



## Kimball Residents Pick Top Romance Films

By Pat Flinn  
Observer Contributor

FEBRUARY FEATURES Valentine's Day, and what beyond love songs and poetry stirs hearts like a romantic movie? Lots of them are out there. Which are the most popular?

We took a random poll of Kimball residents using a list of titles compiled by our in-house movie-industry authority Lily Wayne. Both first and second choices were solicited. Votes were submitted in many different ways: in person, email, phone, and notes.

Residents used different approaches and interpretations when selecting a favorite. One bypassed *Roman Holiday* because it did not have a "storybook ending." Another skipped the list and chose Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* for its sweet depiction of romance. She was especially taken with the now-famous spaghetti-eating scene, with the two pooches eating from the opposite ends of one strand, ending with a pooch smooch in the middle.

**Casablanca** was the hands-down favorite, with *Sleepless in Seattle* a distant second, and *An Affair to Remember*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and *Gone with the Wind* tied for third. As a second choice, *Casablanca* was first, *Roman Holiday*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, and *When Harry Met Sally* tied for second, and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* was third.

The women to men voter ratio was 3 to 1. Both chose *Casablanca* as their favorite. But women were a bit more unified with their choice, 31% vs. men 25%.



Photo credit Warner Bros. Pictures

Asked to comment on our choices, *Berkshire Eagle* movie critic William Everhart responded:

In the best romances, star-crossed lovers confront the fates that conspire to keep them apart, while finding inner reservoirs of strength and wisdom in the process. There you have *Casablanca*.

Humphrey Bogart's Rick, a cynic with a soft heart, jilted at the Paris train station by Ingrid Bergman's Ilsa, finds he still loves her — and she him. But what of Ilsa's husband Victor Laszlo (Paul Henreid), Europe's leading freedom fighter against the Nazis? The brilliant solution defies the fates, and Rick even starts a

# Reflections on a Year of Successes

**By Sandra Shepard**

*Kimball Farms Executive Director*

AS WE ENTER yet another year, I reflect upon the preceding one with gratitude and deep appreciation for all our employees, our residents, and their families. It is an absolute honor, year after year, to lead such a great group of individuals. Each year, the accomplishments, challenges, and camaraderie remind me of why our Kimball Farms Community is considered an extension of family.

Together we achieved another record-breaking year of move-ins and earned national recognition in the areas of employee and customer satisfaction on both campuses. Our Nursing Care Center received excellent annual survey results and continued to provide high-quality care with compassion and respect. Our current Independent Living residents opened their apartments to new arrivals and welcomed them wholeheartedly into the Kimball Farms home.

A few special highlights of the past year also included the addition of our new dog park, where our other community members also have an opportunity to meet new friends! Our Life Enrichment Area received an upgrade with new floors and a new kitchen area, and we embraced the future with the addition of our electric charging stations as many new residents invested in green transportation.

We collectively welcomed many new staff members, celebrated births, and mourned losses. We celebrated milestone anniversaries and acknowledged each department during their respective recognition week. We had record-breaking attendance at our external holiday celebration in December and helped residents and families celebrate memorable milestones and bring in the New Year.

We saw the rollout of new menus with plant-based entrees and vegetarian dishes and embraced challenges across all departments. We expanded interest in the numerous resident committees and collaboratively supported new marketing events this year with fanfare food at our Blues and Brews event and the Fall Harvest. We repeated events like the Holiday Bazaar and Casino Night with elegant dining and festive ambiance.

As a community, we exchanged ideas and visions and opened our hearts and minds to creative out-of-the-box thinking. We embraced change and adjusted accordingly. We saw great success and solidified the sense of family and community through the compassion, respect, and integrity that is Kimball Farms. I look forward to all the wonderful things yet to be accomplished in the year ahead! Thank you for being such valuable members of this special home and community.

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## ***Recycling Fair!***

**Saturday, February 15**

**10 to 11:30 a.m.**

**In the auditorium**

See bulletin board for list of recyclables.

