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Improvements to Portland High School, located at 95 High Street, included the addition of the middle school, as well as a new cafeteria and auditorium. The state is now asking the Town of Portland to repay \$4.6 million of the renovation costs as a result of the town's faulty enrollment estimations.

## Town on Hook for \$4.6 Million

by Michael McCoy

The state is asking Portland to pay back \$4.6 million dollars that it had provided for the high school/middle school complex project, completed in 2004, because of an overestimation by the town.

In the summer of 2001, the Board of Education (BOE) submitted an EDO49, a Department of Education application, with an estimation of 780 students using the facility by October.

According to First Selectwoman Susan Bransfield, who did not hold that position at the time, the BOE revised that number to 1,070 about two or three months later, "given the economy at the time." She went on to explain that there looked to be a number of building projects slated for the near future. This revision was called EDO49R.

In a letter to then Superintendent of Schools Joseph Castagnola, dated November 29, 2001, Associate Education Consultant for the state's School Facilities Unit Paige Farnham said, "We have reviewed and approved the accompanying documentation submitted with Form EDO49R."

The project passed at a November 1 referendum and was under way. By the end the project totaled \$38.6 million, about a million under the projected budget. The state paid about 55% of the total bill, which is figured by a sliding scale between 20-80% based on a town's need. Prior to this, the high school had seen no improvements since the 1960's.

During last Wednesday's Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting Superintendent of

Schools Sally Doyen, also not with the town at the time of the project, said the state began conducting its audit of the project late last summer. Doyen received a letter from the state dated October 30, 2007 questioning the projected enrollment of 1,070. Current enrollment at the facility is about 580 students.

On December 2, she met with the state Office of Internal Audit with the Bureau of School Facilities to discuss the preliminary findings. They told Doyen that the state had overpaid by \$5.2 million. This was followed by a second meeting on January 31, attended by Doyen, Bransfield, Finance Director Rob Buden, and members of the BOE.

Doyen said she received the final audit report from Chief of the Office of Internal Audit Raymond Inzero on March 5, which contained the somewhat lower figure of \$4.6 million overspent.

BOE Chairman Chris Hetrick said Wednesday night that the projection was based on proposed building projects throughout town and the kindergarten class size. Doyen added that, as it turns out, the 2001 kindergarten was "exceptionally high," and it was believed, at the time, that this signaled a general increase in class sizes.

Bransfield suspected that officials also expected more students who attended Mercy and Xavier would be taking advantage of Portland's new facility.

"What they're going on is that we didn't

meet the projection," said Hetrick, adding that he has seen several major projects through during his time on the BOE. "Never has it come back in a final review saying that they have overpaid."

Bransfield noted that she, and members of the boards of education and selectmen, expect to meet with the Commissioner for the Connecticut Department of Education Mark McQuillan, as well as with the governor's office within the next month. She also mentioned that the latter was arranged by selectman John Anderson.

"It's hard to believe," said Bransfield on Monday. "This doesn't make a lot of sense." She continued, "If they wanted to have a full blown study, then they should have required it in 2001...the town entered into this construction project in good faith. We have done everything we said we were going to do."

Hetrick commented, "This is ridiculous... how are you going to do a \$39 million project without knowing, for sure, how much the state is going to give you back." He went on to say that his understanding was that the state would either approve or reject the proposal, and that once they approved it and fronted the money six years ago, it was done deal.

"You don't change a contract in mid-stream," Hetrick said. "I'm more angry than anything else."

"The state was aware of how we were figuring it," he continued. "If at that time,

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they said 'no,' I am sure [the BOE] would have altered the project.

"This doesn't bode well. I would be a little leery about other funding projects out there."

Spokesman for the state DOE Tom Murphy said the audit is simply standard procedure for a cost-sharing program of this sort. He commented, "Unfortunately, the projected enrollment just didn't measure up. That results in some liability to the school district."

When asked why this issue was not brought up earlier, he responded, "That is not how it works... we do not stand over the shoulders of a local building committee. We take their word for it. Sometimes mistakes happen. If that is the case, the state has the responsibility to make sure this is fair to the taxpayers."

Murphy said that the state having to ask for money back from a school project is "fairly rare," but added, "[a difference of] hundreds of students is also very rare."

State Representative Jim O'Rourke attended the Wednesday evening meeting in Portland to discuss alternatives to footing this tremendous bill. "I am of the opinion that the town operated in good faith," he said.

Though he seemed to agree with the sentiments of town officials that evening, he did try to provide a state perspective. To this end, he said, "The state has a real interest in making sure every school district isn't building Cadillacs," adding that there is a square footage per student formula the state goes by. He continued, "I think numbers are far enough apart to amount to... a material difference," going on to figure that it was substantial enough that "auditors can't turn a blind eye."

O'Rourke said the simplest solution would be for Governor Rell to tell Commissioner McQuillan, "Make this go away; this is a good town." However, he expected that something this direct would be unlikely.

"I'm well aware that the town of Portland doesn't have \$4.6 million lying around, burning a hole in their pocket." To this end, he said that he and State Senator Eileen Daly would

push for special legislation that would exempt the town form having to pay.

"I'm very sure we're going to get this done," commented O'Rourke.

Selectman Mark Finkelstein said Wednesday, "The Department of Education is a part of this from day one. Suddenly, they say, 'Uh, the rules have changed,' and it's not the right time for that."

"I agree with you a hundred percent on that," responded O'Rourke, "and I think that's a major flaw on their part."

Finkelstein continued, "I think every municipality should have a stake in this, because if it could happen here, it could happen anywhere."

Bransfield did acknowledge that auditors were simply following state law: "As Mr. Inzero sincerely said, they're not doing this to cause sleepless nights."

As Bransfield closed the issue Wednesday night, she said, "This is not ended; we will have further meetings and information on this." She also noted that Portland belongs to the Connecticut Council of Small Towns, a lobbyist group for municipalities with less than 20,000 residents.

She went on to say, "It's a wonderful school; we're very grateful to the taxpayers of Portland. We are very lucky to have such a wonderful facility."

Just before the BOS moved on to other business, resident Roy Guild said, "I'd like to find out exactly how this happened. I want to find out who blew this."

