Lots of Balloons But No Party
On August 5 and 7, people could be seen driving up and down Popple Swamp Road and as far away as East Street in Sharon searching the horizon for balloons. Those were the two days that Verizon launched preliminary balloon floats to gather information for its application to build a cell tower on property owned by either Matt Collins on Popple Swamp Road or Ralph Gulliver on nearby Bell Extension Road.

According to Mike Koperwhats, a planner for Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., of Middletown, Connecticut, and the person who oversaw the launches, it was a little hazy on August 5, and he knew that photos from the red and black balloons wouldn’t be clear. So on August 7 he floated two larger ones that were bright yellow. From his point of view, it was a success.

Less positive were the reports from opponents of the cell tower. Victoria Montifiori, who lives on Popple Swamp Road, wrote, “We could see a balloon on Matt Collins’s property from our kitchen and front door.” She didn’t think that an area with a swamp and river ecosystem was an appropriate site for a tower.

Her neighbors Kathleen Mooney and Fred Thaler agreed, adding that Verizon is ignoring a plan put forward by First Selectman Gordon Ridgway that involves putting repeaters on phone poles to facilitate coverage and that explores other sites for the tower. Ridgway also has concerns that a road to the tower in this location could be very steep and could wash out during a storm. Ridgway is not opposed to a tower; he noted that Cornwall no longer has any public pay phones, and cell phone coverage needs to be improved.

Matt Collins is for the tower. He doesn’t think that the concern some have about the emission of electromagnetic fields is warranted, because the tower sends a weak signal. He says that most people in town would like better cell coverage.

Skip Kosciusko, captain of the Cornwall Rescue Squad, agreed. “For us, the more coverage we have, the better.” Recently his squad had two rescues in an area north of the Pine Knob Loop on the Appalachian Trail where radios didn’t work but cell phones did. Cell phones are also the only direct communication device that will transmit information via cell phone to a hospital.

The balloon test data and photos were to be presented at an August 20 public meeting. After September 21, Verizon can apply to the Connecticut Siting Council, which makes the final decision on the application. —Norma Lake

Sweet Peet Continued
Over 75 people packed the Town Hall on the evening of July 27 to hear the appeal of Kathleen O’Flinn before the Zoning Board of Appeals, hoping to get an answer to the question of whether the Sweet Peet project proposed for Cream Hill Farm by Charles and Ralph Gold is “farming” and whether it should be allowed to go forward. But they will have to wait for further developments before this key issue is determined.

The ZBA, on advice of counsel, Perley Grimes, voted unanimously that the appeal was premature, as there was no final decision of the Planning and Zoning Commission to review. Final action by P&Z will require prior approval of the site plan by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which has not been received. As DEP has approved other Sweet Peet operations in Connecticut, the Golds expect approval to be granted.

The O’Flins represent a group of 10–15 Cream Hill Road residents who object to the application of the Golds to lease three acres of Cream Hill Farm to Sweet Peet for the production of mulch from horse manure and straw bedding. As reported in the August Chronicle, P&Z had approved the Golds’ application on the ground that the proposed use fell within the zoning regulations’ definition (continued on page 2)
Snakes in the Grass

The fear most people have of snakes is probably primal. Zoo-bred monkeys that have never seen a snake will show fear when confronted with one, and we are not all that different from zoo-bred monkeys.

Both humans and simians have good evolutionary reasons to avoid snakes, as sometimes they can kill us. You will avoid this problem, however, as long as you stay in Cornwall. Michael Klemens, a local herpetologist and the author of Amphibians and Reptiles of Connecticut and Adjacent Regions, has never been able to confirm the presence of either rattlesnakes or copperheads. Neither have I, and I've never seen one.

While some settlement discussions have taken place and will continue, neither the Golds nor the O'Flinns had any comment to make on the talks as of the Chronicle deadline.

—Harriette Dorsen

Good-Bye to Friends

Ann S. Peterson

Congratulations

Alyssa Ackerman and Christopher Crawford

Land Transfers

Paul S. and Joan M. Rogala to Mark D. and Joy P. Marino, 18.3 acres with improvements thereon on Johnson Road for $100,000.

Ian Ingersoll to John D. and Catherine C. McMahon, 90 acres at 226–246 College Street for $1,750,000.

