



The

Kimball Farms



# Observer



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Let 'Em Eat Turkey!

November 2020

## *President's Comments: Lessons from Covid*

Those of us whose early education took place in Massachusetts, and especially New England, learned at an early age about a cluster of famous authors who were household words in the mid-19th century. Among them were Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who advanced the philosophy of transcendentalism through their writings and lifestyles. That philosophy embraced nature and humanity, spawned ideas on communal living, and extolled self-reliance and independent thought.

At the time we married, my husband's favorite American author was Emerson. Doug once described to an out-of-town friend the directions to our apartment: "There's a large stone near the intersection that resembles Emerson's tomb; go south from there for a block." Emerson didn't remain Doug's favorite author and he learned to give excellent directions.

I haven't thought about transcendentalism nor paid much attention to Emerson or Thoreau for years. But somehow Covid-19 has stirred memories of that philosophy and those writers. In many ways the Covid virus has narrowed our lives. But in many other ways our horizons have expanded. With fewer things to do or friends to see, I think many of us pay more careful attention to what we have.

We take time to savor the explosion of color that fills our eyes and comforts our hearts; I don't think it's my imagination that makes bird songs more distinct; morning conversations with neighbors who gather for Kim and the coffee cart remind us that we are a community and we have neighbors to care for who care for us.

I am eager beyond words for this dreadful pandemic to end; at the same time I hope all of us will remember, and be glad, for the new awareness of what matters most to us never ends.

And, thinking of what never ends ... Thanksgiving is nearly upon us. Kimball's plans for that celebration

are not complete but this is basically how the day will unfold:

There will be several places open for those residents who wish to share the holiday with friends here: the dining room, the game room, the auditorium; if more



space is necessary that will be arranged. Tables will be arranged to accommodate social distancing; masks will be required except when eating/drinking.

For those residents who prefer to remain in their apartments, two guests can be invited. Meals will be brought to you. Kimball will underwrite expenses for all guests this year.

Information regarding serving times and food selection will be provided in ample time for you to make your plans. Posters will be in the Mail Room and on bulletin boards; sign-up sheets will be available as well. There's a lot of planning for Mike and his staff to put this feast together, so the choice to eat either in your apartment or one of the common areas cannot be changed.

Tad Evans sent all residents a reminder that this is the time for us to remember our staff with an annual gift. We have a wonderful staff and I think we all recognize that they've been called upon to do extra duties during the pandemic. Please write your checks and place them in Arlene Potler's cubby (157), and please come to the party in the auditorium on December 2nd from two to four o'clock to thank them personally.

*Dorothea Nelson*

## What Was That Odd Taste in Thanksgiving Coffee?

Thanksgiving, probably America's favorite holiday – at least it's mine – is almost upon us. It represents the warmth of family and friends and, of course, delicious food.

For many of us this holiday has been a Norman Rockwell painting repeating itself every year. Every year, that is, until 2020 and the virus. In this era of social isolation and limited interaction, those memories of our bygone Thanksgivings are more precious than ever. Luckily, most of us have many of them. Probably our family favorite could be called "The Kid, the Tea Set and the Mitten," which occurred about 25 years ago at our home in Lenox.

In those days large family gatherings were common, especially during the holidays. It wasn't unusual to have 15 of our extended family seated, or more accurately squeezed, around that table. It was also the excuse for bringing out the linen cloth, the silver, the china and the candles. Our grandson, Hunter, was a little boy of 3 at the time, and he was obsessed with our silver tea set that sat regally on our dining room buffet. He would spend hours sitting on the rug rearranging the tea pot, coffee pot, little cream pitcher and sugar bowl.

A few weeks before this particular Thanksgiving, our daughter, husband and Hunter had visited for the weekend, and he again spent most of his time with the tea set. After they returned home, we got a call from our daughter asking if we had seen Hunter's other mitten around the house because he had come home with only one. We did not find a mitten.

Fast forward to Thanksgiving Day. As usual on that day, the dining room was set; the grandkids had been fed earlier, and the adults were seated around the table. Dinner was over and I was about to serve dessert. Since we were "making a fuss," I poured the freshly brewed coffee into the silver coffee pot and proceeded to fill everyone's cup. I noticed the spout seemed sluggish, and the coffee seemed to have a slight after-taste, so I decided to rinse out the pot and refill it with freshly brewed coffee. As I upended it before rinsing it out, a very stained, coffee-soaked mitten dropped into the sink. No one got sick.

*Marilyn Hunter*



Fall Foliage near Door B

## Goon Moon

"Someone snapped on the light in the bedroom!"

