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THIS IS OUR 3RD ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUE

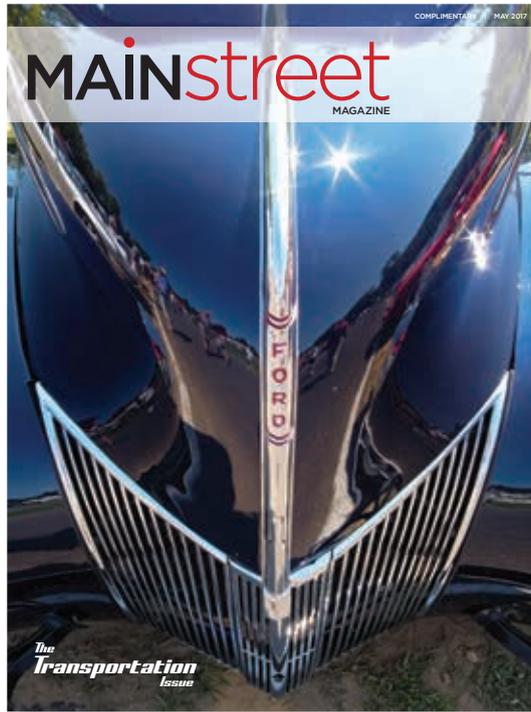
Spring has finally arrived, things have come back to life and everything is in bloom. The good weather makes us want to be outside, to go for a walk, ride our bikes, or take a cruise in our favorite car with the windows and top down. So what better time than this to talk shop about anything and everything that has to do with transportation? With that in mind, we bring you our third annual *Transportation issue*.

This theme was our third ever themed issue, and it has become one of the most popular! But as with all of our themes, the range of topics is pretty wide. It's not just about cars, or planes, or trains, but it's about anything and everything that has to do with transportation. For example, we have legs and that's a form of transportation! So with that in mind, my talented staff of writers went out and they've brought you quite the array of stories! They just never cease to amaze me.

CB has brought us three stories this time, featuring the artist Sergei who seems to epitomize our theme; the Maffuccis who are not just the folks behind Visionary Computer, but are also car enthusiast and David even races; and then CB tells us all about BIFF and the great lengths that folks travel to go to it. Christine brings us the real estate of houses that are located right by a road, and her business feature is an interview with my husband actually, who is just about to open a car storage facility.

Mary tells us about Sandrine Harris and how movement of our bodies is important. Meanwhile Betsy shares Dani Shapiro's story of her travels through life. Trains have a great and important part in our history, and Claire tells us all about it. Allison also brings us a little bit of history with her feature on the old racetrack in Great Barrington. John brings history to life with his piece on the Rhinebeck Aerodrome, which I have been to and it is impressive to see some of these amazing airplanes take off that are close to one hundred years old. Ian tells us about a mechanic who is an expert on Volvos and which ones, in his opinion, are the best ones. And finally, Peter brings us an interesting travel piece; he and his son recently traveled to Cuba. The images and tales of the cars are phenomenal, but I truly enjoyed this piece because Peter explains the ins-and-outs about Cuban travel, and after reading his piece I wonder if Cuba will become the jewel of Latin American and the Caribbean?

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



MAY 2017

The front-end of a beautiful classic Ford – a piece of art.

Cover photo by Lazlo Gyorsok

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PUBLISHER, EDITOR, ADVERTISING, WRITING, PHOTOGRAPHY & OTHER DUTIES

Thorunn Kristjansdottir Publisher, Editor-in-Chief, Designer. **Pom Shillingford** Assistant proof-reader. **Ashley Kristjansson** and **Daniel Martucci** Directors of Advertising.

Contributing Writers: **Allison Marchese** | **CB Wismar** | **Carol Ascher** | **Christine Bates** | **Claire Copley** | **Dominique De Vito** | **Ian Strever** | **John Torsiello** | **KK Kozik** | **Mary B. O'Neill** | **Paige Darrah** | **Sarah Ellen Rindsberg**. Contributing Photographers: **Lazlo Gyorsok** & **Olivia Markonic**

ADVERTISING

Ashley Kristjansson and **Daniel Martucci** Call 518 592 1135 or email info@mainstreetmag.com

CONTACT

Office 52 Main Street, Millerton, NY 12546 • **Mailing address** PO Box 165, Ancramdale, NY 12503
Phone 518 592 1135 • **Email** info@mainstreetmag.com • **Website** www.mainstreetmag.com

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FEDORJACZENKO '08

By CB Wismar
arts@mainstreetmag.com

Sergei Fedorjaczenko is painting with watercolors.

That announcement may not be the lead story on the evening news, but for Sergei, it's a milestone. An avid painter and creative mind that has current interests ranging from sculpture, doing elegant paintings of planes, trains and automobiles (we couldn't resist the linkage) to actually building his own car, he is carefully working on his watercolor techniques. "I need to loosen up," admits the artist with a gentle smile. "I spent so many years doing industrial and package design that I've tended to be very controlled ... very precise. Watercolors force me to be less rigid in my art."

When it comes to designing and building his own car, "The Federini," that knack for rigid precision is very important. "From the time I was a kid, 14 years old, I dreamed of building my own car. Now I'm actually doing it."

Coming to America - and beyond

That fact alone doesn't pay homage to the life story arc that brought Sergei to this moment in time. The journey has been an intriguing one, each piece fitting together with the precision that has been his trademark.

Sergei Fedorjaczenko's parents had come to the USA as "displaced persons" after World War II. That term does little to illuminate the personal chaos and uncertainty of people wandering through war-torn Europe without a country of their own. Born in Heidelberg, Germany of White Russian and Ukrainian parents, it was only when a sponsor from the United States allowed the family to emigrate to their new country, they began to build a new life.

Settling first in New York City, Sergei attended Brooklyn Tech until the family moved to Connecticut. After high school, he started college at UConn until the Vietnam War interrupted his plans and he was drafted.

As fate would have it, Sergei was not sent to Southeast Asia, but back to Germany, to be stationed literally a few miles from his birthplace. The US Army decided that Sergei

should be a photographer, so armed with the standard issue 4" x 5" Speed Graphic (a bulky, awkward camera) he recorded the comings and goings of the officers and activities surrounding the base.

He also found his posting to be a great opportunity to explore Europe. In his Austin Mini Minor, he traveled around the continent. "On one trip, a buddy of mine and I decided to try and follow the 'Europe on \$5-a-Day' model." The irony is not lost on his telling of the story since the equivalent of \$5 will likely not cover breakfast in Europe, today. "We were hanging out in Nice, France, eating at a local cafeteria when we met some American girls."

It seemed that one of their new acquaintances was the daughter of the Firestone Tire Company representative at the Monaco Gran Prix. "It was incredible. We suddenly had access to everything about the race. We were hanging out in the pits with Jim Clark and Graham Hill." The siren call of auto racing caught the young photographer, and would not let go. The year was 1967, and that race took the life of racing legend Lorenzo Bandini in a fiery crash. Nonetheless, Sergei was in love.



Above, top to bottom: *Amelia's Last Flight*. The artist, Sergei Fedorjaczenko. Clay model of the "Federini."

Returning state-side

Back home, Sergei pursued his college career, studying design and reaching out to the head of General Motors Design, Chuck Jordan, to inquire about the pathway to becoming an automotive designer. Jordan responded with some specificity, and Sergei followed his lead.

It was off to the University of Bridgeport for Federjaczenco to get a degree in industrial design and find his first job, not at GM, but at General Electric in Plainville, CT. What followed was an extensive career at various firms in the state that needed product and package design precision ... the very strengths of Sergei Federjaczenco.

Throughout these years, an ever present part of his life was a sketchbook and drawing pencils and pastels. For, though he had no formal art classes, he was often asked to create presentations that illustrated the projects that consumed his professional life. He continued to expand his artistic intuition by bringing his love of automobiles and other modes of transportation into his sketches, drawings and paintings.

A racing career

When the stability of a career and family gave Sergei the opportunity to pursue his love of racing, he eased into the world of speed by becoming a member of the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) and volunteering to work in race operations at various regional tracks. It was at Lime Rock Park during its fabled "Historic Festival" that Sergei found himself attracted to that very civilized form of racing. Rather than attempting to keep up

with the latest engineering developments and the incremental costs of contemporary racing, he would join the group of enthusiasts who restore and maintain vintage race cars and compete on a grand stage.

Sergei set the stage by bringing his wife, Zoe, to a vintage race, and she agreed that his instincts were right. This would be a great way to fulfill his passion for cars. Enter the Fiat – Abarth Allemano and Sergei's racing career was launched.

Design art ... racing ... and finally, retirement. In anticipation of the time he and Zoe could discover their "next chapter," they purchased the oldest home in Falls Village, CT "...because it had a great barn."

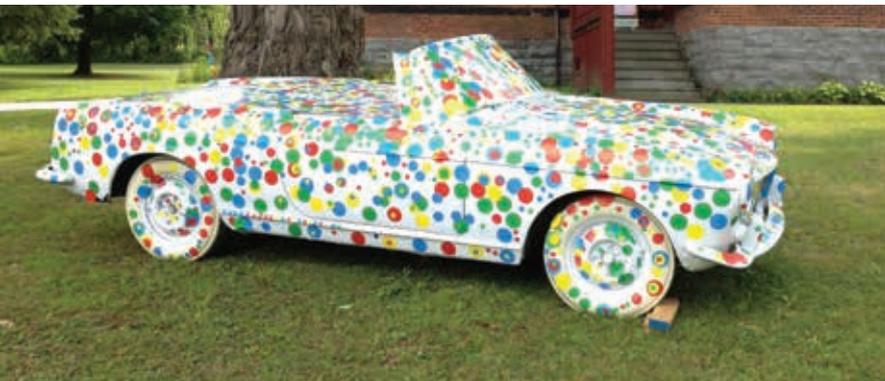
Sergei began spending weekends, then more time working on updating a home originally built in 1730 and turning the three level barn into a garage for working on his cars, a studio for his painting and a second studio level for his automotive design work. The family quickly became a vital part of the community, a fact that was celebrated in 2016 when the couple was named "Volunteers of the Year" for their charitable work.

Local involvement

Engagement with the local institutions included the D.M. Hunt Library in Falls Village. It provided several opportunities for Sergei to pursue his artistic career since the library has a gallery space that presents the work of local artists and has annual events that engage every age group in the community. "The Dot Car was one of my ideas. I painted over a car; windows, bumpers, tires, everything. I had bought the car



Above, top to bottom: *Le Mans Pits*. *Leaving Depot*. Below, left: *The Dot Car*.



for parts so the body work wasn't essential."

"We took the car in my race trailer to the library and set it right on the lawn. Kids were encouraged to put dots on the car, wherever they wanted, and they loved it," he recalls. "We called it a 'Fun Raiser.'" In addition to local shows, Sergei has had solo shows at various galleries including the UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center.

On the first level of the barn, the chassis of "The Federini" rests, waiting for the addition of the newly re-built transmission and the soon-to-be completed re-built engine. A work-in-progress, the car will be a labor of love that has caused Sergei to learn welding and metal work. "I built a fender in a sheet metal class just to learn what would be involved."

A clay model of this imagined car sits on a nearby work table to keep

Sergei focused on what the project will be at completion. "With my painting and sculpting and work on the car, I've got so many projects going that either I have to learn how to live with no sleep ... or I have to live until I'm 120," Sergei says with a knowing smile that belies the fact that although it sounds like a moment of levity, there is more than a germ of truth within.

The holder of four design patents, a pilot, an artist and retired race car driver, there is always something swirling around in his vivid imagination. ●

Find and explore Sergei Federjaczenco's electronic gallery at www.sergeidesign.com. Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist's statement, and a link to your work to arts@mainstreetmag.com.

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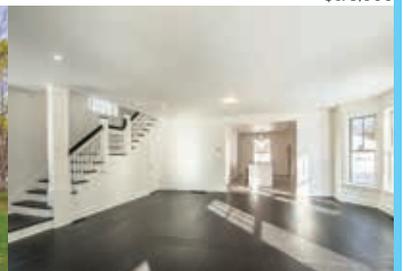
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Dustin Bessette is a faculty member at the School of Arts and Sciences at Post University. He teaches computer information systems and conducts research in business and computer fields, as well as higher education. "I love being able to educate students from a distance perspective as well as a traditional classroom method. I never feel like I am done learning as long as I am still working in an educational field." Dustin spends his spare time outdoors; hiking and camping or riding bikes. Originally from Copake, Dustin loves the fact that this area has nature in its backyard with parks and trails in every direction, but is also close to the train to the city. "I love riding in Columbia and Dutchess Counties, around the Berkshire Mountains, and into Connecticut." You ride like the wind, Dustin!



