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Russell Oakes's widow, Sheila, center, is joined by the couple's six children and their families at Saturday's Old Home Days opening ceremony. State Rep. Melissa Ziobron (back left) presented Sheila with a sign commemorating a portion of Route 196 now called the Russell Oakes Memorial Highway and U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal (back center) recognized Oakes for his contributions to the town and its signature parade.

Mr. Old Home Day Honored with Signs

by Elizabeth Regan

This year's Old Home Days event is a memory, but the 38th annual event left a community keepsake: new signs recognizing a portion of Route 196 as the Russell Oakes Memorial Highway.

The two signs, one at the intersection of Route 66 and one near the corner of Skinner Street, encompass part of the 1.5-mile Old Home Day Parade route over which Oakes presided for two decades.

He died last January at the age of 75.

American flags hang from the two metal markers, a tribute to another of Oakes's contributions to the community: "Flags Over East Hampton," an initiative he started in 2007 that involved placing dozens of American flags around town to salute East Hampton's veterans.

State Rep. Melissa Ziobron, R-34, presented a third sign to Russell Oakes's wife, Sheila, at a ceremony following the Old Home Day Parade on Saturday.

In addition to his longtime association with the parade, Russell Oakes had served as the Old Home Day Association's president.

"We're here to honor and really celebrate the memory of Russell Oakes," Ziobron said. "Part of the way we've done that is to dedicate part of our state highway system to Russell and his memory and what he's done for the town."

A short time earlier, as the parade passed by the Center School gazebo where announcer Red McKinney held court, the sign was first unveiled

for Sheila and her family by Ziobron and state Sen. Art Linares, R-33.

The couple's six children, three of their spouses, and nine grandchildren were on hand to share in the honor as Sheila watched the unveiling with hands clasped in front of a wistful smile.

"It just hit me, just this minute," Sheila said after she'd shared hugs with family and friends in front of the gazebo.

She said her children — five boys and one girl — continue to make sure the parade runs smoothly even though Mr. Old Home Day isn't there to see to it personally.

"They promised their father they would continue being involved with the parade and helping line it up. That's not an easy job," Sheila said.

The boys travel from as far away as Oregon, while her daughter, Maggie Joyce, makes the trek from Fairfield.

"Every time I come to town now, I'll have to drive on his highway," Joyce said.

And, soon enough, Joyce's daughter, Fiona, will be behind the wheel of Russell Oakes' old truck.

"I get to carry on the legacy," Fiona said, once the 16 year old had completed the parade route in the truck given to her after her grandfather's death.

Fiona said she'd eventually like to be in
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AHM Summer Theater to Perform *Li'l Abner*

by Geeta S. Sandberg

At RHAM High School Wednesday evening, voices could be heard alternately singing, talking excitedly and laughing. Following those sounds, students could be found practicing choreography, looking about for a missing bit to their costume, or waiting for instruction — all in preparation for this year's performance by AHM Summer Youth Theater, which takes place next Thursday-Saturday, July 21-23.

The show this year, *Li'l Abner*, is a musical based on the satirical American comic strip about the goings-on in the town of Dogpatch, U.S.A. The show is described by the licensing company Tams-Witmark as "a satisfying mixture of hillbilly nonsense and sharp, critical humor that appeals to the sophisticated theatergoer as well as the child within us all."

The story begins on "A Typical Day" in Dogpatch with fishing, and the popular Sadie Hawkins Day on the minds of just about every resident. But what starts as an ordinary, leisure-filled day quickly changes when a "Cornpone Meetin'" is called — and the government threatens their way of life and the very place they call home.

The musical was described by director Mary Rose Meade as coming at "a perfect time for all of us who must endure the upcoming politi-

cal season. On the surface, it is a spoof on country life with a full cast of hillbilly characters, but it also takes a keenly insightful yet light-hearted satirical view of science, gender roles, and the incompetence of the United States government."

Meade added, "It is both disheartening and yet somehow reassuring that even in 1956 when the musical opened on Broadway, the popular view of government was pretty much the same as it is today."

Hebron resident Skylar Haines, who plays one of the wives, Pat, and is also assisting with the play's choreography, added the performance provides a break from reality.

"This show is comical," she said. "We're trying to make people laugh, we're trying to make fun of the elections and everything going on in our world and I think with everything that's going on recently, it's going to be a break from that."

She explained by "everything that's going on" she meant "all the violence — I think there's just so much hate and that this is kind of a way away from that."

Haines added, "When you're in here you can feel the energy — this cast is amazing."

Columbia resident Katrina McGlynn, who
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Students participating in this year's AHM Summer Youth Theater performance of *Li'l Abner* rehearsed the musical number "Jubilation T. Cornpone" Wednesday evening, in preparation for show time next Thursday-Saturday, July 21-23. *Li'l Abner* is a humorous musical that opened on Broadway in 1956, based on the satirical American comic strip about the goings-on in the town of Dogpatch, U.S.A.



The East Hampton Senior Center's float beat out 16 other entries to take first place in the Old Home Day Parade Awards. Second place went to the Boy Scouts of Pack 8, while the Filthy Fiasco band came in third place.

Old Home Days cont. from Front Page

charge of the Glorious Gallop road race, which her grandmother started 18 years ago and which her mother is poised to take over.

Also helping to carry on the legacy is this year's parade co-chairman Dan Egan who, along with his wife, Cap, oversaw the event.

One of the least glamorous aspects of the job for Dan Egan was his role as a one-man clean-up crew for the horses with the Second Continental Light Dragoons.

The parade has traditionally not included horses because of concerns about picking up their waste, but Egan decided to change that. With the parade committee's float placed strategically behind the horses, Egan would hop out of the vehicle with a shovel when duty called and hop back in after taking care of business.

"Nobody's going to ride in my truck for a month, but that's okay," he joked. "The odor will leave."

For Russell Oakes's oldest son, Russell Oakes Jr., it was a small but notable change.

"We never had horses in the parade before because we didn't know how to clean up the mess and we didn't want to," he said. "When I saw them, I was like, 'First year for horses. Okay, yeah!' It worked."

The largest parade in Middlesex County – which featured a "Beach Party USA" theme this year – included 17 floats, 17 marching bands, and an array of groups ranging from military veterans and emergency service providers to Zumba enthusiasts and barefoot pirates.

Cap Egan described the 7th Regiment Bugle and Drum Corps as the crowd favorite. It was a viewpoint shared by Town Manager Michael Maniscalco, who said his daughter, Isabella, 3, was captivated by the New London-based competitive youth marching band.

"They brought an energy to their performance that spilled into the crowd and was contagious," Maniscalco said.

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, who said he's been attending the parade for decades, called Old Home Days a time when everyone can call East Hampton home.

"This is the best parade in Connecticut," he said. "In fact, it may be the best parade on the planet."

The ceremony following the parade included the presentation of the VFW Fowler-Dix-Park Post 5095 Public Servant of the Year Award, which went to Fire Chief Greg Voelker.

"I am honored to receive this recognition and I'm humbled and very appreciative for these efforts," Voelker said after receiving the plaque from VFW Post Commander Lou Carillo. "I'd like to take a moment and thank the firefighters who have gone before me, the ones I looked up to and learned from. Time has taken many of them from us but I owe them a great gratitude."