Candyland Farms, LLC, to John D. and Catherine C. McMahon, .806 acres on Town Street for $100,000.

Ralph L. and Thalia Scoville to Yelping Hill Association, Inc., .806 acres on Town Street for $100,000.

Family Stuff

In 1928 my grandparents built a summer house on family land in North Cornwall. The house is now in my hands, and after a long renovation, my husband and I are finally moving into it.

May 30, 2009: A weekend unpacking boxes. We're in the final stretch: books on shelves, the kitchen mostly done, furniture in place. Now we're hanging pictures.

I've been looking for a watercolor, a landscape that my husband bought. Up on the third floor, I open a big cardboard carton labeled "pictures," but I can see at once, my heart sinking, they aren't watercolors. Three big 19th-century photographs, one framed, the others mounted on heavy battered board. The framed one is a studio portrait of my great-great-grandfather. The second shows him in a posed family portrait on the lawn. The third is a landscape: a farm on the side of a rocky hill. I recognize the farm, it's right near this house. It's still in family hands. Like everything else.

I recognize my great-great-grandfather, too, of course: the big, wide-spaced, froggy eyes, the jowls, the sideburns. It's Henry Ward Beecher. The family group is him and his wife Eunice, their grown children and spouses. My great-grandfather Samuel Scoville, with his black hair and pale skin and dark eyes, standing on the lawn behind his wife, the Beecher daughter. In the third picture, the farm looks dim and distant, light-stunned, set unevenly on the shoulder of the hill.

All this family stuff. Photographs, jour-
nals, published and unpublished books, china, furniture—nearly everything in the house is freighted with meaning and tribal loyalty. My mother called Harriet Beecher Stowe “Great-Aunt Hattie.” I feel responsible toward her, toward Henry Ward, all of them. Toward everything in the house, not just the objects but about the people they represent. Henry Ward Beecher, the patriarch, his coat jacket open, the gold watch fob across his chest, sitting portly and distinguished among his children. Of course, in the family we don’t think he was guilty of adultery. There’s evidence supporting his innocence, but no one’s written it up. When I think about this I feel guilty myself, because why haven’t I written about it? Why haven’t I rescued my great-grandfather from public contempt? I should at least frame his photograph.

Opening all these boxes, dusting off furniture, looking at photographs, I’ve been thinking about what things are lost, what kept. Much happens by chance: things left behind, thrown out by accident. Precious ribbon-tied letters discarded, their emotional charges finally spent.

In the house where I grew up was a little framed pencil drawing. It’s an interior, done by another great-grandfather, Henry Clay Trumbull. He was a chaplain for the Union during the Civil War, and captured by the Rebel soldiers. He was put in Libby Prison: that’s where he did the drawing. It’s of his cell.

When my mother said “Libby Prison,” the words were full of dread and fear. For the family, the picture represents darkness, an anguished intersection between private and public history. But how long should those feelings reverberate around this little faded drawing? Should it be thrown out? I can’t imagine throwing it out, but if everyone kept everything we’d drown. These stiff photographs, the women with big leg-of-mutton sleeves, the men with thick curtains of whiskers. That’s Pater, my mother said affectionately, of the tall bearded man, her grandfather. Henry Clay Trumbull. I know who he is. How can I throw him out?

My friends have bright pictures on their walls, things they’ve chosen themselves. I’m jealous of their wall space. I wonder where their ancestors are.

We have a huge framed formal photograph of Pater, his little pale eyes nearly engulfed by the long, thick, silky beard. I know whiskers were fashionable then, but I don’t consider a beard handsome, no matter how silky and combed it is. Actually, the silkier the worse.

I’m not going to throw out Pater. I’ll take his photograph up to the attic, where it can lean against the wall until my daughter finds it. If she doesn’t remember who he is she can throw it out. —Roxana Robinson


Letters to the Chronicle

RECORD RUMMAGE
Rummage Sale 2009 is over. The quality was high and sales were brisk. Final figures are incomplete, but this year should be about our best ever. Did you ever wonder what happens to the leftovers? They don’t end up in the dumpster! Blankets and clothes went to the Soup Kitchen, Dresses for Success, Goodwill, Social Services, and to an outfit in Torrington which gives clothes to school children. Baby and other furniture and household items were given to Social Services, Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, and Goodwill.

