The imagination and ingenuity of local artists never ceases to astonish me. In past years my particular weakness has been the animals made from recycled paper and cardboard by Marilyn Olsen, and my collection of Olsens now includes a giraffe, cat, dog, rhino, zebra, and cow. But there is something for everyone at this annual gathering.

I remember Debby Jones’s alligator made from bubble wrap and Skip Hunt’s sock monkey paintings on scrap wood. Then there is the annual invasion of Don Hain’s menacing robots made from tin cans. And could I (or anyone else) forget such Barbara Stone epics as her Tyvek wedding dress or her majestic patio umbrella-turned-giant martini glass?

There are usually as many as 50 artists presenting their works. The prices are very reasonable, and of course 30 percent of the take is always donated to Diane Dupuis’s art department at CCS. I couldn’t end this piece without mentioning the great help Richard gets from his co-curators, the aforementioned Ms. Dupuis and Karolene Carlson of the CCS Parent-Teacher Organization.

—John Miller

Reality TV Hits Cornwall This Fall

The New York media company currently developing “Talent Show,” the TV reality show that will showcase real-life performances by small-town residents all over America, has scheduled Cornwall for one of their early segments.

The show’s backers at Fortuna Media hope to draw a portrait of small-town America today by tracking a talent show’s organizers as they identify potential performers and coax them into appearing live in front of their neighbors and peers. The cameras will then follow them through rehearsals, backstage jitters, and the actual performances. Filmed footage of local audience reaction will be an integral part of the production.

Show creator Tommaso Cinquemani said that Fortuna Media has not yet found a network to produce or air the show, but he is currently in talks with one cable TV network and already has signed up other small-town talent shows in rural Ohio, Nevada, and Texas. Fortuna originally had two other New England towns under consideration, but a visit to last November’s Cornwall production at the invitation of yours truly convinced him that Cornwall was the place to be.

“Television and the talent show have been partners since the very first days of the industry,” Cinquemani told me the other day. “We aim to present a picture of a simpler, less complex age, to go back to the roots, which only seems appropriate during these difficult economic times.”

As in “Block Party,” the new CBS reality TV show that is currently recruiting cast...
members nationwide, “Talent Show” will emphasize the “neighborhood bonding experience” of families who live in close proximity showing off their special gifts. But unlike “Block Party,” there will be no cash prize to stoke competition among the performers. Instead, says Cinquemani, “Talent Show” will bring to light the remarkable shared community spirit that animates even the smallest village. —Bob Clotessy

The Real Stuff
Visit Irene and Buddy Hurlburt’s Haubtoy Hill Farm and you’ll see an old ambulance next to the farm stand; it’s the “Milkbulance” that rescued the dairy operation. Well, that’s not exactly true, but it helped. Like many local farmers, Buddy has gone out of traditional dairying. “When you’re getting $10 a hundredweight for milk that costs $16 to produce, you can’t survive,” says Buddy. “There’s more money in plumbing. But my heart is in farming—the family has been here since 1745—so I had to figure out a way to pay the bills.” In coolers inside the stand are jugs of creamline milk, tubs of ricotta and yoghurt, cartons of eggs. The Hurlburts will also have blueberries, raspberries (transplanted from Marty Rubin’s patch), maple syrup, honey, vegetables, fresh poultry, pork and beef, Christmas trees. “We have customers from Bethlehem, Waterbury, Seymour. When they leave with their dairy or produce they say, ‘This is the real stuff.’ And of course everybody is really supportive in Cornwall.”

That’s what I keep hearing as I talk to farmers: Cornwall is supportive. “Look at what’s happening in the Village!” says Debra Tyler of Local Farm and Motherhouse. “Dan Gracey’s dream was to return cattle to the valley, and he’s doing it. He’s got his Milking Devons on the hill behind the Library, and he’s working with valley landowners about pasturage. Donors made Stone Wall Dairy possible. The Farmers’ Market is well attended. I’m here because I have the world’s best landlord. And our first selectman has pushed us to be aware of agriculture.”

Indeed, agriculture was one of the reasons Gordon Ridgway first ran for office. And 18 years ago, he told me, the state recommended two formal ways for towns to encourage farming. Cornwall implemented both. It created an Advisory Agricultural Commission, one of the few in Connecticut, and adopted a “right-to-farm” clause as a component of zoning regulations. Farmers—and the town—needed protection from residents who complained about farm machinery or manure in the road, whining sawmills, the whiff of irrigation. The clause reads in part, “No agricultural or farming operation shall be deemed to constitute a nuisance provided such operation follows generally accepted agricultural practices.” Says Gordon: “So if you live in Cornwall, that’s the deal.”

