



VOLUME 19 NUMBER 1

APRIL/MAY 1997

# HEATH HERALD

HEATH'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

50¢

## THREE GIANTS

by Jack Cable

Heath took a heavy loss this sugaring season when the large sugar maple in front of the Churchill/Sumner home on 8A had to be cut down. The tree, the largest sugar maple in Heath, as quoted by Mike Peters, was rotted so as to pose a serious threat to the Churchill home and the utility lines. The tree measuring six feet in diameter and one hundred and twenty feet in height came down on Friday - two days before Clyde Churchill passed away. Mike Peters came to take pictures of the tree cutting, then brought his wood splitter over to "help Clyde, because he wanted to" - Mike's splitter is still there - but the tree, Clyde and Mike are gone - three giants in the Heath sugaring heritage.



SAUL OF J & L TREE SERVICE  
(Photo by Hilma Churchill Sumner)



J & L TREE SERVICE CUTS DOWN TREE  
(Photo by Hilma Churchill Sumner)



CLYDE'S BEST PRODUCING TREE  
(Photo by Hilma Churchill Sumner)

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I was among some 50 Heath residents who attended a hearing on Saturday, March 22 at 9 AM in the Community Hall regarding the use of the Shapiro land. Much has been written about this 330 acre site and why there are differing positions as to what the Town should do with it, but I would like to call attention to three points made at the meeting.

First, Selectman Rollo Kinsman's effort in preparing the proposal to allocate 310 acres to conservation and 20 acres to recreation was well acknowledged. His presentation was thorough and professional. He had slides to show what a quality park area could be like as well as some shots of the Shapiro land. He was patient with questions and was very willing to pursue matters requiring clarification. He made the observation that his proposal was a vision of what could be done in the area for the benefit of the Town and its inhabitants and still satisfy the desire of some for a large tract of conservation land. Rollo, who has a professional background in recreational programs, saw his proposal as a compromise that might move this matter forward. I also saw it as a very reasonable, but perhaps too generous a compromise.

Second, the word vision elicited a few comments about the long range needs of the Town. I made reference to my contact with the Planning Board this past year to develop a Master Plan. (The concept of a Master Plan for Heath goes back to about 1985, but at that time there was urgency to develop planning and zoning regulations.

That task was followed by the Board's preparing a comprehensive update of Heath's roads, which was completed during the Spring of 1996.) A Master Plan includes several objectives, among them the use of open space and economic strategies/goals. It establishes plans for the future so that the Town is proactive and not reactive. We all know what happens after the horse is out of the barn. I sorely wish we had a Plan now for open space, but we don't. Lacking that I think we have to look at the long term as regards the Shapiro land. In the future none of us will be around to visit the Shapiro land or to look at it from a present day perspective, but others will and the idea of a future center, for example, with information about the history of the area, which is considerable, seems sensible. Such an effort, however, requires management and Rollo's plan addresses that need. Economic goals are paramount also because Heath has no commercial tax base to alleviate the heavy tax burden on local property owners. It would take an increase of about \$21,000,000 in our current valuation of \$43,600,000 to bring our tax rate, which is over \$22 down to the reasonable level of \$15. Obviously, that is not likely to happen. The numbers dramatically show that economic and tax issues have to be examined and strategies/goals set. (Our actual current tax rate is \$18.82 because the Town received \$150,000 in special aid from the State, but there is no guarantee whatsoever that that support will continue.)

Third, Rollo noted that if the Shapiro property becomes conservation land, then anyone and everyone in the State will be able to have access to it. This fact is very important and has been largely overlooked. But if the Town of Heath controls it, then locally developed rules of governance can be administered and enforced.

In summary what do we want the Town to look like ten or twenty years from now? Will time and circumstance dictate the scenario or can we put a face on our future? All of us have the best interests of Heath at heart so whatever comes from all the discussion about the Shapiro land I hope we can move ahead hereafter in a positive and cooperative fashion, perhaps even towards a Master Plan.

Dave Howland

## HEATH HERALD

HEATH'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

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## RAY'S OF INTEREST

by R. C. Pettengill

Did you know that it was Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) who originated the saying "O God, give us serenity to accept what cannot be changed; courage to change what should be changed and wisdom to distinguish one from the other."?

I don't know who came up with the saying "You can't teach an old dog new tricks", but I think we should all be grateful that most of us can learn a few while we are still young.



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY LAUNCHES NEW FUND DRIVE

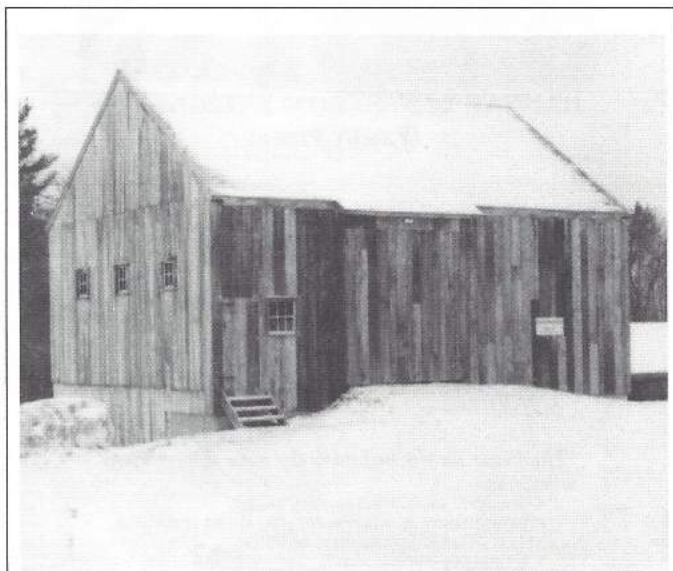
by Pegge Howland

The Heath Historical Society has initiated a fund drive in support of two new projects. One is the laying of an oak floor in the Solomon Temple Barn Museum and the other is the restoration of a so-called "Church bass" musical instrument donated to the Society by Herbert White many years ago.

The relocation of the Barn to the Heath Fairgrounds was a monumental and very successful project. It was dedicated August 20, 1994 after two years of hard work and the generosity of many, many people. At that time the Society didn't have the time or the money to lay a finish floor over the hemlock subflooring which, as expected, shrank and allows dirt to fall through the cracks onto the displays below. The Garys, Dot and Dick, who originally donated the barn, have made an offer to the Society that has given us new impetus to do this project. They will donate most of the oak needed for the floor from trees they are harvesting on their land, though we expect we will have to purchase some more to meet our requirements. The oak will have to be sawed, moved to a mill for kiln drying and planing and then installed. We estimate about \$3,000 will be needed for material and supplies, the mill work and labor costs.

The tragic death of Mike Peters, who was so instrumental in helping the Society locate the Barn at the Fairgrounds, has prompted the Society to dedicate this part of the project to his memory. A suitable plaque or engraving will commemorate the effort.

The "Church bass" has been languishing in the School House for many years and is in very poor condition, but is repairable. Information pasted to the bass reads as follows:



Solomon Temple Barn Museum, Winter 1997  
(Photo by Robert Gear)

"Single bass viol and bow used in services in Church in Heath for many years by Gardner White. Born in Heath 1789 - died North Adams 1869. Presented by his grandson Herbert H. White"

Gardner was one of ten children born to James and Ruth (Ballard) White. There were seven daughters, all of whom became teachers and never married. Not too much is known of the three boys except Gardner, who lived in Heath in what is now Walter Gleason's house on Bassett Road. Gardner had a strong musical bent which was reflected in his naming his sons, Frederick Handel Beethoven and James Mozart Haydn.

Another note inside the instrument indicates that repair work was done on it in North Adams in 1845. Bass viols were used in churches before organs, which were very expensive, became available. The instrument is unique to Heath's history and the Society wants to restore it to playable condition. After obtaining several bids ranging up to \$3,000, the Society has set a goal of \$2000 for repairing the bass and securing a case for it.

The total goal of \$5,000 for both projects will allow for unforeseen contingencies. The Society hopes and will try to have the new barn floor laid and the Church bass ready to play by the Annual Meeting on August 10th. Tax deductible contributions may be made payable to the Heath Historical Society and mailed to David F. Howland, Treasurer, 23 Avery Brook Rd., Heath, MA 01346.

### ALAN'S ALMANAC

by Alan Nichols

November was a relatively normal month though there was almost no snow.

December saw 22" of snow on the 8th which melted through the month leaving two inches at the end of the year.

There was little snow in both January and February. It began to snow and stick in March with 15 inches on the ground on the 15th which slowly melted until the storm on April 1st, the first real Nor'easter of the winter (which we all know runs from November through April) left 16" of well blown snow which melted to 1.32 precipitation.

While the temperature has been good for home heating costs the amount of plain rain and the number and extent of the thaws have been terrible for the roads and perennial plantings.

### Richard A. Sumner

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## "GRANDMA HEATH" HANNAH LANDSTROM BURRINGTON

by Laurie Wheeler Burrington

It is not necessary to dwell upon the death, but rather the beauty and joy of the life of the woman called "Grandma Heath", by a mourner at her memorial service. Hannah Landstrom Burrington was Heath. "She had such a deep faith, and the ability to love everyone the same", said one grandson. Anyone who came in contact with her for very long realized this.

In a lifetime that spanned almost a century, one which saw momentous changes in her world, "she had a sense of wonderment toward the things that happened around her", said one of her grandchildren. Of all the major advancements of the 20th century, beginning with horse drawn carriages and ending with space shuttles, what impressed her most was Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic.

