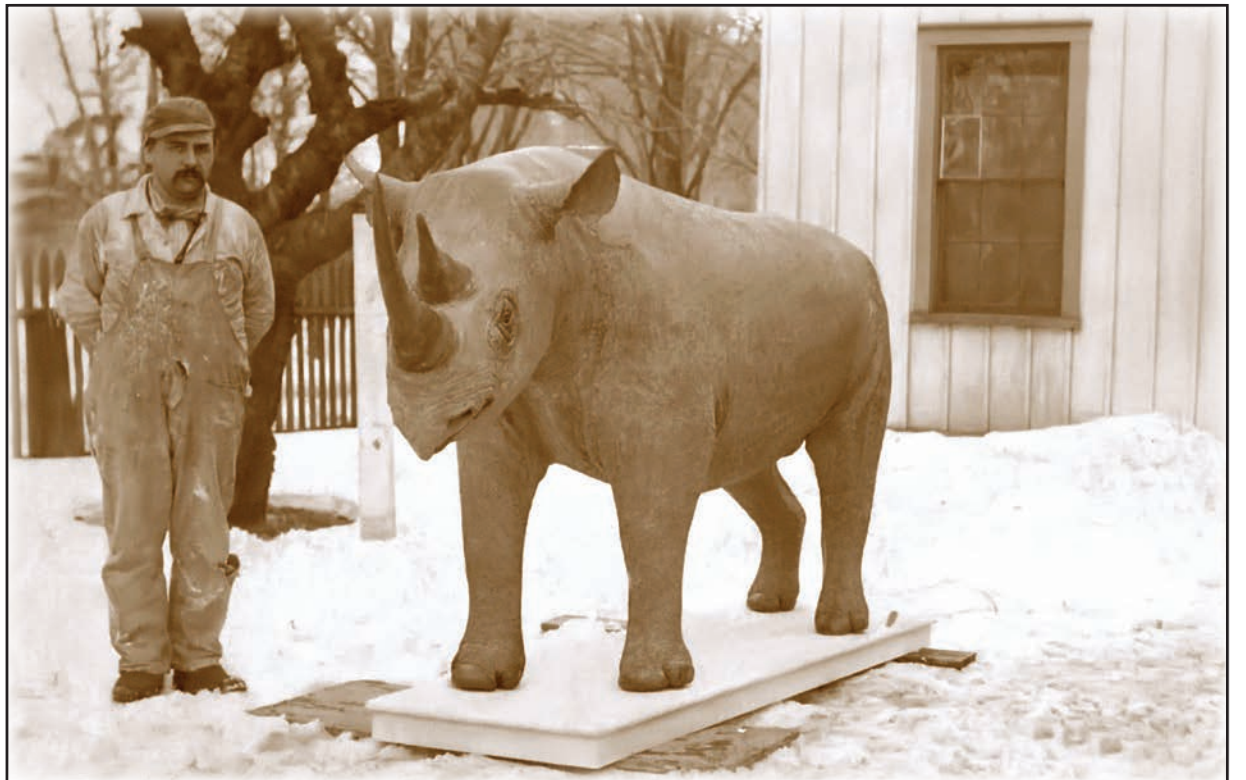




## Etched in Stone – Exploring New York’s Buried Past By DAVID PIERCE



### MOTIVATION

Inevitably, the day to day lives of our ancestors fade over time along with the cemeteries and gravestones that mark their final resting places. Older burial grounds become neglected, forgotten and many, for better or worse, fall into ruin; some disappear forever.

Sharing New York’s buried past helps preserve the rich histories of brave men and women who have gone before us. Lives of great expectation, long lives and short lives, lives of joy and sorrow, lives of triumph and tragedy, lives of gain and loss...are all shared and preserved when descendants honor their ancestors through recognition, research and reverence.

Charles Mirguet: with a Sperm Whale (top left); with a Mounted Rhino—in a recently restored 130 year-old photograph (top right); and in a workshop (center). All photographs are originals from the author’s personal family photo albums.

### WINTER

Wintertime slows the pursuit of knowledge and discovery within the stone-cold cemeteries of New York State. In this season, snow and bitter winds hide the historical treasures of New York’s buried past, as those who have passed before us slumber beneath. During this quiet season, focus shifts to indoor research and reflection on yet another ancestor with a fascinating journey through life.

### THE CEMETERY

The remains of Charles Edmund Mirguet lie in the Mirguet family plot, in Section C of Rochester, New York’s Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Sprawling on 340 acres, Holy Sepulchre Cemetery has been the final resting place of thousands of souls for nearly 150 years. Since 1871 the cemetery has been dedicated to providing a sacred place to gather with family and friends to pray, remember, and celebrate life.



## The Search for Osteologist Charles Edmund Mirguet (1860 – 1929)

In a February 21, 1929 *Rochester Times Union* article announcing his funeral, Osteologist Charles Edmund Mirguet was described as a “Famed Rochesterian, Scientist of Smithsonian Institution.” The article further reported that he “Gave All His Life to Osteology.”

### What is Osteology?

Derived from the Greek words osteon (bone) and logos (knowledge), Osteology is the study of bones through the subdisciplines of anatomy, anthropology, paleontology and biophysics. The science involves the detailed study of the structure of bones, skeletal elements, teeth and other related components. Osteologists

are trained to read and translate a bone’s story. This rare skill provides information that helps us better understand ancient cultures, solve mysteries, and learn about animals.

The story of Charles Edmund Mirguet is a noteworthy story of American opportunity; an immigrant’s rags to riches story of coming to America to work hard and attain the American Dream. Born in Nancy, France, Charles Mirguet received his early education there. He was brought to this country as an orphan by his aunt and uncle when he was just eight years old, and soon settled with them in Rochester, New York.

Continued on page 15

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## FROM THE NEWSROOM

**\*ON THE FRONT COVER:** This issue's front cover features David Pierce's bi-monthly Etched in Stone installment—this time about Charles Edmund Mirguet. David explores New York's Buried Past by researching and sharing stories from his ancestors who are buried in New York. The images he provided for this piece are all at least 100 years old.

**About those extra Owl Lights.** After an initial mailing, our printer noticed that some copies had been misassembled; they then took the extraordinary step of reprinting and resending to all subscribers. Thanks Wayuga! We apologize for the inconvenience / confusion. If you received two excellent copies, as most did, please pass your spare copy onto a friend. **ALSO:** Puzzler Cheryl Bower pointed out that Roger Banister was the first to break the 4 minute mile. Sebastian Coe is a British MP and former track star who won 4 Olympic gold medals, including the 1500 meters in 1980 and 1984. Sorry for any resulting frustration...and thanks readers for giving the Owl Light (including the puzzle) a careful read.

**Finally:** I misdated the Small Town Hound photos in the February issue, they were taken in 2020 not 2000 (corrected in online version).

**ON THE BACK COVER:** We have filled up the back with images (many more posted online and some in hiding) of the parade to celebrate Jane Barnard's 103rd birthday. Many people went by, and these are just a few of the ones I captured. The young person running with the smiley face balloon is Wyatt, one of Jane Barnard's Great, Great Nephews. He is 4. All images by D.E. Bentley (happy to share).

**Publication of Owl Light Literary: Turning Points** is happening in 2021. See advance sale information on page 23 or order online at [owllightnews.com/turningpoints/](http://owllightnews.com/turningpoints/). *Turning Points* will be Canadice Press' first stand-alone literary journal. We want to take it slow and give it our best go given the challenges of 2020 continuing into 2021. Selected authors have been notified and names posted on our FB site. We will also post information there about upcoming author readings (in person and/or via Zoom) once the book is released. Thank you to all who submitted writing. And thank you to everyone for your patience and support as we move forward with this exciting project. Stay tuned!



Where Inspiration & Inquiry Converge

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## SUBMISSIONS—to [editor@canadicepress.com](mailto:editor@canadicepress.com)

We are actively seeking submissions for front page feature articles. Articles should reflect on rural life in New York State. They should be timely, and the original work of the authors(s). Submitted pieces should be around 2000 words and include original images (photos or illustrations). Authors/artists will receive full credit (in print and online). We are also looking for reviews of local arts (visual, performing, literary...) as well as original short stories and poetry for Pen & Prose—our monthly literary arts section.

We except submission on a rolling basis. Please specify the type of submission in the subject line of the email (i.e. news story, feature story, press release, poetry, editorial, opinion, fiction etc.). Include your name and phone number in the email, as well as a word doc attachment of the submission. Feel free to contact us in advance with queries, if desired. All submissions will be considered on a case by case basis for publication in future issues (in print and/or online). **The general deadline for all content for upcoming issues is the 10th of each month. Owl Light News pages fill up FAST!**

We place online content ongoing and welcome community press releases.

## Shifting Lines in the Sand

No trespassing signs border or surround many rural properties in New York State—a ritualistic act of self-preservation. Our property, along with that of most of our neighbors, backs up on state land frequented by hunters—who take advantage of this shared natural resource during open seasons for deer, turkey, and small game, and can easily drift onto unposted private lands. When hunting has waned for the year, we wander into these shared land areas and explore on foot or with snowshoes.

In most communities—including our rural enclave—there still exists a vast range of ideological and political viewpoints. Yet, until recently, I believed that the things we had in common with our neighbors—our mutual love of rural living (trucks, dogs, nature, gardening, bonfires, and bird watching come quickly to mind) along with the more basic commonalities we all share (love of family and the desire for health and happiness)—helped bridge these divides.

Until an unexpected discovery highlighted for me the naiveté of my perspective.

We have been doing some training with our newest pup, Æsc, on the state land that borders the back of our property—and that of our surrounding neighbors. During a recent outing, we came upon a neighbor's posted signs. On the name line—rather than the usual landowner name being written in—our neighbor had written, “no democrats.” Perhaps I should have just disregarded this as some good, clean fun, but it really angered me.

Given the increasingly calcified divide that has emerged within the political parties, and the divergent views that dominate extremist Right and Left positions, I should hardly be surprised by this rural display of pride in one's chosen side. We live now, more than ever, in a world of lines drawn in the sand. These lines have become more concrete with the rise of social-media-inspired “tribal” identities that feed on vulnerabilities and devour empathy. I have come to realize that many people vote with little understanding of the candidates—no wonder, given the

complexity of today's issues and the constant (often misleading) bombardment of prospective voters by social media's self-appointed pundits.

During the 80s and 90s, when I was in my 20s and 30s, I did not register for a political party. The party choices seemed too limiting; I preferred to look at candidates' records and peruse their positions on the issues that mattered the most to me. However, since New York is one of nine states that have closed primaries, at some point I realized sacrificing the ability to vote in primaries was not worth this non-affiliation. I registered as a Democrat. Despite this necessitated party registration, I, at times, still chose Republican candidates who I believed supported the things I considered important, and right.

All that changed in 2016. For the first time, I found myself voting deliberately along party lines. Despite having spent a couple decades with minimal exposure to television and social media—choosing, instead, to read my way to knowing what I needed to make viable life decisions, including voting decisions—I *knew* who Donald Trump was. I didn't like what I saw and did not believe that he could be the kind of leader I had hoped for. As the race got meaner, and the lines in the sand more defined, I watched in horror as a social media feeding frenzy—and the weaknesses in the electoral college system—installed Trump as our country's 45th president.

Nonetheless—and I do mean this—I tried to believe, I wanted to believe the campaign antics that I found appalling were engineered strategies to win the race. Given the grave responsibility before him, I reasoned, Mr. Trump—as *President*—would, perhaps, start acting professionally, seek the wise council of others, and make decisions (along with his House and Senate majority Republicans - 2016-2018) in the best interest of we the people (almost half of whom voted for him).

It quickly became evident that the best we could do was endure four stressful years and look ahead to 2020, with our fingers crossed that careless and unprofessional actions would not cause permanent damage to our reputation as a country and our social

and environmental progress as a nation.

Unfortunately for all, Trump's actions *have* caused damage to our country. And his role in the recent assault on the Capitol (for which he has been impeached a second time) has resulted in violence, destruction of property, and the death of at least five people (a Georgia man charged in connection with the insurrection has committed suicide). Unlike Hillary Clinton, who on November 9, 2016 conceded the 2016 presidential election after media outlets declared Trump had exceeded the required 270 electoral college votes (despite Clinton having won the popular vote), Trump (who lost in the electoral college *and* in the popular vote) has not conceded his loss. He continues to spew falsehoods and fan the flames of violence among his supporters.

Still, I feel—for the first time in four years—a sense of hope as Joe Biden and Kamala Harris stand ready to lead our country—their country—for the next four years. I am confident that they will act to lessen the divide that has been hastened by the Trump administration. It is a cautious hope. The recent assault on our Nation's Capital, coupled with a year of COVID-19-related challenges, has shaken my confidence to the core. I will need to see real change to believe again in the promise this nation of ours can offer its citizenry.

I love and value that as a nation, as a people, we are learning from our past systems of hatred and oppression. I want to believe that we can continue to grow, to break down the ideological walls that divide us by opening ourselves up to shared discussion and reasoned debate. I want to believe and hope that one day I will encounter my neighbor and begin a conversation. That these types of conversations will take place in many communities. That as a Nation we will continue to evolve and begin to heal. In seeing those posted signs, I am, however, a little less hopeful than I was—and a little more inclined to draw lines (and put up posted signs). ✎

D.E. Bentley  
Editor, Owl Light News

## FROM OUR READERS

### IMAGINE... THINK SMALL, THINK BIG!

#### Or Can \$36 Really Make a Difference!?

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act was enacted in March of 2019. One of the provisions of the Act, for 2020, allows for the deduction of up to \$300 for charitable contributions to qualified organizations, for those taxpayers who take the standard deduction. Consider that a \$300 deduction would save an average taxpayer around \$36, not a particularly large sum.

Consider further, however, that the Internal Revenue Service reported that nearly 112 million personal tax returns were filed for 2019. If only 10% of these taxpayers donated back their \$36 in 2020 tax savings to qualified organizations, revenue to charitable causes would exceed an astounding large sum of over \$400 million.

During this pandemic, in a time of great need, envision the good you would do if you were handed \$400 million to distribute to organizations who provide food, shelter, health and human services to our fellow citizens. I will be donating my \$36 to charity in 2021 and ask you to consider doing the same! Together we can make a difference!

Spread the word!  
David Pierce  
Canandaigua, NY

### Jack Evan's Legacy Keeps Community Center Stage

Thank you so much for publishing Joy Lewis's inspiring story about John Cushing Evans, better known as Jack Evans. Jack Evans was a native of Hemlock, and later became the philanthropist who created the Jack Evans Community Center at the school from which he graduated in 1935. His family has kindly continued in their generosity to the Little Lakes



Community Association, which purchased the building from the Town of Livonia in 2018. Jack's legacy continues in the Association's naming of the gym of iconic design, with a stage on one side, in his honor.

Jack wrote many wonderful stories about his boyhood in Hemlock collected in his memoir, *Hemlock Memories*. Several of these stories are also available in a notebook kept in the History Room at the Little Lakes Community Center. If there is sufficient interest, one or more of them may be submitted for publication in the *Owl Light News* in the future.

Thank you for your great publication, which I look forward to reading each month!

Tawn Feeney,  
Volunteer at LLCC



OPINION By TRACY MITRANO

# Reflections on My Congressional Races

In July of 2017 I began to explore a run for congressional district NY-23. Geographically the size of New Jersey and encompassing eleven counties (two partially, Ontario and Tioga), NY-23 runs from the suburbs of Binghamton to the shores of Lake Erie, from route 86 to areas that touch interstate 90. The Cooke Report denotes it is a R+6, meaning that on average the Republican candidate wins by 6 points. I knew it would be an uphill battle, but in the aftermath of the Trump administration, and with a Trump sycophant representing the district, I threw my hat into the ring. I promised to run twice, both 2018 and 2020, in the belief that the second election would result in a Democratic president with coattails to Congress, just like 2008. I was right on the first point, but not on the second. I underestimated the Trump effect that changed American politics. This article is the condensed retelling of my experience.

Twelve of us vied for the Democratic nomination in 2018. Chastened by the staying power of Trump in this district and exhausted by the tireless antics of his failed administration, it is now difficult to remember the excitement we felt in getting involved in the primary race. Whatever our differences in personality, background experience, or policies, we were united with only one exception—a town supervisor—in being non-politicians who previously never held elected office. We wanted to make a difference! Our schedule was relentless in a large district. Various Democratic committees and regional leagues of women voters sponsored events that had us going for months. By the time we got to petitioning, we could all recite everyone else's stump speech. Only five of us made it to ballot, and absentee ballots decided a slim 223 voter difference by the end over the July 4th holiday in 2018. Looking back on three and half years, it was unquestionably the most fun of the entire experience.

Intellectually I was prepared for defeat by November of that year, but emotionally not. I had it in mind that 2020 would resemble 2008 when the Obama election swept a Democratic, Eric Massa, into Congress from this district. Once I won the primary, I prepared myself for the long game. Momentum built throughout the general election,

however, to the point where hope against hope, by election eve I considered the possibility that lightning might strike. Alas, it was not meant to be. Bringing down the margin by half—from 16 in 2016 to 8 in 2018—was sufficient consolation for me to shake the sand from my sandals and get back into the game. I had learned so much I was eager to engage those lessons in a second chance.

