Compassion and the Law

On April 7, Superior Court Judge Robert Brunetti granted jail-free “accelerated rehabilitation” to Hunt Williams. A packed Litchfield County courtroom erupted into cheers and applause for Hunt, whose “crime” had been to provide his terminally ill friend John Welles the means he asked for to end his suffering.

Judge Brunetti admitted that he would not want to have faced the decisions that Hunt had to make for his friend. He added that his sentencing also took into consideration the extraordinary support given Hunt by his many friends, including more than 200 character references and the support of over 100 Cornwall citizens who showed up at all three of Hunt’s court appearances. Judge Brunetti admitted that he was “splitting hairs” in his narrow interpretation of the law specific to this case.

A significant consequence of this courtroom drama has been the Cornwall community’s outpouring of togetherness in rallying around one of its own—and doing so with thoughtfulness and respect for the law and its procedures.

As for Hunt, his three months of anxiety are over. The affection and support he experienced from his community, he says, has “eased his mind.” He has no regrets.

—Scoville Soule, Ken Keskinen

Local Politics: The Latest

Cornwall politics? Would you agree that our recent history—the last decade or so—has been rather dull? Few surprises. Lots of crossover endorsements and crossover voting, too. Friendly, yes. Civilized, of course. (We are not Falls Village!) However, there’s an election coming up, and it could turn out to be a hot one.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway has announced he will seek an eighth two-year term. Fellow Democrat Becky Hurlburt says she will leave the Board of Ed to challenge Gordon in the party caucus in July. Both Gordon and Becky have let it be known that, should they lose at the caucus, they will run independently as petitioning candidates.

Meanwhile, Republican K. C. Baird says he will run for another term as selectman. He added that his party doesn’t have a candidate for first selectman, and that maybe, just maybe, they might endorse Gordon.

That’s not all. Ken Keskinen (Green Party) says he is retiring from the Board of Selectmen. And if you’re not already confused, unaffiliated voter Roger Kane says he will leave the Board of Finance to make a run for selectman as a petitioning candidate. The Democrats have no candidate yet for selectman but are looking for one.

Keep in mind that the Board of Selectmen is made up of the first selectman and the two highest vote-getters among the other candidates. Should she lose the top race, Becky said, “I’ll deal with that when I have to.” Asked the same question, Gordon said, “It’s something I’m not considering. I’m not running for selectman.”

—John Miller

Budget Vote Set for May 20

The cost of running the Town of Cornwall in fiscal year 2006 is projected to be $5,571,198, an increase of 7 percent over last year. The vote on the budget will be held at a town meeting on May 20 at 7:30 P.M. in the Gathering Room at CCS.

The Board of Selectmen’s budget, at $1,369,451, reflects an increase of $101,181, or 8 percent, over last year. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway explained that “for the past few years we have tried to hold everything down, but the cost of things we depend on has risen so much the increases are necessary.” He referred particularly to the cost of health-care insurance for town employees, up 25 percent over last year. The cost of salt for snow removal, fuel oil, and gasoline has also gone up significantly.

The Board of Education budget, at $3,409,289, will be 7 percent higher than last year. The portion that pays for CCS comes to $2,059,651, and is up only 2.6 percent. The major budget impact will come from Region One.

MAY 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural Comm. 7:30 p.m. Town Hall Park &amp; Rec. 7:30 p.m. W. C. Firehouse Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall Mosaic/Tile Project 3 p.m. CCS †</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Blood Pressure Screening 3–4 p.m. UCC Parish House ABC Meeting 5:30 p.m. Wandering Moose Youth Safety Coalition 3 p.m. Town Hall (p.3)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 p.m. HVRHS Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 p.m. Library</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>Covered Bridge Slalom Race 9 a.m. † Sexual and Reproductive Rights 2 p.m. Library †</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>ZBA 8 p.m. Town Hall †</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957 † Details in Events and Announcements

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallct.org
Welcome
Henry Maryon Spencer to Tracy and Theo Spencer
Thea Sedgwick West to Kathy and Phil West

Good-bye to a Friend
Ann Woolsey LaFarge

Congratulations
Caryn Gregory and Paul Barber

Land Transfers
Bruce W. Berkman and Susan LaMonte-Berkman to Francoise Moulty and Alan Spiegelman, house and 5 acres at 155 Dibble Hill Road for $326,000.
Connecticut Light and Power Company to Timothy L. and Anthony D. Locke, ½ acre on Lower River Road for $20,000.
Jonathan M. and Victoria Estern Jadow to Hamilton and Roxana Barry Robinson, Jr., 61.895 acres off Town Street for $850,000.
Katherine E. Gunnell to Jack Zetkulic, 10.01 acres on River Road for $190,000.

