

Insightful & Informative

HAMPTON Gazette

A Season of Celebration and Remembrance



VOLUME XLV No. 11 DECEMBER 2023

The holidays are revered for so many things – turkeys and stuffing and pies, Christmas trees and carols and cookies, the solstice’s return of the light, the closing of one year, and the welcoming of a new one. The holidays are also associated with loss. It’s when we miss those who are no longer with us the most.

This time of mourning is tempered with memories, memories we gather and store, bringing them into the light just like the ornaments on the tree during this season of celebration and remembrance. When we hold on to our traditions, those who are no longer with us, are.

In this issue we commemorate the lives of many members of our community who we lost this year, sharing memories from those who knew and loved them, beginning with a tribute to Dan Meade. Many of you who have lived in Hampton only recently did not know the Dan Meade we knew – an extraordinary leader in so many organizations and offices of the town for so many years. But many of us remember him, and we remember him here.

Few people have served our community in as many capacities as Dan Meade. Recognized as Citizen of the Year in 2011, Dan was acknowledged for “his commitment to good governance, equal participation, education, resource protection, and maintaining a high quality of life for all residents”. This dedication to our town extended throughout his life and in every office he filled.



Dan brought many skills to a lot of tables when he moved to Hampton in 1978 with his wife Diane, the couple settling here to raise their daughters, Shannon and Jennifer. Born on February 14, 1945, Dan graduated from the University of Connecticut with a Masters of Science in hydro-geology, a hard earned degree. As Diane noted at his funeral, Dan not only pulled himself up by the boot straps, he made the straps and the boots.

After graduation, Dan embarked on a career with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Geological Survey. He was also adjunct faculty at the University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut State University, and Manchester Community College. His years as a soil scientist were incredibly valuable to our town in several ways, from assisting citizens in understanding the complexities of land management to guiding officials in public infrastructure and smart growth.

There were few boards, commissions, committees and organizations that didn’t benefit from Dan’s involvement. He served as a Selectman for several years. During his tenure on the Board of Selectmen, he participated in major projects such as writing permits for the establishment of the Transfer Station, converting the Consolidated School into Town Offices, and building three bridges to span the Little River. Though this was the only position he ever received compensation for, Dan always donated his Selectman’s salary to various organizations in town.

Dan served a six-year term on the Board of Education where he was involved in the building of the new elementary school. He was one of the original members of the Board of Finance, helping the fledgling agency align municipal needs with statutory requirements. Dan served on the Conservation Commission for decades where his expertise was particularly

SEASON CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The Hampton Gazette



VOLUME XLV, No. 11 DECEMBER 2023

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THUMBS UP To all of the town entities offering us festive activities this month: the Recreation Commission, and resident thespians, for performing Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory"; the Antiquarian and Historical Society for inviting us (and Santa Claus!) to an open house; the road crew for preparing the tree at Town Hall for the annual lighting; the Seniors Club for providing a special holiday luncheon; the Ladies Aid Society for hosting the Annual Holiday Bazaar; the Congregational Church for entertaining the community with a "19th Century Christmastide" historical music program; and the members of the Believers Mennonite Church for, once again, singing Christmas carols to our elders. The Gazette wishes everyone the happiest and healthiest of holidays!

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Every February, the Gazette begins our publishing year by honoring a resident on the front page who exemplifies good citizenship. These are people who have served on boards and commissions and volunteered in community organizations and at community events, recognized for life-time achievements, or simply for being "good neighbors."

Our selection of Citizen of the Year comes from your suggestions, so please send your nominations to: the Hampton Gazette, hamptongazette@yahoo.com or PO Box 101, Hampton; or contact any member of the editorial board by January 5, 2024. We look forward to hearing from you.

FROM THE AGENT FOR THE ELDERLY

For the past year, I have shared my knowledge of everything from how to hire a caregiver to tips on preventing falls. Frankly, I am out of ideas about what to write about. If there is a subject you would like me to cover, please send me an e-mail at: jcornell01@charter.net.

I will no longer be holding monthly office hours at the town hall, but as always, you can call me anytime at 860.208.2430. Leave me a message and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Just a reminder, for anyone in need of medical equipment, my space at the town garage is well stocked with wheelchairs, walkers, shower benches and commodes.

Jane Cornell

The Gazette thanks our Agent for the Elderly for her contributions of over a year to our newspaper where she covered every subject imaginable to assist our senior citizens in their ever-changing lives. Thank you, Jane.

Find your special place in Hampton



with the 2024 Hampton Gazette Calendar. Our Hampton artists share their work through the seasons with picturesque ponds. Order by calling 959.242.4442 or via email at: hamptongazette@yahoo.com Get one for yourself, for friends, for a special place in your home. It's art for everyday living!

appreciated, and on the Recreation Commission, including the Grange Renovation Committee when the Town purchased the Little River Grange and successfully applied for grants to convert the building into its current use as a Community Center. Most recently Dan served as Chairman of the Hampton Emergency Management Department. He also served as Moderator at many Town meetings, always ensuring equity and calm.

Dan's service wasn't limited to municipal government. He served the Congregational Church for decades as a Deacon and on the Board of Trustees and Board of Auditors. For years, he helped halve, prepare, season and barbecue the chicken for the town on Memorial Day. An officer of the Windham Fish and Game Club, Dan was an avid bass fisherman and hunter, a skilled carpenter and car mechanic.

The year Dan earned the distinction of Citizen of the Year was when he completed his service as Chairman of the Garage Committee when the building was finished. Noted for consensus building and open communication, Dan worked with local officials, concerned neighbors, and area legislators to bring to fruition the construction project that three former committees over the course of 20 years were unsuccessful in attaining. Under Dan's leadership, land was found, a grant was received, approvals were given by all permitting agencies, and taxpayers approved the purchase of the property and financing for the cost of the facility.

With a civic-mindedness that is a rarity in today's world, it wasn't lost on any of us that Dan died on the day of a municipal election.

The article that honored Dan as Citizen of the Year noted his attendance at all things Hampton - game nights, historical lectures, theatrical performances and musical concerts, holiday gatherings, school sports, art exhibits. "That's what makes Dan so special," the article stated. "No matter what the cause or position or theme of the event or meeting, Dan participates because he is truly committed to and fond of us, the people here, whatever our views or interests or desires. For Dan, serving our community is a duty, but it is also a pleasure, and his example makes us all proud to be here."

VILLAGE VIEW *and Beyond....*

SMOKE, MIRRORS AND SPOTLIGHTS

Tiz the season to be jolly...

