

CONNECTICUT Woodlands



THE ANCIENT ART OF CHARCOAL MAKING

ALSO: POETRY AND THE NEW ENGLAND TRAIL

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DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

The John Muir Trail skirts this beautiful swamp. See page 26.

Connecting People to the Land

Our mission: The Connecticut Forest & Park Association protects forests, parks, walking trails and open spaces for future generations by connecting people to the land. CFPA directly involves individuals and families, educators, community leaders and volunteers to enhance and defend Connecticut's rich natural heritage. CFPA is a private, non-profit organization that relies on members and supporters to carry out its mission.

Our vision: We envision Connecticut as a place of scenic beauty whose cities, suburbs, and villages are linked by a network of parks, forests, and trails easily accessible for all people to challenge the body and refresh the spirit. We picture a state where clean water, timber, farm fresh foods, and other products of the land make a significant contribution to our economic and cultural well-being.

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On the Cover:

Lance Hansen worked with Rob Butterworth and other devoted helpers building this demonstration charcoal mound in Goodwin State Forest. They created this tangible history lesson as part of their hands-on study in the forest's Master Naturalist Program. Middle photo, a charcoal pit ready for burning in Burlington, Connecticut, in 1890. Below, charcoal making was common in the East for many years, as shown in this New Jersey scene. See page 7.

TOP PHOTO BY PETE VERTEFEUILLE, MIDDLE PHOTO, CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOTTOM PHOTO, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



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Tree-book browsing reveals surprising history



BY ERIC LUKINGBEAL

Sitting in the Connecticut Forest & Park Association library at the end of a long committee meeting, I spied a row of books about trees. I've read and own many tree books, such as Michael A. Dirr's

Encyclopedia of Trees and Shrubs (Timber Press, 2011) and *Hardy Trees and Shrubs* (Timber Press, 1997). (I have wished for Dirr's big book, *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* (Stipes Publishing, 1998) for its encyclopedic details about propagation, pests, and diseases.) As I was sitting in the library, Donald Culross Peattie's *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America* (Houghton Mifflin, 1950) caught my eye, and I signed it out. It cost \$5 in 1950. It's illustrated with Paul Landacre's simple but striking woodcuts.

As a new graduate of the University of Connecticut's Master Gardener program, I have become familiar with many online resources about trees, shrubs, and vines. I especially like the website of the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. But reading Mr. Peattie's 1950 volume reminds me how much nuance, trivia, curiosity, odd facts, philosophy, and enthusiasm are missing from online databases. I am a fan of the odd fact, so Mr. Peattie's descriptions kept my interest. Here are a few tree facts from his book:

Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

supplied the world with pencils for nearly a century, until the supply was exhausted and other species such as the incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), a western U.S. species, filled some of that demand.

Eastern white oak (*Quercus alba*), looked down upon as too weak by British shipbuilders, was used in the USS Constitution and other warships, and it proved good enough for American commerce around the world.

A white elm (*Ulmus Americana*) shaded George Washington as he took command of the Continental Army on Cambridge Common. In the 1920s, this elm died, and its rings were counted, revealing that it would have been a mere sapling in 1775.

Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) grows tall and straight and was often used to make canoes. Daniel Boone made a 60-foot canoe of tulip, and took his family and all his belongings down the Ohio River to Spanish Territory.

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) shrinks less when drying than any other hardwood. Many bedsteads were made of it because its odor was believed to repel bedbugs. Cabin floors were made of it too.

Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) provided forked branches colonists used to find mineral deposits such as gold, as well as water. (A well driller we hired in New York state used witch hazel to site our new well.)

Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) trees measure the largest girth of North American deciduous hardwoods. Its wood is relatively weak but extremely hard to split. This quality resulted in its frequent use as a butcherblock. Sycamores are often hollow, and in pioneer

days, cows, pigs, and even horses were stabled in them.

Sarvisstree (*Amelanchier laevis*), now called serviceberry, is the heaviest wood (along with persimmon) outside of the tropics.

Wild black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) so closely resembles mahogany that carpenters often passed it off as such, fooling even experts. Daniel Boone used cherry to make caskets, which he sometimes slept in.

Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) grows to the right of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's main entrance. Mr. Peattie's book says that redbud's flowers were fried and eaten in Mexico and used in salads in North Carolina.

Sweet locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*, also known as honey locust) grows long thorns, which, because they sometimes pinned together worn-out uniforms of Confederate soldiers, became known in some places as Confederate pintree. The Cherokee tribe used its durable wood for bows.

Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*), also called *stinking buckeye*, is Ohio's state tree and the mascot of Ohio State University's athletic teams. Mr. Peattie notes, "Much capital has been made of this by Ohio's neighbors," but goes on to say, "The retort might be made that the wolverine [the University of Michigan's mascot] is a thoroughly disgusting animal." We might forgive Mr. Peattie for blasting a mammal that now struggles to survive—remember, he was writing in 1950.

Eric Lukingbeal is a retired environmental lawyer. He lives with his wife, Sally King, in Granby, where he serves on the town's land trust and planning and zoning commission.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF
**CONNECTICUT
WOODLANDS**

- A Tribute to Norm Sills, Connecticut's Appalachian Trail Architect
- Almanac: A new column
- Imperiled ecosystems, next in a series

Change happens



BY ERIC HAMMERLING

I write this column fresh from the surprise of the November 2016 election. No value judgments here. No matter what you believe or whom you support, you would likely agree that the outcome of this

election was a surprise.

Although we certainly engage in the public policy arena, I am thankful that the Connecticut Forest & Park Association works primarily at the state level in a non-partisan, science-based manner with a focus on conservation issues that are important to people of all backgrounds and political orientations. At the same time, I have been wrestling with the concept of “change” and wondering whether we are as ready to deal with change in our own lives as we are ready to see changes in political leadership or changes in Connecticut’s forests.

I attended the excellent three-day Coverts Project seminar at the Yale Forestry Camp in Great Mountain Forest this fall. I and the other coverts cooperators (as we call those who complete the seminar) visited different areas of the forest, viewing how it had changed over time. Some forest stands we

visited had grown in response to silvicultural management techniques. Other, unmanaged stands were undergoing forest successional changes on their own. The dedicated instructors, deftly organized by University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension for-ester Tom Worthley, showed in many different ways that the only constant in the forest is change. If you want to prevent change—for instance, maintaining a particular wildlife habitat—you typically must manage that forest actively and continually.

Forests are always changing, but people tend to resist it. Woodrow Wilson famously said, “If you want to make enemies, try to change something.” Indeed, the Harvard Business Review suggested the top 10 reasons we oppose change. I encountered this list in a professional context, but I believe it applies more broadly:

1. We perceive a loss of control.
2. We experience increased uncertainty.
3. We need time to adjust to surprises.
4. Our daily habits are hard to break.
5. We are emotionally connected to the “old way” of doing things.
6. We fear a transition from comfort to incompetence.
7. The process of changing the status quo involves more work.

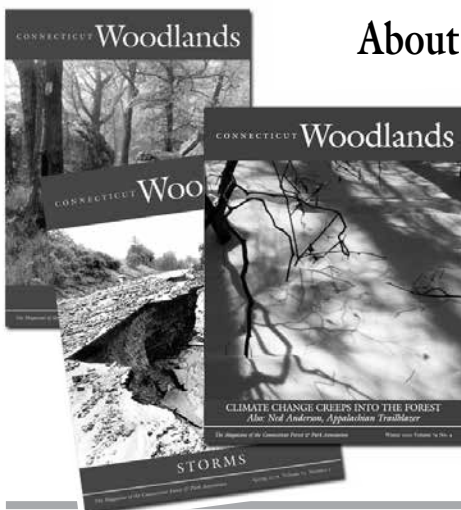
8. Change creates ripples that affect other things and people.
9. Our past resentments and conflicts can bubble up.
10. Sometimes change can stop or damage what you viewed as positive progress.

These are all very real feelings, and I have to admit that I felt uncomfortable just writing this list here.

Forests can teach us something about handling change in the post-November 2016 election world. Here’s where I tend to get philosophical and use lots of conditional “if statements.” If change is constant for us as it is in the forest, and if we learn how we can take actions to affect the outcomes we would like to see in our lives and communities, we can “be the change we want to see in the world,” as Gandhi said.

Your support and action will be critical if we want to better protect public lands; if we want to keep your state parks, forests, and campgrounds from neglect or shutdown; and if we want to continue to enjoy the trails and wondrous natural resources of Connecticut. Yes, change happens, but we can adapt and improve both what we do and how we do it together if we want to succeed for ourselves and future generations.

Eric Hammerling has directed the Connecticut Forest & Park Association since 2008. He lives in West Hartford with his family.



About Connecticut Forest & Park Association and Connecticut Woodlands Magazine

Connecticut Woodlands is a quarterly magazine published since 1936 by CFPA, a member-based nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the land, trails, and natural resources of Connecticut.

Members of CFPA receive the magazine in the mail four times a year.

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Foresters meet indoors, getting serious about climate

BY CHRISTINE WOODSIDE

Every November they clomp into the ballroom of the Aqua Turf banquet center in Southington, wearing work boots and wool shirts, the uniform of foresters. Those who work around trees or study them gather in the unlikely surroundings of chandeliers and carpeting for their annual forum on Connecticut's rural and urban forests, sponsored by the Connecticut Forest & Park Association and the Connecticut Urban Forest Council.

This year more than ever the message of all the talks was: Forests are changing fast, in ways that feel a bit like a creepy movie. Forest professionals must respond with careful protocols for tree care. The language of the protocols is technical. The important point for the public is that Connecticut's landscape is changing dramatically, and no one in the forestry world is questioning that.

We've reported some of this change here in Connecticut Woodlands. The emerald ash borer, a nonnative insect, continues its march of destruction in the state's ash trees, and tree experts can only stop them with chemicals, one tree at a time. Altered rain and snowfall, warmer winters, and warmer growing seasons are altering such patterns of life as when to pick apples.

More change is moving in. A year and a half ago, the southern pine beetle moved into Connecticut, threatening several species but especially the important and rare native pitch pine. Tidal wetlands will continue to shrink. Trees that need cold climates, such as the sugar maple, are starting to suffer. Southern tree species may become northern. One case study presented at the forum reported that a group of magnolias planted as something of an experiment actually thrived in Ithaca, New York, even though they were predicted to die.

The federal government has so far responded to climate change through regulation and rule-making because Congress has failed to act on a national bill. (Kate Sheppard wrote a helpful summary of the fighting and inaction over climate change at the federal level in an August 2015 Huffington Post article called "Don't Like the New Climate Rules? Thank Congress.") That summer, the Obama administration issued new power plant regulations under the Clean Air Act following a Supreme Court ruling. This happened because the U.S. Congress had failed to act on bills that would regulate greenhouse gas emissions.)

I started covering climate change in the late 1990s, back when reporters tended to "balance" articles on global warming with a quote from a scientist who didn't believe it was happening. We stopped that some years ago because the evidence for a warming climate is so overwhelming; it would be like finding someone who disagreed that the sky is blue. Nevertheless, many elected representatives and senators in Washington have considered climate change too controversial among constituents to vote on a national bill.

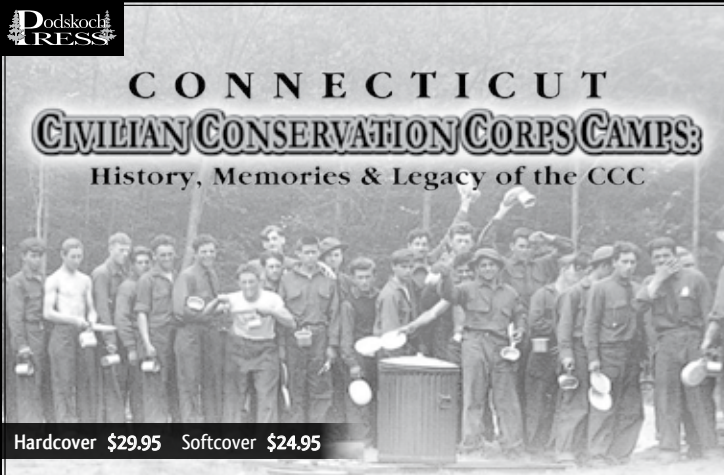
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR RESPONDED TO CLIMATE

CHANGE THROUGH REGULATION AND RULE-MAKING BECAUSE

CONGRESS HAS FAILED TO ACT ON A NATIONAL BILL.

