



POSTAL CUSTOMER
LOCAL

RIVEREAST

News Bulletin

Serving Amston, Andover, Cobalt, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Middle Haddam, Portland, Colchester and Salem

Volume 34, Number 38

Published by The Glastonbury Citizen

December 11, 2009



Portland resident Michael Hennessey recently received a giant menorah, handcrafted by his friends. The gift is just in time for Chanukah, which begins tonight.

Portland Man Given Giant Menorah

by Michael McCoy

On the night of Dec. 3, there arose such a clatter on Michael Hennessey's front lawn. But when he and his wife, Jennifer, threw up the sash, they found not eight tiny reindeer – but eight friends and one gargantuan menorah.

Drivers-by can now find a 12-foot wooden menorah in front of the Hennessey's Stewart Road home, thanks to the evening surprise.

Hennessey, 33, is known around his neighborhood for taking Christmas decorating quite seriously – even though he's Jewish. In fact, neighbors have taken to calling the Hennessey home, the Rockefeller House.

Raised in Middletown by a Jewish mother and Irish-Catholic father, Hennessey similarly married an Episcopalian. Their children, Brynn, 5, and Caden, 3, are being raised Christian. Hennessey, who still attends Adath Israel, where he was bar mitzvahed, said that traditionally children adopt the religion of their mothers, hence his being raised Jewish. "Then, in turn, I respected that tradition," explaining why his kids are being raised Christian.

According to Hennessey, his friends figured he deserved to celebrate Chanukah in the same festive spirit as he celebrates Christmas. (Hennessey put up no less than three Christmas trees on his front porch.)

So, when Hennessey decorated his home Thanksgiving weekend, the octet hatched the plan. Hennessey said Brian Van Derventer and Andy Ives were the brains of the operation, with the former leading the research, and the latter

managing the handiwork. Hennessey said the team modeled their creation after a huge community menorah in West Palm Beach, FL.

A menorah is a traditional symbol of Chanukah – which begins at sundown tonight, Dec. 11.

While a group composed of Van Derventer, Ives and six others spent about a week planning, as well as retrieving the wood, they constructed the whole menorah the evening of Thursday, Dec. 3, in about three hours.

Then they hauled it over in a flatbed trailer (stopping traffic coming both ways), pulled by a pickup truck, placed it in the front yard, and secured it into the ground. They even went as far as hooking it into their electricity, illuminating the flickering lights meant to look like candles. By the time the Hennesseys heard the rumpus, around 9 or 9:30 p.m., the group was giddily congratulating themselves and taking pictures. Before the group dispersed, Hennessey figured there were about 20 people admiring the menorah.

"It was hysterical," he chuckled. He said many cars have since stopped in the middle of the road to stare at the menorah. In addition, he said neighbors uninvolved with the reverse-heist have pulled right into the driveway to look.

However, Hennessey said he was more moved than anything when he realized what had happened, recognizing that they took "the time out of their busy lives."

See Menorah on Page 2

Tax Exemption Approved for Marlborough Vet

by Katy Nally

An issue regarding a disabled Marlborough veteran came to an apparent close Tuesday night, when the Board of Selectmen approved a new draft of an ordinance that granted property tax exemption to one local couple.

"I'm glad they passed it, it's what we wanted," Pasquale Amodeo, attorney for the injured veteran, Willy Hodge, said Wednesday.

The old draft of the ordinance, which was the subject of an Oct. 27 public hearing, included two aspects that upset many residents and veterans – a sunset clause and the exclusion of a surviving spouse. The sunset clause put a two-year expiration date on the ordinance unless it was renewed by law.

But the new proposed ordinance that passed Tuesday night did not include either of these provisions.

Instead, the new ordinance grants the surviving spouse the property tax exemption as long as he or she doesn't remarry and remains in the same house. In lieu of a sunset clause, this ordinance calls for a review from the Board of Finance (BOF) every four years.

As of now, the property tax exemption will only affect Hodge and his wife Robin.

First Selectman Bill Black introduced the ordinance Tuesday by telling residents, "We

have heard your input."

The selectmen went on to say why it was necessary to adopt the state statute through an ordinance instead of a resolution. Selectman Joseph La Bella said since a tax exemption is seen as an appropriation of funds, an ordinance or a "permanent statement of the law," is preferred over a resolution, which he called "an expression of opinion." Selectman Riva Clark agreed, saying since a resolution is "unenforceable" it's not "how we want to honor our veterans."

Since September, Amodeo has said adopting the statute through a resolution would be simpler and faster than by ordinance. At the Sept. 15 Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting, he noted that Hartford had passed the legislation with a resolution in June 2009.

But La Bella said Tuesday "there is a fundamental difference" between Hartford's charter and Marlborough's, saying a resolution in this case would not be sufficient.

Black later agreed saying an ordinance is transparent and codified, unlike a resolution.

The board also discussed the periodic review that replaced the sunset clause. La Bella said it would give future BOS information about the ordinance. Black said anything shorter than a

four-year time frame would be "counter-productive."

When asked about the BOF review, Robin Hodge said Wednesday, "I guess it's better than a sunset clause. ... I hope the review process won't be a major thing."

Overall, Robin Hodge said she was "happy" with the new proposal, but said, "I just wish they'd done this in the beginning."

Robin Hodge said she first discussed the exemption with Black in May. The issue first appeared on the June 2 BOS agenda as new business and at the June 16 BOS meeting it was tabled and later discussed at the July 14 BOS meeting. The issue next appeared on the Sept. 1 BOS agenda, again as new business, and many veterans and residents showed up asking for swift action on the matter, according to the meeting minutes. The BOS proposed their first draft of the ordinance at their Oct. 6 meeting and a public hearing was held about 20 days later.

Meanwhile, Willy Hodge sued the BOS on Oct. 13 for allegedly violating the town charter. On Oct. 26 both parties and a judge agreed the BOS would not take any action on the original proposed ordinance for 30 days, according to Amodeo and La Bella.

According to Willy Hodge's lawsuit, the legislative body that adopts the exemption is residents and not the BOS. The board and Amodeo are still split on this issue, where the BOS claims it is the legislative body and Amodeo says it's the voters.

While action on the ordinance was put on hold, Robin Hodge circulated a petition that called for a town meeting where residents could vote yes or no on the exemption. Last Thursday, Dec. 3, Robin Hodge delivered the petition to town hall complete with 317 signatures.

The petition was not discussed much at Tuesday's meeting, though Black did say "it may be moot," because the exemption had already passed.

Black explained the next steps would be for the town's attorney to review the latest version of the ordinance and correct any grammatical errors and attach a timeframe to the application paragraph. Board members said the application process should be inline with the town assessor's schedule and should be outlined in the ordinance.

Then the finalized ordinance will be published in the *Rivereast* and 30 days later it will take effect.

See Tax Exemption on Page 2

Menorah cont. from Front Page

While Hennessey figured no one purposefully tries to undermine Chanukah, he said, "Everything is so geared for the Christmas holiday," especially commercially. He also recognized that it simply is not as common to decorate much for Chanukah, except for putting out a menorah. Hennessey deadpanned, "They certainly took care of that with the 12-footer."