He characterized the award as a reflection on all the volunteers in his department, whom he thanked for their support and dedication.

Red McKinney said Monday that Old Home Days cost \$70,000 this year for expenses ranging from entertainment and paid marching units to tents and portable toilets.

The event is funded by donations, he said, with the town providing insurance coverage.

The event only cost a couple thousand dollars back in 1978 when six people decided to rekindle a tradition that had fallen to the wayside several decades prior, according to McKinney. He joins Dennis Erickson and Town Council member Melissa Engel as the only remaining charter members of the group.

McKinney described Old Home Day as a gathering rooted in the town's rural history, when farmers would get together for a period of respite after the hay was cut and the crops were in. It was a time "to have some cider, cook a pig and dance around," he said.

Old Home Day fell out of disfavor over time and was brought back in the mid-1930s, though McKinney didn't know exactly when. It ended with the outbreak of the Korean War.

Now, Russell Oakes Jr. calls Old Home Days a chance to reconnect with family and friends.

"I'm in Oregon now, but I come back every year," he said. And despite having left town for college and to serve in the Army before settling on the other coast, he has yet to find a place with more community spirit than East Hampton.

At no time of the year is that more evident than during Old Home Days, where organizations are able to raise money for their charitable causes at booths throughout the fairground.

"It's my family, it's my hometown and it's America," he said. "Everybody's part of something to help the community."

For additional photos from this year's Old Home Days parade, check out [facebook.com/RivereastNewsBulletin](https://www.facebook.com/RivereastNewsBulletin).

Summer Theater cont. from Front Page

plays the character Daisy Mae, felt similarly. She shared this week, "I love this group. I didn't know anyone when I started because I'm the only Columbia person and one thing about this group, this cast and any AHM performance, is that everyone is very welcoming and inviting."

McGlynn said she thought *L'il Abner* was "a great show," explaining "I really enjoy my part as one of the girl leads and I love working with my costar [Jonathan Farrington, who plays Abner]."

She added maintaining a southern accent was at first a challenge for her, "but I think I got it now."

She concluded she was ready for next week's arrival.

"You get to a point where you know the show and are ready to perform."

This will be the last show under the direction of Meade, who has worked with the program for the last 25 years. She shared this week, "I'm not saying I'll never go back to it but for the foreseeable future I just need to regroup and recharge – so it's bittersweet."

Right before rehearsal – and the first complete run of the show – got underway Wednesday, Meade gathered the performers in a circle to work through some logistical details, and provide words of encouragement and feedback.

"We are at the point now where this show stops being all of my work and blocking and all that, and it gets turned over to you," she said. "And I would like, before we get into next week, to know that if I dropped off the face of the earth tomorrow you guys would come together and make the show go on. That's what happens in professional theater; directors don't sit around

and watch the performances. They may watch the first one and then they're off – they're done – because the show becomes the property of the people who are in the cast."

Meade also encouraged the group to focus on working together and performing with the entire cast in mind.

"You can go to a show with the greatest actors in the world, but if every single one of those people out on that stage singing beautifully and dancing beautifully is out there for themselves, you'll go away from that show saying 'Oh they sang so nice; wasn't that great,'" she explained.

"As opposed to going to a show where there's a group of people working together in a way that transforms the theater experience not just for the cast that has that connection – that synergy between a group of people working together to tell a story – but for the audience, so that instead of walking away saying 'oh wasn't that good' people walk away just a little bit in awe."

And that's precisely what's bound to happen when the members of this year's Summer Youth Theater program take to the stage next week, sharing the results of their five weeks of hard work.

Performances will take place in the RHAM High School Auditorium, 85 Wall St., Thursday-Saturday, July 21-23 at 7 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 for adults and \$6 for senior citizens and children under 12. For tickets or information, call AHM Youth Services at 860-228-9488. Tickets are also available at the Hebron town clerk's office located in the Town Hall, 15 Gilead St., and will be sold at the door.

Van Tassel, Teachers Get Raises in Hebron

by Mike Thompson

Superintendent of Schools Tim Van Tassel and the Hebron teachers' union each received raises at the June 28 meeting of the Board of Education.

Van Tassel received a 3 percent salary increase, bringing that number to \$146,466, as well as a one-year contract extension, which takes it through the 2018-19 year.

Van Tassel, who recently wrapped his first year as Hebron schools chief, received effusive praise this week from Board of Education Chairwoman Erica Bromley.

"We're very pleased with all the work that he's done," she said. "The relationships he's been able to make have been very positive, and I think there's a real cohesiveness between administration and staff, and a real openness."

Prior to Van Tassel's arrival, Bromley said, "there was less collaboration and less communication" in the school system. But with him at the helm, she said, "I think it's a more comfortable environment."

The board's vice chairwoman, Maryanne Leichter, also had positive words for Van Tassel.

Board of Education members, she said, have "great confidence in what he's done, and they're pleased in his work."

Leichter added, "I think he's done a really wonderful job for our kids; that's really what we hired him for."

Also at the June 28 meeting, the school board voted unanimously to ratify the 2017-20 contract with the Hebron Education Association. While the contract includes the standard "step" increases for individual teachers

– reflective of their tenure with the school system – it averages to a 9.61 percent increase for the teachers over the three years of the deal.

The new contract will be presented in-depth to the public at the Thursday, July 21, meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

According to minutes of the Board of Education meeting, several residents spoke during the public comment portion to rail against the idea of the teachers receiving such a high raise. Bromley said this week that while she "certainly understand[s] that everybody's in a difficult situation with the way the state is moving," she also wanted to retain the good teachers the school system has.

"Having a strong school system really impacts our community in a very positive way," she said. "This is really one small step in maintaining our excellence."

Bromley noted a substantial part of the new contract is also renegotiated health insurance for the teachers. She said the union will now be on a high-deductible health plan, and said this results in an estimated insurance savings of \$635,000 over the three years of the contract.

Speaking to the new teachers' contract, Leichter said this week, "You have to pay your workers; you have to pay them what the going rates are. You want to retain good teachers."

Van Tassel's contract and the new teachers' contract each passed via 6-0 votes, with Jessica Rainville – who just joined the board in April – abstaining from each.

CCT to Perform *Disney's Mulan Jr.* in Colchester

by Julianna Roche

For the past 19 years, the Colchester Community Theatre Summer Children's Workshop has taken up residence in Bacon Academy's auditorium, where kids spend two weeks each summer rehearsing for a production before performing for the public.

This year, the group is rehearsing *Disney's Mulan Jr.*, which is based on the heartwarming, Oscar-nominated animated film about Chinese culture, honor and the fighting spirit.

"We always try to pick a show that is great for large numbers of kids, because we usually have 80 to 100 of them," said Wallis Johnson, theater director and CCT's vice president of production. "We also try to pick a show that has a teaching message to it. So for *Mulan Jr.*, we are using this opportunity to talk about a whole different culture."

To prepare for the show, Johnson said the campers spend each day rotating between stations, which teach them about different aspects of production. For example, on stage a group practices choreography. Behind them, campers work on painting the set's Chinese themed backdrop with light pink lotuses, and in the hallway, they craft together props for the production, like red and yellow paper lanterns.

