‘Dick’s Dispatch’

Columns 226 through 250

Richard E. “Dick” Venus, a native son and Ridgefield’s first town historian, wrote 366 “Dick’s Dispatch” columns for The Ridgefield Press between March 13, 1982, and Nov. 16, 1989. They focus mostly on the people of the first half of the 20th Century and the events and places that were part of their lives.

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#226: THE SEVERAL CAREERS OF ERNIE STURGES

In the late 20’s, Ernest and Esther Sturges bought the house just north of the McManus residence on Fairview Avenue. Their contributions to the matrimonial fruitbasket were three fine children, Priscilla E., John Nilson, and Sylvia Jane.

The family name is an old one in Ridgefield and can be found among the early settlers. John, who has become a very successful builder, still lives in Ridgefield. He and his lovely wife, the former Sylvia Pinchbeck, have done their share in perpetuating the Sturges name, with three fine children of their own—Charline, James Howard and Donald Charles. The boys have followed in their father's footsteps and are building some of those very large houses that are going up around town.

Ernest Sturges was one of the most vigorous men that I have ever known. He was a painter by trade and would guess that he got his start with the painting firm that was headed by the late Harry D. Hull.

The building trades were all flourishing during the 20's. Every painter, carpenter, plumber, and electrician had all the work he could handle. Then came the market crash in 1929 and the activities of the building trade came to a screeching halt.

In those days there was no unemployment insurance and men found it necessary to accept employment in whatever capacity that was available. It was especially hard on families that had children to feed and clothe. Ernie Sturges was not one to stand around waiting for things to get better and soon he was working with me at the Conklin Dairy.

He had to be just about the greatest milkman ever. He had large hands and they enabled him to carry a great number of milk bottles. There were no paper cartons in those days.

He also had long legs, which propelled him from doorstep to doorstep with amazing speed. His natural quickness stood him in good stead, as unlike the delivery men of today, you were expected to run and Ernie was very good at it. Ernie could jump, as well as run. and if something in the nature of a privet hedge should bar his way, he would simply jump right over it.

The snow never got deep enough to stop Ernie Sturges, even in the great blizzard of February 1934. He plodded through those giant drifts, with what seemed to be very little effort.

Ernie had a very bad tobacco habit. He was an inveterate pipe smoker, but also liked cigarettes and a cigar. In fact, he would go right from one to the other.

While it did not appear to have any effect on him, you just know that it did. One thing was sure, there were very few waking moments when Ernie was without a pipe, a cigarette, or a cigar.

Delivering the milk was only a part of the workday at the farm. That little chore was performed before breakfast and then the regular workday that consisted of many different jobs began. Because of his ability to do so many things well, Ernie performed a multitude of tasks.

On one occasion, a leak developed in the roof of the Conklin residence on Ramapoo Road. Ernie climbed the ladder to the roof, located the leak and set about repairing it.

While so engaged, he called down for me to bring him some nails. I climbed to the roof and as I stepped off the ladder, I could see that he already had a can with plenty of nails in it.

That should have been warning enough for anyone who knew Ernie Sturges as well as I did. Before I could say “You already have enough nails,” Ernie grabbed me.

You may recall that in Dispatch No. 83, I told of how Ernie and Charley Elliott, while working on the roof of Charley's house, engaged in a wrestling match. The match ended when the two rolled off the roof and it was a miracle that neither man was seriously injured. It was great fun.

Ernie just loved this kind of horseplay, but I had visions of us landing on the ground, as he and Charley had done so many years before. Several times, we rolled to the edge of the roof and each time, my heart skipped a beat. At long last Ernie had enough fun and he laughed as I scrambled down the ladder to safety.

The Ridgefield Rotary Club at one time had among its members Ernest Sturges, Charles Elliott and Raymond Keeler. Now, if you do not think this guaranteed lively meetings for the club, you just never knew the gentlemen in question. These fellows were all very active in salvage drives during World War II and did a really great job. They had the very worthwhile faculty of making hard work seem like fun.

When the economy of our country began to improve and the building trades became active again, Ernie went back to his painting.

Some time later, Irving Conklin and I were on our way into town and as we approached the business center we could see what appeared to be a fully extended ladder. It was in front of where Roma Pizzeria is now and looked as though it was standing without any means of support.

Suddenly the ladder began to move, as though walking along the street. We could not see the base of the ladder but Irv immediately said, “You know there is only one man that could be carrying a ladder like that.”

I agreed that it had to be Ernie Sturges and as we got closer to the scene, it proved that we were correct.

Ernie served several years as a constable and several terms as a member or the Board of Tax Relief. This board is now called the Board of Tax Review. Perhaps the word "Relief" made it seem as though a reduction in one's taxes was automatic, when one appeared before that august group.

Ernest Sturges was a strong man, a good man, and always fun to be with.

David Watt and his mother came here from Scotland. just before the turn of the century. They became some of the early settlers of Bryon Park and lived on Fairview Avenue just north of the Sturges residence.

Both Dave and his mother lived most of their lives on Fairview Avenue and both died in 1950, just a few months apart. Dave was a rather private person and in a town where most people were joiners, he was never so afflicted. In the mid 40’s,

Dave retired from the postal service after serving many years as a rural mail carrier. His mail route extended over into South Salem and parts of Pound Ridge as well as parts of North Wilton.

In the early days he drove a horse that was very ill-tempered. It had the nasty habit of kicking or biting anyone or anything that came near it. Dave used to say it was protecting the mail but we always felt that the horse was just ornery.

#227: BRYON PARK FOLK WHO WORKED ON ESTATES & FOR P.O.

The pretty yellow house with white trim at 27 Fairview Avenue was for many years the home of John Edward McGlynn and his family. Ed, or Eddie, as he was best known, was the son of Michael T. McGlynn, a prominent Ridgefield painting contractor.

Ed was a dutiful son and followed in his father's footsteps. It was just before World War I that Ed McGlynn and his pretty bride were married. Mrs. McGlynn was the former Agnes Reardon and I think she came from Ansonia. The nice couple were to have five children, John Edward Jr. Robert, Francis, Mary Isabelle and Anne.

Come to think of it, there sure were a number of children on that short, little street, at least on the west side. John Edward Jr. is still living in Ridgefield, as is his sister Anne, who married a local boy, Jimmy Principi, and they have lived with their children on Colonial Lane for many years.

John Edward Sr. remained in the painting business with his father until the early 40's, when he was appointed acting postmaster on the retirement of Uncle Jack Walker.

Like his neighbor, Peter McManus, Ed McGlynn enjoyed a good game of poker, even though Eddie was by nature, very conservative. He also loved to play pinochle, euchre and 45, as well.

People still play pinochle but the games of euchre and 45 seem to be just about nonexistent today. They were great games that generated a lot of competition and to play those games a player had to be very alert mentally.

Next door and going north, stands the last house on the west side of Fairview Avenue and it is located at the intersection of Barry Avenue. This was for many years the home of Ed MoGlynn's brother, Charles.

The McGlynn boys built their homes on land which they acquired from their father. For some reason that is not clear, Charley McGlynn, his wife the former Katherine Kearney, and their children, moved to Stamford in the late 20's. It must have been a sad day for the family, but Charley probably had a good reason for leaving his hometown.

At any rate, in the spring of 1928, the Charley McGlynn home was sold to James Richard O'Keeffe and his bride, the former Sara Wims. James was named after his father and in order to distinguish between the two he quickly adopted the middle name and became best known as Dick O'Keeffe.

Dick worked for many years on the West Lane estate of Henry Swords, now the home of the Ralph Delli-Bovi family. His father was superintendent for the Swords family when that great estate encompassed what is now Memory Lane and ran south into what is now Silver Spring Country Club. Sara was the cook for the Swords family and you just know that she was a real good one.

Donald Ligos was Sara's nephew and when Don first came to town from New Jersey, he made his home with the O'Keeffes.

With the passing of Henry and Mrs. Swords, their daughter Elizabeth became the owner of the estate. In the meantime, Elizabeth had married Wheaton Grant. Following World War I, the owners of the large estates began, sadly, to break up these great places. Many reasons were

given for this, such as the increase in taxes, the difficulty in acquiring help to keep the estates in shape, etc.

I think Wheaton Grant had come from Virginia and wanted to go back there. For whatever reason, “Homewood,” which was the name given the estate by George G. Haven, a previous owner, was placed on the market.

After Homewood was divided up and sold off, Dick O'Keeffe finished his career as a maintenance man with the town of Ridgefield.

Dick was a big, good-natured man and besides being named after his father, they also had I similar talents. Both Dick and his father were excellent musicians and it was a real treat to hear them play the violin. Actually Dick played many stringed instruments and appeared with his mandolin in the great minstrel show of 1926 that we keep referring to.

Like his brothers, John and Patrick and his sister Eileen, Dick O'Keeffe was a native of the old sod and was born in County Kildare. You just know that the young O'Keeffes learned to dance to the lively Irish folk songs.

Dick's brother Jack still lives in Ridgefield and is a valued neighbor of ours. Incidentally Jack's son, Thomas, is superintendent of postal operations at our local post office.

There is one other street in the development that is known as Bryon Park. Like Fairview Avenue, this road runs north and south and is called Greenfield Street and some very fine families have lived on it.

In the 30’s and 40’s, there was Elsa Scherf and her little daughter. Elsa was a substitute rural mail carrier and was a real good one. She was very athletic in appearance and you could easily get the feeling that she would be very good with a tennis racquet.

Across the street lived John Mahoney and his wife, the former Mary Clark and their cute little red-haired daughter, Marie. John became a chauffeur for Seth Low Pierrepont and the Mahoney family lived at Twixthills for several years. Funny how those names come up. They are all town roads now, Pierrepont Drive, Seth Low Mountain Road, and Twixt Hills Road.

Mary Clark Mahoney worked for some years in the office of the S.D. Keeler Store, which later became Walter Stewart's Store, then Sam Perry's Market, later still Gristede's, and is now Ridgefield Auto Parts.

The Primo Baldaserinis lived on this street when they were first married and the Eugene Mortensens also started their married life there as did Irving Keeler and Myrtice Weaver. In the early days of radio Myrtice used to recite poetry on radio station WICC and she also appeared in that 1926 minstrel show.

Byron Sherwood lived on the west side of Greenfield Street and was a rural mail carrier for the local post office for many years. One of the most important things that a rural carrier is to learn is first the protection of the mail and then the protection of his little cash box. Once, after Byron had loaded his car before starting his deliveries, he noted that he had forgotten his hat and went back inside the office to get it. He left this cash box on the fender of his car and a postal inspector hid it. Byron went wild and the inspector was lucky to escape with his life.

#228: FAMILIES ON THE STREET OF TWO NAMES

One of the early Italian families in Ridgefield was that of Augustus Conti. During the period of which we are writing, the Contis lived at what is now 14 Greenfield Street, or Avenue. You do have a choice, you know.

Like its sister, Fairview Avenue, Greenfield is a rather short street, perhaps 150 yards long. In fact, if you stood midway down the street and your eyes are in good shape, you might

note that the sign on the north end of the street says Greenfield Street, while the sign on the south end of the street says quite plainly, Greenfield Avenue. [*This is still true in 2023!*]

At any rate Gus lived to a ripe old age and can be considered as the patriarch of the Conti family in Ridgefield. He was the father of Ananzita, Geno, Ernest, Joseph and Fred. As you probably know, Joe Conti was the father of Ridgefield's town clerk, Dora Cassavechia, and her sister Mary, who became Mrs. Mario Marcheggiani.

Ernest Conti, who lived for half a century in the Epenetus Howe homestead, of Revolutionary War fame, at 91 North Salem Road, was the father of Leonora and Ernest Conti Jr. Leonora is now Mrs. Joseph Dunleavy and Ernest Jr., still lives on North Salem Road.

Fred Conti was a handsome young man and when he married the pretty Jean Zandri, they were one of Ridgefield's popular young couples. Fred was not a big fellow, but he played football on Ridgefield's great Spartan football team. He did much to prove that it was not necessary to be of monstrous proportions to play the game well. Fred was smart and his quickness more than made up for his lack of size.

In later years, the Daniel Bennetts lived in this house at 14 Greenfield. Dan, like his three brothers, worked most of his life on the great private estates of the early years of this century. Dick Bennett looked after the M.S. Wilson place on Main Street. Finn Bennett worked on the F.E. Lewis estate on West Lane. George Bennett was superintendent on the W.A. Jenner estate on High Ridge and Dan was superintendent on the Reggie Lewis estate on South Salem Road.

The Bennett boys were all fine bowlers, though most of them suffered from poor eyesight. Dan was one of the very best bowlers that I have ever seen. He had a terrific hook ball, that was a beauty to see.

As Dan's eyesight got progressively worse, he had to wear glasses that kept increasing in thickness as he grew older. Finally Dan needed assistance in locating the pins — not with the first ball, as he knew just where to stand when all the pins were up. However, if a second ball was needed, which was not very often, Dan would ask the number of the pins that were still standing. He would then adjust his approach to the foul line and pick off the remaining pins.

Gottlob Gluck and his family lived in the house at 10 Greenfield Street and I think he was related to Gottlob Riede, who preceded me as superintendent at Hillscroft. Mr. Riede was an expert concerning trees and shrubs and planted many things for the Glucks, some of which are still growing there today.

Vinnico Carboni bought this place in the late 20's and lived there with his family until he passed on, just a few years ago at the age of 102. Gus Conti was the patriarch of his family and Vinnico was certainly the patriarch of this Carboni family.

There were three sons, John, Marino and Vasinto. John and his wife, the former Inez Servadio, still live in the old family homestead at 10 Greenfield Street. John was a star baseball pitcher at Ridgefield High and also played the tuba in Aldo Casagrande's Oreneca Band and is now retired from Gilbert and Bennett.

They also had three sons, John Jr., Vincent and Paul.

Marino, who we used to call "Molink,' moved to the midwest many years ago and I believe he still lives with his family in Texas. Vasinto (Vinnie), is the golfer of the family and lives on Nod Road with his wife, Alda. In case you did not know, Alda owns and operates the Candlelight Shop on Main Street.

We have fond memories of Vinnico, the patriarch, with his ample mustache, ruddy cheeks and ready smile. He was a kindly old gentleman and worked most of his adult life on the Carle estate in South Salem.

Transportation was no problem for Vinnico, who never drove an auto. For many years he walked that long trek over the state line to work. He must be considered a real advertisement for walking your way to health. Without modern medicines and vitamins, he made it to 102 and how many do you know who lived to see their great-great-grandchildren?

The Fred Brundage family lived across the street from the Carbonis for many years. Fred came from Mt. Kisco and married the former Jennie Pehrson. Jennie came from an old Ridgefield family and we can remember her father with his long white flowing beard, when he lived on Ramapoo Road.

The Brundages had four sons: Walter, Ralph, Lawrence and Edwin. We see Lawrence occasionally, for though he lives now in New Fairfield, he never misses a wake when some old-time Ridgefielder passes on.

Fred Brundage went into partnership with his neighbor Jesse Benedict and they operated the Brundage & Benedict Store, where the real estate firm of Fitzgerald and Hastings is now at 419 Main Street.

Some called the store B and B and some called it the Busy Bee. Busy, it was, and you could buy almost anything from dry goods to newspapers there. I can remember getting my first pair of crepe-soled shoes at this store. Frances Mahoney handled the dry goods and took care of the books.

My first newspaper route originated from this store and I can remember Jesse Benedict saying that his biggest problem was getting the boys to remember to leave the papers at a new customer's house and then found that they were still leaving the paper six months after the customer moved away.

The delivery of newspapers was a large phase of the operations and on Sunday the paper routes extended into North Salem, South Salem and Pound Ridge. This was accomplished with the aid of Jesse Benedict's 1915 Model T Ford, which sometimes rebelled against the load it had to carry and the many miles it had to travel.

