



HEATH HERALD

Heath's First Newspaper

\$1.00

Volume 29, Number 1

April/May 2007

HEATH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS



Heath Herald

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Heath Union Church News

On February 25, the church membership voted to continue with Phil Grant as pastor. His office hours are Thursdays, 4:00 to 5:50 p.m., and contact numbers are 337-4019 or 413 648-9077.

Our morning worship is at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays with prayer and Bible study on Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. at Dot Sessions' house.

Our Lenten schedule continues, following the Palm Sunday, April 1, celebration, on Maundy Thursday, April 5, with a communion service at 7:00 p.m., the Easter Sunrise service, April 8, at the home of Ruth Corey, and our regular Easter morning worship at 10:00 a.m.

Plans are in the works for a fun night - games and pizza. Contact Richard Gallup, Chair of the Deacons, at 337-5367 for further information.

~ The Deacons

The Heath Herald is a nonprofit newspaper staffed by volunteers and published six times a year. Donations are tax deductible and are greatly appreciated.

THE HERALD DEADLINE FOR THE June/July 2007 issue is May 10, 2007. All articles are the property of the Heath Herald unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Call (413) 337-8594 or E-mail Jane at jdeleu@crockers.com.

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Heath School Happenings

Editor's Note:

We are pleased to present this "Heath School" issue showing, we hope, through the medium of photography the richness our children experience during their school days.

We thank Robin Jenkins and Suzanne Crawford for sharing their photographs with us.

It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

~ Albert Einstein

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We had a talk with Principal Anne Marie Mislak and found out that she's pleased to be here.



A Photograph of My Mother at Age 55

It was, as it turned out, her last Christmas, just days before her 55th birthday. Mom was sitting in her rocking chair, robed and slippered, with her oldest grandson, Skip, at her feet playing with a new truck he'd just unwrapped from the pile of gifts under our Christmas tree.

It was Christmas Day and Mom had recently returned from the hospital where she'd undergone extensive surgery for the cancer that had invaded her body, taking over like a marauding flesh-eating army.

The peaceful look on her face belied the pain she was experiencing. I wondered then, as I wonder still, was she thinking about Christmases past when we were Skip's age? Or of the years spent on this farm where her husband, my Dad, grew up and where she had worked so hard to keep all five of us kids in clean clothes and well fed with hearty homegrown food, where she had interceded for us when a hard-hearted teacher had disciplined us with a ruler or a switch? Or where so often she argued with her mother-in-law, my Grandma? There's a hint of a smile on her face in that photograph and her deep brown eyes display a knowing beyond our knowing.

This mother was beloved by neighbors as well as family; always ready to come to the aid of a friend or a neighbor, always ready to set another plate at the table for a visitor or the minister who came to call at mealtime. My mind goes back to the times when she and I would hitch "Queenie," her sorrel mare, to the sleigh on a wintry Sunday afternoon or to the buggy in better weather, to visit the elderly "shut-ins" always taking with us home-baked-cookies or jam to share.

I remember the brief time she worked during the depression when the WPA(a federal works program) hired local women to make dresses, pants, shirts, and whatever was needed to be given to those in need. It also provided work for the unemployed. (I wonder now how this fit my mother's situation since she hadn't been employed since before she was married and had been a school teacher at the North School)

On payday Mom would stop at Peon's Store next to the Town Hall where she worked and spend a few pennies on a treat for us kids - a bag of root beer barrels (hard candy) . I can still taste them to this day, and I discovered they can still be bought at the Vermont Country Store in Weston, VT.



Aside from the evidence that she has lost much weight, this photo shows no foreboding of her impending death. Her spirit still shines through in her beautiful, loving eyes. Does she know her days are numbered? Is she taking a mental photograph of her beloved family together for the last time until her funeral? I would like to think she's simply savoring her family with all its ups and downs, survivors of disappointments, lost loves, failures at jobs, successes in education, great humor and much laughter and the many assorted friends we brought home to share our family's warmth.

The back of the photo reads:

**Mom Christmas Day, 1952
Born December 31, 1897
Died February 6, 1953**

~ Lois Stetson Buchiane

**Square Dance
Heath
Community Hall**

Friday, April 13, 2007

7-7:30 p.m. for beginners

Dance till 11 p.m.

**Falltown String Band
with
Doug Wilkins calling**

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**To benefit the
Heath Preschool**

*(Editors' Note: It is our general policy not to reprint from local newspapers, however, in this case, we felt that Michael's encomium to Heath belongs here. Reprinted with permission of **The Shelburne Falls Independent**.*

Neighborly Care

Some of our neighbors in Heath decided to throw a baby shower for my wife, Kate, recently. Since we already had a lot of baby clothes and equipment, Kate suggested that in lieu of giving us baby things, if anyone attending the shower wanted to do something for us, it would be helpful to make food we could put in the freezer and heat up during the first week or two with our baby.

Kate wasn't able to attend the shower, as it turned out — instead, she and I were in the hospital, beginning what was to be a long labor and difficult delivery. After a couple of days recovering, she and I and our new daughter Hazel returned home and began finding the shape of our new life. The party had taken place without Kate, but rather than the attendees bringing dishes there, as we had envisioned, they worked out a schedule for bringing us meals at home — sometimes much more than the simple casseroles we expected — over a couple of weeks. This meant a series of visits, welcome opportunities to talk about childbirth and babies and other matters, and in some cases to get better acquainted with people we knew only a little.

Although I have been impressed with the friendliness of Heathans since I moved here a little less than a decade ago, I have been amazed by the generosity and goodwill of the neighbors who have shown up at our door with home-baked bread, daffodils, curry, soups, and the best lasagna I've ever eaten. Kate, having been here only a few years, is perhaps even more moved. Being relieved of the task of feeding ourselves has been a welcome aid to focusing our attention on Hazel, but more nourishing than the food is the sense of being held in the care of a community that stands ready to help, and that welcomes its newest member with genuine warmth. "We're never leaving Heath," Kate said to me.

As extraordinary as this caretaking seems to us, it is in fact nothing particularly unusual for this place. It is also important to note that we have done nothing special to earn this treatment, nor need we have done so. There is a culture of neighborliness underlying the many individual acts of kindness and assistance that go on around here. That culture is something inherited from the past, enacted by those here now, and taught to those newly arrived. In receiving these meals and these visits, as well as other help, Kate and I are also receiving a lesson in how Heathans — and I know this ethic is not limited to Heath — treat people at critical stages of life as well as during periods of crisis or disaster, and we are being confirmed as members of the community that practices such acts of neighborliness.

The effects of the culture of neighborliness are pervasive. The history of neighborly exchange that binds people renders all involved more real to each other, more sympathetic, more known. When we disagree at town meeting, we remember that those with whom we argue are also those on whom we have depended, or may depend on in the future. Surely this accounts, in part, for the thoughtful quality of dialogue that prevails at our meetings. Exchanges of favors and kindnesses stretch across long periods of time, sometimes involving multiple parties; with each act of assistance, the web of mutual obligation is strengthened and social capital is built up.

It is not all touchy-feely, of course. In the culture of neighborliness, matters that are more commonly handled through the impersonal means of the market can sometimes be handled through the informal economy of favors, barter, and gifts, and while such transactions are likely to involve kitchen-table visiting, they nonetheless accomplish real work.

Unfortunately, there are threats to the neighborly ethic. Whereas most people in West County used to work close to home, now most are commuters, and despite the best intentions, people who are not around cannot be of help. What used to be a population of farmers, for the most part, is now far more diverse in its skills and occupations. The broad competence of the farmer — not to mention his or her tools and machines — makes for a useful neighbor in many circumstances. The skills of office workers, photographers, Web developers and writers are also useful, but perhaps apply less often to neighborhood emergencies. Contemporary life is frequently isolating, with attention increasingly devoted to various electronic devices, hectic schedules keeping people hustling from place to place, and more relationships based on far-flung networks rather than proximity. West County remains rich in occasions for bumping into neighbors, but for many people it is all too easy for community life to lose out to the demands of work and household.