"It's a beast," he added, sizing it up at 350 pounds.

Though they know that a menorah commemorates Chanukah, Hennessey said his kids don't know much about what it means. He said he'll use the gift as a springboard to tell them about it.

The Hennesseys moved to Portland just five years ago, but Michael said they've formed a tight bond with their neighborhood. "We have a nice community of young professionals," he said. (Hennessey works in sales for Allergen.)

He added that the neighborhood commonly has block parties and bonfires. In fact, the only reason the surprise patrol didn't do it this Friday was because they're all going out together.

In many cases, even the most ardent Jew might not appreciate such an imposing decoration being installed without their permission. So, it's fortunate the group knew their friend so well. "These guys knew I would be very receptive," he said.

Hennessey, who seemed excited to say the least Tuesday, said, "The neighbors kind of rallied."

As for future Chanukahs, Hennessey was unsure whether he would find a place to store the menorah off-season, or donate it to a synagogue. But, given the care that went into it, Hennessey said one thing was for sure: "It won't be used for firewood."

Tax Exemption cont. from Front Page

Both Robin Hodge and Amodeo said Wednesday they were pleased with the outcome, but that the exemption should not have taken this long.

"My goal was that the veteran exemption get enacted the way everyone wanted and we got that," Amodeo said. "That's what everybody wanted and I'm happy it's done, but don't forget we started this in May."

"I just wish this had happened months ago with out all the expenses incurred," by her and

the town, Robin Hodge said Wednesday.

Robin Hodge mentioned she could not have achieved Tuesday's ordinance without the support of many residents and veterans. At several BOS meetings veterans from Marlborough and neighboring towns came and spoke on the Hodges' behalf.

Amodeo agreed with Robin Hodge and said he was "proud of everybody" who pulled together in the community and it made him realize "there's tons of good people in town."

Perceived Conflict of Interest Leads to Hebron BOS Liaison Change

by Sarah McCoy

Gayle Mulligan's role with the Hebron Soccer Association (HSA) has led to a change on the Board of Selectmen.

For the past four years, Mulligan has served as the executive director of the HSA. That role, she said earlier this week, means that she's responsible for registering players, helping with field assignments, disseminating information to coaches and setting the organization's calendar.

Mulligan is the only paid employee the soccer association has and now, two years after being elected to the Board of Selectmen (BOS), some voters are calling it a conflict of interest to serve as the liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Selectman Mark Stuart said that he's heard these complaints and, earlier this fall, brought them to BOS Chair Jeff Watt. Stuart said Watt then brought these concerns to Mulligan. "I see a potential for a perception of conflict of interest," Stuart said this week. "As public officials,

it's important to avoid these."

Stuart stressed that he is not accusing Mulligan of any wrongdoing. "I have never seen nor did I accuse Gayle of any unethical behavior," he said. "Nor have I seen her not acting in the best interest of the town."

Still, Stuart said at last week's BOS meeting that he feels it would be best to have another BOS member act as the liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and for Mulligan to acknowledge the potential for conflict of interest.

He wound up getting one of those desires.

At the BOS meeting last Thursday, Dec. 3, Mulligan stepped down from the liaison role, but not for conflict of interest. Mulligan, instead, cited a lack of time. Mulligan also serves as the liaison to the fire department and senior center.

This explanation wasn't good enough for Stuart, who, at the meeting, voiced his conflict of interest concern.

Earlier this week, Mulligan said that discussion "blindsided" her and, if there were concerns about her role with HSA, they could have been brought forth two years ago when she began serving as the liaison to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Stuart said he can understand why Mulligan felt blindsided, as she probably thought the issue was done when newly-elected BOS member Dan Larson took over the liaison role for Mulligan earlier in the meeting.

"I felt like they were trying to sweep it under the table and not be forthright," Stuart said of Watt and Mulligan.

Both Stuart and Watt agreed that conflict of interest isn't a new topic for selectmen. In the past, various board members have recused themselves from discussions and votes that involve their employer. "Public officials get themselves into conundrums when they try to walk both sides of the fence," Stuart said. "You have to err on the side of caution."

Mulligan said she understands that but doesn't think it's valid in this situation. "The soccer association is a nonprofit organization separate from the town," she said. "I've never participated in a discussion that benefits them over any other youth organization in town."

She went on to say that last Thursday's discussion was a "personal attack" and, if Stuart had concerns, "he could have just called me up and we could have discussed them."

While she's disappointed in the outcome, Mulligan said she will continue to volunteer in other ways. "I'll take on other responsibilities and that's okay," she said.

She also said that being a liaison will be a good opportunity for Larson to understand what's going on with the Parks and Recreation department.

The BOS will hold their next regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, Dec. 17, at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Office Building, 15 Gilead St.

Marlborough Hockey Star Honored for Olympic Achievement

by Katy Nally

Gretchen Silverman has led a life paved through ice, carved out by gleaming skates and driven by the sport she loved – hockey.

"Pretty much everywhere I went was because of hockey," she said.

The former Marlborough resident, who was 26 when her team took home gold in the 1998 Winter Olympics, was inducted into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Tuesday, Dec. 1, along with the rest of her winning teammates.

The year Silverman won the gold was also the first year the Olympics featured women's hockey as a medal sport. During the games in Nagano, Japan, the team competed against Canada, a longtime rival.

Silverman said the U.S. and Canada had squared off 14 times prior to the Olympics and had an even split of wins and losses. Two nights before their final face-off, Silverman and her team played the Canadians and won, tipping the scales one game in their favor.

It was a close match. The Americans were down 4-1, but came back strong and took the lead, beating Canada 7-4. "It was so close and exciting," Silverman said.

She said this win was a definite morale boost for her team, which would play Canada again just two days later. "We went [into the last game] with a lot of confidence," she said.

In the game for the gold, Silverman, a left wing, said she scored the first goal and assisted on the second. The U.S. won 3-1.

But that was the last time she played at such an elite level, and she retired from the sport after the Olympics. "That was my last hurrah," she said.

However, Silverman certainly did not hang up her skates. She still takes to the ice each Sunday and plays with her husband.

Silverman said that at 26 "it was hard to stay with it." Now she's 37 and works part-time at a Montessori classroom in Litchfield and lives in Torrington.

Silverman grew up in Marlborough and moved away after attending Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Most residents would know her under her maiden name, Ulion, and might remember her and her brothers playing street hockey on Stony Brook Drive, where

they halted the game when cars came by, dragging the nets with them. Silverman said she would devote her after-school hours to hockey, racing to the frozen pond at Blackledge Country Club in the winter and not returning until dark.

Silverman said she was infatuated with hockey since she was old enough to watch her two brothers play. "I just loved the sport right from the get go. It just spoke to me," she said. When she turned 6, she declared she was ready to join a team in the Glastonbury youth hockey league. She'd have started sooner, but 6 was the minimum age requirement for the league.

Since only boys' teams were available, that's what she joined. Silverman credited some of her success to playing on boys' teams, saying some games she felt she had to prove herself as a girl. She said occasionally when other teams found out they were competing against a girl, she would "get an extra shove." But the future Olympian was not discouraged and said she saw it as an opportunity to "give extra effort."

