



The Kimball Farms *Observer*



Volume 35, No. 8

Party Night in the Balkans—page 6

October 2025

Forest Bathing

By Nancy King

Observer Contributor

THE OLLI INSTRUCTOR met our little group of students in the first parking lot at Pittsfield State Forest on



Photo by Kathie Ness

an early fall day and handed out collapsible 3-legged stools for us to carry into the woods. We were to stop walking at several points on the easy trail, move off the trail a little, open up the stools, and just sit and contemplate nature for about 10 minutes.

At the first, I positioned my seat on a bed of pine needles and sat. I breathed in the damp, luxurious scent of pine and looked around me. The many tall trunks rose like the columns of a cathedral. Above me the treetops moved back and forth, while the gentle breeze down below caressed the skin on my face. Patches of sunlight from the swaying canopy danced on the pine needles at my feet. Observing the forest floor more closely, I watched a black-striped chipmunk scamper by with a nut in its mouth. It paused briefly and glanced around nervously before diving down a tiny hole to add to its winter food supply. As I listened, a

Forest Bathing, continued on page 2

Editor's Desk

Head Start Yields October's Issue

THIS OCTOBER ISSUE was born in August. We used our annual summer “break” to crunch deadlines, get a head start on September, and leave breathing room to pull October together. All was necessitated by my taking an extended vacation in September.

That's not to say I'm indispensable. Kathie Ness, as second in command, has ably shouldered my work on top of hers in the past. And our contributors have been supportive. But it's still added pressure on everyone, no matter how much we plan ahead. That's why we need more volunteer writers, editors, and photographers.

They needn't be professionals. If you are willing to interview new residents or staff and can write in decent English, come and talk to us.

That said, our October issue heralds autumn with an essay on “Forest Bathing” by Nancy King. Note: It's more about meditating in the woods than getting wet. You'll find information about an upcoming theatrical performance and advice about recycling. And Mark and Cynthia Coleman take to Open Mic to describe a Turkish-Bulgarian-Greek Friendship Meeting they witnessed while teaching in Bulgaria years ago.

Several new residents are profiled, and our health and book columnists offer their sage advice.

Looking forward to Halloween!

— Charles Bonenti

Local Actors Bringing Laughter

SENIORS ACTING UP, a troupe of amateur actors who are all “of a certain age”—that is, mid-60s and up—is coming to Kimball Farms on Monday, October 27. The group has performed staged readings in various Berkshire County venues, including the Berkshire Athenaeum and Unicorn Theatre. Linda Cantoni and Kimball resident Karel Fisher are co-directors of the offerings coming here.

The two short plays they’ll present are *A Sunny Morning* by Spanish playwrights Serafin and

Joaquin Alvarez Quintero and *Bliss Eternal* by Lenox playwright Steven Somkin. Actor Peter Podol, a retired Spanish professor, and playwright Steven Somkin will be on hand to answer audience questions after the performances.

The readings will take place in the auditorium at 7 p.m. Both plays are described as having comedic elements and surprise endings that offer a lighthearted break from everyday challenges—not to be missed!

Forest Bathing, *continued from page 1*

woodpecker started drumming on a nearby tree. Eventually the noise stopped, the breeze died down, and there was an eerie but peaceful silence in the forest.

Next, the instructor moved our group a little farther along the trail where there were more deciduous trees and told us to find a tree and study it. I found what I thought was an ash tree with its tightly woven bark and opened my little stool close to it. I ran my hands over the rough bark; it was solid, no loose pieces. I felt the little ridges under my fingertips and had the urge to wrap my arms as far as they would go around the tree. Looking up at the leaves, I made a positive identification that it was indeed an ash, since the twigs were directly opposite each other on the branches. (On a tree identification walk, I had learned the acronym MAD, standing for maple, ash, dogwood. These species have twigs directly across from each other, while other trees have alternating ones.) Looking down, I saw clumps of bright green moss among the roots, and I put my hands on them and felt their velvet-like softness.

At the next stop we were seated along a small brook. The sound of little bubbles of water moving over the rocks and pebbles was music to my ears, and tunes from the second movement of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony moved through my head. Just watching the clear moving water

was mesmerizing.