Having been the beneficiaries of neighborly care, we are reminded that it will be our turn to offer help at other times, and, having been touched by that care, we will better appreciate what our help will mean to its recipients. Meeting the duties of neighborliness — which, of course, frequently overlap with those of friendship — we will weave small threads into the fabric of community that, frayed though it may in places, is strengthened with every act of caretaking.

~ Michael Wilmeth





Wild Ramblings

Bottle of Summer



By Bill Lattrell

It is an early morning in mid-July during the year 1964. I am sitting on our family lawn with my back against a large white birch tree. I am just finishing the greatest book that I have ever read, and I must admit I am sad that this book has to come to an end. For the first time I have experienced a great writer. For the first time I have been truly moved by the written word.

The book was *Dandelion Wine* by Ray Bradbury. It was the story of a young boy's summer in Illinois in the late 1920s. The book spoke out loud to me in so many different ways. I could identify with the story of a rural family. I could identify with a less complicated era. And although my life seemed a whole lot more chaotic than that of the main character in the story I took great pleasure in identifying with his day-to-day adventures. Much of the main theme of the book is woven around the first harvest of dandelions for his grandfather's immortal dandelion wine. The metaphors employed by Ray Bradbury in this book all rang true with my 12-year-old heart and mind. It would be years before I would be able to appreciate the metaphorical dandelion wine.

About ten years later I find myself walking in an apple orchard in mid-May. A yellow sea of dandelions and a bright blue sky washes the landscape before me. In the middle of this picture there is an older gentleman, wearing blue jeans, bright red suspenders, and a blue, short-sleeved shirt. He is bent over and the woven wooden basket hanging from a broad leather strap around his neck is swinging to and fro in front of his slightly oversized belly. He has a pair of barber scissors in his left hand, and his right hand is busy picking dandelion flower heads. I can see from a distance that he neatly trims each flower head before he drops it into the basket. He literally whistles while he works, and he is smiling from ear to ear.

Since the day I finished the Bradbury book, *Dandelion Wine*, I have been unconsciously seeking this person. He is exactly the right person to complete a chapter in a book that I am constantly writing in my mind. On many nights, fast asleep in the comfort of my bed, I have dreamed about this person and now he is standing right before my eyes.

I walk across the orchard to be near this gentle man. Without lifting his head, and barely missing a beat of his picking and clipping process, he extends his hand and says "My name is Melvin, and it is a glorious day." "Picking dandelions for wine?" I inquire. "Why yes!" he replies. "Would you care to join me?"

For the next two hours we pick dandelions side by side. Melvin trims the stem and green material off the bottom of each flower head with his barber shears, and I, mimicking his actions, trim mine with a small pair of scissors attached to my Swiss Army knife. During the time we spend picking dandelions together Melvin carefully explains the wine-making process to me. Later that day he would boil the flower heads in equal parts of water. After cooling he would add sugar, yeast, a quantity of oranges, and a little ginger. He would let that cook for a while, and then he would siphon off the clear liquid into a five-gallon glass jug and put an air lock on the bottle. A few weeks later he would siphon off the clear liquid again and transfer this to another five-gallon glass jug and reemploy the air lock. Then a couple more weeks after that he would transfer the liquid into quart bottles where it would rest for six to twelve months before it was opened. The wine that was 12 months old would be much better, he explained, but he could never resist opening up a bottle on the first really cold night in front of his fieldstone fireplace with the fire roaring and lighting the room.

I helped Melvin "cook" the dandelions that night. We shared a bottle of last year's wine, and, I must admit, I was surprised at the wine's delicate taste. Neither sweet nor tart, the wine was simply smooth and summer-like. That night Melvin made me an offer. "Come by on the first night that it gets below zero and we'll share a bottle of this year's wine."

It is ironic that Americans spend so much time trying to rid the earth of dandelions. Hundreds of tons of broadleaf herbicides have been utilized, and thousands of hours of time have been spent by man in ridding his "perfect" lawn of this plant. Considered a noxious weed by many, the bitter irony is that the early European settlers brought this plant with them across the ocean to the New World because it was highly prized as an herb used in medical remedies, a green used in salads, and a flower used to decorate the family garden.

It is interesting to note that while many historical botanists think that the dandelion was brought to the New World by European settlers, and is, therefore, an alien plant, there is much evidence of the plant in native American lore, legends, and herbal remedies. It is likely that this plant is (and has been for a very long time) circumpolar.

("Wild Ramblings" continued on page 7)

("Wild Ramblings" continued from page 6)

The dandelion is best known for its bright yellow flower head, which is, in reality, a cluster of flowers each yielding, upon maturity, a seed attached to a parachute-like seed dispersal unit. Strong winds can blow these seeds for miles and miles spreading an individual plant's genetic resources for very long distances.

The dandelion plant has at its base a rosette of leaves. Each leaf is deeply toothed. In fact, the name dandelion comes from the French description of the plant leaf, *dent de lion*, (lion's tooth). Each leaf is "V" shaped in cross section. The plant leaf collects water and drains the water through the "V" channel like a gutter on the eaves of a house. The rosette of leaves all channel water toward the center of the plant where a large taproot holds the plant in the soil. Few other plants enjoy this ready-made, efficient watering system. The taproot can extend up to a foot into the soil. This provides an anchor for this perennial plant that assures the plant will be around from year to year. The large taproot helps the plant to survive drought, flood, fire, and wind. Surely this plant has evolved to outlast us all.

Dandelions can take over large areas of landscape. When in bloom the yellow ocean of flowers dominates the landscape like few other flowers. Summer snowstorms of dandelion seeds can be found cluttering the air on the first windy days of late May and early June.

When used as food, the green leaf can be used in salads and cooked as "greens." It supplies the body with beta carotene, Vitamins B1, B2, B5, B6, B12, C, E, D, as well as biotin, inositol, potassium, phosphorous, magnesium, and zinc. The taproot can be dried and ground and used as a reasonable substitute for coffee. Tonics made from dandelions are said to good for the liver (relieving the liver of jaundice), gallbladder (especially for removing gallstones), and indigestion. The milky sap found in the stem is used by herbal practitioners for the removal of warts, moles, calluses, and sores.

Generations and generations of cultural use of this plant by early Europeans and Native Americans seem to confirm the value of this plant in both medicinal and culinary applications. There is little question that this miraculous plant is here to stay despite all of our efforts to get rid of it.

Some months later, just a few days after Christmas the mercury dips to -4 degrees. I remember my invitation and find my way to Melvin's cabin. I knock on the door and Melvin answers wearing a blue flannel shirt, with red suspenders holding up green wool pants. He is also wearing the same smile that he wore the day we were picking dandelions last May. The smile still begins at one ear and ends on the opposite side of his face at the other ear. "I was wonderin' if you'd show up tonight," Melvin said. "Bringing in the winter with a remembrance of the summer ain't a bad thing to do on a cold night."

Melvin and I chat a little bit in front of the blazing fire in the fieldstone fireplace. We talk about the weather, the recent apple season, and the new winter. After a short while,

Melvin goes to the pantry and pulls a bottle of this year's dandelion wine off of the slanted handmade rack made from stout apple tree branches. He twists the corkscrew into the cork, and while pulling the cork out of the bottle he paraphrases Ray Bradbury.

"Like openin' a bottle of summer," he says.

"Yes, Melvin," I reply, "like openin' a bottle of summer!"

Melvin pours the nearly clear wine into two glasses. We raise our glasses and toast the first cold winter night by touching our glasses together and taking a sip of the wine. Melvin looks at me, and I look at him, and together I know we are both back in an orchard during the month of May surrounded by bright yellow dandelions and a clear blue sky.

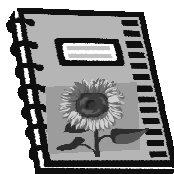
Game Afternoon at Community Hall



A March Sunday afternoon, devoted to game-playing and promised to cure the winter doldrums, drew an enthusiastic crowd. Proceeds from the event that was sponsored by the Heath Community Hall Committee will be used to refurbish our Community Hall.



