

Historical Society Newsletter

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

Volume 7, Issue 5

Calendar

Tuesday January 16, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our speaker will be Karen Shook. She will talk about research that she has done on "The Underground Railroad."

Tuesday, February 20, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our speaker will be Michael Russert, Director of the Oral Project at the Military Museum in Saratoga.

Tuesday, March 20, 7 p.m. at the Community Center in Greenfield. Our speaker will be Jud Kilmer, owner of Kilmer's Sawmill on Lake Desolation Road. He will speak about the history of his family and the Town of Greenfield.

A thank you to Evelyn Feulner and Audrey Crandall, two of our members who spent a morning making paper chains for the Historical Society's Christmas tree. Also thanks to Joyce Woodard who came to my house to string cranberries and popcorn with me. An old-fashioned Christmas indeed!

Alice Feulner, co-chairman
of the Christmas program

Coral's Calls

January always seems a strange place to start a 'New Year' in the Northeast but I guess we hardy types have pretty much gotten used to it by now...

we did enjoy the December end of the old with that lovely, mellowing low sun coming through our westward windows of the former Odd Fellows Hall to a cheerful group of members and friends (more than 30) who'd come to just 'catch up' – some with more recent additions to the hall itself and others with just the 'pause' point in a busy season. As they used to relate in some old English tale, the 'board groaned' under the spread of goodies laid out upon the table and the mulled cider was soul-warming... A photographer/reporter, Ed Burke, from *The Saratogian* mingled amongst us, taking various shots. I mumbled to him something about 'getting out my camera.' He suggested I take advantage of the 'wonderful light' before it was gone – it already seemed nearly magical that we'd had the sun at all after a goodly number of dark days.

Our new (altho' she's got us set to about March so not letting any grass grow under her feet, despite our overly green month) program person, Lynn Wochinger, brought some lively carols to us via her portable keyboard...before joining the more relaxed pace of the nibblers, sippers, and socializers. No meeting to conduct or listen to...what an inspired blessing! Dot and Henry Rowland brought the cider and there were certainly enough irresistible goodies to do a proper cookie exchange at the end. Bob Roeckle, co-chair of the event with Alice Feulner, had squared off the Victorian armoire so that it did not look quite so out of place and I got to look at the back of it, as rarely seen when here; I still miss it after 30 years, especially looking for my gloves the first cold morning earlier. However, since it came

originally from the Grand Union (or the United States) via my old hometown, Schenectady, it has great sentimental value, excluding its practicality which works less well with the four doorways and a staircase of my abbreviated center hall. I could actually now, with an expanded staircase and opening to the main attic, get it up there if it could ever fit up to the second floor.

Well, that's not the greatest Town news of the moment but this month, we'll hear a special speaker, Karen Shook, who operates the Wayside Inn. She will talk about research she's done on the Underground Railroad and its role in the early days of our township. That's Tuesday, January 16 at the Community Center, business meeting to start at 7 p.m. On February 20, we'll hear from Michael Russert, director of the oral history project at the new (relatively speaking) Military Museum in Saratoga Springs. That meeting will also be at the Greenfield Community Center.

There are still some 'loose ends' yours truly is seeking to nail down before our society's calendar year end which does not seem near in winter but will be with us all too soon: these include the status of our legislative grant from Sen. Farley's office that got somewhat bogged down in the requisite paperwork to be filed with the State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – and our getting 6-digit estimates for the carriage shed stabilization to be eligible for our 4-digit sum which would still be useful to employ. I continue to pursue the trail of our 'imminent charter' approval with the State Education Department of which I cannot be too critical lest they suspend my pension.

Thanks again to everyone...and any whose name I've no doubt omitted...who helped in any and every way during Calendar Year '06...to make our organization function as well as it has.

And in the *apologia* division, since I was so quick to infer hemi-demi-semi-wavers of fiction applied upon fact amongst the 5th estate last column, I was very mildly reminded by once-neighbor Mary Max of my taking the liberty of renaming her late husband (a habit I've gotten into over the decades, not in 'creating' characters but in offhandedly dealing with those thrust upon me). How could I be so uncharitable to *Dick* Mitchell, a skilled gentleman (GE retiree) who literally 'rescued' this family one dark-pre-Xmas tide when I returned from Ohio with my son, ill husband attempting to

keep remaining circuits afloat (on the phone, long distance, my spouse related he was able to keep the coffeepot working by replacing the fridge's connection to the stove outlet). Dick, when I explained we were living by lantern and candlelight, did come over right before Christmas Eve to stroke the circuits a bit, a rare gift of 'light' to our grateful senses that rough 'n tumble, challenging year.

Well, *seasons of light* – ahead to us all!! See you on January 16! And don't bother coming early – I've gotten really good at the chairs altho' you may have noticed how I'm always too busy babbling to really be of much use putting them back in the closet! *Gracias!!*

Going Fishing/The Old Mine/ What a Blast

by Leonard J. Muller

How to begin this: the telling of one adventure of youth?

I guess one promises a story to Ron Feulner and then is bound by simple old honesty (guilt) to follow through. So I begin.

Oh those days! Those summer vacations with endless days of exploration. Sweet, simple youth and the freedom to do almost anything, just as long as no one was hurt or property damage done.