At the local level, elected officials and anyone who deals with land for a living have been dealing with climate change for years. At the federal level, arguments continue about what America should do as a country, while town and city water and sewer officials have to deal with rising seas, and flood managers must deal with new flood zones, greater threats, and streets under water. Foresters too must observe and tend the landscapes that struggle with different growing seasons, unpredictable weather, and damaging insects. The change is upon us, and the foresters are on the case.

Christine Woodside is the editor of Connecticut Woodlands magazine.




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GHOSTS IN THE FOREST

THE ANCIENT ART OF CHARCOAL MAKING

BY JEAN WIERZBINSKI

An unusual round structure stands just off the path from the Goodwin Forest's Grand Junction to Governor's Island. Four-foot-tall logs stand around a central pole. Although it looks a little like a primitive dwelling, inside, thinner logs lie stacked horizontally. Once a common sight in Connecticut's woodlands, charcoal mounds have vanished from the forests, leaving only ghostly traces on the forest floor. In the past, a charcoal maker would have burned this mound to the ground to create high quality charcoal, an efficient fuel in high demand. This reproduction mound will remain as it is so that anyone walking by learns about an important part of Connecticut's history.

In its Goodwin Forest Management Plan, 2012–2022, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's forestry division identified remnants of charcoal mounds found in Goodwin State Forest as a valuable cultural resource, the only remaining visible evidence of this vanished forest-based occupation. The areas are round, usually surrounded by older, mature

trees, but with little new growth within the circle.

Susan Barlow from the Manchester, Connecticut, Historical Society described them as "slightly raised circles 25–45 feet in diameter made up of earth and cinders . . . clear and identifiable, because they are quite large and still have bits of shiny charcoal, found a few inches under the top layer of leaves and soil."

Preserving the remains of the once-thriving charcoal industry is a goal of foresters and historical preservationists throughout the state. The remains of mounds and charcoal-burners' huts are protected within such forests as the Rockland Preserve in Madison and the Cockaponset State Forest in Chester. Grants from the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office funded the archeological exploration and preservation of a charcoal mound at People's State Forest in Barkhamsted. Goodwin State Forest's master naturalists, the Friends of Goodwin Forest, and DEEP collaborated to create the reproduction mound in Goodwin State Forest. Lance Hansen and Robert Butterworth, two trail enthusiasts and trail managers for the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, performed much of the "grunt work" as participants in Goodwin Forest's Master Naturalist program. They leveled the site, felled trees, and stacked the wood to create the mound. The reconstructed mound teaches visitors about the ancient art of charcoal

making and preserves the memory of this forest-based occupation.

Crucial Resource Since the Bronze Age

The 19th-century colliers made charcoal when they burned the wood in the mounds without oxygen. This process drove off moisture and reduced the wood to mostly carbon. The charcoal produced in such mounds bore little resemblance to the barbecue charcoal sold in stores today. Today's briquettes, invented by Henry Ford to use waste products from his factory, are a mix of charcoal, sawdust, wood scraps, coal dust, and minerals. "Charcoal of good quality retains the grain of the wood; it is jet black in color with a shining luster in a fresh cross-section. It is sonorous with a metallic ring, and does not crush, nor does it soil the fingers. It floats in water, is a bad conductor of heat and electricity, and burns without flame," M. D. Chaturvedi wrote in 1943.

From the Bronze Age forward, charcoal has been a crucial resource with wide-ranging uses. Blacksmiths used it to fuel their fires. People used charcoal powder to brush their teeth, settle upset stomachs, and eliminate bad odors. They used it to pack ice, even meat. It was used to make gunpowder, ink, black paint, and medicines and to cure tobacco. Charcoal has twice the energy value of regular wood, and charcoal's properties when burned made it ideal for metalworking.



Charcoal pits, burning, Burlington, Conn. Oct. 10, 1890.

CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Burning charcoal mounds in Burlington, 1890.

Beginning in the early 1700s, high-quality charcoal fueled Connecticut's burgeoning brass and iron industries, supporting a vital period of growth and a bustling economy. It continued to fuel Connecticut's metal industries until the 1920s, peaking in the mid-to-late 1800s. Charcoal was such a necessity that virtually every town, even small, non-industrial farming ones, had its charcoal makers. Mr. Butterworth said that in central and eastern parts of the state itinerant colliers helped meet the need for charcoal, while the high demand created by iron forges in northwestern Connecticut led to more permanent charcoal burners.

Methods for making charcoal vary around the world based on the characteristics of the soil and the water table in a given region. In some places, charcoal is burned in deep pits dug into the ground. In Connecticut,

however, the hard, rocky soil and high water table meant that the "pits" were actually leveled, cleared areas on the forest floor.

Connecticut's colliers transformed ordinary hardwood timber into charcoal through a laborious, dirty, and dangerous process. They built their mounds once winter passed, beginning in late March, and worked them through the summer. Construction included several stages.

Setting Up the Center Pole

The mound in Goodwin Forest stands on a flat, cleared circle surrounded by a shallow trench. The collier created this "pit" by leveling and raking an area close to the wood he would use as his raw material.

Next, the collier created a center chimney known as the fagan, by stacking small logs horizontally into a triangular tower several

feet high. He then inserted a fagan pole, a tall pole, into the center of the fagan. This pole allowed the collier to visually identify the center of the mound after its completion. The collier could pull the fagan pole out and ram it back down during the process to assess the progress of the burn, which started from the top of the mound and moved downward.

Once the fagan pole was in place, the collier filled the chimney with kindling. He then placed billets, four-foot lengths of wood cut the prior season, around the chimney. The mound in Goodwin has two levels of billets, but a large mound would have more levels and multiple layers within each level.

Next, the collier covered the structure with leaves or straw to create a barrier between the billets and next layer. "Leafing the pit" prevented dirt from falling into the mound, which could extinguish the fire or cause uneven charring.

The collier "dusted the pit" by shoveling dirt on top of the leaf-covered mound until it was completely covered. He then climbed to the top and created an opening around the Fagan pole so he could "fire the pit" by pouring hot embers into the chimney. A wooden "bridgen" closed the opening, which was buried under a foot of dirt.

Now the collier had to tend the mound constantly for anywhere from a few days to a several weeks, depending in its size. Because it was crucial for him to stay awake to control the burn, he might use a one-legged stool so he would tip over if he started to doze off.

The wood in the mound charred slowly. It really was baked rather than burned. White smoke escaped the top of the mound at first, as water burned off. Once the temperature was hot enough—which we now know to be 518 degrees Fahrenheit—carbonization began, and smoke became blue as the gasses escaped. In the early spring and summer, the woods would have been filled with smoldering mounds of wood, the air redolent with their smoke. The smoke the mound produced did not smell like a campfire. Van Morgan, an environmental educator, musician, and history enthusiast, demonstrates charcoal burning in Pennsylvania and has produced step-by-step YouTube videos as he constructs and burns a mound. He describes the scent of a burning mound as more earthy than a campfire and says he "can almost smell the tar being cooked out of it." As the charring



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The charcoal made in Connecticut forests was used to smelt iron in furnaces in Kent and elsewhere that looked like this. (The one shown here is in New Jersey.)



PETER VERTEFEUILLE

This demonstration mound, built by Lance Hansen, Rob Butterworth, and several dedicated helpers in Goodwin State Forest, is one of only three like it in Connecticut.

continued, temperatures in the mound could reach 1,000 degrees F.

The most dangerous part of the collier's job was "jumping the pit." As the wood burned, the mound shrank and soft air pockets, or mulls, formed. The collier climbed to the top and stomped or jumped on the air pockets to eliminate them. If he fell through, he fell into a virtual furnace.

The collier might also need to "give 'er fire" by opening a vent lower on the mound to draw the charring process to the desired side if it was burning unevenly. He could also create a draft and draw the fire down, allowing moisture to escape and continuing the charring process. The mound continued to shrink as more wood burned.

A skilled collier knew when it was time for "foxing the brands," or raking out the charcoal from the leaves and dirt. Any pieces still smoldering or not quite done were re-covered with dirt until they were finished. Colliers loaded the charcoal onto wagons and took it to the metal production furnaces or other customers such as blacksmiths. A good collier might produce 35 to 40 bushels per cord of wood from a single mound.

Isolated, Dangerous Lives

The collier's occupation was dangerous. Some colliers fell into the burning mounds. Colliers and their assistants could be maimed or killed while felling trees or chopping wood. Breathing in smoke made

colliers susceptible to the same lung diseases as coal miners. The natural forest environment presented dangers as well. Mr. Butterworth reports that colliers kept frogs in their huts to give snakes something to bite besides them. It seems not everyone was aware of this precaution. In 1902, a rattlesnake bit a collier in Lime Rock. Fortunately, he survived.

The colliers' isolated lives in the forest often affected the way they were viewed by society. The artist and expert in pre-industrial life in New England, Eric Sloane, described them as "a strange breed, living a lonely life in the forest, almost like wild beasts . . . not only shunned, but often feared. . . During all that time, through every kind of weather, the maker of charcoal lived with his mound, sleeping only in dozes for fear an open flame might start and explode into a full fire, which would demolish the mound. There was no time for washing; there was seldom more shelter than a bark lean-to." David Webb Fowler, former author of *Colonial American Digressions* at davidwebbfowler.com, wrote, "Some colliers were excused from regular church attendance and encouraged to stay in camp and read the Bible. Religious people (most people) did not think well of anyone who could go out in the woods and stay away from the community for several months. They thought him an odd person."

In parts of northwestern Connecticut, colliers were called Raggies, a less than flattering

nickname. The origin is unclear. It may be a corruption of the northwestern ridge known as Mount Riga, or of the Russian names of the immigrant colliers in that area. Later, as coal replaced charcoal as the primary fuel, it may have reflected the physical appearance of the impoverished workers and their families. In the Torrington area, it is still considered a derogatory term. If colliers were ostracized, it was only because their more refined neighbors failed to recognize how much their own way of life depended on the colliers' hard work at a filthy, dangerous, and exhausting job.

Massive consumption cleared forestland. Connecticut consumed an impressive amount of charcoal in the 19th century. An 1890 New York Times article about the state's economy in 1845 noted, "The total number of bushels of charcoal burned during that year was 4,122,203. Of this quantity, 3,029,042 bushels were marketed in Litchfield County." This massive consumption meant that the 19th century charcoal industry had a major impact on Connecticut's woodlands, particularly in the northwestern corner.

Before the peak charcoal producing years, early farmers had destroyed forests as they cleared land for fields and harvested wood for everything from fuel to building homes to manufacturing tools for daily living. In 1820, only 25 percent of Connecticut was forested. The trend reversed as Connecticut's farmland became depleted of nutrients and the American west opened for settlement. Many abandoned their farms, which reverted to forest. By 1840, 47 percent of the state was covered in forest. With the growth of industrialization in the state, the demand for charcoal increased, and Connecticut's forests were once again cleared on a massive scale.

The Puzzle of Deforestation

Numerous now unknowable variables such as mound size, variations in the number and types of hardwoods on a given acre, and the skill of the particular collier make it difficult for modern foresters to calculate deforestation in a given area during a given time. Another factor complicating modern efforts to determine deforestation is that production in various parts of Connecticut varied widely. Although charcoal was produced throughout the state, Litchfield County consumed vast amounts because of the multiple

furnaces located in iron-rich northwestern Connecticut. Mr. Fowler wrote on his website, “An average hardwood tree that was 16 inches thick about four feet off the ground would produce about half a cord of usable wood. . . . Some acres of hardwoods had 60 usable trees on them, while others had as many as 80.” According to the article “Colliers in New Hartford” by Walter Landgraf and James Monroe Smith, a typical mound might contain 30 cords of wood. If a collier tended three mounds at a time, he would burn 450 cords of wood in a season. If each acre of forest yielded 30 cords, then one collier would clear 15 acres each winter, creating 15,700 to 18,000 bushels of charcoal. The New York Times article I’ve mentioned calculated that 206,463 cords were cut in 1845, “Litchfield County leading with 57,236 cords.” It is not hard to understand why, by 1860, forested land in Connecticut dropped to 29 percent.