The majority of our budget goes for educational aid to Cornwall students. We also give to 16 other charities.

With the tireless help of many volunteers and the community’s generous support, we are able to continue the work of more than 59 years.

—Elizabeth Kemniston and Thalia Scoville

Co-chairs

FIFTY YEARS AND GOING STRONG

This year’s Rose Algrant Art Show celebrated the joint reappearance of two exhibitors from its very first year, Marc Simont and his sister Jenny, as well as the remarkable organizing skills of Bee Simont. Thanks to Bee’s indefatigable spirit and hard work (and her helpers), the show has taken place every single year since 1959; its opening nights, meanwhile, have become legendary as a meeting place for Cornwall art lovers. Sales from this year’s early August exhibit were about $14,000. After expenses are deducted, several thousand dollars will be donated to the Cornwall Housing Corporation.

—Elisabeth Kaestner and Phyllis Naults

Campaign ’09

Well, election ’09 anyway. It’s not likely that there will be any campaigning for the November 3 town election. There are no contested offices and several cross endorsements. This has become common in Cornwall; most of us are apparently satisfied with our town government.

Here are the candidates chosen at the July party caucuses.

Democrats: First Selectman, Gordon Ridgway; Selectman, Richard Bramley; Town Clerk, Vera Dineen; Treasurer, John Green; Tax Collector, Jean Bouteiller; Board of Finance, Earl Brecher, John LaPorta, Celia Senzer; Board of Education, Philip Hart, Irene Hurlburt, Park & Rec., Margaret Cooley, Rebecca Hurlburt; Zoning Board of Appeals, Nancy Calhoun, Betty Spence; Planning and Zoning, James LaPorta.

Republicans: First Selectman, Gordon Ridgway; Selectman, Kenneth C. Baird; Town Clerk, Vera Dineen; Treasurer, John Green; Tax Collector, Jean Bouteiller; Board of Finance, John Camp, John Preston; Board of Education, Rachel Matsuda; Park & Rec., Steven Saccardi, Ronald Laigle; Board of Assessment Appeals, Charles Gold; ZBA, Marsha Bobalik Smith; P&Z, Heidi Kearns.

Noteworthy are two names that don’t appear above: Barbara Gold, chair of the Board of Education, and Annette Kosciusko, P&Z. Both are stepping down from their demanding volunteer jobs in town. The boards will choose new leaders when they reorganize after the election.

—Ed Ferman

Cornwall Briefs

• Derailment: In mid-July, two freight cars of the Housatonic Railroad went off the rails and overturned on River Road. It was the second derailment in Cornwall in two years. Although there have been no injuries to date, the train occasionally hauls ethanol, which would present a serious hazard if an accident occurred. The Selectmen’s Office has been urging the railroad to upgrade the ties and railroad bed as soon as possible, and in the meantime to stop carrying dangerous materials, including ethanol.

• Honoring World War II Vets: Along with Falls Village and North Canaan, Cornwall will honor veterans of World War II at a program to be held in Falls Village in October. If you are a World War II vet, please contact Gordon Ridgway at 672-4959.

• Pink House: The historic 19th-century house in downtown West Cornwall is on the market. Well, sort of. The Landmark Trust owns the property and has listed it with Bain Real Estate. But—and this is a big BUT—it has been unoccupied since a chimney fire in January 2008 and would need extensive renovation. If renovated, would former owner Maura Smithies have the right to move back in? She and her ex-husband gave the property to Landmark with the understanding that she would have the right to live there for the rest of her life. She currently lives in a barn behind the big house. Priscilla Miller of Bain said that what happens next is up to the court, and she indicated a sale was unlikely if the court ruled in Ms. Smithies’s favor.

• Dzenutis Fund: A special account has been set up at the National Iron Bank for those who want to help the Ralph Dzenutis family rebuild their Cornwall Bridge home, which suffered huge damage from a fire on July 31. The Chronicle asked about a report that Ralph, upon detecting the fire in his garage, ran the half-mile on foot to the Cornwall Bridge Firehouse and brought a pumper back to his house. Not true. Ralph, a captain in the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department, drove to the firehouse.

