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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 Frampton.

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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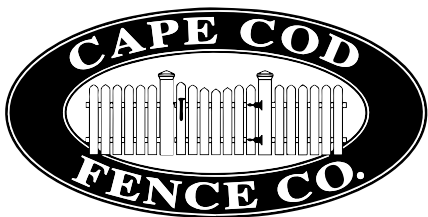
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2018

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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

page 8.
Travel
Cross Sound Ferry
Cruises

page 14.
Meet
Ryan Craig

page 18.
Feature
Summer of Discontent

page 23.
Business
Banking on Success

page 26.
Health & Wellness
Dr. Paul Scalise
Charlotte Hungerford
Hospital

page 32.
Delicious
Faux Ceviche

page 36.
Adventure
Off the Beaten Path

page 44.
Community
The Hartford Club

page 46.
Music
Sounds of Summer

page 55.
Final Thoughts
A Day to Forgive



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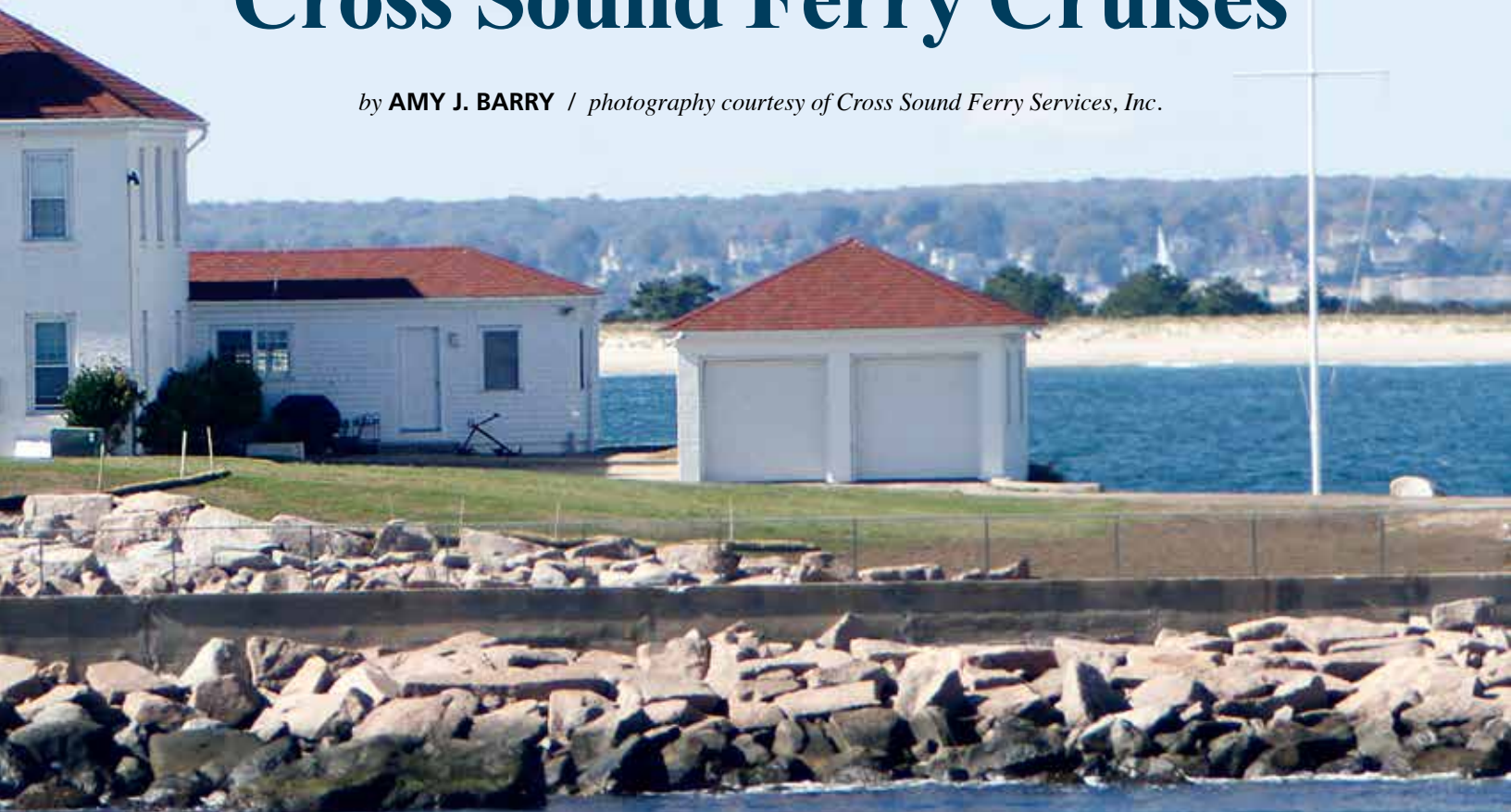


Watch Hill Lighthouse.



