


# Our Village in December

## Bidding Farewell to 2009



*In all the excitement of the December holidays, including two exhilarating parties in our Clubhouse, most Villagers kept busy shopping, decorating, and preparing for family visits, either here or there. Some traveled far (Craigs to Montana, Shreves to California), and some had large family groups come here (Wests). Most dream of a white Christmas (a la Bing Crosby), and we got it. Traveling adults found it a bit inconvenient, but the kids loved it. Our Village was lighted beautifully with the warm glow of holiday candles in our condo windows, lovely wreaths on our doors, and many strings of lights on some of our outdoor trees. Well done, Villagers!*

*The Book Club made an interesting journey to the Concord Museum to see their annual celebration of children's literature. Thirty-five trees located throughout the museum were artistically decorated by volunteers to capture the essence of each children's book selected. A good trip to remember for a return next year!*

*And then in old-fashioned picture-book fashion some-31 singers (nearly half men) bravely donned their cold-weather apparel and, led by Ruth Ann Dillon, went caroling in our Village to call on resident shut-ins.*

*We have finished collecting grandchildren photos for our special edition. Don't forget, it's the NEXT issue - March/April. We are planning on printing additional copies so that those who have participated can have a second copy. Thank all of you for your cooperation. This is a one-time endeavor, and the interest has just been tremendous with more than 50 families participating. Sorry it can't be printed in color since all of your children are so beautiful. When you look at those faces, you'll just melt. This special Bulletin issue will be made up almost entirely of photos, so if you have news or announcements to disseminate for that period we ask that you use the mail room bulletin board.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

*I introduce this letter from Richard Diaz by saying SHAME ON US. As part of Richard's ongoing crusade to keep us from poisoning ourselves, he has been attending all the meetings of both the Board of Health and the Planning Board to evaluate the petition by an asphalt company (Newport Materials) to build, maintain and operate an asphalt plant in our neighborhood. Rarely does he see any other VSR'er at the meetings. He's fighting for all of us but without our support. If we continue to be complacent about this, suddenly we'll wake up one day to find operating in our "back yards" an asphalt plant that introduces poisonous air-borne chemicals and metals into this neighborhood. Watch out if you or your children have asthma. You will holler mightily when you find the value of your property has depreciated substantially since it will then be considered 'undesirable' to all but maybe the granite workers themselves. So WAKE UP VILLAGERS.*

*-Editor*

Westford has held numerous meetings with Newport Materials reps at which they contend their asphalt plant meets the zoning bylaw criterion for "light manufacturing" in the proposed area. Achieving a simple definition of "light" has been batted around from meeting to meeting with their lawyers capitalizing on Westford's inability to interpret its own bylaws.

Life offers us few opportunities by which we can simplify a complex circumstance using a simple analogy with a common experience. This asphalt plant is exactly that and this is my analogy:

If any citizen were to request from the town that the area at 540 Groton Road, now being considered for an asphalt plant, be re-zoned as a "Smoking Permitted" area, most of the sitting government would stand with a resounding NO. Westford would not waste any time, resources or talent in requesting or reading any studies. Endless committee and board meetings would be neither scheduled nor tolerated. Data collections, talking points and study abstracts would fall into a circular file.

No over-paid "experts" would be needed. Overheated attorneys would boil to a selectively deafened audience, and life would continue with the mundane and routine struggles and dilemmas that involved every family in this "bedroom community."

So... Why is Westford considering the Newport Materials application any further?

My impression is that these hearings, meetings and discussions represent a new era of "dilettante intellectual welfare." The only benefactors of this form of welfare are the lawyers and the experts. The people left to pay the piper will be the rest of us.

So if we don't want to breathe the secondary effects of the metals and chemicals that Newport Materials admits they will be adding to our environment, take action now.

*-Richard Diaz, 26 Jan. 2010*

## AFRICAN SAFARI SLIDESHOW PRESENTATION

The Thursday Village Meeting on 7 January featured a slideshow presentation by Rose O'Donnell of her recent African Safari.

