

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 14 : NUMBER 4 MAY 2004



Something Special

A new Little League diamond, much-needed parking, a picnic area and a cinder walking track are in the works for part of the eight acres purchased by the Town east of Foote Field and the existing driveway off Route 4. The possibility for such improvements came in the form of a letter from the State Office of Policy and Management allocating a Small Town Economic Assistance Program Grant of \$250,000 for funding the parking and recreation project. The parking area will accommodate about 40 cars and include a turnaround for buses.

Gordon Ridgway said the total cost of the work will have to await estimates by engineers, but he felt the big state grant should fund the project. Some day soon, he said, the new recreational area should be a "special place in the community." —John Miller

Teeth for Town Plan

One of the top priorities in Cornwall's Town Plan of Conservation and Development is to preserve Cornwall's natural environment and rural landscape. The Planning and Zoning Commission recently adopted two regulatory tools to help achieve this goal. A "buildable area" zoning regulation was added to make sure that future development does not occur on land that is too wet, too steep, or would result in excessive reshaping

of the natural landscape. In addition to protecting Cornwall's scenic landscape, this regulation also serves to protect water quality and the natural environment.

The commission also recently adopted a "fee in lieu of open space" regulation to enhance opportunities for protecting open space and natural areas with future subdivision activity in town. Now, with future subdivisions, P&Z can either require the permanent protection of up to 15 percent of the subdivided land, or request payment by the applicant into a designated open space fund so that other land in town can be purchased as open space.

In pursuing implementation of the town plan, the commission has also established special study committees to: 1) enhance pedestrian safety and traffic calming in Cornwall Bridge, 2) simplify the permit requirements for certain business uses in the town business zones, 3) research the feasibility of a transfer-of-development-rights program, and, 4) update parking requirements.

This year the commission will also be initiating the preparation of a series of large-scale computerized maps that the commission and town residents can use to better document and understand important natural resources, as well as cultural resources such as historic structures and cemeteries.

The commission views this as a critical first step to updating the town plan in the coming years.

—Rick Lynn

After School Program—Yes!

There will be an after school program (henceforth to be known as the "Extended Day Learning Program") when CCS reopens in late August. This from Park & Rec. director Bethany Thompson, who will be in charge.

The program was made possible by a \$15,000 REAP (Rural Education Achievement Program) grant secured by Principal Kathleen Fitzgibbons. Funds from the grant will serve as seed money, and fees are expected to make the program self-sustaining and not affect the already tight town budget.

—John Miller

The Country Wife

Dorothy Van Doren's *The Country Wife* was first published in 1950. It is the first in a trilogy of breezy, often touching, memoirs that Van Doren wrote about her life in Cornwall and New York's Greenwich Village, which include *The Professor and I*, and *Men, Women and Cats* (the last title of which echoes James Thurber's *Men, Women and Dogs*). All of these once-popular books are now out of print, but they can still be found with a little effort at local bookdealers or on eBay. Each of the

(continued on page 2)

MAY 2004

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Weekly Events: Tuesdays: Blue Mountain Satsang , 6:30 P.M., UCC Day Room; Jam Session , 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Wednesdays: Play Group , 10 A.M., Playscape/UCC Parish House; Stretch Class , 5:30 P.M., Town Hall Thursdays: Meditation for Mothers , 1:15 P.M., UCC Day Room Fridays: Preschool-K Story Hour , 10 A.M. Library Saturdays: Chess Club , 9:30 A.M. Library						1 Annual Cornwall Child Center Auction 3-6 P.M. Mohawk Ski Lodge†
2	3 Park & Rec. 7 P.M. W. C. Firehouse Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	4 5 Region One Budget Referendum Noon-8 P.M., Town Hall Inland Wetlands* 7:30 P.M. Town Hall		6	7 Civil Rights Safe Zone Meeting 7:30 P.M. Town Hall†	8 Spring Bird Walk 7:15-9:30 A.M.† Extras for Kids Bake Sale 7:30 A.M. Baird's & W.C. Market† American Girls Club 11:30 A.M. Library UCC Progressive Dinner & Music
9 MOTHER'S DAY	10 Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Parish House Scholastic Book Fair CCS Library†	11 12 P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library		13	14	15 ARMED FORCES DAY Deadline: June Chronicle Copy Cornwall Assoc. 9 A.M. UCC Day Room Author/Illustrator Talk 11 A.M. Library† Kids' Pajama Party Reading 4 P.M. Library†
16 Separation of Church & State UCC 11:30 A.M.†	17 Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Library	18	19 20 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall Bd. of Ed. 5:30 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	21 Annual Budget Town Meeting 7:30 P.M. Town Hall† Cornwall Historical Society Annual Meeting 4 P.M. Library		22 Thomas the Tank Club 11 A.M. Library Hazardous Waste Collection†
23 Separation of Church & State UCC 11:30 A.M.†	24 CCS Walk-A-Thon (p.2) ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	25 Acting Class Show 6 P.M. Town Hall†	26 Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	27 28 VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse		29
30	31 MEMORIAL DAY †					

