Skiing in Norwich:
From the Rope Tow to the Olympics

David Callaway

Norwich Historical Society Shares Skiing Lore

What's the magic behind Norwich and its Olympic skiers? Is there a secret group of ski coaches hiding in the woods at the top of Elm Street? Are ski jumping classes a requirement at the Marion Cross School? Or is there a magic elixir in the town's maple syrup? What else could explain the abundance of Olympic athletes who have come from this small Vermont town during the last sixty years?

For starters, if you lived in Norwich in the 1930s, you really weren't far from the center of a skiing revolution. It all began in 1934 with 'Bunny' Bertram, a 1931 Dartmouth graduate who captained the first Dartmouth ski team. He made history on a hillside pasture just north of Sample's Jump.

Continued on page 8

Writing Art and Meaning

Ruth Sylvester

In some traditions, it all begins with the Word. In keeping with the power of words, and with the relative rarity of the skill, many ancient cultures revered writing, and honored those who could write and read. Now we’re living through changes that find writing reduced to texting. For words we may substitute acronyms or emojis. Some lament the lack of penmanship training in school, but others say, “Who needs it?” Even keyboarding on a QWERTY typewriter is losing out to double-thumbing on a screen-ette.

Continued on page 12

Restoring Sight in the Himalayans

The joy of sight restoration is a remarkable thing to witness

Alec Carolin

Imagine having your world slowly shrouded in darkness. Once, you were able to see clearly: the snow, the grass, the faces of your loved ones. But then your eyes, your windows into the world, began to cloud over, and you lost sight of that beauty piece by piece. This is the tragedy inflicted by cataracts in the developing world. And the goal of the Himalayan Cataract Project, whose offices include a team right here in Norwich, is to fix it.

The Himalayan Cataract Project, or HCP, was founded in 1995 by two ophthalmologists, Dr. Geoffrey Tabin and Dr.

Continued on page 22

Laura Di Piazza and her kids: Alice, Harry and Lucy

CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING: THE TIMES IN THE TIMES
Congratulations to Bill Hammond

For the last six years, Bill Hammond has been an outsized presence in the lives of the children who attend the Marion Cross School. He knows their names—every single one of them. He knows what they like to do. In more than a few cases, he knows their eccentricities and their struggles... and what makes them special. He greets them first thing in the morning. He checks in with them on the playground. He waves good-bye as they board waiting buses to go home. He dresses up: as the Statue of Liberty for Immigration Day, as Bill Nye the Science Guy, as a French soldier to read to the third grade. He juggles, performs magic—and finds a way to say "yes" to their ideas for making the school a better place.

In and of themselves, these are small things. But they add up. And over the last six years, in ways both large and small, Mr. Bill has transformed Marion Cross. It is a happy, productive place—after a number of bumpy years before he arrived—and the entire town of Norwich has benefited. For that reason, the Norwich Citizen of the Year Committee has named Bill Hammond its 2018 honoree. You could say we’re late to the game: He was honored last year by the National Association of Elementary School Principals as the 2017-2018 distinguished national principal. Or you could say we saved the best for last.

What may be most remarkable is that Mr. Bill is revered by students, parents, and teachers alike. “I don’t think there’s a kid in the school,” one teacher says, “who doesn’t adore him.” A parent comments, “Mr. Bill has handled every challenging parent with dignity, respect and an attitude that truly wishes to help the student, not anyone else’s agenda or issues.” In school, if teachers want to get something done that costs money, Mr. Bill encourages them to focus on what they want to accomplish and tells them, “We’ll figure out the rest.” To be sure, there are teachers who get frustrated because sending a kid to the principal, in this case, isn’t that much of a punishment. Says a teacher, “He’s not heavy handed. He’s always thinking, ‘What’s the learning opportunity here?’ He wants to be someone kids can feel safe with, and long-term learning is more important to him than short-term consequences. It makes us as a community figure out how we’re going to deal with the issues troubling this child.”

But, perhaps the strongest words of praise come from some of the people who wrote to the Citizen of the Year Committee nominating Bill Hammond. “Norwich children are being raised with a sense of ‘service to others’ through many projects, fundraisers, and educational exploration,” one person wrote. “He has directly influenced thousands of young emissaries of good will and kindness.” Added another, “Bill’s creativity, leadership, patience and dedication positively impacts class after class of Norwich elementary school children, providing them with the confidence and appetite for learning that will nourish them for the rest of their lives. But his influence doesn’t stop there—through his insightful and thoughtful “Crosswords” and many other vehicles of interaction with the community, he has the same impact on parents as well.” By dint of his efforts, Bill Hammond has made Norwich a better town. We’re grateful.

Over the last few years, though, the Citizen of the Year Committee has also come to recognize that naming a single honoree in a year is, really, inadequate. The sheer number of generous-spirited, industrious, and creative people who
Pour their time and energy into making Norwich, the Upper Valley, and the world better is humbling. We can’t recognize them all. But we can recognize at least a few. So this year, we want to call attention to two people, Barney Hoisington and Linda Gray, whom we’re calling “Stewards of Norwich.”

Barney Hoisington

Up until a few years ago, if you spent any time at the transfer station, you saw Barney Hoisington. Regardless, it should be pointed out, of the weather. Barney was the soft-spoken, polite man collecting any returnable bottle or can with a 5-cent deposit on it. He sorted them, made sure the redemption label was visible, got them ready for a redemption center… and then donated the proceeds to the Haven and other nonprofits. He raised thousands of dollars a year this way. Five cents at a time. Without fanfare or much notice. It’s impossible to know how many people Barney helped over the years, one beer bottle or soda can at a time. But it’s a lot. And along the way, he helped Norwich stay cleaner. As the person who nominated Barney put it, “He is a truly generous man who gave of his time and resources along the way, he helped Norwich stay cleaner. As the person who nominated Barney for this award… he helped over the years, one beer bottle or soda can at a time. But it’s a lot. And without much fanfare or notice. It’s impossible to know how many people Barney helped over the years, one beer bottle or soda can at a time. But it’s a lot. And along the way, he helped Norwich stay cleaner. As the person who nominated Barney put it, “He is a truly generous man who gave of his time and resources along the way, he helped Norwich stay cleaner.”

Linda Gray

You know Linda Gray, too – if not in person, then by virtue of the “Solarize Norwich” collars that from time to time have adorned the Citgo pole outside Dan & Whit’s. Linda has been a moving spirit on the Norwich Energy Committee for close to a decade. The committee does a lot: signing people up for weatherization initiatives and home energy audits; getting the town, the school, and the library to buy solar-generated electricity; winning the grant that produced the EV charging station at Dan & Whit’s; helping the Fire District move toward hosting a solar array near its Route 5 pump house. But more than anything else, Linda has become the face of – and the courteous, persistent, unstoppable force behind – the Solarize Norwich campaign. The result? Some 20 percent of the town either has solar installed or participates in off-site community solar. That is remarkable by any measure.

Arthur Owen

Finally, you may not have known Arthur Owen. When he died in September, his obituary in the Valley News noted, “It was not long before many people of the Upper Valley came to know Arthur as the go-to man for fixing foundations, digging septic systems and driveways, plowing, landscaping, and various other jobs. In addition to work, Arthur enjoyed snowmobiling, ice fishing, sugaring, dancing, and eating pie.” But that’s just the bare bones. We’ll let the person who nominated Arthur fill in the gaps: “Arthur was the linchpin of the Beaver Meadow, West Norwich community. He was instrumental in the early days of reviving the Beaver Meadow Schoolhouse as a community center, and he embodied community in everything he did. His bulldozer, excavator, trailer, and plow truck were constantly going out on some mission to help people. He pulled most of us out of a ditch (or worse) in the winter, fixed our cars, repaired our furnaces, plowed and sanded our driveways, installed our septic systems, smoothed our rough places, and repaired our generators. He kept numerous people out of winter accidents by sanding the hill in front of his house in ice storms and standing guard in the rain and ice to warn them to slow down. For many years, he worked full time for Dartmouth College as a ‘trouble-shooter,’ and then came home to another full-time job working to help his neighbors. He worked long hours and sometimes all night helping people when the circumstances required it. Sometimes he did it as a paying job. Sometimes he was just doing people a favor and refused payment. (He never turned down an offer of lunch or pie, however!)”

We consider it an honor to be able to recognize Bill Hammond, Barney Hoisington, Linda Gray, and Arthur Owen this year.