Bill Dinneen, chair of the Agricultural Commission, regrets that they can’t do more for local farmers: “The system seems to be wrong. It kills me that we couldn’t prevent the Scovilles from going out of dairying.” Nonetheless, the commission, which has 13 members and two student advisors, is very active. Its main focus is on the Ag Fair, which was brought back from the old days of Grange sponsorship and had its best year in 2008. “We’re also very involved in education,” Bill says. “We have the Cornwall Agriculture and Land Fund (CALF), and we’re proud that an anonymous donor has given $10,000 for agricultural scholarships. Some of those funds are helping Charlie Russ up at SUNY Cobleskill, where he’s studying mechanics.”

Members of the commission can also be proud that they provide mutual aid. Donna Larson noticed a grant opportunity in Yankee Magazine, and they are all working on it to help Buddy Hurlburt restore a historic barn. Ted Larson tells me that Wendy Kennedy is helpful with state grants and farm bureau programs.

One of their duties is to meet yearly with farmers to oversee operations on eased lands such as the Lorch Farm. After Art Lorch sold development rights to the state (“He had great vision,” says Cilla Mauro), Chris Hopkins bought the farm (now Stone Wall Dairy Farm), and the town came in with over a hundred donations to buy the east 100 acres. “Chris has been a model tenant,” says Gordon. “He’s fixed up the barns, too.”

Chris sells raw milk from his 21 Jerseys, who produce 65 gallons a day. Speaking of proposed legislation that calls for more testing, additional labeling, and the prohibition of raw milk sales in retail stores, Chris says, “I’m not sure the bill will make it out of committee, but the issue has certainly brought us producers together.”

“And kicked up a lot of support and publicity,” adds Debra.

There’s more than milk at Stone Wall Dairy. In one end of the greenhouse, Chris gathers eggs from the hay-lined nests of his multicolored flock, 130 Rhode Island Reds, Barred Rocks, and Buff Minorcans. When he opens the door, they burst outside to frolic in the sun and leap the low fence onto the grass. Soon they’ll be grazing on the hillside across Route 7, housed in a coop on wheels (unless they end up in the freezer).

And Chris has help from Jonathan Kirschner of Stone Wall Vegetables, who has started flats of onions and tomatoes inside the other end of the bright warm greenhouse, and from Ken Gladding, who ran the farm in the past. Chris envisions his farm as a welcoming community place for both farmers and their customers. “Look at that view! I’d like to build a local food system, perhaps on a countywide scale. You’d have to be strategic; is this interest in local food just a fad? Will it last? The ‘food shed’ would need to be big enough, but not too big, and be tied together with some kind of marketing piece. This farm might, because of its roadside location, be a logical selling place for others.”

Ted Larson (who produces eggs, tomatoes, green beans, and honey) isn’t so sure that “strong-backed, hard-willed, and independent” farmers would buy in to such a collaboration. “We market on our own,” he said. And yet, once upon a time, Cornwall farmers did buy in to cooperative dairying. Only that, as Chris warns, it got “too big,” and then, as Bill Dinneen lamented, the system no longer fit the need.

Whatever their views on how to run the farm or fulfill the mission, these farmers are the real stuff, in this for the long haul over the rocky hills. As Will Kennedy says of his Lineback veal operation, “You have to be in the business seven years before you might see a profit.”

“It’s a peculiarity of our town that we do more on worse land,” says Gordon, “because we’re stubborn and have a commitment to the land.”

“We’re so proud of ourselves for being first in the state in energy efficiency,” says Debra. “Maybe we can be first in sustainable agriculture, too.” —Ella Clark

Welcome
Haylen Alexis to Jennifer and Bradford Sincovic
Jules Parisi to Olivia Prud’homme and Stefan Parisi

Good-Bye to a Friend
Judy Gates

Land Transfers
Stone Brick House, LLC, to U.S. Bank, foreclosure on property at 378 Kent Road.
Federal National Mortgage Association to Brian J. and Jennifer Moore, 7,386 acres and improvements thereon at 266 Great Hollow Road for $210,000.
Elizabeth Van Doren to John C.L. and Sarah V.C. Van Doren, 2,857 acres and improvements thereon at 399 Cornwall Hollow Road for $174,000.

A Scoville Connection
It’s been said that half of Cornwall is related to the Scovilles. While this may no longer be true, among that half is a fairly well-known artist, James Henry Moser, whose work will soon be on display in the Library.

