Demolition by Neglect

The paint peels, weeds grow on the porch, tarps flap forlornly on the tornado-damaged roof. Rumsey rots, with no remedy in view.

Last month, Ben Gray, who lives next door to the former school that was once considered derelique, but Rumsey Hall continues to to his serious offer received for the property, and "deemed unsafe," and only a state law that now comes through the correction of the building to Rumsey, which will have twelve chimneys of its own. His final word: "I will accept donations." —Charles Osborne

AUGUST 1999

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NOTE: School opens September 1; closed Labor Day, September 6
Cornwall ambassador and carpenter, told me that it bothered her that many of the volunteers were excited to return home to their hot showers and comfortable beds. She was happy living with less. We are both thankful for what we have, but also realize it is more than we need. We left our Mexican friends with more than they had before, but not as much as we would have liked.

My journey to Mexico was inspiring. I had the best time. I encourage anyone able to volunteer for the La Casa Project, or similar organizations, to do so. I am thankful for having had the chance to do such a wonderful thing.

—Devon Root

### Farewell to the Pines

On July 10, Peter Del Tredici, Director of Living Collections at Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, led about 50 people on a walk along the edge of the former Cathedral Pines to see what had happened to the forest in the ten years since it was devastated by the 1989 tornado.

As nearly everyone knows, the Cathedral Pines are gone and will never return. The conditions that gave rise to them a couple of hundred years ago no longer exist.

Forests are always changing, Peter told us. He pointed to a rare surviving elm and seven times the size of the present facility. But all in all the mood was distinctly upbeat. A couple of days later I walked the path for volunteer workers throughout the area. Librarian Girmy said even now deer could hardly penetrate the damaged area to a glade where a few large seedlings of hemlocks and other fast-growing trees. And already on hand were the Litchfield Hills Pipes and Drums, trim in Scottish bonnets, white shirts, kilts of McLean Loch Buie tartan, and tasseled knee socks, ready to do their thing in style.

A walk-through of the new library plan enabled viewers to visualize a generous-sized children's wing at left of the entrance and the stacks wing at far right, with a meeting room for special programs in a smaller wing directly ahead. At the center will be an open gallery, with space for periodicals, reference works, browsing areas, and electronic work stations. Librarian Ginny Potter quite naturally gravitated to where the circulation desk will be, not far from the entrance. Total cost of the project: $1,750,000, with $1,265,000 raised so far, leaving $485,000 to be raised. Total area: 6,000 square feet, over seven times the size of the present facility.

From 4:10 to 4:30 p.m., the church bells rang out, marking the tornado's brief but disastrous duration. A moment of high drama came when the St. Peter's bell got tangled in its rope and was untangled by daredevil Dan Evans, who scaled the steep roof without the benefit of ladder or handholds, crawling crabwise upward and along the roof ridge to reach the belfry. After dedication of a newly planted red oak “to the people and community spirit that helped Cornwall recover from the July 10, 1989, tornado” (this from a plaque mounted nearby), there was an open-mike session for those wishing to share their tornado stories. Happy memories abounded of “Blakey’s Bar and Grill,” when Pat and Jerry ran a non-stop restaurant from their kitchen for volunteer workers throughout the arduous cleanup period. On a less cheerful note, other speakers recalled the green and yellow sky just before the storm struck, then the total blackness and raging wind and water and noise like a train coming through.

But all in all the mood was distinctly upbeat. As poet Oliver Eldridge put it during the open-mike session, “The bonds made by disaster are long and sweet indeed.”

—Jean F. Leich

### Great Day

Saturday, July 10, was a double-barreled occasion, marking not only the tenth anniversary of the tornado that roared through our town on that day back in 1989, but also the kickoff of the fund-raising drive for the future Cornwall Library.