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.”

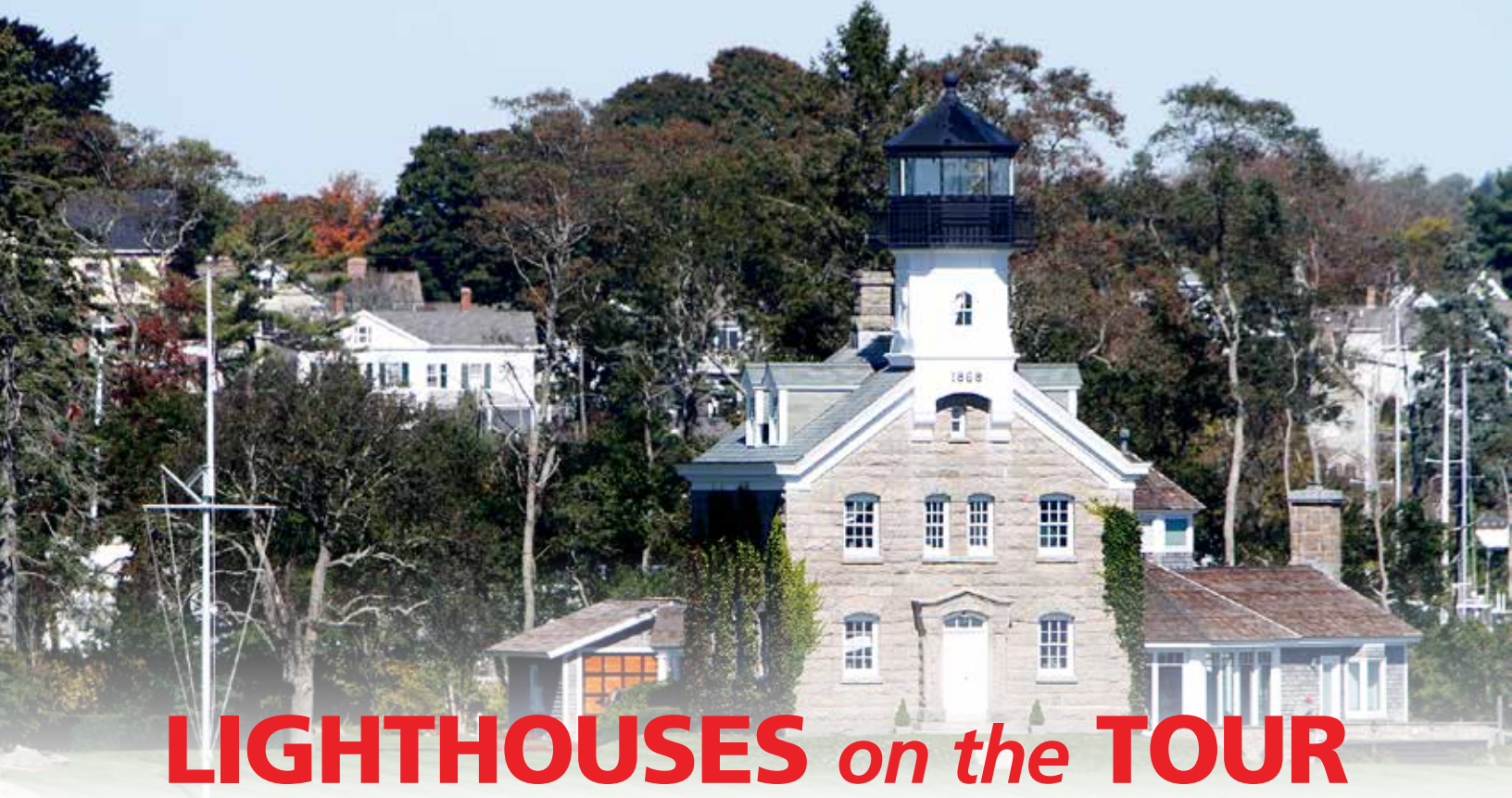
People of all ages enjoy the lighthouse cruises, Mickus says. “We get a lot of school-age groups because of the educational experience, as well as summer camp groups. You can’t get up close and personal to these amazing structures, the ones in open water, any other way.”