Small pill bottles can now be recycled at the Fair.

*The Kimball Farms Observer is written and published  
by and for the residents of Kimball Farms*

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## President's Letter

### *New Year Gets Busy Start*

Dear Kimball Farms friends,

We are in the midst of a cold but very busy winter season here at Kimball Farms. The new year began with a huge event planned by Garry Roosma and his crew. Mike Paglier and the dining staff provided food and drink, and two rounds of entertainment were offered by Avery Sharpe and his musicians before dinner and the Kimball Farms Players after dinner. Thank you to all who helped with this extravaganza!

The January Residents Association meeting featured Sandy Shepard, Executive Director, and Mike Quirk, VP of Housing for Integrity, who explained the ins and outs of the Kimball Farms annual budget and the rationale for this year's increase in the monthly service fee. They answered several questions from residents.

The month was filled with concerts organized by Sharon Lazerson, as well as talks from the Speaker Series. Thank you all.

All our committees are reorganized and getting active. The Recycling Committee will hold a Recycling Fair and take your unwanted stuff on February 15.

The Trips Committee and Michelle Rosier have trips planned to the Clark Art Institute, Barrington Stage for the 10x10 program, the Mahaiwe for the opera, as well as other activities. Check the books on the bridge for signups.

John Cheney and the Kimball Farms Singers will offer us a Valentine's Day party on February 14, with goodies from Mike Paglier. Sharon Lazerson has a number of new programs planned for February as well.

Stay warm and keep an eye out for activities to enjoy.

*Pat Steele, President*

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## *Time to Meditate*

Meditation sessions with Rich Hayes take place Fridays at 3 in the Conference Room.

## Editor's Desk

### *Romance in February*

Since Valentine's Day is emblematic of February, Associate Editor Kathie Ness suggested we focus on romantic movies. The idea quickly morphed into taking a poll of residents' favorites. Contributor Pat Flinn agreed to solicit and tally the votes, while we approached the *Berkshire Eagle's* movie critic William Everhart for his take on our top choices.

Kimball events planner Sharon Lazerson, meanwhile, scheduled a *Casablanca* screening on February 11 and a movie trivia night on February 12. John Cheney will lead the Kimball Farms Singers in a concert of love songs on February 14. Romance will be all around us!

In the bleak midwinter, when we're glad to snuggle indoors, our feathered friends outdoors are less cozy and must eat to keep themselves going. Many of us helped them along for years before moving to Kimball and continue to do so now. Contributor Jean Rousseau touched base with numbers of intrepid bird feeders to discover how they do it.

Kimball Executive Director Sandy Shepard reports on the achievements in 2024 and we welcome three new residents to our community.

*Charles Bonenti, Editor*

# She Was Always There

By Pat Flinn

*Observer Contributor*

A NATIVE OF PITTSFIELD, new resident MaryAnn Minella grew up there and graduated from Pittsfield High School in 1954. She worked at Berkshire Bank & Trust for five years, first as a mail girl and then as a secretary. She moved on to be a legal secretary for former city solicitor Ed Reder for a year, then ended up taking a secretarial position with GE Group.

MaryAnn describes the next chapter of her life this way: “I thought there was something bigger and better than Pittsfield, so I decided to move to California in 1960. It was different there. I loved it.”

She went to work as an executive secretary for Lockheed Aircraft in Sunnyvale, just south of San Francisco. Only a week after arriving in California, MaryAnn met her future husband, Michael Minella, Jr. He was an engineer with GE, which happened to have an office within Lockheed.

Mike and MaryAnn married in 1962 and honeymooned in Hawaii. Their first son, Michael III, was born a year later in 1963. In October of that year, husband Mike was transferred to...guess where...Pittsfield!

MaryAnn says: “My parents were happy, but I was not. It was an adjustment for me.” In December of 1965 the couple bought a house on Quirico Drive (where MaryAnn lived until she moved to Kimball Farms). Their second son, Eric, arrived on the scene in 1966.