A 45-minute video of scenes of tornado damage, copied from slides and eyewitness photographs, were on view at the present-day library. Two large tents rose on the green, one for people attending concerts and speeches, another for food service, with a smaller one at the entrance to the site of the new library, neatly outlined on the grass in yellow ribbons. Also on hand were the Litchfield Hills Pipes and Drums, trim in Scottish bonnets, white shirts, kilts of McLean Loch Buie tartan, and tasseled knee socks, ready to do their thing in style.

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—Jean F. Leich

### Desolation He Hath Made

On Sunday, July 11, about 40 Cornwallians gathered on the Town Green to give thanks once more for our deliverance from the great tornado. In a tent in front of the Rotary Club bandstand we heard Peter Hammond and Scott Cady speak and lead us in prayer. Lisa Lansing Simont read from the 46th Psalm (“Be still, and know that I am God”) and St. Matthew’s Gospel (“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”). Stephen Beecher read a prayer on behalf of St. Bridget’s parish, and Rudi Wolf read appropriate blessings in mellifluous Hebrew and English, including “for the infiltration of the earth by Heaven.”

Music, traditional and contemporary, was provided by Cornwall’s own Cotsfoot Chorus, accompanied by David Pastorello.

Ten years have covered up much of the damage wrought by the tornado; but on that Sunday behind the bandstand the surviving half of a tall maple tree shimmered in the noonday sun.

—John Leich

### Welcome

Peter Daniel to Joanne Silbert Windas and Thomas Windas

Megan Rose to Ronald and Catherine Knapp Aakjar

### Good-bye to Friends

Adelaide Ewing Gay

Vincent Merola, Jr.

### Congratulations

Kristal Heinz to Travis Callahan

Nancy Hurlburt to Robert Hofelder II

### Land Transfers

Patricia Hayden Blake to Richard R. and Marnell B. Stover, house and 8 acres, $410,000.

John and Patricia O’Hara to Robert M. and Margot H. Feely, house and land on 113 Pierce Lane for $387,000.

Werner B. Pfeiffer to Karen J. Greenberg, house and land on Route 45 for $410,000.

Ruth M. Maedel to Alfred G. and Patricia J. Haut, house at 402 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike for $70,000.

### CCS Expansion?

Will the sound of hammers and saws fill the air of our school again? A growing school population, increased need for smaller rooms, and a gym that is too small may result in another expansion of the
Letters to the Chronicle

A DIFFERENT APPROACH
This selectman isn’t trying to slow down the planning process for the new gym and classroom space at Cornwall Consolidated School. Quite the contrary; I am writing and speaking out in town to suggest ways to hasten and smooth the process, and cut its cost.

The usual way to proceed at this point in our school expansion process is to form a building committee that then hires an architect to do preliminary drawings and cost estimates. In the past Cornwall has spent $76,000 on drawings that didn’t result in buildings. Litchfield just spent $35,000 on a school study by architects producing a $8 million plan that town government refused to put to Litchfield voters. Cornwall can do better than this; Cornwall can think through at the start better than this.

Recently I spent part of a morning with Gay Capitano, vice president of Borghesi Building and Engineering in Torrington. They do steel building systems, an alternative to traditional bricks and mortar. Mr. Capitano and I visited the new school gym in Harwinton, which Borghesi completed about three years ago at a cost slightly under $500,000. This figure included engineering and design, site prep, heating, plumbing, insulation, electrical work, and a connector to the main school building. Harwinton had sought out Borghesi after the architectural firm hired to do the preliminary work produced a $1.5 to $2 million design. Borghesi’s designers, working with the people of Harwinton, produced a structure costing a third as much.

It is this kind of thinking and investigation that the people of Cornwall can do well. I have more ideas than just a steel building. You probably do too. I want those ideas on the surface and examined by a building committee before we spend dime one on architects. The architect we eventually hire should enter the process to fine tune the committee’s affordable construction concept.

Should there be an architect on the building committee? Yes, of course. You need somebody with design experience and who knows the state building code. You should also have a builder. I also think it might be helpful to have a landscape architect. Most important, you need a chairperson known and respected for his or her tact; Cornwall is blessed with several people of this kind.

