Elections 2003

Half of Cornwall’s voters went to the polls in early November, and what they did in the polling booths was fairly routine—almost. I’ll get to the un-routine in a moment. First, the routine.

Gordon Ridgway, endorsed by both parties, won a seventh term as first selectman. Treasurer John Green, Town Clerk Cheryl Evans, and Tax Collector Helen Migliacci, all cross-endorsed, were re-elected. Migliacci and Evans, both Republicans, got more votes in the Democratic column. Ridgway, a Democrat, did a little better in the Republican column.

Other winners were Earl Brecher (D) and Celia Senzer (D) to four-year terms and Roger Kane (R) to a two-year term on the Board of Finance; Annie Kosciusko (R) and David Grossman (D), as alternates to the Board of Finance; incumbent Democrats Jim Terrall and Catherine Tatge to the Board of Education, along with newcomer Wynne Kavanagh (R); Richard Bramley (D) and Roger Kane (R) to the Board of Assessment Appeals; Annie Kosciusko (R) and Doc Simont (D) to the Planning and Zoning Commission; Anne Chamberlain and Hanna Grossman, both Democrats, to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Brian Kavanagh (R), Phill West (D), Donald Clarke, Jr. (D), and Margaret Haske (D) join the Park and Recreation Commission.

What was not routine about this year’s election was the three-way race for the two additional seats on the Board of Selectmen. When Earl Brecher chose not to run for another term, Democrats picked Skip Kosciusko as their candidate. Republican K.C. Bair ran for another term, and Cornwall’s small third party, the Greens, put up Ken Keskenen, the person who invented affordable housing in the community, a former Democratic Town Committee chairman, and our unofficial poet laureate (“Sing HO!”).

Ken got 201 votes and K.C. came in second with 168. They join Gordon on the new Board of Selectmen. The outcome in this race would appear to be more a victory for the candidate than for the party. One other Green on the ballot came in last among five running for Park and Rec.

A final note: Cornwall becomes one more of approximately 175 towns and cities that, according to the Nation magazine, have elected a Green Party candidate to office. —John Miller

**Professional Help**

In the lingo of strategic planning, SWOT (as distinct from SWAT) is a non-violent acronym. But it has serious intent. Its initials stand for “strengths,” weaknesses,” “opportunities,” and “threats.”

Since last spring, the Cornwall Historical Society has been navigating a strategic planning process, funded, in part, by a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council. Guiding the organization through this process, their stipends paid by the grant, are Sally Whipple and Liz Shapiro, museum professionals. Working with Liz and Sally is a committee of six, including (ex officio) the Society’s president, Jim Gold.

What is a strategic plan? In brief, according to the pros, it is a “road map for board members...that sets out policy and strategy that guides fundamental decision making and the allocation of resources around institutional priorities for the next three to five years.... A strategic plan is a statement of action for institutional accomplishment....”

Of basic importance is the Society’s relationship with the Cornwall community. Over the last few weeks, the strategic planning committee has been busy conducting a series of interviews with Cornwall residents, including educators, young parents, business people, artists, and members of town boards and commissions. An essential question has been: how can the Society serve the town and encourage the community to support the organization with active membership. Some interviewees who saw the organization as a closed society were not aware that they could join the group as members.

### DECEMBER 2003

(continued on page 2)
A Newcomer’s Perspective

After having lived in Greenwich for 27 years we decided to retire to West Cornwall. Our friends would ask us why we would pull up stakes and leave a beautiful town like Greenwich to go and live in the country. It is hard to explain. We didn’t want to be too far away from our children, but we did want to leave the hustle and bustle of lower Fairfield County. For about two years we looked all over Litchfield County until one morning, with snow in the air and ice on the trees, we drove up Dibble Hill Road to a house our realtor wanted to show us. As I looked into the dense pine forest along the roadway, I knew that we had found something special. That night we made an offer for our house on Dibble Hill.

From our kitchen window we can see white pines towering 100 feet into the air; the trunks of some have split into five major branches, each of which could be a major tree in its own right. The sight of these magnificent old trees gave me hope. They have been here a long time and thrived.

Our walks in Cornwall, often alongside a river or pond, are veritable nature trails. On one favorite walk there is a reedy swamp with bull frogs croaking, geese, beaver dams, and a solitary heron that usually flies off at our approach. There are wild columbines and hollyhocks, Queen Anne’s lace, and woodruff along the way.