In addition to being busy with the kids, MaryAnn was a Mary Kay Skin Care Consultant for 42 years. She also enjoyed bowling and playing golf at both the GEAA course and the Berkshire

Hills course (where her dad had a lifetime membership).

Mike and MaryAnn enjoyed traveling, especially seeing the U.S.A. Mike died in 1994 at the age of 59. MaryAnn says: “That was too young. You don’t get to pick that one.”

MaryAnn continued to take trips, mostly with groups, often with friends. She has been multiple times to Ireland and to Norway, where she still has cousins. She explained that her first name is a combination of the first names of her Irish grandmother Mary and her Norwegian grandmother Ann. She is quick to note that it is one word, not two, with a capital “A.”

“I have two great sons, both very nice people,” she says with pride, adding she once said to Eric: “Daddy and I were very lucky with you.”

Eric’s quick reply: “Mom, luck had nothing to do with it. You were always there.” It appears the proverbial tree and apples are quite

close together.

This past October, while preparing to move to Kimball Farms, MaryAnn had a stroke. She says it was the result of a “double whammy...high blood pressure and COVID!” Son Eric (from San Diego) came to help with the move, as did son Mike and his wife Mary (closer in Dalton), who continue to help her out. She is recovering from the stroke nicely, and is even attending the KF exercise and balance class.

MaryAnn sums up her Kimball experience so far: “Everyone here has been so friendly, stopping in if my door is open and introducing themselves.”

It is a good bet that the door to apartment 166 may be open often.



Photo by Lily Wayne

*MaryAnn Minella*

# Local Connections Ease a Transition

**By Dorothea Nelson**  
*Observer Contributor*

An interview with new resident Marcia Brolli will introduce you to a woman who wears many hats: teacher, gardener, herbalist, knitter, reader... and I've not yet touched upon her accomplishments in renovating old houses or her travels to places far and near. Except for a brief stint in Evanston, Ill., she's been a New Englander all her life. She was born in Meriden, N.H., lived in Northboro, Mass. and attended local schools there until departing for Colby College in Waterville, Maine, where she earned a degree in English.

While at Colby she met and, after a three-year hiatus, married Robert Brolli. With degrees in hand, the couple moved to the Berkshires. Both were teachers, and then Bob became the first director of the Mount before he bought Bullwinkle's, a store he operated first in Lenox and then in Great Barrington. Marcia taught high school English at Mt. Everett Regional, a position she maintained for 39 years.

We chatted a bit about differences in public school behavior today. Although Marcia's been out of teaching for 23 years, her observations remained pertinent and interesting. "We just didn't have many discipline problems; the kids never had cell phones." And then she added, "I was there so long, I was trusted by both students and faculty." I could almost hear the collective sighs of today's classroom teachers!

Besides all that's involved with teaching, the couple became adept at renovating houses, first with two houses in Alford, then their Richmond home, and finally the home she just sold in Sheffield.

These tasks would have been enough for most people, but Marcia isn't most people. She and her sister (a trained lyric soprano) both love to sing and have performed together at Tanglewood. She's also

been active in the Stockbridge Festival Chorus as well as a loyal participant in her church choir at Old Parish Church in Sheffield. Opera is a great love; she's so pleased to know that feeling is shared by many at Kimball and that a van will be available for HD live performances at the Mahaiwe theater.

Marcia's enthusiasms include gardening. For some years she's been an active volunteer with the

Herb Associates at the Berkshire Botanical Garden, where she joined Anna Smith, a friend from Colby. In Sheffield, Marcia has worked with its Food Assistance Program to supply needy residents with nutritious food, and for 22 years was active in the Sheffield Historical Society.

Some of her travel adventures have taken her far afield. One that was particularly special for her was a 15-day excursion to China with ten teenagers and two other faculty members. It was eye-opening for them all and a particular delight for her since her father had taught Eng-

lish in Shansi from 1932 to 1934. She has also visited Ireland, Turkey, France, and Italy, and enjoyed a Viking cruise on the Rhine with Nancy Duvall (before Nancy became a Kimball Farms resident herself).

