

Historical Society Newsletter

Ron Feulner, Editor
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OFFICERS: Coral Crosman, President; Deb Dittner, Vice President; Patty Schwartzbeck, Secretary; Alice Feulner, Treasurer; Robert Roeckle, Trustee; Ron Feulner, Trustee; JoAnn Rowland, Trustee.

Volume 6, Issue 8

This issue sponsored by Rose Callenius Noble in memory of her sister, Helen Callenius.

Calendar

Tuesday, April 8, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield will be our business meeting followed by Rob Jones, Skidmore professor who locates old foundations and historic sites using modern maps and other technologies.

Sunday April 30, 1-3 p.m. the Historical Society will sponsor a field trip to Vince Walsh's ***Kawing Crow Nature Center*** on Greene Road (go north from Greenfield on Route 9, turn right just before railroad overpass on Greene Road continue past intersection of Locust Grove Road and the Nature Center will be a short distance further on the left, just past some wetlands).

Tuesday, May 23 (that's the fourth Tuesday instead of the third as we usually meet), at 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our business meeting will be followed by Field Horne, author of *Sartatoga Reader*.

I would like to thank all of you who have sent articles, which I will use in future newsletters. For those who are still working on articles, please continue because I can never have too many. At times the pile gets so low, I don't know if we will be able to continue so it feels good to have a few in waiting. Editor

Coral's Calls

I think it may be 'safe' now to boast about my *near* brush with fame right here in Greenfield based on a possible interview some weeks ago resulting from a theatrical 'connection' also occurring right here in Greenfield (or close!) between a trio of high schoolers who met in 1984 at the NYS Summer School of the Arts School of Theatre, then held at Skidmore College for four weeks: their names were Philip Seymour Hoffman from Fairport High School (near Rochester), Bennett Miller and Dan Futterman, both from Mamaroneck High School, Westchester County...

Several weeks back, an assiduous administrator of the various summer school programs for the NYS Education Department was (in the manner of Arthur Conan Doyle or one of his characters) tracking down, at the request of a writer from *People* magazine, faculty and staff that worked with a program that brought 32 talented high school students (via two tiers of rigorous auditions) to one spot in the state from across its varied regions, with *Capote* being one of the big bets to possibly sweep the Academy Awards. Of course, yours truly, your current faithful president (until I can find some genuinely talented soul to replace my errant ways) was buried in some parallel universe with only a dim awareness of what films were up for what (based on a repeated complaint that nothing stayed on the big screen long enough for a slow-moving senior like myself to follow the crowd to the ticket

booth...) so that I had to be brought 'up to speed' in terms of who was whom... A theatre organization I'd helped form that same summer ('84) but drifted away from as my job responsibilities shifted at the state, I'd rejoined in early retirement and, as it happened, a teacher (John Fredricksen) who impressed me with his dedication to coordinating the annual January student conference drawing together in the Catskills more than 600 high school youngsters from across the state, along with their drama teachers, coaches and a host of chaperones, also had *taught* at Mamaroneck both Bennett Miller and Dan Futterman ('06 Academy Award nominees for best director and screenplay writer, respectively) all those... many years ago. The NYS Theatre Education Association itself was 'birthed' that same historic July at Skidmore, where the first officers were elected and said group decided to launch an annual theater educators' conference in New York City *two* months hence, an *unheard of* compression of time at State Ed (or for vets of the NYS Reading Association and the NYS English Council).

Apart from all that ancient history, your faithful president was a bit taken aback, having probably confronted no fewer than 120 faces in one day just the prior week at Maple Ave MS, when this SED spokesperson, Ed Donnelly, asked if I happened to recall three students from a summer program I'd help administer 22 years earlier! *Duh...* It was enough for this erratic amateur archivist to simply *put hands* to the diaries and journals that reflected that period although I was reminded I'd taken photos, now on the state's theatre school website, distinguishing that estimable '84 group. Suffice it to say, while Hoffman took the "best actor" award for his total immersion in the role of that amazing author, Truman Capote, *Crash* became the film de la nuit of the Academy – as they say in the horse biz, the odds-on favorites were not necessarily all in the same pool (a mixed metaphor, to be sure.)

ANYWAY, the real event was that I stayed up (mostly) to watch Academy Award formalities, being chided (when awake) to see films (*i.e.*, movies) *where they really belong...* on the big screen before a *live* audience in the theatre, not on DVD. I wanted to reply, 'hey, no fear of that – my CD/DVD drive on computer has never been broached by the latter..' It made me realize more *why* the audience for live actors on a stage (or musicians!) is so unique and special and – largely well-attended – despite the competing draws for the

attention of frenetic, all-in-the-workforce members of this crazy early 21st Century culture of ours...

On other subjects, we had a fabulous live night with our own wide-ranging if local entertainer/poet/author/teller of tales real and relative...none other than Joe Bruchac who was able to engross his listeners with the keen re-creation of Abner Greenfield and kin along with other luminaries that brought early Jamesville its fame (and fury...). While some of this hearkens back to *Greenfield Glimpses*, Joe is the repository of much lore, having had so much handed down through his own legendary family that combines various ethnic roots and puzzles, including Abenaki, yet also tapping into such (once) living resources as Larry Older and others who gave these green hills a lilting language and song long rewarding in their magical charms...