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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Buying Into a Dream

**After a decade in corporate America,
a local boy moves home to pursue his vision.**

by CAROL LATTER / photography by SESHU PHOTOGRAPHY

When Ryan Craig was a teenager, he was biking to school one morning when he saw a “Help Wanted” sign in the window of the Berkshire Country Store in West Cornwall. He decided to apply. Little did he know that this moment would change the trajectory of his life.

Craig worked at the store for five years. After he graduated from high school, he attended Northwestern Regional Community College (now Northwestern Connecticut Community College) in Winsted before going to work in a corporate setting, in retail management and sales.

“I spent 10-11 years in that business and enjoyed it, but I always wanted to be my own boss and try something entrepreneurial. I started looking around and ultimately came across a listing for the Berkshire Country Store ... the exact same place where I had worked in high school. The store was offered for lease,” he recalls.

“At the time, I was living in Hartford County but I jumped at the chance to move back to the place where I grew up. It was not only an opportunity to get into business for myself, but I thought, ‘What a great chance to move home, and own and operate a business in a community that I was familiar with, and where people were familiar with me.’ So I came back and spent two years in West Cornwall.”

While he enjoyed the work and had a wonderful staff, Craig wasn’t happy with the terms of his lease.

Then fate stepped in.

“I was approached by the economic development commission (EDC) for Norfolk. They were interested in having a place in their community where people could buy groceries, grab a bite to eat, and hang out for a while. As it happened, one of my regular customers was a member of the EDC when they were talking about needing a place in the community for people to meet. She said, ‘I know just the guy!’ So they came down and scouted out our store in Cornwall. They asked me if I would be interested in opening up a similar place in Norfolk.”

In the course of the discussions that followed, Craig

learned that in 2015, the Northwest Hills Council of Governments received a two-year economic development grant from the State of Connecticut.

In turn, the council hired a company – East Hartford-based GOMAN+YORK – to provide shared economic development services to implement village center initiatives in eight small towns. These activities focused on supporting existing businesses, creating jobs, and filling vacant commercial spaces, with the goals of increasing economic activity in the region while retaining the “historic main street” character of each small town.

The serendipitous part was that Craig had already been working with one of the firm’s principals, Mike Goman, to negotiate a better lease for his original store in Cornwall. Soon, the conversation turned to having Craig open a store in Norfolk instead. “Mike was instrumental in helping me work this out,” he says.

Craig spoke with the landlord for the potential new location. But just as in the movies, there was a last-minute hitch, and the prospects of opening a new store began to look dire.

For Craig, who faced a deadline for making a decision, “negotiations ran out of time. Things were not moving as quickly as they needed to. We ended up shutting down the store in Cornwall.”

He took a regular paid position with another company, and it seemed that his entrepreneurial journey – for the moment, at least – was over. “I took what I thought was a slam-dunk job,” he says. “But very quickly, I found myself missing what I had been doing.”

Fortuitously, things were going on behind the scenes that would rewrite the ending to his story. Over the course of four months, a group of private investors and citizens who were “trying to revitalize downtown Norfolk and tackle other things that they thought had potential” formed the Norfolk Foundation in an effort to make it more economically feasible for would-be entrepreneurs to start a new venture.

Meanwhile, Craig realized that his day job wasn’t all it was cracked up to be. “I called my contact from the EDC



IT TAKES A VILLAGE:
Collaboration, philanthropy,
community support – and more
than a dash of serendipity –
helped Ryan Craig to achieve
his entrepreneurial vision.



SMALL TOWN, BIG DREAMS: Ryan Craig is proud to be able to serve his community while contributing to its economic success.

and said, ‘Are you still pursuing someone to operate a general store?’ They said, ‘We’ve interviewed a few people but we haven’t found anyone we wanted.’” Not long after, Craig made a presentation to the Norfolk Foundation, which purchased the building he’d been looking at and signed a lease with Craig. He welcomed his first customer on January 4, 2017.

Today, the new Berkshire Country Store is a hub of the community.

“My feeling has always been that you have to be more than a bakeshop, a coffee shop or a deli. Any one of those alone could fail [as a business], so you have to be pretty creative,” says Craig, 34.

That’s especially true in a community like Norfolk, he notes. The community is home to just 1,800 residents, and one-third of them are part-time or summer residents with primary homes in cities like Philadelphia or Boston. The village features Infinity Music Hall, a bar and a restaurant, but in order to buy groceries or other items, residents had to drive to Canaan or Winsted, a 15-minute trek in either direction.