The production includes a wide age group of performers— from second-graders to high-schoolers, many of whom, Johnson said, have returned year after year.

"Having done this for so many years, I look at it as a privilege as I watch kids who return every year as they grow up and some of our campers that started as little second graders are now helping as college students. They come back to help and it's a really strong sense of

community," she said.

A perfect example is Katie Conway, a Bacon Academy graduate ('14) and current University of Connecticut student, who has participated in the theater workshop every year since third grade. Now, she comes back in the summer to work as a counselor.

"I think, especially with this group, it's the community and the bond you form when you go from literally nothing at the beginning and then you get to work on your character and build confidence, you learn new dance moves, make costumes," Conway said. "So at the end, you get to this big show and it's so much fun standing on stage when you know how much work you've put into it."

Mallory Scherff, an incoming eighth-grader at William J. Johnston Intermediate School, said this is her fifth year participating in the workshop. She will be playing as one of the ancestors in *Mulan Jr.*

"You don't need to know how to sing, dance, act... [teachers and counselors] make it easy to learn. I came in here not even ever seeing a theater show before and now my passion is theater," she said.

According to Johnson, learning is a major component of the workshop, so even students who have not had any outside theater experience are welcome to audition.

"It's a really exciting process because in a short amount of time, these kids — some of whom have had no stage experience at all — put on a show together," Johnson said. "They create very strong relationships with friends and make new friends here."

Wallis added, "We present the material in



Kids attending the Colchester Community Theatre Summer Children's Workshop at Bacon Academy craft lanterns to use as props for their July 23 production of *Disney's Mulan Jr.*

such a way that there's a strong amount of success so it's a great self-confidence booster and what better way to boost your self-confidence than to perform in front of a huge live audience?"

The Colchester Community Theatre Summer Children's Workshop will present *Disney's Mulan Jr.* on Saturday, July 23, at 2 p.m. in the

Bacon Academy auditorium. Tickets for the production are \$5 each (adults and children) and can only be purchased at the door on the day of the performance. For more information, call Wallis Johnson at 860-267-1023 or Laura Brown at 860-537-3259. CCT is sponsored by the Colchester Parks and Recreation Department.

WJJMS Prepares for Demolition Phase to Begin

by Julianna Roche

This summer, William J. Johnston Middle School (WJJMS) will finally move into the second phase of its \$48.66 million renovation project, which was approved at referendum last June. According to WJJMS Principal Chris Bennett, school officials have completed phase one of the construction plan, which included a lot of consolidating and shuffling of offices.

Now, they're ready for the demolition phase to begin, which Board of Education Chairman Ron Goldstein said should begin in the next four weeks.

"We didn't get the final sign out from the state until, I'd say early- to mid-June, so within just a few weeks, we did a lot of work, which happened in a relatively short amount of time," he said.

As part of the consolidation phase, the WJJMS main office has been moved to the former Pupil Services office and Pupil Services is now located in Jack Jackter Intermediate School for the duration of the renovation project. Phone and fax numbers for each remain

the same. According to Bennett: "It was a Herculean effort on behalf of the staff."

With a scheduled opening for the beginning of the 2017-18 year, the middle school's construction plans include renovating several parts of the existing school, demolishing the older wing from the 1950s and '60s, and building a new two-story main section for classrooms.

"We're moving from a 1952 original structure to a more efficient building with better use of space," Bennett affirmed. "Because even with our current building, we have so much square footage in hallways alone. ... The new building will be comfortable. In our old building, we don't have air conditioning; the new building will. It'll also have an educational design that will make sense for the 21st century, not the '50s, which will give students more opportunities."

As for the project's timeline, Bennett said he hopes the demolition phase will be completed before students return to school in the fall.

"The push is to do a lot in the summer months," he said. "Abatement and demolition will hopefully be completed when they come back to school. Then, things will be relatively quiet while we do the completion of construction documents, and final designs in the fall."

According to Goldstein, while the actual construction phase of the new building will likely not begin until the start of next year, students can still expect some changes when they return.

"When they come back, they will be using a different entrance," he said for example, also adding that any changes will be communicated to students and parents by the school.

"If people are looking for information, they can visit the building committee website or follow the committee on Twitter (@WJJMSBC). They can do the same on the school's website," Bennett added. "We want people to feel like they can get their questions asked and get information."

Bennett said it was also important to note

that during the abatement phase of the renovation, Connecticut statute says children under the age of 18 should not be on school property. Therefore, if parents need to bring their child to the school for whatever reason, Bennett says to call the school first so they can arrange to meet elsewhere. "We just want everyone to feel safe," he said.

With the renovation finally underway, both Bennett and Goldstein said they're very pleased, considering renovating the school has been a project in the works for nearly 10 years — a long and winding road that included the 2013 defeat at referendum of a proposed middle school/senior center/community center building.

"It's taken years of hard work, years of board meetings... and to finally see it in action is pretty exciting," said Bennett.

Goldstein agreed. "The project has been underway for years... so it's exciting not just for the district, but for the community as a whole too."

Portion of Route 66 in Portland to Close for a Week in 2018

by Elizabeth Regan

Members of the Town Council voted unanimously to authorize the state Department of Transportation to carry out a bridge replacement on Route 66 that will close a portion of the road for seven days in the spring of 2018.

An alternative construction proposal by the state transportation department would have lasted four months but did not include any planned road closures, instead relying on a widened road and one-way traffic when necessary.

The \$1.5 million project, funded by state and federal grants, will fix the bridge and culvert over Pocotopaug Creek in front of American Distilling. The bridge was classified by the transportation department as "structurally deficient," according to DOT project manager Andrew Cardinali.

The four-month alternative was opposed by several Route 66 business owners at Tuesday's council meeting, including American Distilling CEO Ed Jackowitz. His company is the world's largest producer of the cosmetic and

pharmaceutical product known as witch hazel.

"I think faster, better, cheaper is the way to get it done," Jackowitz said. "All the businesses over here will be able to benefit. You'll still be able to get to various businesses here for those few days even though you won't have through traffic."

The owners of Food Bag and Subway reiterated Jackowitz's concerns.

Traffic will be reduced to one lane along Route 66 for about three weeks prior to the road closure while utility crews move gas mains and overhead wires, according to the transportation department.

The bridge was originally constructed in 1913 and widened in 1925, the department said. The original section is made up of concrete slab with embedded steel beams. The newer section is a conventional reinforced concrete slab. The structure sits on stone masonry and concrete abutments.

Thomas Lopata, a project engineer with CME

Associates, told council members the bridge's age and design make it necessary to do a full replacement rather than rehabilitation.

Full closure of the section of Route 66 for one week will require a 1.7-mile detour for regular traffic and a 1.8-mile detour for commercial traffic, Lopata said.

The full detour for regular traffic from the west will involve getting on Route 196 at the intersection with Route 66. It will follow Summit Street to Main Street and back up to Route 66.

The commercial route will follow Route 196 from the Route 66 intersection to Barton Hill Road.

Jackowitz has 24 tanker trucks carrying witch hazel product for global distribution. While he said he was willing to take the trucks off-line for the 7-day road closure, he said four months of dodging construction impacts could be disastrous for his business.