Finally, the OLLI instructor stopped us at a spot near the end of the loop trail and told us to meditate while she prepared a tea ceremony. The tea smelled like pine and was very soothing to sip. While we drank, our leader gave a little talk on the history of Forest Bathing. It started as ecotherapy in Japan in the 1980s, at a time when there were record levels of depression in that country. Called *shinrin-yoku* in Japanese, it is the practice of therapeutic relaxation where one spends time in a forest, focusing on sensory engagement to connect with nature. Later I Googled “forest bathing” and learned that solitary time in a forest setting increases parasympathetic nerve activity. Trees themselves release compounds known as phytoncides into the air, which can help reduce stress levels.

In these upsetting times, a little forest bathing along the quieter stretches of our Dan Dorman Trail can be soothing and calming. The trail entrance between parking lots E and F is a great place to start. Try it, sitting or standing still while you experience the forest with all your senses.

Always take a friend along when you walk on the trail—in case of a sprained ankle or other mishap, and for the pleasure of enjoying the experience together.

Finding Callings, Then Each Other

By Jean Rousseau
Observer Contributor

THESE TWO PEOPLE searched long to find their true callings and found each other along that way. Anne Hutchinson, a New England Yankee in both name and ancestry, and Gene Kalish, son of a deeply cultured Jewish family with Midwestern roots, met, then married, 35 years ago in Great Barrington. Their lives, first separately, then together, make quite a story.

Anne comes from Yankee stock going back “hundreds of years.” She is descended, indirectly, from and was deliberately named for famed religious dissident Anne Hutchinson of Rhode Island and New York colonial history. Born in coastal Connecticut and raised in Torrington, the eldest of seven children, Anne graduated from Connecticut College in 1969 before joining the Peace Corps to teach biology in Ghana for three years.

She then decided to further pursue science, this time in oceanography. She enrolled at Oregon State University, where she earned a master’s degree in 1975, and then took employment with the U.S. Geological Survey working in San Francisco Bay. The survey was studying the potential effects on the bay of the massive California Water Project, which was designed to divert abundant Northern California water to San Joaquin Valley farms and Southern California cities.

When the Yale School of Nursing created a pioneering program in professional-level nursing training for liberal arts graduates, Anne felt called again. She enrolled in the program and, after studying in Tanzania for her thesis, graduated with her second master’s degree, as a pediatric nurse practitioner, in 1984. A position at Berkshire Medical Center brought her to the Berkshires. She

later took a sabbatical year, 2002–3, at Tulane School of Public Health in New Orleans, with a tour in Ethiopia, to earn her third master’s degree.

Eugene “Gene” Kalish was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. His family had moved from Atlanta to Chicago, then to southern Illinois, before his parents settled in St. Louis. One of three sons, Gene took to the piano at a very early age and continues with it now, as evidenced by the grand piano in the

living room of apartment 257. Musical talent runs in the family: his Sephardic grandmother was a virtuoso pianist and his daughter is an accomplished violinist.

Gene studied music and liberal arts at Oberlin College, Ohio, with a teaching career in mind. He earned a master’s degree at the University of Pennsylvania in 1970, then a doctor of arts at Yale Drama School. He began teaching drama, first at Worcester Polytechnic, then Bard College, then Simon’s Rock. In time Gene concluded that his best calling was with younger students. By then, as a single parent with two children, he sold insurance while working with special-

needs students in numerous school systems.

Anne and Gene met in Great Barrington in 1987 and married in 1990. Anne having raised a daughter and Gene a son and a daughter, they decided to take in more. Together they raised or helped several young relatives and a few foster children.

Anne has retired from BMC and remains very active in charitable work. Among other interests, she serves as a combined board member, director, and manager of operations for the Great Barrington Food Pantry.

Gene mostly retired in 2010, although he continued to teach chess to young people and is now working to support and fund the Williamstown League of Women Voters Democracy Leadership Award program. Clearly, both are still busy doing good works.



Photo by Lily Wayne

*Anne Hutchinson and
Gene Kalish with Pele*

President's Letter

Cooler Weather and Busy Days

FALL IS FINALLY HERE, and change is in the air. A busy fall calendar is in full swing.