Rebecca Thomas is the office manager and now a certified UltraSlim Therapy Specialist at Berkshire Mountain Chiropractic in Great Barrington, MA. "I've been working at the office a little over four years now. My favorite part about my job, besides the day-to-day work, is the relationships we've built with our patients." When Rebecca isn't working, she tries to spend as much time outside as possible. She loves hiking with her dog Josie, and spending time with her family. Horses have always been a part of Rebecca's family and she started riding at seven-years old. "I always loved going on trail rides with my horse QT and my sister Victoria." As life-long resident of the area, she loves driving on Route 22 through the small towns enjoying the Taconic Mountain range and the open fields. Who doesn't?!



Tyler Duncan is a jack in the family business, Northwest Lawn and Landscape. "I love working with family, giving back to the community, the type of work itself, and seeing the direct results of my work." Tyler considers himself an outdoors enthusiast! He is an avid hiker, outdoorsman, and likes riding dirt bikes and four wheelers. As a native to the area, Tyler says the diversity in the area is great! "We are nestled in a beautiful valley that has so many local attractions like Harney & Sons, the Ole Angry Orchard, but we also have a rich history too. I wouldn't trade living here for the world!" Next time you see Tyler on the road, look for his yellow lab, Ben, riding shotgun. They might be sharing a bag of Cool Ranch Doritos.



Just like most two-year olds, **Kaitlyn** is always on the move from the time she gets up to bedtime. She absolutely loves being outside – swinging, blowing bubbles, riding in her battery-operated Audi, riding on the tractor with her daddy, and enjoying a stroll on the Rail Trail with mommy – those are just a few of her favorite outdoor activities. Kaitlyn doesn't slow down much, but when she does she enjoys watching Disney movies, following her two cats around the house, and snuggling with her dolly. Regardless of the occasion, Kaitlyn is a typical girly-girl and loves to have her nails painted, a bow in her hair, and a bracelet and necklace to accessorize with her "pretty" outfits. Gotta go folks, she's back on the move!



Bridgette Proper is a senior at SUNY Oneonta studying Adolescent Education and Mathematics. She is currently student-teaching and will graduate in May in hopes of becoming a middle/high school math teacher. Bridgette has also lifeguarded for almost seven years and teaches swim lessons to children ages 2-14. "I love teaching whether it's in the pool or in a classroom." She also has a love for sports, but when it comes to her fitness, she likes to run. "It allows me to clear my head and contemplate important decisions in my life. I was not born a runner, but once I started seeing results, I was hooked!" Bridgette has done two half marathons this past year, and hopes to attend more in the future. Until then, if you see Bridgette running in Copake, be sure to wave!



Fridrik Kristjansson is the proprietor of Nailed It Building & Construction. "I really like being creative and bringing my clients' vision to reality." When the power tools are put away after the workday, horsepower is the next best thing in Fridrik's book. Last winter he participated in the winter autocross at Lime Rock Park and had so much fun seeing what his 2011 Subaru STI could do. Although Fred is 100% Icelandic, he has a soft spot for American muscle. With three of his own 1969 Ford Mustangs, there is always something to tinker with. "I finished my first Mustang rebuild when I was 16. My dream was always to have 'the trilogy'; coupe, fastback and convertible. There is nothing better than driving off into the sunset with my wife." Hey Freddy, where's your fast car at?



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There's a new business coming to town

DAN MARTUCCI OF PRECISION AUTO STORAGE, MILLERTON, NY

By Christine Bates

christine@mainstreetmag.com

Main Street has interviewed a business owner or not-for-profit chief executive in every month since we published our first issue over four years ago. This month's interview with Dan Martucci (full disclosure Dan is married to our publisher Thorunn Kristjansdottir) is our first with a business, which hasn't yet opened its doors. Our conversation with Dan reveals a risk-taking entrepreneur who bought land, and designed and built a large specialized building for a new business that doesn't have a local equivalent.

What is Precision Auto Storage?

Precision Auto Storage is a secure, private, climate-controlled building on Route 22 that provides storage and easy access to owners of automobiles and motorcycles. It will offer other services as well like car detailing, car washing, battery charging, checking and adjusting tire pressures, and concierge services. The spaces are big so it's easy to drive in and out. Initially we will be able to accept 25 cars. After we reach full capacity we can add lifts and accommodate more cars. Not everybody can build their own garage to house their cars. Many collectors just run out of space or they don't want to build a bigger garage to house one or two cars.

The facility will also have a lounge with a TV, kitchen, and meeting room where members can gather. The concept is that this is a membership club for car fanatics. The garage is planned to open in June and we are already selling memberships.

Where did you come up with this idea?

I have always loved cars. When I was eight years old I volunteered to wash and polish my father's car and got great joy out of the finished product. I'm not sure if he paid me or not. My first car was a 1972 Dodge Dart that I rebuilt with a close friend of mine,



Donald Honour, which we still drag race at Lebanon Valley and cruise around the block with.

I wanted to have my own business and I knew it had to involve automobiles. I realized that there aren't any high-end garages for automobiles in the area and that there are a lot of car enthusiasts around here with car collections and multiple vehicles.

What prepared you for starting this business?

I grew up in the suburbs of New York City but spent every weekend in Ancramdale, NY. I started my career with a bond broker, but I didn't like sitting at a desk and I missed the country. After eight years I left the bond business and went to work for Dutchess Oil & Propane. Delivering propane in the winter to people's homes was more satisfying than being confined to an office and I made a lot of friends. After the business was sold to Crown Energy I decided I needed to learn about sales and went to work for a printing company. At the same time I started talking to people like Don Breslauer [featured in this maga-

zine in May of 2016] of DB Enterprises in Salisbury, CT and local auto enthusiasts who knew the car culture around here to refine my idea.

Did you do a business plan?

In order to get a loan from a bank I had to write a business plan, and we're pretty much on target. Creating the business plan was very helpful in thinking about how to set up the business and going over the numbers again and again to make sure it would work.

How will you acquire customers? Who will they be?

We have started to advertise in *Main Street Magazine*, of course, and *The Millerton Moviehouse*, and we are developing a network of car enthusiasts. I've discussed this with other high-end garage owners and they all agree that word-of-mouth in the car community is key, and print advertising is most effective. I believe that our members will be older and not so active on social media, but we do have a Facebook

Above: Dan Martucci driving his 1969 Chevrolet C-10 pick-up truck that he has rebuilt.

Continued on next page ...

page and a website up already.

I expect most of those who will be interested in memberships will own at least one valuable car that they want to preserve. From the experience of other garage operations, the customer-base could be members with one or two cars each, or one collector who takes up all the spaces.

Have you figured out pricing?

Key to providing an affordable price to members is having each car insured against loss by the owner. The garage itself carries substantial property and liability insurance. We hope to attract members by providing a unique service to the area, and also by being priced well below other comparable garages in other locations, such as in southern New York. And annual memberships will be priced differently than month-to-month arrangements.

Was it difficult to get permission to build the garage?

The approval process took a year and a half and the purchase of the land was not finalized until the planning approvals were in place. I also talked to neighbors who might be impacted by the building before we spoke to the planning board. Throughout the process I tried to work very cooperatively with all the regulatory entities, like the DEC, and Department of Transportation, and really didn't have any problems. I said, "Anything you want changed let me know." The Planning Board of the Town of North East was easy to work with and very helpful. There were a few back and forths as is always the case, but we managed to work through it.

How did you go about designing and building the garage?

I figured out the size in my backyard by putting stakes in the ground and experimenting with the size of the spaces. The total footprint is 9,000 square feet and measures 150 feet by 60 feet. The inside is completely open with a truss span of 62 feet. A



standard parking space is generally around 8 feet wide by 15 to 18 feet deep. Each space in my garage is 10 by 20 – plenty of room to get in and out without hitting someone else. Members will feel comfortable knowing that their car is not jammed into a spot like most parking garages. The interior will have a museum feel and look. I can't wait to see it finished and filled with spectacular cars.

Climate control with dehumidifiers and radiant heat in the floor helps keep the garage clean. Security is also an important part of the design. There are 14 cameras with a constantly recording DVR that I can access remotely. The whole building is spray foamed to save on heating and cooling and protect the interior from rodents. In a barn or old garage mice can get into a car and wreak havoc on the interior of the car.

After studying other commercial high-end garages, I designed the building myself and saved a ton of money by acting as the general contractor. I got lots of pricing from subcontractors and I ended up working with people I've known a long time and/or were the best in the business.

What keeps you up at night?

Besides Isabella, our daughter born in November, I'm just anxious to get the building finished and worry about finding customers. Last night I was up thinking about the weather and when we will be able to pour concrete.

Will it be difficult to find employees?

This business does not really require a lot of employees. I may be hiring one



additional person to help me out once the business gets going.

How will you expand your business?

After adding lifts to accommodate another 25 cars I could see expanding into car brokerage, and buying and selling cars for owners.

Where do you get your information?

Most of my information and research comes from the Internet, and hands-on experience. But I have always taken the advice of my parents, and to quote my father, "Fear has two meanings: one, you can forget everything and run, or two, you can face everything and rise." •

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House by the side of the road

THE IMPACT OF ROAD PROXIMITY ON RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

By Christine Bates

christine@mainstreetmag.com

For Main Street Magazine's Transportation Issue we explore the impact of adjacent roads on residential real estate.

All the realtors we spoke to agreed that a house close to a busy road must be priced at a discount to comparable properties in size and condition set away from the road. But how close, how big a discount, and how much longer on the market is difficult to quantify. Realtor guesses on appropriate discounts ranged from 5% to 30% with taking a little longer to double the time on the market. Depending on distance from the road and traffic, the drawbacks are obvious: noise is the major negative, lack of privacy, danger to kids and dogs, difficulty pulling out of the driveway, dust in the summer and salt in the winter, and roadside litter.



Getting a steal

The challenge for a listing agent is to get potential buyers into a house that sits right beside the road. (Hint: If you want to know how far the front of the house is from the side of a highway without actually visiting, download Google Earth and use the easy ruler function). Fewer lookers translate to lower prices. A historically important Hillsdale house built in 1788 and lovingly restored sits beside State Route 22 surrounded by 17 acres of fields and orchards. The location is “the only reason the house hasn't sold,” according to current listing

agent Anthony Acquisti with Halstead Property. The elegant four-bedroom 3,350 square foot home came on the market in Fall 2015 at \$785,000 and, after three price adjustments and three brokers, is now being offered at \$595,000. According to Acquisti the house alone is insured at \$1.2 million. “The only bad time is on Fridays and Sundays between 4pm and 6pm, and even then you don't hear the road noise inside the house because of the soundproof windows.” At the time this article was written in mid-March, there were several active conversations happening with younger weekenders

who like to entertain and recognize a bargain.

Roadside living from a resident

Pom Shillingford and her family renovated an 1830s house, which sits just outside the center of Salisbury, CT on Route 44. A woman of great taste, energy and humor, she described the advantages and annoyances of her home's location. “The pros are convenience – it's so handy to shoot over to LaBonne's for milk at 6:55pm. And you are never snowed in. I love listening to that scraping noise of the ploughs at 3am and knowing I'm not going to be trapped in the house all day with my kids! We have town water, great Wi-Fi, and we're the first to get power back on in an outage. We definitely paid less for the house – the road was my number one concern along with the extent of the renovation. I wish the house was further back on the property, but then I probably wouldn't have an AGA stove.”

“There are cons. We're never going to get around the whole traffic noise

Above: Located well away from a well-maintained dirt road, this house off Bowne Road in Salisbury, CT has its own road. Photo courtesy of Elyse Harney. Left: The vacant “Ice House” on State Line Road in the Town of North East, NY is a great example of an old house that is really right beside the road. Photo by Christine Bates.



Continued on next page ...

thing. Luckily we inherited great windows with the house, which really helps. The noise never bothers me inside, only in the garden. We can hear a car coming and going for miles, not just when they pass directly by the house. Privacy is another minus. People who have never been in our house tell me they love the sitting room and all our bookshelves. Definitely can't walk about naked in the side of the house facing the road! And everyone knows if you're having a party and haven't invited them."