#229: BUSTER'S GOAT-POWER CART; AMAZING GEORGE BAILEY

Next to the Byron Sherwoods on Greenfield Street lived the Charles Coe family. Charley, his wife, the former Mary Bailey, and their son, Charles Jr., had previously lived on Danbury Road right across the street from the entrance to the Old Ice House [*Girolmetti Court*].

The large white, rambling structure was a two-family house and it was owned by Sam Denton, as were all the houses on the hill to Joe's Corner and on to the stone wall that now encloses the Casagmo development. In fact that house next to Casagmo's wall is now 612 Main Street, and that is where I was born a few years ago.

It just so happened that the house where the Coes lived on Danbury Road and the one on Main Street where I was born were once just one very large house and it sat just south of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. But that is another story.

The house on Danbury Road where the Coe family lived was torn down more than 20 years ago and Mary Girolmetti built the neat little brick house that sits there now. The house that it replaced is just one of the many houses that have been moved in Ridgefield from their original foundations. I would bet that more houses have been moved in Ridgefield than in any town of comparable size.

At any rate, Charles Coe Jr. was called Buster, in order to distinguish him from his father. Of course we soon shortened Buster to Bus and even that was used less and less as he grew up until it finally disappeared entirely and he became just plain Charley.

When Bus was a little fellow, his father bought him a goat. It caused great excitement in the neighborhood and the little black and white animal got lots of attention.

Goats are very healthy creatures and they used to be used as companions for race horses. At many race tracks they lived right in the box stall with the horse.

Goats are also very playful and make great pets. Charley's goat had curved horns and it seemed to enjoy having the human kids grasp the horns and attempt to push the goat back as it tried to go forward. Very few of the kids were strong enough to stall the little fellow for even a minute.

Goats were quite often used as subjects in the comic section of the Sunday newspapers and invariably they were pictured eating tin cans. The neighborhood kids used to bring cans to Charley's goat but it soon became apparent that the goat was only interested in the paper that was wrapped around the can and not the tin itself.

The goat came complete with a nice harness and a cute little wagon. It had been trained to pull the cart and did very well until it encountered an immovable object, such as the side of a building. It was then that adjustments had to be made as the goat had never learned to back up.

Charley patiently began training sessions with the goat, but the little animal proved to be quite stubborn and flatly refused to take a step backward. Then came the day when the goat gave in and started to back up. The problem was that once he started backing he would not stop. The goat backed Charley around his yard, at a very good clip, until the front wheels got cramped under the wagon, turning it over and depositing the driver unceremoniously on the ground.

While the Coe family lived on Danbury Road, the three Bailey boys, Frank, George and Robinson, lived with them. The Baileys were all very fine mechanics in their respective trades.

If he were around today Frank Bailey would no doubt be an electronics expert. In the early days of radio, Frank built one by hand from scratch. It was an enormous machine with three large dials that had to be synchronized to get any particular station. When properly adjusted, it was possible to get such distant radio stations as WEAF and WJZ in New York, WOR in New Jersey, WBZA in Boston, WRIS in Cincinnati or even KDKA in Pittsburgh.

There was another trick that was used in an effort to get the distant radio stations. It was by use of an antenna and the longer it stretched, the farther the reception. Therefore the antenna would be strung from the radio to the farthermost tree possible. If no tree was available, a pole might be used in place of a tree.

Radio buffs like to brag about the distant stations that they had been able to reach and in the early 20's, there was considerable competition.

My brother Paul had a set that had been made by Jimmy Kilcoyne. It was one of the very early radios in town, if not the first, and it had exceptional range.

One morning Paul, walking to work, met a couple of neighbors who were bragging about stations they had reached the previous evening. One of them asked Paul how far he had gotten the night before. The weather had been very cold so hardly breaking stride, Paul said "I just opened my window last night and got Chile."

Frank Bailey was an excellent electrician and when he was not tinkering with radios, he worked for Charley Riedinger, but later on he opened his own radio store on Main Street.

Frank's brother George was a carpenter and what a carpenter he was. George was a little fellow whose movements were quite deceptive.

He never seemed in a hurry and in fact gave the impression that he was rather slow. However, the project on which George would be working seemed to take shape as if several men were putting it together. It can be truly said that this little blond fellow had no waste motions as he went about his business with the ever-present pipe dangling from the very center of his mouth.

I do not think that George ever measured some of the boards that he cut. He would simply gaze at the space where the board was to be nailed. Then he would saw the board and it would fit perfectly into the space for which it was intended.

George was a real wonder. It was during the early Depression years that he left Ridgefield to be the boss carpenter for a firm that was engaged in a large project on Long Island. Robin Bailey was known as a finished carpenter and like his brother George, he never seemed to hurry.

Again, like George, there was no wasted motion and his work was beautiful to see. Robin worked along with George Johnson for the Knoche Brothers firm for many years. The Knoches' clientele was for the most part made up of people who demanded the very best in workmanship and you can rest assured that they got it.

#230: HAY! THAT'S SOME LOAD THEY HAVE!

As we were meandering along Greenfield Street, we were in the process of extolling the mechanical skills of Robin Bailey. While so doing, another little anecdote came to mind and it might prove to be of interest.

It happened just a few years ago and we were far from Greenfield Street. Marie and I were attending the National Convention of Postmasters in Phoenix, Arizona, and in the course of events, we visited a nearby town called Rawhide.

This turned out to be a rebuilt, frontier town. It was very authentic, complete with rambling buildings, false storefronts, wooden sidewalks and dusty streets, through which there wandered, horses, cows, chickens, and other members of the livestock family. There were many tourists in the town and the stores were doing a very brisk business.

When I stopped to examine some harness that was on display, the group that I was with got a little ahead of me. As I crossed a narrow little side street in pursuit of my companions, my side vision detected a man approaching the main thoroughfare. There was something vaguely familiar about the man, the way he walked in his cowboy boots and the way he wore his huge sombrero.

As the man came closer, I called out "Hello Bob" and he looked at me with a rather startled expression. It took a minute for him to recognize me, which is understandable since it was quite a few years since we had seen each other. It turned out to be Bob Roache, who had built several homes in Ridgefield some 30 years ago.

When I inquired about his wife, Joyce, he pointed to a store that my companions were about to enter and informed me that she was operating what seemed to be the general store. As I entered the store, Joyce could be seen directing the operations and when I pointed her out to Marie, we had a pleasant talk about Ridgefield and the many changes that had taken place since she and Bob moved to the West.

You see, Joyce was Robin Bailey's daughter. All of which seems to prove that you can find former Ridgefielders anywhere, even in the middle of the desert. Just thought you'd like to know that.

So back to the Coes of Greenfield Street. Charles Coe Jr., was another fine carpenter and worked for many years for the Knoche Brothers firm. Charley, or Buster as we used to call him,

had a very interesting hobby. He was an expert at making model airplanes, into which he placed tiny engines. He got great enjoyment out of flying the little planes around the ball diamond at the old high school.

Charley married the former Ada Burdick and they were a popular young couple. Ada was a rural mail carrier at the local post office. Both she and Charley were very good at square dancing and rarely, if ever, missed the dances held each Saturday evening at Odd Fellows Hall, where Al Broadhurst and his orchestra played for a lively crowd.

The Coe family moved from Danbury Road to Greenfield Street in the late 20's and lived right next door to their friends, the Byron Sherwoods. Both of these families were great square dancers, so you just know that they had lots of fun together.

Charles Sr., had been a farmer in his younger days, but converted to masonry work and became really good at it. However, he never got the love for life on the farm out of his system and both he and his neighbor, Byron Sherwood, used to help us get the hay in for Irving Conklin's cows and horses. This was done after they had put in a full day's work at their regular jobs and they seemed to enjoy the hard work.

Charles Coe was a big strong man and though Byron was not quite as large, he was equally as strong. In those days there were no hay choppers or even hay loaders. The hay had to be raked into windrows by a dump rake and then piled into hay cocks. It was then pitched by hand, with a fork. onto a horse-drawn wagon. When the load arrived at the hay barn, it was then pitched again, by hand, into the hay mow.

It was really something to see Bryon and Charley, as they dug into the large hay cocks and pitched them up to me on the wagon. Many times the handles on their pitch forks would bend, almost to the breaking point, with the weight of the hay.

My job of loading the hay wagon was made much easier because these great hay pitchers always placed those large forkfuls of hay where they could be most easily handled. The job of loading the wagon could be very tough for a kid, if the hay pitchers were inexperienced. If the hay was not properly loaded, the job of pitching it off when the load got to the barn, could be a complete disaster.

On one memorable occasion, we had sowed oats on a large field that stood on the corner of West Lane and Elmwood Road, just over the New York State line. A very attractive white house now graces that field. It was the home of Phil and Eleanor Masterson for many years.

At any rate the sky became very dark as we were gathering in the oats and a thunder storm was brewing. It was decided to clean up the field and get the oats on the wagon in order to be able to get all the oats under cover.

The very large barn on the Dr. Shelton estate had large sliding doors at either side which made it possible to drive the team in one door and out the other, while leaving the load of hay completely under cover.

Oats are very heavy and the last load was surr. to be a really big one. The man kept on pitching and I kept on loading, until the load was so high they could no longer reach me, even with long-handled forks, but the field was cleaned.

Then to my dismay, it was discovered that my team, Kit and Lady, could not move the wagon. Harry Terpeny's roan team, Duke and Diamond. was dispatched to hook on in front of Kit and Lady and the four horses got us started toward the barn.

The thunder in the sky was increasing as we approached the stone abutments through which we had to pass to reach West Lane. The load was so large that it was a real struggle to get

through the abutments and when you drive by now, some 50 years later, you will see that one of the abutments is leaning and it is possible that we started it to tip.

We had to pass through two more stone abutments as we reached the barnyard but got the load under cover just as the storm, in all its fury, struck. While the load was in, the horses were out and before we could unhook them a bolt of lightning struck not more than 50 feet in front of them.

It was all kind of scary, but we saved the oats.

#231: THE PEEPING TOMS OF BRYON PARK

We have just about completed our trip through Bryon Park and telling of the families that lived there during the 20s, 30's, and 40's. The park is composed of Bryon Avenue, Fairview Avenue and Greenfield Avenue or Street, as you prefer. It is probably Ridgefield's very first development and was named for Dr. B.A. Bryon, the man who made it possible.

We just cannot leave the area without another little anecdote about some of the people who lived in the park. These are people who were considered to be a little different at the time. Perhaps, by today's standards, they might not cause a stir, or even be newsworthy.

However, at the time, these people kept their neighbors in a state of constant agitation and caused more than just a little fear.

Those who have been following this column for a couple of years may recall that in column #116, there was mention of the fact that at one time there were no less than three peeping toms operating in the High Ridge, Bryon Park area. We labeled these characters by number, no. 1, no. 2, and no. 3.

It was disclosed that Peeper No. 1, after numerous complaints had been registered, was observed while actually performing his nocturnal antics. He turned out to be a very prominent person, who just could not resist the temptation to peep through the windows of the building that was being used as a convent, at the corner of High Ridge and Abbott Avenue.

Peeper No. 2 had a "modus operandi" that was considerably different. He shunned the more sensational method of actually pressing his nose against the window glass, preferring to make his observations from the relative safety of the sidewalk. However, this offered very little solace to those who during the night looked out to find this fellow staring at their window.

It should be noted that Peeper No. 2, seemed to be most active during a full moon. Those who follow the various phases of the moon may find this to be of great significance, but it should be remembered that the bright moonlight made it easier to observe the peeper.

The case of Peeper No. 3, was considerably different. This fellow not only roamed the neighborhood peeping in windows at will, he also stalked any woman who had the temerity to venture out and walk after dark without benefit of a companion.

In one very notable instance, a lady, whom we know quite well, was terrified to find she was being followed one evening, and ran to a neighbor's house for protection. She was indeed fortunate that Mildred Coleman was at home and offered protection from what could have been a very serious situation.

A call was placed with the State Police, who were still in Ridgefield at the time and Officer Emil Struzik was dispatched to the scene. Peeper No. 3 was still at the door of the Coleman residence as the police car traveled up Catoonah Street.

When he saw the flashing lights on the car as it turned onto High Ridge, he took off on a run for home. The officer did get a glimpse of the man as he disappeared down the street.

After questioning the intended victim, the officer went to the home of the suspect. The peeper's wife answered the door and despite the best efforts of Officer Struzik, he never got to question the man as the wife declared that he was sick in bed and had been there all evening. This proved to be all the protection needed by the peeper and he was free to continue to harass the neighborhood.

During the next incident involving Peeper No. 3, the story is different but the results were the same. It just seemed incredible that even though his identity was well known to most people in the area, he was able to escape arrest.

It was indeed fortunate that while his nightly exploits covered a considerable length of time, no violence occurred. As a matter of fact, the closest anyone came to suffering bodily injury was the peeper himself, in the following rather sensational event.

A young newly married couple moved to a nice second floor apartment in Bryon Park. The husband's business caused him to attend a night meeting once each week.

Peeper No. 3 became familiar with the young husband's schedule and decided to make a visit during his absence. Shortly after the husband left for his meeting, the wife decided it was a good night to go to bed early and read a book.

Television was in its infancy at the time and the young couple had not yet acquired one. Besides it would be difficult to concentrate on the book, with pictures dancing across a TV screen, whereas the radio was not a distraction.

So with the fine music of Glenn Miller to listen to and a good book to read, the lady was prepared for a quiet evening at home. Alas, it was not to be.

The young housewife had been reading for some time when her glance happened to wander up and over the top of the book. There, just a few feet away and close to the window glass, was the leering countenance of her neighbor, in the person of Peeper No. 3.

The urge to utter the loudest scream possible must have been great, but this extraordinarily, practical young lady had other ideas. Without revealing what she had seen,she inched slowly toward the edge of the bed and then made it appear that she was on her way to the kitchen for a bedtime snack.

As she came abreast of the window, this very courageous woman whirled around and threw the window open. Then, with all her strength, she gave a mighty shove that pushed the ladder away from the house and it went crashing along with a very surprised Peeping Tom to the ground.

The peeper must have been a cat, as he landed on his feet and somehow was able to run off, leaving his ladder behind.

It was only after this exciting action had taken place that the lady called the police. During their investigation, the police found that the ladder, which they had confiscated, carried the initials of the peeper, who lived nearby.

Armed with the incriminating evidence, the police visited the home of the peeper. As you may have already guessed, the dutiful wife again attempted to exonerate her husband. She vehemently declared that her husband was asleep in bed and had been there all evening.

The ladder was produced and initials were shown, but the wife quickly recalled that someone had stolen the ladder just the previous week.

Perhaps such loyalty as exemplified by the peeper's wife should be admired. However, that was a feeling that was definitely not shared by the neighbors.

Oh yes, when the young husband returned later in the evening, the usual quietness had returned to the area. When he asked his wife how her evening had gone, she replied, "It was very

routine." It was not until they were at breakfast the following morning that disclosed what had transpired the previous evening. Her reason for this was very simple, "If I had told him when he came home, he would not have slept a wink all night."

Such consideration for a husband is worthy of commendation.

#232: THE TALENTED BLOOMER CLAN

Two very nice homes, at the north end of Greenfield Street, carry a Barry Avenue address, but many people consider them to be a part of Bryon Park. They may have been there before Bryon Park was developed.

The house that sits on the northwest corner of Greenfield Street and Barry Avenue was home to Ray and Grace Fish and their sons Ray Jr. and Bob for some 25 or 30 years. However, at the time of which we are writing, it was the home of Andrew T. Bloomer and his wife, the former Anna Stauffer.

The Bloomers are an old Ridgefield family and Andrew, Clara, Frank and George, were all natives of the town. Clara married Horace Walker, a former chief of the Ridgefield Fire Department and one of the first of the paid firemen. They lived for many years at what is now 44 Gilbert Street.