The Norwich Citizen of the Year Committee: Cheryl Herrmann, chair; Lisa Christie; Dan DeMars; Laura Duncan; Rob Gurwitt; Don McCabe; Signe Taylor.
EDITOR’S NOTE

It’s not unusual for this column to start with a reflection on the weather. I guess as Vermonters, that’s just what we do. It is such a large part of our lives and it is woven into everything we do. We just have to talk about it!

As I reflect on this winter, I suppose I could dwell on the subzero cold snap over the holidays, or the many school cancellations, but there’s so much more to talk about than that. While Vermonters do love to talk about the weather, we also don’t hibernate when it gets cold. There’s still work to be done and a wealth of activities to keep us entertained. This issue of the Norwich Times certainly proves that.

We’ve highlighted members of our community who are making a difference here and around the world. Our fine police force is keeping us safe at home while other local professionals are helping restore eyesight to individuals in Asia and Africa. The arts community is alive and well through the winter months – dancing, reveling, painting – to keep us all entertained and inspired.

Still stuck for things to do in Norwich? Be sure to read Mark Lilienthal’s column, Life at 531 Feet. You’ll find inspiration in his words to get up and get active around town this spring. There is just so much to do in (and love about) Norwich!

We hope you enjoy the uplifting stories that are coming out of our community. If you have a story to share, let us know... and remember, no story is too small. If it makes you smile, let us help you pass it along.

Happy Spring!

~ Elizabeth Craib

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Norwich Offers Firewood to Those In Need

Frank Orlowski

No one who lives in the Upper Valley needs to be told it was a fierce start to the winter. Extreme wind chills, double digit below zero nights, and damp cold days flourished in late December and January. As a result, fuel usage was at a max this winter.

Many area residents depend on firewood as a secondary, and primary heat source, and as those temps go down, so does the firewood pile. For some folks, ordering an extra cord of wood is not a problem. For others, however, the $250 or $300 for a cord is a financial hardship.

To meet the needs of those depending on firewood, and without the means to afford it, Norwich offers a community firewood reserve. Norwich resident David Hubbard heads up this community effort to help those in need of wood for heat.

Though the firewood is gathered and stored in Norwich (there are two sheds for storing the wood), Hubbard explains that anyone in need throughout the Upper Valley can use this wood. Folks from as far away as Windsor, Bridgewater, and Bradford (VT) have made use of this service.

Though it is occasionally possible for a delivery of wood to be made to the recipient, most who receive the wood come and pick it up themselves. “Eligibility for receiving the wood is based on the honor system,” says Hubbard. There are no applications for recipients to fill out, nor are there reviews to determine if someone is eligible. “If someone can afford wood, they should get it from a firewood dealer.”

Making the wood available depends on the hard work of volunteers, and the staff of the Norwich Public Works Department. Hubbard explains that Andy Hodgdon’s public works crew collects most of the log length firewood used from cutting jobs along Norwich’s roadsides, and transports the wood to the collection site at the firewood sheds. In addition, during slow times throughout the year, public works staff will devote time to cutting, splitting, and stacking the wood.

Community volunteers are also instrumental in the work. Once a year, in late October, Hubbard organizes a volunteer workday, with volunteers showing up with saws, wood splitters and trucks to cut, split, stack, and deliver the wood. Hubbard finds that many of his volunteers, “are 50 (years old) and older,” and he’d love to see “new blood, younger adults,” step up and get involved. Hubbard does point out that throughout the year, young folks from Youth In Action and Hanover High do pitch in and help stack wood, as do some Appalachian Trail hikers who stop and spend a few days in the area.

The two sheds where the firewood is stored can hold between 20 and 25 cord, Hubbard says. Last year, 100% of the stored wood was distributed, and this year, as of late February, about eight cord remain available. As many people run out of wood late in the season, chances are there will be little left at the end of this winter.

For those interested in more information on the firewood collection and distribution effort, visit the website for the Town of Norwich.

Five Colleges Book Sale

Since 1963, the Five Colleges Book Sale – Mt. Holyoke, Simmons, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley – has been taking place every spring. This is one of New England’s largest sales of old books with all profits going to scholarships for Vermont and New Hampshire students.

There are usually 35,000-40,000 books from all genres in good condition available for purchase, including maps, prints, computer materials, CDs, videos, DVDs, and audio books. Discounts are available on first-day sales over $300 (not including specials and sealed bids), there is also a sealed-bid auction of special items, everything half-price on the second day.

This year’s sale takes place on Saturday, April 21, from 9am to 5pm, and Sunday, April 22, from 9am to 3pm (all items are half-price on Sunday), at the Lebanon High School Gym, in Lebanon, NH, which is handicap accessible. This year they will be accepting credit cards.

The Sale is the work of some 300 volunteers, graduates, and friends of the five colleges. Contributions of books and other items are accepted throughout the year.

For more information, visit www.five-colleges-booksale.org.
eBird Unites Tech and Nature

On a beautiful Sunday in January, twenty-two bird nerds from all over Vermont and New Hampshire forwent the sunshine to learn the ins and outs of eBird, a web and phone-based app that allows birders to contribute their observations to science. In a world where we can use an app to make a hotel reservation, track fitness regimes, and even find a date, tech has addressed the needs of even the intentionally unplugged, those who would rather look at feathered friends than screens. Yet eBird workshop participants arrived with field guides and phones in hand, ready to merge the old with the new.

Hosted by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, a Norwich-based non-profit, the eBird workshop was run by VCE scientists (and birdwatchers) Kent McFarland, John Lloyd, and Jason Hill. Launched in 2003 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, eBird is now the world’s largest biodiversity-related citizen science project, with 100 million bird sightings contributed annually. Soon after its launch, eBird created regional web portals that allowed users to interface with regional data and to feel more ownership over the project.

Vermont eBird was the guinea pig for the state portals and VCE scientists, then a part of Vermont Institute of Natural Science, were in on the ground floor. VCE continues to manage the portal in collaboration with Vermont Audubon and various local Audubon chapters, Vermont Fish and Wildlife, the North Branch Nature Center, and of course, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Now in its 15th year, Vermont eBird participants have cumulatively submitted 260,000 complete checklists, documenting all 385 bird species ever reported in Vermont. This makes Vermont eBird the largest community-driven biodiversity dataset ever compiled in the state.

Following VCE’s workshop, Vermont eBird can now count twenty-two more tech-savvy birders among their ranks. Workshop participants left energetic and ready to submit their data so that it is most useful to scientists like those at VCE.

Alice Grau, from Addison County, said, “I loved the workshop, really enjoyed getting a glimpse of what eBird can do. I have a way to get serious about birding this year, one of my goals.”

Given the interest in the workshop and the positive feedback of participants, VCE plans on holding similar workshops in the future. Any workshops or video resources by VCE will be posted on the Vermont eBird website www.ebird.org/vt/news.
And then there’s Laura Di Piazza. An artist with an MFA from Goddard College in Plainfield, Laura has bent her artistic interests and talents primarily towards calligraphy. The word means ‘beautiful writing,’ and that’s an exact description of what she mainly does.

“I was exposed to calligraphy purely by chance in seventh grade,” Laura says. “I was in an inner-city school in Brooklyn that offered an Italic calligraphy course for only one academic year. My teacher was very kind, patient and she provided me with plenty of guidance and encouragement to pursue calligraphy beyond her class.” Laura continued her interest in calligraphy, keeping it as a hobby into her twenties, while she engaged in the common post-college mix of jobs. In her case, the mix included working in a sleep lab, and doing publicity for SAG (the Screen Actors Guild). “I offered calligraphy on the side,” she recalls cheerfully, “and it kept growing. After a while there was no time for a day job.”

She produced material for corporate events, weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, and so forth. “That kept me very busy, but I cut back when I became a mother,” she says. Her daughter Alice was born in 2005, and her twins, Harry and Lucy, in 2007. The family moved to Norwich in 2008.

Teaching There and Here

In addition to producing calligraphy, Laura teaches classes and workshops. She’s spread her skills over a wide area in this way, though the classes are necessarily small. In the Upper Valley, she’s taught calligraphy at Dartmouth, Artistree, POST and AVA, and has given workshops in Europe, but mostly she teaches in New York, for Society of Scribes, commuting down for a weekend. She enjoys getting a fix of city life, but she likes returning to the Upper Valley. She says, “It’s very relaxed here. You don’t ever have to worry about crime, and the air is so clean! And here people aren’t as showy.” (We certainly don’t pretend to dress in a league with the New York art scene!) Laura herself radiates a winning combination of style and the hominess of a mom and of a special needs teacher, a calling she also pursues. Herself a mix of cultures – her father is an Italian-American from Brooklyn, and her mother is Eritrean – she blends the beauties of both races.

