



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 27 : NUMBER 8 SEPTEMBER 2017



Rain Bomb

A rain bomb is also called a "wet microburst" that occurs, we're told, when cool air and rain hit the ground at high speeds in a thunderstorm, usually in a small area. Which is exactly what happened on Wednesday, August 2, in a small area of Cornwall Village from Pine Street to Valley Road and Cemetery Hill on Route 4 to Route 125.

In just over an hour the area was hit by five inches of rain and three incidents of hailstones the size of peas. At least a dozen driveways were washed out during the downpour. Route 125 had to be closed to traffic for several days until state crews could patch the roadbed. An unexpected benefit is that the state will now resurface all of Route 125, which is probably the roughest state road in town.

This, by the way, is some of the same area hit hardest by the 1989 tornado that roared through the village and pretty much wiped out that ancient stand of trees known as the Cathedral Pines. —John Miller

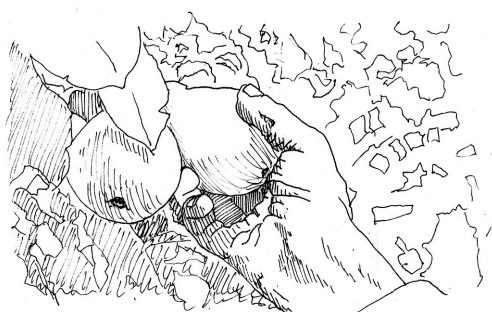
P&Z to Update Town Plan

At its meeting on August 8, P&Z began a discussion on updating the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. This update will be significant because of a new

priority that could result in changes in zoning.

The meeting began with a presentation by Jocelyn Ayer of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments on the draft regional plan, which will give strong emphasis to attracting young people and guide housing, jobs, and town centers toward this goal. Chairman Dave Colbert said that our town plan was likely to have similar priorities to the regional one.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway gave a brief but urgent talk, saying that a struggling economy and population decline are regional problems, but far more severe for our town. "We've lost 100 residents in the last four years, and we're now to the point where we're talking about merging schools." He went on to say: "We've won the battle for open space; now it's time to



pay attention to demographics and attracting more young people."

Although no specific zoning changes were discussed, Dave Colbert said that such changes are best done as an implementation of the town plan.

Changes to the zoning regulations can be made without town approval; however, P&Z will certainly pay attention to input from residents. Your first opportunity to offer ideas and opinions will be a forum scheduled for late October.

You can keep informed on this important issue by visiting the Cornwall website, cornwallct.org. Click on "Civic Government," "Minutes and Agendas" "Planning and Zoning Commission" to see the regional plan and other documents. The current town plan is on the website under "regulations." —Ed Ferman

A Bird in the Hand

Did you see the large birdhouse in a lone dead American elm tree in the Ferman's pasture on the west side of Cream Hill Road near Rattlesnake Road?

It is an American kestrel nest box, one of five boxes in Cornwall erected and monitored by Art Gingert, co-leader of our spring bird walks. The others are in ideal

(continued on page 2)