George Bloomer was a carpenter and built his own home, one of the first to be erected on the site of the old Fair Grounds, at 366 Wilton Road West. George and his wife had two children, Jane and George Jr. Jane is now Jane McGrath and still lives in the family homestead.

Another brother, Frank Bloomer, was a farmer and stayed on the old family farm. Frank and his wife had a daughter, Edith, who later became Mrs. David Gearbart. David was well known through his association with the Acorn Press and at the time he passed on, was editor of The Wilton Bulletin.

When Edith was a little girl, she had very long curls and she looked very pretty, as she sat on the wagon seat with her father, as the team of horses plodded along the country roads of town. They really made a living picture of rural life in Ridgefield. [*Edith later became the town clerk of Wilton*.]

It should be noted that the road on which the family farm was located was aptly named Bloomer Road and it runs south off Branchville Road.

Andy and Anna Bloomer would have made excellent subjects for a Norman Rockwell picture. Anna was the real grandmother type and possessed that highly desirable trait that enables some people to put other people at ease and make them feel right at home.

Andy was tall and graceful, with a thin face, that belied a rather well-muscled body. He and Anna were fine dancers and it was a treat to watch them glide over the dance floor, especially when the band was playing their favorite old-fashioned waltz.

Andy was an ardent bowler and for many years he had a team that carried his name. We used to bowl on the alleys that were located in the basement of the old Congregational Church House.

Andy was an inveterate pipe smoker, as were some of the other bowlers, such as Ray Keeler, Ernie Sturges, Irving Conklin, Jack. Smith, Frank Wallington, Lee Vance and myself. There were only two allevs and they were situated in a rather confined area.

You can readily imagine that when all those pipes were going, it was difficult to see the pins at the other end of the alley. Even worse, when we had finished an evening of bowling, our clothes smelled as though they had been through a forest fire with Smokey the Bear.

I guess that sometimes we tend to stereotype those who are engaged in various types of employment. Hands that have thumbs that are blunt, with tips that just go straight across, can only belong to a garage mechanic, who has twisted a lot of nuts onto a bolt. A carpenter or a painter will have something in their demeanor that will link them to their respective trades. The well dressed gentlemen, with the for bidding facial expression, just has to be the loan officer down at the bank.

Well, as a young fellow, I came to think that a primary requisite for anyone who worked in a hardware store was that they looked like either Andy Bloomer or Jack Whitlock. You were bound to meet one or the other, when you entered Bedient's store back in the 20's, 30's, or 40's.

Andy, with his large frame, kindly face, steel-rimmed glasses and ever present pipe, was the personification of a good hardware man.

Andy and Anna Bloomer had a daughter Edna, and a son Andrew Jr. Edna married and moved to Norwalk, our mother town, where she worked as a registered nurse for many years.

Andy Jr. married a very popular local girl, Elizabeth Weitzel, and they had a daughter Kaye and a son Tommy. I am sorry to relate that neither Kaye nor Tom live in Ridgefield, and in fact, there are no Bloomers listed in the local phone directory.

At a very early age, Andrew Jr. learned to play the alto saxophone. It was not long before he became equally proficient with the clarinet, the tenor sax and the bass sax.

Like his father, Andy became associated with the D. F. Bedient Company, but his first love was music and he could have easily made a good living with a dance band.

While with Bedient's, Andy learned the floor covering trade and in later years, joined with Jimmy Bellagamba in establishing the B & B Floor Covering Company. As a matter of fact, as I am writing this, I am looking at a first-class tile job that they did for us more than 30 years ago and it looks as good as the day they put it down.

We had the pleasure of playing in the same dance band with Andy on many occasions and it was always great fun. It is always fun when the band has the ability to put the crowd in a dancing mood.

Most of the fellows that Andy played with came from the Norwalk area. For some reason, Norwalk always seemed to produce the very best musicians. Some of them were Bix Santella, a great friend of Andy, Ernie Harris, Aaron Ashboom, Mike Livingston, Pete Vaast, George Hendricks, Hack O'Brien, and Ernie Pollard. Some of the great bands that he played with were Jack Miller's, Frank Volk's, Vic Vaast, Hughie Golden's and Charley Sterling's.

Andy also gave lessons on the sax and clarinet and many local boys learned to play under his careful guidance.

This time of year reminds me that we almost always were able to go skating on Thanksgiving Day. Our favorite place to skate was New Pond, which unfortunately is no more. Someone opened the gates in the dam and the pond just flowed away.

Andy Bloomer was a really good skater, as was John L. Sullivan, with whom he always seemed to be in competition. Some of the other skaters that come quickly to mind were Francis Martin, Alero Ciuccoli, John Nash, Nathan Perry, Pete, Lynce and Reno Carboni, Red Dunlap and John McGowan.

#233: BARRY AVENUE BENEDICTS, ELLIOTTS AND CARBONIS

The house that sits just to the west of the former Bloomer homestead is the residence of Charles and Betty Elliott. It was built in the 40's and while it carries the address 41 Barry Avenue, it could be considered as a part of Bryon Park.

Charlie is the son of the late Charles Elliott Sr., who was the subject of our Dispatch No. 83. Charles Jr., still carries on the refuse collection business that was established by his father more than half a century ago. So “Chuck,” as his many friends call him, owns and operates one of the very oldest family-owned businesses in Ridgefield.

The house on the corner of Fairview and Barry Avenues is rather new and not of the era which we are covering. The lot on which this house sits once belonged to Ernest Scott and in the mid 20’s, Ernie sold it to Marion Green, a New York City school teacher.

Just recently, I received a letter from Rev. Thomas Hennessey, inquiring about the location of this property. Father Hennessey is a Jesuit priest and a professor at Fordham University. He is a nephew of Marion Green and visited her in Ridgefield when he was a Little boy and Marion lived on High Ridge Avenue, in the house that was built bv Samuel Carpenter and is now the home of Frances Cleaners.

Marion Green must have been a rather affluent school teacher, as she owned not only the lot in question, but the house on High Ridge and another on Main Street as well as having an interest in The Kane Inn, which as you know, is now The Inn at Ridgefield on West Lane [*lately Bernard’s and now, The Benjamin*]. I would guess that if she were still around today and owned all these properties, with today's values, she would be considered quite wealthy.

There are two more houses that could be a part of Bryon Park. One is on the corner of Greenfield Street and Barry Avenue. It is now the home of Alex Santini and carries a 25 Barry Avenue address. Those who have been following this column may recall that we told of Alex's fabulous career in Dispatches 54 through 57. We really should have written a book about his many achievements.

At the time of which we are writing, this house was the home of Jesse L. and Maude Benedict. One of Jesse's outstanding characteristics was that when he found something good, he stayed right with it. This includes his gracious wife, Maude, with whom he celebrated their golden anniversary.

Then, too, he was in business on Main Street for more than 45 years and he was Ridgefield’s town treasurer for 39 years.

Jesse was born in Pound Ridge and exhibited great intelligence when he moved to Ridgefield at the turn of the century. At that time, the store at 419 Main Street, which now houses Fitzgerald and Hastings [*Dr. George Amatuzzi’s offic*e], was a kind of general store, owned by Andrew Flood and Fred Brundage.

Andrew Flood passed on in 1906 and Fred Brundage brought in his friend and neighbor, Jesse Benedict, as his partner. For many years, the sign over the front door read, Brundage and Benedict. We used to call it the “Busy Bee” or B&B.

After Fred passed on, Jesse kept the store going until 1951. He then sold the business to Harry Boshnack and later it became Miller's Department Store.

Jesse was a kindly man and very well-liked. His store was a favorite meeting place, especially on a Sunday morning when it seemed that people in the village area all went there for their newspapers. When you engaged Jesse in conversation, you could not help but get the feeling that you were talking to a pretty solid citizen.

Jesse had a rather amusing habit. When the conversation was light he sometimes would break into a little clog dance, which he could do so very well. It was a trick that he performed, even in his old age. It really was kind of cute and never failed to bring a smile to those who gathered around the store.

During the week, newspaper boys, including myself, delivered the papers door to door in the village area. Then, on Sundays the paper routes were extended over into New York State. We used Jesse's 1915 Model T Ford to deliver to Pound Ridge, South Salem and North Salem.

This was quite an experience and we met a lot of very interesting people. There was a Ryan family just over the line in North Salem. They were quite wealthy and had a butler. He was the very first Chinese man that I had ever seen and I found him to be fascinating. He always wore a stiff white jacket and was very charming, always smiling and he had the most pleasant mannerisms.

The fact that he always had a cup of hot cocoa for us on a cold winter's day made him something very special.

Jesse kept his job as town treasurer all those years and many times he was unopposed at election time, because he was so well-liked. I was a member of the Board of Selectmen at the close of his career and at times when Jesse was unable to carry on his duties, Harry, Paul and I would deputize Nancy Servadio (Nancy is still the mainstay of the selectmen's office) to carry on for him until he was able to return.

The last house that might be considered a part of Bryon Park has the address, 23 Barry Avenue. It has been the home of Elsie Carboni and her family for the past 35 years.

Elsie is the former Elsie Zandri and is well-known throughout this area for her ability to prepare her culinary delights for large groups of people. Her late husband, Deno Carboni, passed on a number of years ago. His untimely death at an early age must have placed a great burden on the young family. That they were equal to the challenge is quite evident in the many nice improvements that they have made to their lovely home.

It is hard to believe that on this property there was once a very large barn that contained a stable of race horses, but that is another story.

The Carboni family acquired this property from the Charles Cain family. You may remember that Charlie worked as a garage mechanic for Louis DeVantry when Louis ran Central Garage on the corner of Danbury Road and Grove Street, where Pamby Motors is now. Charlie married DeVantry’s daughter and went into business across the street where Mobil is now.

Charlie accepted a job with a large oil company and moved with his family to India. That was a long time ago and we have not heard from the Cain family since.

#234: THE REMARKABLE SELLECKS

Selleck is a family name that can be found liberally sprinkled through the history of Ridgefield. In fact, the Sellecks were among the very early settlers, not only of Ridgefield, but many surrounding towns, especially Danbury.

There were Sellecks in the New World, even before Ridgefield or Danbury were settled. According to Beverly Crofut, members of the Selleck family were early settlers of Long Island and the name can still be found in telephone directories of the famous old island.

The Rev. Charles G. Selleck was pastor of the local Congregational Church more than 150 years ago, when that church was located in the very middle of Main Street, at its intersection with Route 102.

Many years before that, Captain Jonathan Selleck was appointed, along with David Waterbury and John Copp, by the General Assembly, to view the land that would make up our town. That was in 1706 and two years later the land was purchased from Chief Catoonah and his Ramapoo Indians.

According to Mr. Crofut, the Selleck family, of which he is a direct descendant, was related to the Sands family. The Sands were very early settlers of Long Island and Sands Point was named in their memory.

Bev is a veritable walking encyclopedia concerning the history of the great Selleck family. We have encouraged him to write a book on the subject, lest that wonderful information be lost to future generations.

In this area, the Sellecks were connected with a variety of enterprises. Jarvis Selleck was a farmer in the early days of that section of town that is known as Farmingville. Sturges Selleck owned and operated the Maplewood farm, which was just over the town line on Route 7.

Sturges was a very progressive farmer and recognized the necessity of getting his products to market. In 1812 Sturges Selleck built what was called a turnpike, through the Sugar Hollow section of what we know as Route 35 and 7. The land along that stretch is very swampy and travel to Danbury was very difficult especially in the spring of the year.

Building that road must have been a really tough job. When it was completed Mr. Selleck installed a tollgate and the receipts helped to pay for his efforts. A recent vote on Super 7 seems to indicate that perhaps that is the only way that highway will ever be built.

Many of our roads were built with funds derived from those who lived along it, with payments based on the number of feet of their property that fronted on that particular road. In some instances the families did the actual work, rather than pay to have the work done.

The Maplewood farm was on the southeast side of the highway as you cross the little bridge where Bennett's Farm Road intersects Route 7. It later became Maplewood Inn, operated by Benjamin Selleck and his wife Phoebe. It became a great place for people of Danbury and Ridgefield to meet. The great rambling old building was torn down some 45 years ago.

The place continued to be called Maplewood for a few years and the name was then changed several times, the last of which was "The Foundry." The sign out front now reads. "The DownUnder."

Keeping the Sugar Hollow section of the road to Danbury in good condition turned out to be a full-time job. The swamp, over which the road was laid, had an appetite for gravel, like some carnivorous animal. Overnight, sections of the highway would sink into the mire.

This was a condition that continued even after the concrete highway was laid in 1925. Large slabs of concrete would sink into the swamp, without warning. This created very hazardous conditions until the 40's when a rather new idea was tried. Holes were drilled into the surface of the road and cement was forced under the slabs of concrete, with great pressure, and once again, man had triumphed over the forces of nature.

The Sellecks seemed to have a propensity for road building that went back a good many years. Another ancestor, Benjamin Selleck, is credited with building the turnpike between Baltimore and Washington in 1800. He must have been Bev's great, great, great grandfather.

Many Ridgefielders will remember the most recent Benjamin Sturges Selleck. We got to know him in the late 20' and he was one of the most interesting and colorful characters we have ever met.

"Sturg," as his many friends called him, married Jessie Eliza Keeler after whose family Keeler Drive is named. You can bet that if this wonderful couple had ever posed for a Norman Rockwell painting, it would have been a classic.

The Sellecks lived for many years on Ridgebury Road in a farm house just opposite from where Regan Road branches off to the right. Sturg operated a dairy farm and sold and

traded horses and raised chickens on this very picturesque farm. Some of his barns are still standing across the road from the farm house.

Mabel, one of the Sellecks' daughters, married Joel Crofut. After Joel's untimely death at an early age, Mabel and her children, Beverly, Stan and Marvin, came to live on the Selleck's Ridgebury farm.

In the early 20's, the Sellecks sold the farm to John McLaury and moved to 23 Barry Avenue, which is now the home of Elsie Carbon and her family. The McLaurys named their place "Airdrifts Farm" and the Sellecks named their new home "Little Brook Stables." The name Little Brook was derived from the fact that a little brook that started up around Peaceable Street flowed north, after a heavy rain, by the Sellecks' horse barn.

Sturg had a stable of racehorses which he brought, along with some chickens, from the Ridgebury farm. They were trotters and it was my good fortune to exercise them in the large lot that bordered the Selleck property and on which now sets St. Mary's School.

Alice Brook and Jolly Brook were trotters and Sand Pilot was a pacer, and riding him was like sitting in a comfortable rocking chair. They were good racers and Sturg used to enter them in the Grand Circuit races. He had a large Dodge van and traveled to Goshen, Albany, Syracuse, and as far west as Ohio.

Alice Brook set a record at the Danbury Fair track and large sums were offered for her, but Sturg would not part with a winner. Unfortunately in the next race after setting the record, a piece of the harness broke and the driver lost control of the mare. She raced around the track, seven or eight times, at tremendous speeds until someone threw a blanket over her as she passed by. The damage was done and she was never the same great racer.

Sturg drove a maroon-colored Hudson Super Six coupe, over the dashboard of which there was always at least two dozen King Edward cigars. He and Jessie celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1934. Jessie passed on six years later and Sturg followed three years after that. They were great people and we would not expect to see their like again.

#235: THE KENNEDYS AND THE KNEELING COWS

There is one more house that we almost overlooked in writing about Bryon Park. The correct address of this house is 175 High Ridge but it is part of that large area that we know as Bryon Park..

This fine old house sits on the west side of High Ridge, opposite St. Mary's Church and just south of St. Mary's School parking lot. The house seems to be vacant now and is owned by Bill Boland.

Back in the teens, the 20's and 30's, it was the home of John Morgan. I'm not sure as to what John's middle name was, or even if he had one. However, we are sure it was not Pierpont, and yet he was often referred to as J.P. Morgan, after the great financier.

John looked the part of a prosperous businessman, though I am not sure what his occupation was, as he was retired when I knew him. He had a well-trimmed mustache, a well-pressed, three piece suit, across the vest of which was draped a very large gold watch chain. That chain looked as though it would have had sufficient strength to moor the Titanic.