Marcia has known about Kimball since before the place opened. Now, after having been on her own for 25 years, she determined it was time to make this place her home. The move has been made easier for her since she has so many long-time friends here, but she says even more important than that is the willingness of everyone to meet new people "more than halfway—it's not just meet and greet." And when asked what words she might use to describe her new home, her response was "kindness and friendliness," words I believe many other residents would echo.



Photo by Lily Wayne

*Marcia Brolli*

# Educator on the Move

**By Susan Dana**

*Observer Contributor*

CECILE BECKMAN has lived in many places since her birth in New Jersey, and now she's landed in apartment 132 at Kimball Farms.

Her memories of growing up in the small town of Rahway include the kind of freedom that children no longer have, she believes. In an area surrounded by woods, she and her pals jumped rope, built fires to roast potatoes purloined from their mothers' kitchens, watched the clouds drift across the sky, and socialized at the local pool in the summer.

Some of the bolder boys dried the long-stemmed brown weeds they called "punk" and then pretended to smoke them. Her group divided itself into a hierarchy of the young, middle, and older kids, with the oldest giving the orders. In that environment, the younger ones learned how to deal with other people, and Cecile says, "We learned lessons about getting along with others that were never in the school curriculum, and I think it was a much healthier way of growing up."

At Syracuse University, she majored in psychology and minored in English and philosophy. After completing a master's degree in education, she took her first job as a kindergarten teacher in Westfield, N.J. When she married a Syracuse classmate whom she had met in a Shakespeare class, they moved to the Detroit, Mich., area where he had graduated from Wayne State Medical School.

Cecile moved back to the East Coast and taught in a variety of schools in New York City, from a year in Harlem to PS 189 in Manhattan at 89th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. "It was series of very different experiences," Cecile remembers with a wry smile.

For even more "different experiences," in 1987 she signed up to teach for the summer at a high school in Tel Aviv, Israel, and in 1990, she returned to teach at a girls' high school in Jerusalem through Teachers On Volunteer Service (VOTS).

"I'd go back again," she said. "I had always been intrigued by Israel, and I was astonished by the strength, attitude, and pride of the admirable Jewish people. It was a whole experience for me. I grew up with anti-Semitism, and this was a whole different experience."

Cecile's transition from a large retirement community in Yonkers has not been easy. She had to give up favorite furniture and "great stuff," a problem we can all relate to. She mentioned how helpful her counselor, Eileen Henle, and other neighbors have been while she's been learning the ropes and unpacking.

But challenging as the move has been, now she's living close to her daughter in Alford, who was a real estate attorney before her retirement to the Berkshires. She was always a good cook, but now she is a professional baker. Her business is called "Sifted"!

Cecile also has two sons, one an attorney in California and the other an ophthalmologist with a special focus on glaucoma, who divides his time between Rhode Island and Florida. Three grandchildren make up the next generation.

As Cecile and I finished our interview meeting, she casually mentioned that she had been a speed walker. She used to walk with a group of friends before 6 a.m. and the beginning of the teaching day, and routinely climbed five flights of stairs to meet with students. She has already met Nadine Gill, a kindred spirit.

Even if speed walking is not your thing, be sure to call Cecile at 7132.