After seeing one of the natural wonders of the world - Victoria Falls - she traveled south to Botswana since her main interest in this trip was to see the wild animals. Her pictures were wonderful, in fact, exhilarating, and the commentary by this gutsy lady (traveling alone) fascinated us. Hopefully we will have another slideshow by Rose this spring when she will take us on her trip to Antarctica.

## GRATITUDE

It's such a simple word, but it encompasses a myriad of feelings.

How do you thank a village for so many kindnesses? Since Harry began his journey against cancer, so many people need to be thanked.

- Thanks to the wonderful "band of brothers" who volunteered to take him to his radiation treatments the past several weeks, and all those who asked to be back-ups for this endeavor.
- To all the amazing women of the village who phoned, emailed, came by to chat, sent cards, delivered wonderful and delicious food and goodies, left gifts at Christmas, and offered help and advice.
- Thanks to the brave carolers who came out on a frigid night to sing lovely Christmas carols at our doorsteps. They made beautiful music.
- Thanks to all those who kept our spirits up and are still doing so after 1-1/2 years.

We offer our profound thanks and appreciation for your help, concern, and empathy. We can't imagine a nicer, more involved, and caring group of friends and neighbors than here in our Village. We are truly grateful and blessed to be here.

*-Louise and Harry*

**Attend the joint meeting of  
the Planning Board and  
the Board of Health  
scheduled on Monday night  
February 1, 2010  
at  
the Stoney Brook School auditorium  
at 7:30 pm.**

## BOOK CLUB ENJOYS CONCORD MUSEUM'S "FAMILY TREES" EXHIBIT

by Ann Sullivan

The VSR Book Club hit the road again, and this time it was off to the Concord Museum's December exhibit "Family Trees." This year was the 14th annual display of volunteer-decorated trees, each dedicated to a children's book. The trees were covered with hand-made ornaments pertaining to a particular children's book, some beloved classics and other newer contemporary selections.

Greeting us in the museum's entry hall was Dr. Seuss' Green Eggs and Ham. The tree was laced from top to bottom with a long railroad track of aluminum foil winding all about. Paper "fried eggs" green and yellow were intertwined with papier mache slices of ham covering all the branches. We loved this tree and this book so much it was hard to move on.

Next was a tree for the Betty Crocker Cook Book for Boys and Girls, a delicious book – oh, I mean tree-decorated with favorite recipes and small cooking utensils. These were full of gingerbread cookies and sugar-dusted "snowball" cookies.

And, of course, Madeline's tree, covered with little straw hats and streaming blue ribbons. Remember, too, Frog and Toad Together? Members of the Bolton Library set up this tree with little frogs and toads hopping from branch to branch. Frog and Toad we love you still!

Newer books were included too. Have you read Richard Scarry's Cars and Trucks and Things That Go? What wonderful ornaments: space ships, covered wagons, canoes and yachts, trains and ????. If You Give a Cat a Cupcake is full of illustrations - cherries and frosting and chocolate – try to read the book and decorate a tree with cupcakes. Mrs. Greenberg's Messy Hanukkah got kids in the kitchen making latkes. Oh what a mess and oh what fun! And the decorators made a messy tree right there in the exhibition gallery.

Our VSR group then sojourned to the nearby Colonial Inn where we shared memories of our tour while devouring scones, berries, creme brulee and tea.



## DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR? The VSR Yuletide Carolers

by Ann Sullivan

When Ruth Ann Dillon posted a notice on our bulletin board asking who would like to go Christmas caroling in our Village, she got a lot of enthusiastic responses. And so on the night of 22 December, 31 carolers (nearly half of them men) met with Ruth Ann in the Clubhouse for a little practice and direction. The song sheets she had prepared were distributed. Even though we've had many good times in our Clubhouse, this was different for it sparked feelings of spirituality.

The weather was really cold and windy, and we were bundled up like carolers of old in our ski masks, knit hats, mittens, scarves and boots. But we had flashlights not candles and cars not carriages. With laughter we carried the music into the darkness from home to home, from Stoneridge to Sandstone. We hoped to bring caring and neighborly love to the house-bound residents.

