Samantha Rudes will travel in New Zealand. Dain Council and David Kennedy will begin work, and Samuel Dwyer will be working and writing. Maurice Oyanadel will be working in health care. Kurtis Whitney graduated from Housy in January and is attending the Academy of Equine Dentistry.

Graduating from Oliver Wolcott Technical School are Jessie Elliott, who will attend Fairfield College of Art, and Sandra Sterzl, who will work in the automotive field.

Cornwall students graduating from area independent schools are Gavin Shapiro (Kent School), going on to Tisch School at NYU, and Matthew Mulberry (Millbrook School), whose continuing education plans are undecided. Cooper Osnovicz has been home-schooled and will head to Santa Barbara City College.

Congratulations and good luck in all your future endeavors!

—Wynne Kavanagh

Pitching Your Tent in Cornwall

About 60 people crowded the Town Hall on May 6—a beautiful day, we might add—to hear about affordable housing. Marie Prentice, organizer of the Cornwall Association event, said, “We wanted to get people thinking about this aspect of the Town Plan, which needs to be revised this year. And we feel strongly about the issue.”

First up, Jim Levy of the Cornwall Housing Corporation (CHC) spoke of the recent housing survey, to which 21 percent of Cornwallians responded, most of them over the age of 50. Results showed that they believed there was a clear need for affordable senior housing (but were not in any hurry to live there themselves), and that local people wanting to have a house in Cornwall need financial help. Jim described Kugeman Village, the Clifton Read Fund (for rent relief), and the Parcel Program (home ownership), which he called “our jewel.”

Mike Geyselaers, firefighter in Cornwall, EMS man at Lime Rock, and a shining participant in these programs, readily agreed. “I am a charter member of Kugeman, I used the Clifton Read Fund when I was out of work, and for three years now my family and I have lived in our own house. Oh, and I filled out the survey. Thank you, Cornwall Housing!” There are currently 10 Parcel Program houses in Cornwall; two more are going up on Lake Road, and there is a waiting list for future properties.

Realtor Nick Bruehl gave us the dismal “larger picture of housing.” He wondered aloud, “Was the $230,000 house I sold earlier this year the last of its kind? The entry-level price of a house in Cornwall now is...” (continued on page 2)
Annie Kosciusko, chairman of P&Z, spoke of a few mechanisms already available under current regulations, such as accessory apartments and various exceptions that allow greater density of housing if the units qualify as affordable.

Representative Roberta Willis said, "What strikes me most about Jim's survey is the age of the respondents. Connecticut has lost 20 percent of its 20- to 34-year-olds during the past decade." She cited stagnant wages and the rising cost of living—specifically housing—as the reason for this trend. "A $300,000 house is difficult for anyone on a low or even a middle income to handle financially. We’re not talking low-income any more," she said. "We have trouble keeping teachers and nurses, not just EMTs and firefighters."

State Senator Andrew Roraback complimented the gathering: "Real energy emanates from communities of people like you in this room, addressing issues locally." Echoing views expressed by both Annie and Roberta, he reminded us that towns can "wed open space preservation with affordable housing; the two need not be mutually exclusive." He cited a program in Vermont that sets aside lots for affordable housing as part of its open space purchases. Connecticut should, he believes, consider opportunities like this. The state does have a few useful programs. "Just last week," Andrew quipped, "There is nothing more appealing than taxing people who can’t vote for you."

David Grossman asked, "Why can’t Connecticut have a homeowner’s property tax exemption as they do in states like Massachusetts and Texas? This could cut 25–50 percent off homeowners’ assessments in return for a small increase in overall town tax rate. Low- and moderate-income families would benefit most." Andrew and Gordon viewed this as an idea worth looking into.

The sentiment was clear in the room that Cornwall should continue to support a diverse economic population, and that although we may be ahead of other towns in the region, more needs to be done to address this issue. And all agreed that close cooperation and communication between local and state officials will be an important part of this process.

Good-bye to a Friend
Joan Terrall

Armin Landeck

If you had removed the 18th-century trappings of the salon of Madame de Staël in Paris and brought it closer to home, you would have gotten the salon of Madame Rose Algrant on Cream Hill Road. At any given soiree a few years ago you could have rubbed elbows with the famous in the world of arts and letters residing within a radius of 30 miles.

Armin Landeck, a key member of that select group, will be featured at an exhibition of his etchings at the Cornwall Historical Society opening June 23. Landeck was a handsome man with a natural elegance that came across even through his rumpled tweeds and ink-stained slacks. In his field as an etcher, he ranks among the world’s best. Given the harshness of the tools of his trade—steel points, copper plates, printer’s ink, acid—and a press that weighed a ton—it’s astounding that so much lyricism was implicit in his work. To compound the challenge, his favorite subject matter was the empty streets of Greenwich Village at night. He avoided putting people in his compositions, as if their presence might upset the tranquility of the neighborhood. Although people are out of sight, one senses their rhythmic breathing behind the closed doors and under the chimneystopped roof tops. Some snore, some dream, while others stare into the dark and make plans for the coming day.

