



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 8 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 1999



## Ridgway Appeals for Fairness

"It's incomprehensible," Gordon Ridgway told me. "It's irrational." Our first selectman pushed a printed sheet across his desk. "And it's fundamentally unfair."

I looked down at the heading: "Educational Cost Sharing Fiscal Year 1998-99." Ridgway had made a check mark next to Cornwall, with a per student state aid figure of \$46. "Now look at Sharon, nearly three times as much. Look at Litchfield, about ten times. North Canaan, sixty, maybe seventy times." My eye fell on Torrington, which gets \$3,265 per student.

"Sure," Ridgway went on, "some of those towns are 'poorer,' in a sense, than Cornwall. But are they ten times poorer? A hundred times poorer? Here in Cornwall over ninety percent of our educational budget comes from local taxpayers. In the bigger cities it's more like twenty percent. It's the less wealthy people here in town who have to bear the brunt of this crazy state aid formula. Cornwall's poverty rate is greater than the state average, but the formula doesn't seem to take that into account."

The problem is compounded, according to Ridgway, by the fact that Cornwall has the fastest rising school population in Litchfield County, with the "big bulge" now heading into high school in a most expensive way.

Also, Cornwall's aid is now so low that state "aid to education" could double—or triple—with no meaningful effect on town revenues. "It's the formula that's got to be scrapped," Ridgway says.

As chairman of the Northwestern Connecticut Council of Governments, Gordon Ridgway is trying to do just that. At its December meeting, the group drew up a list of four priorities to share with state legislators prior to a January breakfast session. "A new formula should be devised within the next two years," the statement reads, and in the interim, "a \$500 per student minimum grant should be adopted." This request is also endorsed by the Litchfield Hills Council, and thus is backed by virtually every town in the county.

And it does, in fact, seem like a modest demand. The state's big cities would still be getting over \$5,000—and even over \$6,000 for Hartford—per student. "Although these issues lack the cachet of a football stadium," Gordon's statement to the legislators reads, "they are, at least to us, far more important."

—Bob Potter

## Birth of A Skating Rink

With any cooperation from Old Man Winter, the town lot behind the West Cornwall Firehouse should be resounding by now with the crunch of skates on ice and the exclamations

of happy Cornwall kids.

Thanks to an old-fashioned, do-it-yourself volunteer effort, a 90' by 50' rink frame was constructed in November, layered with a high-tech sheet of puncture-resistant plastic and filled with tons of water. The temporary 2" by 8" wooden frame is supported by dozens of stakes (mahogany, chestnut, cherry, and walnut that might otherwise have been destined for Shaker furniture) pounded into the ground by Ian Ingersoll, Jeff Fox, Eric Nelson, and others. Jeff's crew then pitched in for finishing touches. Thanks also are due to Jim Terrall and his transit.

In December, Rick Stone (who had originally leveled the nicely shaded site for skating twenty years ago) brought in heavy equipment to dig trenches for wiring outside lighting and to erect three utility poles—with help from John Hubbard, Michael Gellatly, Connie Hedden, and Howard Stone. Spotlights for night skating should be in place by now.

The approximately \$2,000 in start-up costs for this endeavor were fronted by the organizers; generous contributions from a variety of parents and well wishers have partially offset these expenditures, but further contributions would be welcome. (Write Cornwall Rink, Box 243, West Cornwall, CT 06796.) Others have volunteered snow plowers and