There are two sources of stress in life: Stress that is thrust upon us and Stress that we "volunteer" for. The season of stress is upon us. Acknowledging and understand the difference is key to stress reduction. Some stress can't be avoided - there are bills to pay, mouths to feed, schedules to meet. But the reality, if you take the time to stop and think about it, is, for much of the stress in our lives, we have volunteered. As for example the commute to work (or drive anywhere): Suppose you have a 20 mile commute. At 50 MPH you will arrive in 24 minutes. At 65 MPH you will arrive in 18 minutes. How much stress could you reduce by starting your journey six minutes earlier? Not only will your drive be more relaxed, you will reduce the risk of accident and injury to yourself or others and potential traffic violations that inevitably involve monetary cost, in fines and insurance.



It may also involve extended legal issues. Is it worth the risk? How often are we advised about the effects of stress on our health? Go to bed six minutes earlier, get up six minutes earlier and leave six minutes earlier and you will reduce your stress exponentially.

As the Dog is fond of woofing, "The hurrier I go the behinder I get."

And here comes Christmas. The song may tell us "It's the most wonderful time of the year," but we have for some reason volunteered to make it the most stressful. Boy howdy, have we. If the hustle and frenzy actually brings you pleasure and joy by all means run with it. But if you are driven by some illusion of duty, tradition, guilt...whatever, to drive yourself to the nervous hospital, bottle or turn yourself into a miserable, bossy, short-tempered bastard, to say nothing of running up debt, it's time to take a step back and examine your motives. Ask yourself, "How important is it? Is this what I really want to be, or am I responding to someone else's (media markets?) expectations - real or imagined?"

Change may not come easy but in the end it is generally well worth the effort. "Reduce stress slowly" comes in many small steps. Most stress is home made.

Breathe

Breathe in the Kaleidoscope
Breathe out the Rainbow
Breathe in the Cacophony
Breathe out the Symphony
Walk barefoot in the Grass
On the Beach
In the Garden
Reach for the Heavens
Grasp ever the Earth
Watch the Caterpillar on its Journey
Help the turtle cross the Road
The pelican glides smoothly
Over the churning Surf
Learn its Ways
The sun Sets
The sun Rises
Adieu yesterday
The sail sinks beneath the Horizon
All is New
Savor this day
It's the only Today you have.
Breathe

During the month of October members of the Hampton Fire Company logged 140 man hours responding to 25 emergency dispatches: two fires, three fire alarms, one tree and wires down, 14 medical calls. Community service events included: Fire Prevention education at the schools, Landing Zone demonstration at Scotland Fire Department, Trunk or Treat at PHHS, and Halloween on Main Street. Admin meeting and training were held locally and at Eastern Ct Fire Academy.

And the pager sounded.
Stay safe. Reduce stress. Tiz the season to be Jolly.

There will be several special events for Hampton to celebrate in December:

DECEMBER 3

- Old Fashioned Carol Sing, led by Rick Spencer, Hampton Congregational Church, 11:30 AM, after Sunday service
- Open House at the Burnham Hibbard House, 2 – 4 PM. Music by Mark and Beverly Davis, Santa with gifts for children 12 and under, festive food and drink for all
- Lighting of the Town Tree, 4:30 PM at Town Hall

DECEMBER 17

- Performance of Truman Capote's "A Christmas Memory" by Hampton thespians at the Community Center at 2PM.
- Caroling for seniors at their homes, led by the Believers Mennonite Church members, other Town residents welcome to join. 5-7 PM, meet at Town Hall at 4:30.

CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS AND HISTORY AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

On Sunday, December 3, immediately following the service, a 19th Century Christmastide will be presented in Holt Hall with local musician Rick Spencer and accompanying Dawn Indermuhle. Known for historical music programs, they will entertain us with a one hour program on a selection of Christmas songs popular at the end of the 1800's, including commentary on the background, origins of the songs, and the evolution of America's 19th century holiday traditions. This will be followed by an audience sing-a-long! Please bring a homemade holiday dessert to share.

SENIOR LUNCHEON

The chefs who serve such wonderful meals for our seniors, kitchen wizards Diane Gagnon and Peter Witkowski, and one of Santa's elves cleverly disguised as Dave Halbach, are cooking up something extra special for the holiday luncheon this month: fish chowder, braised shortribs, twice-baked potatoes, creamed spinach, a vegetarian option, and dessert. The luncheon will be on Wednesday, December 13, at noon in the lower level of Town Hall and the cost for Hampton residents 55 years and older is \$10 this time only, guests \$15. To attend, you must RSVP by noon on December 8 to: hamptonseniorsclub@yahoo.com. Hope to see you all there!

Home for the Holidays



A CHRISTMAS MEMORY

To enhance your holiday season, come to the Hampton Community Center at 2PM on Sunday December 17, for a performance of "A Christmas Memory." This very early work of Truman Capote, originally a short story, then an hour long TV production, won 18 major awards including the Peabody as best TV show of the year, International Critics Award, and several Emmys. A film version produced as part of a trilogy with two other Capote stories was one of only two American films chosen for exhibition at the Cannes Film Festival.

This adaptation into a radio play is the work of Juan Arriola and the late Gordon Hansen. Here is your chance to see your friends and neighbors step into literary characters: Perry Mandanis, who is playing Capote, Anne Flammang as the young "Buddy", Mary Oliver as his beloved cousin, and cameos from other performers, such as Juan Arriola as Ha-Ha, the Native American proprietor of the small town's local bar.

Admission is free and refreshments will be served after the performance, including, of course, a treasured fruitcake.

Following the performance, caroling for Seniors at their homes will be led by the Believers Mennonite Church members. Other Town residents are welcome to join. We will meet at, and leave from, the Town Hall at 4:30.

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

The Antiquarian and Historical Society will host their annual Open House in the Burnham-Hibbard Museum on December 3 from 2 – 4PM. Mark and Beverly Davis will entertain visitors with their lovely music, Santa will bring gifts to all good children under the age of 12, and festive refreshments will be served -- cider, traditional Christmas cookies, and fancy holiday desserts.

The Annual Community Tree Lighting will take place following the Open House at 4:30PM at Town Hall.

Fletcher Memorial Library



NEW BOOKS

We are particularly strong in juveniles and young adult books this month, with new works by favorites Rick Riordan and Mo Willems. A new season of *The Crown* on DVDs has come in, too, as well as adult fiction from Lee Child, Margaret Atwood, Rania James and James Rollins, as well as new biographies of Elon Musk and Arthur Miller.