Photo by Lily Wayne

*Cecile Beckman*

## February Events

**February 9 ▪ 6:00 p.m.**

Superbowl Party

**February 10 ▪ 7:00 p.m.**

Peter Blanchette, guitarist

**February 12 ▪ 7:00 p.m.**

Pianist Karen Tchougourian,  
Romantic Movies Music Trivia

**February 14 ▪ 10:30 a.m.**

Valentine's Day Party  
w/Kimball Farms Singers

**February 15 ▪ 10:00 a.m.**

Recycling Fair

**February 17 ▪ 7:00 p.m.**

Doug Schmolze, Patriotic Songs

**February 18 ▪ 2:00 p.m.**

Book Group

**February 19 ▪ 10:00 a.m.**

Theatre Games w/Maggie Barkin

**February 19 ▪ 6:30 p.m.**

Camera Club

**February 24 ▪ 7:00 p.m.**

Speaker Series

**February 25 ▪ 4:00 p.m.**

Berkshire Museum presentation  
on the Mahicans

**February 26 ▪ 7:00 p.m.**

Olga Dunn Dance Studio Performance

## February Trips

**Sunday February 2nd Bus at 12:15 p.m.**

Clark Art Museum *Free Day*

**Friday February 7th Bus at 5:30 p.m.**

Hevreh in Great Barrington

**Friday February 21st Bus at 5:30 p.m.**

Hevreh in Great Barrington

**Saturday February 22nd Bus at 1:15 p.m.**

Barrington Stage *10x10 Festival*

**Thursday February 27th Bus at 1:30 p.m.**

Norman Rockwell Museum

**MAKING MUSIC** *most mornings, PineHill resident Judy Stelling is at the piano, playing church music, popular oldies, and an occasional classical piece for an*



*hour or so. She plays on her own piano, which she brought to PineHill with her, but which would not fit into her apartment and is out in the upstairs lobby. Formerly a nurse, Judy says she has been playing since childhood.*

Photo by Charles Bonenti

## In Memoriam

**Barbara Liebert**

November 7, 1930 to December 27, 2024

**Nancy Brigham**

March 3, 1932 to January 6, 2025

**Diana Redfern**

July 24, 1931 to January 15, 2025

## Birthday Wishes

**Twenty-three residents celebrate birthdays in February.** There is a 20-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrants.

**February birthdays belong to:** Bridget Connolly, Herbert Hodos, William Ryan, Bruce Bernstein, Steve Blanchard, Nelli Van Batavia, Jane Shea, Ruth Bemak, Suzanne Daignault, Alan Hoffman, Gary Shampang, Gene Leibowitz, Dorothy Mandel, Gloria Pixley, Nancy Haase, Betty Simmons, Rita Kaplan, Joanna Strauss, Andrew Matthews, Reed Hand, June Ann Mason, Peter Strauss, and Lita Moses.

Happy Birthday to each of you!!

# Cardiac Arrhythmia

## Diagnosis and Treatment – Part 1 of 2

By **Stephanie Beling, M.D.**

*Observer Columnist*

IN 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson established American Heart Month, and since then, every February, heart health is front and center. It is also the month that we celebrate Valentine's Day and once again the heart is front and center. If at times you feel that your heart is all aflutter, it may be love but it could be something requiring medical attention—in other words a cardiac arrhythmia.

An arrhythmia is an abnormal heartbeat caused by a defect in the timing or sequence of electrical stimulation. The heart may beat too quickly (tachycardia) or too slowly (bradycardia) or in a very irregular way. It may feel as if it is skipping a

beat. Some arrhythmias may not be serious. Others may be more of a problem, even catastrophic, in that they can cause fainting, heart failure, or even sudden death.

A quick review: The heart is a muscle with four chambers that receive and pump blood throughout the body. The upper two chambers, called atria, receive blood from the body and the lungs and pass it to the two lower chambers, called ventricles, to pump out again. The right atrium receives oxygen-depleted blood from the body, pushes it to the right ventricle and on to the lungs, where it picks up a new supply of oxygen. At the same time, the left atrium receives the oxygen-rich blood from the lungs and pushes it out to the left ventricle, which then pumps it into the aorta and on to the rest of the body.

Under normal circumstances this happens 60 to 100 times a minute in a very regular rhythm. The entire sequence depends on small and precise bursts of electricity that trigger a coordinated sequence of heart muscle contractions. The heart has a natural

pacemaker called the *sinoatrial node* that is the starting point of the heartbeat. Palpitations are one type of arrhythmia when the beat starts elsewhere and the normal sequence is disrupted. Palpitations are symptoms of everything from short- or long-term stress to caffeine or alcohol excess, smoking, or medications, and they show up in a variety of arrhythmias. They may feel alarming, but they do not always reflect a serious heart condition. Prolonged or frequent episodes of palpitations require further diagnosis.