Taking Time, Creating Focus

“There’s a movement to ‘slow’ activities,” Laura points out. “People are so immersed in the fast-paced digital world, but they want a respite. There’s definitely a comeback to pen and ink.” Ironically, that digital world provides
access to slow arts like calligraphy. “Lots of people are learning online,” she adds. “The internet has made this ancient art form popular. Video is very important. It’s helpful to see it being done.”

Modern calligraphers use an oblique penholder that enables them to set the nib at the appropriate angle for pointed pen calligraphy. Laura mostly letters copperplate, a flowing style characterized by thicker down-strokes (written with more pressure on the nib), and delicate fine hairlines elsewhere. The script offers great opportunities for decorative flourishes.

**Exhibiting and Curating**

Sometimes Laura’s calligraphy is part of a show by another artist. For example, in a recent exhibition called *Office of Unreplied Emails* – by international artist Camille Henrot, exhibited in Berlin, Germany, and Paris, France – Laura created calligraphic versions of the poetic and philosophical responses that Henrot designed as answers to alarmist fundraising emails.

Laura occasionally mounts a show of her own work, both calligraphic and abstract. Some of her paintings include words, and other pieces seem to convey information in an unknown script, as though they were maps or chip designs. She currently has an exhibition, *Vox Somnium*, at Northern Stage (through May 23). “My point,” she says, “is to showcase work that is not ordinary, that you could possibly see in a dream, and in a dream it would make sense.” In November and December of 2018, the Norwich Library will host a display of Laura’s calligraphic work.

Laura also curates exhibitions of other artists’ work. “I like someone’s work, so I say ‘Let’s show it somewhere.’ I kind of match-make artists with venues and media outlets, selecting works and how they’re displayed. It’s so much easier [for the artist] when someone else is doing this, or helping.” She has curated exhibitions at, for example, UVM and Vermont Law School.

**Passing on the Gift**

“My favorite show,” says Laura, “was the one I curated last spring at the Norwich Public Library. It was a display of work by elementary school students in Vermont and New Hampshire.” Students from as far as Lempster and Woodstock saw their work professionally displayed, thanks to a grant from the Byrne Foundation to help with framing costs. The opening reception didn’t need champagne to have plenty of fizz – and Laura knows from her own experience how taking a young person’s artistic efforts seriously can change lives.

Watch Laura craft this calligraphy at www.vimeo.com/81937507.

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Natural and Organic Lawn Care

The use of professionally delivered natural/organic lawn care programs continue to gain popularity from consumers demanding less impact on the environment, their family and their pets. The increased demand for natural/organic alternatives has fueled the development and release of newer and safer products that can deliver results not attainable in the past.

This good news does not simply end with implementing new ‘tonics’ to improve turf health, but rather a fresh mindset as to what a healthy lawn system really is and the notion that perhaps not having that perfectly manicured lawn is okay. Furthermore, education and stepping away from decades of conventional "spray it and go" programs continues to challenge and indeed reshape the industry of professional lawn care.

Today's modern lawn care health program focuses on resolving underlying issues such as soil quality/bio-health, organic matter and turf varieties present in the lawn. Additional considerations are how the lawn is used and the microclimate present, such as exposure to wind or deep shade. Only by addressing the cause of poor turf health and what is deficient, can we truly address the underlying problems. This change in mindset is a vastly different approach than simply treating visible symptoms such as poor density, color, weak roots, insect, and disease issues to name just a few.

The Upper Valley has typical lawn problems ranging from compaction, hard-to-control weeds, moss, and pests such as grubs. Core aeration is a simple, yet effective tool to reduce soil compaction and when combined with overseeding, grass varieties that are better suited to site conditions are added. Aeration and overseeding are best done with adequate soil moisture in the spring and fall for optimum results.

While spraying for weeds (including moss) is still a viable rescue tool to reduce an unwanted plant in a lawn, so too is creating a habitat that is more favorable to turf. This includes reducing compaction through aeration; adding more vigorous grasses via overseeding; adding compost tea; and utilizing organic/natural fertilizers and calcium based lime. Correcting soil deficiencies through organic and natural actions will address underlying problems leading to a healthier lawn.

There are new products that can address crabgrass, broadleaf weeds (even tough ones like ground ivy and violets), ticks, grubs, and disease issues. Although these natural/organic materials are not magic wands compared to conventional lawn care, they do provide great value when combined with proper mowing (3” from May – September), aeration, overseeding and improving soil health.

As more homes are built by rivers and lakes, the need for natural/organic lawn care will only continue to increase due to imposed restrictions… and rightly so. And as communities and schools adopt more eco- and child-friendly products, natural/organic lawn programs will continue to be more than just a trend.

~ Theron Peck, Chippers Turf Division Manager
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When Adam Weinstein, his wife Heather Salon, and their two children Simon and Twyla moved to Norwich eight and half years ago, they were greeted by revelers... literally. On the day of their arrival, the Summer Revels festival was happening on the green, a memorable introduction to the town. As they settled into the community, they also became Revelers.

Revelers are participants of Revels North, the Hanover based performance organization that focuses on traditional song, dance, storytelling and ritual. The grand spectacle each year is the Christmas Revels which takes place at the Hopkins Center for the Arts and is seen by nearly five thousand people each year over the course of a weekend. The 2017 show was a Nordic Celebration of the Winter Solstice and featured traditional songs, stories, and dances of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Denmark. Previous years have featured traditions of Quebec, Appalachia, Ireland, and England. Besides the Christmas Revels, other Revels North programming includes the Spring Singers, the aforementioned Summer Revels, The Band of Fools, and informal pub sings and community dances.

Their children were the first Revelers, participating in Revels Kids. Currently, Simon, a student at Hanover High school, is the most involved family member, participating in nearly every Revels program to the point where he prioritizes Revels over other extracurricular activities. His talents landed him one of the leading roles in a previous Christmas Revels, and also plays string bass in the Band of Fools. Twyla, who just turned ten, loves singing in Revels programs, and her parents suspect she may become more involved like her big brother when she gets older.

Adam's hectic work schedule prevents him from performing as often as he'd like, but was thrilled to have received the opportunity to perform with his children in his first ever Christmas Revels this past year.

Heather claims she's neither a singer, dancer, or actress, but that doesn't thwart her from participating in Revels. Other than being an avid supporter of her children and husband, she's also Revels North board member. She enjoys seeing how things work from the inside and dealing with the challenges of how to move the organization forward.

According to Adam, one of the best aspects of Revels is that it keeps traditions alive. It's an excellent way to learn about different cultures while also teaching the community through song, dance, and theatre. Heather loves the intergenerational friendships that occur. She says that Revels is one of the few places where kids actually get to hang out and become friends with adults.

But truly, what keeps this family participating is the happiness and embrace they've felt within the Revels community. As to why more Norwich residents should join, Adam says, "When you're stressed out with the world, it's nice to come together with other people in kindness."
Woodstock, Vermont when he rigged up an "endless rope tow, powered by a Model T Ford engine." Prior to this time, once a skier got to the bottom of the hill, they had to hike back up the slope for the next run. "The ingenious contraption," states the historical marker at the site, "launched a new era in winter sports." Closer to Norwich, the original ski 'lift' in the country was developed at Hanover's Oak Hill in 1935. The J-Bar ran successfully for more than 40 years, while Bertram's rope tow lasted for just a year before he moved his operation over the hill and set up what became Suicide Six.

While the rope tows and J-Bars made the sport more accessible, especially to children, learning how to ski properly was still a challenge. Enter Ford K. Sayre. Ford learned to ski at Dartmouth and directed the Winter Carnival in 1933 when he was a senior. That same year, on a joint Dartmouth/Smith College trip to Mt. Moosilauke, Ford met his future wife, Peggy. The couple married in 1933, and managed the Moosilauke Lodge until 1936 when he became the manager of the Hanover Inn. At the Inn, he offered free ski lessons to children of guests and to kids in the neighboring towns. According to an article in the Dartmouth Alumni Magazine in the fall of 1944, Ford realized that during the Depression years, many children in the area, "particularly in the outlying communities, could not afford adequate equipment and instruction in skiing." Ford rounded up usable second-hand equipment and had it repaired and distributed to children who needed skis. He also spent "many weekends teaching skiing to the children of Etna, Norwich, and other communities." In 1942, Ford enlisted in the Army Air Corps while Peggy continued to run the learn-to-ski program. In July of 1944, Ford was killed in a mid-air collision during an air show in Spokane, Washington. Rather than send flowers, a friend suggested that money be donated in Ford’s name for ongoing opportunities. Albert Snite, a Norwich resident and father of the future Olympian, Betsy Snite, "The instructor must be willing to recognize some latitude in the pupil's style," Snite wrote in the introduction, “but must attempt at the same time to teach the solid fundamentals of skiing. This is a system that... allows for the individual variations from the basics. So don’t worry if your first grade pupil doesn’t look like [an Olympic star] after two weeks of work.” Instructors were encouraged to have “unlimited patience,” and when students were tired, “do something easy to rest them and make it fun.”

