Cornwall’s Merry Pranksters

Halloween in Cornwall in the 1940s was in many ways a more innocent time, with unwrapped baked goods or apples given to trick-or-treaters without thought of danger, and homemade costumes and decorations. But one contrary aspect lives in the memories of many longtime residents: the Halloween pranks. Most of the action took place in the villages of Cornwall and West Cornwall, which were more densely populated. Jerry Blakey, who grew up on Yeling Hill, which had mostly summer residents, grumbles “I had to walk five miles to get into trouble.”

Denny Frost, whose initial reaction upon being approached for this story was, “Who, me?” recalls one Halloween where he and Charlie Swanson took all the hand-hewn shutters off the house of a “grumpy old guy,” mixed them up and left them scattered on the lawn. Someone fingered them and their punishment fit the crime: the endless task of sorting them out and putting them back up. In those days there were privies in many backyards, and one of the boûles went missing, they noticed a hole in the door big enough for a small hand. Minister Jim Simpson somehow figured out when the thief would strike (divine intervention?) and hid inside the closet. When the perp reached in, he grabbed his hand. I’ll leave you to imagine the look on the boy’s face.

There’s one more prank that begs to be included even if it wasn’t at Halloween. The church youth group that met in the basement of the UCC Parish House kept Cokes and other refreshments in a locked closet. Jerry Blakey recalls that when some of the bottles went missing, they noticed a hole in the door big enough for a small hand. Minister Jim Simpson somehow figured out when the thief would strike (divine intervention?) and hid inside the closet. When the perp reached in, he grabbed his hand. I’ll leave you to imagine the look on the boy’s face.

—Carol Schneider

Cornwall’s Dogs

Do dogs resemble their owners? Lower our blood pressure? Drool while cats rule? All good questions that we can’t answer here. But we can tell you a lot about the dogs of Cornwall, thanks to Town Clerk Vera Dinneen, who dug deep into her computer to come up with the following information:

- 258 dogs are registered: 134 female and 124 male.
- There are 37 Labs registered (15 black, 12 yellow, 10 chocolate); 19 golden retrievers; 13 Jack Russells; and 13 dachshunds.
- The most common names are Bella (nine, including one Isabella); Lucy (six); Daisy (six, including two Daisy Maes); Tucker (five); Molly (five); and Bear (five, including versions like Gobi Bear, Lucky Bear, and Teddy Bear).
- Candy, a shi tzu; Emily, a Jack Russell; and Paco, a chihuahua are all approximately 17 years old.
- The #1 tag goes to whoever is first on the first day of business in June. Nancy Calhoun’s dog Miss Beatrice Potter has been the top dog for the past three years.

—Vera Dinneen and Ed Ferman

Cemetery Census

The Cornwall Town Plan of May 1, 2010 included a goal of creating an updated directory of the people who have been buried in Cornwall’s 11 cemeteries. John Calhoun began his frequent visits to these cemeteries in 2008 and submitted his final directory of the people who have been buried in Cornwall’s 11 cemeteries. John Calhoun began his frequent visits to these cemeteries in 2008 and submitted his final

(continued on page 2)
(continued from page 1)

The upcoming unit on puppetry in October. His research included perusing records in the town clerk’s office as well as the Connecticut State Library. The final product, a searchable list of over 3,748 people, is now available in the P&Z office, the town clerk’s office and at the Cornwall Historical Society for anyone searching for a piece of family history. The oldest grave John found was that of a citizen interred in the Bradford cemetery in 1753. The smallest graveyard, the Allen cemetery, held exactly one grave. For fun I took a look at which family name was represented the most in Cornwall’s cemeteries. Given the amount of work John put into this, it would have been nice if the Calhouns had won the contest. But no, the Johansons checked in with 79 stones, followed by the Swifts with 78, and the Harts with 77. You will have to pardon me if I miscalculated; it’s all in good fun! Cornwall owes John a big thank-you for volunteering to do this project.

There are other projects in the Town Plan volunteers could help with, so look on the town website for the plan (cornwallct.org), and see where your interests and talents lie. —Anna Timell

Cornwall Child Center Update

On a warm sunny day this September I had the pleasure of visiting the Cornwall Child Center, which I haven’t done in a couple of years, now that our three children have graduated to the “big school” across the street. A warm and welcoming staff greeted me. Children were busy playing, creating, and learning and the walls and tables displayed colorful artwork and projects, just as I remembered.

Current director Amy Bresson showed me the beautiful new toddler playground equipment that was installed in June, thanks in part to a grant from the Cornwall Foundation. This is particularly good news since the toddler program is nearly at capacity with the addition of three new families this fall. Enrollment is growing in the preschool room with the addition of three new families. Also doing well is the child center’s after school program, named A.S.K.K. (Afterschool Kids Klub) for the kindergarten through fourth-grade crowd. The program now has its own classroom across the street at CCS. Tracy Gray, who oversees it, explains that this location is helpful for future enrichment units, which involve lots of hands-on projects, such as the upcoming unit on puppetry in October. In between projects, these children are on the move. They will be meeting at the Cornwall Library on Fridays and teaming up with Deb Tyler’s Motherhouse on Mondays for farm-related activities. Amy reports the center also had a successful summer program this year that included five full days of toddler care each week in addition to programs for older children. She anticipates a similar summer program next year.

