

February 2023

HALIFAX NEWS

REMEMBERING MY FRIEND ANNE DEWITT (1931-2022)

– Gregg Orifici, Halifax, Vermont

Here are some of Anne's wonderful words and generous recollections. I tried to capture her voice (and her 'gotcha' smile and wry sense of humor) on those winter afternoons before the start of the pandemic, when I last sat with her in her hilltop home.

Leader of the Gang

What's your name? You live down the road?
When did I last see you? I mean *see*, see?—you know
I can't—not right, anyway, only light and shadow. *Disgustus*.
Sitting inside on a beautiful day. Read me the letters in this word scramble,
would ya? Keeps me sharp—

Not as sharp as I used to be, when I was a teacher, you know.
All the books in this room, I've read 'em—the ones
upstairs, too. I'm a Shakespeare freak and a Goethe geek.
But Homer was my *numero uno*. I learned Greek for him
And swam in the sea. *Opoiadípote stigmí boreí*—
Who cares what it means, any moment
might be our last!

You're from Long Island? Strange country.
I'm from next door. Flatbush. In the country
of Brooklyn. I was leader of the 27th Street gang—
At least I was when I outran Angelo Danisi. My best friend.
We played stickball and roller-skated and
gave the 28th Street gang hell.

2020—sounds like what I'd like to see.
I was born in '31. What grade are you in?
I haven't graduated yet. Never learned to type.
But I used to keep a diary. Wrote poetry, too,
about a hundred years ago—who knows where they are?
I sure hope nobody's seen them. No, I don't want to hear 'em,
I want to hear yours.

I'm into music, man. Classical all day, every day.
I break for news.
I used to play piano and study rhythm
at a camp in Connecticut. That's the picture of my teacher,
the beautiful one in the flowing dress.
Leaping. You don't see it? It's over there on the music stand.
Well, it was...Couple a hundred years ago
I drove her home to Florida and stayed so I could
carhop and work in a nursery. I love plants, hate eating them though.
Have I had my second cup of coffee? My peanut butter
is around here somewhere. But I can't eat it without coffee.
Who cares if it's my third.

Did you know my sister was on Broadway?



Annie Get Your Gun—no way I wanted any of that.
We liked different things. I read like crazy, anything
I could get my hands on. And I was a tomboy—helped my dad
in the garden. A Victory Garden, yeah, how'd you know? I've grown
veggies my whole life, who can remember what kind? You're talking
Ancient History. You used to help me with the garden
here? Very nice of you. Lotsa black flies. What's your name?
Is that Italian?

My best friend was Italian. How did you know?
I grew broccoli and cabbage, you say? Carrots and onions,
tomatoes, potatoes, zucchini and corn. Here?
In Halifax? Come on! I don't even like vegetables.
I like peanut butter. And bananas. You make me laugh.

I grew sunflowers taller than corn?
Birds ate the seeds all winter. *Bravo*. I like birds.
Red and black flannel shirt with holes in it sounds like me
to a tee. You say we've known each other twenty years—
Let me feel your face. A face feels like a face, goddammit,
who can tell anything? —
But that's a serious moustache you got going on.

I remember every weed. Frost is tricky on the hilltop, caught me
a time or two for sure. Never plant 'til after Memorial Day, I say.
Global warming is sure taking its own sweet time up here.
Can't remember harvesting a thing, just weeds.
I hope somebody got something—I don't like vegetables,
I like Greece.

I went places with peanut butter. Everywhere but South America.
I stayed in youth hostels. Japan, South Africa, India, many places.
Every day I used to go jogging, a hundred years ago, maybe, until
I hurt my back. Now I swim laps. Maybe not today. How should I know
It's 3 degrees out? I swim indoors, silly.

I do all the strokes but my flip turn is history, like me. *Disgustus*.
Can't see where the wall is. I've got a hard head, knock on wood,
but cement is not my friend. I like you. Do I know you?
Care for some peanut butter?



TURNING THE CORNER



It's January 7th, the first Saturday in the new year. The sky started out soft greys, blues, and pinks before the sun came up, through the trees and over Blue / Ballou Mountain to my southeast. I check my Sundial app: day length will be 9 hours and 12 minutes. Looking back, I calculate that is 10 more minutes than at the winter solstice. "Days are getting longer. It will be Saint Patrick's Day before we know it," I comment to my spouse. "Saint Patrick's Day?" he replies. Me: "Sure. That's when we are done with winter. And we get to drink whisky. Why, it's practically the spring equinox by then." I am enthusiastic. Says he, "I can drink whisky every day. We will be in Dublin soon after." I look up the latitude of Dublin, Ireland. Above the 53rd parallel north! We are down here at 42.8° N. How long is their longest night, I wonder. First I find out that the Dublin winter solstice night is 9 hours and 30 minutes longer than the summer solstice night, then that the day is only 7 ½ hours long. Mentally comparing this to our 9 hours, I picture sun-up at 7 with sun-down at 2:30 in the afternoon, then sun-up at 9 a.m...h'mm.