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

† Details in Events and Announcements ◀◀◀ **Note the change!**

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallct.org

(continued from page 1)

relatively short chapters in *The Country Wife*—lovingly illustrated by Mimi Korach—is a little morality tale on the happy perils of life in the country and city. They are affectionate, wry tributes to the “double-life” many weekenders experience.

Van Doren is both the voice-of-reason and the survivor-who-lived-to-tell-the-tale. Her charming wistfulness is coupled with high anxiety, especially when she relates the first night she spent alone in her old house in Cornwall during a howling windstorm; and then when she grappled with a panicked heifer loose on her lawn from a neighboring farm.



The book jacket is distinctive for its background rendering of wooden clapboards, suggesting the side of an antique house. This is fitting because so much of the world Dorothy Van Doren loved was centered around the 18th century farmhouse she and her poet/husband Mark Van Doren—referred to as simply “the Professor”—bought in Cornwall Hollow in 1923. In a memorable chapter, “Don’t Wait to Buy a House,” Dorothy recounts Mark’s immediate attachment to his new Eden, “As for the Professor, he was simply in love, and with a man in love, there is no arguing.”

Dorothy was a distinguished novelist and critic for *The Nation*, and she shared with her husband a romantic, literary vision of the pastoral life, of which Cornwall provided the perfect personification. This is not to say, however, that either was inept at adapting to the difficult—often harsh—realities such a life presents (Mark was actually born on a farm in the Midwest). Life in Cornwall in the early ‘20s was more rustic than it is today. There were no four-wheel drives (it took the Van Dorens five hours to come up from the city in their Model T); few, if any, roads were paved; and there was no Stop & Shop 20 minutes away. Mark and Dorothy and their two sons (always referred to as “the boys”) would never be mistaken for real farmers (Dorothy describes Mark as being a “late riser”), but they rejoiced in imagining they were. There was something of the pioneer in all of them, and this is what makes the book so engaging. They learn to tap syrup from their long row of ancient maples; they chop their own Christmas tree from their hemlock forest; and they take on acres of raking in “The Ordeal of the Leaves.”

Though the reminiscences in the book evoke a certain nostalgia, they are not purely sentimental. Invariably, when certain days seem to begin with plenty of sunshine and rosy promise, things often turn for the worse—and the stubborn, sometimes impulsive, professor is likely in the middle of it. In one instance, he decides to build bookcases

himself and almost takes the house down with them. “We have few hot days in June in our part of Connecticut,” writes an exasperated Dorothy, “but let the Professor begin to build a set of shelves in one of the upstairs rooms under the eaves and the temperature rises promptly to eighty-five and does not budge till sundown.”

Mention is made of a lively social life where notable writers and artists were frequent guests, but these friends are referred to often only by first names. “Joe” is the famed naturalist and critic Joseph Wood Krutch, and “Jim and Helen” are the Thurbers. This casual style creates an intimacy for the reader, as if he or she is part of a running conversation.

For many years after this memoir was published, Dorothy Van Doren wrote a column for *The Lakeville Journal* also called *The Country Wife*. When she stopped writing for the paper, she continued to tell stories about her beloved Cornwall till she was almost 100. I should know. As her grandson, I was the lucky recipient of many of these endearing recollections.