The daughter of Victor and Anna Matilda Josephine Larson Landstrom, originally of Sweden, Hannah was born in Waltham, MA in 1901. Her parents brought her and her siblings to Heath in 1911 to work for Ethel Moore on her various properties in South Heath.

Hannah left for a brief time in the early twenties for nurse's training in Waltham, and married Frederick William Burrington of Heath in 1924. They lived in Waltham for a year, but because they missed the hills, soon came back to Heath.

While away Hannah saved money from her first job to buy an upright piano, which was something she had always wanted. She took lessons for a year, but basically taught herself to play the piano and organ. She was, her daughter Catherine said, one of those people who had a knack for looking at music and transposing the notes higher or lower. She was the organist for the Heath Union Church for many years and played the piano for the Heath Grange until it folded. In later years she gave her beloved piano to a great-niece.

She and Frederick's family of five children began growing in South Heath. In a household that held additional family as often as not, whether a great-cousin, a hired hand, or various children and spouses and grand-

children, Hannah cared for them all, and cooked, cleaned, gardened, hayed, sawed wood, and generally helped where she could. Even through the Depression years, there was food on the table, thanks to the family farming efforts, and a no waste attitude. They had cows, chickens, hogs, milk, and eggs; they canned just about everything, and without "electric anything". Her son Paul speaks of her ability to handle that old wood cook stove, because "anything they ate came across that stove."

Hannah's husband Frederick died in 1961. At that time "she automatically stepped into another job" and cared for the family of her daughter Jane who had passed on; following that time she worked as a companion for many people, caring for them as well as her own flock. She did that until her health began to fail and she went to live in the Anchorage Nursing Home.

The matriarch of the Burrington clan for so many years, her life was one of giving, caring, and guidance, finding room in her prayers for all. Being a part of the family she created and shepherded through hard times and good gives one insight to her loving ways, which continue on in the lives of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.



HANNAH LANDSTROM BURRINGTON  
(Family Photo)



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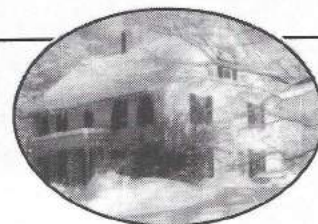
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## HILMA SUMNER

### A LEADER WHO DESERVES RE-ELECTION

by Rollo Kinsman and  
Eileen Tougas

As fellow selectmen observing Hilma Sumner's performance as chairman and working with her each week, we feel uniquely qualified to comment on her approach to solving problems and her accomplishments. For this reason, and at the urging of others, we take this opportunity to tell you why we think she should be re-elected.

As Chairman, Hilma develops the agenda for the weekly meetings. To our knowledge she has never refused to include a requested item, ignored an issue or excluded anyone from addressing an issue. She takes to heart the problems people have and helps whenever possible. She puts guests at ease, is patient with each person who wishes to state an opinion and never hurries anyone who is expressing a point of view. Her approach is always inclusive and never arbitrary.

Following are highlights of the accomplishments achieved by the Town of Heath under her leadership: Hilma initiated meetings with Senator Jane Swift, Representative John Merrigan and Senator Andrea F. Nuciforo outlining to them the Town of Heath's most important issues. As a result, Senator Swift and Representative Merrigan assisted in our successful petition for \$100,000 to improve Jacobs Road. They also were active participants in granting Heath \$150,000 two years in a row to reduce our taxes. Newly elected Senator Nuciforo has promised to continue this solid support for the Town of Heath.

Heath received a \$3,000 grant from the Governor's Safety Bureau for the purchase of roadside delineators.

A \$163,234 grant was received to complete handi-

cap access renovation on the Town Hall and Community Hall. Hilma assured that the renovation designs maintained the architectural integrity of the buildings insofar as possible while meeting State and Federal regulatory guidelines. This project is nearing completion.

Proposed legislation is now in the hands of Senator Nuciforo for his sponsorship which, when passed, will facilitate transfer of the tri-town landfill site from Mrs. Constance Burrington to the Towns of Heath, Charlemont and Hawley (a pre-requisite to developing a plan for final capping of the landfill).

The road building and maintenance equipment has been upgraded and road conditions in Heath are improving. This summer, Avery Brook Road will be completely re-built.

The Fire Department has been improved and funding for fire fighting equipment increased resulting in the purchase of a new fire truck and related equipment.

Establishment of a part time position for a Town nurse will be proposed at the Annual Town Meeting.

The wages of our Town employees have been increased. Hilma's goal is to make them commensurate with the wages of their peers in other towns as resources permit.

A new personnel handbook has been published.

Regulations for operation of Heath's cemeteries will be presented for approval at the Annual Town Meeting.

A compromise proposal for management of the Shapiro land has been developed and will be presented as one option for approval at the Annual Town Meeting.

We recognize that all of the above accomplishments required the hard work of many people, committees, and boards. We emphasize, however, that they could not have come to fruition without the support and leadership of our Chairman.

The hardest part of the job is moving steadily ahead, regardless of emergencies and distractions, addressing and solving complex problems and taking initiatives that will improve the lives of all of Heath's citizens. Hilma does this well!

We strongly urge you to re-elect Hilma as Selectman for the Town of Heath.



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## STATEMENTS OF WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

### Richards Steinbock - Selectman

I have lived in Heath since 1974. I've been a member of the Volunteer Fire Department since 1975, secretary/treasurer of the Firefighters' Association since 1980. I have served on the Sawyer Hall reconstruction committee, the Franklin County Energy Task Force, and the Shapiro Land Study committee. I was a Heath Assessor for ten years, chairman for five. I am currently a member of the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board.

I am a self-employed graphic designer - the Heath Fair T-shirt is my creation, as is the Town Seal - and my wife is a Park Ranger. She was a selectman for six years, chairman for four.

Anne and I have raised four children in Heath. Our roots here go deep. We have many good friends here. We love where we live and we love the Town, warts and all.

With sixteen years of town office in our family, I know the downside of the job, and am running in spite of that.

I am running because a number of people that I think very highly of have been asking me to. There appears to be a sense of discontent and a loss of accountability in town, and some people seem to think that I can be the beginning of an antidote to that. I would hope not to disappoint them.

I can't say that all of you will always be happy with all of my opinions, actions or statements, but I can promise you that I will always deal fairly and honestly with you, acting in the best interests of the Town and its inhabitants, and according to the rules and laws governing a selectman's conduct.

With your help, I hope to be able to provide some leadership and direction as Heath charts its way into the future.

Running for selectman is not a decision I made in haste. I know the job is going to put a big dent in my time but, having committed myself, I will give it my all if elected.

As a result of thinking long and hard about this - perhaps too long - I find myself running as a write-in candidate. To vote for me, you will have to write "Richards Steinbock" under selectman and "x" the box. It's a little bit of a bother, but I hope to make your effort worth it.

I tried to keep this short, but you'll be hearing more from me later. For the time being, I'll just say that, if elected, I will do the best job possible on your behalf.

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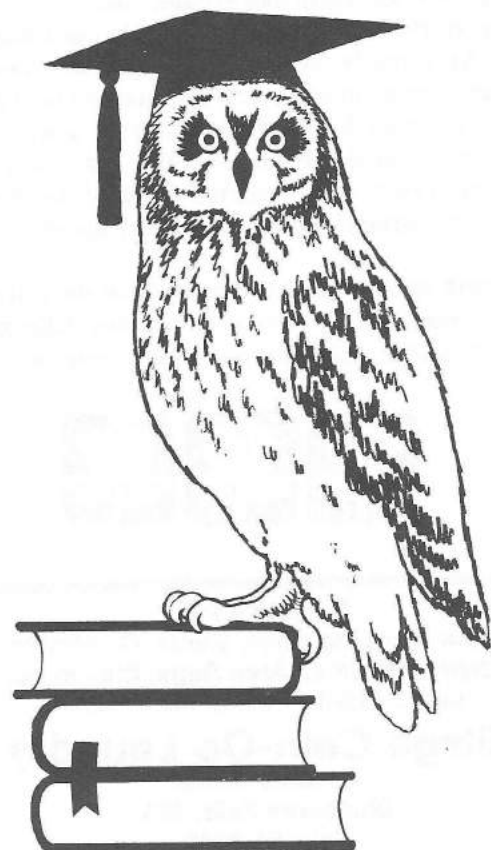
### Dino Schnelle - Planning Board

I need your help to work for the fine citizens of Heath by serving on our Planning Board. I am running as a write-in candidate. Our most recent town meeting reminded me again what a richly diverse yet well spoken and articulate community I have the good fortune to live in. Although I have only lived here ten years I have many good friends and neighbors.

I believe that although we have different backgrounds and sometimes differing opinions, there is a sense of fellowship, trust and respect here that is becoming increasingly rare. For that reason I feel it is important that as many voices and viewpoints as possible be represented as we decide what the future of Heath will be like.

There is great awareness of how much is changing in our society and in our area, and I am concerned that as we plan for growth, we focus on and maintain those things we don't want to change, those things we cannot afford to replace in our lives and those precious things we don't want to lose by carelessness or inattention.

If elected to the Planning Board I will work to make sure that as many voices as possible will be heard from and that we temper the inevitable growth and changes ahead with the consideration and respect that this unique community deserves. I hope you will help me by giving me your ideas, concerns and suggestions, and most of all, I hope you will make your voice heard by voting.





## HEATH TOWN ELECTIONS

by June Day

Town elections will be held on May 9, 1997, at Heath Community Hall, from noon to 7 PM. Several incumbents took out nomination papers and will be on the ballot, as follows: Hilma Sumner for Selectman (one three-year term); Donald Dekker for Assessor (one three-year term); June Day for Town Clerk (one 3-year term); Robert Viarengo for Planning Board (one four-year term), Joseph Corbeil for School Committee (one one-year term), Frank Brower for School Committee (one three-year term); and Maureen O'Malley for Library Trustee (one three-year term).

