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SUMMER IS HERE!

We've been waiting all winter for this: summer! All of the kids are getting out of school – some have already, others will be out soon enough. The weather is warm, sometimes even too warm. But we're not going to complain – right? We filled the complaint weather quota this winter... that's for sure.

With summer come so many fun adventures and activities. The warmer weather and all that vitamin D from the sun just makes you feel all sorts of energetic with a need to partake in so many activities. And there's no shortage of things to do in our area, lucky us! Whether it's the theater you crave, or summer concerts, or swimming at your favorite hole... so many adventures to be had!

Much like the hodgepodge of adventures that you can have this summer, this issue has a hodgepodge of stories. There's no theme this month and so our topics are all over the place. But that's fun, too. Somehow we've acquired lots of themes for our magazine throughout the year, and so I always enjoy issues like this where there's no specific theme that carries throughout.

I'd like to take a moment to share with you how much fun Mary and I have been having with our podcast, *Main Street Moxie*. We launched in January and drop an episode every other Monday – on Moxie Mondays. Our guests have all been amazing and inspirational, and Mary and I have had so much fun talking to these folks who come from all walks of life. The feedback thus far to the podcast has been so encouraging and I love that the extension of this magazine in this podcast format has been so well-received. The one thing that I've always tried to achieve with publishing this magazine is to spread good, positive stories. And I'm delighted that we're able to do that in a different platform (in this case as a podcast). Talking to people and letting our voices be heard (literally) versus reading them on these pages or on our website, it has just been a lot of fun for me personally. It allows creativity to flow in a different way. But perhaps more importantly, I've been so moved by all of our guests and their words of wisdom.

I hope that if you haven't listened to our podcast that you'll consider giving it a listen. You're in for some amazing people and their stories, and their moxie words of wisdom. And Mary and I are super excited for our guests that are lined up for the remainder of the year, which include a Stanford professor and a *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author, to name just two! Find *Main Street Moxie* everywhere you listen to podcasts!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



JUNE 2022

Summer is blooming.

Cover photo by
Olivia Valentine

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THE BIG COUNTRY SKY

By Betsy Maury
info@mainstreetmag.com

Last winter the Dell Eads Reading Room at Housatonic Valley Regional High School in Falls Village, CT, got some unexpected visitors. Renowned kinetic sculptor, Tim Prentice and his longtime artistic collaborator, Dave Colbert were looking up at the ceiling of the octagonal shaped room, considering the light. Prentice and Colbert were being shown a potential location for an installation they planned to gift to the school in the spring by Pat Vanicky, the school's art teacher and fellow Cornwall resident. Vanicky had approached Prentice and Colbert with the idea of donating a sculpture to the school in part to inspire students to experiment with sculpture, a practice she teaches as part of the school's course offerings.

Prentice's art, which has graced public spaces from New York to Taiwan for close to 50 years now has a permanent home in the Dell Eads Reading Room. The planning of the site-specific installation of the sculpture began with visually assessing the room and then calibrating the sculpture elements to respond to the room's air flow. The power of kinetic sculpture is its interaction with wind and light. For this piece, Prentice and Colbert worked with wire and highly reflective aluminum tubes to fabricate the sculptural elements. The sculpture is held suspended from the ceiling and is in near constant motion from gusts coming from doors to the outside as well as slight modulations in the HVAC system. Groups of students

gathered beneath also create rising air that will cause the sculpture to respond. Anticipating the elements' response to wind is central to the art and Prentice and Colbert design with this in mind. The artists requested the school paint the ceiling a very particular color – Benjamin Moore 2066-30 Big Country Blue – to create a background for the installation. The selection was to “bring the sky inside, I think,” says Vanicky. The result transformed the room from a functional media center to a place of visual delight.

Making air visible

Prentice was taken by surprise and laughed a little when I asked what his hope was for the piece in its new home. Mulling the question over, he said he hoped the students would “give it a little thought, about how the sculpture makes the air visible.” Prentice recalled his own awakening to kinetic sculpture as a high school student when he visited the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, MA, with the wife of a teacher at his boarding school. With no art program at the school at the time, the faculty wife was determined to bring art to the students, or students to the art in this case. It was seeing Alexander Calder's *Horizontal Spines* at the Addison that planted the first seed for Tim Prentice. That, and a lifetime considering wind through sailing pursuits and serving on an aircraft carrier in WWII combined to inform

his singular brand of art practice and output.

Sculpture that moves and responds to the elements is endlessly fascinating to look at. The reflective nature of the aluminum material, set against a blue background with indirect light on one side of the room means that the work looks different at every minute of every day from every perspective as the weather patterns change outside. This organic quality feels right at home in a place bustling with teenage activity witnessing the highs and lows of school days. For some, sitting underneath it might provide impetus for energetic idea generation, for others it might offer the opportunity for soothing contemplation or meditation.

Inspiring generations

Prentice and Colbert's particular brand of kinetic sculpture is unique and by showcasing this art form within the school's building, Pat Vanicky is not only bringing this art to students, she's helping to connect students to the rich artistic community in northwest Connecticut. Aspiring artists at Housatonic have unusual access to living "local" artists (many of whom are world renowned) and opportunities to engage with their work. Guest artists are a regular component of the art program here and many graduates go on to top art colleges. The site-specific installation now fluttering in the breeze of the library may well provide inspiration to a generation of Housatonic students, and maybe not just those studying art. Vance Cannon, who oversees the Dell

Eads Reading room says, "the room is getting a lot of use, especially in the afternoons."

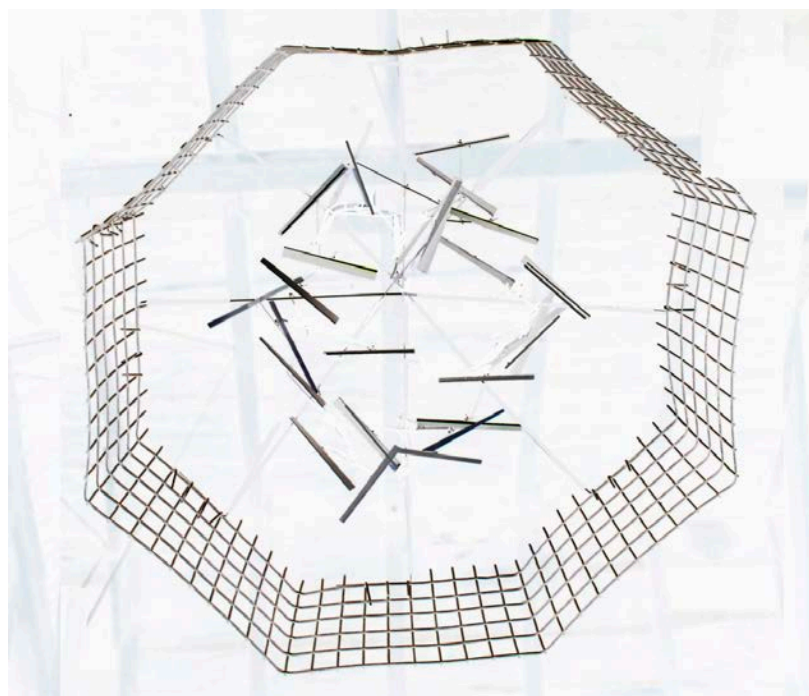
The room is used by the entire student body and in truth, there's something in the Prentice/Colbert sculpture for everyone. For students interested in industrial fabrication, the use of simple materials crafted by hand creates an unexpectedly complex effect. For scientists, observing the repeating pattern of the parts making up the whole illustrates a central principle in science. Musicians will see (and hear) the mood of the wind on the sculpture. Geometry students will see angles and shapes in balance. If visitors stare long enough at the sculpture, they are likely to see both precision and whimsy, hard angles and abstraction. Just as a profound imprint was left on Prentice on seeing the work of Alexander Calder at a formative age, the installation of the Prentice/Colbert sculpture may inspire artistic kinship with students who will see it every day for four years. And as is the hope of all artists, maybe it will inspire, challenge or provide respite during that time.

At home with the artist

A visit to the Prentice Cornwall campus with its barns, out buildings and panoramic views gave me insight into the artmaking. Prentice has created his art from his Cornwall studio for close to fifty years and a lot of the idea generation takes place in his barn studio in an old icehouse. Experiments in fabrication abound. Diminutive prototypes cover the wall of the studio, and the property is dotted with full-scale sculptures of one kind or another and many works in progress.

On the day I visited, several large metal sculptures stood askew or in tatters on the landscape after having endured some recent heavy winds. Seeing prototypes on site, shows many of them in their glory, their reflective materials set against rolling Litchfield hills or rough-hewn barnwood. The rustic beauty of the Cornwall landscape elevates Prentice's art, I think.

The seemingly complex but simple constructions of interlocking angled wires with metal or plastic planes are incredibly sensitive to moving air.



Above: 3D model of Housatonic sculpture, photo courtesy of Prentice/Colbert. Below, left: Looking East Times' Square installation, photo courtesy of Prentice/Colbert. Opposite page: Dave Colbert, Pat Vanicky, Jeff Lloyd, Tim Prentice, photo by Don Heiny.

Much of Prentice's large-scale work is installed in public spaces where the environment or landscape play a role in showcasing the art. Prentice/Colbert sculptures have been installed in public atriums in museums and airports around the world as well as mounted outside in sculpture gardens. Lexan – a composite plastic that comes in various weights and shades of opacity – aluminum and stainless steel are materials of choice for most of the work, though the team has built some sculptures with brightly-colored feathers and has experimented with glass panels as well. All of the kinetic structures appear fragile and delicate but maintain their integrity as they respond to movements in the air. What is constructed from hard industrial and geometric material is made undulating and musical in the wind. One piece, *Outdoor Carpet*, moves like the magic carpet imagined in children's books, ready to take flight when the wind picks up speed. Its appearance is flowing, responsive, almost *alive*, though it is composed of decidedly hard, dead material – small squares of lexan knitted together with wire then suspended from a metal plane. This seeming whimsy or dynamic serendipity is the essence of Prentice's work.

His rightful place

In April 2022, Prentice closed a year-long indoor and outdoor exhibition


of his work at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, CT. The exhibition featured 20 indoor works, five outdoor works, and a video portrait of the artist. The title of the exhibition refers to Alexander Calder, whose mobiles inspired Prentice as a boy and who most in the art world would consider the granddaddy of kinetic art. The work of Tim Prentice and Dave Colbert claims a rightful place in this artistic tradition by creating dynamic work in which forms change in new ways and are constructed of new materials.

Though the show is now closed, Prentice/Colbert sculptures can be seen nearby at the Torrington Court House or Connecticut Science Center in Hartford and at the site of new Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown. And now, with great pride of place and through the efforts of an inspired high school art teacher, Housatonic boasts its own original kinetic sculpture from one of Cornwall's most inventive native sons. ●

To view the Prentice/Colbert sculpture or the Blue & Gold exhibition currently on view in the Kearcher-Monsell Gallery, please contact main office secretary Cindy Fuller at CFuller@hvrhs.org (860) 824-5123 ext. 1160 to schedule a visit.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work through the arts form on our "arts" page on our website.





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Matt Gardener is a builder, contractor, and a member of the Marine Corps reserve. He has been building for about three months but has served in the Marines for two and a half years. “What I enjoy most about this work is the step-by-step knowledge I’ve been getting on how to take plans from a blueprint and put it all together on a large scale,” Matt says. “As for being in the Marines, I carry great pride in serving my country and carrying on a family tradition.” Matt is originally from Nassau, NY, but says he loves the Millerton area and the country landscape because it gives him the chance to meet new people and learn new things. “My summer plans this year are going to my uncle’s for our family reunion on the 4th of July. We have been doing this for many years and I always look forward to it every year.”



Cathleen Hamm is a licensed real estate salesperson for Davala Real Estate, LLC. She assists with buying and selling homes, properties, and even investments. Though she is new to the business, she is learning so much from those around her. “I previously worked as an LPN and was director of a non-profit,” she says. “So, the ever-evolving, fast-paced environment is something I know and love.” Outside of work, Cathleen enjoys CrossFit training, gardening, and sitting in the sun in her backyard with a cup of coffee. “As a teenager I traveled to Guatemala and the Philippines on mission trips to provide various services to the local people, and I discovered that what matters most isn’t the things that you can collect and build, but the people and relationships you create. People are invaluable and so many of us don’t realize our worth. People are the true investment in this life.”



Is **Sean Kennedy** Ben Affleck’s doppelgänger? We think so! Doppelgänger fame aside, Sean has worked in design and drawing for Allee Architecture + Design in Millerton, NY, for the past 14 years. “The best part is the opportunity to be creative on an almost daily basis,” says Sean. Outside of work Sean will take any chance to be outside and enjoy the day. Sean was born and raised in the Northwest corner and has lived in other places, but since coming back here he says he’s realized there really isn’t anywhere he would rather be. “I like having the space to breathe,” says Sean. “After being so busy moving last summer and fall, I’m looking forward to some normalcy this year. Hopefully I will find some time to go on vacation, but honestly, I’ll be happy just to stay here and paint my house.”



Wendy Kenney is a licensed real estate salesperson for Davala Real Estate, LLC., and has been a respiratory therapist for over thirty years. In 2007 she transferred to home care and is currently working in sleep therapy. “I have enjoyed the many challenges in this field, and it has been very rewarding,” she says. Outside of her career, Wendy enjoys golfing, photography, gardening, riding motorcycles, and spending time with her children and grandchildren. Wendy was born and raised in Columbia County, NY, and after graduating from Chatham High School, went on to graduate from Hudson Valley Community College. “This area has so much to offer I decided to stay local and raise my family here, where I could be close to family and friends,” Wendy says. “This summer my husband and I are looking forward to attending some LPGA events and spending a little time relaxing in Cape Cod with family.”



Zachary Sohotra is a Deputy with the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office who is approaching the start of his seventh year of service in June. “Working for the Sheriff’s office means being a part of a community,” says Zach. “It is especially gratifying to work in the same community that I was raised in.” Outside of work Zach enjoys spending time with family and says they are the most important part of his life. Zach recently married his wife, Amanda, this past November and says he is thankful for any time spent with her and their dog, Layla. Zach and Amanda enjoy being active, spending time outdoors as much as they can. “We live in a small, tight-knit community. It’s a small enough place to feel like your family and friends are always close by making working in the county even more meaningful and gratifying.”



Juliet Harrison is the owner of the Equis Art Gallery in Red Hook, NY, where she specializes in representing the work of contemporary equine artists from around the world. “I have been a gallerist for over eight years, both in a brick-and-mortar storefront and online with an active website,” she says. “I love connecting collectors with artists and artwork that they will not easily find elsewhere in the world, as Equis is the only gallery of its kind.” Outside of the gallery, Juliet spends time visiting other art venues around the Hudson Valley and beyond. She is a voracious reader who formerly worked at Oblong Books in Millerton and Rhinebeck. And, as you can imagine, loves to spend time around horses – any horses – from backyard pets to racing royalty.



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A blooming *business*

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir
info@mainstreetmag.com

The foundation of our local communities are its residents and businesses. We here at Main Street love nothing more than spreading their stories and the mantra of local as well as supporting local. With that in mind, we were excited to have a chance to learn more about Amanda Zick and Margaret (Greta) Anderson of A+M Flower Co., who are not just located in the heart of Pine Plains, NY, but that heart is at the center of their blooming business.

Who are Amanda and Margaret?

AZ: We are neighbors and friends living in the heart of the village of Pine Plains with our families, dogs, and flower gardens. We both grew up on dairy farms – me in Brunswick, NY, and Margaret right here in Pine Plains. I spent my summer Fridays through high school earning cash by cutting flowers for a local flower farmer, and I've grown a small cutting garden for myself ever since.