Today, that’s no longer the case.

“We are the place in town where you can buy milk, eggs, and butter,” says Craig. “We sell newspapers, we have a full deli, and we have a coffee shop serving locally roasted organic fair trade coffee. We stock paper goods, canned goods, chips, dips, and firewood. We scoop ice cream in the summer. I try not to limit myself to any one segment.”

The country store also serves up breakfast, lunch and dinner – everything from breakfast sandwiches, soups and salads to pizza and meatball parmigiana.

With two tables of eight and individual tables, there’s plenty of space for meetings. A church group meets weekly for coffee, the EDC committee holds its website design meetings there, and knitters come in to work on their projects while they enjoy baked goods and coffee. People also drop in to play cribbage and checkers. It’s a scenic spot, with large glass windows offering a great view over the valley.

“I think this is exactly what we envisioned,” Craig says. “It’s neat that we’re in the midst of the downtown and our business fits better here. My customers tell me that we’re the best thing that’s happened in Norfolk in 50 years; that makes me smile. If you sell a service, not just a product, you’re going to be successful. And I’m passionate about providing a service to people.”

That passion has paid off in a steady stream of customers and great online reviews. One Yelp reviewer called the store “worth a drive from wherever you are! I drive here from NY State because the food and conversation are just that good. So go in and say hi if you are in the area, enjoy great food, and get snacks to go for whatever activity you are in the area for.”

After such a short time in business, the Berkshire Country Store seems poised for long-term success. At the end of his first year in Norfolk, Craig already had a staff

of 10 – two employees who followed him from the original location, and another eight that he hired.

“To be able to say that I employ 10 folks in a small town is a wonderful feeling. And it’s great for Norfolk’s economy.” He convinced two of his employees who lived in neighboring towns to move to Norfolk. “Now they’re paying rent and utilities with salaries provided to them from the Berkshire Country Store. Knowing that I’m helping to balance everyone’s checkbooks and keep their lights on through the Berkshire Country Store is kind of cool. And there’s still a lot of growth that can happen here.”

He adds, “I pride myself on the fact that I haven’t lost an employee since before last summer; that’s unusual. And every day, they’re getting more and more knowledgeable.”

Being an entrepreneur, Craig says, is his true calling. In the corporate setting, his suggestions for improvement were sometimes brushed aside, or someone higher up the ladder took credit for his ideas. Today, as a business owner, “I can work with my staff to make sure they’re empowered. We can implement their solutions. And I can also implement my own solutions. I think that makes me a better manager and a better owner. I also like to talk to customers about my ideas, and I enjoy being able to turn on a dime.”

While the time Craig spent in the corporate world ultimately didn’t prove to be the perfect fit for him, “I’m appreciative of corporate America and the education that it gave me. I spent nine months in a banking center to learn about all things banking and all things management. It gave me real-world experience, with value that I have been able to apply.”

He says the biggest challenge for any business is the startup phase, and his venture has been no exception. “The physical nature of opening, especially a retail business, is exhausting. You’re looking at 110 hours a week, with no days off. At some point, it gets going on its own, and now, I’m able to take some days off. But it’s definitely a lot of hard work and it has to be a thing of passion, not just financial rewards.”

For Craig, creating a fun destination for both out-of-town visitors and locals is a dream come true. “We wanted to make sure our customers could come in and grab lunch, and grab a gallon of milk and a tube of toothpaste on their way back out into the world. I think it’s a unique shopping and dining experience. I don’t know of any 7-Eleven that can offer the same thing.”

For more information, visit berkshirecountry.com.

Carol Latter is a Simsbury-based writer and the editor of *Seasons Magazines*.

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

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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

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 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.

“I couldn’t believe the news that Bobby Kennedy was killed. I’ll never forget



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



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

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](https://www.facebook.com/ShutterBugCtPhotography).

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Banking on Success

**Torrington Savings Bank marks 150 years
as a pillar of the community.**

by **TERESA M. PELHAM** / *photography by* **SESHU PHOTOGRAPHY**

When John Janco was a senior at Torrington High School 45 years ago, his guidance counselor said Torrington Savings Bank was looking to interview three young men who might be interested in a training program to become bank tellers. Of the three, Janco was the one chosen, and he hasn't left the organization since. He's now president and CEO.

That sort of longevity is actually not too rare within the bank, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary this June.