Who enjoyed the evening the most - the singers or their audience? Perhaps a toss-up. All of us felt "that certain feeling." Only our Ruth Ann who brought forth the idea and led us along is named here. The anonymity of the volunteers is part of their blessings.



## FUN FUN FUN AT BULL RUN

On Jan. 15th two dozen VSR'ers converged on the Bull Run Tavern in Shirley, MA to hear our own "saloon player" Donn Hill entertain us with his fantastic piano playing. Donn has played there every Friday for 37 (yes, 37) years. After a very delicious dinner (all agreed), we sat around the charming newly decorated Bull Run, and while Donn played tune after tune (non-stop) we happily sang along. What an absolutely marvelous evening, and there are notions of repeating the venture in the spring. Keep tuned in. Next time, maybe more can join us.



## ROD STEWART IMPERSONATOR Coming to VSR on April 6

Rick Larrimore will perform Rod Stewart's greatest hits at our Clubhouse on April 6. Showtime is 7 pm, cocktails at 6:30.



One night only. We thank Skip Giles for making the arrangements for this entertainment. Skip has seen him perform and feels he's quite spectacular in this impersonation of Rod's raspy vocals and moves. We hear Rick is also quite a charmer with the ladies! The cost to us will be \$12.50/person. Put it on your calendar now and watch the bulletin board for sign-up sheets in late March.

## Let's Live GREEN in 2010

New companies devoted to helping reduce folks' carbon footprint are springing up all over. Hybrid cars, renewed interest in recycling, eco-friendly business practices – all are devoted to cleaning up the nation's collective teenage bedroom. We can jump on the eco-bandwagon in a number of ways.

Read the labels on the items you are buying and avoid the use of polyvinyl chloride (also known as PVC or vinyl). It can creep up in toys, flooring, shower curtains, etc.

Stop using plastic bags. Plastic grocery bags are a quadruple whammy; they never decompose, they are hazardous to wildlife when they inevitably end up in their habitats, they are made from petroleum products, and they can be a danger to the folks in your own household.

Avoid the use of aerosols.

Instead of lubricants containing solvents, use castor or mineral oils to lubricate switches and hinges.

Cut down on battery usage. The hazardous waste created by the lead in batteries is a danger to the environment. Instead, use rechargeable or solar-charged batteries.



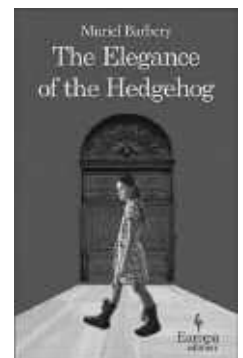
by Dianne Marston

Snuggling up in front of a fireplace (yes, even gas!) with a good book is a wonderful winter pastime. The VSR Book Club offers great suggestions for books to read. We meet every six weeks to discuss a book that has been chosen by the group. Often people tell me that they don't like to be held to a schedule and that having to read a book by a certain date is like "doing an assignment." That is certainly a valid point shared by many. On the other hand, the benefits of meeting together to socialize, to enjoy refreshments, and to discuss a book read by all the participants can be an uplifting experience. Listening to the differing viewpoints and insights can be both informative and interesting. Their reflections may mirror your own or present an entirely different perspective.

Occasionally we go on field trips to places inspired by the books we read or we have guest speakers who further enlighten us. Usually 10 to 20 people attend the meetings, and some who come have not read the book but are interested in the topic. Books are chosen three months before the discussion, which allows ample time to purchase, borrow, or get the book from the library. The upcoming book selections are posted on the Clubhouse bulletin board. You are most welcome to drop in sometime to see if you might like to become a regular participant.

