

# *Historical Society Newsletter*

*Ron Feulner, Editor*

*P.O. Box 502, Greenfield Center, NY 12833*

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

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## **Calendar**

**Tuesday, May 15, 7 p.m.** – regular meeting at the Community Center in Greenfield. Program: *Old Fashioned Ice Cream Social*.

**Saturdays, May 19 and June 2, Field Trips** – information will be finalized at the May meeting: Manville Rock, Spruce Mountain Fire Tower or the Graphite Mine. If you are unable to attend the May meeting but want to attend one or more field trips, call Ron Feulner at 518-893-0620.

## ***Coral's Calls***

Our final “speaker” of the year, news of the volunteer committee of a dozen folk who are to oversee salvaging of the town’s D&H caboose and general neighborly fellowship and good will appeared to prevail at April’s meeting with the nominating committee’s slate pretty much in place, another volunteer to assist in the annual internal audit of the books, plus my announcement of an additional \$7,500 that should be coming our way from Sen. Farley’s office with a more limited time frame to encumber the \$5,000 from two years ago still being processed through the State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation office. Despite the charter not yet quite being “final” through the State agency for which I once consulted, went to work for a year and stayed 28, I felt I could wrap up my four years as GHS prexy with a sense that we may have moved a bit forward – you should know that as a ‘swimmer,’ I am generally happy to keep my ‘head above water.’

Claire Olds, retired Dean of Students for Skidmore College, is an endearing, folksy speaker who can set forth a gentle yearning (in at least me) to call forth some more or less relevant experiences of Time Past. She has used her skills and insights to develop and

share a memoir-writing course for the Adult Learning in Retirement section of Empire State College and she exhorted us Greenfielders to ‘get down’ our stories (some of which we have done, as Ron Feulner, our monthly newsletter editor, pointed out at the end of the session.) I, too, also keep waving *Grey Matters*, a publication of the Senior Citizens Center of Saratoga Springs (writers of which I coordinate – a few of the last issue’s pieces up for reprint in the *Gazette*, as I understand it from Natalie Walsh, senior section editor.) Claire recalled one of our Greenfield neighbors, Al Barney, with whom she worked at Skidmore College whose skills and insights were helpful to coordinating their on-campus responsibilities.

Our speaker did send me off into my own reverie of being, as an undergraduate, on a Deans’ committee that had been formed after eight or nine students had raised an issue about a ‘townie’ and an egregious event that had occurred on the ‘men’s side’ of campus. Then, in the days of ‘loco parentis,’ there were strict rules about things but the Dean of Men and the Dean of Women agreed to meet with the aggrieved group providing they included a woman because it was a ‘co-ed’ school even if this incident involved guys (except for the townie). So one of the guys came, very humbly, to me and said they were ‘forced’ to have a woman on their committee and even though they had protested it, the deans would not otherwise hear them out so they asked if I would ‘mind’ joining them as the ‘token’ female. (I guess I knew them from an impromptu campus lit mag and a few less mainstream activities.) Anyway, I might never have gotten any sense of what ‘deans’ did on a campus if it had not been for those pleasant Saturday evenings of fresh-baked pie and coffee at one or the other of their homes, the group of us rehashing the town-gown communications process and the college’s

stratifications, homogeneity and other ‘issues’ I’m not sure we ever totally resolved ... in our time.

Of course this took place far from Greenfield but having spent a fair amount of time on and off the nearby campus of Skidmore in various capacities, I did feel a forgotten kinship with such issues with which higher ed school communities must wrestle. And then Claire mentioned ‘Kent State’ (during her tenure) and that took me instantly back to teaching English-journalism at what is now the Schenectady High School but was my alma mater, Linton, and several students lowering the flag in respect to the ones killed in Ohio, a polarizing incident to the high school because it was interpreted as an appropriate homage by some and an unpatriotic desecration of the flag by others and the whole school closed down the next day in a rare event for faculty and staff to “mull” over. A student in my class had his camera with him that raw day when the flag was lowered in 1970 and, I suppose, with a graphic notion ‘this was news’ like Iwo Jima, he got it on film, processed it and we were able to get it to our printer and have it inserted on page 1 of our long-labored school newspaper about to go to press – this was ‘record-breaking’ in those days which 21st Century students of an instant-imaging, duplicating and transmission generation would now find nearly impossible to fathom ...