"I would not be able to foresee how we would be able to handle these tankers in and out of

here for four months. That would be just about impossible," he said.

Town Council member Mark Philhower made the motion to approve the 7-day road closure. There was no opposition from the three other council members in attendance: Chairwoman Patience Anderson, James "Pete" Brown and Kevin Reich.

Philhower said shutting the road down during construction was the way to get it done quickly and with fewer complications.

"I think in the long run, the seven-day shutdown is a lot faster and [causes] less stress on the local businesses," he said.

Cardinali told councilors the transportation department will begin the design phase now that the town has chosen to shut down the road for the main construction period. He said an alert about the exact timeframe is likely to come out about 30 to 45 days before work is set to begin.

Right now, all he could say was that it's likely to be in the spring of 2018.

Grant to Aid Brownstone Avenue Redevelopment

by Elizabeth Regan

A \$750,000 grant to clean up an abandoned industrial site on the riverfront is paving the way for continued Brownstone Avenue redevelopment efforts blending public and private spheres.

With remediation money secured, First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield said Tuesday that the town can go forward with plans to purchase the 5.28-acre former petroleum storage and distribution site.

Concept plans for the \$3.78 million riverfront revitalization outlined in the grant application include a 5,000-square-foot restaurant and 1,500-square-foot museum with expanded parking for two adjacent parks.

The restaurant would be privately developed and operated while the museum would be run by a nonprofit organization like the historical society, according to Bransfield.

In the application for the Department of Economic and Community Development grant, Bransfield said the town would move to purchase the property immediately if the grant was awarded. On June 30, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy announced Portland was among the 14 recipients receiving a total of \$7.9 million to assess and remediate contaminated sites across the state.

Project estimates indicate the town would be responsible for \$330,000, with private and state funds covering the difference. Bransfield said the local funding would likely come from the town's 15-percent share of ticket sales from the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park and, possibly, from the general fund.

The town purchased a 40-acre swath of riverfront property and the adjacent quarries in 1999 for \$1.05 million. The popular Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park leases the quarry side, paying \$371,966 in lease payments to the town in fiscal year 2016. Bransfield said the business has paid the town almost \$2 million in lease fees since it started in 2005.

The town-owned riverside is now home to a park, including a performance stage and a picnic pavilion.

Bransfield said she is negotiating with O,R&L Commercial, the brokerage firm representing the estates of owners John and Rose Balletti, to come to a purchase agreement. The Board of Selectmen will meet in executive session to discuss the potential transaction at a special meeting on July 20.

On Wednesday, Deputy First Selectman Brian Flood said he's generally in support of riverfront development, but "the devil is in the

details."

"I think the real issue from a preliminary standpoint is what it's going to cost to purchase this property," he said. "Another issue is what is the property going to be used for? I think all of that is wide open."

He said he was not involved in devising the grant application or the project details contained in it.

Those listed in the grant application as key support staff for the project include Bransfield, Finance Director Tom Robinson, Economic Development consultant Mary Dickerson, Public Works Director Richard Kelsey and environmental consultant Amy Vaillancourt of Tighe and Bond.

Town charter specifies any real estate transaction over \$10,000 must be approved by voters at a town meeting. Any loan in excess of \$500,000 must go to a referendum.

In March, Portland voters approved the \$172,000 purchase of two parcels on Middle Haddam Road for use as the trailhead for the Portland section of the Air Line Trail currently in development. The money came from town funds for capital expenses and land preservation.

The riverfront property under consideration now, which combines three parcels, is on the market for \$845,000. Depending on the ultimate sales price, the town might apply for a low-interest loan, according to Bransfield, and would make loan payments with its 15-percent share of ticket sales from the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park.

Bransfield said purchasing the property would build on the town's commitment to making the riverfront and brownstone quarries a more welcoming place for residents and visitors, including those with an interest in history and geology.

Describing the quarries as a vital link to the past, she said a museum could tell the story of brownstone "including how it was formed geologically, how it was mined for several decades, and how it helped build the cities of New York, Boston, New Haven, Hartford and many others."

She cited scientists and students from colleges like Wesleyan University – which was built from Portland brownstone – who have come over to study the quarries.

"It's history as well as science," she said.

The grant application said assessments by Tighe and Bond, an engineering and environmental consulting firm, indicate the remediation will likely take two years to com-



Empty petroleum tanks loom over abandoned Brownstone Avenue land that First Selectman Susan Bransfield envisions as a waterfront restaurant and museum. The town is considering buying and cleaning up the 5.28-acre property with a combination of local, state and private funding. A \$750,000 brownfields grant awarded in June would remediate contaminated soil and groundwater and demolish structures and equipment laden with asbestos, lead and PCBs. An environmental assessment found levels of contamination in surface soils classified as a "significant environmental hazard."

plete and will include soil removal, the demolition of existing structures, and groundwater monitoring.

The studies found petroleum impacts to soil and groundwater, with the levels of contamination in surface soil constituting a "significant environmental hazard."

Significant hazards, which pose direct-contact, short-term risk to humans, are identified in state statute and must be reported to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The grant application cited a 2010 spill of 690 gallons of fuel oil as the cause of some of the contamination. It said another home heating fuel spill "may have occurred historically."

Asbestos, lead and PCBs were found in buildings, storage tanks and piping on the property.

Bransfield called the cleanup and redevelopment an issue of regional concern. She cited involvement by Brownstone Exploration and

Discovery Park owner Sean Hayes, Economic Development consultant Mary Dickerson, and Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce Vice President Jeff Pugliese and state Rep. Christie Carpino as examples of private, local and state support for the project.

Nonprofits like the Brownstone Quorum and the historical society have long supported efforts to enhance the area, she added.

Bransfield pointed to East Hartford and Glastonbury as two municipalities that have taken old tank farms and revitalized them for public and private use.

Goodwin College in 2008 was awarded \$600,000 in federal funds to clean up a former tank farm that now boasts a riverfront campus and an environmental-themed magnet school, according to the college's website.

Glastonbury turned an old oil tank farm into its Riverfront Park, which includes a public boat launch, boathouse, banquet facility, playground, ice skating, a dog park and walking trails.

Motor Vehicle Mill Rate to Rise in Marlborough

by Julianna Roche

The Board of Finance voted 4-1 last month to increase the town's motor vehicle mill rate to 34.15 to match the property mill rate. Board member Ken Hjulstrom was the lone opposing vote.

According to Board of Finance Chairman Doug Knowlton, the decision to increase the mill rate was the direct effect of state budget cuts to the town's Municipal Revenue Sharing Account (MRSA) and Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funds, which resulted in a shortfall of \$104,208.

"The state took away the MRSA and ECS funds of the town," Knowlton explained. "And their tradeoff was that the town was able to tax motor vehicles at the same rate as the regular property tax."

The state had initially capped motor vehicle mill rates at 32, but, after the Marlborough town budget passed by voters in May, the state scrapped this plan – which allowed towns to increase that mill rate if so desired.

According to minutes from the June 15 meeting, First Selectwoman Amy Traversa said the difference between collecting motor vehicle tax at 34.15 versus 32 would generate \$111,000 in revenue.

When asked the reason for his opposition, Hjulstrom stated his issue with the increase was that "the BOF already voted to place an additional \$80,000 into contingencies to cover potential shortfalls in state revenues."