I'm the planner of our duo, "Queen of the Spreadsheet," and in charge of all things scheduling, sorting, and seed starting. Margaret, who goes by "Greta" and gets her love of gardening and flowers naturally! Greta's mother and aunt have beautiful flower

gardens, and she seriously caught the flower bug in the last couple of years – there's been no stopping her since. Greta is the "get things done" partner – willing to try anything, dig all the holes, and has a true eye for design and creativity in arrangements.

How did the idea for this business come about? When did you start it and why?

GA: 2021 was our first season. We each individually expanded our gardens during the summer of 2020 when we were all stuck at home because of COVID-19. We bonded over our shared love of cut flowers and our mutual desire for a creative outlet. After admiring each others' flowers all summer and talking about our favorite flower influencers, I floated the idea to Amanda that I was hoping to set up a roadside stand the following year and see how it went. Amanda knew that if there was going to be a flower stand outside her house all summer, she couldn't just sit back and watch. So, she agreed to help out and offered to try it out as a partnership.

Is this your full-time job?

AZ: No. At the time that we were brainstorming and planning out the idea of A+M Flower Co. we were both working full-time jobs. I'm in government, and Greta in nursing. We are still working full-time, non-flower jobs, although Greta is in between jobs at the moment. We were and are both generally satisfied with our jobs, but were looking for a way to flex our creative muscles that our jobs didn't exercise. Since we were both dabbling with our individual cut flower gardens and arranging our homegrown blooms for ourselves and our friends, it seemed like the perfect fit.

What is A+M Flower Co? What type of business is it, what products do you have, how does it work?



Above: Amanda Zick (left) and Greta Cary (right) of A+M Flower Co. All images in this article depict Amanda and Greta and their flowers. All photos are by SoYork Photography.

GA: After our experimental 2021 season was a bigger success than we expected, we decided to formalize the business idea, expand and upgrade going into this year for our 2022 season. A+M Flower Co. started out primarily as a roadside flower stand selling seasonal bouquets with a limited bouquet subscription program on the side. This year we are continuing to stock our Flower Cart, which I have completely redesigned and refreshed. It will be stationed at its usual location at the corner of Academy Street and East Church St. (199 E) in Pine Plains, NY. We are continuing with

Continued on next page ...



our Bouquet Subscription program, which we offer in five week sessions, one in each season: Spring, Summer, and Fall. Each session gets you a fresh hand tied mixed bouquet of whatever flowers and foliage is in season at that moment. It's a convenient way to bring fresh flowers into your home on a routine basis and keep you grounded by the natural rhythms of the seasons.

Additionally, this season we are offering a limited series of events such as Bouquet Bars, which are kind of like Paint and Sips, but with flower arranging instead of painting. We are really excited to be partnering with a long-time Pine Plains institution, Lia's Mountain View Restaurant, to host these events. You will be able to find out the details of these events on our website or by joining our email list. Also, we are always open for special orders for custom arrangements on a limited local basis.

All of your flowers are grown right in the middle of Pine Plains – is that important? How does that work and make you different?

AZ: Our local community is very important to us. We both love this little town and are raising our kids here. There are so many reasons why keeping our flowers local was the right fit for us. First, traditionally, most of the flowers that are sold in the US are either imported or shipped domestically over long distances. In the age of climate change we knew we didn't want to contribute to that system.

There has been a trend in the floral industry in the last few years that pushes for more local and seasonal flowers – and we're thrilled to be a part of that shift in what we feel is the right direction. And we are so excited to see many other local flower growers and florists making that shift as well.

Second, we live and work here in Pine Plains and our kids go to school here. We want to strengthen and grow (pun intended) our local community and bring beautiful locally-grown flowers to our neighbors here.

Third, it just keeps it simple. If we grow locally and sell locally, it limits the amount of storage we need, it limits the "flower miles" our blooms need to travel, and it allows us to keep our prices affordable for everyone, which is really important to us.

What kind of flowers do you grow and sell throughout the seasons?

GA: We grow and forage everything we sell from right here in Pine Plains. The vast majority from our own backyards, though we wouldn't necessarily call them gardens. It is closely planted and intensely monitored specifically for harvesting cut flowers. We amend the soil with natural compost that we buy locally, manure from my family's farm, as well as diluted fish emulsions.

We specialize in annuals, though we are slowly adding more perennials. We hope to shift at least half of our flowers to perennials.

We sell many different varieties throughout the seasons including: Spring – daffodils, tulips, anemones,



ranunculus, Iceland poppies, peonies, and tall bearded iris. Summer – rudbeckia, larsspur, strawflowers, snapdragons, cosmos, celosia, ageratum, asters, gomphrena, lisianthus, and zinnias. Fall – dahlias, dahlias, dahlias! And also everything from the summer season that is still cranking out blooms.

Do you do special requests – events like weddings – or is it purely subscriptions and the Flower Cart?

AZ: Yes! We haven't yet expanded into large weddings or events, but we are doing our second small wedding party bouquets and boutonnieres this month in June. We are happy to consider smaller events such as private parties, anniversaries, engagement parties, bridal or baby showers.

Is your business just in the summer, or is it two seasons? ... Three seasons?

GA: Honestly, it's a year-round business though our main sales season is roughly May through October, which correlates to the growing season here locally. In the late fall, we are digging and dividing our dahlia tubers and

prepping them for storage, we are cleaning up our gardens and putting them to bed for winter, and we are pulling out the flowers we have set aside to dry during the hot summer and working on dried flower arrangements and wreaths. In the winter, we are business planning for the next season, pouring over seed catalogs, making wish lists of which varieties we want to grow in the next season, and resting up for the big spring planting. In early spring we are starting seeds, prepping our garden beds with compost and landscape fabric, planting annuals and tending to our perennials, not to mention updating our online marketing and social media in every season.

What kind of flowers can one buy – bouquets, special order, pick your own, or what you have at any time? How does the subscription and Flower Cart work?

AZ: Our focus is mostly on mixed bouquets of whatever is in season at the moment. We primarily sell through our bouquet subscription and our Flower Cart. The Flower Cart has recently had an upgrade and a refresh and we couldn't be more excited about it! It will be located on the corner of Academy St. and East Church St. (Rt.



199), and the hours will be limited and announced on our website and via our email newsletter.

What are your most popular and best selling flowers?

GA: I think the beauty of flowers is that everyone loves something different. I would say our mixed bouquets sell the best, although this past Mother's Day weekend the simple bunches of tulips went like HOT CAKES! Maybe by this time next year we will have a more definitive answer for that.

Who does what in your duo?

GA: I personally LOVE this question. When this partnership began I was just thinking of throwing some seeds in the ground and making pretty bouquets. Little did I know what a big surprise awaited me. Amanda is the planner in our duo. She does everything from deciding what types of flowers to plant, colors of flowers to plant, when to plant, how many to plant, when to order seeds or bulbs, and anything else you can imagine. She is the SPREADSHEET QUEEN and she absolutely loves it. I think (Amanda can say otherwise) that she absolutely loves to see her plans come to life.

For Amanda, the planning phase is a way to showcase her creative talents. As for me and as previously mentioned, I am the "doer" in our duo. This is not to say that Amanda is not, but this is the part where I can be most helpful. My organization/planning skills are not at the level of



Amanda's, and so I make myself useful with everything else. I do everything from digging holes to bringing in compost, harvesting and putting together bouquets. I absolutely LOVE arranging flowers, and could do it all day long.

Who are your customers, how do they find you and how do you reach them? Are your customers mostly around Pine Plains or further afield?

AZ: Our customers are nearly all local to the Pine Plains area. We do have some Flower Cart customers who stop by as they are driving through, but the vast majority are our neighbors, teachers at our local schools, nurses, other small business owners, local retirees, etc. We are actively trying to reach more customers this season, but last season was primarily through social media and word-of-mouth.

What have been some of your challenges since starting your business? Are your challenges mostly weather-related?

GA: Weather is always a major challenge. This year we've had a very cool, late spring which was great for our tulips that held off until Mother's Day – which is our biggest flower sales holiday. In more average years,

most of our tulips would be already past by Mother's Day. However, with our changing climate there seems like there is no such thing as an "average year" anymore. Last summer we had so much rain that we never had to use our irrigation, but other years we hardly get any rain. The only predictable thing about the weather is that it is guaranteed to be unpredictable.

What is your favorite part of the business, and what has been the biggest challenge?

AZ: My favorite part of the business is the planning and marketing aspects. I love starting seeds and harvesting flowers in the early morning or after putting the kids to bed.

GA: My favorite is definitely creating the bouquets, and seeing the joy on a customer's face when they see their arrangement. My perfect morning is going out early with my coffee to pick flowers, and then arranging them. The biggest challenge has been finding the time to do it all though. With full-time jobs and young kids at home, making time for everything and balancing all the demands on our attention is challenging to say the least.

What is your favorite flower and why?

Both: That's like asking to choose a favorite child – we love them all! Although I suppose we do have some that we love more than others...

AZ: For me, it is daffodils, tulips, English Garden Roses, zinnias, and dahlias.

GA: For me, it is ... it depends on the day and season. All of the flowers we grow have their moment so it's impossible to pick a favorite. I guess if you twisted my arm I would say peonies are up there as one of my all-time favorites. They are just stunning from start to finish, and create amazing bouquets. More recently, I've found a new love for poppies and cosmos. Both have a whimsical feel, and add such charm and beauty to a mixed bouquet, or on their own. ●

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Chocolate Fudge

OLD-FASHIONED

*F*udge you're thinkin'? Yes! Fudge for June. When I (Olivia) was down south last year for my stepfather Claude's funeral, I was looking through his things and came across a fudge recipe. It was written on a yellow, tattered piece of paper with chocolate smudges on it. I have a vague memory of my stepdad making the fudge years and years ago. I can't recall the fudge itself, but only the joy it brought him while he made it. He said he used to make the fudge with his mom when he was a little boy and then made it with his three daughters when they were young and now with me when I was about ten.

Now, Claude didn't really know his way around the kitchen. He was great on the grill, but other than that, he stayed away from the kitchen – except when it came to washing the dishes! It was always just the two of us in the kitchen by that point and what great conversations we shared over the sink full of dirty pots and pans. One of us equipped with a sponge, the other a dish towel. I always offered to wash, because if I had to dry, it was drying AND putting the dishes away. Washing was just one task! It's funny to think how things you dreaded doing as a kid turn out to be some of your fondest memories as an adult. If we could only chat and wash dishes one more time...

Fudgy fudge

The first time I made this recipe it wasn't a huge success. Claude's recipe was a bit vague. Thankfully, with a little patience and a better understanding about the fudge making process, I made good, fudgy-tasting fudge! I was a purist while experimenting. I chose not to add anything. However, the next time I make it I

will definitely add nuts! I don't know if you've noticed, but we sure do love adding nuts to most of our recipes. And you can add nuts, peanut butter, or candy to this recipe.

Claude noted at the bottom of his instructions, "delicious" and yes it sure is. This fudge is delicious. Thank you, Claude, for everything. Including this fudge recipe. It is only fitting that we share his recipe in this month's issue. We would like to shout out to all the dads and father figures: Happy Father's Day. Wishing you all a very sweet day!

RIP, CNP

Fudge ingredients

2 cups sugar
3/4 cups of milk
3 heaped tablespoons of cocoa powder
1/8 tsp salt
2 tsp butter
1 tsp vanilla

Instructions

Line a small square dish with either parchment paper or aluminum foil and spray lightly with cooking spray. In Claude's recipe, he stated using an 8"x8" square pan. I found that this pan was too big and produced thin fudge. We wound up using a Pyrex dish measuring 5"x7", which was perfect. It yielded 15 good size pieces of fudge.

Place sugar, milk, cocoa powder, and salt in a saucepan, stir constantly on medium high heat until the mixture begins to come to a rapid boil. Reduce heat to low and let the

mixture simmer without stirring until it reaches 238 degrees Fahrenheit on your candy thermometer. If you don't have a candy thermometer, you can drop a little of the mixture into cold water. It should form a soft ball that flattens between your fingers when you remove it from the water.

Once it reaches the correct temp, remove from heat, and allow the fudge to cool to 110 degrees. This takes about an hour, give or take 10-15 minutes. Do not stir the fudge while it cools. Once it has cooled down to the desired temperature, mix in the butter and the vanilla. Beat with a wooden spoon until fudge loses its sheen. Do not under or over beat!

Fudge can be tricky: You need time and patience for this recipe. If you get it right – and I'm sure that you will – you will thoroughly enjoy this old-fashioned chocolate fudge.

If you have any questions, please feel free to DM Olivia. •

Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @olivaiwvalentine.





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Something is going on... *The Ancram, NY real estate market from 2018 to now*

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

What has been happening over the last four years in our area's real estate markets? This article analyzes sales in the Town of Ancram, NY, since Main Street's last coverage four years ago to get a market snapshot in just one Columbia County town. (This feature is data intensive. For background on the community you can read the 2018 Ancram story online at www.mainstreetmag.com).

Attacked by Covid, Ancram median home prices rise 70%

Everyone who has considered buying or selling knows that 2020 had a dramatic impact on real estate markets everywhere. Sales results in Ancram over the last four years reflect the effect of Covid, working remotely and low interest rates, proving that these national trends affected even small rural towns (see chart). In 2020 in Ancram, total population just 1,500 residents, 37 houses were sold, more than double the previous year. The \$22.5 million in sales of single-family homes was four times greater than 2019. Even in 2021, the dollar volume of home sales, although not as high as 2020, was still more than triple that of 2019. And million-dollar sales in Ancram have become more frequent. In the ten years between 2007 and 2017 only eight properties sold for over a million dollars,

compared to nine in just two years in 2020 and 2021.

Most tellingly, in these same four years, Ancram's median home price has risen 70% from \$250,000 to \$425,000. Compare this price change in the same period to homes in Salisbury, CT, barely 15 miles away. Starting with a higher median price of \$502,200 in 2018, double that of Ancram, the median sale of a single-family home in Salisbury rose to \$700,000 in 2021— an increase of 42%. Off a much lower base, in percentage terms, Ancram values are appreciating even faster.

Vacant land is selling

Sales of vacant land, always slow to find a buyer, are another barometer of the real estate market. Vacant residential lot sales have risen significantly in terms of sales dollar volumes and number of transactions with the price per acre around \$9,200. The median acreage purchased in 2020 and 2021 was around ten acres, suggesting that new homes will be going up on sizable pieces of property. Sales of agricultural land, which is tracked separately, reached almost \$3 million in 2020, another record.

Prices are heading higher in 2022

Although the sample is small, price



Above: The center of Ancramdale has been designated as a historic district and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the background is a recently restored historic house designed by architect Doug Larson. Photo courtesy of Doug Larson, Larson Architecture Works LLC.

levels appear to have remained strong in the first four months of this year with the median sold price for a home through May rising to \$515,000 from \$425,000 last year (see chart). Meanwhile the actual number of houses sold through May is roughly half that of 2021 during the same period. The average sold price of \$843,800 was boosted by the sale of one trophy property on Wiltsie Bridge Road for over \$3,000,000 for a six-bedroom house and over 350 acres of land – a record price for Ancram.

Median price levels in Ancram for 2022 will increase further when five homes, represented as pending or contingent, close in the next few months. The median listing price of these properties is \$1,600,000! Land sales, only three so far this year, are always subject to big swings. Listing prices range from \$31,000 an acre to less than \$5,000 for 135 acres on Doodletown Road.

Not much left to buy

Like forsythia and daffodils, the real estate market usually blooms in April

and May with new listings expanding inventory of houses for sale. But not this year. Not anywhere. In Ancram in early May there were a total of 16 listings of any type of residential property for sale, including only seven single family homes. Although the average listing price is \$645,000, the median price of \$425,000 is the same as 2021. A sure sign of a seller's market is a home located on Route 82 currently listed at \$1,200,000, which was purchased in 2019 for \$600,000.