First, we congratulate Sandy Shepard and Bill Kittler on their promotions! We know Sandy will continue to be a presence around here in her new role as Regional Director of Campus Operations. And we welcome Bill, whom many of us know from the Nursing Center, as our new Executive Director of Kimball Farms.

Many activities are underway as we start October. The annual Staff Appreciation Drive honors our wonderful staff and takes the place of tipping them. Contributions are accepted through November, and a special event is held in December to distribute the checks to the staff.

Committee sign-ups for 2026 will begin on October 7. This is your chance to choose which of the 17 active committees you would like to join. The sign-up sheets are collated and given to the committee chairs, who will fill their groups. Some committees have a numbers limit, and others can accept all comers.

The Nominating Committee will fill in a slate of officers and counselors and present their recommendations for a vote in December. There is a two-year limit for serving in these positions.

Upcoming events include a photo array of our youthful selves in the Conference Room. A Recycling Fair will occur on October 18. Our fabulous movies will continue. Sharon Lazerson will send us talented musicians and the Speakers Committee will educate us.

A number of cultural events are planned for October. We will be visiting the Berkshire Symphony at Williams College, South Mountain Concerts, Barrington Stage, and the Met opera at the Mahaiwe.

Be sure to visit the Corner Store, which can help you get ready for the holidays in December.

Enjoy the outdoors for a few more weeks. This is my favorite time of year!

— Pat Steele, President,
Residents Association

Proper Recycling Matters

WHILE MOST RESIDENTS and aides cooperate in the proper disposal of trash, the Kimball Farms Recycling Committee asks those who are not following our directives to please do so. It matters!

Despite instructions (both pictures and print) in each of the trash-room areas, some use the “broken glass only” bins for plastic gloves and bandages, and some put used facial tissues in the recyclable-paper bins. A reminder: Medications are toxic to the environment and should be taken to the depository for them at CVS or the one outside the Lenox Police Department.

Soup containers and coffee cups are not recyclable as paper products because they are plastic coated. All non-recyclable food containers, including pet food cans, should be cleaned before disposal.

If the disposal instructions posted in the trash rooms are unclear, please ask one of the co-chairs (below) for clarification. We welcome suggestions for improvements.

The next Recycling Fair will take place on Saturday, October 18, from 10 to 11 a.m. in the auditorium. Lists will be posted identifying those items that we will take for recycling.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact Nancy King (x7237) or Dave Vacheron (x7123), co-chairs of the Recycling Committee.

— Dave Vacheron



Nancy Duvall, blue ribbon winner in the annual Labor Day Pitch and Putt Golf Tournament, poses between tournament co-chairs Dave Vacheron, left, and Tad Evans.

Photo by Charles Bonenti

Minding Family, Cats, and Travel

By **Dorothea Nelson**

Observer Contributor

DOORWAYS are more than entrances to an apartment; they offer insights to a person's tastes and interests if one stops to look carefully at what is posted on them. I did exactly that when I visited Patricia Gazouleas. Her surname was a strong indication of a Greek connection and a quick glance informed me that this woman likes cats.

There were pictures of cats, cat figures, cat plaques...including one that had *gati*, the Greek word for "cat" on it. I knew I was in for a treat when Patricia answered the door and we began a conversation that I hope will never end! I soon met Harpo and Harry, discreet creatures who totally ignored me as I admired them.

Patricia's life began in Battle Creek, Mich., a place that was home for five years before the family relocated, eventually to Bronxville, N.Y. She remained in the East for some years, and enrolled at Mt. Holyoke College in 1952, where she studied for one year before transferring to the University of Michigan.

From there Patricia went off to travel in Europe, ending up in Athens, where she met Panajiotis Gazouleas, a Greek journalist. They soon married in a classic Greek Orthodox ceremony, complete with exchanging of bride and groom wreaths. The couple returned to the U.S. and raised their three children, two sons and one daughter, in Bronxville. Sadly, their daughter succumbed to cancer at an early age, but the boys, John and Edward, now live in Houston, Texas and Richmond, Mass.

Eventually the couple built a large house on Long Island that became a gathering spot for the entire family. Patricia pursued her interests at SUNY Purchase and taught at Dowling, a small liberal arts college in Oakdale, NY, for several years. She also wrote essays for a local newspaper column on "Aging," a topic she may pursue here!

