Favorite Wife</i> 7:30 P.M. Library (p.4)
15 Deadline: March Chronicle Copy	16 PRESIDENTS' DAY CCS Winter Recess	17 CCS Winter Recess 8th Grade Benefit Dinner 5:30 & 8 P.M. Wandering Moose (p.4) Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Library (p.4)	18 Hot Chocolate Hour 3-4 P.M. Library (p.4) 8th Grade Benefit Dinner 5:30 & 8 P.M. Wandering Moose (p.4)	19 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. Firehouse	20	21 Jr. Book Club 11 A.M.-Noon Library (p.4) Talk: <i>Magellan</i> 4 P.M. Library (p.4)
22 WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY	23 ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	24 	25 ASH WEDNESDAY Hot Chocolate Hour 3-4 P.M. Library (p.4) Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 7:30 P.M. W. C. Firehouse Green Party 7:30 P.M. Library	26 	27 Motherhouse Bookshelf Celebration 10:45 A.M. Library (p.4) Town Hall Players 8 P.M. Town Hall (p.1)	28 Thomas the Tank Club 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. Library Town Hall Players 8 P.M. Town Hall (p.1)
29 Town Hall Players 6 P.M. Town Hall (p.1)						

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

party. In all other cases, there is a mandatory waiting period of 90 days between the time of registering and being eligible to vote. New voters may register and are immediately eligible for the presidential primary.

Forms are available from the town clerk, and questions may be answered by calling Jayne Ridgway at 672-0279. The town clerk will have applications for absentee ballots by February 10.

Although politics has declined in recent years as a hotly debated topic locally, national issues cause deeper concern and stimulate voters to go to the polls. Records show that in years of presidential elections, more than 90 percent of Cornwall's registered voters cast their ballots. With the current Democratic contest, people seem to be waking up and preparing to speak up with their vote.

—Ginny Potter and Jayne Ridgway



### CVFD: A Family Affair

Cornwall benefits from a tradition of civic volunteering which stretches far back in time. Nowhere is this more evident than in the volunteer fire and emergency medical services. Many of the current members are part of a long history of family participation.

Take Fred Bate, Jr. Nearly as long as there's been a CVFD, there's been Fred. He started out helping to shape emergency services in our town and is still at it nearly seven decades later. His son, Fred III, manager of the transfer station, joined the company nearly 40 years ago.

Cornwall has a pattern of children following their parents in service to the community.

In the last few years, Steve Heaney has followed his father, Gary, into both fire and emergency medical services.

Kristen Ingvertsen joined her father, Gene, a fire captain and EMS responder, in the service. Kristen had tried to get a junior fire corps started up but couldn't quite get enough other kids into it. She vividly remembers riding around with her father after the tornado, opening up the roads, making sure no one was stranded. "I love to help out...and working on the ambulance—it's just so much fun."

Steve, too, always wanted to do it. He recalls sitting in his father's truck and longing to hop out to assist but having to wait until he was old enough.

Don Whitford joined up when he was eighteen—pretty much the first chance he

got. His father, Bob, had been a member since Don was a little boy and it "just seemed like fun."

Assistant Chief Connie Tobin Hedden joined Cornwall's department over ten years ago as a third-generation firefighter from Kent. Ron Laigle and his son Ron are a unique duo: They have both served as department chief—Ron Jr. one of the youngest ever.

It's a sibling thing too. The Stone Brothers, Rick and Howard, are long-time members. Fred Bate III's brother-in-law, Dave Williamson, is a past chief. When Dave's sister, Nancy O'Donnell, moved back to Cornwall, she signed up and has been with the emergency medical service ever since.

Hunt Williams broke the generational pattern when he was introduced to the department by his stepson Phill West. Then in his early sixties, Hunt wondered if there were any place for someone his age. As one of the most active members over the last eight years, Hunt has clearly answered that question.

Among those of us lacking the family predisposition to CVFD membership, I suspect that many, like me, joined because when they were little they wanted to be firefighters...and never stopped.

—Adam Fischer

### Chess Anyone?

"Take your time now, folks. Study the board." The calm voice of Scott Cady flows around players bent upon plotting the capture of noble knights and vassals and the downfall of their king.