Buden said the worst-case scenario is that the town will receive an invoice from the state for the \$4.6 million. Spokesman Murphy noted that the state would be willing to work out a payment plan for the town.

However, O'Rourke seemed quite confident that the appropriate legislation would be passed before the senate and house sessions adjourned on May 6. He also did not anticipate any opposition to the effort. "With Eileen and I supporting this, that won't be a problem."

## Marlborough Town Budget

by Kristina Histen

First Selectman Bill Black presented his recommended town budget of \$21.1 million to the Board of Finance for the 2008-09 fiscal year at last Wednesday meeting. This represents an estimated increase of about 5.77% over the current year's spending.

The proposed budget is comprised of four major elements; the best estimate of the local Board of Education's budget, which currently stands at \$7.21 million, the proposed RHAM Board of Education budget of \$7.04 million, the \$4.53 million Town Operations budget, and \$2.05 million for debt services. If adopted, the tax increase would be approximately 5.89% over the current year's budget.

"Clearly with our Grand List growth of only .88 percent and ever increasing fixed costs, the challenges are many," First Selectman Bill Black said in a letter to Board of Finance Chair Catherine Gaudinski. "Couple this with an expected drop in local revenue, \$70,000, as a result of reductions in the number of building permits, fewer home sales fees plus a lower return on investment funds on deposit all further impact the Town budget.

"Revenue reflects State estimates of funding allocations as provided for in the Governor's budget," he continued. "This area of the budget is not expected to change substantially as our legislators work toward a final State budget package."

Expenditures, as received from all departments, boards and commissions, would have called for a Town Operations budget increase of 11.46%. After a number of budget workshops, the Board of Selectmen reduced by

\$200,000, totaling \$4.53 million, or a 6.78% increase.

Roads reconstruction continues to be a priority for residents, Black said. This year he is requesting \$1.57 million for major drainage and road reconstruction projects. An additional funding request of \$1.61 million is anticipated for the following year as well, he said. Black reported that, he felt, the town had made significant progress to repair several miles of roads which had been neglected.

Salaries and benefits made up 58.01% of the Town Operations budget, totaling \$2.63 million, an increase of 4.4%. This comes as a result of a 15% increase in health care premiums and a contractual wage increase of 3.75% for town employees. The Board of Selectmen did, however, eliminate two part time positions for road side litter pickup and reduced the hours of the Assistant to the Assessor from full time to part time.

The costs associated with operating the town facilities are projected to increase by 14% in the coming year. Utilities are expected to go up by 8.5%, this includes fuel oil, electricity, gasoline, and diesel. Black reported that the town has undertaken energy saving initiatives to keep the increase at "only" 8.5%.

Board of Finance Chair Gaudinski was not available for comment at the time of publication.

The Board of Finance will conduct a series of budget workshops until their Public Hearing at the end of April. Residents will be able to vote on the budget at the May 12 Town Meeting.

## Longtime Glastonbury Citizen Owner Henry Hallas, 83

by Jim Hallas

Henry Hallas, longtime owner and publisher of *The Glastonbury Citizen* and *The Rivereast News Bulletin*, died Saturday, March 15, of complications from open heart surgery.

He was 83.

Born August 25, 1924 in Lincoln, RI, Henry and his three older brothers rose from near poverty during the Great Depression, using brains and perseverance to put themselves through college and realize the American dream.

Oldest brother Jeremiah attended Stanford and the University of Connecticut, was press secretary to Governor Raymond Baldwin and became a successful publisher. Bodhan put himself through the University of Alabama and became a noted lawyer. Terry graduated from Yale in three years and went on to become a trader on Wall Street.

Henry was a 1942 graduate of Woonsocket High School where he was a standout athlete and starring halfback on the varsity football team. Upon graduation several months after Pearl Harbor, he attempted to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps, but was rejected due to color blindness. The recruiter told him of a new outfit that was forming to serve with the Marines—the U.S. Navy Seabees—and Henry signed up.

He subsequently shipped out to the Pacific, serving with the 96<sup>th</sup> Seabee Battalion in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. Two of his brothers also served during the war: Terry, a Navy airman, was at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941 and fought at Midway and in the Solomon Islands campaign. Bodhan served on Peleliu and Iwo Jima.

After his discharge from the service, Henry lived for a time with his brother Jerry in South Windsor. During that time, he met Glastonbury native Marion Zirkenbach, then a student at Hillyer College, now the University of Hartford. They were married in 1949 and moved to Syracuse, NY, while Henry earned his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship, attending on the GI Bill.

They subsequently returned to Glastonbury. Henry attended UConn School of Law and worked as Executive Director of the Merit System, an association formed to promote fair and effective government at the State Capitol and surrounding towns. He was interested his entire life in the workings of government and poli-

tics—an interest and expertise he would put to good use in later years as a newspaper editor and publisher.

In 1953, he and Marion purchased *The Glastonbury Citizen*, then a fledgling enterprise that seemed to be headed for speedy extinction. Henry later joked that the net assets of his new venture "consisted of a shoebox with the names of approximately 100 to 200 subscribers, half of them unpaid."

He and Marion established the *Citizen* "headquarters" in their home, a second floor apartment on Pratt Street. Henry covered town board meetings at night and hawked advertising during the day in an effort to make ends meet. He was also writing Glastonbury news for *The Hartford Courant*, which apparently did not view his struggling weekly newspaper as enough of a threat to pose a conflict of interest.

*The Citizen* was initially printed in Middletown, but as costs increased and the newspaper gained some strength, Henry decided to acquire his own press and printing facility. He went with what was then a new process, called "offset," which used a photographic process as opposed to the old letterpress technique.

"We were the first weekly newspaper in Connecticut to switch from letterpress to offset," he recalled years later. "Other publishers thought we were making a big mistake to switch to the new method. How wrong they were." Today, all newspapers use this process.

*The Citizen* offices were first located on the corner of Oak Street and Nutmeg Lane. They were subsequently moved to the present building on Nutmeg Lane.