"The Historic Commission were unhappy with our fence and hedge when it first went in. I love our hedge, if only it would thicken up a little more quickly. We did design the garden so that the area where we spend the most time is sheltered and protected by hedges and the house. We probably should have planted massive evergreens to block everyone's view, but I hate them. What is more of an issue is that the road is elevated above our garden so it is even harder to screen. Litter is another problem. Bloody hooligans chuck their empty cans and bottles on our grass and I have to pick up the trash. Then there's the salt and grit from the highway crew, which plays havoc with the grass and hedge. And anyone with a driveway off a main road knows about those annoying, speedy drivers who don't pay attention to the turn signal and come within inches of rear-ending you."

There are roads and there are highways

Quite logically there are much bigger discounts for houses sitting beside major highways, like Route 7, and Route 22, and Route 44. Even on those roads a significant house like the one pictured in Salisbury can sell quickly at close to the asking price for the right buyer. "My client had been looking for a historic, colonial house for over four years," recounted Robin Leech. "When he saw the intact details and the land, all objections vanished."

Patrice Melluzzo with William Pitt Sotheby's in Massachusetts pointed out that many homes very near the road are older, larger, and may need extensive renovation, which affects



their value even more than the road. Graham Klemm of Klemm Real Estate agreed, "Buyers are looking less for antique homes and lean more towards newer, brighter, more private properties."

Salisbury Assessor, Kayla Johnson, admitted that there is no specific formula for deducting value for road noise in the assessment process. "It all depends on what the market is telling us." So how to explain a beautifully expanded and renovated house in Falls Village with an address on Route 7 North? "People still think of Route 7 as a main artery, but it really does not get heavy traffic," argues Elyse Harney of Elyse Harney Real Estate. "The house has been beautifully done and is fenced, but is very visible from the road. It's been on the market for some time and started at over one million and is now listed at \$895,000."

Location lessons

Proximity to the road definitely impacts the time it will take to sell a house and the closing price. Many realtors and sellers are blind to the potential impact on buyers of roadside locations even if noise levels are minimal. If you buy a house for less because of its location, also expect to sell it for less. When the real estate market is moving upward and there is low inventory, as appears to be the case at the moment, the impact on roadside house prices will be less. And let's not even talk about houses by racetracks, train tracks, or airports. ●



Above, top to bottom, L-R: Inside this 1788 house in Hillsdale the noise of State Route 22 disappears. Photo courtesy of Anthony Acquisti of Halstead Property. The integrity and significance of this grand historic house in Salisbury, CT attracted the buyer, the location on Route 44 didn't matter. Pom and David Shillingford's renovated house on Route 44 in Salisbury, CT. Both photos by Christine Bates.

TIPS TO SELLERS ON NOISY ROADS:

- Close windows and doors during showings
- Install soundproof windows if possible
- Draperies can visually screen out traffic
- Create a visual buffer with a split rail or picket fence and plantings - not a tall stockade fence which calls attention to the problem
- Install a fountain to mask the noise outside
- Arrange showings during least trafficked times
- Play music
- Make sure for sale sign includes pluses of property like pool, large yard, mint condition. etc.
- Prepare for a longer time on the market
- Investing in great photographs of the property to attract potential buyers from Internet real estate sites is especially important
- Painting and staging become even more critical
- Emphasize outdoor living space away from the road
- Price at a discount to comparable properties - remember you probably paid less also

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Dani Shapiro

By Betsy Maury
info@mainstreetmag.com

Dani Shapiro has a woodpecker problem. It comes, hammers, and comes again. Shingles need to be replaced, paint touched up and nerves soothed after a visit. Eventually, she sees her husband through the window in his bathrobe with a pellet gun.

Meeting Shapiro on one of those cold March weekends at Marty's in Washington Depot was a boon to my spirits. Around that time of year I'm good and ready to see signs of life and be hopeful again. A familiar literary presence in the northwest corner and author of ten books, Dani lives in Litchfield County and holds popular writing workshops at the White Hart Inn in Salisbury, CT and Kripalu in Lenox, MA. She's just as warm and accessible in person as her writing is; she invites you in, nods in agreement, shares freely. We talked about country living – woodpeckers, beavers, coyotes – and shared knowing nods about husbands and chainsaws. I read an early copy of her new book, *Hourglass: Time, Marriage, Memory* (Knopf) almost in one sitting and put off a day's worth of laundry, pruning and other spring cleaning tasks to savor it. *Hourglass* is that kind of reading experience, brief, intimate and engaging. Certainly, it was a book for March.

About *Hourglass*

Though Shapiro is also a novelist and writing teacher, this memoir – her fourth – held special appeal to me as the book chronicles a period of about twenty years in Dani's life that roughly corresponds to my own. The book begins in the present, with the woodpecker hammering the Connecticut house and then toggles back to a first meeting with her husband M (as he's known in the book) in New York, the nascent relationship, the honeymoon in France recovered in diaries kept on the trip, through the birth

and young life of their son. These years – roughly mid thirties to mid fifties – were ordinary yet quietly tumultuous for Shapiro, or at least they feel that way as she writes about them. The usual things happen – professional setbacks, home maintenance, family disharmony, illness – yet Shapiro makes them all mean something to herself and her readers.

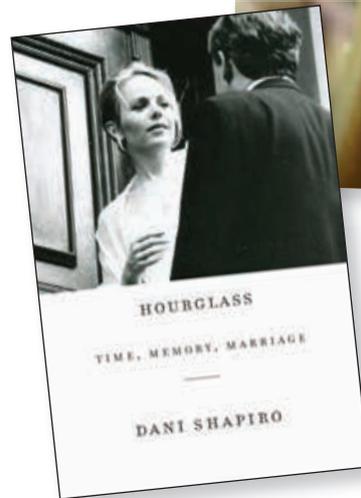
The delicate structure of real-time writing interspersed with diary entries and flashbacks makes for a textured reading experience. Adult life feels like this sometimes, daily routines imprinted on memories of daily routines, observations of slow growth, jarring sights in the mirror. Rarely, does getting older feel linear. Throughout the book, there are chestnuts of wisdom from other writers and seekers like Thomas Mann and Grace Paley on big themes like luck, time and marriage, what might have happened but didn't. One of the most memorable for me was from the Polish Nobel Laureate Wislawa Szymborska on luck:

“You were in luck – there was a forest.
You were in luck – there were no trees
You were in luck – a rake, a hook, a beam, a brake
A jamb, a turn, a quarter inch, an instant.”

This kind of punctuation provides grounding to the narrative. I was surprised how many words of wisdom stayed with me.

The themes of life

There are other themes too like the bargain struck between two people in marriage, who takes care of what and when, how we recalibrate, the fragile equilibrium in all marriages.



Above: The author, Dani Shapiro. Above left: The cover of Shapiro's new book, *Hourglass: Time, Marriage, Memory*. Images courtesy of Knopf/Random House.

And of course there's money. Almost no marriage is without worry about it, how much of it is needed, where it all went. She worries when M has let the health insurance lapse and how to get by another year without painting the house. Yet Shapiro meditates on these concerns with steadfast balance I think, and reinforces the notion that marriage is a leap. Even after 18 years it's still a hopeful leap. Dani shows us in her trajectory how different life looks at 30 and 50 and quietly makes the case for the blessed present.

Although some snapshots from Dani's life mirror my own – getting along in a winter storm without a generator or muddling through a trickling shower when the well runs dry – *Hourglass* is more than one woman's story of relocated life in the Litchfield Hills. The book speaks to readers everywhere; it's

resonant, hopeful, and transcending about small things, things that matter. Shapiro is a chronicler of Everywoman – the aspirational young ones just setting out, those like me in the early middle pausing to look around and those with a wistful smile looking back. In just about everyone's life there have been or will be accommodated expectations, gathering worries and a little fear even, all occurring in tiny increments. Dani Shapiro writes with great tenderness for the ordinary, and deep respect for life and love in all its striving and imperfection. ●

Dani Shapiro will make a 26 city reading and book signing tour including stops at the Merritt Bookstore in Millbrook, NY, on Wednesday, May 17th and the White Hart Inn in Salisbury, CT, on Thursday, May 18th.



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By Mary B. O'Neill, Ph.D.
info@mainstreetmag.com

Transport (verb): to transfer or convey from one place to another. (Merriam-Webster).

The process of transportation – of moving from here to there – can take place on a physical and an emotional plane. Sometimes, that movement can be so slight as to be imperceptible. Yet, it's that movement that can cover the most profound distance. This is the kind of transportation Sandrine Harris is dedicated to.

Shifting gears

Former professional dancer Sandrine Harris is a movement educator and practitioner of Feldenkrais®, an awareness-based learning method in mindful movement. Sandrine is also the founder of Kinesoma, an experiential learning path of embodied practice, which blends dance, Feldenkrais® and mindful practice. Bringing in a rich set of skills, she also facilitates mindfulness meditation and breathwork.

Sandrine's mission is to cultivate self-care, deep listening, and a healthy nervous system, which she defines as the way we sense ourselves, feel through our bodies, and relate to the environment around us, including our connection to others.

Her approach is grounded in recognizing unconscious habits and patterns, and finding inroads to understanding and self-compassion.

Sandrine explains, "I facilitate a guided process of awareness through movement and meditation, where we collaborate in discovering what is happening in body and mind, and how to shift into greater possibility. I don't correct the people I work with. I allow them to discern for themselves where those shifts need to occur."

Easy rider

Her role in this journey is neither to drive the car, nor direct you with a road map to a destination. Rather, she asks questions about the journey and suggests places to stop along your route. And she wants this to be a passage full of ease, helping you navigate life's snarls and collisions.

For Sandrine, ease is a cornerstone of her work. "When we are fully present, we are tuned into our bodies and able to observe the activity of our minds. With this awareness and clarity, we can simply 'be.' This is ease. It is the place where we meet ourselves with kindness, in the service of our health in mind and body, together," she explains.

Stopping at the intersection of mind and body

Sandrine works at the nexus of mind and body. Her approach assumes a mind-body connection that intersects in our bodies' nervous system. "I help people experience mind and body

in each moment and allow them to explore how they relate to themselves and the environment around them."

Whether in individual sessions or in groups, the practice always involves Sandrine as a guide in slowing down our physical bodies and our emotional lives to "listen in." It's only in the moments of pause that we sense ourselves at a deeper level, and paradoxically cover the most ground.

In this pause, Sandrine explains, "We bring our attention to slowing down and being aware. This awareness underpins learning about the patterns and habits in our bodies and minds. When we recognize these patterns – some of them long held – we can then make a choice about them."

Holding patterns

Sandrine recounts a story of a client, a woman in her 70s who came to her feeling "locked up in her body." Because of this the client felt less capable, limited in her movements, and feeling anxious about anything beyond her perceived comfort zone. Additionally, she was plagued by chronic pain and poor sleep, which further added to her discomfort – physically, mentally, and emotionally.

In their sessions, it came to light that the woman had been brought up

Continued on next page ...

to observe strict rules of behavioral and postural etiquette. This involved very specific ways of holding and moving. These movement patterns had manifested themselves physically, but also contributed to a self-limiting way of seeing herself and what she was capable of. These rules of movement dictated how she related to the world around her.

In their work, Sandrine helped the client explore those holding patterns through movement. She facilitated a process for the woman to build awareness and rediscover a more relaxed way of relating to her body. The more Sandrine helped her client unlock her body, create ease of movement, and release old patterns, the more she reclaimed capability. This rediscovery of herself led her to create lasting and significant changes in other parts of her life.

Speed bumps

Sandrine observes that our culture is fast paced and intense. “Slowing down is a challenge but one of the most effective ways we can reawaken, connect with others, and be where the learning is – in the moment.”

By slowly deconstructing our larger, and often unconscious, physical patterns into moments of movement, we can then tune into ourselves more



Above: Kinesoma workshop, rolling through sensing. Photo: Jeff Schlichter. Below, left: Mindful meditation. Photo: Theo Coulombe.

fully. It becomes a tool for awareness, deeper listening, and self-care. We miss all this when we go too fast in our bodies and minds.

Think about it. That country road you speed down most days looks very different when you travel on foot. When you slow down, you notice the bumps and undulations, the cracks and potholes, as well as the flowers on the side of the road.

Put on the brakes

In Sandrine’s work, using the senses in easing up on the life’s accelerator is critical. “When you slow down and move gently with guided awareness practices and awaken to the present moment, you notice the senses more fully,” she explains. This guided practice is not an evaluative judging but a curious noticing. This curiosity leads to learning.

Sandrine facilitates ways to engage with mindful practice, including meditation and breathwork. Mindful practice is a way of orienting fully to the present moment. It’s a process of grounding oneself in presence, and being able to watch the mind non-judgmentally.