John's wife was the former Theresa Walsh, who was born just two doors south of the Morgan house, in what we later called the Baker house. Mrs. Morgan's brother was the very prominent Judge James F. Walsh, of whom we will hear more later.

Of equal import to us was the fact that John Morgan was an uncle of Miss Grace White, later to be Mrs. Clifford A. Holleran. Grace was one of the greatest of the many fine school teachers that we ever had. She was one of those who made you learn.

This being the Christmas period, you might be interested in a fine gift that I just received. You may recall that we have frequently mentioned in this column the name of James F. Kennedy, who was Ridgefield's premier builder 100 years ago. Some of the buildings that wear his trademark are St. Peter's Church in Danbury, Congregational Church in Ridgefield, St. Mary's in Norwalk, St. Mary's in Ridgefield, the great E.P. Dutton mMansion of High Ridge, and our fine library on Main Street.

"Big Jim," as he was affectionately called, was indeed a big man and he had a big family — four sons and four daughters.

Margaret Kennedy and I have become pen pals. She was a young lady when the family moved to Bridgeport during World War I. After attending Merrill's School of Business, Margaret became a private secretary and you just know she was a good one. Advancing in her profession caused her to move around some, and eventually she got to California, where she later became a postmaster.

Someone sent Margaret one of the columns that I wrote about the great Kennedy family. She was delighted that someone remembered the family and soon we were corresponding — just as two retired postmasters should, via the U.S. mails. This was not an easv chore for Margaret as her eyesight had failed badly. However, with the help of a public stenographer, we were able to keep in touch.

During the past year several of my letters went unanswered and it became a matter of concern. Then just the other day I found a slip in my P.O. box, heralding the arrival of an unexpected article. The postmark was Riverside, Calif., and when the wrapper was removed, a little red book was revealed and inside the book was a little note from Margaret Kennedy. The title is engraved on the front of the book, in gold and it reads Ridgefield, Conn. 1708-1908 Bi-Centennial Celebration.

We consider this fine book to be one of the nicest presents ever received and after 78 years, it is still in good condition. Apparently the book was written and published at the close of Ridgefield's 200th anniversary, as it contains the many speeches that were made at the closing exercises.

The Honorable William O. Seymour was chairman of the proceedings and he introduced each of the pastors of the local churches and they responded with appropriate remarks. Addresses were also given by many prominent citizens, including former Governor Phineas C. Lounsbury, Judge Howard B. Scott, Judge James F. Walsh (Mrs. Morgan's brother), and Cyrus Northrop. LL.D.

Lest you might think that the program was limited to adults, we would hasten to point out that our local schools conducted an essay contest and the winners were allowed to read their essays at the closing ceremonies. We were very happy to read that Margaret Kennedy was one of the winners. Her essay appears on pages 76, 77, 78, and 79 and, of course, it is entitled A History of Ridgefield.

So Margaret Kennedy, who will soon be 90, was featured at our town's bicentennial in 1908, in a celebration that was chaired by the Honorable William O. Seymour. Mr. Sevmour happens to have been the great-grandfather of Karl Seymour Nash, publisher of this newspaper. Just thought you would like to know that, also that 50 years later, Karl himself was the chairman

of our 250th anniversary and 75 years later, the writer of this column was chairman of our 275th anniversary.

We just think it is great that Margaret Kennedy, who took part in those fine ceremonies 78 years ago, is still with us and we offer this as a tribute to her, as we also thank her for a wonderful Christmas present.

When I was very young, I remember hearing certain anecdotes that were treated as axioms. One that comes to mind at this time of the year was that on Christmas Eve, at midnight, all animals on the farm go into a kneeling position.

It was a few years later that we remembered the story and since Irving Conklin's farm was just a short distance down Ramapoo Road, we decided to go and see for ourself what would happen at midnight. There were about 50 cows in the barn and when we opened the door at just 12 o'clock and turned on the lights, we noted that about half of the cows were on their knees, while the other half were lying down.

Of course, the skeptics said that all the cows were lying down and as we entered and aroused them, some were in the kneeling position preparatory to rising to a standing position. We ignored their theory and the next morning, the pious cows all received an extra ration of grain.

So a Merry Christmas to all.

#236: NATIVE SONS CELEBRATE 200th

The book that I received for Christmas, which describes Ridgefield's 1908 Bicentennial ceremonies, is really very interesting. The exercises, which took place on Monday and Tuesday, July 6 and 7, of that year consisted of many speeches by a number of prominent people. It just seemed to be the mode of the day.

Some of the speeches, made at the closing exercises 78 years ago, sound as though they could have been made yesterday. This is especially true of the remarks made by Judge James F. Walsh.

Judge Walsh was not born in Ridgefield, but came here with his family, at the tender age of four weeks. That's about as close to being a native as you can get.

So the judge grew up in Ridgefield and attended our local elementary schools, including that seat of learning that was conducted by the Honorable William O. Seymour, the chairman of the Bicentennial. We had no high school at the time, and like many others, young Jim Walsh took the train each day to Norwalk for his high schooling.

After graduating from college and law school, Judge Walsh joined a law firm in Greenwich. He would have liked to practice law in Ridgefield but at that time everyone in town was so honest and good and neighbors got along so well, there was little chance of making a living here as an attorney.

It would seem that today the situation is somewhat different. When one sees the great number of lawyers now practicing in Ridgefield, it is hard to realize that just a little more than 50 years ago one would have to look long and hard to find a practicing attorney.

Oh, we had lawyers who resided in Ridgefield but did not practice here. There was the noted Attorney Samuel Keeler, who lived where the Joseph Hall family now lives at 293 Main Street. Lawyer Sam, as he was affectionately known, was very active in town affairs and even served for years as president of this newspaper [*The Ridgefield Press*]. However, his activity in legal matters was pretty much restricted to the canyons of New York City.

Those unfortunate enough to require the protection of an attorney generally turned to Danbury and engaged Judge Cable, Judge Cunningham or perhaps Judge Davis. Even our own

town counsel was imported from Norwalk for many years in the person of the venerable Judge John H. Light.

Many changes were to take place in the judiciary, with the arrival of a young attorney named Joseph H. Donnelly, in the very early 30 s. In the halcyon days of Ridgefield, even our probate judges were not of the legal profession. I am not sure if even today it is required. However, for the past 40 years the judges have been attorneys and should be.

At any rate Judge Walsh, as a young attorney, did not feel that he could pursue his profession in his hometown but became highly successful in Greenwich. It was not long before other members of the bar in that town induced the bright lawyer to become involved in politics.

After holding a few minor offices, he became a candidate for the state legislature. Being a Republican, once he had secured the nomination, his election was just about assured.

The Walsh star became a comet and after serving as representative, he became a candidate for the state senate and was again elected, with the support of Governor George E. Lounsbury. Eventually Judge Walsh became speaker of the General Assembly. He was a hometown boy who made good and his opportunity to speak at the exercises was well deserved.

It almost seemed like a search had been made for former Ridgefield men who had fashioned successful careers in other localities, as several of the speakers fit right into this category. Other speakers, such as Governor Phineas C. Lounsbury, told of how it had been their ambition to accumulate money and then return to Ridgefield. Judge Walsh echoed their sentiments and added “But times have changed and what was sufficient to live on years ago, we do not think now is sufficient.”

Would this not be equally true today? It seems that many of our young people must leave Ridgefield to seek their fortune in order that they, too, may come back to live here and we wish them well.

To illustrate how times had changed, Judge Walsh, in his remarks, told of a young man who planned to get married. He asked his employer for a raise, for he felt that he could not raise a family on $10 a week. The employer was not impressed and informed the prospective bridegroom that when he got married he was only paid $8 a week and he raised a family of four.

“Yes,” the young man replied, “but that was before the day of the cash register.”

In his remarks, Judge Howard B. Scott also told of his ambition to make enough money so that he could return to and live out his days in Ridgefield.

The address closing the exercises was made by Dr. Cyrus Northrop, another very successful native son. Dr. Northrop was born on West Lane in 1834. He left Ridgefield as a young man, more than 50 years before the bicentennial.

After completing his education, Dr. Northrop became professor of English literature at Yale and served in that capacity for 21 years. Then he was lured to Minneapolis, where he proceeded to become the president of the University of Minnesota, a post that he held for more than 22 years. Dr. Northrop was possessed of a very great memory and he recalled the names of the many native sons who went on to become prominent in various fields of endeavor.

For a little town, it certainly had more than its share of men who became successful throughout our country. One thing that all these men had in common was the conviction that to live in their hometown, they must acquire the means to do so in far away places that offered more lucrative compensation. It seems that very few were fortunate enough to realize their ambition to return here.

So despite the many changes in Ridgefield over the years, it is still very difficult, if not impossible, for our high school graduates to afford to live in Ridgefield and that to me is sad.

One of the reasons for this is the terrific costs of rents and leases. Perhaps it is time for the powers that be to consider rent controls and more young couples could join me in a Happy New Year to You.

#237: BIG FIRES AND A LITTLE FIREBUG

In the areas and times that we have been covering, there was a character that was considered to be a lot more dangerous than the peeping toms and their nocturnal. hi-jinks. This fellow was a firebug and like the peepers, he was suffering from a psychosis.

Some of the fires that were set by this person have been mentioned in previous columns. In Dispatch #167 we told of how his name was synonymous with what is felt when one has a toothache. We would add that we were referring to his last name and his first name was Fred.

As so often happens, with people who have a penchant for setting fires, Freddie was a member of the fire department. He never missed a fire and always worked diligently, along with his fellow firefighters to extinguish the fire that he himself had set.

What makes the story about Freddie Payne so unusual, is the fact that he was able to carry on his nefarious activities over such a long period of time, without being detected. Apparently no one was suspicious of this little fellow, who not only helped fight every fire, but was always among the first to arrive on the scene.

When Freddie was finally apprehended, he readily admitted to setting a number of fires over a period of a dozen or more years. There were several fires which he would not take "credit" for setting, including the one that destroyed John Keeler's barn. However, after listening to his story, those conducting the investigation felt that all the evidence pointed directly in Freddie's direction.

Most of the fires that occurred during the time in which the little firebug was operating involved barns and other outbuildings. John Keeler's fire was a very serious loss, for it was a large barn and housed some 60 horses. Two horses died in the terrible conflagration and 65 tons of hay were destroyed, as was the large building. No doubt, it was the loss of the two horses that caused Freddie to deny his guilt.

There were some rather spectacular fires in the first quarter of this century, such as the Adams and Keeler Livery Stable fire and the one that destroyed the William S. Hawk estate and the one in 1922 that destroyed several buildings on Bailey Avenue.

The Adams and Keeler stable was located near the corner on south Main Street, where you exit onto Wilton Road East. The fire got a good start and a stiff breeze took care of the rest. The result was that the great stable was a complete loss.

There are about 20 horses in the barn and though some were hardly singed, the stable hands were able to lead them all to safety. Horses seem to have the utmost confidence that everything will be all right as long as they are in their stalls. Unless they are blindfolded, they will not leave a burning building and unless they are forcibly restrained, they will dash right back into a raging inferno.

The neighs of terrified horses are very shrill and those who witnessed this terrible fire said that they could be heard as far away as the town hall.

The William S. Hawk mansion was one of the largest and most beautiful in the history of Ridgefield. It had some 40 rooms and was styled after one of the fabulous European castles.

Mr. Hawk had been lured to Ridgefield by descriptions of the town that he had heard from his wealthy friends. His first visit here, before the turn of the century, convinced him that this was a community of sheer beauty.

Mr. Hawk and his wife stayed for several months at the old Bailey Inn, while he searched for a place to build his new home. During the process, he bought land from several different people, until he had amassed some 30 acres of very desirable property. The Hawk estate would stretch along the south and west side of Branchville Road. It started just beyond where East Ridge enters the state highway and the frontage ran to where Rockwell Road (formerly Cushman Lane) intersects with Branchville Road.

The fine cut-stone wall that encircled the property is still visible. The stone pillars with their iron gates, at the front and back entrances to the estate, are still intact and in good condition.

When Mr. Hawk was ready to build on the highest elevation of his property, he engaged the services of a noted architect, William Bates. It was said that the cost of erecting the mansion was $40.000 and while it may have seemed a large amount at the time, it is hard to believe today.

After the tragic fire, all that was left standing were the four enormous chimneys. They stood there for many years as a grim reminder of that terrible loss.

The carriage house survived and continues to be known by that name, though it has been remodeled into a very attractive residence.

The fire on Bailey Avenue could have been very tragic as there were a number of people involved. It occurred on April 26, 1922 and started just about where the Acorn Press building is now. The fire was quickly out of control and the wooden buildings burned to the ground. There was a bakery, a cooperative store, and several apartments and a small building that housed the instruments of the old Ridgefield Band.

The baker, Peter Trottolli, and storekeeper. Antonio Travontino, escaped, as did Ernest and Mary Conti and their baby daughter, Leonora; and John and Elizabeth Morganti, with their son, Paul. Paul was just a wee bit of a boy at that time and we wonder if he still remembers the excitement.

My brother, Paul, took me to see the ruins the next day. Everything was lost in the fire, including the band instruments. As we looked at the still smoldering timbers, a shiny piece of metal caught my eye where the band building had stood.

It was the cymbal, from which the handles had been burned. We rescued them and put new handles on and they were later used for many years by Aldo Casagrande's Oreneca Band.

There were a great number of fires in 1923 and the one at S.D. Keeler's barn on Branchville Road proved to be Freddie Payne's undoing. Brother Gus was driving by as the fire started and after turning in the alarm he went to the barn. A light snow had fallen during the day and there were Freddie's footprints leading away from the blaze. They were very easy to follow.

#128: THE HIGH-FLYING JACOB FAMILY

In the very early part of this century, Morris Gottlieb was the proprietor of a clothing store on Main Street. Business was good and Morris seemed to be quite prosperous. Therefore, it came as a real surprise, when a huge ad appeared in The Press, to the effect that Morris Gottlieb was selling, not only his business, but two houses that he owned.

It was war time but Morris was too old for duty and people wondered about a line in the ad that indicated Morris needed cash at once.

Sereno Allen came up from Westport to view the situation. He was not interested in the Gottlieb store but wanted both of the houses. They were (still are) located, one on the corner of High Ridge Avenue and Barry Avenue and the other, with four apartments, was right next door. The apartment house was known for many years as the Gottlieb flat.

It seems rather odd now, but both of the roads mentioned went through a name change during the period of which we are writing. High Ridge, from Catoonah Street north to Gilbert Street, was known as Maple Avenue and along that stretch, it was lined, on both sides of the street, with large and beautiful maple trees.

As a tribute to the very famous artist, Frederic Remington, the name Barry Avenue was changed to Remington Avenue. Remington was the largest property owner (about 50 acres), along the highway that extends from High Ridge to Ramapoo Road; from that point on it is West Mountain Road, to the New York State line.

For some reason, the names Remington and Maple Avenue did not stick and reverted back to High Ridge and Barry. Perhaps because the Maples started to disappear and Remington was not around to defend his name.

The name Barry Avenue came from the R.C. Barry family, which had a sizable farm on the north side of the road, almost opposite Fairview Avenue, at the turn of the century.

At any rate, Sereno Allen purchased the two Gottlieb houses and lived in the corner house. When Mr. Allen passed on, in the very early 20's, his grandson became owner of the two properties.

Sereno Thorp Jacob had only recently married Marion Wakeman at the time and the young couple moved from Westport to their new home in the corner house. To say that this handsome couple, with Sereno at the wheel of his Stutz Bearcat, received considerable attention on their arrival in town, would be a gross understatement.

There was much conjecture among the local gentry, when shortly after settling down in the corner house, they started construction of the large stone wall that still encloses the corner house. The old axiom that goes "a good fence makes good neighbors" has been tested many times. Actually it all boils down to the purpose of the fence and its effect on the immediate neighborhood.