The book discussed at the January 21 meeting was *Trick of the Eye* by Jane Stanton Hitchcock. On March 4 we will discuss *The Elegance of The Hedgehog* by Muriel Barbery. A "Minnesota Reader" review follows:

"Muriel Barbery has exquisitely created a compelling novel overflowing with emotion. Set in an elegant Parisian apartment building, it tells the story of two residents who have adopted illusory ways of living. Renee Michel, a 54 year old widow and building's concierge, keeps her intelligence and culture hidden in order to conform to the French social stratum. Cynical Paloma Josse, a 12 year old genius, has decided to end her own life on her 13th birthday. Told through the two characters' voices, their observations on life and profound thoughts are woven into the storyline. When a new resident moves in, the three form a poignant friendship. The characters' habits and reflections provide a fascinating impression of the French class-based way of life."



VSR



NEWS

# OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

## *A Notable Affair with Pipers a'Piping and Swans a'Singing*

by Shirley Chambers

DEC 12 – After Oohing and Ahhing over the delicious appetizers and desserts and milling about greeting our arriving neighbors with hugs and air kisses (safer during flu season), the party got launched with the four-man live band plus vocalist Phyllis rendering some easy dancing music and holiday songs. The “Gabriel Combo” played for us at our party two years ago, skipping last year because of the ice storm blackout. They are an offshoot from the “Come Back Kids,” a much larger band that plays monthly at the Chelmsford Senior Center.

Sultry singer Phyllis (LeBlanc) Duggan was again in rare form. She has an innate vocal talent and unbelievable musical instincts. Phyllis has never had a singing lesson in her life, nor does she read music. Go figure! That cute little drummer man (sort of hidden in the corner) also sang during the evening. And the bassist and keyboardist completed the rhythm section. Rounding out the band was their jazzy trumpet player – the foursome making darn good music and creating a pleasingly harmonious evening for all.

Ruthann Fisher and Dorothy Moran were presented with token gifts from the Social Committee in appreciation for their two years of great social events and dedicated service as committee co-chairs, and the new tri-chairs Kathy Abate, Loretta Auld, and Joyce Minosh were applauded for their willingness to take on the job starting in 2010.

I cannot review this party without mentioning my “special” somewhat bedazzling dance with Larry A. The expression “defying description” comes to mind. The crowd was in awe as at one point I was tossed onto Len Halio's lap! Ladies, until you have danced this “special” number with Larry, you have no idea what a memorable (for me) and eyebrow-raising (for the spectators) experience it was! Prepare, you may be next!

Our smartly dressed ladies all looked quite elegant for this occasion. Nice to have a dress-up party once in awhile just to prove we still know how. This is such a happy time of the year, indeed a season to be jolly. We will remember this wonderful party with its wonderful music and our wonderful friends as a most joyous celebration for all. From the photos here everyone appears to be having a wine-ing good time!



PHOTOS: SHIRLEY CHAMBERS

## VILLAGERS WELCOME 2010 WITH GUSTO

*by Paul Currier*

The Village ushered in another new year and a new decade on Thursday, December 31st. A variety of Chinese cuisine was the evening's choice for the 40 plus village residents who braved the falling snow and chilly temperatures. The evening got started with tantalizing appetizers, your favorite beverage and the usual socializing to which we have become accustomed at all our gatherings. The Clubhouse was arranged to allow everyone to sit comfortably in the main area. The buffet table was overflowing with food from which we filled our plates and bellies for the next hour or so.

Our dynamic duo DJ's, Ann Marie and Ray Barnes, had the crowd up and off their fannies around 9:30 with some excellent 45's. Calories were burning off bodies as shoes got kicked off and serious dancing was underway with the electric slide and tunes like good ole YMCA and Barbara Ann. Christine Caterino stole the show with her dance routine to Tina Turner's Rolling Down the River.

During a short break in the dancing Ruthann Fisher took a few minutes for the night's special prize drawings. June Halio and Eli Demetri each walked off as winners carrying a nice gift basket full of goodies arranged by Nany Diaz. And Dottie Hall was another winner with a fine bottle of wine.