In the late 1940s, the Ford Sayre program got rolling in Norwich on the south side of Cemetery Hill. The Altow Ski Area was named after the first owner, Al Peavy: Al’s Tow! The rope tow was powered by a Ford V-8 truck engine. The moving rope circled over auto wheels mounted on posts and towed skiers up the hill. An exciting interlude for a trip up the slope came when the hill flattened. The skier had “to let go of the rope before it went out of reach over one of the wheels, then glide across the flat stretch and grab the top again as it emerged from another wheel at the far side.”

According to Buff McLaughry, who grew up in Norwich, this was a scary moment when he was a five-year-old.

As a grade-school student, Bill Aldrich, another longtime Norwich resident, helped sell hot chocolate in the warming hut at the base of the hill, and also operated the rope tow once the adults had fired up the engine. “We would watch the towline for ‘fall offs’ and put the engine in neutral until it was all clear.” Altow ran 1,500 feet from top to bottom and, according to Aldrich, “It would take 3-5 minutes to shush it on a brisk day and maybe 5-7 minutes to ride up.” It cost .50¢ for a half day of skiing and the Ford Sayre Ski School charged $1.50 per winter for ski instruction. No races were held at Altow, but the town’s children learned the basics of skiing on the little run. Altow opened in the late 1940s, and by the 1950s had installed lights for night skiing. Aldrich remembered on night skis, “It was a beautiful scene to look over the town area and watch the towline for ‘fall offs’ and put the engine in neutral until it was all clear.” Altow ran 1,500 feet from top to bottom and, according to Aldrich, “It would take 3-5 minutes to shush it on a brisk day and maybe 5-7 minutes to ride up.” It cost .50¢ for a half day of skiing and the Ford Sayre Ski School charged $1.50 per winter for ski instruction. No races were held at Altow, but the town’s children learned the basics of skiing on the little run. Altow opened in the late 1940s, and by the 1950s had installed lights for night skiing. Aldrich remembered on night skis, “It was a beautiful scene to look over the town area from the top.” In the early 1950s, the neighboring cemetery spread across the hill, and the Altow Ski Area had to close.

Albert and Elizabeth Snite owned the Altow hill and offered free use of the area to the town. Their daughter Betsy took full advantage of the area. Bill Aldrich remembers her training at Altow in the warmer months. “Bets” ‘ran’ up and down Altow three times per day and to the very top, not the first knoll! After that, she...
jogged 3-5 miles and finished by doing the hill again!" In the winter, she skied every day. According to Jerry Hickson, Snite’s first Ford Sayre ski instructor, “She was about nine years old and quite eager to ski. Later, when she was in high school, she didn’t race in Ford Sayre races because she was too good, but trained with the Dartmouth ski team.” Betsy kept getting better. She competed in the 1956 Winter Olympics at the age of seventeen. Four years later she won the silver medal in women’s slalom in the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, California. She made the cover of Sports Illustrated and became the first Olympic medalist from Norwich, Vermont.

Near Altow off of Hopson Road, a 25-meter ski jump was created in the 1950s by David Bradley and Omar Lacasse. It was called Sample’s Hill after the Dartmouth artist-in-residence, Paul Sample who owned the property and lived nearby. Buff McLaughry sped down Sample’s Hill many times as a boy. “The excitement of flying in the air as a kid was incredible,” said Buff. “Jumping was viewed as an extreme sport then. It was the X-Games of its day. Spectators flocked from all over to watch us sail through the air for jumps of even 50 feet. It was really cool.”

“I remember,” said Steven Bradley, son of David Bradley, “the road being lined with cars, and kids carrying long skis.” According to Steven, “The worst (part of jumping) was seeing the guy in front of you crash and come sliding out below in a heap. You never knew if there was some huge divot or a deep rut where you would be landing next.” Steven admitted that he wasn’t the best, but “There were a few local kids who could really lean out on their luck and, once they got a taste of it, were amazing on the big hills. Everyone got their start there.”

Among those who began their skiing and jumping career in Norwich was Jeff Hastings, who competed at the 1984 Olympic Games and finished fourth on the large hill, placing just 2/10ths of a point out of the medals. A neighbor of Hastings was another jumper, Mike Holland. He competed in the 1984 and 1988 Winter Olympics. In 1985 he held the world distance jumping record for 27 minutes before a Finnish jumper passed his mark by one meter. Mike’s brother Joe was the “leading U.S. Nordic combined skier in the late 1980s and early 1990s” and appeared in the 1988 and 1992 Winter Olympics. Not to be outdone, the youngest Holland, Jim, was a ski jumper in the 1992 and 1994 Winter Olympics. Felix McGrath, another Norwich native, was an alpine skier in the 1988 Olympics. Tim Tetreault, who was raised in Norwich, competed in the Nordic Combined in three Olympics during the 1990s. The list goes on and on. In all, Norwich has produced 11 Olympians, highlighted most recently by Hannah Kearney, who brought home a gold medal from the 2010 Vancouver Olympics where she won the women’s moguls event.

Articles in The Valley News and The New York Times and a new book, Norwich: One Tiny Vermont Town’s Secret to Happiness and Excellence have recently appeared about Norwich and its abundance of world class winter athletes. The writers have searched for answers to the town’s success in winter sports. And the answers seem elusive. But if you follow the threads, the one thing the athletes have in common is the Ford Sayre program. Hannah Kearney started skiing when she was two and when she reached first grade enrolled in Ford Sayre program. Betsy Snite had a Ford Sayre coach at Altow, the Holland brothers soared at Sample’s Jump and Oak Hill under the watchful eye of David Bradley or another Ford Sayer instructor. Buff McLaughry, a jumping mentor in the Ford Sayer program for 23 years, coached Jim Holland. Whether they started at Altow or the Dartmouth Skiway, Sample’s Jump or Oak Hill, so many young people, whether they went on to be Olympic or recreational skiers, at one time had a volunteer Ford Sayre coach who made skiing exciting, and – most importantly – fun.

Drop by the Norwich Public Library in February to see the Norwich Historical Society’s exhibit on winter sports and the Olympics.
Editor’s Note: The Norwich Times is now in its 21st year, and we are excited to feature our loyal advertisers from time to time as space permits. Many have been with us since the beginning. We appreciate their commitment to the Norwich community, and thank them for sharing their good news and services with us.

Gilberte Interiors, A Family Focused Success Story

Our part of the world is blessed to have many established, successful long-time businesses that not only enhance the economic life of the Upper Valley; they also become an integral part of community life. Some that come to mind include Dan & Whit’s, King Arthur Flour, and the Co-op Food Stores. One business that certainly fits this mold is Gilberte Interiors of Hanover.

Operating a business for 50 years requires more than just the nuts and bolts of proper management. It requires trust from the patrons of the business; a comfort in walking through the door and knowing you will be treated right; and the confidence that those working there will not only do what is expected, but perform above and beyond those expectations.

Fifty years is how long Gilberte Interiors has served Upper Valley residents, though Cheryl Boghosian, who along with brother Aharon run Gilberte Interiors, point out that the business works with clients across the country. Today’s technology allows businesses such as Gilberte to work with clients long distance, though Cheryl says, “I still like working face-to-face.”

Of course, with the advent of technology, it certainly is possible to be face-to-face with a client in California or Florida, she adds.

Family has always been at the core of Gilberte Interiors. Begun by Cheryl and Aharon’s mother, Gilberte, in a small retail space on Allen Street, the business has grown to encompass the large, exquisitely designed and decorated operation we see today. Andy Boghosian, Gilberte’s husband, worked locally at Split Ball Bearing while Gilberte started her business, but by the mid-1970s, he joined his wife in the growing enterprise. The couple’s hard work, and expertise in style and design, built the business into the success it is today. Andy remained involved in running Gilberte Interiors until he passed away in early 2017, and Cheryl says her mother, Gilberte, remains active in the business today.

Cheryl, who holds certification from the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), and Aharon, with an educational background in business (a graduate of UNH’s Whittemore School of Business), operate Gilberte Interiors on a day-to-day basis. Cheryl studied interior design and architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design and Syracuse University prior to joining the family enterprise. She handles the design work while Aharon handles many tasks, including working with bath and kitchen elements and fixtures. Adding to the family nature of the business, Cheryl’s husband, Neil Roth, takes care of the business side of the operation, which includes working with the many subcontractors.

