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BEST OF
Hartford
MAGAZINE
2009 THROUGH 2018



Seasons' Greetings



Ahhh, summer! We'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who isn't filled with anticipation about everything the next few months will bring – warm days, flowers in bloom, summer vacations, trips to the beach, playing tennis, and walking, running or biking on the countless miles of trails that wind throughout our beautiful state.

For those looking for a different way to spend their leisure hours, Amy J. Barry tells us about the unique adventures offered by Cross Sound Ferry. The company operates three different cruises in Long Island Sound, giving passengers a chance to view the many historical lighthouses that dot the shoreline.

For folks seeking a more extreme adventure, Caryn B. Davis introduces us to the owner of East Haddam-based Overland Experts. Bruce Elfström takes clients on off-roading adventures and expeditions all over the world – from Iceland and the Arctic to Bolivia, Peru and Mongolia – traveling by vehicle, horse and camel.

Music lovers will enjoy tagging along as Mike Briotta takes us behind the scenes of the annual Tanglewood music festival, set in the rolling hills of the Berkshires. This summer-long event draws a wide range of performers, including the iconic Yo-Yo Ma, Steve Miller and Peter Dinklage.

Love art? Check out Matt Broderick's story about 32 life-sized statues that have been installed in public spaces throughout the town of Simsbury, and will be on view to the public through Sept. 15. The statues are part of a collection of more than 400 figures that have gained acclaim worldwide.

Feeling nostalgic? James Battaglio and Leonard Felson bring us first-hand recollections from people who experienced the Summer of '68. It was in that tumultuous year, 50 years ago, that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated – and the fallout reverberated throughout Connecticut.

We hope you enjoy this issue. Have a great summer!

Carol

Carol Latter, Editorial Director



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Seasons of Glastonbury™
is published by *Seasons Magazines*
James P. Tully, Owner/Publisher

Creative Director
Stacy Wright Murray

Editorial Director
Carol Latter

Cover Photograph
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Summer

2018

“Knee deep in the water somewhere
Got the blue sky breeze blowin' wind through my hair
Only worry in the world, is the tide gonna reach my chair
Sunrise, there's a fire in the sky
Never been so happy, never felt so high
And I think I might have found me my own kind of paradise”

– Zac Brown Band

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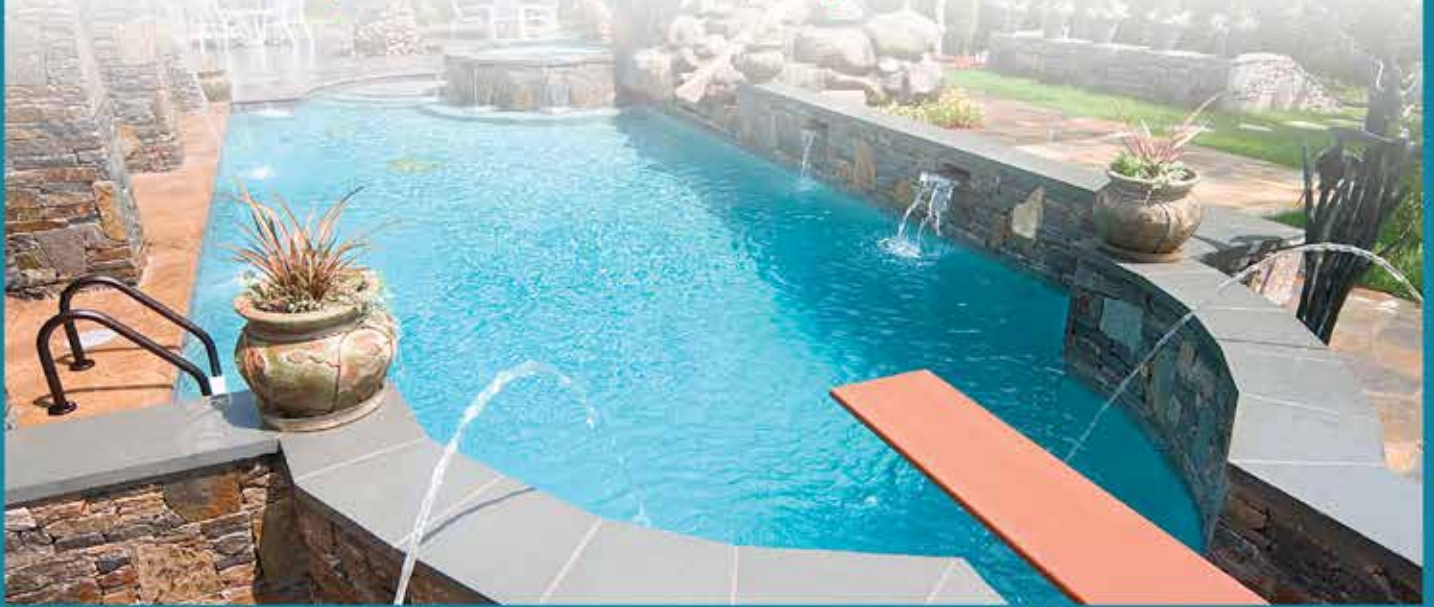
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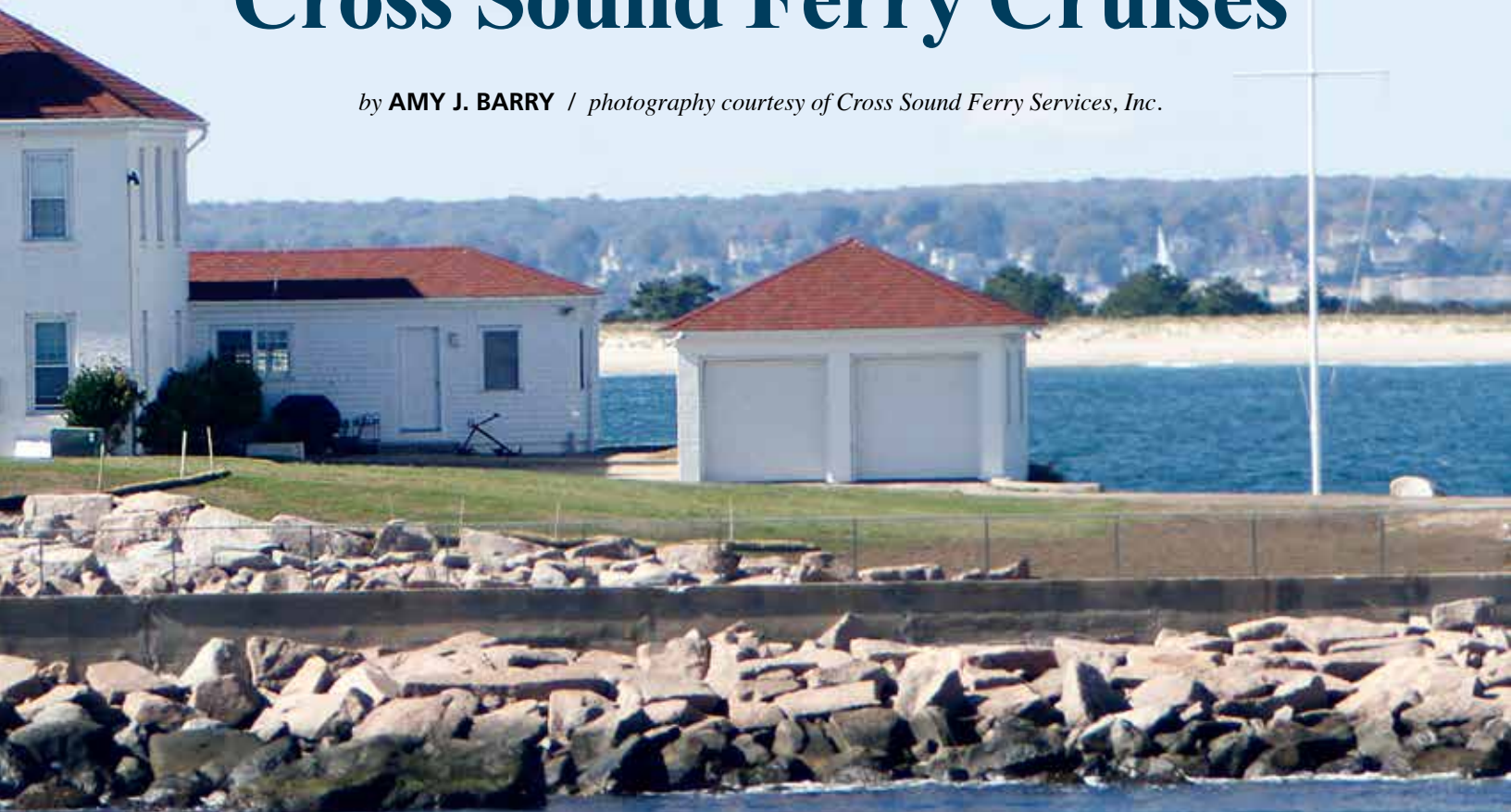


Watch Hill Lighthouse.



See Lighthouses Up Close On Cross Sound Ferry Cruises

by **AMY J. BARRY** / *photography courtesy of Cross Sound Ferry Services, Inc.*



People have long been fascinated by lighthouses. Throughout the centuries, their awesome towering beauty has captured the imaginations of artists and writers. We are intrigued by these glorious beacons of light guiding ships to safety in wild seas, as well as the romantic notion of lighthouse keepers living in dwellings accessible only by vessel.



Long Beach Bar (Bug) Lighthouse.

Here on the Long Island Sound we have an abundance of historic lighthouses that have been painstakingly preserved because of their significance as icons of American history, despite today's newer technologies replacing many of them as functional navigational aides.

And now, people have the opportunity to travel on a state-of-the-art, high-speed ferry to view up to a dozen lighthouses gracing the waters between Connecticut and Long Island on a choice of three distinctive, expertly narrated Cross Sound Ferry cruises.

"We had discussed offering lighthouse cruises for a couple of years. We were used to being in the ferry business, not the excursion business, for well over 40 years," says Stanley Mickus, director of marketing and public affairs for Cross Sound Ferry. "We went ahead and started offering the cruises in June of 2015. The response was so great we expanded from two to five days a week and instead of ending in September, kept going through November."

Mickus explains that Cross Sound Ferry has been working closely with the New London Maritime Society –

which owns and maintains three of the lighthouses on the tours – as a valuable, historical resource.

"This is an opportunity to create awareness because most people don't know much about the lighthouses except what they see in a photograph or painting," he says. "When you go on one of these cruises, you're getting a three-dimensional experience."

The "Classic Lighthouse Cruise" is the first cruise that was offered by Cross Sound Ferry, departing from New London. It features views of nine lighthouses from New London to Long Island, including a stop at Long Beach Bar "Bug" Light – the pride of Long Island's East End Seaport Museum – as well as two Revolutionary-era forts.

In 2016 the "Lights & Sights Cruise" was added, also departing from New London. In addition to viewing nine lighthouses, this cruise parallels the mainland coast out of New London Harbor to explore mansions and waterfronts from Watch Hill, R.I. to Fishers Island, N.Y.

This summer, "Long Island Lights" joins the offerings, departing from Orient Point, N.Y. This newest cruise includes views of eight lighthouses and historically

significant sights around the waters of Plum Gut, Gardiners Bay, Long Island Sound, New London Harbor, and Fishers Island Sound.

Passengers are taken on the lighthouse cruises aboard one of two high-speed catamarans. The Sea Jet is capable of cruising at speeds of more than 30 knots (35 mph). The vessel is equipped with modern airline-style seating on two enclosed, air-conditioned decks with a spacious outdoor deck for viewing the scenery.

Because of the positive response to the lighthouse cruises, Cross Sound Ferry is greatly expanding the number for 2018, and this summer the Cecelia Ann joins the fleet.

"This boat has done sightseeing cruises in and around New York Harbor," Mickus says. "It's a little larger than Sea Jet with more outdoor seating and large, panoramic windows."

Besides the opportunity to see the lighthouses, Mickus emphasizes that it's the narration of the cruise that makes the whole experience so interesting and educational.

"We have three primary narrators and each has a different perspective on the trip [and] provides history and their innate knowledge about the lights," he says. "They're very interactive, they walk around the vessel engaging with passengers, answering questions."