Henry guided *The Citizen* through many changes over subsequent years as Glastonbury grew from a backwater with a 1953 population of about 12,000 to today's affluent community numbering some 33,000 residents. Subscriptions went from a few hundred papers that fit in the back of Henry's old station wagon to over 8,000 today. Staff expanded from two—Henry and Marion—to approximately 30 full and part-time employees.

Henry used his growing newspaper—and his knowledge of politics and government—to try to guide the town in what he felt was the most beneficial direction. For instance, the construction of Route 2 and the Putnam Bridge opened up new areas for development, prompting him to push for planned zoning and devel-

opment to help balance the taxes of homeowners.

He was especially proud of his successful crusade to change local government from Board of Selectmen to the Council/Manager form of government in effect today. In doing so, he demonstrated a vision of the future that was not universally shared, particularly by the "Old Guard."

He also helped revive the Chamber of Commerce, which then existed in name only, and served as its president. The paper also pushed for a review of the Town Plan and Zoning Code, as Henry saw both the benefits and the dangers of Glastonbury's burgeoning development.

Active in community organizations, he served as president of the Glastonbury Rotary Club and for years emceed the club's popular Products Show with wit and charm. He was a recipient of the Rotary's highest honor, the Paul Harris Award.

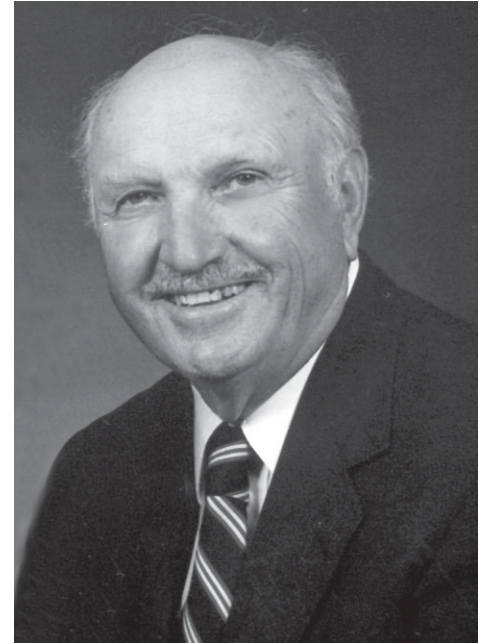
Henry was also a charter member of the Glastonbury Hills Country Club, serving three years on the Board of Directors. An athlete all his life, he was an avid golfer, who chalked up seven holes-in-one during his years on the links. He was a devoted Boston Red Sox fan, rooted for the Chicago Bears and spent many years coaching the midget football program in town.

Through it all, *The Citizen* reported on countless Council, Board of Education and Town Plan & Zoning meetings. It published thousands of pictures and names of children, information regarding organizations and their programs, churches and synagogues, school events and bus schedules, lunch menus, sporting activities, news of births, graduations, honor rolls and dean's lists—and, of course, obituaries, which this week, sadly, includes his own.

He always strove to be fair—though critics and those with opposing agendas sometimes charged otherwise; he was a man of strong opinions who nevertheless showed respect for opposing points of view; he would apologize if he thought he had been wrong, but he would never back down if he thought he was right.

He had little use for stuffed shirts, but he liked people and was a loyal friend and a true egalitarian. He treated the humblest waitress with the same easy-going courtesy and respect as he would the president of a major corporation.

When he retired as publisher in 1989, *The*



Henry Hallas

*Citizen* was recognized as one of the premier weekly newspapers in the state. In the two years before his death, he returned to work part-time, spending a few hours each morning at the office working on the business side of the company, which now also includes the regional *Rivereast News Bulletin*.

He loved *The Citizen*—it was his creation—nurtured from a shoebox full of expired subscriptions into a vibrant and successful force and voice in the community. Even as he lay bedridden in the weeks before his death, he would ask about the newspaper and the employees he viewed fondly as his own extended family.

Things here at *The Citizen* will never be quite the same without him.

Henry leaves his wife Marion; son James Henry Hallas and daughter-in-law Deborah of Portland, CT; a daughter, Barbara Hallas Pierce and son-in-law Daniel of Westborough, MA; and four grandchildren, Benjamin C. Hallas, James Henry Hallas II, Caroline R. Pierce and Elizabeth M. Pierce.

Funeral services will be private with full military honors. A memorial service to celebrate his very full life will be held Saturday, March 29 at 11 a.m. at the First Church of Christ, Congregational, 2188 Main Street, Glastonbury.

# Portland Writer Tells Story of Legendary Meriden Coach

by Michael McCoy

Portland resident Bryant Carpenter is a newspaperman by profession, but he recently put aside that necessary detachment for an emotional biography that was three years in the making.

The book is called *Life is Still Good Rob Szymaszek: One Man's Coaching Philosophy Applied to the Toughest Challenge of His Life*, and it primarily chronicles six years in the life of the former Meriden high school football coach. That titular "challenge" is a brain tumor.

Carpenter, 42, was raised in Southington and recalls a harrowing ordeal that shaped much of who he is today. When Carpenter was 11, his seven-year-old sister Laura was diagnosed with a neuroblastoma, a form of cancer that primarily attacks children. In Laura's case, the cancer manifested itself as a tumor on her neck.

She isn't supposed to be living now, thirty-one years later. Given a five-percent chance to live, Laura persevered. In his prologue, Carpenter writes, "I don't need the photographs to remind me of how hollowed out, how skeletal she looked in those months of 1977 and 1978, years that retain the length of decades in my memory." Today, Laura lives in Florida with her husband and two kids, working as nurse, and without a trace of the cancer.

After graduating from high school in 1983, Carpenter attended Bentley College in Massachusetts. "I was kind of miscast in business school," he remembers. He eventually transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University, majoring in English and reported for the *Meriden Record-Journal* on the side.

Carpenter graduated from Eastern in 1988, and the next year, moved to Maine to begin freelancing for the *Portland Press-Herald*. Eventually, he moved to Long Island and worked as the sports editor for the *Southampton Press*. In 1998, Carpenter's employment journey came full circle as he returned to the *Meriden Record-Journal*, first as a reporter and then, in 2006, as the paper's Sports Editor. He moved to Portland in 2004 with his wife, Colleen McClain, an English teacher in Rocky Hill.