Hjulstrom referred to an April 7 BOF meeting when board members unanimously voted in favor of increasing contingencies in the town operations budget from \$20,000 to

\$100,000, with the hope that doing so would set aside funds in the event that MRSA revenues fell short. He argued the additional taxes raised by the mill rate increase should cover the shortage, making the \$80,000 taxed on the town to inflate the contingencies fund unnecessary.

"Raising the vehicle mill rate above that which was factored in the budget passed at the town meeting is essentially double dipping," Hjulstrom said. "I just don't like taxing people twice for the same thing."

However, Knowlton argued this was not the case, considering the new motor vehicle cap was set at 37.125, giving the town the option to increase the mill rate.

"They will not be paying twice," he said. "When the state legislature finally passed their bill, they left the motor vehicle mill rate to be whatever the towns charged for their property rate, and they never passed the law to lock it in at 32. And next year, from my understanding, it looks like it will be locked in at 32 mills."

"From a town perspective, it might be nice to have an extra \$80,000 laying around, but I personally would rather keep it in the taxpayers' pockets," said Hjulstrom.

According to Knowlton, however, the surplus may actually work to the town's benefit.

"It may actually work in our favor with the surplus when we, what I anticipate, get cut even further by the state," he said. "The direction it seems to be going would be that aid to the town would get cut even more, and if we end up with a little bit of surplus going into next year, we won't have to raise taxes next year."

Two-Car Crash in Marlborough Leads to DUI

A Hebron man was charged with DUI following a two-car crash on Jones Hollow Road Sunday, state police said.

Police said shortly after 7 p.m. July 10, a Honda Accord, driven by Rita M. Sawyer, 65, of 225 Jones Hollow Rd., was driving north on Jones Hollow Road near the Route 2 overpass, while a Toyota Rav4, driven by Ryan J. Patulak, 44, of 325 West St., Hebron, was traveling south on Jones Hollow.

Police said Patulak failed to negotiate a sharp right curve prior to the overpass, crossing over the double yellow line, into Sawyer's

travel path. The Honda Accord attempted to take evasive action left at the same point the Toyota Rav4 corrected itself right, causing both vehicles to collide head-on.

Sawyer was transported to Middlesex Hospital for possible injuries, while Patulak was transported to Marlborough Clinic. Further investigation revealed Patulak to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, police said, so he was subsequently charged with DUI, failure to drive right, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and operating a motor vehicle with no insurance.

East Hampton Police News

6/24: Jason Canterbury, 33, of 5 Bellevue St., was issued a summons for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, East Hampton Police said.

7/2: Kathy L. Camp, 53, of 30 Namonee Tr., was arrested for operating a motor vehicle while using a cell phone, failure to drive right and driving under the influence, police said.

Marlborough Police News

7/5: According to state police, Matthew Nevin, 25, of 57 Johnson Rd., was taken into custody for violation of probation on two outstanding warrants for third-degree burglary and third-degree assault.

7/8: According to state police, Richard A. Walz, 56, of 169 S. Main St., was taken into custody and charged with second-degree harassment for sending several text messages which were criminal in nature.

Colchester Police News

7/5: According to state police, Michael John McCarthy, 35, of 39 Alexander Rd., Apt. 99, Salem, turned himself in due to an active arrest warrant and was charged with violation of probation.

7/6: According to state police, Rene J. Cotto, 21, of 697 Myrtle St., New Britain, was arrested and charged with evading responsibility, failure to drive in proper lane, and operating a motor vehicle without a license.

7/9: According to state police, Brenton Funaioli, 29, whose address was listed as P.O. Box 2194, New London, was arrested and charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, illegal possession of narcotics, third-degree criminal mischief, assault of public safety/emergency personnel, and breach of peace/threatening.

Junior Ancient Fife and Drum Corps Makes Comeback in Marlborough

by Julianna Roche

Sixteen-year old Colby Seidel didn't always like fifes and drums. In fact, he remembers his dad dragging him unwillingly as a kid to musters on the weekends. It wasn't until he learned more about the deeply-rooted history behind the art that he found an appreciation for it.

"I've been around fife and drum my whole life and was never really into it... but as I started learning more, I got more interested," said Seidel. "There was no Junior Corps in the area, so I was kind of disappointed about that. I thought it would be cool to have one, but I couldn't do it myself and I was hoping there would be other people interested."

The Marlborough Junior Ancient Fife and Drum Corps (MJAFDC) was originally established in 1964 by the Marlborough Fire Department, and reached its peak membership with more than 70 children by 1976. Eventually, however, it separated from the fire department, to become its own not-for-profit. But, dwindling numbers over the years took their toll, and in 2010, the corps was forced to disband due to lack of membership.

But last November, Seidel and two friends, Joshua Parlee and Dharma Perron, got together and made the decision to try and resurrect the Junior Corps, which all agreed was an in-depth process – including acquiring old MJAFDC equipment, reviewing historical material, cleaning and maintaining the drums, and making an inventory of their assets.

By December, they were having their first practices and in May 2016, the 12-member corps had their first performance at the William Diamond Juniors Muster in Lexington, Mass.

"They literally breathed life back into a group that played a huge role for kids and families in the town of Marlborough for 46 years," said

Wayne Seidel, Colby's father and MJAFD director.

The corps is now looking to recruit more members and schedule more musters. "We want to grow in numbers because we are still in the recruitment stages, so we are really looking for more people to play and more instructors to make the corps sound even better," said Parlee.

"That's also the great thing about fife and drum, especially Junior Corps," added Seidel. "We can take anyone who's of age [8-18 years old] to be in the corps, even if they don't know how to play music. ... The instructors will teach them."

All three re-founding members said for anyone who is questioning whether to join, there are endless reasons to get involved with fife and drum.

"It's to be a part of the community too," said Perron. "You meet a lot of people; you can travel places. Some corps go to places like Cape Cod or even Switzerland."

Seidel recalled past musters he and Parlee did with the Colchester Continental Fife and Drum Corps at Disneyland and on a cruise ship. "Fife and drum provides opportunities and who doesn't like opportunities? They're so valuable... it's just something that everyone should be able to find," he said.

"I've seen many marriages and lifelong friendships that originated in drum corps," Seidel said. "Many kids have attained quality performing skills that have led to musical careers or other corps... I've seen many kids develop a love of the history and experiential learning, then go on to become teachers [and] I've seen the quietest children develop into strong leaders through their experiences in drum corps. While this activity is not a fit for all kids, for others, the experience has a positive long-



The revived Marlborough Junior Ancient Fife and Drum Corps practices every Wednesday at Marlborough Congregational Church. From left: Beginner fife line instructor Kristy Motes, Director Wayne Seidel, Kyle White, Rachael Parlee, Hannah LaBombard, Colby Seidel, Dharma Perron, Krystal Wentworth, Joshua Parlee, Sophie Perron, James Rigoletti, and advanced fife line instructor Sean Quint. Members not pictured: Nicholas Carrano, Ethan Puetzer and Laci Cameron.

lasting impact."

