

# HALIFAX NEWS

## SAM & BOBBIE GROVES: A HALIFAX STORY

by *Bobbie Groves and Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont*

*All photos from Bobbie Groves*

Sam and I met at Earlham College [Richmond, IN] in 1964. I was best friends with his roommate in college, and on the first evening back on campus sophomore year, Sam brought his guitar to play at an all-college outdoor dinner. I fell for him completely; we've been married for 53 years. He went to Yale after Earlham, so I went east, too. We got our master's degrees and Sam pursued his doctorate. I was a potter. For the first few years Sam did leather work, making sandals in New Haven where I had a pottery shop. But we wanted to be back-to-the-land hippies. I came up to southern Vermont with my mom to leaf-peep. We drove around and got as far as Verna Canedy's, where we bought some of her pies. At one point we were up in Marlboro, maybe on Cow Path 40, and I saw a log cabin, Peter & Rachel Van Loon's. I hopped out and knocked on their door and asked how they did it.



We didn't have jobs, but we saw Grover's little place on Hatch School Road. It was really rustic. They had had animals down in the basement. Still, we could afford it, so we bought it. We paid \$21,000 for it with \$10,000 down that we had saved, so we ended up with a mortgage that was cheaper than our rent. That first summer, 1975, we were still living down in Connecticut, but I bought a Troybilt tiller and we put in a garden. The next summer we moved to Halifax. The original house had been built by Alpheus Chase. He lived in a little place on Shearer Hill Road across from Pusey's (Don Cael's). We moved up here in June of 1976. Grace Sumner Hill [sister of Homer and Kenneth] showed up, along with Burton, to help us. Grace brought a ton of hamburgers and made them for us and our friends all day. She was a great information gatherer!

I started doing pottery right away in what is now our little library. Sam made me a leather box that everyone admired, so he started

making those to sell. He and Paul Dary took them to a show, where they sold well. Sam sold leather work for 10 years at shows then started teaching. I sold my pottery for 25 years.

Sam started repairing and building on our house pretty soon after we arrived. Sam would add to the house every summer whenever we had a little money. Frank Maltese showed up after we started building on, and Frank and Sam became fast friends. When we bought it, the house was 24 feet, end to end; now it's 96! Sam figures he has replaced some 50 windows! He did all the work himself with a little summer help from a couple school buddies and, of course, Frank (see pic). One summer Sam and a buddy raised the roof about three feet. They also built our second building, the one with the greenhouse.



Frank Maltese, denied dynamite, does demo with a maul



What teachers do in the summertime

We heated with wood for about 10 years. We had one wood stove down in the basement. I would tend the fire all the time to keep my pots from cracking. We had a ladder instead of stairs.

Sam was building houses, among them the Women's crisis center, with Dave Ross and Chad Farnham for about 15 years. Sam was a zoning administrator for a while. There were few rules – couldn't build over 35' tall, had to be 25' from neighbor, 65' from center of the road. Now you may have to have a septic system, I don't know. He'd get paid \$2 or \$3 to consult on a project.

Sam started teaching first at Wilmington, junior high and high school science, and then chemistry in Brattleboro. He created a character, Dr. FrankEinstein, for the first day of school. He'd go in with a schleppy lab coat, slide rule in his pocket and wild wig, and do a presentation about how chemistry teachers can blow stuff up. He'd get big water balloon surges shooting water 20 feet! People would line up along the windows to watch his show.

One of his more encompassing projects was the Strolling of the Heifers. I volunteered him for it by saying, when asked to volunteer my services, "My husband built the award-winning

floats in high school"—so I was dubbed "volunteer of husband". He did about 130 projects for the Stroll—the big cows at the front, fixing the handicap doors so they didn't close too quickly—there was something new every week to figure out a solution for. I ran recipe contests and such for the Stroll as well.