These days, on Saturday mornings (9:30 to 11 A.M.), the Cornwall Free Library has become a gathering place for chess. Scott, one of Cornwall's chess aficionados, offers tips, advice, and even some direct instruction on his oversized magnetic chessboard. Players from five to fifty-something appear, youth and elder playing together, dedicated to mutual destruction.

The level of play varies a great deal, from the adult novice such as yours truly, who knows the moves but needs some strategy, to the child whiz who swiftly puts opponents in a pincer lock (not a technical chess term). Most of the group consists of average players looking for a good game and hoping to get a bit better. Dr. Mike Kelly plays Arnon Fischer at one table while young Will Gottsegen keeps a teenager from Kent on his toes at the next board. At another table, John Hare and RJ Thompson duke it out, with Scott offering the occasional guiding comment. Sometimes all play stops while Scott and Dominique Lasseur play a carefully watched match surrounded by whispering kibitzers—"Ooh man! Did you see that?"

The group welcomes beginners and experts and asks those who can to bring along a chess set. A chess team, which could play groups from other towns, will hold its first meeting February 7, at 11 A.M., after the regular morning chess club meets.

—Deirdre Fischer



### Welcome

Keaton James Terrall to  
Elizabeth Tobin and James Terrall

### Good-bye to Friends

Robert Bailey  
Robert Bodkin  
Steven Rosen

### Congratulations

John Horn to Elizabeth Horn

### Land Transfers

Sam S. and Audra Fontana to Marydale Debor, house and 6.5 acres at 24 Dark Entry Road for \$498,000.

James F. Singelman to John D. and Christina P. Tobin, 5.07 acres at Whitcomb Hill Road for \$135,000.

Irene and Alan H. Hurlburt, III to Jessica Brackman and Charles Melcher, 42 Hautboy Hill Road for \$184,300.

### Cornwall Website

The Cornwall website ([www.cornwallct.org](http://www.cornwallct.org)) is currently being updated. Members of the Website Committee are reviewing all the information on the site and revising it.

This means that the listings of members of all the town boards and of our civic organizations will change to reflect election results and new appointments. In addition, popular pages such as "What's New" and "Coming Events" will be reviewed to ensure that the information is current.

The website had its origins in the Community Profile sponsored by the Cornwall Association in 1999, and the eight-person Website Committee responsible for the site is a subcommittee of the Cornwall Association.

The members of the website group are: Anne Baren, Hendon Chubb, Richard Griggs, David Grossman, Lazlo Gyorsok, Norma Lake, Dominique Lasseur, and Stephen Senzer.

Unlike the websites of many other towns, the Cornwall site is fully independent of the town government.

The website recently acquired more server (storage) space, so that the site can maintain archives—of the *Chronicle* and of photographs of past events—and can continue to add new features. The site is also adding more links to other sites, such as very informative ones maintained by many departments of the federal and state governments. There are already links to many local and regional organizations; movie listings and current weather forecasts are available too.



Other features added during the past year include comprehensive business listings from the Association of Businesses in Cornwall and printable town forms for land use and zoning permits so that obtaining applications no longer requires a trip to the town offices.

One ongoing problem is keeping town board agendas and minutes up to date. This situation is expected to improve when the town upgrades its computers to include online capability.

Viewership has remained steady, with an average of almost 200 hits (defined as pages viewed) each day, although hits have reached as many as 700 when election results have been posted.

Ideas and suggestions are always welcome. Just go online and send your thoughts to the webmaster on the site. —Stephen Senzer

**A Breath of Fresh Air at CCS**

The hiring of Dr. Kathleen Fitzgibbons—Dr. Fitz—as principal at Cornwall Consolidated School has parents, teachers, and kids energized and working well together. The following interview will give you some sense of her style.

**Q:** Now that the school year is almost half way through we'd like to get a sense of how things are going for you at CCS and in our community.