Joe Bruchac

Yours truly was relieved that the place was packed (albeit I knew that was *not* my doing) because after the swell photo promotion and coverage of our earlier iced-out date in January, I was afraid folk would forget to come back... *No* problem and I sensed a great time was had by all, amazed by the way Joe can set an iambic heartbeat of mankind

with a simple if reverberant drum, bringing us into that campfire spirit and sacred ceremony from which we derive both kinship and identity... And we were fortunate in having freshly-autographed copies of several of his titles, plus learning of his mere months' old and most proudly-worn moniker, that of "grandfather," thanks to Jesse, son of Joe and Carol B. (not to mention Jesse's good wife...)

In other biz, I tried to recruit potential nominating committee members and folk to take official roles in our org, if not necessarily met by a sea of hands despite the crowd that packed our community center... Oh well, assuming there are still a few 'shy' (to use Garrison Keillor's favored adjective) persons out there who might be willing to serve, they can call (587-9809) or e-mail me (porpress@aol.com) and I'd be happy to pass their names along to our nominating committee (once we have one.) Elections are *slated* for May!

Our numerous projects include: probable date for hike through Kawing Crow nature preserve to be led by Vince Walsh is Sunday, April 30, 1-3 p.m. Details to follow... Tom Siragusa (bless his electronic soul!) has volunteered to set up a website for our organization (which I expect we can hotlink, despite our change in name, with the Town's...) **Bob Jones** (who teaches at Skidmore College) will guide us at our next meeting (April 18 at 7 p.m.) through the wonders of locating pinnings of historic edifices, part of the Woodlawn Estate where Clinton Street once ran, using state-of-the-art technology he will explain. He is also proposing a summer field excursion to inspect these vestiges, date to be set. SEE you all in April, with the deity willing and if the creek don't rise, as they say, and hey, here in our township's multi-layered geology, we could always skedaddle on up to the Ridge if need be, anyway...



Historical Society audience at Joe's presentation

Vince Walsh and the Kawing Crow Awareness Center

by Ron Feulner



Vince Walsh crossing his Boardwalk

During our February meeting (the one I missed because we were in Florida) Vince Walsh gave a slide show about nature. For those of you who have never had the pleasure of meeting Vince, let me tell you that he is a young man with a ponytail who looks like he could be on the cover of a movie magazine, but don't let that fool you; behind those good looks is a rugged outdoorsman who is as comfortable paddling a canoe ninety-miles into the Adirondack wilderness as he is sipping hot cider next to the woodstove in his hand built lodge. And, he has that comfortable aura about him that comes from a person who is living his life the way he wants rather than getting caught up in the rat race that drains so many young people. Well, enough about that. Before I embarrass him beyond recovery, I had better get back to the reason I am writing this article.

When I returned from Florida, several members of the historical society told me that they had enjoyed Vince's slide program, but they wondered why he didn't mention how he became interested in the outdoors and what led to his starting the awareness center. I couldn't answer their questions except to say that Vince is kind of a modest fellow, and although he does have quite an impressive background, you will always find him talking about nature rather than himself.

To find the answers to these folks' questions, I decided to interview Vince and write an article about him and his awareness center. So, on

Wednesday morning, I drove over to Greene Road and sat down with him in his lodge that he had built mostly of native lumber. The lodge was warm; he had built a wood fire that morning and was warming the building for a slide program that he would be presenting to the public that evening.

Since I was there the last time, he has added a fascinating display of mounted animals and birds. Most were the result of road kill—not hunting—he was quick to explain, even though he does enjoy the sport. He also has an interesting display of bark and splint baskets and Native American hunting gear. As we sat opposite each other in the center of the room, Vince began talking about his interests in the natural world. His words made me think about the words of an earlier naturalist, Louis Agassiz, who once said that he was going to take a summer off from his university teaching and study the natural wonders of the world, but added, “I never made it out of my own backyard.”

Vince told me that he thought his interests in the natural world probably began early when he was three or four. He chuckled and said, “My mother likes to tell the story about how at age three, I saw a butterfly in our backyard and followed it into a nearby park. A policeman rescued me about a half-mile from my house. When I was in third grade, I did a report about wolverines and that opened up a whole new level of understanding about animals and how they lived. While attending high school in Saratoga, I loved to hang out along the Kayaderosseras Creek near Middle Grove. My friends and I camped out, explored, built a rope swing over the water, and then decided to build a rock dam to make the pool under the rope deeper.”

He said, “Before we graduated from high school, my friends and I were hiking in the Adirondacks. When I discovered the Adirondacks, it opened up another whole world to me. After graduating, I decided that joining the Marines would let me continue my outdoor training, and I soon shipped off to Hawaii for a four year stint. I wasn’t prepared for the change in environment; the mountains were so steep and in the blink of an eye you could go from the flat ocean to some of the most rugged terrain I had ever seen. While in Hawaii, I participated in jungle warfare training where they would make us survive with minimal provisions in the wilds for weeks at a time. Although it was a

chance for me to learn more about nature, I soon began to feel homesick for the Town of Greenfield. When I finally had a chance to return home, I was struck by the many changes that had occurred during my absence. Greenfield had its first traffic light, and there were so many new houses being built.”