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# JANUARY 1999

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					<b>1</b> NEW YEAR'S DAY Pancake Breakfast 8 A.M.—noon, UCC Parish House Benefit La Casa Project (p.4) National Iron Bank, Art by Laurel Wolfe through January	<b>2</b> Nick Jacobs' Photos at Wish House through February
<b>3</b> Hedgerows Upstairs Gallery, Paintings by Pieter Lefferts through March Opening 4 to 6 P.M.	<b>4</b>  Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>5</b>  Skating Salisbury School Rink 6 to 7 P.M. Inland Wetlands Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall* Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	<b>6</b> Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall Cub Scout Parent Meeting 7 P.M. UCC Day Room	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Game Night 7 to 9 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse (p.4)	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Cornwall Library Art Show, Sculpture by Ken Keskinen P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>12</b> Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Dem. Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall 	<b>13</b> Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall CCS PTA 7 P.M. CCS Library	<b>14</b> Cornwall Housing Corp. 4:30 P.M. Kugeman Village Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>15</b> Deadline for February Chronicle Copy Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library	<b>16</b> Cornwall Assn. 4 P.M. Town Hall
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	<b>19</b>  Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall 	<b>20</b> Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall	<b>21</b> Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Lib. Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib.	<b>22</b> Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library <i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i> , 7:30 P.M. UCC Benefit Jubilee School (p.4)	<b>23</b> <i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i> , 7:30 P.M. UCC Benefit Jubilee School (p.4)
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Office*	<b>26</b>  Skating Salisbury School Rink: Note Time Change to 5-6 P.M. (p.4) Region 1 Bd. of Education 7 P.M. HVRHS Library	<b>27</b> Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5 to 6:15 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	<b>28</b> Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>29</b> Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library Cub Scout Pack 15 Pinewood Derby 7 P.M. CCS	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b>						

\* Check at Town Office

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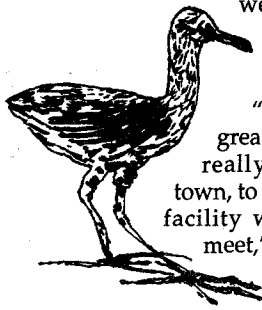
portable hockey goals and, most important, labor to help Skip Kosciusko and several of the above resurface and clear the ice.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway has asked that parents sign waivers of responsibility for their children, and that all skaters wear soft hats or bicycle helmets. Children under 14 are expected to be accompanied by a supervising adult, just as is required at Cream Hill Lake. Users must park to the right of the Firehouse and not interfere with that facility.

Organizers are hoping that, if all goes well, a more permanent facility can be sought for the future.

"This could be so great for our kids, and really everybody in town, to have a fun outdoor facility where people can meet," said one enthusiastic parent.

—David Monagan



### Big Boosts for New Library

Fifty-seven hundred dollars. That was the gratifying box office nut cracked by the Cornwall Library's fund-raising Talent Show staged in the United Church of Christ on November 27. The show, which featured music, juggling, dramatic skits, and audience sing-alongs, packed the balconies as well as the floor of the church.

With this eager crowd on hand, it was absolutely appropriate for Lisa Simont, Library Board President, to announce before the show went on that the state had awarded a \$462,000 grant toward the building of a new library just south of its present location. The money amounts to about a third of the project's total cost.

President Simont gives much of the credit for obtaining the grant to Library Trustee David Grossman, who assembled the grant application. Under a state formula, Cornwall requires 6,000 square feet of library space to meet the needs of its population and accommodate the goals of the board. The application evidently made it clear to the state that Cornwall badly needed to move from its present 850-square-foot main room.

The grant must still get State Bonding Commission approval, which is not assured. Last year the Bonding Commission disapproved the grants for three Connecticut libraries, and no one is sure why. "Politics intrudes on the Bonding Commission's doings," says Simont. She adds, "It's a good thing we have Del Eads on our side," referring to long-time State Senator Adela M. Eads.

The Bonding Commission meets to make its decision in late January. Until then, says Simont, "we'll just have to wait."

—Charles Osborne

### PTA's Computer Club

David Samson started the Cornwall Computer Club because he believes that every-

one, students in particular, ought to have access to computers. "They're the tools of the future," David believes. "If kids can use them on a daily basis, they're more competent. When I was growing up, I played with toy cameras and doctor sets. Now kids play with computers to prepare themselves for the world they'll be living in."

The club started in the summer of 1997, when David and his Lakeville friend Paul DePaolo noticed that people were discarding a lot of computer hardware. Why couldn't those bits and pieces be donated to the PTA (a tax write-off), and then assembled in an educational workshop into a working system for families who could not afford new computers?

From the beginning the group was successful. They received hardware donations that they could utilize not only to build systems, but also to improve the school's computer systems. To date the club has sold two systems to families at minimal cost and contributed \$200 to the PTA general fund.