**A:** Things are really fantastic. By that I mean I feel very comfortable. The community has been so accepting of me. Now I know the children. When I talk to students, whether for disciplinary concerns or for other issues, I know them personally so the conversation is more meaningful. This is true for the teachers and staff as well. We just had our monthly staff meeting for January and I said, "Now we know each other and we've made our team, so let's get on with it." The deeper needs can now be answered. Parents have been so supportive of me and willing to give me a chance. They have faith in me and have proven that with their support. Everyone involved with the school seemed to be waiting for something and I think it turned out to be me. I think I was meant to be here.

**Q:** To begin as principal this year with all the construction happening must have presented additional challenges for you.

**A:** The construction doesn't enter my mind except that I'm interested in each stage and need to be responsive to logistical issues. I'm a carpenter's daughter and built my own home so construction has always been a part of my life. The construction here is not a problem for me. I know it will get done and the committees are doing their job so I don't worry.

**Q:** What are your biggest challenges?

**A:** The biggest challenge is teaching the children what I expect of them in terms of social behavior and careful, thoughtful consideration of each other. I do this by example and spending time with them individually and in groups. I have all the time in the world to do this right. I want the children to be the best they can be as individuals and feel good about themselves. Now that I know them we have good conversations. I'm so grateful for this. It's a gift.

**Letters to the Chronicle**

**FAIR'S FAIR**

In last month's Chronicle article, "A Gift of the Dodds," Maggie Cooley names the awardees of one of the parcels as "Jonathan Beardsley, Danielle Giulian, and the adorable Odin." The other lot went to just plain Cindy Kirk and Charles Grivas. C'mon, Maggie. Can't you see the glaring omission here? Cindy's about as adorable as they come. Please: "Charles Grivas and the also-oh-so-adorable Cindy Kirk" ....Cheee! —Scoville Soulé

[Readers who wondered about the species and size of the adorable Odin will be glad to know that he is a small boy.—the editors]

**A VOTE IS A VOTE, BUT IS IT STILL FUN?**

Politicking has taken some strange twists and turns this year as the internet has finally become the communications tool of choice among the candidates. Led by the young, for whom new media hold no mystery, campaigns maintain excellent websites, blogs, and instant communications through e-mail with distant county commissioners.

Keeping communications moving was a huge logistical challenge in the '60s and early '70s when I worked in a couple of presidential campaigns. Squads of advance men, usually two weeks ahead of time, fanned out to prepare for the candidate's appearances. There was always a "phone company guy" with them to set up the banks of black, rotary telephones the press required. No cell phones in those days; no laptops, video cams, or digital photography.

Politics then was all tied up with personal contact at every level of the campaign. You won if you got the most votes, at least until the 2000 election, but the way you did it was by telephone, visits for hands-on persuasion, and whistle-stopping by train so that the voters got a look at your guy and heard him speak. All this took time—hours, days even—which would seem like decades to the current campaigners. Since the era of Super Tuesday and

multi-state primaries, taking time isn't even possible.

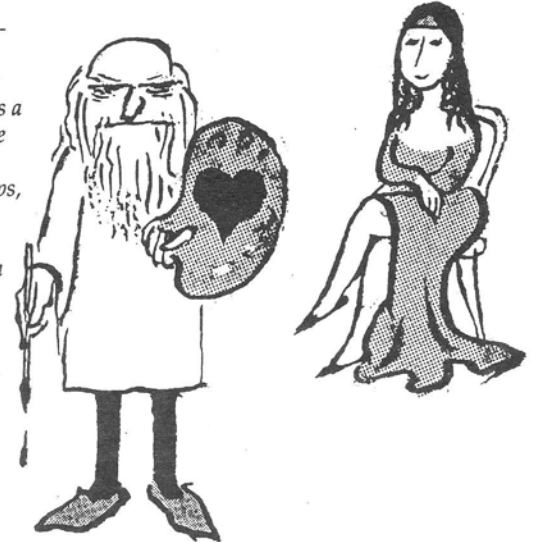
Once upon a time, before voting machines were common, before Super Tuesday and the fax machine, you had to wait until the morning after election day to know how California had gone. In 1948, my father woke me up to keep him company through the night. He was convinced Harry Truman would win and didn't want to be asleep when the news came from the West Coast. So I had my political baptism, in my pink wrapper, six years old, drinking orange juice and waiting for California.