From almost any part of town there are pastoral vistas begging for a keen eye to capture them on canvas: a view across a long, rolling green meadow to a solitary white church spire, a red barn with rolls of hay, a crystalline blue sky above; at the highest point of one very steep hill, a breathtaking view of more sil- lent, rolling hills; at a bend in the Housatonic, a vast stretch of choppy, metallic gray water surrounded by immense trees.

Families of turkeys wander the woods and roadways unafraid, and bears have been close enough to capture on camera. Hummingbirds frequent our garden and owls punctuate the night air. The air is fresh, the sky is magnificent, and for the first time since leaving Australia 37 years ago, we are again familiar with the stars.

People are warm, solid, and interesting, proud of a heritage sometimes going back for generations. Now our only problem: with all that Cornwall has to offer, the kids want to come up every weekend.

—Graham and Brenda Underwood

On Hand 24/7, 365

In many respects, the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD) is like the Secret Service. Both organizations protect important people, in our case the populace of Cornwall and neighboring Sharon—essentially everyone between Goshen and the Appalachian Trail, from Bantam to Kent to Falls Village.

Both organizations are highly skilled. The firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are trained, tested, and certified by the State of Connecticut. Unless there is an emergency, CVFD people usually blend into the crowd. The nearly 45 men and women of the department are active and employed throughout the Northwest Corner—they dine, shop, worship, and raise their families alongside yours.

In short, they are like everyone else in the community, until you or one of your neighbors encounters an emergency and dial 911. Then, to use the popular expression for dedication and responsiveness, the members of the CVFD are there, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Part of every member’s time each month is dedicated to training sessions that review skills and enable CVFD people to keep pace with the changing technologies and the latest in emergency tools and equipment. When an emergency arises, that training goes to work. And you will see firefighters in a variety of familiar situations:

• At a motor vehicle accident, where firefighters may be dismantling a crushed car while EMTs tend to the occupants trapped inside.

• At the Mohawk Ski Area first aid shack.

• Directing traffic to alternate routes after storms that inevitably drop trees across roads and power lines.

• Behind the wheel of an ambulance or fire truck as the community-owned vehicles respond to an alarm from a neighbor’s home.

If you made that 911 call yourself, however, chances are you will find one of your neighbors at your door within moments, followed by other members of the CVFD who have brought necessary equipment.

The Department welcomes members of the community interested in being a part of this vital service. If you are over 18 and willing to make the commitment, contact the First Selectman’s Office at 672–4959 for more information.

—Bill Winters

Welcome

Joseph and Zinnia Kling to Maryann Lennon and Michael John Kling

Land Transfers

Elaine Marie Licari to Kim Savage Realty L.L.C., 23 acres on Kent Road for $55,000.

John F. and Betty B. Hudson to Leonard E. and Joyce Alsop, 18 School Street for $525,000.

A Chronicle Sibling

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the Chronicle should feel gratified with the debut of Norfolk NOW. A monthly publicationarty modeled on the Chronicle, NOW is published by enthusiastic citizens of Cornwall’s neighbor to the north.

Lloyd Garrison, a founding editor, declares that the Chronicle “was a great influence on us”—no question about it. Norfolk NOW’s first issue (October, 2003) cites the example set by the Chronicle in meeting the need of the town for reporting on events at “the periphery
of larger papers in our region.”

Thankful though Garrison may be for the Chronicle’s inspiration and guidance (NOW is free to local postal patrons, has a calendar, and has a letters department but no editorial page) the paper looks and feels much more ambitious than the Chronicle. NOW boasts:

- Sixteen pages (to the Chronicle’s four)
- Photographs—nine halftones
- Advertisement—some 20 in number (a quarter page costs $25 per issue)

With all this, NOW costs $1,000 per volunteer-produced issue. Garrison admits NOW “has been lucky with money.” The Chronicle started (in 1991) with $900; NOW raised $6,500 for its launch.

Impressed by its new sibling’s drive, the Chronicle wishes NOW well, and applauds its assertion that “we are confident it will become the fair, reliable, comprehensive, and sometimes irreverent community newspaper we’ve all been waiting for.”

That would pretty much describe us, wouldn’t it? —The Editors

Events & Announcements

Candlelight Reading: Tom Walker’s seventh annual reading, sponsored by Friends of the Library, will take place Friday, December 26, at 4:30 p.m. at the North Cornwall Meeting House. He will read A Child’s Christmas in Wales by Dylan Thomas and Christmas in New Orleans, a short story by Truman Capote.