Carpenter Ant Speaks Out

I am not a termite! Termites are soft, pasty-white, greedy wimps with terrible figures (no waist). They build these disgusting clay tunnels up the side of foundations so they can skulk their way up to the wood they gorge on. Can you imagine? And on top of that, they eat the walls of their own bedrooms. How depraved is that?

I, on the other hand, am a slim-waisted, healthy, big black ant. I build modestly sized channel-type bedrooms for Queenie and the kids. And I polish my walls, I don’t eat them. Oh, I may leave a few small piles of sawdust here and there, but that’s all. But most of all, I don’t skulk. You’ll usually see me in plain sight, marching honestly across the kitchen floor on my way to the cupboard for a snack. If you would like me to build my house at your home sometime, arrange to have rain water splash back on your sills for a year or two, or—better yet—lay the sill on the ground or a couple of inches up from it. This softens the wood for easier tunneling and makes me feel more welcome as co-owner. But if your sill is over six inches off the ground, I may set up housekeeping in a nearby tree stump anyway, crossing over to our main house only at meal time. I don’t carry a grudge.

Another thing: some know-nothings accuse me of doing structural damage which, in fact, is due either to wood rot, which is fungus and moisture, or to that same termite we’re talking about who doesn’t know when to stop chewing.

So, Cornish readers, think kindly of me. And if you do spray or stomp on me by mistake, don’t feel guilty. I reincarnate easily, coming back better looking and twice as hungry. After such an accident, just wait a couple of minutes and open the cupboard door. That’s me on the honey jar.

—C. Ant, as dictated to S. Soulé, Pot. Secy.

Historic Library Sleepover

For several hours on the evening of April 22, a hungry pack of young readers devoured three pounds of cookies, three 10-packs of fruit drinks, 34 ounces of potato chips, two pounds of carrots, three pounds of apples, great piles of Cheez-Its, and, most important, read an undetermined number of books.

There were three “snack-and-yack” periods interspersed with three half-hour reading blocks in this first-ever Read-a-Thon Sleepover at the Cornwall Free Library. Acting on a telephone tip to a possible story taking place in and around the stacks at number 30 Pine Street, I slipped in a back door announced about 10:30 p.m. and quickly identified myself as a member of the working
press. A head count indicated 17 fourth- and fifth-graders plus one seventh-grader, Reill Lynch, whose mother, Bridget, along with fellow parent Deirdre Fischer, were riding herd for this historic overnight event.

The Library meeting room was crawling with 12 boys laying out their sleeping bags in case any of them felt an urge to close their eyes during the night, which still had nine hours to go.

The four girls were giggling and talking up a storm around the corner in the children’s section. Autumn Classy, Emma Fischer, Anna Geysealaers, and Margaret Hopkins, fourth-graders all, said they didn’t expect to get much sleep because it was clearly too much fun staying awake.

The event was open to fourth- through sixth-graders, and though there were none of the latter, Bridget and Deirdre have a hunch that the fifth-graders had such a good time they’ll be back next year. Each kid had three sponsors contributing five bucks each, so a grand total of $275 was raised and will be used by the Library to attract the 9-to-13-year-old crowd. A possible plan to create a “beanbag” reading area with popular magazines and CDs was met with enthusiasm.

I made it home and to bed, wondering if a board game the kids played called Othello had anything to do with murder and intrigue in long-ago Venice. I’d forgotten to ask.

—John Miller

Lake Gets Clean Bill

During a recent talk with First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, the conversation turned to a discussion of summer beach culture and preventive medicine.

Last year there were occasional waves of illness that seemed to share Cream Hill Lake as a nexus. Gordon reports that lab-coated people from Torrington Area Health (TAH) would come test the water and find no problem, yet children got sick and the lake took the rap. It seems that summer bugs, bacteria that do not originate in the water, are easily transmitted by the water from kid to kid, even in chlorinated pools. Last summer there were public facilities, even some pools, that TAH closed down till the problem resolved.

So this year, if anyone in your family is sick, please act just as you would with a contagious illness and school attendance (no, not just bundle the little nippers out the door regardless, tempting as it is). Best to stay out of circulation, away from the lake or swim meets elsewhere, until all symptoms are gone.