SEPTEMBER 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Mat Squad at 6:30 pm UCC; Karate, 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall; Men's Senior Basketball 6:30-8:30 pm CCS ♦ Tuesdays: Zumba, 5:30-6:30 pm Library ♦ Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064; Stitch 'n Spin, 7:15-8:30 pm UCC ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group, 10:30-11:30 am Library; Meditation, 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Zumba, 5:30-6:30 pm Library; Mah Jongg, 7-9 pm Library call 672-6874; Adult Volleyball, 7-9 pm CCS gym ♦ Fridays: Yoga 8:30-10 am Library ♦ Saturdays: West Cornwall Farm Market, 9 am -1 pm; Co-op Farm Market, 9 am-12:30 pm ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9-10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1 pm call Debra 672-0229					1 ♦ Labor Day Weekend Art Sale Opening Reception 5-8 pm Library	2 ♦ Labor Day Weekend Art Sale 10 am-4 pm Library ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall
3 ♦ Labor Day Weekend Art Sale 11 am-2 pm Library	4 LABOR DAY	5 ♦ Inland Wetlands Agency 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	6 ♦ Full Moon Drum Circle/ Water Blessing 7-9 pm Local Farm	7	8	9 ♦ Both Farm Mkts on Green 9 am-1 pm ♦ Cornwall Ag Fair 10 am-3 pm ♦ Cornwall Assoc. Newcomers' Tea 3:30-5 pm Library ♦ Artist's Reception Offenhardt 5 pm Library ♦ Bat Count/Pot Luck 6:30-8:30 pm Local Farm
10 ♦ Rain Date for Ag Fair 9 am-4 pm	11 ♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC ♦ Region 1 Bd. of Ed. 6:30 pm HVRHS	12 ♦ Eco. Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Monthly Senior Luncheon Noon UCC Parish House ♦ WC Septic Comm. 5 pm Ingersoll's Shop ♦ P&Z 7 pm Library ♦ Park & Rec. 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm CCS	13	14	15 ♦ Deadline: October Chronicle Copy	16 ♦ Board of Assessment Appeals 9-10 am Town Office
17	18	19 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	20 ♦ Bd. of Education 4:15 pm CCS ♦ 6-wk Writer's Workshop 6:30-8:30 pm Library ♦ Bd. of Finance 7:30 pm Town Hall	21 ♦ Knitting Group/Hats/ Cancer Patients 10 am Library ♦ Cornwall Conservation 7 pm Library	22	23 ♦ First Annual Cornwall Clean-Up/Green Up Day 9 am-12:30 pm Library ♦ Family Cow Workshop 10 am-1 pm Local Farm ♦ Women's Drumming Circle 7-9 pm Local Farm
24 ♦ Rain Date for Clean Up Green Up 11 am-2:30 pm	25 ♦ ZBA* 7 pm Library	26	27 ♦ Cornwall Business Assoc. 9 am W. Cornwall Library ♦ 6-wk Writer's Workshop 6:30-8:30 pm Library	28 ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1-6 pm UCC	29	30 ♦ A Paperboy's View Walking Tour 10 am WC Post Office ♦ Artist's Reception Susan Hellmann 3-6 pm Souterrain

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

habitats in wet pastures in Cornwall Hollow and Cornwall Village and a hay meadow at Hedgerows Farm. There were three pairs of breeding kestrels in Cornwall this spring, each successfully rearing five nestlings.

The American kestrel, for many years called the sparrow hawk, is our smallest falcon—about the size of a blue jay—and feeds on small rodents, birds, and insects. Males have a striking blend of rusty back, streaked breast, and blue-gray wings, while females are a warm russet brown. They can be seen hovering on rapid wing beats over fields before diving for prey.

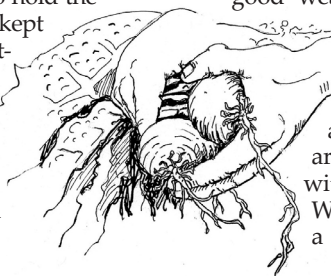


The kestrel is a declining species in much of North America since the late 1970s. Art has been working with their nest boxes since then and now monitors 66 of the 86 boxes in 26 towns in the western and north-central areas of Connecticut. "This year saw 57 breeding pairs, a banner year, perhaps due to a mild winter," he reported.

Art loves to share his passion for nature with others, and in early July invited Joni Hinchman and me to join him and photographer Don Heiny as he banded kestrel chicks at the box at nearby Hedgerows.

Art affixes a small, numbered aluminum leg band to each chick so that any recapture provides vital information on the migratory patterns and behavior of the species. Kestrels migrate annually from our area to southern U.S and occasionally as far as Central America, and pinpointing their locations, including food and habitat on these wintering grounds, is essential to aiding conservation efforts for the species.

Art processes the kestrel nestlings with an efficiency and care that is both impressive and heartwarming. After climbing about 15 feet via ladder, he closed the box's entry hole with a sponge to prevent unwanted escapes, swiftly placed all five youngsters in a mesh bag and brought them to the ground. The chicks were approximately three weeks old and within ten days of fledging (leaving the nest). Art taught Joni and me to hold the nestlings' legs in a manner that kept them calm and secure as he attached a leg band to each. He then plucked three small breast feathers from one chick to be submitted to a nationwide DNA study to provide information on the health of the species.