No, Goon Moon with his fleshlight  
prodded my bedclothes sea.

Intrusive, not romantic, Goon Moon  
is not champagne ... nor roses.

In fact, my roominate, a dog,  
is not at ease and whimpers for my pet-pat,  
which is romantic, sort-of.

Goon Moon, now soiled with human waste:  
footprint, flag  
is, quite literally,  
a thingy of the past

*Charles Haynes*



## In Memoriam

**Robert Shanks**  
October 8, 1932 to Oct. 12, 2020



## Improving on Nature with Piles of Stone

If a hole is to dig, can a stone be to pile? “Yes,” if your name is Dave Vacheron. Call them cairns or call them inuksuit, Kimball Farms can now boast six such creations. The latest one, near Pine Hill, is the largest, consisting of 14 stones.

Dave was intrigued by piles of stones on roadsides during a trip to Ireland several years ago. The memory remained in his consciousness and was reinforced when he read one of Andy Goldsworthy’s books, *Wood*. British sculptor, environmentalist and photographer, Goldsworthy “works almost telepathically with nature, rearranging its natural forms in such a way as to enhance rather than to detract from its beauty,” according to Wikipedia.



The immense stone sculptures Goldsworthy crafted were not created to last; rather they became the “seascape” where some of them were built and washed away with the flow of the tides. Likewise, Dave expects that most, if not all, of his structures will be displaced by snow and wind.

It was something affecting many of us with the arrival of Covid-19 restrictions – boredom – that renewed Dave’s memories of “stone plantings,” and so sprang the decision to create his own. He searched among the several culverts on the grounds to identify stones he thought would be appropriate; size and shape were primary considerations. This was the most time-consuming part of the entire process.

Once they were gathered, he laid out stones and began to build, starting with the largest stones and

continuing with smaller ones. He used small stones as “shims” to keep each structure intact.

Never did he expect any response from other residents. He is both grateful and humbled by the many expressions of pleasure that have greeted him, comments like: “They make me smile.” “I love spotting them and knowing someone here created them.” “They’re just fun to look at!”

A lifelong interest in nature and gardening was inspired by his father; according to Dave, his dad loved the building of gardens. One of his pleasures was to plan for secret gardens that would be hidden behind shrubbery and marked by low hedgerows. Dave emulated such designs in landscaping his own garden in Canaan, N.Y., his home before moving here.

The creations of cairns (I still prefer inuksuit!) represents for him an evolution in his own love of garden building. It is the larger garden of Kimball that is home now for Dave’s unique appreciation of nature’s magic in guiding our eyes to ways we, too, can rearrange “its natural forms in such a way as to enhance rather than to detract from its beauty.”

*Dorothea Nelson*

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## Open Mic: My Little Brother, My Hero!

In September 1950 I entered my freshman year at an all-girls college in New York City along with 49 of my peers. *Music, Music, Music* played constantly on the juke box in the cafeteria as we all registered for classes, one of which was English Composition. We were all typical products of the mid-twentieth century; we wore bobby sox, saddle shoes and poodle skirts. We were day students, commuting from all parts of the city. And most of us were the first females in our families to attempt post-high school education. And so we commenced.

Our English teacher was as new in this world as we were; on our first day, she assigned us an essay designed to evaluate our grammatical writing abilities with the intention of planning her subsequent course content. We were asked to identify and write a piece describing our favorite hero.

I faced a quandary. Who should I choose for this momentous honor?

Alexander Hamilton, my favorite revolutionary long before he became a Broadway star? Joan of Arc, my favorite female historic figure? After all, she led an army and returned the French king to his throne long before “feminists” fought for equal rights and pay. I mulled and mulled.



That evening, upon arriving home, I was greeted by my little brother with a smile and a happy question about my new school. That smile solved my dilemma; who else but this courageous six-year-old could qualify as “my hero”?

Frank was born on December 7, 1943, and welcomed by his three older sisters, who were so happy to have a little brother. He was a beautiful baby, always smiling, and we three were delighted

with him. For the first year, he progressed and appeared to be totally normal. But in his second year, it appeared that he was not achieving the physical milestones that were expected. Finally, when he’d passed the 19-month mark and was still not able to crawl, sit up, stand or walk, my parents brought him to a doctor. He was diagnosed with “spastic paralysis” and there was no positive prediction of his future development.