**Atrial Fibrillation Heart Rhythm**

Atrial fibrillation (A-fib) is the most common type of arrhythmia and is characterized by an irregular and often very rapid heart rhythm that can cause blood clots to form in the quivering atria. These clots may then lodge in blood vessels

leading to the brain. A-fib is increasingly common in older adults, affecting as many as 1 in 10 over the age of 80. It increases the risk of stroke, heart failure, and other heart-related complications. For many people, A-fib may have no symptoms, but in others it may cause a fast, pounding heartbeat, shortness of breath, or weakness.

Although usually not life-threatening, A-fib is a serious medical condition that requires proper treatment to prevent stroke or heart failure. Treatment may include medications to prevent clotting, therapy to reset the heart rhythm, and/or catheter procedures to block faulty heart contractions. Most of these procedures are done by an electrophysiologist, a specialized cardiologist who is an expert in diagnosing and treating issues with the heart's electrical system. An electrophysiologist can discover which area in your heart is causing a problem with rhythm and often can fix the problem right after the diagnostic procedure. Next month we will review the ventricular arrhythmias.

# Observer Spotlight

**FOUR GENERATIONS** of the Van Dyke family gathered at Kimball Farms on January 6. Standing behind resident Marjorie Van Dyke are, from left, her grandson Connor Van Dyke holding his son, Charlie; Jenie Smith, Connor's partner and Charlie's mother; and James Van Dyke, Marjorie's son.



Photo by Dave Vacheron



**NEW YEAR'S EVE** gala featured a lavish cocktail buffet, above, the Avery Sharp Jazz Trio, and "The Show" of skits, right, organized by Garry Roosma, standing, with, from left, Doug Cannon, Molly Pomerance, Mary Misch, Charlie Cook, and Gilbert Schrank.



Photos by Lily Wayne

**Romance Films** *continued from page 1*

beautiful new friendship.

Buoyed by a savagely witty script, *Casablanca* is not only the best romance ever but one of the best movies ever made.

Not as much is at stake in *Sleepless in Seattle*, a bitersweet romantic comedy. But the fates again play a hand, this time in the familiar genre tropes of misunderstandings, wrong assumptions and squandered opportunities that keep our romantic leads apart.

Grieving widower Sam Baldwin, recently relocated to Seattle, goes on a radio talk show at the behest of his precocious son to describe his idyllic marriage, winning the hearts of female listeners, including that of Annie Reed, a Baltimore reporter engaged to Bill Pullman's wearisome stiff. The couple remain tantalizingly at bay as the Empire State Building beckons.

*Sleepless in Seattle* cruises on the appeal of its lead actors, Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, and an earlier romantic comedy, *An Affair to Remember*, starring Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr, is a critical component. *Sleepless in Seattle* and *An Affair to Remember*, which finished third in the Kimball poll, would make a great double feature.

Kimball Farms events planner Sharon Lazerson has scheduled a screening of *Casablanca* here on February 11th, followed by an appearance on the 12th by local pianist Karin Tehougourian featuring music trivia from *Casablanca* and other romantic films.

This survey turned out to be a fun and entertaining project, for both the solicitors and the responders. It brought back fond memories. It engendered personal stories, both poignant and humorous. And it was the start of some interesting discussions. It is apparent that these favorite movies have had a long-lasting impact on the survey participants here at Kimball Farms.

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## Solo Diners Gain Option

Residents dining solo now have the option of being seated with other singles on Sundays.

A sign-up sheet will be posted at the entrance to the dining room at 5 p.m. The first five to sign up will be seated. The option is not open to guests.

Questions? Call Dave Vacheron at 7123.