After I'd been doing pottery for about 25 years, my mom got sick, and I went to help her in Florida. After she died, I applied to cooking school in NYC and moved there. I found a little apartment nearby, turning down the chance to live with Sam's mom. At 50 I was the oldest student. The school trained us a while then put us into NYC restaurants. There's a position called *stage* where you work for free for the experience. I worked a diff place every night I was in school. My favorite was Marcus Samuelsson's, in Harlem.

I could only get home about once a month. Then after school was done, I needed an internship. Since I wanted to go home to Halifax, they put me in Betty Hillman's restaurant, Le Petit Chef. The Hillmans were so sweet! I loved cooking at Betty's—that was my favorite job ever. I loved the big jolly parties. When Betty decided to sell, I told her to advertise at my cooking school, and sure enough, someone from the school bought it. Sadly, they didn't make a go of it.

I worked for Dr Hartounian's son Aram's place in Keene, a Mexican restaurant. Tristan was opening River View, and I worked with him. Then I decided to pursue the United States Personal Chef training in Albuquerque, New Mexico—you get a business plan setup and do personal chef-ing where you cook 20 meals for someone, some fresh and some frozen. A couple of weeks later, you do it again. My first client was Tom O'Brien, the town moderator for 30 years before Patty Pusey; he was also a teacher. He lived on Green River Road. He got ALS and was still in his house, so I cooked his meals. And Mike Drummey was his best friend. He used to go to Town Meeting dressed as a clown. He and Edie Fenton would give everyone corsages, and Edie would flirt with him. I cooked also for Dr. Lois Armbruster. She lived in Halifax Center maybe a mile from the Blue Giraffe [Halifax Center mailboxes]. Was she the one who wrote a book on trails in Halifax with Bernice? Maybe that was with Lucy Sumner [the book's co-author was Bernice's sister, Bertell Woods]. I cooked for Al Del Valle and his partner Joe. They lived by the snake lady who lived near Dora Green's on Old Lane. That lady had snakes and ferrets running around her house. Lucy Sumner painted Al and Joe's historic [Crosby] house—it's been in the Halifax Historical Society since Al died. Al had Alzheimer's, and I adopted him through the courts, so I was his guardian. When I wanted to hire someone to help me, Laura Sumner

suggested Dora Green. Dora was postmistress and was homeschooling her children, so her time was pretty flexible. She and Paula Hendler and I took care of Al for four years.

I did dinners for Walter Posen [on Hanson Road], too; he always called me “kid” although I was like 60; those dinners were the most fun. I cooked for Peggy Spinelli, and for someone connected to [famous cellist] Pablo Casals’ widow. And for the journalist Lynn Scherr. And for Ken Fisher’s group of lawyers, Christmas dinner at his house for about 20 people from his practice. And for Saul Bellow when he lived next door. Saul’s Russian relatives came to one big party, maybe a birthday party with novelist Philip Roth and his actress wife Claire Bloom.

One of my favorite memories is when I arranged a surprise birthday party for Paul Dary, getting 120 people to the Community Hall without him knowing! The whole town knew except him. It was great.

I do a lot more traveling than Sam does, so I feel confined during the pandemic. Sam had a stroke in October 2019, and we had to be clean and pure for his surgery—no Thanksgiving, no Christmas, no birthday party. We didn’t see anyone from October on. Sam was hospitalized for nine days in the ICU, where they found a lot more issues, then they sent him home to wait for the best anesthesiologist to arrive. Finally, he had the two surgeries and was just getting done with Dartmouth when the pandemic started. We only see his sister from our cars. We will be glad to get our shots and to see the pandemic recede into the past.



Paul Dary: master of all that touches the ground or passes through it



## TOWN NEWS

### FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

Dec. 27, 8 men and 1 truck responded to an alarm sounding on Stowe Mt. Rd; cause was a smoky wood stove.  
Jan. 5, 2 men responded to LaRock Lane. Deerfield Valley ambulance transported.  
Jan. 7, 8 men and 1 truck responded to Stowe Mt. Road for smoke in the basement.  
Jan. 13, 1 truck and 2 men responded to Guilford fire station to “cover” their station.  
Jan. 8, 4 men responded to Hanson Road for a lift assistance.