Every Day Stuff: The Cornwall Girl Scout Troop #53 is continuing its personal products drive to benefit the Aids Project in Torrington. They are asking CCS students to donate items such as toothbrushes, tooth paste, lotion, soap, shaving cream, razors, hair ties, toilet paper, and other “every day stuff.” If you are willing to donate, call Tricia Collins at 672-6437.

Attention Egg Layers: L’Egacy, a ministry offered in the name of Jesus Christ, is looking for your help. When chickens cooperate, a weekly delivery of eggs is brought to Friendly Hands Food Bank in Torrington—but the chickens are on strike! If you have eggs you would like to donate, L’Egacy will deliver them on your behalf to the food bank. All eggs must be cleaned, not cracked, and the date laid written on each egg, using a non-toxic marking of some sort. Food donations will also be accepted, but no home-made products, please. Contact Kalyn Cruse at 672-6049 with questions. Deliveries can be made to 157a Cream Hill Road in West Cornwall.

Eyewitness of the Middle East: On Sunday, December 14, at 11:30 a.m. at the UCC Parish House, the Reverend Ken Taylor will speak on his recent trip to Palestine and Israel, where he served for two months as an Ecumenical Accompanier for Palestinians crossing the border. Ken Taylor is a retired UCC clergyman long active in local and world ministry. For information, call the church office, 672-6840.

REGIONAL POLLUTION ALERT

For several decades, New Englanders have been concerned about the pollution that drifts eastward from factories in the Midwest, blighting the growth of our forests and fields. Now the problem may be nearer to home and more severe.

The Northwest Connecticut Council of Governments (NWCCOG), representing area towns from Canaan to Washington, is concerned about the impact of the proposed cement-manufacturing plant in Columbus County—20 miles from the Connecticut border—that has been proposed by a company known as SLC. NWCCOG has issued a statement urging the state of New York to review the environmental and health impact of such a plant on nearby communities—an impact that could negatively affect all creatures living downstream of the plant.

The coal-fired plant could emit up to 20 million pounds of chemical and particulate matter each year to threaten the health of all residents in the area. Moreover, its 25-ton diesel trucks (up to 265 a day) would also add to the pollution levels, thereby jeopardizing the region’s efforts to be in compliance with the Clean Air Act.

NWCCOG says SLC has had “numerous environmental compliance failures in its facilities in the past decade.” So far, SLC officials have not provided an adequate description of the potential effects of their plant. Connecticut’s Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has written the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, asking that the SLC facility be in strict compliance with the Clean Air Act. Before opening, any new facility would have to give evidence of stringent and closely-monitored guidelines to assure compliance.

THE SHARING DR. FITZ

“Education is learning what you didn’t even know you didn’t know.” (Daniel J. Boorstin)

Those in the Cornwall community who don’t receive Dr. Fitz’s Friday note home to parents at CCS are missing a treat. Dr. Fitz shares something of herself each week, giving us something to think on—like the Boorstin quote above—and reminds us how lucky we are to be living here in Cornwall, along with keeping us up to date with goings-on at school.

HIGH SCHOOL REFERENDUM

A referendum will be held Tuesday, December 9 from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Town Hall to vote on the following question: “Shall Regional School District Number One appropriate $1,795,000 for the design and construction of renovations and improvements to Housatonic Valley Regional High School, and authorize $1,795,000 in bonds and temporary notes to defray said appropriation?” Citizens of Cornwall eligible to vote in town meeting may vote in this referendum.
Deck the Halls: Unique, fresh greenery arrangements—all sizes and styles for sale at Baird’s on Saturday, December 6, from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., and on Sunday outside UCC and St. Peter’s from 11 A.M. to Noon. Proceeds to benefit the Cornwall Child Center. Call Karolene Carlson for more information at 672-2205.

Art in Cornwall: The Cornwall Library is currently showing Local Scenes, Cindy Kirk’s watercolors and cartoons of local interest. In the glass case, Susan Fox is exhibiting her Milkhouse pottery. These shows will continue through December 13. Beginning December 15 the walls of the Library will feature photographs and a painting by Jonathan Scoville. And Diane Schapira will show clay masks and furniture in the display case.

At the National Iron Bank, Hugh Dunlavey will be showing paintings during December.

Land Use Fees Increased: Cornwall’s land-use fees recently increased due in part to a $20 fee now charged by the state for all land-use applications. The new fee schedule is as follows: zoning permit, $35; special zoning permit, $120; petition to change regulations or map, $100; subdivision, $110 plus $50 per lot on existing road, and $350 per lot for five or more lots; inland-wetlands permit, $20; ZBA permit, $20.

The Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 14. Take your daily walk with Carla Bigelow and Celia Senzer and look for birds at the same time. Call 672-6898 in advance or (860) 489-1235 on the day for information as to meeting places. The area covered is from the Sharon side of the Housatonic to Cream Hill Road, Town Street and north just beyond Music Mountain Road. The observations will be in the next Chronicle. Anyone who would be willing to do a feeder bird count should call Celia at 672-6898.

Greet the New Year with breakfast at the UCC Parish House. Buttermilk pancakes with Cornwall maple syrup, sausage, cereal, milk, juice, and coffee will be served from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Donations once again will benefit the La Casa Project, building homes for the very poor in northern Mexico.

UCC Christmas Fair: Locally made arts and crafts will be featured Saturday, December 6, from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. at the annual Christmas Fair of the United Church of Christ. One-of-a-kind journals, jewelry, doll clothes, vintage postcards, potpourri and herbal soaps, fresh wreaths, and greens will be for sale in the Parish House. To reserve a wreath, call Joan Edler before December 3, at 672-6789. In the Day Room, soup and sandwiches will be available. Children can shop for their families on the second floor; all items there are 25 cents and proceeds will benefit the Cornwall Child Center.

Scholastic Book Fair: From December 8 to 17. This is the PTA’s main fund-raiser. Community grandparents, aunts, and uncles are welcome to browse for holiday presents at these times: Grades K to four, Wednesday, December 10, from noon to 5 P.M.; Grades five to eight, Tuesday, December 16, 3 to 7 P.M.

Benefit for “Arts for Africa”: On Saturday, December 6, 1 to 4 P.M., the Wish House presents Sitting with Santa—an afternoon of fun, food, and photos for kids and adults. Have your picture taken with Santa by photographer Tory Estern Jadow, to benefit Josh Perlstein and Anna Dolan’s project, “Arts for Africa.”

Community Christmas Pageant: For more than 60 years, the UCC Meeting House has been the setting for a traditional Christmas pageant with carols and readings. Participants are from all faiths; ages are five to 85. This year, the tradition will continue on Saturday, December 20, at 7:30 P.M., followed by hot chocolate in the Parish House. Questions? Call Charlotte Frost, 672-6323.

Cornwall Conservation Trust: New officers are Hector Prud’homme, president; Maggie Cooley, vice president; Helen Vanam, secretary; and Jean Bouteiller, treasurer. New directors include Denny Frost and Daniel Hubbard. The Board expressed appreciation to Maggie Cooley and Brad Harding for the services as former president and vice president.

Medical Items Available: For many years, the United Church of Christ has offered the loan of medical items, free of charge, to residents of Cornwall and nearby towns. Items include hospital beds, wheelchairs, walkers, tub seats and transfer benches, crutches, commodes, and the like. Until recently, requests for equipment or offers to donate items have been received through the church office. The new number to call is 672-6516, the home of Pat and Jerry Blakey. Please don’t hesitate to call. If necessary, leave a message and they will contact you in a short time.

Cornwall Extras for Kids will hold its annual Wine Tasting and Holiday Art and Ornament Sale on December 6, from 4–6 P.M. at the Cornwall Arts Collection. The benefit features wines from the Cornwall Package Store, hors d’oeuvres from the Cornwall Inn and the Wandering Moose Cafe, and artwork donated by local artists. Extras for Kids provides need-based funding to Cornwall children to enable their participation in extracurricular and summer enrichment programs. The gallery is located at 7 Railroad Street in West Cornwall. Tickets are $15 per person, or $25 per couple and are available in advance by calling 672-4625, or at the door.

Motherhouse offers a mother-daughter treat on Saturday, December 13, 9:45 A.M. to 3:15 P.M. It will be a relaxing day of quiet arrangements—all sizes and styles for sale at Baird’s on Saturday, December 6, from 9 A.M. to 6 P.M., and on Sunday outside UCC and St. Peter’s from 11 A.M. to Noon. Proceeds to benefit the Cornwall Child Center. Call Karolene Carlson for more information at 672-2205.

Motherhouse offers a mother-daughter treat on Saturday, December 13, 9:45 A.M. to 3:15 P.M. It will be a relaxing day of quiet activities such as making potpourri and hand-dipped candles. Limited to 12 participants—$35 per pair. Call Debra Tyler to confirm, 672-0229.

Christmas Shopping

Whether you think it’s fun or a horror, one easy gift for anyone with a Cornwall connection is a subscription to the Chronicle. For $10, we’ll send 12 issues to any out-of-town address. If you tell us it’s a gift, we’ll send a note announcing it.