House Prices Are Rising
Is there a housing bubble? And, if so, has it reached Cornwall? The answer to the bubble question may not be clear, but it does appear that Cornwall house prices have been rising by more than 20 percent a year.

In the 12 months from April 2004 to March 2005, there were 19 residential property sales recorded by Town Assessor Barbara Bigos. The average sales price was $450,450. The same 19 properties had been assessed at an average of $169,200 at the time of Cornwall’s last revaluation on October 1, 2001. Based on the state law that says assessments should equal 70 percent of market value, the average market value of the 19 properties in 2001 would have been $241,700. These recent sales reflect an average increase of 86 percent during the roughly three years since the last revaluation.

To calculate what these recent sales prices might imply for your own property, multiply your assessment (available on the Grand List at the Town Office) by 2.66. This factor takes into account both the 70-percent ratio of assessment-to-market value and the three-year increase of 86 percent reflected in recent sales.

Thus, for example, a “typical” Cornwall house and lot assessed at $20,000 may well be saleable for as much as $532,000 today ($200,000 x 2.66). Of course, you won’t know what price your house will actually bring unless you put it up for sale, and most of us would probably rather stay right where we are.

There is also a downside to the rapid increase in property values. For one thing, it doesn’t benefit those residents who rent, rather than own, houses. For another, it means that families of moderate income who would like to live in Cornwall, including some who grew up here, will find it increasingly difficult to purchase houses.

—David A. Grossman

Cornwall’s narrow, twisting lanes. Little thought is given to these conveyances, although no Brink’s truck can compete with their priceless contents. They are easily distinguished by their sunny yellow paint job and flashing red lights.

I hitched a morning ride with school-bus driver Ellen Underwood and rode shotgun on the afternoon drop-off run with eight-year veteran driver Tony Sterzl, accompanying them from their pre-departure check of lights, tires, etc., to the company-mandated end-of-run search for tiny sleeping bodies. Had it not been for their amiable conversation (eyes always on the road, though) I would have been bored out of my gourd—which is just what the Laidlaw Bus Company and the drivers want, and what this year Cornwall will pay a cool $200 grand for—no excitement.

The kids can take a lot of credit for how smoothly and quietly things go. Except for an occasional command to sit down, little disciplining was required, and rowdiness was minimal, a change from my antediluvian school-bus days when we were heavily connected to CD players. Gazing rearward from my seat at all those little tousled cranias with their headsets, it was easy to imagine myself in Mission Control.

But if 99.9 percent of the trips are uneventful, it is due mainly to the sure touch of the drivers. Some glitches, of course,
are unavoidable. Heidi Whitney was once stuck on a snowy road for an hour and a half until rescue arrived. “The kids broke out their snacks and we had a party.” Ellen’s bus couldn’t summit icy Dibble Hill, and she had to back the great, hulking behemoth all the way down the slippery slope (most drivers wouldn’t tackle that in August). Busses have even found themselves surrounded by escaped cows. But these are the exceptions.

The government, however, is working to make the trips more challenging. New EPA regulations limit idling time to three minutes, requiring the drivers to set off on their winter routes with frigid motors protesting and defrosters working feebly. Still, the crew of drivers, which also includes Larry Moran, Jenna Pakula, and newcomer Anita Morin, always seems to cope, and, like their chilly busses under the new edict, they rarely lose their cool—even when careless motorists ignore their flashing lights, which happens to each driver on an average of once a month.

So when you’re snug in your bed on a snowy morning, postponing your chores until the roads thaw out, think about these intrepid souls setting forth to battle the elements, and next time you see them going by, give them a thank-you wave. They deserve it.
—Matt Collins

Substance Abuse Among Teens
The Youth Safety Coalition, formed by the Cornwall selectmen to focus on substance abuse and the needs of teens, met on April 13. Speakers were Cynthia Bianchi, Housatonic Youth Service Bureau; and Jacquie Rice, HVRHS math teacher, swim coach, and president of the Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance Squad. Handouts included guidelines for teen parties and a list of resources for families of teens.