ADULT FICTION

Margaret Atwood	Old Babes in the Wood (stories)
Rhys Bowen	The Paris Assignment
Graham Brown	Clive Cussler Condor's Fury
Melody Carlson	A Royal Christmas
Lee Child	The Secret (Reacher)
Amy Chu	The Golden Gate
Amanda Cox	He Should Have Told the Bees
Suzanne Woods Fisher	Lost & Found
Tania James	Loot
John Graham	The Exchange: After The Firm
Sophie Hannah	Hercule Poirot's Silent Night
Alix E. Harrow	Starling House
Ragnar Jonasson	Reykjavik
Julia Kelly	A Traitor in Whitehall
Angie Kim	Happiness Falls
Ayana Mathis	The Unsettled
Kyle Mills	Code Red
Marta Molnar	The Secret Life of Sunflowers
Katie Powner	The Wind Blows in Sleeping Grass
Ron Rash	The Caretaker
James Rollins	Tides of Fire (Sigma Force)
Danielle Steel	Palazzo
Peter Swanson	The Christmas Guest
Paul Vidich	Beruit Station: Two Lives of a Spy
Jesmyn Ward	Let Us Descend
Stuart Woods	Obsession

ADULT NON-FICTION

Walter Isaacson	Elon Musk
Anderson Cooper	Astor: The Rise & Fall of an American Fortune
Oliver Franklin-Wallis	Wasteland: The Secret World of Waste....
John Lahr	Arthur Miller: American Witness
Bill O'Reilly	Killing the Witches (Salem, MA)

JUVENILES AND YA

Jennifer Barnes	The Brothers Hawthorne
Megan Blakemore	Princess of the Wild Sea
Jon Klassen	The Skull: A Tyrolean Folktale
Rick Riordan	The Chalice of the Gods
Rui Sutherland	Wings of Fire Bk 6
Mo Willems	Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Sleigh!
Helen Yoon	Is This...Winter?

DVDs

The Crown, Season 5

MONTHLY EVENTS

December **Top Shelf Gallery** features the art of Hampton Elementary School students. Come check out the creations of the town's budding artists during the library's open hours (Wednesday 12-7, Thursday & Friday 9-12, Saturday 9-3).

December 13 **FML Book Discussion Group** 6PM Holiday Party! Come with your ideas for book selections for 2023. Bring your favorite appetizer to share. New members are always welcome.

Wednesday Afternoons **After School Story & Craft** 4-5PM. Join us for a story and a related craft every Wednesday during the school year.

Thursday Mornings **Tai Chi at the Hampton Town Hall** 8:30AM. Tai Chi takes place in the Town Hall Pavilion, weather permitting.

Mah-Jongg 101 10 – NOON. Mah Jongg is a popular tile game currently taking a foothold with older people. It's a terrific brain teaser, it's addictive, it's fun, and it's social. Try it out, all skill levels are welcome.

Friday Mornings **Mexican Train** 9AM -- NOON. Join us for free classes on a modern version of Dominoes on Friday mornings.

Baby Story Time Song & Play 10:30 – 11:30AM. An interactive program for birth to three-year-olds using a variety of musical instruments, rhymes, songs, finger plays, puppets, as well as a story or two. Our goal is to encourage a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Senior Delivery Service

The library is happy to provide a delivery service for library items (books, audio CDs, and DVDs). Please call or email the library with your requests and/or questions on this and all listed programs at 860.455.1086 or fletchermemoriallibrary@gmail.com

GROWING & LEARNING

PARISH HILL MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL RELEASES HONOR ROLL

Congratulations to the following students for earning distinction on their school's honor roll.

Grade 12 High Honors:

Isabella Chokas, Dylan Fernandes, Gretchen Ricci, Alexander Vecchio

Grade 11 High Honors:

Hannah Becker, Sydney Lovegreen, Kaya Morell, Xander Ouimette, Evelyn Rondeau, Brady Silva, Anthony Tatulli

Grade 10 High Honors:

Andrew Landolphi

Grade 9 High Honors:

Keaghan Crawford

Grade 8 High Honors:

Madeline Becker, Hurley Cinami, Katelyn Lathrop, Jack Morell, Brayden Ouimette, Brenden Ouimette, Aedyn Trigo,

Grade 7 High Honors: Ernerie Dozert, Isabella Fullerton, Caleb Lassen, Olivia Sabo, Tanis Trigo

Grade 11 Honors:

Natasha Belt, Harmony Freed, Ella Sholes

Grade 10 Honors:

Thalan Thongchanh

Grade 9 Honors:

Scotia Thomen-O'Brien

Grade 8 Honors:

Faith Beaumont, Isabella LaBarre, Sophia Shibenski, Arthur Sprague

Grade 7 Honors:

Scarlett Blanchard, Nathaniel Murd, Mila Nazario

SCHOOL BOARD REVEALS, CLARIFIES COSTS

In response to a Freedom of Information request from the Board of Finance reported in last month's *Gazette*, the Hampton Elementary School Board of Education released the cost of employee settlements reached this last year.

According to school board Chairman Rose Bisson, the \$20,000 settlement from a Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities complaint, which was filed by a former employee and alleged racial discrimination, was covered by the school's insurance, Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA). It is unknown whether the complaint and its resolution will be viewed as a liability and consequently affect future insurance coverage. A subsequent discrimination grievance lodged by an employee of the school, also alleging racial discrimination, filed on September 26 of this year is not yet resolved.

The second employee settlement totaled \$93,000, however, Bisson explained that the employee, who was placed on administrative leave until retirement on June 30, 2024, passed away after the settlement was reached. Bisson said that, therefore, the school board only needed to pay \$14,371. Bisson complained that the initial amount of \$93,000 was mischaracterized by First Selectman Cahill at an October 11 meeting of the finance board as "six figures", though it is unknown as to whether or not any benefits were part of the negotiated package.

At the November 15 meeting of the finance board, Bisson was also critical of the figures represented at the October 11 meeting for a potential heating system: "\$1,180,000, with an estimated incentive from Eversource of \$390,000, leaving a total of \$790,000", which reportedly does not cover the cost of removal of the current system or the generator. Chairman Donahue had also reported that the estimated annual savings of this system is \$11,804 per season and that its life expectancy is only 15-20 years. At the finance board meeting, Donahue confirmed that all of those figures were accurately based on information she obtained from the school during a presentation on the proposed heating system. Bisson assured finance board members that the school board would not purchase a system that could not ultimately pay for itself.

SCOUTING NEWS

Troops 93 and 1093 started out the Scouting season with a busy schedule! On October 8, we attended the Highland Games held in Scotland, which is our biggest fundraiser of the year. The scouts run two separate food booths, where we sell hot dogs, hamburgers, sausage, peppers and onion grinders, pulled pork, bubbles and squeak. Coffee, as well as breakfast sandwiches, were also served. On October 28 we took a 15 mile bike ride from Goodwin Forest to We-Li-Kit Ice Cream in Pomfret, and timed the weather perfectly with an 80° day. November 3rd to the 5th was a campout at June Webster Camp in Ashford. The troops had a friendly meal preparation competition. The girls won with a cream of broccoli soup in a bread bowl, barely beating the boys and their pork chops. *Scout meetings are held at the Congregational Church at 7PM on Tuesdays.*

As I grow older, I am constantly reminded of the lessons I learned in the kitchen. From my mother's and grandmothers' kitchens, to my own in Vermont and now back here in Northeastern Connecticut.