Back in 1868, a woman named Katherine Church deposited \$5 into a savings account, and became the first depositor in the bank, then known as Wolcottville Savings Bank. In that same year, the bank granted a mortgage for \$500 to a man named Riley Johnson. Twenty years later, total deposits topped over

\$400,000. Wolcottville Savings Bank became known as Torrington Savings Bank in 1881, as industry in Torrington began to grow.

Today, Torrington Savings Bank has more than 34,000 accounts and its assets total more than \$830 million. The bank currently has seven retail branches and more than 100 full-time employees.

One thing that hasn't remained the same is banking technology. While many industries can claim to have been affected by changes in technology during the past century and a half, banking is perhaps one of the more dramatic scenarios. Just a few decades ago, every bank customer regularly spent time in the bank's lobby. Today, banking can be done at home, or even by snapping a photo of a check with a cell phone. (Seriously, how does that work?)

Fewer employees are needed to staff bank lobbies



MONEY SENSE: Torrington Savings Bank's senior management team (above) works collaboratively with the Board of Trustees to guide and manage the bank according to the best interests of its customers and local communities. From left, Kathleen Katrenya, senior vice president, Retail Banking & Marketing; Eric Erdtmann, senior vice president, Commercial Lending; Lesa Vanotti, senior vice president, treasurer, CFO, CRO and assistant secretary; John Janco, president and CEO; Jeffrey Geddes, senior vice president, Residential & Consumer Lending and CRA Officer; and Miles Borzilleri, senior vice president, Trust Officer.

but plenty of back-office staff members are needed for compliance and technical issues.

"Because we're a mutual bank and we have no shareholders, our entire focus is on customer service," says Janco. "With everything we do, we should be thinking about our customers and our community."

Torrington Savings Bank, like many other community banks, plays a key role in supporting community organizations from libraries to Little League teams.

"It's hard to say 'no' to anyone," says Janco. "Local nonprofits depend on banks."

In addition to regularly supporting local organizations such as the Warner Theatre, Torrington Savings Bank recently made a \$150,000 gift to the Torrington Library to create the recently named Torrington Savings Bank Community Room, an expansive gathering space that was part of the 2016 library renovation.

Janco encourages employees to be involved in local community efforts, and most employees serve on local boards or otherwise volunteer their time to the Rotary Club and other organizations. And at work, employees try to remain focused on smaller accounts.

"People think we can't offer everything the big banks offer," he says. "But we can. You just get it with a smile and

a teller who knows your name. Bigger isn't always better. You can pick up the phone and talk to a person here."

Several employees have similar yet different backgrounds to that of its president and CEO, including Jessica Dziob, assistant vice president of retail banking and marketing. After completing her freshman year of nursing school, she heard that the bank was hiring for summer help.

"That was 16 years ago," she says, noting that the bank was cooperative and enthusiastic about her completing her education. "I just kind of fell into banking but it's been a lot of fun. The environment here is very supportive and there are always opportunities if you're willing to work hard. Having such a supportive and encouraging environment isn't always the case with larger companies. It's really like a big family here."

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

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



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Dr. Paul Scalise

As a pulmonologist, a critical care physician, and Charlotte Hungerford Hospital's new vice president of medical affairs, Dr. Paul Scalise has, as he puts it, "a foot in both camps."

A practicing physician, he is privy to the needs of the clinician, but as an administrator, he understands that there are regulatory and fiscal constraints that come into play when making decisions for the institution.

"You have to balance the two," he says, "and it's not always easy."

Before assuming his role as liaison between the medical staff and the CHH administration last October, Dr. Scalise held a similar position at the Hospital for Special Care (HSC) in New Britain, which during his tenure grew from a small hospital with a couple of hundred admissions per year to an institution that admits more than 800 patients annually. Dr. Scalise is quick to point out that the growth was "not all because of me," but acknowledges that he did usher in some significant changes in how the hospital took care of patients.

"I'd like to think I left a long-lasting imprint on how the hospital manages patients on long-term ventilation," he says.

Though HSC is a long-term acute care facility and CHH is a short-term acute care hospital, the balancing act is very similar for Dr. Scalise.

"Juggling the clinical hat and the administrative side is difficult, because you see the world through different lenses," he explains. "As a clinician, you know what's best for your patient, and you don't want to hear about regulations and rules and fiscal restraints." But if you don't pay attention to those things, notes Scalise, putting on his administrator hat,

the hospital wouldn't be able to carry out its mission – which is to offer quality care to all of its patients.