For those interested in enrolling children in any of these programs, call Amy Bresson at 672-6989, or check out the website at cornwallchildcenter.org. The center is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. —Cay Hosterman

Cornwall Agricultural Fair

On Columbus Day weekend, October 12 and 13, Cornwall will celebrate its businesses and artisans with Cornwall Days. Businesses in West Cornwall and Cornwall Bridge will offer special sales and craft demonstrations. There will also be an open studio tour of over a dozen Cornwall artists. Organized by the town’s Economic Development Commission, the celebration will showcase what Cornwall has to offer residents and visitors.

Funding for this event has been received from the Cornwall Foundation, the Cornwall Association, and the Economic Development Commission’s activities fund. More information at cornwallct.org. See you at Cornwall Days! —Gordon Ridgway

Endorsed Candidates List


How Your Votes Will Count

According to Connecticut State Statutes 9-188 and 9-167a, the election rules governing Cornwall’s first selectman and selectman races in the upcoming election on November 5 will work this way: Voters cast one vote for first selectman (two candidates, one position) and one vote for selectman (two candidates, two positions). The highest vote getter for first selectman wins that office. The loser then becomes a contestant in the race for the remaining positions on the board. The two top vote getters in this race (one of whom may or may not be the losing first selectman candidate) are duly elected. If, however, the losing first selectman candidate gets enough votes to win a seat on the board but decides not to accept, a vacancy occurs. In this case, the newly elected first selectman and the top vote getter among the remaining willing candidates—now an elected selectman—are empowered to fill this vacancy by appointment. Under no circumstances, however, may the board be composed of three members from the same party, a caveat that may result, on occasion, in a higher vote getter being passed over, so that more than one political party is represented on the board.

Welcome

Inez Lynn Palafox to Stephanie Bentz and Jose Palafox Diaz

Congratulations

Kelsey Nicholson Van Beever to Shaun Miller

Goodbye to Friends

Edward G. Bourne
Frederick Van Voorhees Bronner
Gunther Charles Hepprich

Cornwall Agricultural Fair

The 22nd annual fair, appropriately dedicated to the memory of Ralph Gold, got underway on Friday evening under the direction of agricultural advisory committee chairman Bill Dinneen. Committee and fire department members, ever dependable volunteers, and young people in high gear erected tents and marked out 1,000 cow chip raffle squares and spaces for booths and events. A few notable names: Lynn Scoville, Buddy Hurlburt, Gordon Ridgway and Ian, Jamie Murphy, Denny Frost, Steve Saccardi, Josh Tyson, and the Kennedys. By Saturday morning the town green had been transformed into a fairground.

Dan Cain was at his traditional location with children cranking their cider press. Garrick Dinneen milled out lumber on the HVRHS vo-ag portable saw mill. Justin Downs provided the hayrides. Nancy Calhoun tended her greeting cards. And all those jams and jellies and preserves from the Church of All Saints! Cows and calves,
rabbits, ducks, and yes, even one llama!

Informational displays came from Cornwall Energy Task Force chair Kate Freygang and the Cornwall Conservation Trust. UCC Pastor Micki promoted the church’s June work trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation and Tracy Gray explained the Heifer Project.

New to the fair was CTSART, Connecticut State Animal Response Team. Dianne Beebe explained this statewide organization dedicated to animal rescue and care during emergencies. New also was Goshen Pack #35 represented by Don Whitford and Sean Scanlon looking for Cub Scout candidates. Suzie’s Sweets (Susan Saccardi) and Cornwall Country Market owners James and Idella Shepard of the soon-to-open store, with the help of Dave Cadwell, presented delectable treats. Antique cars formed a backdrop for the town green.

In a closely watched event Patrick Kennedy’s Brown Swiss Helga, after dithering a bit, delivered $300 to square #388 for John McMahon of Cornwall. James Kennedy won the bale toss; Fred Scoville came in second with a toss just under one-half mile. Ian Danforth Gold won the youth division.

There were a sack race and bubble gum blowing contest and, of course, many blue and red ribbons for syrup and vegetables in the tent and flowers and baked goods in the tent and flowers and baked goods and many blue and red ribbons for syrup and vegetables in the tent and flowers and baked goods. And let’s not forget the CCS class of 2014 — Phil Hart.

Region One Vote Fails Again

It has been said that a sign of insanity is doing the same thing over and over—but expecting a different result.

On Tuesday, September 17, the proposed 2014 budget for the Region One school system went down to defeat. It was the sixth time that the voters had rejected the budget. There were 682 votes against and 479 votes in favor. This is roughly the same margin as in the previous five ballots.

As the Chronicle went to press, no word was yet available as to when the Region One budget will be on the ballot again.

—David A. Grossman

Which Side Are You On?