Meanwhile, back to Greenfield ... Our own (GHS) Vince Walsh will be heading the caboose committee along with nominating committee head and longtime resident Joyce Woodard, Louise Okoniewski of the Town Clerk’s office and others whose community roots have enabled them to come forward to protest the extirpation of this 9N fixture to other places ... they will focus on both the needs and potential of the caboose as well as the adjacent, historic station. April brings the season of ‘renewal,’ of hope and much else despite, here at the Private Benedict House, a watery stream needing to meander down my yard’s length toward the swamp (for which the original deed had ‘water rights’ long ago when Captain Page still had quarters catty-corner.) I treat my time in this olde house (in the southernmost reaches of our township – up the road a short huff, jogging, I’m in Milton ...) as a precious ‘privilege,’ dependent on mobility, eyesight, what have you ... and even though shoveling snow and carrying wood are what I call ‘cheap gym’ (with fresh air and birdsong), I’m ever grateful for a volunteer plowman (or two) who can make a quick sweep of my little

paces. In the past two peculiar winters, not a few plowing contracts have gone un-inked ... so we are doubly grateful for such generosity.

Alice Feulner, Louise McCormick and Joyce Woodard brought mouth-watering confections and everyone hung around to schmooze after the biz part and speaker last month until the clean-up crew and chair-stacking facilitators were scattering nibblers and chatters ... I hope Ms. Olds inspired more than just me to ‘reflect back’ on a time and a place, a role each of us may once have had in something we surely thought forgotten, like the stop-watch I set in my poetry volume, having found what I wanted to ‘re-read’ and then couldn’t locate the timepiece until I was nearly back from my twice-Kayaderosseras-crossed outing of a half-dozen miles, not fast at all, but stopping to put one foot up on the guardrail and listen to the high-velocity music ... grateful for those little tunnels and whatever that make ears rather marvelous when they are more or less working okay ... These are not exactly ‘still waters,’ especially for trout fishermen (of which Claire’s colleague was an ardent exemplar and she also enjoyed) but for one like myself who spent so little time in Greenfield, working in Albany and trekking about the state, it was a couple years of jogging before I even *found* that part of the stream which is on the ‘back side’ of our block (actually a triangle ...)

We hope to have an outing or hike on May 19, shortly after our “ice cream social” final meeting on May 15 when we will also hold election of officers at this terminus of our ’06-07 calendar. I wish to thank ‘all the neighbors’ that have become friends in our organization, even those who’ve visited from faraway places like Galway, Corinth, Wilton, Saratoga Springs, Northville ... Yunno,’ it’s a small world as I read the other day of that generous gentleman in Galway who left a substantial bequest to their library and other benefactors and as I pursued the newspaper account curiously, the ‘story of his life,’ one name stood out – his second wife’s who happened to be my mother’s immediate supervisor at KAPL and a person my Mom idolized ... why, they might have even attended each other’s weddings as my Mom had seemingly ‘followed’ her late-in-life marriage with her own second start ... and so the world goes round and the creek flows and as Dick Roeckle once pointed out to me in the general store where Stewart’s now stands in Middle Grove that the “Ridge” up behind us has something to do with our living in the foothills ... amen, after 30 years, yes,

I understand that. So I will name no names in thanking all of you who have supported me despite my narcissistic rambles through the town environs and for being so supportive, open, smiling and generous ... during my time as supposed leader of this amazing organization ... *keep on trucking* ... as a culture of us used to say ... beyond the log-laden semi's which come and go in every direction ... I know almost everything by 'the sound' now ... even whether the barometer is rising or falling and, when jogging especially, what the 'conveyance' might be coming up behind – whether it carries a single extension ladder. Or perhaps a pair aloft on the utilitarian pickup. See you all in May!

## ***Early One Morning in 1957***

*by J. Frank Goyette*

About a quarter mile up Allen Road from Joe Doherty's general store in Porter Corners, there was an old stone and wood frame house. Leslie and Helen Rodgers owned it. They were very kind and loving people that opened their home to children in need. They were parents to their own three children and at this time, foster parents to three other children and me. So on a typical school day there were seven kids scrambling to get out the door and off to school. On this particular October morning, I don't remember what was specifically on my mind other than making sure that no one stole my toast, I got my share of oatmeal and my hair was combed just right before heading off to high school in my 'black slacks.' That was pretty much the normal routine for all of us.

There was a little white refrigerator by the kitchen door with a radio on it. The radio was usually tuned to WPTR in Albany for the latest music, news and weather. Most days the sound from the radio was more like "white noise" amid the chaos, as we each got ready for school. On this day the radio was about to become the center of attention. A special bulletin announcement interrupted whatever was playing. We hushed each other and listened as the announcer said that the USSR had launched an "artificial earth satellite." It was called "Sputnik" and was about the size of a basketball. It circled the earth in the unbelievable time of about an hour and a half! The satellite's radio transmission played over the radio and as I listened to that constant beep, beep, beep, I knew that this was not only a historic event, but one that also created a little fear almost like the Russians had invaded the US.