Ms. Rice told of the medical dangers of alcohol abuse to young people from her vantage point as a member of the ambulance squad. Because their bodies are immature, teens are more vulnerable to alcohol’s effects and are more likely to take dangerous actions when drunk, especially driving under the influence. The depressing effects of alcohol on heart and lungs can also cause serious harm.

Ms. Bianchi stressed that substance abuse by teens is a significant problem, even in well-to-do rural towns. She rejected the notion that drinking is a “rite of passage,” not a matter of personal choice. The youth today are more affluent, and often have more freedom than in earlier generations, the danger of their engaging in substance abuse is higher. Nationally, children are experimenting with alcohol and marijuana at earlier ages, placing themselves at greater risk of more serious involvement.

The Coalition will meet next on May 9 at 3 P.M. at the Town Hall. All are welcome.
—Hanna Grossman

LETTERS TO THE CHRONICLE

HEARTFELT THANKS!
The verdict is known, the dust has settled, but I continue to reflect on this community that we live in. No town could possibly have shown more support to an individual and an issue than you did. On three court days you took time from jobs, businesses, and personal schedules to pack the courtrooms to overflowing—to make a civil and dignified statement of support and unspoken protest. You wrote over 200 letters of support (and reading those copies has been a humbling and moving experience). You made many morale-building calls, and immediately established a more-than-adequate defense fund! In the near future we will have another “gathering” to continue to remember John Welles and to celebrate. For now—THANK YOU CORNWALL!!
—Hunt Williams

SPECIAL MAN, SPECIAL PLACE
The successful outcome of Hunt Williams’ case is a reflection of the efforts of a special community. The over 200 letters of support, court support, legislative efforts and thoughtful media interviews all illustrated the unique nature of this case and our town. The judicial system paid attention to our efforts.
The values of caring and commitment are, of course, embodied by Hunt. There could not have been an easier person to support. Fellow townspeople returned his service to them. This behavior does not happen everywhere.

As events unfolded, the final outcome was uncertain until the judge’s thoughtful ruling. Yet the community support for Hunt was never in doubt. The story went out with Cornwall offering unique insight in the national debate of end-of-life issues. Support from “greater Cornwall” stretching to California and beyond came pouring in. The community and the judicial system worked. Now we can all enjoy our return to anonymity and this beautiful spring.
—Gordon M. Ridgway, First Selectman

SPECIAL MAN, SPECIAL PLACE
The successful outcome of Hunt Williams’ case is a reflection of the efforts of a special community. The over 200 letters of support, court support, legislative efforts and thoughtful media interviews all illustrated the unique nature of this case and our town. The judicial system paid attention to our efforts.
The values of caring and commitment are, of course, embodied by Hunt. There could not have been an easier person to support. Fellow townspeople returned his service to them. This behavior does not happen everywhere.

As events unfolded, the final outcome was uncertain until the judge’s thoughtful ruling. Yet the community support for Hunt was never in doubt. The story went out with Cornwall offering unique insight in the national debate of end-of-life issues. Support from “greater Cornwall” stretching to California and beyond came pouring in. The community and the judicial system worked. Now we can all enjoy our return to anonymity and this beautiful spring.

SOMEONE’S COMING TO OUR TOWN??
What’s that you said, honey? No way…Charles and Camilla coming to Cornwall, Connecticut, eating fish and chips at the Wandering Moose. Just wait until I tell Mum when I call her on Sunday. I guess it wouldn’t be good form to tell them about the wedding breakfast Peggy McEvoy and I had the last time he got married! No need to tell him I fowossal for foreign potentates when I became an American citizen. So, he’s coming later this month. What’s the date today…Mr. Miller, you are a scalavog!
—Karen Beattie

ON RATTLE SNAKE POND
This is the time of year when I stop at the Rattlesnake Pond Road at every opportunity to see what’s new. Friday, April 8, was particularly rewarding. I saw a pair of common mergansers, a pair of green-winged teal, a couple of pairs of hooded mergansers and several single females (they must have laid their eggs and their partners departed), a pair of kingfishers, a pair of bluebirds, two great blue herons, grackles, wood duck (in the back), mallards, one black duck, a song sparrow, Canada geese, and, best of all, an adult osprey sitting in a tree right next to the road. That week I also saw four turkeys vultures and two black vultures on the edge of the pond.

Carla Bigelow noticed many dead fish along the edge of the pond and called the DEP for an explanation. Apparently, the last heavy snowfall prevented sunlight from penetrating the ice. As a result, aquatic plants and algae were unable to produce oxygen through photosynthesis. The lack of oxygen killed the fish. According to Bill Foreman of the DEP, it is not an uncommon event in shallow ponds. A big loss to the fish and a big gain for the vultures—and, possibly, the osprey.