Though he refers to *Life is Still Good* as his first book, Carpenter actually published *The Classic Experience*, an account of the Hampton Classic Horse Show, in 1995. Speaking on the annual event, he lightly remarked, "It's one of those snooty high-society kind of things."

Carpenter's most recent plunge into the literary world focuses on Rob Szymaszek, better known as Coach Smaz. Szymaszek was born in 1950, and spent his entire life in his hometown of Meriden. As a sophomore, he began playing football for Maloney, one of the two high schools in the town.

In 1972, Szymaszek married his high school sweetheart, Diane, and went on to earn his master's degree in health education and a six-year degree in counseling from Southern Connecticut State University.

Then, in 1976, at the age of just 26, Szymaszek was awarded the position of head coach for his alma mater, the Maloney Spartans. This would be a spot he would occupy for 26 years, racking up 160 wins. Carpenter includes a number of episodes over Coach Smaz's tenure, but the book is driven by what happens in Chapter 1, simply titled "September 1, 2001."

After his team lost a scrimmage to Glaston-

bury, Szymaszek headed out to Westport to meet with Staples High School head coach Marce Petroccio, a get together that had developed into a preseason tradition.

While driving on the Wilbur Cross Parkway, Szymaszek felt peculiar, specifically dizzy, nauseous, and "oddly detached from his surroundings." Before he knew what was really happening, the coach was pulled over by a power-tripping police officer, who informed him that he had two flat tires, and had hit the median as well as another car. When Szymaszek got out to fix the flats, the officer threw Szymaszek to the ground, adorning him with handcuffs that made his wrists bleed.

He was brought to the emergency room where doctors deduced that Szymaszek had experienced a simple-partial seizure. While still in the ER, he had a grand mal seizure, which doctors said would have been fatal, had it happened while driving.

Nine days later, Dr. Joseph Piepmeier, a neurosurgeon at Yale-New Haven Hospital, who Szymaszek would later look to as a "god," ordered a biopsy. This yielded the discovery that Szymaszek had an oligodendroglioma, one of nine varieties of brain tumors.

Szymaszek began combing through bookstores for first-hand accounts from cancer patients, but he could not find any. So, he decided to write his own. However, Carpenter said, "he realized he didn't know how to go about it."

"Right away, I was drawn to the project," said Carpenter, who appreciated the parallel between Szymaszek's coaching style and his fight against cancer. Carpenter explained the coach's strategy on the latter as, "I know you're tough, and you're probably going to beat me, but I'm going to kick your ass."

Carpenter is grateful to those who enabled the project to happen. He credits executive editor Jim Smith as, "the guy who really pushed to make this happen." He also expressed gratitude toward *Record-Journal* owner Eliot White, who gave Carpenter the summer off to start the book.

One interesting element to the book is the gradual shift of Carpenter's voice from a relatively detached third-person narrator to a character in the story itself. Noting the development of his relationship with Szymaszek and his family as he chronicled his illness, Carpenter noted, "I went from being a hired gun for a book project to being a member of his family."

By the same token, the process for the book began as a series of one-hour interviews as Szymaszek related his story, but eventually Carpenter would visit the family more regularly and even accompany the coach to doctor's visits, becoming a primary witness. "I went from being a guy who the story was told to," he remembered, "to being a guy who saw the story happen first hand."

Initially the book was to close with a scene from the beginning of the 2004 season when Szymaszek returned to Maloney as an assistant coach. The duo planned to team up for a sequel of sorts, but Szymaszek suggested they just keep the book going.

Part II of the book is decidedly less optimistic. During those last 110 pages, Szymaszek's tumor evolves from grade 2 to grade 4, the severest.

*Life is Good* inherently tugs at the heart



Carpenter seated in the home office where he wrote *Life is Still Good* in.

strings, as it chronicles the rollercoaster that Rob, Diane, and their daughter Jennifer rode for six years. It depicts the effect his winning spirit had on family members, coaches, colleagues, and students on the field and in the guidance office. The story shows Rob in loss and victory, from struggles with school administration to carefree days on the beaches of St. Martin with Diane. It even includes a touching run in with Bill Parcels. The chapter "In His Corner" ends with an especially poignant scene, and image, between Rob and his longtime collaborator, Assistant Coach Mike Falis.

This is just one of many pictures throughout the book taken by Bill Lischeid, a Maloney parent, who is also responsible for the emotional cover photo that depicts Szymaszek embracing his daughter Jennifer. "His pictures helped me craft scenes at which I was not present because the photos were so, so good," said Carpenter.

The book climaxes with a testimonial at the Aqua Turf Club in Southington. The event concludes with Szymaszek addressing a crowd of 500. It takes him a little bit to reach the podium and get his bearings, but he eloquently and succinctly thanks those dearest to him, while hoping to inspire the entire room. After a funny anecdote, he instructs the audience in his shoot-from-the-hip manner: "I'd like to ask all of you, if you're ever in my situation, when adversity comes your way, kick it in the ass."

The last chapter, titled "Post Game," is decidedly bleaker than the rest of the book. Szymaszek is forced to spend more and more time in bed and is confronted with a family loss.

But Carpenter promises, this picture of Coach does not do him justice. "He lived with brain cancer; it wasn't until he was confined to the bed that he was finally dying of it."

Plaidswede, an outfit located in Concord, New Hampshire signed on to publish *Life is Still Good* in January of last year. The book

went to print in September of 2007, however its release was delayed until November after Szymaszek's final quarter came to an end on September 20. He was 57 years old.

Despite Coach Smaz's absence, Carpenter remains close with the family.

Shortly after publication, the Meriden Border's hosted a book signing that Channel 3 attended. Carpenter's next event will come on April 2 at the Middlesex Hospital Cancer Center. In truth, it will mark the culmination of Szymaszek's reason for bringing Carpenter (who he refers to as his "co-author") on-board in the first place. "It's the first time we're taking it to the people Rob originally envisioned," said Carpenter. "I'm looking forward to that event."

Carpenter estimated about 3,000 copies of the book had been printed. "We knew that people would want to read this story," said the author. "It's not just a local story; it's not just a Connecticut story; it's not just a cancer story. It's a life story."