At first glance, it appeared that this fence was to shut off the outside world. Actually, a stone wall is an excellent buffer against unwanted noises and since the corner house was very close to both of the highways, it was in need of some protection.

The Jacobs proceeded to have three children, Sereno Jr., Sally and Merritt. Thus the wall served a dual purpose, in that it protected the children from the highway, since they were quite lively, especially the last-named, as Merritt was a high flyer. Actually, he is still a high flyer as he is now a pilot for Pan Am, as his dad was before him

Sereno Sr. was a bona fide hero of World War I. He was born and grew up in Westport, where as a boy, he learned the carpenter trade. This was not exciting enough for the adventurous youth that he was, so he joined the Merchant Marine and went to sea.

When the war broke out he did not wait for the U.S. to declare war, but volunteered as an ambulance driver and served on the battlefields of France. The ambulance duty brought Sereno in contact with the fledgling French Air Corps. Soon he became enamored with the thoughts of flying an airplane and volunteered for duty with the French.

After mastering the art of keeping those little planes in the air, Sereno joined the famous Lafayette Escadrille. This great outfit was headed by Eddie Rickenbacker and was composed of American pilots who could not wait for their own country to enter the conflict.

The group soon became a part of the French military and operated much as Claire Chennault's "Flying Tigers" did in World War II.

The word escadrille denotes a unit of the French Army, consisting of six airplanes, with pilots and equipment. Of course, the word Lafayette was used by the pilots as a payback to the

great Marquis de Lafayette, for his tremendous help to this country in the Revolutionary War, in which he served as a major general in Washington's army.

No doubt it took a lot of courage to fly those flimsy little biplanes. The pilots must have been considered authentic daredevils 70 years ago, flying planes that are a far cry from the ones of today.

When the U.S. entered the war, Rickenbacker's unit transferred to the U.S. Army Air Corps.

Following the war, Sereno Jacob became a promoter of airline service. Then, at the bidding of his old friend, he joined Rickenbacker and flew planes for Eastern Airlines. However, poor health forced him to quit flying.

After arriving with his bride in Ridgefield, Sereno reverted back to his old trade and did carpenter work with James Sheridan and Francis Connell. This must have been rather tame for a man who was used to the glamor which Sereno had experienced so he turned his attention to local affairs and became associated with the late Harold E. Finch in real estate.

Sereno found time to serve on the Board of Assessors and became chairman of that group. He was also a member of the Building Committee for the addition made to the old High School on East Ridge. During World War I, Sereno served as chairman of Ridgefield's Defense Council.

Marion, in the meantime, endeared herself to all who knew her. She had a most pleasing personality and operated a successful antiques shop where Liberta's is now on Main Street. She also served as hostess at Stonehenge, when that famous establishment was run by the "Skinker" Victor Gilbert.

#239: BEADIE BEDIENT AND HIS IMPEDIMENT

So our old friend Harry Hull has passed on. A lot of nice things should be said about this fine man, who meant so much to our town. It will take a special column to do this and we fully expect to do that.

We have started down Barry Avenue and got to the second house, one which carries number 4. It is a large building, with four apartments and was known for many years as the Gottlieb Flat. It was so named after Morris Gottlieb, who owned it until Sereno Allen purchased it in 1918.

This building must have been one of the first, if not the very, apartment house in Ridgefield. There were apartments over some of the stores, such as Bissell's, but this was strictly an apartment house. It made an ideal place for young couples to start their married life and for many years, it has served just that purpose. Many are the young couples who got their start in one of these apartments.

Perhaps we could keep some of our young married couples in Ridgefield, if we had more apartments such as these. However, the price of an apartment or a condo is enough to scare a young person right out of town.

It seems that when a developer starts planning a multifamily building, the label "low and middle income" is used. Then, when the time comes to rent or lease the place, the misnomer comes to mean that only those in the $75,000 bracket can afford to live there. This must be very discouraging to a bride and groom who want to stay in their home town.

The next house, going down the hill, is number 6 Barry Avenue. It is a very attractive brown shingled house and is the former home of Francis and Daisy Bedient. Francis passed away

some 25 years ago but Daisy lived on until just a couple of years ago when she was in her 100th year.

Daisy was one of the three Smith sisters whom we have mentioned previously. The others were Henrietta Smith Hoyt and Ruth Smith Whitlock. These ladies were from an old Ridgefield family.

They were all very petite, and ladies in every sense of the word. When you met one of them, you just knew that you were meeting someone very special. They were a rare breed and it was great to know them.

Francis Bedient was a son of David F. Bedient, who owned and operated the famous old store that still carries his name *[Bedient's Hardware*]. Francis and his sister, Leona, who was our assistant town clerk for so many years, were both called "Beadie" by their many friends.

When D.F. Bedient passed on in the 20's, his son took over the business and ran it until Abe Morelli purchased the company in the 50's.

Beadie was a little fellow — in stature only. Actually, he was considered to be a big person in many ways, especially where his heart was concerned. He was an inveterate cigar smoker and wore gold-rimmed glasses. Beadie was full of pep and literally bounced around his store.

Many years ago, the D.F. Bedient Store was a classic country general store, where you could buy anything from hardware to harness and even groceries. There was even an old-fashioned pot-bellied stove around which the old-timers would gather to swap stories on a cold winter's day and you can just bet, they were some stories.

Beadie was a trusting person and this was of real benefit to many of his customers. During the dark days of the great Depression, a number of families would have been in dire straits, had it not been for the compassion shown by this kindly man. He was not an easy mark, but he would extend credit to those who otherwise might go hungry.

Did you ever notice how some of the very nicest people have been plagued with an affliction of one kind or another? Beadie had such a problem, but he would not let it alter his pleasant disposition.

It had to do with his manner of speaking. Beadie just could not enunciate certain letters of the alphabet. He had great difficulty with the letters, c, g, k, r, s and v. Oh, Beadie always seemed to manage to get his message across very well. After hearing him a few times, a person would tend to disregard his impediment, though at first, one might look at him in surprise. His sunny disposition was such that a new acquaintance was quickly won over and it was great to do business with him.

As might be expected, some of Beadie's attempts to make himself understood developed into situations which might be viewed as humorous. I will tell of a few, as long as it is clearly understood that it is not our intention to poke fun at this very respected gentleman.

On one occasion, back in the horse and buggy days, Beadie was courting Daisy and planned a ride in the countryside. He called the livery stable and when Reggie Humphreys answered the phone, he heard the following request, "Hey Weggy, tend up a two-teatta and a twotta, Daisy and I donna dough widen" — a two-seater and a trotter.

In later years, it was the custom for this very nice couple to spend Sunday evening at the movies in Danbury. There was no movie theater in town at the time.

Beadie always stopped at the store for a handful of cigars. On this summer evening, my father, Jack Walker and Frank Taylor were sitting on the store's front porch. The porch has since been replaced by the two showrooms, on either side of the front door.

For several weeks, groceries had been mysteriously missing from the store and Beadie was aware of this as he drove up in his Hudson Super 6. Beadie said hello to his friends on the porch and entered the store.

As he reached into the cigar case, he looked up and saw a man struggling to get out through a back window and the man was carrying a large bag full of groceries. Beadie became so excited that, instead of calling to the men on the porch to head off the burglar, he ran to the front door. Then he vaulted over the surprised sitters and shouted "Top you ton of a B, top!"

The thief, with his loot, raced down Bailey Avenue, but was later caught.

Ebenezer Scofield lived in Pound Ridge and called Bedient's to inquire about garden hose. Eben had speech impediment and Lawrence Coleman could not understand him and passed the phone to Andy Bloomer. Andy turned the phone over to Jack Whitlock and Jack with a mischievous grin, handed the phone to Beadie.

In just a minute, as you have guessed, the fur began to fly as Beadie and Eben each thought the other was making fun of the other.

Incidentally, as far as Beadie was concerned, my name was "Ditty Weenie."

#240: CHIEF BROWN'S FIREMEN'S BALLS, WILD PINOCHLE PARTIES

Mr. and Mrs. Fred Smith have lived at 8 Barry Avenue for a number of years. Fred was a long-time clerk at the D. F. Bedient Company store and retired just a few years ago.

Mrs. Smith, the former Gertrude Whitlock, was a classmate of mine at dear old Ridgefield High School. We graduated together a couple of years ago and have remained good friends.

During the period we have been covering, this was the home of Ellsworth F. Brown. "Brownie," as most everyone called him, is probably best remembered as the long-time chief of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department.

Brownie loved a parade and as fire chief, served as marshal several times. He was rather tall and very slender with gold rimmed glasses and a little well-trimmed mustache.

He was always very proud as he marched down Main Street, wearing his white chief's hat and carrying his bullhorn, which was really a large silver megaphone. A large bouquet of flowers protruded from the bell of the horn.

When it came to having a good time, Brownie really knew his way around and he would always see to it that everyone else had a good time as well. During the many years he served as chief, he kept things lively and the firehouse was the scene of many social events.

When plans for the parties were of such proportions that they could not be held in the firehouse, the affairs were moved to the town hall. The annual Firemen's Ball was always a great social success and the auditorium of the old Town Hall was always filled to capacity. It was a time for neighbors to get together, in the 20's and 30's. It was also an opportunity for those unfortunate enough to have moved away to return and visit with old friends.

I still have the program for the Firemen's Ball that was held on May 27, 1938. Wharton Ford's orchestra played for dancing and Bede Best was his vocalist. The late Ralph B. Crouchley was chairman of the affair. Some of the songs rendered by this fine dance band were, "I'll Take Romance," "The Missouri Waltz," and "Stars Fell on Alabama" and when Bede Best sang "All Of Me," everyone crowded around the stage to listen.

The following year, our own Mayflower Swing Band played for the ball. We had a fine floor show that featured the great international ballroom dance team, Veloz and Yolonda. They

had been appearing at New York's World's Fair and we were lucky to get them. People actually danced in those days, rather than just swaying to and fro, in one spot, as many do today.

Brownie was great for getting people together and he used to invite neighboring fire departments to compete in card tournaments. There was fierce competition between Danbury and Ridgefield during the 20's. Pinochle was the popular game in those days and it was not unusual for 50 or 60 men to gather for the spirited contests.

As a kid, I was called on to perform with my harmonica and I joined with Ernie Stash and his violin and Moxie Hahn at the piano to make a trio.

Moxie was a Danbury fireman and an excellent entertainer. He was short and stout, very much like Alfred Hitchcock, and even had the features of the great director. He would play any song, old or new, and his style ranged from Liberace to Fats Waller. Moxie was a whole lot of fun.

The 18th Amendment was in effect at the time and alcoholic beverages were not easy to come by. However, there were a number of apple orchards in town at this time, so hard cider and cider brandy were manufactured and saved, to be dispensed to the thirsty card players.

About 20 feet east of where the present rear doors of the firehouse are now, a large metal hoop was hung on a rack. It had been used years before as a fire bell [*the hoop is today displayed on the Bailey Avenue side of the town hall*]. Next to the hoop was a little gray shed, in which the potent cider, which was called "The poor man's champagne" was stored.

Brownie made sure that Moxie's glass never ran dry while he played the piano and Moxie had a very definite taste for the highly effective apple juice. After a few glasses, Moxie thought he was Ignace Paderewski.

At about this time, the boys would slide the piano bench from beneath Moxie and to the delight of the crowd, he would continue to play without missing a beat while still in a crouched sitting position a la Victor Borge.

Brownie always made sure that there were other forms of entertainment for the card players. Whenever a crowd gathered at the firehouse and the cider was flowing, it seemed that a set of boxing gloves was bound to appear. This was especially true after the card games were completed.

Fritz Frinder was a very good boxer and was always ready and willing to exhibit his prowess at the game of fisticuffs. After Fritz had worn out a couple of opponents, someone was sure to goad John Chrisopher to challenge him.

John worked for the State Highway Department and was very strong. He was also very short and very left-handed. John was not the least bit scientific and depended largely on his sweeping left handed haymaker to keep his adversaries at bay. After some cider, John's overhand haymakers created a real breeze as they missed their mark by a considerable margin and everyone had a good laugh.

On one occasion, as Fritz danced around, ducking John's wild swings, he became a little overconfident in his ability to cause John to miss. Finally, Fritz dropped his hands to his side and made no effort to parry the blows. Soon he was sticking his chin out, while he was encouraging John to hit it.

The crowd was enjoying John's discomfiture and John was becoming very annoyed. Finally, Fritz bent forward with his chin an open invitation and John, measuring the distance very carefully, started his swing from the floor and his left hand came over in a terrific arc and landed flush on the target. It was some time before Fritz came to.

Brownie was a window clerk at the old post office when it was located where Addessi's is now. During the Depression, postal workers were not paid the salaries that they get today. Many of them. found it quite difficult to make ends meet.

In those days most everyone was bothered at one time or another by bill collectors. One day a man who was obviously a bill collector approached Brownie at his window. The man asked to speak to Ellsworth Brown and Brownie said “Sorry, but you just missed him, as he has gone out to lunch.”

#241: THE MAN IN THE CELLAR AND POSSE IN THE SNOW

Next door to Ellsworth Brown in the 30’s lived the Herman Martins at 10 Barry Avenue. Herman was a very scholarly looking gentleman and always seemed to look his Sunday best, whether just coming home from church, or raking the leaves on his lawn. Like his neighbor "Brownie," Herman had a neatly trimmed moustache and wore gold-rimmed glasses.

When I knew him, Herman was employed on the great Frederic E. Lewis estate where he worked at sundry jobs. It seemed that he must have been an assistant to the superintendent Jack Smith but there were times when he substituted for anyone who was absent. He could be working with flowers in the beautiful conservatory one day, replacing a teamster on another, or filling in for an ailing cow man.

The Martins had a very pretty daughter named Ethel, and she married the handsome John Walters in the 1920’s. They made a very nice-looking couple and were popular with the local social set.

In the 50’s John and Ethel moved to Florida, for some reason that I could never understand, although the weather we have been having recently may provide a clue as to what they were seeking to escape from.

Just below the Martin house lived the Joseph A. Zwierlein family. For many years, Joe was one of Ridgefield's best known characters. He was a painter by trade and was employed by Michael T. McGlynn before going into business for himself as a painting contractor.

Joe was quite a large man and many of his friends referred to him as “Big Joe.” Despite his size, Joe could climb a ladder with ease and he seemed to have no fear of great heights.

Very few painters would care to climb church steeples but Joe seemed to relish the task. I remember watching him do the gold leafing of the cross atop Saint Mary’s Church and could not help but admire his nerve as he worked at that very lofty height.

Joe was born in Bridgeport, but came to Ridgefield as a very young man. No doubt he was attracted by the lucrative opportunities provided those in his line of work by the many wealthy families that had come here.

As a boy, Joe had learned to box and became a very good amateur boxer. He gained a favorable reputation in several of the boxing clubs around Fairfield County.

Joe was one of the organizers, along with Joe Roach and Pete Chrisifis, of the Ridgefield Athletic Association. This was a thriving organization in the 20’s and early 30’s and had a well-equipped gymnasium on Danbury Road where Genoa Importing Inc., is now.

This was at a time when both boxing and wrestling were carried on without the silliness that seems to accompany them today. These fellows were serious about their sports and any clowning was quickly discouraged.

Joe met and married the former Irene McGlynn and they had a son, Thomas Joseph. Tom Joe, as he was called by most everyone, was born on Decoration Day (Memorial Day) 1916 and it was probably the only time his father ever missed a parade. Big Joe always marched with

the fire police, except for the last few years when he rode in one of the fire trucks, with “Boots,” the fire department's Dalmatian, perched beside him.

During his high school days, Tom Joe was student manager of the baseball and basketball teams. I think he graduated from Bucknell. At any rate, he had a degree in physical education and later became director of physical rehabilitation at one of the large veterans' hospitals in Pennsylvania.