Throughout the process, these marvelous little raptors remained remarkably calm, with an occasional wing flurry or nip at our wrists. Then they were quickly placed back in the bag and Art returned them to their soon-to-be-vacated home. He made a quick check of fur, feather, and other prey remains in the nest and found that these nestlings were being fed a lot of meadow voles by their parents.

So where were the kestrel parents while this was happening? They kept a watchful eye well away across the field and Art spotted the mother just once.

By now these chicks are likely on their own, perhaps soaring over the Middle Atlantic states or maybe even the Gulf of Mexico, heading for their winter homes.

—Joe Ellis

Dining in Cornwall, A Brief History

Jerry Doolittle once described West Cornwall as "the place good restaurants go to die." The late Wandering Moose had the longest life, but many others have passed through over the last 35 years: The Café by the Bridge, the Station House, and Cadwell's Corner (all in the space later occupied by the Moose); The Deck and Freshfields and Dan and Kathy Cain's Hedgerows. Railroad Square housed several good spots that flickered too briefly: Carol Bonci's Café Lally, Sue Kochman's Soupe du Jour, Dan Evans's Smokin' Barbecue, and Mother's Cafe. In Cornwall Bridge, the Cornwall Inn once had an excellent dining room.

Why are we so bereft of dining spots? We talked with Janet Sanders, who says she is an optimist, an essential quality for the chair of our Economic Development Commission. "Lots of energy and ideas are going into encouraging new business. The restaurant business is not for the faint of heart, but give it time; we're hopeful. Folks will travel far for good food."

We also asked Dave Cadwell for his thoughts. Dave ran Cadwell's Corner for ten years from 1987 to 1997 and introduced the Moose's Russ Sawicki to the restaurant business.

"Russ and Sharon worked hard for many years, adding space and technology. It was heartbreaking to see the Moose go," Dave said.

"The restaurant business is fine in the good weather, but in my case not strong enough to close or cruise during the long winter. At times during the winter I worked by myself and was overstaffed. Most area restaurants come and go; with a few exceptions like the Woodlands, none have lasted a generation. The Deck was

Good-bye to Friends

David E. Battistoni
Karla Weber Simon
John "Zabby" Zabriskie

Congratulations

Marika Lendl and Stephen Rome

Land Transfers

Priscilla Hart Mauro to Doris E. Mauro and Paul M. Smith, land with buildings and improvements thereon, at 11 Hart Hill Road, for \$258,500.

Adrienne de Polo Becker, Trustee, to Robert Alan Southern, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 275 Dibble Hill Road, for \$635,000.

William Roland Hartley-Urquhart to Diane M. Beebe and Madelon E. Nunn-Miller, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 14 Pine Street, for \$407,500.

hugely popular, and Freshfields actually had valet parking, but neither lived very long."

Asked about the future, Dave said: "The Moose has a glorious location, overlooking one of the most photographed and painted spots in the state; a new spot there would be greeted with open arms."

A dining spot elsewhere in town seems unlikely. The change of use in two important buildings in West Cornwall can't help. The building that once housed Bierce's General Store and later was renovated into the handsome dining room of The Deck is now a residence. As is the building across from the post office parking area once occupied by Yutzler's and Hedgerows.

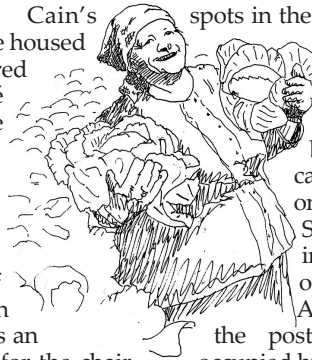
Another difficulty is the fact that, with no town center, Cornwall's retail presence is unavoidably scattered. As Gertrude Stein famously said of Oakland: "There is no there there."