The first lesson was a clear-eyed understanding of my opponent's playbook; create a straw man and then throw out a million dollars attacking it. Not so much at play in the 2012 election, the first of the reconfigured NY-23rd district against Nate Shinogawa, by 2014 Reed perfected it against Martha Robertson. Self-inflicted flaws (not living in the district) of the 2016 Democratic candidate, John Plumb, easily combined with the Trump wave that crashed this district. Trump won by 15 points and the Democrat lost by 16. If I could get out ahead of the straw man, I believed we had a good chance of steering moderate Republicans and at least 40% of unaffiliated voters towards our ticket by November 2020. I began that effort by moving for three months to the county where we lost the most: Chautauqua. "You just won 5,000 votes," Eric Massa would say to me in the spring of 2019 when I ran into him at the birthday party of a mutual friend, "just by showing up."



Tracy Mitrano took a break from campaigning to enjoy some sunshine on the deck of her Penn Yan cottage, February 14, 2019.

...the people who came out to talk about their troubles with health care encouraged us. Many were not Democrats. Our plan was working. I was a real person. They had legitimate concerns that as their representative I promised to fix. We would build on that momentum throughout the race.

And show up I did, first in the western part of the district, where I revived my own western New York roots with chicken wings and Friday fish fries, and then back into the other parts in the center (Allegany, Steuben, and Yates), saving the east for the fall. With wonderful volunteers and a good primary campaign manager, we came up with a strategy for 2020, hired more staff, reworked the campaign web site, raised money, met with the editors of some of the most influential news outlets in the district, and, most important, set a schedule for a series of five-day, five town meetings on relevant topics such as health care, infrastructure, and the environment. By January of 2020 I was again in the west talking about pre-existing conditions and affordable health care. We even organized an effort where two doctors paid a charity to extinguish the medical debt of the most impoverished people in the district in the name of our campaign to kick the series off. Noticing once again as I had in the 2018 that the media in this district is a tough nut to crack (largely for the failure to do investigative journalism),

that event did not make such a splash, but the people who came out to talk about their troubles with health care encouraged us. Many were not Democrats. Our plan was working. I was a real person. They had legitimate concerns that as their representative I promised to fix. We would build on that momentum throughout the race.



Until Covid hit.

It was the middle of March and we were halfway through a second tour. The subject was the "squeezing of the middle class," one into which we could fit many issues, such as educational debt, the 2017 tax cut give away to the 1%, and the lack of infrastructure that held the farmers and working-class back. If people would just take a few minutes to think through how our Tea Party representative failed to bring the district what it needed to revive economically—affordable health care, good education, transportation, and the internet—we could avoid the straw man and talk about real issues with people.

Continued on page 9

## JOIN THE OWL LIGHT CONVERSATION

We welcome commentary from our readers.

Many of our regular contributors include direct contact information with their BIO information, and are happy to hear from other members of the Owl Light community. You can also send emails (with the title of the article in the subject line) to [editor@candicepress.com](mailto:editor@candicepress.com).

As our slogan states, Owl Light News is where "Inspiration & Inquiry Converge." As such, we welcome creative content and ideas along with active inquiry and commentary around the things that matter in the more rural places we live in—"where trees outnumber people."

Letters to the editor and longer opinion pieces can be emailed to [editor@canadicepress.com](mailto:editor@canadicepress.com). We ask that letters be topical, with sound arguments focused on ideas and information that inspires discussion and fosters positive community growth. Open exchange and change requires a willingness on the part of many to share divergent thoughts and listen carefully; to explore the validity as well as the weaknesses in dissenting views.

Short, concise letters under 500 words are more likely to be published.

We look forward to hearing from you.

# Pathways to Democracy

Obesity in America—Taking a Closer Look with NIFI's Deliberation Forum

By **DOUG GARNAR**



## HOW SHOULD WE REDUCE OBESITY IN AMERICA?

If one looked at photos of Americans taken in the 1940s through the late 1970s you would find few overweight or obese people.

For the period from the 1980s to the present, consider the following:

- One third of all Americans are obese and 20% of all teens are likewise.
- Prior to the current pandemic, over \$190 billion dollars were spent annually to treat obesity-related illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, strokes and certain types of cancers.
- A growing trend in clothing is “relaxed/expandable fashions.”
- Many ambulances now have been fitted with “heavy gurneys.”
- Stores are increasingly outfitted with electric scooters which are used for the most part by obese people to shop around the store.

The National Issues Forums Institute has developed the following forum designed to promote group and community deliberative conversation about this major health issue. It offers three options: “Help people lose weight;” “Improve the way our food is produced and marketed;” and “Create a culture of healthy living and eating.” Each option includes specific actions and, as with all NIFI deliberations, counter points/trade-offs to consider.

### OPTION ONE—HELP PEOPLE LOSE WEIGHT

Consider the following actions:

- Insurance companies could charge higher rates for obese customers as some companies already do for those who use tobacco.
- Community health agencies or insurance companies could send out public service announcements (PSAs) that educate people about health hazards associated with being obese.
- Individuals could lobby their children’s schools to remove vending machines full of unhealthy snacks.
- Employers could offer incentives to workers to lose weight by providing in house exercise equipment or subsidizing gym or health club fees.

Major trade offs: People ought to be free to choose what they wish to eat; some people simply cannot lose weight.

### OPTION TWO—IMPROVE THE WAY OUR FOOD IS PRODUCED AND MARKETED

Consider the following actions:

- Local governments can help inner city stores purchase equipment necessary to carry fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Taxes could be raised significantly on foods that include added sugars.
- Farm subsidies on unhealthy ingredients could be eliminated.
- PTAs could agree to stop selling junk food for fundraising events.

Major trade-offs: Companies should have the right to sell what they believe the market will bear; people should be free to purchase what they want.

“When you talk about obesity, there’s so many things that can cause that. It can be a medical thing, or down to the individual. There’s a lot of other things involved than eating a Mars bar.”

— Peter Shilton

### OPTION THREE—CREATE A CULTURE OF HEALTHY LIVING AND EATING

Consider the following actions:

- Zoning rules could require that new residential developments include sidewalks, bike paths, and open space.
- Banks and lenders could devise financing products that would support the development of walkable communities, with mixtures of residential and commercial uses.
- People could make exercise part of their regular routine, even if it is only around the block.
- Require more physical activity during the school day

Major trade-off: Such dramatic changes could take decades and would require significant changes in our way of life

This NIFI issue guide was first published in September 2016. Some of the actions outlined in the deliberation have been implemented in communities throughout the country. That said, the COVID pandemic has magnified many of the issues raised by the obesity epidemic which continues to plague our country.

### Two bright rays of hope in my community of Broome County include the following:

- On the north side of Binghamton there has been a virtual food desert for over 15 years with the closing of several major food markets. The only source of food during this time has been convenience gas stations. Recently, the Broome County Council of Churches has opened a small food store in a new apartment complex. Over the last several summers, in a large vacant plaza parking lot, small trucks have brought fresh produce for people to buy.
- Another promising project has been the spread of community gardens (“The Vines Program”). Over 20 gardens have sprung up in the last decade. People are allotted a small plot and they can grow fresh vegetables and fruit. In Otsiningo Park a large amount of land has been used for community gardens with the county supplying water and cultivating the gardens in the early Spring.

Perhaps most heartening is that these small projects are classic examples of efforts by citizens to tackle a major problem, which, with limited resources and lots of perspiration, have begun to make a visible difference. Citizens working in the “wetlands of democracy” have begun to transform their communities.

*For information about this forum one can contact [nifi.org](http://nifi.org) or Doug Garnar.*

Doug Garnar works with the Kettering Foundation and NIFI (National Issues Forums Institute) to help citizens find “pathways to democracy.” He has taught since 1971 at SUNY Broome Community College. He lives in Binghamton, NY.  
Doug Garnar at [garnardc@sunybroome.edu](mailto:garnardc@sunybroome.edu)

## OPINION By **KURT STAUDTER**

### White Riot and Insurrection

The bombing at the federal building in Oklahoma City, the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the white supremacists’ rally in Charlottesville, and now the riot at the capital, these events have shaken this nation to the very core. We all remember where we were when we first heard, and the images are forever burned into the soul of every American. It makes us who we are.

Not a pretty picture, eh?

As I watched the overrunning of the capital I was stunned. Through the years we’d all seen events like this play out in the third world and end very differently. Usually the despot that stole the election would order the military to open fire on the protesters leaving dozens dead. Thankfully that didn’t happen here.

This week voting begins in Uganda and human rights violations are on the rise. Through the years Americans have been called to help make sure elections were held fairly around the world. We were the

This is part of the problem now. Everybody can find that echo chamber on the internet customized for their point of view.

beacon of democracy that gave people hope and inspired them to be better, to be just. Now, after 35 years in power the leader of Uganda isn’t going to give up without a fight. However, the United States won’t be there to occupy the moral high ground. It’s kind of sad.

Continued on page 9



# Side Street Sounds

## Fond Farewell to Miché Fambro

By STEVE WEST

**M**y first recollection of seeing Miché Fambro was when I was in high school in the 1980s. I had heard of the new wave band, Miché and the Anglos, but I had no idea he was that guy. He was just a guy that worked at Buzzo Music in Geneseo.



It would be another 25 years or so before I can really say I met him. I was hosting an open mic at Muddy Waters in Geneseo when he came in one night. He said his wife and daughter were watching "Dancing with The Stars, or The Bachelor, or some such thing" on TV, and he just had to get out of the house. He took out this guitar that had multiple jacks and areas taped off— which I would soon learn were for picking up his unique finger percussion on the

body of the guitar. Then, he started to play his first song. His voice was sweet and rich. The speed with which the notes flew from his guitar were something you'd expect to hear from a heavy metal shredder, not an acoustic player. The normally buzzing crowd at Muddy Waters fell silent as Miché breezed through a couple of original tunes and a couple of standards. I became a fan that night.

About a year after that first encounter, I got a message from Miché asking if I'd appear with my band, The Tabletop Three, on an internet show that he was doing. I was honored to say yes. He came to my house and interviewed me, then he filmed the band rehearsing in my living room.

The highlight of the evening was having Miché join us for an impromptu version of "Ain't No Sunshine." Listen at: [youtube.com/watch?v=mJYU0Stvhnc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJYU0Stvhnc&feature=youtu.be).

To say that I knew Miché well is probably an overstatement. Mick, as he was known to his friends, posted dozens of videos of his performances, lessons, and thoughts on being a musician on his social media pages. Even if you never met him in person, his gentle demeanor and easy style in front of the camera made you feel as if you had known him forever. Even though he performed all over the world, over the years, he was gracious enough to fill in for me occasionally when I couldn't make a local gig, and he played in a couple of charity shows that I produced.



February 2020, Mick posted to his Facebook page that he had been diagnosed with liver cancer. In his typical style, he was optimistic about his treatment plan and rarely mentioned it again. In fact, if you missed that post, you might not have known he had anything wrong at all. He continued to post music videos and lessons all summer and into the holiday season. On December 9, 2020 he posted that his doctors had found a new cancer, and the diagnosis was terminal. On December 18, his wife, Wendy, posted the heartbreaking news that Miché had passed.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his daughters, Michael and Naomi, and his grandchildren, Leona and Marqui. He is also survived by his mother, Vivian McCord; siblings, Pat Fambro, Greg James and Angie McCord; many other cherished extended family members; his puppet, Newton, and his beloved guitar(s).

To see the full obituary, visit: [doughertyfuneralhomes.com/Obits/?p=12309](https://doughertyfuneralhomes.com/Obits/?p=12309)

Although I was always completely impressed with his musicianship, my most enduring memory of Miché will be his gentle spirit and the grace with which he carried himself on stage and in personal moments with friends and family. His passing is a tremendous loss to the music community. 🎸



Images courtesy of the Fambro family.

Steve West gigs (online performances and Live shows) and other info. can be found at: [stevewestmusic.com/](http://stevewestmusic.com/)

## COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

### Meet a NASA Engineer— and Try Out Computer Coding!



**O**ntario County 4-H is excited to announce that we are hosting a cool STEM opportunity to be held virtually using the Zoom platform on January 20th at 7:00pm. In this Zoom class, you will get to meet Timothy Canham, Senior Software Engineer at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory. His most recent project is the Perseverance Mars Rover that was launched July 30th, 2020 and is scheduled to land on Mars on February 18th. He will be talking about the rover and also answering YOUR questions live on this Zoom class. After talking with Tim Canham from NASA, Rebekah Bagley, engineer at Collins

### Virtual STEM Experience Open to All Area Youth and Families

Aerospace, will be leading us in an activity where we will use computer coding to make our own Mars Rover move according to our commands using Scratch.

Both Bagley and Canham are Finger Lakes natives and are excited to work with local youth to spark interest in STEM. This event is a great opportunity for youth to learn more about space exploration that is taking place right now as NASA explores the planet of Mars, will introduce youth to free educational tools that will allow them to learn about computer programming, and concludes with more information about how youth can continue to grow and explore in this project area.

These activities are ideal for youth ages 8-14,

but the whole family is welcome to participate together! This specific opportunity is open to both 4-H and non 4-H youth. Please email Sarah Wilhelm at [sab423@cornell.edu](mailto:sab423@cornell.edu) to register your family for this event. 🎸

## Honeoye Public Library

"We're Books...and More"

[honeoye.owwl.org](http://honeoye.owwl.org)

**BOOK SALE** – Every Saturday in February  
 Tuesday read aloud with Jimbo!  
 FB@Honeoye Public Library.

Closed on the 15th—Presidents' day.

**OPEN:** Mon. 2-6 • Tues. 12-4 • Wed. 2-4 • Thur. 2-6 • Sat. 9-1  
 8708 Main St. Honeoye, NY • 585-229-5020



# Small Town Hound

## Adventure Closer to Home

By Æsc



The face on Mill Creek, made out of tires.

Adventures with my humans can, at times, be quite exciting. This past month found them staying closer to home. They spent more time staring at newspapers (shaking their heads sadly while going on about this, or that), watching football (the balls they use seem far superior to the smaller balls that we play with in the evenings), and walking with me and my canine companions in nearby fields, forests, and swamps. I have also been working on my finding skills, both close to home and in more remote and distant wildlands. (My human Todd must not have a good sense of direction as he is *constantly* getting lost. I find other people too.)

One of the towns nearest us is Honeoye, NY (42° 79'01"N 77°51'67"W). It is a short drive away, not even enough time in the truck for me to settle into my backseat lair. I go with them sometimes to the place where the containers get thrown into a big box (most of them, some they let me play with—to occupy me during my alone time). I stay in the truck, but the people outside pass me special treats through the open window. I always miss these trips when Mars or Winnie are the chosen one (and I believe they feel the same, as they often snarl at me upon my return). We also all walk about together on the trail that leads from Main Street—right across from a great-smelling place called the Cornerstone Market, with one of the large human faces that look down on me. The trails feature wetlands with an abundance of birds—I like birds—and pathways built up on legs that allow us to walk over the water areas. They lead to Honeoye Lake with grassy areas and playgrounds—where I practice going over, up, under, and through.

42°79'01"N 77°51'67"W



D.E. Bentley 2021

Other times we go to a place called Mill Creek. My humans tell me that in the summer you can sit outside, and they promise that sometime I can join them for dinner. I can't go into most food places, but it always smells delicious when my humans bring home little boxes from here that I sometimes get small bites of.

Near the bridge is a place that had a giant bird out front—Birdhouse Brewing Company. My humans said a man named Randy lived here before and made birdhouses; that is why they chose that name. My humans get tacos in little boxes from here and they smell really good. They have an outside seating area, so maybe I can come back here too. I can't wait, but right now people are staying in more than usual so I will have to be patient. The people we do see are wearing masks, like the ones my humans wear when they go out.

During our most recent Honeoye visit we ventured into the library. I have been here before and they absolutely dote on me. I love rooms full of books, and although I chew on many things I never (as I mentioned before) chew up books—preferring toilet paper (before it has been used by others) and newspapers (after they have been read, of course). There is so much for humans to do in this library, so there are always people for me to visit with.

There is one part of the library that really upsets me but that my human finds interesting. There is a big room filled with animals. Yes, that's right...animals. There are big animals and small animals, many of which smell like the animals I know live nearby, so I suspect they all found their way here from nearby fields and

forests. These animals do not move, but they stare out with their glassy eyes and I find it quite disconcerting. The first time I saw them I was a bit put off by the fox. I am thinking I should be more wary of the one with the stripe, as Winnie had to have *three baths* last time she met one of those. There are books that show pictures of the animals and have words. I wish I could read these to learn more. My human told me that the animals are stuffed, just like my duckie, but they look so much like the real thing. Overall, it is quite an impressive and educational display and if you have not seen it you should check it out. There are display boxes in another room that hold some really old objects created and used by the Native Americans (that's what I heard someone say) who lived on all these lands first, before the other people started coming and taking more than their share.

Continued on page 19

## SATIRE

# The Light Lens

## Do You Billieve?

By T. TOURIS

Hanging in my shop is a dusty, wrinkled Buffalo Bills pennant dated from 1997. This was given to me by my young children as a birthday or Christmas gift, I can't remember, but it's remained a shop fixture since then. Little did I know that it would mark the beginning of a long and dark epoch in Buffalo Bills history.