Irene, like her sisters, Ethel (Ryan) and Mary (Kasper), was a local school teacher. Mary passed on only a few weeks ago. All three sisters taught at dear little old Titicus School at one time or another. Irene also played the piano very well and performed at many of the local stage productions.

During World War I, Big Joe joined the Home Guard and advanced to the rank of supply sergeant. The commander of the group was Second Lt. David W. Workman, who later became editor of this newspaper [*The Ridgefield Press*]. Joe belonged to several local organizations and his favorites seemed to be the Knights of Columbus and the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department. You can bet that Joe was faithful to, and a strong supporter of, these worthy organizations and he left his mark on both.

Like many large people, Joe was light on his feet and a really good dancer. We remember he and Irene winning the prize for waltzing on several occasions.

Incidentally, Joe and Irene began their married life, as so many other young couples did, including Marie and me, in that lovely apartment at 613 Main Street. They later lived in the house at 13 Catoonah Street, that until a few years ago was the offices of the District Nurse and is now called “Under the Dogwood Tree.” For a short time they lived in a house on Governor Street, where the Toy Caboose is now. Then they moved to 12 Barry Avenue and finally to 73 West Lane.

It was at this time of the year, while the Zwierleins lived at Barry Avenue, that an incident occurred that is worthy of note. Joe was out at a meeting one night and Irene heard a noise in the basement. She opened the kitchen door that led to the basement and there in the darkness was the outline of a man.

The man hurled a rubber boot at Irene and then fled out the back door of the basement. Irene quickly recovered and soon had the police, in the person of Charles Wade Walker, on the scene.

Word spread quickly through the neighborhood and soon a posse of neighbors was organized. It was the be led by a very nervous, part-time policeman.

The trail of the intruder was easy to follow as there was a light freshly fallen snow. Sounds like the firebug story but it is more exciting. The tracks led north through the fields to Ramapoo Road and an old hay barn that had a ground floor basement. The barn was a part of Irving Conklin's dairy farm and while the upper part of the barn was used to store hay, the basement sheltered a dozen young heifers that Irving used to winter there.

The basement doors were always left open, in order that the herd of heifers would have easy access to a tiny pond where they got their water. The tracks of the culprit led directly to the open barn door.

At this point a decision had to be made. Do you barge into the barn or do you wait for the quarry to come out?

Perhaps this is a good time to explain that the officer carried a gun, but, as he said later, he was terrified at the thought of ever having to use it. In fact, he said that he had never used it, even in practice.

By now the posse had grown to a considerable size and they wanted some action. The man had managed to enter the barn without disturbing the heifers and they remained quietly in their shelter. However, at the approach of this small army, led by Charles Wade, a distinct rumble could be heard. Just as they reached the door, the herd, probably encouraged by the man, stampeded out the barn.

Several people were knocked flat, including the officer, whose gun went off harmlessly into the air. The heifers raced across the open field, with the perpetrator keeping pace in their midst. He sure could run and with all the tracks made by the crowd, it was impossible to follow him.

Several people thought they knew who he was, but positive identification could not be made and he got away scot-free.

#242: HOW TO GET BIG JOE'S GOAT

Since last week's column, there have been inquiries as to the identity of the housebreaker. You will recall that he escaped detection by stampeding Irv Conklin's heifers, after joining the herd. In the excitement that followed, no one could positively identify the man.

However, you can be assured that this culprit and Peeper No. 2, are one and the same, and Mrs. Zwierlein agreed to that theory.

Also, there have been requests for some stories about Joe Zwierlein. There were many humorous incidents involving Joe and if they can cause a smile here and there, they will be worth relating.

As we have pointed out, Joe was a big fellow and we should say that despite a gruff exterior and a rather abrupt manner, he was very good natured. There was nothing backward about Joe and he had the courage to stand up for what he believed to be right. He would fight hard for a cause and if things did not go his way, he would roar like a wounded lion. Yet, when the final decision was made, even though not in Joe's favor, he would loyally put his shoulder to the wheel and help as best he could, as he was a great organization man.

Possibly because of his size and the fact that he was good natured, many felt safe in teasing Joe. The joking and the teasing were always sure to bring on a reaction, but somehow it was easy to get the impression that Joe was enjoying the proceedings, just as much as the teasers. Many are the tricks that were played on Joe, and though his initial response was bound to be very loud and rather severe, he got over it quickly and soon was enjoying whatever trick had been played.

Joe was very fond of playing cards and it made little difference, whether it was pinochle, poker or set-back, though he favored poker, a game at which he enjoyed phenomenal success.

One evening Joe became engaged in a spirited game of poker and as usual, it proved to be quite profitable for him. A number of men crowded around the card table, to watch the proceedings. As the evening wore on, the onlookers wore down as they tired of watching the game and left for home.

Two of the last to leave were George Fasola and Dr. Peter Yanity. Each of these gentlemen was known to have a rather mischievous nature, which would occasionally surface in the form of some trick they would play.

Some time later in the evening Joe Zwierlein's luck ran out and he decided that the prudent thing to do was to go home to bed. The other card players heard Joe's car start and after it had run for a few minutes, the engine stopped.

It was not long before the silence, which usually surrounds a poker game, was shattered by Joe's loud voice as he demanded to know who had been fooling with his car. Someone had jacked up the rear wheels of the car, so it was impossible to move the vehicle in either direction. Not only did the tricksters make sure that the wheels did not touch the ground, they removed the jack and replaced it with concrete building blocks.

Joe was awful mad, especially when he had to borrow a jack to lower his Ford station wagon to the ground. However, when speculation narrowed the suspects down to the aforementioned pair, of which Joe had learned to become tolerant, he laughed along with the rest of the men.

Then there was the great card tournament, between the K of C Councils of Ridgefield, Danbury, Bethel, Newtown, and New Milford. For this event, Joe was teamed up with Tabby Carboni to represent Ridgefield. That the two were eminently successful is proven by the fact that they won top honors in the pinochle division, and the prize was a goose.

Tabby, being well aware of Joe's willingness to take issue with most any suggestion, announced that he would take the goose home and at a future date, Joe and Irene would be invited over for dinner. As expected, Joe disagreed and stated that he would take the goose home and the Carbonis would be invited over to dinner at the appropriate time.

Of course, Tabby had anticipated this and was delighted to accept Joe’s kind offer, as Tabby was well aware that the prize was a live goose rather than one all prepared to go into the pot. Not many people have suffered through the agonizing experience of picking the feathers from a goose. Though a goose tastes very good, the taste could never compensate for the job of removing those obnoxious feathers, especially the smaller down feathers.

Like the good soldier he was, Joe tackled the job and it consumed most of the day. On the night that Tabby and Katherine arrived for dinner, Joe met them at the door. Needless to say he was under a full head of steam, but somehow managed to restrain himself, though his muttered greeting was intertwined with a line about how it was necessary for him to use tweezers to get those small feathers off the bird. Joe never used profanity, but he must have been sorely tempted on this occasion.

Joe and Bernie Bernie Christopher worked for Joe as a painter and he was a master at getting under Joe’s skin. Come to think of it, Bernie was the Art Carney of his day and Joe would have made a great Jackie Gleason.

Once they were side by side painting the picket fence at the Keeler Tavern, when Bernie suggested that he change to the other side of the fence and then each could paint his own side of the fence. Bernie would put more paint than was necessary on his brush, with the result that the excess paint spattered onto Joe’s face. Of course, Joe would explode, which would make Bernie happy, as he moved to a safe distance from the boss.

On another occasion, a boring and wrestling card was to be presented at the Italian and American Hall. The ring in which the contests were held had to be rented from a gymnasium in Bridgeport. Joe and several others, including Bernie, went along to load the ring into Peter McManus’s truck for the ride back to Ridgefield.

Once the ring was set up, Bernie strode to its center and announced that he always wanted to put on the gloves with Joe. You can bet that Joe readily accepted the challenge and went to his corner to have the gloves laced on.

Bernie did not wait for the lacing, he merely shoved his hand in the glove, tapped Joe on the shoulder and when he turned, he let fly. The blow landed flush on the jaw and Joe went down

but bounced back up and took after Bernie, who had wisely dashed out the front door of the ball. When last seen they were running hard up Bailey Avenue.

#243: WHEN COON HUNTING WAS A POPULAR PASTIME

In the 1920s and 30s hunting for raccoons was a rather popular and profitable sport. It was at a time when raccoon coats were the thing to wear and the pelts brought from $5 to $8, according to their color and condition. The darker the pelts, the higher the price.

In later years two things caused a great drop in the value of "coon" skins. Mink coats had become a great attraction for those who could afford them and those who could not, turned to cloth coats. Then Russian furs began to flood the market and a hunter was lucky to get even $2 for a coonskin. In recent years raccoon coats have made a comeback.

In the period of which we are writing, some hunters were interested in hunting raccoons for the extra money they made, and some because the hunting was done at night and did not interfere with their regular employment.

Then there were those, like my brothers, Jack and Charlie, who just enjoyed hearing the coonhound's great voice as it raced through the woods. To them there was nothing quite like turning the hounds loose and waiting to hear the sharp bark that indicated the trail of a coon had been found.

That particular sound would continue, over hill and dale and through the swamps, until the barking of the dogs became deeper and longer and the hunters knew that a coon had been treed.

Jack knew every inch of the wooded areas of Ridgefield and from as far from the hounds as a mile or more, he could tell you whether they were crossing a small brook, or passing through a particular barway or gate. When the hounds finally started "barking up," Jack would lead the way to the spot where the coon had been. The route that he took might be circular rather than straight, in order that difficult places to walk might be avoided.

If the tree in which the coon was perched happened to be climbable, Jack would use spurs, such as the linemen use to climb utility poles, and he would go up the tree to have a look. When it was determined that the coon was large enough to take, a shotgun was used to bring it down.

When it was found that the coon was too small, someone would shake the little critter out of the tree and Jack was always satisfied, just to hear the dogs run the coons in.

These fellows took their coon hunting seriously and there was great rivalry among them concerning the ability of their hounds. One time, brother Jack and Ernie Stash became partners in the purchase of a hound. Her name was Rose and they went all the way to Virginia to get her. They paid the unheard of sum of $435 for Rose and that was in 1931, when the Great Depression was in full swing.

Rose turned out to be well worth the price. She was a beautiful black-and-tan and highly intelligent.

When Rose barked you could bet your life that it was a coon. The other hounds might run after a deer, a fox, a skunk, or even a rabbit, but not Rose. We heard other animals around in the woods at night and when our flashlights picked them out, we would see Rose go right by them without even a glance. She was responsible for treeing more than 60 raccoons in that very first year.

Rose was such a great coonhound that when she was too old to join in the actual chase, she was carried from the car into the hunting area. The other dogs remained leashed until Rose

found the trail. As soon as she barked, the younger dogs were released to do the running and Rose was carried the rest of the way. She did not mind this procedure and seemed content in knowing that she had played her part in the hunt to perfection.

When Rose passed on, the interest in coon hunting diminished rapidly. By the same token, there was a dramatic increase in the raccoon population. It is no longer necessary to go into the woods to find raccoons. On most any night you can find one on your back porch, or in one of your garbage cans.

It was customary for a new hunter to have the chore of carrying the heavy shotgun on the night of his first hunt. This would guarantee him the privilege of shooting the first coon that was treed.

On Joe Zwierlein's first coon hunt, he carried the gun for miles and it began to look as though he would never get the chance to use it. The moon was almost full and raccoons like a darker night.

It was just about midnight when Rose's bark floated back to us and we were sure of the quarry. She was joined by Watch, another good hound, and soon they were barking up.

When we reached the tree, our flashlights located a real large coon about 30 feet from the ground. Jimmy Sullivan was carrying the shells and Joe, in preparation to exercise his rights, asked Jimmy for a shell. Jim was of a rather mischievous nature and handed Joe a blank shell.

Of course, nothing happened and Joe asked for another shell. Jimmy told Joe that if he was not successful, he would have to shoot the coon himself as he had only a few shells, and with that he handed Joe another blank.

Joe took very careful aim but despite the blast, not a leaf stirred.

Jimmy took the gun, and of course, with a good shell, brought down the coon.

"Well," Joe said, "I'm sure that I weakened him."

#244: A TALE OF TWO DOGS

We have been writing about the late Joseph A. Zwierlein and told about the first time that Joe went coon hunting. In that story we told of some of the great coon hounds that we knew more than 50 years ago.

One of the hounds, named Rose, was pictured as being highly intelligent. With your kind permission, I would describe a jealous streak that this great dog developed and how she discredited what she felt was a pretender to her coveted role as "queen of the pack."

Rose had come from Virginia and quickly established herself as just about the finest coon hound that any of us had ever seen. She was probably seven years old when she arrived in Ridgefield and that is a little past middle age for a hunting dog. Because of that fact, brother Jack felt there was need for a younger hound to take over, if and when Rose began to tire of the nocturnal sorties into the wooded areas.

Since Rose had proven to be such a sensation in her profession, it was agreed that the new dog should come from the same area of the country from which she had been acquired. Another trip was made to Virginia and another beautiful black-and-tan was located in the mountains, just a few miles from where Rose had plied her trade.

Her name was Flo and she was the "spittin' image" of Rose. However, at the tender age of two, Flo was much younger and full of pep.

Rose did not take kindly to this incursion into what she considered her personal domain. She did not mind the other dogs, as they were males and both "Leed" and "Watch" treated Rose with proper respect. Rose seemed to rather tolerate Leed, who was a large blue tick and she

actually appeared to like Watch, a fine dog with the colors of a beagle. It would be fair to say that Rose really ruled the kennel and did a great job, keeping the other dogs in their places.

Flo was quite another matter and, being rather brash as well as young, presented a challenge to the older dog's leadership. So, she had to learn the hard way that she must play second-fiddle to the queen — if she wanted to play at all.

There were the initial skirmishes between the two females, in which Rose lost no time in convincing the interloper that she was the boss. The situation changed somewhat when the hounds were in the woods where Flo's great speed enabled her to avoid Rose and her rulings.

This caused the older dog to exhibit a disposition that we never knew she possessed. Rose would actually sulk and refuse to pick up a trail, for when she did, Flo would race right past her in joyous pursuit of the raccoon. It got to a point where it became necessary to keep Flo on a leash until the coon was about to be treed and only then was she allowed to join in all the excitement.

Once we made the mistake of releasing Flo too soon. It happened on the westerly side of Nod Road, just across from the home of the Mortimer C. Keeler family. This place would later be known as Heritage Farm and later still, the surrounding area would become the beautiful Twin Ridge development. At the time of which we are writing, there were very few houses in the area.

Rose had picked up the scent of a raccoon and was carefully chasing what turned out to be a very large, 34-pound coon. Rose must have known it would be a prize catch, as there was a resonance in her baying that we had never heard before. When Rose heard Flo coming to join the chase, her great voice was suddenly stilled and Jack immediately sensed that Rose was about to play some kind of trick.

After several minutes, we heard Rose again, but this time she was traveling south, whereas she had previously been traveling north. Jack [*Venus*] said "That jealous old Rose is running the track backwards." Flo caught up with Rose and passed her, which was apparently just what Rose had expected.

Flo continued south traveling at a torrid pace and again Rose's voice was stilled. When next we heard Rose's familiar voice, it was a mile to the north of where Flo was still running the track backward. The sly old hound had completely confused the younger dog.

Soon Rose was "barking up" a large oak tree near the home of Henry K. McHarg (now the home of the Donald K. Brush family). It was the largest coon we had ever seen and Rose was not about to share any of the credits with a young upstart like Flo.

Just thought you might like to know that coon hounds, just as some humans, can be guilty of snobbishness on occasion. One thing was sure, the old dog taught the new dog some new tricks.

There were many stories about Joe Zwierlein and one had to do with a dog. In his spare time, Joe has served as Ridgefield's dog warden in the 30's, but after several years and many experiences, he gave up the job.