"I see real growth in the kids' computer abilities," David says. "They have better understanding of how to use programs. Their keyboarding has improved. Best of all, they're no longer intimidated by the tool."

The group now meets twice a month to work on projects from the PTA, the school, and club participants. "My hope," David says, "is that people will not only donate hardware, but also come and join in the club's gatherings. People of all ages and all levels of computer knowledge are encouraged to stop by and play. For anyone who enjoys puttering with computers as a novice looking to learn more, the Cornwall Computer Club is the place to be."

For more information call David Samson at 672-0616.

—The Editors

### The Wave of the Future?

On a recent visit to the Alternative School of HVRHS, which has been meeting since 1995 in the United Church of Christ Parish House basement, I found the students busily planning their Christmas party, which they were to host and cook. Some were phoning prospective guests ("Do you want ham or turkey?"); others were making lists. Their two teachers, Rob Gollow and Susan Torpey, answered questions and offered suggestions ("Don't forget napkins!"). As the students finished their tasks they drifted upstairs, leaving me with Rob and Susan.

Though not lacking in potential, these are kids who for various reasons couldn't function at the high school, and were selected for the Alternative School, now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year. Here, in a small, non-threatening, "family" environment, with the help of their teachers and each other, they are learning how to work through their problems instead of bottling them up, and to develop the self-confidence and social and behavioral skills they need to function in society. Though some drop out, the success rate is high.

Prospective students are evaluated over a two-week trial period. "They have to want to

be here," Rob says. Those accepted spend their sophomore and junior years at the Alternative School, then return to Regional for their senior year. First period (usually science) is at HVRHS, then Rob and Susan bus them to the Parish House. Monday is Community Service Day—they work at places like the Sharon Audubon Center, Harvest Bakery, and Falls Village Day Care. Friday is set aside for outdoor activities like hiking and canoeing. This leaves only three days for academics, but Rob says they can accomplish more in three than the high school can in five. The kids work mainly on their own, though sometimes one will tutor another. They also have cooking (lunch), clean-up, and administrative jobs.

Such a school can only work with skilled, dedicated teachers, and it has them in Rob and Susan. Rob, in his second year at the school, and Susan, who is new this year, both have wide experience in special education (Susan has a degree). "The kids tested me at first," says Susan, "but now they trust me. I'm their friend."

Susan and Rob think alternative education is the wave of the future, as our society produces more and more troubled children.



And while they are grateful to UCC for making the Parish House available, they look forward to having a larger, permanent place of their own some day. They want to expand to 20 or 25 students (currently they are limited by the size of the bus to 14 students, and there is a long waiting list). They would also like to keep the students through their senior year. All this means money, of course, but

as Rob puts it, it's cheaper to nip problems in the bud than deal with more serious ones down the road.

—George Kittle

P.S. The kids turned out a terrific dinner; I had both ham and turkey, and great apple pie.

### Good-bye to a Friend

Charles Emmons

### Congratulations

John W. Budge to Kimberly S. Matthews

Richard A. Kling to Maria Victoria

### Land Transfers

Peter K. Allen to Shawn A. and Denise L. Classey, house and 10.6 acres at 83 Allyn Road for \$160,000.

Wilshire Funding Corp. to Linda Scofield, 11.8 acres on Great Hollow Road for \$28,000.

John F. Ashton to State of Connecticut, 284.2 acres and 75.1 acres on Flat Rocks Road and Crooked Esses Road for \$1,075,000.

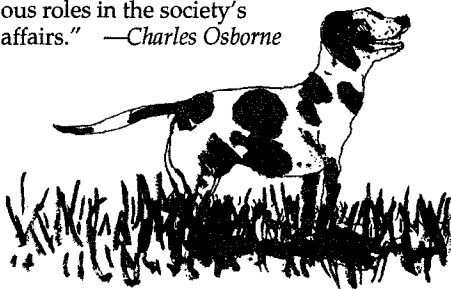
## Turning a Historic New Leaf

The Cornwall Historical Society has revised its original 1964 charter so that its members are now in charge for the first time. Until now, a self-perpetuating group of "corporators" has controlled the society's bylaws and chosen its directors.