Additionally, there are "open" positions available, as follows: three Finance Committee positions (one two-year term, two three-year term); one five-year term Planning Board position; two one year term Constable positions and one one-year term Dog Officer position.

There are other positions: Tree Warden, Sexton, Burial Agent, Fence Viewers, Field Drivers and Measurers of Wood and Bark. These positions have traditionally been filled via nominations from the floor at the Annual Town Meeting.

There are two write-in candidates. Richards Steinbock is running against incumbent Hilma Sumner for Selectman, and Dino Schnelle is running for the open five-year term position on the Planning Board. If there are any other residents interested in being write-in candidates, please publicize your name.

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Artspace is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 AM to 5 PM. Saturday 9 AM till noon. More information: call 772-6811

## MAUREEN O'MALLEY - LIBRARY TRUSTEE

"I am running for a second term, three year position as library trustee. In the past three years, I have begun to familiarize myself with the Massachusetts Library Services, and I have helped Laurie Burrington to adjust to her new position as library director. I would like to continue to serve the Town in this capacity. Our library system is changing rapidly due to the revolution in computer technology. As a trustee, I will keep up to date with these changes and be of support and assistance to our library patrons and our librarian as we ease the Heath Library into the 21st Century."

### JUNE DAY - TOWN CLERK

"I am again asking for your vote for the office of Town Clerk. The two years since my election in 1995 have seen the data for the census and voter list put into the VRIS (Motor Voter) computer system. And this year I expect to establish a list of the dogs and owners living in Heath. Working on elections has been rather fun due to the fine crew and their guidance. I am slowly working on getting town records organized according to the master plan I envision. I hope to accomplish that during this next three year term if indeed you will reelect me as your Town Clerk on May 9."

### DON DEKKER - ASSESSOR

"I have been an Assessor for the past nine years, and somewhat reluctantly have agreed to run for another term. I have always strived to be just and fair in all assessing decisions and will continue to do so in the future. We now have a good knowledgeable Board and I promise to do my best for the Town."



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## GREENING THE SCHOOL

by Bonnie Wodin

There has been a look of Spring at the Heath Elementary School to sustain us through the lingering winter. The Upper classes have been planting seedlings along with their teachers, Jorie MacLeod and Steven Bechtel, with parent Bonnie Wodin of Golden Yarrow Landscape Design.

Soon after February vacation, as winter winds howled, wood from the Clark's saw mill arrived at school. The following Wednesday evening parents and children met with Jorie's husband, builder Jim Bonham, and two large ladder-like constructions emerged.

Within days, questions and equipment began to pour into the school. Using donated six-packs and lights, each "uppers" student has planted either flower or vegetable seedlings. Their excitement has been contagious. Each day small groups of students check their seeds. They have been amazed to see how quickly...or how slowly...they germinated.

Growing the seedlings, or bedding plants, is one dimension of Greening the School. In addition to the "hands-on" learning of working with the plants, students record their observations taking daily measurements of their growing plants and recording their progress in their Plant Journals. They experience being scientists.

The horticulture project has also blossomed into experiments with growing things in the classroom itself. Led by Upper South teacher, Jorie MacLeod, students are observing germinating seeds, dissecting seeds and more. Each child will be encouraged to create a plant experiment at home and report back to the group.

We are, however, not growing our plants in a vacuum. Periodically Bonnie comes in and leads the class in a creative writing exercise. Some students chose to read their writings aloud. Their portfolios of poetry, prose and illustration are rounding out their association with plants. The program also includes a literature component.

The bedding plants are one aspect of this horticulture program. Other aspects of the program include Sunflower Day, when each member of the school will plant a sunflower seed. When the seeds have grown to small plants they will be taken home or planted at school. The Middle South class will be rooting cuttings of house plants to pot up later in the season.

When the seedlings are mature, we will have a school wide day of celebration. That day many of the seedlings that the Uppers have grown will be planted outside to beautify the school grounds. Some may plant their sunflowers as well. The rest of the seedlings will be offered for sale to the community. The money raised by the seedling sale will fund this project next year.

This year the Uppers have raised: snapdragons, annual asters, zinnias, marigolds, cosmos, several lettuces, broccoli, several types of tomatoes and basil. Keep your eyes open and your garden beds tilled. Heath grown bedding plants are on their way!

## MOHAWK TRAIL REGIONAL SCHOOL SECOND QUARTER HONOR ROLL

The following Mohawk Trail Regional High School Heath students were named to the school's second quarter honor roll.

Seniors: High Honors, Cory Rothwell; Honors, Colin Gruen, Justin Lively

Juniors: Honors, Melissa Gilbert, Lauren Kuehl, Bryony Richter

Sophomores: Honors, Jesse Porter-Henry, Kathleen Tuturice

Freshman: High Honors, Lindi Donelson

Eighth Grade: High Honors, Aaron Woden-Schwartz; Honors, Joseph Almeida, Brendan Lattrell, Maya Rocke, David Smead

Seventh Grade: High Honors, Steven Smead, Maya Donelson

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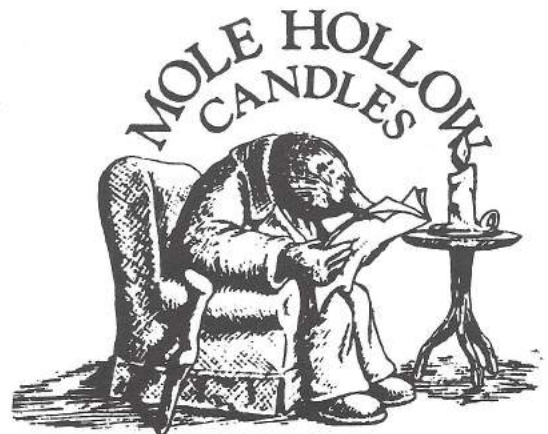
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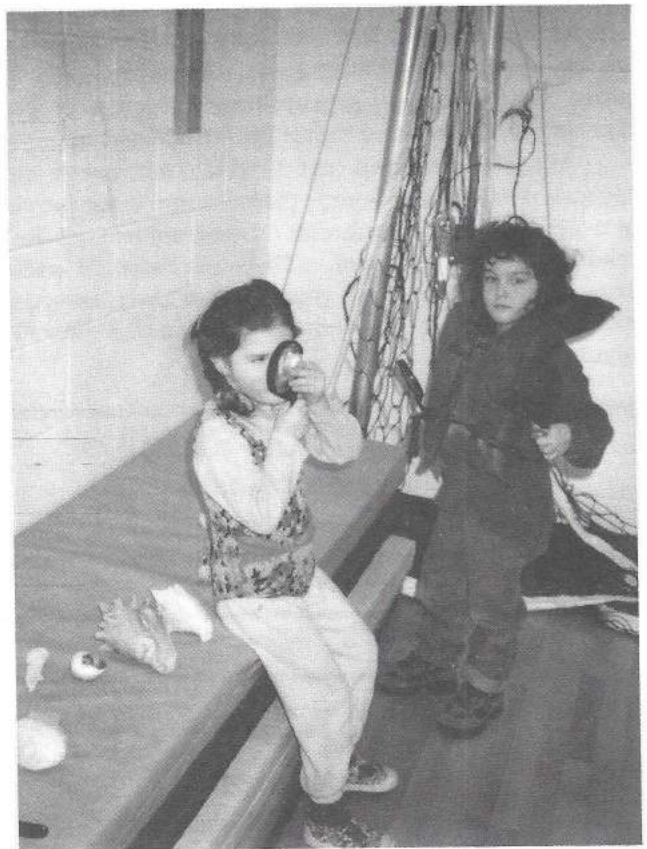
## HEATH PRESCHOOL NEWS

by Suzanne Crawford

Now that the preschool has been settled into its new home at the Heath Elementary School for most of this school year, it is interesting to reflect on what the move has meant. We have certainly been welcomed by everyone, students and staff alike. We have especially appreciated being able to do some cross-age groupings. It is not uncommon for a few older students to drop in as the preschoolers are arriving. Robbie Murphy's 2/3 class often visits in pairs to read aloud to the preschoolers, and they invited us to watch their play, The Boy Captive of Old Deerfield. We have also collaborated in tapping some maple trees and gathering sap, and will invite them to join us for French toast and maple syrup soon. On Valentine's day, several older students helped the preschoolers read their valentines. And, of course, it is fun for the children to see their older siblings, cousins, and friends at work. The entire staff has been wonderfully supportive and helpful in many, many ways. Phil O'Reilly maintains a warm and welcoming vision supporting inclusion of the preschool here. Gail Hall very generously provides snacks for us, and Tim Lively keeps our classroom (and the entire school) in tiptop shape. We have been able to work out scheduling to allow the preschoolers to participate with library and music each week. The children look forward to a story with Wanda Musacchio and the chance to check out books each Wednesday. ON Thursdays, Karla Tandon visits us for about 15 minutes of singing and music/movement activities. Although the art and physical education schedules cannot accommodate a regular time for the preschool, still these teachers have connected with us. Suzanne Taylor took advantage of another class' field trip day to do movement activities with us and has helped us find space to store and use our active play materials (balance beam, mats, indoor slide, etc). Deborah Coffey gave us clay to enjoy and shape, and then fired the children's creations. We always are mindful of the children's health and safety, and fortunately have little cause to call on Robin Booth for her services as the nurse, but it is very reassuring to have her help close by. David Matteson has observed in our classroom, as part of the literacy mentoring process, to encourage dialogue about supporting young children's emerging interest and experimentation with reading and writing. Henry Leuchtman has been more generous with assistance about the computers and technology, as have Stephen Bechtel and Doug Wilkins. (What a gift Henry gives to this lucky school - especially since his eternally cheerful, calm, and competent technological tutoring is only part of his work!) The list could go on and on...With every staff member I have felt a shared interest in each other's work, friendship and respect, and a willingness to help each other. Also, on a professional level, I have found the continuing dialogue of the staff about educational philosophy and practices to be stimulating.