AN 'INTERNIST ON STEROIDS'

A Connecticut native, Dr. Scalise grew up in New Haven, and knew early on that he wanted to pursue a career in medicine.

"No one in my family was in healthcare," he says, "but I remember being a kid going to the family doctor's office, and the whole thing always intrigued me." Dr. Scalise earned his medical degree at Georgetown University School of Medicine, where he had the opportunity to work under "one of the grandfathers of pulmonary medicine," Dr. Sol Katz, which sparked his interest in the field.

Dr. Scalise appreciated how the pulmonary medicine and critical care specialties interfaced with all aspects of medicine. Lung problems, he points out, can stem from gastrointestinal problems, cardiac disease, or kidney issues. He says he was also attracted to the intensity of the critical care side of the specialty.

"The acuity of illness – having to respond quickly, the excitement, the adrenaline," he says. "Some say you are like an internist on steroids."

After completing his internal medicine residency and a fellowship in pulmonary and clinical care medicine, both at Georgetown University Hospital, Dr. Scalise joined the staff of HSC as a clinician in 1993.

"I went in thinking I would do it for a year or two, and stayed for 24 years," he says. While at HSC, Dr. Scalise served as chief of pulmonary medicine, chief of medicine,



Dr. Scalise outside Charlotte
Hungerford Hospital in
Torrington.

chief of staff, and medical director of HSC's Hartford satellite before being appointed senior vice president of medical affairs, the position he held until coming to CHH last fall. He also developed the weaning unit at the HSC satellite at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and served as its director.

While at HSC, Dr. Scalise shared his clinical expertise with medical students, residents and fellows from the University of Connecticut Medical School, receiving the Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award. He also was honored for excellence in teaching medical students when at Georgetown.

"It was fun to be around the residents and students and fellows," he recalls. "They keep you sharp and on your toes."

A SYSTEM THAT CAN PROVIDE EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY

The opportunity for Dr. Scalise to move to CHH came at a time when the small community hospital was in the process of partnering with Hartford HealthCare.

"I knew there would be an opportunity to impact the hospital because of this change, and I accepted that challenge," he says.

According to Dr. Scalise, the partnership not only provides CHH with the stability of being a part of a larger health system, but also gives both institutions the ability to expand access to care for their patients.

"Patients at CHH have always gotten good care," he says, "but some primary care doctors and specialists have aged out and we haven't been able to replace them as quickly as we'd like."

Not only will the merger provide a wider network of physicians for both hospitals to draw from, he says, but it will allow Hartford to extend its reach into the Litchfield County area, while offering CHH the economic resources to upgrade equipment and improve its physical plant.

"We know we're not going to be everything to everyone in a community hospital, but we now have a system that can provide everything to everybody," says Dr. Scalise.

All of the hospitals in the Hartford HealthCare system are connected through a "care logistic center," he explains.

"It's like mission control in Houston," he says. "They

"My goal is for people to look at CHH and say, 'That's how a good community hospital is run; that's the kind of care you should deliver at a good community hospital.'"

– Dr. Scalise

have these huge high-definition screens showing each hospital, how many patients and how many beds there are open on each floor. If you come in with a neurosurgical problem, for example, you're not going to be operated on at CHH, but you will be transferred to the right place."

Physicians at CHH also will have access to educational resources at Hartford Hospital, including a simulation library

– "one of the best in the Northeast," according to Dr. Scalise – and training center, in which doctors can practice new procedures on robotic mannequins.

BRINGING 'THE ADMINISTRATIVE VIEW TO THE BEDSIDE'

With Dr. Scalise's recent move to CHH, he has shifted even more toward the administrative side of medicine, though he hasn't given up his clinical practice.

"I still see outpatients with pulmonary issues, and cover the intensive care unit every fifth or sixth weekend," he says. "I realized I couldn't do the amount of clinical work I was doing before, but I think it's extremely important to my position that I'm still active clinically, because I can't ask people to do things that I'm not willing to do."

So Dr. Scalise continues to "bring the administrative view to the bedside" at CHH, he says, and is assessing, along with other hospital leaders, the institution's clinical needs.