### SENIOR MEAL

Friday, February 19 is Halifax’s next senior meal. It is still take-out only. The menu is: Turkey & gravy with biscuits, potato, vegetable, and dessert. Meals may be picked up from 11 AM until 1 PM at the Community Hall in West Halifax located at 20 Brook Road. A free will donation of \$3.00 is appreciated but not mandatory. Let Joan know you’re coming: 802.368.7733. – Joan Courser

**THE BRATTLEBORO AREA HOSPICE** offers informational Zoom sessions on advance care planning every Wednesday at 10 a.m. or other times by arrangement. They provide **FREE HELP** to create a written healthcare plan (*Advance Directive*). They have answers to these and all your questions:

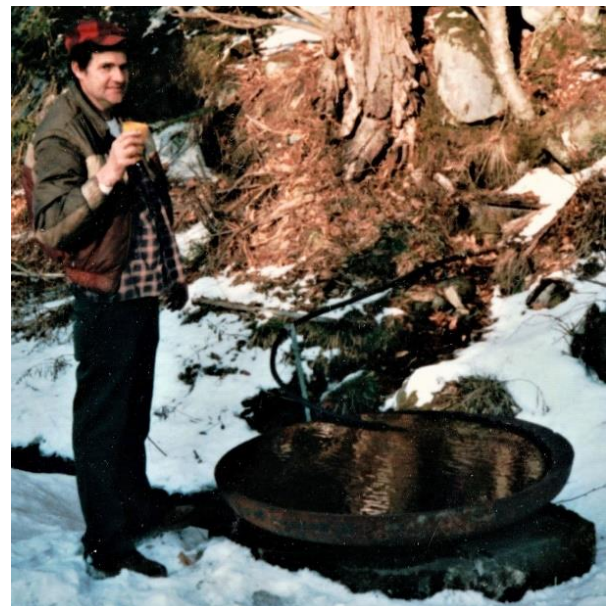
- **Where do I find the forms?**
- **Who should be named as my healthcare agent?**
- **Who do I give the completed form to?**
- **How do I talk with my family about my healthcare wishes if I am unable to speak for myself?**

To receive a ZOOM invitation, contact **Taking Steps Brattleboro** at Brattleboro Area Hospice (191 Canal Street, Brattleboro 05301): call Don Freeman, 802.257.0775 ext 101 or email them at [don.freeman@brattleborohospice.org](mailto:don.freeman@brattleborohospice.org). As their current flyer puts it, *“Anyone over 18 years old should have one. It's how people care for one another.”*



### SORROW

Halifax lost beloved long-time resident Carlton S. Barnett Sr. Carleton (age 87) passed on December 24 surrounded by family. Carlton was born in Cabot VT, the sixth of nine children. His parents died when he was in his teens, and he came to live in Wilmington with his older sister, Lorraine and her husband Richard. He married Bernice Burnett of Halifax in 1956. They soon bought a house in the village of West Halifax then later resided on Whitneyville Road. Carlton was constable of Halifax for at least 20 years, his most cherished of the jobs he had during his years in Halifax. Carlton was a friend to all and a great storyteller and loved to get a laugh out of everyone he met; he rarely failed in that. He and Bernice had two children, Carlton Jr. and Tammy. Sadly, Carlton Jr. was killed in a logging accident in 1991. Tammy now lives in Brattleboro. His grandchildren and great grandchildren live in Halifax and Brattleboro. Halifax is not the same without him.



*Constance Lancaster sent this HHS photo of Carleton drinking the spring water from our Halifax bell in 1985*

Halifax has also lost Michael Wheeler (Oct. 28, 1957-Jan. 15, 2021) who loved fishing, cars, classic rock, and going to the beach. We offer our sympathies to his family and friends.