Do you have any options while looking forward to a new café by the bridge? (See story page 3.)

The Cornwall Country Market is a market, not a restaurant. But it has a fine deli, a few tables, and is a good option for a quick breakfast or lunch.

Your only choice for dinner is R.S.V.P., Cornwall's answer to the Napa Valley's French Laundry. It has survived since 2001 because of an unusual concept for these parts. Chef Guy Birster and co-owner Charles Cilona offer French bistro cuisine with a five-course, three-hour dinner. The tiny place in Railroad Square seats 20 by reservation only. Although reviews of its food in the *NY Times* and online sites have been highly favorable, its appeal is limited. There is no menu, credit cards are not accepted, and the cost is \$110 per person.

If neither of those options works for



you, we can only point you toward Miller-ton or Litchfield and Bantam, attractive towns with, in our view, the best variety of good eateries in our area.

—Ed Ferman

Small and Strong

Principal Mike Croft anticipates his seventh year at CCS with confidence in his staff, excitement for new and continuing programs, and enthusiasm for the students. School opened on August 28 with an enrollment in the mid-70s, but with eight incoming kindergartners; perhaps the numbers are headed up. A graduating class of 18 in 2015 hit the school population hard.

There are some major staff changes. Stephanie Magyar, former English teacher, is moving to the principal's position at Salisbury Central School; Jennifer Law will fill her position. Kathy West, science teacher, is taking a one-year sabbatical to complete a master's degree in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education; Beth Frost will serve as her substitute. There are two fewer education paraprofessionals, and the custodial staff has been reduced to two full-time positions.

Changes in class configuration over the past three years have resulted in what Mr. Croft calls a "durable configuration" that can absorb changes in class sizes. He praised the teachers for adapting to the new plan, which has allowed for staff reduction. In the early grades, kindergarten through grade two form a class of 25 students (8, 6, 11) and grades three and four a class of 18 (6, 12). In the middle school, grades five and six form a class of 18 (12, 6) and grades seven and eight a class of 14 (12 and 2).

Mr. Croft highlighted two programs of note: Early Literacy Groups (ELG) in grades k-two and three-four, and Personalized Enrichment Projects, new for grades five through eight. The ELG model "floods" the class with adults for the reading periods and has led to gains in reading achievement.

The Personalized Enrichment Project, supported by a grant from the CCS Fund for Excellence (CCSFE), anticipates the eighth-grade Explorations program. Students will work with a teacher and learn skills for doing research and inquiry in preparation for a project for public presentation.

After a one-year hiatus, the after-school care program for children in grades k-6 is back. Funded by the Board of Education and CCSFE with private donations for tuition support, the program will be run by the school, not the Cornwall Child Center as it was in the past. Hours are 3 to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday; Wednesdays at the Cornwall Library. Patricia Vanicky will serve as director.

Building changes have been invisible but significant. Insulation of the north wing (music and art rooms, the oldest part of the

building) is being completed. And projects leading to reduction in heating costs will continue under the leadership of Phil Hart and custodian Pete Selino.

How to pay for education remains a challenge, more than ever. The CCS budget has been reduced by 7 percent for the coming year; but the absence of a state budget (as of this writing) makes the effect of that reduction uncertain. Still to be determined is Cornwall's Educational Cost Sharing entitlement; last year the town received \$6,976 from the state. Of more significance is a proposal still on the table that districts pay one-third of teachers' retirement benefits.

Whatever the challenges, Mr. Croft is confident that students will leave CCS with literacy and numeracy skills needed for the 21st century.

—Barbara Gold

The Video Guy

If you go on YouTube and search for Richard Griggs, you'll find something remarkable: hundreds of video recordings of meetings and events in Cornwall.

Consider this: sitting through one routine selectmen's meeting requires the patience of a Zen master; Richard attends them all and uploads his videos to YouTube the same night. You'll also find him at most happenings in town. On a late spring Saturday, he captured three events: the Co-Op Farm Market, a talk on the Flat Rocks fire, and the Cornwall Bridge Spring Stroll. This last event tells a story, though not perhaps one the organizers intended. What we see in this 12-minute video is a band, a blacksmith, and a few tables manned by some nonprofits and the Economic Development Commission. The final shot is an intersection with passing cars and few strollers.