Carpenter says he has received a lot of positive feedback on the book, especially from football coaches, claiming they have made their assistant coaches read it. He is now kicking around a couple ideas for his next book, including a childhood memoir that would incorporate the ordeal of his sister's illness.

It is impossible to discuss the book with Carpenter without recognizing the love and admiration he has for Coach Smaz. "Rob was the eternal optimist," remarks Carpenter. "The core philosophy is right there in the title," he figures. Indeed, those four words pop up again and again, whether from the pen of the author or the mouth of the coach: "Life is still good."

*Life is Still Good* is available at nhbooksellers.com, as well as Barnes and Noble in Glastonbury, Border's in Meriden, and Burgundy Books in East Haddam. It retails for \$19.95, and is 355 pages long.

## East Hampton Police News

3/5 — Randy Cavanaugh, 28, of 28 Markham Rd., and Jesse Ricks, 66, of 74 Windy Hill Dr., Middletown, were involved in a two-vehicle accident at the intersection of Rt. 16 and Rt. 196. Cavanaugh was issued a ticket for failure to obey a traffic signal and distracting driving, East Hampton Police report.

3/7 — Brian M. Krajewski, 33, of 145 Chestnut Hill Rd., was arrested pursuant to a court-ordered warrant for disorderly conduct and second-degree failure to appear, police report.

3/7 — A 15-year-old male juvenile was referred to Juvenile Court for second-degree breach of peace, police say.

3/8 — Andrea Rivers, 42, of 50 Old West High St., was arrested for disorderly conduct and interfering with a police officer, police report.

3/8 — Dutch A. Bulseco, 39, of 215 Skyview Dr., Cromwell, was arrested on a warrant for

sixth-degree larceny and second-degree criminal mischief, police report.

3/11 — Gail Saltus, 44, of 24 Middletown Ave., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for sixth-degree larceny and sixth-degree conspiracy to commit larceny, police report.

3/12 — Omar Namen, 36, of 138 Ague Spring Rd., Haddam Neck, was issued a ticket for operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police report.

3/15 — Paul D. Bouchard, 37, of 174 Lake Dr., was arrested for second-degree strangulation, first-degree unlawful restraint, third-degree assault, violation of a protective order and breach of peace, police report.

3/16 — Andrew J. Tierney, 45, of 85 North Main St., was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to obey a stop sign, police report.

## Colchester Police News

3/5-Kenneth Blandina, 46, of 23 West Ridge Dr., was charged with disorderly conduct, third-degree assault and risk of injury, State Police said.

3/5-Scott Duffany, 26, of 16 Carefree Ln., Chaplin, turned himself in to State Police on the charge of second-degree failure to appear, State Police said.

3/9-Danielle West, 21, was charged with DWI, failure to have tail light, failure to stay in lane and violation of protective order, State Police said.

3/10-Mario Gagliardi, 23, of 2064 Manchester Rd., Glastonbury, was charged with speeding, narcotics and drug paraphernalia, State Police said.

3/10-Nicole Mockus, 20, of 4 Hickory Hill Rd., Andover, turned herself in to State Police on the charge of failure to pay or plead, State Police said.

3/10-Brittany Mounce, 21, of 45 Grove St., Wauregan, was charged with criminal impersonation, State Police said.

3/10-Diana Tomczyk, 26, of 315 High St.,

East Hartford, turned herself in to State Police on the charge of violation of probation, State Police said.

3/11-Vincent Rutchick, 25, of 87 Old Hebron Rd., was charged with possession of controlled substances/narcotics, drug paraphernalia and insurance coverage fails minimum requirements, State Police said.

3/12-David Cabrera, 31, of 11 Ridgewood Rd. Ext., East Haddam, was charged with third-degree assault, disorderly conduct and interfere with emergency calls, State Police said.

3/13- Shivonne Clark, 20, turned herself in to state police on the charge of second-degree failure to appear, State Police said.

3/13-Richard Peno, 51, of 108 Wellswood Rd. B2, Amston, was charged with possession of marijuana and red light violation, State Police said.

3/16-Joel Voronuk, 19, of 15 Pine St., Columbia, was charged with operation of motor vehicle with suspended license, State Police said.

# Marlborough BOE Approves Budget

by Kristina Histen

The Marlborough Board of Education (BOE) unanimously approved a \$7.25 million budget for the 2008-09 fiscal year on Monday; a spending plan that represents a 5.44% increase over the current year.

The BOE held a special meeting this week to rescind the \$7.21 million budget adopted at their Feb. 28 meeting because of the need for an additional kindergarten section. Currently, there are 92 children signed up, but past kindergarten trends show that the school should expect an increase of 2-6 additional students during the summer months.

At the time of the Feb. 28 BOE meeting, only 85 children were registered, making it reasonable for only five sections. However, with the chance of having at least 100 kindergarteners by the fall, the Board felt it necessary to follow the Early Literacy Plan adopted in December of 1999. This plan follows the recommendation of the Department of Education that there should be no more than 18 students per kindergarten class.

"In kindergarten it is very important to have that ratio between teachers and children," Board Chair Maria Grove said.

To keep the class sizes as low as possible, Superintendent of Schools Sal Menzo suggested an extra section of kindergarten in the afternoon, totaling six sections for the coming school year. The \$7.25 million budget proposes adding a half-time teacher and a half-time paraprofessional for the sixth kindergarten section, with both salaries combined totalling \$34,288.

"Our budget is entirely for children, based on the recommendations of administration and

the educational leaders whom we put our trust in," Grove said.

All Board members agreed that this proposal was necessary for Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School to move forward.

Monday night the BOE also discussed whether or not the 2008-2009 proposed budget should be increased even higher to afford another Physical Education teacher. Local resident Shawn Fischer shared the boys' annual physical education test results with the Board, saying that these numbers were "very disturbing," and "not only bad, but becoming considerably worse." In 2005, only 37% passed, he said, in 2006 only 31% passed, and last year, only 29%.

"Consider very seriously, as a school and the Board of Education, to improve what we have and add a P.E. teacher," Fischer said. "I know it goes beyond that, but what is at stake is too high to ignore."