This is my third year in an 18th-19th century house with not a level floor anywhere, but a galley pantry with its tiny twelve-paned window, wide planked shelves, and slight entryway that holds staples, herbs and spices, that we call our "pantrium". Were it not for its narrow confines and the current broadness of my posterior, I might could work and live in there.

Recently, I found myself reflecting over the torn, toasted bread that I was preparing for our Thanksgiving stuffing. This was one of my first kitchen assignments for the holidays, and one, as a petulant seven year old, that I absolutely loathed. It was always so much! The big warm pan of cornbread was easy, it fairly fell apart in my small hands. But the toast was dry, and hurt to tear. My mother insisted that it would get easier, although I was certain the best way was with the ancient semi-rusty bread knife that lived on the heavy magnet strip under the cabinets.

KITCHENING

This year, we were using up our cache of leftover Little River sourdough (can there be such a thing?) from the back of the fridge. I rummaged for that old breadknife and without thinking started sawing it into slices, toasting, and then for good measure, drying it out in the oven on a low temp. It was really hard. I could not use the knife to cube it up, it could only be torn. Something so simple, to be tearing this bread.

And then, I was weeping. No, not from the onions, they were long in the pot with the celery and herbs and broth. For a few scant moments, I was back in our kitchen, with the yellow formica counters, small maple-leaved table, watching my mother with her razor-thin carbon steel knife slice even thinner sheaves of McIntosh and Cortlands into a deep dish of a flaky Crisco abyss.

Mary Oliver



CONTRIBUTORS: Deb Andstrom, Marie Cantino, Jane Cornell, Adam Drouin, John Gorman, Susan Hochstetter, Christina Mazza, Rob Rondeau, Janice Trecker, Gay Wagner. **PHOTOS:** page 1, Pete Vertefeuille; page 2, Ruth Feltenberger Halbach; page 8, courtesy of Kathleen Fitzgerald.

RECIPES OF THE MONTH

Hot Fudge Sauce

This was my mother's signature Christmas dessert, which she served over Peppermint Stick Ice Cream -- a flavor which would have otherwise been too sweet, but is perfect with this thick, bitter chocolate sauce. The year my mother died, I couldn't get enough of it -- this remembrance of my mother, who, like all mothers, made Christmas -- returning to purchase more ice cream until, like egg nog, it was no longer sold. I subsequently rid myself of the obsession, but not all of the extra pounds.

Stir together:

6 tbs. butter, melted

2 cups sifted confectioner's sugar

2/3 cup unsweetened cocoa

Stir in 1 cup evaporated milk. Bring to a boil over very low heat, and boil, stirring constantly, for five minutes until thick. Add a little milk when reheating.

Dayna McDermott

Pecan Sensation (Un)Fruitcake

AKA "Not your grandmother's fruitcake"

Like the holidays in Truman Capote's Christmas Memory, nothing at our house could begin without the pecans. How we waited for the boxes of pecans from the South, many gathered by my aunt off the farm at Beaver Creek. Wrapping some for dear friends, but mostly for the precious fruitcakes of all sizes that never seemed to end until they were joyously wrapped and out of the house.

Mary Oliver

3/4 cup sifted flour

3/4 cup sugar

1/2 tsp baking powder

1/2 tsp salt

2 packages pitted dates (about 1 lb)

1 cup well-drained maraschino cherries

3 eggs

1 tsp vanilla

3 cups pecan halves

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Grease, then line a loaf pan with waxed paper.

In sifter, place flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In a large bowl place nuts, dates and cherries. Sift the ingredients and then mix with your hands until nuts and fruits are well coated.

Beat eggs until foamy. Add vanilla to eggs and stir into nut mixture and mix well. Spread in pan evenly. Bake for 1 hour and 45 minutes. Cool on rack. Serve in thin slices.

Louise Oliver

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

In an article titled "The Irish Come to Hampton" published in the March 1993 *Gazette*, Jim Robertson chronicled the arrival of the first group of immigrants to our town. The article quoted a man from Hampton who in 1845 wrote home while traveling in England to report news of the "great fear of a famine in Ireland", claiming he saw 1600 people in Liverpool waiting for a ship. "The price of passage used to be \$15 but it is now \$25 including water and a pound of bread a day", he reported. "You have no idea how miserable they are, crowded into a ship, often 300 and 400, and as the ship leaves the dock and they bid adieu to a crowd of friends who come to see them off and whom they will never see again, the sight is distressing."

What the man observed was the beginning of a massive wave of immigration bringing 1.5 million Irish to America during "The Great Hunger", when Ireland's potato crops, which the Irish depended solely upon, were blighted. The "Potato Famine" caused approximately twelve percent of the population to starve to death, and over a quarter to emigrate. The Irish, under cruel English governance, were legally precluded from owning land and therefore unable to raise another crop, to hunt, or to fish. English landlords used the famine as an excuse to further persecute the Irish, evicting them and burning the thatched roofs of their dwellings to avoid "disease". Today, places like Achill Island's Deserted Village of Slievemore, where small stone homes remain in desolate rows, are reminders of the devastation of those times.

The Irish arrived in our town more than a century after others settled here. According to the article, "Like all small towns, Hampton was the last place to attract the immigrant because the possibilities for work were few and the land was already occupied and expensive." In 1850, ten percent of Connecticut's population was comprised of immigrants while only two percent of Hampton's was. The Census that year reported sixteen Hampton residents from Ireland. Ten years later, while Hampton's overall population was on the decline, the number of Irish immigrants increased to 25. In another 20 years, 25 percent of Hampton's total population was Irish, either immigrants, or the children of immigrants. "The Irish," Mr. Robertson wrote, "were permanently established in town."

After the famine ended, the Irish continued to arrive in great numbers. "They were met by growing anti-Catholic and anti-Irish prejudices," the article stated. "For most Americans, the Irish



THE VILLAGE CHURCH

were 'different' enough in their speech and their behavior, as well as their religion, to be very noticeable." Most of us are familiar with signs of the era which announced: No Irish Need Apply. Too poor to afford land to cultivate their own crops and raise their own animals, Irish immigrants provided cheap labor on farms and in households. They were also illiterate, as "the English rulers of Ireland refused to provide public education for the Catholic Irish populations."

In *Discovering Hampton*, Janice Trecker wrote of the role of the Irish in the building of railroads, across the nation and here in town, calling the job "back-breaking...grueling labor". With tracks running all the way through town, she wrote, the railroad company was a significant employer of Hampton men. A 1963 article in the *Hartford Courant* that chronicled the development of the railroad in Hampton mentioned two early Irish families who were generationally involved. Martin Navin reported that his grandfather "helped lay the original track", and James Fitzgerald worked as a foreman. Both families lived near the train depots at Clark's Corners and on Station Road, and members continued employment with the railroad company through three generations.