“Everybody has their niche,” says Cheryl. Using local subcontractors on the projects the business performs is important to this Upper Valley institution. Cheryl recognizes that our area is gifted with many talented local artisans and contractors; a great advantage for the work Gilberte Interiors performs. “We...
try to use local contractors,” she adds, “I have great confidence in them.”

Many fine craftspeople work directly for Gilberte Interiors; they fabricate a good deal of the elements used on their projects in-house.

Working closely with her clients, Cheryl’s design expertise helps create a room, or home, the client loves. “My goal is to listen to how they live, and their lifestyle,” says Cheryl. “We work to design to someone's style.”

Working with a professional designer helps the client be assured that the outcome of the project will be just what they desire. “They want to take your lead,” says Cheryl. One important aspect to design today is incorporating green and sustainable elements into the home.

Not surprisingly, clients of Gilberte Interiors will continue to use the company’s services even if they move from the area. Though Gilberte works with folks around the country, their nucleus is still around the Upper Valley with Norwich being a home of many of their clients. Though a longtime Hanover resident herself, Cheryl says she spent part of her childhood living in Norwich.

“Norwich is great... it has many beautiful spots,” says Cheryl. That attractive environment plays an important role in design work, she added. Taking advantage of the countryside, the views, is critical in designing an interior of a home. The lifestyle of Norwich residents plays a role, too; family life is important to the designer. “Norwich is a pocket of active, interesting people,” she adds. “People here are very family oriented.” This certainly helps explain the attraction to a family oriented business such as Gilberte.

Though she spends considerable time operating the business with her husband Neil, and brother Aharon, Cheryl is active in sports, particularly rowing, hiking and tennis. Sporting activities are important to the family; Andy Boghosian loved playing golf, and Aharon can often be found in his off hours working out at the River Valley Club.

Cheryl also finds time to volunteer with the Good Beginnings program of West Lebanon, an organization that utilizes volunteers to assist families with new babies. Additionally, Cheryl is involved with many activities at her church.

Giving back is a component of the business, too; on many occasions I personally encountered Aharon, as he donated items from Gilberte Interiors to a local non-profit. Community is at the core of everything they do.

Your Everyday Wine Cellar

At the store, we are frequently asked what the proper wine is for a particular situation. Whether it is the ideal pairing for a special meal, just the right wine for an important relative, or the best choice for a celebratory event, there are times when we want to put a little extra effort into making things perfect. Naturally, we always want to succeed at this!

Other times, with a simple meal on a weekday evening, most people don’t put that much effort into the selection. Why is that? Does it have to be a weekend, a holiday, or a special occasion for us to feel that the choice of wine is important?

This is a part of the way we live that I have always found puzzling. Every day we get to spend with friends or family is precious, and I think they all deserve to be treated that way.

Now, I’m not suggesting that all meals require a wine that is fancy or expensive, but with the enormous variety of wines available throughout the range of prices, I do think it’s worth giving a moment’s thought to what to serve every time a bottle gets opened.

One does not need to keep an extensively stocked cellar to live this way. Simply having a few “everyday” wines on hand allows you the flexibility to say “Hey, here’s the right white to serve with tonight’s fish tacos” instead of “Oh darn, I need to run to the store for a bottle of wine!” If this sounds like a good idea to you, stop by and let us help you start your “everyday cellar.”

~ Peter Rutledge

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Molly O'Hara

Dog ownership can bring fantastic, and sometimes unexpected, gifts into our lives beyond experiencing the unconditional love and support they provide. For some, dogs encourage exercise. For others, they provide much-needed therapy; and for many, dogs bring people together and help create new friendships. And sometimes, they create whole worlds.

For Betsy Vereckey, her dog Ronan was also the connection that brought her to the Upper Valley when her life in New York City turned upside down.

When Betsy first began looking for a dog with her then-husband six years ago, she didn’t set out looking for a Glen of Imaal Terrier necessarily. She researched various dog breeds and kept searching for the one that caught her eye, and the Terriers did it. “They’re like little bears,” she said, and they love to cuddle.

After finding a breeder, Susan Blum, and discovering just how intense a process it can be to talk with and purchase a puppy from an ethical breeder, she finally heard back that Susan’s dog had puppies and decided to go ahead with buying one. So, they made the long drive up from NYC to pick up Ronan and left, as Betsy said, “We went back to the city, and I thought, ‘Well that’s nice, Hanover was great, but I will probably never see her [Susan] again.’” But the women did stay in touch, to both of their benefit.

In fact, around here Susan is known for having created a large Glen of Imaal terrier population and extensive web of friends. Betsy ended up coming up here quite a bit with Ronan and made several terrific friends through the dog world.

Fast-forward a few years to 2017. Betsy’s life had changed drastically, and she was ready to get out of the city. The Blums invited her to come up and stay with them for a while. So, Betsy packed everything up and moved here in October 2017. “I basically upended my life because of my dog,” she said. “It’s great, I have a whole community up here which would have never happened in New York.”

Betsy said Ronan is having a blast living with so many other dogs, as Susan has five, and it’s been a lot of fun for her, too. First of all, a litter of puppies was born recently, and what dog person doesn’t want to get to snuggle in a pile of puppies, but she’s also met many new people through Susan, including other Glen of Imaal Terrier owners, such as Erin and John Tunnicliffe of Norwich.

Erin previously owned a Glen of Imaal Terrier, Sadie, who was the “light of my life,” she said, “and shaped so much of how I lived my day-to-day.” Erin got Sadie over 13 years ago.

Erin noted that this is one of the highest per capita area for Glen of Imaal terriers, despite them being a rare breed, “and it’s because of the Blums.” Before she got Sadie, Erin had grown up with smaller terriers, West Highland White Terriers, but had never heard of a Glen of Imaal. She was just at a place in her life where she was ready for a dog but wanted something slightly bigger. She saw Catherine Britton, of Norwich, walking her Glen of Imaal, and thought, “Wow, they are fanciful looking creatures.” Then Erin discovered that there were breeders right around the corner from her, the Blums.

She went and met with them and talked about the breed and met their dogs. “They’re so unique and interesting looking. People were always stopping on the street to pet Sadie or to ask about her and her breed.”

Sadie was so special to both Erin and John during their relationship that they ended up having her be the only other being in their wedding.

In this instance, not only are these individuals meeting new people on the street with their dogs, or potentially at Huntley Meadows or another dog park, but also through the spider web of friendships that center around the Blum’s.
True, we live in a small community. Also true that a lot of us have lived in a metropolis at some point in our lives, or, at minimum, a place with a little more pep than Norwich. Though it can be hazardous to admit it, I often miss the sheer volume of possibilities that more populous places offer. Let’s be honest with ourselves: sometimes on a Friday night when we ask loved ones, “What do you want to do tomorrow?” the options (“we could walk the Ballard Trail” or “we could go to the farmers market”) might not dazzle city slickers accustomed to authentic Japanese ramen, professional sports teams, and 24-hour nail salons.

The reality, of course, is that there are myriad pleasures for us to explore and discover right here in the world of 649. Lately, I have been thinking a lot about all the things I haven’t yet done here. It has been an instructive exercise because it proves what we all know but might not acknowledge: though Norwich is small, its capacity to surprise and delight is limitless.

For starters, what must it feel like to nominate someone for the Women’s Club Citizen of the Year? It seems like something that would require a great deal of earnest, satisfying reflection on what makes our community good. Attending the gala where the COTY is honored must figure on the bucket list of local people, along with riding on a fire truck in a parade and volunteering as a pie judge at the Fair.

Speaking of the Fair, what holds us back from sitting on the dunk tank? Are we more nervous that people might actually line up to throw balls to dunk us or that perhaps no one would care enough about us to bother lobbing a ball? Only one way to know...

Maybe I would enjoy a contra dance more as an adult than I did as a kid. Seems like I could find out at Tracy Hall on a pretty regular basis. At the risk of the authorities confiscating my Vermont driver’s license, I admit that I have never personally tapped a sugar maple tree. I am not really sure where Tigertown Road is, but anytime someone says that it’s out that way, I pretend like I do. I should go find it.

Over the decades in 05055, there is a whole set of “I’ve never” that I would like to work on reducing. As a citizen of a democracy, I have never attended a Selectboard meeting or spoken at Town Meeting. I have never volunteered to help put up or take down the American flags on holidays. I should get on that because the end result makes our town look as spiffy as a Norman Rockwell painting.