Board members, however, were skeptical about the P.E. tests and the accuracy of the results. Local resident Shannon Bielaczyc questioned what exactly the test was looking at, as her third-grade son and his friends "tested very poorly." Ironically, all are "clearly healthy" and on the soccer team. During the test period, they had been training from August to December.

"We want our students to be healthy and intellectual," Menzo said, "but it's just not something we can put on the plate right now."

The supported 2008-2009 proposed budget was presented to the Board of Finance yesterday (Thursday).

## Belltown Man Confesses to Child Porn Possession

by Michael McCoy

An East Hampton man pled guilty to a child pornography charge on March 13 and could spend 10 years in prison.

According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Jeffrey Hall, 38, of Mott Hill Road, was arrested in the aftermath of an investigation headed up by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agency. This federal branch nailed Hall through a national effort called Operation Emisary.

Special agents of ICE targeted a particular pay-to-view child pornography website and, through court-sanctioned monitoring, were able to gain information, including a customer list. According to the attorney's office, this particular site contained pictures and clips of child pornography.

Agents ascertained that Hall had used his home computer to access these images, so special agents searched his residence and seized his computer and hard drives. The search of the hard drives yielded more than 600 images of child pornography including "photographs of children under the age of 12 engaged in sexually explicit conduct and photographs depict-

ing violent or sadistic sexual conduct involving minors."

The U.S. District Court in New Haven said Hall pleaded guilty to one count of Title 18, possession of child pornography. Judge Ellen Burns heard the plea, and he was released on a \$100,000 appearance bond, which was secured by property.

The conditions of that release include Hall's continuation of mental health treatment, and prohibition of unsupervised contact with any child under 18. Seeing his son, however, is an exception. Hall is also prohibited from holding any position of authority over a child, having access to a computer, or leaving the state of Connecticut.

Judge Burns will sentence Hall in New Haven on May 28. It is possible he could receive up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Attorney Kevin O'Conner said the prosecution was part of the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood Initiative, which "seeks to protect children from online exploitation and abuse." More information on this is available at [www.projectsafefchildhood.com](http://www.projectsafefchildhood.com).

## Marlborough Police News

### Hebron Police News

3/5-Brian Poulin, 35, of 450 Church St., was charged with two counts of violation of probation, State Police said.

3/8-Jawan Potter, 34, of 489 East St., was charged with third-degree burglary, fourth-degree criminal mischief, third-degree larceny and breach of peace, State Police said.

3/6-Scott Jacobs, 21, of 21 Lake Rd., was charged with sixth-degree larceny theft from building and using motor vehicle or vessel without owners' permission, State Police said.

3/16-Thomas Scoville, 46, of 153 Thompson St., S. Glastonbury, was charged with DWI and speeding, State Police said.



Elmer-Thienes Mary Hall Elementary School students recite a warm up rhyme for the crowd at the 17th annual CT COLT Rhyme Celebration.

## "We all Laugh in the Same Language"

by Kristina Histen

About 300 children recited rhymes and sang songs in different languages on Wednesday for the 17th annual Connecticut Council of Language Teachers (COLT) Rhyme Celebration held at Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School.

The Rhyme Celebration was created for children from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade, to promote an early love for language. This was the third time the school has co-hosted the event with CT COLT. Twenty-four schools from 13 school districts across Connecticut attended, representing 15 different world languages learned in school, from after-school programs, and at home.

CT COLT is a non-profit membership organization that promotes language proficiency and the knowledge of world cultures. It advocates for world language learning for all students at all grade levels, supports teacher and student activities that demonstrate language teaching and learning and recognizes the success of teachers and students in world languages.

"We are fortunate to have an active community in Marlborough that practices multicultural awareness," Superintendent of Schools Sal Menzo said.

The gymnasium was decorated with flags of different countries, most donated by families of Marlborough, and posters made by fifth-grad-

ers describing their heritage. Children in brightly colored themed costumes enjoyed snacks in the cafeteria before the ceremony began. They drew funny faces on the program's mural and posed for pictures on stage with their groups as they anxiously waited to recite their rhymes.

"I am very proud to have about 200 of my students participating in the Rhyme Celebration in some way," Kristen Vrabie, Marlborough teacher and CT COLT Rhyme Celebration Co-Chair said.

This year's theme, "We all Laugh in the Same Language," was inspired by Marla Lewis' song of the same name. She was at Marlborough Elementary School on Monday to perform her song and conduct a workshop. Students from MES sang the song to kick off the day's activities.

As each school went up on stage, children spoke eloquently in different languages as they proudly recited their rhymes. Students danced, performed skits, and sang both individually and as members of groups. Throughout the celebration, Marlborough students told jokes to entertain the crowd, like "What letter ends everything? The letter 'G'!"

For more information about CT COLT Rhyme Celebration, visit the website [www.ctcolt.org](http://www.ctcolt.org).

# Obituaries

## East Hampton

### Doris Viva (Hackney) Bergren

Doris Viva (Hackney) Bergren, 95, widow of Howard E.W. Bergren, passed away Saturday (March 15, 2008) at Brittany Farms Health Center in New Britain. A lifelong New Britain resident, Doris graduated from the Moody Business School and was employed as the head of the Proof Department at New Britain National Bank for over 20 years and the New Britain Trust Company for 10 years until her retirement in 1973. Doris was active in the Connecticut Citizens Defense Corp for the War Council during World War II. Doris' father was a builder and named Doris Street in New Britain after her.

Surviving are two sons, Alan H. Bergren of Norwich; and Bruce W. Bergren of Hermosa Beach, CA; a sister-in-law, Irene Hackney who was her caregiver for over 5 years; several nieces and nephews. Besides her husband Howard, she was predeceased by five brothers and a sister.

Funeral services and burial will be private. There are no calling hours. Carlson Funeral Home, New Britain is assisting the family with arrangements. Donations may be made to the charity of the donor's choice. Please share a memory or note of sympathy at [www.carlsonfuneralhome.com](http://www.carlsonfuneralhome.com)

## East Hampton

### Marian S. Gauthier

Marian S. Gauthier, 91, of Griffin, GA and formerly of Hartford and East Hampton, died Wednesday, March 12, at Spaulding Regional Medical Center in Griffin, GA. Born Oct. 10, 1916 in New Britain, she was the daughter of the late Archibald and Minnie (Walker) Sharp. Marian had retired from the Phoenix Insurance Company where she had been employed as a secretary.