As early as the 1880s, some Connecticut landowners recognized the need to look toward the future through sustained yield forest management, an idea imported from Europe. They ensured that the cut area of forest was regenerated immediately. Dr. Thomas Starka, professor in Clemson University’s Forestry and Environmental Conservation Department, provides an example of how sustained yield would work: “Each year 600 acres of 20-year-old timber was cut and each year the land was allowed to naturally regenerate. After a 20-year cycle of this sustained yield process there would be 20 forest stands, each 600 acres in size, and each one year older than the next.” The total acreage for this example of sustained yield would be 12,000.

The charcoal industry declined throughout Connecticut and the northeastern United States in the early 20th century as coal replaced charcoal. In their 1959 book *Vanishing Crafts and Their Craftsmen* (Rutgers University Press), Rollin C. Steinmetz and Charles S. Rice preserved memories of what may have been the last old-school collier in Pennsylvania. In the old tradition, Elmer Kohl lived alone in a log hut in the woods, although by then his primitive home stood within earshot of the Pennsylvania Turnpike traffic. The dust and dirt of his job didn’t bother him, nor did the hard physical labor. He continued to cut wood (but under new environmental protection rules), layer the mound with leaves

THAT AMAZING SKILL IS GONE. MR. KOHL TOLD THE AUTHORS HE HAD TRAINED VARIOUS APPRENTICES OVER THE YEARS, BUT NOT ONE REMAINED TO CARRY ON. THEY ASKED MR. KOHL WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE MODERN CHARCOAL MAKING METHODS. HE SIMPLY ANSWERED WITH A SHRUG.

and sand, climb the ladder, drop hot charcoal into the center, and monitor the burning for days. His one concession to modernization was using a charcoal “house” with sides that could be raised or lowered to affect the burn. He raked out his finished charcoal and bagged it, but he didn’t deliver. His customers knew where to find him. He accepted any kind of order, including a special order for charcoal made from black walnuts. He knew the walnut would not burn well, but having made his own liquor during Prohibition, he knew the charcoal was destined to filter some Pennsylvania moonshine. The customer never did pick up that order. Mr. Kohl gave away the charcoal, accompanied by a warning that it might not burn.

Mr. Kohl’s skill was so finely honed that he once burned a Sears Roebuck catalog at low heat, just to show he could. The pages of the carbonized book could be turned without crumbling, the print could be read, the pictures viewed.

That amazing skill is gone. Mr. Kohl told the authors he had trained various apprentices over the years, but not one remained to carry on. They asked Mr. Kohl what he thought of the modern charcoal making methods. He simply answered with a shrug.

Despite the availability of coal, some metal industries continue to use charcoal because

of its clean, hot burn. As late as the 1990s, charcoal kilns were operating in Union, selling the product to metal industries and to consumers as superior grilling charcoal. The decline in charcoal production is one factor contributing to the reforestation of Connecticut. Today, approximately 59 percent of the state is woodland.

There is still a worldwide demand for charcoal. It continues to filter our water and our air. It is used in kidney dialysis, breast cancer surgery, dressings for burn victims, and drug overdose treatment. Production of charcoal has actually increased worldwide from 18 million tons in 1965 to 47 million tons in 2009. In 2009, Africa produced 63 percent of the charcoal in the world and has experienced substantial deforestation as a result. Although the United States ranked 10th in the world in charcoal production in 2004, the industry has vanished from Connecticut, its impact on the state’s forests a distant memory. Remnants of charcoal pits and colliers’ huts can still be found in wooded areas throughout Connecticut, including Barkhamsted, Cornwall, Madison, Kent, Chester, Hampton, and Manchester.

Jean Wierzbinski is the retired principal of Sayles School in Sprague. The author thanks Lance Hansen, Robert Butterworth, and Laurie Giannotti.



PETER VERTEFEUILLE

Lance Hansen and some of the logs the crew worked with making the charcoal mound.



POETRY WILL HELP CONNECT WALKERS TO THE TRAIL

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.

—John Muir

The role of the poet-in-residence is to use poetry to amplify awareness and expand general understanding of the New England Trail while enriching the experiences of hikers. The poet-in-residence will use the written and spoken word to assist all who encounter the trail to get the most out of every moment whether they are through travelers, on a short jaunt for a view or exercise, or enjoy just reading about this unique footpath.

Poetry can enhance appreciation of the trail by capturing the landscape and experience of hiking in words that memorably resonate with people. This includes not only seeing common sights in new ways, but also expressing the full range of senses from the smell of a fern glade to the feel of traprock to the taste of a sassafras leaf. Poetry can take what is invisible and render it visible in the mind's eye by bringing to the fore legends, cultural history, natural processes, and a sense of change and continuity over time. Through poetry, the trail community will learn to see in four dimensions—in time as well as space. Poetry can also evoke the feeling of being on the trail—sweat, wind, cold, heat, muscle aches, unexpected joy.

The poet in residence will probe the very idea of “trailness,” that notion of connectivity so important in human affairs and of which a continuous footpath is the physical embodiment. Poetry will enable trail users to see anew, or with greater mindfulness, and it will promote transfigured vision by injecting awe and wonder into ordinary experience.

Great philosophers and poets from Aristotle to Wordsworth to Thoreau and beyond were peripatetic thinkers, people whose bodies and brains were in conversation. Hiking may be a kind of poetry in motion. We can connect the legs to the heart and mind with poetry.

—David K. Leff



INSPIRED BY A TRAILSIDE ARTIST AND OTHER WRITERS

A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID K. LEFF

On October 24, Connecticut Woodlands Editor Christine Woodside sat down with Mr. Leff and talked about his writing life and his one-year post of poet-in-residence of the New England Trail. The NET covers 215 miles from its start on Long Island Sound in Guilford to the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border. It is the first of the 11 national scenic trails designated by the U.S. Congress to get its own poet. Mr. Leff began his year with a November 29 celebration at the Connecticut Forest & Park Association, whose trail staffers and volunteers maintain the trails making up the NET in Connecticut. The evening included poetry readings by Mr. Leff's mentor, Connecticut Poet Laureate Rennie McQuilkin, and three other poets: Amy Nawrocki, John Stanizzi, and Mr. Leff.

Christine Woodside: You are a writer who also had another career, which lots of people do. Tell me when you got interested in writing.

David Leff: I got interested in writing in my middle teens. When I was 15 or 16. My mother was a college English teacher [at the University of Bridgeport], and there were all these books lying around. One day I was bored or whatever, and I just picked up the book that was lying on the table. And it was the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson. I started reading "Self Reliance" and I was transfixed. I read the "Divinity School Address" and "Nature" all in one afternoon. It was 1970 or 1971. I was a kid who was mediocre academically, very uncoordinated at ball sports. Reading those gave me a sense that I could sort of be who I wanted to be. But it also inspired me to be good in school. From there, I also developed my love of the outdoors and nature. I also decided that the writing life might be intriguing and might be something that would draw me in, and it did. I will tell anyone: Reading Ralph Waldo Emerson changed my life. I started writing stuff, some poems, and some other things. I didn't really know what I wanted to write about. I didn't really have a voice. That was true when I was in college. I loved college; I turned into a good student because of Emerson. I became a sponge for knowledge. I finished college in three years, and I'm not a high school graduate.

You're not? Why?

I was bored after my sophomore-year in high school and I didn't have anything to do. My mother said, "Why don't you take some courses [at the University of Bridgeport]?" You can take them for free because I teach there. So I did. I took two sophomore level English courses. I got a B in each of them. So the next year after I finished my junior year in high school, I applied to the University of Bridgeport, and I said, "I could do the work. Why don't you take me?" And they did. So I went there for a couple of years. I wanted to put some distance between myself and my mother. And so I went to the University of Massachusetts. That's a long story. I got in as an in-state student. I had to put myself through because she didn't want me to leave.

You got in as an in-state student because you established residency in Massachusetts?

Yes. I went up to live with a friend for a few weeks in Boston. I got a driver's license and the rest is history.

Wow. Are you an only child?

I have two sisters. My father left when I was 14 or so. I graduated from the University of Massachusetts [with a degree in English and almost enough credits for a double major with history]. I wrote some poetry in college. I wrote some shorter things that never got published. Norman Mailer said you need a million words

behind you before you publish anything. I needed to learn a trade. In 1975 when I graduated from college, I wanted to get a PhD in American history, but PhDs in American history were driving taxicabs.

You graduated from college in what year?

1975. I finished high school and college in three years each. I had just turned 20. So I wanted to get a PhD in history, but there were no jobs. I was never really interested in the law, but I decided to go to law school. I got into the University of Connecticut law school. Law school really didn't suit me. I didn't really enjoy it. I'm eternally grateful for the training because of the analytical thinking. I met some lifelong friends in law school. I was a cofounder of the environmental law society. I wrote two novels in

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Pickarel Cove

for David Morse

Past the local runways with their buzz of Cessnas,
beyond the last wind sock,
below a steep bank littered with junkers
rusting into the earth and pierced by saplings

curls Pickarel Cove, original coil
of the river long since gone straight, backwater home
to all the life the river's too busy to accommodate.

Ease down the bank, uncover the skiff, use a snag
of stricken sycamore for balance, and put in.

There's no hurry. This will take time. You are at first
a sight for all those little periscopes
of lesser Painteds peering through the scum.
Settle in, be patient, become
a part of it,

wait for the bullfrogs to resume
their song beneath those spires of pickerel weed,
the long sigh of heron wings,
their soft clap as they're folded in for the stealth
of stilt-legged fishing—a sign you're safe as scenery.

Now it's time to look for a disturbance
of the duckweed—a slow counterclockwise
revolution of quilled algae growing on a two-foot shell
basking just below the surface,
from which a double-fisted, hook-beaked snout
rises, backed by a pair of mud-black eyes
taking you in. Be still, let yourself be known.

And be ready when the snapper sinks slowly,
scrapes the bottom of the boat, raises it
like the first world, setting you down, different.

Don't be surprised to feel yourself lifted again
in deeper water at the bend,
home to the three-foot Imperial Carp

that show themselves just once a year
when two by two they twine, hundreds roiling
the river, their copper, black-bordered scales
enormous, the currency of an ancient culture.
Their surge will swell the surface invisibly
like the sudden updraft that catches a small plane
unawares, and tosses it, reminder your welcome
is provisional.

—Rennie McQuilkin

A Brief History of the Skunk Cabbage

To find a heaven in a wild flower.

—William Blake

It comes up in time to cure winter's ills.
Grind and boil shavings of its thick root stock,
chant the proper Chippewa Song of Healing,
imbibe, and begone your deep-rooted cough.

A salve from it will heal the fungus of your feet
and though it's toxic to things that uproot it
you can rub eight seeds of its brain-shaped fruit
on a bride's maidenhead for conception.

Above ground it's all water and air:
rather than decaying, *Symplocarpus foetidus*
simply evaporates, its huge celebrations of leaf
gone before the summer is properly underway.

But it's older, more established,
more intent on being than anything around it,
makes its feckless cousin, that pretty all-summer
lily, the Marsh Calla, seem ephemeral.

Pushing down toward bedrock, the foot-thick
taproot of this decades-old plotter
sprouts a Medusa head of unquenchable
root-fur relishing deep-down muck.

It's planning ahead,
small spears of next year's version and the next
already formed at the base of its root stock.
Right now, this March,

look closely at the south-facing slopes
of any iced-in creek and see, in earth-brown
rings of leaf mold where it has melted snow,
the Skunk Cabbage

already up. It heats everything around it,
those blood-purple, gold-spotted spiral spathes
cracking winter's shell, bird-beaked . . .
No, don't try to tie it down with metaphors—

it is simply itself, fetid yes, but sweet, sweet
to the carnal beetles and flies of March
seduced by so much delicious decay
it emulates in its birthing place,

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continued from page 13

that slit-doored shadowy recess
 where the globe of a skin-beige blossom,
 fleshy, all stamen and style, reclines, its parts
 so much warmer than the winter beyond
 its patrons revel,
 their wing fur riffled by a warm breeze
 as if fanned by a harem master
 in this pleasure dome.