The new charter, and new bylaws open to amendment by the membership, call for a May annual meeting of the members to elect three directors to serve three-year terms on a nine-member board, and to transact other business. At the annual meeting, the board will continue to elect the society's officers.

In keeping with the society's annual cycle of events, copies of the new charter and bylaws will be sent next spring to all members, along with the call for the first annual membership meeting. Copies of the charter and bylaws are also available on request to P. O. Box 115, Cornwall, CT 06753.

Society President Michael Gannett states: "I and others who worked on this transition are hopeful that the members and friends of the society will welcome these changes and that they will wish to take advantage of the greatly enlarged opportunity to play vigorous roles in the society's affairs." —Charles Osborne



## Hello Broadway

The children at CCS may be wise to the art of country living, but when it comes to theatre, Cornwall is not exactly saturated with dramatic offerings. Last spring, the CHOICES after-school enrichment program decided to remedy that situation by making an effort to bring theatre experiences to CCS. This fall, CHOICES sponsored an after-school acting class led by Leslie Elias, of the Grumbling Gryphons. Field trips to a professional dance company production and to an off-Broadway play are being considered.

By far the most ambitious event was a trip to a Broadway matinee on December 9. The show was a mime and music revue called *Fool Moon*, created by Bill Irwin and David Shiner, who also star in the show. The current production of *Fool Moon*, its third since 1993, was produced by Jim Freyberg, the parent of a seventh grader at CCS. It is a mesmerizing two-hour foray into a world of wordless antics and skits with two very witty and expressive clowns.

Irwin and Shiner were accompanied by a back-up band, the Red Clay Ramblers. Endlessly versatile with both instruments and music, they were also engaged in some of the comedic routines. The audience too was called upon to perform. Members of the audience were selected by the two actors and

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# Letters to the Chronicle



## JUGGLERS IN CATHEDRALS

*The boisterous standing-room-only enthusiasm that greeted the Talent Show at UCC on November 27 was in contrast to the attentive, but usually subdued, response of Sunday morning parishioners—and yet there were links.*

*Church and entertainment are old partners. We see them together in our Cornwall Christmas pageant. And I've seen whirling dervishes at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York, and a rock mass, the Misa Yeh Yeh, in Madrid. During medieval times, as the only show in town, the church presented passion plays, troubadours, acrobats, and jugglers—not unlike our own Talent Show flame-swallowers, readers, singers, whistlers, and actors. Two thousand years ago, before there were churches, Jesus performed in the open country, changing water into wine, multiplying fishes and loaves, walking on water.*

*Should we worry about the future existence of the church and entertainment? Looking into the years ahead the picture gets fuzzy. In the worst possible scenario, church, entertainment, and everything else has melted into one big ball of radioactive glass. But in the best, we will still be moved by the angelic singing of the likes of Maja and Christine Grey.*

—Marc Simont

## GYM COMMITTEE DISAPPOINTED

*On behalf of the gymnasium committee, I would like to thank all those who responded to our survey. I would also like to update the survey numbers. The final tally: 265 respondents of which 223 believe a new facility is needed, and 42 of whom do not; 216 would support an initiative to build a new facility.*

*It is what has transpired since the committee reported results to the Board of Education that is discouraging. The BOE requested the survey, which was financed and carried out by the gym committee. The day they received the committee's report, the BOE voted to send representatives to the selectman's advisory committee. Why? I should think that the BOE would take the initiative in this process, for it is a school issue.*

*In the December Chronicle Mr. Ridgway cited increased enrollment as his motivation to form a committee "in the next month or two...of townspeople with no particular personal agendas...Nothing is in crisis now." The formation of this committee may be a positive step, but allow me two quick points: the increased enrollment at CCS only exacerbates that inadequacy of the present facility; increased enrollment did not create the problem. The current facility falls significantly short of meeting the minimum standard whether there are 40 children enrolled or 400. Second: trying to locate people without an agenda is akin to finding the proverbial needle in the haystack. If the proposed committee is going*