The world outside has certainly shown me lots of fun things to do right in my backyard. What Norwich childhood could be called complete without a journey to the top of the fire tower on Gile Mountain? Parcel 5, Huntley Meadow, the Milton Frye Nature Area, the woods behind King Arthur Flour, the trails by the river...all are Norwich natural gems. But there remains so much more to discover and explore. Personally, the only part of the Appalachian Trail in Norwich that I have “hiked” has been entirely by accident; who hasn’t walked on Elm Street? I am reasonably certain that the wooded part of the Trail in town is quite a bit more interesting, yet I haven’t explored it.

Though I like the game, I have never worked up the guts to go to the weekly cribbage gathering at the American Legion Hall. I have never been the first customer at Dan & Whit’s on an ordinary operating day, though I have been the last. I am not familiar with the inside of the grey church next to the school, and, if I’ve been inside Beaver Meadow Chapel, it’s news to me. In both cases, I’m curious, but, well, life always seems to intervene, a feeling many Norwich residents know well.

There is much more to see, do, and check out in town, I am certain. Many new experiences in front of us are the intangibles. Our town is blessed with people who have accomplished extraordinary things in their lives. Our neighbors are entrepreneurs, athletes, farmers, elected officials, volunteers, scientists, craftsmen, artists, doctors, teachers, and, of course, parents. Somehow, small as our town is, we haven’t all met each other yet. Norwich has a nice habit of rewarding patience, of putting people who should meet in the same place. If you can allow yourself to let it happen, the town usually finds a way to help you cross the “I’ve never met _____” off your list.

And as we all know, those are the moments that build new friendships, inspire business opportunities, and launch laughter into the air around us, reminding us always that the best part of our little town is the people who call it home.
Care to Dance? An Evening of Contradancing

Lars Blackmore

You’ve likely driven past the sign or come across it on the list serv: “Contradance Tonight!” Just another event taking place at Tracy Hall. But who goes? What’s it like? I wasn’t sure what to expect when I decided to go take a look. I mean, I don’t dance, and here was an entire evening supposedly committed to nothing but dancing.

The harsh fluorescent lighting and basketball line markings on the floor didn’t exactly lend a nightclub atmosphere to the venue, but that didn’t seem to deter any of the early arrivals. This was a casual affair, to be sure, the dancers all showing up in work clothes, street wear, or shorts and a t-shirt. Contradancing, at least at this level, has no dress code, so the only common theme was soft-soled shoes or socks, in part to spare the floor, in part to facilitate the dance moves while also keeping the noise level down.

An impressive sound system was rigged on stage for pianist Sarah Nelson and violinist Tom Moreau of the evening’s band, Gypsy Minor. Next to them stood the caller, David Keynor from Massachusetts, beaming expectantly while acknowledging and welcoming the dancers as they trickled in.

Bow to Your Partner. Bow to Your Neighbor

A handful of hesitant newcomers had come early for the scheduled beginner’s introduction, and Keynor patiently and cheerfully walked them through the basics with easy-to-follow explanations and hints. The trickier transitions were demonstrated by some volunteer veterans, and while those new to the game mastered the hand-offs and spins, the crowd around them grew steadily.

To get the show underway, Keynor grabbed the microphone and explained the basics: “If you’re new to this, then remember: wash your hands, and drink lots of water.” He then encouraged veterans to be sure invite someone out to dance. “A complete stranger would be great, since it gets people out on the floor,” he said.

By the halftime intermission, the place would be packed, close to 40 eager dancers on the floor. By the halftime intermission, the place would be packed with close to double that number.

Impressive as that might be, these “bush-league Norwich events,” as one dancer affectionately called them, are nothing compared to the seriously hopping world of greater New England contradancing. A weekly gathering just up the road in Montpelier draws a sizeable crowd, and the competitive leagues in Massachusetts have hundreds of enthusiastic dancers – there, apparently, you can find an entire subculture of contradancing to techno music that’s attracting scores of younger dancers, too.

Several of the regulars at Tracy Hall spoke in awe of the Flurry Festival in Saratoga Springs, a three day contradancing extravaganza held in February each year, that draws thousands.

Contradancing, apparently, is quite a “thing.” Who knew? Still, grassroots and local is a comfortable place to start, and with a great band and an experienced, enthusiastic caller, the Norwich dance had nothing to be ashamed of.

Balance and Swing Your Partner

Contradancing belongs to the same realm as square dancing and other folk dances, but apparently there’s something particularly appealing about this format, as many dancers end up sticking with contradancing after trying other forms of traditional dance. Chip Hedler of Muskeg Music, one of the driving forces behind our vibrant regional contradancing scene, has described the genre as, “A lifetime of enjoyment of moving in time to live music that can be quite exhilarating.”

It’s certainly fast paced in an old-timey sort of way, rich with legacy and pageantry, delightfully respectful and restrained, but with just enough innovation and novelty to remain relevant. The name comes from the tradition of dancing across from a partner as part of two parallel lines of participants (the caller will issue a cry for, “Long Lines, Forward and Back!”) – although that’s seen less often in contemporary contradancing.

Typically, groups of four dancers form a circle, with two designated as gentlemen and two as ladies, no matter what the actual gender mix of the circle may be. The circles then line up in rows on the dance floor. By a prelude to each dance, the caller will walk everyone through the sequence of steps, typically no more than four or five at a low-key affair like tonight. A couple of swirls, some...
elaborate trading places, a bit of back-and-forth – by the second walk-thru pretty much everyone will have it down, and then the dance can begin in earnest as the musicians count it off.

**Circle Left, New Partner**

With an experienced caller like Keynor at the helm, the timing is invariably perfect, and between the easy-to-follow toe-tapping beat of the music and his clear instructions, the challenge for the dancers is mainly to avoid screwing up too badly in the beat of the moment. In the event they do, it’s quickly sorted with a smile and a shrug – nobody is in this to win it. It’s a group effort for all to have as much fun as possible, and there’s a palpable, shared sense of accomplishment when the entire group makes it through a particularly tricky transition unscathed.

The caller is your considerate, caring – and sometimes daring – guide and mentor. It’s his call, literally, when to spin or twirl, how to hold, and how to move. And while it’s all structured and choreographed, in the sense that you do what he tells you when he tells you to do it, there’s enough artistic freedom left for each pair to strut their stuff if they feel so inclined.

And as they get comfortable with the sequence, bolder and more accomplished dancers will add little flourishes and twirls to the moves, while others appear content to simply relish their growing confidence in mastering the basics.

If things are going well, the caller will eventually grab his violin and join the band for a beat, allowing the room to revel in their collective newfound skill and independence without his guidance. Each completed sequence of the dance ends with a trade-off of partners to the adjoining circles, and then the pattern repeats with the new configuration of dancers until the entire line has rotated through.

Once the dance is over, the circles dissolve, dancers from the sidelines will get invited to join in, while others take a well-earned break. And then it’s time for the next dance.

**Down the Hall, Four In Line**

The appeal is evident: the learning curve isn’t all that steep, and you don’t need gear or any particular skills or athletic ability. Having said that, an evening of contradancing is a genuine workout (the veterans all bring water bottles and heed the admonition to hydrate between dances), and many dancers sit out a dance or two to recover. One veteran dancer jokes that the skills you learn from contradancing, the weaves and the tight turns back-to-back, are perfectly suited for getting through a crowded airport.

More importantly, perhaps, it’s an incredibly friendly crowd and a great social scene; for many, the dance provides an opportunity to reconnect with old friends and acquaintances. There’s animated chatter and lots of laughter during breaks. It’s a community gathering at its finest.

What’s truly remarkable, however, are the persistent smiles throughout the evening; smiles of pure enjoyment, of accomplishment, and of overcoming awkwardness – in public, no less. Goofy guys suddenly turn out to be surprisingly agile and graceful, shy wallflowers blossom and beam with pride.

**Do-si-do Your Partner**

Part of the charm is the constant swapping of partners and neighbors: in the course of any given dance you’ll be teamed up with someone old, someone young, someone you know, and someone who’s new to the scene. Not only does it make things more interesting and allow beginners to learn from the pros, it also means that you’re more than welcome to show up on your own to a dance – you’ll fit right in and become an integral part of the evening’s collective dance squad.

I had half expected this to be a grandparents-night-out affair, but I would have been wrong. Granted, there weren’t too many teenagers to be found swinging partners around, but there was a respectable spread of every age group, from Dartmouth students to young-at-heart folks of all ages.

**Ladies Chain Across**

“Are you having fun?” inquires a poster at the front door. “Are you helping others to have fun?” It is part of New England contradancing tradition to actively encourage veteran dancers to invite those on the sideline to dance, and to go out of their way to welcome newcomers. “Aim to please every person with whom you dance by being sensitive to everyone’s unique preferences and abilities,” say the guidelines, and they appear to have been taken to heart.