Ted Webb of Orient, N.Y. was the first narrator on the tours.

"This is something he's been doing as a passion for years—working to preserve lighthouses," Mickus says. "He's past president of the East End Seaport Museum and has generated scripts for all these lighthouses."

Also on board as narrators are Steven Cryan of Old Saybrook, a marine painter with an extensive knowledge of lighthouses, and Steve Purdy of Mystic, who is the lead interpreter on the Charles W. Morgan whaling ship at the Mystic Seaport.

"We have a really nice state-of-the-art PA system with a cordless microphone," Mickus adds. "We also have enhanced listening devices and give out ear buds free of charge, which is particularly helpful for our older clientele with hearing issues."

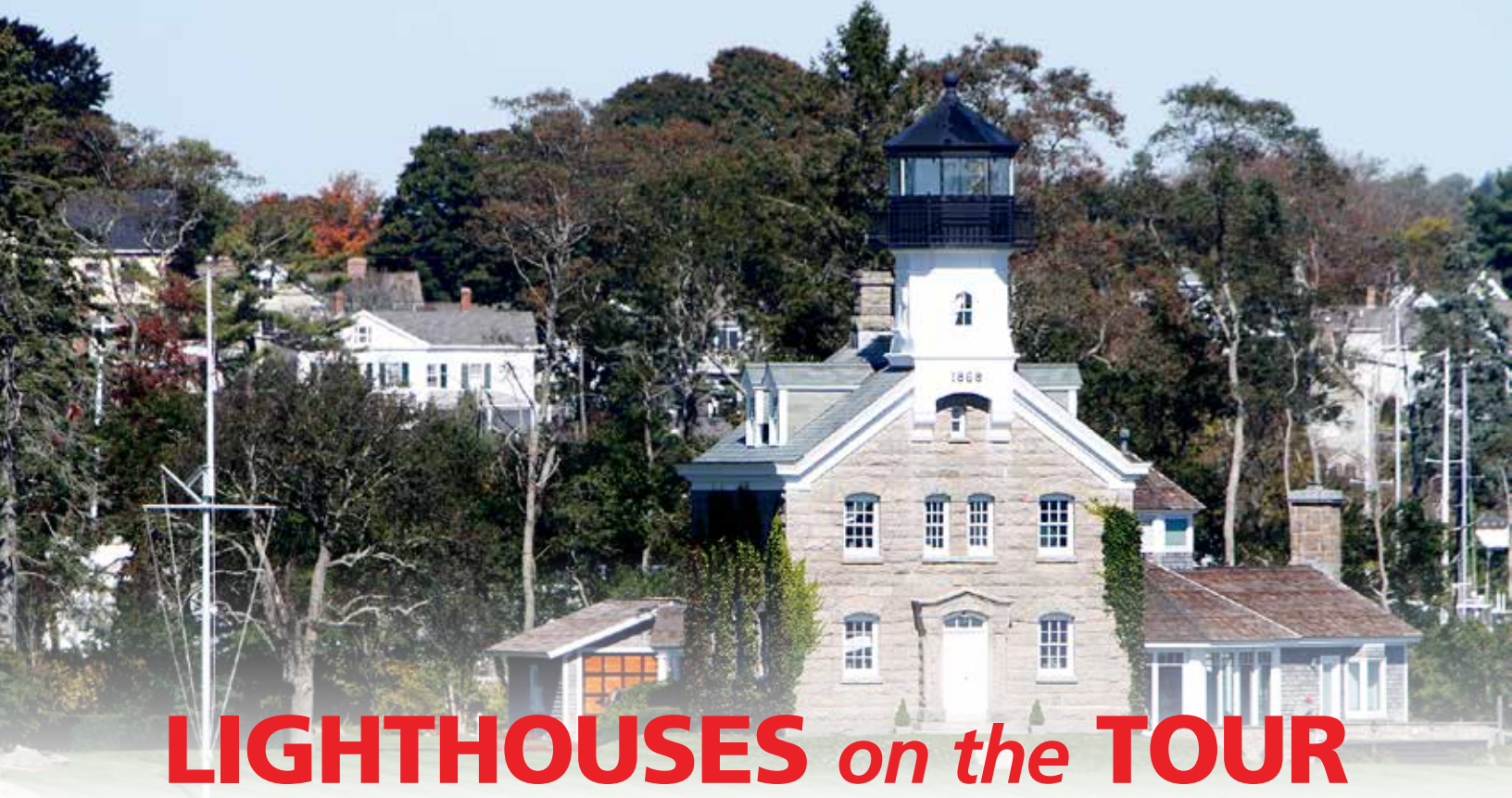
People of all ages enjoy the lighthouse cruises, Mickus says. "We get a lot of school-age groups because of the educational experience, as well as summer camp groups. You can't get up close and personal to these amazing structures, the ones in open water, any other way." ■



Latimer Reef Light.



New London Harbor Light.



LIGHTHOUSES *on the* TOUR

Three unique Cross Sound Ferry narrated cruises visit the majority of a dozen lighthouses in the Long Island Sound, each with its own unique and colorful history.

Avery Point Light: The last lighthouse in the state built as an official navigational aid, it was first lighted over a year after its 1943 completion due to concerns about enemy invasion during WWII.

Bug Light: Officially known as the Long Beach Bar (Bug) lighthouse, this classic 1870 Victorian structure was set on fire by arsonists in 1963, then restored by the East End Seaport Museum in 1990.

Latimer Reef Light: Completed in 1884, the iron “spark plug” located about a mile north of the eastern point of Fishers Island was named to honor a patriot spy captured on the reef, and subsequently hanged.

Little Gull Light: This functional lighthouse, seven miles northeast of Orient Point, was taken by the British in the War of 1812, and destroyed by the hurricane of 1815. The granite tower was rebuilt in 1858.

Morgan Point Light: Located in Noank at the mouth of the Mystic River, the original granite tower was built in 1831. After many complaints that the light was too dim, the current lighthouse was built in 1868.

New London Harbor Light: The oldest lighthouse in Connecticut, built in 1761 (rebuilt in 1801), it helped

guide Colonial privateers seeking shelter during the American Revolution up the Thames River.

New London Ledge Light: A French Second Empire structure – architecturally unique for a lighthouse – Ledge Light is unusual for another reason. It is reportedly haunted by the ghost of an early keeper.

North Dumpling Light: During Prohibition, the lighthouse keeper was accused of signaling to liquor smugglers. Today it is owned by the inventor of the Segway Human Transporter.

Orient Point Light: Also known as the Coffee Pot Lighthouse, the cast-iron clad-and-brick-lined structure was marked for demolition by the Coast Guard in 1970 but was saved by public outcry.

Plum Island Light: Also known as Plum Gut Light, the 1869 historic granite lighthouse was decommissioned in 1978 in order to upgrade to an automated light a short distance away.

Race Rock Light: Built in 1878 on a rocky ledge southwest of Fishers Island, where fast current and conflicting seas are the norm, Race Rock’s foundations alone took seven years to build.

Watch Hill Light: First built as a watchtower to warn local residents of naval and pirate attacks, Watch Hill continued looking out for maritime safety by building the current structure in 1806.

Cruises are approximately two hours. Both vessels are equipped with a snack bar and cocktail bar service. \$30 adults, \$15 children ages 2 to 11.

For 2018 Cross Sound Ferry Lighthouse Cruise schedule and booking information, visit www.lighthouse.cruises or call 860-444-4620.

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Hot on the Trail

New town wide statue exhibit celebrates life's, town's simple pleasures.

by **MATTHEW BRODERICK**

With its acres of farmland, miles of bike paths, and quaint town center, Simsbury – located 11 miles northwest of Hartford in the Farmington Valley – is a traditional New England town which, like many towns in greater Hartford, offers a mixture of historic charm, picturesque views and 21st-century necessities like a Starbucks. “We’re a small town, but we have a lot of simple pleasures,” says Lisa Gray, executive director of the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce.

To draw attention to those pleasures – and to attract more visitors to Simsbury this summer – the chamber has unveiled the Simsbury Art Trail, an assortment of 32 life-sized bronze statues by renowned sculptor Seward Johnson that will be spread townwide from May 15 through September 15, 2018. The statues depict people engaged in simple day-to-day activities like taking a nap on a lawn, reading the newspaper, or gardening.

“The sculptures celebrate the little things in life that people often take for granted but which add to life’s enjoyment,” Gray says, “and the enjoyment of our town.” Johnson’s collection of more than 400 sculptures have been featured worldwide in private collections, museums and public spaces from Japan to Rome to New York’s famed Times Square. She adds that former chamber president Ferg Jansen and his wife, Linda, saw some of Johnson’s works on display in Warsaw, Indiana, several

years ago and came to her with the idea of bringing them to Simsbury.


More than three-quarters of the statues – which were sponsored by local businesses and organizations – are located within a one-mile radius of the town’s center to create a walkable trail, Gray says. Additional statues are located within a larger six- to eight-mile radius that includes farms, restaurants and even a golf course in town, creating a bikeable – or driveable – tour.

“We expect people will want to make a day of it and will stop for an ice cream, get lunch in town, or visit our local businesses and see all the wonderful things Simsbury has to offer,” Gray says. An Art Trail brochure with a map can be found at each sculpture location, and organizers hope that visitors in town to view the statues will take the opportunity to sample Simsbury’s amenities.

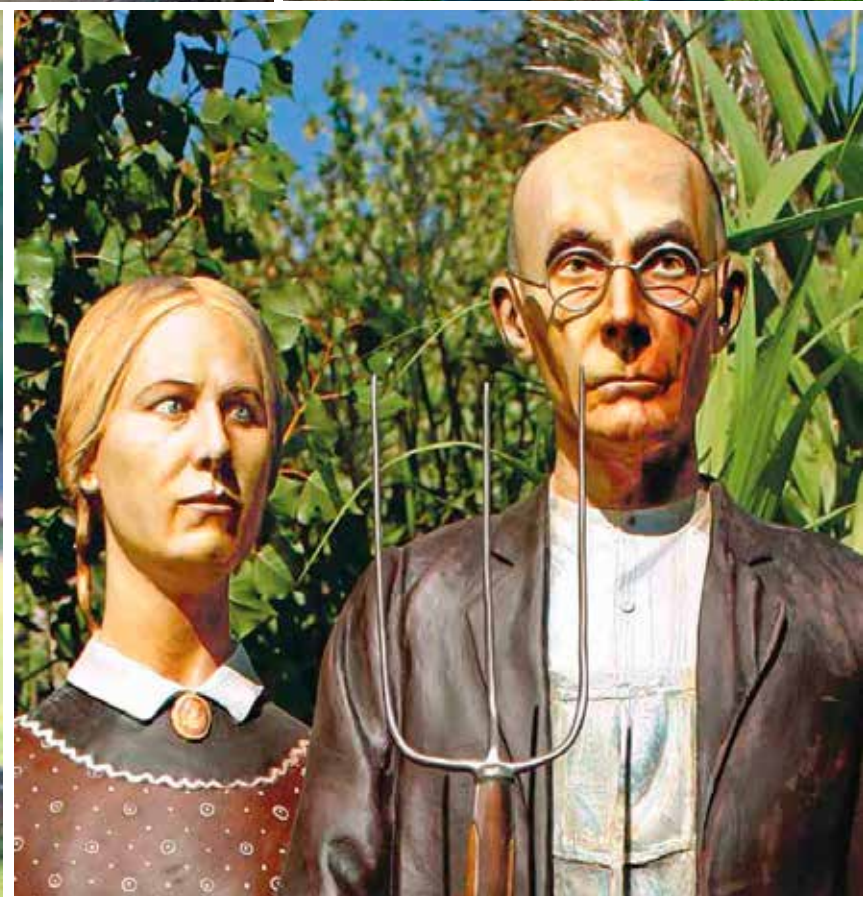
Gray expects to draw visitors from across Connecticut and has been promoting this unique attraction at the state’s visitors’ centers, in print and on social media. “I think this is going to appeal to a wide audience – from young families to more mature people with a real appreciation for art.” That’s because, while Johnson’s



HOT DOG: The *Relish, Too* statue, sponsored by Fitzgerald Foods, is located at 710 Hopmeadow Street. Statue by Seward Johnson ©2013 The Seward Johnson Atelier, Inc. **Photo courtesy of the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce**



A KISS FOR LUCK: Lisa Gray, executive director of the Simsbury Chamber of Commerce, stands in front of *Embracing Peace*, sponsored by the Farmington Valley VNA and located at 8 Old Mill Lane. Statue by Seward Johnson ©The Seward Johnson Atelier, Inc. Photo by Michael Fiedler



A DAY IN THE LIFE: Seen clockwise from top left are *La Promenade*, located at Red Stone Pub, *Special Delivery*, located at Simsbury Post Office, *God Bless America*, located at the Simsbury Historical Society, and *Creating*, located at the Simsbury Free Library. All statues by Seward Johnson ©The Seward Johnson Atelier, Inc.