There are a few other miscellaneous pluses of being in the new school. It is a real treat to see children who were in the preschool in years past growing and developing. Our classroom is beautiful and sunny and bright, and it has the absolutely cutest toilet in the world! (Make a point of checking it out next time you visit the school.) We've been able to have a classroom pet here, and are enjoying Cuddles, our guinea pig. We can sometimes take part in special programs. And finally, the children's transition to kindergarten will be very smooth.

The Community Hall was a much loved home for the preschool for many years with many wonderful aspects. Its classroom area was very spacious, allowing room for active play such as using our big riding trucks more easily. (Isn't it funny how little bodies take up more space than bigger ones!) Our class this year has been small, easing the transition to the smaller classroom at the school. It was also great to have the kitchen right there, both for the ease of cooking projects and for a safe place to set projects that needed close supervision. It was a treat to be able to use the upstairs ballroom for active play on rainy days. Also, the outdoor climbing structure was just right for young children. We will be very grateful to have more playground equipment at the new school later this Spring. Active play is essential for young children as they develop their coordination and strength for climbing and balancing. In light of all the work being done at the Community Hall this winter, though, we feel luck to have moved into our new classroom.



PRETEND DAY AT THE "BEACH"  
(Photo by Suzanne Crawford)



## LIBRARY LINES

by Laurie Wheeler Burrington

Recently the preschoolers have enjoyed cross country skiing, a pretend day at the beach in mid-winter, learning about feelings and health, maple sugaring activities, and looking for signs of Spring. We had a validation visit by two observers from the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs as part of the process of re-accreditation, and we should get word about the accreditation decision later this Spring.

Michelle Howe, who has most generously volunteered her time with the preschool for the past two years, is beginning a new job. We will miss her hard work and her cheerfulness. To celebrate her gift of friendship to us all, the children decorated a sweatshirt with hand prints and a cake with colored frosting. Our gratitude to Michelle is even deeper than the beautiful frosting job!

Pre-registration for the 1997-98 school year will begin soon. All young children who are either 3 or 4 years old by August 31, 1997 are eligible to attend. I will send a letter to all families that I know about with eligible children, but please feel free to contact me if you know of any children I may have missed. Also, please call me if you would like to arrange for a visit to see our program. You can reach me at the school at 337-5307 or at home at 339-4265.



**HAMMERING IN THE TAP FOR MAPLE SUGARING**  
(Photo by Suzanne Crawford)



**TASTING THE MAP SAP**  
(Photo by Suzanne Crawford)

Hmmm, notes and happenings from the library this month.

In a small town we are all operating within tight budgets and tight spaces. In preparation for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting the library has prepared its budget request and has requested an additional 4 hours for the Library Assistant to help keep up with increased workload and a healthy circulation, and an increase of \$500 for the book budget. For a number of years we have "level funded" and this year found ourselves almost not meeting state requirements for obtaining state funding. Losing state funding would mean a decrease of approximately \$1,600 from the library. Well aware of the Town's financial status we do not ask for these increases frivolously. We ask that you please show your support for your library and come vote at Annual Town Meeting!

Both National Library Week and National Volunteer Week are April 14-April 19. So stop by to help us celebrate two treasures, volunteers and your library! We will have a reading and celebration on Monday evening the 14th.

In May we will begin an artist of the month (or two months) art display. Our first artwork will be that of Frederick Burrington. If you are interested in displaying your artwork in future months let me know.

The Friends of the Library will be having their annual Memorial Day Bake Sale. Good food, (you know how these folks bake!), and a good cause, as the money goes to the Friends and eventually into our libraries. The goodies also give you energy for all of those Saturday morning errands!

We have a number of new books and books on tape thanks to donations and purchases.

Work on the Library's long range plan is beginning. Input from the community would be helpful, and we will have a suggestion box in the library.



**PRETEND DAY AT THE "BEACH"**  
(Photo by Suzanne Crawford)



## MIKE PETERS A FULL LIFE IN A SHORT TIME

by Joanne Fortune

Mike had a compassionate, kind, caring and generous nature. He had a silly side and made us laugh. We'd sit on our porch and listen to his many stories, losing our breath with giggles.

Heath held a special place in his heart, and he felt personally responsible for us. Someone once asked him if he ever wanted to live anywhere else. Mike became introspective and poetic, "I love Heath and would never think of living elsewhere. This town is a paradise for kids." He had a huge heart and derived great pleasure in selflessly helping others. If he saw someone pushing a bicycle up a hill, he'd stop, toss the bike into his truck and deliver bike and rider home. When cows strayed from their pasture and the farmer struggled to lead them home, Mike stopped, had a good laugh, then tied them to his truck and "drove" them back to their field.

When our shallow well went dry we discovered floating rodents. Mike came to our rescue. Barefoot, he climbed down a ladder to the bottom of the well, pumped out the cold water with the decomposed animals and troweled plaster between the well tiles all the way to the top. He scattered two garbage bags of returnable cans in the ditch along the road for our son, Cabe, to find and redeem at the store. "Don't ever tell him," he whispered in his husky voice. He gave Cabe a CB radio and every night for two months, Jack Rabbit called Electrolyte to ask how his day was and to wish him a good night.

Mike was generous. In his business, he "carried" credit accounts way beyond the 30-day grace period. He deeply cared about people's hardship. Known as the "guy who gave me candy", many of the children of our school each wrote a story about Mike. The common thread running through the memoirs was "Whenever I went into the store, Mike would give me a piece of penny candy", "I liked him a lot", "he was a very good man" and, most of all, "I miss him very much".

Mike took monthly aerial photographs of the Heath School construction. He paid for the air fare, the film and the processing. He very much wanted to see those photographs displayed on the walls of our new school.

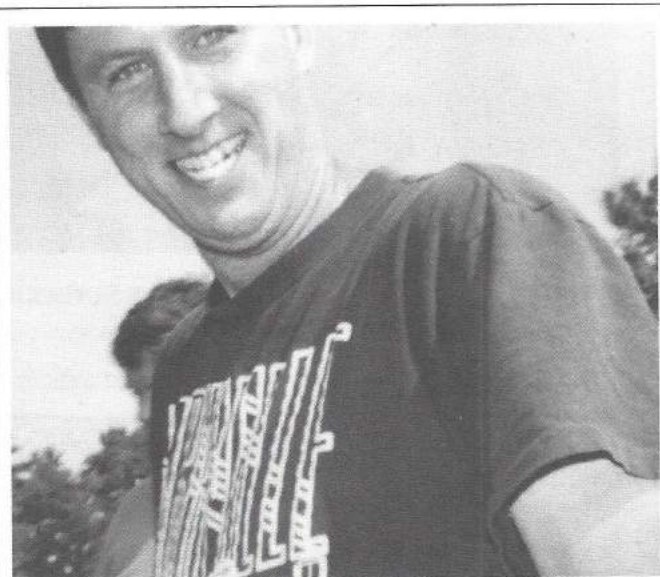
Beneath the gruff, teasing and sometimes callous personality, Mike was sensitive. When Tigger died, Mike buried him by his flagpole and set an engraved granite marker. He told me he was so heartbroken his mom had to take over at the store. When we camped and fished

with him, we were surprised to learn that he could not eat fish the day he caught them. "It's just too soon". Losing his very close friend Doug last August took a lot out of Mike. He spent many Autumn afternoons at Doug's grave, stricken with grief.

Mike dreamed of living in his tent on the top of the hill behind Giard's sugarhouse. "I want to live in the woods by myself like a pioneer." He planned to run his television on his generator and install a doorbell at the bottom of the hill so he could shuttle visitors. I joked about needing another tent for his pool table. He was in his element fishing and could catch trout with his hands. He'd grab them and throw them onto the bank for me to slide onto a forked stick.

I struggle with why I hurt so deeply with his passing. I know he's peaceful and well now. But I miss him terribly. I keep expecting his phone calls, his truck to pull into our yard. He made me laugh and he broke the monotony of life. He'd call us, "I have a couple steaks, do you have charcoal?" I'm making cookies, come on over to help". Or he'd show up ready to fish or go for a ride. He loved an adventure.

Mike was a very special guy. The different facets to his personality allowed for many varied friendships. He had the rare ability to laugh at himself. He knew how to have fun, he loved to tease and his smile made his eyes sparkle. I know that wherever he is, he is barefoot, his hands are clasped in front of him, and he has that sideways grin on his face with that mischievous look in his eye.



MIKE PETERS - AUGUST 1996  
(Photo by Cabe Delisle)

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SKETCH BY JACK CABLE

## IN PRAISE OF NETTLES

by Paul Brouthers

When I was about ten years old walking home one spring afternoon, I came upon what I thought to be a patch of wild spearmint and greedily shoved a tender stem into my mouth. Within seconds I know the error of my ways, and to this day cannot forget my introduction to the infamous stinging nettle.

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is one of the first herbs to brave the chill of late March. As soon as the snow is gone I look for the emergence of its rugose shoots. After a few days of spring sunshine, the nettle is off and running.