In the house, I am watering the plants—mine and Rosie's. Rosie's are at "winter camp" with me. The plants are good plants and write dutiful letters home to Mom Rosie. "Hi, Mom! It snowed for 2 days and 2 nights. The power went out and so did the internet! Good thing Winter Camp has a generator. Miss you!" says the Fuchsia in December. In January, the Succulents write, "We desert types are hanging out in the south window, wondering when winter ends. The babysitter says we're having another early mud season right now, and one of the cars got stuck (but a passer-by pulled it out), and the rain is unusual plus a pain in the neck," and the Aloe comments, "As a healing plant, I'm attuned to other plants. That tall iris behind me has taken it into its head to grow two blossoms. Right now! In January!!"

This is true: at last year's Edie Fenton Memorial Plant Swap on Memorial Day Weekend Saturday, I acquired an unusual Walking Iris from Bonnie Brown. She told me, "It might bloom, and then it might make another." I interpreted



this to mean it might make another blossom, but I was wrong. The blossom made another plant. First a bulge appeared in a leaf, then they separated (photo at left), and the bulge grew into a delicate blossom (photo at right). After a while, the dying blossom began to lean, to droop, and finally to drag on the ground. Eventually I noticed it was putting out roots—it "made another." The baby plant is now a healthy young'un while its parent is busy putting out two new flowers. I can see where the **2023 Plant Swap** will have some exciting offerings again this year...so put that on your calendar:

Saturday, May 27, 2023 at the Halifax Community Hall in West Halifax. (Wasn't that a nice segue?)



Today was also the second day of the full moon. I did not see a bit of it. So much for stargazing when the clouds are swirling, and snow is falling, and dense fog shields our anxious eyes from the ruts in the road. Instead of watching the moon, we watched the cats. The girls wanted out on the porch. (Although the three cats are all feral or drop-off rescues, they are not allowed outdoors because I treasure birds.) Since the wood stove was heating us up to boiling, I opened the door. After a few ins and outs, I

became aware of a persistent squeaking. The grey cat, Solveig, was crouched in a corner, watching intently as a red squirrel (outside the screens) scolded her on one side and down the other. It's only fair.

At this point, you may be wondering why it is January 7th and yet already I am working on the newsletter that typically is thrown together in a sleepless rush a minute after it ought to be out. This is the first week of my retirement from the Veterans Health Administration. I find it very pleasant to work on whatever catches my fancy without guilt (or taking annual leave). Of course, there are many forms to fill out and changes to make so our household budget finds its balance, but "I'm Medicare's problem now" is still a very nice refrain.

Midday, the sun has still not cleared the trees that line my property to the south. The trees are shining as the puffs of snow melt in the sunshine. I love the changing light and shadows as the sun moves westward. I wonder when the sun will clear the treetops. Much later, the moon rises far to the north, not at all where the sun rose. I review the seasonal shift of the full moon's location on the horizon, relying on a 2015 post from Karen Masters on a Cornell site: south/southeast in summer, north/northeast in winter. It's a strange and wonderful planet.

– *Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont*

TOWN NEWS

SENIOR MEAL IN HALIFAX – FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 12:00 NOON

Friday, February 17 is the next meal at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax, Vermont. We serve at noon. Menu: fruit, corn chowder with ham, cornbread, rolls and dessert. All seniors are welcome. A free will donation of \$3.00 is asked. HOPEFULLY we will not have snow that day. The last two meals there have been snowstorms. Call Joan to let her know you are coming (802-368-7733). – *Joan Courser*

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS. Well...there is lots of snow on the ground now, so there are lots of birds. Not really any new ones, but the old faithfuls are coming each day: Evening Grosbeaks, Blue Jays, Chickadees, lots and lots of Mourning Doves, four Cardinals (2 pairs), Tufted Titmouse, Woodpeckers (a Hairy and a Downy) and a Red-Bellied one, Sparrows, now and then a Blackbird, a couple of Purple Finch, a few Juncos, a Red-Breasted Nuthatch and a White-Breasted one, and a Starling. As always I am enjoying the birds! – *Joan Courser*

Elsewhere Around Town. Up on Hanson Road we watch the barred owl perch on a tree or garden crook, scanning the ground for hints of rodents whose tracks we see. The grey foxes visit at times; there is a pair now. It is their time to mate. We watch the crows, ravens, turkeys, and chickadees, sometimes hear a golden-crowned kinglet or other singer. – *Laurel Copeland*



Althaea Carroll on Hanson Road snapped these stellar photos of a bobcat on her porch.