It would not be New Year's eve without Ann Marie's creative party games to start the competitive juices flowing amongst the village people. This year there was a variation of the balloon game. It took three teams some time to catch on to the rules and technique. We just don't seem to be as quick as we were back in our younger days. Another test for our resident athletes came with the orange-in-stocking game. The combatants included Mike Gallant, Tom Barry, and Larry Anzivino. The trio rhythmically swung their oranges dangling from the waist while attempting to strike another orange on the floor moving it 15 feet to the finish line. With a bump here and a grind there a new orange-stocking hip-swinging champ was crowned. Larry walked proudly away with the coveted crown. Quite honestly, Larry looked like a pro at this game. He'll be tough to de-throne in future events.

The partygoers could not pass up the chance to wish Christine DeFronzo happy birthday. She wore a wide grin as everyone joined in with one of the longest happy birthday serenades on record at the Clubhouse.

The dancing and fun continued through the night as the clock approached the stroke of midnight. Party hats and noise makers were handed out at 11:45, and corks began popping off champagne bottles moments later. The revelers gathered, as is the tradition, in the library to watch Times Square's crystal ball slowly make its decent bringing 2009 to an end and welcoming 2010. The hugs, kisses and handshakes were aplenty as we wished one another a happy, healthy new year. The evening came to a close as we picked up the hall and returned the furniture to its proper place. The hall was left prepared for another promising eventful year.

Many thanks to the Social Committee for a joyous New Year's eve party and another terrific year of special events. "Life Is Good" at VSR!



PHOTOS: LEN HALIO

## AREA DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT

*Reviewed by Paul Currier*



**The Old Court**  
**29-31 Central St. in downtown Lowell**  
**(Corner of Middle St and Central St)**  
**Telephone 978-452-0100**

Jayne and I have, on a couple of occasions, enjoyed the authentic taste of Ireland at the Old Court Irish Pub and Restaurant.

Co-owners Jerry Murphy and Finbarr Sheehan opened in 2001 and, of course, have a full service bar with Guinness as the number one seller. Each draft is poured to Irish standard – filled three quarters full, then allowed to settle and topped off to the rim. They feature American cuisine as well as traditional Irish classics such as Shepherd's Pie, Bangers 'n' Mash, and their award-winning Fish & Chips. We can personally vouch for the Fish & Chips (\$12.95) - their best seller. This is a very large piece of fresh haddock fried in a batter of Sam Adams and Guinness and served with cole slaw and french fries. The batter is very light, which helps savor the taste of the haddock. In my humble opinion the Fish & Chips is the best I've had. Another popular selection is the steak tips ((\$12.50), which Jayne had on our last visit. They were perfectly marinated and cooked medium rare. Delicious! We also had fried calamari as an appetizer - light and tasty, just the way we like them. The corn beef dinner (\$9.95) is another favorite. We have not tried it yet, but it's on my radar screen.

The Old Court attracts two crowds: families from Lowell and the surrounding towns before 9:00 pm. After 9:00 the bouncer arrives for late night guests and the local bands. We asked about the after-9:00 crowd and were told by other patrons our age that they definitely leave before the younger crowd shows up.

Try The Old Court, I think you'll like it. They are open Monday - Saturday, 11:30 to 9:00 pm.  
Life is good!

## WHY WOMEN SHOULDN'T TAKE MEN SHOPPING

After I retired, my wife insisted that I accompany her on her trips to Target. Unfortunately, like most men I found shopping boring and preferred to get in and out quickly. Equally unfortunately, my wife is like most women - she loves to browse. Yesterday my wife received the following letter from Target.