—Adam Van Doren

[This is one of a series of essays on books about Cornwall.]

CCS Walk-A-Thon

Imagine a community in which eighth grade parents at CCS didn’t have to be in a year-long fund-raising mode to pay for the annual class trip. What if they could start raising money when their children were in kindergarten? What if classes had big fat bank accounts by the time the students reached the eighth grade?

You think maybe I’m whistling Dixie but I’m not. Listen up. CCS is gearing up for what organizers hope will be an annual walk-a-thon. Students in all grades will participate and raise pledges in Cornwall. Money raised will be split 50-50 between each class’s bank account and a tax-deductible cause. The cause this year will be the Rett Syndrome Association, in honor of Elizabeth Watts, who is graduating this year. (Rett Syndrome is a degenerative neurological disorder.)

The walk-a-thon, which was the idea of CCS parent Bente Busby, will take place after lunch (about 12:30 P.M.) on Monday, May 24, with the entire school participating. Students will be bussed to the intersection of Cream Hill and Cogswell Roads and will walk designated routes depending on their class. Little kids will walk a mile, medium sizes 2.5 miles, and the big kids 4.5 miles. Members of the community, like you and me, can join the fun if we’re up to it.

Back to Bente Busby. Why and how did she come up with the idea? “If you’ve got two or three or more kids in school, it takes a lot of bake sales and other things to come up with enough money to send the eighth graders on their class trip every year. This way money will be put aside starting the first year. Fewer cookies. Fewer bake sales. Time for other things when you become an eighth grade parent. And the kids learn about good causes.”

—John Miller

Welcome

Patrick Michael to
Ann Russ Robinson and Michael Robinson

Good-bye to Friends

Margery W. Osuch
Mark Paul

Land Transfers

James J. Vanasse, John P. Vanasse, Ophelia L. Vanasse to Paul Lincoln Cornell, Jr., Tr., 34.4 acres on Ballyhack Road for \$170,000. [Listed incorrectly in April.]

Bernice H. Merz to Bonney Brook, LLC, .78 acres on Kent Road for \$19,000.

Mr. Madwom to William C. Gawel, Jr., 5.28 acres on Burlwood Lane for \$60,000.

John Ivan and Catherine Guilsher to Elisabeth A. Mason and Paul H. Cohen, house and 6.5 acres at 53 Cream Hill Road for \$395,000.

Robert C. Beetham to Gerard and Robin Mollica, house and 4.9 acres at 100 Kent Road for \$335,000.

Thomas M. and Linda M. Cangiano to S. David Moche and Nancy Wolfson-Moche, house and 8.944 acres at 191 Great Hill Road for \$580,000.

Judith Seaton Gates to Brian M. Mollica, house and land at 179 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike for \$185,000.

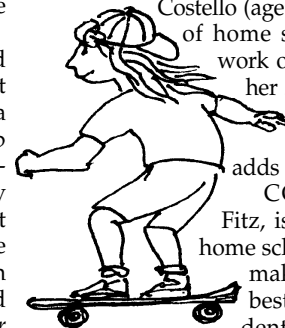
Roger Jackson to Mark J. and Nancy A. Hamilton, house and 1.254 acres at 364 Kent Road for \$375,000.

Donald C. and Catherine Madigan to Michael L. and Carol Trevas Fleisher, buildings and 10.849 acres at 24 Flat Rocks Road for \$675,000.

Home Schooling in Cornwall

Home schooling is a growing preference for Cornwall parents. The Connecticut constitution states that parents are responsible for educating their children or seeing that they are educated. I have heard of at least eight home-schooling families in Cornwall, though there are probably more. I interviewed four Cornwall home schoolers who are around my own age (14) and their parents.