One must wear sturdy gloves when handling the fresh plant, for even at this tender age the nettle can give a nasty sting. The tiny hairs along the plant's stem inject minute amounts of formic acid at the slightest touch. Harmless, but very painful.

When the shoots are about six inches in height, they are at their best for eating. They can be prepared simply by steaming for a minute or two, and served with a little butter or lemon juice. (Cooking or drying destroys the stinging property.) By keeping the nettle cut, you can assure a fresh supply of young shoots throughout the season. However, as may happen in the business that is spring, if the nettle outgrows its tender youth, all is not yet lost. Older leaves and stems may be chopped and simmered in chicken stock for a wonderfully healthful and delicious broth. Try adding a little onion and celery. In Scotland, chopped nettles are made into dumplings and cooked in broth.

All season long, nettles can be cut, hung to dry and used alone or as a base for any number of delicious herbal teas. Nettle tea on its own is rather bland and green tasting, not unlike green China tea. With a little spearmint or lemon balm it is a wonderful hot tea on a cool spring evening. Or try it iced after a morning of weeding in the hot spring sun.

Nettle's uses and virtues seem mythic. It is high in iron and other minerals and has been used as a tonic and "blood purifier". It is a folk treatment for arthritis. The word "urtification" derived from its genus name, refers to the process of deliberately stinging oneself with fresh nettle stems. I do not know if there is some scientific principle at work here or if the pain of the sting makes one forget the pain of the arthritis; but some swear that it works.

As an herb with strong astringent (drying) properties, nettle has been used for internal bleeding, mucous discharges of the respiratory tract, and for diarrhea and dysentery. It also has a reputation for being useful in urinary and kidney infections.

Nettle also has a following as a prophylactic for the symptoms of hay fever and ragweed allergies. It is suggested that a cup of nettle tea or several capsules of dried herb be taken daily beginning several weeks before the onset of the allergy season and continuing until it's end.

Nettle fiber has been made into cloth. It is strong and enduring, and was used in Northern Europe before the introduction of flax.

Nettle is also one of the botanical preparations promulgated by Rudolph Steiner, used by biodynamic gardeners as a compost starter and enlivener of the soil. It is said to help plants growing near it to get the maximum nutrition they can from the soil. As a companion plant it is said to increase the vigor and flavor of potatoes, increase the potency of essential oils in such plants as lavender, rosemary and sage, and to repel aphids and a variety of moths.

Of course nettle is a bit of a thug and many would never consider planting it. We keep a patch of it in a shady corner and it is not difficult to keep in bounds. It runs underground like mint, but can be easily pulled or kept in check by mowing. The alternative is to find a patch in the wild. It is a denizen of waste places, once cultivated ground and roadside. (Do not consume any herb found growing along the roadside.)

Dried nettles can also be purchased in any store that has a selection of dried herbs. But half of the fun of eating from the wild is locating and identifying the harvest. So I encourage you to get out there with a good field guide and find one of the treasures of the spring countryside. Who knows what else you may discover. Just don't mistake the nettles for spearmint!

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# WILD RAMBLINGS

by **BILL LATTRELL**

## A PLACE WHERE HUMAN AND NATURAL HISTORY MEET

Like most wooded areas in our community, stonewalls are a permanent feature of the landscape in the forest near my house. These stonewalls, constructed of fieldstone and years and years of stubborn Yankee sweat and labor are a marvel to behold. The once margined pasture lands, creating physical barriers to sheep and cattle, keep them in their proper places, as well as demarking the boundaries of individual property ownership. Today most of these stonewalls serve little function, other than long standing boundary markers. As farmed land turned to forest these endless structures became an artifact of a time when people hand carved the landscape utilizing only the materials available from the land. While many of us have worked rebuilding a section of a stonewall here and there, few can imagine the great effort given, one heavy stone at a time, by generations of men, women, and draft animals in the laying of these stonewalls. If one examines a stonewall closely, the fortitude, dedication and muscle of the effort is inscribed in each ten foot section.

Although they were never intended to be, these man-made wonders are now an integral part of the natural world. The rocks in the stonewalls catch the warm sun and hold the heat into the cool evening, serving as good nesting areas during summer months for many small critters. The many crevices found between the stones provide good hiding and escape, as well as a handy place to store food for many of these same animals. Hedgerows, comprised of trees that are much older and larger than the trees of the surrounding landscape, provide a definitive edge that is rich in food, cover, and escape habitat. Some of these trees are as old or older than the stonewalls, reminding the observer that human lifespan is dwarfed in comparison.

There is a very large red oak tree along one of these old stonewalls in the woods near my home. This red oak is between four and five feet in diameter and about 90 feet tall. The tree acted as a corner boundary between two properties and so was preserved as a readily identified object for generations to come. Judging from its size the tree was already quite sizable by the time that property boundaries were deemed necessary. It still remains as a visible marker, some two hundred years later.

This old red oak is about two hundred and fifty to three hundred years old. It shows the age of time. Some of its lower branches, dead for many years, reach lifeless out into the surrounding space, still able to resist the forces of gravity. Much of the upper portion of the tree is vibrant with new growth, leaf and acorns. The tonnage of acorns that this tree still produces every other year or so is unfathomable. Rusted barbed wire, buried about a foot and a half in to the scarred trunk with broken ends emerging from the bark, is a reminder of some long past labor of hands trying to eke out a living from the landscape.

This corner of landscape where the giant oak and the old stonewall converge provide a quiet place where, at the end of a brief journey, I often stop to sit and contemplate the day. With my back against the moss covered bark, I usually position myself so that I can look along hundreds of feet of gray and green lichen covered stone. It is a place where the natural world and human effort meet, a place where human history and natural history are complementary rather than competitive.

I have returned to this special place many times. Sometimes I sit there just long enough to rejuvenate a few tired muscles, and sometimes I sit there long enough to sort out the thoughts of my latest journey. But never do I sit there without thinking of long ago chiseled muscle and calloused hands building a wall where the natural world and the human world converge. It's a place where I can look into the past while reflecting on the present. What a wonderful place to be!

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## HEATH FAIR NEWS

By Robert Gear

Mike Peters, who served as President of the Heath Agricultural Society from 1989 through 1996, passed away on February 13. During his tenure the Fair experienced a time of growth and innovation for which Mike was directly responsible. His unique energy and progressive vision of the Fair were an inspiration to all of us who worked with him and we want to retain this energy.

At our March 19 meeting we discussed an appropriate memorial tribute to Mike. Several options were discussed and the following motions were carried. An annual prize will be awarded in Mike's name for a special photography class to be judged in the Exhibit Hall. This prize will be awarded for the best photo taken on the fairgrounds during any fair in any previous year.

A tree will be planted near a memorial bench with a plaque at one of Mike's favorite spots. Possibly we may have a dedication service.

One of Mike's favorite fair features was the fireworks display, so we have arranged to have a special big scale display for this year's fair.

The fair is entering a new phase with an emphasis on maintenance. We will focus on repairing the cattle and sheep barns and continue to renovate the original green barn near the silo. This building is the heart of the fair, built by volunteer labor when the fair moved to its present site predating everything else on the grounds.

The kitchen is being updated and the workshop area started last year is being finished. Eventually we want to paint the barn to match the silo and complete the new fence. Bonnie Woden is planning to plant flowers and shrubbery in this area as well.

The Agricultural Society wants to encourage anyone interested in participating in the fair to come to our monthly meetings. Nearly all the maintenance is dependent on volunteers, and there is never enough help. If this is something you have thought about doing you are welcome to participate in any way you can.

I want to personally thank all of the people who consistently show up throughout the year to help with projects: Ed Croteau, Eric Sumner, Dave Freeman, John Henry, Bradley, Harold and Shirley Tombs and Carroll Stowe. If I have omitted anyone's name, please accept my

apologies. Paul Ferretti started to help with the mowing last season and has been a big help. We really appreciate all of the people who show up year after year at fair time to fulfill their varied and useful roles.

A chief source of income for the Agricultural Society is the revenue we generate by winter storage of boats, farm machinery, vehicles and other items. This money is increasingly important and pays for much of our maintenance throughout the year.

Storage fees are \$25 per item for farm implements and tractors and \$50 for anything else. Checks are to be made out to the Heath Agricultural Society and paid to me at the time items are brought in or before.

No storage vehicles may come onto the grounds without prepayment. Most of the people who use winter storage are repeat customers and a pleasure to deal with; however, each year a few unpaid items are brought in and taken out. This is unfair to those who have paid. The Agricultural Society has moved to have unauthorized vehicles or farm equipment towed at the owner's expense. A written contract has to be completed for everything that comes in.

Storage items may come in anytime after Labor Day and must be out by May first.

The fairgrounds is a beautiful and an under utilized facility; the Agricultural Society would like to see more people taking advantage of it. Anyone who wants to rent the grounds for a family reunion, wedding, corporate picnic or any social function may call me at 337-4844.

One area in which we want to expand is the involvement of children. To this end we are donating a packet of summer squash seeds to each child in the school system. Children who grow these seeds are invited to enter their produce in a special class in the exhibit hall.

This year we are emphasizing a class that was started several years ago in memory of past president Ken Crowningshield. This is a special \$25 prize awarded to any Heath child exhibiting a calf of purebred breed. Details will be found in the premium book.

Monthly meetings of the Agricultural Society are held at the school on the second or fourth Thursday of the month. Exact dates will be posted in the West County News and will vary. Our next meeting is on April 17. Please feel welcome to come and participate, voice your opinions, share your ideas and lend a hand. Thank you.