### URBAN FEEDERS AS A REFUGE FOR BIRDS IN WINTER

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Project FeederWatch collects data from citizens all over identifying and counting birds visiting their home bird feeders. Researchers used FeederWatch data from sites in the eastern U.S. to look at connections between winter weather and common feeder birds. They found that species such as

Carolina Wren, House Finch, and Northern Cardinal—three of the least cold-tolerant bird species in the study—moved out of agricultural and forested areas and into urban areas during or just after the coldest winter periods. *Photo from [www.Audubon.org](http://www.Audubon.org)*



### **JOAN'S SIGHTINGS.**

With all the snow we have received the birds have been busy. I am enjoying all of them in these times of staying home, social distancing and seeing few friends the birds bring me happiness. I have the faithful ones that come day after day all day all long. The Chickadees, Blue Jays (a great abundance of them), a few Juncos, a few Titmice, Sparrows, Woodpeckers still the Hairy and Downy and one Red-Bellied. Mr. & Mrs. Cardinal still come late in the afternoon. I am pleased to still see at the feeders two Red-breasted Nuthatches and two White-breasted ones. This is definitely 'the year of the Blue Jay'—I have 14 to 17 at the feeder at times.....they eat lots & lots of sunflower seed; they are a beautiful bird but bullies. Wayne's cousins from Canada when they visited years ago thought that they were just the prettiest birds. I agreed but said they were to some folks a bothersome bird. I said to them while in Canada how pretty their 'scrub jays' were. They told me *they* were considered a bothersome bird!!! One of them came and took bread from Wayne's hand. I am concerned for the wild turkey; with all the snow and such a hard crust on it, they must be struggling to get food. One year they came to the feeders. I'd like that again. Send your animal sightings to Joan at [jwcinvt@gmail.com](mailto:jwcinvt@gmail.com) - *Joan Courser*

The first week of January, neighbor Janis Bellow saw a bobcat, her first ever wild bobcat sighting. He was right outside her window by her shed. "He sauntered very slowly up the icy hill out back. We'd been seeing tracks and wondering what they were. It was one large cat paw in front of the other in a straight line—no claw marks. This cat had a short blunt tail without any puffed-out fur on it. Huge and heavy-looking and so majestic."

Mid-January, neighbor David Erickson reported seeing a coyote one morning in the northeast corner of Whitingham (near the Halifax border) above Gates Pond. He wrote, "It ran out from [Hamilton Tavern Road] and saw me up at the top of the rise as I was walking back towards Gates Pond. We both froze and, as I was slowly reaching for my phone, it ran off. I got a couple of long-distance shots through the woods, which I will post on iNaturalist later." Here is the link to his photos: <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/68101713>.

We see the red fox regularly up here on Hanson Road plus the barred owl, ravens, crows, chickadees, nuthatches, and squirrels. The tracks in the snow tell me mice and voles are trying to outrun the owl. Elsewhere in Halifax I see a lot of turkey tracks. But in Wilmington up above Lake Raponda, our friends got a surprise visit from an ermine in their cellar! Lynn Redd sent a pic of the furry creature in its natty white coat with black-tipped tail. That's a truly adorable mouser. - *Laurel Copeland*



### **TOWN MEETING IS TUESDAY MARCH 2, 2021**

Town meeting will take place in the Community Hall at 20 Brook Road (not in the school!), and all articles (currently there are 9) will be decided by Australian (paper) ballot. Sample ballots and the Warnings may be viewed on the Town website [www.halifaxvt.com](http://www.halifaxvt.com). Absentee ballots may be requested by calling the Town Office or by going online to the MyVoterPage <https://mvp.vermont.gov/MVP/MyVoterPage> or by sending back your postcard which will go out shortly. If you plan to vote in person, you must wear a mask or face shield and observe social distancing.

Newsletter  
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A Watercolor by Bobbie Groves



Sam Groves Taking the Roof Off

# Halifax News

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