Like many of us, when her husband passed away in 2001, Patricia decided to sell that house and settle

for something smaller and more manageable. She chose to move to Great Barrington, close to her son Edward and to Tanglewood—where Edward, a violist, is now director of the Tanglewood Music Center. Patricia's own love of music has been satisfied by both volunteering at Tanglewood and attending many concerts.

The move to Great Barrington allowed Patricia to travel more extensively. Her "last trip," as she describes it, is scheduled for this fall: a Viking excursion from Berlin to Prague.

She's familiar with Viking travel, something she enjoyed several times with her daughter.

Patricia's apartment is filled with memories of her travels and family treasure. These include a lovely engraved chest, inherited from her grandmother, as well as examples of old Greek pottery. Harpo and Harry love to eat plants, so Patricia has incorporated into her living area a large artificial tree for their climbing pleasure! And if that proves insufficient, they can jump and sprawl on intricate ladders. They are happy cats!

And Patricia is happy, too. "I'm glad I came," she remarked. "I knew that I would find friends here."



Photo by Lily Wayne

Patricia Gazouleas

*She chose to move to Great Barrington, close to her son
and to Tanglewood.*

Open Mic*Party Night in the Balkans*

By Mark & Cynthia Coleman

Observer Contributors

WHEN WE MOVED to Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, in 2003 for a teaching stint at the American University in Bulgaria, we noticed some puzzling phenomena. The municipal bus station was a disused mosque. The nearby picturesque Greek village had been abandoned decades earlier. Several of our new Bulgarian friends had family roots on the Aegean.

The Balkans have been a rough neighborhood for most of the 20th and 21st centuries. As the Ottoman Turks were pushed back by several nationalist revolutions, territory was carved out by several ethnic groups. Then as the various nationalities turned on one another in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, ethnic cleansing ensued. Populations were “exchanged” in the 1920s to meet nationalistic demands (Pontic Greeks for European Turks and Aegean Slavs for Balkan Greeks). All of that involved the current generation’s grandparents. Nobody has forgotten,

as we had occasion to observe.

One night we stopped in our favorite hotel in Edirne, Turkey, where the borders of Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey meet. We went down for supper to find that the tables were set for a party with the flags of the three neighboring countries on each table. We found ourselves seated on the periphery of the initial meeting of the improbable Turkish-Bulgarian-Greek Friendship Society, intended to promote cross-border commerce.

We watched as the Turks arrived first, suitably suited to host the formal occasion and phlegmatic participants. Shortly the Bulgarian *biznis* men (also known as mafia guys) arrived with their bodyguards, or “thick-necks,” Olympic wrestlers and weight lifters from the Communist era. Great awkwardness prevailed as all waited for the fashionably late Greeks, who eventually appeared with their colorfully dressed wives. Everyone sat down and ate in silence until the Greeks, with great flair, began to twirl their ladies around the dance floor as the others watched stolidly. But that, we surmised, was the cultural point that the Greeks intended to rub in.

We don’t know whether there has been a second meeting of the Friendship Society.

A Month for Signing Up and Giving

TWO ANNUAL PROJECTS are underway this month: organizing the residents’ committee memberships for 2026 and continuing the Staff Appreciation Fund drive.

Eileen Henle and Eileen Potash, chairs of the Committee on Committees, outlined the signup procedure during the September 8 Residents Association meeting in the auditorium. Half of the committee chairs spoke about what their committees do, and the other half will follow with talks at the October 6 meeting.

Sign-up sheets will be distributed on October 7 so residents can make their choices by October 28. The

Committee on Committees will sort through the responses and send the final lists to each committee chair. Committees need to be a workable size so not everyone may get his or her first choice. Keep alternatives in mind.

The committees are Art in the Conference Room, Art in the Halls, Committee on Committees, Display Case, Environmental Services (with Recycling and Renewable Energy sub-committees), Food and Nutrition, Golf, Health and Safety, Landscape, Library, Potting Room, Speakers, Residents Association Spring Fund Drive, Staff Appreciation, Staff Education, and Trips.