Marian is survived by her two sons, Roy Gauthier of East Hampton and Michael Gauthier of Atlanta, GA; four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband, Paul Gauthier, and her two sons, Philip and Timothy Gauthier.

Graveside services will be held Saturday, March 22 at 10 a.m. at Fairview Cemetery, New Britain. The Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., East Hampton, has care of arrangements. To leave online condolences or for directions please visit [www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com)

## East Hampton

### Martha Ann Johnson

Martha Ann (Souther) Johnson, 94, formerly of East Hampton, died peacefully Thursday, March 13, at Ellis Manor in Hartford. Born Jan. 20, 1914 in Groton, MA, she was the daughter of the late Morton Alexander and Mary Jane (MacDonald) Souther. She graduated from Fitchburg, MA State Teachers College and taught briefly in Pepperell, MA until her marriage to William Mannix Johnson in 1942. During WWII she worked at Fort Devens to aid the war effort. Upon Bill's return from the South Pacific, they began to raise a family.

They moved to East Hampton in 1952., where Bill served as principal of Middle Haddam School. After his untimely death in 1954, Martha returned to teaching. She taught fourth grade in East Hampton for 30 years, retiring in 1984. Martha was active in St. Pius X Ladies Guild at St. Patrick Church, and delighted in the accomplishments of her decades of former students. A strong, independent woman, her life was devoted to raising her three children. She single-handedly put all three through college and saw them happy in their chosen careers.

She is survived by her daughter Mary Beth Jordan and husband Richard K. (Count) of Hartford, her son William Mannix Jr. and his wife Nanci (Rockwell) of Fairfield. She was predeceased in 2005 by her daughter Jane Sinclair. She doted upon her four grandchildren who lovingly dubbed her "Gingi," William Mannix III and Meghan Johnson of Norwalk, Darci Sinclair and fiancé John Lefler of Franklin, NC, and Geoffrey Sinclair of Texas.

Her quick wit and rock solid convictions will be missed by all who knew her. The family expresses a huge debt of gratitude to Sue Terry and the staff at Ellis Manor for their caring and professional treatment over the last several months of Martha's life.

Funeral rites will be held on Easter Monday, March 24. The family will receive relatives and friends from 9:30-10:30 a.m. in the Spencer Funeral Home, 112 Main St., followed by a Funeral Liturgy in St. Patrick Church, West High St., with the Rev. Msgr. Robert L. Brown, Chancellor of the Diocese of Norwich and son of Martha's long-time friend, the late Elsie Ferrigno Brown presiding. Burial will follow in the family plot in Groton, MA. Memorial donations may be made to the Martha S. Johnson Scholarship Fund (which will aid future elementary school teachers), c/o East Hampton High School, 15 North Maple St., East Hampton, CT 06424. To leave online condolences or for directions, please visit [www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com](http://www.spencerfuneralhomeinc.com).

## Portland

### Norma Hall Olson

Norma Hall Olson, 93, longtime resident of Portland and most recently at Heritage Commons in Middletown, died on Saturday, (March 15, 2008). She was born in New Haven, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur P. Hall. She was the wife of the late William "Willie" Olson, a member of the Warren Masonic Lodge, and was a member of the Hemlock Grange, Zion Lutheran Church and the guilds, and the Portland Senior Center.

She graduated from Arnold College, in Bridgeport, with her degree in physical education, and later early childhood. She was the director of women's athletics at the Middletown YMCA, and then taught girls physical education at Portland High School for 15 years. She then taught second grade at Gildersleeve School and substituted for 12 years. She was an avid fan of UCONN basketball and the Boston Red Sox .

She is survived by her two daughters, Doris Hanford of Cape Cod, and Pamela Olson of Colchester. Also, two grandchildren, Heather Hanford of Hamburg, Germany, and Jason Hanford of Manhattan, NY.

Her funeral service was held at the Zion Lutheran Church, in Portland, on Wednesday March 19. The Rev. James Reemts, Pastor, officiated. A reception for family and friends followed. Donations in her memory may be sent to the American Heart Association, 5 Brookside Dr., Wallingford, CT 06492.

## Hebron

### Joseph A. Lusky

Joseph A. Lusky, 91, of Hebron, husband of Ethel (Laister) Lusky, died Friday, March 14. He was born September 14, 1916 in Bridgeport, the son of John and Mary (Orlowski) Lusky and has lived in Columbia for many years before moving to Hebron where he was a member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Prior to his retirement as General Manager he was employed for many years at the former Electro-Motive Mfg. Company in Willimantic.

Joseph enjoyed skiing, sailing and bowled for many years in the Willimantic Senior League. He was also a member of the Windham Whirlers Square Dance Club. In addition to his wife of 67 years he is survived by two daughters, Carole Eller of Marlborough, Pam Cicaloni and her husband John of Duxbury, MA, three grandchildren, Wendy Hastings and her husband Doug, James Eller, Brett Hungerford and his wife Brenda, three great grandchildren, Evelyn Eller, Cole and Seth Hastings. He was predeceased by a son-in-law, Fred Eller.

His family received friends at the Potter Funeral Home in Willimantic on Sunday. Funeral services were held Monday at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Hebron. Burial followed in West Street Cemetery, Columbia. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to St. Peter Church Memorial Fund, 30 Church St, Hebron, CT 06248. Please visit [www.potterfuneralhome.com](http://www.potterfuneralhome.com) to contribute to Lusky's online memorial guestbook.