There’s a dance every couple of weeks somewhere near Norwich, and it’s not just a winter thing. Keep an eye out on the Listserv or DailyUV events calendar, or visit www.uvdm.org for a schedule. If you’re at all curious, you really owe it to yourself to check out a contradance. But come prepared: the music is irresistible, and friendly and welcoming people are going to sidle up unashamedly and ask if you’d care to dance. Do take them up on the offer.

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Here is the way Wikipedia describes the Town of Norwich, Vermont: Norwich is a town in Windsor County, Vermont in the United States. The population was 3,414 at the 2010 census. Home to some of the state of Vermont's wealthiest residents, the municipality is a commuter town for nearby Hanover, NH across the Connecticut River. The town is part of the Dresden School District, the first interstate school district in the United States, signed into law by President John F. Kennedy.

That is certainly a very interesting and informative description, but it falls far short of what this community is all about. It is truly one of the most unique and beautiful places to live, not only in Vermont, but in the entire United States. So it stands to reason that Norwich would have assembled one of the most unique police departments as well. Norwich covers some 44.7 square miles, and it currently has three full-time police officers and one part-time officer.

Chief Douglas A. Robinson works split shifts with the other officers to maintain 24-hour coverage. Chief Robinson indicated they are currently seeking a fourth full-time officer as well.

Doug Robinson noted that the small law enforcement team shares the workload, and he defines his duties in the following fashion: “What it comes down to, from my view as Chief, is that I have to do whatever needs doing,” he stated with a wide smile. “You get to do it all in this department. Working a shift on patrol, drug investigations, detective work, or traffic stops... I’ve done it all. We have about 100 miles of back roads to cover, so we keep busy.”

Doug has acquired the needed experience to lead the department having held the chief of police position for the past 12 years after transferring from nearby Hartford Police Department. At age 58, he has been in law enforcement since 1982.

“I would say I’ve done it all in every phase of law enforcement. That’s what I like so much about the position here in Norwich. I get to meet and greet so many members of this community in so many different ways. You get a lot of exposure and get to know the residents. All of us on the Norwich force are on call 24-hours-a-day and work rotating shifts. We are very fortunate to have mutual aid from many surrounding communities like Hartford, Hanover, Lebanon, and the Vermont State Police. That really aids our cause here in Norwich.”

Judy Powell: When you enter the lobby of the Norwich Police department, you will encounter the friendly, smiling face of Judy Powell who serves as administrative assistant and dispatcher in keeping with their theme of multitasking. She is a veteran of law enforcement as well, having served as dispatcher for both the...
Town of Hartford and the Vermont State Police for nine-and-a-half years. She has been in her current position for four years.

“When I was younger, I enjoyed the hectic pace of the bigger departments. But these days, the Norwich Department suits me fine. This is such a great, close-knit community. I simply love the people that I work with and that is very important. Everybody gets along so well. It feels like family. I always bake something for each officer on their birthday and we celebrate.”

Anna Ingraham: Anna is the newest member of the Norwich Police Department having come on board two years ago. She is 33 years old and transferred to Norwich from the Windsor Police Department. She was a criminal justice major at Franklin Pierce University and was drawn to a career in Law Enforcement.

“I’ve always enjoyed helping people because it just felt right for me,” Anna explained. “When on or off duty, I try to treat people the same way I would like to be treated. That is important to me. In law enforcement, every day is so different and you don’t know what to expect. I like that as well.”

Anna is originally from Danvers, MA and moved to the Upper Valley in 1997.

Frank Schippert: Frank adds to the theme of the Norwich Police Department that they may be low in numbers, but long on experience. This year he will celebrate his 25th year in law enforcement, and his tenth year with Norwich.

“I really appreciate the small-town atmosphere here because I served as a police officer in Wilmington, VT. I then served in a larger force in Springfield, VT, so I have seen both aspects. I just love this close-knit community where you get to know everyone. I make it a point while on patrol to stop and chat with folks. It’s a very special town for sure.”

Frank is originally from the Long Island, NY area, but was influenced by his aunt and uncle who owned property in Vermont and later his parents who retired in the Green Mountain State. He also enjoys the camaraderie with his fellow workers.

“It is like a family atmosphere at work,” Frank explained. “We get together as often as we can, but that is difficult because we all work separate shifts.”

The Norwich Police Department is awaiting the completion of their new headquarters at 10 Hazen Street, in a project that saw the old station demolished and replaced. They are temporarily located on Route 5.
Sanduk Ruit, who pioneered a low-cost, high-volume surgical technique for removing cataracts. This is a technique uninhibited by the need for a hospital, allowing the HCP to treat people located in some of the most remote areas of the world. Originally based out of Burlington and operating under the umbrella of the University of Vermont, they began by focusing on the mountainous Himalaya region, restoring the sight of its residents one surgery at a time. In 1999, though, the organization became its own 501c3 nonprofit and began to grow dramatically until, by 2010, it had a need for regional offices in Waterbury and Norwich.

I got in contact with Communications Manager Angelia Rorison to find out more about what the HCP is achieving out of their Norwich office, and was surprised by the sheer scope. The purpose of the Norwich office, she tells me, is to house the Operations, Finance, and Communications divisions of the HCP.

And as such, it features some of the organization’s biggest names.

Emily Newick is the Chief Operating Officer for the HCP, and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization, from management of the financial and accounting systems to program oversight and development.

“The direct impact of our work is so compelling to me,” she says. “Restoring sight is dramatic, tangible and miraculous, not to mention DO-ABLE and cost effective. Just imagine your life without sight.”

Jackton Downard serves as the Deputy Director of Operations and Strategic Initiatives for the Himalayan Cataract Project. His role is to support the organization’s growth objectives through budget management, process development, and data crunching.

“I am humbled,” he says, “by how much impact this organization has, and it’s a huge privilege to be able to play a part in building eye care systems in the developing world. Witnessing sight restoring surgeries in Nepal, interacting with the numerous individuals it takes to build an eye hospital in Bhutan, or helping to support the training of Ethiopian ophthalmologists - it’s all very personally rewarding.”

“I may be biased,” says Communications Manager Angelia Rorison, whose responsibilities include marketing, communications, and social media, all under the purview of maintaining a consistent brand and message, “but working for the HCP is wonderful. I am constantly amazed by the stories and work that is accomplished by our in-country teams and U.S.-based staff. The best part of my job is sharing those stories and seeing people as moved and inspired by our work as I am.”

Ms. Rorison tells me that having an office in Norwich has allowed the organization to draw employees from Burlington down to the Upper Valley to take advantage of the area’s many resources. They have worked with Tuck School of Business’s First-Year Project, connected with Flannel (formerly of Norwich) to redesign and manage their website, and partnered with the Norwich Bookstore to secure copies of Second Suns (a book by David Oliver Relin detailing the story of the HCP’s founders), to name just a few.

“So many great neighbors,” she says. Ms. Newick adds: “I love the scale of...
Norwich with its blend of small and big – the best aspects of small town life, coupled with a richness of experience, interests and pursuits amongst its proud residents.”

Today, the HCP conducts high volume campaigns with its partners all across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, and has performed over 600,000 successful surgeries, but its job is far from over.

As Co-Founder and Chairman, Dr. Geoff Tabin has stated, “It’s a travesty that we have 18 million people in our world who are needlessly blind that, with a relatively inexpensive operation, can have their life and their sight restored.”

Looking forward, the HCP is taking bold steps into the future. In 2017, it was named one of eight semi-finalists (out of 1,904 applicants) in the MacArthur Foundation’s 100&Change competition. The platform it competed on was a blueprint for eliminating cataract blindness globally, taking the model of effective work done in Nepal, Ethiopia and Ghana, and scaling it up to fit the entire world. Though the HCP did not win the grant, Ms. Rorison tells me the competition nevertheless provided a major endorsement of their work and raised awareness of the solvable global health problem they have committed themselves to. As a result, the HCP team has been galvanized to aim higher than ever before, working alongside their partners on furthering education, direct service, infrastructure, and the creation of sustainable eye care systems in new and innovative ways. And the Norwich office will play an integral role. With Mr. Downard’s focus on growth, Ms. Newick’s role in operations, and Ms. Rorison’s duty of spreading the word, Norwich will be a hub as the HCP’s proven, community-based model of eye care grows to become a global cure.

Imagine that you’ve been living in a world shrouded by darkness, unable to see the people you love. You may have lost your job, your ability to get around by yourself, your confidence. But then, through one simple procedure, the light comes streaming in. How would you feel?