"I want CHH to be the model of a community hospital in the Hartford HealthCare system," he says. "My goal is for people to look at CHH and say, 'That's how a good community hospital is run; that's the kind of care you should deliver at a good community hospital.' " ■

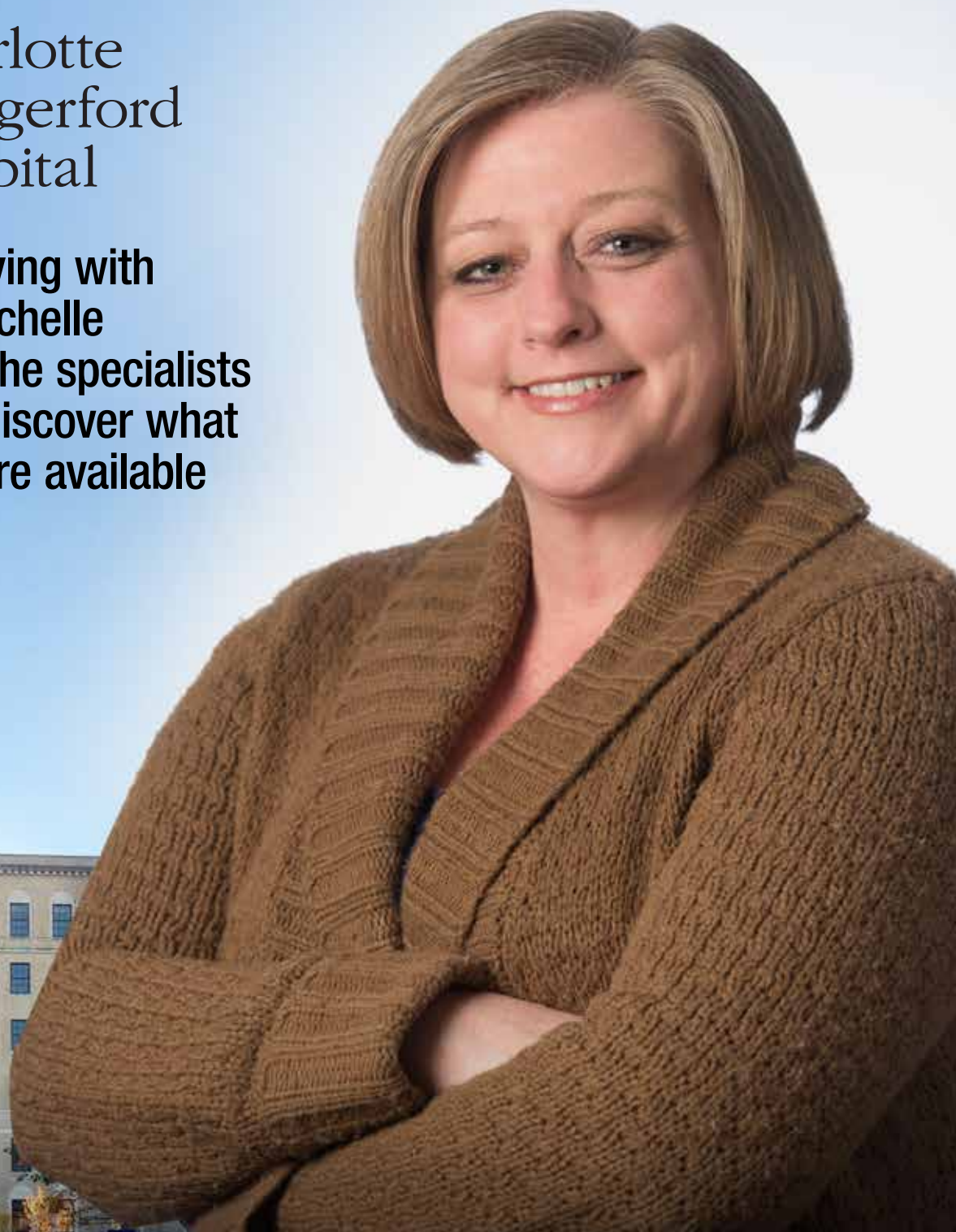
Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.

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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 42.

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 Blanc de 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

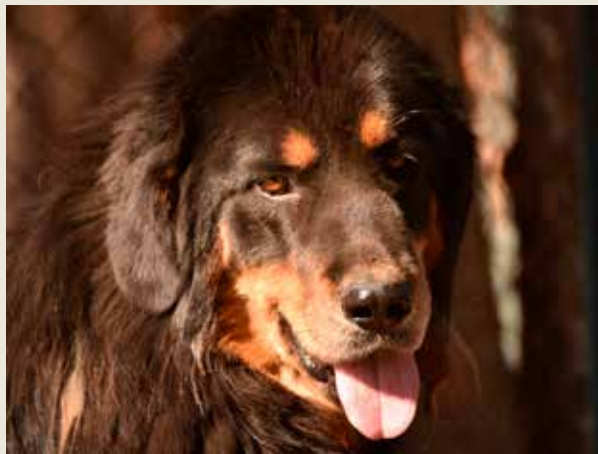


GOING TO THE DOGS: One of the MBDP team’s Mongolian Bankhar dogs in the south-Gobi Desert. Photo by Soyolbold Sergelen

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."