"Hopefully, it's going to provide a great economic boost to Simsbury." And perhaps make people in a tech-connected world not only appreciate the beauty of art, but also remember the value of life's simple pleasures.

sculptures are intricately detailed work, they are designed for more than viewing. "These pieces were created with the intention that they be very interactive," Gray says. "The artist wants people to sit next to them, take a selfie with them or have children climb on them." Each sculpture will be secured to the ground, Gray explains, so they can be fully experienced.

The initial goal, when the Simsbury chamber started planning the Art Trail in early 2017, was to bring 20 sculptures to the town, Gray confesses. But the response from town businesses interested in supporting the effort was so enthusiastic, the final number grew to more than 30. Gray says the chamber has raised \$80,000 for the exhibit and is looking to raise an additional \$10,000 to cover expenses.

The statues' local sponsors are pitching in to help. For instance, the Simsbury Free Library is holding an early June town wide ice cream social and scavenger hunt, while the Simsbury Historical Society, which is featuring five sculptures on its grounds, will be hosting a garden party on June 22, complete with jazz, hors d'oeuvres and wine and beer. Gray hopes that local residents use the Art Trail as an opportunity to invite friends and relatives to visit, to showcase the town. She is optimistic that other sponsors, which include Simsbury Bank, Landworks Development, Westminster School and Fitzgerald's Foods, will add events as the summer progresses.

"I think it's going to attract families, businesspeople and professionals," Gray says. "Hopefully, it's going to provide a great economic boost to Simsbury." And perhaps make people in a tech-connected world not only appreciate the beauty of art, but also remember the value of life's simple pleasures. 📱

To learn more, visit simsburyarttrail.com.

Matthew Broderick is a freelance writer based in Simsbury.

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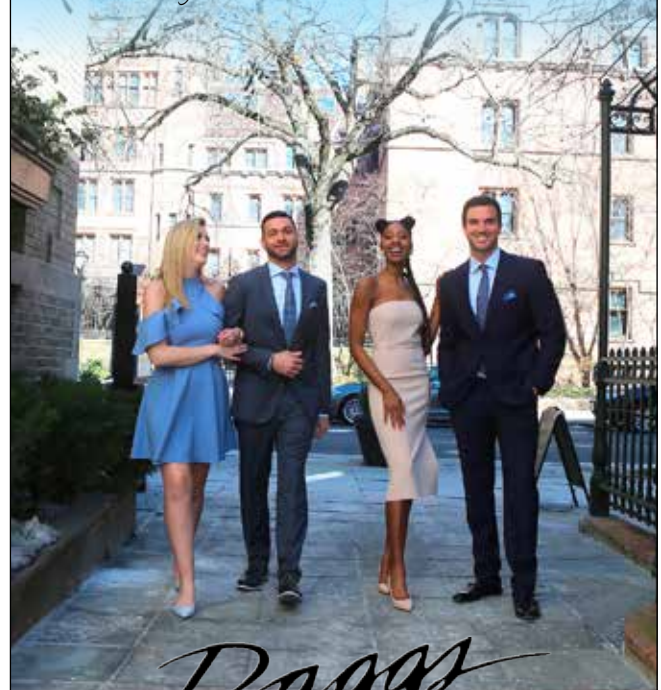


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Summer of Discontent

This year marks half a century since 1968, when political and racial issues spilled over into a series of tumultuous events across the United States. As Seasons writer James Battaglio recalls, Connecticut was no exception.

by **JAMES BATTAGLIO** / Photography by **TODD FAIRCHILD**

Looking back to 1968, I seriously question those who contend that nostalgia is like a grammar lesson: “We find the present tense and the past perfect.”

My recollections of that year are of Hartford on fire, and of first responders trying desperately to dodge snipers’ bullets while fighting the blazes set during the racial unrest that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Coupled with the reflections of my fellow news reporters donning riot helmets and hiding under parked cars to avoid sniper fire, I’d hardly call 1968 “past perfect.”

At the time, I was a writer for the former *Hartford Times*, then Connecticut’s largest evening newspaper, in its 151st year. I was, by all accounts, a “reluctant reporter,” forced into journalism by a city editor who enrolled me into Gannett Corporation’s two-year journalism internship. His decision (not mine) came about in 1964 after I, a copy boy at the time, spent six weeks taking dictation and rewriting press releases while the obit, garden and book editors recuperated from the influenza outbreak that summer. I protested the internship vehemently, explaining that I was going to be a doctor, not a journalist.

Pointing a sausage-sized finger at me, he shouted, “Anybody can be a doctor. You’re going to be a journalist. You know how to type.” My office was the mailroom, where I smoked cigarettes and played cards with my colleagues each morning before attending college classes each afternoon. I loved that job.

I can trace the source of my career to a summer evening in 1963, while sitting at the dinner table with my parents and an aunt who also served as a cloistered Dominican nun. My destiny was launched when Sister Mary, who spent her

one week a year sabbatical from Our Lady of Grace Convent visiting us, deemed that I would take typing in my senior year of high school. Given that her monastic status earned her the rank of family matriarch, due to having friends in high places, her word was law.

“Typing? That’s a girls’ course!” I protested. “I’m not taking typing. Everyone will laugh at me.”

“The people who know how to type will get ahead in the world,” parried my clairvoyant aunt. “You’re going to take typing.” In 1963, personal computers were still years



James Battaglio with a copy of *The Hartford Times*.

away from making everyone a typist. Few men typed 55 years ago.

I refrained from cursing at her, given that I was in the company of God's emissary. So I, along with one other senior male, took typing in the fall of 1963. Little did I realize that her mandate would dictate my eventual career as a news reporter.

And so it was from 1964-1966 that I shadowed seasoned reporters to Circuit Court 14 in Hartford; visited prisoners on death row; and wrote about births, marriages and deaths – hatched, matched and detached, in reporters' vernacular. I even strolled with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor on the lawn of Fuller Brush's corporate headquarters in East Hartford. Life was pretty good and my dreams of emulating Sigmund Freud were gradually diminishing. More than once, I recalled my aunt's dinner table mandate, thinking "she did this to me."

Clichéd though it sounds, Uncle Sam's draft notices really did begin with the word "Greetings," in 1966. I, along with thousands of other males, was called to fulfill my military obligation, even if it meant doing so in snake-infested Guam, which is where I was headed after completing my six months of active duty. I had orders to ship out from New Jersey, to Texas and ultimately to Guam.

At 9 p.m. the night before I was scheduled to leave for Texas, my commanding officer entered my Army barracks and, standing before 40 soldiers waiting to board a bus to the Philadelphia airport, asked, "Who here knows how to type?"

The first rule in the military is to never volunteer for anything. No one raised a hand.

"Forty guys and no one can type?" he shouted. "I'm going to the office and pull your personnel jackets, and if I find one guy has lied to me, I'm going to make his life hell."

I timidly raised my hand and said, "I can type a little, sir."

"What did you do in civilian life?" he asked.

"I was a news reporter."

"And you can type a little?" he said. "You're going to report to me at 700 hours tomorrow. For the next six months, you belong to me. You're going to retype every file in my office before the upcoming Inspector General inspection."

"But I'm leaving for Texas in a few hours," I replied.

"The hell you are. You're going to do nothing but type until your fingers fall off."

Once again, memories of Sister Mary's words prevailed. For the second time in as many years, my typing skills had altered the course of my life. Guam could wait. For the next two years, as my CO promised, I typed and typed and typed until it was time to come home and prepare for my upcoming nuptials. Fortunately, my fingers didn't fall off.

Now it was 1968 and I fully expected it would be a glorious time, given that I was engaged to be married at age 21. I had completed my journalism internship and was now a full-blown staff reporter, with credentials to prove it. But,

as Roosevelt said, this was a time that would go down in infamy.

James Earl Ray turned that promising spring into a dark, dismal, gut-wrenching period when he assassinated the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. The country was on fire as racial tensions prevailed, and that included the North Hartford streets where I was born and raised. Snipers occupied rooftops – some atop the homes that my relatives had owned – and heart-warming memories of neighborhood stores, playgrounds and other haunts fell victim to looting and destruction. A dead body rested on the site where I learned to play mumble-peg.

No, the summer of 1968 was not a good time to be a reporter for many of us, but depending on how you perceived your assignments, covering the country then was either a reporter's dream or nightmare. The public hung on our every written word, for in 1968, the newspaper was king when it came to journalism.

Each afternoon, before the final edition went to press, the City Room was transformed into a distribution center for riot helmets that reporters were ordered to don before entering the city's battlefields. If, and when, sniper fire broke out, we were ordered to take shelter under parked cars.

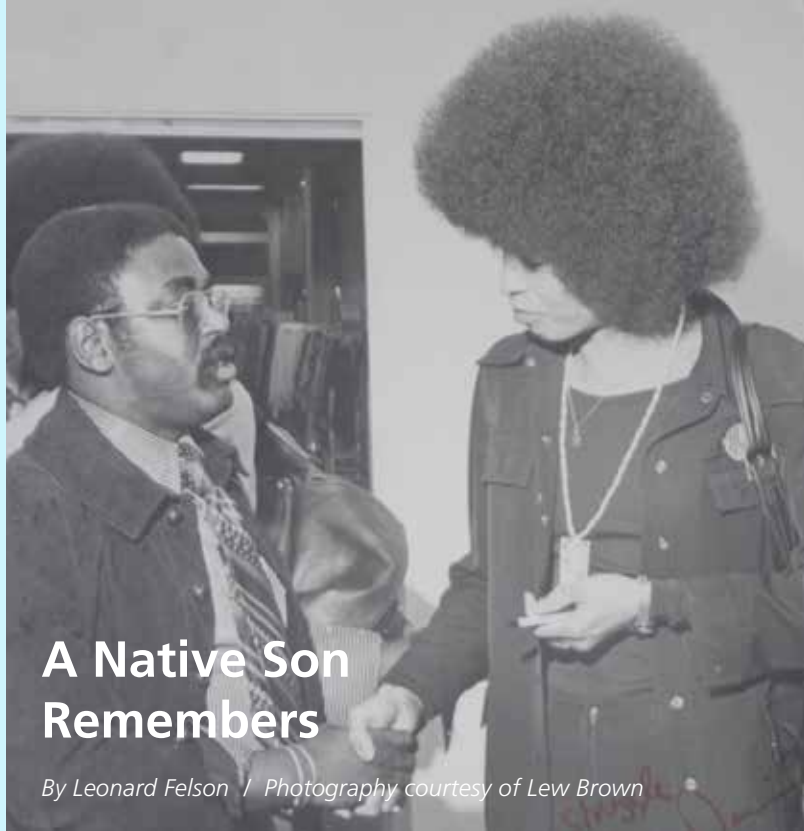
Depending on whether you drew the short straw or not, newsmen (only males were assigned to cover the race riots) were either sent to cover the riots or were planted at desks, ordered to transcribe the pay phone (no cell phones back then) accounts of what was happening into that evening's headline stories. Those who could type were granted the "privilege" of sharing bylined front-page accounts of the "season of unrest."

Of course, many people had different experiences – and different recollections of the Summer of '68. For many of the people I knew, life was either wonderful or agonizingly tense, depending on your gender. We were a year beyond the flower children of 1967 and their Summer of Love, and a year prior to the still-talked-about 1969 Woodstock Concert.