When she reached eighth grade, Silverman joined the Polar Bears, which was her first girls' hockey team, and also the state's. But she still practiced at home, sometimes in the basement, where she admits, "much to my parents' dismay," she broke a few windows.

Silverman went on the play on the women's team at Loomis Chaffee then later at Dartmouth. She graduated with a liberal arts degree in 1994 and joined the national team in 1998. Just two years earlier, though, Silverman was toying with the idea of calling it quits. She said in 1996 she was poised to accept a full-time teaching position in Massachusetts. But instead, she was invited to attend an Olympic tryout camp in Lake Placid and shortly after, Silverman was on her way to the Olympics.

Since her winning team graced the highest platform and accepted the gold in 1998, no other U.S. women's hockey teams have gone as far. In 2002 the team took home the silver and four years later, the bronze. "This is supposed to be their year," she said about the 2010 winter Olympics in Vancouver. "We're hoping."

Silverman said she thought her team was



The gold-winning 1998 Olympic women's hockey team was inducted into the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame Dec. 1. Pictured at a dinner held that day in their honor are, from left, Gretchen Silverman, a former Marlborough resident, and teammates Sandra Whyte and Sarah Tuetting.

gold-capable because team members had played together for many years. "We really had a close-knit group of women," she said.

When asked who scored the goals, Silverman was hesitant, saying instead, "we just all worked together." She said that strength really made her team "unique."

Like Silverman, her teammates also fostered their talents through years of playing on boys' teams. She said many women on her team joined boys' teams because there was no other option. "Most of us were the first girls in our programs...every one of us had played on boys' teams," she said.

Nearly 12 years since Silverman's glory

days, she is still involved in hockey. Her youngest of two sons plays and so does she, once a week. "I still play and I love getting out there on the ice," she said.

Silverman and hockey are intertwined. She said the sport determined the places she would visit, like Japan, the schools she attended and she even met her husband in a hockey league.

She has participated in hockey since she could skate and was awarded the highest achievement of any athlete.

"The fact that I really loved [hockey] was why it took me so far," she said. "I was athletic and competitive and I loved it from the very start and I'll still love it."

Scores Weigh In on Future of Brownstone School in Portland

by Michael McCoy

Eighty people packed the Portland High School media center Tuesday night to put in their two cents regarding the fate of Brownstone Intermediate School (BIS).

The Portland Board of Education (BOE) held a special meeting Tuesday, Dec. 8, to address the issue, with the majority of the time going to public questions and comment.

BIS was built in 1931-32, followed by additions to the building in 1954 and 1967. Last month, BOE chairman Chris Phelps said it was recognized that BIS needed major work as far back as 1989. According to the school system's director of buildings and grounds, Paul Bengston, necessary work includes the replacement of ceiling tiles, painting of walls, and the replacement of hallway floors. He also noted \$200,000 worth of window replacements, the replacement of all lavatories in the original section (\$250,000) and replacement of ventilation units (\$15,000).

As for the school's exterior, Bengston said the rear roof "needs to be replaced as soon as possible," a project estimated to run \$185,000. These are just some of the necessary improvements, which total just north of \$1 million.

"With maintenance," Bengston said last month, "the building could last for another 40 to 50 years."

Phelps estimated that if the building were repaired, the work would be done during the summer of 2011, leaving student schedules undisturbed. However, if BIS, which is also used by the Parks and Recreation Department

and Youth Services, is eliminated, sixth grade will probably move to Portland Middle School, while fifth grade would move to Gildersleeve.

"There's not one perfect solution," said Superintendent of Schools Sally Doyen, who mentioned some of the pros and cons, which had been drawn up by some of the school principals in town. One thing Doyen pointed out was should grades five and six be relocated, the teachers would move with them and class size would stay the same.

Sixth-grade BIS teacher Betsy Galotti petitioned the BOE to keep the school, and called it the "centerpiece of the Main Street area since 1932."

She called fifth and sixth grade the "important transition years" and said the grades are a good match for each other. To this end, fellow BIS teacher Debra Olbrias said, "Sixth-graders are more like fifth-graders socially, emotionally and physically." Conversely, she said an 11-year-old sixth grader was unsuited to be in the same building as an 18-year-old.

Similarly, BIS teacher Rob Dudko, who has worked at three Portland schools these last 17 years, said studies show puberty starts four months earlier each decade, questioning the prudence of second graders sharing a building with students starting puberty.

Galotti also worried where eliminating the school would leave Laurie Boske, who is currently the principal at BIS. She was also one of several who praised Boske's work Tuesday night.

Dudko said the reason he and his colleagues opposed shutting the school down was, "We feel it's best for the children...socially and emotionally." He said the decision should not be based on "dollars and cents."

"I'm very concerned about doing something entirely based on cost," said resident Lucian Guilmette. He also said some of the projected savings of shutting down BIS (such as utility costs) would be carried over to other facilities.

"From an emotional standpoint, I would like to see Brownstone stay open," said Stephanie Tatro, but added that she felt the same way looking at it financially as well. She said she doubted all the BIS improvements needed to be addressed in the next year, figuring they could be prioritized and staggered.

Fifth-grader Georgia Davis also advocated for retaining the building and performing the improvements now, saying, "It will cost more to fix it later." She also said, "An empty school is a bad school."

Later in the meeting, Phelps said something similar. He said the school is "obviously a big part of our Main Street and a big part of our community. The last thing I'd want to see is a vacant building."

After much of the comment on BIS' behalf, BOE member Christopher Bongo reminded the audience, "We're trying to look at what's educationally best for the kids in town. We're not looking to axe a school." However, he said the

state mandates that towns periodically reevaluate their facility usage.

"Decisions have not been made," fellow BOE member MaryAnne Rode said, assuring the audience that the meeting itself was designed to take their comments under serious consideration.

Some residents promoted doing away with BIS, including Maribeth Maslak. "I struggle with having four kids at four different schools every day," she said. "It would be so much easier having less schools." She added, "For a small district, it's interesting that we have these five schools."

Suzanne Burgess said she saw no problem with sixth graders sharing a building with seniors, calling it an opportunity for role modeling. As for bad influences, she said, "No 12th-grader is going to hang around with a sixth-grader," adding she'd question the motives of any who did.

Burgess also floated the idea of expanding Gildersleeve and moving fifth and sixth grade there. But Phelps said he sensed there was "little or no appetite for another \$10-, \$20-, or \$30-million building project."

Just before adjourning the special meeting, Phelps said, "There's still a lot of conversation yet to happen," and said there would be at least one more meeting of this kind, though no date has been set.

Phelps said he expected the BOE to make a final decision early next year.

Belltown Past Revisited in New Play in East Hampton

by Michael McCoy

Epoch Arts is back this weekend with a homespun play all about the East Hampton of yesteryear.

A cast of a dozen teens will perform *The Forgotten Years*, which takes place over a June weekend in 1942.

Though written by the students themselves, the idea was hatched in the spring by Epoch founder Elizabeth Namen, who also directed the play. "I'm just gung-ho on East Hampton," said Namen, a Haddam Neck resident whose stomping grounds as a child included East Hampton.