There's more vacant land for sale than houses. Sellers don't need to find a new place to live if they're listing land. There are nine pieces of vacant land listed for sale, averaging \$9,561 an acre. These are mostly large acreage parcels – seven of these properties are larger than 48 acres and only one is less than 5 acres – a 1.5-acre lot for \$125,000 on Five Roses.

The usual suspects

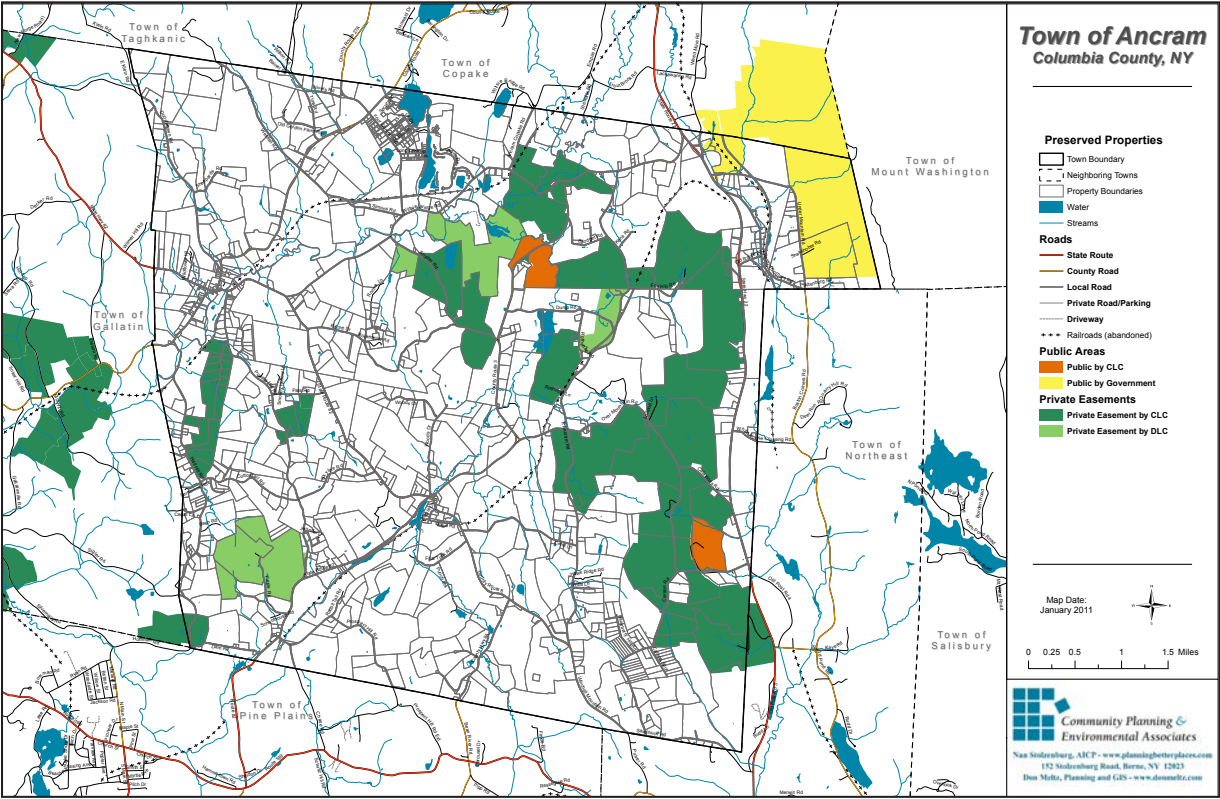
A look at who's buying what confirms what everyone senses – it is younger people from out of town. But Ancram compared to higher priced markets in

ANCRAM REAL ESTATE MARKET IN 2022*

	NUMBER	AVERAGE LIST PRICE	MEDIAN LIST PRICE
FOR SALE NOW			
Single Family Homes	7	\$645,000	\$425,000
Vacant Land	9	\$642,000	\$595,000 – \$9,561 per acre
PENDING/CONTINGENT			
Single Family Homes	5	\$843,800	\$1,500,000
		AVERAGE SOLD PRICE	MEDIAN SOLD PRICE
SOLD IN 2022 YTD			
Single Family Homes	7	\$890,786	\$515,000
Vacant Land	3	\$293,750	\$310,000 – \$5,631 per acre

*Information derived from realtor.com as of May 7, 2022

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: This map shows the land protected in Ancram – primarily in the eastern part of the town. Courtesy of the Town of Ancram. The Town of Ancram is proud of its farming heritage and its distant views west to the Catskill Mountains. Photo by Christine Bates.

Connecticut is still a bargain. Only three properties from 2018 to 2021 sold for over \$2 million dollars. The highest priced in these four years was the sale of a single-family residence on 21 acres on 309 East Ancram Road for \$2,150,000 in June of 2020. Priced between one and two million dollars, six properties were sold to buyers from Manhattan and Brooklyn.

What’s with Ancram?

Ancram is proud to be a “Historic Farming Community” and attracts buyers who are seeking an authentic country life, a farm not an estate. There is one gas station, many farm stands and no grocery, no antique stores or bakeries. Ancram boasts that it has been an agricultural community for centuries and intends to stay that way. Over 90% of resident who answered a 2010 survey indicated that it is very important “to support agriculture and conserve our open space, scenic views and water resources.” 62% of the town’s acreage is devoted to diversi-

fied agriculture including well-known Ronnybrook Farm; horse breeding and riding; alpaca sales; sausage and cheese makers; whiskey distilled from locally grown grains; pick-your-own vegetables and berries; pasture-raised meat and chickens; row crops and hay. Importantly, more of Ancram’s acreage is protected from development by conservation easements managed by the Columbia Land Conservancy than any other town in Columbia County – over 5,000 acres which will remain as open space limiting future development (see map).

Ancram is a small town that has been actively managed since 2010 by its supervisor, Democrat Art Bassin, a former senior banking executive.

During the years of his leadership the town rebuilt the town garage, constructed a new firehouse, adopted an updated comprehensive plan, revalued assessments, preserved scenic views, professionalized town services and while maintaining agriculture as a way of life. An excellent website supplemented by emails from the Supervisor warning of storms or searching for lost dogs, expanded broadband service and impressive community newsletter have brought the community closer together. Residents have been recruited to serve on committees and councils from economic development and technology to conservation and zoning. The Ancram Opera House, a performing arts theater, has added culture to Ancram. Impossible to believe, Ancram town property tax rates have actually decreased 8.8% from 2018 to 2022.

Exactly four years ago in this magazine a local real estate investor was quoted as saying, “My opinion is that owners should try to sell now before interest rates rise more and this lengthy economic expansion ends. I can’t imagine it will get better.” In Ancram this may be truer today than ever before, but who knows what will happen next? ●

Christine Bates is a registered real estate agent in New York and Connecticut with William Pitt Sotheby’s. She has written about real estate and business since Main Street Magazine’s first issue in 2013.

LAND AND HOME SALES IN ANCRAM 2018 TO 2021*

	2018	2019	2020	2021
SINGLE FAMILY HOMES				
Total Dollar Sales	\$9,173,890	\$5,138,000	\$22,568,204	\$16,571,300
Number of Sales	28	14	37	36
Median Price	\$250,000	\$377,000	\$370,000	\$425,000
VACANT RESIDENTIAL LOTS				
Total Dollar Sales	\$813,200	\$818,800	\$1,166,700	\$1,912,288
Number of Sales	4	7	8	11
Total Acreage	107	72	175	206
\$ Per Acre	\$7,585	\$11,382	\$6,662	\$9,254
AGRICULTURAL VACANT LAND				
Total Dollar Sales	\$200,000	\$1,515,850	\$2,949,500	\$175,000
Number of Sales	1	3	4	1
Total Acreage	50	268	331	7
\$ Per Acre	\$4,000	\$5,656	\$8,910	\$24,305
TOTAL \$ SALES	\$10,187,000	\$7,464,650	\$26,684,404	\$18,658,588

* Information compiled by author from official New York State Sales Web data and includes both broker and private sales. Does NOT include foreclosures and estate sales, commercial properties, transfers or two family and mobile homes.

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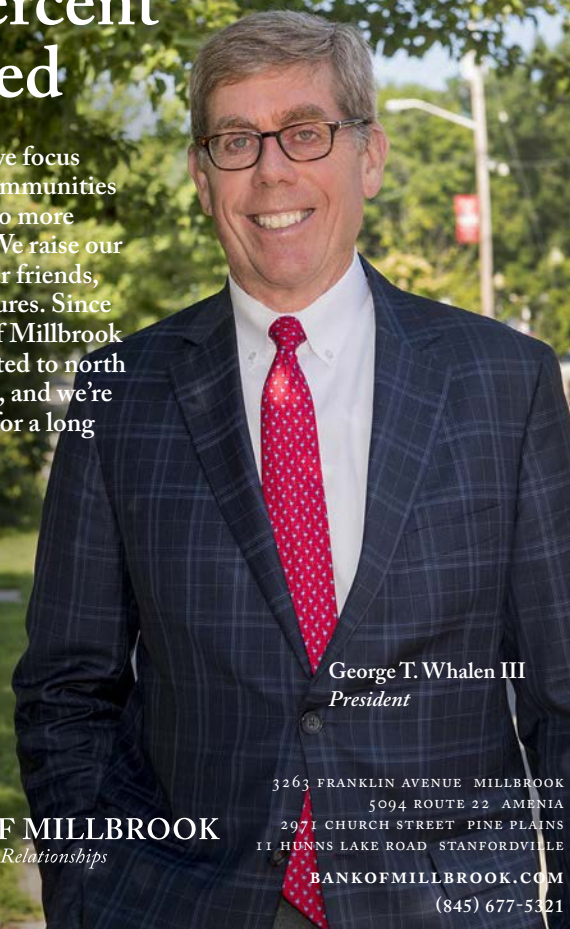
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COLORING OUR PAST

By Clarence Nurse
info@mainstreetmag.com

Last school year, our *Searching for Slavery* class was encouraged to explore ways to authentically share our work with the community. The idea of a public event appealed to us.

Fast forward to this year, nine community schools – public and independent, middle, and high school – gathered on April 28 and 29 at Troutbeck in Amenia, NY, to share the fruits of year-long research projects that examined our region's BI-POC Community (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) for something that has never been done before in the Northwest corner.

Schools and students coming together

The event opened with a resounding performance by Indian Mountain School's voices of *Lift Every Voice and Sing* written by historic Troutbeck Amenia Conference attendee, James Weldon Johnson. Salisbury School's Robert Castro-Terrio '22 and myself, Clarence Nurse '22, took on hosting duties and shared Salisbury documentaries that centered Troutbeck squarely in our nation's history. Indian Mountain continued with documentaries, while Hotchkiss School's students combined artistic pieces in the gallery with their documentaries and presentations highlighting different aspects of this hard history.

Sharon Center School painted an accompaniment to Langston's Hughes poem on Great Migration and filmed and recited a "cinpoem," and Mar-

velwood School wowed everyone with their documentary, *Black Moses*, on the nationalism of Marcus Garvey. Housatonic Valley Regional High School put together info-graphs on the Troutbeck attendees, the mahogany carvings adorning the property, and the geography of Troutbeck. The Wassaic Project collaborated with three New York State public schools as young students recreated artistic pieces that used the messiness of today's world to construct solutions based on the models of past Civil Rights pioneers.

Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries of Ohio State University, photographer Nona Faustine, Silas Munro of Polymode Studio, and Mike Morand and Melissa Barton of Yale's Beinecke Library, all spoke on the work students have been doing and shared some impactful and inspiring work of their own to bring it all together and hopefully solidify the Symposium as an annual event.

On Thursday, Faustine, Munro, and Jeffries shared their thoughts on presentations as they went on, giving words of encouragement and offering a level of intellect and creativity that you can only get with individuals of that caliber and expertise. Students were attentive and dialed into the words of the panelists, so much so that during breaks you could see groups forming around each panelist with guests lining up to gather more knowledge and soak in as much as they could.



Above: Students, teachers, panelists and some event organizers. Below, left: Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries speaking at the Symposium. Photos by Piece Moley, '22 of Salisbury School.

Giving recognition

Also highlighted was a display of work towards the back of the Troutbeck ballroom for guests to examine, which included posters that had information on historically significant Black people and events that have not been given proper recognition. For example, on one display was a description and picture of the Spingarn Medal, an award for outstanding achievement by a Black person.

Friday's guests included students from Litchfield along with local community members. Dr. Jeffries gave a striking talk on America's complacency about our history, and how we value nostalgia for the "good old times," rather than the times themselves that we are too uncomfortable to address.

Silas Munro enlightened the audience on his work at Polymode Studio, a minority-owned studio that inspires positive social change, while Nona Faustine, accompanied by close friend, Douglas Turner, kept the crowd's attention with her project, *White Shoes*, where she reclaims Black sites in New York City that were once forgotten and with education and persistence become public places by photograph-

ing herself wearing nothing but white shoes.

Mike Morand and Melissa Barton from Yale's Beinecke Library presented Friday afternoon and applauded the pioneering work of the students. Soon after learning about the Symposium, they reached out and partnered with students, excited to open the archives to help groups discover and tell stories.

The first Troutbeck Symposium was a total success. Students from Salisbury School will be making a video on the event in the coming weeks that will show how students, teachers, and members of the community had a great time coming together to share knowledge, exchange inspiration, and enjoy the hospitality and beauty of Troutbeck. Many have their fingers crossed that the event will become an annual affair. ●

This project was supported by a number of community organizations. For additional information visit <https://coloringourpast.org> and <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/hudson-valley/news/2022/04/28/troutbeck-symposium-uncovers-forgotten-black-history>

Clarence Nurse is a senior at Salisbury School majoring in History at The University of Miami next year.



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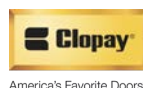
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Curated by the community:

FROM THE HOME FRONT TO THE FRONT LINES: THE ROELIFF JANSEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY REMEMBERS WWII

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

As of 2021, according to statistics from the US Department of Veterans Affairs, little more than 240,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II are alive today. Last year marked the 80th anniversary of what President Franklin D. Roosevelt would famously call “a date which will live in infamy.” The Japanese attack on the American naval base located at Pearl Harbor in the South Pacific ushered the country into the titular war of the 20th century and made heroes both on the battlefields and on the home front.

Over eight decades later, many Americans are finding ways to cope with the sobering reality that what has become known as the Greatest Generation is slowly dwindling with each passing year. With each passing day, another bit of our nation’s living history dies, but before the remnants of World War II fade into the tapestry of history, local historians have made it their duty to preserve those precious memories and relics of those who lived through these historic events.

Bringing local memories back to life

With an exhibition inspired by the 80th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society (RJHS) has invited the local community to provide family items dating from WWII, that will tell the

story of the war *From the Home Front to the Front Lines* from a very personal perspective.

Opening on July 2, RJHS’s summer exhibition will feature personal correspondence, photographs, GI standard issue equipment, commendations, medals, official documents, and mementos passed down through the generations by family and community members who served. This exhibit is thought to be especially important because the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor of December 7, 2021, was largely eclipsed by the challenges and strictures imposed by Covid.

Residents who have generously loaned items are from the entire “Roe Jan” region including Ancram, Copake, Hillsdale, Gallatin, and Taghkanic, and beyond. The response to the call for WWII items has been overwhelming. Many residents contacted RJHS and have eagerly loaned mementos of all kinds that have come down to them from family members who served in every branch of the Armed Forces. Equally important, however, are the stories and mementos from those who participated in the war effort without ever having left home.

The following interviews were with two RJHS board members, Lesley Doyel (LD), the society’s president, and Nick Fritsch (NF), who handles communications and graphics.