—Celia Senzer

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Second Annual CCS Walk-a-Thon will take place on Friday, May 20, at 12:30 P.M. This year the students have chosen to support “Doctors Without Borders” (“Médecins sans Frontières,” or MSF). Proceeds will be divided equally between MSF and the eighth-grade trip fund. Walk or make a donation. The Walk-a-Thon begins at the intersection of Cream Hill and Cogswell Roads. For more information call Bente Busby at 672-2543.

May 2005 Cornwall Chronicle
Art in Cornwall: The Outsiders Gallery will host an opening reception with music by Kevin Marquis on Saturday, May 14, from 5 to 7 P.M., featuring the paintings of Robert Andrew Parker, Douglas Truth, and Paul Graubard. The show runs through May 31.

The Seventh Annual Spring Bird Walk, sponsored by Park & Rec., will take place on Sunday, May 8, from 7:15 to 8:45 A.M. It will be led by Art Gingert, our resident naturalist and photographer. Bring binoculars and scope/tripod if you have them, and wear waterproof boots.

The National Iron Bank is showing Gary Barron’s architectural renderings of New York buildings and Harold Brien’s pastels and watercolors.


The Seventh Annual Spring Bird Walk, sponsored by Park & Rec., will take place on Sunday, May 8, from 7:15 to 8:45 A.M. It will be led by Art Gingert, our resident naturalist and photographer. Bring binoculars and scope/tripod if you have them, and wear waterproof boots.

Meet at the intersection of Rattlesnake and Cream Hill Roads, and then carpool to Rexford Road for the bird walk through Hedgerows Farm. No rain date. For details call Carla Bigelow at 672-0283.

Taps

Of all the information in this issue, the least useful may be this: the Army is the only service that still uses bugles to sound the haunting melody that you will hear on Memorial Day (the other services use trumpets). Still, it's information, and that's our job. Your job is to support us by sending in a donation. Thank you very much.

Tsunami Relief: The United Church of Christ’s offer to match donations (up to $10,000) for tsunami relief in Southeast Asia is open until June 30. Over $18,000 has already been raised. To contribute, send a check, payable to “UCC in Cornwall” and marked “Tsunami Relief,” to P.O. Box 35, Cornwall, CT 06753. For further information call the church (672-6840) or Paul Baren (672-6637).

Bradford Scholarship: Any Cornwall student planning to enter UConn in Fall 2005 may apply. One award will be given, running for all four years of college. A letter of application and two letters of recommendation must reach the Bradford Scholarship (c/o Cornwall Board of Education) by May 25. Criteria include grades, extra-curricular activities, community service, goals, and creativity.

Memorial Day: On Monday, May 30, at 9 A.M., Charles Gold will lead a service at the North Cornwall Cemetery. Bring flowers to decorate graves. At 10 A.M., the Seamen’s Service will take place at the Covered Bridge. The parade and ceremonies start in Cornwall Village at 11 A.M., followed immediately by the annual carnival held on the grounds of the United Church of Christ. Enjoy food, fun, and games hosted by UCC and the Cornwall Child Center.

Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Cornwall resident Jill Sheffield, president of Family Care International, will deliver a talk entitled The State of the World’s Women at the Cornwall Free Library on May 22 at 2 P.M. The topic will be the outlook for family planning.

Whitewater Race: The Covered Bridge Slalom Race, sponsored by the Housatonic Area Canoe and Kayak Squad (HACKS), will be held on Sunday, May 22, at 9 A.M. in West Cornwall. Advance registration required; entry blanks available from Clarke Outdoors (672-6365).

New Website Pages: The Cornwall Website is adding two new pages entitled Cornwall Profiles and Cornwall Artists. Profiles will feature interviews with Cornwall residents, mainly seniors, whose background and activities are of interest. Artists will be a page of pictures and background, or of links to the websites of artists residence in, working in, or showing in Cornwall. Artists: send your website address to www.cornwallct.org.

Thurber Celebration: The initial event of the Cornwall Historical Society’s summer Thurber Celebration will be a reception at the Society’s building on Pine Street on Friday, May 27, from 5 to 7 P.M. Cartoons, books, photographs, and other Thurber-related memorabilia will be on display in the meeting room. Other Thurber events will be announced in the June Chronicle.