There followed all kinds of attempts to help Frank’s physical progress. Each night my mother exercised all his limbs. My father had a long boardwalk constructed, whereon my brother held on to the sides and propelled himself back and forth. He was brought for various medical evaluations and the whole family prayed and visited a number of religious shrines, praying for his recovery. By the age of four, he still could not walk or talk, but none of us resented carrying him everywhere as his smile was ever present. By this time, the “spastic paralysis” designation was changed to “cerebral palsy,” by which it is known today. A friend suggested that my parents take him to a chiropractor, which they did. I don’t remember how the chiropractor treated him, as I was in high school and missed a good deal of family life, but whatever was done for Frank finally succeeded in helping him walk and talk to a limited extent. Needless to say, he could not do what other children his age could do, but we were thrilled at anything he was able to achieve. Through these years, he never lost his wonderfully sweet disposition and was always a joy to be around.

So I wrote my essay and submitted it. To my surprise, the instructor announced that she was going to read the best essay she’d received and it was mine. I always felt its worth was not based on my writing skills; it was the inspirational subject about which it was written. My brother! MY hero!

*Eileen Potash*

*Eileen wrote and read this for the 2019 Pulse dance program at Kimball Farms and in Great Barrington. A dance student portrayed her in the performance.*

## Library Lines: Friend to One, Friend to All

Many of you have met my dear friend Terry Hirst on one of his visits to Kimball Farms. What you perhaps do not know about Terry is that he is an avid reader and buyer of books and that he donates them, once read, to worthy institutions. Happily, in the last few months this has been the Kimball Farms library. Last week, Terry gave me a box for the library containing eight new titles. They were of such quality and interest that I thought you would like a preview of these books that will soon be on our library shelves. Here they are, in no particular order.

*The Green Road*, by Anne Enright: In this novel that spans 30 years, the Irish award-winning writer tells of Rasaleen Madigan, matriarch of a family of four youngsters, of the family's trials and triumphs and of a reunion when they are all adults. It brings the family together in a vain attempt to recover the relationship they have lost. Her 2007 novel *The Gathering* had already won the Booker Prize.

*Hamnet*, by Maggie O'Farrell: The author uses historical fiction to explore a parent's worst nightmare, the death of a child in the family. Set in Stratford, England, in the late sixteenth century, the narrative tells of a young, struggling playwright (who is unnamed), his marriage to Agnes (pronounces Ann-yis), the tragic death of his beloved son Hamnet, and, years later, the writing of a play which he named (a different version of his son's name), Hamlet.

*Blacktop Wasteland*, by S. A. Cosby: "It's a high-action heist novel with heart. Great characters, imaginative storytelling. Memorable turns of phrases. Reversals, surprises. The most-hyped book of the summer of 2020 and for good reason." So said one review of this Cosby novel. It's the story of Bug Montage, who is forced by financial and social problems to leave his comfortable, middle-class life, revert to his former identity and participate in one last memorable heist.

*Shadowplay* by Joseph O'Connor: Henry Irving, Victorian England's most famous actor and theater impresario, opens his own theater and hires a young Dublin clerk, who has ambitions as a writer, to manage it. The young man is Bram Stoker, future writer of *Dracula*. He also hires Ellen Terry, the actress, who soon casts a spell over both men.

*The Everlasting*, by Katy Simpson Smith: From the flyleaf of this novel: "Spanning two thousand years, *The Everlasting* follows four characters whose

struggles resonate across the centuries: an early-Christian child martyr, a medieval monk, a Medici princess of Moorish descent, and a contemporary field biologist conducting an illicit affair. As these conflicted people struggle with forces they cannot control, their circumstances raise profound questions."

*The Good Detective*, by John McMahon: Falling into a deep depression after the deaths of his wife and son, P. T. Marsh, a sergeant in the Mason Falls, Georgia, police force, tries to help a strip club performer who is terrorized by her abusive boyfriend. When the boyfriend is murdered, Marsh becomes a suspect in this and another murder that also points to him.

*Execution*, by S.J. Parris, the pseudonym of Stephanie Merritt (born 1974), a prominent English writer, speaker and critic. The first of her historical novels featuring the heretic, philosopher and spy Giordano Bruno, *Heres*, was published in 2010. (Bruno was actually an Italian Dominican friar and philosopher who spent two years in England and was later burned at the stake as a heretic in Rome in 1600.) *Execution* is the sixth in the series. Set in 1586, this novel transports Bruno to England to inform Queen Elizabeth's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham, of a plot to kill the Queen and put Mary, Queen of Scots, on the throne. To serve Walsingham, Bruno must go undercover.

*A Burning*, by Megha Majumdar: Though published only a few months ago, this brilliant first novel has already won several book awards. Set in contemporary India, it features three memorable characters. The first is Jivan, a Muslim girl who has wrongfully been sent to prison; second is Facebook, PT, a gym teacher who gets involved in right-wing politics; and the third, Lovely, an outcast who dreams of being a movie star. She has information that can set Jivan free but it will cost her future. Will she make this sacrifice? The author has been hailed as a tremendous new voice in contemporary fiction.