Annual Projects, continued on page 9

From the Netherlands to the Berkshires

By Susan Dana
Observer Contributor

AT THE MOMENT, the main decorative features of Annie McHugh's apartment are cardboard boxes, both empty and still full. But the most eye-catching temporary decoration is a bright yellow tennis ball, suspended by a cord from a light fixture. It is not a fashion statement, but rather an important part of a visual therapy rehabilitation plan. Following the tennis ball with her eyes as it swings back and forth helps to improve Annie's peripheral vision, which was impaired by a recent stroke.

When we met, Annie had just closed on the sale of the house in Pittsfield where she and her husband, Ed, had lived for 62 years, and where they raised their four daughters. Ed was a native of Pittsfield, and the two met at the roller-skating rink that was a city landmark on Dalton Avenue. He went on to work for the post office in Lanesborough and Pittsfield, and was also a ticket taker at Tanglewood. He loved working with and meeting people. Unfortunately, Ed died four years ago.

Annie, on the other hand, took a more complicated route to Pittsfield. She was born in the Netherlands just as World War II was starting. She was so young that she was largely protected from the war. Her brother, however, remembers that her baby crib was located in the basement of their farmhouse. Even now Annie says that the sound of airplanes makes her want to head for the cellar. Her

father was a farmer, so it was a bit easier to keep his family fed during the war and especially the "Hunger Winter" of 1944–45.

After the war, many of their friends emigrated to Canada, but when she was ten years old, Annie's parents and their six children settled in Chatham, New York, where her father established a dairy of Holstein cows on 350 acres. Her brother and his sons continue to run the family dairy farm, which now consists of more than 2,000 acres in nearby Valatie, New York.

Annie worked at Crane & Co. in Dalton for 16 years and has long been an active member of Hope Church in Lenox, where 50 years ago she met Kimball resident Marlene Bergendahl, and more recently John Cheney.

Annie's mother left 90 descendants, and while she can't claim a similar record, Annie does have 9 excellent grandchildren, whose smiling faces appear on a large throw that's draped over the back of her couch.

Annie decided to come to Kimball Farms last January because she did not want to burden her daughters, and she is sure that Ed would be happy to know she is being cared for. While her current activity is unpacking, she is looking forward to finding other pinochle players and jigsaw puzzle enthusiasts amongst Kimball residents. Annie is pleased with Lynn's Strength & Balance classes, one of her first activities here.

You can welcome Annie by calling her at 7167 for dinner, pinochle, or other activities to enjoy together.



Photo by Lily Wayne

Annie McHugh

Knitters Welcome

The Lenox Council on Aging's Social Needlework Group meets from 12:30 to 2 p.m. on alternating Mondays and Thursday at the Senior Center at 65 Walker St. The group aims to strengthen social bonds while developing fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, imagination and creativity while promoting relaxation and strengthening memory. Information: Call (413) 637-5535.

October Trips

Friday, October 3 Bus at 6:15 pm

Berkshire Symphony Concert
Williams College

Sunday, October 5 Bus at 2:15 pm

South Mountain Concerts

Friday, October 10 Bus at 5:30 pm

Hevreh in Great Barrington

Saturday, October 11 Bus at 11 am & 12:30 pm

Harvest Festival
Berkshire Botanical Garden

Sunday, October 12 Bus at 2:15 pm

Barrington Stage

Sunday, October 19 Bus at 12:15 pm

Met Opera at Mahaiwe
Bellini's *La Sonnambula*

Tuesday, October 21 Bus at 9:30 am

Bennington Museum w/lunch at
Mount Anthony Country Club

Friday, October 24 Bus at 5:30 pm

Hevreh in Great Barrington

Date, Location TBD Bus at 6:00 pm

"Let's Eat Out"

October Events

Saturday, October 4 • 7:00 pm

Michael Leidig, pianist

Thursday, October 9 • 7:00 pm

Clarinet/Piano duo

Steve Poppel, clarinet, with Joan Leonard, piano

Wednesday, October 15 • 7:00 pm

Matt Casson, Vocalist/Songwriter

Wednesday, October 22 • 7:00 pm

Emily Kalish, violinist

Wednesday, October 29 • 4:00pm

Bernard Drew presentation

African-American history in the Berkshires

Happy Birthdays!

Twenty residents celebrate birthdays in October.