For the women I spoke with, it was a year of new cars, nightclubs and high fashion. Like many of their young peers, these women loved to dance and drink back then, and recall doing the Monster Mash, the Mashed Potato and the Camel Walk, made famous by the Godfather of Soul, the late James Brown. Women wore white pearls, tailored suit dresses, and bold colors. Skinny model Twiggy wore a tiara and the mini-skirt was queen – 1968 was a fashion revolution akin to the 1920s flapper era.

For males, it was a different story; 1968 was filled with painful memories for the boys who crept up to their mailboxes each day, fearing the infamous "Greetings" letter from Uncle Sam. Vietnam loomed large in the hearts and minds of young males who faced the draft and the inevitable jungles of Southeast Asia. The world and its woes loom large in their memories as they apply to the Vietnam War, along with racial strife.

Retired printing/publishing executive and former NFL



A Native Son Remembers

By Leonard Felson / Photography courtesy of Lew Brown

Lew Brown was a face and a voice anyone who watched television in Connecticut knew well. A veteran TV news reporter, he retired in 2000 from WVIT, Channel 30, the NBC-owned and operated television station here. Fifty years ago, he was a fledgling radio news reporter for WKND, 1480-AM, then one of the most widely listened to stations in Hartford's black community.

By the summer of 1968, the effects of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, only a few months earlier in Memphis, Tennessee, continued to reverberate through Hartford. Lew Brown couldn't get it off his mind.

For Brown, that story that summer was about covering his world. Born and raised in the North End, he was one of nine children, growing up at Bellevue Square, a subsidized housing project. By way of Trenton, New Jersey, his family was part of the Great Migration to the North from the rural South, his mother born in Georgia, his father in South Carolina.

The night that King was killed, Brown was out on Albany Avenue in the heart of North End. Juan Fuentes, a freelance reporter and photographer, was with him.

"I never saw brick smolder like that," Brown recalls, reflecting on an auto shop ablaze. An apartment building was also on fire.

"Get out! Get out!" Fuentes yelled in Spanish to residents in the apartments. Fuentes had also grown up in the North End, where an emerging barrio was developing. West Indian and Puerto Rican families were finding attractive terms on houses in the Blue Hills neighborhood, as white flight escalated, Brown says.

That night, Brown came to another realization – about how discrimination works.

As Brown made his rounds around the city, he saw patrolmen lined up at the Windsor-Hartford line to the north; at Trumbull and Main streets to the south; along Homestead Avenue to the west; and by the railroad tracks to the east.

"I said, 'we're on a reservation,' " Brown recalls.

"The riots had gotten so out of hand," he says. To him, the police action telegraphed a fact about life in the city that summer and for years to come: "It was as if they were saying, 'You can do what you want to do in your area, but you best not come out of that area.' " ■

player for the St. Louis Cardinals, Richard "Dick" Dean of Windsor, now 76, well remembers the year 1968 and considers it the antithesis of 1964.

"When President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, as Dr. King said, I felt as though we people of color had been to the mountain. Four years later, in '68, when Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy were assassinated, the mountain became our valley," said Dean, who graduated from Indiana's DePauw University with honors during the Johnson administration. "I grew up in the 'Whites Only' Washington, DC era where I was kicked out of (white) playgrounds, beaches, rest rooms and restaurants."

Dean rationalized that "when these old people who ban me from places die, maybe this segregation crap will die with them and things will be different."

Four years later, in 1968, Dean's predictions were proven wrong. His two heroes, King and Kennedy, fell to assassins' bullets. "No, 1968 was not a great year. It split the country and the races in half. America was in turmoil," Dean somberly recalls.

While acknowledging the horror of both assassinations, most women I spoke to reflected on the positive aspects of 1968, when "2001 Space Odyssey" was the number one movie (although the country was still aghast over the cougar-like antics of Mrs. Robinson from the movie "The Graduate," released just days before the new year) and it took more than seven minutes to sing "Hey Jude," by the Beatles, 1968's number one hit.

"I remember going to The Rocking Horse Café in Hartford with my roommates," recalls Paula Serignese of Lebanon. "I was 22 years old in 1968 and had just graduated from Ithaca College in New York. I had my father co-sign for my brand new, \$3,000 red 1968 Camaro with a black racing stripe. We'd go to the café where an elderly woman named May wore a huge hat and threw peanuts on tables, after which we were expected to throw the shells all over the floor. We'd order a pitcher of beer and drink the night away and get up and go to work at Pratt & Whitney the next morning where we

weren't allowed to wear pants at work...only skirts and dresses. Those were good times, but I still have a vivid memory of Bobby Kennedy dying on June 6, 1968, the day I turned 22 years old."

It was at the Rocking Horse that Paula met Nick, her husband-to-be, who commuted from East Hartford's Lamplight Village Apartments to an Air Force base in Westover, Massachusetts.

"I was frustrated with everything in 1968," he recalls. Now a retired attorney and the grandfather of four, Nick is a "gentleman farmer" who lives in a magnificent home sitting on 37 acres beside the historic Lebanon Green. He, too, was part of the military environment in 1968.

"For the most part, my only fond memory of 1968 was meeting Paula a year before we got married," says Nick. "That was pretty much an awful year, due to the King and Kennedy assassinations and the ongoing Vietnam War."

In 1968, John Cook, CEO of QuoteWright travel insurance company of East Hartford, was a senior in South Dakota's Yankton College, now a federal penitentiary. His recollections of 1968 included numerous



HAPPY EVER AFTER: Hazelann and John Cook are still going strong almost 50 years after their wedding.

A Patrolman Reflects on a Tumultuous Year

By Leonard Felson / Photography courtesy of Bernard R. Sullivan

Bernard R. Sullivan grew up in an Irish-American household on Albany Avenue in Hartford's North End, among blacks, Jews, and Italian-Americans.

He joined the city police department in 1964. Four years later, two-and-a-half months before the summer of 1968 arrived, he was walking a beat as a patrolman in Parkville

when riots broke out in the North End after Martin Luther King's assassination.

"I got pulled off that beat and was sent up to the North End with a bunch of cops from around the city," says Sullivan.

"It was insane because number one, we weren't prepared. We weren't trained. We weren't equipped. It was not the sort of thing we were used to dealing with," he recalls.

"You get up there and people are throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails.

There was some gunfire

involved. Some cops got hurt, hit by rocks and stuff like that. It's not a fun position to be in. Anyone who says it's not scary is full of s---," says Sullivan.

"You're marching in groups down the street and all of a sudden you come around a corner and people are throwing rocks and bottles and stuff, lighting businesses on fire. It's almost like being in a war zone, but you've got a job to do and you do it," he says.

By the summer, as he walked his beats, he saw change overcoming his neighborhood and his city. "I remember the summer well. It was hot," he says.

Yet in early 1968, the North End hadn't changed that much, recalls Sullivan, referring to the diverse neighborhoods. "But the riots made a big difference, and the white flight began."

Sullivan says the tragedy is that although the rioting, over several years in the late 1960s, drew attention to the discrimination and poverty affecting residents' daily lives, it also destroyed the community's fabric.

Sullivan climbed the ranks, ultimately serving as Hartford police chief for seven years and as state public safety commissioner under Gov. William O'Neill from 1989 to 1991. He's retired and lives in Glastonbury. ■





FAST FRIENDS: Above from left, Tony McMahon, Gene Sheehan, Hazelann Cook, James Battaglio and John Cook. Below, James Battaglio and Dick Dean.

attempts to answer friends' questions as to "why the hell I chose to go into the Marines."

"I was facing active duty orders from the Corps two weeks after college graduation. Without a doubt, I was headed for Vietnam. If I hadn't developed a medical problem that disqualified me from the military, for sure I would have joined friends in Vietnam. I lost a lot of my buddies there," he recalls.

Conversely, Hazelann Cook, John's wife of 49 years, now executive director of public housing in Hamden where she's worked for more than 30 years, has entirely different recollections of 50 years ago.

"The fashions were fabulous in 1968," she says. "We had a good life...nobody was hungry and we were all equals, having come from blue-collar families," she says.

Still described today as a "fashionista" by those who know her, Hazelann recalls being 21 and single and driving her new (red) Mustang to the Blue Sands Nightclub in Rhode Island. She vividly recalls wearing a powder blue organza blouse and sporting a short skirt. Hazelann flips through her 1969 wedding pictures and displays a photo of her coming down the aisle, wearing a "mini" white wedding gown.

Tony McMahon, of East Hartford, a retired radio and TV executive, recalls 1968 as the year he mustered out of the Marines.





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"I couldn't believe the news that Bobby Kennedy was killed. I'll never forget walking through Grand Central Station while wearing my Marines uniform and carrying my sea bag over my shoulder as a pretty blonde approached me. I was thinking this woman might be attracted to me and that maybe this was going to be a good experience. Instead, she came up to me and spit in my face, calling me a baby killer," he said. "That's how I recall the summer of '68."

Glastonbury resident Gene Sheehan, III, president and managing partner of Sullivan & LeShane Public Relations, was on track to join the military until that path was altered by a twist of fate. He recalls that summer with mixed feelings.

"The day I graduated from Providence College in June of '68, I partied like crazy at a Rhode Island bar called Brad's. From there, I drove my 1963 MGB to another party in Boston. The next morning, while suffering the worst hangover of my life, I woke up to the news that Bobby Kennedy had been shot," recalls Sheehan. "I remember driving home to Connecticut feeling so disillusioned and depressed because Bobby was our hope of ending the Vietnam War. I kept thinking how ironic it was that I graduated high school in 1964 only months after JFK was killed, and now, four years later, Bobby met the same fate."

Sheehan, who was in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), a group of college- and university-based

programs for training commissioned officers for the U.S. Armed Forces, says his parents had no money for college so he borrowed \$1,800 to pay for tuition. Although the ROTC offered him its only Distinguished Student Military Scholarship two years later, Sheehan – who had passed two military physicals – was on cortisone for hay fever. "Ultimately, the military declared me 1-Y status, which was a military deferment."

As for me, I had more reason to revel in 1968 than not to. I had just gotten married, had completed my military obligation, and had two years of college behind me. I was a reporter covering Connecticut in my new red Pontiac LeMans, which was later severely damaged by undesirable types after I wrote an investigative story on their corrupt dealings. And yes, I felt the weight of two devastating assassinations and race riots that year, but who among us didn't – male or female?

Suffice it to say that, with apologies to Charles Dickens, 1968 was clearly of tale of two sexes. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. ■

James Battaglio is a writer and editor living in Glastonbury.

Todd Fairchild, of West Hartford, is a longtime contributor to Seasons. Find him online at facebook.com/ShutterBugCtPhotography.

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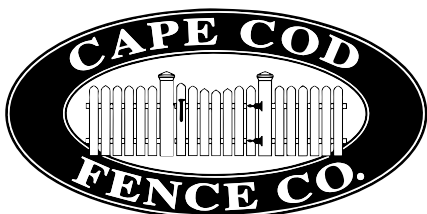


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Toby Karl

Hanging on the door of Toby Karl's office at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center is a sign bearing the Shakespeare quote: "How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a weary world." Indeed, doing good deeds is part of Karl's job description. As director of volunteer services, she and her impressive corps of volunteers have had a far-reaching impact on Saint Francis, its staff, and its patients.

During her 23-year tenure as director, Karl has grown the hospital's volunteer program from about 25 volunteers to more than 650, making it the largest department after nursing. Once the province of older, retired members of the community, volunteerism at Saint Francis has become a diverse enterprise, with volunteers ranging in age from 15 to 96, and working in about 89 different job descriptions.

Karl's impact on the hospital can be seen everywhere – from the maternity floor (where Read to Grow volunteers deliver new books to every new baby and a message about the importance of reading to every new mother), to the cancer ward, where she dispatches others to offer lunch, conversation, and company to patients undergoing cancer treatment. It can be seen in the waiting rooms, where members of Karl's staff report to families about the status of a child or parent in surgery, and in the food bank at the Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center (a community clinic for the underserved in Hartford's North End), where her volunteers serve not only Saint Francis patients but anyone in the community in need.

"Toby is a hands-on, dedicated director," says Frances Sethre, a Simsbury resident who volunteers in the outpatient cancer clinic. "She walks the walk, as they say, and doesn't just talk the talk. She is just so inspiring."