Namen said she sees other towns that have "this amazing downtown area," and wondered why East Hampton's doesn't bustle the way it once did. "In the '40s it was hopping," she said, remarking that even in her teenaged years it was livelier than now.

Namen said the town was a true destination in the 1940s, especially during the summer, and that many would even come from New York City to seek reprieve. "I want people to know that and remember that," she said.

So, she contacted Sandy Doran of the Chatham Historical Society. In turn, Doran rounded up Ann Rita Clark, Lorraine Bevin and Everett Wright to sit down with the cast members and discuss life in World War II-era East Hampton. In September, the cast spent a few hours talking with the trio, and sifting through artifacts at the historical society. "Just about everything they said is in the play," said Namen.

So, the students set out immediately to start developing their characters, writing the script around them. (The cast members are playing people their own age.) Instead of perfecting the script before commencing rehearsal, the cast did both simultaneously.

Namen said one challenge was draining 2000s language from the cast's script. She said she found herself often asking them in the early stages, "Did they use those words?"

Namen also said she originally worried about placing all the play's action over just a few days, but figured that in the 1940s, "One weekend was all sorts of fun." This is not to say that Namen is down on Belltown now. In fact, she noted being enamored by the shops, business, and even the public library all being located in the center.

Certainly notable about the production is its original script, collaborated on by 12 writer/actors. However, this is not uncommon for Epoch, who most directly employed this approach two years ago in *The Heart of War*, a non-political look at the personal cost of war.

However, these productions have traditionally been for high school-age kids, but Namen moved the threshold back to seventh grade this time. "Some of these kids have never acted," she remarked on much of the cast. But, she said the older kids took the new recruits "under their wing" immediately. Namen called it "one of the best casts" she's worked with.

In addition to Namen, the play is being co-directed by East Hampton native and recent high school graduate Erica Cunningham.

The play ranges from monologues delivered directly to the audience to full-cast scenes like the two centerpiece dances. It touches on issues trivial (resentment toward the fancy-dressed New York City girls) to grave (the announcement of the draft). The play also name-checks landmarks of old, such as stigmatized watering hole The Purple Cow.

Ben Hill, 17, is a senior at East Hampton High School, and plays Theo, who he described as "rich and kind of dumb and in love." Theo falls for Martha Ann, who's visiting from New York. In the end, it turns out that neither had sized the other up quite accurately.

Ben said he found himself struck by how different the time period was, and admitted, "If I got drafted now, I don't know what I'd do." He also marveled at the prevalence of radio at the time, noting it's how the draft gets an-



Epoch Arts students rehearsed their new play *The Forgotten Years* earlier this week. Pictured here, Jacob (played by Bryce Annino) mopes over a New York girl who has declined his advances, while Eyvette (Polina McGuire) and Theo (Ben Hill) chat in the background.

nounced in the play.

Jessie Ross, 13, just moved to Haddam Neck from Florida last year. Her character, Barbs, is forced to quit school to help support her family, though she prides her self on her booksmarts. Seemingly impressed by the fortitude of the part she plays, Jessie said, "People were a lot tougher than they are today."

Namen recognized Epoch's reputation for having fairly offbeat productions, but said many have told her, "This is your most straight-for-

ward play yet." It also seems to validate Namen's mantra: "Community, community, community."

The Forgotten Years runs Friday, Dec. 11, and Saturday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m., at Epoch Arts, 27 Skinner St. The play lasts about an hour. Tickets are \$7 for general admission and \$5 for students and seniors. Tickets will be available at the door, or those planning to attend may call 860-365-0337 or e-mail info@epocharts.org to reserve seats.

Scheibelein Retires from Colchester Town Hall

by Katy Nally

Pam Scheibelein, a nine-year veteran of Town Hall, retired Monday, Nov. 30 – but the former department clerk didn't clean out her office until this past Monday.

When asked why she delayed packing up, Scheibelein grinned and suggested, "Maybe it's a subconscious thing."

Even though she retired last week, on Monday people came in and out of her office for goodbyes and hugs. Some – who apparently didn't get the retirement memo – even stopped by to drop off mail.

The mail, which was undying even after she left, is actually how it all began. Scheibelein was hired in 2000 to handle mail delivered to the first selectman's office for just two hours a day, from 2:30 to 4:30. She was employed as a cafeteria worker in William J. Johnston Middle School at the time and walked into Town Hall "on a whim" to interview for the position.

Nine years later, her job duties have ballooned to include 16 other tasks, according to the department clerk job posting.

Among her many jobs, Scheibelein recalled the most interesting stories from when she would act as an animal control liaison. The clerk was in charge of fielding calls from concerned citizens who complained about stray cats, possible mountain lion sightings and once, even a guinea hen issue.

Scheibelein said a resident called up to say a neighbor's guinea hens were crossing over into his or her lawn and causing a ruckus. As with all the calls she received, Scheibelein listened to the resident and helped to calm her or she before notifying Animal Control. "Everyone just wants someone to listen to them," she said smiling.

Similar to her liaison duties, Scheibelein also greeted citizens who came into the first selectman's office. She said it was her job to "be respectful" and listen to residents' troubles.

Customer service was a common thread throughout Scheibelein's many jobs. The Queens native began working as an airport passenger office manager in what used to be called

Idlewild Airport (now John F. Kennedy International Airport) when she was just 17. Since then, she has dealt with the Christmas rush in a department store and lines of students in two school cafeterias. She was also a stay-at-home mom for 13 years. "I just seemed to like people," she said.

Of all her careers, Scheibelein said her nine years as a department clerk were "definitely the most challenging."

When she first began at Town Hall, Scheibelein admits she was computer-wary. But over the years she has grown to become computer-savvy. "I still have challenges, but I'm not afraid of it," she said laughing.

She said when former first selectman Linda Hodge arrived, the two forged a sort of partnership based on their technological incapacities. Hodge couldn't work the phones and Scheibelein was still trying to figure out the computer, but the two eventually taught each other, Scheibelein said.

All her technology lessons must have paid off because Scheibelein said she plans on using her laptop to stay in touch with several town committees of which she is a member. As secretary of Youth Services, Scheibelein will still attend the committee's meetings via computer once she leaves for Tennessee to visit her grandchildren.

She is also a member of a senior center study group that formed recently.

In her years as department clerk, Scheibelein has worked with four first selectmen. She worked with Contois the longest, from 2000 to 2007. Stan Soby was an interim first selectman for most of 2007, Hodge held the position for two years and newly-elected Gregg Schuster worked with Scheibelein for the two weeks preceding her retirement.

Scheibelein said the years with Contois were fun because the office had three women in "completely different stages in life," saying "there was always laughter."

Scheibelein had lived in Colchester just four years before she became the department clerk.



Pam Scheibelein retired Nov. 30 after working for nine years as a department clerk in the first selectman's office at Town Hall. She said her goodbyes Monday and packed up her office. She is pictured on the right, alongside Mike Caplet, the executive assistant to the first selectman.

She grew up in South Ozone Park in Queens, NY, then later moved to Nassau County, NY, with her husband. In 1994 she moved to Connecticut and settled in Colchester just two years later.

Now, a grandmother, Scheibelein said seeing more of her family is high on her list of retirement priorities. In fact, she said this was part of the reason why she retired.