FEEDER WATCH. Remember to sign up for the winter-spring bird count hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "The FeederWatch season begins on November 1 and runs through the end of April. The last day to start a two-day count at the end of each season is April 29." Their website provides step-by-step instructions and log sheets on which to record what you see; alternatively, you can use an app to log the birds you count. Visit <https://feederwatch.org/about/project-overview/> for details.

MORE FUN WITH BIRDS. Cornell offers woodpecker recognition training. Their website at <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/downy-and-hairy-woodpeckers/> has photos, diagrams, and text comparing the Hairy Woodpecker with the Downy Woodpecker. We have both these woodpeckers locally and they do come to

feeders. They look almost the same, big Hairy and little Downy. Review the facts and try the re-playable Bird Academy SnapID quiz game linked from the above site.

**Remember to call the Fire Department BEFORE you light an outdoor fire!
Call Wayne (802) 368-7733 or Malcolm (802) 368-2484**

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS.

On December 29, seven men and two trucks responded to Ed Clark Road in Colrain, MA. to a second alarm structure fire. Halifax’s 91-E-3 (engine) filled tankers at Adamsville Road and Halifax’s 91-T-1 (tanker truck) pumped that water to Colrain’s truck. This was Halifax’s one hundred and third call of 2022. That’s a lot of calls!

Jan. 6 at 6:16 AM seven men and one truck responded to a car in the river off Brook Road. A fireman helped the person out of the river. She was taken to the hospital by Deerfield Valley Ambulance suffering back pain. She was a lucky lady not to be injured worse than she was, but it sure was a scary experience.

Jan. 9 three men responded to Hubbard Hill Road for a woman having trouble moving one of her legs. The Halifax highway crew helped by sanding the driveway; it was a slippery day...again.

Jan. 10 seven men responded to a residence on Branch Road for a person having trouble breathing. The ambulance transported her to Brattleboro.

Jan. 12 four men responded to Route 112 and found a man feeling weak and dizzy...traffic was directed, and an ambulance transported the man to a hospital in Greenfield, MA.

Jan. 12 seven men responded to a car on its side on Reed Hill Road. Occupant was out of the vehicle and not injured. A wrecker was called.

Jan. 22 three men responded to Wheeler Road for a medical call; person was transported to Brattleboro hospital.

Jan. 22 four men responded to a call on Brook Road; a patient with back pain was transported to hospital.

Jan. 23 seven men responded to a call of a car off the road; the road was checked from the MA. town line to Larrabee Road but nothing was found.

Jan. 23 one truck and three men responded to a tree on wires on Phillips Hill Road.

Jan. 26 seven men and two trucks responded to a mutual aid call in Colrain, MA.

Get into the monthly Fire Department 50/50 raffle! Buy tickets (\$10 a ticket) from any fireman.

Emergency services — call 911

New Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call 988

Veterans Crisis line — call 988 then press 1, or you can text 838255



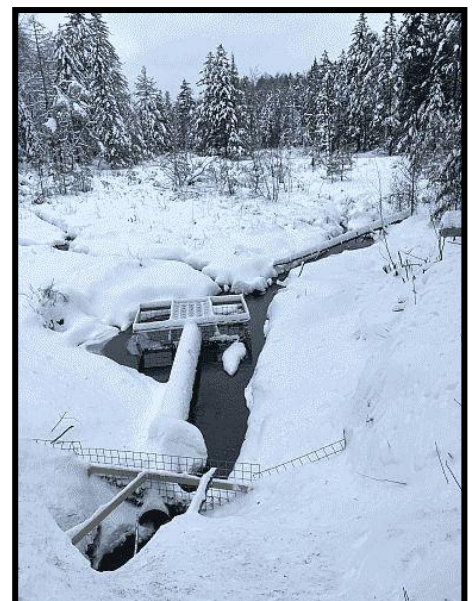
WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

Have you seen any of these 5 animals crossing a road? As part of a wildlife connectivity project, I am interested in where five wide-ranging mammals cross the road. If you see one on or crossing a road, or if you see tracks that suggest one crossed the road, let me know

(LaurelACopeland@gmail.com, 802-368-2439). Include **date, time, & location**. The 5 animals are **Moose, River Otter, Fisher, Black Bear, and Bobcat**.



(Right) The privately-funded Beaver Deceiver (© Skip Lisle) on Hatch School Road is working well. It saved the Town from having to install a 4'x4' cement culvert (1000's of dollars) and lets the beavers live undisturbed.



Newsletter
P O Box 27
West Halifax VT 05358



Things That Fall Off Your Car in the Road

Halifax News

FEBRUARY 2023

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Snow-flecked Apple Tree