KEEPING THE CUSTOMERS HAPPY

Karl has worked in the Saint Francis health system for more than 35 years. She started at Mount Sinai Hospital as an auxiliary volunteer in 1981 before moving on to serve as president of the auxiliary and then director of volunteer services.

"That was supposed to be a temporary position, as I had young kids at the time and was reluctant to leave them," Karl recalls. "I stayed for 24 years."

When Saint Francis and Mount Sinai merged in 1995, Karl moved to Saint Francis to oversee volunteer services at both institutions.

A journalism major at the University of Iowa, she began her career in public relations, at one time arranging lecture tours for national celebrities around the U.S.

"This is as close as you can get to a real PR job," Karl notes of her work in volunteer services. "We have to keep all our customers happy, which is what I keep as my guiding principle – we have to keep the patients happy, the staff happy, and the volunteers happy."

One of Karl's proudest accomplishments while at Mount Sinai was her "Don't carry your baby home in your lap" campaign, which led to a program through which car dealers donated car seats to the hospital, which then leased them to new mothers for \$10.

"They would get their \$10 back when they returned the car seat for the next size up, and we made sure everybody in the hospital knew how to safely use these car seats," Karl says. "At the time, car accidents were the number one killer of babies. We actually got a law passed through the Connecticut legislature outlawing taking your baby anywhere except in a car seat."

Karl brought this get-things-done attitude with her to Saint Francis. Last December, when the hospital social workers told Karl about a family visiting the outpatient clinic that was going through difficult times – "more than anything, the mother wanted to be able to have a Christmas tree for her children," she recalls – Karl not only secured a tree, but also decorations and presents for the kids.


"Our department is the place of last resort," jokes Karl. "When they can't figure out any other way, they come to us."

AN ARRAY OF PROGRAMS

Karl has spearheaded many new volunteer programs while at Saint Francis. Her volunteers not only provide food for 1,300 to 1,600 families a month through the food bank at Saint Francis' Mount Sinai campus, but also diapers, through its diaper bank, and winter coats during the holiday season.

The Mended Hearts, a group of volunteers who have had heart surgery, come to the hospital to offer support and advice to heart patients about to undergo similar procedures. There are fall-risk volunteers who flag patients who are at high risk of falling, arts volunteers who come in to perform for patients and staff, and "patient representatives" who round on patients, providing companionship and picking up gift shop items, like magazines, for them. One volunteer brought an older patient a laptop, Karl recalls, and taught

Written by **Lori Miller Kase**
Photography by **Seshu Photography**



MAKING AN IMPACT: Tobye Karl leads a team of volunteers who make life better for patients at Saint Francis and for people in need in the community.

her how to email her grandchildren. There are even canine volunteers (the four-footed variety) who “bring unconditional love” to patients’ bedsides, she says.

On a recent workday, Karl guided a visitor through a room in which volunteers were sifting through piles and piles of donated books, gently cleaning them to present to the siblings of new babies, as part of the Read to Grow program. She pointed out a storage closet that was overflowing with hundreds of colorful pillows made by the Windsor Women’s Club and donated for use by Saint Francis patients. Karl explains that patients hold the pillows against their surgical area when they cough to help lessen the pain. The storage closet shelves were also filled with boxes of pink, blue and white baby layettes – hand-knit blankets, hats and mittens – to be gifted to new mothers in the maternity ward.

“The biggest problem,” notes Karen Murray, one of the volunteers, “is finding a place to store all the wonderful things people donate.”

Like a doting parent, Karl says she doesn’t have any favorite volunteer program.

“I get delight in them all, frankly,” she says. “Whatever project or problem I’m working on now is the one getting my special attention.”

The trick, she says, is finding meaningful jobs that challenge the volunteers and use their wide range of expertise. She says she has several elementary school teachers, and even a principal, who participate in the Read to Grow program; energetic high school students who serve as mobility volunteers and “use their charm to get patients out of their beds and walking”; Hartt School and Classical Magnet School students who bring music into the hospital halls; and prospective physician assistant and medical students who help out in the hospital, while at the same time getting a preview of their intended careers.

Karl personally interviews every adult volunteer applicant (her assistants interview college and high school students) to match each one to the appropriate position.

Often, there is just a natural fit. Frances Sethre, for example, started volunteering in the cancer center after her husband, who had been treated there, succumbed to his illness.

“Even though the cancer took him eventually, my experience there was nothing but wonderful,” she recalls. Sethre brings lunch or coffee to patients at the day center, and keeps them company while they receive chemotherapy. “It’s the most rewarding thing I’ve done in my life. I feel that it’s actually a privilege to do it.”

An especially rewarding volunteer experience, she says, occurred when a patient she had befriended, who was in the last stages of her life, told her, “It takes a village to take care of a cancer patient – and you’re part of that village.”

“To this day, I will never forget those words,” she says.

“At that moment, I realized that you do make an impact.” Sethre was, in fact, instrumental in getting that particular patient’s husband, who himself was recovering from heart surgery and unable to drive, to the hospital to see his wife before she died.

“THE BEST JOB IN THE HOSPITAL”

Karl says she tries to be aware of the needs of the institution, and challenges herself to figure out how volunteers can best meet those needs.

“That’s the challenge I love the most, when I can creatively figure out ways to solve problems, especially when it may never have occurred to staff that there could be a volunteer solution.”

Karl’s only regret, she says, is that she can’t place everyone who wants to volunteer. There are about twice as many willing candidates as Saint Francis has volunteer slots for; there is even a 100-person wait-list for high school and college students to participate in the volunteer summer program.

A peek into Karl’s office reveals that the dynamic director of volunteers has been recognized over and over for her leadership and dedication to community service. Among the awards displayed is a glass statue honoring her “professional excellence” from the Connecticut Association of Directors of Volunteers in Healthcare, a certificate of appreciation from the Connecticut Read to Grow program, the inaugural Sisters of Saint Joseph Award (The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chambéry order founded the hospital) and the 2017 Healthcare Heroes awards from the *Hartford Business Journal*.

But what is most rewarding for Karl, she says, is being able to make a difference in both the hospital and in the life of the volunteers.

“That’s the joy I get out of it,” she says. “I say I have the best job in the hospital, because I am able to do this kind of thing. I’m working with wonderful people who are unselfishly giving their time and we are able to make an impact, so what else could be better?”

Karl points out that volunteering is not only emotionally fulfilling, but recent studies have even shown that it’s good for your health.

“When I retire, if I ever retire,” she adds, “I will definitely volunteer.” ■

Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.

Photographer Seshu Badrinath of Avon specializes in intimate, natural portraits of families and children. For more information, visit seshuphotography.com



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PERFECT PAIRINGS

by **SCOTT CLARK**

Who doesn't like the thought of a cold refreshing beverage as the temperatures outside continue to rise? Hot summer days are a great opportunity to seek out light, fresh and crisp wines and beers. These choices can be enjoyed on their own after a hot afternoon of working in the yard or just lying on the beach. They also pair well with lighter summer fare like salads, or entrees like the Ceviche dish featured this month. See page 32.

CRISP REFRESHING WINES

Sauvignon Blanc – The primary flavors of Sauvignon Blanc are lime, green apple, passion fruit, grapefruit and white peach. Depending on how ripe the grapes are when the wine is made, the flavor will range from zesty lime to flowery peach.

- Try Oyster Bay (New Zealand), Charles Krug (Napa) or Celestin Blondeau Sancerre (France)

Albariño – Albariño is a high-quality, light-bodied white that grows mostly in Spain and Portugal. It's loved for its high acidity, refreshing citrus flavors, dry taste, and subtle saltiness.

- Try Martin Codax or Kentia (Spain)

Grüner Veltliner – The primary fruit flavors in Grüner Veltliner are lime, lemon and grapefruit. There is also a green and herbaceous flavor that is often described as white pepper.

- Try Laurenz V. Singing Grüner Veltliner or Groiss Grüner Veltliner (Austria)

ROSÉ

Rosés are among my all-time favorite summertime quaffers. They are so versatile that they are a must-pack with your picnics. They are served chilled, just like white wines, so slide a freezer sleeve over this wine, too. A rosé is also acidic, but the red wine it's made from offers a little more melon/strawberry/red fruit qualities

that pair well with many food types.

LIGHTER BEERS

Lighter beer styles (frequently lower alcohol) are great to enjoy during the dog days of summer. Enjoy offerings from local breweries in these styles:

Gose or Sour Beers – Gose beers provide a refreshing crispness and twang. A Gose will have a low hop bitterness and a complementary dryness and spice from the use of ground coriander seeds and a sharpness from the addition of salt. Sour beer is the oldest type of beer in history. Nearly all beer used to be at least somewhat sour before pasteurization and sterilization was entirely understood. Sours come in a wide range of styles and can run the gamut from mouth-puckeringly sour to barnyard funky to fruity and light.

- Try Thimble Island Gosaic (Branford) or Two Roads Sauvignon Blanc Gose (Stratford)
- Also: Sierra Nevada Otra Vez (North Carolina)

Pilsner – This style is medium bodied and characterized by high carbonation and tangy Czech varieties of hops that impart floral aromas and a crisp, bitter finish.

- Try Two Roads Ol' Factory Pils (Branford) or Connecticut Valley Brewing Company Sky's The Limit (South Windsor)
- Also: Oskar Blues Mama's Little YELLA Pils (North Carolina)

Session IPA – A session IPA combines the hoppiness of an IPA with the lower alcohol content of a session beer.

- Try Stony Creek L'il Cranky (Branford) or Two Roads L'il Heaven (Stratford)
- Also: Founders All Day IPA (Michigan)

Scott Clark is the general manager of Liquor Depot Inc.



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Faux Ceviche

It's Like a Cool Ocean Breeze

written and photographed by **PRUDENCE SLOANE**

When the temperature starts to climb into the upper regions, just the thought of turning on the stove makes my brow sweat. This is the time to chill out with cool foods. Fresh seafood, tangy limes, seasonal produce and fresh herbs make ceviche one of the most popular dishes in the coastal regions of Central and South America and it has rapidly found its way into the trendiest restaurants in North America. One can pay a pretty price for ceviche in a restaurant but it can be made at home economically and easily. Ceviche or (seviche) is a dish made with raw seafood. The acid in the citrus “cooks” the seafood by denaturing its proteins, the same way that heat does. But many people shy away from the idea of eating raw seafood, so make one with cooked shrimp. And to keep super cool in the kitchen, make it with store bought cooked shrimp so you don’t have to even glance at the stove. There is no need to splurge on

the expensive jumbo shrimp as cocktail size, the smallest (and cheapest) size, is just as good, because you will be cutting them into smaller pieces. To keep this dish crisp and fresh yet highly marinated, I use raw corn and cucumber. I don’t use avocado or tomato as they will break down and become soft quickly. Serve this as a fancy appetizer salad in a martini glass, or with tortilla chips for a crowd on a hot summer’s day. For lunch, serve it inside crunchy corn tortillas. Another added bonus is that it’s high in protein, low in carbs and calories – under 1 Weight Watchers “Smart Points” for 1 cup. It can be made three days ahead and kept chilled in the refrigerator. 🍹

Prudence Sloane is a well-known television and radio personality, culinary educator and food writer as well as the founder of Prudence Sloane’s Cooking School and Hartford City Food Tours. For more information, visit prudencesloane.com.

LIGHTER CHOICE: Cooked ceviche served on tortilla chips makes a refreshing alternative to guacamole or dips.





MIXING IT UP: A quick toss with fresh ingredients is all that's needed.

SUBSTITUTIONS: Tilapia is a good substitute for shrimp as it is a firm white fish which will hold up while cooking. Poaching is my preferred method for faux ceviche. Poaching gently cooks the fish without fear of overcooking.

To poach: Bring a pot of salted water (one tablespoon salt per quart of water) to a boil. Remove from the heat. Lower the fish into the water. Cover the pot and let sit. The fish should be cooked for 10 minutes per 1-inch thickness of fish. It can be left in longer as it won't overcook. Gently remove the fish. Let cool, then dice and add to the recipe.