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## A TOWN NURSE FOR HEATH

by Susan M. Gruen, RNC., MPH  
Heath Health Task Force Member  
Board of Health

Over the last few months, the Heath Health Task Force has worked feverishly to compile information on the health needs for the town of Heath. Years ago, so many that I don't wish to count, Sheila Litchfield, Sharleen Moffatt and I worked through Franklin County Home Health Care as Visiting Nurses for the Town of Heath. Over the years, this position was eliminated as well as the position of Town Nurse. It is interesting to note that at present, no town has a town nurse. Many organizations have developed programs that could take care of a few patients and families over the years. With the many government programs making deep cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, these services have been severely wounded or worse yet, eliminated. Many elders in our own communities have been left stranded, without assistance from families, unable to identify programs that can assist them, or find necessary transportation to receive the care they need. Still, others rely on the emergency room for acute care, when in reality, preventive type assistance would have eliminated the visit in the first place. Health care systems can no longer afford, nor justify long stays in the hospital for recuperation. Families are already stretched to the limit, caring for their children, themselves and now their elders, plus trying to make a living with both family members working full time.

The questionnaire that was distributed to 278 families in Heath clarified many issues that families are not only concerned about for themselves, but for their neighbors. The 38% return rate was an amazing response to this appeal. I would like to take this opportunity to share just a small portion of the information that we received.

Let me first start out saying that over 90% of the families supported a Town Nurse. They identified many areas in which they would use the services that a nurse could offer, including, immunization up dates, blood pressure clinics, vision and hearing screenings, first aide course, smoking cessation programs, parenting skills and physical exams. One outstanding concern was for home visits. I can speak from past experience, home visits would be beneficial. Here, many health risks can be identified before any emergency intervention is called upon. Our Police, and Fire Department and EMT's are being stretched too thin. Ask any volunteer, they would prefer that people get preventative care before any tragedy occurs that calls for their assistance. Prevention is still the best cure. The town nurse can evaluate a person's health risks, make appropriate referrals to their health care practitioner or other organization that will assist the patient or family in securing the necessary care needed. It isn't just the elderly that need the assistance of the town nurse but the chronically informed/terminally ill and the overly burdened families of Heath.

The emergency room was used frequently by the people of Heath for many and varied reasons. Forty three percent of the people using the emergency room used it more than twice a year! Of those who used the ER, 25% were inappropriate, and 32% were for non-emergency care. Many, if not all of these visits, could have been handled or prevented by a town nurse. When you consider the time spent driving down to Greenfield for care (if you have transportation), the waiting time and the cost for care, compared to receiving the care by the town nurse, there is no comparison.

Visiting Nurses must now comply with even stricter rules that regulate the visits they can cover. "Skilled Nursing Care", has been redefined and with the present cuts to Medicare, eliminates many of the visits that were previously covered when we visited the residents of Heath. Nursing care is in a "Critical Mode". People and families needing nursing care are denied assistance because the rules have changed, the need hasn't!

True, there are many health care providers in the surrounding towns. Many were originally developed to include the needs of West County. They are now private health care centers which see patients under their health insurance plan or they may or may not accept fee for service. Health Links are for residents who either lack insurance or have minimal insurance. Their care is available for those able to get to Mohawk High School, and usually on a one time visit.

I ask you all to come to town meeting and ask questions about hiring a town nurse if you still are not convinced. The proposal requests the Town to raise and appropriate \$7,000 which will cover a registered nurse for 6 hours a week, to care for the health needs of the town. A small price for Health care. Our committee will continue to seek financial assistance to lower the cost through any means possible. We hope with the approval of this presently unique, but very old idea, that we can present this information to other towns, in the hope of creating a West County District Nurse. I know if this happens, many people will sleep more soundly knowing that their family and their neighbors are healthier and safer at home. The Police Department, Fire Department and EMT's will not be called out for tragedies that could have been prevented.

A special thank you to the members of the committee, whose help and passion make this proposal possible, Sheila Litchfield, Robin Booth, Sharleen Moffatt, Cathy Tallen and Karen Moore.

 Frederick M. Burrington      Artist  
Drybrush Watercolor  
Pen and Ink Drawing  
Commissions Taken  
Rt. 8A, Charlemont, Ma. 01339 (413) 337-4426



## FRCOG - FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

by D. F. Howland

A new acronym is likely to become part of our lexicon if the new regional concept of local governments banding together to share services is supported by voters this Spring. If voted in by 14 of the 26 towns in the compact, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments will become effective July 1, 1997 and the old Franklin County Government will go out of existence. In Heath the Annual Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 10, at 9 AM in the Community Hall; the article pertaining to this matter will read as follows:

To see if the town will vote to accept the Charter establishing the Franklin Regional Council of Governments as proposed by the Franklin Regional Charter Commission for the purpose of providing regional municipal services pursuant to Chapter 151 of the Acts of 1996, Section 567, as amended, or take any other vote or votes in relation thereto.

How has this come about? For one thing the Legislature began to move towards the elimination of county government as far back as 1985 when the County Charter Procedures Act (Chapter 34A) gave every county except Barnstable County the power to adopt a charter or to amend an existing charter. Franklin County tried to create a charter in 1988 and in 1992, but efforts failed for lack of support by the towns and their selectmen. Last year Chapter 151 (see article language) gave Franklin County the opportunity to create something unique because our group of 26 towns seemed to have a viable organization of municipal services. It is quite possible the other county governments in the State will be disbanded. The State has taken over jails, Registry of Deeds and Court Houses leaving very little for the Counties to do, except in Franklin County. We have a range of mutually beneficial community services - engineering, purchasing, health insurance, planning and human services. So special legislation was passed that created a Charter Commission to come up with a plan. The result is the FRCOG.

County government in Massachusetts has never been strong whereas town government and home rule have been the dominant force in the State since the days of the Massachusetts Bay Company established in 1629 by King Charles I. This charter provided for a General Court (legislature) with latitude to govern their affairs so long as their laws did not conflict with the laws of England. While this arrangement appeared to be delegating colonial authority by the King the reality was that the idea of self government was born. Subsequently towns were formed by the Legislature each with their own town meetings that gave rise to local by-laws and regulations. Thus the strong and direct relationship between the Legislature and the towns. Franklin County was first mentioned on June 24, 1811 when it was set off from Hampshire County. There are now 14 counties in

the State. Counties were a creature of the Legislature and were given specific and limited duties. In recent years organizational changes and improved communication capabilities have enhanced State/town relationships thereby speeding the demise of the intermediary county government.

In July 1996 Chapter 151 was passed. By September towns were notified about the Charter Commission and asked for appointments. The Commission was made up of a selectman or appointee from each town (26) plus the three County Commissioners for a total of 29. Two subcommittees were established - a structural or organizational committee and a finance committee. Dave Howland was named by Heath to represent its interests and Chuck Mackie was an alternate. They served on the Structural Committee. There was doubt that a finished product could be readied in time for town meetings in the Spring of 1997, but the Commission worked hard, met often and the work was completed.

Briefly the changes are:

Towns will voluntarily participate in the FRCOG.

Town meetings will vote the group's budget. Heretofore the budgets came through on Cherry Sheets.

Costs are allocated on the basis of core services plus fees for optional services. Overall costs are reduced.

A Council of up to 26 members, one per town is similar to the present structure. Members can be selectmen or a selectman's appointee. It has broader powers than before.

The Executive Committee has been changed from three Commissioners to two appointees by the Council, two elected at-large and the Director of the Planning Board - five members in all. Thus, there is more direct responsibility/involvement by the towns and Planning Board, an important element in the area.

The overall result of these changes will enable Heath to have more of a say in regional services and development. Our costs for county government have gone down over the last three years from the \$8,000 range to \$5,774 for FY 97. Under the new arrangement our costs are the same for FY 98, but all the other communities will see a drop in costs. This was due to a new (and reasonable) formula to bring greater equity to the distribution of costs.

The Charter Commission voted 19 to 3 to adopt the FRCOG. Please turn out on May 10 to cast your vote.

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## SELECTMEN'S REPORT

by Eileen A. Tougas

Yes, believe it or not, Spring has arrived! Perhaps it will seem more like a reality once the snow has melted away. At this point in time everyone is looking forward to freeing themselves from the bonds of winter entrapment. Soon we will be able to stow away our warm winter jackets, mittens and boots and enjoy the gifts of sunshine, warmth and new life that color our world in Spring.

Hopefully you have taken the time to look over the proposal for the management of the Shapiro land. The BOS believe that this is a middle ground approach and complies with Mr. Shapiro's wishes concerning the land he donated to the town.

An information meeting on the Shapiro land proposal was held at the Community Hall on Saturday, March 22, since it will be included for adoption on the annual town meeting warrant on May 10. Please see a follow-on article on the Shapiro land proposal elsewhere in this issue of the Heath Herald. Additional copies of the proposal may be obtained from our Town Coordinator, Janice Boudreau.

Budget hearings for the FY 98 are drawing to a close. Many town departments requested level-funding, however, there are some departments that are finding it necessary to request increases due to cost, wages, activity and/or equipment.

There have been many questions surrounding the FY 98 Mohawk Trail Regional School District budget and the results of this are yet to be determined. On March 12, 1997, the MTRSD School Committee voted not to accept the proposed budget or certify the assessment to the towns until firmer figures were available. To accomplish this all eight member towns had to agree to waive the MA General Law 45-day notification regulation. This would allow more time for the School Committee to approve the budget, schedule an MMAC meeting, and then have another public meeting on April 9. The towns would then have a certified assessment within seven days.