Scheibelein, 68, said she will visit her grandchildren in Tennessee for three months, but other than that she has few plans to fill her now-empty agenda. "I have no big desires to see Europe," she said.

And yet, although this is only her second week off the job, Scheibelein said she's "loving" retirement. She said she'll definitely miss working in Town Hall, but also said working on her own schedule is a great benefit. "[Retirement] won't be as vibrant and diverse as here," she said.

"Pam is incredible and I'm really sad to see her go," Schuster said. "She's just a bright and cheerful person in the office at all times."

Even though mail for the first selectman's office will soon be addressed to a new department clerk, Scheibelein will still remain part of Colchester.

New Director Has Plans for Cragin in Colchester

by Katy Nally

After working in seven libraries in six different towns, Kate Byroade has found her niche at Cragin Memorial Library.

The new library director began working Monday, Nov. 30, and already she has a few ideas on how to make Cragin more accessible for residents. She stressed the library's need for an online catalog, saying patrons should be able to access Cragin's database "in your pajamas."

"I want to make Cragin a 24-hour, 365 library," she said. Byroade explained this doesn't mean Cragin will employ staff around the clock, but that patrons could eventually have all access online.

A 24-hour library, she said, allows residents to renew books online from home and download e-books and mp3 versions of audio books. Byroade said she wants a system that's "modern and stable and will work for the community." She also mentioned creating a Facebook page for Cragin.

Aside from revamping the library online, Byroade said she wants to change Cragin's internal system that catalogs items. The new director called the current system "obsolete," because it hasn't been upgraded or updated in a while and she said it encounters operational problems about two times a month.

Once the internal catalog is updated, Byroade mentioned linking Cragin with other local libraries, so patrons can request items that are not available in Colchester. Currently, if customers ask for an item Cragin doesn't have, a librarian must call up other libraries until it's

located.

If the library is linked in with other towns, with a click of a mouse a patron can ask for an item to be delivered to Colchester. Byroade said this would free up staff time and make the library more accessible for residents.

Byroade has worked in several other libraries that utilize this system, including where she got her start, West Hartford.

At the main branch in West Hartford, Byroade worked as a page shelving books when she was 16. When she went to college she worked at another library in Virginia where she transferred information from the card catalog to a computer. In 1992, she graduated from the Randolph-Macon Women's College with an undergraduate degree in religion.

After graduation, Byroade said she struggled to find work, but was eventually hired at the Welles-Turner Memorial Library in Glastonbury. For a while, she worked in the children's section but later accepted a job in Portland.

For three years Byroade was the circulation manager of the Portland Library. Compared to Glastonbury and West Hartford, Portland was small for Byroade and she said she enjoyed the library's connection to the community. "The smaller the community, the more central [libraries] are to the town," she said.

After Portland, Byroade took a yearlong hiatus and attended Simmons College in Boston. She obtained a master's degree in library and information science then accepted a job in Bethel.

There she worked as a teen librarian, organizing summer reading programs for students. Byroade said she "revamped" the middle school's reading list, updating choices and making books more accessible for students. But, after two years as a teen librarian, Byroade moved on to Manchester, where she stayed for nine years.

She began working as the head of circulation and technology services at Mary Cheney Library, the main Manchester library. Byroade said she managed a large staff, including pages, college students and full-time employees. She said her job at the main branch was very "high energy" and stressful at times, which is why she welcomed a transfer to Whiton Library, the smaller Manchester branch, about four years later.

At Whiton, Byroade was in charge of the adult budget and purchased new DVDs for the library's collection. She also helped out with children's programs and read books during pajama story time.

After nine years in Manchester, Byroade said she accepted the position at Cragin because she "wanted to move on and advance my career."

Byroade said one of the reasons she chose Cragin was because the building still has its original architecture. She gushed about the 1905 building and its seamless new edition. "I adore this building," she said. "It's designed so well, it just a gorgeous gorgeous building."

But not only did the building attract her, Byroade said she came to Cragin because she "knew it was so well run." The library had a



Kate Byroade is the new director at Cragin Memorial Library. She began Monday, Nov. 30.

few tumultuous months after the longtime director Siobhan Grogan retired with only a few weeks' notice, and two interim directors took her place. Byroade said both Karen Giugno and Susan Rooney did a great job filling in for Grogan. "We have a terrific staff," she said.

Now, two weeks in, Byroade has nestled with that "terrific staff," sharing with them her wealth of library knowledge.



The Board of Education (BOE) recently received the 2009 Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Leadership Award of Distinction. Pictured from left are BOE member Mark Allaben, board chair Jane Dube, state Department of Education Deputy Commissioner George Coleman, Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz and BOE member Kathy Shea.

Hebron School Board Honored by State

by Sarah McCoy

The Hebron Board of Education was recently named a "Board of Distinction" by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE).

The award, which is in its first year, was given to only seven districts across the state.

"We work well together and try hard to respect each other's opinions," Board of Education (BOE) Chair Jane Dube said this week. "To me, this award recognizes that work."

For a board of education to be named a Board of Distinction, it must meet criteria in five categories: board leadership in promoting student achievement, professional development, policy, community relations and organizational leadership. In addition, the school board applying for the award must have received CABE's Board Leadership Award at least twice.

The Board Leadership Award is the first level of CABE awards given to boards that meet 22 of 34 criteria. Hebron has received this award for the past three years.

In reviewing the Hebron board's application, Vincent Mustaro, CABE's senior staff associate for policy services, said the school system's dedication to student achievement came through "loud and clear."

He highlighted the fact that around five years ago, Hebron's Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) scores were lagging behind those of other schools, particularly in math. However, Mustaro said this week, now Hebron has surpassed many

of those same schools.

Mustaro went on to compliment the board for its support of fine arts, the challenge and enrichment program, curriculum development and regular textbook updates.

"As the person who reads the applications, I can tell you Hebron has a lot to be proud of," Mustaro said.

Superintendent of Schools Ellie Cruz said this week that she feels "incredibly fortunate" to work with a board of education as professional and respectful as the one in Hebron. "Everyone really focuses on teamwork and they take their work very seriously," she said.

In September, the Hebron school board completed a two-day professional development retreat for its members. Last month, there was an orientation for the two individuals newly-elected to the board – Will Moorcroft and Tina Blinn.

Events like this, Cruz feels, show the dedication of board members.

"Serving on the board is time away from their families and their careers," Cruz said. "But, our board members are proud to serve and consider it their civic responsibility."

Board members Kathy Shea, Mark Allaben and Dube accepted the award on behalf of the entire BOE at the CABE Convention on Nov. 20. It is now displayed in the BOE office at Gilead Hill School.

Colchester Police News

12/2: Clarence Braun, 24, of 87 Sillimanville Rd., East Haddam, was charged with first-degree larceny and third-degree burglary, State Police said. He was arrested on a warrant from an Aug. 28 burglary. According to State Police, Braun broke into a Stoneridge Road home.

12/2: Benjamin Boucher, 20, of 8 Green Ln., Willimantic, was charged with violation of probation, State Police said.

12/2: Cameron James West, 27, of 46 Cottage Grove Cir., Bloomfield, was charged with second-degree larceny, second-degree identity theft, third-degree forgery and illegal use of credit card, State Police said.