COOKED SHRIMP CEVICHE WITH LIME AND CORN

By Prudence Sloane

Makes 4 cups or 8 ½-cup appetizer servings or 8 large taco shell servings

- 1 lb peeled cooked shrimp**
- 1 cup fresh raw corn kernels (about 1 ear)**
- 2 cups ¼-inch diced, peeled and seeded cucumber (about 1 large)**
- ½ cup fresh lime juice**
- ½ cup orange juice**
- 1½ - 2 tsp kosher salt to taste**
- ½ - 1 tsp habanero sauce to taste**
- 1/3 cup 1/8-inch (very small) diced red onion**
- ½ cup coarsely chopped cilantro**

Dice the shrimp into ½-inch pieces. In a bowl combine all the ingredients except the olive oil. Let marinate in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight to intensify the flavors. Keep well chilled. Serve with the marinade in a glass or bowl, or drain well if serving on a taco shell.

TALL, COOL TREAT: This dish makes an elegant appetizer or entrée on a hot summer's day.




Off the Beaten Path

A biologist and lover of “harsh, bad places” offers his clients extreme adventure.

by CARYN B. DAVIS




WET TREK: 2014 river crossing in central Iceland. Photo courtesy of Bruce Elfström



“We choose places not frequented by the average person. Places that can only be seen effectively with a well-driven 4x4 vehicle, the modern camel, the modern horse ...”

– Bruce Elfström

MAKING TRACKS: Dropping off the shoulder of a glacier after a crossing in Iceland in 2010. Photo courtesy of **Bruce Elfström**



Bruce Elfström loves adventure and in particular, he loves “harsh, bad places.” He has spent his life in extreme locations, doing extreme things.

Through Overland Experts LLC (OEX) – his East Haddam-based off-road driving school and expedition logistics company – Elfström provides worldwide professional, recreational and military training in 4x4 vehicles. His clients include members of humanitarian organizations, government personnel, film crews, the armed forces, emergency workers, people involved in scientific and academic field research, and thrill seeking, off-the-beaten-path travelers.

“We choose places not frequented by the average person. Places that can only be seen effectively with a well-driven 4x4 vehicle, the modern camel, the modern horse. We choose places such as Mongolia, Iceland, Peru, the Arctic, Patagonia, Bolivia and Brazil, that blend the natural environment with cultural interaction,” says Elfström.

A biologist by training, Elfström likes to incorporate his love of nature when leading these trips, so in addition to learning how to operate a 4x4, his clients also learn about the country they are traversing.

CANADA, EH?:
Bruce on a ship in
Newfoundland, 2017.
Photo courtesy of
Bruce Elfström

"Days are spent exploring and nights are spent in a wide assortment of first class facilities. I always have a geologist with me. My number one thing is to inform people about nature and other cultures. If I can get them to appreciate nature, in the end, they are going to protect it more. If I can inform about a culture, maybe we won't bomb the next culture that seems to have upset us," says Elfström.

Participants must train in the 4x4s before leaving the States. Elfström has created a five-mile wooded track on his 40-acre property in Connecticut, and has opened training branches in Colorado, North Carolina and Virginia. The rigorous obstacle course mirrors the terrain clients will experience in other parts of the world. It includes hills,

ditches, side-slopes, moguls, sand, mud, water and rocks. Elfström also covers navigation, equipment preparation, emergency maneuvers, basic field repair and tactical procedures, some of which he learned from military personnel during his formative years in Lebanon.

Elfström was born in Connecticut to Barbro Elfström, a Swedish native, journalist and Middle East cultural expert. His father, Robert Elfström, was a racecar driver and award-winning filmmaker who directed the documentary "Johnny Cash: The Man, His World, His Music," along with numerous programs for PBS, National Geographic and the Smithsonian Institution.

"My mother started with murder mysteries and then



A PLACE TO REST: Clients enjoyed the luxury lodges at Tsavo Park in Kenya in 2010. Photo courtesy of Bruce Elfström



FACE TO FACE: A family enjoys a close encounter with elephants at Amboseli National Park during an OEX Guided Self-Drive Expedition in Kenya in 2011. Photo courtesy of **Bruce Elfström**

fell in love with the Middle East and Israel. She interviewed Israeli and Arab women and wrote a book about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from their perspective,” recalls Elfström.

When Elfström was 13, his parents divorced and he went to live with his mother in Lebanon. She had been sent there by the United Nations in the mid-1970s to cover the civil war. Three weeks after their arrival, a major battle ensued.

“My brother and I sat in the house for four days in the only room without windows, waiting for it to subside. My mother was on the other side of the ‘Green Line’ [a no-man’s land that separated the warring factions] and could not get back in. They blew off the top of the building. It was the beginning of many instances of being caught in crossfire. But when you are a kid, normality becomes what your experience

is right there and then,” recounts Elfström.

Shortly thereafter, he learned how to drive a Land Rover with a 70mm gun mounted to the roof through the streets of Beirut and the Bekaa Valley. The skills he acquired in Beirut ultimately shaped his future. He became close friends with



PHOTO OP: The team made its first trip to Mongolia in 2002 during a reconnoiter for an IMAX film. It was during this trip that the Mongolian Bankhar Dog Project was conceived. Photo courtesy of **Bruce Elfström**



SANDSCAPES: The team camped in Libya near the border with Egypt in 2001, while scouting for an OEX trip to the Sahara Desert. Photo courtesy of **Bruce Elfström**

local politicians and often retreated to their mountain homes to hunt for snakes, shoot machine guns and drive Range Rovers, which were common activities for boys in this region. Elfström had a deep appreciation for biology, animals and the great outdoors. The 4x4 vehicles granted him the mobile freedom he desired to explore those interests.

When Israel invaded Lebanon, Elfström left the country via transport ship and returned to the States. He pursued many professions that included reptile curator, fisherman and logger, but eventually relocated to New Mexico with his future wife Kacey, where he attended graduate school, teaching biology and physiology labs.

"In my field research, I used Land Cruisers. I'd been driving over people's study sites, but there was no disturbance. Soon I was hired to teach others how to drive these vehicles while being environmentally sensitive. I thought this could be a business so I went to the UK and got certified by Land Rover and at other four-wheel driving schools," says Elfström.

Another component to his business is consulting. Because of his tactical and practical knowledge of 4x4s and his understanding of how to move equipment through international borders, Elfström often acts as a fixer. For

example, he once received an email from a group of Land Rover enthusiasts en route from England to Singapore. The group was delayed at the Chinese border because they didn't have the appropriate paperwork required in order to cross.

"I have connections in the State Department so I was able to help. Other times, I will go with people on their trip, or I train them how to do these things themselves," says Elfström.

Film companies frequently employ Elfström to support their crews in challenging locations or to appear in productions with scenes that require expedition driving. One Imax film he worked on entitled "Dinosaurs Alive!" turned into a five-year project.

"Two years prior to shooting, I went to Mongolia to location scout, to secure the large trucks we would need, and to arrange transportation for tens of thousands of pounds of equipment, 40 people and 17 vehicles across the Gobi Desert," says Elfström.

While in Mongolia, Elfström witnessed the devastation from a large pack of wolves that had attacked and killed 17 horses and 30 livestock in one community in the course of one night.

"It was mayhem. All the herders went out to try and kill

the wolves,” Elfström says.

Historically, Elfström knew the Mongolians once had a livestock guardian dog called the Bankhar that was used to protect the herds. But during the Soviet occupation from the 1920s to the 1990s when the nomads were relocated to settlements, most of the dogs were wiped out. Many were killed for their pelts and turned into Russian coats.

“I decided it would be a very simple thing to find these dogs in the corners of Mongolia where I am sure they existed and get a breeding group together and put them back into the herder’s hands. It was a Mongolian solution to a Mongolian problem,” Elfström says.

And with that, the nonprofit Mongolian Bankhar Dog Project (MBDP) was established in 2013.

Elfström spoke with herdersmen and village elders whose



RIDING HERD: A Nomad in northern Mongolia carries a herding stick called an urga. Photo by Soyolbold Sergelen

forefathers had kept these animals. He spoke with conservation groups to solicit their knowledge and involvement. He worked with Dr. Adam Boyko’s Institute of Canine Biology at Cornell University to ensure

that the dogs chosen for breeding were not mixes of any sort with modern dogs, and that they were unrelated to one another. Any animals whose DNA indicated they were not pure Bankhar were excluded from the project. This was vital because many modern breeds have a shorter life span than the Bankhar, and are prone to diseases that this ancient canine is not.

“The Bankhar, like many other livestock guardian dogs



GOING TO THE DOGS: One of the MBDP team’s Mongolian Bankhar dogs in the south Gobi Desert. Photo by Soyolbold Sergelen

across Asia and Europe, is not a breed, but a 'landrace.' A landrace is a domesticated species of animal that has developed over time through adaptation to its natural and cultural environment of agriculture and pastoralism. Bankhar dogs have evolved and co-evolved with humans to fit to a very particular niche. The reason why a Bankhar dog looks and behaves as it does is to maximize its efficiency and effectiveness as a working livestock protection animal," explains Elfström.

The MBDP started with 10 dogs, which has grown to 100. The organization built very large kennels to house them and the sheep that live alongside the puppies for the purpose of bonding. As the puppies are born and grow, they are placed in national parks across Mongolia, where many herding families live, and with the Snow Leopard Trust, whose mission is reduce the conflict between herders and predators.

The MBDP consults with local elders to determine which individuals or families can "adopt" a dog and maintain the strict three-year protocol set forth by the MBDP with regard to how they should be raised. If the dog succeeds with one family, there is hope it will succeed with another, and ultimately be able to protect the herds from predators



BEST IN BREED: Scarface, one of MBDP's male Mongolian Bankhars at the breeding center. Photo by Soyolbold Sergelen

as these dogs were intended to do. Thus far, 60 pups have been placed.

The MBDP wants to use this program as a model that can be implemented in other parts of Mongolia and Central Asia. They also want to help the herders develop other revenue streams

such as selling sustainable cashmere or other forms of wool that can come from the camel or the yak.

Elfström's company, Overland Experts, is offering trips this year to Mongolia, where people will have a chance to help hands on with the MBDP while learning more about this fascinating culture. 🐾

For more information or to make a much-needed donation, log on to bankhar.org, or to reserve a spot for an upcoming trip to Mongolia or another exotic locale, log on to overlandexperts.com.

Caryn B. Davis is an architectural photographer and writer whose images and articles have appeared in more than 60 magazines. Her newly published best selling photography book, "A Connecticut Christmas," garnered high accolades in print, radio and television media and was featured in the New York Times' travel section and on NPR.

CANINE ASSISTANCE: A Mongolian herder family welcomes their new Bankhar, gifted by MBDP. The dog will help protect the family's herd from predators. Photo by Soyolbold Sergelen



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Something Old, Something New

The Hartford Club offers networking, special events and philanthropic opportunities.

by **TERESA M. PELHAM**

When Chris VanDeHoef needs to meet with a client, he could have them come to his home office, which isn't ideal for a variety of reasons. Or, he could park himself at a table at Starbucks, if he can find two seats, but sometimes the music and the crowds are not conducive to business. The best meetings, he says, are the ones held at The Hartford Club. The young CEO of Penn Lincoln Strategies is always able to find a quiet spot to talk, and is able to share a good meal or a drink with someone who might not be familiar with the historic club.

Now marking its 145th anniversary, The Hartford Club is working on reinventing itself, infusing young professional blood into this private, downtown city club. It's a tall order, though: Part of the reason many remain

longtime members of this business and social club is its traditional vibe, but change can bring about new ideas and new opportunities.

Recent renovations meant saying goodbye to old-fashioned carpeting and stiff furniture in the once dark-hued members' lounge in favor of comfortable seating, brighter tones, and restored original hardwood flooring. A recent gathering of board members in the lounge brought out glowing recommendations



Standing, left to right: Chris VanDeHoef (board member, owner of Penn Lincoln), Ryan Keating (board member, owner of Keating Agency Insurance), Eric George (board member, president of Insurance Association of Connecticut). Seated, left to right: Michele Perrault Czarasty (board member, retired), Melissa Biggs Esq. (partner, DePino, Nuñez, and Biggs, LLC.)

of the club, which became instant classic slogans.