## Tech Talk

### *Where to Find Help*

Kimball Farms has no computers set aside for residents' use, although administrative staff will type or copy letters or forms on request.

IT staffer Tanner Shepard can advise on use and correct problems with most cell phones, computers, and printers, but cannot fix broken equipment or resolve problems with landline phones. Those should be addressed to Liesl Carlson in the administrative office.

Beyond the KF campus, the Lenox Public Library has three computers for public use and no library card required. You can check emails, search the Internet, and write letters during open hours.

The Lenox library also has a Tech Help program on Thursdays from 2 to 4 p.m. (with the exception of February 13 and March 13) through March 20. It complements the assistance at Kimball by adding instruction in word processing, email basics, social media use and Zoom and FaceTime basics.

Call the library at (413) 637-0197 to reserve a half-hour time slot.

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## Netflix Series Set in a Retirement Home

Word is circulating that the Netflix series "Man on the Inside" somewhat mirrors life at Kimball Farms.

Actor Ted Danson, 76, plays a retiree who agrees to go undercover for a detective agency at a posh San Francisco retirement home to find a valuable necklace that may have been stolen.

Some at KF who have watched the eight-episode comedy say they find amusing parallels with life here.

## Family Saga Reflects World Events

By Mary Misch  
Observer Columnist

*BOURNVILLE: A Novel in Seven Occasions*, by Jonathan Coe, covers significant events over 75 years through the perspective of two English families: the middle-class Lambs and the anointed Royals. Among the finalists for the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction, this book contains a great deal of unvarnished commentary by citizens about government matters. Only the most dedicated Brits and Anglophiles need take all of it to heart. For the rest of us, it makes diverting reading for the long winter nights. Our library has the American edition.

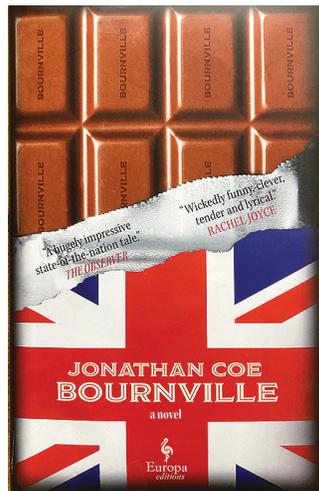
The seven occasions, sometimes out of order, go from VE Day in May 1945 to its 75th anniversary in May 2020, during the worst of the Covid pandemic. As shown by its jacket, *BOURNVILLE* is also about the actual making and marketing of Cadbury's chocolate candy from a factory complex near Birmingham, known locally as "the Works." The planned community of Bournville, much like Hershey, Pa., includes working-class housing and public recreation areas. In time it will be reduced to a theme park called Cadbury World.

The Lamb family, starting with Mary and Geoffrey and three sons, move up and away from Bournville, but remain attached. Cadbury Bars and Crème Eggs continue to be found on Mary's mantelpiece. Geoffrey carries his reactionary views with him from place to place. The eldest son, Jack, will move cheerfully with the times and do well selling luxury cars. The next, Martin, is to spend his best years arguing for parts of the European Union to accept Cadbury's chocolate, despite its vegetable fat component. British people have said, fondly, that

their local product "tasted of the war." Peter, Mary's favorite, becomes a BBC violinist and her confidant. The three choose and change partners, rarely with Geoffrey's approval.

At the first VE celebration, Bournville listeners to the radio are unmerciful toward their King's halting speech, with someone shouting, "Come on, mate, out with it." After the final pause, one says, "Blimey—he made it." In 1953, Bournville watchers of the televised Coronation complain, "But we can't see the colours." In 1966, the final game of the World Cup, between England and West Germany, is played out in excruciating detail, credited by author Coe to another book. In 1969, members of the Lamb family, on holiday in Wales, hear local disapproval of Prince Charles: "If there has to be a Prince of Wales why can't he be a Welshman?" In 1981, after the wedding of Charles and Diana, Mary's aging father thinks, "Another bloody royal ceremony. The Coronation was bad enough, but this one, hell's teeth!" In 1997, after the funeral of Diana, Jack tells his wife, "I think, if her life is going to mean anything, we should all take that lesson from it. That we can achieve anything." He goes on to reveal his plan to buy a more elaborate property. His wife responds, "It's what she would have wanted."