I learned that there are as many ways of home schooling as there are home schoolers. For instance, Silvia LaPorta (age 13, seventh year of home schooling) uses a curriculum from the Maryland-based Calvert School, complete with tests and assignments. Arnon Fischer (age nine, second year of home schooling) is taught by his mother, Deirdre. He studies math, and does a self-chosen unit project, in science or history, that develops his independent reading and writing skills. Margaret Tyler (age almost nine, home schooled all her life) learns from the multitude of crafts and chores that she and her family do. She doesn’t follow any curriculum or pattern of schoolwork, but concentrates by doing what interests her. Paris Costello (age almost 13, half a year of home schooling) bases her work on the curriculum that her seventh grade class at CCS uses, but goes more in-depth and adds other units.



CCS’s principal, Dr. Fitz, is very positive about home schooling, and wants to make the experience the best possible for the students. She makes all the

PTA programs and field trips available, and offers tutoring with the CCS teachers after school. She also investigated if parents should register with the Board of Education. (Registering a home schooled child is voluntary; all a parent is required to do is file a "letter of intent" stating that he/she is educating his/her child at home.)

Hardly any of the students that I interviewed could think of anything they didn't like about home schooling. They all liked being able to work at their own pace and having more control over what they do. Paris finishes her work early in the day and can do other things like learn from the Assignment Discovery Channel, which is about history, and work with more in-depth learning software. She plays the flute and likes soccer. Margaret enjoys being around the animals at Local Farm, helping her dad build things, and doing many crafts such as felting and candle making. Every day is new and different. Silvia starts working at 8:30 A.M. and finishes around 1:30 P.M., and after that she likes training her dogs in agility; sports, pottery, and working at the Little Guild of St. Francis. Arnon spends the day doing his work, and he is also involved with Berkshire United soccer and the Cub Scouts. He likes sports, anything to do with history, and he is working on a spy story.

I asked both the parents and the kids what they would like to tell people about home schooling. Margaret and her mother Debra said: "It's fun and I like to do it!" Silvia would like to debunk two myths: Home schoolers have no friends and are on permanent vacation. Silvia hardly ever takes a vacation from her work and has many friends, some of whom are area home schoolers. Her mother Bianca said, "Home schooling has allowed our children time to develop and pursue their own interests." Paris said, "You learn faster and everyone should do it." Arnon and his mother Deirdre think that home schooling is the right thing for Arnon. Deirdre said: "I'm a gardener. I'm giving my kids food, water, and plenty of light." —Hannah Colbert

[This is the first of two articles.]

The Mohawk Season

The sign on the door of the ski lodge said "Closed for the season. See you in November." Inside there was evidence that carpenters were making some new tables as I made my way for an appointment with Carol Lugar, who runs the Mohawk Ski Area. I was met at her office by a suspicious Saint Bernard named Mauja, which, I was told, means "storm" in the Inuit language. Mauja settled down by a picture window overlooking the empty parking lot as Carol was saying that Mohawk's 57th season had been "a good one in spite of some unexpected expenses."

"Such as?" I asked.

"Such as," she said, "the cost of liability went up 30 percent. Our insurance bill was \$400,000." (In spite of my somewhat limited mathematical aptitude, I figured out that it would take well over 13,000 lift tickets—at, say \$30-a-shot—to come up with that much

Letters to the Chronicle

(Re: last month's article by Earl Brecher which praised the writer for saving Cornwall a million dollars)

"HAPPY IS GOOD"

Thanks, I guess... But you do know that lots of people were involved besides me. Whatever. The addition to CCS is growing like Topsy, so we can all be happy or at least reasonably so. That condition is a good thing and, I for one, will be glad if it lasts for a long time.

—Biffie Dahl Estabrook

STUNNED!

I was stunned to read in April's Chronicle Earl Brecher's praise of Ms. Estabrook and her role in the school building fiasco. Certainly she helped engineer significant change, but not for good. And certainly not for a savings of a million dollars.

Imagine, Earl, you go to the store to buy something and I go and make exactly the same purchase. If I pay less than you did, I have saved money. When Cornwall abandoned the first plan to adopt a second, there were no savings because there was no attempt to purchase the second time what had been voted in the first referendum. Consider these reductions: under the second plan there is a substantial reduction in the amount of new construction, resulting in less instructional space for fine arts as well as considerably less space in the gymnasium and kitchen facilities. The current plan is to lay the gym floor with a lower grade wood, make it two feet short of a standard middle school basketball court, and to side the exterior with a cheaper material that does not match the existing building. Add to these examples the road not moved. Deduct roughly a half million dollars spent under the first referendum then lost as a result of the second. Furthermore, in the last 15 years our school has twice undergone major renovations but in neither plan has there been a provision for a cafeteria.