How has the response from residents impacted your experience with this year’s exhibit: *From the Home Front to the Front Lines*?
LD: People have been incredibly generous and amazingly enthusiastic. Folks take every opportunity to tell



Above: Front Lines: Elmer Odell, Fighter Pilot - from Odell Family Collection. Below, left: Home Front. From Collection of Sheila Jamieson. Second World War.

us that they feel a sense of great pride and comfort with the ability to give voice to a parent, grandparent, or loved one. You know it isn’t just the history itself that makes this exhibit so special – as important as that is – the 80th anniversary is the perfect moment to highlight family stories and to celebrate the many sacrifices that were made.

NF: We’ve discovered that most veterans of World War II almost never talked about their experiences. They were hard pressed to tell family members because they themselves wanted to forget and move on with their lives. But through the correspondence, diaries, and other accounts, recorded by war veterans, it has been a journey discovery for family members themselves, who are, in some cases, learning details of unbelievably horrific war experiences for the very first time.

What are some of the items that the exhibit will feature? How much will come from the front lines and how much from the home front?

LD: We have structured the exhibition as something of a scrapbook of life abroad in the war and those who felt the war here at home. There’s a story from a woman in Hillsdale



Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: Front Lines: Booklets - from Paino Family Collection. Front Lines: Standard issue from Collection of Joe Gatti/Livingston History Museum Right: Home Front: Ration Cards - Collection of Sheila Jamieson.

whose father landed on the beaches of Normandy during the third wave of offensive on D-Day. He was of the Jewish faith, and as such, his dog tags were marked with an "H" for Hebrew. When he arrived in Paris, he had a chance to meet many fellow Jews who had been forced into hiding during the Nazi occupation. On loan to RJHS is a reminder of that unforgettable experience – a Star of David with "Juif" in the center printed on yellow fabric and intended to be sewn prominently on clothing as a means of identifying Jews. As requested by her father, this chilling memento has been kept by his daughter as, in her father's words, tangible "evidence of the viciousness of fascism."

NF: We have many unique items that were curated from the home front as well. Another Hillsdale resident whose father was a medic and was scheduled to be separated or relieved on December 8, 1941. Of course, we now know that history had other plans for this young man. He treated soldiers for all kinds of ailments after they came back from battle including venereal disease, which was a huge problem that does not get much play in the history books.

LD: We have a jacket from a bomber pilot who lived in Ancramdale and who saw a great deal of action over the Mediterranean Theater. The

jacket is hand-painted with an array of words and images including a grid of fifty bomb silhouettes, representing his fifty successful missions. This is what we mean by a patchwork of history, as seen in the wide range of loaned World War II items.

Did you learn anything you had not previously known about the area from these residents?

LD: Well, as most know, the town of Ancram has been home to an important mill on the banks of the Roe Jan River. In the 1920s, the mill began specializing in the manufacture of very thin paper used for cigarettes, and because of its light weight it was perfectly suited to Air Mail. During the war Air Mail became increasingly important as a way of cutting down on the enormous weight of thousands upon thousands of letters sent overseas to soldiers and sent by soldiers back to family in the US. Among many other significant items, a family in Acramdale has loaned RJHS a pristine box of Ancram Air Mail stationery – a crucial contribution to the war effort produced right here in a Roe Jan town.

NF: Another aspect of the home front which we thought was fascinating, in addition to ration cards, records and documents of both adults and high school students trained as airplane spotters, there are records of a knitting group from Copake that produced warm clothing and balaclavas to wear in cold climates, and instructional booklets and maps for use by men and women serving in foreign lands. All of this provides insight into daily life during the war years, and acts as a vivid reminder that many of those thrust into this world-wide conflict were very young and most had prob-

ably never even been away from home and family before.

What has left you most impacted by this exhibit and the folks who contributed? What do you think this kind of exhibit does for rural areas like ours?

NF: The fact that the show itself is being built around the vast array of objects that have been put on loan by Roe Jan area residents, who, as keepers of the flame, have lovingly preserved so many WWII items entrusted to them by their parents and grandparents. And, while the exhibit will represent the impact of the war years at the local level, it will in many ways, also be representative of the war as experienced by the entire nation.

LD: This has been a very emotional experience for everyone involved – through stories, letters, telegrams, and many other mementos loaned to us, we have an entirely personal perspective into the unbelievably challenging times of those who lived through and served during World War II. The response of the Roe Jan community has far exceeded our expectations, and RJHS is grateful for chance to bring these stories to light. •


Thanks to the Roe Jan Historical Society and its fervent efforts to preserve, the important impact they made on the area's history can be experienced this summer by an entirely new generation of Americans.

To learn more about the Roeliff Jansen Historical Society and the new exhibit, please visit www.roeliffjansenhs.org.





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A photograph of a person's feet wearing black loafers, resting on a desk in an office setting. A computer monitor and a telephone are visible in the background.

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A photograph of a person's feet wearing tan pants and dark shoes with yellow soles, standing on a forest floor covered in moss and fallen leaves. The background is a dense forest of tall trees.

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June Bride

IT WAS A CALIFORNIA WEDDING AFTER ALL

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

There are many chapters in the book of our lives. In honor of the month of June, CB has given us a glimpse into a snippet from a chapter from his life from over 40 years ago. What can he say? It was the 1970s and it was California...

It was a California wedding to remember, complete with beach towels, balding tires and a picture of Parnelli Jones. Far from proper New England nuptials, that sparkling June day was witness to one of those life-changing experiences that one simply can't forget. It was, after all, California.

The chapel sat high above Zuma Beach on the northern limits of Malibu. For those faithful in the pews, the windows looked out across the Pacific Coast Highway to the gentle swells of the Pacific. Behind them were the hills, now brown with chaparral, punctuated with small groves of cedar. It was the perfect spot for a wedding, so the office phone would ring as summer approached, with inquiries about availability, cost and procedures for having folks who had not set foot in a church for decades plan their special day in the chapel.

"Got it at Zayre's"

As I pulled into the familiar parking lot, top down on my beaten up roadster, I slipped into a convenient space and, as I emerged, was greeted by a smiling gentleman who began the conversation with an exuberant "I'm the best man!"

"Of course you are," I responded, picking up on his enthusiasm. "It's going to be a lovely afternoon."

We shook hands ... and he extended the jovial conversation by inviting my attention to his sports jacket. "I got this for today. Got it at Zayre's. What do you think?"

For those whose memories do not include details of long departed retail chains, Zayre's was a chain of

stores that came and went between the late 50s and 80s. Sold, merged, split, the spirit of the former home of the "\$1 bottles of wine barrel" lives on in BJ's Wholesale Club and TJ Maxx.

Upon quick review, the "best man's" jacket appeared to be a polyester blend that might have melted were it worn too close to a hot radiator. But there was something else about it that was off. Something was missing. It didn't register at the time ... but, to revise the Bard, "something was rotten in Denmark."

As we strolled toward the chapel, we were greeted by two young ladies busily picking the flowers planted in the church gardens. "They don't have any flowers ... so we thought we could just take some of these." Innocence dripped from every word. Why not avail themselves of the carefully landscaped plantings?

"... Don't you love it?" ... not so much

And then, there was the bride. Standing at the chapel door, she was attired in a fabric of floral explosion that looked very much like two beach towels. "Somebody told me you could make a dress by sewing two beach towels together. Don't you love it?" Love may have been too strong a word, but since it was the theme of the day, I smiled and nodded. "In another hour this will all be over," I thought to myself, realizing that the time investment would be small in the grand scheme of things.

And, here comes the groom. There was no Zayre jacket for him. Work pants and a clean white shirt with a clip-on tie were the prescribed outfit of the day, and he appeared ready for the ordeal ahead.

After a quick conference designed to outline the ceremony – who did what, when – we gathered around a portable stereo system they had provided and looked through the album sleeve of Cat Stevens' most recent album to find their chosen

processional hymn *Morning Has Broken*.

The song continued

A dozen family and friends filtered in, found seats and waited as the moment arrived. With only one miss on placing the needle on the record, Cat Stevens' lilting song filled the room. The two young ladies who had purloined the flowers – they were the bride's daughters – moved down the short aisle and decided on a place to wait as the groom and best man appeared from the side and looked, appreciatively at the towel-clad bride who moved toward us.

An important side note is that *Morning Has Broken* runs 3 minutes, 20 seconds. The main aisle of the chapel was approximately 35 feet long. It does not require higher math skills to realize that two bride's maids and a following bride can navigate 35 feet in a matter of seconds. The song played on. We stood and looked at each other. We smiled. We shifted from one foot to the other. The song continued.

And, finally – thankfully – it was over. "Dearly beloved ..." We were off and running. Aside from the suggestion that the couple face each other when they repeated their vows and that the best man place the wedding rings on my book so that they would not roll around on the chapel floor, there had been one request. "We each have a gift and we'd like to announce that right before we put on the rings." A simple enough request.

It's the thought that counts

We got through the vows with relative ease, and it was time for the exchanging of gifts. The bride elected to go first. "I know how much you like car racing," she began. "So, I'm giving you my autographed picture of Parnelli Jones." A murmur went through the congregation. Closer scrutiny of the cherished image would reveal that this was not an autographed photo of the legendary

race driver. It was a promotional copy issued by a sponsoring tire company. But, close enough. It's the thought that counts.

And now, the groom. "I want you to have the rear tires off my car. And, I checked. The wheels are the same size. We'll switch them later." His act of generosity did not go without notice as the bride blushed and leaned over to kiss him.

Finally, the rings. As I leaned over toward the best man who was fumbling in his pants pocket for the two rings, I realized, in a flash of crippling insight, what was amiss with his Zayre jacket. There were no buttons ... no button holes ... no open pockets. In their place were marker lines and dots where the missing touches should be.

Much as I wanted to burst out in peals of laughter, I could not. This was a solemn occasion. This was their wedding. Decorum was mandatory, especially from the robed cleric who had become the ring master of this Saturday afternoon circus matinee.

I did the only thing available: I bit the inside of my mouth and struggled to tamp down every surge of laughter that threatened to erupt. I could feel the inside of my mouth beginning to bleed, but that could not stop me. It was time to exchange rings, buttons and button holes or not.

Somehow, the sitcom wedding was over. "By the power invested in me by the State of California, I pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride." The act complete, there was a smattering of applause and first bars of the musical recessional filled the chapel.

The irony of *Moonshadow*, another track from *Teaser and the Firecat* was not lost on me. "And if I ever lose my mouth / All my teeth, north and south."

My mouth hurt, even as I tried to smile at the couple as they exited, stage right. It was, after all, a California wedding. •

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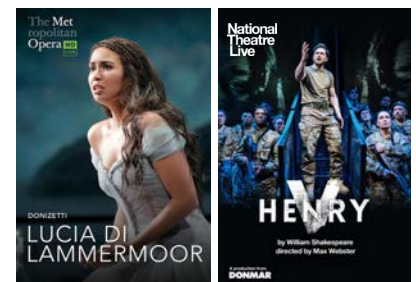
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TICKETS



Rising up

Looking for some summer fun – check out the music offerings from Rize Up Entertainment

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

As things heat up for summer and life continues to feel like it did pre-pandemic, we'll all be yearning to go out and have some fun. While we're reveling in our newfound freedom and embracing the summer season, we'll want to crank up the music and dance. Whether you're looking for a fun night out or seeking a talented band to get your party going, you can count on the talent at Rize Up Entertainment based in Millerton, NY. If you're a musician, you, too should explore the business' offerings.

Music in the making

In 2011, Rize Up Entertainment initially opened its doors as an entertainment company. Alex Cooper is the visionary behind the venture. A music fan for as long as he can recall, Cooper dedicated nearly 20 years to the art of deejaying, performing as a hip hop artist, and working in and out of several recording studios as a producer/audio engineer.

"I recently decided it was finally time to put my knowledge and passion to use and converted my entertainment company into an independent label," says Alex Cooper, president, Rize Up Entertainment – a record label and party entertainment service.

Although many of Rize Up's original services are still being offered – including scheduling time at any of the company's affiliated studios, booking shows for musicians, or offering its affiliated deejays and musicians for hire for parties and celebrations – the recently expanded company also operates as an independent record label.

Before launching Rize Up and bringing that business to where it is today, Cooper learned some valuable lessons on how to manage a business. For about a decade, he worked for his

family's business, Associated Lightning Protection Company Inc., in Millerton. Having served the business in various roles, Cooper has been able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of operating a business.

Before transitioning to the commercial sales and drafting side of business, Cooper worked as an installer and inventory manager. Via this revenue stream, the music enthusiast has been able to comfortably fund side projects in the music industry.

Although other record labels and entertainment companies are certainly plentiful, Rize Up Entertainment has a new spin. "We like to think of Rize Up Entertainment as an artist-run label. Any artist or creative signed on with us is treated as an equal, which means that they have control over their creative processes, and we are simply there to assist," reveals Cooper.

Cooper's vision for Rize Up revolves around his own guiding principles and the core values of his business. He will ensure that Rize Up remains a haven where musicians, artists, and other creatives can feel secure with everything from signing on – to reaching out for assistance and opportunities.

"Today's music industry is far from being in favor of the artists behind the songs we listen to. Through Rize Up Entertainment, I plan to be a part of creating meaningful change," says Cooper.

On the record

In March, 2022, Cooper signed on Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band. This marks the new independent record label's first signing. Cooper initially connected with the talented, energetic band in 2018 when he had Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band featured as guests on his music podcast, Music Mondays w/ MAZEMENT, which is available via Apple, Spotify, and YouTube.



Above: Alex Cooper signing Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band to his record label, Rize Up Entertainment. Photo courtesy of Rize Up Entertainment.

Music Mondays w/ MAZEMENT is where Cooper shares music news and spotlights his interviews with artists from around the globe. The podcast airs on the final Monday of each month. It has featured many talents from legendary deejays such as DJ Rob Swift (The X-Ecutioners) and DJ Johnny Juice (Public Enemy) to music industry veterans such as producer Lee Evans.

"Ever since the band was featured, we've been in touch with one another. I finally had the opportunity to see Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band perform locally. That's when I remembered my initial impression of their talent and recognized the potential behind the band's frontman and music," says Cooper.

After being invited to the band's recording studio in Avon, CT, a deal was signed. Cooper describes the signing as a "surreal moment." After being immersed in the music industry for

Continued on next page ...

most of his life, Cooper looks forward to elevating the band's branding, releases, and overall potential.

"We take pride in Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band's diversity and the power they bring to every performance. I look forward to exploring what we can accomplish together," says Cooper.

"I'm so proud to be working with Rize Up Entertainment. I can't wait for everyone to hear what we release next," says Corey Rieman, frontman of The Dilemma Band.

About the band

Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band traces its history back to 2016. It began as a three-piece band – a trio of friends happily playing music they love. Although a passion for music remains, the original band members have moved on to other projects and new ventures.

Enter Avon, CT's Corey Rieman. This musical talent has formed a new identity with the latest iteration of the band – one that is centered around Rieman's skillset as a multifaceted musician. Beyond vocals, he plays guitar, the harmonica, and keys.

When it comes to Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band's sound and style, they hit all the right notes. They mix audience favorites with original music. "They're chameleons – they can literally play anything. From a producer's standpoint – regarding publishing opportunities – that's a bonus," concludes Cooper.

If Cooper had to categorize the music, he'd label the sound as "indie rock with a hint of progressive." Some comparisons from yesteryear: Talking Heads, The Cure, and the Pixies.

The band members share backgrounds that started with a love for rock, blues, funk, soul, folk, indie, new wave, and world music. This versatility enables them to be a top choice for corporate events, weddings, and other celebrations.

Awards and more

Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band continues to be among the top three most booked bands on The Bash – one of the largest booking agencies in America. They have earned several recognitions, including The Bash Best of 2020; The Bash Gold Member; The Bash Rapid Response; 25+ Verified Bookings; and GigSalad's Top Performers (GigSalad is a full-service platform for booking gigs).