"The kids are the ones making this happen. The adults are only there to guide them along," he added. "We have a great group of parents that are supportive of this positive activity for their kids [and] there appears to be a lot of support from members of the community too, that remembers or was proud of the Marlborough Juniors of yesteryear."

The MJAFDC practices Wednesdays from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Marlborough Congregational Church and will perform at the world's largest muster, Deep River Ancient Muster at Devitt's Field on 15 Southworth St. this Saturday, July 16. The parade begins at 11 a.m. For more information on the MJAFDC, look for the group's page on Facebook, or email MarlboroughJrAncients@gmail.com.

Marlborough Adopts Municipal Water System for Phase Two

by Julianna Roche

The Town of Marlborough is now its own water company – at least temporarily, as a result of last Tuesday's public hearing in which the Board of Selectmen unanimously voted in favor of adopting the new municipal water utility system's rules and regulations.

According to minutes from the July 5 hearing, Town Planner Peter Hughes stated the new regulations – which took effect July 11 – were developed after analyzing municipal regulations from East Hampton, Southington, and Montville, as well as rules and regulations from water utility companies such as Aquarion, Connecticut Water Company (CWC), and The Metropolitan District.

The town's decision to become its own water company, which has been in discussion for months, stems from CWC's unexpected withdrawal as partner in the water system expansion project in April 2014. As a result, the town has had to evaluate other options in order to find a dependable water source and keep the water system project moving forward.

"What we did was look at the rules, regulations, fees, and ongoing costs of having water to fit our town's with the norm," said First Selectwoman Amy Traversa. "We were very careful setting rates and regulations to make sure that ours were compatible with surrounding towns and other private water systems."

According to the regulations, Traversa will act as the CEO of the water system and will be able to use the services of other town agencies and departments, including the Department of Public Works to carry out any necessary responsibilities of the water department.

However, she said this is only a temporary situation. "We are estimating that it will be this way for nine to 12 months. That's our hope – that it's a temporary situation while we complete phase two and plan for the future, but then we are looking for an outside company to take it over."

With phase one now finished, phase two of the water system project is set to begin, which is being funded by a second \$500,000 Small

Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) grant the town received from the state.

Phase two is composed of two parts, with the first to complete water pipes extending from Independence Drive up to School Drive. There will also be five properties in the center of town connecting to the water system in the next month, including China Sea, Mark's on Main, 7-Eleven and houses at 13 North Main St. and 23 North Main St. According to Hughes, the school, senior center and library will also become part of the water system and be included in the billing cycle. It will take four to six weeks to complete the water main construction, which will begin in September.

"There are no plans to expand beyond that right now but we would have the ability to expand if somebody needed to come in and get water," Traversa said. "So for instance, if there was a drought or the well water dried up for a house in this main area, we could do that."

The second part of the plan includes a bid for two 15,000-gallon water tanks which will

be stored near the well system on school grounds. The tanks are not expected to arrive until later this year or early next spring, however.

"We want to make sure we have enough water tanks if development continues to happen," said Traversa, who is hopeful phase two will help do just that.

"The completion of phase two will allow the center of Marlborough to become more developed," she said. "As soon as we see shovels going into the ground, you're going to see a snowball effect where more and more development is likely to happen."

Development, she said, will also help create a much-needed level of tax stability for the town.

"Right now, we rely so much on residential property taxes that further commercial development of the center is going to bring Marlborough into a more stabilized tax phase," Traversa said, "and lessen our dependence on residential property taxes."

Obituaries

Colchester

C. Frank Palmer Jr.

C. Frank Palmer Jr., 72, of Colchester, beloved husband of Barbara Jean (Zawisza) Palmer, passed away surrounded by loved ones Wednesday, July 6, at Middlesex Hospital.

Born March 14, 1944, in Pensacola, Fla., he was the son of the late Coburn Franklin and Ethelda (Jolly) Palmer. A plumber by trade, Frank had worked for both Bacon Brothers and then Nick Fassino, both of Middletown, and finally Glastonbury Hardware (and Plumbing) most recently before his retirement. A longtime communicant of and usher at St. Andrew R.C. Church in Colchester, he was active with the Knights of Columbus as a 3rd Degree member of the Francis Cardinal Spellman Council 6107 as well as a 4th Degree Knight with San Jose Assembly 121.

An avid outdoorsman, Frank enjoyed his involvement with BSA Troop 13 at the parish for over 20 years, having served as scoutmaster (and assistant) for many of them. He had volunteered with Colchester Baseball for many years and enjoyed being an umpire for Little League as well. Frank was also a member of St. Joseph's Polish Society in Colchester where he served on the Board of Directors.

In addition to his loving wife of 50 years, he leaves his daughter and son-in-law, Deborah and Jeff Simes of Coventry; four grandchildren, Victoria, Amanda, Erika and Brian; sister, Bonnie DuPrey of Vermont; brother, Benny of Florida; three sisters-in-law, Joan and Cathy, both of Colchester and Cindy of Moodus; and numerous extended family, friends and fellow Knights.

He was predeceased by his son, Darren; his sister, Julie; four brothers, Jerry, Douglas, Dennis and Larry and his brother-in-law, Peter DuPrey; in addition to his parents.

The family received guests Sunday, July 10, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester. The funeral assembled Monday morning, July 11, at the funeral home before the celebration of the funeral liturgy at 10 AM at St. Andrew Church, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester. Burial will follow in the New St. Andrew Cemetery, Colchester.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory may be made to either St. Andrew Church, K of C Council 6107 or BSA Troop 13 – all in care of St. Andrew, 128 Norwich Ave., Colchester, CT 06415.

For more information, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

Colchester

Jeffery Lynn Fanning

Jeffery Lynn Fanning, age 60, of Danbury, died unexpectedly at Danbury Hospital, surrounded by his daughters, on Sunday, July 10. He was born in Ogdensburg, N.Y., on July 25, 1955, a son of the late Bruce and Carol (Boprey) Fanning.

As a young man, he served in the U.S. Army. A talented mechanic, Jeff enjoyed building muscle cars in his youth. He was the recipient of the Top Gold Prize Mopar Mechanic award from 1981-83. As an adult, he enjoyed puttering in his garage or cruising Candlewood Lake on his boat. He was a member of the Polish American Club of Danbury. For the last four years, he enjoyed spending time with friends and travelling with his girlfriend, Priscilla.

He is survived by four daughters, Susan Kauffman and her husband Peter of Colchester, Ann Piascik of Salem, Sheri Fanning and Kasandra Fanning both of Brookfield; two stepdaughters, Sierra Alves and Kristen Lebish, both of New Milford; six brothers, Dale, Ed, Lyle, Tommy, Sonny and Terry Fanning; two sisters, Karen Whitmore and Chrissy Malasky; and his beloved companion of four years, Priscilla Laughinghouse, her six children and multiple grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his brother, Billy Fanning.

Memorial contributions in Jeff's name may be made to the American Lung Association at www.lung.org.

A Celebration of his Life will be held Wednesday, July 20, from 6-8 p.m., at the Catholic War Veterans Hall, 2 Shalvoy Ln., Danbury.

To light a candle of hope and remembrance, visit cornellmemorial.com.