A new dog warden was appointed by the Board of Selectmen and the new warden did a creditable job for some years. However, there was a change of administration in town hall and a terrific clash of personalities began to develop between the first selectman and the dog warden.

It got to a point where sides were drawn and supporters of the dog warden were quite vocal in praising him for doing a good job. It got so bad that a parting of the ways was inevitable, for as they say, "You can't buck City Hall."

So the dog warden departed and Joe Zwierlein was persuaded to take back the job he had relinquished many years before.

Sometime after he was installed as the new warden, Joe approached me and asked that I get him one of the gadgets that the mailmen carry. He then explained that he had observed the mailman making his rounds on West Lane, where he was confronted by a large black dog. The dog had a menacing manner and gave every indication that he was about to bite the mailman.

Joe told of how the mailman quickly reached into his pocket and brought out what looked like an oversized fountain pen. The gadget emitted a spray which was directed at the belligerent animal. Joe said he was amazed to see the dog lay down and roll over.

He was describing HALT, a product that had proved to be very effective in subduing unruly canines. I gave Joe a dispenser of the spray and forgot the matter, until I met him several weeks later.

He acted very annoyed and told me how I had gotten him in all kinds of trouble. I asked what the trouble was and Joe told of how he had received a phone call from a lady in the Ridgefield Lakes area. The lady complained about a dog that was biting everyone that it came in contact with and the neighbors were very upset.

Joe told of how he got in his car and headed north to the Lakes area completely confident that his new armament, which he thoughtfully had put in his pocket, would protect him in any situation.

As he approached the address that the lady had given him, Joe recognized the house by the little hedge in front of it. He also noticed as he alighted from his car that a large dog was stretched out on the lawn, facing away from him.

Joe described how, with the spray can in his hand, he quietly, but confidently, approached the offending animal. However, just as he was about to push the button on the spray, another dog bit him, right on the rear. He said that the dog has such strong jaws, he bit right through his wallet.

As you have already guessed, Joe had sprayed the wrong dog, which was later found to be very old and without teeth.

#245: WHY JERSEYS AND GUERNSEYS WERE POPULAR

It was in the late 40's that Joe and Irene Zwierlein moved from 12 Barry Avenue to their own nice home at 73 West Lane.

The Barry Avenue property was owned by the Mortimer C. Keeler estate and now it became the home of the Irving Keelers. Irv was the son of Mortimer and some years before had taken over the operation of the great old Keeler farm on Nod Road. The farm had been the home of that venerable family for many years and was a true family enterprise in every sense of the words.

Irv was a good farmer and besides running a large poultry operation, he also conducted a dairy business. For his milk supply, Irv depended on a herd of Jersey milch cows. Now there is a word that I have not seen or heard in a very long time. The word milch merely denotes that the cows were kept for the production of milk, rather than beef.

Jersey cows were rather small animals, compared to the other breeds. They were noted for their ability to produce milk that was very rich in butterfat. This was a very desirable trait in the days before large dairies started to homogenize the milk. This process prevented the cream from rising to the top of the glass bottles.

Years ago, most people were interested in getting the richest milk possible and with the disappearance of the cream line, all milk looked the same. The butterfat content was not printed on the bottle cap, as it is today.

Before homogenization, the dairies depended on the depth of the cream line to advertise the quality of their product. Some dairies even had their glass milk bottles made with a long slender neck, to create the impression of a long cream line.

There was one bottle developed that had a rather large bulge at its top. It was called a “cream top” bottle and when a small spoon, which was supplied by the dairy, was extended into the bottle, it blocked off the milk in the lower part of the bottle. This made it easy to pour off the cream, which was then used in the morning coffee, or it could be used for whipping cream.

Some of the dairies that used the cream top bottle had a slogan printed on the side of the bottle that read, “You can whip our cream but you can't beat our milk.” The quality of milk seemed to be of much more importance in those days and competition between the dairies was very intense. Just can't help but wonder if many people have their favorite brand today.

Jersey cows and Guernsey cows were great producers of the highly prized cream, or butterfat, as it is referred to today. The color of the cream from a Jersey cow was a deep yellow, while the Guernsey cream was of a golden color and was advertised as “Golden Guernsey.”

Most of the other breeds produced more milk, but less cream and it was so much lighter in color that it could hardly be distinguished from the milk.

Because of the desire of the public for rich milk, the Jersey and the Guernsey cows were very popular. Both breeds originated from the Channel Islands that bear their names and are a part of the British Isles.

All that changed when homogenization wiped out the cream line and then the doctors started to advocate using milk with a smaller cream content. Production became the byword over butterfat and the Holstein-Friesan cow, which was a great producer, came into its own. This large black and white animal is a native of Northern Holland and greatly outnumbers the other breeds on the large dairy farms of today.

The trend toward low-fat milk continued until today; butterfat has practically disappeared. It makes one wonder how those old timers who thrived on rich milk ever survived.

At any rate when the demand for milk that was rich in cream lessened dramatically, the Jersey and Guernsey herds began to disappear. We have always felt that this fact had some bearing on Irving Keeler’s decision to give up farming.

We should mention that the little fawn colored Jersey cows were very cute. They were also very tough and could survive where the larger breeds could not. Even so, my own favorites were the pretty red and white Guernseys.

Whether it was the declining popularity of milk that was so rich in cream, or the very tough competition in the dairy industry, or the drudgery that is generally associated with the work on a farm, or perhaps a combination of all these things, Irving Keeler decided that it was time to get out of business and give up the farm.

Many of the areas of Ridgefield, which have been relegated for agriculture, were best suited for dairy farming. However, due to the rugged terrain, which Ridgefield has in abundance, farming of just about any kind was never an easy proposition.

Though the taxes on farmland were levied in such a manner as to encourage those with large holdings to retain their land, the steadily increasing land values resulted in the sale of many of the local farms. Developers came on strong and the character of Ridgefield changed rapidly.

Ridgefield once had numerous small family farms and when the wealthy families came to town in the late 1800's and early 1900’s, most of them fortified themselves with what were euphoniously labeled “Gentlemen's Farms.” There were only five to six farms that were large enough to be considered as commercial ventures.

With the demise of the Keeler farm, the number of large farms was reduced further. Today, Dan McKeon's Arigideen Farm is just about the only one left.

The Keeler farm had been in that family for more than a century when Tom Baggott purchased it more than 35 years ago. Tom and his boys kept the poultry part of the operations going and they raised produce which they sold at the farm and at a vegetable stand they operated on Route 7.

After a few years, the Baggott family gave up farming and Barry Montgomery transformed the farm into one of the very finest of developments that we now know as Twin Ridge.

Somehow we got a long way from Barry Avenue so back we go to 12 Barry Avenue, which is now the home of Angelo “Beebe” Zandri and Mrs. Zandri. Beebe is a machine operator for Morganti Inc. Beebe, like Joe Zwierlein, is a great dancer and is also known for his prowess as a set back player.

#246: WIRED LEMONS, PLASTER, AND DRUMS

One of the fine old homes on Barry Avenue is at the bottom of the hill and just west of the Beebe Zandri's. For some years now, it has been the home of Dorothy J. Brown. During the period of which we are writing, it was the home of William and Jane Davies.

The Davies had three children, William Jr., Linda and Ann. Linda is a retired school teacher and still lives in Ridgefield. At one time, this house was owned by Mrs. George H. Newton. It was later owned by C. Lindsay Sutherland, who sold it to John Curtiss in the 40s. Curtiss had the place for only a year and then sold it to the Davies family.

William Davies Sr. will probably be best remembered as a very good horticulturist. For many years he was the superintendent for Dr. William H. Allee, when the Allee family resided in the mansion on the corner of Main Street and Market Street, where the District Nursing Association now has its offices.

Bill was justly proud of the beautiful flowers that he grew and never missed having a prize entry in the many local flower shows. In those days there was great competition between the gardeners on the private estates that were so numerous in Ridgefield.

Their activities were not limited to the local shows; they also had exhibits in the National Flower Show that used to be held in New York City at the old Grand Central Palace. Many of the great Ridgefield gardens were represented in that superlative display of botanical beauty.

There is a story, which we have reason to believe is true, of how one of our local exhibitors at the big show in New York entered a lemon tree in the fruit tree class. It was a very healthy looking tree, but had a rather serious drawback. Whether it was the wrong season or not, was not made clear. What was clear was that the nice little tree was utterly devoid of any fruit.

With typical “Yankee ingenuity,” a commodity which Ridgefielders possessed to some degree, our exhibitor paid a visit to his favorite grocery. After acquiring a dozen nice fresh lemons, the exhibitor proceeded to wire the lemons to his tree at strategic locations.

When he had finished his cosmetic surgery, he put the very pretty tree on display. It drew the admiring glances of the judges and as you probably have already guessed, the little lemon tree walked off with the blue ribbon. Incidentally, the 1987 National Flower Show is in full swing at this time.

Just west of the Davies house there was, and still is, a little brook that had its source up on High Ridge and Peaceable Street. After a heavy rain, the water flowed north, through Byron

Park, under Barry Avenue, along the Conklin Dairy, under Ramapoo Road, and emptied into New Pond.

New Pond has just about disappeared, as some years ago, the dam that caused the pond to come into being was opened. The water flowed out of the pond into the Titicus River, where it joined the water from Upper Pond and Roberts Pond and eventually emptied into the Croton River.

The little brook also served as the eastern boundary for an open field that was also owned by Mrs. George H. Newton. William Weinberger purchased the lot in the late 20's and established a fine little nursery there. Billy Weinberger was superintendent for the Hyde sisters on the very attractive estate that they had built in the early 20's at the southern end of High Ridge. This place, with its cobblestone and old English courtyard, is now the residence of the Mortimer V. Schwartz family.

The nursery, which featured various trees and shrubs, was a sideline for Billy, who was also a fine horticulturist. The lot is now overgrown with trees and it is hard to imagine that it was once a fine nursery.

Just north of this lot is a house that is barely visible from Barry Avenue. For many years it has been the home of Mrs. James Gaeta. Her late husband carried on a very prominent plumbing business from this place.

During the period of which we are writing, this was the home of the Roy W. Davis family. They had a daughter, Bertha, who married Jacob Walters and they lived a little farther out on Barry Avenue.

The Davises also had two sons, Paul and Philip. Paul was once the proprietor of the Blue Front Grocery Store on West Lane. This old country store is a real landmark and was known for more than 40 years as Casa-More. The name is a combination of the names Casagrande and Moore. Gene Casagrande and John Moore were partners in the business that they started in the very early 40's. Joseph Hahn recently purchased the business from Gene Casagrande and changed the name to West Lane Market and Spirits.

Phil Davis was one of Ridgefield's fine young athletes and played on local baseball and basketball teams. Phil was also a good amateur boxer and might have made a career of it. Like his father Roy, Phil was an avid hunter and father and son used to roam the great wooded areas of Ridgefield, before the wild game fled the onslaught of the developer's bulldozer.

Roy Davis was a mason by trade, in the days when the plastered walls and ceilings of houses were made by hand. My father worked with Roy Davis, Percy Humphreys, Lon Stevens and Will Stevens. They were artists in their trade and much in demand, especially in the days when the large mansions were being built in Ridgefield. However, that was long before plasterboard came on the market. Plasterboard is much easier to install and quicker as well as cheaper for the builder.

Whenever these men worked on a house that was close to home, I used to take my father's lunch to him and it was always a treat to smell the plaster as it was being applied. It was always a mystery to me as to how the plasterers could make the surface so smooth.

Roy Davis was a charter member of the Ridgefield Volunteer Fire Department and later was chief of that excellent organization.

I guess for me, his ability as a plasterer was exceeded only by his prowess as a drummer. Roy played the parade drum, sometimes called the street drum in the old Oreneca Band. This great band represented Ridgefield very well and was in great demand in all the surrounding areas. In those days, the drummer had to learn to march while keeping his left leg rather stiff.

This prevented the drum from bouncing around as he marched. Today, most drums have a metal strap that fits around the drummer's leg.

After a parade, drummers from all the bands would gather in the firehouse for a competition called the "Battle of the Drums" and Roy always won.

#247: BARRYS OF BARRY AVENUE WHO WATER-GLASSED EGGS

As we continue to travel west on Barry Avenue, we come to number 42. It is a cute little old house and sits quite near the highway. The present owner is Miss Rita Mitchell and she grew up across the street at 28 Fairview Avenue.

For many years, this was the home of the Patrick Raines and their two nieces, Mary and Katherine O'Hearn. Both Mary and Katherine were local school teachers. They were also both very pretty and both were just as nice as thev looked.

Unfortunately, Mary's teaching career was cut short by a very tragic and very crippling ailment. For a long, long time, Katherine O'Hearn did double duty as a nurse for her sister, while continuing to teach. These fine girls greatly added to the beauty of that 1926 minstrel show that we keep referring to from time to time. In that show, the sisters sang, but we remember them dancing "The Sailor's Hornpipe" and other folk dances and they were very talented.

As teachers, the O'Hearn girls took a special interest in their pupils and the young people never had anything but the best to say about them. I remember our own children coming home with glowing tales of how Katherine had encouraged them and how very patient she had been with them. The girls were a great credit to their profession and will be long remembered.

Just west of 42 Barry Avenue is a very nice open field that goes with the place. The field is probably 3 or 4 acres of the rapidly dwindling open space in this area.

I can remember mowing the hay on that field, with a team of horses and a McCormick-Deering mowing machine. The field runs north to where Irving Conklin used to have his dairy farm and it produced a very good crop of hay. It would be nice to see it stay as it is, for the neighborhood kids to play in.

Just west of the open field is number 52 Barry Avenue and it is now the home of the Morena family. It is interesting to know that the original house at this address was owned by John Barry, after whom Barry Avenue was named. According to Roberta Barry Robertson, John Barry's grand-daughter, the original house was so big, it was rather difficult to manage.

Actually a large house was needed, for John and Mary Ann Barry had 10 children. However, as the children grew up and left home, the big house was cut in two and moved into neighboring Brvon Park and became two separate homes. We are not sure which of the present houses made up the Barry home but one thing is sure, a lot of houses in Ridgefield were moved to where they are presently located.

Roberta, who now lives in Mamaroneck, is to be credited for many of the interesting stories connected with this place. Her father was John Barry's son, Robert, so you know where her name came from. She lived with her parents and her sister Mary, when they were little girls, in what was called "the old Barry house," before it was moved.

While talking with Roberta, you become quickly aware that she has an incredible memory and can describe in detail every room in the old house. I hope you will be as interested in her description of the way of life, before and during World War I, as I am.

When the Barry sisters were little girls, they did not attend local schools. Instead, a teacher was hired to come to the house and start their education. They were joined by the Mitchell twins, Madeline and Genevieve. The twins were older sisters of Rita Mitchell and lived

on Fairview Avenue. It should be said that Madeline and Genevieve were also in the cast of that 1926 minstrel show.

At any rate, a little classroom, replete with desks and blackboards, was set up for them and Roberta remembers that their first reader started out with "The hen found a bag of flour. She tried to carry it home."

The teacher was Miss Teresa Buckley, who lived in the little house at the very top of Catoonah Street. Teresa later married Louis Baker, who was one of the original state policemen. Lou was stationed in Ridgefield and we told about him in Dispatch No. 216.

Robert Barry was engaged in real estate in New York City. It was his custom to take the train to Branchville Station and then on to the city on Sunday afternoon. He did not return until Friday evening. This put a considerable burden on the family and they all had to help to keep things going during the father's absence. The chickens had to be cared for and in the winter months, the coal furnace had to be stoked.

In those days, they had not yet started to put lights in the chicken house to encourage the hens to keep laying eggs during the relatively short winter days. Therefore, in order to prepare for the days of short egg production, eggs were preserved by immersing them into a wooden tub, in which there was a concoction that was both thick and slimy. It was also quite cold, since it was kept in the cellar.