Garden Journals



By Pat Leuchtman

It's not that I don't have any memory at all. It's just that I don't remember things in a linear way. That is, I don't remember that it was last year that was so cold, or that the summer of '96 was really wet. And I just made up those facts, so don't worry about your own memory of last winter or the summer of '96.

Neither do I have a very good memory of how much time has elapsed between events, which means that when someone asks me how long I have been growing a particular plant I'm more apt to reply, "Oh, forever" or "Oh, not very long." Nor do I always remember the proper name of a particular plant. This is truer of vegetables than flowers, but it is a problem.

It is for all these reasons that I try to keep some kind of record of each garden year. My system has varied over time. In our early years here on the hill I kept little 3 x 6 inch date books with one page per day. I'd note temperatures, rain or sun, and planting activities. For example, the entry for Monday, May 19, 1986, was "hot and breezy." I planted rhubarb plants, beets, red kuri squash, green and wax beans, and slept with only a single sheet. Notable heat for May! I see that I made no notes for the next five days except RAIN. I wonder how many of those seeds rotted and had to be replanted. No note of that.

Those little date books worked pretty well as a bare bones record. But they were not beautiful. Then someone gave me a handsome illustrated 3-Year Garden Journal which provided room for daily entries on weather and planting, maps of the garden, lists of new plants. It was arranged so the record for one week in one year was placed next to the same week for the other two years, making it easy to compare weather, tasks, and problems over time. I kept up this journal with fair regularity. When looking at the completed entries for all three years I am fascinated by the differences each year.

I have seen other people's journals, some of which have been very impressive. I think I can put the most notable journals in one of two categories. One is the very precise and complete scientific sort of journal with lots of details about many plants in the garden, possibly including notes on personal experiments. The other kind of journal is more artistic, with beautiful sketches of plants, planting schemes and maps of the garden. I have been inspired by both of these types of journals, but I am not up to either one.

My latest journal is nearly filled. It is a child's notebook that I bought in China with a picture of Chang e, the moon goddess, on the cover. It has cheap lined pages. There is nothing about it that makes me feel I have anything to live up to in my record keeping which I know is going to be sketchy.

Instead of beautiful colored drawings, I've taped in catalog photos of plants I've ordered. This gives me visual information so I can at least remember the effect I was hoping for. And it gives me cultural information about the plant. I do note the planting times; I've also allowed myself room to note the progress of that plant over time.

Sometimes the entries peter out because the plant is successful, like the Meidiland landscape roses that were planted in 1991, and continue today, although not as lushly in Heath as the catalog photos promised. Others are brief, "Climbing hydrangea, *Hydrangea petiolaris*, from White Flower Farm, \$15.95, planted in cellar hole, 1991. 1992 Dead." In my own defense, and possibly defense of the White Flower Farm, I do have to remember that 1991 was only one year after the barn burned down, creating the cellar hole, and I was just beginning to create the soil there.

Oddly enough, there are no records for 1994 at all, an amazingly busy year in the garden because that is the year Daughter Kate was married with the roses and broccoli bearing witness. However, in this case, the memory of all the work her siblings did on her behalf in the garden, the rain all week before the wedding, the romantic mist that shrouded the hill that morning, and the brilliant sun that burst through as bride and groom prepared to say their vows were absolutely unforgettable.

It is time to think about a new journal. In fact, a friend gave me a beautiful book she bought in Italy. *Il Mio Giardino*, My Garden. It has a handsome cloth cover and creamy pages. One page has lines to list the date, what is planted, where, how to water and fertilize and prune. There is room for general notes. The facing page is blank but the inch scale at the bottom and the orientation (North) arrow at the top of the page suggest it can be used to map the garden. Or use it for lengthier notes, I am sure. Other pages at the end of the journal allow for month by month notes, and pages, pages mind you, for all the international flower shows one plans to attend.

Maybe, I'll just have to look for another child's notebook.



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Heathans Abroad**Austria**

Imagine, if you will, a magnificent room, at least the size of a football field. Marble walls, balconies, and columns are set off by ornate gilt. Six gigantic crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling. We are seated on one of the dining platforms that line the sides of the hall where pink roses and pink carnations literally drip from above, while more bouquets grace the tables that are set with acres of lovely china and crystal. Dancers in black or white tie and elegant gowns swirl to the strains of Strauss waltzes just below us. To our left is a large stage where the musicians play, and a gigantic clock shows the time as it creeps toward midnight. This is New Year's Eve in the grand ballroom of the Hofburg, the Imperial Palace of the Hapsburg Empire in Vienna, and we are there!

There are two other ballrooms, slightly smaller but equally elegant. Footmen in rose-colored uniforms stand at attention on the grand staircase, where, at the top, Emperor Franz Josef and Empress Elisabeth (actors, of course) greet their loyal subjects as they ascend. Later they will dance in each ballroom. In our ballroom we dine, we dance, and we watch and try to absorb it all. The dance floor is full, and, at one point, a marching band incongruously marches through. Fairly early in the evening there is a special waltz to officially open the ball, these ladies all in white gowns, their men in black tie. As we get closer and closer to midnight the dance floor becomes more and more crowded, making dancing difficult, so we watch. At midnight the clock strikes twelve, the music plays, and there is the usual hoopla common around the world. The emperor and empress arrive and wish everyone a Happy New Year. There is entertainment, and then the dancing resumes.



The grand ball was special, but equally so was the private dinner dance our group of twenty-eight had at the Palais Coburg. We ascended the wide, marble, red-carpeted staircase to three private rooms. Waiters circulated serving champagne and canapes on silver trays. We entered the dining room to waltzes played by three musicians. Again there were the marble walls, the columns, and the gilt. Mirrored fifteen-foot doors reflected light from the crystal chandeliers and lit candelabra on each table. This time the roses were white. The dinner was exquisite. With dessert came the strains of the "Anniversary Waltz" and a Happy Anniversary sign on our dessert. The excuse for this grand trip was our twenty-fifth, and we felt very special, indeed, as we started the first waltz on the dance floor in the middle of the room.

In our ten days in Austria (Christmas in Salzburg / New Year's in Vienna) music was king. Add to the two occasions described above, the Vienna Boys' Choir in the Imperial Chapel, a performance of Gounod's opera, *Romeo and Juliet*, a marionette performance of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, a dinner concert in the fortress above Salzburg, and a concert at the Mozarteum, a school for young musicians. New Year's Day saw us at a concert in Vienna, almost entirely Strauss and ending with the traditional and rousing Radetsky March. We even had Strauss waltzes playing on the bus on our way to the airport to go home. It is no wonder that those waltzes repeatedly came unbidden into our heads for a very long time after our return.

Christmas in Salzburg, a small city of 120,000 people, was magic, with its Christmas trees on street corners, little white lights draped over narrow cobbled streets, and church bells pealing simultaneously from churches all over town. We loved Christmas Eve dinner with new friends in our hotel, a hotel built before America was discovered, they are proud to tell us. Christmas dinner at the famed Sacher Hotel was a sublime Christmas goose.

A trip to the lake district showed us the Austria of picture books: lovely lakes, deep and cold, traditional chalet-style houses with overhanging roofs and wooden balconies, and trees completely frosted with white but not from snow. Dense fog collects on the trees and coats them with white. We saw no snow, more evidence of global warming, which is taking a heavy toll on their tourism industry. This is the land of Heidi, a story dearly beloved from my youth. It is also the land of the von Trapps and *The Sound of Music* which was filmed here. We were told of the edelweiss for which young lovers risk their lives climbing in the dangerous mountains to find this gift to present to their lady loves. I was told firmly, though, that the song "Edelweiss" was not Austrian but American! Austria is also the country of Mozart and his face is everywhere, especially on Mozart chocolates blazoning forth in every other shop window.

How did we do so much in ten days in Austria? The performance of the Lippizaner Horses in their elegant exhibition hall was magnificent. The rooms at the Hofburg palace were splendid, as were those at Schonbrun, the summer palace. We visited museums. We even had a little brush with celebrity, riding in the hotel elevator with Walter Cronkite. The food was spectacular. I remember with great fondness the lobster in aspic on Christmas Eve and the very fine goulash at lunch in the lake district. But maybe most of all, those scrumptious pastries, for which they are so well-known, remain etched in my memory, as well as spread on my waistline.