It was requested that the selectmen in each of the eight member towns decide if they would support the waiver or not. The results of this vote had to be reported to Albert J. Cormier, Superintendent of Schools, by no later than 9 AM, on March 18. Due to the urgency of this request the BOS held an emergency meeting on March 17 and voted unanimously to approve the waiver. We were notified that one of the towns voted not to approve the waiver, therefore, the School Committee had to certify assessments to the towns on Thursday, March 27.

Susan Gruen stated that the Health Task Force Committee was pleased with the response to the health survey that was mailed out to town residents. The results of this survey indicated that 90% of the returns were in favor of having a Town Nurse to administer and care for the people of Heath. It is the committee's recommendation that a part-time (6 hours a week) registered nurse be hired at an annual cost of \$7,000. The BOS wishes to thank the members of this committee, Susan Gruen, Sheila Litchfield, Cathy Tallen, Charleen Moffatt, Robin Booth, and Karen Moore for the time, energy and talent they have dedicated to this endeavor.

The BOS has been advised that there is no legal authority for the towns of Charlemont and Hawley to own land in Heath, therefore, prior to further action to acquire the land from Mrs. Constance Burrington and/or cap the landfill, the state legislature must pass special legislation. The three towns have voted to seek the special legislation, which has presently been drafted and signed by Selectmen of the three towns. The BOS met and discussed this matter with Senator Andrea F. Nuciforo on February 28, 1997 and he agreed to sponsor this legislation. He expected that this would be done, hopefully, during the current legislative session.

After several delays, construction for the Handicapped Access Project at the Community Hall is near completion. Unfortunately, it may take anywhere from four to eight weeks for the elevator to be delivered.

Meanwhile, construction has commenced at the Town Hall. The BOS has been assured that because this work is less extensive than that of the Community Hall, it would be completed in a timely manner. We are aware that this construction will cause some inconveniences, and ask for your indulgence.

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## SHAPIRO LAND UPDATE

by Rollo Kinsman

We want to thank all those who came to the Shaprio land meeting on March 22. The BOS proposal was presented and explained, questions asked and positions stated.

Mr. Robert Connor came forward to claim that 8.6 acres of land shown on the Shapario Land Map as belonging to the Town of Heath actually belongs to him. We have asked Town Council to investigate this claim and determine its validity.

We will proceed with our proposal for the John Shapiro Park and are considering other areas of the Shapiro land that are suitable for location of a possible future nature center, etc., in the event the original area is not available.

There were a few questions asked that did not get answered in full at the March 22 meeting.

**Question 1.** Does land reserved for recreation purposes have the same degree of protection from diversion to other purposes as does land reserved for conservation?

**Answer.** Yes, the same procedures are required for placing land in and getting it out of both Conservation and Recreation. The difference is that facilities such as a nature center or a visitors' center with rest rooms can be built on recreation land but not on conservation land.

**Question 2.** What happened to the "home rule" argument (against placing the land in conservation)?

**Answer.** The BOS proposal (to set aside a small portion of the land for recreation and place the rest in conservation) does not meet all objections to losing "home rule", however, those home rule advocates who expressed an opinion to us felt the proposal was a reasonable compromise and one they would support so that we could move forward with the Shapiro Park.

**Question 3.** Do all residents of Massachusetts have equal access to the Shapiro land as do Heath residents if the land is put in conservation under State regulations?

**Answer.** Yes.

**Question 4.** What about the portion set aside for recreation purposes?

**Answer.** The same is true, however, a user fee, even a significant fee could be charged non-Heath residents to recoup total construction and operation costs of a nature center built on recreation land. It would be much more difficult to impose a non-Heath resident fee for the portion of land in conservation.

**Question 5.** How would we pay for building a nature center or any other facilities?

**Answer.** We are not proposing to build or fund anything at this time. We are only asking that a small parcel of land be held out of conservation so that some day, if a grant becomes available, or someone donates funds and volunteers provide the labor, and the citizens of Heath vote to do so, we would be able to build a nature center or campground or some other recreation facility that would increase the enjoyment of the park for all.

We will keep you up-to-date on the Shapiro land claim dispute and any other pertinent information prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

## DOG LICENSES

The Board of Health and the Town Clerk have started a campaign to make sure all Heath dogs are licensed. A current rabies certificate is a requirement for purchase of a dog license. Therefore, full compliance assures some protection to citizens from the rabies that is rampant in the wild animal population and is a hazard to our pets and ourselves. It is also Massachusetts law that cats must be immunized. However, since there is no license requirement, compliance is the owner's responsibility.

A letter went out to all Heath households in early April to inform you of the rabies clinic taking place on April 12 and to warn dog owners that Heath intends to enforce the dog license law. Dog owners have until June 1 to purchase a dog tag and license without penalty. After June 1 there will be a \$25 fine in addition to the cost of the license (\$3 for males & spayed females, \$6 for unspayed females). Dog tags and licenses may be purchased at Sawyer Hall Monday through Thursday, 9 AM to 3 PM, or via mail. Send in the rabies certificate and a check. The Town Clerk will return the certificate along with the license and tag.

The Town Clerk will send out another mailing in mid-May to remind owners who have not purchased a dog tag that they have only a short time to do so before they are subject to the \$25 fine. The Board of Health and the Town Clerk intend to continue efforts to go after delinquent dog owners after June 1, so PLEASE get a current rabies certificate and purchase the license. It will save us all much trouble and angst.

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## HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT REPORT

by Jack Cable, Superintendent

SAND, SAND, SAND - has been the ongoing weather related road maintenance this winter. We haven't had the usual snow accumulations - one, two, four inches which required plowing and the freezing rain has been our worst headache. Our sand and salt account is over budget and winter is still a factor.

The December 7 and 8 storm was our worst as it hit during a school day. We tried to maintain the school bus routes, but finally went ahead of the buses on their routes in the AM. Unfortunately for us, school was dismissed early - at the height of the storm. I went over to the school to try to get the staff to hold releasing the children until the roads were better, but to no avail. So we did a repeat of the AM by leading each bus around their routes - plowing and sanding. We had to hook onto one bus three times to pull it up hills (which we had already sanded and plowed). One truck pulled a bus full of children most of the way up Burrington Hill! Although the Heath School staff, in the West County News "praised the bus drivers for getting the children home in spite of impassable roads" - it was the Highway crew that were the real heroes that day!! This kind of activity also limited our job of keeping the roads properly plowed and sanded. In this particular storm, with this type of snow (wet and heavy), we needed to keep up with the conditions, but were busy with the buses. Then we were criticized by the school staff and residents for not clearing the roads in a timely manner. Although the snow was not impossible, this same scenario happened on March 14. School was in session in spite of this writer's objections (also objected on December 7). After the December 7 storm I requested that all buses be equipped with chains. Again, during the March 14 storm, school was let out early - during the worst part of the storm. The Heath Highway crew spent over one hour putting chains on all those buses (loaded with children) at the Highway Garage!

I talked to Bob Clancy about having automatic chains on all buses coming to Heath - written into the new bus contract - it is in the contract. These chains automatically work when activated by a switch on the dash. Many utilities and fuel companies now have these on their trucks.

The transfer station will be accepting plastic containers soon so watch for the announcement and heed the requirements. This will add to the already high rate of recycling in our community. Don't forget the mercury batteries (hearing-aid, photo, etc) - give them to Bud or Cleon for disposal.

The untimely death of Mike Peters has left a large void in Heath as his activities in the store, fair, sugaring, etc. - also the Highway Department which counted on him for plowing, especially in emergencies, and he helped me with weather conditions. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

## HEATH FIRE DEPARTMENT

by Mike Smith, Fire Chief

During the months of January and February vast improvements have been seen in the Fire Department's office. Thanks to the help of a number of individuals the walls and ceiling have fresh paint, the new cabinets have been polyurethaned, and the molding is up. Water and electrical work still need to be done, and an appointment has been made with an electrician to discuss repairs and cost.

In January the department responded to five emergency calls, the most serious of which was a mutual aid call to a Charlemont barn fire. The department spent about five hours pumping water to the site. Other incidents include a mutual aid call to Colrain for a chimney fire, two motor vehicle accidents, a car fire, and one false alarm at the Heath Elementary School.

February saw response to two emergency calls, one, the response to a tragic snowmobile accident, which took the life of a man who had spent his life helping others; the second, a response to a residence in Mohawk Estates for a fire in heating ducts.

All of the new equipment that has been purchased over the past few months has been put on the trucks and is in service. It is hoped to get more 4" supply hose for engines 1 and 2. Right now the department has 2000' and needs at least 1000' more.

A CO detector has been ordered and should arrive soon. This device allows the department to determine levels of CO that are present in buildings. Until now the department has had no means to check for CO. Commonly when a home CO detector sounds, the fire department is called to insure that all occupants are safe, and outside. Now we can test the air and find the source of the problem. The levels of CO will now also be able to be monitored during the overhaul stage of structure fires.

Regular monthly association meetings were held on January 2 and February 6. Regular training meetings were held on January 16, where the department went to the elementary school and went over it with a fine tooth comb, finding the most impressive thing to be the virtual maze in the trusses, and on February 20 where driver training was the subject.

As spring approaches the department will be getting ready for brush fires and other seasonal emergencies.

### HEATH SCHOOL KITCHEN

Selling: Cinnamon Buns (\$5.00/dozen or \$2.50/half dozen)

Oven-Ready Pizza (Cheese--\$6.00; Pepperoni--\$7.00)

All items available frozen; call ahead for freshly-baked.

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## PERCS, PERMITS AND TRANSFERS

### Percolation Tests

Perc testing has been suspended until April except for repairs.

### Building Permits

No building permits were issued this period.