Coming around the corner from Town Street onto Scoville Road is a little scary; the road winds and you don’t see very far ahead. Recently I made the turn and caught someone in the act of tripping on one of the cracks in the road. She also happened to be wheeling a carriage containing two babies. We managed not to collide but it was too close for comfort.

These days, Cornwall roads are filled with folk tramping for health and pleasure. Many of them walk on the wrong side of the road. Yes, there is a right side of the road to walk on—I looked it up. It’s in the CT General Statutes (14-300c). I’ll summarize what’s pertinent to you if you are a walker.

Basically pedestrians are asked to walk on a sidewalk if there is one, or the shoulder of the road if there is one. When there’s no shoulder people should walk on the left side of the road, facing oncoming vehicular traffic. The statute doesn’t spell it out, but if you face oncoming cars you can make eye contact with a driver and vice versa. And you can take evasive action if that becomes necessary; like diving into the nearest beaver pond.

We Cornwallians live in a lightly traveled place and we tend to think of our roads as a playground. Not every driver manipulates her 4,000 pounds of plastic, metal, fabric, and whatnot with a light foot on the gas pedal. So veer to the left side and be healthy.

—Jill Cutler

Cornwall Briefs

• Downtown Cornwall Bridge: Sometimes this month, perhaps as you read these words, a New Age, a Renaissance, the start of something very big will have come to Cornwall Bridge. The folks high up on the hills of Dibble, Yelping and Cream will come down from their stately homes to shop and enjoy a beautifully renovated general store dubbed The Cornwall Country Market. While next door, Bonney Brook, a handsome structure soon to be chock full of happy seniors, stands sturdily between the firehouse and market, a Cornwall Taj Mahal, its doors open and perhaps the envy of our neighboring towns. (Please, God, after months of misfiring on these openings, let the Briefs column get it right this time!)

• Tower Talk: A possible second cell tower is in the works, this one sought by AT&T on Cornwall Water Company property in Cornwall Bridge at 348 Furnace Brook Road. The tower, described in a letter to the town office, would be 174 feet tall, with an equipment shelter and a generator near its base. That brings us to the earlier cell tower application by Verizon to be built off Bell Road near Popple Swamp. Verizon, it was learned, has asked for and been granted, an extension of its building permit until April of 2015. So tower number one has been delayed while tower number two is in the works, so to speak. So what exactly is going on? Is Verizon having second thoughts about its proposed tower or is Cornwall, now called the greenest town in Connecticut, destined to be dubbed the tallest town in the state? We kind of like Tower Town.

• Annual Town Meeting: It’s coming on Friday, October 25, at 7:30 p.m. in the Gathering Room at CCS. The agenda will include the town report, updating Cornwall’s current five-year plan, and a decision on when to hold an election for the town’s representative to the Region One school board. The current policy adopted in 1937 calls for the Cornwall school board to choose that representative. The Board of Selectmen now favors bringing the question of whether to appoint or elect to the townspeople. That vote was deemed too late for the current election cycle so it could be done in 2014 or at the next scheduled municipal election in November 2015.

—John Miller
Events & Announcements

Voter Registration and Absentee Ballots:
The deadline for voter registration is October 29. Registration sessions will be held at the town hall on October 1, 9 a.m. to noon; October 19, 4 p.m.; and October 29, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Registration applications are available at the town hall and the Department of Motor Vehicles. Absentee ballots are available upon application to the town clerk starting October 7. They must be returned by 5 p.m. Election Day, November 5.

The Cornwall Committee for Seniors and the Salisbury Visiting Nurse Association host Suzanne O’Brien, the author of Life, Love, and Transition, at the Cornwall Library Wednesday, October 2, at 5 p.m. O’Brien will discuss achieving a meaningful end of life. Light refreshments will be provided. Info: Tina Hogan, 860-435-0816.

Motherhouse Events:
Country Dance: October 5, 7 p.m., town hall, with caller David Kaynor and Still, the Homegrown Band. Info: Jane Prentice, 672-4350. Studio Tours: 672-6101.

Fall Fluctuations
Temperatures fall, days get shorter, changeable weather eludes forecasting. But one thing never changes: the Chronicle needs your support. Won’t you take a moment to write us a check before old man winter checks in? Thank you!

Temporary Trail Closure: A section of the Mohawk Trail, from the Dark Entry Road trailhead in Cornwall Bridge to the trailhead on Jewell Street in Cornwall Village, will be closed temporarily beginning at sunset, Thursday, October 24, reopening at sunrise Monday, November 4.

Park & Rec will host a Halloween gathering at the Town Hall on Thursday, October 31, from 5 to 8 p.m. Soups, salads, sandwiches and cider will be provided. To donate a homemade pot of soup or stew, contact Becky Hurlburt at prcornwall@gmail.com.

Bonney Brook, ten apartments of affordable housing for independent seniors, is nearing completion. Elderly Health Management is now accepting applications from qualified residents. Information and applications: call 203-230-4899 (x 1053) or bonneybrook@ehmhm.org.