—Rennie McQuilkin

Rennie McQuilkin of Simsbury is the poet laureate of Connecticut and the publisher of Antrim House Books. He is the author of several poetry collections and has had work in publications such as The Atlantic, The Yale Review, Poetry, The Southern Review, The American Scholar, and The Hudson Review. He has received fellowships from the NEA and the state of Connecticut and received the Connecticut Center for the Book's Lifetime Achievement Award and its poetry prize for The Weathering.

Natural Voices is a project of the New England Trail poet-in-residence, David K. Leff.

DAVID K. LEFF continued from page 12

my spare time, stealing from my sleep and devoting vacation time to it. One of them went to the shredder at the landfill. The other I later transformed into verse. That's called *Finding the Last Hungry Heart* (Homebound Publications, 2014). I saved the original manuscript of that.

Tell me about the one that went to the shredder.

It was a saga about a small manufacturing town and a family. It was 350 pages of awful. It was a training ground. On the other hand, shortly after I finished law school, I started keeping a journal. 1978 until now. In the mid-1990s, I started submitting to the Hartford Courant. After a few rejections, they started accepting my place-based pieces. I got a piece in Canoe and Kayak. I started publishing in Appalachia. Around that time, my work started emerging in print. My first book came out in 2004. It took me six years to write because I also had a full-time job. That was *The Last Undiscovered Place*, published by the University of Virginia Press. The recent book about the Allagash (*Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash*, Homebound Publications, 2016) is my ninth book.

At some point you made the jump from not having a voice to really writing regularly. What was the change in you that made it possible for you to begin to believe that you had a voice?

I found that in place-based writing. I found that I had something a little different to say. That I wouldn't consider myself an original thinker, but I'm very good at connecting the dots among things that are diverse. An example I give is the relationship between ethnicity and geology. Most people wouldn't think there is a relationship. But if you look at the history of the state, entrepreneurs in the 19th century needed waterpower to operate their factories and they needed raw materials and then they needed workers. At first, the workers came off of farms. Then they might have come from French Canada, from England, Ireland, and from Southern Europe, Eastern Europe. If you go to these communities today, they've changed a lot since the decline of industry. But in the names of the churches, the social clubs, the faces on the streets, the names of the streets themselves, you'll find those ethnicities, and why? Because of the geological pinch points, the hard rock that produced falls and rapids where the factories were sited, and because the factories needed workers, there's a synergy between ethnicity and geology. I took a page from Thoreau, although he looks at it slightly differently, in looking at the places where we live and where we spend most of our time because most people don't have the ability to take a vacation for more than a couple or three weeks at most. I found in ordinary places there are extraordinary things that have a great deal of meaning and enrich life.

It was place-based writing because you were doing a lot of exploration outside? What was the first piece you published?

The first substantial piece was in Appalachia. It was a walk exploring the [Boston-area greenway called the] Emerald Necklace that was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. My walking, my observation. Drawing connections between what we see, what was there, what might be.

Then what about poetry? When did you manage to get the courage up to write a poem and send it somewhere to get published? Taking that step from it being in yourself to being out with readers?

In 2007–2008 when my second book *Deep Travel* had been accepted by the University of Iowa Press, I went to a reading by Rennie McQuilkin. I loved his work and asked him about it, and he asked me about me, and he said, "I think you should think about writing poetry again."

Why do you think he did?

He saw something about the way I articulated my work. And there was a synergy there. I said I haven't written poetry in a long time. Maybe I'll write some prose poems. I went back to my journal and reconfigured a couple of experiences into what I considered a prose poem and he liked them very much. He had some suggestions that were very valuable. He encouraged me to put together a book. In 2008, he published *The Price of Water* (Antrim House), which is

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MEMBERS' STORIES FROM THE WOODS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last winter, Connecticut Forest & Park Association Executive Director Eric Hammerling invited readers to send in stories about the woods. Here are a couple of them.

Quitting Smoking, and Discovering the Trails

I've always been an outdoor person but didn't discover the Connecticut Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System until I joined the Appalachian Mountain Club in the late 1980s as part of my quit-smoking therapy. I quickly became an avid hiker and have walked most of the Metacomb and Tunxis trails, falling in love with the northern Tunxis and also the Ragged Mountain Preserve in Berlin. My story from the woods began when my hiking buddy and I discovered a trail on Ragged Mountain faintly blazed in blue-yellow and in poor condition. After a few phone calls, we were introduced to Wayne Fogg (a trailblazing genius), who got the trail cleaned up for us and taught us to paint blazes. What an amazing and fun-filled few weeks we had painting trees and learning many painful lessons from our many mistakes. This was the beginning of my illness (I've now been diagnosed with ALS and am in a wheelchair), and my big regret is that I didn't discover this activity when I was able to do more.

—*Roberta Stillson*

Tad Grows Up on the Trail

Tad was born in April. By October, he could hold his head up, and I got a nice kid-carrying backpack so he could sit behind my head and enjoy the ride into the woods. I went through two of these, the first being too flimsy for all the hiking we did. The backpack came with a nice seat for him and a storage area underneath for the necessary items in the woods such as first aid kit, water, emergency stuff, plus diapers, milk, and snacks.

On that October Saturday, the sun was out, the skies blue and warm, especially nice

for October. The leaves were in full color and starting to come down. As I walked along the trail, there was a steady flutter of bright leaves flashing through the air. I decided to do a hike on the Quinnipiac Trail, the loop around Mount Sanford in Cheshire, through the YMCA camp and back to the car, one of my favorite hikes. At this point, Tad was still relatively inert. He seemed to enjoy the ride. At breaks, he enjoyed sitting on a rock and exploring the leaves, sticks, or pebbles. He loved grabbing piles of leaves and tearing them apart, or looking closely at the stems or tossing them up.

The trail there crosses a stream from the Route 42 parking lot, and quickly winds its way up the north side of Mount Sanford. A little huffing and puffing, over an open wooded area, and eventually there is a steep downgrade, which is particularly pretty and full of flying leaves. About that time, Tad got a bit fussy.

Hiking with kids, you have to pay attention to their moods and needs. Tad's fussiness told me that it was time to stop and check under the hood. At the bottom of the saddle point, the leaves were thick and nice. I found a spot just off the trail, dismounted the pack, and spread out a blanket, and in no time, we were comfortable again. It made sense to have our snack at this point, so I broke out the bottle of milk.

I sat with my back to the base of a large maple tree, Tad in my lap, and leaves flying around. He entered the "zone" as he sucked on a small bottle of milk. Such a wonderful feeling as he melted into my lap, eyes drifting slowly closed. The sucking continued but got slower and slower until just a gentle breathing started, and I could put the bottle away. Other than occasionally brushing a leaf off his head as they fell, we both just sat and enjoyed. The sun flickered through the leaves, color splashed all over the floor of the forest, birds flitting. Pretty soon, I could tell Tad was completely asleep in my arms.

So, I got comfortable for a time. The temperature was perfect. Because I was being still, the birds came back, pushing through the leaves and landing nearby. Sights, smells, sounds, all made for a perfect fall day.

After an hour later, a man and a golden

retriever came down the hill and saw us sitting there. I waved, put my finger to my lips. He smiled. The dog gave a quick sniff and then they moved on.

A little later, three women came down the slope and saw us. They were immediately consumed with the sight, making faces that one sees when confronting cuteness. They made a few "Awws" and some nice cooing noises. We chatted quietly, and they were praising me for getting my son out in the woods.

After a few minutes, one of the women looked around and back to me and asked, "Where is his mother?" "Back home," was my reply. The mood shifted with the speed of a deer in panic.

What? Out in the woods with a baby without its mother? What were you thinking? What was his mother thinking letting you out? What if he needs her? What if he gets fussy, or hurt or heaven knows what? Oh the humanity!

Needless to say, we didn't see eye to eye on this point, and they eventually moved on in disgust, convinced that the next generation of humans was in severe danger of being lost in the woods. It struck me at the time that they missed the point of getting out. I was exercising care with Tad. I had brought extra clothes and was prepared for most likely issues that could arise. Rather than bring the fears from the outside world, we chose to sit and enjoy the peace that the woods could offer.

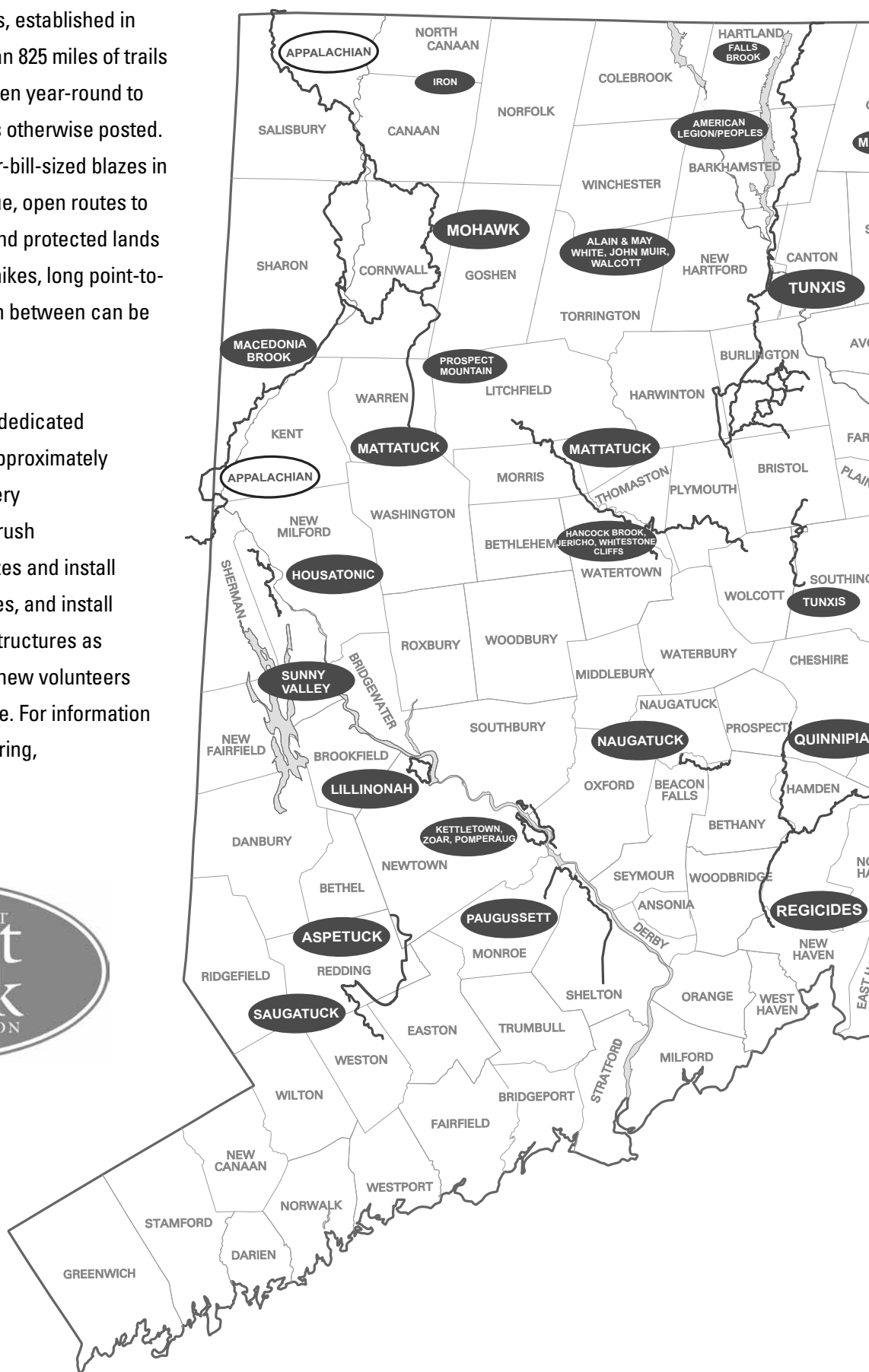
Tad eventually woke. After another quick diaper check, we were off again. Up the hill, signed the register at the top of the viewpoint. Down and around through the YMCA camp, stop at the stream to toss rocks, and then back and up to the car.

All in all, it was a wonderful morning and beautiful day away from stress, enjoying the day and the woods, and watching Tad grow. He and I would go on to spend many pleasant days in the woods. He grew up in the woods, learning how to walk without tripping on every rock and enjoying the peace of it. We grew to exchange pleasant conversations on many topics—including the role of parents taking their kids into the woods. I hope he will grow up to enjoy the same times with his own kids in the woods.