The political aspects did not enter my mind until later on. The implication was that the USSR was ahead of the US in the space race. A month later in November of 1957, the Russians launched Sputnik II. This was a bigger satellite and even carried a dog named Laika. The launches were a clear victory in the cold war for the Russians. The US would not put a satellite into space until late in 1958 and it was only the size of a measly grapefruit. Everyone looked at the night sky a little differently after these satellite launches. They were too small to see as they whizzed around the planet but that would change in a couple of years.

In August, 1960, after several attempts, the US finally got a large 100 foot or so, inflatable, reflective satellite into orbit called Echo I. Its purpose was to advance science and reflect radio signals but it also served to boost the country's morale a little bit. It was a big reflector so it was visible as it streaked across the night sky and it was made in the USA. The news would announce the time and direction to look in the night sky to see Echo I. We would go across the road from the old historic stone house, lie down in the grass, and wait to witness history ourselves. After a bit, someone would shout, "there it is" and we would follow that pinpoint of light across the night sky. If I remember correctly, it would pass roughly from the Northeast to the Southwest. After a few more visits to the field, the thrill of Echo One was gone and we all moved on. After all, we were teenagers discovering things more interesting to look at. However, I will never forget "witnessing" man's first journeys into space.

## ***Stubby and Zelda Rhodes***

*by Toni L'Hommedieu*

*and shared with us by JoAnn Rowland*

**Information concerning the Stubby and Zelda Rhodes Excellence in Leadership Award by Toni L'Hommedieu and read during the annual 4-H Leader Recognition Banquet on September 21, 2006. Toni grew up on the North Creek Road.**

Ernest (Stubby) and Zelda Rhodes started their 4-H leadership years as an answer to a need for a rural learning opportunity for Daketown School children of the Middle Grove/Greenfield, NY area. Parents of the children in this area were supportive of the effort to bring learning opportunities, socializing among other rural children as well as a way to design structured use of leisure time. This club was organized prior to the time when children had

organized activities to occupy their every waking moment. The club was called the Daketown Hustlers and was in existence from 1946 to 1955.

The Rhodes' owned a small dairy farm on North Creek Road in the Middle Grove/Greenfield area. Stubby spent his time with the boys and taught them skills necessary to run a small dairy operation. Included in his program was farm safety, management skills and animal husbandry. The members of the club went to the Saratoga County Fair in Ballston Spa with their prize winning cows.

Zelda worked with the girls in the club on cooking and sewing projects. The girls would also take their projects to the fair to compete for the coveted ribbons. The cooking class taught the members the fine points of baking, balancing nutrition, feeding a family, and other homemaking skills. The sewing projects taught the girls how to make items to wear including the choice of wardrobe items, fabrics and alterations to existing wardrobe items. In addition, the girls learned how to care for babies and personal hygiene.

Both boys and girls were expected to complete their projects and to do demonstrations both at the club meetings and at the fair. Stubby and Zelda also supervised the construction of a club project entered in the club project competition at the fair every year that the club was in existence.

On a personal note, I was a member of this club from 1949 to 1955. I learned how to sew, cook, participate in meetings, make group decisions, and gained a sense of pride about being a "country kid." Both Stubby and Zelda were non-judgmental and provided a supportive non-threatening, non-competitive atmosphere in the club. I cannot remember a time when I felt as though I had done a bad job when, of course, I had some misses throughout the years. None of what we did as a club or as individuals in the context of that club were ever thought of by Stubby and Zelda as a reflection on them. Looking back, it seems that they were always there but never in front, always in a supportive role.

I can truly say that my participation in this 4-H experience with Zelda and Stubby Rhodes changed the direction of my life in subtle ways that I am only now becoming aware of. They were role models of the best possible kind. Both Stubby and Zelda are deceased. Stubby in 1970 and Zelda at the age of 92 in 2005. I had an opportunity to visit Zelda before she died and showed her the quilts that I had made as a result of having learned how to sew and thanked her for doing that for me. As always, she down played her role and spent time telling me how beautiful they were. Ever the supportive leader.

This award is in honor of them both and their selfless quiet excellence in 4-H leadership.

**To join the Historical Society send \$10 along with your name and address to the address shown below.**

**I need articles for the September issue.** If you would like to submit an article, send it to the address below or if you typed it using Microsoft Word, you can e-mail it to me (the editor) at: [aliron@localnet.com](mailto:aliron@localnet.com).

**To sponsor a newsletter send \$50 along with your name and address and the wording (please print) describing whom you would like the newsletter dedicated to.**

*Town of Greenfield Historical Society (TOGHS)*

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