In May of 2020, the widowed Mary, living alone during the pandemic, sees her family only through windowpanes and over Skype. Aware of a heart condition, she uses her limited energy to visit her childhood home in Bournville, where immigrants now live, for a scant VE observance. By June she is weak and in pain, but Covid restrictions prevent proper care. She will die alone, and Peter will write about it in searing detail. In fact, this part is about the author's mother, and well done.



# Hosting the Birds

By Jean Rousseau

Observer Contributor

HOW POPULAR is feeding the birds at Kimball Farms? Very, it turns out. An informal survey of all known bird-feeding residents revealed that at least two dozen apartments (30-plus individuals) are engaged in this activity. Participants range from beginners who took it up only upon arriving here to lifelong devotees.

The longtimers include several serious birders with lifetime lists, thick passports, and records of personal sightings of rare species or of common types in very unusual places. Some of our birders, perhaps the more recent arrivals, are happy just to enjoy the show, especially if there are many birds or they arrive in busy flocks. Peggy Braun speaks of her feeder as Netflix for her cat, and others are of similar mind.

But the majority of our bird watchers/feeders brought the habit with them from previous chapters in their lives. At least several vie for furthest back: Michelle Gilligan, 3rd grade Girl Scouts project; Jeanne Fenn, 4th grade; Gary Shampang, at 9 years old the youngest ever to go birding with the venerable Hoffmann Bird Club.

Some who work at identifying their guests keep lists, often including dates of sightings; others trust to memory; but almost everyone has a few favorites—rarities, beauties, or unusual events.

At least two residents have made birding an important part of their lives. Gil Schrank became a keen hiker and birder as a young camper in Otis. Early in their marriage, Gil and wife Nancy Jones lived near the Museum of Natural History in New York, where Gil reorganized the birding archives and volunteered as a guide for many years. Nancy and Gil have gone on birding expeditions to many places

in the U.S. as well as abroad.

Gary Shampang moved into PineHill with his wife, Doris, in 2024. As mentioned above, he developed an interest and a very keen eye for birds in early boyhood. He learned the protocols of formal identifica-

tion, which require verifying sightings with a recognized expert, and has established numerous records, often of a first species in a region, state, or even country. All that earned Gary the presidency of the Hoffmann Bird Club in 1982–83.

Perhaps Gary's proudest find was spotting a Parasitic Jaeger on Pontoosuc Lake. This is a bird found only in high Arctic climes or at sea, preying on other seabirds. Within a day after the sighting was mentioned in the *Berkshire Eagle* in July 1979, the land around the lake was jammed with cars from all over the Northeast and even the Midwest. That's birders, and birding.

If you are attracted to birding, it's easy to start hosting the birds at a feeder. There are numerous outdoor, hardware, and garden stores nearby with abundant varieties of feeder models, types of birdseed, and helpful advice. This is one of those activities where folks are helpful and not competitive. If you live in an upstairs apartment, however, be sure to take precautions to ensure that your feeder visitors won't make a mess on your downstairs neighbor's patio.

But if you want the easiest, and for some the most pleasurable, way to go birding, go to the Cornell Ornithology Lab site [merlin.allaboutbirds.org](http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org) and download the free Merlin app on your smartphone. It is very user-friendly, and you can turn it on any time you go walking or are just sitting outdoors. It will identify bird calls, name the species, show a picture of the bird, and, if you want, provide abundant information. A walk around the driveway loop in fair weather, Merlin in hand, can turn up 12 to 20 or even more species. You will love it!



Photo by Charles Bonenti

*A simple tube feeder will attract birds to your door.*