There is a 30-year spread between the youngest and oldest celebrants.

October birthdays belong to: Melanie Trumbull, Ann Trabulsi, Felicity McClenachan, Jean Rousseau, Jane Gilligan, Jim Tremblay, John James, Janet Johnson, Audley Green, Patricia Flinn, Betty Jones, Nancy Curme, Kathie Ness, Annelise Brand, Buck Smith, Lorraine Roman, Arlene Potler, Cecile Beckman, Nelda McGraw and Anna Smith

In Memoriam

Carol Hausen (LEP)

October 26, 1928 to August 20, 2025

Tech Training for Free

Cyber-Seniors technology training for older adults is available free on Tuesdays at 9 a.m. at the Lenox Council on Aging at 65 Walker St. Call (413) 637-5535 or email cyberseniors.org/berkshirecounty/.

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

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Finding Grace Takes Unique Approach

By Mary Misch
Observer Columnist

A CURRENT Book of the Month novel, *Finding Grace*, by debut author Loretta Rothschild presents an affluent English couple, Honor and Tom, with their young daughter, Chloe, entering the lush surroundings of the Paris Ritz Hotel. As narrator, Honor reveals sobering details of her quest to provide a sibling for the child. In their luxury suite, the couple argues over Honor's obsession with the progress of Jess, their birth surrogate. Honor takes Chloe down toward the dining room. They meet a friendly woman who "detonated a suicide bomb that killed me and Chloe instantly."

From some vague afterlife, Honor continues to narrate. Except for flashbacks, her focus is primarily on Tom as he blunders through life without her. She catches his thoughts and senses his emotions. In the midst of acute mourning, Tom learns that Jess is to bear his son, Henry.

Five years pass. Honor picks up the story. With hired help and loyal friends, Tom has raised Henry to four and a half, the age at which Chloe was lost. Honor tersely reports, "She wasn't stuck in Limbo like I was."



A piece of misdirected mail gives Tom a name and local address for the anonymous egg donor whom Honor had selected from profile information while "hunting for my replica." Her reasoning was "I'd merely hoped that a passing stranger would presume my second child had my eyes." A recording turns up in which the donor, now known as Grace Stone, recites "Hymn to Beauty," the English version of a Baudelaire poem. It had been Honor's love language.

All this is melodrama, but it is written with excellent taste and abundant wit. Tom goes on to see Grace from a distance and be instantly smitten by the resemblance. He joins the grief circle that she established as a young widow. He courts her, with mixed reviews from his old friends. Month after month, he fails to reveal her relationship to Henry, of whom she is naturally fond. Grace stays in the house, with the expected explicit scenes, reviewed by Honor. Tom, after fumbling through an engagement, soon deals with estrangement. Life goes on for the living, and, we suppose, for the dead.

This book was donated to our library by a resident who stopped at the first chapter, but who described it to your reviewer. Now read completely, with increasing interest, by two of us, it is highly recommended.

Annual Projects, continued from page 6

Other activities of interest not counted as committees but open to volunteers are the Corner Store, Gardening, Bridge, and the *Observer*.

The annual Staff Appreciation Fund Drive, our way to show how much we value our servers, caregivers, and administrators, kicked off in September. It continues through this month to end

in November. The goal is \$200,000 with Mary O'Brien again serving as chair.

Last year's drive was a record breaker with \$210,065 raised, with 93% of Independent Living residents participating; PineHill, LEP, and Sunset residents also donated to the fund. The funds raised are distributed to the staff based on the numbers of hours each individual worked, not his or her rate of pay.

A Look at *Camino Real*

By Melanie Trumbull

Observer Contributor

WHEN THE CURTAIN WENT UP on the Williamstown Theater Festival production of *Camino Real* by Tennessee Williams, what ensued could have been called *Camino Surreal*. The set resembled a painting by surrealist artist Salvador Dalí; and the action took place over the course of one night, with alternating fragments of dreams and nightmares. With no clear narrative, mini-dramas displayed seduction and disillusionment, attempt and defeat, even violence and death. This was a play full of activity, with acrobats and dancers appearing at intervals. Characters as diverse as Casanova, Don Quixote, Lord Byron, Marguerite Gaultier, and Kilroy (as in “Kilroy was here”) came and went through a plane of existence, like purgatory, in which many characters seemed trapped in an atmosphere of humiliation and fear, with every day much like the ones before. Many careful cuts had been made to the script, and yet the performance, with one intermission, still seemed long.