We arrive home to winter in Heath. I'm in jeans and old shirts and back to cooking, cleaning, bringing in firewood for the fireplace, and, yes, sweeping the hearth. It did feel wonderful, however, for just a little while, to live the fairy tale and be Cinderella at the Ball!

~Dianne Grinnell



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL

"This publication is supported in part by a grant from the Heath Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency."

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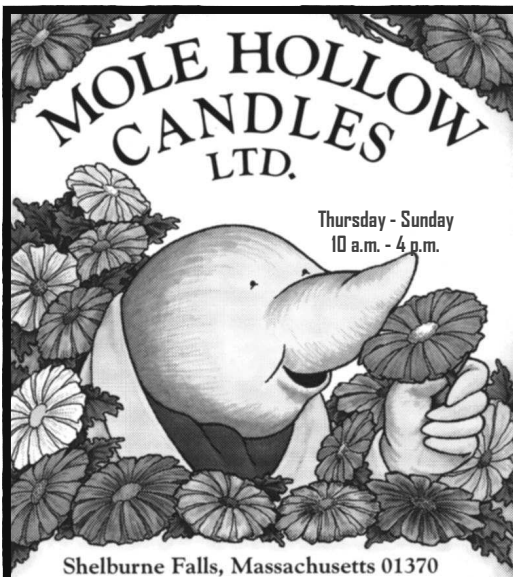
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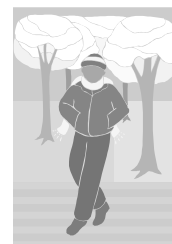
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Town Nurse Notes

Walking



By Robin Booth R.N.

Walking is a great form of exercise because it does not require special equipment beyond good shoes, is available outside your door, and uses most of the major muscles of the body. Exercise in general helps your mood, sleep, and sex life, and affects your metabolism, and, therefore, weight management. You've probably heard all of this before.

What may be news is that there is a walking group starting in Heath! For now, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 1:00 p.m., beginning outside the Community Hall, people can walk the flat road toward Mohawk Estates.

I have measured off tenths of a mile and will give anyone who comes a monthly calendar to track the amount walked. It is totally up to you how far and how often you come! Everyone, young, old, fit, unfit, is welcome. If the weather is bad, don't come that day. We will be walking on dirt road so come prepared to get slightly muddy (but it is better on the feet.)

Walking as little as 15 minutes a day is beneficial. If you are out of shape like I am, the goal is to work up to a half hour of walking. Then the goals change slightly. If you are in good shape and already a walker, the goal is to go farther or faster or maintain a routine. The challenge is yours to decide. The point being that this is individualized and that all walking, even if only one-tenth of a mile, is good walking.

Please consider joining fellow Heathans. I think it will be fun.



Friends of the Heath School Library

**The Friends of the Heath
School Library will offer their annual
Continental Breakfast
prior to and during the Annual Town Meet-
ing at the Heath School
on Saturday, May 12, starting at 8:30 a.m.**

**Come early and enjoy a delicious
beginning to OUR Day.
As usual, coffee, tea, juice,
and a tempting array of goodies
including the ever-popular deviled eggs and
quiche will be available.
All donations go to buy books for
the Heath School Library.**

HOMETOWN HELPER GRANT APPLICATION

A grant application has been submitted to see if funding might be available to replace the flooring at the Heath Community Hall and renew a monthly dance and potluck series. The grant details as presented by Lorena Loubsky-Lonergan were discussed and approved by the Heath Community Hall Committee at a recent meeting. If awarded, the grant would also provide funding help for continuation of music lessons at the Heath Elementary School. Hamburger Helper is sponsoring the grant process and, if you have access to the Internet, please consider posting a brief comment at their site in support of the project. It will increase our chances of being selected for funding. The link is: <http://www.myhometownhelper.com/ViewProject.aspx?tell=2&id=13588>

If you do not have Internet access, the computer at the Heath Free Public Library is an excellent resource and would offer one way of showing support for this fun project. If you would love to hear fiddle music, laughter, and the sounds of dancing pouring from our hall again, please add your voice online in the comment box where you'll find the project description and further details.

~ Lorena Loubsky-Lonergan

Assessors and the Annual Town Meeting

As we approach another Annual Town Meeting on May 12, the Assessors would like to share some thoughts – about money.

Last May, the voters generously agreed that re-creating an assessors' clerk position was a good idea and appropriated \$5,000 to do so. It's been a great help to the Board – we all appreciate the support! Having Val Kaempfer, our chair, act as clerk has alleviated a great number of problems the Board was submerged in. Not only can she field questions from all of the characters who need our help but are only available during the business day (lawyers, bankers, appraisers, realtors, etc.), but she can contact the deed registry, the Department of Revenue (DOR) reps, and other state and various municipal agencies without having to sneak phone calls at a "real" job – as I've been doing for years. Some taxpayers also find it difficult to get to the office for our Wednesday evening meetings (at 6:30 p.m.), so having day hours has been a help there. The office hours are Mondays, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and Fridays, noon to 4:00 p.m. Stop by!

From my own standpoint, the most important improvement has been that our Wednesday meetings have become true "board meetings" and not just a chance to catch up on phone inquiries, correspondence, and the never-ending flow of data entry and record keeping. We've been able to start to grapple with issues that have been pushed aside for years. Some of these are large questions about the approach we take to assessing various types of property in town. It's very timely that we can do this now, as the real estate market has been in such flux recently. Again, *thank you!*

You, as reader and, possibly, taxpayer, are probably thinking "Well, isn't that nice? So this article is finished and I can start reading Pat Leuchtman's garden column." Well, not so fast!

As happens every three years, we are facing our full revaluation process in fiscal 2008 – the year we are funding at the Annual Town Meeting this May. In the recent past, the Assessors have requested about \$5,000 for "reval expenses" every three years. This has, primarily, paid for a consultant to come in and steward the process through the DOR maze of regulations and requirements.

The process, while I've been on the Board for the past decade or so, has really focused on viewing the minimal number of properties (sales and a few samples from each category of property) and getting the paperwork approved. The latter is not an unimportant thing – without it, the DOR will not "certify" our tax rate and we can't send bills. That might be an attractive thing to you as a taxpayer, but taxes, as is said, are inevitable, and delay is expensive.

The reality of it, however, is that there is more to a reval than just minimally meeting the paperwork requirements of the DOR. It should, ideally, be the time that we thoroughly examine the properties in town and adjust their assessments according to market conditions. This is not to say that we have not attempted to do exactly that, but, frankly, the level of services a consultant will provide at \$5,000 is not sufficient to have a truly deliberative process. The Board, of course, helps in the process, but we are part-time volunteers who receive a small stipend for our time and are not experts on either property appraisal or state law.

Last year we proposed that the Town appropriate \$10,000 in FY'07 to do the first half of a full "field review" (including house inspections) that would be done of the Town over two years for the '08 reval. This proposal was defeated at the Annual Town Meeting. Heath has not done a full field review in anyone's memory, if ever. We were disappointed that the Town didn't feel it wanted to fund such an undertaking last year.

We feel (mostly) comfortable with the "factual" aspects of our residential assessments in Heath (dimensions, materials used, number of rooms and baths, etc.). As a board, however, we are less confident in the more subjective aspects: relative condition, relative "grade" of construction (mansion vs. shack), and depreciation based on renovations. These items directly affect value of a property relative to its neighbors' values and, in a real way, impact the fairness of the entire system.

The only way to accurately assess the condition, grade, and depreciation of a structure is to go inside it occasionally. The process is simple and not time-consuming to the homeowner, but, in the end will provide us all with a more equitable tax system in town. We are required to assess all properties at "full and fair market value" by law. Look at what we have your property assessed at – considering other sales in this and other nearby towns, do you *honestly* think that the value we've assessed it at is the most you could actually get in an open market sale? If not, it is under-assessed.