The trip by bicycle to the old graphite mine and Baptist Church cabins behind Jake Smero's place was an occasional longer adventure. On this day, Paul Labarge went with me. Once we got to Jake's pond, (which he stocked with trout, but that's another story) we took the old logging road up to a small stream that flowed between the old mine and the church cabins. Fishing poles in hand, the usual bait of grasshoppers or worms were searched for. Grasshoppers were in short supply so the flipping over of rocks for night crawlers was the order of the day. Alas! Worms seemed in short supply also. The area of the search eventually reached the church cabins where there were some really nice big stones. Over they went. Worms? Did we find any worms? Nope. But we did find some strange metallic creatures with tentacles of wires attached. Now at the ripe age of twelve, I knew that this was a find of epic proportions!

Reminiscing

by Mary Max

In the late fifties, explosives (cherry bombs, ash cans, M-80s, silver salutes) were occasionally acquired and immensely respected for the power to shred tin cans and whatever else they were placed in. We were well aware of how much damage these things could do to the human hands and eyes. Today's youth are so innocent of such things that as adults they don't have the common sense that God gave a good rock. Anyway, I digress.

Dynamite caps! At least that is what I thought they were. Electrical dynamite caps. Wow! Jackpot. Now let's see if they still work. Batteries – you need batteries to set them off. Remembering my bicycle's fender light with a couple of fresh "D" cells. I knew that dynamite caps were very dangerous so how to test them? Bury them? Naw, the noise. Get behind their explosive power with lots of cover. Yup. Ah a stone wall and lots of noise to boot. Perfect. With the added effect of seeing how strong these things were at damaging rock.

So, over the wall the six-foot test wires went, very carefully placing the cap in the proximity to a granite rock. Hugging the ground (nearly entering it) batteries were placed end to end for a three volt total electrical jolt. The ends of the wires were ever so carefully placed on the batteries. Instant Blam! Whooooieeeee! Success! For the first time in my young life the semi-sweet smell of high explosives and pulverized rock. What a thrill!

Now, what to do with the eleven caps left? Tell no one? No. I had to tell Dad. So I did. "Now, Lenny, those things are dangerous, be careful." So, I showed him how careful I had been with them, and he let me keep them. Then he proceeded to tell me his story of breaking up rocks in Norway back in the 1930s. Anyway, the rest of the caps we touched off during the next week or so. What a blast!

This is one of the stories from my youth. Can you imagine this story happening today? Those freedoms of the past are gone forever, those days of innocence.

In the spring of 1955, on a beautiful day, I had to go to Ballston Spa to have a cyst removed from my neck. The doctor had said that it would be no problem, just a couple of hours, and I could go home so I left my daughter, Rhoda, with my mom. I had my operation, and when I returned home, I saw several cars in Mom's yard, and a lot of people standing around, talking, and laughing. Bob Clements, a fireman, came over and said that they had organized a search party, but everything had turned out well.

Rhoda had been riding her tricycle up and down the driveway, and the last time that Mom had seen her, Rhoda was down by the barn. A few minutes later, she had disappeared. When Mom called, there had been no answer. After checking all the buildings, Dad went down to Middle Grove and brought back a bunch of guys to help him search.

They had all split up and gone in separate directions. Bob Clements had gone up Hyspot Road where he found Rhoda peddling her tricycle as fast as she could up the dirt road. When Bob stopped her, Rhoda said that she was on her way to visit her Uncle Lou and Aunt Irene. When Bob brought her home, Mom was relieved after feeling so badly that Rhoda had left while in her care.

About a year later, in 1956, just before Thanksgiving, the temperature dropped to about twenty below zero. We were in the process of having a new furnace installed, and the men were installing the heat ducts. Therefore, we couldn't run the furnace. It was cold in the house so I had dressed Rhoda in a home knit sweater and lined jeans and put her in her crib for a nap. She was three years old. After I thought she was asleep, I told the workmen that I had to run next door for something and would be right back. I was gone about fifteen minutes when my brother Bob came to get me and told me that the furnace man had left the house and was driving home when he saw a little girl running down the road near the creek. He told Bob that he thought it was my child. When Bob told me that Rhoda was down to Mom's, I was in shock.

Rhoda had heard Mom say that she was fixing a turkey for Thanksgiving and had decided to go down and see what the turkey looked like. When

she arrived at Mom's, Rhoda was so cold that the tears on her cheek and sweater were frozen. She had wet her pants, and they were frozen also. When I arrived, Rhoda was on the register thawing out, and was she ever happy to see me. I explained to her that if she wanted to see the turkey, she should have told me, and I would have taken her down.

Something in Common with Rhoda

by Ron Feulner

I don't remember the incident very well, but my mother does. I must have been about four or five-years-old, and it was the early 1940s when all the roads were still dirt. We lived on Murray Road in

Middle Grove, and my father, a lumberman, was cutting wood on a lot on Creek Road (a road with no houses at that time) about half way between the Corner Post and Rock City Falls. Just like Rhoda, I came up missing one day.

I had rode my tricycle to the end of Murray Road, then down Middle Grove Road, and had taken a left on Creek Road when a man returning from work at GE spotted me peddling my tricycle. He stopped to ask me where I was going (traffic wasn't very heavy in those days). I told him that I was on my way to see my father. Since the man didn't know where my father was logging, he decided to bring me home.

My mother had twins who were about two at the time, no indoor plumbing, and an acre garden to tend. I'm not sure that she had even missed me.

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