"It's formal yet familiar," Michele Perrault Czarzasty, a board member and financial advisor with JP Morgan, says of Hartford's only city club.

"There was a lot of thoughtfulness to bring a more modern look while also retaining the feel of a traditional club," says Eric George, an insurance executive who also serves on the club's board of directors. "Even some of us stodgy folks have adjusted to the new look."

The historic upstairs cigar lounge also received a facelift: The carpet was pulled away to reveal original hardwood floors and a much more airy space was created.

"I don't think there's another club or restaurant around here where you could have dinner and then relax afterwards with a cigar," says Czarzasty. "The staff goes above and beyond. Justin [the bartender] has the Maker's Mark all set when my husband comes in. But it's really the [members] that make the club."

Like many private clubs, The Hartford Club generally does not allow members and guests to wear jeans while visiting. Just a few years ago, a survey was conducted to determine whether members would like to alter that rule. Overwhelmingly, it seems, members want to belong to a special place where folks are dressed a bit nicely. The no-jeans rule still applies.

"I just like it because everybody here calls me 'Mr. Keating,'" quips Ryan Keating, board member and principal of the Keating Agency.

Some 500 special events are held throughout the year, including "Finest Hours," after-work social events that draw young professionals and raise funds for various charitable organizations. Other events include cigar dinners, wine and beer tastings, book club meetings, entrepreneur group meetings, bus trips, holiday dinners, and weddings.

While members pay an



The Hartford Club member lounge.
Photo by Flynn Photography



The Hartford Club back patio.
Photo by Flynn Photography



A happy couple at their Hartford Club wedding.
Photo by Brian Ambrose Photography

annual fee, it's not necessary to be a member in order to book a wedding or other event there.

The Hartford Club is looking to boost its membership rolls, and spread the word about the benefits and amenities it offers in the heart of the city. "The best advertising is when people come in and see all the things we're doing," says Keating. "It's not necessarily what people think."

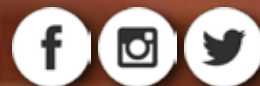
The benefits of belonging to The Hartford Club extend far beyond the 50,000 square feet of 46 Prospect Street. Reciprocal access to more than 1,000 clubs of different varieties across the country and worldwide means being able to stay in or visit a welcoming place while traveling for work or pleasure. Locally, reciprocal clubs include Wampanoag Country Club, Tumble Brook Country Club, and Hop Meadow Country Club.

"It makes it much more attractive if you have to travel for work," says George. "You know the food and the service are always going to be great."

Along with changes to the facility itself, the membership and leadership of the club are continuously evolving. It's hard to imagine that in the 1970s, a physical barrier – a threshold, if you will – kept women out of the main part of the club. Today, three members of the Board of Governors are women, as are three members of the Board of Directors.

"We're continuously working on expanding our diversity, and our membership has become more representative of our society," says George.

Teresa M. Pelham is a writer based in Farmington. She is the author of two children's books benefiting dog rescue. Contact Teresa at tpelham@comcast.net or visit her website: www.roxysforeverhome.com.



GREAT VIEW: A child enjoys a family concert in Ozawa Hall. Photo by Hilary Scott

Sounds of Summer

Tanglewood offers a cherished tradition for music lovers.

by MIKE BRIOTTA / photography courtesy of Tanglewood

A concert at Tanglewood, in the rolling hills of the Berkshires, is more than just a retreat from rising temperatures. It's an enduring New England tradition. Like a trip to the shoreline, stocking up on sunscreen, or grilling a hot dog in the backyard, summer just wouldn't be complete without it.

Maybe you've felt a reverberation of sound waves bouncing off the wooden floor at Seiji Ozawa Hall. Heard a performance on the well-groomed grounds, hunkered down on your blanket and lawn chair. Or you've been stirred by a languid breeze, near dusk, while the Boston Symphony Orchestra performs its perennial Pops.

Anthony Fogg, artistic administrator, has experienced the site in its full splendor for nearly a quarter-century. Fogg's role includes big-picture thinking about upcoming artists.

"The longer you do this, the easier it becomes," Fogg explains. "It's like a jigsaw puzzle. You line up a few key pieces and, very gradually, the rest of the schedule fills out." Some of those key pieces – the cornerstones of a Tanglewood summer – are names like James Taylor, whose popular lyrics reference the dreamlike Berkshires.

Other recurring performers include famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma, a fan favorite throughout the years. A prodigious talent who became widely acclaimed in the 1980s, Ma frequently makes summer visits to Tanglewood's forest-enshrined stages.

Fogg fondly recalls previous performances by violinist Joshua Bell and classical pianist Emanuel Ax. He recalls that "Itzhak Perlman and Yo-Yo Ma were both young performers when they first played here."

While most fans have their own established favorites, it's just as important for Fogg to look to

the future. "We have a large and strong following of existing patrons," he says. "And we also need to introduce the next generation of performers."

ROCK RENAISSANCE

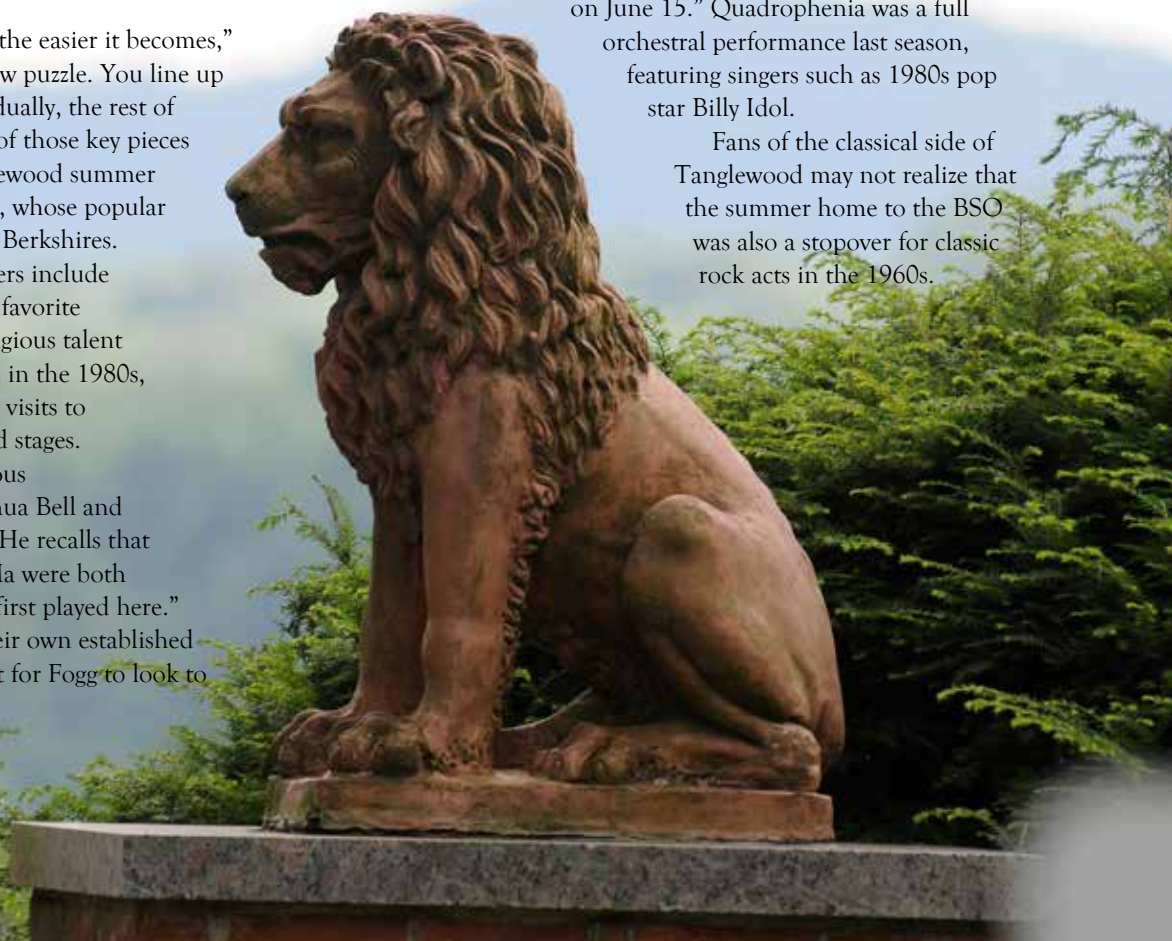
For those aligned to rock, Tanglewood not only "salutes" you but also offers an intimate space for inspirational performances. According to Christopher Ruigomez, Tanglewood's assistant director, the venue established its rock roots some 50 years ago.

"On the rock side of Tanglewood, we've had popular artists including a performance of 'Quadrophenia' last year with Pete Townshend [of The Who]. We open with rock opera 'Tommy' this year and we'll have Roger Daltrey.

That performance, with the orchestra, will be on June 15." Quadrophenia was a full orchestral performance last season, featuring singers such as 1980s pop star Billy Idol.

Fans of the classical side of Tanglewood may not realize that the summer home to the BSO was also a stopover for classic rock acts in the 1960s.

AIN'T NO WAY TO HIDE YOUR LION EYES: Tanglewood's entrance is guarded by a majestic creature. Photo by Stu Rosner





ROCKIN' IT: Steve Miller and Peter Frampton. Photo courtesy of BSO

"Some of those big, iconic names have played at Tanglewood before," Ruigomez says. "The Who performed here a couple of times – the first time on their way to Woodstock." Famed promoter Bill Graham was another presence here.

He adds that the rock dates tend to fill up from June through July, and again at the end of summer, when the BSO tours Europe. David Crosby is one famous rocker scheduled for a return engagement this summer. Bands including Chicago and Jackson Browne have also performed in the past.

Harry Connick Jr. is coming back to Tanglewood this summer. Comedians Steve Martin and Martin Short are slated to perform in September, in a performance they wryly

subtitled, "An evening you will forget for the rest of your life." Béla Fleck and the Flecktones will headline a show at Ozawa Hall.

MIDSUMMER NIGHTS

Tanglewood continues to balance newer music – as evidenced by performances by Evanescence and Train in recent years – with paying homage to the classics. Regardless of your generation, Tanglewood offers a full range of musical styles.

"Andy Grammer is one of the youngest performers we've got," says Ruigomez of the popular singer. "Many different generations are represented here. Young people are starting

to get into the Tanglewood experience.”

An interactive experience that bridges many generations is a tribute to Leonard Bernstein. “Young people will be coming to replicate some of the things he did,” Ruigomez explains. “He was known for his interactive sessions with kids at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, talking to them about music. We’ll be celebrating elements of his life all summer.” The Bernstein commemoration reflects a worldwide series of events for what would have been the conductor’s centennial year.



IN THE GLOAMING: Tanglewood at dusk. Photo by Stu Rosner



STRINGS ATTACHED: The Boston Symphony Orchestra performs at Tanglewood. Photo by Hilary Scott

Other highlights include a performance by Alison Krauss, her first show here as a headliner, and a reprisal of the show “Wait, Wait... Don’t Tell Me.” Notable guests on that program have included former Red Sox pitcher and free spirit Bill “Spaceman” Lee and former Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick.

For many returning fans, including the assistant director, the hallowed space itself holds a unique charm. The emerald grounds hold a tangible allure. He views these rolling green fields the way a baseball fan sees the diamond.

“There’s something about Fenway Park grass, and Tanglewood grass is a close second,” says Ruigomez. “It’s pretty special too. I have great memories walking the grounds, getting to see them empty. And also when there are 18,000 people here.”

BUCOLIC BANDSTAND

For the eclectic conductor Keith Lockhart, all points on the musical spectrum are fair game. He’s led the Boston Pops

for more than two decades, performing alongside some of the most notable names in modern entertainment.

“Audiences who come to hear the Pops at Tanglewood are exposed to the widest possible range of musical expression possible from an orchestra,” says Lockhart. “Over the years, this has included traditional light classics, some of the hottest of Broadway stars, rockers like Melissa Etheridge, and a Jerry Garcia tribute.”

His precursor, famous cinematic composer John Williams, once advised Lockhart to be a good steward of the Boston Pops. Lockhart vowed to keep its most essential qualities alive in the Berkshires.