Football historians often compare the Buffalo Bills period between 1997 and 2017 to the Soviet Union's Gulag system under Stalin. During this time, thousands of people were sent north and forced to work under unbearable conditions. The harsh conditions and torment suffered by Bills' players from this period is well documented. The number of former Bills quarterbacks suffering from PTSD, is suspected to be in the hundreds.

Fans who lived through these years have to deal with chronic physical and mental challenges brought on from two decades of a diet consisting solely of Labatt Blue.

The arrival of a new regime at One Bills Drive in 2017 signaled a merciful end to this brutal era. In four short years, the Gulag-like system has been dismantled and Bills fans will be able to watch what may be an historic Super Bowl run in the comfort of their own homes. No longer will they have to seek warmth by jumping through flaming tables.

Maybe it's time to show that old pennant some respect and give it a good dust off.



Go Bills!

T.Touris is a wanna-be-retired-computer-programmer. He spends his free time designing and working in wood, while dreaming up the next Light Lens.



### Editor's Note:

At this crucial point in the history of the United States, we believe that offering space for commentary on current issues is extremely important and a responsibility we take seriously. In light of the grave potential for misunderstandings—that can further divide our citizenry—and the potential for renewed (and challenging) conversations that can help us all find common ground, we welcome letters to the editor about important issues we face as a nation and globally.

Given the passionate emotions that have dominated the recent elections, politics is an inevitable topic. We hope that as Biden and Harris and the new administration settle in, reader-submitted topics will turn away from national politics and toward regional issues—including all the wonderful things that are happening in rural communities across New York State. Given the importance of accuracy regarding actions to ensure the integrity of our electoral process (at the state, judicial, and executive levels), we wanted to offer Mr. Geller an opportunity to respond to reader feedback. Thank you to all contributors for being willing to share and discuss this issue...and for casting your votes. Thank you, also, for those willing to run for office during these trying times—including Tracy Mitrano, who shares in this issue the rewards and challenges inherent in that process.

Dear readers...next issue we move on!

D.E. Bentley  
Editor *Owl Light News*

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## Reader Response to “Trump’s Election Trutherism”

I am writing in response to an opinion piece you published in the January 2021 edition of the *Owl Light News* —“Trump’s Election Trutherism” by Len Geller.\*

Mr Geller claims that President Trump and his “minnons” are only contesting a free and fair election because they want to delegitimize an incoming Biden Administration in order to stay politically relevant. Additionally he claims that by not conceding to Biden, Trump is only dividing the country.

I must be living in a parallel universe but didn’t we just spend four years listening to Hillary Clinton whining on left wing media that Trump stole the 2016 election from her, did she ever concede to Trump, did we not spend four years of constant media lying to us about Russian interference, Russian collusion, Mueller Investigation nonsense, Pelosi and Schumer phony Impeachment procedures against Trump as well as other “everything is Trump’s fault” nonsense?

President Trump has every right to contest the outcome of the 2020 Election. Additionally, every Trump supporter who thinks Biden is illegitimate and that the election was stolen from Trump has every right to do so too.

If it’s OK for Democrats to cry foul when they lose, it’s OK for Republicans to do so when there is real cause to cry foul. It works both ways Mr. Geller.

As for election integrity, I don’t think he is concerned one bit. Instead his article appears that he supports cheating and lying and Democrats who do.

The 2020 Election had too many anomalies, such as votes being counted more than once, more votes being cast than voters voting, votes being changed by machines, voting laws being ignored etc. These anomalies need to be thoroughly investigated and corrected and those who committed voter fraud need to be prosecuted. However, with one party (Democrat) being more than willing to cheat, with one party (Republican) only half heartedly willing to stop it, and with a media who is complicit in censoring free speech, and only telling us that Joe Biden is just wonderful, we are quickly going to see American Elections becoming only rubber stamps for totalitarian rule.

If readers of this paper are not as concerned as I am about the integrity of our elections then America as we know it is gone.

Richard T. Keene  
Lieutenant Colonel (US, Retired)  
Honeoye, NY

\*[owllightnews.com/trumps-election-trutherism/](http://owllightnews.com/trumps-election-trutherism/)

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## Mr. Geller's Rebuttal

Mr. Keene’s response to my opinion piece is filled with false claims and baseless accusations. I am not going to discuss his false claims about Russian interference in the 2016 election or the Mueller report, since they have nothing to do with my opinion piece. Suffice it to say that there is overwhelming evidence that the Russians did interfere in the 2016 election, much of which is documented in the Mueller report. Before responding to his call for further investigation of alleged election fraud, I need to address the false equivalence he draws between Hillary Clinton’s reaction to her 2016 election loss and Trump’s reaction to his 2020 election loss.

As a matter of public record, Hillary Clinton *did* concede the election on November 9, 2016 after congratulating the winner the night before. In contrast to Trump, whose legal team has filed over 60 lawsuits contesting the election results, Clinton filed none. The only post-election action her legal team took was to join a legal request by third party candidate Jill Stein for a recount in Wisconsin. Nor did Clinton and her followers try to pressure local and state election officials and state legislators in key battleground states to overturn the election or incite a mob to storm the Capitol Building to overturn the electoral college results. Even though the Clinton campaign complained about possible Russian interference in the election, it refused to challenge the results either in court or on the ground. To equate these post-election complaints with Trump’s baseless allegations of election fraud and repeated legal and extra-legal attempts to overturn the election is absurd. What Clinton did was the usual post-election grumbling from a candidate expected to win; what Trump has done is to use a fabricated and delusional conspiracy theory to fuel an attempted coup.

Citing numerous alleged voting anomalies that warrant investigation, Mr. Keene believes that the issue of widespread election fraud remains an open question. It isn’t. The train has left the station. The issue has been settled, and the reason it has been settled is because the investigation that Mr. Keene is calling for has already been undertaken by local and state election officials numerous times in response to numerous allegations in the key states in question, and no widespread election fraud or rigging has been found. Moreover, when given the opportunity to make their case in state and federal court, the Trump legal teams and those acting on his behalf have been unable to present any compelling evidence in support of their claims. Let me repeat those three little words: no compelling evidence. You can only cry “the earth is flat” so many times before it falls on deaf ears.

Let’s review the facts. In the five battleground states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, each controlled by a Republican majority in the state legislature, and two (Arizona and Georgia) under full GOP control with a Republican governor, no election fraud or rigging was found, and Joe Biden was certified the winner. In Georgia where there were two recounts, Trump gained only 2,417 votes, not enough to change the final outcome, and in Wisconsin where there was a partial recount, Biden gained 74 votes. Still not satisfied with these outcomes, the Trump legal team has filed 62 lawsuits, mostly in the five battleground states above plus Nevada, none of which (except a minor one in Pennsylvania having no effect on election results) have been successful.

This abysmal failure in court is very revealing, because if you cannot make your case in a court of law, which is the most fair and impartial hearing you will ever get, then it cannot be made at all and should be given up. That Trump and his allies in Congress and the media refuse to do so and are still promoting the stolen election myth shows clearly that they are not concerned with truth and evidence but with holding on to power no matter what. We saw this on full display on January 6, 2021 when Trump and his disciple Giuliani incited a mob to storm the Capitol in a failed attempt to overturn the election.

For those who are still loyal to Trump and accept the stolen election theory, the following facts should give you pause. When Trump incited the crowd to storm the Capitol, he did so with the help of two major lies in addition to the big lie of the stolen election. The first lie was that he would join them in the march to the Capitol. Of course, he never did. Instead, as the crowd started to move, Trump got in his car and drove to the White House to watch the ensuing chaos on television, unwilling to intervene and call off the mob. An even more damaging lie was suggesting to his followers that their presence in the Capitol would encourage Vice President Mike Pence to do his constitutional duty and overturn the election, when Trump knew full well that Pence had no constitutional authority to do so. In other words, Trump incited some members of the crowd by giving them hope that the election could still be overturned, when in fact he knew that Pence would not violate his oath of office, and only chaos and disruption would ensue. In the first lie, we see Trump the manipulative coward; in the second lie, we see him using his followers as pawns in a sick and vengeful power game.

Here are some more disturbing facts that may lead you to question Trump’s motivation and credibility. This is not the first time Donald Trump has made election rigging charges. In fact, it is a pattern of behavior that goes all the way back to 2012 when Trump tweeted that there were “reports of voting machines switching Romney votes to Obama.” Sound familiar? Four years later when Ted Cruz defeated him in the Iowa caucuses, Trump accused Cruz of stealing the election. That same year he claimed the Democratic primary was rigged against Bernie Sanders, and even after winning the 2016 election, he claimed that 3 million illegal votes were cast against him and set up a commission to investigate election fraud that was eventually disbanded because it found no evidence of illegal voting.

Continued on page 23



## White Riot from page 5

It makes one wonder that if this were a riot by people of color it would've ended differently. Police in some regions of the U.S. are still killing young unarmed Blacks with impunity. You'd think that we'd have gotten beyond that by now. If this had been a Black Lives Matter march on the capital we'd be counting the dead on more than one hand.

Through the years I've marched with protesters more times than I can count, and I can tell you that it's easy to get wrapped up in the mentality of the mob. It's also simple to get urged into action by an inspiring speaker. Especially when they're telling you what you want to hear.

This is part of the problem now. Everybody can find that echo chamber on the internet customized for their point of view. If that worldview is based on false claims and bogus facts then not only are you being deceived, but more importantly you're not contributing in a meaningful way to a discourse that desperately needs to happen.

The only way this doesn't tumble out of control is if we can establish a mutually agreed on set of facts and build out from here. To have multiple realities gives us no starting point.

We didn't get here overnight. This has been steadily building for years. So the issue here is how do

we walk this back from the cliff? To start with we've got to find out why people are so upset.

Taking a knee for the national anthem, burning a flag, or running riot over the capital are all signs that things are not well in the country. Unlike the folks on the right that lose their minds over the desecration of their symbols, for me it sets off the warning bells and leaves me wanting to know what the grievances are and find a way to solve them. Like it or not, we're all in this together.

Now that the Democrats are in control there are growing calls for payback. As much as some deserve it, it's time for the Dems to have a laser-like focus on getting the job done. Effective government is the best revenge. I'm not saying that there aren't those that should be punished: Senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley should be thrown out of the Senate, or at the very least be censured. For people like Trump—along with his spawn and Rudy Giuliani, who stoked the fire of sedition—there's a special place in Hell, but for now we'll have to settle for a little jail time (although Trump will have likely pardoned them by the time you read this).

This has been a dark four years and it's been decades coming. Biden and Harris won't fix this overnight. To heal the rift in this country will take a long time, and it will take all of us. All of the voters have

reason to be upset. They do. They're justified in believing the government isn't working in their interest. The oligarchs that have paid off our elected leaders call the shots now, and it's been a decades long greed-fest.

What we watched happen at the capital was inexcusable. Those responsible for the destruction and looting should be brought to justice. I hope that there's one thing we can all agree on, and that is that this should never happen again. Let's not let this be the last straw, but instead be the first step in fixing the injustices that plague this nation. 🦉

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Kurt Staudter, Springfield, VT. Over the course of thirty years Kurt's career working for National Grid and New England Power has given him a unique perspective on the Connecticut River. From operating the Bellows Falls Hydro Plant in the 1990s, to his job now in Substation Operations & Maintenance, every day his work takes him someplace along the river. He is an elected Executive Board Member of IBEW Local 486. A longtime activist and political columnist for the Vermont Standard, Kurt along with his wife Patti also ran the Vermont Brewers Association representing the growing number of craft breweries in the state for almost seven years. He has a Bachelors of Arts degree from the National Labor College, and participated with a fellowship in the Harvard Trade Union Program.

## Mitrano from page 4

We could win Congress, and then lay the foundation to make the 23rd district attractive to investment. Over a hundred people showed up in Olean, including a high school teacher who brought his senior class. A Republican state representative came to an auditorium event in Wellsville, and at the end he came up to introduce himself and we laughed a bit as we "elbow shook." The next night we hosted fifty people in the library public room in Bath. But by then the concern over the epidemic was growing more prominent. It was March 13. As I drove home to Penn Yan, I decided to take our show online for the remainder of those five-city themed events.

I might as well have been driving into a brick wall. Sure, I continued to raise money. For a time, we created a well-attended online series in which we discussed agricultural issues, local economies, and the environment. When George Floyd died and the Black Lives Matter movement revived, I showed up at almost every single march in his name throughout the district. I gave an important address on race relations in Watkins Glen. We sought local leaders of the Black communities to form an affinity group. I spoke in Black Churches. Meaningful in its own right, these efforts were nonetheless meaningless against the most significant aspect of our strategy: to get me out into public so that my opponent would have a hard time demonizing me. Because no matter how successful we were at keeping pace with the pandemic, the restrictions it placed on us blocked our ability to effectively be out in public to win the hearts that would get us the votes.

By the end of August, with Biden and Harris installed for the Democrats, we commenced our most complex poll. After Labor Day, we bored over the promising results. Only seven points separated me

from Reed. Even better, his numbers were falling below the critical 50% mark for an incumbent. Moreover, Covid-19 restrictions were lifting, especially in the Finger Lakes, so I began to get out—first closer to home and then all over the district—with events carefully choreographed for masks, outdoors, and socially distanced. We got up on T.V. three weeks earlier than in 2018. We had the best direct mail media on the Democratic side of the fence. Curiously enough, my opponent seemed strangely silent. Even better, regional press outlets left ridiculous press releases from his campaign alleging obvious lies about my campaign largely unattended. For a few days in September I began to feel real hope.

And then came the "defund the police" onslaught. "You look like El Chapo," remarked one of my supporters. "Do you really want to defund the police?" asked one of my stepsons, a deputy sheriff. No matter what we tried, we could not push it back. I held a press conference. We wrote a cease-and-desist letter, first to Reed's campaign and then to the media that hosted the content. I pleaded with our contractors for T.V. and direct mail to change up our message to specifically address his blitz. To no avail. I also did not have a national Democratic Party able or willing to blow it back. Looking back on the "defund the police" Republican attack on Democratic congressional candidates, Sheri Bustos—former head of the 2020 Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC)—asked a Republican pollster at a December 15, 2020 Cornell University Institute on Politics and Global Affairs event, "Why did you see it, and we didn't?" Really? I knew the damage the minute I heard the ad in mid-September. No one should need a pollster to understand the threat. No wonder by October I began to feel so frustrated, and so hopeless.

In the end, I was right on one point—and the more important one—that a Democrat would take the White House in 2020. But not on the second. Trump won by 15 points. And with coattails to boot. I lost by 16 points to the incumbent. As cause, symptom, accelerant, Trump was the difference between now and 2008. Whether the people in this district will ever get what they need: affordable health care, education without debt, infrastructure; and what they reasonably want: economic opportunity, a fair shake at life, freedom from want that bequeaths liberty however one personally wants to define it, remains to be seen. I would not bet on our 10-year incumbent unless and until he shakes himself truly free of his obstructionist Tea Party proclivities, something he may in fact be trying to do if he is at all sincere about the real meaning of the "Problem-Solvers Caucus." But let us remember true bipartisanship begins at home. The straw man approach and the fearmongering it instills in voters may win elections but does not garner respect. And there, Reed fails miserably, no matter how much he plays instrumentally to his audience.

I am already on the road to returning to the work from which I came, and continue to love: teaching young adults, helping them to learn to think so they can go on to graduate or professional school or get good jobs in the workplace; and helping colleges and universities with curriculum that addresses contemporary challenges in cybersecurity and information science. I kept my promise to run twice, and I am keeping it in defeat to not run again. Still, one piece of advice: everyone should run for office! It not only teaches you a lot about yourself, but about what is promising and what still ails us in our democratic republic. 🦉

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# The Homestead Gardener

## Revisiting the Commons

By **DERRICK GENTRY**

This column has been mostly dedicated to the homely task of sharing ideas on how to live a small-scale, self-reliant, ecologically sane, pleasure-filled life while stationed on a small plot of land. The experimental successes and failures are personal and particular, while the shared knowledge is common property. All I know, and all I write about here, is little more than a re-processing and paying forward of what I have picked up from others in the common domain. (In light of that fact, “self-reliance” sometimes strikes me as a silly notion...)

This communal practice of sharing ideas quietly assumes that we already have—or expect to have—long-term access to some land that we can call our own, a secure place where we can daydream and try things out. The truth, however, is that for the average person even a small plot of reasonably arable acreage can be extremely hard to come by. As more and more of us are turned on to the idea of small-scale self-reliance and seek to build resilient local communities, one of the most serious challenges we face is basic access to affordable land.

During these winter months between seasons, when there is not a lot of experimentation taking place outside, my thoughts tend toward bigger-picture issues. The question of land access/ownership has been on my mind lately. How might we change the plot, unplug from the economic status quo, and establish alternative spaces where more of us have the opportunity to live the kind of life we want to live? If you ponder such questions, as I do, then you will soon find yourself in the middle of some exciting new conversations that are revisiting and rethinking an old idea: the idea of the commons.