The band has a large following with more than 14,000 likes and Facebook followers. They have played in some of the most famous venues on the East Coast including The Bitter End in Manhattan; My Father's Place at The Roslyn Hotel in Roslyn, NY; Toad's Place in New Haven, CT; and Wall Street Theater in Norwalk, CT, among other venues. They also played at the now defunct City Winery on the Greenway in Boston and The Haunt in Ithaca.

In June 2021, Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band was the featured band at the 175-anniversary celebration for Lake Compounce Amusement Park in Southington, CT. The band also headlined at Six Flags Great Adventure in CITY.

Summer tour

Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band just launched its *Sweet Summer Tour*. They will be performing at venues up and down the east coast – from Maryland to New Hampshire. A few local haunts will be included in the mix such as the June 6 and July 1 gigs at Farley Macs in Simsbury, CT.

The band frequently invites special guests such as Danny Reilert and Dan Graziano (Graz) to perform with them. "They continue to add diversity and surprises to each performance with their ever-evolving setlist," adds Cooper.

Recent reviews for Corey Rieman & The Dilemma Band include: "Most professional, classy individuals to do business with. Very entertaining. Awesome musicians. Really knows how to work the audience. They were so liked, and we already booked them for next July 4th. Highly recommended."

Another accolade: "The Dilemma was excellent. They played at the perfect volume for an outdoor, daytime



Above: Corey Rieman and special guest guitarist Graz at the Rize Up Entertainment red carpet event. Photo courtesy of Rize Up Entertainment.

event, got the entire crowd going, and stayed for a few encores because nobody wanted to see them go! They were amazing! Book them ASAP!

The Sweet Summer Tour ends August 19. Music aficionados can visit the band's website (thedilemmaband.com) or Facebook (facebook.com/the.dilemma.band.official) to find out where the band is playing locally in the future. Music fans can also visit the website to stay tuned for upcoming releases.

On August 7, Rize Up Entertainment is sponsoring and providing music for The Sunset Fest at The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Canaan, CT. This festival will host local artists and other local, creative vendors in a fun, positive environment.

"In June 2016, we lost an amazing, creative, and very imaginative person, Aubrey Schmitt. We want you to join us by celebrating the life she lived! By bringing local artists, musicians, and creative minds together for one event, and sharing it with everybody we know and would love to meet," says the family and friends of the late Aubrey Schmitt.

Future vision

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Above, top to bottom: Before the construction of the Triplex Cinema it was a vacant lot. The Triplex Cinema (today) has been the 'heart space' that Richard Stanley envisioned for the town. It is hugely popular. Photo courtesy of Gary Leveille collection.

By Dominique DeVito
info@mainstreetmag.com

To be at the intersection of Railroad and Main Streets in Great Barrington, MA, today is, for people who know the history of the town, like being at the graduation of one's child from a Master's Degree program. Thirty years ago, today's scene was a dream and a plan.

Today, the storefronts are occupied with eclectic and traditional businesses; restaurants and coffee shops abound; the sidewalks are spacious and well taken care of; pedestrian crosswalks are clearly marked and respected; and – what it's really all about – there are people everywhere. Even for tourists, this multitude of positive impressions generates a palpable sense of prosperity and cohesion. It's a town that has its stuff together. It's a graduate with a solid future. Truly, though, today's success seemed as likely for this town as the achievement would be for the middle school ne'er-do-well whose teachers gave up on them. But a turn-around is always possible where there's a vision and a community to support it.

Getting things started

Flash back to the late 1980s. Richard Stanley loved the Berkshires. Born in Brooklyn, raised on Long Island, and a professed "junkie of New York City" as an adult, he had a second home in nearby South Egremont. When he sold his business in Long Island, he moved to his second home full-time.

"I played golf for a year," he said of this rare down time, "and I got into real estate. I always thought Great Barrington was a hub for the southern Berkshires. I decided to purchase the Barrington House in the center of town, which was in disrepair. As I renovated the building," he said, "I became more interested in the town and what was

going on there. I joined the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. It was clear the town was at a crossroads."

Hank Ervin grew up in North Carolina and spent summers as a teen working at a camp in the Berkshires, which is where he developed his love of the area. After college, he worked in Boston, eventually moving to Pittsfield with his wife. His position with First Agricultural Bank put him squarely in the circle of those who could make a difference in the southern Berkshires. Looking back to the early 1990s, he said, "Serendipity can be a strange thing. When I started at the bank I got involved with the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. The vacancy rate on Main Street in Great Barrington at that time was about 25%. There was no parking, and there was no money for parking. Along came a rep for the Massachusetts Department of Economic Development, asking me what could be done to help the area. I knew exactly who they should talk to."

The prospect of grant monies that could lead to significant transformation of the downtown was exciting for many. Meetings were held to identify as clearly as possible Great Barrington's significance to its population and also to its area. In the Main Street Revitalization Proposal drafted in 1992 to target grant monies, it was noted, in part, "In response and recognition of the increasing retail-store vacancies and continued existence of numerous blighted structures, the Chamber of Commerce has held several open citizen participation forums... Participants discussed the current state of our Main Street, zoning issues, what direction should we take in developing Main Street, parking

problems, disinvestments as well as utilization of empty buildings... people feel that the long-term survival of Main Street is linked to the long-term survival of the community... Main Street is one of our finest resources."

Blight made things right

In the center of town was a trifecta of a mess: an abandoned old bowling alley, a burned-down lumber company, and the clear blight that they were generating. Stanley and others realized it would take much more than renovating just the Barrington House to make a lasting difference. The Revitalization Proposal made clear that: "The primary national objective of this activity is the 'prevention or elimination of slums or blight.'... Specific attention will be for the creation of a DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP. The partnership will be charged with the specific responsibilities of Business retention, development and recruitment; Downtown Market Analysis; Tourism Development; and the critical need to develop an organizational structure to coordinate and implement the plans..."

In 1992, the Main Street Action Association (MSAA) was established as a division of the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce under William (Bill) Webber III, with Michael Hogg serving as its President. Monies started coming in to pay for market analyses, traffic studies, staff, and supplies. Hogg and Stanley applied for additional monies to continue developing the blighted area, securing over \$400,000 by writing grant proposals from the state Executive Office of Communities and Development.

Ervin noted, "In my discussions with EOCD, parking by and



Above: Railroad and Main Street. Below, left: At the Barrington House on Main Street today, the experience is luxurious and the reviews are outstanding. Photos courtesy of Gary Leveille collection.

large was not considered an eligible purpose for the rear property at the Barrington House, so we brainstormed how we might wrap parking into a plan. The only way," he said, "was to wrap the parking into a greater economic development plan. What started out as discussion about parking mushroomed into something much greater."

Bob Raser remembers those days well. He owned the iconic Carr Hardware store on Main Street and was the President of the SB Chamber of Commerce, having served on the Board for years. "Great Barrington was indeed a hub of the Southern Berkshires," he noted. "Under Musical Director Seiji Ozawa, Tanglewood (the music venue in nearby Stockbridge) was drawing more and more people from Boston and New York City," he said. "The influx was starting, people were coming and wanting to stay, but Main Street was not seeing its potential."

What this town needs...

With grant monies secured, the MSAA was still in planning stages for what to do with downtown. Ideas were bounced around. Business development, for sure, restaurants, shops, safe sidewalks, parking, but what else? It was Stanley's conviction that a movie theater would be the ideal addition to this part of town. "I felt the town needed a 'heart space,'" he said, "and a movie theater can do that. A movie theater is a destination," he pointed out. "It

gives people a reason to come down town. After, people typically want to talk about a movie, or they make a date out of going to the movies, so they're looking for nearby restaurants. But the theater is what gets them here."

"When Richard shared his vision," Raser noted, "everything started to come together."

Raser echoed Ervin's comment about the serendipitous nature of what happened next: "The whole community came together for the good of the community," he said. "Businesses, of course, but also service organizations, utilities like power and gas companies, schools, the general public, even politicians. Stanley was at the helm," he noted, "and the community support was unparalleled. Everyone came together to make sure what needed to get done got done. One of those people was Pam Krol who owned Krol Jewelers, a Railroad Street staple. Considered a true 'people person,' Krol was instrumental in helping bring everyone together. She was a founding member of the Railroad Street Merchants Association; she was a director in the Southern Berkshire COC; she was a true believer in BerkShares (more on that later); and she created what would go on to be the beloved town-wide Great Barrington Summerfest. She was a champion for the vision Stanley and others knew would transform the town. Sadly, Pam passed away just this past February.

Raser reflected, "There were over

50 businesses that needed to sign waivers for access to parking if this was going to happen. Imagine that."

...is a movie theater!

The Triplex Cinema, Stanley's and the town's keystone for a place to bring people together, opened in November 1995 with nearby parking; large, clean sidewalks; and, sure enough, as Stanley believed, "because people were looking for them, restaurants started opening. Other businesses followed, and things started flowing. What influenced my intuition about this," Stanley said, "was my experience in Manhattan. People go where it's interesting – and safe – to be. And they come back."

Under Stanley's management, the Triplex focused on independent films that were hard to find in other places and that generated the kind of conversations people enjoyed having over coffee, drinks, or a meal. When the proposal came in the early 2000s for the Triplex to host an international film festival, Stanley didn't hesitate. The Berkshire International Film Festival (BIFF), held annually the first week of June, is now another peacock feather in Great Barrington's plume-studded hat.

Historical precedent

Gary Leveille is a historian and author of seven books on local



Continued on next page ...

history, including *Legendary Locals of the Southern Berkshires* (Arcadia Publishing, 2014). He writes *Then and Now*, a column on life in the Berkshires for the *Berkshire Edge*. Leveille is also an archivist for the Great Barrington Historical Society. After college he and some friends lived in a rental at the intersection of Railroad and Main Streets. He knows a thing or two about the history of Great Barrington and the Berkshires.

“Railroad Street had quite a history,” he shared. “In the 1920s through ‘40s it was full of bars and pool halls and gambling; it was seedy. Things started to improve in the 1970s and ‘80s,” he said, “but it still had a reputation, and long-time residents were wary of the area. Then along came Richard. He really had a vision,” he said.

“Great Barrington is a tight community,” Leveille said. “It has a history of supporting worthy causes. For example, it was the town that raised the money for W.E.B. DuBois to go to college.” DuBois was born in Great Barrington in 1868, and one can imagine the challenges for a Black family in the heart of New England at that time. His teachers and the community realized his potential, and they were not short-sighted. DuBois went on to earn a PhD from Harvard University in 1895. Among his lifetime of diverse accomplishments was sharing in the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. He edited the organization’s magazine, *The Critic*, for over 20 years. His homesite is a National Historic Site in Great Barrington, another

tourist destination.

“Richard was new to the town,” Leveille noted, “but he was persuasive and he persevered. When the cause is right, there’s always been community support here. Finding parking is a nice problem to have.”

A community of riches

Flash forward to the past few years. Great Barrington’s aptly recognized renaissance of the 1990s continues to play out in the town and community today. The Triplex continues to thrive, and there’s also the world-class Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center just a few blocks down on Castle Street. The theater, a three-story brick and marble complex, opened for live performances in 1905. Home to vaudeville, “talkies” and more consistently feature films, it was in a state of disrepair around the same time the Triplex opened, and its fate became unclear. In 2002, Lola Jaffe rallied supporters to form a non-profit to rehabilitate the space, and over nine million dollars later, the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center opened its doors just in time for a Centennial Celebration in 2005. Today, the theater is home to a variety of performances and other events.

Stanley marvels at the “depth of community” in Great Barrington. He recognizes three top strengths for the town: 1) Diversity of population and experience; 2) opportunity for existing and new businesses; and 3) local food and restaurants that attract newcomers and regulars. “There’s a great sense of place in smaller towns,” he said, “and that needs to be paid attention to and fostered.”



Above: City store block now. Below, left: The Mahaiwe consistently draws large and enthusiastic crowds to its variety of performing arts. Photos courtesy of Gary Leveille collection.

Hank Ervin likes to point out the multiple success stories in and around Great Barrington. The Berkshire Food Co-Op, which started in someone’s garage in the late 1960s and is now in a prime Bridge Street location in a beautiful new space of nearly 10,000 square feet of grocery store and administrative space. It’s open daily 9am to 7pm. Ervin points to the Berkshire South Regional Community Center and the Railroad Street Youth Project as examples of organizations that support different segments of the population, equally necessary for the town’s overall vitality.

Local. Local. Local.

Stanley spoke enthusiastically about Susan Witt’s creation of BerkShares in the early 2000s. BerkShares are a currency that can be used at local businesses to keep dollars in the community. Backed dollar-for-dollar by local banks and businesses, paying for goods and services with BerkShares enforces a sense of local commitment. There’s even an app now so users can go paperless. Witt is a co-founder and now Executive Director of the Schumacher Center for a New Economics, based in Great Barrington.

Historian Gary Leveille includes among his favorite places in Great Barrington the Mason Library; the Great Barrington Historical Society Museum (“a gem”); and the Gorham & Norton grocery store – all of them on Main Street. “And the churches and architecture all over town,” he said.

You can do a Google search of

Great Barrington and the Berkshires and find no shortage of articles and information praising the town and the area. In January of 2022, Kaitlyn Wylde wrote for *Vogue Travel*: “With a slew of new businesses that could easily thrive on a popular Brooklyn street – many of which actually did – and improvements to existing cultural institutions, Great Barrington has become one of the most popular destinations in the highlands of Massachusetts.”

Wow. Now.

Today, Stanley is the vice president of the Community Development Corporation of the Southern Berkshires (CDCSB), an organization he helped found. Its mission is “to create affordable housing and economic opportunity for low- and moderate-income households in the southern Berkshires.” This is more important than ever in the wake of the COVID pandemic, which saw many city dwellers escape to their second homes to reside permanently, and also younger families moving to the area. Real estate has become a super-hot commodity, and housing for downtown workers is at a premium. Housing, transportation, education, maintaining a town’s diversity while accepting and embracing that it’s trendy – these are worthy issues for a thriving town and area. Great Barrington in the next 5-10 years? “More of the same,” he mused.

If anyone likes a challenge, it’s Richard Stanley. If you like to visit towns that are a delight to explore, all roads lead to Great Barrington. •



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MAKING ALL THE DIFFERENCE

The life and legacy of Richy Vacek

By Kathryn Burke
KBurke@nysba.ny.gov

Whenever I see the title for this publication, *Main Street Magazine*, I think not just of the small businesses on “Main Street,” but of the sidewalks that connect the businesses and are a wonderful place to see familiar faces, be recognized by friends, and meet new acquaintances.

There are many people walking among us that, as “ordinary, regular” people, have made significant contributions to making the Hudson Valley such a great place to live. Regular people, just doing their job, positively affecting our lives in the Hudson Valley. I’ve come across a number of those people at the New York State Bridge Authority (NYSBA) in my role as director of Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley (HBHV), a not-for-profit created to educate on the bridges of the NYSBA. Some people were there years ago and have passed on, others are retired, and some are actually still there.

Richy Vacek and his ode to the Bear Mountain Bridge

Richy Vacek was that kind of person. Richy started working at the Bridge Authority at the age of 19, in 1974. The Bear Mountain Bridge soon became Richy’s bridge. He climbed and maintained its amazing, historic structure. Richy had great respect for the bridge and its history. He wanted to share his appreciation with others and as foreman, he organized a museum in the garage of the original administration building. Richy collected

artifacts, newspaper articles, and a multitude of construction photos and photos of the Bear Mountain Bridge through the years, that he displayed in cases and in inviting ways to encourage interest. Engineering students from West Point, Manhattan College, and SUNY Orange came regularly to the bridge and to visit Richy’s museum.