• School Opening: When CCS opened its
doors on August 31, new principal Robert Vaughan welcomed 122 students and one new staff member, Linda Massucci, who will teach Title 1 reading.

- Junior Tennis Team Triumphs: Cornwall Roadkill, Cornwall’s 14-and-Under Junior Tennis Players, returned triumphant from the United States Tennis Association-sponsored Connecticut Junior Team Tennis tournament. They beat five other division winners from the 2008/2009 indoor and outdoor leagues. As 2009 state champions, Cornwall—with resident team members Zack Busby, Zack Zuckerman, Sam Green, Charlie Van Doren, Audrey Ellen, Lee Pryor, Connor Elwell, Dan Melcher, Jake Ellen, and coach Todd Piker—was scheduled to compete later in August as Connecticut’s entry in the USTA’s New England Sectional Championship.

The Farmers’ Market will be held at the Ag Fair on Saturday, September 12, at 9 A.M., and in West Cornwall all other Saturdays through October.

A Blood Drive will be held on Tuesday, September 15, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Blood is very much needed. Call 1-800-GIVE BLOOD to make an appointment, or just walk in.

Lobsters to Go! A sale to benefit the CCS eighth-grade class will be held on Saturday, September 19, from 4 to 6 P.M. at CCS. Prices of the 1 1/3-pound lobsters will be determined closer to sale. Pre-paid reservations only, must be made by September 17. Contact Debbie at 672-2121, 672-1220, or ccslobstersale@yahoo.com.

Guided Tour of Cornwall Plains: Walk around the Village Green and hear about life since the 1800s, including the story of the controversial Foreign Mission School. The tour and a descriptive map are sponsored by the Cornwall Historical Society. Meet at the Society building, 7 Pine Street, at 10 A.M. on Saturday, September 19.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Aleigh Lewis’s show of photographs continues through September 12. She will speak about her work in Cuba and the United States on Sunday, September 6, at 4 P.M. Beginning September 15, the Library will exhibit paintings by Joel Schapira entitled “thank you deary mary richardson—see you no.” An artist’s reception will be held on Saturday, September 19, from 5 to 7 P.M.

Lady Audrey’s Gallery will host a reception with music and refreshments for the artists of the “Bridges” competition on Sunday, September 6, from 3 to 7 P.M. On display will be the artists’ many interpretations of the word “bridges.”

At the Wandering Moose Café, photographs, watercolors, prints, and artist’s proofs depicting scenes from the world-wide travels of members of the Haydock family are on exhibit.

Services for the Elderly, a presentation by the Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA), will be held on Wednesday, September 23, at 6 P.M. at St. Bridget’s Parish Hall on River Road in Cornwall Bridge. Call Louise Riley at 672-0222 to arrange transportation.

The Turn of the Year

Spotting that first wispy maple branch turned red still shocks the summer-minded among us. It’s time to make plans for the cold months. But before you turn your attention to the price of oil, grab your pen and write the Chronicle a check. It’ll warm you right up!

At the Library:
- Diabetes Outreach: Management for Seniors, led by Kristin Bott, RN, of New Milford Hospital. Friday, September 18, from 3 to 5 P.M.
- Children’s Story Hour for three- to five-year-olds begins Friday, September 25, at 1:15 P.M.
- Needed: new and gently used books for the annual Columbus Day Book Sale to be held the weekend of October 10. Please, no textbooks, encyclopedias, or magazines.

Cow Chip Bingo: Saturday, September 19, at 3 P.M. in the field next to the Town Hall. Buy your cow chip ticket from a local merchant or from a CVFD member or at the Ag Fair on September 12. $2 for a $300 prize!

First Aid and CPR Class: Saturday, September 12, from 8 A.M. to noon at the West Cornwall Firehouse, sponsored by Park & Rec. and taught by Dave Cadwell. Free for ages 14-21 or anyone who has volunteered as a coach, ref, or ump in the last year; $10 fee for others. Participants will leave with their first-aid and CPR cards. Reservations by September 10: Bethany Thompson, 672-4070, or cornwallparkandrecreation@yahoo.com.

The 18th Annual Cornwall Agricultural Fair will be held on the Village Green on Saturday, September 12, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. (See insert in this issue.)