What is meant by a “commons”? What kind of ideal, alternative model does it represent? Well, if you believe in the right to save and exchange open-pollinated seeds—indeed, if you believe in taking care of the land with future generations in mind—then you can already count yourself a proponent and practitioner of the commons. For most readers of this column, the concept is fundamental to what we do even if the word is not used on a regular basis.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no fundamental conflict between the idea of shared resources and the idea of privately managed property. Property is not viewed as “theft” within the model of the commons. In fact, one function of a commons is to protect not only the land and resources that are shared but also to secure the long-term autonomy of the people who depend on those resources. For example, the Agrarian Trust—a national organization founded by the indefatigable Severine von Tscharner-Fleming—has created an agrarian commons on a vast scale that is designed to help millions of acres of old farm land bypass the conventional real estate market (driven by investors and “developers,”) and instead transition it from the ownership of retiring farmers into the care of a new generation of small-scale farmers. Most of these aspiring farmers could not otherwise afford to get a start on their own.

The model of the commons has also been seen as a promising way to address the socio-economic inequality that is the legacy of generations of structural racism.

“Land is the basis of justice, freedom, and equality.”  
—Malcolm X

Just as there is historical precedent for the commons, there have been past attempts at radical land reform in the United States. When General Sherman met with twenty African-American leaders in January of 1865, they all told him that land ownership was the best way to secure both economic and political freedom for newly freed slaves. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, reserving coastal land in Georgia and South Carolina for Black settlement guarantees. Only six months later, 40,000 former slaves were living on 400,000 acres with army-issued mules. The infamous “40 acres and a mule” experiment was given barely a season to take off. The new president, Andrew Johnson, cleared the land of its newly freed stewards, and the Jim Crow system—premised on a recognition of the deep connection between economic and political power—became the dominant model in both the South and the North for decades to come.

The equally radical Homestead Acts of the late 1800s did not succeed as a reparations project, but they did generate massive amounts of wealth from the sale of government-granted land that has been transmitted over many generations. In the year 2000, it was estimated that nearly a quarter of the adult U.S. population were descendants of the original Homestead Act recipients. Only a tiny fraction of those original recipients were African-American.

While the Homestead Acts were mostly failures from a social justice perspective, there were some notable successes among the early Black homesteaders who received land. Self-organized homesteading “colonies” formed throughout the country, the most famous of which include Nicodemus (in Kansas) and Dearfield (in Colorado). They are inspiring examples of what a marginalized and oppressed people can do if they have something to work with. Most intriguing of all, these historic homesteads seem to have succeeded due in large part to the fact that they were part of small-scale collective endeavors—what we would now call examples of resilient local communities.

Much of this history is reviewed in a stimulating piece published in June 2020 in the journal *The Conversation* under the title “Land Loss Has Plagued Black America Since Emancipation – Is It Time to Look Again at ‘Black Commons’ and Collective Ownership?” When I read the piece this past summer, I knew immediately that I wanted to contact the authors—Kofi Boone and Julian Agyeman—and talk more about the idea of the commons and about their recent collaborative work.



Kofi Boone is Professor of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at North Carolina State University. His work explores the intersection between landscape architecture and environmental justice, and he has published widely in both popular and scholarly media.



Julian Agyeman is Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University. He has written or edited 11 books, and he is the originator of the concept of “just sustainabilities,” a term that is now widely used, and which Agyeman has defined as “the



need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and into the future, in a just and equitable manner whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems.”

As a homesteader, I am naturally drawn to the idea of an agrarian commons and to the rich and still undervalued tradition of Black agrarianism (represented by figures such as Fannie Lou Hamer and—who knew?—Malcolm X). As Boone and Agyeman remind us, however, the idea of the commons transcends agrarian ideals, inviting people like me to think within a much broader context. Just as the concept of permaculture is about more than perennials and the plant kingdom, the idea of the commons is about more than just the land. What it is about is dignity, security, social justice, and “a better quality of life for all.”

The following is an edited transcript of my conversation with Kofi and Julian (thank you both once again for generously taking the time to talk with me).



How would you define the idea of a “commons” for someone who is not familiar with the term? For those who are not familiar with the debate over the concept, is there anything you feel ought to be said in response to the old (and perhaps overly discussed) critique of the “tragedy of the commons”?

**K.B.** In this context, a “commons” probably has different layers. There is a cultural layer; a sense that the commons is defined in the context of the cultural needs of Black people, and within the context of racist systems that have reduced the spaces and resources available. There is a material layer in that the idea of a commons is meant to overcome structural barriers to accumulating resources to control land and enable wealth generation. And there is an organizational layer that suggests cooperative ownership through large scale micro investment might be a strategy to overcome the extreme constraints on wealth in Black communities.

The “Tragedy of the Commons” refers to the theories attempting to explain “free riders”. The tragedy is that a commons requires a selfless sense of cooperation and participation, but it doesn’t prevent the opportunity for those who are not contributing fully to still get the benefits of the common interest. I don’t know whether or not this is over discussed (beyond signaling that commons are risky and discouraging their consideration). But I will say that theory was based on observations of White American agricultural practices over a century ago. The cultural imperatives, specifically the ones that have recurred throughout the Black American experience, may suggest that a cultural imperative might impact the idea of the use of a commons.

Continued on page 20



# Dragonfly Tales

## Nature Connections: EMU

By **STEVE MELCHER**



**T**oday's youth spend the majority of their time connected indoors. They're connected to their phones,

**"Necessity is the Mother of Invention."**

Frank Zappa (well maybe)

to computers and through the big screen on the wall. Classes are being taught online now. Zoom has been wonderful, a true testament to a necessity being the mother of invention as well as our entrepreneurial skills. We saw a need to provide a safe way to educate children and fulfilled that need with available tools and imagination. Most kids I know are attending classes in person every other day or some similar scenario, filling the rest of the time with online class activities, all with technology that has existed since the last century. I taught oceanography and classes during the early days of 'remote learning'. There were children on ranches called 'cattle stations' in the outback of Australia that were hundreds of kilometers away from the nearest school, so homeschooling was the only option. We used radio transmissions and were lucky to have words come across our screen or printed out on a dot matrix printer at 1200 BAUD. No graphics or videos or even color were a part of our tool kit back then. The need was there and some inventive folks rose to the occasion and created an educational network for distance learning. Today, this has become the norm and even a preferred method of presenting material. I've taken classes, presented webinars, voted at board meetings all on meeting platforms like Zoom that were virtually unheard of two years ago. I even attended the British Dragonfly Society's annual conference 'live' through the marvels of software dedicated to bringing people together online.

All of this is wonderful. The 'Internet' might not have been invented by Al Gore but I worked with him in project 'GLOBE' back in the late 80's. The object was to bring education to remote areas of the world through the internet. I remember working with a small village in Namibia that didn't have access to the internet (no electricity or running water). We bussed a school load of kids to the nearest city, Walvis Bay, so they could access the internet and learn remotely. Not exactly what the program was designed to accomplish. This might be considered a misuse of technology or at the very least a waste of resources. The point is, those kids got more of an education from the bus ride than they did from sitting in front of a computer screen in Walvis Bay. I'm sure the kids probably enjoyed the 'field trip' to the Atlantic Ocean and the side trip to Namib-Naukluft National Park more than their GLOBE experience.

### Our Need for Nature

Today, we can attend classes on regenerative agriculture and watch BBC documentaries about the mating habits of meerkats. All in the comfort of our living rooms. But aren't we all 'itching' to get outside again? Recently an article in the New York Times read: "Nature Deficit Disorder is Really a Thing," adding "Children's behavior may suffer from a lack of access to outdoor space, a problem heightened by the pandemic." Even before the pandemic parents gave example of the healing powers of nature, reducing their child's symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder or even depression. Now with COVID, we are learning what folks did in past pandemics. Outdoor spaces, including those associated with schools and libraries, can offer social distancing that is one of the cornerstones of protection from viral infection. As tragic as the pandemic is, COVID 19 has dramatically increased public awareness of our need for a connection to nature.

Even before social distancing, health care providers were concerned about loneliness among seniors as well as teens.

Loneliness is as high a risk factor as smoking and obesity for early death. Families who are stressed by the fear of the virus and economic uncertainty are cut off from their usual social circles and turning to nature for solace and connection. The adoption of household pets has almost doubled during COVID 19, indicating a need for some connection with nature through another species. Folks have become aware of 'something greater than themselves' and are seeking an understanding to that awareness through connections with nature. Feeding birds has become more popular. Online sights and phone apps that identify everything from birds to fungi have been downloaded and accessed like never before. Veganism is becoming popular worldwide with a new awareness of the origin of these novel viruses and a more compassionate view towards our fellow creatures. The percentage of folks switching to a plant based diet showed a marked increase during Veganuary which was sponsored by several organizations including our own Plant Based News.

The towns and villages in the Finger Lakes have done a wonderful job of rising to the necessities brought on by the pandemic. Rotarians, churches, schools, libraries and many groups formed during the last year just for the sole purpose of caring for folks in their community, have admirably risen to the challenge of the needs of our communities. Many have focused on a reconnection to nature.

### What you can do-EMU

Those of you who have kids at home have the unique and awesome responsibility to expose those kids to nature. You don't have to be a Steve Irwin or David Attenborough to carry out this task.

### E-Experiences

Simply provide nature experiences...daily. We had a rule at our house that we would spend sometime outdoors everyday, no matter what. Rainy day? Wear a rain coat. Just 30 minutes or a trip out to the back fence or down to the front stoop to turn over a leaf is enough to expose a kid to an experience with nature. Different age groups require different experiences. A four year old may be fascinated by a worm for minutes whereas a teenager may have to put the thing on a hook and go fishing to be fully engaged. Seasonal rituals are important as well. Years ago, we would visit our grandparent's farm during the summers, now we at least can visit a local farm or CSA during days they are open to the public. Rituals like cutting down a tree for the holidays can be an experience in nature. I remember well how excited I was for the first day of trout fishing or turkey season. What ritual experience will your family carry on to the next generation?

### M-Mentoring

You don't need a degree to teach your kids to be in awe of the natural world. Parents have told me that they have 'rediscovered their own love' of nature through watching their children. Can you remember spending hours turning rocks over in the stream to find what monsters lie beneath? Kids get excited about what we're excited about. Your children will show compassion when you show compassion.

Continued on page 15



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# Bee Lines

## Winter Woes: Bees, Humans, and Canines Adapt to the Changes



By SAM HALL

Checking the Accuweather forecast for the area where I have most of my colonies, it looks like Thursday, January 14 will be a day with the temperatures in the low 40s. Depending on the wind, the Saskatraz bees will be active; without much wind they might actually be flying outside. They will be doing winter cleansing flights. The snow (if there is any) will look like someone has sprayed yellow paint on it—hence the term “Yellow Rain”. The past few years I have been getting Saskatraz bees as replacement colonies as they are better suited than others for winter. They should be, as they were developed in Saskatchewan, Canada, known for its cold winters.

Following the “cleansing flights,” there will be several hundred dead bees appearing on the snow. This is nothing to panic about as it is perfectly normal. These are bees that are too weak to make it back into the hive for various reasons.

Fortunately, the weather has turned a bit colder. The reason I say that is the warmer the weather the more active the bees are in the hive and when they are active, like humans, they eat more. Their reservoirs of honey can be fairly quickly consumed in warm weather.

February 7th in my yard it is predicted to be 44 degrees. I will not get into the debate on climate change, but I can tell you what my own experience has been and how it has changed in the past few years. There used to be a 10-day to two-week period in February when you could count on severely cold weather with a temperature down to zero and below in some years. I still get low days but never two weeks with days in a row of sub-freezing zero temperatures. Where I grew up in Appalachia there was a saying that “when the days lengthen the cold strengthens”. This no longer seems true.

If you open a hive and pop the inner cover and the bees are right up against the bottom of it, those bees are hungry if not starving and must be fed. I use candy boards to feed this time of year. In the image to the right, you can see two of my candy boards, one that has not been used yet and one from last year that was in use. I fill them with cane sugar that I have moistened just enough to make it malleable and if I have some I will put in some Honey-B-Healthy.

I have friends that simply will put cane sugar on top of the inner cover with an empty super or spacer above and the bees will come up and take it down. I prefer my way as I can turn the candy board bottom side up if need be and the bees do not have to worry about getting cold going above the inner cover as the sugar is right above them. I am told that a full candy board is equal to a full super of honey. I believe that to be right.

Now is also the time to consider Varroa mite treatments for the spring if you need them. For years I refused to treat and eventually came to the conclusion if I didn't want to treat, I would have to replace most of my colonies every year. So, I decided to fight back and the bees agreed. This past fall I treated every colony with Mite-Away Strips. Some probably did not need it. This spring I'm looking at oxalic acid to treat with. I'm still researching it. I'm told that I should not use Mite-Away again this time as the Varroa mites will eventually mutate around them and I would have mites that were immune to it. Something I don't want. So, I'm going to first do some mite level testing to see which colonies actually need treatment and which don't rather than simply treat prophylactically.

The days are getting longer and by mid-February there will be noticeable change. Sometime during the last two weeks of February the Queen, who has never totally stopped laying, will begin laying in force to build up the population to handle the blossoms in March and April. The old worker bees now some six months old will revert to being nurse bees for the new developing bees. I will talk more about this another time.

The pandemic has affected all of our lives. Three of my friends have been killed by COVID-19 and my brother in law died from a heart attack. All in the past month. Due to COVID-19, two of my daughters and their families have had to quarantine for two weeks and work with the Health Department on contact information. I have been practicing almost total isolation except for grocery shopping and getting coffee at the Dalai Java in Canandaigua. I'm hoping to be vaccinated later this month at the VA.



Sam Hall 2021

The board on the left has not been used, while the one to the right was filled with candy last season (and is partially consumed).

Continued on page 19

## OPINIONS AND POLITICS



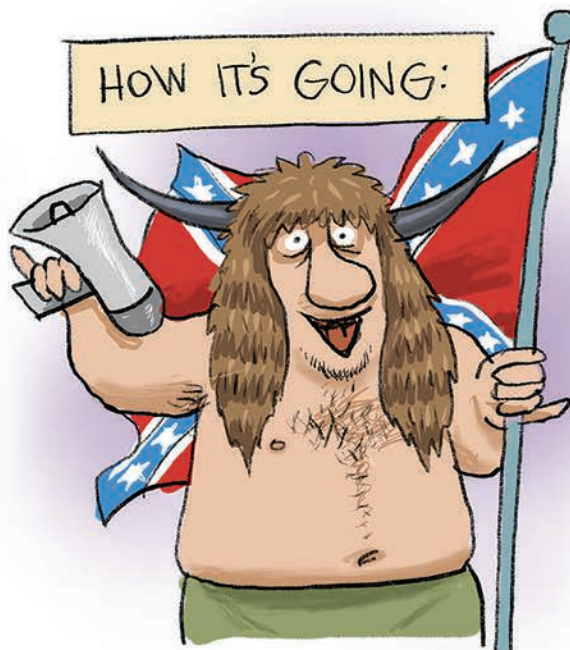
Cartoon by Sally Gardner

sallygardner.com

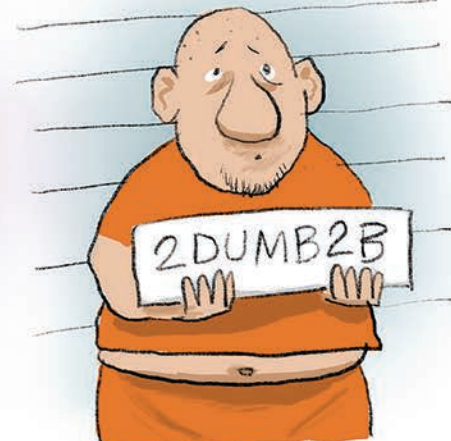
HOW IT STARTED:



HOW IT'S GOING:



WHAT'S NEXT:



SERIOUSLY, QUIT FOX NEWS.

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# Crafting Your Own Cuisine

By EILEEN PERKINS

## RECIPE

February is a month when fresh ideas for root vegetables are often welcomed, especially if one still has a big supply stored in the root cellar or refrigerator from garden harvest or a recent foray into the grocery store. Upon bringing a bowl of the orange jewels to the table, midwinter, how many times have you thought (or heard), “Oh boy, CARROTS!”? Naaaa...well, let’s change that. This easy recipe just might do. The process is simple, but in order to get the best results, you do need to pay attention. Consider adjusting the cooking times to meet your own particular sense of taste. If you like your cooked carrots with a bite, cook less in Part 1. The times offered here are suggestions only.



You can use “baby carrots” (shown here), peeled, bite-sized carrot sticks, or carrot coins. ✂

Eileen Perkins 2021

## Maple Glazed Carrots

(Serves 3-4)



### Ingredients

- 1 lb. carrots –so called “baby carrots” work, but so do peeled, bite-sized carrot sticks and carrot coins. Just be sure to cut them of similar size, so their doneness will be uniform.
- 1/4 tsp. (rounded) salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. butter or non-dairy buttery spread
- 1/3 cup (real) maple syrup
- 1/4-1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg (optional)
- Parsley (optional)

### Procedure

#### Part 1

In a heavy bottomed saucepan or skillet, stir the salt into the water, and dissolve. Add carrots and bring to a boil. On medium high heat, continue cooking for about 9 minutes, stirring frequently. The water should be pretty much gone at this point. (If you want the carrots to be firmer, cook for less time, during this step, drain off most remaining water, and return the pan to the burner.)

#### Part 2

Now cook the carrots on a low heat setting, stirring in butter and maple syrup completely. Continue to stir for about 5-7 minutes, or until the carrots have an attractive glaze. Be careful not to burn. I use a pancake flipping spatula to stir, so I can scrape the bottom of the pan well. Sprinkle with ground nutmeg and chopped parsley, preferably fresh but dry is ok too. Serve hot or cold.