—*Geoff Meissner*

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails, established in 1929, currently total more than 825 miles of trails in 96 towns. The trails are open year-round to all forms of foot travel unless otherwise posted. The trails, marked with dollar-bill-sized blazes in a signature shade of light blue, open routes to exploring the open spaces and protected lands of Connecticut. Short loops hikes, long point-to-point hikes, and everything in between can be found on the Blue Trails.

The trails are maintained by dedicated volunteers who contribute approximately 20,000 hours of trail work every year. Trail volunteers clear brush and downed trees, paint blazes and install signs, coordinate work parties, and install bridges and additional trail structures as necessary. CFPA welcomes new volunteers to help with trail maintenance. For information about the trails and volunteering, see ctwoodlands.org.



INTERACTIVE BLUE TRAILS MAP ONLINE

Whether you're a devout hiker of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails or a walker looking for a local escape, the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's new online trails map will help you plan your outing before your boots hit the ground. As a companion tool to the *Connecticut Walk Book*, this map will allow you to zoom in and see the latest trail locations, learn trail names and distances, and fully discover all that Connecticut hiking has to offer.

CFPA VOLUNTEERS HONORED



Connecticut Forest & Park Association volunteers gathered November 4 for their annual dinner. They caught up on news, played a game of Connecticut trivia, and won a few awards. Left, CFPA Development Director James Little, second from left, recognized the organizational skills of the Connecticut Trail Runners for the Run for the Woods Race. Members here are Steve Schiller, Abby Doolittle, Dave Danenberg, and George Daniels.

ALL PHOTOS BY ERIC HAMMERLING



Above, Ruth Cutler thanked the many members of the CFPA Garden Gang who work on landscaping outside the Middlefield headquarters. She received an Outstanding Volunteer Award for her leadership of the group.



Above, CFPA Field Coordinator Colin Carroll, center, and CFPA Trails Stewardship Director Clare Cain, right, presented Thomas Burkholder with an Outstanding Volunteer Award.



Left, CFPA Manager of Events and Volunteer Engagement Elizabeth Fossett recognized Scott Gray and his wife Sonya Wulff (not pictured) as Outstanding Team Volunteers.

Visit ctwoodlands.org for a full list of volunteer awards and statistics.

MAJOR RELOCATION COMPLETED AT CHAUNCEY PEAK

BY CLARE CAIN

The butt slide. That's how many hikers refer to the southern descent from Chauncey Peak on the Mattabesett Trail, part of the New England National Scenic Trail. Some have likened it to walking on marbles, others have called it "the flume," evoking a dangerous trail in the White Mountains. However you think of it, the gullied-out trail section, with an incredibly steep grade (greater than 35 percent), was far from ideal and certainly didn't meet current trail design standards.

It had long been the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's vision to relocate the trail along more gentle grades to ascend and descend the mountain in a more dignified and sustainable manner. Thanks to recent funding from Department of Energy & Environmental Protection's Recreational Trails



CLARE CAIN

Members of the Student Conservation Association spent a month improving a gullied-out section of the New England Trail.

and Greenways Program, CFPA in 2016 was able to commit the necessary resources to get this project completed.

The goal was not to make the trail easier to hike (the climb will still be a challenge) but to make the trail grades more reasonable, to prevent soil loss, to reduce maintenance, and to ultimately create a trail bed with adequate footing that can sustain hiker traffic for years (aka no more butt-sliding).

This October, CFPA contracted with the Student Conservation Association. The SCA brought a crack team of young trail builders who helped with some of the most technical work on the steep mountainside. The crew spent a month in Connecticut, setting stone steps, building retaining walls, constructing new trail, and taking a big bite out of this enormous trail improvement project.

CFPA's rock work group, called the Rock Stars, spent two days improving and relocating the trail entrance at Giuffrida Park. Public and corporate work parties have also helped with this major relocation. The overall project cost more than \$25,000.

None of this would have been possible without the partnership of the landowners, the City of Meriden and York Hill Trap Rock Quarry. Both partners have been incredibly supportive, and York Hill recently signed a trail license agreement with CFPA demonstrating its commitment to the trail. CFPA is grateful to them for hosting the trail and allowing the public access to the incredible Chauncey Peak with its incredible views.

Clare Cain is the trails stewardship director of CFPA.

Lead Your Own Connecticut Trails Day Event in 2017

Be part of the biggest trails celebration in the nation on June 3 & 4.

Lead a Trails Day hike and share your favorite trail with others.

No experience necessary & online registration will open in January.

Visit ctwoodlands.org to sign up.

Join the fun!



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my first book of poems. I tagged those as prose poems, but what I realized was—people said, “They’re a little more lyrical than that.” I just let them go to the edge of the page. Then I started playing with line breaks.

It just felt right.

Yeah. It felt right.

Tell us about your backcountry life.

I was not much of an outdoors person as a child. My family only went on one vacation that I can remember, but I went to summer camp all the time. My interest in the outdoors really started when a friend of my mother’s—and I might have been 14 or 15 at the time—was leading an Outward Bound group for urban kids. They were going to take a hike on the Appalachian Trail and I got invited. And, again, I fell in love. I lived in Fairfield at the time. That was the start of it. I went on that trip. That kind of opened me up so that when I read Emerson, I knew what he was talking about. In my 20s, I hiked all the 4,000-footers [in the White Mountains of New Hampshire]. I started climbing the winter 4,000-footers. I did quite a few. I probably climbed most of the hundred highest. I never finished that. I climbed a number of Adirondack peaks.

Did you connect them with writing inspiration?

Not at the time. I was 23 when I started my journals. I didn’t really connect them with inspiration for writing at the time. I got interested in canoeing. I canoed the Allagash. I had a three-week canoe trip on the Missinaibi River up to James Bay in Ontario. I canoed in Labrador twice.

By that time, I had moved to Collinsville [in 1984]. I canoed on the Farmington River. I wanted my avocation and my vocation to be united. In September 1978, I got a job with the state of Connecticut with the Office of Legislative Research. Within a couple of months, I wound up on the Planning and Development Committee for a year. In the second year of my 16 years with the

Office of Legislative Research, I was staffing the Environment Committee. I became the legislature’s expert on Indian affairs. I also put together an 80-page handbook about environmental topics that legislators would encounter. At the opening of any new legislative session, I had advice: Never do any more good than the people can stand. That’s not original with me. One of the members of the Environment Committee was a very conservative Republican and we disagreed on a lot of issues, but he trusted me. Sometimes he would say to me, “What would I think about it?” Because I knew him well enough to articulate his point of view.

Who was this?

Sid Holbrook. When John Rowland became governor, he [Sid] became commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, and he invited me to come over and work for him. I said no twice, and the third time I said yes. [In 1996.] Eventually I became deputy commissioner under three commissioners. I had started publishing just a few years before that. I believed in what we were doing. I can’t do anything I don’t have a passion for. The most important thing to me, programmatically for me when I was at DEP, was land acquisition. I negotiated the state’s largest land acquisition ever, the Kelda lands. I also negotiated the easement for the Great Mountain Forest, which was at the time the largest privately held forest in Connecticut, about 6,000 acres.

When you left DEP, which is now DEEP [the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection], did you think it would be a weird thing to change the relationship you had with the public?

The fact is, it wasn’t that big a transition. I was writing about many of the things I had worked on when I was at DEP. I believed in them very strongly. It was another way of expressing the same passion and interest.

Can you talk a little about your physical disability?

I have degenerative spinal disc disease. I have had three different surgeries. Four levels of my cervical spine fused. I’m in pain all the time. It’s the kind of gnawing, nagging, low-level pain, like a toothache, which certainly isn’t comfortable, but not so excruciating that you can’t function. Sustained concentration is often difficult. You adapt. In my office, I have three different kinds of chairs and I have a lectern that I work at. One of those chairs is one of those rockers that President Kennedy used for his back. I don’t canoe anymore. I miss it. To do a J-stroke? It’s just the constant motion. I don’t fish anymore. The motion of fly-fishing, constantly moving your arm, which is connected to your shoulder and neck. I can sit at my computer for 20 minutes and then I can get up. I’ll do housework. Throw in a load of laundry. Movement is the key to being comfortable. The most comfortable thing is walking.

Do you climb mountains anymore?

I probably could with a daypack. Backpacking is out of the question. My son and I have talked about going to one of the huts [in the Whites]. He’ll carry the load. But that’s OK. Life has other pleasures. You want to put a little bit of resistance to things that are negative. But it’s better to adapt to them and channel them into a way that’s useful. If I hadn’t had this issue, I probably would have done a lot less writing. I would have been outdoors more. If you don’t translate the things that are negatives in your life into something positive, you’re missing something. Pain has taught me empathy, compassion, and also gratitude. No one would willingly be in pain all the time, but pain is part of who I am. I wrote a poem in my second collection about that.

Tell us about your activities in the Connecticut Forest & Park Association.

I’m chairman of the Public Policy Committee. I’ve been doing that for about three years. I retired from the DEP in 2006.



How did you get the idea for a poet-in-residence on the New England Trail?

I was visiting my sister in Tacoma Park, Maryland, a couple of years ago. I noticed on the side of the streets at certain points there were signposts with poems. I filed it away. I have seen it elsewhere [Vermont, out west, and in West Hartford], but this was the first time I had encountered it. I went to the annual volunteer dinner [of CFPA] when [the artist named] Xiomaro gave his presentation, as the artist-in-residence. It was fun and flamboyant. I read in Connecticut Woodlands about a volunteer who placed poems out on a trail, Tom Tella. I communicated with Eric [Hammerling] and Clare [Cain] about getting poems onto trails. And I thought, well, there have been artists-in-residence. Why can't there be a poet-in-residence? I wrote a précis and sent it to Charlie Tracy of the National Park Service. After several months of back and forth, they said yes. One of the things I'd like to do is have a gallery opening with Xio's work on the wall and next to his work on the wall, mounted on foam core will be poems.

Tell me about your experiences on the New England Trail.

What intrigues me about the New England Trail, and it's true with all our national

scenic trails, is that they are cultural artifacts laid over natural artifacts. What fascinates me most are the synergies between nature and culture. You can go up to Chauncey Peak where people carve their names in the rocks. And you're looking out on a traprock quarry. The whole notion of traprock, the word is Swedish for steps. You can dip your toe in Long Island Sound, which I did last week, and you can walk by houses and that big Whitfield condominium that looks like a spaceship landed, and then you walk by the oldest stone house in New England, and finally, you end up in the woods. And throughout the woods, there are old woods roads that George Washington's troops or Comte de Rochambeau crossed. There are cellar holes, and canals. Another thing that fascinates me is that a lot of people in Connecticut think we don't have any old-growth forest. Well, we do. Our old-growth forests are those wizened trees clinging to the ridgetops. Some of these are ancient trees no more than 40 feet high, all twisted and gnarled. You stand on these ridges and you look out. You see land parceled into agriculture and urban uses and suburban uses, and transmission wires. Nature and culture are so tied together. And that's really the beauty of it, and the fact that we could have this continuous trail with very little road

walking—although the road walking in Guilford is fascinating. On the trail, you'll find plane crash [sites]. There's one in Massachusetts in the Holyoke Range. And there's one in the Meriden area—there's no memorial, but you can find the parts of the plane. The trail is all about stories and this intersection between nature and culture. As poet-in-residence, I have twin goals. One is to enrich the experience of the hiking community. Just like a song or phrase can catch in your mind and enlarge your world. And the other is for the poetry community, most of them are not familiar with the trail. Here's another source for inspiration.

It just seems elemental to some of us.

Yes. The whole notion of a trail, of connectivity.

I think that's key for people's imaginations.

Yes.

Are you planning to produce a body of work?

Most of my time and most of my effort is going to be about making connections between poetry and the trail for other people. Whether it's ekphrastic poetry with Xio or readings. I'd like to get the municipal poets laureate who are in trail towns together for a reading.



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TRIBUTES TO RUSS BRENNEMAN

Pioneering environmental lawyer, CFPA leader

BY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES



Russ Brenneman with his wife, Frederica, in 1967, after she was sworn in as a juvenile court judge. Their three children, including daughter Amy (who created the television show "Judging Amy") endured a pose with Governor John N. Dempsey.