My hat is off to Patrick Mulberry, volunteer architect who did the preliminary evaluation and drawings for the PTA gym study. I think his work is a sound basis for a building committee to begin work. The gym study report is included in the Cornwall Education Strategic Study Report, copies of which are available in both town libraries and the Town Hall. The report is a good, quick read and every parent and voter should read it before the first Building Plans Informational Meeting to be held at CCS on August 4.

And everyone in Cornwall who can should plan to come to that meeting. Let’s put our ideas to this thing right! —Earl Brecher, selectman

POSTAL ADDENDUM
In his very informative letter about the good work of the Cornwall Postal Services, which appeared in the May issue of the Chronicle, Ken Keskinen failed to include Rose Bowman, whose 35-mile Cornwall Bridge route is covered cheerfully and most efficiently six days a week.

—Natasha Ellenberg
(Cornwall Bridge, of course)

ARE WE PLAYING IT TOO SAFE?
I am offering playground equipment free to school or non-profit organizations—excellent condition, institutional quality: 16-foot stainless steel slide, a three-seat swing set with trapeze and rings, ten-foot jungle gym with parallel bars and slide poles. Please call 672-6090.

This offer was made to Lisa Lansing Simont for the Library, and she was reluctant because of the liability. We can’t have a diving board at the lake for fear of injury, I can’t go on a Park and Rec.-sponsored bird walk without signing a full page liability waiver! Life is full of risks. We take calculated risks daily, because we think they are worthwhile. Shouldn’t we allow our kids opportunities to explore their potential, to learn to climb to the next ring or to swing a little higher, to take turns and share?

—Ben Gray

SWIMMERS TAKE NOTE
In Cornwall a little-known gem for the avid swimmer is Mohawk Pond. It offers the clearest water, no weeds, and a perfect half-mile loop with easy visual targets. The boat ramp access near Mohawk Camp is easily found by following the boat launch signs from Green Hill Road. My route is to wade out about 20 feet to survey the situation, counting fishermen and canoists (usually one or two) and swimmers on the opposite rock (varies from none to thirty). Then I dive in and go into my own world—absolutely clean and soothing, that swimmer’s experience of gliding and working out the kinks by building a rhythm until you’re as fluid as—well—the pond itself.

In the middle is the best place to rest. Float a minute, feel the sun and note the birds and movement on the edges—very peaceful. Reach the rock and return. Twice is a mile; once is a great refresher too. The best times to go are early or late in the day; midday can be crowded. Dogs are welcome.

So if you’re in it for the swim as I am, this is a simple, clean routine. —Katherine Freygang

present Cornwall Consolidated School building.

The first of two informational meetings on this subject will be held Wednesday, August 4, 7:30 p.m., at CCS. At that time, members of the Cornwall Education Strategic Study Committee (CESSC) will present summaries of their work and answer questions. The second meeting will be on Friday, September 24, also at 7:30 p.m. at the school.

In November 1998 the Board of Selectmen established the CESSC to review all of the physical-plant needs of the school and to recommend solutions. This followed a town-wide survey created, circulated, and interpreted by the PTA Gymnasium Committee, which concluded there was strong agreement among the respondents that the current CCS physical education facility is inadequate. In addressing its charge, the CESSC considered not only space concerns, but also school population projections, room utilization, parking and playing space, and other possible locations for all or part of the school.

After six meetings to consider the work performed by various subcommittees, the CESSC sent to the Board of Education a series of recommendations in April. The primary one is that the BOE request the Board of Selectmen to appoint a Building Committee to develop plans for and determine the cost of adding a gymnasium and making renovations for a school population of 250. Other recommendations ask the selectmen to re-route Cream Hill Road and research the future acquisition of adjacent land. Having received the CESSC report from the BOE, with that board’s unanimous approval, the selectmen have scheduled these two informational meetings so the town can be informed of, and contribute to, the planning process.

Copies of the CESSC report, with all supporting documentation, are available in the Town Office, the Cornwall Library, the West Cornwall Library, and CCS.