*to be balanced, it must reflect the efforts of the gymnasium committee and the results of the survey alluded to above. There should be several gymnasium committee representatives on this new committee.*

*There may not be anything in crisis right now in terms of traditional classroom space. If you're between the ages of 5 and 14, however, and want a decent place to practice, perform, and compete, there has been an ongoing crisis at the school for many years. Please watch the developments carefully; this issue concerns us all.*

—Brian Kavanagh

PTA Gymnasium Committee Chair

## WHAT A SHOW!

*Nobody asked me to write this letter. But someone must take on the self-appointed task of speaking for the happy throng who saw the Library benefit Talent Show on November 27.*

*The Pats may or may not come to Hartford. A Home Depot may or may not come to Torrington. But The Greatest Show on Earth HAS come to Cornwall. All of the 350 on hand would have their own—and different—favorite numbers. Mine, perhaps, was the Northwest Passage singing "Mr. Santa" (a.k.a. "Mr. Sandman"). My greatest surprise was Leslie Elias whistling. My loudest laughs came with Victoria Labalme's young actress auditioning for a TV commercial. But greater than any single performance was the effect of the whole: astonishing variety and change of pace with never, never a letdown.*

*Most of all, thanks should go to Marie Prentice, the impish impresario who dreamed up the show, corralled the participants, and then directed and otherwise pushed the pieces into their final form. She and her helpers cannot be overpraised for the event, which raised over \$5,000 for our Library-in-Transition.*

*If this is an overly flowery letter, it is meant to be so. Bouquets to all from an enchanted audience.*

—Bob Potter

## UCC WANTS SUGGESTIONS

*The United Church of Christ is looking toward future community needs. Our buildings (North Cornwall Meetinghouse, Parish House, Village Meetinghouse) are used not only by the church but also by others—Cub Scouts, 4-H, quilters, benefits, Food Co-op, youth groups, public lectures, bridge groups, meditation, etc. For over a year, a committee has been studying the changing and projected uses of these buildings. We have identified maintenance and space needs, headed by accessibility for the handicapped. We would welcome community input: What do you think is lacking or could be improved? Please direct comments or suggestions to me at 672-6637, or send them to Capital Projects Committee, UCC, Cornwall, CT 06753.*

—Paul Baren

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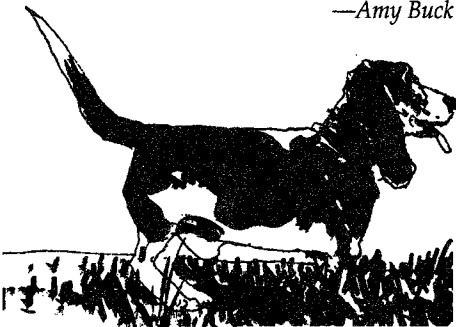
became the butt of mimicry or were brought up on stage to assume various roles.

Thanks to Jim Freyberg, the CCS students remained after the show for an informal question-and-answer period with the cast. We gathered up in front of the stage and it was a real thrill to see the actors and musicians at ease, sitting in their jeans and sweatshirts without makeup, *talking*. The kids were fascinated by some of the special effects in the show, which we learned are made possible by the work of many unseen stagehands. One student asked, "How do you pick out someone to come up on stage?" Some of the audience recruits seemed so comfortable on stage that the kids were sure they were *planted* actors. Not so, Irwin replied. "You just learn to read people as you walk the aisles, and if they really look nervous, you don't pick them."

I was one of the lucky parents who accompanied the 91 upper graders who made the trip. Unlike other class trips I've been on, we rode in style—in comfortable, smooth-riding coach buses. The buses even had video monitors overhead. So we were able to watch movies during the ride. (*Star Wars* down and *Indiana Jones* back). This made for a very quiet, orderly journey. The parents and teachers marveled at how well behaved the students were. And the students were unanimous in pronouncing the show awesome.

This luxurious and special trip was made possible through the generosity of several groups and individuals. Jim Freyberg made available discounted tickets. Extras for Kids, the PTA, CHOICES, CCS, and individual donors all contributed money to make up the difference between the actual cost and each student's fee of \$10.