FAMILY PHOTO VIA HARVARD LAW BULLETIN

Russell Brenneman died on October 10 at the age of 88. He served for many years on the Connecticut Forest & Park Association Board of Directors, and he helped shape Connecticut Woodlands into the magazine it is today. He was born in Illinois and did most of his growing up in Columbus, Ohio, and Tucson, Arizona. After Ohio State University, Harvard Law School, and service as a U.S. Army lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, he settled in Connecticut with his wife, Frederica (a longtime Connecticut Superior Court judge). He was a founding partner of the Connecticut law firm of Copp, Brenneman & Tighe. From 1976 to 1981, Mr. Brenneman served in the public sector as president of the Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority. In 1981, he returned to private practice as a partner with Murtha, Cullina, Richter & Pinney in Hartford, where he founded the firm's environmental law practice group. Mr. Brenneman was a pioneering member of the environmental movement, in which he was active for

more than a half century. From the movement's infancy in the 1960s until his passing, Mr. Brenneman devoted countless hours to the conservation and management of forests and open land, the control of air and water pollution, and the development of environmental and energy policy.

He was the author of the seminal *Private Approaches to the Preservation of Open Land* (Conservation and Research Foundation, 1964) and, with Sarah M. Bates, *Land Saving Action* (Island Press, 1984), in addition to numerous speeches and articles. He cofounded the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters and served as president and a director of the CFPA. Through his teaching as an adjunct professor of environmental law and policy at the University of Connecticut School of Law and at Trinity College, and through his mentorship and training of young lawyers at the firms where he practiced, Mr. Brenneman influenced a generation of young people interested in protecting the environment.

In 2013, Mr. Brenneman received an

Environmental Merit Award for Lifetime Achievement from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In 2016, the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut further honored him with an official citation recognizing his lifelong dedication to environmental conservation. In the words of the General Assembly, directed to Mr. Brenneman, "Your work established the state's earliest community land trusts, enabling conservation easements across the state, and has made you an indispensable attorney of unparalleled skill." Mr. Brenneman is survived by his wife; by his two sons, Matthew and Andrew, and his daughter Amy; and by five grandchildren. Donations in Mr. Brenneman's honor may be made to the CFPA or to the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters. A memorial service took place on October 29 in Westport.

—From published obituary



CLCV

Mr. Brenneman at a recent Connecticut League of Conservation Voters environmental summit.

A SELF-EFFACING MENTOR WHO TAUGHT BY HIS ACTIONS

BY DAVID PLATT

I had the privilege of working closely with Russ Brenneman when I was a young lawyer. From the beginning, Russ made a huge impression on me. His legal acumen and legal scholarship on environmental and conservation issues of all kinds were unparalleled. Mr. Brenneman quite literally was on the forefront of the environmental movement, as he had a hand in the development of the environmental laws that were passed in the 1960s and 1970s that serve as the foundation for environmental protection to this day. In land conservation, he also was ahead of his time, developing the fundamental building blocks of conservation easements that today protect treasured open spaces across the country. His legacy as a legal scholar leaves the world as a much better place.

But beyond that, it was Russ's gentlemanly and sophisticated approach to things that stood out. He was genuine and down to earth, and a mentor in the best sense of the word. Self-effacing and selfless almost to a fault, he taught as much through his actions as through his words. Just watching him work was nothing short of inspirational. He had an amazing ability to analyze issues and figure out the most effective way to advocate. He was adept at drawing on his experience to study issues, read the political and other winds, and solve problems. People trusted him, because his integrity and credibility were always beyond reproach; and they liked him, because he always modeled the right approach and behavior. He had a knack for doing right for his clients, while also "doing the right thing" in the bigger sense of the phrase for the environment and society at large.

Russ inspired me to be a better lawyer and person, and for that I am eternally grateful. We will all miss this one-of-a-kind man.

David Platt of Chester is an environmental lawyer and member of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association Board of Directors.

MEETINGS AT THE DINER: QUIET, CALM, AND SPIRITUAL

BY JAMES W. LITTLE

I would meet Russ at the Sherwood Diner, supposedly to talk the mundane details of fundraising. We never quite got there. We'd always got stuck on spirituality, or God, or the history of conservation. Ours were always thoughtful, invigorating conversations. We talked frequently of our children (he would ask about my oldest son, who was studying for the priesthood), the peculiarities of our respective churches, and of my halting journey working toward a master's degree at Trinity College. He wasn't judgmental but always encouraged and inspired. We laughed, our words flooded out, and our topics went all over the map. I always left these meetings sorry that they were ending.

Conservation and its history, what drove people to take action, was often the center of our discussion. As a former banker, my interests were the economic drivers of the conservation movement. He would shift the conversation away to the spirituality of the movement, another great interest of mine, and suggest that should be the focus of my writing at Connecticut Forest & Park Association and Trinity. He seemed motivated by a keen interest in and love for his fellow human being, despite all our flaws, and that flowed from him at every meeting.

When I think of Russ Brenneman, feelings of caring, kindness, and quiet calmness come to mind. He had that unique ability to hold you in the moment and make you his center of attention. Russ had a great laugh, a chuckle that would always make one smile. Much will be written about his outstanding contribution to the conservation movement, his groundbreaking legal work, his leadership at CFPA and the League of Conservation Voters, and his lyrical written works. However, I will remember the man who took time to break bread, talk about topics so few want to discuss, and encourage the taking of new challenges.

James W. Little is the development director of CFPA.

RUSS BRENNEMAN—A TIMELINE

BY JOHN HIBBARD

Environmental lawyer and Connecticut Forest & Park Association Board of Directors member Russell Brenneman was active in environmental policy and conservation organizations for almost six decades. This review is from my memory. It is by no means complete, but it gives a sampling of his important work between 1963 and 2016. It is a reminder to us to follow his example.

1. In 1958, he drafted an option for CFPA to acquire Platt Hill in Winchester Center as a Laurel Sanctuary and that was later purchased by the George Dudley Seymour Fund, as Platt Hill State Park.
2. In 1969, he was appointed to the Governor's Committee on Environmental Policy that resulted in the General Assembly establishing the Department of Environmental Protection in 1971 as well as the passing of the Landowner Liability Law.
3. He was a member of the board of directors of the New England Natural Resources Center, which conducted the New England Natural Areas Survey. The Connecticut inventory was done by CFPA and transferred to the newly established Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.
4. He served as special counsel to DEP during its organization in the 1970s.
5. He was elected to CFPA's Board of Directors in 1971, having been recommended by Belton A. Copp to be his successor.
6. He was elected vice president of CFPA in 1975. He held this position until he became president two decades later.
7. As president of CFPA, he was a regular visitor to the CFPA office and supporter of the organization.
8. He continued as a board member and as an advocate for the environment.
9. *Twentieth-Century New England Land Conservation, A Heritage of Civic Engagement*, edited by Charles H. W. Foster, published by the Harvard Forest 2009. Mr. Brenneman wrote the chapter called "Rescuing Connecticut: A Story of Land-Saving Actions," pages 259–300.

John Hibbard is the former executive director of CFPA.

THE MAN WHO BUILT THE SIERRA CLUB: A LIFE OF DAVID BROWER

By Robert Wyss. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. 410 pages

BY DAVID K. LEFF

David Brower, the Sierra Club's first executive director, is unfortunately often forgotten among other environmental heroes of the 20th century such as Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson. Kudos to author Robert Wyss, a journalist and professor at the University of Connecticut, for this much needed and exquisitely researched book that helps rescue those of us who care about the natural world from a lamentable amnesia.

Mr. Brower was an energetic and charismatic character of Shakespearean proportions whose vision, willingness to take chances, and unflagging dedication to protecting the natural world made him the "preeminent conservation leader in the 1950s and 1960s." He turned the Sierra Club from a regional hiking organization into an environmental force of national and even international influence. But many of the same talents that brought success—a bold, risk taking, and indomitable spirit—also led to his forced departure from the Sierra Club in 1969 and later from Friends of the Earth, which he founded. His story is simultaneously an inspiration and cautionary tale for today's conservationists.

Born in Berkeley, California, in 1912, young David Brower was an aggressive rock climber and peakbagger. He joined the Sierra Club in 1933. He is credited with 33 first ascents in the Sierra Nevada, and he climbed every 14,000-foot summit in the range. Mr. Brower dropped out of college and served in the Army's Tenth Mountain Division in World War II. First hired as an associate editor of the Sierra Club Bulletin in 1938, he was elected to the club's board of directors in 1941 and stepped down in 1952 to become executive director.

Mr. Brower's daring and skillful leadership resulted in the 1955 defeat of two proposed dams in Dinosaur National Monument on

the Colorado River, a first-of-its-kind milestone that energized, empowered, and emboldened the conservation movement. But as part of a compromise, he agreed to the much larger Glen Canyon Dam downstream. Later calling the project "just an engineering, job-making project and money-making machine," he would never forgive himself for sacrificing this incomparably beautiful place. As a result, he soured on compromise. It colored the rest of his career, for good and for ill.

Through his efforts, a wilderness bill was introduced in Congress in 1956 (it passed in 1964). Meanwhile, he fought the U.S. Forest Service as a bastion of "saw-log" foresters for whom "multiple use" meant "that everything in the national forest is for sale." He battled a National Park Service that he thought favored tourist amenities over preservation of the natural world. Mr. Brower advocated for new parks and wilderness designations throughout the west, often meeting with success that protected millions of acres. He was victorious leading the fight against two dams in the Grand Canyon during the mid-1960s.

The indefatigable Mr. Brower also began an ambitious, large-format Sierra Club book program that called attention to threatened natural areas using spectacular photographs from the likes of Ansel Adams and Elliot Porter. The books gained wide attention, won awards, and resulted in increased prestige and membership for the club. But they also diverted resources from advocacy and ultimately presented financial risk.

"Brower's skillful use of public relations," Mr. Wyss writes, "in his books, films and political efforts helped build public support, allowing him and others in the movement to be more demanding." But Mr. Brower could be abrasive, if not downright hostile, to those who disagreed with him. He was a

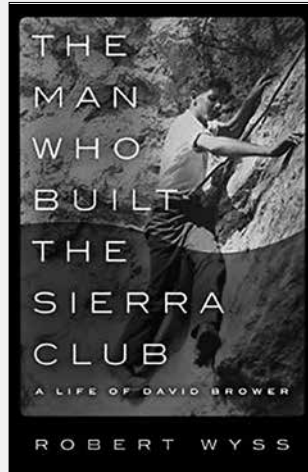
poor personnel and financial manager. He spent money without authorization, undercut his board, and even defied direct orders. Eventually, "intemperate remarks" and "lax management" caught up with him. He was a national conservation hero, but his reckless management and cavalier treatment of those who dissented from his views ended his career with the Sierra Club in a public confrontation.

In his later years, Mr. Brower continued as a visionary and was among the first to see environmental issues as an international problem. He was in the vanguard on toxic chemicals, air and water pollution, nuclear power, energy conservation, and other issues.

Mr. Brower left the Sierra Club in 1969 "just when the fledgling environmental movement could have used a strong leader," Mr. Wyss writes. Reflecting on the current conservation movement, the author, a former Providence Journal environment reporter, laments, "We have lost sight of the Brower style of environmental advocacy." Mr. Wyss sees "a leadership vacuum" in today's environmental organizations whose heads are "typically not hired for their charisma but as professional chief executive officers who will spend most of their time on administrative functions."

The unvarnished David Brower might not make the best CEO in the contemporary political and financial climate. But there is no doubt, as Mr. Wyss points out, that today's environmental managers could use a good dose of Mr. Brower's passion, nerve, and vision. Although he has been gone almost a generation, we still need the inspiring eloquence of the man who said, "We do not inherit the Earth from our fathers, we are borrowing it from our children."

David K. Leff, the poet-in-residence of the New England Trail, is the author of many books about New England, adventure, and the sense of place. He lives in Collinsville.



CONTINENTAL DIVIDE: A HISTORY OF AMERICAN MOUNTAINEERING.

By Maurice Isserman. New York: W. W. Norton, 2016. 436 pages

BY ROBERT M. RICARD

For the past eight years, I have asked my class of 60 or so natural resources students, “What is the Continental Divide?” Blank stares. These are very bright young people. Yet only occasionally does anyone give the right answer. With no other plausible reason for this, I can only speculate that Americans continue to lose touch with our nation’s natural treasures: parks, forests, trails, and mountains.