When I was writing my first book *Images of America: Hudson River Bridges*, Richy invited me to visit his museum. The first available time to visit was during a snowstorm. I could tell how excited Richy was to share the information on the Bear Mountain Bridge, so I took that trip over Storm King in the storm and it was definitely worth it. Through Richy my appreciation for the Bear Mountain and the other bridges of the Bridge Authority grew. He knew the history of the bridges, but more important, Richy knew the Bear Mountain Bridge. He knew every inch of the structure from the top of the towers to the bottom of the piers. Richy knew the bridge because he had spent a great deal of his life on the bridge performing regular maintenance and, because he was on the bridge most days, Richy noticed the small issues before they became big problems. Richy, and that practice of regular, informal inspection exemplifies the Bridge Authority mantra of *Maintenance Deferred is Maintenance Denied*.

When Richy retired from the Bridge Authority as Historic Bridges of the Hudson Valley was being formed, it was a given that Richy would become a Board member. Richy’s museum seeded the HBHV museum and



Above: This is Richy, front, with his maintenance crew at the BMB on the main cable that dips below the deck in the center of the span. Below, left: Richy’s museum with one of the last class groups to visit.

classroom space at the Bear Mountain Bridge. He continued to give his time, then retired, to help HBHV educate on the Bridge Authority bridges, joining class visits to tour the bridge and the museum, humbly answering questions of students, although we all knew Richy’s knowledge of the Bear Mountain Bridge was more extensive than an engineer’s.

One of the good guys

When Richy was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer, he resigned from the HBHV Board to fight it. Although he fought hard, we lost Richy in October 2021. He is dearly missed by all. Richy was one of the good guys. He was such a really nice, generous, down-to-earth guy. He had a wealth of knowledge about the Bear Mountain Bridge and the Hudson Highlands, and he loved to share it. We were all better off for knowing Richy.

In December 2021, the HBHV Board voted unanimously to rename

the Bear Mountain Bridge Museum and classroom space, the Richy Vacek Bear Mountain Bridge Museum. We will make that a reality this summer. The New York State Bridge Authority Commissioners have authorized the naming of the space in honor of Richy. Our hope is to share Richy with all of you; to recognize how one person can have a profound effect on our lives.

As you read this and go about your day, be sure to recognize and thank the Richys that are in your life. We all have them; hopefully some of us can be that kind of person, if we truly make the effort to be kind, generous, caring, and fun. ●







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Balancing change and tradition

Chris Kennan faces new landscape of rural life

By Griffin Cooper
griffin@mainstreetmag.com

There's a whirlpool of change currently swirling around the communities of the Hudson Valley and the neighboring townships of Berkshire and Litchfield counties. The events of the past two years have taken what was only recently a noticeable but measured trot from tradition to change in our area and has accelerated at a confusing pace thanks to the cultural effects of the pandemic. The mass migration of folks from the boroughs of New York City to rural towns along the Hudson River and further afield churned the once still waters of rural life with results that have thus far left the economic future of the area uncertain.

While many of the former city residents have brought revenue for small businesses and genuine community involvement, it has become harder to ignore the higher cost of living brought on an expensive housing market with each passing month. Lifelong residents and young people with an eye on the future and family have experienced growing anxiety when it comes to the prospect of laying down roots locally. To make matters more tense, the soup of culture shock, sprinkled with a bit of gentrification, seems to be brewing amidst the ever-changing nature of the Coronavirus itself and the mandates that have impacted everyday life.



Keeping a vigilant eye

Perhaps one of the few tethers that can help to tie these many seemingly loose and uncertain threads together are the local leaders elected to each small town and village. Many of the men and women who took up the mantle of a town board member or town supervisor were elected before the impacts of COVID could have been dreamed up. Still, it is these folks who are tasked with keeping a vigilant eye on the wellspring of positive change while still maintaining the traditions that have shaped community identity.

When it comes to the Town of North East, which encircles the Village of Millerton and lies in the bull's-eye of the Tri-corner region of Dutchess, Litchfield and Berkshire counties, many residents feel as if they sit helplessly at the epicenter of the great cultural whirlpool. Perhaps then, there is no better leader to help residents navigate through the tumult than North East's supervisor, and Yale-tested Chris Kennan. Chris is an experienced public servant, with a long history of working in the non-profit organization world. In a time when strong community bonds are essential for building a future where multiple generations will shoulder the character of rural life, Kennan and his fellow town supervisors are up for the challenging tightrope walk.

Do you have a history in local government? What inspired you to run in North East?

Much earlier in my life, I was in local government in New Jersey. I worked for Mercer County, NJ, which was centered in Trenton. A struggling, old industrial river town a lot like



Poughkeepsie. It gave me a sense that local government was much closer to the people, and that you could actually see the impact of your work on people's lives.

As far as what it was that inspired me to run for office in the Town of North East? Well, I was on the board of Townscape, which gave me a view into some of the challenges that Millerton and North East were facing. I found myself at a time in my life where the decision presented itself to either retire, or lean in and get involved in the community where I live. I chose to lean in and contribute with my experience as best as I can.

When you're not involved in local politics, what is your path career wise? Is there a relationship between profession and local leadership?

My path, such as it is, has been entirely local. I came to this job without having grown up in Millerton. So

Above: Chris Kennan speaking at Ed-die Collins Memorial Park in 2021. Below, left: Chris harvesting grapes at Blackbird Vineyard in Salt Point, NY. All images with this article are courtesy of Chris Kennan.

Continued on next page ...

I feel even more the importance of getting to know the community really well. All the different parts of it, especially the ones that were not immediately obvious or comfortable. Anyway, at this time, I feel there is no difference between my profession and my Town job, they're one and the same!

What aspects of North East inspire you the most, given that it is a farming community, how much value do you place on that tradition?

I'm inspired by the physical location of the town. We live in a place that is still clean, it's still quite natural and unspoiled, it's magnificent. It has a farming background. And while I certainly did not grow up on a farm, I was lucky to have spent a lot of time on a dairy farm, including an entire summer when I was 17. I got to love the animals, enjoyed the milking, and got very buffed from stacking hay bales on a moving hay wagon. The agriculture we enjoy in North East has evolved, and we have almost no "traditional" agriculture left. But that's life, no? Things change, including farming. However, what agriculture we have still involves the land, and it is the land that feeds us, and nourishes us.

What do you see for the future of local government, do you sense any broad changes when it comes to young people running for office?

I feel that local government in our area, like the Village and the Town,

is so different from larger communities or areas. In local government you can know everyone who walks into Town Hall. And if you don't, you just say hello and now you do. That is so different from the state or national government, and to some degree even from the county. I hope it always keeps that direct contact. And I'm really glad that the Town now has two Board members under 40, and hopefully we will have more. Local government is tough to get your arms around, there are so many rules and regulations, and it can move at an incredibly slow pace at times. That can be frustrating. But it also helps us make sure we're checking all the boxes before we make any significant changes.

How do you assess your role in town government? Is there a particular issue or opportunity that you are currently focused on?

First of all, I'm glad I got to spend two years as a Town Board member before becoming supervisor. There is a lot to learn, both in terms of rules and regulations, and also in terms of what's going on in the town, what local issues are bubbling along under the surface. You never know everything. I certainly rely on and appreciate the small crew of Town Hall employees who have helped me navigate all the formal steps and have been so supportive.

In terms of particular issues, I've obviously been very focused on finishing the Town's Highway Garage project. It's taking a long time, it is costing more than anyone had ever anticipated, but mostly due to aftereffects of COVID – materials and labor both having very significant price increases.

At the same time, I've also been quite focused on our environment, and the impact of our municipal activities on climate change. What is facing our planet is so huge, so devastating, and so inexorable. It feels as if we couldn't possibly make any



difference, we're such a small piece of a global puzzle. But we can't just give up and avert our gaze. It's not a responsible option. And acting together, thousands of other communities like ours, and much bigger, we can make a difference.

As a Town Supervisor, how do you balance work life with personal and political?

I balance my Town job with a lot of personal hobbies and interests. As many of my constituents know, I'm still a competitive runner in my 70's. I enjoy the company of others as well as the competition.

I love live music (how great that Millerton has the Music Cellar, and Johnny G!). I'm looking forward to attending the Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival again this summer. I'm also a news junkie, and I read a lot. Both national and international news and opinion. Sometimes that's uplifting and inspiring, these days it can be scary and discouraging. It's important to have outside interests, and to be aware of the larger world outside of North East. •

To reach Chris Kennan, you can email him at supervisor@townofnortheastny.gov.



Above, top to bottom: Chris participating in the Mid Hudson Road Runners Club 25k Turkey Trot. Chris with son Oliver and grandson James. Left: Chris participating in the Dutchess County Classic Marathon.



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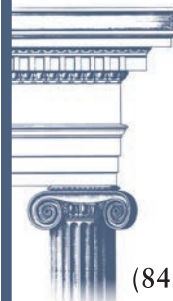
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Getting into the swing of golf

By Mary B. O'Neill, PhD.,
mary@mainstreetmoxie.press

Sometimes the Universe aligns in a particular way and propels you in a new direction. So it has been with me and golf. Friends applying positive peer pressure, a membership special at Canaan Country Club in Canaan, CT, and the discovery of a brand-new unboxed set of golf clubs. They had lain dormant in our garage attic for over a decade – a forgotten gift from my husband during the fog of child rearing.

I heeded the Universe's call and found myself embarking, in my middle years and despite deep trepidation, on learning the game of golf in the company of my beginner friends. Enter Canaan Country Club and Golf Professional Kay McMahon, founder of eduKaytion Golf based in New Lebanon, NY.

The Kay Way

Kay is an accomplished golfer, but more importantly for our group, she's a dynamic and effective teacher. Highlights from her career include over 30 years of teaching experience in various settings and Class A membership in the LPGA and PGA of America. She is a member of the LPGA Professionals Hall of Fame, a 2020 LPGA Top 20 Instructors-Elite, LPGA National Teacher of the Year, and one of *Golf Digest's* 50 Best Teachers in America.

Although she coaches everyone from children on up, she's especially sensitive to the needs of women students, having worked and played in a sport that remains male dominated.

Over her long teaching career, she developed the Golf 8.5 approach,

which comprises 4 pre-swing and 4.5 in-swing steps. At its pedagogical core, Golf 8.5 is about the "why," and for Kay, when students understand the why of the swing, they will more quickly grasp what they need to do.

Kay's 8.5 approach employs "chunking." By this, she means deconstructing the most fundamental element of the game – the swing. In our lessons, she counsels that while the clubs we use will vary, the swing remains the same.

In breaking down the swing into easily digested pre-swing and in-swing actions, she provides the basic no-fault recipe for success – no fuss, no muss. She comments, "The swing takes less than 1.2 seconds. I want to declutter what students need to do before and during the swing. I simplify it so they can focus on what's important, and forget the hodgepodge of advice they may hear about elbows, wrists, and weight transfer."

Kay offers differentiated instruction in our lesson, often relating golf to other parts of life to drive a point home. She wants to know what each person's objectives are for our time together so she can provide feedback and goals that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound).

Her ideal student wants to learn and possesses a growth mindset that is open to new approaches – and who is willing to forget previous unhelpful golfing advice. She wants beginner students to be patient with themselves and not engage in trash talk about their efforts. "I'd like students to talk to themselves like they'd talk to a friend – supportive and encouraging."

She continues, "The industry

says golf is difficult, but the swing is simple and often overtaught. I based my 8.5 approach upon years of observation and empirical evidence."

Laws of physics

Kay begins instruction with the laws of physics regarding ball flight. "These are the absolutes of what the ball and club can do. When students understand what the ball will do when hit by the club, they will know how to create desirable shots and self-correct the ones that go off course."

Consider golf another reason why physics and geometry are useful after high school. The club's direction, angle, speed, and squareness of contact will directly impact the ball's direction, spin, trajectory, and distance. Knowing how these elements interplay allows students to understand their shots.

Setting up for success: GCAP

GCAP is Kay's acronym for the fundamental four pre-swing steps that are non-negotiable and sequential. These are:

- **Grip:** hold the club more in the fingers with the club in the air at waist height
- **Clubhead:** step in with the back foot and set the club down on the ground as it is designed
- **Alignment:** set your foot line perpendicular to the leading edge of the clubface
- **Posture:** happens automatically – magic!

Continued on next page ...

Above: Panorama of the Canaan Country Club.

Posture's position in last place is deliberate. It's where Golf 8.5 differentiates itself from traditional approaches. "Many students are taught posture first. This leads to fixing and adjusting and lots of tips that confuse students. When you set up the shot using GCAP, posture naturally follows. We all learned to stand up as toddlers. The rest our mothers did by telling us to stand up straight."

GCAP is formulaic and becomes your pre-shot routine from the putter to the driver, thus setting up the golfer for an effective swing.

Getting in the swing of it

The golf swing encompasses the next 4.5 steps. Kay's focus on the club lessens our focus on the ball, buckets of which are nowhere in sight during our lesson. Not letting us near a ball is by design. She emphasizes that it's not the ball you need to be concerned with. It's the tool you're using – the club. The ball is inert until it's acted upon by the club's outside force. If she had her way, the ball wouldn't enter the lesson until the swing was understood and perfected.

In our lesson, her approach was working. We were getting the swing, understanding the arc path of the club, where to start and stop our truncated swing from waist height to waist height, and feeling good.

Yeah, great. But we want to hit something. "That's the problem," she advises. "When the ball is involved, you're focused on hitting it. You're not focused on the swing."

With our relentless pressure, she gave us what we wanted: the small, white, dimpled orb. Suddenly we were swinging every which way but the correct one. Lesson learned – forget the ball, remember the club. That sage advice for Danny from *Caddyshack* is wrong. It's not that Danny should be the ball. Danny should be the club.

Will you be my friend?

When learning golf Kay advises the buddy system. This is someone who stands out of the club's reach for the pre-swing and in-swing and offers "Yes" or "No" feedback. This allows the golfer to reflect and process what they've done. The golfer can then self-correct if necessary. In turn, the observer becomes more discerning about her own swing.

Observation helps both people become more self-aware. This self-awareness is not judgment and negative self-talk. Instead, it's a learning tool for self-correcting.

By taking the swing slowly, we learned that it is the sum of the parts, and only when the pre-swing and in-swing are broken down into chunkable pieces can it be repeated and reassembled into a fluid whole. It's then that we can add the ball and speed.

Permission slip from the teacher

For a beginner, the rarefied world of golf might frown on accommodations that seem sacrilegious but make the game fun for a beginner. Kay has a response to that, "It's 'OKay'. Unless you're playing in a real competition, make it enjoyable. Have fun. It's a game." Here are some of her "OKay" rules for beginners:

- Tee off at 150 yards
- Put every ball on a tee
- Roll the ball, so it lies on a more elevated tuft of grass
- Play nine holes and start on the second hole. Play only the evens and walk the odd.
- Move the golf ball five giant steps from anything you don't like
- Forget the club's pars, set your own

Know your pro

As an absolute beginner, golf isn't a game I could just start playing. Lessons are critical for me since I don't know the first thing about the game. When selecting a professional, Kay recommends observing them and asking them about their teaching style. Talk to students. Ask them what they



Above: Kay demonstrating the swing.

learned and if they had fun. Look for LPGA/PGA-credentialed instructors. And remember, a good golfer doesn't necessarily mean a good teacher.

A comfortable club for beginners

There's another kind of club that can be challenging for beginners: the golf club they play at. For me and my friends, the Canaan Country Club in Canaan, CT, under the new ownership of Joe Quattrocchi, is just right. It's friendly and pleasant with a relaxed dress code. There are nine holes not riddled with hazards, so you can feel accomplished and build confidence.

For Quattrocchi, who also owns Wheels of Time, a vintage auto restoration company in Pine Plains, NY, the Canaan Country Club represented an opportunity. "I'm all about restoration and bringing things back to their original beauty. I saw the potential of Canaan Country Club in that way, and we've made a lot of progress. Bringing on Kay to provide instruction has been a great decision."

Over the past year, he's made the course more "interesting" and upgraded the drainage on the course to keep it playable in all weather. He's also created a retail shop to supply golfers with what they need on the course.