## COOKBOOK REVIEW

### *The New Whole Foods Encyclopedia-* *A Comprehensive Resource For Healthy Eating* by Rebecca Wood

This is both a review of a very useful book (one that I have had on my shelf for years), as well as a challenge to you. Let me make the challenge first.

The past year shoved at us an opportunity for changing the way we approach feeding ourselves. Some people planted food gardens in their yards for the first time, sowed vegetable seeds in pots which they perched on sunny window sills, or stretched the boundaries of a garden plot they’ve been cultivating for decades. Some began to cook for themselves after years of relying on restaurant meals. Some examined their consumption of animal products, and resolved to eat fewer of them, in some cases going so far as to become a vegetarian or completely plant based. Because of food security concerns during uncertain times, some folks filled their pantries with plenty of shelf stable ingredients such as nuts, dairy analogs (like almond milk), seeds, vegetables, grains, beans, meats, and seafood, even if they were unfamiliar with how to cook with them.

Time constraints, energy short falls and perhaps even insufficient inclination, may have tempted people to just “tough it out”, when eliminating foods, or working with new ones. I believe that failing to bridge the gap between past and present needs/concerns invites destabilization. My challenge to you, here, is to build more of a foundation for any changes you have made of late, by becoming a bit more informed. Consciously open the door to trying new things.

This cold weather season is prime time for turning inward, and gathering information about how to balance your current nutritional needs, and freshen your palate. Subscribe to a cooking blog or two that demonstrates skill in a domain you have recently entered. Consult seed catalogues for inspiration, and if you are actually planning on planting seeds this year, give yourself plenty of time to explore your options before buying the first thing that jumps out at you. Consider more possibilities while allowing your enthusiasm to build.

*The New Whole Foods Encyclopedia, A Comprehensive Resource For Healthy Eating* by Rebecca Wood is both a food encyclopedia and a coaching tool. Utilizing a “food-as-medicine” theme, the author provides what one of her first pages describe as “an A to Z of selection, preparation and storage for more than 1000 common and uncommon fruits, vegetables, grains and herbs, including how to heal with Ayurveda, western nutrition, and Traditional Chinese Medicine.” Regardless of whether you are interested in incorporating alternative medicine avenues into your wellness plan, this tome has a lot to offer. Clearly, this author wants people to eat in exciting and health building ways, and she does her best to provide an expansive reference for doing so. There are plenty of exotic entries in this book, but she also explores foods that are commonly known but perhaps not well understood. (a whole page is devoted to maple syrup, for example)

Ms. Wood’s work is a classic and both original and revised editions are not difficult to find. Borrow it from your local public library system, or purchase a new or used copy to have in your home for ready access. ✂

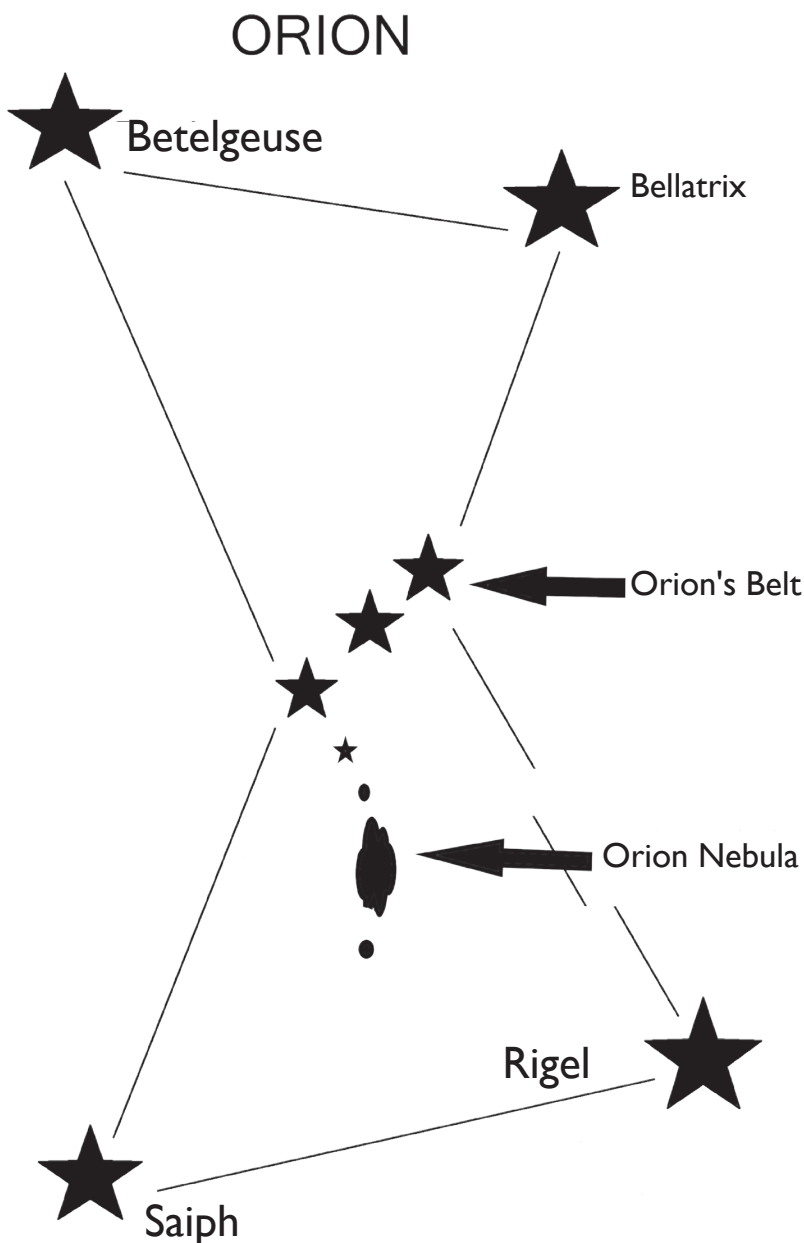
Eileen Perkins is a native of Rochester N.Y., who cooked professionally, in a wide range of venues, for many years, before moving to the Finger Lakes. She and her husband owned and operated “Eileen’s Bakery an’ Soup Kitchen”, a business that emphasized vegetarian cuisine and the craft of artisan baking. Recipe adaptation for people with special dietary needs is a passion she enjoys sharing. Among Eileen’s current priorities is preservation of food from the garden, developing more comprehensive communication skills, her Falun Gong practice, and educating compassionate people about human rights in Communist-ruled China, and elsewhere.

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# The Night Sky

## Orion the Hunter and Dwarf Planet Pluto

By DEE SHARPLES



**A** beautiful constellation in the February night sky is Orion the Hunter, located high in the south after dark around 7:00 PM. Orion is one of the few constellations that actually resembles its name. It's easy to spot because of the three stars of equal magnitude and distance apart in a slanted row which make up Orion's belt. His body is comprised of four prominent stars. Betelgeuse is a red supergiant star that marks his shoulder and shines with a distinctly reddish color. Three other blue giant stars (Bellatrix, Rigel, and Saiph) complete the outline.

On a dark moonless night, you'll be able to see the Orion nebula with your naked eye looking like a fuzzy cloud of light. The nebula located below the belt stars and three faint stars depict the hunter's sword. Binoculars will enhance your view.

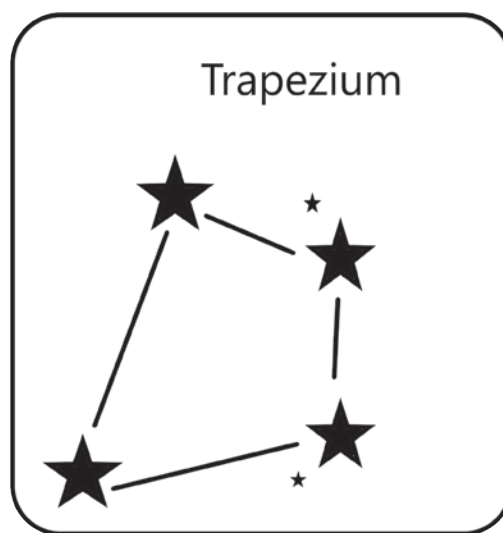
Within the Orion nebula, but visible only through a telescope, is a small group of stars which form an asterism known as the Trapezium forming the shape of a lopsided rectangle. Galileo discovered the Trapezium through his newly invented telescope and saw its four brightest members. These stars are huge, 15-30 times the mass of our Sun. They're responsible for illuminating the gas and dust in the nebula and making it glow. Within the nebula is a huge star 'factory', overflowing with recently born young stars.

**F**or over 75 years, our solar system had nine planets, not eight like we do today. In 1930, Clyde Tombaugh a young American astronomer discovered Pluto, and it became the ninth planet. Because of its enormous distance from Earth, we knew very little about this mysterious world. In 2006, Pluto was demoted from its planet status by the International Astronomical Union when it didn't meet the recently established criteria for the definition of a planet. It's now classified as a "dwarf planet".



One of the final images taken before New Horizons made its closest approach to Pluto on 14 July 2015. Image Credit: NASA/Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory/Southwest Research

The Trapezium is located within the Orion Nebula.



On July 14, 2015, NASA's New Horizons spacecraft made a spectacular fly-by at a distance of 7,800 miles from Pluto after traveling 9½ years to reach its destination and it revealed many of its secrets.

Pluto is about 3.7 billion miles away from the sun, while Earth is only 93 million miles. It takes Pluto 248 Earth years to travel once around the sun in an elliptical, tilted, oval-shaped orbit. One day is 153 hours long. Pluto has five known moons, with Charon being the largest and half the size of this dwarf planet.

Pluto is two-thirds the size of Earth's moon and its surface has tall mountains, valleys, flat areas, and craters. The temperature can be as cold as -375 to -400 degrees Fahrenheit. It has a thin atmosphere consisting mostly of molecular nitrogen which expands when

it comes closer to the sun. One surprising image taken by New Horizons was of a huge heart-shaped feature some 1,200 miles across on its surface.

The New Horizons spacecraft was only about the size of a grand piano but its mission to Pluto was hugely successful, and it continues its journey today into the far reaches of the Kuiper Belt. ☾

### Magnitude

Magnitude measures the apparent brightness of a celestial object and is expressed by a decimal. An object with a negative number like our Sun is brighter.

- Sun: -26.7
- Full Moon: -12.6
- Rigel: 0.12
- Betelgeuse: 0.42
- Bellatrix: 1.64
- Saiph: 2.09

Dimmest star visible with the unaided eye: 6.0-6.5

### How to measure degrees in the sky

A simple "ruler" is to hold your arm straight out and make a fist. The area of the sky covered by your fist measures about 10°. Start at the horizon and by moving your fist up and counting how many "fist-widths" it takes to reach an object in the sky, you'll have an approximation of its height. To measure 1°, hold your little finger out at arm's length. The area of the sky covered by your finger is about 1°. Also use this method to measure how far apart two objects are from each other in the sky.

Dee Sharples is an amateur astronomer who enjoys observing planets, star clusters and the Moon through her telescope. She is a member of ASRAS (Astronomy Section of the Rochester Academy of Science) and records "Dee's Sky This Month" — describing what can be seen in the sky — on the ASRAS website, [rochesterastronomy.org](http://rochesterastronomy.org).



## Etched in Stone from front

### Services Much In Demand

In his later teens, Charles Mirguet was employed by Ward's Natural Science Establishment in Rochester. Without formal education, he gained expertise through his 35 years of on-the-job experiences at Wards. With the passing of years and with his valuable experience, he gained an enviable reputation which extended far beyond Rochester. He specialized in osteology, and his services as an expert were in demand in many scientific quarters.

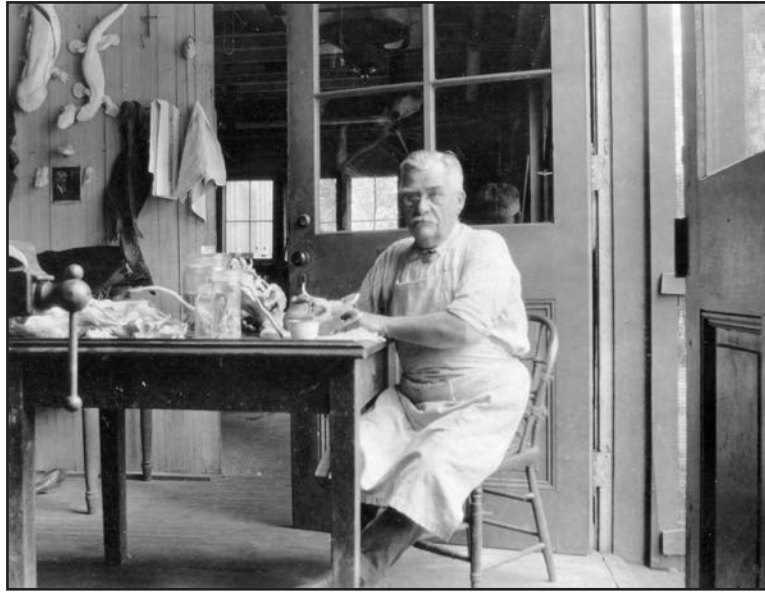
In 1911, as his reputation spread worldwide, Charles Mirguet was hired by the Smithsonian Institution and moved to Washington D.C. while still maintaining a home in Rochester for his wife Eleanor and several of their seven children. For his special use, a one-story bungalow was built in the central quadrangle of the Smithsonian Institution where he had his quarters. This workshop residence soon became a mecca for scientists following numerous lines of endeavor. Here Charles Mirguet spent most of his waking hours for eighteen years.

His activities were many and varied. He mounted bone structures of animals from many quarters of the world, the basis for study by experts in many government departments. To those who were given access to this laboratory, it rapidly became one of the most interesting spots in Washington, not only because of the variety of material on view, but also because of the colorful fund of information which Charles Mirguet was able to supply.

### Managed Smithsonian Displays

Charles Mirguet had a share of every important scientific activity of the Smithsonian in his 18-year career there. He prepared, installed and managed Smithsonian displays at the St. Louis and San Francisco international expositions. In previous years he had done similar work for the Ward's Natural Science Establishment at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 and the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo in 1901.

Unsuccessful effort had been made to preserve the famed horse Rienzi, on which General Sherman made his ride from Winchester to Cedar Creek. Charles Mirguet accomplished the task. To this day, that mounted horse is one of the sights at the Armed Forces History Exhibit at The Smithsonian in Washington. In 1923 Mir-



Charles Mirguet at the Smithsonian in 1924.  
Photo courtesy of David Pierce

in Washington when his illness took an unexpected turn for the worse, resulting in his death on February 20, 1929.

Charles Edmund Mirguet traveled an inspirational life journey from an orphan in France to a renowned and celebrated American Smithsonian Institution scientist from Rochester, New York. This was his realization of the American Dream—like so many others in the history of the United States. Over ninety years has passed since his death, and yet his legacy remains intact in the displays and archives of the Smithsonian Institution.

How ironic and full-circled that all that remains of Charles Mirguet, a celebrated osteologist, is his skeleton buried in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. As seasons change and years pass, the story of Charles Edmund Mirguet will fade away, but for this moment in time, his life will be remembered, etched in print and preserved, as a small piece of New York's buried past. ❧

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David Pierce recently retired and moved with his wife Colleen to the Town of Canandaigua. He has enjoyed exploring his family history for many years, documenting people, place and events as far back as 1590. He is a certified member of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, having documented his ancestry back 10 generations to Francis Cooke and Peter Browne, two of the original passengers on the Mayflower voyage of 1620, 400 years ago. Many of his ancestors lived in and around Ontario County for well over 200 years, providing a fitting backdrop for his research.

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## Dragonfly Tales from page 11

Mentoring doesn't mean 'structured play'. As a matter of fact, studies are showing the value of 'unstructured play'. All of these activities vary according to age. Ages 2-6 just need to get outside. The bush beside the porch becomes a jungle when a kid is allowed to spend time using their imagination.

I can hear you saying, "Yeah, I'm going to stick my kid in a bush for the afternoon and let him explore nature". This is where the mentoring comes in. If you are fascinated by the leaves and critters in that bush, chances are your mentored family member will be as well. Give them the age appropriate 'tools' to work with as well. The 'cardboard box' was introduced to our own Strong Museum's National Toy Hall of Fame followed a few years later by 'the stick'. A cardboard tube becomes a telescope in the little hands of a kid with imagination. For older kids 7-12, nature experiences should be fostered with exploration, autonomy, and a chance to demonstrate competence. This is where the adult becomes a hummingbird mentor as opposed to a helicopter mentor. Hummingbirds flit in and praise the flower for the sweet nectar just as the hummingbird mentor should praise that preteen for catching a fish or crafting that piece of artwork created with objects found in nature. The preteen is not quite as peer oriented as they will be in a few years and may still prefer to fill bird feeders on their own. When the child reaches 13-25, I always said they should be put on a sailboat or farm somewhere and made to work. The brain essentially stops growing and the hormones are all about strength and growth and reproduction. Teens like spending time with their peers. This is a time of 'rites of passage' where a group may go off exploring in an Outward Bound type of experience. Older kids, like us, are busy and have to schedule time to spend with nature.

### U-Understanding

"In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." (Baba Dioum, 1968.)