The recordings are not meant to be artistic and some are technically imperfect—one interview cuts off the subject's head—but criticism of this sort is like complaining about the grammar of a talking horse; the effort itself is amazing enough to command respect.

We sat down with Richard and asked him about his project and how it got started.

"I was always checking out selectmen's meetings, and about two years ago Joanne Wojtusiak suggested that I video them. I borrowed a friend's camera and found that I enjoyed it.

"Then I moved on to events. One of my favorites and most popular was the swap shop at the dump." (Others with over 200 views are the meeting about moving the farm market, which turned out to be somewhat controversial, and the *Chronicle's* 25th anniversary reception.)

"I don't edit any of the videos, and I try not to add much commentary.

"Weekenders like my videos; they can follow what's going on from a distance. And I also send them to reporters for the *Lakeville Journal* and *Republican-American*; they love them because they don't have to attend every meeting.

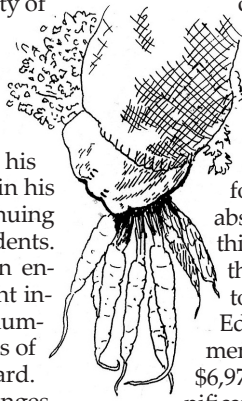
"I've never received any complaints about my videos but I've learned that some folks don't like to be photographed and I try not to include them.

"This is purely a volunteer effort, but the Cornwall Foundation provided funds to the Cornwall Association for a new camera. It comes with a boom mike and a mumble filter, so you'll be able to better hear the meetings. It's not my personal camera and is available to someone else if I can't cover an event.

"I feel the videos are part of an historical record. I want to give something to the town, as did my grandfather Elmer Griggs (who started P&Z) and my father David."

All of Richard's videos can be viewed on YouTube or on the Cornwall website, cornwallct.org.

—Ed Ferman



New Eatery in Town?

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a building overlooking a covered bridge and a river is in need of a restaurant. If all goes well, the space long occupied by the Wandering Moose may soon welcome a new restaurateur. Although his agreement is not yet finalized, the likely tenant, Sean Aylmer, said: "My wife Justina and I are excited to work with Russ Sawicki in leasing the space. I have over 30 years in food service. We look forward to offering fresh, healthy comfort food with a refined feel." Seems like a perfect formula. —The Editors

CVFD Activity Report

- 11 emergency medical responses
- 2 automobile accidents
- 3 smoke/odor removal
- 1 mutual aid cancelled en route
- 4 false alarms
- 1 structure fire, mutual aid (Mutual aid: calls to assist a neighboring town)

Tip of the Month: HELP US HELP YOU. Please place your house number out by the road facing both ways in reflective numbers four inches high. This will help us respond.



Cornwall Briefs

•**Flat Rocks Road Closing:** Was supposed to happen last month but now we're told the closing for bridge repair will occur September 11.

•**Town Surplus:** Possibly as much as \$200,000, but with an unhealthy state budget still to come, some of the surplus might well be needed to compensate for state shortfalls or just plain stinginess to small towns. Town Hall tells us that much of the surplus came from people paying up back taxes and give-back from the school budget.

•**Rummage Sale:** Sales stood at a record of slightly under \$36,000 with more funds coming in. Those funds are used for educational gifts to Cornwall students. So bravo to Woman's Society president Anne Hummel and the hundred or so volunteers who put in several weeks of hard work gathering all the rummage goodies and then manned the booths on sales days.

•**Muni Election:** There will be one on November 7, but there will be no contest for our Board of Selectmen, which will consist of First Selectman Gordon Ridgway and Selectmen Richard Bramley and Priscilla Pavel (replacing Heidi Kearns, who chose not to seek a third term). —John Miller

Events & Announcements

At the Cornwall Library

The First Annual Labor Day Weekend Art Sale: prints, photographs, posters, drawings, and paintings donated by the community and local artists to benefit the library. Opening reception and sale, Friday, September 1, from 5 to 8 P.M. Sale hours 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. on Saturday, September 2, and 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. on Sunday, September 3.