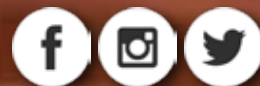
The benefits of belonging to The Hartford Club extend far beyond the 50,000 square feet of 46 Prospect Street. Reciprocal access to more than 1,000 clubs of different varieties across the country and worldwide means being able to stay in or visit a welcoming place while traveling for work or pleasure.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

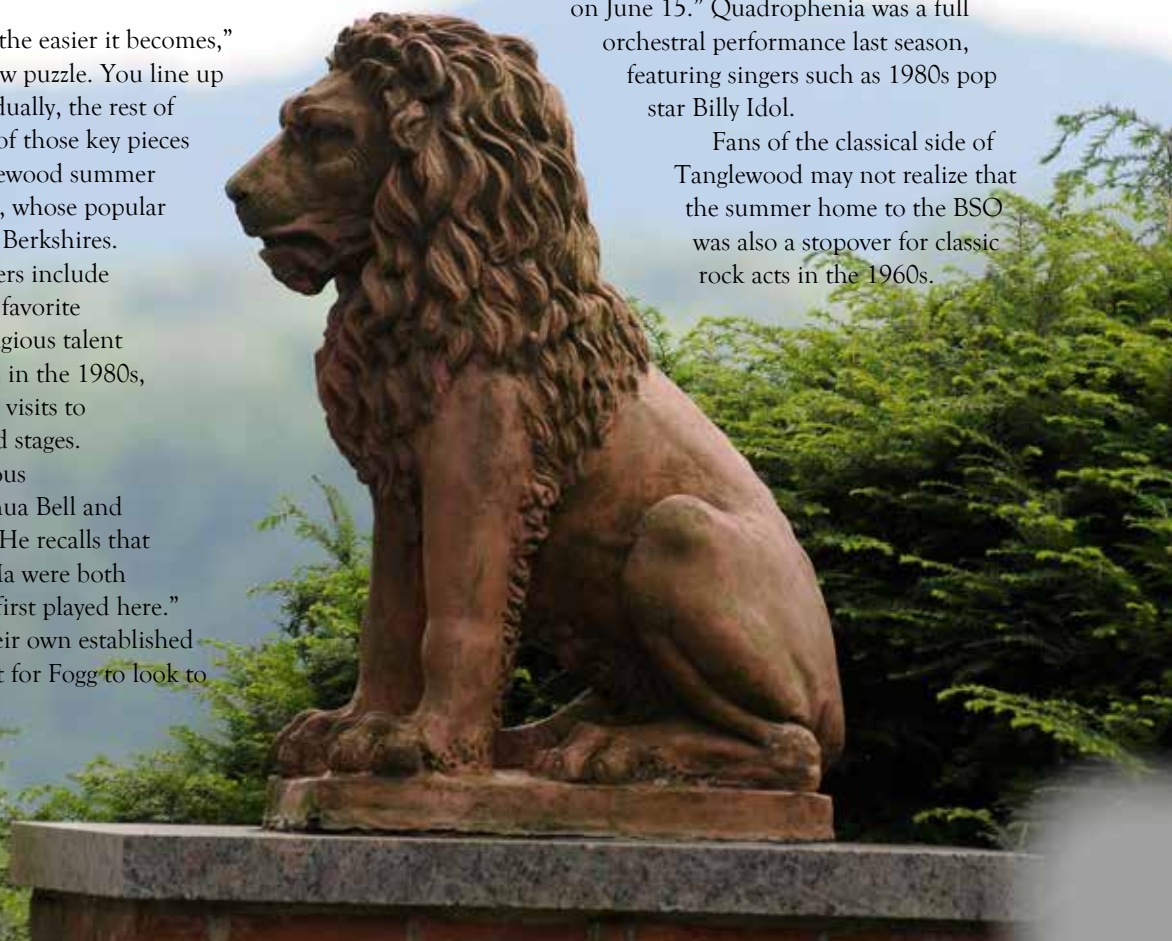
For those aligned to rock, Tanglewood not only "salutes" you but also offers an intimate space for inspirational performances. According to Christopher Ruigomez, Tanglewood's assistant director, the venue established its rock roots some 50 years ago.

"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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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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