In a 1976 photo, a friend and I stand at a road marker for the Continental Divide—sometimes called America’s backbone—in Wyoming. We look wet and cold from camping and biking, but we are clearly happy. Crossing the Continental Divide the first time feels like a milestone. It may help us understand the significance of this geological line by reviewing some American history: the Lewis and Clark expedition, the Oregon Trail, settlers crossing over to California (such as the Donner Party), and Native Americans’ gods watching over all of these doings from towering, rocky, snow-capped heights.

With Euro-Caucasian conquest and settlement, there came first ascents of peaks from east to west. Colonists were terrified of the wilderness. Puritans, for example, believed the forest was literally inhabited by the devil and other evil types. Wolves, bears, catamounts, and timber rattlesnakes were truly dangerous, not to mention the clashes between Europeans and Indian tribes attempting to stave off cultural extinction. Also, try to imagine how dark 1600s New England was. Can we “moderns” who rarely experience a lack of illumination authentically imagine the dark?

As this fear subsided, a few brave (or crazy, as many of their peers claimed) colonials made first ascents of high places. In this book, Maurice Isserman does a wonderful (and enormous) job of telling this history of mountaineering—the story of mountains and what they have meant to Americans for four centuries.

Mr. Isserman was born in Hartford, grew up in Coventry, and for some years has been a history professor at Hamilton College.

His history begins with a resident of Pasataquack (modern day Durham, New Hampshire), in the Upper Plantation of Massachusetts Bay Colony, doing what his peers feared to do—he climbed a mountain. In 1642, Darby Field walked his way through the upper boulder fields of the “White Hill.” He was reluctantly escorted by one or two Native Americans who went with him to the Saco River at the mountain’s base and then climbed to the top of what became known as Mount Washington.

Early explorers such as John Cabot, Samuel de Champlain, and Giovanni da Verrazano described seeing towering peaks from the coast and noted that the great volumes of river water must be sourced from great snowy mountains. Mr. Field left no map or records of his climb. But the story was recorded in 1647 by Governor John Winthrop. These mountains become more widely known as the White Mountains.

Mr. Isserman’s first chapter covers this beginning to 1842. For the most part, this narrative is about conquest of Native Americans and the Euro-Caucasian taking of the land. Settlement paved the way for accessibility of the mountains, short and tall. It is a story also of a clash of nations (English, French, Russian, Spanish) alliances. Many of the first ascents were by government agents searching for routes through mountain ranges and mapping them. From time to time, a bold party member or two would break away and climb to a summit. This section is a dense, well-researched chapter with content few people would know.

The next chapters tell of explorers more interested in botany, geology, birds, and hunting than nation building. This brought the nation to first explore Yosemite, the Cascades, the Sierra Nevada, the Great Rocky Mountains, and, of course, crossing the

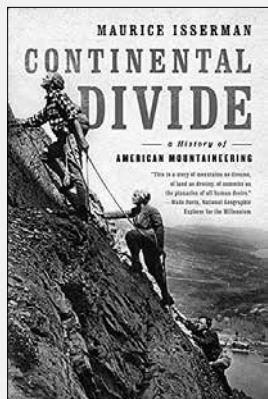
western Continental Divide. This chapter is followed by stories of easterners, such as Theodore Roosevelt, who advocated, and practiced, the “strenuous life.” Thus, climbing high places became acceptable if not glamorous to the American public yet was practiced by only a few.

Mountaineering, specifically, or the “brotherhood of the rope,” took root in the beginning of the 20th century. Europeans had been climbing the Alps since the latter part of the 1800s. They had begun to develop the first climbing methods such as rappelling and roping in these places. A few Americans learned these on the Old Continent and then brought them home. Competition for first ascents became ferocious—and personal—especially in the Rockies and in Alaska (and Europe by Americans).

By the onset of World War II, mountaineering had become a close-knit fraternity of a few. With the close of the war, climbing and camping gear designs had advanced (think nylon) as had climbing methods. Americans brought these all home. Army & Navy stores first sold surplus war gear, then mountaineering and camping companies and cooperatives, such as REI, exploded in sales. The 1950s saw what Mr. Isserman calls “the Rucksack Revolution,” or the changing of the old guard to returning veterans used to self-sacrifice and teamwork. Climbing develops competitive philosophies (free-climbing vs. anchors). Americans, with people from other nations, scale the great mountains around the world beyond North America.

This book is always about the minority of people who climb mountains, from hiking paths to technical ascents. Seeing a high place, one higher than any other high place nearby, is the center of attention of the earliest mountaineers. This urge remains. This book is well written and is based on rigorous scholarship. *Continental Divide* surely will be regarded as a definitive history of American mountaineering.

Robert M. Ricard is a senior extension educator for the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension.





TRY THIS HIKE

TRAIPSING THROUGH ROCKY WOODLANDS ON THE JOHN MUIR

AND WALCOTT TRAILS

BY DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the summer 2016 issue, we reported on the vote by the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's Trails Committee to correct the spelling of the Walcott Trail. The current *Connecticut Walk Book: West* has the earlier spelling ("Wolcott"). A new edition of the guide will be issued within the year.

The Muir/Walcott Connector provides a link between the two trails.

DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

My husband and I stared at an old tree's roots that appeared to be swallowing or trying to crush a tall, narrow boulder on the John Muir Trail, a Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail in north-central Torrington. "How in the world did those roots manage to creep over such a big rock to reach the soil?" I figured that before those roots grew long enough to reach the ground, they must have found enough soil on the boulder itself.

The week before, on the nearby Walcott Trail, my friend Noreen and I had encountered two other boulders engulfed by huge roots that looked like tentacles. The trees' tenacity amazed, and reassured, me.

Yet, on the John Muir Trail, Paul and I also saw signs of mighty trees succumbing to the attacks of tiny insects—many large hemlocks looked more dead than alive, no doubt a result of the invasive, non-native hemlock wooly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*) that has been killing these trees for a quarter-century.

Roots, rocks, and trees are prominent features along both the John Muir and the Walcott trails, two short paths one can explore one at a time or as a longer hike via a connector trail. The 2.1-mile John Muir Trail, in Paugnut State Forest, begins at the

entrance to Sunnybrook State Park and travels through wooded, rolling hills in a northeasterly direction toward Burr Pond State Park. It ends at the Muir/Walcott Connector, an unpaved section of Starks Road. A 0.1-mile walk on the connector takes you to the 2.5-mile Walcott Trail, a Blue Trail that encircles Burr Pond. With only minor changes in elevation, the Walcott Trail is easy, although the many rocks along the path mean you do have to watch your step.

I walked these two trails separately and describe each hike separately here.

Winding Up Walnut Mountain on the John Muir Trail

Hike this trail by leaving a car at your endpoint or as an out-and-back walk. Paul and I hiked point-to-point from Sunnybrook State Park to Starks Road following the description in the *Connecticut Walk Book West*. We left one car on Starks Road and drove together to the trailhead at Sunnybrook State Park. We parked in the lot just inside the park entrance off Newfield Road. Then we walked back to the road, crossed to the other side, and turned right. Immediately after a road bridge, we stepped over the guardrail and descended on stone steps

into the woods of Paugnut State Forest. A state website describes Paugnut as a mixed hardwood forest “with white pine and hemlock found on drier and rocky areas.” Well, this trail is certainly rocky, so it was no surprise to see so many hemlocks.

At first, the trail parallels the narrow, east branch of the Naugatuck River (which we found nearly dry in October because of the 2016 drought) before it heads uphill. From start to finish, the trail ascends and descends several times, sometimes moderately steeply, as it winds across the western, southern, and eastern sides of Walnut Mountain. Along the way, the trail crosses three dirt roads, an old forest-tower trail leading to the mountain summit, and several streambeds, which were totally dry when we were there.

As we hiked, Paul and I stopped often to look at and photograph things that caught our interest: a birch tree’s long, skinny roots stretching across the forest floor—and reminding me of the veins and arteries on an anatomy poster; the same birch’s shaggy bark; a log dotted with little white mushrooms; a rock cairn; a massive, old maple tree; stands of beech and white pine; and mountain laurel thickets. After the last of the dirt roads (Buttrick Road), the trail skirts around the edge of a swamp and pond. Paul and I at first were disappointed that the vegetation along the shoreline was too thick for us to get a good view of the swamp, but we



DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

The 85-acre Burr Pond, seen from the Walcott Trail in Burr Pond State Park.

finally found a break big enough to walk through to the water’s edge, where the view was pretty.

The trail ends at the Muir/Walcott Connector, an unpaved section of Starks Road that is closed to motor vehicles. We turned left onto the road, passed the turnoff for the Walcott Trail, and continued to the paved part of Starks Road, where we had parked our car.

Directions to the John Muir Trail

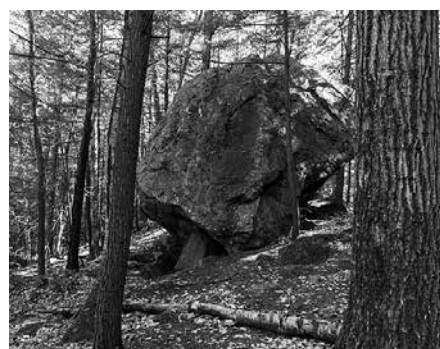
To spot a car at Starks Road: From Route 8 exit 44, go straight and pass the first traffic light. At the second light, turn left (west) on Route 4 (E. Elm Street). Go 0.5 mile and turn right on Main Street. Immediately after firehouse on left, bear left onto Newfield Road. In 2.5 miles, pass entrance to Sunnybrook State Park (you will drive back here with the second car to start the hike). Go another 0.5 mile on Newfield Road and turn right on Saw Mill Hill Road. In 0.7 mile, turn right to continue on Saw Mill Hill Road. At the stop sign, go right on Starks Road and drive 0.8 mile to a parking area big enough for three or four cars, on the left, just before a gate blocking vehicular access to unpaved road.

To the trailhead at Sunnybrook State Park, from Starks Road: Retrace your drive back to Newfield Road and head 0.5 mile south to the park entrance. The parking lot is just inside the entrance.

Burr Pond on the Walcott Trail

The Walcott Trail loops around Burr Pond, an 85-acre pond with a rocky, forested shoreline and a sandy beach situated in Burr Pond State Park. The day my friend Noreen and I hiked the trail, we met in the boat launch parking area and set off in a counterclockwise direction. (Note that the *Walk Book*’s directions begin near the park’s main parking lot, not the boat launch lot. Hikers can begin at two other points, either of the two junctions with the Muir/Walcott Connector.)

Following a blue blaze, we left the parking lot, entered the woods, and crossed a wooden footbridge over a small stream. A few minutes later, we saw a big glacial erratic to our right. The trail itself soon becomes studded with rocks. Often hugging the



DIANE FRIEND EDWARDS

A glacial erratic on the Walcott Trail could almost shelter a person in a storm.

shoreline, occasionally heading a bit inland, the trail crosses a few small streams and goes past the two junctions with the Muir/Walcott Connector. It also passes two blue-and-yellow-blazed side trails—the first of which leads 0.1 mile to a massive, sharply angled erratic with overhangs almost big enough for a person to shelter under. The second side trail goes 0.2 mile to the tip of a peninsula jutting into the pond. We skipped that one and kept following the main trail. After passing the dam that creates Burr Pond, the trail crosses a bridge over the brook below the dam, turns left to pass the other end of the dam, and heads toward the beach. Before reaching the bathhouse, the trail veers right and goes uphill, crossing the park road just before the main parking lot. From here, the trail leads behind a sign toward the shore of the pond, then turns right and, following the shoreline, heads back to the boat launch parking area.

Directions to the Walcott Trail

If driving directly to this trail, take Route 8 to exit 46. Go west at the end of the ramp onto Pinewoods Road. At the first stop sign, turn left onto Winsted Road. Go south about a mile to a blinking yellow light and a sign for Burr Pond State Park. Turn right (west) onto Burr Mountain Road. In about one mile, pass the entrance to the park on the left and go another 0.1 mile to the boat launch area on the left.

Diane Friend Edwards is a freelance writer and nature photographer who has written this column for several years. She also proofreads this magazine. She and her husband, Paul, live in Harwinton.