Now Earl, where is the purported \$1 million savings? Clearly the purchase planned in the first referendum is not the one being made in the second; they are very different. Yet as different as they are, there is little difference in the taxpayers' burden. Unfortunately, Ms. Estabrook's obfuscation resulted in a costly two year delay. Kudos for these Ophidian maneuvers, Earl? I think not.

—Brian Kavanagh

SAVINGS? AT WHOSE EXPENSE?

As a parent to three students at CCS, I can't help commenting on Earl Brecher's "Recollections



of a Selectman" in the April Chronicle. At one point Earl cheers the supposed million dollar savings resulting from the changes made to the initial school construction project. My response to that is that some money isn't worth saving! The CCS campus has a road running right through the middle of it. We had an opportunity and a plan that would have corrected this situation. Instead the building committee was directed to "save some money" and so, rather than moving the road, we wound up with all the parking and drop off being moved across the street from the school and thus significantly increasing the foot traffic crossing the road. Hopefully tragedy will never strike, but if it does, I doubt that many will be looking back so fondly at the money saved. Lastly, let us thank those truly deserving of praise, the members of the building committee for all their selfless efforts on the town's behalf throughout this entire process.

—Peter Busby

NEED HELP?

Did you know that half of the new "bump" on the backside of the Town Office building is the new Social Services Office? It's a lovely little place where the Cornwall Cupboard Food Pantry is housed. Those in need of food and grocery items do not need an appointment and are welcome to "shop" anytime the offices are open, Monday through Thursday, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.

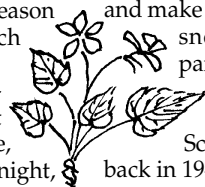
I'm in the office, usually on Mondays, to assist folks of all ages who are in need of support services. Are you a parent with kids driving you crazy? I have parenting resources to help! Need help paying for the rent or heating fuel? Are you a senior struggling with the cost of prescription medications? Do you need help with chores that have become too difficult for you to manage alone? I have resources that may be able to help. Did you know there is a program that pays the Medicare Part B premium for people with low fixed incomes? It could mean an extra \$60.60 in your pocket each month! Does the house need some fixing-up? You may qualify for help! Transportation a problem? We have a Rural Transit bus with door-to-door service if you give them 24 hours notice! These are a few of the many resources available, so stop by and visit, or call me at 672-2603.

—Jill Gibbons

Cornwall Social Services

bread. Ouch!) Total attendance for the season and make all that snow. There was still much snow visible in mid-April when I paid my visit and it can stick to the

The other big increase was in electricity. In the month of January alone it cost Mohawk \$70,000 to heat the lodge, trails well into May. Carol Lugar is the daughter of the late Walter Schoenknecht, who started Mohawk back in 1947 and who (continued on page 4)



(continued from page 3)

pioneered the process of snow-making.

So it was a good winter for Mohawk in spite of the extreme and prolonged cold. Business was particularly good over the Christmas holiday and during February. And over the next six months the staff will be working hard in this labor-intensive business getting Mohawk ready for the next season.

—John Miller



Events & Announcements

Town Meeting on Budget: On May 21 at 7:30 P.M. at Town Hall the annual town meeting will be held to vote on the fiscal year 2005 budget.

Memorial Day Observances will be held on May 31. A service in the North Cornwall Cemetery will begin at 9 A.M.; all are welcome to bring flowers. The Seaman's service will be held at 10 A.M. at the Covered Bridge. The Memorial Day Parade and ceremonies will start at 11 A.M. Marchers should be at Hubbard Field at 10:30 A.M. The UCC and Child Center will hold their annual carnival on the church grounds following the ceremonies.