One of the many contributions of the Irish to our town was the establishment of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Embraced by these and later immigrants, the Catholic Church was received far less enthusiastically by others who lived here. The late arrival of immigrants to small towns like Hampton didn't deter residents from adopting what Mr. Robertson described as "anti-Catholic and anti-Irish prejudices."

Up until 1850, Jesuit priests from Massachusetts met the spiritual needs of Catholics in northeastern Connecticut, however the surge of immigrants required local Catholic churches. The first Pastor of St. James in Danielson, Father Michael McCabe, a Dubliner, served mass alternate Sundays at the home of John Reilly, the original "Howard" house, as in "Howard Valley", and most recently where Peggy Fox lived. In 1860, Reilly and his Irish neighbors, Thomas McLaughlin, Jon McMahon, and their pastor, Father Thomas Preston, proposed the establishment of a Catholic church here. "The established protestants greeted this idea with no little resentment," Mrs. Trecker wrote, "and the church was sited, not on the main street, the usual location of village churches, but around the corner."

Governor Chauncey Cleveland donated an acre of land on Cedar Swamp Road, southwest of the newly built Center School and Town Hall, to site the Greek Revival Church. According to Mr. Robertson's article, "the church was built there because Hampton's 'town fathers' did not want it on Main Street. They gave the land and even gave trees to plant around the church so that it would not be visible from Main Street."

"The pretty church is now clearly visible....thanks to the destruction of the pines in the hurricane of 1938," Mrs. Trecker wrote, "but its position off the Main Street of town is a reminder of the religious, social, and political divisions of the nineteenth century."

Mass was first served in the church in 1877 with Father John Murphy, who boarded at the Chelsea Inn across from the Congregational Church, presiding. "At the time the church was dedicated to the Our Lady of Lourdes in 1877," Michael Winters wrote in a 2017 *Gazette* article commemorating the Church's 140th anniversary, "it was one of the first churches to be so dedicated in the entire country. The apparitions of the Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous in the small French village in the foothills of the Pyrenees mountains had occurred only nineteen years earlier." In 1896 pastoral care of the churches in Danielson, Brooklyn, and Hampton was given by Bishop Michael Tierney to the LaSalette Fathers, a religious order founded in France. The first child to be baptized at Our Lady of Lourdes was Mary Ann McLaughlin, born on January 26, 1877, the first wedding was on Christmas Day, 1879 between Mary Navin and Daniel Leary, and the last parishioners to pay pew rent, at ten dollars a year, were Mary Ann Reilly, Mary McMahon and James Fitzgerald.

Though our Catholic Church has not seen as many changes as our Congregational Church, which celebrates its 300th anniversary this year, beginning with its conversion from a colonial meeting house to the Greek Revival remodeling with its columned portico and steeple, Our Lady of Lourdes has experienced continual renovation and growth through the years. The interior of the church was decorated in 1918 with Father Julian Ginot accomplishing most of the work himself, notably the ornate stenciling on the walls. The building was wired for electricity, a furnace was installed, the confessional was built, the horse carriages were removed and a parking lot paved, the shrine to Our Lady was landscaped, the Ambrose Crane Center was constructed, the bell tower was erected, and the entrance ramp was installed. Clubs were organized to raise funds for improvements.

Though the Irish were the first parishioners, as more and more immigrants arrived on American shores, eventually reaching the rural corners of New England, the surnames of a variety of heritages start to appear. Records and relics reveal Our Lady of Lourdes as a sanctuary of ethnic diversity and cultural richness. One hundred and fifty years after those first immigrants arrived, a 2019 poll the *Gazette* conducted at the Hampton Harvest that year, asking residents to identify their cultural heritages, listed so many countries that a few people referred to themselves as "Heinz 57"; however, the largest percentage of those polled claimed Irish descent.

Most of our Christmas traditions come from other countries, the tree from a German legend, the poinsettia from a Mexican one, carols and cookies from several cultures. As the luminarias and farolitos of the southwest symbolize a lighted path for the Holy family to follow on Christmas Eve, candles in the windows also have religious roots. A lit candle placed in a window in Ireland was a secret message from Catholic families, forbidden by the English to practice their religion, asking a priest to bring the Blessed Sacrament into their homes at Christmastime. Today, the candles that

twinkle in many of our Main Street windows during Christmas -- including those of the Congregational Church and the Community Center -- beautifying our village and creating an aura of charm and tranquility, originated with this Irish tradition.

REMEMBERING... *Our Spiritual Leaders*

In the early days, the priest came from Danielson every other Sunday morning to hold Mass here at eleven o'clock, just one service. The Sunday in between we just didn't go to church. Sometimes the priest couldn't get here because of bad weather conditions and we waited until noon and then went home because church rules didn't allow a Mass after that time. But we made good use of that time for visiting.

Anna McDermott

When I first came in the thirties, at the Catholic Church, the priest would come on Sunday for the service, and that was it.

Stanley Gula

Father Markowicz married us. He buried both of my parents and baptized both of my children. He will always be most special.

Claire Winters

When Father Deasey was there, I always looked forward to Church. He always said something to make you feel special.

Dorothy Fox

I remember Father Crane's great energy. He was skilled at networking. Old ship bells were used for the bell tower. He could take things that others were casting aside and reuse them in new ways.

Barbara O'Connor

I'll remember Father Mac for many wonderful things, but especially for the time he spent with my mother and our family on the night she passed away. As always, he was such a comfort.

Gloria Burell

Father Boulanger was kind to children. He talked to them from the altar and tried to make the Mass meaningful for them.

Felix Winters

Father Sickler was our parish priest for a relatively short period of time, but time enough to make many lifelong friends, especially those who shared his passion for sports.

Nancy Bradley

Father Schloth, a quiet and spiritual man, with a ready smile, invited and encouraged me as a disabled member of the parish to be a member of the parish council and to use what gifts I might have for the church.

Kathy Burell

PASSAGES *Remembering Friends and Family*

JOHN F. IVAN SR. passed away on April 5th at the age of 74. Born on November 4, 1948, John's family immigrated to the United States in 1957, settling in Windham. John graduated from Windham Technical School in 1968, worked at the American Thread Company, and retired from General Cable. In 1981, John fulfilled a dream by building a log cabin and moving his family to Hampton where he was happiest walking the forest trails, fishing, cutting wood and working in his garden. Our condolences to his wife, Janice, his sons, John (and Tami) Jeremy (and Melissa) his grandchildren, and his sisters, Murielle Ivan-Marrotte of Hampton. Edith Ouimette, and Jacqueline Marceau.