Actors Tony Danza and Pamela Anderson had been announced, months in advance, as the romantic leads. When Danza dropped out, his replacement, Bruce MacKenzie, assumed the role of Casanova,

with Anderson as Marguerite Gaultier. Marguerite has some lengthy monologues musing on life, love, and loss; Anderson played these as though talking to herself, in a soft voice that sometimes could not be heard. Anderson looked the part of a self-described “aging voluptuary,” and was by turns haughty and vulnerable. Casanova, however, showed no expression of romance or danger. MacKenzie followed the role of Casanova to the letter; yet his Casanova was a cipher, going through the motions without stirring the emotions. *Camino Real*’s cast is one with many characters, and numerous actors, such as the one who played the Gypsy, dominated their scenes, however brief.

An unprepared theater-goer, ignorant of *Camino Real*, might have experienced great frustration with this complex, surreal drama. And a theater-goer who had done some homework in advance might have come to the performance with high expectations and felt let down when those expectations were not fulfilled. It is small wonder that *Camino Real* is so rarely staged, as it is by its nature a high-risk production. This was the Williamstown Theater Festival’s third production of the play since the 1960s; clearly the festival believes in *Camino Real*. Kudos to them for taking that risk on behalf of the audience.

Senior Pen Pal Club Formed

Seniors at Kimball Farms can become pen pals with Lenox High School seniors by joining a new Senior to Senior Pen Pal Club.

Members will design and make artistic cards, then respond to a prompt by writing in the cards on topics such as funny memories, life advice, favorite songs, and so on.

Each card will then be mailed to its matched pen pal from another generation to make a lasting connection.

If interested, contact Kimball events planner Sharon Lazerson at sharonlazerson@gmail.com.

Love Your Life — Love Your Liver

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

Observer Columnist

THE LIVER is one of the most vital and hardworking organs in the human body. Located in the upper right side of the abdomen, it is the body's "chemical processing plant." It performs over 500 essential functions, involving *billions* of biochemical reactions per second, making it a cornerstone of overall health and well-being. Without a healthy liver, every other system in the body is compromised.

One of the liver's most critical roles is detoxification. Every day, the body is exposed to toxins—whether from food, medications, alcohol, environmental pollutants, or metabolic waste produced by our own cells. The liver filters these harmful substances from the blood, converting them into less toxic forms that can be safely excreted through urine or bile. This detoxification process helps prevent the buildup of harmful compounds that could damage tissues, organs, and the nervous system. The liver also plays a vital role in digestion and nutrient processing. It produces bile, a fluid stored in the gallbladder and released into the small intestine to help break down fats. Without adequate bile production, the body struggles to absorb fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E, and K, which are essential for vision, bone health, immune function, and blood clotting. The liver also metabolizes carbohydrates, converting excess glucose into glycogen for storage and releasing it back into the bloodstream when energy is needed. This regulation helps keep blood sugar levels stable, preventing fatigue, weakness, and more serious conditions like hypoglycemia. Protein metabolism is another crucial liver function.



The liver processes amino acids (the basic building blocks of protein) obtained from our food, removes harmful by-products like ammonia, and synthesizes important proteins such as albumin, which supports fluid balance in the bloodstream, and clotting factors, which help stop bleeding after injury. Without these proteins, the body would be vulnerable to swelling, bruising, and excessive blood loss. The liver is also a key player in the

immune system. It has specialized cells, called Kupffer cells, that destroy bacteria, worn-out blood cells, and other foreign particles in the bloodstream. This immune-defense function helps protect the body from infections and supports overall resilience.