### Deed Transfers

Denise C. and Paul C. Cloutier to James Gleason and Sarah A. Hettlinger, Colrain Stage Road. \$15,000.

Michael G. and Christine L. Cameron to Brian P. Patrick of Chicopee, Shawnee Drive. \$1,100.

Irene W. Mekrut to Mekrut Family Limited Partnership of CT, 1403 Jacksonville Stage Road. No consideration.

Patricia Ann Williamson to Raymond E. Williamson, Jr., of New Canaan, CT, Robert W. Williamson of Stamford, CT, and Roger C. Williamson of Sandy Hook, CT, 124 Long Hill Road. No consideration.

Donald E. Hillman to Richard C. Bishop of Shelburne, Underhill Road and Sumner Stetson Road. No consideration.

Richard C. Bishop to Donald E. Hillman of Colrain, Underhill Road and Sumner Stetson Road. No consideration.

Dominic and Mafalda Musacchio to John J. and Wanda Musacchio, Colrain Stage Road, \$1.

John J. and Wanda Musacchio to Robert R. Carey of Bernardston, Swamp Road and Colrain Stage Road, lot 1. \$1.

Robert R. Carey to John J. and Wanda Musacchio, Swamp Road and Colrain Stage Road. \$1.

Homer V. and Alice M. Bouchard to Commercial Credit Corporation of Springfield, 24 Number Nine Road. \$71,935.

Bruce Goldstein to David H. and Rosemary D. McKinnon of Shelburne, 16 West Main Street. \$60,000.

Lynn E. Perry to Hesselbart-Perry Really Trust, Roland J. Hesselbart and Lynn E. Perry as trustees, Burrington Road. \$1.

Heath Development Corp. to Leonard H. Roberts of Ashfield, Number Nine Road. \$18,000.

Lands Edge Inc. of Williamstown to Robert A. Schultz and Christine E. McClelland of Springfield, Number Nine Road, lots 3 and 4.

Kenneth and Lorraine G. Bishop to Kenneth and Lorraine G. Bishop of Springfield, 12 Wigwam Drive. Less than \$100.

P. Richard Caracciolo to Jean F. Caracciolo, 230 Number Nine Road. No consideration.

Town of Heath to Andrew and Christopher Parker of Springfield, 1 Waterfall Drive, \$1,000.

George H. and Eileen A. Tougas to Daniel L. Tougas, Christine Tougas, Paul H. Baker and Sandra Y.

Baker, all of Chicopee, Mohawk Estates, lots 13 to 17. \$1. Miriam C. Matteotti to Edward Tretheway and Lisa Tretheway of Southbridge, Cheyenne Road, lots 29 and 30. \$3,000.

United Bank of Greenfield to Kyle J. Scott of Turners Falls, Underhill Road, lot 5B. \$3,500.

Kyle J. Scott to Kyle J. Scott and Richard Young of Turners Falls, Underhill Road (also known as Underwood Hill Road), lot 5B, \$1.

## HEATH FIRE DEPARTMENT

by Mike Smith, Fire Chief

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As spring approaches the department will be getting ready for brush fires and other seasonal emergencies.



## LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

by Senator Andrea F. Nuciforo, Jr.

The Legislative Session at the State House is increasingly busy as important issues affecting the residents of Massachusetts are addressed. While the votes in the Senate chamber often grab the headline, some of the most vital work for the Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire District occurs in legislative committees, in informal meetings with other legislators and state officials, and in my work in the District itself.

### School Building Funds

Many school districts around the Commonwealth are struggling with the need to build more modern facilities, to provide programs for students and to transport pupils from distant communities. Over one hundred school building projects currently await state funds for school construction and repair. Many of these projects lie in the Westernmost part of the State.

In spite of this, the Governor's budget proposal calls for a school spending authorization for Fiscal Year '98 which is \$20 million less than was authorized in Fiscal Year '97. An example of the consequences of such a proposed authorization cut was brought to my attention by Garth E. Story, the Superintendent of the Farmington River School District, where a project for a new Elementary School to service children in Otis and Sandsfield ready to go out to bid. Although level funding would allow the project to go forward right away, the school building project would be delayed by the Governor's proposal.

I will work with the Senate leadership and other members to restore level funding for school building construction. Fortunately, the Senate leadership appears unlikely to settle for the low school building budget numbers proposed by the Weld administration. I strongly believe that small towns cannot budget numbers proposed by the Weld administration. I strongly believe that towns cannot be expected to pick up the full tab for the modern facilities children need and deserve, and I look forward to working with Senate President Thomas Birmingham and my Senate colleagues to insure that adequate sources are made available for school construction.

### School Transportation Reimbursement

The Fiscal Year '98 budget will mark a welcome increase in regional school busing reimbursement money. In recent years, the state encouraged towns to form regional school districts, but then cut funds for transporting pupils. Because the Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire District contains many large regional school districts in rural areas containing students who live far apart, the costs of busing are very high.

The Chairman of the state Board of Education has outlined a plan which would increase state funds for student transportation immediately, bringing the state's share of the costs to 100% by Fiscal Year 2000. I support this initiative, and will work in the Senate to assure its passage.



## The Way It Is In The Country

*"If it's old, works well and has a purpose in life,  
don't change it".*

by CARROLL STOWE

### HISTORY AS I WOULD LIKE TO FIND IT

Every day that I travel our deteriorating roads here in Heath I can only wish that the events that took place on these byways had been recorded.

This mishap took place just south of where the Whalen log cabin is on the 8A part of the Herb Stetson place. Ernie Thane and I were chopping corn one Sunday morning. Perhaps this might not have happened if we'd gone to church that morning. I was driving the Thane B John Deere hitched to the Stowe farm Papec one row field chopper.

Smooth as silk was how things were going. As you travel the row you check your travel and then the equipment, the truck side of you then back to your direction. I had momentarily checked the tractor, looked to the chopper back to the B and back to the chopper to see it all afire. All this observing took at the most 20 seconds. The modern day farmer of that era had little thought of a fire extinguisher. That was our problem. Peggy, my wife, had come to tell me that dinner was ready. She turned the car around and saw the fire. She got to the nearest phone and called the fire phone. The fuel tank for this unit was directly over the engine. The small brass fitting feeding the filter bowl had broken and ran gas onto that hot power unit. It was truly unbelievable how rapidly the firemen got there. It will never be known if an extinguisher would have kept the fire out, as the gas would have kept running.

We were able to get the chopper going again but it never really worked as well as it had been that Sunday AM.

My dad had recently had a mild stroke and was not with us that day and I was not anxious to go home and report this set back to him. His personality had vastly been altered since his illness so he was very understanding. I was so relieved even though it was not my fault that the unit caught fire.

There's nothing in that area of North Heath that indicates that such an event ever happened. And in this fast pace of today, it makes little difference.

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## MILESTONES

by Edith Royer

Michael J. Peters, 32, died February 9 as a result of a snowmobile accident. He was the son of Cleon and Teresa (Galipo) Peters. He attended Rowe School and was a 1983 graduate of Franklin County Technical School.

He was owner and operator of the Peter's General Store in Heath. He was the President of the Heath Agricultural Fair for several years. He was a member of the Indian Head Snowmobile Club and he enjoyed maple sugaring.

Survivors besides his parents of Heath are a sister Crystal Griswold of Halifax, VT, a foster brother Edmund Croteau of Heath and a foster sister Sheryl Volego of Chicopee, his grandmother Nora Galipo of Shelburne Falls, four nieces and a nephew, several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Services were held at Smith-Kelleher Funeral home with a Liturgy of Christian Burial at St. Joseph's church. Rev. John Roach officiated. Burial was in the Heath Center Cemetery.

Raymond H. Jackman, of Clear Water Drive, died March 15 at home following a brief illness. He was the son of Helen and Russell Jackman. He moved to Heath in 1988. Besides his mother of Greenfield, he leaves his wife of 25 years, the former Suzanne Cole, a son Michael G. of Heath and a daughter Sandra Heil of Moodus, CT, two brothers, Ronald E. of Enfield CT, and Earl R. of Green-

field, a sister Judith Jackman of Springfield and two grandsons. Services were at Smith-Kelleher Funeral Home. Burial was in West Branch Cemetery in Colrain.

Born January 25, a daughter Katrina Lillian Ruth to Charity Lynne Day and Shane M. Hill of Greenfield, granddaughter of Christine Day of Winchester, NH and Shirley Clark of Greenfield, great-granddaughter of Dorothy Day of Gill, Jim and Dixie Hill of Shelburne and Earle Day of Heath, great-granddaughter of Les and Ruth Brown of Bernardston and Flora Townsend of Greenfield.

Born February 23 in Dublin, Ireland, a daughter Jessica Marie Briona, to Bonnie M. (Cobb) and Joel R. McDonald, granddaughter of Shirley Smead of Greenfield, Randall and Linda Cobb of Heath, Claudette McDonald of Marie, Hawaii and Mel McDonald of Reno, NV, great-granddaughter of Raphaella Dion of France.

## HEATH UNION CHURCH NEWS

by Pastor Colin Lucid

"O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens!" Psalms 8:1.

What a great verse of scripture on which to meditate on during the spring months. We at Heath Union Church are excited about some upcoming events.

On April 17, 18, 19 we will be having a Family Conference. The title is "Does God Care About My Family?". During this three day conference we will be discussing some issues facing our families today. Our guest speaker is author and professor Dr. Richard Seymour. We will meet at 7:30 PM each night at Heath Church. On that Saturday we will also have a potluck supper at the Community Hall at 5:30 PM. All are welcome.

For further information please call Reverend Colin Lucid at the parsonage, 337-5755.

## Shepherd Excavation



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