When Vince finished his Marine stint, he returned home and decided to attend Paul Smith’s College in the northern Adirondacks. He graduated in May, '97 with a degree in Environmental Studies. While at Paul Smith’s, he became involved in hiking and canoe racing, and he is now proud of the fact that he is one of only four charter members of the Paul Smith’s canoe team who is still participating in their marathon competitions where they paddle for ninety miles and portage (carry the canoe) for five miles.

After graduating from Paul Smith’s, Vince attended Johnson State College in Vermont, where he studied plant and animal sciences and Native American history. By June of '98, he was back home in Greenfield where he obtained his DBA (Doing Business As) *Kawing Crow*, even though he didn’t own any property yet. He worked part time at the Ndakinna Center on Middle Grove Road and during the year 2000 was invited to be a member of the US Swan Boat Team (20 paddlers per boat) competing in Thailand, where he spent an extra ten-days checking out the jungle. He saw a ten-foot cobra, and got to ride an elephant, and visit native villages in the mountains. This all took place while he was hunting for the perfect piece of property back home to start his own nature center on. Vince grinned and said, “That’s when I discovered that old proverb that, ‘The more you chase something, the faster it goes away from you.’ I hunted all over central NY for the right piece of property. I wanted something affordable, next to State land, with a mixture of water and woods where I could build my house and Nature Lodge. After several years and many disappointments, I was about to give up when a real estate person told me about a parcel on Greene Road. The price was affordable because of all the wetlands on it—just what I wanted. I drove over to Greene Road and liked the whole area. In fact I had once been on the backside of the same property looking for rare Black Tupelo trees which I had read about and eventually found. After a little negotiating, I was able to purchase the property.”

My wife, Alice, and I went back that Wednesday evening for Vince's slide program and met some nice folks who were there for the same purpose. Most of the slides were photos taken on his own property of birds and animals that also call that chunk of real estate their home. By the time the program ended, I began to realize how much I have isolated myself from the real world. I grew up spending a lot of time in the woods and consider myself somewhat of an environmentalist, but I realized that gradually through the years I have let my relationship with nature slip a little. Just like a man who lives in the mountains or on the shore of a beautiful lake, we tend to take such things for granted after a while. It isn't until someone like Vince opens our eyes again that we can return to the beauty and importance of the world that we are all so much a part of.

In the present world where we seem to be caught up in heavily marketed cheap goods (that most of us don't need) accompanied by the loss of American jobs (which we do need), it is refreshing to see a local young man trying to start his own business right here in the Town of Greenfield—a business that will not harm the environment but will help to renew our appreciation of it. I think that the **Kawing Crow Awareness Center** may be Greenfield's best kept secret, and I would invite all of you to discover for yourselves this young man and his dream. When folks find out what he is doing, more people will be beating a path to his lodge door because he offers so many diverse programs. From guided walks to children's birthday parties (always with an emphasis on nature and the environment), he offers something for everyone.

A field trip, sponsored by the Greenfield Historical Society will be held on April 30th at Vince's Awareness Center. It will be a chance for local folks to get to know more about Vince and his new Town of Greenfield business. So join us (it is open to the public—you don't have to be a member). Vince says it will consist of about a half-mile hike including 300 feet of board walk across the marsh. We will begin and end the walk at his lodge. Even if you feel the hike will be too much for you, we encourage you to come and hang out at the lodge, where I'm sure someone will provide refreshments

and certainly a time for socializing. Hope to see you on Sunday, April 30th from 1-3 p.m.

To get to Vince's Awareness Center proceed north on 9N from Greenfield Center. Just before the railroad underpass take a right on Greene Road. Continue for a total of two-and-one-half miles. After you cross Locust Grove Road, Vince's driveway will be on the left side in a wooded area a short distance past a low area in the road with wetlands on your left.

For more information on programs offered at the **Kawing Crow Awareness Center** call Vince at (518) 893-2620 or visit his website www.kawingcrow.com



Vince building his boardwalk

*Become a member of the Town of Greenfield Historical Society and receive our newsletter. Fill out this form and enclose \$6.00 for individual membership or \$10.00 for household. **If you send more it will be considered a donation.** Other types of memberships are also available (lifetime, corporate, etc.) just call and ask (893-0620). Our membership year begins in September and dues are paid annually. You may also join at one of our meetings.*

Send this application form and fee to Town of Greenfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833. Make checks payable to: Town of Greenfield Historical Society.

Type of membership: Individual _____ Household _____ (please indicate how many persons ten-years-old or older are in the household). _____

Name (please print) _____

Street _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Amount enclosed _____ (**\$6 individual or \$10 household**) **Date** _____

Areas of interest to you _____

Note: If you know someone whom you think might want to become a member, send us their name and address, and we will send them a free copy of our newsletter along with information on how they can join.

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

*Town of Greenfield Historical Society
P.O. Box 502
Greenfield Center, NY 12833*