Do kids get to do this any more or has the internet revolution washed the fun and suspense out? —Lisa Lansing Simont

**SORRY, WRONG NUMBER**

The number listed for the Cornwall Child Center in the yellow insert of the January Chronicle is incorrect. If you call that number, you will get the barn at Hautboy Hill Farm. For those searching for the Child Center, the correct number is 672-6989.

—Norma Lake



**Q:** What have been the greatest rewards?

**A:** The greatest reward is my relationship with everyone in Cornwall starting with the students and spreading to people in the community. I'm very happy to know everyone now and run into people in the library or around town. It makes me so happy to see a group of kids waiting for the bus as I drive by, open my window and greet them and have them wave back saying, "Hello Dr. Fitz!"

**Q:** What is your guiding philosophy as an educator and leader?

**A:** Love. That's not in the textbooks but it's true. This includes respect and a certain knowingness. Love is absolutely what motivates me.

**Q:** What is your vision for CCS?

**A:** I want to make the school able to answer as many needs as possible by offering

each student the best education for him personally. Cornwall has a different world view from other places I've been. Lock-step public education is not what suits Cornwall. I am trying to create an educational environment that is best for these kids. I'm only interested in answering the needs of these kids, not in what other towns are doing. The benefit of a small school is that this creativity and thinking "outside the box" is possible. It's not going to happen overnight. I'm exploring how to make this happen. Many things must go on with their education in the traditional sense, but I want to honor other ways of thinking too.

**Q:** How are you finding life in Cornwall?

**A:** I need a place to live. My rental is over June 15 and I really do need to find a home! —Emilie Pryor

## Events & Announcements

**Come Celebrate St. Valentine's Day,** February 14, at 7:30 P.M. at the Cornwall Free Library. See a screwball romantic comedy and eat homemade desserts. The movie—one of the best of its genre—is *My Favorite Wife* with Cary Grant and Irene Dunne. Hosting the evening will be John Miller and Joy Gould Boyum, professor of film studies at New York University. Sponsored by Friends of the Library. Suggested donation: \$7.50.

**Motherhouse** is offering a retreat for mothers and daughters on Saturday, February 7, from 9:45 A.M. to 3:15 P.M. Come make breadsticks, stone soup, and Valentines! For details, call Debra Tyler at 672-0229.

**Grand Opening Party** for the Motherhouse Bookshelf at the Cornwall Free Library, at 10:45 A.M., Friday, February 27. Refreshments served. Visit and borrow from this special collection of books about parenting.

**La Cucina di Cornwall:** Imagine gondolas gliding under the covered *ponte* as you enjoy an Italian feast cooked and served by the CCS eighth grade. The event will benefit the class trip to Washington, D.C., in May. The feasts will be served up at the Wandering Moose on Tuesday, February 17, and Wednesday, February 18. Two seatings each night, at 5:30 and 7 P.M. Adults, \$10; children, \$5; a family of four, \$25. To reserve your plate of spaghetti & meatballs or Chicken Fettuccine Alfredo, call Hannah Colbert at 672-6726. Reservations for either evening may be made by e-mailing ourmaridog@yahoo.com, or calling CCS during school hours at 672-6617.

**Talk on Magellan:** On Saturday, February 21, at 4 P.M. at the Cornwall Free Library, biographer Laurence Bergreen will speak about his new book, *Over the Edge of the World: Magellan's Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe*. Mr. Bergreen actually repeated parts of Magellan's epic adventure and will show slides of this journey. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cornwall Library, this event is free, but donations are gratefully accepted.

## Sweetheart Deal

February has long been a month of romance, but as the song goes, a kiss may be grand but it won't pay the rental. If you are looking to catch our eye, the best way to do it is with a check.

**Art In Cornwall:** At the Cornwall Free Library during the month of February, Wallace Harding will be showing her paintings and drawings, while the glass case will be filled with portrait busts of the presidents made by CCS eighth graders.

At the National Iron Bank, the February artist of the month will be Lynn Fowler, who will be showing paintings in oil of landscapes and flowers.