12/3: Joseph Leblanc, 44, of 42 Skinner Rd., was charged with possession of less than four ounces of marijuana, DUI and speeding, State Police said.

12/4: Frederick Barberi, 49, of 61 Woodland Dr., Uncasville, was charged with failure to drive at a reasonable distance, failure to drive in proper lane and DUI, State Police said.

12/4: Kevin Rodriguez, 24, of 104 Prospect St., Bristol, was charged with failure to appear in court, State Police said.

12/4: A 17-year-old was charged with two counts of sixth-degree larceny and third-degree criminal mischief, State Police said. The accused was arrested on a warrant for thefts of

student property from Bacon Academy, according to police reports.

12/5: John Johnson, 50, of 32 Devonshire Dr., Waterford, was charged with DUI and misuse of plates, State Police said.

12/5: Deirdre Stokes, 41, of 92 Dara Dr., was charged with DUI and misuse of plates, State Police said.

12/6: At 2:42 a.m. an accident on Route 2 was reported involving a Ford F150 and its four passengers, State Police said. According to reports, the pickup hit a patch of ice and rolled over. All four passengers were wearing safety belts, but two were sent to the Marlborough Clinic for "cuts and bruises sustained in the accident," State Police said.

12/6: David Roux, 41, of 170 Lakeside Dr., Lebanon, was charged with drinking while driving and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, State Police said.

12/7: Michael Pinkerton, 33, of 5 Meadow Dr., No. 2, was charged with DUI and failure to drive right, State Police said.

12/8: Shawn Sims, 23, of 255 Boretz Rd., was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia, failure to drive in proper lane and two counts of possession of less than four ounces of a controlled substance, State Police said.



Andover resident Dianne Grenier is heading up efforts to raise \$5,000 for the installation of a wooden carved sign at Andover Veterans' Monument Park, located at the intersection of routes 316 and 6. The property the park is located on has been state-owned for nearly a decade, until the town reacquired it earlier this fall.

Andover Gets Back Piece of Land

by Sarah McCoy

At the intersection of routes 316 and 6 there is a triangle-shaped piece of land that's home to Andover's veterans' memorials. The property is just over a half acre and is adorned with a flag pole, plantings and monuments in commemoration of the residents who have served during wartime.

For nearly a decade, that land has been state-owned property. The state took it over when the Department of Transportation reconfigured the intersection and held onto it through the widening of Route 6 in 2002, and kept it for another seven years.

In that time, Andover resident Dianne Grenier has worked to form a sub-committee of the town's Beautification Committee to ensure the parcel of land is cared for. Twice a year, before Veterans and Memorial Day, a group heads out to the property to plant, weed and upkeep the land. "It's a tribute to Andover's soldiers," she said earlier this week. "Cleaning it up is really the least we can do."

Since the state owned the property, First Selectman Bob Burbank said this week, town officials were hesitant to do much else to the land.

That's all about to change.

Earlier this fall, the state quit claim deeded the land to the town. And last Wednesday, Dec. 2, the Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to formally name the parcel Andover Veterans Monument Park.

Grenier is now heading up fundraising efforts to make sure everyone knows of the name. She's proposing to install a wooden sign along Route 6 to highlight the land and what's on it.

"Andover is one of those towns that you drive through and don't even know you've been there," Grenier said earlier this week. "It is only fitting that a proper sign now be erected to identify this special place in our community."

She is hoping to raise \$5,000 for a wooden carved sign and appropriate lighting.

Those interested in making donations can do so by mailing a check to the Town of Andover, c/o Andover Veterans' Monument Park, 17 School Rd., Andover, CT 06232.

Other fundraisers to support the sign construction will be forthcoming.

The triangle is also the former location of the historic Andover Creamery. The building was torn down in 2001 to make way for the Route 6 expansion project. A marker of its previous existence now stands where the creamery used to be.

When the Route 6 construction was done, town officials asked if the well to the old creamery could be capped and maintained. Now, Grenier is hoping to reuse that well to provide water to Monument Park.

She has been in touch with local businesses some of which are interested in donating their services to lay a trench and provide a tap to the well. Grenier said earlier this week that she's looking forward to the day when Beautification Committee volunteers don't have to worry about shuttling water to and from the property.

At this point there is no timetable for when the sign can be erected. "As soon as we raise enough money we'll begin construction," Grenier said earlier this week.

Andover Police News

12/3: A burglary was reported at 10:12 p.m. at a Burnap Brook Road residence, State Police said. Some time between 7:30 a.m. and 10 p.m. the house was entered and various items were taken including a laptop, a camera and jewelry, according to police reports.

Hebron Police News

12/4: Scott Killelea, 50, of 363 South Main St., Marlborough, was charged with DUI and speeding, State Police said.

Marlborough Police News

12/5: Numerous unlocked vehicles were entered overnight and items were taken, State Police said. The street the vehicles were parked on include: Jones Hollow Road, Monhege Path, Deer Run, Stage Harbor Road, Chapman Road, North Main Street and Keirsted Circle. Anyone with more information is asked to contact Officer Randy Ransom at 860-537-7500.

Portland Police News

11/30 — Frank Johnson, 25, of 204 Main St., was charged with second-degree assault, unlawful discharge of firearm, second-degree reckless endangerment and disorderly conduct, Portland Police said.

12/4 — Charles Mifflin Jr., 40, of 256 Airline Ave., was charged with operating a motor vehicle under suspension, police said.

12/5 — David Dickenson, 18, of 807 Glastonbury Tpke., was charged with possession of alcohol by a minor, police said.

12/6 — John Ous Jr., 49, of 12 Summer St., was charged with misuse of plates and operating unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

Colchester Selectmen Discuss Town Police Force

by Katy Nally

In Gregg Schuster's second board meeting as first selectman last Thursday, members discussed a myriad of items, including two regarding the town's police force.

Also at the Dec. 3 meeting, selectman Rosemary Coyle gave an update on the senior center study group.

Selectman Stan Soby told board members during his liaison report, a new memo of understanding between the town, the Police Commission and the police union was received. Schuster said Tuesday the memo went out Nov. 18 to the Resident State Trooper Supervisor John Thomas, Police Commission Chair Glenn Morron and former chair of the Colchester Police Union Tim Edwards.

Schuster said he was now awaiting reply from the Police Commission and union. After that, attorneys will draw up the "slight change to the existing contract," Schuster said Tuesday.

The first drafts of the memo oscillated between the former first selectman Linda Hodge and the Police Commission and union, because the three parties could not agree on new terms regarding a potential third shift.

The police department wanted to create a third, or midnight, shift, but said the language in the memo of understanding from the town was too restrictive. Hodge's last draft of the memo allowed officers on the midnight shift to take grievances up to the Police Commission, but not to arbitration, because it could cost the town money, she said.

Schuster said his memo of understanding does not restrict the grievances of officers on the midnight shift and that it emulates the grievance policy in the current police union contract.

Even though the memo is in place, Schuster said the police department might not be able to immediately staff a third shift. He said this week "there's a manpower issue" because one officer is out injured and another is interviewing with a different police department.