“Our job is to complement the programming with some of the best programs and guest artists the Pops has to offer,” he says. “We are always excited to perform at Tanglewood, which exposes us to large audiences who are not necessarily among our crowd in Boston.”

Asked about his best memories working with celebrity performers in the Berkshires, the director has an abundance to choose from. “Oh, there have been so many!” he says. “Over the last couple years, though, my time on stage with Bernadette Peters, Jason Alexander, Seth MacFarlane, and Pete Townshend performing his ‘Classic Quadrophenia’ really stands out.”

Tanglewood is an idyllic summertime home for music’s biggest names. It’s also a slice of Americana that only lasts for one fleeting season at a time – as ephemeral as beach trips, barbecues, and bikinis. For musicians and fans alike, the pastoral landscape surrounding Stockbridge Bowl is a magical place.

“The beauty and serenity of the setting, I believe, help people put aside their daily cares and concentrate on the music,” says Lockhart. “People come to Tanglewood solely because they want to be uplifted by the music. We try to give them that.” ■

Mike Briotta is a writer living in western Massachusetts. His fondest musical memories include attending James Taylor and Carole King summer concerts at Tanglewood with his wife Kelly.



ADVERTORIAL

Dr. Madina Falcone:

An ophthalmologist with an eye for beauty

by **STAFF** / photography by **SESHU PHOTOGRAPHY**



THE EYES HAVE IT: Dr. Madina Falcone outside UConn Health's Outpatient Pavilion in Farmington.

As a board-certified ophthalmologist, Dr. Madina Falcone diagnoses eye diseases, including vision loss, diseases of the retina, cataracts and glaucoma.

Madina Falcone, M.D., M.S. is an Oculoplastic and Reconstructive surgeon with UConn Health in Farmington, specializing in cosmetic, orbital, and reconstructive surgery.

As a board-certified ophthalmologist, she diagnoses eye diseases, including vision loss, diseases of the retina, cataracts and glaucoma.

As an orbital (or oculoplastic) surgeon, she performs eye plastic surgery and reconstructive surgery of abnormalities affecting the eyelids, eye tissue, and tear ducts – such as thyroid eye disease, masses and lesions of the orbit – and inflammatory diseases, all of which can all impact someone's facial appearance.

Passionate about her work and eager to improve her patients' lives – physically, mentally, and aesthetically – Dr. Falcone is excited by every new challenge and opportunity to learn something new in her field.

She grew up in California and received her medical degree in 2008, graduating with highest distinction from Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, Chicago Medical School. She completed her residency in ophthalmology at Boston University Medical Center from 2008 to 2012, and her fellowship in ophthalmic reconstruction and orbital surgery at Tufts University School of Medicine in 2013 and 2014.

She joined the staff of UConn Health four years ago and moved to Farmington, where she lives with her husband, Todd Falcone, MD (who also is a UConn Health physician) and their two young children.

Seasons Magazines: Why did you decide to become an ophthalmologist and then further specialize in oculoplastic surgery?

Madina Falcone: I always enjoyed working with my hands. And being an artist myself, I've always enjoyed painting. There's a really tight-knit connection between art and your eyesight. I wanted to go into a specialty that would combine the two.

What drew me to ophthalmology in the first place was that I knew there was a lot of variety in what you could

do within the field, a lot of potential. I also knew it was considered one of the more competitive specialties when I was in medical school, but I always liked competition – a little friendly competition drives you, makes you more aware of your surroundings. I also like that ophthalmology has continuity of care; you continue seeing your patients throughout their lifetimes; you really build a rapport.

SM: What is most satisfying about your work?

MF: I get a chance to really focus on a particular area of the face, its anatomy and structure, how it will behave surgically, and how a patient will respond. I'm a perfectionist and I like having the perfect outcome and working with people's eyes and their facial expressions.

Your eyes are very expressive. They really tell people how you feel. It gives my patients an opportunity to change their perception of themselves and helps them feel better. It gives people a better aesthetic outcome after surgery, whether [they have] eyelid cancer or orbital tumors or orbital disease. My job is to reconstruct the eyelid and give a patient a functional eyelid that works, but it should also be beautiful. I love my specialty because I get to do both every time I operate.

SM: It sounds like the medical and aesthetic aspects of your work are fully integrated. Is that right?

MF: Yes. Surgery can be divided into the functional, something you do to fix the medical problem, and cosmetic surgery, the aesthetic aspects of the face. But for me, they're not separate; they go hand in hand. I do surgery to lift a droopy eyelid so the patient can see better, but also employ the artistic component of a more beautiful eyelid.

SM: Are there many doctors in Connecticut doing this kind of reconstructive eye surgery?

MF: It's definitely a smaller sub-specialty. There are fewer women ocular plastic surgeons, but there is definitely an increase in female surgeons [overall], which has been an advantage for me coming out of medical school, and also kind of empowering.

SM: What do you see as the benefits of being a female surgeon?

MF: Being a surgeon has a perceived image of being this very domineering, strong, opinionated person. I think female surgeons have the gift of being able to work well with our hands and also being compassionate and nurturing – being able to balance our work, families, personal lives,

"There are always new medical therapies coming out, ways of managing very complex disorders, new diseases being diagnosed and defined. There is always something new to learn. I don't think any field in medicine is stagnant that way. I feel like it's an exciting time in medicine, with a lot of new developments and thought processes. "

– Dr. Madina Falcone

children. One of my greatest joys is having an amazing family and wonderful kids, and at the same time, I have a career I love.

SM: What do you like about being on the UConn Health team?

MF: The attitude and forward thinking at UConn. It's very encouraging of collaboration – doctors working together and being supportive of one another. It's an academic medical center, a teaching hospital, so we do very complicated surgeries. I am affiliated with the

departments of dermatology and otolaryngology, and I work with all kinds of surgeons, dermatologists, endocrinologists, infectious disease doctors and internal medicine physicians. A lot of multidisciplinary interactions occur.

SM: Can you share any stories you're particularly proud of, where you feel you've made a real difference in the quality of a patient's life?

MF: I recently saw a patient with really advanced thyroid eye disease and she underwent bilateral orbital decompression surgery. She's been doing extremely well, her vision is stabilized, and she's no longer in danger of losing vision from the disease. And I was able to do rehabilitative surgery around her eyes to make them look and feel better.

In the same week, I saw a post-operative patient who underwent cosmetic bilateral upper and lower eyelid surgery. It was age-related; she had excess skin, bags under the eyes. The patient wanted to look and feel better, and she looks fabulous. She's really happy and is telling all her friends. It's one of my favorite surgeries.

SM: Where do you see this field 10 years from now?

MF: There are always new medical therapies coming out, ways of managing very complex disorders, new diseases being diagnosed and defined. There is always something new to learn. I don't think any field in medicine is stagnant that way. I feel like it's an exciting time in medicine, with a lot of new developments and thought processes.

Amy Barry has been publishing feature stories and reviews for 30 years. She has been awarded more than a dozen first places for her columns by Society of Professional Journalists, CT chapter. She also facilitates expressive art and writing workshops and retreats.

Photographer Seshu Badrinath of Avon specializes in intimate, natural portraits of families and children. Visit seshuphotography.com

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Once again, *Seasons Magazines* are seeing stars!

Seasons Magazines were honored with 10 awards from the **Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists** during its annual meeting and “**Excellence in Journalism Awards**” celebration.

Seasons’ writers, photographers and illustrators were recognized for their work with the following awards:

Congratulations!

1st place - Matthew Dicks, Humorous Column

1st place - Alycia Chrosniak, Feature Photo

1st place - Bob Engelhart, Editorial Cartoon

2nd place - Matthew Dicks, Humorous Column

2nd place - Patricia Chaffee, Sports Feature

2nd place - Matthew Broderick, Leisure

2nd place - Nick Caito, Feature Photo

3rd place - Amber Jones, Feature Photo

3rd place - Carol Latter, Sports Feature

3rd place - Tovah Martin, Leisure





A Day to Forgive

Every year on Feb. 1, Americans turn their gaze to Punxsutawney, Penn., with hopes that the groundhog they drag forcefully from its burrow will not see its shadow.

Groundhog Day. A holiday starring a reluctant rodent and a stupid superstition that is meteorologically meaningless regardless of presence of a shadow.

Every year on Feb. 14, the price of roses quadruples as listless couples sit at candlelit tables and stare at iPhone screens while waiting for their chicken piccata, and singletons bemoan a day dedicated to the romantic love that has thus far eluded them and probably always will.

Valentine's Day. Americans spend millions of dollars every year every on this supposedly romantic moment that is often filled with angst, expense and regret.

Even New Year's Day is kind of dumb. It's a federal holiday, so at least most Americans enjoy a day off, but

why? We survived another year? We need time to dispose of the previous year's calendars! We require a full 24 hours in order to decide upon a New Year's resolution that will almost assuredly be abandoned 72 hours later?

The problem with so many holidays like these is that they result in no lasting effect. They are meaningless, pointless expenditures of effort. Days filled with dashed hopes and unfulfilled dreams. General stupidity.

But not all holidays are stupid.

Mother's Day, for example, leaves moms feeling slightly less ignored for 1/365th of the year.

Thanksgiving brings families together for genuine moments of love and political discontent.

The Fourth of July reduces the median number of fingers on stupid Americans considerably.

Christmas drives the U.S. economy while slaughtering millions of evergreen trees.

But so many of our holidays achieve

none of these lasting impacts. I like a holiday that leaves something behind. Some lasting effect. Some meaningful change.

This is why I adore and celebrate the often-ignored summertime holiday, Forgiveness Day.

July 7. A day when we are supposed to find forgiveness for those who have transgressed against us in the previous year.

Forgiveness. This is a lasting effect. The transition from one state of being to another. Forgiveness can make a real difference in our lives.

This year, for example, I plan to forgive my children, Clara and Charlie, for their constant fight over who gets to sit beside my wife at dinner while I sit silently across the table, trying not to be offended by these small, thoughtless, hate-filled monsters.

This year I intend to forgive my cats, Pluto and Tobi, for the many nights spent running across my face while I sleep. Yes, it's true. Our home is 2,300

square feet, not counting a basement in which they spend large amounts of time, yet this pair of four-legged devils often find the need to run across the one square foot of space that my face occupies at any given moment.

It's awful and stupid and possibly malicious, but on July 7, I will forgive them.

Until they do it again.

This year I will try to forgive every waiter who tries to upsell me a stupid bottle of sparkling water, and then, when I decline, walks away from me like I'm some kind of deadbeat dad. Sparkling water is stupid, and it's not sparkling. It's carbonated. It's Diet Coke minus everything that makes Diet Coke liquid gold. It's an added expense designed to increase the bill and therefore the tip, when in reality, I'm much more likely to tip well if the waiter simply brings me "still water," which everyone else just calls water, and leaves the green bottle of nonsense where it belongs.

Still, I will try forgive these waiters, as difficult as it may be.

I will not, however, forgive the beverage snobs who look upon my Diet Coke like planet-killing poison and constantly warn me about its implication upon my health despite the fact that they haven't seen the inside of a gym in two decades and take the elevator to ascend a single floor.

Forgiveness has its limits, and the beverage snob is one such limit.


I will, however, find it in my heart this year to forgive the old lady with the walker at CVS who cut me in line a couple months ago, forcing me to call her out with a strongly worded, verbal admonition (because I don't discriminate against people with disabilities or the elderly in any way whatsoever), which led to everyone else standing in line hating me for calling her out.

I forgive the old lady who cut me in line. It was a heinous and despicable act, but on Forgiveness Day, I can find forgiveness for her.

I think.

But there will be no forgiveness

for the jerks in line who judged me on that day. That elderly woman cut me. I had every right to let her have it. But they had no right to their side-eyes and exasperated sighs. No right to look upon me like I was some kind of insensitive cretin.

No forgiveness for them. Let's be realistic. It's Forgiveness Day. Not Miracle Worker Day. 

Matthew Dicks is a West Hartford elementary schoolteacher. He is the author of the new novel, The Perfect Comeback of Caroline Jacobs, as well as Memoirs of an Imaginary Friend, Something Missing, and Unexpectedly, Milo, which have been translated into 25 languages worldwide. Learn more at matthewdicks.com.

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