## Kids At the Library:

- Story Hour resumes on Friday mornings for pre-schoolers at 10 A.M.

- Hot Chocolate Hour will start again on Wednesday, February 11, from 3 to 4 P.M., and will run for six Wednesdays. Open to third and fourth graders, who may take the bus from CCS to the Library; permission slips are available at school. Kids will listen to exciting stories while snacking on cookies and hot chocolate. Limited to ten students. Please sign up at the Library.

- A Valentine card-making workshop will take place at the Library on Saturday, February 7, from 11 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. Lots of glitzy supplies will be provided. Open to all ages (under six with adult supervision).

- Interested in sharing ideas and talking with other kids about the books you're reading? The first meeting of the Junior Book Club will take place Saturday, February 21, from 11 A.M. to noon. Open to kids in grades six and up, the first meeting will choose a book to read and discuss. Multiple copies of the chosen book will be available. Informal discussions will take place every four weeks on Saturday mornings.

All programs are free. Please register for all events by calling the Library at 672-6874.

**Cornwall Democratic Town Committee** will hold a regular meeting on Tuesday, February 17, at 7:30 P.M. in the Library meeting room. A key item on the agenda will be whether the committee should formally endorse one of the Democratic candidates for president. Registered Democrats are invited to attend and to share their thoughts with the committee.

**The Sunday New York Times** will now be available to read at the Cornwall Free Library through the week following publication.

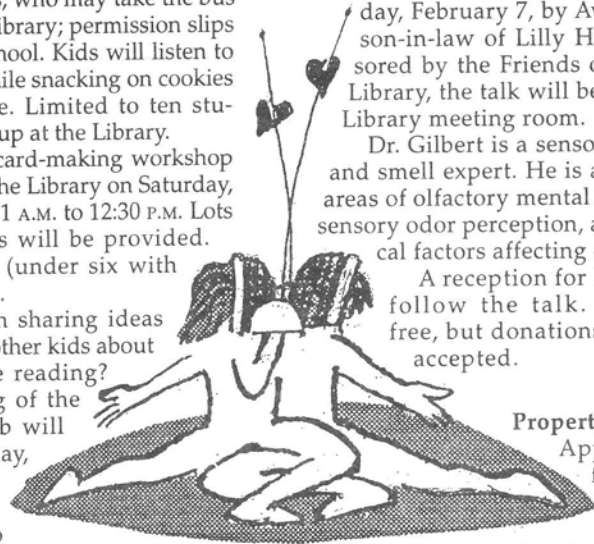
**Cornwall Swimming:** Park and Rec. will sponsor community swimming every Saturday evening in February at the Hotchkiss School from 7 to 8 P.M. There is no charge. Please call Bethany Thompson at 672-6058.

**Game Night:** Park and Rec. will sponsor family game night every Friday in February at the West Cornwall Firehouse at 7 P.M. Pizza and beverages are available for all who come. Bring a board game! All children must be accompanied by a parent.

**Lecture:** "The Sense of Smell: Fact, Fiction and Fantasy" will be the topic on Saturday, February 7, by Avery N. Gilbert, son-in-law of Lilly Hollander. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cornwall Library, the talk will be at 4 P.M. in the Library meeting room.

Dr. Gilbert is a sensory psychologist and smell expert. He is a pioneer in the areas of olfactory mental imagery, multi-sensory odor perception, and psychological factors affecting odor judgment.

A reception for Dr. Gilbert will follow the talk. Admission is free, but donations are gratefully accepted.



**Property Tax Appeals:** Application forms for the Board of Assessment Appeals

hearings (to be held in March) are now available from the town clerk or the Assessor's Office. They must be filed—not just postmarked—at the Town Office by February 19. Applicants will be notified of their hearings by mail or phone. For further information call the town clerk at 672-2709.

## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

### FEBRUARY ISSUE

Marc Simont, Illustrations  
Becky Hurlburt and Scott Cady, Editors  
Doc and Lisa Lansing Simont, Publishers

### MARCH ISSUE

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Ginny and Bob Potter, Publishers

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