“I love the process of mindfulness because it’s an accessible orientation, and it’s available to us at every moment. We can learn to become more present in everything we do. We’re able to tune into ourselves amid interactions with others, and other daily activities,” she emphasizes. “We can come back into a mindful practice at any moment, and this gives us more

space to feel and think and slow ourselves enough to make healthy choices and cultivate personal growth.”

Tuning up the breath

A touchstone of mindfulness is guided sensory awareness practice that pays attention to the breath, which is immediate, in the moment, automatic, and often unconscious. Becoming aware of our breathing can be a valuable part of conscious body practices.

When we are attuned to our breathing, we are linked to the present moment – not the breath we took five seconds ago, or the one we will take five seconds in the future.

Sandrine guides this process of noticing how we are breathing, and the different ways we breathe when we are at ease or facing difficulty. Learning about our unconscious breath allows us to transform our breathing habits into healthy and conscious ones.

“Breath is movement. Movement is in everything we do. Even when we are seemingly still, there is motion. It’s who we are,” reflects Sandrine. Being aware of the subtle movements associated with breathing connects body and mind in an intimate and immediate way. We are a body breathing and a mind aware of that breathing.

Joyride

All of this might seem so complicated it could take your breath away. It doesn’t have to be. Sandrine provides the space and time for you to be mindful of what’s happening in your body and mind, and learn about the

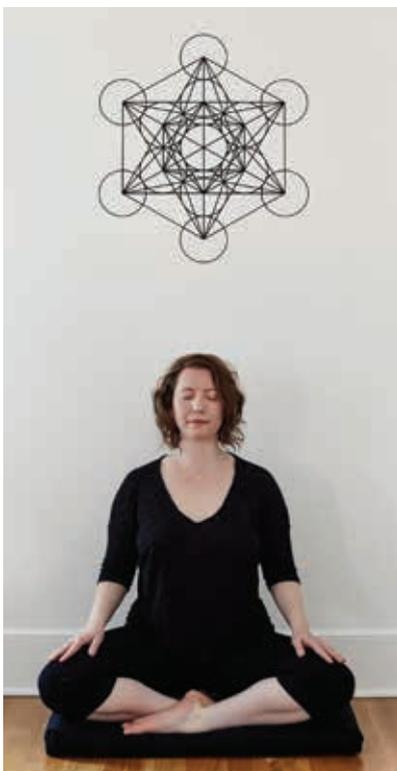
choices you have around what’s happening.

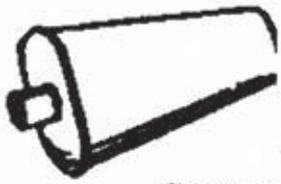
The work of guided awareness can be fun and playful. “Play is one of the most valuable types of learning, and one that as adults we often neglect. When we play, we are curious, and open to possibility and spontaneity. We become flexible and non-judgmental. In play we can rediscover pleasure and learn about ourselves,” she continues, “Being playful in our bodies leads to a playfulness of mind. In that moment, we can embrace our fully embodied selves. Mind and body working as one.”

Sandrine is your gifted and intuitive guide on this path of joyful, curious exploration and learning. Her approach is supportive, collaborative, and deeply giving. The infrastructure you build together will be lasting, regardless of life’s twists, turns, and detours. •

For more information about Sandrine and her offerings, visit www.kinesoma.com. You can email her at sandrine@kinesoma.com or call (646) 479-1453. She offers private sessions locally in movement, breathwork and meditation, along with weekly Feldenkrais® classes at Yoga At Space in Lakeville, CT (www.yogaatspace.com).

Sandrine is also an outreach facilitator in mindfulness and contemplative practice on behalf of the Copper Beech Institute in West Hartford, CT (www.copperbeechinstitute.org). In outreach, she offers trainings to clinicians and educators, as well as working directly with students and vulnerable populations. At the Institute, she leads retreats for people from all walks of life.





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VOLVO FOR LIFE

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

Two icons greet every customer who enters The Auto Shop in Salisbury, CT. Flanking the door to the parts room are posters of Albert Einstein with his tongue sticking out, and John Lennon in all his bearded, late-70s glory. It's a decorating aesthetic. Driftwood brackets the top of the door frame, and the sweet smell of hydraulic fluid wafts in from the decades worth of salvaged Volvo parts that line the shelves. Political cartoons, a sign from the Scottish Socialist Party, and a warning about fascism complete the motif.

There is a sense of *feng shui* about the office, of opposing forces brought into alignment. Next to a bench-full of small parts is an egg-filled nest, and underneath a framed picture of nine Volvos he sold to students at Housatonic Valley Regional High School is a placard that reads, "Teenagers: Tired of Being Harassed By Your Stupid Parents? Act Now!!! Move Out, Get a Job, Pay Your Bills While You Still Know Everything." In the parts room, a piano that isn't just furniture.



Manufactured and organic goods, gravitas and humor, ebony and ivory,

The desire to buy a Volvo

I've never owned a Volvo, but I wish I did. The Auto Shop is the kind of place that makes me want to hawk my late-model Subaru in favor of the cherry '93 240 out front, just so Steve Ohlinger could be my mechanic. Or not exactly my mechanic, perhaps, but my automotive spiritual advisor. He doesn't work on all the cars, but he drives them to diagnose what's wrong. Or not exactly diagnose, but feel what's wrong. His racing background helps him distinguish between the rattle of a loose motor mount and the beginnings of an expensive transmission problem.

German car manufacturers would have you believe that engineering is an antiseptic endeavor. In commercials, four or five Aryan types in lab coats surround their latest model, holding clipboards and pointing at wind tunnel results. Steve, in his fleece cardigan and khakis, is a reminder that men once harnessed the power of metal and oil to create a combustion engine that not only changed the world, but under the best circumstances, reflects and defines our personalities.

An education

During my visit, he told me straight up that my 2015 Crosstrek wouldn't be worth the time he puts into his aging Volvos, and I found myself agreeing with him. The dozen or so Swedish imports on the lot were more like me: graying around the temples, laugh lines beginning to appear around the wheel wells. Sure, hair dye and cosmetic surgery could fix that, but is it worth the



time and expense? When my ex-girlfriend's bumper came loose on her 2004 wagon, Steve effected a utilitarian repair using rivets in place of the cheap plastic tabs used on newer bumpers. Pretty? No. But it saved her about a grand.

Her car was my education in Volvos. It was a V70, whose doors closed with the solidity of a bank vault. The seats were heated La-Z-Boys, and the one major problem she had was the computer that controlled it. Steve doesn't touch that. 1999 is the cutoff for well-made Volvos in his book, and he sent her to a dealer to hit control-alt-delete. At the turn of the century, the suits decided to replace the actuator gas pedal with a "drive-by-wire" design that now has a computer at the helm. That's when Steve pushed away from the table.

The 850 and the 240 are his preferred vintages, and he describes them like a sommelier. The 850

Above: Decades of used parts take on an artistic arrangement around the shop. Left: Steve and an employee.

Continued on next page ...

was the last “workable car” Volvo produced, when repairs were more wrench than keyboard. But the 240 ... ah, the 240. A quick Internet search turns up dozens of nostalgic posts about the beloved model. Most of the ardor radiates from home mechanics who are able to tinker their cars back to life, a tribe descended from Model-T and Beetle owners, with their teeming toolboxes and scraped knuckles.

Don't throw it away!

On the day I visited, Steve had a Beetle in pieces in the back bay and a Westfalia camper out front, proof that he loves all kinds of vehicles. A walk around the garage is a museum trip. In order to service all vintages and models of Volvos, Steve has held on to just about everything: front grills, front doors, front quarter panels; rear taillight assemblies, rear bumpers, rear nameplates; interior paneling, exterior weatherstripping; antennas for the top of the car, exhaust assemblies for underneath. Some of it is stored upstairs in a back room, some in an immobile Dodge van out back; some in neat rows along the fence, some in piles in a decapitated 850.

Like any good boss, Steve shares the credit with his primary mechanic, Ken Hagley. “He could have built the pyramids,” he boasts, and as he shows me around the shop, he pauses to share a project here and there that he and Ken whipped up.



Like the aforementioned office, they tend to draw together the conflicting interests of order and chaos, engineering and whimsy, like the 122 with the Volvo boat motor or the triple-braced, dual-purpose towing hitch on the Westfalia that allows him to tow a boat or insert a bike rack. Last week, Steve was as enthusiastic about his business as he was about Ken's ingenuity, which he demonstrated with a few vigorous bounces on the one-off hitch.

Steve, the business and karma

Some of his playfulness comes from decades of ownership and having weathered the vicissitudes of the automotive industry, the economy, and local demographics. Steve has occupied the same building since 1984, when he bought the building from Doug Reed and Carl Franzen after seeing it listed in an advertisement in *Auto Week*. Since then, he has installed lifts, raised the ceiling, and added a second floor as the business grew to gross over a million dollars in the mid-90s. Steve's personal narrative involves even more peregrinations from Westchester to California, flirtations with Hertz rentals (“fired, thank God”) and tutelage at the piano that sits in the parts room, not unplayed on the day I was there.

Like the supply of used Volvos, however, his customer base is shrinking. He has no need for ads, for nearly all of his customers are



“old, retired, gone.” So is his brand of ethos. Steve speaks of “karma” in his work: when he refurbishes a 240, it “works if we do it all the way” and put the time into it that it deserves. It's hard to connect with a machine that way when the first diagnostic step involves a digital scan from a \$5,000 device. Generations of customers looking for a reliable, mechanically-sound car have turned to Steve, and the Housatonic Valley parking lot is still peppered with 240s and 850s that he has kept running.

On the cluttered wall of the office is poem by customer Ann Longley – an ode to Steve that captures the place he occupies in the community:

*If your car is down and out
Don't scream or cry or grieve
Just haul it down to Railroad Street
And hand it straight to Steve.*

*He's a doctor in disguise
The honest kind, that's rare
Steve'll tell you if your auto's
Way beyond repair.*

*He'll help you find a good used car
And check it through and through
And if it needs some work he'll make
It run as good as new.*

*So if your car is feeling blue
You need make just one stop
The one mechanic you can trust
Is at the Auto Shop. ●*



Above, top: Like the cars he repairs, they just don't make offices like this anymore. Above: Decades of used parts take on an artistic arrangement around the shop. Left: In addition to the piano in the parts room, the drum set upstairs offsets the business end of owning the garage.

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Trains & their lasting impact

By Claire Copley
info@mainstreetmag.com

Sometimes as I drive around in our beautiful area I try to imagine the landscape with no cars, no highways, no paved roads at all, just open farmland, the way it was in the nineteenth century. Getting over Carpenter Hill would be daunting in a cart, not to mention Winchell Mountain. Somehow, I never include trains in my vision, but the truth is they were everywhere then. Trains moved people, farm produce and goods between New York City and New England in the world that existed before cars, roads, and trucks. Dutchess County was crisscrossed with railroads between the mid-nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

Some of the largest farms in the state were in Dutchess County, but getting produce to markets was a problem. Transporting food to New York or Albany meant carting the goods to the Hudson river, then loading them on a boat. The river was used in the warmer months when ice harvested from local lakes and rivers in the winter could be used to refrigerate the produce. But when the river froze in the winter months, no boats could pass. Farmers spent the winter months harvesting ice and storing it. Getting goods to the river from the eastern parts of the county was a long and difficult journey.

The Dutchess County Railroad Company

In 1832, only five years after the first US railroads were inaugurated, the Dutchess County Railroad Company (DCRC) was incorporated to build a railroad line that crossed the county from Poughkeepsie to the Connecticut state line at Millerton. It was decided that Poughkeepsie would make a good



Above: The Millerton train station, now the location of Steed Real Estate. Photo is in the public domain.

hub as it was centrally located in the county and had good river access. Providing access to the river for eastern Dutchess county merchants and farmers was the primary goal of the Dutchess County Railroad Company. The DCRC would be the first of many.

By 1892 nearly 300 miles of railway track existed in Dutchess County, touching each of the county's 20 townships at least once. Nine individual railway lines operated within the county, ranging in length from four to 54 miles. The county was believed to be an important east-west and north-south corridor, and a gateway to New England from New York City.

All the activity that the railroads generated in Dutchess county benefited New York City. The city had been the biggest commercial power in the Northeast since the Civil War. It was threatened by Boston in the mid 1800s when the winters would shut down transport and travel to the city. To deal with this threat New York City officials and private investors got the idea to extend city rail lines, like the one that

connected New York to Harlem, to the surrounding areas that would connect them to the larger region.