—Ralph Gold, Chair CESSC

So Long, Skip

To fully appreciate Hugh (Skip) Hunt III, you have to see him in action, as he certainly was while serving as master of ceremonies at Park and Rec.’s Independence Day festival on the Cornwall Green. The occasion, in the midst of that heat wave, was relatively sedate, the participants being just children and parents, and the events following the traditional format (bicycle parade, watermelon-seed-spitting contest, sack and wheelbarrow races, water balloons, and limbo pole). Skip was gambling on the Green, all done in shorts and shirt of festive colors, face painted in vertical stripes, wearing a gigantic headpiece resembling a jester’s cap crossed with a top hat, and announcing each new event in stentorian tones worthy of a circus ringmaster. He blew the trumpet, pounded the drum, and juggled three hoops at a time, just as he has done at so
Polar Exploration: Escape summer's dog days with Emmett Dwyer, who will talk about Antarctic expeditions on Friday, August 20, at 8 p.m. at the Cornwall Library. Dwyer will focus on Amundsen, Scott, and Shackleton, and explain why Amundsen was successful in getting to the Pole. Free admission. Sponsored by the Friends of the Cornwall Library.

Library Special Programs: On August 4, from 6:45 to 8 p.m., as part of the story hour for ages six to ten, Teviot Fairservis of East-West Fusion Theatre will present Animal Tales of Japan, using audience volunteers and authentic masks and costumes.

The Children's Film Series continues with the original Lassie Come Home (1943) with Roddy McDowell and Elizabeth Taylor on August 6, and Peter Pan (1960) with Mary Martin on August 13. Films start at 7 p.m. and run about 1 1/2 hours. Snacks provided.

Master storyteller and musician Derek Burrows will wind up our summer events schedule with Folktales of the Caribbean and Africa on Saturday, August 14, from 4 to 5 p.m.

Rose's Friends: The 40th Friends of Rose Algrant's annual exhibition will open on August 6 at 5 p.m. at Mohawk Mountain and continue through the weekend. It will feature a retrospective of the paintings and drawings of the late Arlington (Dutch) Yutzler, along with works by some 60 other Cornwall artists. A portion of the proceeds will go to the Cornwall Library Capital Fund.

Free Concert: Park and Rec. is sponsoring a jazz concert with Peter McEachern at the Cream Hill Lake Association on Friday, August 13, 7 to 9 p.m. No Charge.

Become a Certified Lifeguard with a six-day Red Cross lifeguard, first aid, and CPR course. The program: Monday, August 9, 3 to 7 p.m.; Tuesday, noon to 7 p.m.; Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Monday, August 16, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fee (amount not yet determined) to cover cost of books and materials. Limit is ten people. For registration and information, call Sandy Twaddell (672-6720) or Jane Prentice (672-6101).

August Road Work—From August 23 to 27, the following roads and streets will be resurfaced: South Road, College Street, Great Hollow, Great Hill, Everest Hill, and Bolton Hill Roads, Jewell and Pine Streets.

Fun in The Sun: Come down to Hammond Beach for Water Sports Day. Games, prizes, and a cookout lunch. Not just for kids! Monday, August 9, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Help Still Wanted: Cornwall Park and Recreation still needs managers/coaches for a fall soccer league. Please call Diane Coo, 672-6546.

Agricultural Fair Update: September 18 is Fair Day at the Cornwall Green, starting at 1 p.m., with the usual animal tent, produce judging, craft displays, demonstrations, and cow-chip bingo. Questions? Call Peter Ripley, 672-6716.

Calling All Artists and Patrons: Extras for Kids invites artists of all ages to depict their favorite Cornwall person, place, or thing in any medium—paint, pencil, photo, sculpture, etc.—on Saturday, August 28. Artists are encouraged, not required, to paint their pictures that day. Bring finished work to the Town Green between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. for display at a silent auction from 4 to 6 p.m. Forty percent of the proceeds will benefit Extras for Kids. Refreshments. Questions? Call Barbara Stone at 672-6256.