Our connection to nature can be understood through what E.O. Wilson describes as the 'biophilia' hypothesis which proposes that humans have an innate need to affiliate with other life forms such as dogs, horses and cats as well as a desire to be near nature in general. We've spent 99% of our evolutionary history closely connected to nature. We've only recently, genetically speaking, distanced ourselves from nature and are suffering, I believe, as a result of that separation. ❧

#### Further reading:

*How to Raise a Wild Child* by Scott D. Sampson

*Sharing Nature with Children I and II* by Joseph Cornell.

Anna Botsford Comstock's *Handbook of Nature Study*

#### Local Nature Organizations:

Burroughs Audubon Nature Club (BANC)

Odonata Sanctuary

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Steve Melcher is the primary caretaker, hoof trimmer & poop scooper at Odonata Sanctuary, Mendon. His studies included using members of the Order "Odonata," as bioindicators of freshwater ecosystems. He has written/coauthored in journals, magazines, and books re: environmental literacy and ecological issues. Steve now works with environmental and educational organizations whose goal is to have "no child left inside".

Learn more: fb @ Odonata Sanctuary.

# The Monthly Read

## A Change for the Better

### A Review of *Squeeze Me* By Carl Hiaasen

By MARY DRAKE

**W**hen it's often dark and cold outside and the world seems to be a grim place, why not escape somewhere warm and sunny with a book that makes you smile?

Like his other novels, Carl Hiaasen's most recent book, *Squeeze Me*, is a comic crime novel set in his native Florida and written in the satirically irreverent style that has become his signature. Just as William Faulkner's purview was the South, so Hiaasen's novels are all set in sunny Florida, and, although the sub-tropical environment may appear heavenly, there's still enough trouble in paradise to make for an exciting plot.

The book's title was inspired by the invasion of non-native pythons into the Florida Everglades, America's largest wetland. Brought to the US during the exotic pet trade, the snakes often outgrew their owners' interest and were released into the wild where they adapted and proliferated. Needless to say, encountering one can be terrifying since they are capable of reaching lengths of 23 feet and can weigh up to 200 pounds. Although usually not a threat to humans, pythons can be aggressive and have been known to constrict and kill their owners.

The book begins on the fashionably exclusive island of Palm Beach, off Florida's Gold Coast, so called because only the wealthy can afford to live or vacation there. A well-heeled widow named Kiki Pew Fitzsimmons disappears during a posh charity ball dedicated to eradicating, of all things, Irritable Bowel Syndrome. We're told that "Mrs. Fitzsimmons had no personal experience with intestinal mayhem but she loved a good party." Similar fundraisers are mentioned throughout the book for such obscure maladies as psoriatic gingivitis and Peyronie's syndrome; there's even a "sun-drenched party benefiting squamous-cell research." Kiki Pew's disappearance occurs too coincidentally with the discovery of a gigantic python that has an enormous bump in the location of its stomach.

Kiki Pew began life as Katherine Sparling Pew, but changed her name to Kiki after her first marriage, when we're told it's common for socialites to assume a new chic identity. After becoming fabulously wealthy in her second widowhood, she joins a "flamboyant fan group" of dowagers who brazenly call themselves the POTUS Pussies, or Potussies for short. They're admirers of Mastodon (that's the Secret Service's code name for POTUS) and sing his praises in a ditty of their own creation called "Big Unimpeachable You."

It gets more outrageous from there.

The novel's real protagonist is Angie Armstrong, a wildlife relocation specialist who re-homes anything from bunnies to bobcats that have invaded human space, and her business is booming since Florida's real-estate development is squeezing native species out of their habitat. In many of his books, Hiaasen depicts gutsy, outdoorsy women like Angie; she can identify all the birds in the Everglades and isn't afraid to chop the head off a 23-foot python if necessary, though whenever possible she prefers to keep them alive. She hates seeing animals killed so much that when, as a wildlife officer, she sees a drunken man deliberately mow down a baby deer with his boat, then come back to skin it for dinner, she feeds his hand,

that won't release the skinning knife, to an alligator. She gets a short stint in prison for that but remains someone you don't want to get riled up.

As in any good satire, there are improbable characters, like Christian, the short European whose only job is to make sure POTUS's tanning bed works properly (which it doesn't.) There are funny names, like Casa Bellicosa for the winter white house, and caricatures of unfortunately recognizable characters, like Fay Alex Rip-toad, leader of the Potussies, who thinks people like Kiki Pew deserve more than a silver missing person's alert. There ought to be a platinum alert for people like them. And there are wacky things going on, as when two inept thieves steal a frozen python with a big bump in its belly, only to have it fall out of their trunk as they speed over a set of railroad tracks.

Hiaasen is a journalist for the *Miami Herald* who in his spare time writes "satire with a bite." He's been compared to satirist Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, who made fun of 18th century travel literature as well as many then-current opinions and events. Hiaasen, too, has written fourteen satirical novels that draw from what is going on around him: the unfortunate invasion of pythons, a vacationing POTUS who stokes the fire of "cultish fervor" while inspiring elitism, and the tendency to use immigrants as scapegoats—an illegal but innocent Honduran named Diego Beltrán gets conveniently blamed for Kiki Pew's death, and POTUS begins the chant of "No more Diegos," which quickly catches on. No one seems really interested, however, in finding out the truth about Kiki Pew's death.

Writing satire is much more enjoyable and sensible than, say, storming the Capitol. For Hiaasen, farcical humor is a necessary coping mechanism. "For those of us who are perpetually pissed off," he said in a recent interview, "there's a therapy to reading [satire] and there's a therapy to writing it. Believe me—I'd be doing it whether it was getting published or not. It's a socially acceptable outlet for some of my anger. But I think if you talk to a lot of writers who write humor and satire, at the root of all of it is anger and indignation—a sense of outrage about injustice."

He's also outraged and deeply saddened by what, collectively, we humans are doing to our environment, and it is painfully obvious in Florida. He has Angie Armstrong having these thoughts: "nothing got better in the besieged, breathtaking world she cared about most. The Everglades would never be the lush unbroken river it once was; the shallows of Florida Bay would never be as pure and sparkling with fish; the bleached dying reefs of the Keys would never bloom fully back to life. Being overrun and exploited was the historical fate of places so rare and beautiful." This is why Hiaasen has also been described as an environmental writer.

His timely concern for the natural world, for the political fray, and for the ever-present problems with human nature is like a bitter drink that's made palatable with a twist of irony. "I think this is a year where everybody is desperate to laugh," Hiaasen said. "It does keep your sanity." ❧

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Mary Drake is a novelist and freelance writer living in western New York. Visit her online at [marydrake.online](http://marydrake.online) to learn more about her books. See her YA story excerpt below.

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## *Where the Path Leads—Chapter 11: From Pain to Pleasure* – By MARY DRAKE

In last month's chapter, Emily must work helping to drain the water meadow (aka a swamp) where she meets the handsome Lord Arthur, second son to the Baron who owns the demesne.

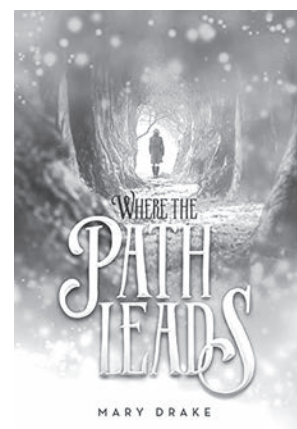
**T**he laborers working in the water meadow heard the announcing drumbeats and horns of the noble entourage as they wound their way down the high road. The Duke of Kent, the Baron's brother, was bringing back his niece, Lady Rosamond. They were surrounded by his retinue of knights and archers and his traveling minions of carters, cooks and servants.

For days after that tales swirled through the marsh like the insects that whined about their heads, extolling the opulence of the ensuing feast with its twenty-nine courses and elaborate dishes, like suckling pigs complete with heads and eyes, trimmed all round with fresh laurel branches, pheasants stuffed and refeathered to appear still alive, a pie that really did have live birds in it, though they weren't the four-and-twenty blackbirds of the rhyme but dainty yellow finches tethered to the dish, and the illusion foods, like the miniature replica of the castle made entirely of marzipan. Emily had never tasted marzipan, an almond paste that Will assured her was so sweet and delicious that just one bite would sweeten every word out of her mouth forever after.

**Read Online:** [www.owllightnews.com/where-the-path-leads-chapter](http://www.owllightnews.com/where-the-path-leads-chapter)\_\_\_\_\_.

If you want to find out more about the book, go to [marydrake.online](http://marydrake.online), also available as an ebook on Amazon.

Squeeze Me  
352 pages  
Knopf  
(2020)





## Elbow Room

As a child, I yearned for elbow room. Seven of us crowded around a table for four. There was one couch with no space to sprawl. No wiggle room once we were wedged into the car. My elbows seemed perpetually pressed to my sides, someone else's shoulders against mine, even when brushing my teeth or combing my hair. I liked to imagine the day I would have elbow room. I would stretch out with both of my elbows on the dinner table, walk around with my hands on my hips and my elbows out like wings or weapons. I would have an armchair to myself and use both of the armrests.

At college, my dreams of elbow room languished. I plunged into the press and push of dorm rooms and lecture halls and dining halls and parties. We shared books, bus seats, beds, and bathrooms. We leaned on each other's desires and dreams. We were continuously elbow to elbow, side to side, and cheek to cheek. We were peas in a pod that finally filled to bursting, split and spilled us out, elbows and all.

As a working woman, elbow room and all the rules of preserving and protecting it became para-

mount again. In conference rooms and offices, on airplanes and trains, my elbows worked hard to defend my space, to climb the ladder. Weekends were freer. There was the hop and swing of the dance floor, elbows flying to make room for feet and hips.

I learned to be careful about giving up elbow room. When I was 23, my father walked me down the aisle to link arms with another. The other turned out to have a tight and painful grip, and I had to elbow my way free. And some years after that, I walked under the Perseid meteor shower to link arms with my true love. Our elbows a perfect fit.

Elbow room all but disappeared when I became a mother. My elbows became cradles, and then swings, and then lifters and carriers and hand holders and carpool drivers and arm-crossing-no-nonsense takers. My daughters grew into young women, and my elbows bent and held and gave as each walked to take another's arm. They needed their own elbow room.

Retired from the working world and with children grown and gone, I rediscovered elbow room. At first it was luxurious. I finally had my own armchair! Two of us at a table for eight! I could pick and choose when to be shoulder-to-shoulder and when to be arms lengths apart. And then Covid-19 came. No handshakes, only elbow touches. And then no touches, stand six feet apart. And then physical distance, complete.

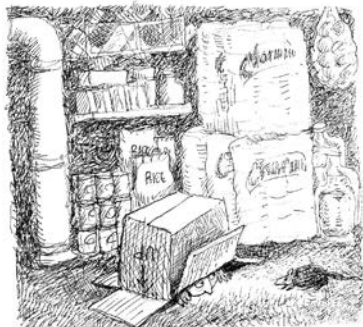
Now I find myself longing for dinner with twelve people squeezed around the table for eight, our elbows pressed to our sides so we can barely lift our forks. I'm longing for the swing and sway of music, you and I crushed together in the jostle for a spot to sit or stand or dance. I'm longing for my elbows to bend and lift and push while we laugh at our inflexibility in yoga class. I'm longing to be sipping coffee in the Dalai Java and have someone's elbow knock the wobbly table so that my cup almost but doesn't quite splash over. I'm longing for my elbows to be the cradle and swing and lifter and carrier for my granddaughter. To hug and hold my daughters and family and friends. To be squished in the backseat of the car. To barely find a spot on the couch. To touch.

Anne Ruflin is a resident of Bristol, New York. She is a member of the Bristol Bookends II Memoir writing group with the Bristol Library. She is returning to creative writing after a 36 year break, during which she pursued a career in health care administration and raised a family. She is spending quarantine with her husband and several dogs, cats, and horses. Anne's piece, "Summer in Your Veins," was selected for inclusion in the upcoming *Turning Points* literary journal—out later this year (go to [owllightnews.com/turningpoints/](http://owllightnews.com/turningpoints/) to order your copy). She is also the human of the rescued barn cat, Oreo Cookie, who has enjoyed writing to Tarzan. (see his letter in the January issue of *Owl Light News*).

**Turning Points**—Canadice Press' first *Owl Light Literary* collection—will be published in 2021.

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—include work from published and emerging authors.

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*Owl Light News* welcomes submissions of poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and hybrid literary art for our monthly "Pen and Prose."  
Submissions to [editor@canadicepress.com](mailto:editor@canadicepress.com).

## FLURRYING, FLURRYING

(Parody of "Carolling, Carolling," by Alfred Burt and Wihla Hutson, 1954)

Flurrying, flurrying, all the day,  
snowflakes just keep falling;  
flurrying, flurrying, come what may,  
snowflakes just keep falling.  
So I shovel off the drive,  
which the snow proceeds to hide:  
push, heave, push, heave,  
snowflakes just keep falling.

Flurrying, flurrying comes the snow,  
and the flakes keep falling;  
flurrying, flurrying while winds blow,  
snowflakes keep on falling.  
All about the world is white,  
and each flake seems to invite:  
push, heave, push, heave  
while the snow keeps falling.

Flurrying, flurrying once again,  
snowflakes still keep falling;  
scurrying, scurrying thick and thin,  
snowflakes always falling.  
This is how the season goes:  
piling, piling of the snows.  
Push, heave, push, heave,  
snowflakes ever falling.

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William Preston is a retired medical science writer and current freelance editor who enjoys writing poetry; he especially enjoys experimenting with various poetic forms. He and his wife, Marti, live in Macedon, New York.

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# Fantastic Flora

## Sweetest of Trees – *Acer saccharum* (Sapindaceae)

By SALLY L. WHITE



**S**weetest of trees, the sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) grows in 75% of New York State's forests and is a significant part of a quarter of them. Apart from its value as lumber, this species supports a 25 to 30-million-dollar maple sugar industry here, with some 2000 producers.

Record commercial production was 820,000 gallons of syrup in 2019; I hope you got your share! But that New York production is a small fraction, about 5%, of the 11.4 million gallons of syrup produced worldwide (2013). Although Vermont outperformed us, Quebec, with more than 8 million gallons, produced the vast majority. Can't get enough maple? Researchers at the Maple Program at Cornell University are working on developing maple beer, maple wine, maple soda, and maple performance gel. We'll have to wait a bit longer for maple toothpaste, I guess.

All trees carry sap, and maples are not the only ones being tapped. Birch beer was a popular drink made from sap of that tree, and other species of maple have contributed a share. Our editor reports that she taps black walnuts, which also provide a tasty syrup. But sugar maple, which grows only in the eastern half of the northern hemisphere, is prized for its high sugar content and abundant flows. Elsewhere they must make do with others, such as box elder, silver maple, and bigleaf maple, which are used in western Canada.

New York has a dozen different species of maples, of which seven are native. Only red maple (*Acer rubrum*) covers more territory than sugar maple; it is also sometimes tapped, as is the less common black maple. Some residents of urban and suburban areas even tap the introduced Norway maples in their front yards.

The last full moon before the equinox, the last one of winter, was known as the Sugar Moon or Sap Moon as it signifies the time to tap trees. This year, that full moon will occur on February 27, though it more often falls in March. To Native peoples, it was also known as Worm Moon, Crust Moon, or Crow Moon, among others. When the crows return, the old-timers would say, it's time to tap trees. Decades of experience gave them a deep understanding of seasonal cycles and the ways of their trees. Some say they could feel the sap rising in the trunk.

Our Gregorian calendar is a crude fit for seasons that were once defined by natural occurrences. Today February's full moon is generally known as the Snow



Sally White 2020

Moon (according to the Farmer's Almanac and other sources) and the Sugar Moon is placed in March. It's true that spring (at least the equinox) occurs in March, but it's also true that sap usually starts flowing in February. Here in New York, the season generally starts in mid-February and ends in early April. Across the US, the average season lasts about 30 days, but ours has averaged 48 days in recent years.

Sap rises through a network of plumbing, most of which is dead tissue. Long narrow xylem cells, connected end-to-end like straws, carry water and stored nutrients up through the trunk to feed new buds and leaves. Each tree, each year, does a spring and summer's work of building an entire new tree, as it were, wrapped around the old one like a new skin. We know this "new tree" as the annual ring. The wood the tree builds in spring, with its fast-growing open vessels, will carry most of the sap. The growing season ends with the production of tighter, dense summer wood.

Many ask if being tapped hurts the tree. Yes, it does, but to a limited extent, and sugar maples are considered to be somewhat resistant. A tree "bruises," as we do, but it does not heal. Instead it walls off injured tissues and carries on without them. Each injury reduces function, but each year that fresh new

The sugar maple has long been valued for its beauty and usefulness. Schoolchildren voted to name sugar maple the state's tree in 1889, but the legislature did not act. The following decade, NY saw the decline of its forests to their lowest extent; only about one-fifth of the forests from a century ago remained. Sixty years later, as forests were recovering, fans of red oak (*Quercus rubrum*) decided it should be the official state tree; again the legislature balked. In 1956, Governor Harriman suggested they approve the children's earlier suggestion. Horrified, Governor Johnson of Vermont sent a telegram to Harriman, indignant that NY would even consider adopting his state's tree. He'd allow it only if NY proved its syrup was half as tasty as Vermont's. Harriman accepted the challenge and set up a tasting contest that ultimately involved nine states and the province of Quebec. Sadly, NY came in third, but sugar maple still stands as our official state tree, as it also does for Vermont, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.

skin of wood and bark works to cover the wound. Too many injuries, too much damage, and the tree begins to decline. Fortunately, tapping technology has improved in recent decades, and most sugar makers manage their sugarbush carefully to maintain production and tree health.