DAVID DOBLINGER lost his battle with addiction on April 15th at the age of 45. Born on January 20, 1978 to Jane Nichols and Tom Phillips, he graduated from Parish Hill High School in 1996. David was employed in the car sales industry and in landscaping for many years. He was a good and kind man, leaving a lasting impression on many people. Predeceased by his mother and his adoptive father, William Doblinger, both of Hampton, David is survived by his step-father, Roderick Nichols, also of Hampton, his fiancée, Emily Gaffney, and her son Treyd, his brother Josh, his sisters Leila Austin and Lacy Fritz, and many nieces and nephews. Our condolences to all.

BROCK SQUIRES passed away on Father's Day, June 18th, in the 66th year of his life. Born on May 4, 1957, Brock grew up in Hampton where he attended the Consolidated School and Parish Hill and where he was well liked by all who knew him. Brock was self-employed for many years, owning his own trash collection service, subsequently working at Willimantic Waste Paper. He was also a dairy farmer. Predeceased by his brothers, Bucklyn, Bradyn, and Scott, all of Hampton, Brock is survived by his wife, Sharon, his son, Brock, his daughter, Krita, his stepsons, a step grandson, his sisters Carolanne and Roxanne, and his nephew, Jesse, of Hampton. Our condolences to his family.

RONALD ROCK passed away on August 27 at the age of 86. Born on January 21, 1947, Ron served his country in the U. S. Navy, his time in the service a testament to his courage, commitment, and patriotism. Upon his return, Ron embarked on a thirty-year career at General Dynamics Electric Boat where he was a skilled engineer and mentor to young professionals entering the field. A handyman in his everyday life, he was always willing to assist others with

repairs or projects. Ron found peace and tranquility in nature and passed on this love to his children and grandchildren. His greatest joy came from his family, his wife Susan, their daughters, Tammy (and Robert), Angela, and Michelle, and nine grandchildren. Our condolences to all.

PHILIP RICARD passed away peacefully on August 30th in the 61st year of his life. Born on Christmas Eve in 1961, Phil was a man of many interests and talents, love for his family the cornerstone of his life. A land surveyor, Phil was fascinated by oceanography and astronomy, always eager to learn more about the world beyond what the eye could see. Above all, Phil loved his grandchildren, cherishing every moment he spent with them. Our condolences to them, and to his wife Debbie (Paine) Ricard and his daughter Elizabeth Paine. Predeceased by five brothers, he leaves behind his brothers Norman and Denis, two sisters, Louise and Elizabeth, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

MICHAEL FRANCIS FORD passed away on September 3rd at the age of 75. Born on February 13, 1948 in Hartford, after graduating from South Catholic High School, Mike went on to have a long career with the Steamfitter Union Local 218, 84 and 777. He loved the outdoors, spending time fishing, trap and skeet shooting. Above all, he loved his family and attending sporting events and activities his grandchildren were involved with. Our condolences to them and to his children, Michael and his wife Rachel, Melissa and her husband Robert Adduci, and Mary Alyson Pilagin, and his sisters, Cathryn Oles, Anne Tranberg and Patricia Leroy.

ROBERT S. NEBORSKY passed away on September 21, one day before his 70th birthday. Born September 22, 1953, Robert grew up in Hampton where he and his family, and their sheep, were very involved with the local 4-H Club, and where he attended the Consolidated School, Parish Hill, and Eastern Connecticut State University. A talented vocalist and accomplished accordionist, Robert was a gentle soul. "You were everyone's favorite", the Tumel family confirmed. "We grew up together," wrote Neal Moon. "We were and still are the best of friends." Alan Freeman reminded us, "Robert fought a long battle with health issues, yet, it did not diminish his faith and trust in his Creator." Nor his optimistic disposition. Our condolences to Robert's sister Stephanie and her husband John Thrower.

ROBERT LAWLOR passed away on October 14th in the 89th year of his life. Born on February 22, 1934, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1955 and served in the Korean War. Returning home he joined his brother in the family photography business, working together for the next 20 years. An avid baseball fan, he coached little league for many years, and his passion for the outdoors ultimately led to building the dream house referred to as their "Little Piece of Heaven." His biggest joy was watching his grandkids excel in academics and athletics, cheering them on at the nearest basketball court or soccer field. Robert was kind and gentle, the first "to give the shirt off his back." Our condolences to his wife, Maureen, of 68 years, their children Nanci, Kathy Sweet (and Bill) Robert (and Stephanie), twelve grandchildren, and 14 great grandchildren.

LOUISE SABO passed away on October 27th after a battle with cancer. She was 64 years old. Born on July 28, 1959, Louise and her family have lived in Hampton for many years. Affectionately known as "Weezie", she was described as a "sweet and wonderful woman", a "lovely lady" and a "beautiful soul, inside and out," who "didn't want any services after she passed", so her daughter promised to throw her a party. On

November 12, family and friends gathered at the Franco-American Club to remember her. She leaves her husband, Tony, her children, Kim and Paul Sabo, Elaine and Randy Michaud and many beloved grandchildren. Our condolences to all.

KENNETH HENRICI passed away on November 4th at the age of 77. A graduate of the University of Connecticut, Ken served his country during the Vietnam War with honor as a 1st Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Following his military service, he embarked on a lifelong career in education, starting as a teacher in his hometown of Hamden and ending as the Superintendent of Regional District#11, where he devoted the last 16 years of his career. He deeply believed in the power of public education and in providing students with opportunities to challenge themselves, often expressing the view that everyone had the right to fail. Our condolences to his wife, Meryl, their children and their families.

SUSAN MARIE FOWLER passed away on November 21. Born on August 24, 1947, she was 76 years old. Our condolences to her husband, David, who wrote: It is with tears in my eyes that I must tell you of the passing of my sweet precious Susan. Words cannot express how fortunate and lucky I was to have her in my life for 54 years. She made my life complete, and I will keep her in my heart forever. To know her was to love her.

Aunt Sally was a very special lady: Movie star pretty, always cheerful, eternal sparkle in her eye, ready with cookies, a meal or a prank for us kids. And always interested in what we had to say or gotten up to. Even as dementia was taking her she maintained her sparkle and cheerfulness. She passed in 2020 at age 81. She and Uncle Rich had been married for more than 60 years. A couple days before she passed I visited her in the nursing home. She had been going in and out of consciousness for several days. When I entered her room she opened her eyes and greeted me with a bright and loving, "Jack." And then she asked, "Where did you get the birdseed?" I was gob-smacked – knocked back. How on earth did she know my wife had reminded me to get birdseed before I left? I had.

We just don't know what flights thee mind and soul take when a loved one is preparing to cross the bridge. Later going through her things, the following poem was found in her sewing box. It was for Uncle Rich.

WHEN I MUST LEAVE YOU

When I must leave you for a little while,
Please do not grieve and shed wild tears
And hug your sorrow to you through the years,
But start out bravely with a gallant smile;
And for my sake and in my name
Live on and do

All the things the same,
Feed not your loneliness on empty days,
But fill each waking hour in useful ways,
Reach out your hand to comfort and cheer
And I in turn will comfort you

And hold you near;
And never, never
Be afraid to die,
For I am waiting
For you in the sky!