Marlborough

Brian Joseph Bronzi

Brian Joseph Bronzi, 53, of Marlborough, the loving husband of Karrie Zajicek Bronzi, lost his battle to cancer Thursday, July 7, at home, surrounded by his devoted family. Son of Ronald and Beverly (Lawton) Bronzi, he was born Sept. 19, 1962.

Raised in Glastonbury, he graduated from Howell Cheney Technical High School, Class of 1981, with a diploma in automotive skills. He went on to attend Arizona Institute of Technology. He worked at Monaco Ford in Glastonbury for many years. Later, he became owner and operator of Glastonbury Earth Products LLC, where at his sandpit he sold premium sand to builders and contractors.

Besides his wife, he is survived by his daughter, Alexis Bronzi, of Marlborough and his son, Clint Bronzi and his wife, Ginny, of San Diego, Calif. In addition to his parents, Ron and Beverly Bronzi of Florida, he leaves a sister, Brenda Bronzi Estes and her husband, Mark, also of Florida; his father-in-law and mother-in-law, Doug and Eleanor Zajicek of East Hartford; the Zajicek siblings and their spouses, nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews; as well as a very dear and true friend, Andy Dimoff, his wife Pam, their daughter and Brian's goddaughter Heather, of Marlborough.

His life was much too short, but he touched the lives of many friends to remember him. The very mention of his name brought a smile to the faces of all who knew him. He was truly a genuine, good man.

Funeral service will be held Friday, July 15, at 10 a.m., at the Mulryan Funeral Home, 725 Hebron Ave., Glastonbury. Burial will follow in St. Augustine Cemetery, South Glastonbury. Friends called at the funeral home Thursday, July 14.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the American Red Cross, 209 Farmington Ave., Farmington, CT. 06032 or to Protectors of Animals, 144 Main St., East Hartford, CT 06118.

For online condolences, visit mulryanfh.com.



Middle Haddam

Marjorie E. Hanna

Marjorie E. (Hallberg) Hanna, 100, of Middle Haddam, widow of William J. Hanna Jr., died Tuesday, July 12, at Middlesex Hospital Hospice. Born Nov. 16, 1915, in Middle Haddam, she was the daughter of the late Sidney and Elizabeth (Daley) Hallberg.

Marjorie was a lifelong resident of Middle Haddam and a member of the Secondnd Congregational Church in Middle Haddam. She was retired from EIS in Middletown, Connecticut Underwriters Insurance, and Baretta Provisions of East Berlin.

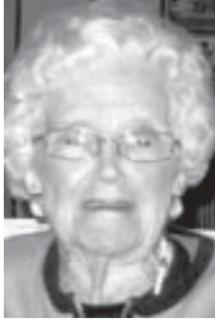
She is survived by her sons, Robert Hanna of Middle Haddam, William Hanna (Kimberly) of Portland; three daughters, Irene H. Nichols of Portland, Marjorie Schufer (John) of Portland, Carol Baretta (William) of East Berlin; daughter-in-law, Kathy Hanna of Portland; grandchildren, Debbie Johnson (Carl), Robert Hanna Jr. (Karen), Lori Wright (Tom), Daniel Baretta (Marlene), Donald Hanna, Daniel Hanna (Sara), William Hanna, Kevin Hanna, Brian Hanna; great-grandchildren, Megan, Ashley, Lauren, Nate, Lucas, Lindsey, Ryan, Jack, Katie, Elizabeth, Joshua; great-great-grandchildren, Kayleigh, Ryan, Savannah and Abigail.

She was predeceased by her son, Donald Hanna, daughter-in-law, Patricia Hanna, and granddaughter, Jodi Baretta Bjorklund.

Friends may call at the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, today, July 15, from 5-7 p.m. Funeral services will be held Saturday, July 16, at 10 a.m., in Second Congregational Church in Middle Haddam, with the Rev. Lois Kennedy officiating. Burial will follow in Union Hill Cemetery in Middle Haddam.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Second Congregational Church, 52 Middle Haddam Rd., Middle Haddam, CT 06456.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.



Marlborough

Helen L. Crossley

Helen (Labis) Crossley, 91, of Waterford, formerly of Marlborough, wife of the late Robert J. Crossley, died peacefully Tuesday, July 5. Born Nov. 23, 1924, in the Scitico section of Hazardville, now Enfield, daughter of the late John C. and Victoria (Brenick) Labis.

Helen was an accountant for the State of Connecticut Department of Labor. She was most proud of attaining Master Gardener designation from UConn. She taught CCD at St. John Fisher, where she attended daily Mass. She volunteered at the Richmond Library and was a former member of several other volunteer organizations. Helen loved to read anything and everything and completed the daily crossword puzzle in ink.

She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Catherine C. and Stephen J. Negri of Waterford; a son and daughter-in-law, Alan R. and Donna E. Crossley of Marlborough; a brother, John Labis of Enfield; and a sister Margaret Golas and her husband Joseph of Enfield. She is also survived by a granddaughter, six great-grandchildren, four step-grandchildren, 14 step-great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews and good friends. She loved them all.

She was predeceased by her grandson, Robert J. Crossley.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated by her nephew, the Rev. John Golas, on Tuesday, July 12, in St. John Fisher Church, Marlborough. Burial followed in Marlboro Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Richmond Memorial Library, 15 School Dr., Marlborough, CT 06447, or to the Waterford Public Library, 49 Rope Ferry Rd., Waterford, CT 06385.

Marlborough

Craig Joseph Keegan

Craig Joseph Keegan, 46, of Raleigh, N.C., formerly of Marlborough, died, surrounded by his family and friends, on Tuesday, June 21. He was the son of Joseph and Flora Keegan of Amston.

Craig also leaves behind his brother, Christopher and his wife Jill and their children, Jaden, Dixon and Solomon. He also leaves his sister, Shelly Keegan Barker and her husband Michael and their children, Keegan, Mallory and Rowan.

A memorial service was held in Raleigh, where he resided for the past 25 years.



Marlborough

Anna Hammond Robinson

Anna Hammond Robinson, 97, of Marlborough, passed away peacefully in her sleep Tuesday, July 5, at Marlborough Health Care Center, where she resided for 18 years. She was born May 15, 1919, in Milford, Devon to the late John and Mary Miller Maginis, and married to the late Harry Hammond, and then years later, to the late Frank Robinson.

She was a longtime resident of the Tartia School House on Tartia Road in East Hampton. Anna loved all nature, including gardening and animals, especially birds. She also loved cooking and was an avid knitter. She worked for many years until her retirement at Pratt and Whitney in East Hartford.

She is survived by her son, Gary Hammond of Great Falls, Mont.; her grandson, Brian Hammond; and one great-grandson, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Anna's loving family would like to thank the entire staff at Marlborough Health Care Center for their diligent care and gracious kindness that was extended to Anna during her residence.

A small memorial service will be held Thursday, July 21, at 11 a.m., at the Lakeview Cemetery in East Hampton, where she will be buried over her late infant son, Damon Hammond.

To leave online condolences, visit spencerfuneralhomeinc.com.

East Hampton

Stanley Reed

Memorial services for the late Stanley N. Reed, 74, beloved husband of Alice Smith Reed, will be observed at 1 p.m. Saturday, July 23, at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Rd., Colchester.

The family will receive guests starting at 12:30 PM. Burial will follow the service in Linwood Cemetery, Colchester.