So, who was James Henry Moser? The Scoville connection starts in April 1877, with the 23-year-old Moser living in Toledo, Ohio. Needing extra income, he accepted students, among them two young women from Cornwall, Mrs. Lydia Hubbard and Miss Martha Scoville, in Toledo at the time for an extended visit with relatives. Before their visit ended in June, Mr. Moser had proposed marriage to Miss Scoville.

Martha did not say no, but she did return to Cornwall. James came to visit when he could as his career blossomed and his work appeared frequently in magazines. They finally married in 1883.

The couple lived first in Atlanta, then made their home in Washington, D.C., in 1887, where Moser’s work was seen in
HELPING CORNWALL
The Cornwall Foundation is pleased to announce its latest grants: $3,000 to the Cornwall Housing Corporation as the first portion of a $10,000 matching grant for infrastructure in connection with the development of their parcel program property on Route 7, $1,000 to the Chronicle for costs in connection with a future fundraising appeal, and $500 to Greenwoods Counseling Service for their ongoing work with the Cornwall community. Since its inception in 2002 the foundation has granted $18,500 to 17 organizations.

The Cornwall Foundation is dedicated to enhancing life in Cornwall. Requests for grants are accepted throughout the year.

—Paul Baren, President

CORNWALL MINOR POETS AWARD
The Cornwall Hollow Union of Minor Poets is pleased to announce the results of the competition for the best sonnet celebrating real-estate developers. The winning sonnet was submitted by the Real Estate Developers’ Glorification Association, which strictly observed the Shakespearean rhyme scheme:

When in disgrace with conservationists,
We’re soiled by our lucrative endeavors;
We love to serve those privileged vacationists
Who’d rather ruin land than save the beavers.
Oh why are we so oft reviled as villains
When we’re the ones who really have the Vision?
We should be praised by you and all your chilluns,
Not targeted with insults and derision.
Just think! A nice casino in the Village,
Some neon billboards rising in the Hollow,
And after just a little forest-pillage,
Hotels and spas; rock festivals to follow.
Let’s first propose the plan to Donald Trump:
To honor him, we could re-name the Dump.

—Franny Taliaferro

Letters to the Chronicle

Winter of Our Discontent
Cornwallians concerned about global warming may take heart from this winter’s statistics. Twenty-six snowstorms each deposited over one inch on the ground, and three ice storms also required the town to sand its roads. By mid-March the weather had closed down CCS on four days, and eleven days had two-hour delays, but still counted as full days of instruction. Four days will be tacked on to the end of the school year.

Mohawk Ski Area reports having had “a pretty reasonable winter.” Business is largely consistent from year to year, says President Carol Lugar, because its primary market is families with young children. March was a great month for Mohawk because there was more light, but still good snow, and over 60 inches of snow remained at the top at mid-month, most of it man-made.

Roads are the big-ticket items. Some winters in the past have produced under 20 storms, but lately we have had over 30. This year the Town Crew used 600 tons of salt and 1,800 tons of sand in clearing our 69 miles of roads. The cost of materials has gone up; nonetheless, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway says the town’s goal is to spend less than last year by using different materials, which means more of the cheaper sand and pure salt and less of the expensive salt with additives. This year’s expenditure is 10 percent less than last year’s, but it’s still over budget, so the overrun will come up before the next town meeting. With luck, we have seen the last winter storm this season.

—Ann Schilling

A Many-Voiced Tribute to Dr. Fitz
At the end of this, her sixth year as principal of CCS, “Dr. Fitz” is moving on from the end of the school year.

Mohawk Ski Area reports having had “a pretty reasonable winter.” Business is largely consistent from year to year, says President Carol Lugar, because its primary market is families with young children. March was a great month for Mohawk because there was more light, but still good snow, and over 60 inches of snow remained at the top at mid-month, most of it man-made.

Roads are the big-ticket items. Some winters in the past have produced under 20 storms, but lately we have had over 30. This year the Town Crew used 600 tons of salt and 1,800 tons of sand in clearing our 69 miles of roads. The cost of materials has gone up; nonetheless, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway says the town’s goal is to spend less than last year by using different materials, which means more of the cheaper sand and pure salt and less of the expensive salt with additives. This year’s expenditure is 10 percent less than last year’s, but it’s still over budget, so the overrun will come up before the next town meeting. With luck, we have seen the last winter storm this season.

—Ann Schilling
Events & Announcements

A Contradance with Still the Homegrown Band and Jim Gregory calling will be held on Saturday, April 4, from 7 to 9 P.M. at the Town Hall. Call 672-0550 to learn more.