I visited Uncle Rich often after Sally passed. Uncle Rich was not afraid. He passed within the year. I visited the day before he passed. On this, as on previous visits, he would always say, "I can't believe I will never see Sally again," and a lonely tear would appear in the corner of his eye. He would wipe it away before it could drop free. Many of us suspect he had stopped taking his heart medication. Love conquers all.

Uncle Grampus



JOSHUA'S TRUST

December 9 **Harvey Preserve Preview Hike** Federal Road, Chaplin, 1 – 2:30PM

December 9 **Nature Journaling with Arts & Crafts** Atwood Farm, 10AM – 1PM

January 1, 2024 **First Day Hike at Pigeon Swamp Preserve** Pigeon Swamp Road 10AM - NOON

For details, updates, cancellations or to register, go to <https://joshuatrust.org/events/>

CONNECTICUT AUDUBON AT TRAIL WOOD

December 21 **Winter Solstice Celebration** 6:30 – 9PM. Celebrate the beginning of the sun's return with readings, candle lighting, "magic fire", international solstice traditions and hot vegan chili with warm mulled cider. Potluck items welcome!

Fridays **Friday Afternoon Walks** 1PM

Join volunteers at Trail Wood for an invigorating hike on the Edwin Way Teale sanctuary.

First Wednesday of the Month **Trail Wood**

Troubadours 6 – 9PM . Join a group of music lovers who play and sing songs written during the period the Teales lived at Trail Wood, 1959-1993.

Second Sunday of the Month **Sunday Walk** 2 PM
Join Trail Wood Caretakers Laura & Paul Tedeschi for a Sunday walk on trails starting with an Edwin Way Teale reading. To register, or for information on fees, contact trailwood@ctaclub.org or call: 860.928.4948.

GOODWIN STATE FOREST

December 2 **Beginner Tracking Class** 2

8AM-10AM . Join wildlife tracker, Robin Chandler, on a tracking focused hike through Goodwin.

December 2 **Bobcats** 2 – 3:30PM . Pat Colburn's presentation focuses on the history, habitat, diet, behavior, and reproduction of bobcats in Connecticut.

December 7 **December Hike** 2 – 4PM. Join Naturalist Adam Drouin for a winter's day 3-mile hike to Fran Zumpano Memorial Beach and Governor's Island.

December 9 **Bald Eagles** NOON – 1:30PM
A discussion and slide show with Ginny Apple will feature eagles and their resurging population.

December 15 **Owl Pellet Dissection** 4 – 5PM
Join Adam Drouin for an owl pellet dissection with guaranteed bones to uncover.

December 16 **Long Distance Hike** 10AM – 1PM
Join us for a guided 5.5-mile hike through the forest with a visit to Black Spruce Pond.

December 26 **Winter Night Hike** 7 – 8:30PM
Join us for a guided night hike around Brown Hill Marsh, during the full moon of December.

Registration is required at ctwoodlands.org. Contact adam@drouin@gmail.com with questions.



I have a Christmas etiquette question:
is re-gifting acceptable?

One of Santa's Elves

My Dear Neighbor:

The holidays are a time for expressing affection and gratitude to those around us, whether by invitations to a meal, helpful services performed, or tangible gifts that we believe the recipient would like or appreciate. The key to all gift-giving of whatever dimension is the demonstration that the *recipient*, not the giver, is at the heart of the transaction. For many of us it's true that giving gifts, whether on prescribed occasions or impulsively, brings us just as much joy as receiving them. We should not, however, allow this personal joy to supersede the purpose of the act. That said, Auntie Mac is in no way inclined to find fault with someone who, upon receiving a perfectly fine Atelier Saint-André Perrin serving tray from Cousin Florence and can see no possible use for it at home but knows her dear friend has always been mad for that particular marbled motif, decides that it would make a lovely Christmas (or birthday) gift. The key here is the thought and care that goes into the redistribution of these items, and so, several ground rules must be adhered to. First, ensure that you are most certainly *not* giving the item back to the person from whence it came. Friendships and families have been shattered for less. The gift should by all means never have been displayed or used by you, at least that the recipient would know about.

(Auntie Mac realizes that she is tiptoeing into the realm of subterfuge, here, but re-gifting does require a bit of stealth, cunning, and common sense.) New items, of course (as opposed to antiques and ephemera) should be unused and in their packages. All gifts should be in excellent condition and wrapped nicely--by you, not the former giver. A gift should never be given solely because you want it out of your sight--there should be a genuine desire to present the recipient with something that you feel they would appreciate. Or find amusing. Or need right away, since they keep borrowing your old one.

Auntie Mac has never seen the need to hang onto items that one would never use, with two exceptions. One is the self-evident jumbo wall hanging of a boa constrictor one's father-in-law sent you from his sojourn to Maracaibo and expects to see it proudly displayed each time he visits. (It is then permissible to lock it up in the attic for the remaining 51 weeks of the year.) The other is based on pure affection and memory. The 17th Earl of Derby, a friend of my grandfather's, bequeathed to him an engraved pocket watch which he presented to me on my 18th birthday. I have never carried a pocket watch on my person (and it is rather busy—all those fleur-de-lis), but out of love for my grandfather I will not part with it. So to sum up, dear, things should be used, and it's a kindness to pass them on to those we think would appreciate them . . . far more than we apparently do.

Your Auntie Mac

Joy: such a small, simple word with such a powerful impact. We spent a lot of time this last year searching for kernels of joy in what felt like a sea of loss, understanding all the while the necessity of finding it. "To miss the joy is to miss all," wrote Robert Louis Stephenson, who was one of my mother's favorite authors, so to discover that these words were his is joy in itself, and brings many reminders. "Find out where joy resides, and give it a voice far beyond singing."



with Dayna McDermott

Where it resides. I suppose the most natural place to reclaim joy is in the garden where it greets us every morning in all seasons of the year. Most naturally in spring, when in the dismal days of March, the merest glimpse of a daffodil blade shouldering the dirt brings hope of the garden's resurgence. And in summer, where there are always new flowers to look forward to while we appreciate anew the cool of ancient ferns and pines. And in the fall as we stroll through the cornucopia of foliage, through limbs dangling leaves like jewels, collecting color and warmth for the bleakness to follow. And in winter, with the peaceful delicacy of snowflakes which precede the storm, and in its aftermath, the pristine surf, the sparkling sculptures of shrubs cloaked with snow, the willows with ice. There's joy in all of this.