—Amy Buck



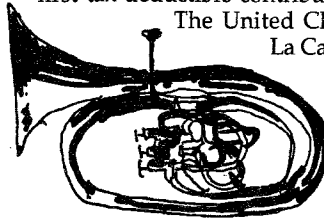
## Predictions

Last January we predicted a year-end Dow of 9,000 and the previous year we foresaw the bugless summer. Are we just lucky or what? For 1999, we see, um, a great blizzard in February. Exact date will be provided to all contributors during the next month. Watch the skies but have a happy New Year!

## Events & Announcements

**New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast:** Gourmet buttermilk pancakes, dripping with Cornwall's own pure maple syrup, will be served on January 1 from 8 A.M. to noon at the Parish House of the United Church of Christ. You don't like pancakes? That's too bad—but come anyway. Talented chefs will be able to take care of your appetite in a creative way.

Proceeds from voluntary donations for this meal will benefit the La Casa Project—volunteers building homes for very poor families in northern Mexico. This year the hope is to build a "Cornwall House" (one built entirely by Cornwall people). The cost of materials for one house is \$3,500. Volunteers pay for their own transportation and meals. If you would like to join the group leaving for Mexico in June, please speak to Jim Whiteside, Dusty Sandmeyer, or Jerry Blakey, all of whom have been participants in previous years. Or just consider making your first tax-deductible contribution for 1999 to The United Church of Christ La Casa Project.



**Cornwallians to Teach:** The winter / spring program of the Taconic Learning

Center, beginning the third week in January, and ending in late April, will include three courses taught by Cornwallians. They are: Elementary German (John Leich), Today's Genetics (Phyllis Wojan), and Writers Workshop (Ken Keskinen). In addition, John Zinsser will contribute a segment to a course of opera. Other courses to be offered are: Cosmology-Astronomy-Planetology; Restoration and Early Eighteenth Century Poetry; Shakespeare, the Classical Tradition; and Our Environment. For information call 435-2922.

**Recycling Opportunity:** All that holiday wrapping paper can be put in the paper bin at the transfer station (i.e. the dump) *as long as it's flattened*.

**Time Change for Ice Skaters:** Due to a previous arrangement that must be honored, Cornwall skaters have been asked to use the rink at the Salisbury School an hour earlier, from 5 to 6 P.M., on the following Tuesday evenings—January 26, February 2 and 9. Suggested donation, \$2 per person; family, \$5 maximum. Don't forget to wear a soft hat.

**Game Night** at the West Cornwall Firehouse, sponsored by Park & Rec., will be on Friday, January 8, from 7 to 9 P.M. Bring your own games or use ours. Refreshments. Call Skip Kosciusko (672-3169) if weather threatens.



**Amahl and the Night Visitors** will be performed by a local cast on Friday, January 22, and Saturday, January 23, at 7:30 P.M. at the United Church of Christ. The event will feature Miles Merwin and Eliot Wilson as Gian-Carlo Menotti's Amahl, along with soloists Anne Chamberlain, Dusty Sandmeyer, Bill Lauf, Doug Carlson, and Pieter Riley, and a chorus of children and adults. Tim Prentice is designing the set and Ellen Moon the costumes. The performance will benefit the Jubilee School's visit to Cornwall in June.

Reservations may be made by sending a tax-deductible check to *The UCC-Jubilee School* and mailing it to "Amahl," UCC, Box 35, Cornwall, CT 06753. Include your name, number of persons, and date of performance. The suggested donation is \$12 for adults, \$6 for children under age 12. For information call Peg Keskinen (672-6486) or the church office (672-6840).

**Art in Cornwall:** At the Cornwall Library, the exhibit of works in handmade paper continues through January 9. Beginning January 11, the Library will show the multifarious sculptural works of Ken Keskinen. At the National Iron Bank, January's artist will be Laurel Wolfe. At Hedgerows Upstairs Gallery, there will be an opening on January 3 from 4 to 6 P.M. of a show of paintings by Pieter Lefferts. This exhibit will continue through March. An exhibit at the Wish House of photographs by Nick Jacobs will run through February.

## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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