"It's not 100 percent resolved," Schuster said.

Resident State Trooper John Thompson said Wednesday "the town and the union are in agreement...but we just don't have the manpower right now to fill three full shifts."

Schuster also touched on a conflict between the resident state trooper contract from the Department of Public Safety and the town's police union contract.

Colchester uses a mix of resident troopers and its own police force, where both follow town guidelines, Schuster said. In May, the state issued a new contract for resident troopers, and those in Colchester couldn't sign on because they were already committed to the

town's police contract.

"It's a pickle we're in right now," Schuster said Tuesday.

Currently the resident state trooper supervisor serves as the police department head, while the Police Commission is in charge of hiring, firing and local policy, Schuster said.

At the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting, Schuster asked board members to start thinking about how the town would cope if the resident state trooper program were pulled.

"The best-case scenario is the state issues a new contract for towns with a combination of police and resident state troopers," Schuster said Tuesday.

The first selectman said he has been working with state Representative Linda Orange and Senator Andrea Stillman on this issue and has looked to other towns in similar situations.

* * *

In other liaison reports, Coyle discussed the first meeting of the new senior center study group. Last Thursday, the group held its first meeting and elected Theresa Hendrickson from the Commission on Aging as chairperson and Norman Dupuis, who is an AARP representative, as vice chairperson.

Coyle said it was a "lively group" that got a lot accomplished in their first meeting. She listed some questions the 10 members raised including, how many seniors live in town, who uses the center and which towns have senior centers or community centers. Coyle said the groups decided to make a list of pros and cons for both a stand-alone senior center and a joint senior and community center.

The study group's next meeting will be Jan. 14.

Also at the meeting, the BOS agreed to help out the new first selectman in a big way – by expediting his town-issued benefits.

Schuster said the town offers benefits to three, full-time, paid elected officials: the tax collector, the town clerk and the first selectman. But there's a three-month waiting period before officials receive benefits. He said former first selectmen Jenny Contois and Soby both declined the benefits, as did the tax collector, so the waiting period was never an issue. (Linda Hodge, who was first selectman before Schuster, eventually took the benefits, but not until well after the three-month waiting period had passed, he said.)

But Schuster asked the BOS to change this probationary period so benefits would commence the first day of the month following the beginning of an official's term.

* * *

The next BOS meeting will be Thursday, Dec. 17.

East Hampton Police News

11/20 — Clarence Braun, 24, of 98 Sillimanville Rd., Moodus, was arrested pursuant to a warrant on charges of third-degree burglary, second-degree larceny and conspiracy to commit larceny, East Hampton Police said. According to police, the charges stemmed from a Sept. 11 burglary on Knowles Road.

11/23 — Vain L. Dadd, 32, of 155 Siegel St., 3H, Brooklyn, NY, and Gary Demko, 49, of 70 Coleman Rd., Manchester, were involved in a two-vehicle accident at the intersection of East High and Lakeview streets, police said. Dadd was arrested for failure to drive a reasonable distance apart and operating a motor vehicle while under suspension, police added.

11/24 — Heath Galvin, 20, of 61 North Main St., was issued a ticket for failure to carry a physician's statement concerning inability to wear a safety belt, police said.

11/25 — Dylan Moore, 20, of 210 East Hampton Rd., Marlborough, was arrested pursuant to a warrant for failure to appear, police said.

11/26 — Alan M. Schaffer, 54, of 21 Blackledge Dr., Colchester, was arrested for operating under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right, police said.

11/27 — Christopher Bennett, 43, of 237 Hall Ave., Meriden, was arrested for disorderly conduct, third-degree assault, second-degree threatening, and criminal mischief, police said.

11/27 — David Lentini, 43, of 21 Mott Hill Rd., was issued a ticket for improper pass in a no-passing zone, police said.

11/27 — Lance Sypek, 49, of 7 Hayes Rd., was issued a ticket for failure to obey a signal,

police said.

11/28 — Glifton Johns, 36, of 34 Deerfield Ave., East Hartford, was issued a ticket for operating a motor vehicle without a license, police said.

11/29 — Mark Roncaioli, 53, of 3 Daniel St., was issued a ticket for failure to wear a safety belt, police said.

11/29 — Joshua P. Pollard, 20, of 68 Childs Rd., was arrested for operating under suspension, police said.

11/29 — Brian J. Becker, 50, of 67 Chestnut Hill Rd., was issued a ticket for failure to wear a seatbelt, police said.

11/30 — A 17-year-old male juvenile was arrested for possession of marijuana and possession of paraphernalia, police said.

11/30 — Thomas M. Heath, 30, of 15 Old Coach Rd., was issued a ticket for failure to obey a control signal, police said.

11/30 — Katelyn A. Peterson, 18, of 137 Buckeley Hill, Colchester, was issued a ticket for speeding, police said.

12/1 — Douglas R. Robinson, 37, of 9 Colchester Ave., was arrested for possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia, police said.

12/1 — Mary Ellen Cowles, 55, of 65 Meeks Point Rd., was issued a ticket for failure to obey a stop sign and operating an unregistered motor vehicle, police said.

12/2 — Robert Dickenson, 48, of 4 Wangonk Tr., was arrested pursuant to a warrant for interfering with a police officer, possession of marijuana and two counts of failure to appear, police said.

From the Editor's Desk

Observations & Ruminations

by Mike Thompson

If you head to the movies this weekend, you just might spot somebody you know. It turns out Portland resident Bob Muir is now playing at a theater near you.

Bob is an extra in the new Robert DeNiro movie *Everybody's Fine*. He appears in a scene involving DeNiro and his on-screen daughter, played by Drew Barrymore. Bob didn't have to travel far to film the scene either, as it was shot at Bradley International Airport.

In the scene, DeNiro is saying goodbye to Barrymore. While they speak, Bob can be spotted walking in the background.

But don't blink, or you just might miss him. I spoke with both Bob and his wife Maureen on Tuesday, and Maureen cracked that while her husband was up at Bradley shooting the scene for about 12 hours, he's actually on screen for "maybe 10 seconds. Maybe."

Still, Maureen was excited for her spouse's screen debut. The two of them and about 30 of their friends – including a couple from Meriden that also landed parts as extras in the same scene – gathered last Saturday for a potluck dinner at the Muirs' home, then headed over to Destina Theatres in Middletown to see the film. They arrived early enough to let everyone else in the theatre know why they were there. And when Bob appeared on screen, Maureen said, the crowd went wild.

"It was fun," she said. "It was a lot of fun."

Neither of the Muirs knew until they saw the movie whether Bob was actually in the film – or if his scene wound up on the infamous cutting room floor. And it's been a rather long wait for them; Bob's scene was shot back in April 2008.

Still, though it's been more than a year and half since he filmed the part, Bob spoke of the experience as if it were only yesterday. He talked about the big buffet spread set up at Bradley (the scene was filmed in an area of the airport that is generally no longer used, he said), the many crew members that were present and the number of times the scenes were shot and reshot.

"I just walked around there with those big eyes, watching all this stuff," he said. "I just found it very fascinating."