What a wonderful, varied selection of new books for our library. Thanks again, Terry.

John Gillespie



## Beware Hypertension; It's the Silent Killer

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, occurs when the force of the blood pushing against the walls of your arteries (the muscular, multi-layered blood vessels that carry oxygenated blood from the heart to all the tissues of the body), is consistently too high. The pressure is a function of the resistance of the blood vessels and how hard the heart has to work. Blood pressure, whether normal or elevated, is defined by a set of numbers, measured as millimeters of mercury, for example: 120/80 mm Hg. We say this as 120 over 80. The first number represents the systolic pressure that occurs as the blood is being pumped out of the heart and into the arteries. The second number represents the diastolic pressure and is created as the heart rests and refills with blood between heart beats. The question is: when is blood pressure “too high?”



In 2017 the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association published new guidelines that at least provided a framework for defining hypertension with more clarity. Normal blood pressure is 120/80 or less. Elevated blood pressure is 120-129 systolic and more than 80 diastolic. Note that this so-called “elevated blood pressure” is not yet called “hypertension.”

The puzzling thing for me is that in my medical practice, where I saw many patients from out of town with “elevated” blood pressure, I was told that their doctors were “watching it,” but doing nothing to eliminate the risk factors contributing to the elevation. More about this later. I guess they were going to “watch” it until it increased to “hypertension” and then prescribe medication rather than dealing with the contributing risk factors. “Hypertension” is classified as Stage 1 with a systolic pressure of 130-139 and a diastolic pressure of 80-89. The Stage 2 numbers respectively are >140 and >90.

What justifies the label “silent killer?” First and foremost is that hypertension is, for many years, a condition with no symptoms. It does its damage to the arteries in complete silence. The increased

pressure pushing against the artery walls day after day damages the lining called endothelium, causing inflammation and increased susceptibility to plaque formation. This in turn makes the arteries narrower and stiffer with even more increase in blood pressure. It really is a vicious cycle.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) hypertension puts you at risk for cardiovascular disease, including heart attack, heart failure and aneurysm as well as cerebrovascular disease, including stroke and dementia, the leading causes of death in the United States. In 2018, nearly half a million deaths included hypertension as a leading or contributing cause. At least half of adults in the United States have elevated blood pressure or are taking medication for hypertension; however, only one in four adults have their condition under control. About half of adults with uncontrolled hypertension, approximately 37 million people, have Stage 2 hypertension. There is a huge cost associated with this, physical, emotional and financial, estimated to average \$120 billion per year.

The cause of hypertension is often not known, and it is then referred to as primary or essential hypertension. In other cases, it is the result of a complication of another condition and is called secondary hypertension. Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and high cholesterol levels can lead to hypertension, especially as people age. The vicious cycle is once again apparent in that the conditions considered as leading to hypertension are the same conditions caused by silent, uncontrolled hypertension.

The risk factors are: Obesity, especially abdominal or visceral fat; lack of physical activity; excess alcohol; smoking; high salt, low potassium diet; and stress. Obviously, with a healthy fruit, vegetable, whole grain and bean diet, increased activity (walking is good) and stress management, much can be achieved. We can't do much about age and family history, but that just makes healthy changes even more important. Please take this to heart and your heart and all of the rest of you will say “Thanks.”

*Stephanie Beling, M.D.*

## ***The When and How of Moving to Pine Hill***

*I think it might be time for a move to assisted living ... so now what do I do?*

Making the decision to move to Kimball Farms was a very smart investment in your future. Your Lifecare contract provides for a higher level of care as you age and your needs change. A move to assisted living is often the next step after independent living. Pine Hill offers peace of mind to residents and families when living completely independently is no longer the best option.

What should you do if you think things are not as easy for you as they used to be? First, either you or your family should call me at 7037 to discuss your situation. Don't wait until things become so hard that you are not able to care for yourself in your apartment. Sometimes residents discover that with just a little extra help they can put off a move for a while longer. I have a list of private pay homecare providers so that you and your family can pursue hiring some help, if that is your preference.

When you are truly ready to discuss a move, we can add you to the Pine Hill waitlist. If an apartment is not readily available at that time, we will offer you the Bridge Program, which provides for assisted living level of services in your current apartment at no extra charge until we can offer you a move to Pine Hill. In exchange for these no-charge services, you will need to sign an agreement that states you will accept the first apartment offered to you at Pine Hill. Services will continue until the move is made. We will deliver three meals a day; can help with bathing and dressing, medication management, laundry, bed making, trash removal; and scheduling of physician appointments all as part of the Bridge services. The community nurse will meet with you to help you decide which of the offered services you need.