What we are proposing for FY'08 is much less ambitious than a full field review, but is the first step in doing one in a sort of slow-motion way: As in the past, we are hoping to have a consultant come in and review, in detail, our records and proposed values and work with the DOR in getting approval. This year, however, we are also proposing to have an outside appraiser do some limited "listing" (complete viewing and inspection) of some residential assessments that we are not as comfortable with. We hope that the Town will support our proposal and fund this undertaking.

As a word of caution, it is not impossible that the DOR might *require* a full field review at some point in the future, since we have no history of one. If you've been following the recent problems in the town of Ashfield in the paper, you would have read about exactly this situation. If that were to happen, the town would have no choice in hiring an outside appraisal firm to do a full review.

We hope that you will support us as we try to live up to the oath we took as board members when we were elected – that we would attempt to assess all property as fairly as possible. See you at the May meeting!

~ Henry Leuchtman



In Memoriam Robert Gear

On February 20 of this year, Heath lost another of its citizens who truly understood and lived the town's commitment to the values of country life.

Robert Gear personified commitment to family, to the land and to the caring for and delighting in animals, to education and to the need to support our libraries.

The family, Robert, Jane McHale, and daughter Alice first moved to Heath in the summer of 1991. They lived for several years on the Heath Fairgrounds where Robert served as caretaker, as an active member of the Heath Agricultural Society and a former vice president. According to a long-time member of the Society, he never missed a meeting. He was also a spokesman for the Fair, submitting articles on Fair activities to the *Heath Herald*.

When fire destroyed their Fairgrounds home in 2001, although devastated by the loss of so much including a beloved dog, they were greatly consoled by the generous outpouring of help from fellow townspeople, several of whom shared their homes with them and cared for their animals.

Finally in one place for three years, they set about acquiring land, designing, and finally building their own, energy-efficient home and barn for the horses, moving in during the summer of 2004. As Jane explained it, Robert had always wanted to have land to manage with enough space in which to raise and train his horses, one of the reasons, she said, he loved living at the Fairgrounds.

When asked why, after so much loss in the fire and the scarcity of places to rent in Heath, they elected to stay, Jane said that besides the fact that Alice attended the Heath School, the overwhelming support of Heathans played a large part in that decision. Robert loved the Heath School and, while Alice attended, spent many happy hours there, having lunch with Alice and browsing in the library to which he donated books.

Those of us who got to spend time with Robert found him to be unfailingly friendly, optimistic, and full of good cheer, even to the end when he lost his battle with pancreatic cancer.

On a personal note, two years ago at the Friends of the Heath Library annual Memorial Weekend Bake Sale, in a discussion of possible fund-raising activities, Robert suggested we have, instead of a strawberry festival, a Rhubarb Festival and possibly create a Rhubarb Cookbook to which he would donate several recipes. We enthusiastically embraced this idea and are now sorry that it never came to pass.

At his funeral service, many of us found out for the first time just how variously talented Robert was – musician, book collector and seller, writer and storyteller, animal trainer and endangered horse breed saver. We were struck by something Jane said that for Robert, the latest was always the best, that he lived in and for the moment. - an example of how to live we could all learn from.

~ Jane de Leeuw



Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee voted on January 30 "To over-spend in each of the accounts Winter Equipment, Winter Hired Services, and Winter Sand and Salt, if necessary." The ice storm of January 15 caused serious tree damage that obstructed town roads especially in North Heath requiring hiring special crews to clean up the mess. The cost is expected to be about \$8,500 versus an appropriation of \$2,500 in the Winter Hired Services account. MGL Chapter 44 s 31c permits over-expenditure of emergency winter related expenses if both the Selectboard and FinCom vote to do so. Subsequent adjustments to these accounts can then be made by raising the tax levy or transferring funds from other sources at a Special Town Meeting. We expect to do the latter. This is not an unusual procedure for the Town of Heath. There is no emergency funding from FEMA or the State for this event. Otherwise, the Town's expenditures versus appropriations for this time of year are on a satisfactory track.

Budget preparation for the Annual Town Meeting on May 12 is underway. Hearings with department heads have been held, but a lot of work has yet to be done...high-speed internet needs, salary reviews, and the assessors' revaluation plans, to name a few. As usual the Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) budget dominates planning. Local newspapers have covered the District's budget problems very well, but we take note of a few issues:

- 1 The operating budget for the MTRSD is up 8.19%, but the total assessment to the towns is up 14.28% due to level funding and/or losses in income. Heath's increase is \$72,508 or 10.43% or about \$.90 (5%) on the tax rate. Heath's lower Net Minimum Contribution requirement keeps our share of the school budget down.
- 2 The Preschool expects a loss of grant funding for FY08, which could add another \$20,000 or so to Heath's school budget. The Preschool Advisory Board is working hard to alleviate this situation. Just another case of an unfunded mandate.
- 3 School Committee approval of the MTRS budget is being held hostage to the hoped-for benefits of the "R.E.D. Circuit Breaker" program (R for rural, E for Economically challenged and D for Declining enrollment) currently under consideration by some State legislators and the Department of Education. Designed by Heathen Ken Rocke, this program could provide some \$10 million to 42 Western Massachusetts communities including \$1 million to the MTRSD. If R.E.D. doesn't make it through the legislative process, the District may cut more programs and staff by some \$400,000 in order to make it through the Town Meeting process. (Ken's help with our education situation has been invaluable.)

4 The State's education system is in dire need of financial review: Special Education (SPED) is a federally legislated program that has never been properly or fairly funded. Facilities and Personnel operating costs are essentially fixed and do not permit meaningful economies of scale, which have proven that District consolidation is not a solution. Health Care costs for FY08 are up 20%, a shocking increase that suggests such benefit programs demand analysis and correction. Fundamental problems with Chapter 70 Education Aid reflect most dramatically the State's supporting only 40% of public education costs versus 60% some 4 years ago.

5 The MTRSD School Committee is proposing that Colrain and Heath revote in May an article to support consolidation. Last year these towns voted NO. At this time the FinCom is NOT in favor of changing that vote. Heath School Committee representative Bob Gruen submitted a local petition to the School Committee on March 14 changing certain articles in the Regional Agreement that clarified and protected all District towns from financial and education losses. The School Committee has taken the petition under advisement.

Somehow a combination of damage control and improvement in our local education operations has to be implemented not only for our children's sake but for towns to be able to manage their own needs in a reasonably satisfactory fashion. We need to see "those on the Hill in Boston" take a serious and fresh look at priorities in State spending.

~ Finance Committee Members:
Dave Howland, Chair
Ned Wolf, Secretary
Janis Carr
Budge Litchfield
Jeff Simmons



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- Contact us about the spread, walking the land, this year's crop, or to see how you can assist in the community effort to preserve and transfer this farm. (413) 337-5340, www.gis.net/benplace, benplace@gis.net.

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~ Photographed by Jan Carr

This section is free to Heath Farmers, and is made possible by the sales of Carroll Stowe's compilation "The Way it is in the Country." Agricultural producers should submit their information to *The Heath Herald*, P.O. Box 54, Heath, MA 01346.

HEATH AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY NEWS

It took our breath away. Nearly 40 people showed up on March 8 to share their love of the Heath Fair, their commitment to seeing it continue, and their ideas for making it better than ever.

I can't imagine Heath without a Fair, said one longtime Heath resident, and that sentiment was echoed by several people. Carol-Ann Eldridge told of having to abandon a vacation in the Tetons because her children couldn't bear to miss it. Doug Stetson, the most long-term fairgoer in the gathering, observed how state aid for the Fair, like everything else, has diminished. Many spoke of wanting the Fair to grow. John Henry, a past president of the Agricultural Society, said that whether it grows or becomes a one-day Fair again, he would like to be it be sustainable.

People shared ideas for new events. The one that drew the most merriment was inspired by the butter-carving competitions at the Minnesota State Fair. "Butter is expensive," mused Gloria Fisher, former Minnesota resident, "but maybe we could use something else like, I don't know --how about manure!" We took no action on that suggestion but we did vote unanimously to continue the Fair for 2007. Mark your calendar for **August 17, 18, and 19.**

We still face significant financial challenges. Several people signed up to help with fund-raising. Since the meeting we have had two generous donations. Anyone wishing to contribute to keep our Fair in operation may send donations to: The Heath Agricultural Society, Box 10, Heath MA 01346.