There were numerous proposed rail lines throughout the county, and some actually got built. The Poughkeepsie Locomotive Engine Company was founded in Poughkeepsie in 1836 to build the engines for the railroads that were certain to come to Dutchess County. But progress was slow and capital was hard to come by. Routes were debated and defeated. Railroads were a new and promising business opportunity, but there was a lot of competition for routes.

New York and Harlem Railroad

The first railroad to enter Dutchess County was the New York and Harlem Railroad, intended to stretch from New York City to Albany. In 1848, it arrived for the first time in Dover Plains which was, at that time, its last stop. The Harlem reached Amenia in 1851 and Millerton three months later.

In 1863 Cornelius Vanderbilt began to consolidate the New York and Harlem Railroad line with The Hudson River Railroad and New York Central line. The Hudson River line was designed as a substitute for the frozen Hudson River, and would replace hard winter travels by stagecoach. Many were resistant to the Hudson River line as it marred views of the wealthy landowners along the eastern shores of the river. At this time, Poughkeepsie was the final stop, where travelers and freight could be transferred to steamships for the rest of the trip to Albany, or in winter, stagecoaches. Later the rail line was built all the way to Albany.

Job creations

The construction of these early railroad lines changed Dutchess county considerably. It brought new kinds of jobs into the Harlem Valley and allowed Poughkeepsie businesses to flourish. Most of the new jobs were laborer jobs, but with the railroads came jobs as station agents, conductors, and freight agents. Most of the laborers were immigrants, young

and unattached, who followed the construction routes. Many chose to settle along the railroad route and became farm laborers, iron miners, or dairymen. In Poughkeepsie, industries like brewing, brickyards, iron works, carriage builders, and pottery grew and thrived because of the influx of workers and travelers.

The Dutchess and Columbia Railroad (D&C), began functioning in 1869 out of Fishkill. It was intended to make stops in Hopewell, Millbrook, Stanfordville, Pine Plains, and Millerton. William P. McDermott writes in his book *Railroads, Dutchess County, NY 1848-1907*:

“Indeed, within a decade two more internal rail lines would traverse the county. But before the end of the century, letters of the Hartford & Connecticut Western; New York and New England; New York, Boston and Northern; Newburgh, Dutchess and Connecticut; Philadelphia, Reading and New England; New Haven; New York, Boston and Montreal and other rail systems would adorn Dutchess County railroad cars and locomotives. These railroad designations represented a far reaching interest in the Dutchess County rail system as a route between New England, Pennsylvania and points west.

Local entrepreneurs and others from New York, New England and Pennsylvania envisioned great profits in the export of local agricultural, mineral and manufacturing products and the import of coal for fuel from Pennsylvania.”

The railroad business

In 1865, the local officials were asked to consider another line that would run from Fishkill Landing to the Connecticut state line close to Millerton. This would be the first internal county rail line but would connect to the Connecticut & Western Railroad (C&W), then under construction, to reach New England’s commercial centers. There was an effort to keep this line a county railroad, owned and

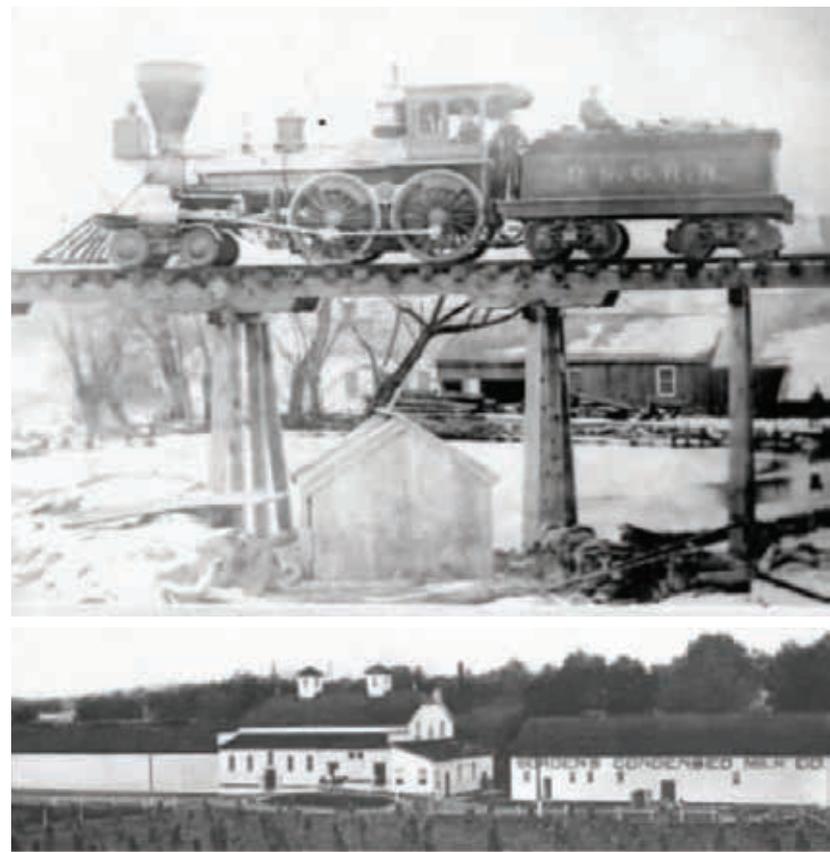
operated by the county, but it was soon leased to larger players and ultimately ownership passed to larger, more solvent, rail companies.

Railroads, especially local ones, were a dicey business in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were, needless to say, huge undertakings which required the purchase or lease of vast quantities of passable land. Routes had to be negotiated with local farmers. Stations had to be built and staffed, cars manufactured, bridges built, and track laid. Immigrant labor was cheap but often lured away by higher wages on local farms and dairies. Bankruptcies were common, as were acquisitions by larger entities. Nevertheless, railroads were big business and many investors wanted in on the future. Rail companies came and went with alarming speed, and the atmosphere was highly competitive. There was a seemingly endless amount of railroad charters, defaults, foreclosures, acquisitions, consolidations, and abandonments. This instability made growth and planning difficult and ultimately supported the demise of the Dutchess County rail system.

During these early years, the rail lines attracted dairy farmers to build milk depots along the tracks. This revolutionized the local dairy industry. Rail transportation was a vast improvement over carting milk to the river for the long hot trip to the city. When the rail lines went in, farmers could dispose of their milk quickly and thus increase the size of their farms and herds. Hotels were built, and restaurants opened to feed hungry workers and travelers. Manufacturing increased to meet the demand of new markets. At this time too, Dutchess County became a destination for tired city folk to spend pastoral weekends. Where I live, in Stanfordville, Hunns Lake was a recreational destination complete with snack bar, road house, and hotel.

The trains in Pine Plains

Because Wappingers Creek, enters the Hudson midway between Beacon and Poughkeepsie and rises in Pine Plains, it provided a natural



Above, top to bottom: A train trestle in Bangall. Borden's Dairy in Pine Plains. Photos are in the public domain.

route. Pine Plains became a minor railroad center and at one time had eighteen passenger trains a day stopping there. In 1875, the Township of Pine Plains had a population of 1,410 and the hamlet of the same name about 600. It has been suggested, with good reason, that Pine Plains had the best railroad passenger service per capita of any location in the United States.

In all, five railroad lines crossed at or near Millerton. Making it a rail hub in the Northeast corner of the county. As a direct result, Millerton became the largest and most important village in the town of Northeast. Several of these lines met up with Connecticut lines that continued through New England where manufacturing was thriving.

From its early days, the railroad between Rhinecliff and Silvernails (outside of Pine Plains where trains had to climb Mt. Ross) became known as the “Huckleberry” or the “Hucklebush” line, or the “Old Huckleberry Train,” because at certain uphill grades the train went slow enough for passengers to hop off, gather berries growing along

the track and hop back on the train. The Silvernails/Rhinecliff branch survived on milk and farm shipments and a dwindling number of passengers. The branch line was officially abandoned on July 15, 1938, the same year that all local railroads not previously abandoned in Northern Dutchess County met their end. The rails and ties were removed soon thereafter. Today, only the Harlem and Poughkeepsie lines are still used (Metro North), and the Hudson River line was taken over by Amtrak.

Railroads fostered development, and where rail lines met towns grew up. The history of our county is tied inextricably to this period of rapid growth. It’s odd to think of Dutchess County as a busy railroad hub. We usually see that history progresses from pastoral to urbanized, not the reverse. But here in our lovely, quiet county, there used to be trains crisscrossing the county, and train whistles and smoke everywhere. If you look hard you can still find the remains: stations that have been converted for other uses, old rail trails and trestles. But other than these remnants, this part of Dutchess County history is mostly unknown today. •



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The Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum

By John Torsiello
info@mainstreetmag.com

The history of brave men and women in their magical flying machines are lovingly preserved at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum. But this is not your static, hands-off museum. No, these winged machines, some dating back to the earliest days of flight, take to the air summer through fall in air shows that delight young and old alike.

Cole Palen, the founder of the Aerodrome

According to the organization's website, the Aerodrome has been entertaining and educating for more than 50 years. Its founder, Cole Palen, grew up next to a 1930s Hudson Valley airport, dreaming that he would own and fly the machines he saw overhead. He spent the rest of his life bringing the vision alive. Starting with six derelict World War I planes, Palen would eventually make the Aerodrome into America's first flying museum of antique aircraft and replicas, achieving worldwide fame.

Palen believed, "It isn't an airplane if it doesn't fly," and the non-profit Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum continues his work of collecting, restoring, and exhibiting more than 60 aircraft of the Pio-

neer, World War I and Lindbergh Ages of aviation. Palen believed in having fun and presenting his treasures in an accessible way, and that tradition continues.

Michael Fisher has been involved with the Museum for a number of years, originally and now once again as an announcer at some of the events the Aerodrome conducts, and as its secretary. The former pilot said, "We have an amazing number of folks who have been here a long time. We used to get several thousand people for air shows back in the 1970s, which was really our heyday, but the first gas crises put a crimp on things. But, we are making a recovery and a good crowd will be between 500 to 1,000 for a show." Not as grand as the 8,000 to 10,000 people who might show up after the Aerodrome and Museum made an appearance in *National Geographic Magazine*, but still a sizeable crowd. "We have picked up some momentum recently after a TripAdvisor named us a 'don't miss treasure' and included it on its bucket list of things to do."

The stars of the show

The 2017 season will run June 10 to October 22. Shows start at 2pm

and run until about 4pm. The stars are the historic airplanes, including a 1909 Bleriot, the oldest regularly flying airplane in the Western Hemisphere; a Fokker DR-I Triplane, the most famous fighter of World War I; and a precise replica of the Spirit of St. Louis, which was the first aircraft to fly from New York to Paris in 1927. While aircraft rotate on and off the flight line, usually 15 to 20 are flyable for shows.

You can fly, too!

And, not only can spectators enjoy the aerial shows, they can also get up and into the wild blue yonder. The Museum, for a fee, will fly passengers in its 1929 New Standard D-25 that was designed for passenger hopping by the great "flying circuses" of the 1920s and 1930s. Maintained to modern aircraft regulations, the plane is now a fixture of the mid-Hudson Valley summer skies, carrying up to four passengers per flight before and after the weekend air shows, as well as on weekdays. Flights are approximately

Continued on next page ...

Above: Original 1918 Curtiss JN4-H celebrating 100 years of flight. The Jenny is Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome's Annual Gala centerpiece. Photo by Tim Haggerty, courtesy of the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum.

15 minutes long, cost \$75 per person, are on a first-come-first-serve-basis. The rides begin at 10am and continue to dusk. Weekday rides are obtained by reservation and depend on pilot availability.

Entertain and educate

“Again, our motto is we entertain and educate,” said Fisher. “We are chartered by the state of New York as a museum and that is our mission. And at the bottom of it all is the preservation of aircraft and memorabilia, and to capture the various eras of flight.”

Various planes are featured in the Aerodrome display and its shows, such as the Curtiss Jenny, which was mistakenly printed upside down on a few airmail stamps in 1918, making it one of the rarer stamps that can fetch tens of thousands of dollars for a lucky owner; a Glenn Curtis Albany Flyer that flew from Albany to New York City in 1920, then considered a rather dangerous feat because of shifting winds along the route; and the above-mentioned Spirit of St. Louis replica that flew last year and attracted a huge crowd.

A Saturday “History of Flight” program highlights the Pioneer era before World War I, a World War I show teaser, and the Golden Age of Aviation in the 20s and 30s. A Sunday show is a World War I spectacular with a hero, a heroine, the villainous Black Baron of Rhinebeck, scenery, pyrotechnics, and a World War I tank. The supporting



cast includes many antique automobiles.