## Marlborough

### Marion G. Prout

Marion G. Prout, 93, of Napa, California, formerly of Marlborough, died Saturday, March 8, at Queen of the Valley Hospital with family members at her side. Marion was born in Providence RI on June 18, 1914 to George H. Morse and Edith K. Morse. She had one brother, Harold Morse and three sisters, Helen Waters, Blanche Faulkner and Lillian Lord. They had all predeceased her as well as her two husbands, Myron C. Lord and Benjamin H. Prout. Marion is survived by a son and daughter-in-law, Kenneth and Phyllis Lord of Marlborough; a daughter and son-in-law, Helen and Samuel Mitchell of Napa, CA; and a daughter and son-in-law, Marion and John Hanson of Portland, OR.; nine grandchildren, William and Diane Lord and Douglas and Sandra Lord of Marlborough, Stephen and Janice Lord of Tucson, AZ.; Cynthia and Scott Baker of Abington, MD., James and Elizabeth Mitchell and Craig and Wendy Mitchell of California, Brian Mitchell and Kevin and Nancy Mitchell of Colorado, and Kirsten and Jason Bird of Oregon; 32 great grandchildren, two great-great grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Marion was adored by family and friends, and never lost her zest for life. Marion will be greatly missed by all who knew her. A private burial will be in Antioch, CA. at the convenience of the family. Memorial contributions may be sent to the American Cancer Society or the charity of the donor's choice. Notes of sympathy may be sent to the family on-line at [WWW.RPFSC.COM](http://WWW.RPFSC.COM).

## Portland

### Jabez Wayne Sterry

Jabez Wayne Sterry, 80, of 1 Highland Ave., Portland, passed away on Wednesday morning, March 12 at Middlesex Hospital. Born in Middletown on December 16, 1927, he was the son of the late Edward L. and Hazel (Zesewitz) Sterry. Wayne enlisted in the US Navy at age 17 serving for nearly 26 years with his duties including World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam. Spending almost 24 years at sea on various submarines, he achieved the rank of Senior Chief with most of his duties in the Atlantic Ocean. He was particularly fond of his duty in the Mediterranean Sea with Toulon, France being his favorite port.

Wayne was a life long resident of Portland, a member of the Antique Arms Collectors Association of Connecticut, Ye Connecticut Gun Guild, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, a Life member of the American Rifle Association, and a former member of the Middlesex County Historical Society.

He is survived by a brother, John B. Sterry and his wife, Jane, of Portland; a nephew, John B. Sterry, Jr. of Portland; three nieces, Sandra (Sterry) Watkins of Beaufort, Victoria, Australia, Janine (Sterry) Pittman of Morrison, Oklahoma, and Sara (Sterry) Rutter of Portland; two grandnieces, Kayla M. Pittman and Devon E. Rutter and four grandnephews, Austin L. Pittman and Colten J. Pittman of Oklahoma and Edward J. Watkins and Joseph L. Watkins of Australia.

Funeral services were held at The Parish of Trinity Church in Portland last Monday. Interment followed in the Swedish Cemetery in Portland. In lieu of flowers, friends may make donations in his memory to Ye Connecticut Gun Guild, c/o Peter Kuck, 602 Park Rd., West Hartford, CT 06107 or the Middlesex County Historical Society, 151 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457. Messages of condolences may be sent to the family at [www.doolittlefuneralservice.com](http://www.doolittlefuneralservice.com).

## Portland

### Clifford A. Gustafson

Clifford A. Gustafson, 89, of Portland-Cobalt Rd., Portland, passed away peacefully with his family by his side, on Monday, March 18, at Middlesex Hospital. He was the beloved husband of 67 years of Helen E. Iverson Gustafson. Born in Portland, June 18, 1918, a son of the late Charles A. and Amelia Charlotta Johansdotter Gustafson, he was a lifelong Portland resident. He had been employed as an insurance professional for the Aetna Life and Casualty Co. for many years until his retirement.

He had a deep love for the sea having also worked as a marine surveyor and as a boat Captain often powering large yachts to Florida and back. He was a member of the Warren Lodge No. 51 AF & AM and had been Past-Master (1964). He also was a member of the National Association of Marine Surveyors, and the Hemlock Grange No.182 as well as a member of Zion Lutheran Church.

Besides his wife Helen, he is survived by his daughters, Nancy Droit and her husband Jimmy of Glendale, AZ, and Elise O'Brien and her husband David of Portland; his son Charles M. Gustafson and his wife Jane of Chester; his daughter-in-law Katharine "Kit" Gustafson of Canterbury; his son-in-law Peter Van Aken and his wife Candace of Winchester, MA; his grandchildren Christina Van Aken, David Van Aken, Sarah Beth Droit, Joseph Droit, Tara Laubach, Eric Gustafson, Kevin O'Brien, Christopher O'Brien, Katherine O'Brien; his sisters Jane Bartolotta of Higganum, and Margaret Randazzo of Portland, and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his daughter Carol E. Van Aken, his son Clifford E. Gustafson, his sisters Ethel Lamb and Helen Spencer, and his brothers Arnold and Alf Gustafson.

His family will receive relatives and friends in the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland on Saturday, March 22 from 2:30 - 3:30 p.m. with the procession to Zion Lutheran Church for a service at 4 p.m. The Rev. James Reemts, Pastor, will officiate. Interment will follow in Swedish Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, gifts in his memory may be sent to the Block Island Maritime Institute, P.O. Box 358, Block Island, RI, 02807 for the purpose of educating adults and children alike on the wonders of the sea.

## Colchester

### Wendi Marie Fellows

Wendi Marie Fellows, 35, of Colchester, passed away Monday (March 17, 2008) at the Yale-New Haven Hospital.

Born Dec. 12, 1972 in Willimantic, she was a daughter of Gary Fellows and Sandra (Nichols) Desroche, both of Colchester.

Wendi was a Registered Nurse in the area for many years. In her spare time, she enjoyed crocheting, reading, walking and camping, but found her greatest joy in her children.

In addition to her parents, she is survived by her three beloved children; Vicki, Kelly and Vanessa; her grandson, Reese; her sister, Stacey Fellows of Colchester; her nephews, Ethan and Jackson; and numerous extended family members and friends.

Calling hours were held from 5-8 p.m. on Thursday at the Aurora-McCarthy Funeral Home, 167 Old Hartford Road. Funeral services were scheduled for today (Friday, March 21) at 10 a.m. at the funeral home with a chapel service to follow at 10:30 a.m. with the Rev. Charles F. Brown, officiating. Interment will follow in the New St. Andrew Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made towards her children's education, in care of Sandra Desroche, 90 Davidson Road, Colchester 06415.