We voted to contract with three great musical groups and seek underwriters to help defray the cost. We will be having Rani Arbo and Daisy Mayhem on Friday night, Mary Maguire and her band for Saturday afternoon, and the Hunger Mountain Boys with their old-timey music on Sunday afternoon. Since the meeting we have had a donation designated for Saturday night music with Girl Howdy.

New officers were elected in a slate that included some new and some seasoned officers:

Gloria Fisher and Pam Porter, Co-Presidents

Shirley Tombs, First Vice President

Bradley Tombs, Second Vice President

Jan Carr, Treasurer

Christine O'Brien, Secretary

Doug and Kathy Wilkins, Fair Secretaries

Norm Sessions, Auditor

Robert Tanner, Conrad Halberg, Carol Sartz, Dave Freeman, Board Members

We owe a debt of gratitude to outgoing president Bob Delisle and outgoing treasurer Norm Sessions for their many years of service. We are glad they both intend to stay involved. Bob says he is looking forward to continuing to help out with the fairgrounds, sound, electricity and also to putting more of his time into his very popular Agricultural Tent. Norm agreed to serve as Auditor.

We are so grateful for the outpouring of support from all those who attended the meeting and the many who could not attend but who called before or after the meeting with offers of help. We look forward to seeing many of you at future Fair planning meetings, at work bees and, of course, at the 90th annual Heath Fair.

Next meeting: April 12, 7:00 p.m., Heath School

Wednesday night work bees (6:00 p.m. until dark) begin at the Fairgrounds as soon in May as weather permits. Watch for announcements.

~ Pam Porter, Co-president

WMass COUNTS Legislative Update

Who we are: Western Mass COUNTS stands for Western Mass Coalition Of Underfunded Towns and Schools. We are a grassroots coalition working to restore adequate educational funding in the towns of the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and throughout Western Massachusetts to ensure the continued vitality of our public schools, towns, and regional economy.

We are looking for volunteer members to help in writing letters, making phone calls and visits at the Statehouse, and working in our communities to build bridges and find long-term solutions to keep our schools and towns thriving. Ken Roche, a committed advocate for education in Heath and recently retired superintendent for Blue Hills Vocational School, has written an exemplary proposal that if enacted would bring nearly \$1M to the district and nearly \$10M to Western Massachusetts schools in the same situation as Mohawk.

Called the R.E.D. Circuit Breaker (Rural Economically-challenged Declining-enrollment CB), the proposal restores aid that was cut during the recession. In educational lingo a circuit breaker “keeps things from getting worse.” The three factors required for aid to “kick-in” are: a district having 6.5% decline in enrollment in the last five years; fewer than 100 students per square mile; a target Chapter 70 education aid town share of fifty percent or greater.

As the burden of education funding has shifted over the last five years from the State to the shoulders of our towns and citizens, both the towns and school district have worked tirelessly to do more with less but we are at the limit of what cuts the schools, towns, and taxpayers can afford. MARS, WMassCOUNTS, and Mohawk Superintendent Michael Buoniconti are collaborating to bring the RED-CB to the Governor and Statehouse. The proposal can be found online at www.mohawkdistrictsolutions.org under files/resources.

If you are interested in working in Heath or regionally on school funding advocacy or for further information on the circuit breaker and school funding issues, please e-mail or call Lorena: wildlor@gmail.com or 624-3842. We meet regularly on Thursday mornings at Mocha Maya's for informal socializing and strategizing meetings and once every three weeks at Buckland Shelburne Elementary School. We expect to have educational forums in the coming month in each district town to talk about educational funding, what we can do to bring our communities together in understanding and support for our schools and our towns' needs.

PLEASE COME TO BOSTON IN THE SPRINGTIME...

Last April, we had a great time when Heathans and folks from throughout the Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) piled into a Zoar van, courtesy of Bruce Lessels. It was a trip that really paid off! The MTRSD was awarded an unprecedented 400K, 10% of the “Pothole” funding and a special pilot grant to explore creative transportation models, thanks to Marguerite Willis in Charlemont who graphically

illustrated the unique terrain of our region geographically. Representative Guyer also came through with promised regional transportation funding.

Cut to April '07 - Our districts, towns, and most important, our children need us to be their voice and to come together, to put aside any fractious debate. At this crossroads, your help is essential to take a united and strong message to Boston. Please join us on APRIL 25 for the STAND FOR CHILDREN RALLY on Beacon Hill. We will have an earlier bus for those teams that would like to meet with legislators to urge their support for the R.E.D. Circuit Breaker and other key initiatives. There will be a separate family-friendly bus that is just for those who want to attend the rally and return early. I was told we have first dibs on the coach buses since we are so far from Boston. If you plan on bringing kids, let us know. Call or e-mail Lorena at 624-3842 or wildlor@gmail.com for further information or to sign up. We need a final bus count to Stand for Children by April 11.

~ Lorena Loubisky-Lonergan

Heath Elementary School Parent-Teacher Partnership (PTP) News

Another busy season gone by and an even busier one to look forward to! Because Mother Nature was rather uncooperative and delayed over winter, we were unable to offer the usual outdoor Winter Enrichment activities. Hence, we are planning additional Spring Enrichments including an exciting performance of Native American Storytelling, Music & Dance scheduled for Thursday, May 31, at 1:00 p.m. at the school.

Our indoor enrichments have been numerous and rich. Our young thespians – over 30 of them – gave two full-length performances of “Charlotte's Web” at the school on March 30, and will perform again in excerpts at the Senior Center on Thursday, April 5. Please call the school for details. All are welcome!

Spring means baseball, t-ball, and softball, as well as Garden Club and Grounds Movement activities. If you are interested in helping out in any of these ventures, please give us a call; we'd love to have you there.

And once again, at home sports events we will be firing up the grill and offering snacks and dinner fare. Come out and root for the Home Team (schedules to be posted or call the school for information).

Happy spring!

~ PTP Officers:

Dana Blackburn, Co-Chair

Dawn Holden, Co-Chair

Robin Jenkins, Treasurer

Valerie Lively, Secretary

Selectboard's Report

Meeting Schedule

The Board meets every Tuesday evening at 7:00 p.m. in Sawyer Hall.

Senator Ben Downing's Visit

At the invitation of Doug Wilkins, newly elected State Senator Ben Downing visited Heath on March 16 to tour the Town and meet with officials and residents. Sen. Downing listened to the concerns of the Selectboard, School Committee, Library Trustees, Planning Board, and others for an hour and a half in Sawyer Hall before heading off to the Heath Elementary School for lunch and a visit with the staff and students.

Three-Town Landfill

A contract with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has been signed and submitted along with an application for payment. We're waiting for the \$1,000,000 check! The towns of Heath, Hawley, and Charlemont have received the final closure report from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for the landfill. A meeting will be held with the Selectboards of the three towns to discuss the final conditions of the closure report and to coordinate the required post maintenance activities.

School Issues

The School Committee has voted to recommend a level service budget to the towns for approval at the Annual Town Meeting. This represents an 8.9% increase from the previous year. This may result in some towns needing to ask for over-ride votes. An intense lobby effort is underway to try to get additional assistance from the State. Phone calls and letters to our legislators in support of additional financial assistance are always helpful. A significant reduction in state grant funding for preschools is expected this year, and, as a result, the Town may be asked to consider funding a portion of the Heath Preschool's operating costs.

Appointments and Vacancies

The town is in need of an animal inspector. The duties of the position include: documenting the livestock in town; reviewing the conditions of their care and keeping; investigating complaints of neglect or abuse; monitoring cases of disease; making reports to the town Board of Health and to the State. If anyone is interested, please contact the Board at the town offices.