Inside the clubhouse, you'll find The Belted Cow Farmhouse Tavern with a menu to please everyone. A horseshoe-shaped bar is ringed with tables for a post-golf refreshment, relaxation, and dining. Adjoining the bar is a dining room and beyond that is a rec room with a pool table and darts. On weekends there are bands and karaoke nights with singers to prove that Canaan's got talent.

A good walk not spoiled

As I'm discovering, golf is a game of taking the long view. My aspirations are humble – enjoy taking up a new pursuit, move my mind and body in new ways, spend time with friends, learn how to swing properly, and celebrate small victories with a cold beverage. If I meet those goals thanks to Kay and the Canaan Country Club, I'll be hitting par every time. ●

For more information about Kay McMahon and lessons, visit www.edukaytiongolf.com. For more information about Canaan Country Club and to take advantage of its 90th-anniversary membership special of two years for \$298, visit www.canaancountryclub.com.

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SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

by contrast

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

This is a beautiful part of the country, it really is. At least once a week, a certain slant of light or the fleeting glimpse of a fox reminds me how lucky we are to live amidst such natural wonders.

But March?

This year, that fifth month of winter nudged me toward a madness that inspired the writers of Groundhog's Day. Go north, more winter. A little south, more mud and rain. To escape it in April, one must go big or stay home.

One gray morning, this dilemma brought me to Expedia with one question (with apologies to Mary Oliver): what will you do with this one wild and precious week?

The opposite of here

One of the best ways to understand any concept is by comparing and contrasting it to its opposite, which led me to my next question: within the continental United States, if I could go to a place most unlike this one, where would that be? And once I was there, what would I do that is most unlike my normal routine?

Florida immediately comes to mind, as does anywhere south of, say, Tennessee. But the term "snowbird" was created to describe the flocks of

people who head to those places in the winter. My thoughts drifted west: New Orleans...Texas...Arizona.

Utah.

Arches, slickrock, aridity.

No.

More.

Rain.

Click, click, "Flight purchase confirmation: Las Vegas, NV."

Be prepared

I viewed Las Vegas as a staging area with cheap hotel rooms and amusing spectacles – a gateway to the Utah desert, where I decided to plan three days of backpacking in Zion National Park. Not only had I never been to Zion, but I had never backpacked in a desert environment.

My years of Boy Scouting have ingrained the motto "Be Prepared" into my approach to backpacking, so while I aim for the lightest possible pack, I also try to account for every contingency in my selection of gear. Backpacking in the Northeast demands consideration of everything from snow to black flies, and as I researched backpacking routes in Zion, I learned that it can have equally mercurial weather. In April, the desert can be hot, cold, or both, depending on the time of day. It can be dry and lacking in water sources as well as prone to flash floods.

I settled on a little bit of everything: rain gear and puffy jacket; shorts and wool base layers; sunscreen and down

sleeping bag.

I ended up using all of it.

Au revoir, Falls Village

While I was prepared for the wilderness of Zion, I was less prepared for the wildness of Las Vegas. Flying into it at night, I expected to see the spectacle of the Las Vegas strip from above, but when the person in the window seat decided to keep their shade drawn, I was literally blinded to it until I turned my rental car onto Las Vegas Boulevard and saw the Eiffel Tower looming overhead. Over the next ten hours, I would stroll through a Parisian streetscape, past the Arc de Triomphe, and have breakfast at EggsLut. *C'est la vie* in Las Vegas. Whatever the opposite of sleepy Falls Village, CT is, Las Vegas must be pretty close to it.

The next morning, I set out for Zion along the long, straight ribbon of Interstate 15 that constitutes a different kind of contrast from New England. No trees, no bends in the road, just flat out flying at 80 miles an hour for three hours. Mesas and telephone poles flashed by like Morse code, and before I knew it, I was in another time zone, checking out at the local outfitters in Springdale, Utah, with a propane canister, detailed park maps, and a Nalgene water bottle to replace the one that was lost in airline baggage.

My first night out was to be a trial run: a four-mile out-and-back along

the Coalpits Wash Trail into what I thought would be a quieter part of the park called the Southwest Desert section. I loaded up with water and took my first sandy steps amid the sagebrush, mesquite, and pinion pines. I was the only one on the trail, and by the looks of it, I was the only one who'd been there for days.

Fortunately, someone on horseback had come through recently, and whenever the trail crisscrossed the dry riverbed, hoof marks marked the trail on the other side. Unlike the Appalachian Trail's unmistakable white blazes, hoof marks were all I had to go by as the trail moseyed along the banks of the wash, threading its way between sparse vegetation and volcanic rock formations.

But the area was not lifeless by any means. Crickets sprang underfoot, cottonwoods shaded the few remaining mud pools, and a single, explosive desert evening primrose festooned the talus.

Maybe it was just me, or maybe it was the suggestion at the trailhead that mountain lions have been seen in the park, but during my day and night in the Southwest Desert, I had a continual sense of activity just out of sight. Coyote tracks and chipmunks were the only evidence of wildlife until I settled into camp and sat down on a nearby precipice to take in the

Continued on next page ...



Above: Angels Landing Trail traces the spine of a 1488' butte above the Virgin River that runs through the center of Zion Canyon. Below, right: The Depression-era CCC work provides a one-of-a-kind walk through millennia of geologic transformation.

Previous page: The Southwest Desert section of Zion teems with life, even if you don't see it.

sunset. As the wind died down and insects began to buzz, a chorus of unseen birds serenaded the sunset like a cowboy with a harmonica, and one by one, a needlepoint of brilliant stars perforated the tapestry of the night sky. I left the rain fly off the tent to be a little closer to it while I slept.

The West Rim Trail

The next morning, I awoke before sunrise out of necessity: I had booked a spot on the 9:30am hiker shuttle to the Lava Point trailhead of the West Rim Trail, and I had to hike four miles to get to the van. Lava Point marked the beginning of my planned traverse through the center of the park along the West Rim of Zion Canyon. I would hike the better part of nine miles along the rim before descending into the heart of the park along the spectacular slickrock trails that the Civilian Conservation Corps built into the canyon walls in the 1930s.

After the hour-long shuttle, I found myself alone once again in front of the panorama of Lava Point before hiking down to 6000', where most of this

trail lies. From time to time, I would pass a small group of backpackers, but for the better part of five hours, I hiked within view of the tiramisu of Zion's upper canyon, pausing here and there under pinion pines to appreciate the barren afternoon light of the American Southwest.

I first saw that light through a View Master when I was eight. I had inherited a set of National Park discs with lightly worn edges that gave me my first glimpse of western sun in iconic images of Mount Rushmore and Glacier National Park, framed by the solemn darkness of the View Master. I was intoxicated by the quality of the light, and it has since come to signify the western United States for me.

I spent most of that day awash in that perfect light, but toward sunset, clouds began to shade the opposing wall of Zion Canyon. By the next morning, gusty winds had blown in a tumult of roiling gray, and the forecast predicted rain by noon. As I started down the slickrock of the canyon, though, I was glad for the flat light and protection from the sun on the now treeless path. My campsite at Cabin Springs marked the end point for day hikers who would explore the upper reaches of the canyon and the spectacular geology of the park, and the trail here was maintained for crowds, with easy grades and flat surfaces.

Angels Landing

The main attraction on this part of the trail is Angels Landing, a knife's

edge of a butte that stands almost fifteen hundred feet above the Virgin River that snakes around its base. Chains provide an extra point of contact and a focal point to keep hikers from peering over the harrowing edge, but enough Instagramers have documented themselves at its panoramic summit that park officials have installed a permit system this year to limit the crowds. Backpackers like me with a backcountry permit are allowed to summit, but they must carry their packs with them up the considerable incline.

The Beehive Trail in Acadia shares some similarities with this hike, but the additional thousand feet of cliff add a degree of anxiety to Angels Landing that has few analogues in the eastern US. Fortunately, the volcanic rock that comprises most of the trail provides unparalleled purchase, and within an hour, I, too, would claim my social media moment, with the southern reaches of the canyon at my back and an increasingly ominous sky overhead.

Rain freckled the trail as I descended into the center of the park, and I paused to extract my rain jacket and pack cover for the last few miles, satisfied that I had used every piece of gear I had packed. I left The Narrows and The Subway, Zion's famous slot canyons, for another trip, but in three days, I had bonded with a place so distinct, so wonderfully different from Southern New England that I felt no need to visit those overcrowded attractions. Perhaps next March... ●





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Second Saturday

For a fun, community-day out, visit the galleries, shops, and restaurants at Kent Barns in Litchfield County



By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

In the hills of Connecticut's Litchfield County is Kent Barns – a sprawling complex of antique barns that are home to a variety of stylish art galleries, shops, and top-notch eateries. Visitors flock there for Second Saturday – a family-friendly community event, which kicked off May 14 and runs through October 15.

Be sure to stop by on the second Saturday of each month for a bite, some shopping or socializing with friends, or for some inspirational gallery hopping. The bucolic setting will be bustling with seasonal markets, unique events such as author and designer lectures, and fun activities for people of all ages. This event, which is open to the public, supports local businesses and artisans.

"Second Saturday is like stepping out onto your favorite piazza with street musicians playing in the background and shoppers bustling about with bouquets and baguettes en route to another market, shop, or gallery. It's a day to be enjoyed by everyone. Each monthly event will offer an entirely new experience for visitors," says Karolene Carlson, integrated marketing consultant for Kent Barns. Visit

Kent Barns' website for news about upcoming pop-up shops, demonstrations, and talks.

The lineup

Community Farmers Market (10am to 2pm)

Located in the iconic Big Red barn, this enticing market offers a stunning selection of specialty plants, herbs, and colorful blooms. An assortment of delectable dairy products and meats will be available from South Kent's Rock Cobble Farm.

House of Books Storytime Under the Big Maple Tree (10am to 11am)

Children ages eight and under are welcome to gather under this charming tree to listen to live book readings. Each session will be followed by a fun craft event. The tree is located outside 109 Cheese Market.

Kent Flower Market at RT Facts (10am to 1pm)

Flower power! Attend flower design workshops and watch demonstrations

Continued on next page ...

Above: The Fall Flower Market.
Photo: Karolene Carlson.

by leading florists and makers. “The last few years, the outdoor flower market has been hugely successful. It attracts people from all over the NW Corner – from families looking for a cool day out to discerning designers, and sometimes, one can catch a glimpse of Martha Stewart,” says Carlson. Some of the local growers and florists include Anderson Acres Farm and Cobble Well Farm, both in Kent; Falls Village Flower Farm in Falls Village; Loam Floral Design Co. in New Preston; and Honeychurch Home in Salisbury.

Scribble Art for All Ages Under the Big Maple Tree (11am to 1pm)

Celebrate summer and art by participating in a collaborative craft for all ages. These art projects will change for each Second Saturday event. All materials are provided.

Art Galleries, Shops & Eateries—New Exhibits and Offerings (10am to 5:30pm)

All three galleries will showcase the works of contemporary artists. First up: Catch Andy Harper’s *Parallel Botany* at Carol Corey Fine Art. Harper’s works are described as “arenas for discovery and camouflage.” They depict the exuberance of growth, and the death and decay of botanical subject matters. The show ends June 5.

Through July 3, Kenise Barnes Fine Art will exhibit Melanie Parke’s

Flowers for Friends. Pastoral, bucolic still life settings emerge from Parke’s life. The artist reconstructs familiar interiors and filters them through the ideology of memory. Her often captures the beauty of flowers, birds, decorative objects, gardens, and domestic settings—“safe places for pleasure.”

Through July 10, Craven Contemporary will feature *Alex Katz - New Flowers*—seven new large flower works by the artist. The show will spotlight the 94-year-old artist’s signature minimalist aesthetic, which feature flat planes of rich, lovely color. In October 2022, Katz will have a major retrospective at Manhattan’s Guggenheim.

Live Music Under the Big Maple Tree (12pm to 3pm)

Live music will be played on a patio under the majestic tree. Before grabbing a seat under the ol’ maple tree, pick up a tasty breakfast or lunch at one of Kent Barns’ award-winning eateries. Head to No. 109 Cheese Market for artisanal cheeses; Swyft for farm-driven pizzas, shareable small plates, and seasonal entrees; Wilson’s Bakery & Café for coffee, all-day breakfast, sandwiches, salads, baked goods, and more; or Woodford’s General Store, which has a temporary pop-up location at 4 North Main Street. Head there for specialty gifts and locally sourced foods.



Save the date!

Literary buffs can visit House of Books in its new and renovated space at 10 North Main Street.

Save the date! A upcoming book talk is scheduled for July 9. Tune into the conversation led by Eric D. Lehman and Amy Nawrocki, who have co-authored several great reads about Connecticut. *Connecticut Farms and Farmers Markets—Tours, Trails, and Attractions*, details the farms that dot the Constitution State – from Salisbury to Stonington and everywhere in-between. Whether you’re seeking authentic agricultural experiences, the most sustainable options, or fun farm experiences, this book will help you in your quest. The discussion will be presented on the plaza next to Craven Contemporary. ●

To learn more, visit in person at 6 North Main Street, Kent, CT. Call (860) 866-8066 or visit online at kentbarnsct.com.

There is always a lot happening during the Second Saturday event at Kent Barns. Photos: Karolene Carlson.



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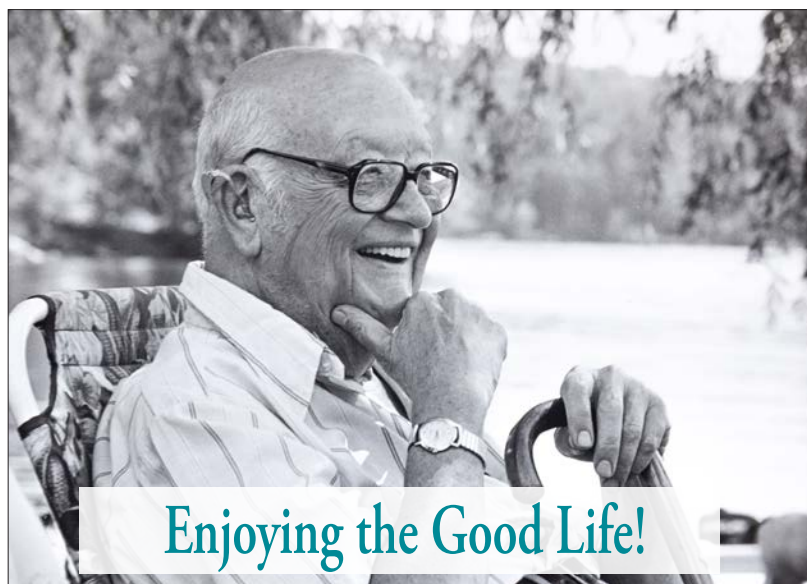


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Peonies

By Pom Shillingford
info@mainstreetmag.com

As an English native who ended up gardening in the New England entirely by mistake, my gripping about the length of the gardening season here knows no bounds. I will bore anyone with ears about it. However, the one silver lining to enduring our interminable winters here to then be slapped with an utterly miserable cold and wet spring is that by the time we do FINALLY get to the good part, we have truly earned our rewards. And to me my gold medal comes in the form of the peony, the quintessential early summer beauty.

Symbolic of love, honor, happiness, wealth, romance and beauty, you could be justified in asking why bother with any other flower? Bold, blowsy, beautiful scented, the two-to-three week – maybe four, if you go with a mix early and late varieties AND we don't get a mini heat wave in there – stretch when the peonies are in bloom is the starting gun for summer. And that in itself should be a good enough reason enough to buy them just when they are in season.

I'm telling you – in season flowers will always look, smell, and last

better than flown-from-afar imports. So don't jump the gun and spoil that prize.