The folks behind the museum

The president of the Museum is Michael DiGiacomio, who, during his younger years spent hours building model aircraft and volunteering work on full-scale aircraft at Stanton Airport, and now operates Mike’s Tree Service in Dutchess County. He has actively been volunteering since 2001, starting with cutting grass and then helping with air shows. He has been a member of the Museum Board of Trustees since 2007.

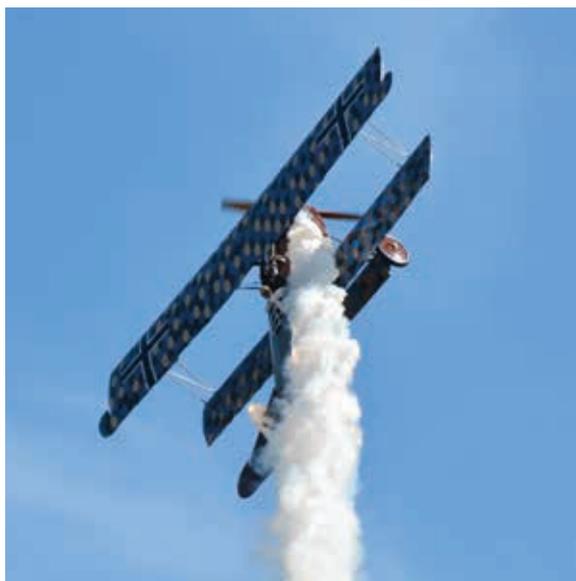
Clay Hammond serves as Vice President and, perhaps more importantly, as Chief Pilot at the Museum. He took his first airplane ride when he was just five-weeks old on his mom’s lap in the family J-3 Cub, flying out of Old Rhinebeck. He began flying vintage aircraft at an early age. A professional pilot and aviation salesman by trade, he has specialized in aircraft sales, ferry and delivery of aircraft new and old.

The Museum, which is worth a visit in and of itself, opens on May 1. It contains a wondrous collection of airplanes in addition to the ones mentioned above. Events during the month of May include the Second Annual Spirit Gala and Fundraiser on May 20th, which will include a daytime demonstration and educational discussions followed by an evening fundraiser, dinner and dancing at the Aerodrome, and the 13th Annual Cole and Rita Palen Memorial Free Flight Meet on May 28. •

For more information and to see a list of events, visit www.olderhinebeck.org.



Above, top: 1911 Curtiss Model D Pusher copy, successor to the machine that flew from Albany to New York with a stop outside Poughkeepsie in 1910. Above: 1927 Spirit of St. Louis copy, identical to the one Lindbergh flew to Paris. Photo is taken of the plane going over the Kingston Rhinecliff Bridge on its maiden flight in December 2016. Left: 1918 Fokker D VII copy with original Mercedes Engine. The best WWI fighter. Photos by Tim Haggerty, courtesy of the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum.



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The Belmont of the Berkshires

A SHORT HISTORY OF GREAT BARRINGTON

FAIR HORSE RACING

By Allison Guertin Marchese
info@mainstreetmag.com

Great Barrington, Massachusetts, is an interesting and eclectic place. It was named for Lord Barrington, a man who it was said took a great interest in the colonies of New England. Formerly part of New York's 1705 Wesbenhook Patent, the town was incorporated in 1761. Its earliest inhabitants, the Mahican Indians, called the town "Mahaiwe," for "the place downstream."

Great Barrington is known for its rivers, great natural paths and trails, spectacular mountain views, and glorious gorges. It is also known for hosting the longest continually operating fair in New England.

The great fair

The Fair first incorporated in 1848, and beginning in 1859, horse racing was added to the Great Barrington Fair, which was big news. Sometimes called, The Belmont of the Berkshires, these country fair horse races drew thousands to the quaint town. The Great Barrington Fair once had a record breaking crowd of 27,048 and once handled a million dollars in one day. It was hugely popular and it was the last stop on the Massachusetts Fair Circuit.

The Massachusetts Fair Circuit included county fairs such as Northampton, Marshfield Fair, Great Barrington Fair, Weymouth Fair, Brockton Fair, and Berkshire Downs. As many writers have penned, "the races were cheap, and the horses were slow, but people flocked to them anyway."

What Great Barrington had going for it was, of course, the scenic beauty. In the early days, horses competed not for million dollar purses, but rather \$50, or a basket of apples and a couple of gallons of locally made cider. An announcement in the *Franklyn Democrat* of Greenfield, MA, in 1859 brought the good news that an exhibition of horses at Great Barrington would take place at the fair grounds of the



FAIR GROUNDS, GT. BARRINGTON, MASS.

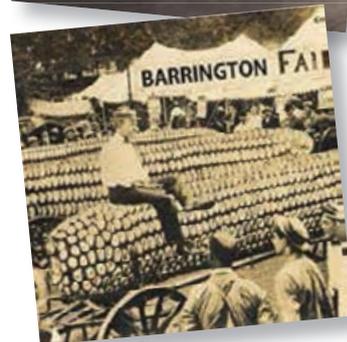
Housatonic Agricultural society with prizes including \$150 for Best trotting horse, and \$75 for best matched pair of horses. There was an offer for \$50 for the best four-year old and just \$15 for the best pacer. A grand total of \$25 would be given to the best horse owned in the county. The exhibition was promised to be "large and unusually attractive."

The agricultural society

The Housatonic Agricultural Society originated when a few country gentlemen gathered at the Berkshire House, in the fall of 1841, to discuss forming a group in the southern portion of Berkshire County. Major Samuel Rosseter presided over the meeting appointing committees from each of the eleven southern towns. The task of each appointee was to go out into their communities and gather the opinions of the people. By the end of 1848, the society was incorporated with Major Samuel

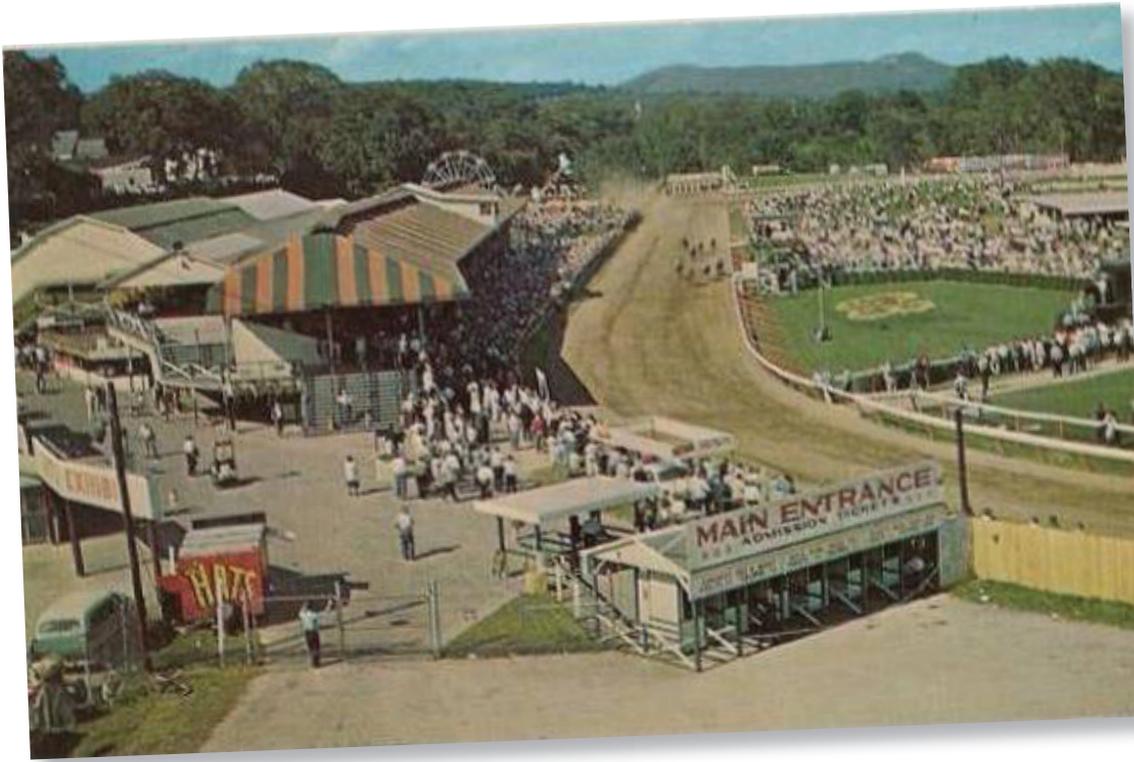
Rosseter as its president. The very first exhibition of the society was a "cattle show" held on the September 28 and 29 of that year with the first passenger train on the section for the Housatonic Railroad bringing spectators. People from surrounding towns also flocked to the vacant lot south of the Congregational church where the cattle were exhibited. The society also added an oxen plowing match and on Main Street, they featured a parade of horses.

In 1854, the society purchased land south of the village and started building a variety of structures. Members also laid out the track for the showing of horses. With a heightened interest in its work, the Agricultural Society grew to a membership of 1,600 in a very short time. The Society members included Great Barrington's most prominent farmers and they worked



Above: The races and the fair at its height. Photos courtesy of the Great Barrington Historical Society.

Continued on next page ...



Above, top to bottom: The Fair in its heyday. The race-track as it stands today. The horse stalls and cowshed (2014). Photos courtesy of the Great Barrington Historical Society.

diligently to benefit farms and farmers by improving farm conditions and introducing better implements of husbandry to increase breeding of cattle and horses.

Breyer and picking winners

In 1989 the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Animal Cruelty came down hard on racetracks citing examples of horse abuse at country fairs.

But before the license was revoked, Andrew Breyer made history at Barrington's country horse races.

While at Harvard University in then 1960s, he felt that the race-track was far more intellectually stimulating than Classic Literature. And when he decided not to take his final exam in 1966 in favor for betting a long shot at the Belmont stakes, he was hooked. Breyer, it seems, had a knack for understanding horses and a sixth sense for knowing which horse would finish first, a talent that he later wrote about in his book, *Picking Winners*. He was celebrated for his handicapping skills and contributed articles to several well-known racing sheets including the *Daily Racing Form* and the *Washington Post*. He also

penned a book called, *My \$50,000 Year at the Races*, where he reveals his gambling exploits at various renowned race tracks, including the Great Barrington Fair races. He referred to it as one of the most picturesque and quaint race tracks in America.

In Breyer's memoir, he devotes a chapter to The Great Barrington Fair races. He said that it was so lovely that jockey's sunned themselves, race fans enjoyed bleachers flanked by flowers that looked more like park benches, and that in between races attendees could eat cotton candy and ride the Tilt-a-Whirl. Breyer confessed that he didn't go to Great Barrington to take in the fall foliage, but wanted to cash in on what seemed to be a winning track, according to his friend who all but assured him that betting there was a sure thing. The winning was estimated at nearly \$1,000 a day.

On September 11, Breyer threw off his plans to be at Saratoga and headed to the Berkshires. After checking into the Red Lion Inn, he met with two veteran horse-players familiar with Great Barrington Fair racing. He asked them point blank if the races were fixed. They confirmed it was true and said in one instance, when a horse was too far in front of the favorite, the jockey literally jumped off his mount, giving the 1-9 long shot the win. What was even more attractive was

Barrington's ability to attract enormous crowds and lots of money, sometimes up to \$500,000 wagers a day. After familiarizing himself with the jockeys, trainers and horses, and after making his way through the lively crowd, Breyer placed his first bet of the ten-day meeting on Sister Rabbit who at the last minute was running odds 8-5. He wagered \$400 just as the price dropped 3-2. The horse won easily, and he realized that he was going to make some easy money. The next day he wagered \$700 and lost. In short order he met up with the friend who assured him the races were fixed. He continued to lose and Great Barrington turned out to be the only track he would lose \$1,500. Later on, PBS did a television special on horse fixing and Great Barrington Fair was featured.

The track today

Like many rural race tracks, the Great Barrington Fair races closed in 1983. A freak tornado, which took place in 1995, slammed directly into the Fair Grounds abandoned buildings, nearly destroying the old grand stands and what was left of the track buildings. An effort was made two years later to rebuilding the site and start the races once again, but the effort lasted but two short years. Since then it seems the remains have yet to find a purpose.

In 2006, a New York City firm purchased the property for a staggering \$2.7 million with the intention of creating a massive conference center and hotel. By 2010, the plans had yet to make it off the ground and the project ended up in foreclosure.