We must prioritize urgent need based on safety and health concerns. Unfortunately, this might mean that due to an at-risk situation, someone new to the list gets an apartment sooner than someone that has been on the list for a while. The clinical team reviews need on a regular basis and advises the marketing department when we feel an urgent move is necessary.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions about the process at any time.

*Jackie Tripicco, LCSW  
Community Social Worker*

## ***Some Timely Advice***

If we got one-tenth of what was promised to us in these State of the Union speeches, there wouldn't be any inducement to go to heaven.

*Will Rogers*

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.

*Nikita Khrushchev*

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it.

*Clarence Darrow*

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.

*Oscar Ameringer*

I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them.

*Adlai Stevenson*

## ***Birthdays***

Fifteen residents celebrate November birthdays. There is an 18-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrant. November birthdays belong to:

**Joyce Coffey, Suzanne Bach, Barbara Liebert,  
Betsey McKearnan, Elske Smith, Marilé Lynch,  
Karen Carmean, Lois Neumann,  
Dolores Pieropan, Robert O'Brien,  
Monroe "Moe" England, Phyllis Nichols,  
Judith Kittredge, Lavon Frye  
and Barbara Sterner**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!!**

## Follow Tillie's Nose to the Brandstons

Tillie is the beautiful, lively 8-year-old English yellow lab who has lived with the Brandstons for the past two years. Although a professionally trained hunting dog, she is quite content now chasing after tennis balls and is happy with the attention she is getting from her new admirers.

Howard and Melanie Brandston have come to Kimball Farms from their 40-acre farm in nearby New York state's Columbia County. They lived the first 20 years as weekenders from New York City, but became full-time residents in 2001, at what they liked to call their "Humble Haven in Hollowsville."

Howard was born in Toronto, Canada, and moved to Brooklyn with his family at age 9. He enjoyed acting in school productions at Lincoln High School, but discovered that he was a talented visual artist with an aptitude for theater lighting and went on to study theatrical illumination at Brooklyn College. He designed lighting for off-Broadway shows, but while the lighting was excellent, the plays closed soon after opening.

Howard became an apprentice with the world-renowned Stanley McCandless, an architectural and theater lighting designer, and this became Howard's career as well. His work became known quickly after he designed, among other projects, the 1964 World's Fair *It's a Small World* exhibit. He founded his own firm in 1965 and his first client was Hilton International, for which he traveled around the world designing lighting for many Hilton hotels. His other projects, totaling over 2,500, ranged from the relighting of the Statue of Liberty for the 1986 Bicentennial to the Women's Military Hall of Fame in Washington, D.C., and the world's largest aquarium in Osaka, Japan.

Chances are that Kimball Farms residents have seen Howard's work in their hometown or travels, without knowing it. Howard practiced architectural lighting design, but he also used light as a medium for making fine art. His lighting sculptures have been

shown in art galleries throughout the United States and are installed permanently in museums. He is the recipient of many major awards, has published extensively and has been on the faculty of a number of institutions. In 2015 he received Brooklyn College's Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts. He capped his career with his book *Learning to See: A Matter of Light*. He is an avid outdoorsman, enjoying fishing and hunting, with Tillie as a happy companion.



Melanie was born in Connecticut, but her family moved to Arizona, which she disliked because it did not have four seasons. She moved back East and attended Colgate University in upstate New York, majoring in economics. Melanie credits free pizza and cookies for attracting her to the development profession while a student looking for volunteer opportunities. She worked in Colgate's Development Office for two years, then moved to New York City, where, for the next 30-plus years, she worked as an executive and consultant

for over 46 nonprofit organizations.

In 2010 she quit consulting full-time to spend more time with Howard at the farm. She returned to school at Skidmore College, earning a master's degree in liberal studies, and was on the adjunct faculty of the College for two years, teaching "Philanthropy and the Arts." In 2017 she accepted a part-time job at Gould Farms in Monterey, Mass., and conducted the first capital campaign in their 100-year history, successfully raising \$2.7 million for a much-needed community center. She considers her work at Gould Farms as her "career topper" and continues, part time, as their Development Director.

Melanie and Howard have been married for 32 years. Howard has four children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, all of whom are sad to see the end of family gatherings at the Brandston's farm. The huge property, though, became too much for Howard, Melanie and Tillie and they are delighted with their move to Kimball Farms.

*Margot Yondorf, photo by Lorraine Roman*