Our grandson has returned all sorts of long gone joys to the garden, where the yard is once again reclaimed for playing Tag, Hide-and-Go- Seek, Mother May I, One-Two-Three Red Light! He walks out of the house, into a night filled with fireflies or on the morning of an Indian summer, stops for a moment to absorb everything, and with a depth beyond his years says, "I'm so happy I'm home," and then with a spirited, "I get to run all over the place!" he's off. He takes everyone who comes for a visit on a tour of what's important to him – which trees to climb and the sections of the stonewall to walk on, his sandbox and his tree house, inviting stuffed animals into the gazebo that he's turned into his veterinary office and inviting company to tea parties beneath the weeping cherry.

There are also flowers he particularly likes. His reasons are different than mine; I look to durability, longevity, compatibility, or the gift of it, flowers

from the gardens of friends and family. Our grandson favors those with vibrant colors, as in the fiery, scarlet branches of crocosmia, or size, as in the ten foot towers of sunflowers, or their ability to attract bees and butterflies. Dandelions, bluets and milkweed are favorites. He is fascinated with all of the creatures that venture into the yard -- bees, butterflies and dragonflies, deer, rabbits, squirrels, turkeys, chipmunks, foxes. They all gladden the yard. As do his toys! Trucks, scooters, soccer balls, wiffle bats, Frisbees -- we have to pick them all up when it's time to mow the grass, and before the first snowfall of the season, but they make the lawn a cheerier place. One can only smile at the sight of a radio flyer.

Joy dwells in these things, in the sandbox extending from the deck, filled with the tools for constructing castles and building roads, in the tree house resting in the crook of the birch tree, where a flag proudly proclaiming his name, his kingdom, is hoisted. These are things Juan built for his grandson; he also builds things that bring me joy. From branches he constructs obelisks for clematis, and arbors for Concord grapes, and fences to protect the vegetables which make me feel like I'm at Sturbridge Village every time I pick a tomato. Wind chimes designed from sea shells, from an assortment of old bells, of old spoons, the keys of a xylophone, metal landscape spikes which produce, surprisingly, the sweetest of sounds, birdhouses and feeders that coax certain birds into the garden. If you provide these and plants that invite winged visitors -- milkweed for butterflies, coral bells for hummingbirds, catmint for honey bees, black-eyed Susans for dragonflies, thistle for goldfinches -- they will come. Their simple presence, swift flight paused to alight on a petal, gives us joy.

My most prized possession? The swing that Juan salvaged from my father's garage. I recognized the weathered, old board the moment I saw it, transporting me to all the hours I spent on it as a child. Most important, it reminds me of my father, who repurposed materials for everything -- stairs, birdhouses, benches -- crafting this swing from a salvaged scrap of lumber and suspending it, with natural hemp rope, from the branches of a sugar maple tree. It has lasted all this while to lift his daughter, his granddaughters, and his great-grandson into the dream world of sunlit leaves.

Joy, above all, lives in the people we love, and lives on in the memories of those we have loved, which come to us sometimes in the form of an object, or a song, or a scent, and always when we need them most.

And at Christmas time, when joy can be found everywhere -- in the twinkling magic of the Christmas tree, the scents and the sounds of the season, the warm embrace of friends and family, the exhilaration in the instant darkness turns into a world of blinking lights, and in the peacefulness that candles in the windows evoke. Joy springs from the innocent belief that reindeer pull a sleigh filled with benevolence from the North Pole to the rest of the world, and settles in the ancient belief of the miracle at Bethlehem. The purest joy in our homes found in the faces of children on Christmas morning when they realize Santa has come; and in our town, in the faces of our elders when their neighbors sing carols to them, for another year.

May your holiday be filled with the memories you make and those you've saved, and with joy that extends throughout the new year.

NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED

Who was the person who coined the term, "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished?" Oscar Wilde, a 19th century poet and playwright. If you think that is sarcastic, then apparently it hasn't happened to you. Yet.

My husband and I lived in Providence when we were first married in 1971, but we longed to live in the country. We got into vitamins and health food and herbs, and while shopping at a health food store for vitamins and herbs, we got

into a conversation with the proprietor about the herbs she was selling from Greene Herb Gardens. She told us that it was beautiful out there, so we decided to visit Greene Herb Gardens in Greene, Rhode Island not far from the Connecticut border. Greene Herb Gardens was an herb shop located in one tiny wing of a huge summer mansion that was built by a wealthy Arnold man around the time of the First World War. The store was run by two elderly women, Mittie Arnold and Margaret Thomas. I believe it was Mittie's father who built the summer place. We bought more herbs from them in small jars. We told them that we were looking for a place in the country to live. Mittie wondered if we would be interested in renting the apartment that the chauffeur had lived in. There was a five-bay stone garage behind the summer mansion and barn. Who in America owned five vehicles circa 1917? Only the wealthy. We went to look at the apartment. Obviously, it was on a second floor since the five-bay garage took up the first floor. We fell in love with the apartment. Hardwood floors, soapstone sink in the kitchen, claw foot bathtub, beautiful view of the valley where the herbs had been grown. In the 1950's Greene Herb Gardens sold herbs to Pepperidge Farm for them to use in a tea bread. The valley where the ladies had grown herbs was a meadow now.

We moved in and loved the place. It took longer to drive to my job in Providence, but the miles driving through Coventry to get to Rte. 95 were beautiful and worth the long drive. We planted a garden behind the garage. The owners had their farm help plough a garden for us. We grew wonderful vegetables there. As the decades went by, of all the gardens we had when we lived in South Killingly, Burlington, and Scotland Connecticut, the best melons we ever grew were in Greene. Not only was the soil rich, it had a little sand in it too, so drainage was good in the soil. At that time, I was doing the laundry with something called Ivory Snow Flakes, which was a powder that came in a box. Come winter I told my husband I found mouse turds next to the box of Ivory Snow and a hole bit into the box. I learned that mice eat the fat that is in soap. My husband set a mouse trap next to the box. In the middle of the night we heard a loud snap that woke us both up.

My husband got up to check the trap. He did not find a dead mouse in the trap. He found a mouse that had reached into the trap for the cheese and got his foot caught in the trap. He carefully picked up mouse and trap in a way the mouse couldn't bite him and carried the whole thing downstairs, opened the door, bent over and released the mouse over the wintry grass. The mouse limped away.

The next summer we planted lots of veggies and included small watermelons plus cantaloupe. About twenty feet away from the garden was a very small copse, with one sapling in it and some brush. When the midget watermelons looked ripe, I leaned over and picked one only to be astonished to find that a hole had been bitten into it and the insides of the melon eaten out. What a disappointment after all that work of planting seed and weeding till the melons were ripe. The next day when I went to pick veggies and a watermelon, I saw a mouse limping out of the garden and over to the copse. He had made another hole in another watermelon and eaten the insides. He was living proof of the saying that no good deed goes unpunished!

Angela H. Fichter

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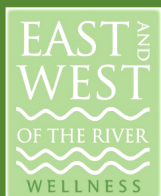


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