Two years later the property was again sold for just \$800,000 to a group known as Fairgrounds Realty LLC, making the old Fair the site of a new non-profit organization for sustainable agricultural education and recreation. ●



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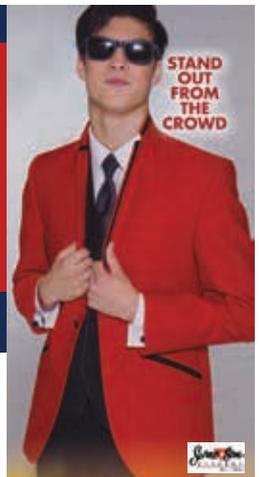
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DAVID & SHELLEY MAFFUCCI

Computers & cars

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

Meet David and Shelley Maffucci at their Lakeville, CT Visionary Computer store, and break-neck speed is likely the last thing that would resonate. Gracious, thoughtful, and patient to a fault, they both project individuals who are living life at a relaxed pace ... and want you to do the same.

Their wishes for customers and friends may be centered on the absence of stress and the enjoyment of the products and services that flow from the Bissell Street location, but within – well, that is, in fact, the story.

How it all started

Shelley is a local girl. Born in Maine, her parents moved to Canaan, CT to work at Geer Village, so Shelley grew up in the bucolic midst of Northwestern Connecticut. After high school at Pine Tree Academy in Maine, Shelley attended Atlantic Union College in Lancaster, MA, got her degree in nursing and moved back to the area to pursue her chosen career. She was a stalwart at Sharon Hospital until the Salisbury Visiting Nurses Association offered her the opportunity to lead their highly regarded hospice program. But, we're getting ahead of the story.

David's family moved from the Greater New York area to Fairfield, CT when he was young. As a teenager, he turned the family

backyard into a private race course where he not only chased around on his "quad" off-road machine, but refined what became a life-long passion for racing radio controlled (RC) model vehicles. When it came time for college, David chose the Computer Sciences track at UConn, only to shift, mid-stream into the Business Program.

A conversation in the computer lab at UConn, where David spent copious amounts of time, led him to a cross-state meeting in Lakeville to interview with a game developer who was based there. Even though David had a final semester to finish in order to graduate, the interview turned into a job offer, with this caveat: "You're hired, if you can start next week."

As is quickly evident to any customer who darkens the Visionary Computer doors and brings along a technical issue, David Maffucci does not waste time. His ability to unravel complex issues is matched with a total dedication to the intensity required to make fast decisions, accurately. There's a dotted line, here, to David's passion for RC racing. Speed. Accuracy. Instant decision making. No mistakes.

Unwilling to pass up the opportunity to jump from academia into the "real world" of complex computer engineering, David made the required adjustments, commuting between the UConn Storrs



Above: David and Shelley Maffucci. Below, left: David racing in his Camaro at Thompson Speedway. Photos courtesy of the Maffuccis.

campus and Lakeville on a weekly basis – finishing his degree on time and diving, head first, into the business world.

It all started with a blind date

Then, there was the blind date. Shelley's father was a stalwart of the Canaan Volunteer Fire Department, so when it came time for the annual carnival, a friend in a yoga class suggested to Shelley that she call this "nice guy," David Maffucci and see if he might want to go to the carnival. Arriving, stylishly, in his open-top Jeep, David was the perfect gentleman. He escorted Shelley to enjoy the rides, the side-show games of skill, and the general playful energy of the carnival.

It was, as they both remember, a very special night. "He wanted to make sure I had a great time, so he won several stuffed animals on the midway and we sampled the carnival food," Shelley remembers with a smile. "And we went for a ride on the fire truck" adds David, recalling an activity that soon became an annual event for the couple.

It may have helped that Shelley's father was part of the Fire Department ... but there was the ride, just the same. "And we've been together ever since," Shelley concludes with

a joyful finality that simply previews the rest of their story.

MacWorld

Working for a game developer, David got to attend events that were considered the ultimate computer wizard gathering – MacWorld. Twice a year, once on each coast, Apple Computers would gather the many technological geniuses who developed programs on the Mac operating system and shared with them the latest innovations. Steve Jobs, the legendary founder of Apple Computers, was a regular attendee of the west coast version of MacWorld, where he would often unveil the technological breakthroughs that took Apple from a niche computer to a world power.

It was at one of these conferences that David was invited to "play" in the invitation-only lab set up to unveil new technology not yet on the market. It was David's chance to try out the gaming software on a new machine, just to see how it would work. As he busily wrangled the new machine, an interested eavesdropper was looking on. "It was John Scully, then CEO who



Continued on next page ...

had forced Steve Jobs out of Apple, then was forced out himself when Jobs returned.” David was impressed with the high level interest. He was also impressed by the title on Scully’s name tag. “Technological Visionary.”

When the gaming company was sold and David was invited to move with it to Boston, he reached a watershed moment. He loved the Northwest Corner. He had found the love of his life. It was time to stay – to employ those talents of speed and decisiveness and the entrepreneurial spirit to go of on his own.

“When I had seen Scully’s title, I knew, instinctively, that I wanted to carry that forward.” David reflects on the move that set his life in a totally new direction. “Visionary Computer ... and I was going to be Technological Visionary.”

As Mohammed Ali so famously said, “if you can do it, it ain’t bragging.”

And, he did it. Shelley remembers the initial steps. “David had a small apartment in Canaan. He lived in the back room and the front room became Visionary Computer.” Consulting, troubleshooting, assisting, and supporting, David found his niche. The year was 1994, and there has been no turning back.

Shelley comes on board

As for Shelley, her tenure with nursing ran parallel to David’s work with computers. The birth of their daughter, Tabitha, led Shelley to work on a flexible schedule until five years ago when there came another bend in the road.

“We had more and more women who would come into the shop, looking for answers,” David recalls. “Our techs are terrific, but sometimes there was a need to find a different way of explaining things

... a way that wasn’t intimidating.” Enter Shelley.

“It’s not as scary as it sounds,” she affirms with an air of calm assurance. “Sometimes it’s just easier to communicate, woman to woman.” From consulting to selling and servicing can be a big step. Not everyone can think through the ramifications of starting up a business that invites the public in to browse and question ... and buy. Visionary Computers has made that transition, and early success has turned into expansion and a strong outreach to the community.

On May 1, 2017, a 1,000 square foot addition to the original retail location will usher in a new era at Visionary. “Not only are we offering the entire Apple Computer line, but we’re providing private, dedicated spaces where our techs can work with our customers, one-on-one, to get questions answered and issues solved.” David has dropped the “Technological Visionary” title from his business card, but his view into the future has not become clouded.

Back to racing

And, underlying the growth and prospering of the business has been the energy and drive that has made it work. The same young boy who bounced through his backyard on a quad and raced RC cars had always wanted to satisfy his “need for speed.”

“Rick Kopec, who founded the Shelby American Auto Club was an early client when he was developing the club database.” David recalls the moment when fantasies became real. “He invited me to a club event at Lime Rock Park – all I had to do was drive a car with a Ford engine.” So, with a rented Crown Victoria – not exactly known for its track prowess – David confronted the mile and a half track ... and fell in love, all over again.

“I knew that he loved what he was doing,” recalls Shelley with a smile. “And, although I always have to worry a little bit about his safety, I know he’s got a hobby that is a great release from the business.”

It was Shelley, in fact, who



Above: The new Visionary Computer elevation. Left: Radio controlled short course truck.

cemented David’s racing ambitions. “I saw a Dodge Challenger with a ‘For Sale’ sign on the windshield and told David about it.” That SRT Challenger got David onto the race track, and the magic began. With experience at Lime Rock Park, Pocono, and Thompson tracks, it was time to move on ... and move up. A Camaro ZL1 now sits in the Maffucci garage, waiting for those sunny days when the “Technological Visionary” can get on the track.

With the opening of the greatly expanded Visionary Computers in Lakeville, life will take another exciting turn. As a “Premier Partner” of Apple Computers, the products and services that David and Shelley will offer to their growing customer base will continue mature and expand. “We love it,” says David. It’s that simple. •

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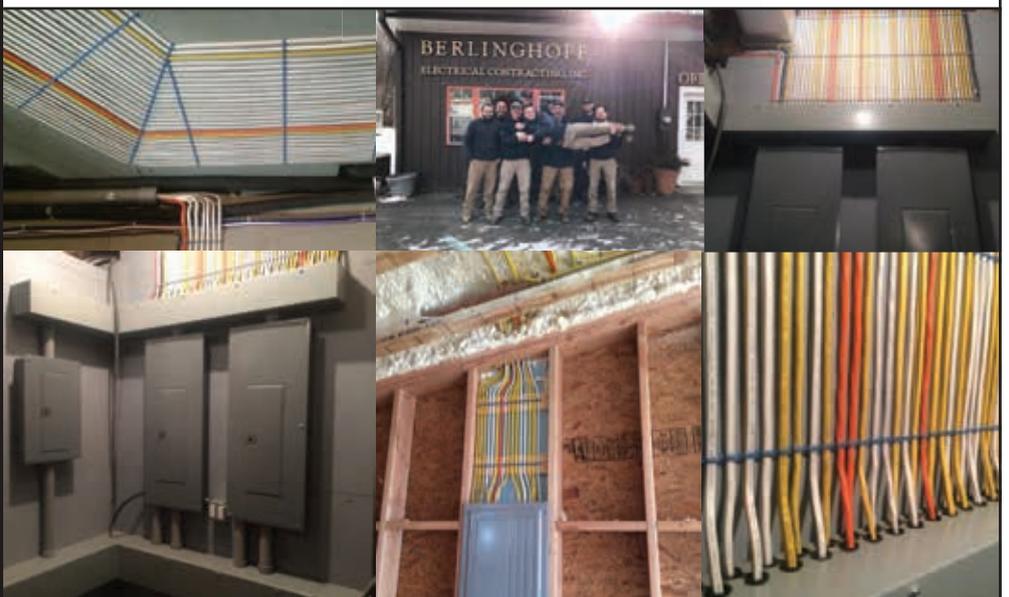
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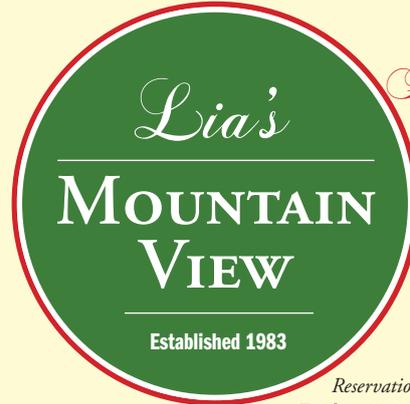
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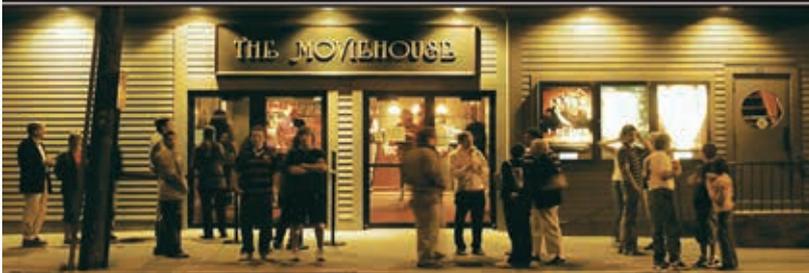
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THE 12TH ANNUAL BERKSHIRE
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

“I know I probably say this every year.” Kelley Vickery is laughing at herself. “But, this BIFF is going to be the best, ever.”

Coming into its 12th year, the Berkshire International Film Festival has become a sweeping event – played out from its home base of Great Barrington, MA and satellite theater screens in Pittsfield. The eclectic and challenging selection of films for the 2017 edition of the Festival may well underscore Kelley’s seeming hyperbole.

What started out as a nascent effort to focus on one of the underrepresented arts (the Berkshires already had great music, theater, fine art, and dance) the initial film festival attracted 1,000 cinephiles from as far away as Boston and New York. “This year, we’ll welcome well over 4,000 people from all around the world,” reflects Vickery. “At least 50% of the attendees come from outside our immediate tri-state area.”



Above: Christopher Plummer, this year’s honoree. Above top, right: Movie posters for *A Plastic Ocean* and *The Exception*. Photos courtesy of BIFF.

About the festival

From the grand screen of The Mahaiwe Theater to the screens of the nearby Triplex Theater, the Beacon Theater in Pittsfield and, this year, the newly opened performance space at St. James Place in Great Barrington, BIFF commands the first weekend in June. The programs offered on those screens and stages is a wide-ranging collection of American and international films – dramas and documentaries – features and shorts – as well as in-depth discussions with the filmmakers responsible for the screened offerings.