The system was called "water glassing" and it was widely used in the days before electric refrigerators and the huge electrically cooled warehouses of today. This method of preserving eggs was used not only on the farms, but in private homes as well.

Large quantities of eggs were purchased when they were plentiful and the price was down. They were then "water glassed," to be used when eggs were scarce and the price was high. The material used to prepare the solution was called water glass and had as its base a certain kind of clay (called sodium silicate). It was made by the Rutland Fire Clay Company at a plant in Rutland, Vt. This same firm is in operation today and produces roofing. materials, patching plaster, furnace cement, and a concrete patching substance.

A one quart can of water glass, when mixed with 11 parts water, would keep about 16 dozen eggs. It was then poured into an earthenware crock, or a wooden tub. The eggs were then placed in the container, leaving them about two inches below the surface.

It should be noted that the mixed material could also be used as an adhesive. Small wonder that it was with a feeling of revulsion that Roberta reached into the sticky solution to retrieve the eggs to be used for breakfast. It was a chore that she did not relish.

(*To be continued*)

#248: HOME LIFE A CENTURY AGO

With the moving of the "old" Barry house from 52 Barry Avenue to Bryon Park, the Robert E. Barry family moved to a farm in Washington Depot. That was in 1913, and while the family was still in Connecticut, it was not like Ridgefield.

Therefore, like many others who have moved away from Ridgefield, the Barry family had a yearning to return. The opportunity presented itself when George Abbott, who had married Robert Barry's sister Kate, offered Robert 14 acres on Barry Avenue. The offer was made for the purpose of settling an old debt. It was the only incentive that the Barrys needed to come back home.

The land in question encompassed what is now the Michael P. Hilton residence at 70 Barry Avenue. A further attraction was the fact that the land was just two doors west of the old Barry homestead.

Robert Barry lost no time in accepting the offer and plans were made to build a new home on the property. It was not long before construction was started on the fine house that stands there today. The house was completed in 1915, and a very happy family moved back to their old neighborhood.

Roberta Barry remembers that the new home had a large living room, a dining room and kitchen on the first floor. There was a so-called butler's pantry between the dining room and the kitchen, as well as what they called "the little room," right off the kitchen. This room had a pantry closet, with shelves that were lined with jars of canned fruit and vegetables that were grown right there on the place.

There was a large coal burning stove in the kitchen and a barrel of flour sat in the corner near the little room. The flour barrel was in constant use and produced many loaves of bread, all sorts of rolls, cake and cookies. You must remember that this all "took place long before a housewife enjoyed the luxury of driving down to the nearest supermarket to get the necessary foodstuffs for her family.

The kitchen also had several other pieces of equipment that were essential in the operation of a successful family enterprise. Near the kitchen stove was a large old coffee grinder. Most people bought their coffee in bean form at the time, and ground it as needed.

There was also a contraption for grinding corn and an "ice box" that was regularly filled with large chunks of ice by an "ice man" who came along, house to house, with his horse drawn ice wagon.

In the cellar, there was a large coal burning furnace and of course there was the proverbial water glass tub. The cellar also had a large table, upon which Robert Barry used to grow endive in wooden flats.

The second floor of the house had four bedrooms and a bathroom. The third floor, or attic, with its three attractive dormer windows, had two unfinished rooms that were partitioned off with beaverboard.

The spacious grounds had just about everything to help provide for a happy family. There was a large grape arbor that each fall was filled with luscious Concord grapes. There were various berry bushes, fruit trees and a garden with rich soil.

The place had three chicken houses and in the clothes yard there were clothes lines, mounted on four poles — no electric clothes dryers in those days.

When Mrs. Barry decided it was time for a chicken dinner, Robert would repair to his tool house and reappear with his axe in hand. Roberta and her sister, Mary, much to their annoyance, were not allowed to view the actual execution of the chicken that was selected, but like all kids they were very inquisitive and wanted to know what it was all about. On one occasion, when the girls were aware that a chicken dinner had been planned, they went out and crawled under the chicken house to watch.

Unlike those who attended the beheadings in the Tale of Two Cities, the girls remained very quiet. However, one of them was rather squeamish and made a slight noise, just as the guillotine was to be put in operation. The father heard the noise, the ruse was discovered and Robert Barrv marched his daughters back into the safety of their house, before completing the coup de grace.

During World War I, home gardens and the growing of food took on a very important role in the war effort. There was a shortage in just about every commodity and people were urged to grow as much food as possible.

The field just to the west of the Barrys' new home was plowed and a good stand of corn was grown. This was shared with an Allen family that lived in New Rochelle, where they had no room to grow anything. The two families worked together each weekend on their joint venture. Incidentally, the soil in that field has again been moved around, this time by a bulldozer.

Because of the war effort, the Barrys found it necessary to enlarge their garden and the vegetables it produced proved to be invaluable. This was also true of the fruit trees, the raspberry patch and the strawberry beds, of which they had several.

When the house was being built, electric wires were installed. However, since the power lines had still not been extended throughout the town, no fixtures were installed. This made it necessary to use kerosene lamps for lights in the house. This created a chore for the girls and they were kept busy, filling the lamps with oil and cleaning the many chimneys.

If wicks were not properly trimmed, the lamps would smoke and the glass chimneys would turn black, adding more work for the girls.

Like all kids, the girls looked forward to the Christmas season. They used to wait anxiously for their father to go into the woods with his axe to cut a pine or cedar tree for them to decorate. Their excitement mounted when Robert returned and the tree was carefully set up in the living room.

Once the tree was in place, with its butt in a pail of water to keep it fresh, the girls started to trim it. The tinsel was strung among the boughs, popcorn balls, and various baubles were attached and another important item was added. Since there were no electric lights, candles were used. They were small candles and they were attached to the branches with little metal clips.

The danger of fire was great, but very few occurred as the tree was carefully watched. The fire marshal, if we had one then, would have had a field day.

#249: MANY OLD ENTERPRISES OF THE ASTUTE ERNIE SCOTT

We got a little ahead of our story as we traveled west on Barry Avenue, due to the fact that the Barry family moved from 52 Barry Avenue and then later returned to 70 Barry Avenue. So back to 52 and the impressive white house that has been the residence of the Joseph T. Moreno family for the past 15 years.

As has already been told, the original house at 52 (the old Barry house), was made into two houses and both were moved across the street and into Bryon Park. This all took place before World War I. Almost as soon as the old house disappeared, construction started on the present house at this location.

We are not sure whether the builder of the present house was the Walsh family, or Ernest Scott. One thing is sure: Ernest married the Walshes' pretty daughter, Marie, and the Scott family lived there for years.

Ernest and Marie had a son, John E. Scott, who was known to his friends as "Buddy." In the 30s, Marie and Buddy moved to the Stamford-Greenwich area. Marie was a niece of the noted Judge James F. Walsh, as was Teresa Buckley, who taught the Barry children before they attended local elementary school.

Ernest Scott came to Ridgefield as a young man in the early part of this century. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, and when he talked, his voice had a pleasant little burr that proved that fact.

By profession, Ernest Scott was an engineer and apparently he was a very good one. At the time of his arrival in this country, the great John Hampton Lynch mansion on West Mountain was being constructed. This beautiful place is now owned and occupied by the Congregation of Notre Dame.

The engineer in charge of construction on this job was taken ill and young Ernest Scott was sent to Ridgefield to take over his duties. Like so many others, Ernie was greatly impressed by the beauty of Ridgefield and by the time his job at the Lynch estate was completed, he had made the decision to make Ridgefield his home.

Ernest Scott's choice of Ridgefield as a place to make his home proved to be a good one. He quickly adapted himself to the local scene and his many talents were much in demand.

Ernie. was a very astute businessman and through the years, he acquired considerable wealth. An edifice that was to benefit from Ernest Scott's engineering skills is the very impressive St. Stephen's Church on Main Street. This church was built in 1915 and six years later Ernest Scott started construction of the red brick business block that stretches north from Ridgefield Hardware, to Catoonah Street. This building has been known as the Scott Block for many years.

When that large block of stores, offices and apartments was completed, Ernie turned his attention to the other side of the street and erected the building that now houses several stores, including Jeanne Cook's travel agency. This was also called the Scott Block and since George G. Scott also had a Scott Block, you had to know your Scotts to avoid confusion.

Ernest Scott did more than build houses, churches and stores. He owned the Ridgefield Market, which was at the southern end of the new block he had built on the east side of Main Street.

Henry Weidner was manager of the store. Some of those who worked in this meat market were, my brother Paul, Lester Winn, Jack Sheehan and Maurice Weaver. Mrs. Norman Bennett (Lottie) and Marion McGlynn were bookkeepers and Quinto Carboni was a delivery man.

In those days all the food stores made deliveries and they would deliver any sized order, even as small as a yeast cake. Like all meat markets of that day, the floor of the store had a heavy layer of sawdust. Every evening, at closing time, fresh sawdust was applied and then the whole floor was raked, very neatly, and made ready for the next day's business.

There was also a Scott Coal Company, which Ernie operated from where the Ridgefield Supply is now. Sam Cousa made deliveries of coal, with a one-horse wagon that was drawn by a huge black horse. The horse was stabled in a barn at 52 Barry Avenue.

Irving Van Wagner was also a deliveryman and he used to drive a truck that was made by the White Motor Company.

With the Scott enterprises under a full head of steam, and still growing, Ernest Scott found himself badly in need of help to keep everything on an even keel. Soon help was on its way, in the person of his sister Fanny, who came over from Scotland.

Fannie was a very bright lady and she stepped right into the operations. Fannie not only kept the books on the many activities, she also served as Ernie's troubleshooter.

Continuing out on Barry Avenue, we come to number 62, which is now the home of the Lawrence J. Cernoch family. This large white house was built by George Abbott, who had married Kate Barry.

They had two children, Florence and Louis. Lou was an outstanding athlete and Francis Martin used to say that Lou could have been a major league baseball player. Lou was also musically inclined and played clarinet in the old Oreneca Band.

Jacob Walters bought the Abbott place in the 20s, after he married Bertha Davis (Roy Davis's daughter). The Davis family lived just three doors away, at 38 Barry Avenue, so Bertha did not have far to move.

Jake and Bertha had three children: Philip, Gerald and Edith. Both Phil and Gerry were excellent athletes. Phil was especially good at pitching baseball and Gerry was a very good batter. Both boys were very good bowlers. Phil had a fine curve ball and Gerry a blistering fast ball.

Phil took piano lessons from Lottie Boyce, as did his sister Edith. They both became fine pianists and I remember a recital at which they played a duet in a most professional manner.

The Walters children also had a very nice little pony. It was a great attraction to all the kids in the neighborhood. Gerry was a fast growing boy and his legs got so long that when he rode the pony, he had trouble keeping his feet from dragging on the ground.

Jake Walters had been a chauffeur, but like so many others engaged in that line of work, he later went into the automobile repair business. Then he acquired a new car dealership and conducted a thriving business in the store where Brunetti's Market [*Lantern restaurant*] is now. Jake took care of the repairs and his brother John ran the store and sold the cars.

#250: CARS, BOWLING, REFUGEES, & A POLYMATH PROFESSOR

We have been telling about the Walters family that lived on Barry Avenue, but detoured to Main Street, where Jacob and John Walters sold and repaired automobiles. Their place of business was where Brunetti's Market [*Lantern restaurant*] is now and the repairing was done in a garage, just to the rear of the store.

There was a long narrow building that stood not more than a foot, just to the north of the garage. For some years, this building had been used as a place to bowl.

Bowling is a sport that has its ups and downs and during a down period, in the 20's, the alleys were removed and the Walters brothers used this place to store their cars.

Later on, when Jake Walters moved his operations to Herb Bates' garage on Bailey Avenue [*where the Ridgefield Press used to be*], the bowling alleys were installed again.

Bowling had regained its popularity, especially in 1938, when the town suffered through a devastating hurricane. There were an awful lot of damaged trees and a great number of men were imported from Massachusetts to repair the damage and clean up the debris. These fellows used to bowl candle pins, rather than big pins or duck pins. Orazio Rossini and Marty Marinelli ran the bowling alleys and they lost no time in acquiring candle pins for their new customers.

During the period, when the building was without the alleys, the Walters brothers carried on a new car agency and used the building to store their cars. They sold several makes of autos, including the Flint, Durant and Star. Later still, Leo Pambianchi carried on a Nash agency from where the Walters brothers had been. All of these cars have long since gone out of existence.

So back to Barry Avenue again and to the Walters home at number 62. The next owner of this large house was Frances (Zandri) Strouse. It was here that Frances established her

business that came to be known as Frances Cleaners. That business is still in operation today at 145 High Ridge Avenue.

The next family to occupy the house was Gaetano and Sadie (Pambianchi) Pancotti and their children. It was well that the house was large, for they had a number of little ones. There was Harry, Reno, Gino, Vincent, Louis, and Louise and they were to be followed by Marie and Rudy, eight in all.

Vincent still lives in Ridgefield with his wife, the former Corinne Kaiser. Vinnie, who has been a member of the Ridgefield Fire Department for many years, did not have to look far for Corinne for she was growing up just two doors away, where her parents operated a farm.

Right next door, at 70 Barry Avenue, Lived the Michael P. Hilton family. This is the house that Robert Barry built in 1915, and a picture of which has appeared on this page of The Press [*posted with the previous week's column*]. Mrs. Roberta Barry Robertson, who now lives in Mamaroneck, recognized the house where she had lived as a child.

In the late 20's, this place became the home of Fabian Franklin, his wife Christine Ladd Franklin and their daughter Margaret Ladd Franklin. Fabian Franklin was born in Hungary and came to this land of opportunity as a young man. While still in his native land, Fabian studied engineering and worked as a surveyor.

After coming to America, Fabian enrolled at George Washington University and later continued his studies at Johns Hopkins University. He had a passion for mathematics and later became professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins.

Fabian Franklin became a very prolific writer and wrote for several publications, including The American Journal of Mathematics, The Yale Review, Forum, and the North American Review. He also became an assistant fellow of The American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

For several years, Fabian was editor of the Baltimore News and also served as associate editor of the New York Evening Post.

We remember Fabian Franklin as a most imposing figure of a man. He was always very well dressed and had a quiet but friendly manner. He had a long beard and could be seen, most any afternoon, as he walked the short distance from 70 Barry Avenue, to St. Mary's Club House (now the K of C Home) [*and now St. Mary's offices*] at the top of Catoonah Street.

The club house had a very fine library and Fabian seemed to enjoy going there to study. It was very quiet there and he never tired of reading and learning.

Christine Ladd Franklin was also quite noted in her own right. She was a prominent psychologist and was widely known as the architect of the Ladd-Franklin Theory of Color.

I believe that it was the Franklin family that had the house next door built, while they lived here. This cute, white brick building is number 80 Barry Avenue and is now the home of the K.H. Schmid family.

Mrs. Franklin passed on in the early 30's and Fabian went to his just reward in 1939. Their daughter Margaret continued to live here for a time but eventually the place was sold for a day school. It was known as the West Mountain Country Day School and the same name was later changed to The Ridgefield Country Day School.

So there seemed always to be a lot of children in this neighborhood, and the number was considerably increased when the next family moved into the large white house at 70 Barry Avenue.

It hardly seems possible that it is almost 30 years ago that Fidel Castro started his big push from the mountainous regions of Cuba in his campaign to overthrow that country's Batista

government. As we all know, Castro was finally successful and his victory was greeted by many well meaning people as a great thing for a country that had suffered a long time under the dictatorship of Batista. Little did they know that they were merely jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

One of those who stood on the street corner in Havana and cheered as Castro and his triumphant troops marched into the Capital of that unfortunate country was a handsome young international lawyer. His name was Manuelo Vega-Pinochet and he had been a classmate of Castro when both were in college.

Things had been very bad under Batista and Manuelo felt that any change had to be for the better. He soon learned otherwise.

(*To be continued)*