*Dear Mrs. Robbins,*

*Over the past six months your husband has caused quite a commotion in our store. We cannot tolerate this behavior and have been forced to ban both of you from the store. Our complaints against your husband are listed below and are documented by our video surveillance cameras.*

- June 15: Took 24 boxes of condoms and randomly put them in other people's carts when they weren't looking.
- July 2: Set all the alarm clocks in Housewares to go off at 5-minute intervals.
- July 7: He made a trail of tomato juice on the floor leading to the women's restroom.
- Aug. 4: Went to the Service Desk and tried to put a bag of M&M's on layaway.
- Aug. 14: Moved a CAUTION - WET FLOOR sign to a carpeted area.
- Aug. 15: Set up a tent in the camping department and told the children shoppers he'd invite them in if they would bring pillows and blankets from the bedding department, to which 20 children obliged.
- Sept 4: Looked right into the security camera and used it as a mirror while he picked his nose.
- Oct. 18: Hid in a clothing rack and when people browsed through, yelled "Pick Me, Pick Me."
- Oct. 23: Went into a fitting room, shut the door, waited awhile, then yelled very loudly: "Hey, there's no toilet paper in here." One of the clerks passed out.

# Simply Social

Cathy Abate, Loretta Auld, & Joyce Minosh,  
Tri-chairs

Hello from your new and expanded Social Committee. We are very excited about the plans we've put together for the upcoming year. In addition to the sign-up sheets, we will also be placing on the bulletin board "save-the-date" notices for future events. Hopefully, this will be helpful.

Special thanks to the previous members of the Social Committee who are staying on our committee, and welcome to the "new" folks who have joined us. We tri-chairs are very excited about the ideas and enthusiasm our team brings to the Village. Here are some of the fun-filled events that you can look forward to in 2010.

- Drop-in Coffee - Jan. 23
- Presidents' Day Brunch - Feb. 21
- Wine event - March 20
- Clean-up Day as well as Open House of Arts (be thinking creatively) - April
- Memorial Day Cookout - May 31
- July 4th Cookout - July 5
- Root Beer Float/Ice Cream Day - Aug. 22
- Block Party & Barn Dance - Sept. 25
- October Fest - Oct. 16
- Karaoke - Nov. 13
- Holiday Party - Dec. 11
- New Years Eve Party - Dec. 31

A huge thanks to past chairwomen Ruthann Fisher and Dorothy Moran for all of their help and advice during the transition, and we are glad that they are both willing to stay on our committee since their experience will be invaluable to us. We are also especially grateful to Carlene Craib, our Social Committee Board Liaison, for all her guidance and help.

-Reported by Joyce Minosh

## HOW SMART IS YOUR BRAIN?

This comes to us from an orthopedic surgeon. It will confuse your mind and you will keep trying over and over again to see if you can outsmart your foot, but you can't. It is pre-programmed in your brain!

1. While sitting down, lift your right foot off the floor and make clockwise circles with it.
2. Now, while doing this, draw the number "6" in the air with your right hand. Your foot will change direction. And there's nothing you can do about it! Before the day is done you will try it several times again. Bet you've already done so! It's an old trick, but fun to bring back once in awhile.

"Eating what stands on one leg (mushrooms and plant foods) is better than eating what stands on two legs (fowl), which is better than eating what stands on four legs (cows, pigs, and other mammals)."

This Chinese proverb offers a good summary of traditional wisdom regarding the relative healthfulness of different kinds of food, though it inexplicably leaves out the very healthful and entirely legless fish.

## ALTERNATIVE MEANINGS FOR COMMON WORDS

- Coffee (n)** - the person upon whom one coughs.
- Flabbergasted (adj)** - appalled over how much weight you have gained.
- Abdicate (v)** - to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach.
- Esplanade (v)** - to attempt an explanation while drunk.
- Willy-nilly (adj)** - impotent.
- Lymph (v)** - to walk with a lisp.
- Gargoyle (n)** - olive-flavored mouthwash.
- Balderdash (n)** - a rapidly receding hairline.
- Testicle (n)** - a humorous question on an exam.
- Rectitude (n)** - the formal, dignified bearing adopted by proctologists.
- Oyster (n)** - a person who sprinkles his conversation with Yiddishisms.
- Frisbeetarianism (n)** - the belief that, when you die, your soul flies up onto the roof and gets stuck there.
- Circumvent (n)** - an opening in the front of boxer shorts worn by Jewish men.
- Poemon (n)** - a Rastafarian proctologist

Winning submissions to *The Washington Post's* neologism contest.

-Submitted by Dean Hubbard

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