Bob Gruen has decided not to run again for School Committee. We owe a debt of gratitude for the many years of service he has provided the Town through some very difficult times. No one has taken out nomination papers as of the date of this report. The last day to take out papers was March 21, 2007, therefore a write-in candidacy will be required. Anyone interested in serving on the School Committee might let the Board know so that we can help with publicity.

There are also two vacancies on the Board of Health. Walt Gleason and Joy Fynmore have resigned recently. Our thanks to them for the incredible amount of work they have

done for the Board of Health in what has been a challenging period. If anyone is interested, please contact the Selectboard at the town offices.

FY08 Budget

Budget hearings for town departments are almost completed and we are about to develop the spreadsheets outlining the FY08 budget to be presented at the Annual Town Meeting. Employee salaries and cost of living allowances will be evaluated before the budget can be finalized.

WiFi

The Town has a high-speed wireless Internet connection available to anyone within range of the antenna. Check it out as you drive through the center of town or visit the library. Thanks to Doug Finn for installing the equipment and configuring it for public access. The Computer Committee has been discussing ways of increasing the range of the WiFi network and of continuing the availability of the high-speed T1 line past the trial period that ends in June.

Heath Online

Take some time to visit the Town's Web site at www.townofheath.org. You'll find Selectboard meeting minutes, school information, and much more. The Web site is currently being switched to another service provider and is undergoing a face-lift so keep checking back. You may contact the Selectboard at BOS@townofheath.org. Send messages to any board or individual via the e-mail address, or visit the Heath Web site.

~ Heath Selectboard
Thomas Lively, Chair
Brian De Vriese
Sheila Litchfield

Selectboard Meets with Senator Ben Downing



Heath Business Directory

Bald Mountain Pottery

625-8110

The Benson Place

Wild Blueberries & Blueberry Spread
337-5340

Fred Burrington

Artist
337-4302

Dave Cote Builders

Branch Hill Road
337-4705

Robert Delisle

Electrician
337-5716

Russell E. Donelson

Design/Construction/Cabinetry
337-4460

Jerry Ferguson

Handyman - Lic. Electrician
337-4317

Earl M. Gleason

Fire Equipment
337-4948

Heath Brook Studio

Glass and Baskets
337-5736

Maple Ledge Goldens

AKC Registered Golden Retrievers
337-4705

John Mooney

Custom Remodeling
337-8344

Wanda Mooney

Realtor
337-8344

Tripp's Blueberries

Taylor Brook Road
337-4964

Paul Turnbull
Janice Boudreau

Commercial/Wedding Photographers
337-4033

Bonnie Wodin

Custom Gardens & Landscapes
337-5529

Support Your Local Businesses

If you would like more information about the Heath Enterprise Council, please call Alicia Tripp at 337-4964


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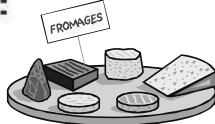
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Library Lines

Ultra-Mini Golf Course

By Donald Purington

Golf in February? In Heath?? In the library??? Seems incredible, but it's all true. On Wednesday, February 21, the library was the site of an eight-hole, ultra-mini golf course. The event was held during the February school vacation to ward off cabin fever and entice more families into the library. Twenty children and their parents came to putt their way around the library.

The course was laid out with barriers and bumpers to reduce the need to chase errant shots all over the library. Even so, the greens were challenging enough so hole-in-ones were not the norm.

Golfers registered at the circulation desk and received a putter, ball, scorecard, and pencil. The first hole was in front of the circulation desk. From there they hit the ball down a winding track into the children's area, then played two holes in adult fiction, one hole in nonfiction, back to fiction, then through a tube into young adult fiction. They finished with a long putt down the aisle between the gardening books and the young adult nonfiction.

The golfers had a good time in the library, and some books went home. Cabin fever was banished for the afternoon.

New at the Library:

Adult Fiction Books: *Water Like a Stone* by Deborah Crombie, *Deeper Sleep* by Dana Stabenow, *High Profile* by Robert Parker, *Sisters* by Danielle Steel, *Trout Whisperers* by Peter Bodo. **Adult Nonfiction Books:** *Tender Bar : A Memoir* by J. R. Moehringer, *Art of Aging : A Doctor's Prescription for Well-Being* by Sherwin B. Nuland, *Leaves Of Grass : The First (1855) Edition* by Walt Whitman, *Weedless Gardening* by Lee Reich, *Plumbing* by Rex Cauldwell. **Young Adult Books:** *Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron, (2007 Newbery Medal winner), *Minnie and Moo and the Seven Wonders* by Denys Cazet. **Children's Picture Books:** *Earth Mother* by Ellen Jackson. **Children's Nonfiction Books:** *Tree Farmer* by Chuck Leavell, *Anno's Magic Seeds* by Mitsumasa Anno, *Behold the Bold Umbrellaphant : And Other Poems* by Jack Prelutsky. **Book on CD:** *Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* by Bill Bryson. **DVD:** *Little Miss Sunshine*.

*If minds are truly alive they will seek out books, for books are the human race
recounting its memorable experiences, confronting its problems,
searching for solutions, drawing the blueprints of its futures.*

~ Harry A. Overstreet (1875-1970)
American Social psychologist

I Wonder What You're Reading?

Young people who live in a small town can be forgiven for thinking that it is only in cities that wonders abound, especially these days when outrageous depictions come to us through TV and movies. But when challenged is it amazing what marvels and curiosities we can find – right under our very noses – if we will but open our eyes and ears.

Betty G. Birney, author of the popular Humphrey books about a wise classroom hamster, has taken the tales she heard as a child and transformed them into the charming and exciting tale of Eben who has to find seven wonders in his town of Sassafras Springs if he wants to get to the city to see some of the wonders he has been longing for.

No stranger to Heath, Betty, sister-in-law of Jane Birney deLeeuw, came to the Heath School last May to regale an excited group of students, staff, and community members with further tales of their favorite hamster, and we are hoping for a return visit sometime soon.

All of the Hilltowns will be reading *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs* together this spring, and we will all be challenged to find the wonders in our own towns. In addition to reading and discussing the Seven Wonders in schools and our living rooms, there will be a Wonder Hunt, and an Identify This Wonder project. And more!

Multiple copies of the book will be available at the Heath Library and the Heath School Library. This is a perfect family read. For more information about this multi-community read log on to <http://www.townofheath.org/7wonders.html>

~ Pat Leuchtman

Milestones

Robert Gear of Heath died on February 20, 2007 at home. Born on May 30, 1942, in Southampton, NY, he was the son of Frederick Albert "Al" Gear and Mary Kuchtuk Gear Zielinski.

After graduating from Southampton High School, he attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, majoring in composition and baritone saxophone which he played at jazz clubs in the area for several years. Becoming more interested in the guitar, Robert developed an in-depth knowledge of steel guitar playing in Hawaiian, country, and blues music, writing articles for several music publications. He recorded an album of National and Dobro steel guitar tunes in 1976 and produced "Hula Blues," an album of early instrumental steel guitar music for Rounder Records. He also played the Irish fiddle.

Following a childhood interest in agriculture and horsemanship, he became involved with efforts to preserve old breeds of livestock and wrote for periodicals specializing in old farming methods and sustainable agriculture. He developed an antiquarian book business focusing on agriculture, was a founding member of the American Minor Breeds Conservancy, and was instrumental in saving the Randall Lineback Cattle, an endangered Heritage breed.

Upon moving to western Massachusetts in 1985, Robert was able to own horses and develop skills training them and later to acquire two young Spanish Barb horses that he trained intensively and was frequently seen riding through town.

For several years, Robert and his family lived on the Heath Fairgrounds where he served as caretaker. During his tenure, he wrote frequent columns for the Heath Agricultural Society and about the Heath Fair which ran in the *Heath Herald*. A regular patron of the Heath Free Public Library, he was an enthusiastic supporter of all of the library's activities.

He is survived by his wife Jane McHale and his daughter Alice Taylor Gear. In addition, survivors include his sister, Karen Bennett and a cousin, John "Josh" Grabowski, both of Southampton; a sister-in-law, Michele McHale, of Northampton; brothers-in-law, Thomas McHale of Portsmouth, RI, and Frank McHale of Hamilton, IN, and his father's sisters, Florence and Mary Gear of Valley Stream, NY.