The many types of peonies

There are more than 33 recognized species of peonies with countless cultivars amongst them. The most commonly grown type is the herbaceous peony which die completely back in the fall to reappear in early spring. There are also shrubby tree peonies, as well as intersectional (Itoh), a hybrid of the two. Peony blooms are categorized in to six types: Single, Semi-Double, Full Double, Japanese, Anemone, and Bombe. Colors run the spectrum from pure white through to the deepest darkest reds. If you're not sure where to start, my advice would be to head to www.peonysenvy.com. Their website is laid out such a way that makes it super easy to compare varieties.

As with the tulips last month, if you are planning on starting some this fall, the early bird catches the worm, so place your orders sooner rather than later when what you had your eye on might have sold out. They

won't ship out until it's the right time to plant.

There are few easier low-maintenance plants to grow than peonies – if you abide by the one golden rule. Best planted bare root in the fall but even if you plant out a potted-up plant, *Do Not Plant These Too Deep!* Bare root, the flower buds should be barely an inch below the soil surface. I know this seems counter intuitive and you are leaving them to brace the elements unprotected just as winter approaches, but be brave. You need to do this otherwise they will not flower. Last fall I planted a new bed and covered them all with a layer of straw for this first winter. As soon as the snow was gone, I whipped the straw off and they are all now rocketing up. Be careful if you mulch your beds. Be sure to pull the mulch away from the base of the peony.

Wait three years for it

Once planted, the brakes have to go on for a bit in terms of cutting blooms. I say a bit but what I mean is three years. THREE YEARS I hear you yell. Yes, I'm afraid so. Initially they need to pour their energy into developing a really strong root system and not pushing out flowers. Once they've done that they will last for decades. As my garden goddess Vita Sackville West wrote: "They are so long lived that once you have established a clump, they will probably outlive you."

And then we get to the really good part, bringing them inside. To gain the longest vase life, peonies are best

cut before they fully open and in what is known as the marshmallow stage. A peony flower head starts off as small ping pong-sized ball. Cut this when it is still hard and your flower will not open. Wait until this feels squidgy like a marshmallow and it is good to go.

The one downside to peonies is that their bloom season is not that long. But there is a trick to prolonging the time you can enjoy them. Pick the flowers at that perfect marshmallow stage, remove all leaves, wrap the ends in damp newspaper and place in a plastic bag. Then pop them in a fridge. They can last for several weeks like this. (I once read about someone's granny who saved hers until Thanksgiving every year!). The one caveat is there can be no fruit or veg in the fridge with them. I have found that my husband's beer fridge is the ideal place for these. Being English too, the warm beer I have hoofed out to make space is not that much of a drama – I tell him it should remind him of home. Others may not be so understanding! ●

Pom's favorite supplier of peony roots
Adelman Peony Gardens www.peonyparadise.com. Top recommendation for locally cut peonies: Bear Creek Farm, Standfordville www.bearcreekfarm.com.

Pom Shillingford is an obsessive gardener originally from England and now based in Salisbury, CT. She offers seasonal cut flowers through English Garden Grown. Find her on Instagram @english_garden_grown.





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KEEPING THE FAITH

WRITER ELIZABETH KUTEPOV USES HER CREATIVITY TO INSPIRE OTHERS TO FIND THE LIGHT

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Within the last few years, many of us have experienced challenging times. With the arrival of the pandemic, we've all faced varying amounts of uncertainty, fear, and the effects of isolation. Many of us were overburdened as we juggled our jobs and the demands of family life during a time of remote work and home schooling. As a result, our wellbeing has been compromised.

According to a recent survey released by the American Psychological Association, psychologists reported a large boost in demand for treatment of anxiety and depression, in comparison with previous years.

Regardless of the hurdles we've faced and the struggles we've all endured, it helps to be hopeful that brighter days lie ahead. For many, a sense of security is achieved through faith.

Writer Elizabeth Kutepov certainly knows a lot about pain, but the Roxbury, CT, resident also understands how perseverance, belief, and creativity can work together to help heal. Now that she's on the lighter side of her pain, Kutepov wants to help others overcome their challenges.

Elizabeth's story

Kutepov's dark story began when she was a child. Her father had a prestigious job as chief of pathology in the US Navy. As a result, the family was relocated from Woodbury Heights, NJ, to Japan. For the few years that her family lived overseas, Kutepov's dad was rarely home.

Kutepov later learned that her father met a Japanese "call woman" at the Officers Club. On the rare occasions when he was home, he drank, smoked, and played the piano until the wee hours while she and her brother John struggled to sleep.

She experienced little happiness in those days. When Kutepov wasn't playing with her Barbie dolls or tinkering at the piano, she'd often stroll through the bamboo forest behind their house with her brother. Kutepov's father eventually married the woman and abandoned the family. "This was the beginning of my emotional downfall. I cried nearly every day. The lack of my father's presence caused me such grief, sadness, and confusion," says Kutepov. When she left Japan with her mother and brother, feelings of devastation left her crippled.

More obstacles

When Kutepov was about 15 years old, she left home and temporarily stayed at a friend's house. She felt completely helpless and traumatized by John's behaviors and the anger he directed towards her.

Even though Kutepov was a svelte teenager enrolled in ballet school, John made disparaging remarks about her weight. The teasing, sarcasm, and emotional taunting overwhelmed her.

A few years later, Kutepov drove her first car – a green VW Super Beetle to California where she lived for a while. While there, she was having difficulty sleeping and experienced some unusual behavior.

"I remember knocking on a stranger's door. When a man opened the door, I thought it was my father, but it wasn't. I don't remember too much about the rest of the events that led up to my first hospitalization," says Kutepov.

Soon after she flew back east to visit her mother, Kutepov was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder.

Doctors unsuccessfully prescribed many different drugs to treat her moods. For nearly 30 years, Kutepov lived hopelessly and emotionally crippled with extreme depression and manic episodes, which led to a suicide attempt.

Finding the light

Kutepov finally began healing when she was in her forties. After severing a relationship with a toxic boyfriend, Kutepov started to feel the first waves of freedom. At the time, she lived in New York City.

That's where she later met Andrey. The duo, which initially became acquainted through a dating website, tied the knot within six months.

"My true recovery stemmed from finding and marrying Andrey – my angel, lifelong partner, and best friend. Through our precious time together, I have healed mostly from my grief and trauma, which yielded great happiness and a sense of security and true love," says Kutepov.

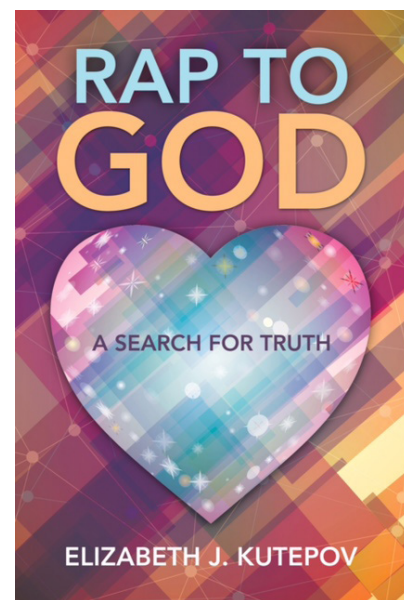
She gives thanks to God for her life, growth, and healing. Kutepov recalls a memory from her time in Japan. "I had a vision or dream – an image of Jesus Christ hanging over my bed. At that time, I began my search for the truth. I still haven't found exactly what I'm looking for," she adds.

Creativity reigns

Rather than trying to escape her pain through illicit drugs, Kutepov channeled that sorrow into poetry and music. Kutepov became prolific with poetry when she became acquainted with Andrey. Perhaps the stability he represented, gave her an outlet for artistic expression. Kutepov pours her soul, heart, and mind into her work and believes that her pain is a conduit for these expressions.

In 2017, Kutepov self-published *Rap To God; A Search for Truth* – a poetry collection that features gripping verses that express her honest, deeply heart-felt search for God

Continued on next page ...



Above: Elizabeth Kutepov's book *Rap To God*.

and truth. She credits her family and friends for recommending that she publish her work. Available on Amazon, Lulu, local shops and libraries, it garnered high ratings.

One customer review states: "Beautifully written as well as thought provoking. You can feel the writer's raw emotions perfectly laid out in each poem. I highly recommend it!"

The avid writer says that she never took any formal writing classes, but always jotted down her thoughts in a diary or journal.

"My journals are very personal and were written with sheer honesty about what was going on in my life. That writing started taking on a new dimension into poetry and prose," reveals Kutepov.

In addition to writing, Kutepov has a history of immersing herself in other types of creative work. After earning her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theatre and Liberal Arts from The City College of New York (CUNY) where she graduated cum laude, Kutepov worked as a background artist in feature films, commercials, and television shows such as *Law & Order*, *The Sopranos*, and *Ed*.

Making music

Since Kutepov is a music enthusiast, she yearned to connect her words to music. Her album, *Rap to God* came about through Kutepov's search for a producer.

"My Producer, Marvenis (Marvin Ennis) of the band, Starpoint (*Object Of My Desire*), responded to an ad I placed seeking someone to work with. He is extremely talented and created beautiful music for my album with some help from various musical artists," says Kutepov.

The album was released in 2019 and features 16 songs. Several mixes have followed. Kutepov's music is

available on Apple Music, Amazon, YouTube, and Spotify. While some of the songs convey Kutepov's search for God and her frustration in finding Him, others relate to love, thanks, and dismantling racism. "One song is about my dislike for tailgaters," reveals Kutepov.

The single, *Rap to God* soared to success. Both times it was released, it charted in the Top 20 most streamed songs in the rock industry. *Rap to God* is among Kutepov's most popular songs and stems from a poem in her book.

Some of the artist's favorites include *Doors of Love*, which is about her relationship with Andrey and *Black or White*, which highlights the artist's distaste for racism.

Shining bright

When Kutepov was living in New York City, she began reading at open mics. She continues to share her work at poetry readings in the Hudson Valley.

Kutepov wants to see others pursue their own paths to happiness. "I encourage others to reach inside themselves to realize that they have more power than they are aware of. I encourage them to hold onto life because you never know what positive changes are around the corner. I believe in working hard, walking a straight line, and putting faith in yourself and your higher power," she adds.

As for her future plans, Kutepov will continue to write poetry and create music, with the hopes that somehow she will have a positive effect on others. She is currently considering compiling another poetry collection and finishing a memoir.

"I do not blame anyone or hold anger against anybody for the misfortunes that I experienced. I have completely forgiven all parties and situations. I know that my life, values, personality, strengths, courage, kindness, understanding, and ability to love were developed by these events and I am ever grateful that I have the ability to forgive," concludes Kutepov.



Above: Writer and poet Elizabeth Kutepov.

How good do I have to be

To ward off the pain
Of an existence I didn't ask for
As the sun rises once more
Plagued we are in this world of doubt
Turning again this way and that
Seeking a way to find
How to clear my mind
Of what I ponder in this strange land
Please help me up with your hand
As I falter and gasp of what is to come
Now I resolve to save the day
In every way
I can
Please help me up with your hand
So I can continue to take a stand
On what's right
We all have to fight
In a peaceable way
Then only
Can we save the day
Grasp this thought
Let's do what we ought
To do right now
Love the thought of how
To assemble as one
Encourage each other to
Rise above the dregs
Of life...

(no title)

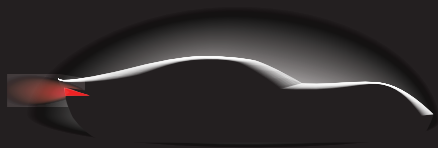
I hold this globe with one hand
Asking you to take a stand
Why can't we change this land
I'll be leader of the band
The dark draws near
Or is it already here
I beg your heart to steer
Just want to make it clear
We have a chance at peace
Do you want a brand new lease
On a bright new life
Do you have to think twice
Tried so hard
But I looked the other way
Now tryin hard to save the day
My sin and doubt
Pierced right through me
So black and hard
My heart was truly
Selfish to mine own
Please don't disown me
Now ready to hold the earth
Place my arms around its girth
Plant my feet upon this turf...•

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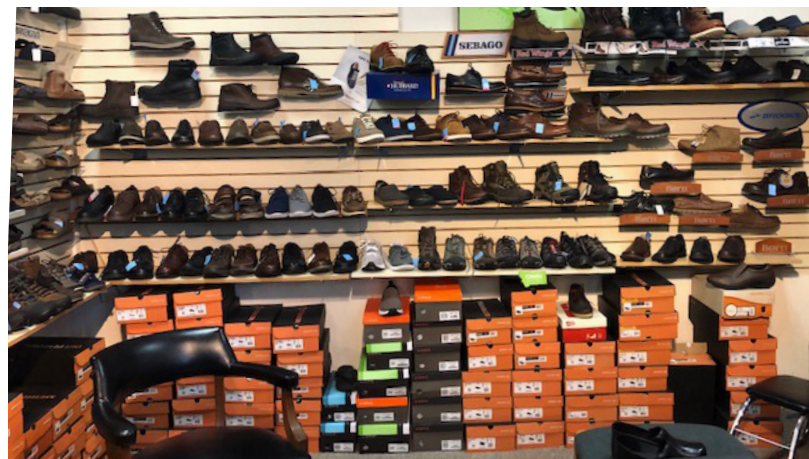
Mark and Lauren Traeger of Two Twelve Consultants are a locally-based consulting firm that works on a one-to-one basis with business owners to assist them in either starting a new business or revitalizing an under performing business that has issues with finances, marketing, employees, etc. They help existing business owners who would like to expand their business, add a new product line or additional locations. Although they possess decades of experience, they charge much less than competitors from New York and Boston. This is because their objective is to provide locally-based professional expertise at a reasonable rate. It is their way to give back to the community. Two Twelve Consultants offer no charge for the initial meeting where their experts evaluate the issues and then follow-up with a project outline. They want the businesses in this area to be successful. Nothing gives them more satisfaction than knowing they have helped local businesses to not only survive but to thrive. Anyone can open a new business but, unfortunately, many people do not understand all the aspects to make it a profitable enterprise. The typical business owner does not have the time or expertise to do all of these at the same time. At Two Twelve Consultants, they research, investigate, and create a plan for clients to get the job done in the most efficient manner. They are also currently offering a 50% discount for veterans and first responders.



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Red, orange, yellow and blue ... which wedding flowers will you choose?

Weddings are supposed to be a special time for love, happiness, new beginnings and unity; but sometimes the overwhelming amount of details can make it a breeding ground for stress and frustration. One of the most important parts of a wedding is the flowers, but it doesn't have to be complicated! Finding the perfect flowers for your wedding can be a breeze!:

1. Hire a great florist! Not only do you want to connect with the flowers, but you want to connect with your florist too. Finding the right florist entails someone you have a good connection with, who will be able to settle on flower varieties with you and help you make the right decision, and one who makes beautiful bouquets/arrangements that you can picture carrying down the aisle!
 2. Make it something you love! Choose your favorite flowers and colors, if there's a color you're not big on, ask to see something else. You want to make sure it looks good, but also makes you happy.
 3. Colors are important, make sure you keep a color scheme in mind. Match the colors of your flowers to coordinate with your bridal gown and bridesmaids attire.
 4. Keep in mind an aesthetic. What is your design style? A rustic barn for a venue or a tent? A farm landscape or a ballroom? Knowing your preferred style and venue will help narrow down your flower varieties and make the question of roses or wildflowers a more obvious choice.
 5. Consider an adequate budget. It is easy to want to buy every flower you see. Having a solid budget in mind that fits the size of your wedding will assist you in narrowing down choices.
 6. Everybody loves Pinterest, so have fun and spend a few nights creating an inspiration board for your bridal folder, which will also help give you and your florist an idea of prices, availability, and style ideas you love.
 8. Flowers are seasonal. It is best to choose flowers that are in season as opposed to out of season.
- Advice by: Johanna Cuccia (Jo#2), Country Gardeners Florist employee and senior at Housatonic Valley Regional High School.

Country Gardeners Florist

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