Given its enormous workload, the liver is remarkably resilient and capable of regeneration—able to regrow damaged tissue under the right conditions. However, poor lifestyle choices can overwhelm it. Chronic alcohol consumption, high-fat diets, obesity, viral infections,

and exposure to toxins can lead to liver diseases such as fatty liver disease, hepatitis, and cirrhosis. These conditions can be silent in the early stages but eventually impair liver function and threaten life. Maintaining liver health requires a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, while limiting alcohol, processed foods, and added sugars. Staying physically active, managing weight, and avoiding unnecessary medications or supplements that stress the liver are also crucial steps. In short, the liver is the body's unsung hero—quietly and tirelessly working to detoxify, digest, store energy, produce proteins, and defend against infection. Taking care of it isn't just important; it's essential for energy, vitality, and long-term health. When the liver thrives, the whole body thrives.

Open Mic

A Day on the River

By Doug Cannon

Observer Contributor

ON JULY 17, 2025, my wife, Jeanne, and I went whitewater rafting on the Deerfield River. There were four of us adventurers on a nice big, blue, sturdy, inflatable raft that could hold seven. I should point out, however, no seat belts!

The expedition was my idea, a gift to Jeanne to celebrate her upcoming birthday. She was *very* apprehensive about the rafting, quite conscious that dangers can lurk in such adventures. Naturally, and I'm afraid characteristically, I pooh-poohed her concerns. I mean, "What bad could possibly happen on a whitewater rafting cruise?"

Recently we had seen, again, *Little Big Man* (Dustin Hoffman as sole survivor of Little Big Horn), and ultimately Jeanne resolved her fears by saying, *à la* Lodge Skins, that "it's a good day to die." So we went.

Our guide tended a paddle like a rudder. He'd been with this company for 14 years. This year alone, he'd come down this 5-mile stretch maybe 40 times. He knew every rock, whirlpool, and rapids like the back of his hand.

We went through a couple of Class 2 rapids and one Class 3. For those of you who are woefully uninformed about rapids, Class 2 is just functionally like, in snow skiing, one step up above the bunny slope, and then Class 3 is functionally like, in scouting, earning the rank of Tenderfoot. Or, at least it seemed that way...this guide was so good! We were never fearful.

Great fun. Even when I was thrown (see photo) from the raft and into the midst of the churning Class 3. The problem, however, was that I couldn't get a grip on the raft quickly enough, and then the current, which was substantial, took hold of me and shunted me downstream, *sans* raft. I can only credit having lived a life of good, clean Christian living, plus always being trustworthy, loyal, helpful,

friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and irreverent, for the fact I wasn't literally smashed on a few of the boulders. Clearly the current could have had its way with me, had it any malice.

When Ms. Jeanne first turned about, happened to notice my empty seat, gazed out upon the churning waters, and espied me, she reports that I looked

"worried." This I deny. That was, in truth, a look of total bewilderment as I tried to figure out "How did I end up in this fine predicament, (Ollie)?"

Long story short, another raft downstream got to me after I'd been in the water for only,

maybe, 15 seconds. It was a warm and humid day, with the sun beating down on occasion, so in retrospect, I must admit the water was invigorating. Refreshing, even. In its way.

I emerged and clambered onto Raft 2, safe and sound, with nary a scratch or bruise. It may have been almost 2 minutes before I began to appreciate that the outcome could have been much worse. Much, much worse. Before that, I was nonchalant, kind of "What, me worry?" I was still in a state of complete befuddlement.

Now, I must admit to a sense of disillusionment when Raft 2 offered to get me back to Raft 1 and to my beloved wife, Jeanne, only to hear from said raft that they didn't want me back. I'm given to understand that the "No" vote was unanimous.

We landed shortly thereafter. All in all? A good day to live.

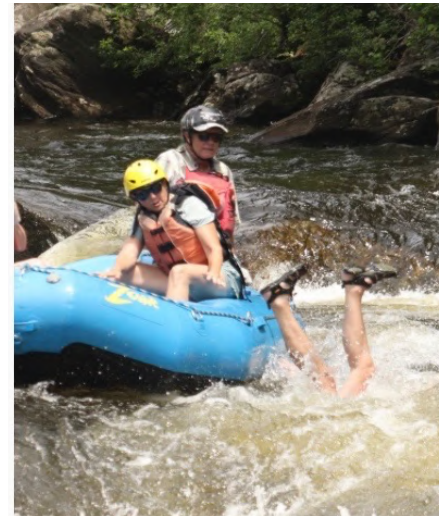


Photo by Zoar Rafting

The author exits the raft.