BY PAZ.CA VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Noma Restaurant in Copenhagen can overwhelm diners with its novelty.

LESSONS IN SUSTAINABILITY FROM A FAMOUS RESTAURANT IN DENMARK

BY JEAN CRUM JONES

My husband and I visited Copenhagen in September looking for lessons about the sustainable food movement in Denmark. That region with its climate and modern agriculture similar to New England's has become the world's leading culinary epicenter. Scandinavia, like New England, was well known for its distinct culture, but not as one of the great food cultures of the world—until about a decade ago.

Yale Education Travel and the Copenhagen restaurant Noma organized our trip. Noma, a tiny establishment with 44 seats, was selected as the world's best restaurant in 2011, 2012, and 2014 and has been ranked in the top ten list since 2008, according to the respected "World's 50 Best Restaurants" compilation sponsored by San Pellegrino. It is joked that it is easier to win a Nobel Prize than to get a reservation at Noma. In only 13 years, Noma has become one of the most distinguished restaurants in the world.

We dined at a variety of traditional and New Wave Copenhagen restaurants, spent two days visiting Danish farms, listened to three lectures by Professor Paul Freedman of

Yale and author of books on taste and dining, and enjoyed 12 other like-minded Yale folk and our Noma hosts.

Noma restaurant is located in an old warehouse that once stored salted fish on the Christianhavn waterfront of Copenhagen. Noma's name is a contraction of Nordic Mad (mad means food in Danish). Claus Meyer, a Danish food entrepreneur and television personality, and Rene Redzepi, then a 25-year-old who had cooked at world-class restaurants El Bulli (in Spain) and the French Laundry (in California), opened Noma in 2003. Both wanted to create a restaurant that would explore the potential of Nordic produce and would create a regional culinary identity. At the time, experts laughed at the idea of cooking gourmet food with just Nordic ingredients. In 2004, Mr. Meyer and Mr. Redzepi organized the Nordic Cuisine Symposium through which a dozen pioneering Scandinavian chefs developed the "Manifesto for the New Nordic Kitchen." They reimagined how Scandinavian cuisine might be, if they focused on seasonality, sustainability, animal welfare, and traditional Nordic ingredients: fish, root vegetables, grainy breads, nuts, and wild game.

Mr. Redzepi, whose mother is Danish

and whose father is from Macedonia, was greatly influenced by his childhood summers in Macedonia, where he learned gardening and foraging from his grandparents. At Noma, 90 percent of the food is farmed, fished, raised, or foraged within 60 miles of the restaurant. Mr. Redzepi did not want to cook French-style with Nordic ingredients. He developed a unique identity for his Nordic cuisine. His magic is that he can make eloquent, complex combinations that taste like what they are and yet unlike anything ever eaten before. In 2005, Noma earned a Michelin star. The Nordic Council of Ministers adopted the Kitchen Manifesto "as a way of boosting the production and consumption of traditional Nordic food products."

Insects in the Dessert Sauce

Nature strongly dictates the presentation of Noma's restaurant dishes with branches, rocks, and shells being part of the food plate-scape. The cooks serve the plates with a flourish along with a sophisticated description of each dish. Many young cooks train at Noma, so there is a high ratio of chefs to diners, about one chef to two diners. The Noma kitchen looks more like a science laboratory. I saw no ovens. The cooking was

done outside on Weber charcoal grills. When we entered the restaurant, a strong whiff of smokiness filled our nostrils.

We ate a 12-course tasting menu. I will admit there was so much novelty I was overwhelmed. The fussiness with the food plating distracted me; it was hard to just dig in and enjoy. Favorite tastes were a shaved radish on a kelp crust and eight charred green leaves, all different, with a scallop paste. One dessert featured a sheep's milk custard garnished with an ant paste, which was lemony in flavor. My husband Terry's favorites were the steamed King Crab (an invasive species in the Baltic Sea) and the reindeer moss cooked in chocolate.

Noma is not about home cooking but is an amazing example showcasing that only a small fraction of the earth's bounty gets to the plate. In 2008, Mr. Redzepi and Mr. Meyer established a nonprofit experimental kitchen, the Nordic Food Lab, in Copenhagen where chefs and academics can come together and share their knowledge about local and underused ingredients. The goal is to make more diverse food available to more people and to make deliciousness a greater part of people's lives.

The Yale Connection

In 2011, Mr. Redzepi launched the MAD Symposium for a new generation of chefs seeking a deeper purpose. It is an annual two-day gathering of chefs, farmers, and academics held under a bright red circus tent just outside Copenhagen. The purpose is "to expand knowledge of food to make every meal a better meal; not just at restaurants, but every meal cooked and served." In 2011, Mr. Redzepi and Dr. Freedman became acquainted when Mr. Redzepi was invited to Yale to speak at an Agrarian Studies Lecture. Subsequently, Dr. Freedman was asked to speak at a MAD symposium.

Mr. Redzepi, certainly a charismatic chef with a multitude of social concerns, has arrived on a world stage when chefs are no longer considered just talented artisans but also all-knowing change makers. The food system is very complex today, and chefs must be accessible and respond to a gamut of queries such as, Why aren't you doing more about food waste? Why are you serving such-and-such endangered fish? Why aren't you purchasing more locally?

Well-educated people are eager to engage in serious dialogue with chefs about food

issues. The MAD Institute at Yale ("MAD" is taken from the Danish word for food) was organized in 2015 as a collaboration with Yale's Sustainable Food Project. The purpose is to provide a place where chef world leaders can gather and exchange ideas with other food activists and Yale students concerned about issues such as the environment, fisheries, indigenous food ways, immigration, and globalization. The inaugural MAD Yale Leadership Summit was held in June 2016. Chefs were asked to think creatively and critically about some of the systemic food issues that intersect with a chef's trade.

No More Noma

Rene Redzepi is a restless, creative individual who is driven to keep imagining, improving, innovating. Mr. Redzepi no longer wants to offer the 12-course tasting menus, and as I was working on this column, he had decided to close the current Noma this New Year's Eve, 2016. He has bigger dreams. During one morning of our tour, we were taken to the new site for Noma 2.0. Mr. Redzepi is planning a revitalized restaurant that will be part of a state-of-the-art urban farm. The design includes a rooftop greenhouse, a huge field on a raft in the lake, and a garden and wild field surrounding the existing building. The very large building will house the restaurant, as well as a staff gym, a test kitchen, and offices for MAD and his other enterprises. Mr. Redzepi plans that Noma 2.0 will adhere more carefully to the seasons. Fall will feature game and foraged forest ingredients; in winter, Noma will become a seafood restaurant, and in spring and summer, a fully vegetarian restaurant.

Right now, the site, just outside the city's hippie Christiania neighborhood, looks like a crack den. Amid the jungle of weeds and brush is a very large ex-military warehouse that once stored mines for the Danish Navy during World War II. Street art covers the walls, and thousands of spray-paint cans lay in heaps inside and outside. This is going to become a world-class culinary destination? Most of the Yale group seemed skeptical.

Our Winery's Transformation

I, however, felt this was all strangely familiar, as Terry and I had revitalized a 1950s Nike Army base located at the back of our farm, which we had acquired in 1998. The look was the same, even though separated by an ocean and a couple decades. Our updated

military building is now a spiffy wine production center. I am sure Noma 2.0 will likewise rise as an inspiration and show how our environment can be transformed by food.

We did much more than visit Noma. We dined at long-standing high-quality Copenhagen establishments and some new places started by Noma alumni. They all emphasized Nordic ingredients and focused on purity, freshness, simplicity, and ethics. We spent two days on Danish farms. These sustainable farmer-growers supply produce and other food products to the restaurants we'd visited. We find sustainable farmers are the same everywhere—they have a passion for caring for their land and growing the best-tasting foods possible. It was easy for Terry and me to bond with them. We made some new farmer friends.

New Cuisine in Connecticut?

In the jet-lag fog that follows a trans-ocean trip, I tried to sort out what all my Copenhagen experiences meant to my Connecticut farm life. I tried to think about what a New Connecticut Cuisine might taste like.

We arrived home just in time for Connecticut's celebration of Farm-to-Chef week, an outgrowth of an initiative started by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture in 2006 to link chefs and farmers. I was all "dined out," but a glance at the itinerary inspired me. Almost 80 chefs participated. I reflected on the new initiatives between Connecticut's farmers and chefs. There has been an explosion of Farm-to-Table restaurants in Connecticut both because of a growing cadre of chef-owners of first-class eateries and the growth of new small farms that can cater to chefs and their kitchens. World-class chefs such as Rene Redzepi have provided inspiration and confidence in trusting one's own native food ingredients.

Traveling makes me realize there's no place like home. I am so lucky to live in Connecticut where we have a wide variety of food gifts from conscientious farmers and their well-tended soils, quality seafood from hard-working fishermen, a plethora of highly skilled food artisans, and many caring citizens that support chefs and farmers so we can all keep producing real good food that says Connecticut. Simply, Connecticut tastes delicious.

Jean Crum Jones is a registered dietician who works with her family running the Jones Family Farms and Jones Winery in Shelton. She is an honorary director of CFPA.



Members of the University of Connecticut's "Stormwise" team were honored by the Connecticut Urban Forest Council in October.

CFPA

FORESTERS HONORED

Emery Gluck, a forester with the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, won a field forestry award from the Society of American Foresters in October. The society's magazine, *The Forestry Source*, reported that Mr. Gluck in a 34-year-long career has "worked tirelessly to expand his boundaries" in his work managing roughly 22,000 acres of state forest lands. Mr. Gluck has written often for *Connecticut Woodlands* on some of his projects and passions, including controlled burns and the pitch pine.

At the October Forest Forum sponsored by the Connecticut Forest & Park Association and the Connecticut Urban Forest Council, the forest council presented seven awards. Connecticut DEEP urban forester Robert M. Ricard won the H. Sharon Ossenbruggen Meritorious Service Award, which is named for the late federal urban forester; it recognized many contributions to urban forestry through projects and teaching. The Town of East Hartford won the Municipal Tree Program Award. The Millane family, owner of Millane Nurseries in Cromwell, won the Leadership Award. Brian Carey, conservation director for

the town of Fairfield, won the Fred Borman Award. Jack Hale, chair of the Hartford Tree Advisory Commission, won the Volunteer Award. The Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments (which serves six municipalities in the Bridgeport area) won the Urban Forestry Award for its work mapping the urban forest canopy. Stormwise, an urban tree management project of the University of Connecticut, won the Urban Forestry Project Award for its collaborative work promoting healthy trees near utility lines. Katherine Beechem of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies' Urban Resources Initiative won a special-accomplishment award for her work with young people planting trees in New Haven.

—From press releases

CONSERVATIONIST WINS AWARD

Westbrook resident Thomas ODell won the Rockfall Foundation's Distinguished Service Award at its annual meeting in Middletown on November 3.

Also that evening Rockfall presented certificates of appreciation to Connecticut

Water Company and RiverQuest—Connecticut River Expeditions.

Mr. ODell has chaired the Westbrook Conservation Commission for the past 46 years, upholding its mission to preserve forest lands that protect the water quality of the town's wetlands, streams, rivers, and Long Island Sound. He has been instrumental in achieving a designation of conservation land for nearly 2,000 acres of Westbrook, including federal, state, town, and private property. He also served on the board of the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, serving as editor of the organization's quarterly newsletter, *The Habitat*. He helped launch the Environmental Leadership Scholarship given by the Rockfall Foundation each year to recognize environmental efforts by youth in the Lower Connecticut River Valley region.

Connecticut Water Company of Clinton provides drinking water to residents of 56 towns across Connecticut. RiverQuest—Connecticut River Expeditions of Haddam is family owned and operated by Captain Mark and Mindy Yuknat. Since 2002, RiverQuest has taken passengers on boat trips to learn about the river.

—From press releases

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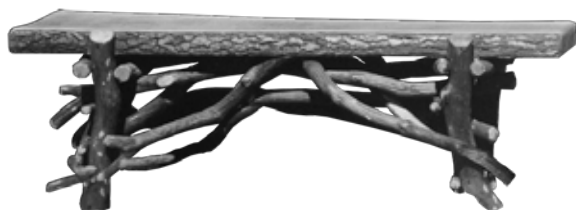
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