Shifts in our climate may be what really hurts the future of our favorite pancake topping. The season already opens about one week earlier than it has in the past, and drought has a dire effect on tree vigor as well as sap flow. Some say sugar content of the sap will decline as climate continues to warm. In the long term, maple forests will likely move north, perhaps even out of our region altogether. New Yorkers now living will enjoy the sweets of this tree, but have we ensured maple products will be here for our "seventh generation" descendants? 🌿

Sally L. White, a recent transplant from Colorado, is still adjusting her botanical expectations to this new environment. Although she grew up in the Southern Tier, that was before she studied botany in college and grad school. Much is familiar but she finds even more to remember and relearn. This column is part of her effort to expand her understanding of our local flora.

## Maple Memories From JAN CARR

Sugaring was such a special time for us on the farm. How I loved being in the woods in the early spring. I was always humbled by how generous our big old maples were. Tapping was a privilege and a special sharing in the gifts of nature. I can still hear the roiling boil of sap steaming away in the sap pans.

Oh and that sweet smell just before a draw! I miss hearing the whooshing wings of the geese flying north so low in the night over the sugar house you were afraid they would hit something. I miss our old barn cat as she snuck in the top steam vents to bat at my hat or later curl up on my chest and share the warmth of the fire.



Jan Carr lives near Himrod NY and works as an all-purpose remodeling contractor and gardener/landscaper. As former co-owner of a blueberry farm, she has always had a deep connection to the spirit of the land. She published her first book, *Of Elemental Spirits: The Poetry of Jan Carr*, in the fall of 2020.



## Small Town Hound from page 7



I like eating string, which I know is not good for me because my humans take it away and tell me “no, no, no!” whenever I find a piece. In the next place we visited—called the Fuzzy Bunny—there is so much string in so many different colors. I had to smell every color. It is like all the colors of nature wrapped up and put on display. Liz Yockel, the store’s owner, said that she uses dyes made from plants to capture these colors. There are also many things made with string and other fancy stuff (I heard that line in a song).

While we were visiting, Liz talked about going to the mountains to spin. I have seen dogs spin, chasing their tails, and keep seeing this image of her turning around in a circle really fast. This spin, though, has to do with yarn, so it must be something different. At any rate, it sounded like fun going to the mountains.

As I mentioned early on, my humans are going out less right now and most people agree that this is a good idea. We do want to come back here soon, to check out Pop’s Bakery and Deli; they are a newer Honeoye place and my humans haven’t visited there yet.

Every month I will be sharing my adventures, and I hope you will join in and check out all these great places too, when you are able. Maybe I will see you in my travels. I am looking ahead to the summer when it will be easier and safer for humans to gather outside (including outside of restaurants) so I can get out more and meet more people—I love people!

*Although I love humans, I should connect a bit more with dogs and would enjoy some play dates. I am pretty socialized (and play well with my friends at home) but would love to meet other dogs too. I am getting big (I weigh 60 pounds and am only 6 months old). If you think you might like to play, let my human know so we can set something up.*

*Æsc is the "Small Town Hound—Finding Creative Venues and Adventures in NYS." He lives with his two humans and his two canine companions, Winnie and Mars, in Canadice, NY. When not writing, his favorite pastime is finding people. Fan mail to Attn. Æsc at editor@canadicepress.com.*

## EVENTS—owllightnews.com/events

Calendar items (for community arts-related and social events) may be entered for free online at: [owllightnews.com/events/community/add](https://owllightnews.com/events/community/add). If you have a cancellation or edit on a previously added event, please e-mail us at [editor@canadicepress.com](mailto:editor@canadicepress.com) or message us on [fb@canadicepress](https://www.facebook.com/canadicepress).

\* Posted events must be open to all individuals and must offer some direct community enrichment (we review before posting goes live).



Top: I had to check out all of the yarn; the colors were so exciting. Above: Slippers and some of the other creations that I saw in the store.

## SEARCHING FOR A FOREVER HOME!

### Meet Remus

This handsome, blue eyed boy is Remus! He is a Husky, Rottweiler mix, and just as cute as can be! Remus is 4 years old, and was recently turned over. In his previous home, he was well behaved with the kids, cats, and dogs that he lived with. His family did note that he can be a bit food protective. Staff recommends a home with dog savvy children, who are old enough to know to give him space while he eats. Other than this, Remus is great with everyone. He even takes treats gently and loves to sit for them too! When it comes to toys, Remus has not been noted to be protective and actually drops them for people. Here, Remus is very housebroken and loves to go for walks. He'd be a great companion for a family who is looking for a new best friend to hang out with. If you would like to meet Remus, please schedule an appointment on our website! I weigh about 88lbs!

Meema featured in December, was finally adopted! Tumnus is sadly still waiting for a forever home! And he is so cute!



Contact the shelter for more information.  
E-mail: [info@bchumanesoc.com](mailto:info@bchumanesoc.com) • Phone: (607) 724-3709  
Visit them at [bchumanesoc.com](https://www.bchumanesoc.com) to submit an adoption application.  
Broome County Humane Society • 167 Conklin Ave., Binghamton, NY

Do you have a fun story about your pet that might be of interest to other pet owners? Or a pet in need of a forever home? Feel free to share it (along with a picture). Email to [editor@canadicepress.com](mailto:editor@canadicepress.com)

## Bee Lines from page 12

Pepper the rescue dog I got in September has also been helpful in keeping me from feeling totally cut off from everything. He is elderly like me. He is somewhere around 11 years old. When we get up in the morning it is debatable which of us is limping more until everything starts working. We try to walk five to six miles a day. It is the only exercise we are getting right now. His weight has dropped from 113 pounds to around 85 pounds—or lower as I have no scales to weigh him here at home. He weighed 89.5 at the vets on November 5, 2020. I only know from feeling of him he is no longer carrying much if any fat. He is



Sam Hall 2021

mainly Chow and I'm learning to brush hair.

I find solace in our walks, including in the bee yard, like never before.

“Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones”

Proverbs 16:24

Sam Hall is a Western NY bee-keeper who first worked bees as a child growing up on a “dirt farm” in Allegany County, NY. He has kept bees for most of his adult life and believes that his mistakes “far outnumber his successes.” [Samhall@Rochester.rr.com](mailto:Samhall@Rochester.rr.com)



# Making Lemonade

## Book Club Valentines

By **BARB STAHL**

**W**hom do we appreciate? To whom do we turn in a pandemic? Who asked themselves these questions before March 2020? Who should be this year's Valentines? Of course, my family are my Valentines, as will always be the case. And, you know Tarzan is part of my family. They are all my "permanent Valentines." But this year taught me that there are many, many more valentines in my life and this is my declaration of love to them. They will know who they are! And, thanks to Zoom, I have regularly "seen" all of them.

So, this year the members of my three book clubs will be my Valentines. Yes, I said three book clubs, and I can just hear the collective sighs out there – "What?" – "Three book clubs?" – "How can that possibly be?" – "Is she nuts?"

Club number one I joined shortly after I returned home to this area in 2005. We call ourselves "The Really Reads Them" book club because we *really* read *and* discuss the book *and* drink wine! The other unbelievable thing about this book club is that we have met on Zoom once a week since the pandemic began. That in itself is pretty amazing! It has been a marvelous way to support and check on each other as several of us live alone.

The book for this month for that group is *Code Name Hélène* by Ariel Lawhon. This fiction is based on a real-life story of Nancy Wake who was a nurse and journalist living in Paris in the 1930s. She married a wealthy industrialist Henri Fiocca. When the Germans invaded France, she became a spy and leader of the French Resistance. From there she does amazing and unbelievable work with the escape network while saving many lives. Throughout the war, of necessity she changes locations, and continues her "spy-work" from different countries. The book is complex, and artfully illustrates her courage. It can be a tough read in places given the difficult subject matter but is well worth the effort.

Book club number two is a history book club based with the Ontario County Historical Society. That one meets typically from September to January, and in a normal year the January meeting would be a potluck dinner with discussion for "what to read next year." This year ... no potluck dinner!

Our main topic this year was early American history. The first book we read and discussed was *Mayflower* by Nathaniel Philbrick. I quickly found out how little I knew about Pilgrims, Puritans, and Native Americans in those early days. During

## Homestead from page 10

In America, some of the earliest major attempts at reparations and a just land redistribution (the Homestead Acts, "40 acres and a mule," etc.) were based on a vision of privately owned smallholdings -- almost a Jeffersonian vision of the small-scale citizen farmer. Do you see the ideal of a smallholder with private property as being compatible with the collective model of a commons? What would you say are some advantages/limitations of either model?

**K.B.** The Homestead Act and efforts for reparations through land distribution did not die of natural causes. They were killed by the backlash or rather "Backlash" that has followed every era of attempts for Black community empowerment through formal government actions. I don't ground the idea of a commons in the utility of the land outside of its potential to help with stable wealth creation through collective ownership of a material asset. The land could be used for any manner of things, not just the agricultural elements that were the hallmarks of the 1800s. The land could participate in any manner of economic development in the collective interests of Black community owners. I don't privilege the Jeffersonian idea of stewardship being a surrogate for citizenship.

Leah Penniman's recent book *Farming While Black* is part of a 21st-century movement to reverse the dramatic 98% decline in the number of Black farm-

ers in the past century. Penniman is addressing the younger generations who will be the new farmers and stewards of the land, and she focuses on the issues of "reskilling" and -- perhaps above all -- the challenge of making an agrarian lifestyle an attractive and viable option to those who may be two or more generations away from having that connection. Apart from making land easier to access and own, do you have any thoughts on how to "recruit" more young people of color to the very idea of land ownership/stewardship? Or is that something we should even be aiming for?

**K.B.** Since the end of the Civil War, not just Black folks, but all folks have seen cities and urban areas as places of opportunity. In the case of Black folks, fleeing sharecropping and the oppressive regime of Jim Crow were the drivers of the Great Migration to major American cities in the early 20th century. That and labor exploitation as major industrial employers like Henry Ford were openly appealing to Blacks to move to work in factories to in part resist unionization and labor rights emerging at that time. In total, there has been a century of messaging that life chances, especially for Black people, are higher in cities than in rural and agriculturally-based contexts. However, this has also come with Penniman's observations on rural land loss and, although there is no single definitive source, a cumulative notion that even though Black people largely live in cities now, they don't own a commensurate amount of land in cities. The idea of engaging the next generation to re-engage agriculture

Happy Valentine's Day to you,  
and to all those that you love!



that time period disease and death were commonplace. The second book was *Death in Salem* by Diane E. Foulds, which was another difficult read about how people can be suspicious of, and attack, others. The third book with that group is *Lord of the Mohawks* by James Thomas Flexner, which I am currently still reading.

My comment for those history choices is that there have been very courageous people in times past who struggled, worked hard, and faced difficult conditions with unbelievable courage. They reminded me quickly that we aren't the first Americans to face huge, and unimaginable, challenges.

Book club three is neighborhood-based and meets every other month. *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* by Helen Simonson is one I read many years ago and now the current choice for this group. Tucked inside its British humor is a gem of a book with several worthwhile messages. We witness a stuffy English gentleman who seems to be falling in love with someone unsuitable in his world. Glimpses of his family and impressive heritage are funny, yet at the same time sad.

With all these book clubs, I don't necessarily like every book chosen and am very often totally surprised at what others see in a book that I never saw. For me that is one of the very best reasons for joining a book club. You often get a chance to see a point of view you would never have considered. (Enough can't be said about Zoom and how it allows us to "see" one another. Smiling, human faces is one of the biggest things we miss during a pandemic.) Then add to that thoughtful observations about life, history, relationships, and differing viewpoints experienced through the lens of a book.

Reading can quickly make you appreciate what you have and remind you to be grateful for the time period you are in!!

This is dedicated to all my book club friends who have helped me keep my sanity, while growing in knowledge and human understanding. I love and appreciate them for their kindness, intelligence, caring, concern, knowledge, and support.

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Barb Stahl is a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, retired school library media specialist, and a western New York/Finger Lakes area lover who did a previous column for Canandaigua Daily Messenger. She loves her family, circle of friends, reading, writing, history, music, theater, and Tarzan the cat who critiques her articles. Contact: [makinglemonadeOwl@gmail.com](mailto:makinglemonadeOwl@gmail.com)

and a non-urban lifestyle is increasing in visibility and accessibility. I think we are in an early adopter phase and it will depend on how Penniman and others do with providing evidence of a sustainable and engaging life. Agriculture and the sense of accomplishment and self-determination it comes with are increasingly a part of a cultural imperative.

This is something of a follow-up to the previous question ... I am fascinated by the figure of Fannie Lou Hamer and her short-lived Freedom Farm Cooperative project. Nearly a half century later, her agrarian vision of empowered local economies may seem either prescient or outdated, depending on one's point of view. Do you see Hamer's ideas as relevant within current conversations about local economies and a Black Commons?

**K.B.** Absolutely critical either way. Living from the land in rural settings is extremely difficult. It requires a level of commitment, cooperation, investment, labor, and most importantly access to markets to even break even. With the increased corporate farming footprint, the small family owned, or any other non-corporate owned farm for that matter, is a very difficult proposition. What I think distinguishes Fannie Lou Hamer's work from others today is her explicit focus on gearing the system to support the poorest and the most economically vulnerable. In many ways, there is a lot more information, resources, and appetite to promote local food systems than there are to

Continued on page 21



# Don't Let This Bug You!©

## Owl Light Puzzle 10 – By GEORGE URICH

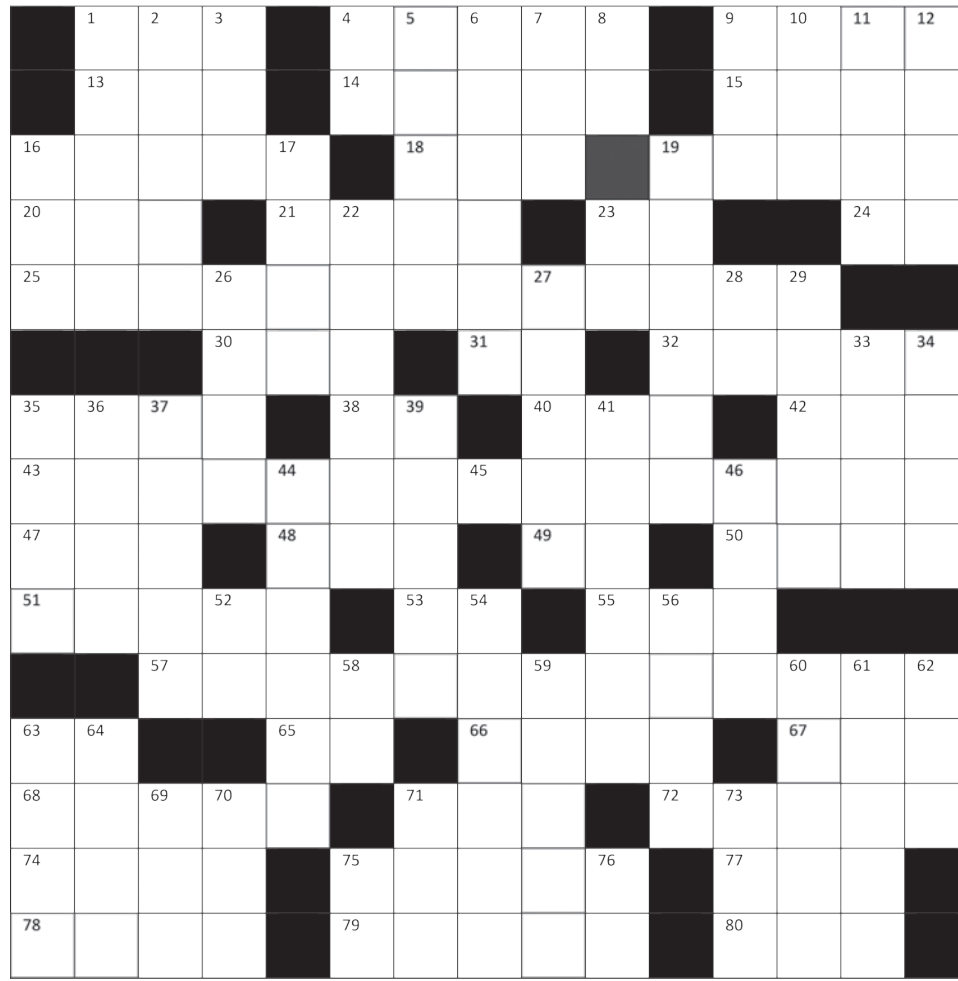


### ACROSS

- 1 Picnic invader
- 4 Extreme dislike
- 9 Insect similar to hornets and yellow-jackets
- 13 Honey maker
- 14 Opts for another tour of duty
- 15 Option for when cheated
- 16 Well known picture editing software, \_\_\_\_\_shop
- 18 Part of the NYC subway system
- 19 Mouth wide open in surprise or wonder
- 20 Charged atom
- 21 Artificial dye for coloring hair
- 23 "Top Gun" actor, Abbr.
- 24 Prolific author of horror and suspense fiction, Abbr.
- 25 Insect that kills its mate after mating
- 30 Fireplace residue
- 31 UFO driver
- 32 Neutered bull
- 35 Get rid of, \_\_\_\_\_inate
- 38 Agriculture Department grade for some eggs
- 40 Richard's First Lady
- 42 Airport postings
- 43 Three flies
- 47 Pie \_\_\_\_\_ mode
- 48 See 49 Across
- 49 With 48 Across, Confederate general
- 50 Slimy fish
- 51 They are attracted by light
- 53 Captured soldiers
- 55 Mine output
- 57 Most common butterfly
- 63 Maker of Chevys
- 65 Zodiac Sign, L\_\_\_\_\_
- 66 German word for Earth
- 67 Competitor of MGM