Though filmed there, the scene Bob was in wasn't set at Bradley. It was actually set in a Las Vegas airport, and Bob had to dress for the part, which meant wearing short sleeves – even though Connecticut in April can still be rather chilly. "I was freezing my ass off," Bob recalled.

As for the actors, Bob said both DeNiro and Barrymore "were very nice to everybody." DeNiro in particular, he said, was "a very low-key guy, very personable." During one take, DeNiro accidentally walked into Bob, and promptly said "excuse me." Bob laughed that he almost responded with, "Hey, you talkin'

to me?" – DeNiro's famous line from *Taxi Driver* – although he was able to control himself.

So how did Bob land a part in a movie? Turns out his stepdaughter is employed at a company in Stamford that works with studios to help them take advantage of the tax breaks Connecticut now offers the film industry. The company was working with the production staff of *Everybody's Fine*, and when Bob's stepdaughter got word that producers of the movie were looking for, as he described it, "old people" to serve as extras in a scene, she spoke right up.

Bob seemed thrilled his stepdaughter recommended him for the part; he had a grand time.

"It was a gas, it was really a gas," he said. "For an old guy, it was a lot of fun."

As for the movie – which is about a father trying to reconnect with his four grown children – both Bob and Maureen enjoyed it.

"I really liked it," Maureen said. "It's really well-done. It's certainly not something that's probably going to appeal to a 20-year-old, but to me it was a really good film."

Bob agreed, saying, "I liked it. It was sort of a sobering thing, a very family-oriented film." Like Maureen, though, Bob said "an adult person, really a parent" might enjoy the movie more than a younger one would.

So if you're in the mood for a good movie – or you simply want to see one of Portland's own share the screen with some of Tinseltown's elite – it sounds like a trip to see *Everybody's Fine* might be in order.

* * *

One of the benefits of the Internet is it's much more difficult for people to get away with making stupid statements. Such was the case for Russell Wiseman, mayor of Arlington, TN. It seems that last week Wiseman wrote on his Facebook page that President Obama deliberately scheduled his prime-time speech about the war in Afghanistan so that he would block ABC's planned airing of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Why? Because the special is about a Christian holiday – in fact, it's one of the few Christmas specials that directly quotes the Bible – and Obama, Wiseman claimed, is a Muslim. (Yes, folks, the "Obama is a Muslim" myth is one that truly refuses to die.) And, when contacted by a local newspaper, Wiseman didn't even claim he was joking when he posted the comment – something he could have easily done, as there is no sarcasm button on your keyboard – or that his words were taken out of context; he simply accused the reporter of "making a mountain of a molehill."

As one blogger who wrote about the incident put it, it looks like Wiseman holds two positions in Arlington: mayor and village idiot.

* * *

See you next week.

Obituaries

Portland

Rae Marie Hoadley

Rae Marie (Spencer) Hoadley, 83, of Rose Hill Road, Portland, wife of the late Robert A. Hoadley, died Monday, Dec. 7. She was born in 1926 in Essex, to the late Alfred and Emma (Looby) Spencer Sr. of Westbrook and Centerbrook.

She is survived by her five children, Hank Hoadley and his wife Connie of Leander, TX, Spencer Hoadley and his wife Liz of Centerbrook, Mary Swanson and her husband Neil of Cromwell, Beth Badin and her husband Roger of Portland, Ellen Squier and her husband Frank of Portland; one sister, Irma Johnston and her husband Henry of Cromwell; two brothers, Lawrence Spencer of Tucson, AZ, and Alfred Spencer Jr. and his wife Jean of Ivoryton; 12 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren and an extended family.

She was predeceased by her sister, Benis Richards and her husband Robert of East Hartford.

Rae attended First Congregational Church of Cromwell. She graduated from Pratt High School in Essex, and attended Ona M. Wilcox School of Nursing in Middletown. Rae was employed as a school bus driver by E.P. Hayes, Inc.; as a school bus dispatcher by Nichols Bus Service; as a Christian Education Director by South Congregational Church in East Hartford and a Desk Clerk at the Riverdale Motel in Portland.

A memorial service will be held Sunday, Dec. 13, at 3 p.m. at the First Congregational Church of Cromwell, 355 Main St., Cromwell. Burial will be held Monday, Dec. 14, at 11 a.m. at the Rose Hill Memorial Park, 580 Elm St., Rocky Hill.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in her memory to the Heifer Project International, P.O. Box 8058, Little Rock, AK 72203 (info@heifer.org).

Arrangements are under the direction of the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland.

For directions, or to extend an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.

Portland

Robert Russell Edwards

Robert "Bob" Russell Edwards, 87, of Portland, passed away peacefully, Saturday, Dec. 5, at Middlesex Hospital. He was the beloved husband for 62 years of Roberta (Anderson) Edwards. Born Nov. 5, 1922, a son of the late Sidney A. and Bess (Carpenter) Edwards of Portland.

A graduate of Portland High School and the Pratt Institute, in Brooklyn, NY, he was a veteran of World War II having served with the Troop Carrier Command, U.S. Army Air Corps, in the South Pacific. Following the war, he married Roberta Anderson on Flag Day, June 14, 1947, and had resided in Brooklyn where they had been employed. They returned to Portland after a few years and remained lifelong residents.

Bob was employed as an art director/graphic artist for Muirson Label Co. Division of International Paper, in North Haven for many years. He later retired as Art Director from Electrocal in South Windsor in 1987. Bob was a past president of the Portland Exchange Club, coached the Portland Little League, played third base for the Collegians in the Portland Softball League and was an avid golfer.

He was a loyal fan of the UConn Huskies Basketball team as well as his love for the Detroit Tigers and in later years, the Boston Red Sox. He was never without a UConn hat or baseball cap along with a pair of white shorts, of which he had many. An accomplished woodworker/furniture maker, and commercial artist, he was always involved in projects and giving to others.

Bob loved his family and enjoyed spending birthdays, holidays, and summer vacations with them on Cape Cod. Christmas was always his favorite holiday, and he will be deeply missed this year. In addition to their close family, including numerous nieces and nephews, Bob and Bert shared many years of good times and laughs with their group of close friends and relatives. They spent many vacations and weekend nights playing cards with their best friends Bill and Doris Nolan. He always had that wonderful grin and was legendary for his great sense of humor and wit.

Besides his wife, he leaves his loving children and grandchildren; daughter, Diane Edwards of Westbrook; son, Robert S. Edwards of Portland; son-in-law, Michael Robinson; and grandchildren, Halley and Ryland Robinson all of East Haddam. Bob was predeceased by his daughter, Susan E. Robinson and his brother, World War II 2nd Lieutenant Sidney A. Edwards, Jr., and sisters, Lois E. Wells and Janet E. Hill.

Bob's family received relatives and friends at the Zion Lutheran Church, 183 William St., Portland, Wednesday, Dec. 9, with funeral services beginning at 11 a.m. The Rev. James Reemts will officiate. Interment will follow in the Swedish Cemetery. Arrangements are under the direction of the Portland Memorial Funeral Home, 231 Main St., Portland. The family requests that gifts in Bob's memory be sent to the Zion Lutheran Church Memorial Fund, 183 William St. Portland, CT 06480.

For directions, or to leave an online expression of sympathy, visit www.portlandmemorialfh.net.