Stan, born Jan. 13, 1941, passed away Jan. 6.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Stanley Reed, Jr. Scholarship Fund at Ameriprise Financial (attn: Sherrie), 111 Founders Plaza, Ste. 1503, East Hartford, CT 06108-3289 (phone 860-290-8880 ext. 15).

For online condolences, visit auroramccarthyfuneralhome.com.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

I realize I haven't written a lot about the Mets this season. But, since it's the midpoint of the season (the All-Star break, or, as I call it, the week when there's no baseball on TV), it feels a good time to give a report on the state of my beloved Metropolitans.

It's not a very good state.

Yes, the team's playing above .500 and very much in the playoff mix. But coming off a World Series appearance last year and with high hopes leading into the season, this year can't help but be seen as disappointing.

For starters, the injury bug has bit – hard. Third baseman David Wright, the star of this team for years, was dealing with his spinal stenosis until he found out he had a neck hernia and needed an operation. I hope I'm wrong, but it's doubtful at this point he'll play again the rest of the season.

Meanwhile, first baseman Lucas Duda, out since the middle of May with a stress fracture in his lower back, isn't even close to beginning a rehab assignment. That's an awful lot of time to be without a guy who hit 27 home runs last year, and 30 the year before that.

And catcher Travis d'Arnaud only rejoined the team about three weeks ago, after having been out since April 25 with a strained rotator cuff.

On the pitching side, ace Matt Harvey didn't pitch like himself – really, not anywhere close – all season, and was finally diagnosed last week with thoracic outlet syndrome, and underwent season-ending surgery to address it last week.

Fellow pitchers Noah Syndergaard and Steven Matz were each recently diagnosed as having bone spurs in their elbow – and Matz's actually needs to be surgically removed, though the team hopes that, with anti-inflammatory medications, it can stave off the operation until after the season.

Jacob deGrom has pitched well, though he's battled with some velocity issues this season – it seems like every start features manager Terry Collins in a post-game conference talking about how great deGrom was “considering he didn't have his best stuff” – and Zach Wheeler, who's coming back from Tommy John surgery, proved again that coming back from that operation is hardly a sure thing; he's experienced a couple setbacks and now, instead of joining the team right about now as it was hoped he would, will likely be late August.

And those are just the injuries. Michael Conforto, who was such a delight after his mid-season callup last July, experienced a sophomore slump so bad he's been sent down to the minors. Curtis Granderson, who had a decent season last year, has been so-so this year, and second baseman Neil Walker, after a torrid April in which he hit .307 with nine homers, has cooled off dramatically, hitting just .232 with six homers since May 1.

Notice how that second baseman I just mentioned is *not* named Daniel Murphy? That's been another thing that's gone wrong – very, very wrong.

Murph, as the entire sports-watching world likely noticed, had an absolutely fantastic postseason for the Mets last year. He was named the National League Championship Series MVP – and for very good reason. The Mets swept that series from the Cubs in four games, and Murph hit a homer in every one of them.

But, despite his great postseason (in the National League Division Series, Murphy hit three homers in five games against the Dodgers – and went 3-for-4 with two runs scored in the decisive Game Five), the Mets decided to let Murph go when his contract was up at the end of the season. It had basically been a foregone conclusion, unofficially, for a while; the Mets had an up-and-coming second baseman named Dilson Herrera waiting in the wings, set to take over second base starting in 2017, and a long-term contract to Murphy wasn't feasible.

I think the Mets viewed Murph as expendable. Before last fall, his offensive numbers had been solid but not eye-popping; he'd consistently bat somewhere between .280 and .290, and he didn't smack of a lot of power (he could hit doubles with the best of them – finishing with between 35 and 40 every year – but his career high in homers was 14, which he reached last year).

On top of that, his defense was always a little suspect; second base was not his natu-

ral position (he played third in the minors, but that wasn't going to be a possibility in the big leagues with Wright here), and while he worked hard at it and was overall a solid defender, you were never 100 percent confident he'd make every play every time. He committed his share of errors – and in fact had two big ones in the World Series last year.

Maybe the World Series errors reminded the Mets of the cons that came along with Murphy's pros. (It didn't help that his bat went stone cold during that five-game series loss to the Royals.) Maybe they thought last fall was something of a fluke and he'd go back to being the good-if-not-great player he'd always been.

Whatever the reason, the Mets chose not to extend Murphy the multi-year contract offer he was looking for. He was out the door, and proceeded to sign with the Mets' chief rivals, the Washington Nationals. Right away, I felt the Mets would pay for this mistake. Murph's postseason power prowess didn't really seem like a fluke to me; it was something he'd been gradually building to all season, after tweaking his batting stance with the aid of Mets hitting coach Kevin Long. And you couldn't forget Murph hit all those postseason home runs against some of the very best pitchers in the game – names like Clayton Kershaw, and Zack Grienke, and Jake Arrieta.

So the reality of him taking his talents to DC worried me. As things have turned out, I was right to be worried; in fact, I should've been even more worried than I was.

Murphy has been the star of the Nationals lineup, hitting 348 with 17 home runs and 66 RBI. He's not just the MVP of the Nationals; I've been hearing him mentioned as a possible MVP candidate for the entire season.

And he's crushed his old team. Of the 17 homers he's hit, seven have come against the Mets. Yes, he has crushed his old team this year. He was particularly good in a series against the Mets last weekend, in which the Nationals won three of four to send New York six games out of first place entering the break.

It's one thing for Murphy to be proving the Mets wrong – but he's been proving the Mets wrong in perhaps *the most painful way possible*. The Mets have made some real personnel blunders during their history, but at the moment, letting Murphy go looks like it may be one of the team's biggest mistakes of all time.

But, I remind myself, it's only one half of the year. Things can get better. It's not like the Mets' season has been a total bust. Indeed, considering all the injuries and misfortune that have befallen the team, the fact they are where they are – just six games out – is somewhat amazing. Yoenis Cespedes, who the Mets wisely brought back in the offseason, has been phenomenal. Batting .302 with 21 homers, he has been instrumental in the Mets being where they are right now.

Cespedes injured himself late last week, and I very much hope he's okay to go by the time the Mets start their second half tonight. If he's not, and winds up missing an extended period of time, that may just be the blow that's too much to overcome.

Even with a healthy Cespedes, I feel the Mets need to make some more moves if they're to see the World Series – heck, perhaps even see the playoffs – this year. Collins has stressed a lot over the past week that the Mets were in dire straits about this time last year only to rise up and have a fantastic final two months. And this is true, but the Mets made a series of trades late last July that really buoyed them – the chief among them being the trade for Cespedes, who made just about everyone in the lineup better. With Wright a non-factor and Duda out until who knows when, the Mets need another offensive infusion, or two. I'm not sure where they can get it.

But also – and perhaps more importantly – the Nationals are not at all the team they were last year. The team had a very bad second half last season (losing 17 games in August, for example), and with Baker at the helm and Murphy at the plate, I just do not see that happening this year.

I'll keep watching, and hoping. Ya Gotta Believe. But, with all the injuries and with Murphy knocking the ball around every time I look up, it's been tough.

See you next week – when, rest assured, I will not write about the Mets.