### DOWN

- 68 Nothings
- 71 Actress, \_\_\_\_\_ Marie Saint
- 72 Look up there, do you \_\_\_\_\_
- 74 Uganda despot
- 75 Elevate
- 77 \_\_\_\_\_ Landers
- 78 Moth larvae, \_\_\_\_\_ caterpillars
- 79 Van Gogh painted there
- 80 Clothes size designation
- 1 More than dislike
- 2 Related to birth, \_\_\_\_\_al
- 3 Vietnamese New Year
- 4 The letter between Q and S
- 5 "He's a real human \_\_\_\_\_"
- 6 Masochist's request
- 7 Go for
- 8 Drummer for the Beatles, Init.
- 9 Peruke
- 10 Now, \_\_\_\_\_P
- 11 Has late meal
- 12 It helps in children's game, Hide and Seek "
- 16 Backup for Gladys Knight
- 17 Big name in elevators
- 19 Groom does not \_\_\_\_\_ kiss the bride until after the vows
- 22 Suck in air
- 23 Southern state postal designation
- 26 Thanksgiving side dish
- 27 Having a good day on the links
- 28 Third person singular neuter pronoun
- 29 Dreaded note from teacher
- 33 With others
- 34 Triangular shaped fish
- 35 Dutch cheese
- 36 French composer
- 37 What a child learning the alphabet might say after learning Q



- 39 Very skilled or proficient at something
- 41 Having existed for a very long time
- 44 Borden cows
- 45 See 8 Down
- 46 Requirement
- 52 Laugh syllable
- 54 Cotton Boll \_\_\_\_\_
- 56 Sounds like 34 Down
- 58 Often response to "May I"
- 59 Sugars, starches and fibers found in fruit, Carbohy\_\_\_\_\_,(not hydrate)
- 60 American actress and singer, \_\_\_\_\_ Dunne
- 61 Working at squeezing out a living
- 62 Drunkard
- 63 In your face flier
- 64 Famous Auntie
- 69 Noise
- 70 Same as 1 Across
- 71 Hearing device
- 73 Musicians asset
- 75 NY politician, was Attn general of NY 1979-1993, Init.
- 76 Letter between R and T



George Urich is a retired Xerox engineer living in Canandaigua, NY. He solves and creates crossword puzzles to keep his brain active. A new puzzle will be shared each month, for the puzzling enjoyment of Owl Light readers. Email George at [gurich@frontier.com](mailto:gurich@frontier.com)

## Homestead from page 20

support poor rural communities, Black or otherwise. The model is relevant because we don't have an equivalent focus on measuring the impacts of these efforts on the most economically vulnerable. It's something to revisit to examine and improve current practices.



We are talking a lot these days about taking down monuments and unloading the baggage of our deeply problematic cultural history (dissociating agrarian ideals from the example of Jefferson, for example). This includes symbols and language -- "food sovereignty" is starting to replace the older "self-reliance", for example, and the term just sustainabilities is another addition to our imaginative lexicon. Are there any particular terms or ideologically fraught ways of thinking/talking that you would like to see change, or are happy to see being changed?

**J.A.** Just as settler-colonialism and racial capitalism have produced a vocabulary and narrative that is often pejorative and exclusive (think: urban blight, redevelopment), we need to decolonize our minds by challenging and ultimately changing these narratives. For example, 'placemaking'. What are we saying when we embark on a 'placemaking' project? We're saying that your 'place' needs a makeover: we need to do this by 'placemaking'. This is deeply problematic

when we see who leads most placemaking projects. Plus, are we really 'placemaking' or are we in effect 'placetaking, from Indigenous peoples, further contributing to their erasure from civic life?



What practical advice would you give to a young person today with no land and little to no inherited wealth, who is entering a dire economic situation, but who would nevertheless like to live a sustainable and just life and do something to make this ideal a reality within their lifetime? What are their options?

**K.B.** There are a lot of efforts happening in real time led by young people that are attempting to navigate this difficult time. History matters and can provide a foundation for the work, but part of it is realizing that you are not alone and that your generation is leading the charge for change. Joining an organization that inspires you might be a way to build relationships, form networks and determine accessible and short-term changes that you can make. The organization need not be directly related to the most dire challenges to sustainability. But gaining experience working with others to tackle social and environmental challenges can be valuable regardless.



In your view, how have the events of this year—COVID-19, the new awareness of racial inequity and injustice, the economic collapse—formed a new

context for our understanding of a Black Commons and for the role of strong local economies? What kinds of changes do you see taking place in the near term and in the long term, and what changes would you like to see?

**K.B.** In the litany of strategies to change laws and make publicly shared and funded systems more accountable and accessible, it would be good to also acknowledge the systemic loss of land and other material assets that could build community wealth. Policies and strategies matter. But also the role land plays in wealth creation. The extreme lack of access to information, access, and resources faced by Black communities has been well established. But the recalculation of lessons learned from previous strategies has not occurred outside of smaller conversations. Building, testing, and scaling up ways to leverage collective investment in the land are needed and should be energetically pursued. Change comes from organization and action, but can start with reframing the problem.

*Derrick Gentry lives in Honeoye with his wife and son, and numerous furred and feathered friends. He teaches in the Humanities Department at Finger Lakes Community College. Email: [Derrick.Gentry@fllcc.edu](mailto:Derrick.Gentry@fllcc.edu).*



# The Conscious Crow

## A Time of New Beginnings

Currently we are in between the American New Year celebrated in January, and the Lunar New Year celebrated in February. This is the time period of new beginnings. Once more we awaken to what we have forgotten. Rituals such as these, remind us to turn our focus and intent upon making a reality that "Change we wish to see in the world," and actualize it by becoming it, as Gandhi so wisely words our melding of concern. The new year is a time of renewal. To put our values into practice and remember what it is we have fallen asleep to in our daily lives and left by wayside of our yesterday. It is a chance to start fresh.

And though it is a cycle of new beginnings in our calendar year—in essence—every day is actually the chance to start a new way and begin again. Within every moment lies a golden opportunity to practice what is truly important to us by consciously reacting and acting in a way that establishes our best Self and embodies our core virtues.

Though we may not believe it, our reactions and actions are remarkably pertinent to the direction of the entire world. What influences one influences all. The obscure, undefined piece uniting us all creates our subliminal and explicit consciousness. Today in our lifetime we are experiencing an unprecedented volume of change that is determining the direction and course of our future, with each one of us as an active participant in the process. We illustrate this in how we relate to what is happening, how we relate to ourselves, and how we relate to the world. We may not completely understand how this plays out in real-time, but the fact of the matter is that we are intrinsically connected to one another with a singular, energetic, invisible string. This invisible connection is energy.

**Though we may not believe it, our reactions and actions are remarkably pertinent to the direction of the entire world.**

Don Miguel Ruiz in the *Mastery of Love* recalls that "What is truth is true, believe it or not. Your body is made of atoms. You don't have to believe it. Believe it or not, it is true." Energetically we are tied—whether we like it and know it - or not we are tied. We move and breathe in unison. Science reminds us of the fascinating truth of this reality, that energy is the very thing weaving within us and among us, because energy is everything that is us. Essentially there is no distance between what we are and what we are not because we are everything. Some of us may never process this on a level that permanently etches a reminder on the forefront of our brains, forcing us to face the truth repetitively, while some of us may hold this continual awareness in complete consciousness.

We each have our own journey along the way as a human Being and ultimately our job in this lifetime is to fine tune Becoming and activate the remembrance of this illusion of separation. Our goal is to illuminate the concealed awareness within us as we walk along the journey of awakening in steadfast persistence, practice, and patience. As Trevor Hall sings so beautifully in his song "Bowl of Light," he reminds us in a gesture that "We forget and remember...and we forget again." What we do comes back around to greet each and every one of us—influencing myself and as much as yourself—since "this life

is a circle and its coming back around...coming back again."

Since we are tied to one another, of course it will be received by everyone and everything to some degree.

Our brain is a major receptor, and just like any other muscle we exercise in that it needs consistency and intentional application in order to evolve and grow to its potentiality. If every day we intentionally and consciously go about our days aiming to keep sight of the incredible, infinite tapestry we are built upon, we react and act differently. If we think about how our actions relate to others, how we are ultimately affecting one another as much as our own self, we are hopefully stirred to relate in a way that is more friendly and more conscientious, because we know it has further reaching affects than just our own self.

As we embark on this recurrent journey together and enter in a new year full of limitless options, may we continue this walk of remembrance, realizing once more that we have a choice: to see things as they are, truthfully, or lose ourselves in the illusion of the world. If we hold constancy in our awareness and lovingly, gently remind ourselves and each other along the way of this awakening, we have the power to actualize our potentiality for consciousness and awaken to this New Day, New Dawn, and New Year, together as One. In 2021, may we remember we are one, and there is only the illusion of our separateness.



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Solution to Owl Light Puzzle 10 (found on page 21)

1	A	N	T	4	A	B	H	O	R	9	W	A	S	P		
13	B	E	E	14	R	E	U	P	S	15	I	S	U	E		
16	P	H	O	T	17	O	I	R	T	18	A	G	A	P	E	
20	I	O	N	21	T	I	N	T	23	T	C	24	S	K		
25	P	R	A	Y	26	I	N	G	M	27	A	N	T	I	S	
30	A	S	H	31	E	T	32	S	T	E	33	E	R			
35	E	L	I	M	38	A	A	P	A	T	42	E	T	A		
43	D	A	M	S	44	E	L	D	R	A	G	O	N	M	A	Y
47	A	L	A	48	L	E	E	49	R	E	50	E	E	L	S	
51	M	O	T	H	S	53	P	W	55	O	R	E				
57	P	A	I	N	T	E	59	D	L	A	D	I	E	S		
63	G	M	65	E	O	66	E	R	D	E	67	R	K	O		
68	N	A	D	A	S	71	E	V	A	72	S	E	E	I	T	
74	A	M	I	N	75	R	A	I	S	E	77	A	N	N		
78	T	E	N	T	79	A	R	L	E	S	80	R	E	G		

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## REBUTTAL from page 8

Two years later during the 2018 midterm elections he again made fraud allegations, and in 2020 he repeated the charge that the Democratic primary had been rigged against Bernie Sanders. Needless to say, none of these stolen election charges were shown to be true. If this isn't a pattern of compulsively spreading election disinformation, then I don't know what is.

By the time the readers of *The Owl* read this, Donald Trump will have left office as one of the most disgraced presidents in American history, and I can only hope that none of the far-right protests expected in Washington D.C. and state capitols on Inauguration Day will have turned violent. Even though Trump is out of office, the authoritarian right—composed mostly of alt-right groups and QAnon believers—is not going away. Some of these groups are well-financed, have many sympathizers, and continue to recruit on social media with the help of false conspiracy theories that demonize their enemies. When the authoritarian right raises its ugly head again to attack our democracy, we need to take the threat seriously and be ready to deal with it.

Len Geller  
Interlaken, NY

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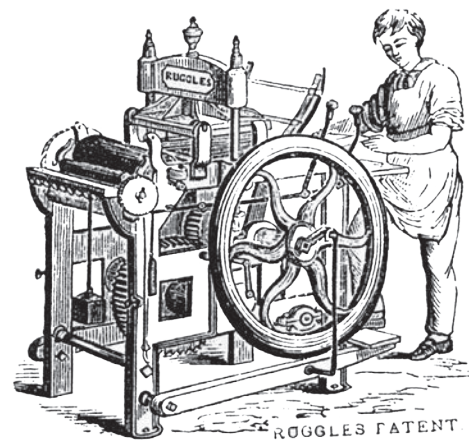
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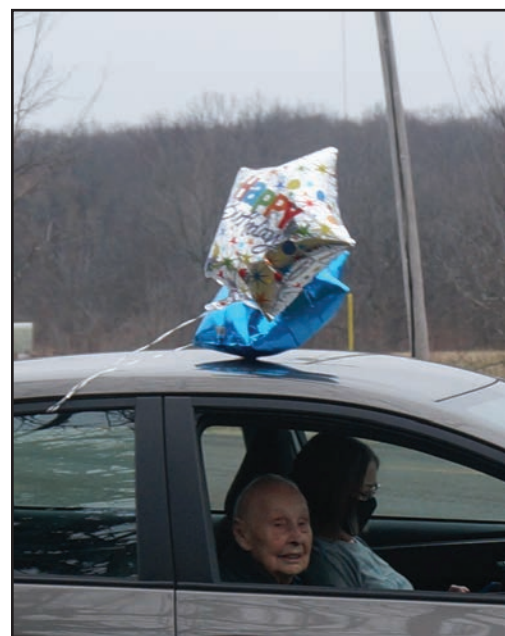
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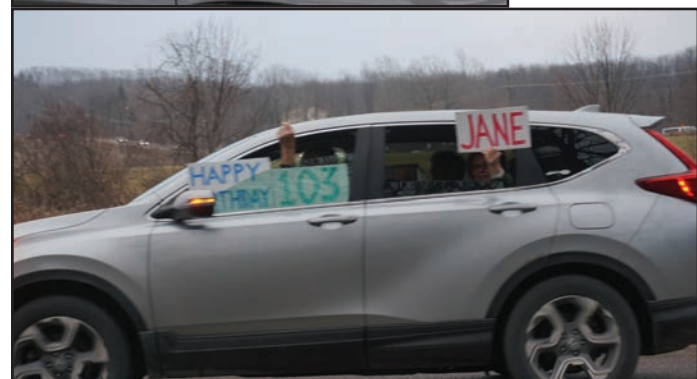


# A Grand Birthday Parade

## The Stream of Cars Just Kept Coming in a Birthday Tribute To Hemlock Resident Jane Barnard



**O**n January 14, 2021 at 4 PM—while Jane Barnard watched from the comfort of her daughter Mary's car—a long stream of cars drove past Jane's longtime residence (that she shared with her husband Howard Barnard until his death, at 94, in 2012). The line of cars seemed endless (How many cars? 103, someone shouted) as they wound their way slowly west and turned onto Barnard Road. They came festooned with the gayest of automotive attire including signs made by Honeoye Central School students and, of course, birthday balloons. Sirens blared, dogs howled, horns beeped, people waved, and "Happy Birthday Jane!" was shouted out open car windows, truck beds, and sunroofs. Looking toward Honeoye, they just kept coming as Jane sat watching, smiling at her many, many friends and relatives who joined in this parade. Following the festivities, birthday cards and a lifetime of chocolates were delivered for Jane to enjoy at her leisure.



Time goes by, and it seems, as of late, there has been more change than most of us wish to see (some of it positive; some just adding another layer of challenge to our already busy and complex lifestyles). It goes without saying that the longer we have lived, the more change we have seen. For those who have lived a century, like Hemlock resident Jane Barnard—who turned 103 on January 14th—those changes include most of what we all now take for granted. Inventions in the 1920s included: band aids (1920); traffic lights (1920); insulin (1922); penicillin (1928); television (1927); and car radios (1929). And in 1925, only half of the homes in the United States had electricity (Jane's was not one of them). Just think of all the other inventions and innovations that have



been taken place since then.

For Jane Barnard and others of her generation, simple things mean more than the newest gadgets, especially in these times of COVID-19—simple things like a grand birthday parade. 🎉



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**W**hen we heard that the birthday parade had been planned for Jane Barnard, we asked Mary to share with her some questions. Their conversation is printed below.

**Mary** What changes have you seen over your lifetime?

**Jane** It's become a dog eat dog world with everyone out for themselves.

**Mary** I would think electricity, a man on the moon?

**Jane** It *was* exciting when our neighbors had electricity run to their house (we didn't have it for years).

**Mary** What about the changing nature of politics?

**Jane** We are such a divided nation, no one seems to work for the greater good.

**Mary** What are the most significant problems we face?

**Jane** To keep the peace at home and worldwide.

**Mary** Any advice for young people?

**Jane** Keep an open mind. Learn to negotiate with kindness and civility.

**Jane** All my answers are really the same.

**Mary** Yes, they are. Was the world kinder and gentler when you were young?

**Jane** We lived in the country, so I was probably shielded from most of the world's troubles. It seems like people accepted hardships and helped their neighbors. We didn't hear about riots within minutes of them starting.

See also: [owllightnews.com/memory-is-a-funny-thing-an-interview-with-jane-barnard/](http://owllightnews.com/memory-is-a-funny-thing-an-interview-with-jane-barnard/); [owllightnews.com/fond-memories-of-jane-barnard/](http://owllightnews.com/fond-memories-of-jane-barnard/); and [owllightnews.com/jane-barnard-and-barbara-connolly-honored/](http://owllightnews.com/jane-barnard-and-barbara-connolly-honored/)