Auction Time! The Cornwall Child Center is holding its 13th annual auction at Mohawk on Saturday, May 1. This year's auction will have its usual wide array of offerings from European vacation homes to tickets for theater and music events to gift certificates for restaurants and salons to locally grown produce and meat, handcrafted gifts and original artwork. The silent auction will begin at 3 P.M., and the \$10.00 admission includes a beer and wine reception, hors d'oeuvres, and live music. The live auction gets underway at 5 P.M. A catalogue of items is available at www.cornwallct.org. For more information call Emilie Pryor at 672-4226 or Jean Vitalis at 672-6880.

But Seriously, Folks

Our treasurer asks us to remind you again that the *Chronicle* has no endowment, receives no grants from the Town or anyone else and does not stockpile funds. So we need your continued response to the appeals in this space to meet our modest but ongoing expenses. Please send in a small donation if you have not done so recently.

Mothers' Day Bake Sale: Extras for Kids will hold its annual bake sale at both Baird's and the West Cornwall Market on Saturday, May 8, beginning at 7:30 A.M. Extras for Kids is a not-for-profit organization helping to enrich the children of Cornwall through curricular and extra-curricular programs.

The Sixth Annual Spring Bird Walk, sponsored by Park and Rec., will take place on Saturday May 8, from 7:15 to 9:30 A.M. and will again be led by Art Gingert, our resident naturalist and photographer. Bring binoculars and scope/tripod if you have them, and wear waterproof boots. We plan to meet at the intersection of Rattlesnake and Cream Hill Roads and then do a short carpool up to Rexford Road, before enjoying a "bird hike" downhill through the meadows and woodlands of Hedgerows Farm. No rain date. For details and to reserve a place, call Carla Bigelow at 672-0283.

The Scholastic Book Fair will be held at the CCS library May 10 to 19, from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. daily. Profits from the annual affair are used by the PTA for various educational programs and playground equipment. This year's book fair will feature a "Buy a Book to Donate to the Cornwall Free Library" option.

The Child Center summer camp program for ages three to six will take place July 5 to 29, Mondays through Thursdays, 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. Any questions, call Pam Brehm at 672-6989.

Civil Rights Safe Zone: There will be a meeting at Town Hall on Friday, May 7, at 7:30 P.M. to discuss the issue of civil rights and to whom we will send the petition recently signed by over 100 people. Questions? Call the Zinssers at 672-6400.

Hazardous Waste Collection Day is on Saturday, May 22. Further information and permits may be obtained at the Selectmen's Office (672-4959) through May 20. The transfer station is now accepting cell phones and ink cartridges for disposal.

The Acting Class sponsored by Park and Recreation will hold its show on Tuesday, May 25, at 6 P.M. at Town Hall.



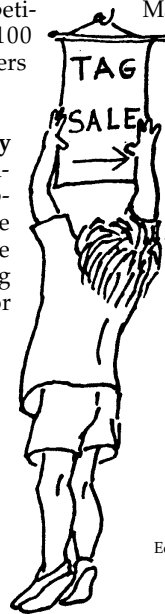
Children's Picture Book author and illustrator Susanna Gretz (daughter of Helen Tennant) will read from and talk about her books at the Cornwall Library on Saturday, May 15, at 11 A.M. Susanna, a resident of London, England, is the creator of more than 30 books for children. *It's Your Turn*, Roger won the 1985 British Smarties award, similar to our Caldecott and Newbery awards. Ages four and up.

Library Pajama Party: Kids of all ages are invited to a pajama party on May 15 at 4 P.M. to hear a reading by Cornwall author Sally Cook of her book, *Good Night Pillow Fight*, illustrated by Laura Cornell. Sally and Laura will also present a slideshow *The Making of a Picture Book*. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Talks on Separation of Church and State will be held at the UCC on May 16 and 23 at 11:30 A.M. William Sloane Coffin (on video) and Gordon Bates, UCC Associate Conference Minister for Justice and Witness, will be the speakers.

Art In Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Sari Goodfriend's show of photography remains on view through May 8. Beginning May 10, the Library will be filled with the 6th Annual Show of CCS Student Work.

At the National Iron Bank, Kelley Futurer will be showing oil paintings during May.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

MAY ISSUE

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