“The joy of sight restoration is a remarkable thing to witness,” says Ms. Rorison, “there is applause, laughter, dancing and tears of happiness. You see someone’s life change in real time.”

With each pair of eyes that are fixed, the world changes in real time, too. And as the Himalayan Cataract Project takes the helm in fixing this problem, we can be sure that there’s a wealth of change to look forward to. And we can know that an indispensable source is right here in our backyard.
Entering the village of Norwich, the open field and orchard on your right constitutes the southwestern boundary of the Nature Area. The main trail entrance is accessed from the parking lot behind the Marion Cross School, leading you to three interconnected loop trails and an outdoor education shelter. The Nature Area has a diverse terrain of geologic features that leads to a wide variety of flora and fauna. Current and future efforts to manage invasive plants focus on species such as Norway maple, buckthorn, burning bush, honeysuckle, bittersweet and Amynthas agrestis, or ‘crazy snake worms.’

Despite the in-town location and relatively small acreage, a wide variety of wildlife is either in residence or occasionally passes through. Fisher make their natal dens in the hollows of the ancient giant sugar maples which are scattered throughout the area. Raccoons also take advantage of the old trees and foxes dig their dens in the south facing banks near the edge of the meadow. Rare sightings of bear, moose and bobcat have occurred. Deer are full-time residents, often sheltering in the overgrown southwest corner. Their continual browsing of the understory is a problem, inhibiting young hardwood regeneration and limiting food sources for other species.

Overall, the incredible value of the Milton Frye Nature Area can be seen in its role as an outdoor education classroom, a readily accessible recreation area, and conserved open space of forest and field.

~ Contributors: Brie Swenson, David Hubbard, and Lindsay Putnam

Rate a lot going on in the Milton Frye Nature Area these days. Marion Cross School children are learning how to interact with and respect their outdoor environment, how to properly build and maintain a trail system, as well as continuing to assist in invasive plant management. Current and upcoming community-wide events include a series of workshops and walks that began in December and continue in February with a tracking event led by the Norwich Conservation Commission. This 35-acre hidden gem located in the heart of the Village is a tremendous natural resource for our town.

The history of the Nature Area goes back to 1974, when the town acquired the majority of the land from the Peisch Family. A second adjoining parcel was later donated by the Lewis Family. The Nature Area was protected via town ballot in 2001, under a conservation easement that is held by the Upper Valley Land Trust. The effort to permanently protect the parcel was led by Norwich Special Places, a citizen group that worked to identify and facilitate the protection of key open spaces in Norwich. A committee of community volunteers, known as The Milton Frye Nature Area Committee, oversaw the management of the Nature Area for many years. It is now managed by a subcommittee of the Norwich Conservation Commission, which is working to update the Forest Management Plan, furthering community outreach with educational and recreational programming and continuing the work of preserving a thriving and diverse native ecosystem.

Welcome to the Milton Frye Nature Area

Left: Marion Cross LEEP Coordinator, Lindsay Putnam, leads a trail stewardship elective on a new trail in town that is being primarily constructed by Marion Cross students. The trail begins in the Nature Area. Right: Trail running in the Nature Area is a very popular activity for all ages.

In December, the Marion Cross Kindergarten held a Lantern Walk and marshmallow roast before the screening of The Best Day Ever, a documentary about the value of outdoor education.

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“B Corp” is a private certification issued to for-profit companies that have met rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency. A helpful analogy is, a B Corp is to business what Fair Trade certification is to coffee or USDA Organic certification is to milk.

Certified B Corporations must sign a Declaration of Interdependence identifying that, together with other like-minded companies, they can make a tremendous impact by expanding the traditions of giving back, sustainability, environmental protection, transparent business practices, and well-being for their employees and communities. It is not an agreement that is taken lightly. This global movement is dedicated to making positive change in a big way.

“Caring for our community has been ingrained in the culture at Mascoma,” says Samantha Pause, Senior VP of Marketing, Sales and Service. “As an employee, it is great to work for an employer who shares my values.”

She went on to say, “By joining forces with like-minded businesses, we can make an impact greater than we ever imagined. The vision and values of B Corp is the next chapter for a bank steeped in the tradition of neighbors helping neighbors, doing what we can to participate in making our communities enjoyable, happy, healthy, safe places to live.”

Mascoma has joined other local companies, like King Arthur Flour, Boloco, Ben and Jerry’s and Cabot Creamery (to name a few) in B Corp certification. By doing business with a B Corp, you choose to be a part of something that will make an impact for good, today and years to come.

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What is your favorite food? “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”
Michael Pollan, In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto

If you could be invisible for a day, where would you be?
The kitchens of my CSA members, watching them feed our vegetables to their families, and listening to their memories of gardens and cooking from their childhoods.

Wine, beer, martini or tea?
Morning: Earl Grey. Evening: Long Trail

What Disney character would you be and why?
Alice, from Alice in Wonderland, because she is adventurous and inquisitive, and a little bit accident-prone!

What song most describes your life right now?
John Denver’s Thank God I’m a Country [Girl]

What do you love most about living in Vermont?
I am a fourth generation Vermonter, and I love being part of that history. When I am on our farm – planting seeds, feeding the animals, eating sweet corn straight from the stalk, or tinkering on our 1950’s tractor – I feel like I’ve added myself to a long lineage of Vermont agrarians. I also love the Vermont landscape. I’ve had the experience several times recently where I was looking through a friend’s travel photos of some exotic place. As we flip through them on their phone, we come to the end and suddenly pictures of their Vermont home or beautiful than the exotic ones!

If you had to give away 50% of your assets today, how/where would you distribute them?
To take care of my family, and Vermont Progressive Party, Rural Vermont, Highlander Center, Center for Constitutional Rights, Healthcare for All, Migrant Justice.

What would be your first question after waking up from a 100-year sleep?
Typing. I’m still using the two-finger method.

What skill would you like to master?
I grew up in Hanover. In 2007, my wife Kate and I relocated back to the area, in part to raise kids, get away from city living, and be close to family.

What’s your favorite hang-out in Norwich?
Norwich Racquet Club... paddle/platform tennis

Favorite way to spend a snowy day in Norwich?
Nothing’s better than enjoying a few hours of snowshoeing or sledding, and snowball fights with Kate, the twins, and our two black labs Carlo and Coco

What fictional place would you like to visit?
Asgard. That’d be cool. I’m still a big Marvel fan.

What is your favorite quote?
“Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.”
Michael Pollan, In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto

What is your favorite cliff quote?
“When I liberate others, I liberate myself... Nobody is free ‘til everybody is free.” Fanny Lou Hamm (c.1964)

Wine, beer, martini or tea?
Green Earl Grey tea, River Roost IPAs

If you could erase one day in history which would it be?
The day Goodman, Cheney and Schwerner were assassinated in Mississippi, summer 1964.

What is your favorite movie from childhood?
8-tracks, Spam, hacky sack

Describe Norwich in one word or phrase.
Norwich is a mostly white, beautiful, upper-middle-class town with interesting, talented, opinionated people, a lively culture, and a fantastic public library.

To which local business are you loyal to and why?
Huntley Meadows is a great venue... tennis, soccer, baseball... being outside.

What is your motto in life?
Work hard, play hard, be positive.

David Barlow
Turnpike Road, Norwich

Correction: We made an error on Dave’s information last time and wanted to fix it. Enjoy getting to know him!

What brought you to Norwich?
I grew up in Hanover. In 2007, my wife Kate and I relocated back to the area, in part to raise kids, get away from city living, and be close to family.

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What would be your first question after waking up from a 100-year sleep?
Did the Patriots win?

What is your idea way to spend a weekend in Norwich?
Huntley Meadows is a great venue... tennis, soccer, baseball... being outside.

What is the best way to start the day?
Coffee is the best, perhaps essential these days.

What weird food combinations do you really enjoy?
As a kid, peanut butter and salami sandwiches.

What was cool when you were younger, but not now?
What is your favorite movie from childhood?
Cats in the Cradle always reminds me to make time for my family.

If you could save or protect one animal, plant or part of our earth, which would it be?
The Great Barrier Reef; that’s where I met my wife.

What did you want to be when you grew up?
I believe in cooperative businesses, Zuzu, USPS, People's Party, Rural Vermont, Highlander Center, Center for Constitutional Rights, Healthcare for All, Migrant Justice.

What do you love most about living in Vermont?
To take care of my family, and Vermont Progressive Party, Rural Vermont, Highlander Center, Center for Constitutional Rights, Healthcare for All, Migrant Justice.

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