Six-week Writer's Workshop led by Deb Devins begins Wednesday, September 20, from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. For anyone who has taken previous classes with her or elsewhere. Class size limited to eight; \$50 fee.

Sashay into September at the Cornwall Contra Dance, Saturday, September 2, at 7 P.M. in the town hall. Old-time music by

Sell Your Stocks!

Did you know that September is the worst month for share prices? On average they tend to lose one percent. After you unload everything, you will need to do something with all that cash. May we suggest generous charitable donations, starting with the *Chronicle*.

Still, the Homegrown Band and calling by Peter Stix. All dances taught, all ages and left feet welcome. Donation requested. Questions 672-6101 or go to motherhouse.us.

Motherhouse Events

All events are at Local Farm, 2 Popple Swamp Road. Register at motherhouse.us or call Debra at 860-671-7945.

September 6, from 7 to 9 P.M. Full Moon Drum Circle and Water Blessing

September 9, from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. Bat Count/Potluck

September 23, from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. Family Cow Workshop; 7 to 9 P.M. Women's Drumming Circle

Art in Cornwall

Opening reception for Harvey Offenhartz's show at the library will be held September 9 at 5 P.M. following the Newcomers' Tea. Show runs from September 6 through October 17.

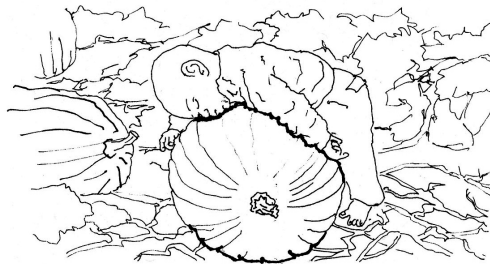
Souterrain Gallery: The exhibit "Mighty Minis" curated by Suzan Shutan runs through September 9. Reception for Susan Hellman, "Scenic Cornwall," Saturday, September 30, from 3 to 6 P.M. Runs through November 18.

The Toll House Gallery in West Cornwall will continue to showcase the work of Donald Bracken, Lennart Swede Ahrstrom, and Scott Zuckerman.

26th Agricultural Fair: Celebrate agriculture on the Village Green on Saturday, September 9, from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. This year's fair is dedicated to Hickory Grove Farm and the Russ family. Rain date is September 10. See insert.

The Cornwall Association Newcomers' Tea: September 9, at 3:30 P.M. in the library. Bart Jones speaking on the 30th anniversary of the Cornwall Conservation Trust. Refreshments. See insert.

Farm Markets: Both the original Farm Market and the Co-op Farm Market will be on



the town green at the Ag Fair, September 9. **Senior Luncheon:** Tuesday, September 12, at 12 P.M. at Parish House. RSVP to Jen Markow by September 6: 672-4071 or prcornwall@gmail.com

The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet Saturday, September 16, between 9 and 10 A.M. at the town offices for the purpose of hearing appeals regarding motor vehicle assessments. No appointment is required. There will be no other time for hearing such appeals.

Clean-Up/Green-Up Day: Saturday, September 23, from 9 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. Meet at the library; pick up trash, plant daffodils. Free picnic, prizes. Rain date Sunday, September 24, at 11 A.M. See insert.

Red Cross Blood Drive Thursday, September 28, from 1 to 6 P.M. at UCC. The need is great. Please call 1-800-GIVE LIFE to make an appointment.

The Cornwall Historical Society will sponsor a walking tour of West Cornwall led by Denis Curtiss, Saturday, September 30, starting at 10 A.M. at the West Cornwall Post Office. Rain date: Sunday, October 1.

CHS has been awarded a \$3,210 grant by Connecticut Humanities to enable its board of directors to participate in a structured strategic planning exercise. The board will devise a five-year plan (2018-2023) working with consultant Joan Baldwin, a curator of special collections at Hotchkiss School.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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