At the Cornwall Library:

• Earthsols: Solar design lessons from New Mexico to be presented by Kate Freygang on Saturday, April 4, at 11 A.M.

• James Henry Moser: Ralph Fetherolf and Jim Longwell will talk about their artist ancestor on Saturday, April 11, at 4 P.M.

• Obama and the Supreme Court: Norman Dorsen offers his predictions on Saturday, April 18, at 11 a.m.

• Saturday Children’s Playgroup begins April 18 from 10:30 A.M. to noon and will meet through the end of the school year; recommended for ages 3-6. For information call Amy Buck at 672-6874.

• Story Hour for pre-K and kindergartners resumes Friday, April 17, at 1:15 P.M. and runs for eight weeks.

• Donate Your Books: Please drop off gently used or new children’s and young adult books, the focus of this year’s Memorial Day weekend book sale.

• Donate Food-Related Items for this June’s Food Glorious Food fundraiser, from cookbooks to kitchen gadgets and other unusual, prized items.

• Picturing Books: A four-session afterschool program focusing on drawing and painting for grades 3-5 begins Wednesday, April 15. For details, call 672-6874.

Sweet April

The skies may be gray, but the agreeable smell of earth foretells the gardening season ahead. Some of us will be digging out the flower garden to plant vegetables this year, a thrifty response to current economic woes. Whatever seeds are in your planting basket, don’t forget to plant a check in the mail to the Chronicle. Thanks!

Art in Cornwall: Beginning April 7 the Library will host a show organized by the Historical Society of works by Cornwall artist James Henry Moser (see article “A Scoville Connection”). The show runs through May 2.

The Cornwall Iraq Moratorium will meet on Friday, April 17, at 7 P.M. Please call 672-0183 for information and location.

Free Blood Pressure Screening offered in Cornwall the second Monday of each month from noon to 1 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. For details call VNA Northwest at 567-6000 or 1-800-752-0215.

Motherhouse Activities.

For more information, ticket prices, and to reserve places, call Debra Tyler at 672-0229. Also see www.motherhouse.us.

• April 11, 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Old Style Life Skills Series Workshop, Sourdough Starters.

• April 18, 7:30 P.M. Family Round Sing at the Town Hall.

Affordable Senior Housing is the topic of discussion at a meeting on Friday, April 17, from 4 to 5 P.M. at the Town Hall. Input into the planning process for ten rental units proposed for construction in Cornwall for low-income seniors is welcome from the community, especially potential tenants. Need a ride? Call 672-6261.

Kindergarten Registration for the 2009–2010 school year will be held on April 15, 16, and 17. Any child turning five on or before December 31, 2009, is eligible. Parents need to bring the child’s immunization record and birth certificate. To schedule a time for your child to visit the kindergarten room and meet Mrs. Stiewing, call the office at 672-6617.

Artists, Musicians, Performers, Merchants are needed to fill the calendar of special events at this summer’s West Cornwall Farmers’ Market. Call Bianca at 672-2969.

What Is Washington Doing for Cornwall?

Ask your senator and representative on Saturday, April 25, at CCS from 3 to 5 P.M. Christopher Dodd and Chris Murphy will talk about the economy and what can be done for small towns like Cornwall. A Q&A session and reception will follow.

The Tenth Annual Art at the Dump will take place at the Transfer Station on Saturday and Sunday, April 25 and 26. (See insert.)

A Red Cross Blood Drive will be held at the UCC Parish House on Tuesday, April 28, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M. Walk-in donors welcome, or make an appointment at 1-800-GIVELIFE. Minimum age is 17; no maximum. Good food and conversation, too!

The Cornwall Child Center’s eighteenth annual auction, Pig ‘n Jig, will be held on Saturday, May 2. (See insert for details.)

The Cornwall Food Pantry is now staffed by volunteers and open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 A.M. to noon. Located in the building behind the Town Hall, with its own entrance on the far right, the pantry is intended for any Cornwall resident in need. Information at cornwallfood@optonline.net or 672-0595.

THE CHRONICLE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

We hope you enjoy this on-line edition of the Cornwall Chronicle. Remember that all our revenues come from readers like you, and we need your help to continue producing this electronic edition along with the print edition. If your contribution is $15 or more, we’d be glad to mail the print edition to any out-of-town address. Please mail your tax deductible gifts to Cornwall Chronicle Inc. 143 Cream Hill Rd., West Cornwall, CT 06796. Comments, letters and news may be E-mailed to the publishers at elfhill@aol.com.