Funeral services were held on February 24 at the Smith-Kelleher Funeral Home, Shelburne Falls, with the Reverend Pamela Porter officiating.

Memorial donations may be made to Good Neighbors Food Pantry, in care of Budge Litchfield, Route 8A South, Charlemont, MA 01339.

Vivian Smith Hazlett of Guilford, ME, died on February 23, 2007. Born on May 13, 1910, in the Dell of Heath, she was the oldest of nine children of K. Paul and Edith Gilbert Smith.

She was predeceased by her husband, William J. Hazlett, who died in 1988 and more recently by her brothers, **Louis** of Heath, Marshall, Fredrick, and Gilbert. She is survived by her son, **James Hazlett**, of North Heath, and two daughters, Ann Panciera of Guilford, ME, and Jane Butler of Poteau, OK; seven grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren.

Requiescat in pace

Rozalyn Sophia Schempp, daughter of **Amy Armstrong** and **Robert Schempp** of Heath, was born on February 18, 2007. She is the granddaughter of **Carolyn and Michael Armstrong** of Heath, Carol and Keith Schempp of Buckland, and Lisa and Dennis O'Gorman of South Deerfield, and great-granddaughter of Carol Semanie of Greenfield and Muriel and Jim Breen of Buckland.

Heath Sustainability Group

The Heath Sustainability group had its first meeting to brainstorm creative ways of localizing our economy and building community. We spoke at length in support of creating a tax relief fund and an educational foundation. Also front and center were discussions related to an Independent Heath School, community gardening projects, a farmer's market, a local cooperative store, movie and music nights at the Community Hall, alternative energy projects, and growth and preservation balance of rural towns and more. Margaret Freeman has set up a Heath blog and forum for discussing these issues online www.heathans.wordpress.com. Registration is free and simple. Please call Lorena at 624-3842 or e-mail lloub-skylonergan@netzero.com for the next meeting time, and with your ideas. All are welcome.

~ Lorena Loubsky-Lonergan



The town election will take place on
Friday, May 11,
in Sawyer Hall from noon to 7:00 p.m.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Length of Term</i>
Selectman	Tom Lively, incumbent	3 years
Assessor	Val Kaempfer, incumbent	3 years
School Committee	*Vacant	3 years
Constables	Bob Tanner, incumbents	1 year
	Jeff Simmons	
Dog Officer	Bob Tanner, incumbent	1 year
Planning Board	Dino Schnelle, incumbent	5 years
Library Trustee	Janis Carr, incumbent	3 years
Library Trustee	*Vacant	1 year
Finance Committee	Jeff Simmons, incumbent	3 years

*vacant offices will require a write-in vote



Community Calendar

APRIL 2007

- April 2-6** - Heath School 6th Grade to Nature's Classroom
- April 5** - Senior Luncheon, Community Hall-Senior Center, 11:45 a.m.
Heath School Drama Club's "Charlotte's Web" at Senior Luncheon
PTP Meeting, Heath School. 6:30 p.m.
- April 8** - **HAPPY EASTER!**
- April 10** - LEC Meeting, Heath School, 3:30 p.m.
- April 12** - Heath Agricultural Society meeting, Heath School, 7:00 p.m.
- April 13** - Square Dance to benefit the Preschool, Community Hall, 7:30 - 11:00 p.m.,
Beginners, 7:00 to 7:30 p.m.
Preschool Story Hour, Heath Library, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.
- April 16-20** - **SCHOOLS' SPRING BREAK**
- April 16-21** - **National Library Week**
- April 19** - Senior Luncheon, Community Hall-Senior Center, 11:45 a.m.
- April 23-May 13** - **COMMUNITY READ** - *The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs*
By Betty G. Birney
- April 25** - Sixth Grade Parent Open House, MTRHS
STAND FOR CHILDREN RALLY, Boston
- April 27** - Preschool Story Hour, Heath Library, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

MAY 2007

**Heath Fair Work Bees begin, weather permitting,
Fairgrounds, Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m.**

- May 2** - Schools' Early Release Day
- May 3** - Senior Luncheon, Community Hall-Senior Center, 11:45 a.m.
- May 8** - Mohawk Spring Concert, 7:00 p.m.
- May 9** - K-12 School Committee Meeting, Colrain, 7:00 p.m.
- May 11** - **TOWN ELECTIONS**, Heath Library, noon - 7:00 p.m.
- May 12** - **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, HEATH SCHOOL, 9:00 A.M.**
Friends of the Heath School Library's Continental Breakfast, Heath School, 8:30 a.m. -
Senior Prom, MTRHS

- May 17** - Senior Luncheon, Community Hall-Senior Center, 11:45 a.m.
LEC Meeting, Heath School, 3:30 p.m.
- May 20** - MTRHS Junior Class Auction
- May 23** - Schools' Early Release Day
- May 25** - Heath School Memorial Day Program,
Heath Center Cemetery, 8:30 a.m.
Preschool Story Hour, Heath Library, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
- May 26** - Friends of the Heath Library Bake Sale,
Town Hall porch, 9:30 a.m. -
- May 28** - **Memorial Day Holiday** - Memorial Day Parades
- May 29** - Art Show, Heath School, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- May 31** - Penobscott Native American Presentation, Heath School, afternoon

JUNE 2007

- June 3** - **MTRHS Graduation**
- June 5** - Project Safeguard, MTRHS



Heath's Monthly Precipitation (inches)

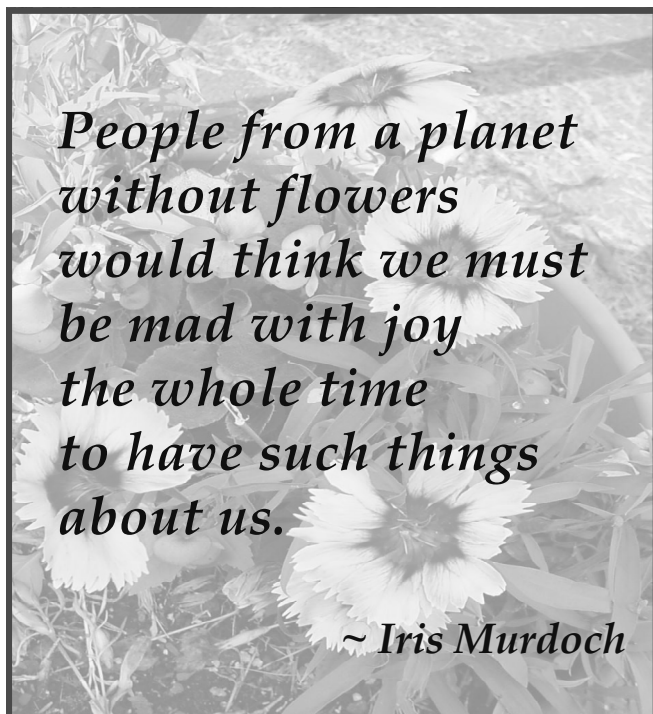
(Observed by Heath School Staff and Students)

	<u>Rain</u>	<u>Snow</u>
From January 11, 2007	¼ "	3 "
February	0	29"
To March 12	3/10 th	8"

In this reporting period:

An ice storm on January 15 signaled the end of the warm spell that we had been having. The ice storm caused a lot of trees and large branches to come down, with ice up to ¾" thick in areas. Two days later there was a morning temperature of 5 degrees below zero. The bitter cold happened again on January 26 with a reading of 12-14 below zero. The first substantial snowstorm of the winter season came on February 14. This Nor'easter dumped between 14-18 inches and was accompanied by a few days of strong winds. February also contained a lot of very cold days. The first "warm-up" came on February 20 with a temperature of 38 degrees. The first full week of March saw wind and bitter cold with morning temperatures below zero. We end this report with a temperature of 47 degrees on March 12.

~ Timothy Lively



*People from a planet
without flowers
would think we must
be mad with joy
the whole time
to have such things
about us.*

~ Iris Murdoch

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