—Maggie Cooley

The Canby Singers Turn Fifty

Veteran Cornwallers will no doubt remember when the Canby Singers, under the directorship of my late uncle Edward Canby, would give a yearly spring concert in the Cornwall school gym. For my uncle, these concerts were a way of giving something back to the town that meant so much to him. They were also among my own first experiences of Cornwall. After their performances the singers would return to my uncle’s house, where they would sing until two or three in the morning, harmonies drifting out and settling over his hayfield like nighttime dew. Various guests and neighbors would drop by, and it was after these concerts that I first made the acquaintance of Cornwall notables including John Welles and Jonathan Scoville, who would appear bearded, barefoot, and in overcoats or to nervously stroke the top of his head while expounding whatever the singers were about to perform. His didactic impulse no doubt derived from his decades-long career as host of a Sunday-morning classical music show on WNYC, which he recorded in the back room of his Cornwall house.

But the Canby Singers are principally known, as one of them put it, for their “pure ethereal sound and perfect pitch.” Director Sheila Schonbrun has retained these qualities while adding some vibrato and “warmth of sound.”

The concert makes that possible.

—Norma Lake

LOCAL TALENT

The Chronicle has received a copy of the following letter, which was sent to the San Francisco Chronicle:

“Next week, three authors who hail from the small village of Cornwall, Connecticut (pop.: 1,480) will be on the SF Chronicle bestseller lists! Michael Pollan (The Omnivore’s Dilemma) and Alex Prud’homme (Julia Child: My Life in France) on the non-fiction list; Caroline Paul (East Wind, Rain) on the fiction list.

“Although Cornwall is small, it boasts mighty literary roots: James Thurber also lived there.”

—Alexandra Paul (also a proud former resident of Cornwall)

Events & Announcements

Hammond Beach opens for the season on June 17. Hours: 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. (Saturdays and Sundays until 7). For information call Tammy Dickey at 672-6028.

Cornwall Artists Open Studio: Saturday, June 17, from 1 to 5 P.M. For a list of participants and directions, click on “Cornwall Artists” at www.cornwallct.org. Questions? Contact Dave Colbert at 672-0064 or ourmaridog@yahoo.com.
Art in Cornwall: Cartoons from the June 3 Library-sponsored CartoonFest will continue at the library through June 17. Starting June 20, sculpture, paintings, and graphics by Hildreth and Lewis Daniel will be shown. Interiors/Exteriors, at the Outsiders’ Gallery, continues through June 26.

Danielle Mailer’s cut-outs and collages of yoga poses are at the Wish House through June.

Also this month, pots made by Vincenzo Rondinone in the 1930s at his Narrow Valley Pottery can be seen at the Cornwall Bridge Pottery Store gallery.

And Becky Hurlburt’s photographs are on display at the Wandering Moose.

Park & Rec’s Annual Beach Party will take place at the Cream Hill Lake Association on Friday, June 16, from 5 to 8 p.m. Hamburgers, hot dogs, beverages provided; bring a side dish to share.

Cornwall Community Tennis: June 19–22: four one-hour group lessons for children, $15. In June and July, the courts are reserved from 8 a.m. to noon on weekdays for clinics.

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The Lap Dogs Relay Team will host their second annual School’s-Out Spaghetti Dinner on June 19 from 5 to 7 p.m. at CCS. It’s a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life, in which they will participate. Tickets at the door or call Joanne Pastre at 672-0179.

Tax-Relief Programs: With tax bills going out at the end of June, the Board of Selectmen reminds us of two Cornwall tax-relief programs: (1) If your property tax bill exceeds 8 percent of your income, you may enter into a tax-free situation with the town, which then takes a lien on the tax-abated property. That lien is settled when the property is transferred. (2) Persons facing difficulty in paying their tax bill may apply for a $200 reduction if the tax exceeds 10 percent of their income. This request must be filed with the town by June 15. For more details, contact the Selectmen’s Office at 672-4959.

Hart Farm Walks: At 9 a.m. every Saturday and Sunday in June, members of the Cornwall Conservation Trust will introduce interested walkers to the trails on this beautiful property that so many helped preserve. Meet at the marked entrance, a fat half-mile along Cherry Hill Road.

Town Purchases of Land is the topic of a P&Z-sponsored seminar at CCS on Sunday, June 25, at 2 p.m. Speakers include State Senator Andrew Roraback and the first selectmen of Cornwall, Trumbull, and Red Hook, NY.

A Call for Editors: The Chronicle schedule of editors for each month’s issue is updated every year. If you’re tempted or have questions, call Bob Potter at 672-6191. If you’re inexperienced, you would be paired with an old hand at first. Most editors serve only one month a year, so it’s not an obligation that lasts forever. And, as usual, we also need writers interested in different aspects of the Cornwall scene.