“We have so many festival-award-winning films this year that it’s going to be a real challenge to see as many as possible.” Kelley realizes that full immersion in the Festival is a great commitment, one that promises to take the audience on a journey around the world.

“We have films from Syria, from Egypt, from Sweden, from Israel, from France, from Chile,” she reels off with a certain joy that confirms that BIFF, as it is familiarly known, has come of age. “We have two films coming from Iran, but with the travel restrictions in place, the filmmakers have reluctantly had to decline our invitation for them to attend.”

Christopher Plummer, the honoree

There will be no paucity of film celebrities in attendance, however. Each year BIFF singles out one film luminary as their honoree. The designation includes both screening of the individual’s latest film and the opportunity to meet them and

hear their reflections on an illustrious career.

“This year’s honoree is Christopher Plummer,” Kelley notes. “His body of work is truly amazing, and on Saturday, June 3 at the Mahaiwe, we’re going to hear from him and screen *The Exception*.” *The Hollywood Reporter* critic Leslie Felperin, writing about the film offered “Plummer’s twinkly, impish turn could make him a long-odds contender for awards recognition.” Canadian actor Plummer, possibly best known for his role as Count Wolfgang Von Trapp with Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* has a distinguished acting career that has spanned over five decades and includes *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Last Station*, and his Academy Award winning role in *Beginners*. His appearance at BIFF will coincide with the US release of *The Exception*.

Thought-provoking films

While feature films may be the mainstay of BIFF, the organizers consciously seek out thought-provoking films that deal with vital contemporary issues. Anne Makepeace’s stirring documentary, *Tribal Justice* will be screened as well as *The Refugee Project*, a film by Matthew Firpo that chronicles the European refugee crisis and *A Plastic Ocean*, a feature length documentary that vividly details the discarded plastic continents floating in the world’s oceans.

Tea Talks

The festival setting allows the audience the unique opportunity to rub shoulders with the filmmakers and hear them delve into the motivations, satisfactions, and reactions to their work. With the opening of the

Continued on next page ...

fully rebuilt St. James Place which has made its evolution from church to center for art and creativity, BIFF will join with Harney & Sons to present “Tea Talks,” opportunities to hear from the filmmakers, themselves.

One of the participants in a “Tea Talk” will be award-winning actor, now director Karen Allen, an area resident and owner/designer at Karen Allen Fiber Arts. From her roles in two of the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* films to her many appearances on the stage and as director at the Berkshire Theatre Festival, Karen’s roots in BIFF run deep. Her film directorial debut – *A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud.* based on the short story by Carson McCullers will be screened at the 2017 BIFF. Recently honored at the UK’s Manchester Film Festival, the film release coincides with the 100th anniversary of McCullers’s birth. The impressive array of local individuals and businesses that shared in and supported the making of the film, would indicate that her appearance is likely to be a major draw.

Sponsorship of the BIFF has both strong local connections and a reach that belies Kelley Vickery’s cosmopolitan background. Settling in the Berkshires after years of living

in both Europe and Asia, her world view is well developed and her sense of bringing the arts to the public quite refined. An early career position in Public Relations at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC and ownership of SOBO Gallery in Frankfurt, Germany provided tutorials in matching artistic endeavors with an eager audience. The growth of BIFF over the past decade is a strong reflection on that expertise.

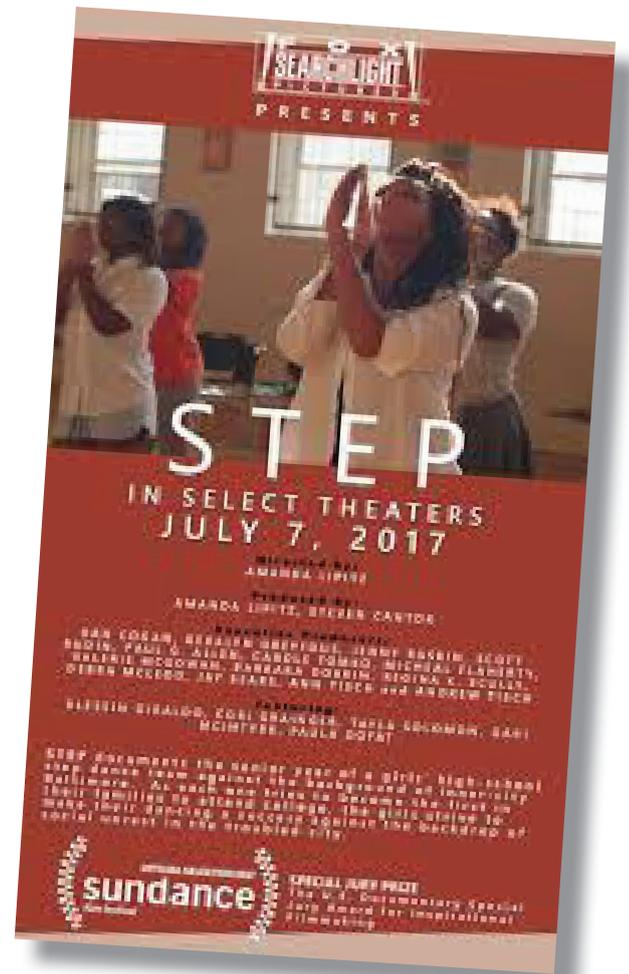
The Great Filmmaker Award

One of the important sponsorships for BIFF comes from Berkshire Bank in the form of a prize awarded every year to an emerging filmmaker whose work captures the attention of a panel made up of members of BIFF’s board. The Next Great Filmmaker Award celebrates work done in producing a short film and brings with it a cash award.

Not to be overlooked in the deluge of challenging, entertaining, and thought-provoking films at BIFF are the social functions that punctuate the four-day event. Placed, cleverly, on the “shoulder season” between the end of school and the official beginning of the summer season, BIFF fits neatly into the social calendar and gains momentum from the appearance of weekend and summer residents who join locals and the national and international audience in finding ample reason to both indulge in and celebrate film.

The “social” factor

“We really try to offer a balance,” affirms Kelley. “We can’t ignore the social and political issues that are all around us, but we also want to provide moments of real entertainment. Our audience can pick from a great cross-section of film types, messages and styles.”



That fine blend will be evident when BIFF screens the recent Sundance Film Festival sensation, *Step*. The film, which documents an ambitious educational project in Baltimore, MD that assures the girls who enroll that they will attend college was hailed in a review by *Variety’s* Geoff Berkshire. “Documentaries aren’t often discussed in terms of their ability to entertain, but *Step* might be the most infectiously entertaining doc since Chris Rock’s *Good Hair*.”

Schedule that haircut, get the seersucker out of winter storage, remember that you can safely wear white after Memorial Day and get ready for BIFF – the 2017 Berkshire International Film Festival, June 1-4 at various locations in Great Barrington and Pittsfield, MA. •

Information, schedules and festival tickets are available at www.biffma.org.

Above: The movie poster for *Step*. Left: Kelley Vickery with actor, and local resident, Kevin Bacon. Photos courtesy of BIFF.



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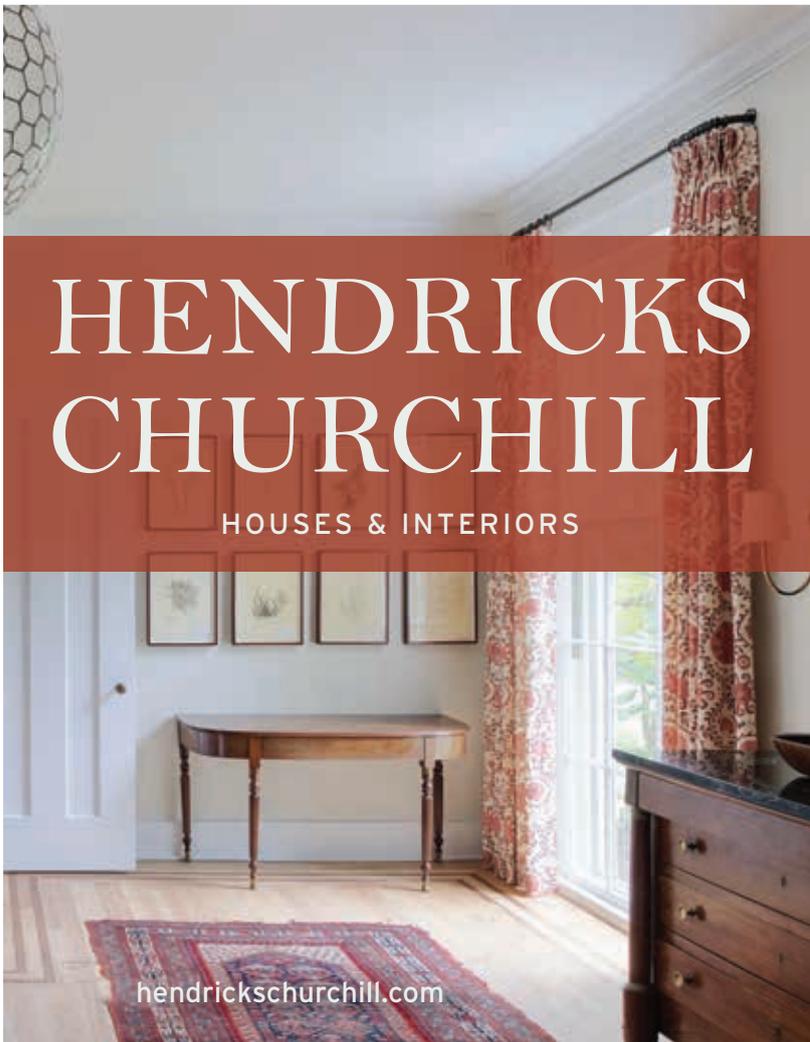
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A Cuba father & son trip

By Peter Greenough
info@mainstreetmag.com

Having visited every Spanish and Portuguese-speaking country in Latin America over the years, except for Cuba and Honduras, I was eager to see the jewel of the Caribbean under Castro-style socialism – before it is overrun by American tourists or possibly closed again by the Trump administration. In early January, 2017, my son and I took the leap. The trip was so much easier and less bureaucratic than I'd ever have imagined for a country that mostly has been off limits to Americans for more than fifty years. The sizable number of old American cars from the 1950s in Cuba is a visible reminder of more than the five-decades-old US government imposed boycott-trade embargo-travel blockade that was implemented back when the Beach Boys were knocking out classics.

Arriving

Delta, JetBlue, American Airlines, and some other carriers have flights from various US airports. Delta charged only US \$352 round trip including all taxes and fees from JFK, plus \$50 at JFK for a visa and the required medical insurance. New plane, leather seats, one third full on a Tuesday for a non-stop three-hour flight to Havana. My son Nick flew on JetBlue from Washington DC via Ft. Lauderdale. We had no bureaucratic hassles leaving the US or arriving in Cuba and were free to roam and use our Spanish person-to-person – many Cubans

speaking some English. The visit was cheaper than visiting Chicago for a long weekend. Welcome to Latin America!

Cuba has two currencies, one for Cubans (pesos), and one for foreigners called a “kook” and written CUC. Foreign currencies are best exchanged for a favorable conversion rate at the Havana airport. Euros and Canadian dollars, if you have them, are even better to exchange than US dollars since US dollars pay a 10% penalty. I changed only 170 Euros there, and later lost out when exchanging the rest of my budgeted US dollar funds for the week at a big, impressive bank in Old Havana after waiting in line at least an hour. Scarce “cadecas” (FX exchange stores) also have favorable rates, but expect long lines of other foreigners from around the globe. US-issued credit and debit cards are rarely accepted and, even in Havana, ATMs are scarce. Nobody seems to seek or accept payment in foreign currencies, only in CUCs – unlike Mexico and some other nearby countries.

Safety

Cuba is amazingly safe, much safer than most places in the US or some parts of Europe – safe like Japan! Everybody agrees on this and incidents are rare. Some scams do exist, so just be sensible and not overly trusting. Don't leave your purse, wallet, or valuables unattended. We repeatedly walked at midnight through parts of Havana that were dilapidated and poor and learned not to be concerned. Perhaps we could import this valuable



feature of Cuba to the US?

Old cars galore

Cubans kindly ignore foreigners rather than gawking, fawning, or pestering them. “Taxi?” is the one thing visitors do encounter. Most of the taxis are late 1940s or 1950s Chevrolets, Fords, Plymouths, Chryslers, Dodges, DeSotos, Packards, Mercuries, Cadillacs, Buicks, Oldsmobiles, an occasional American Motors or Nash, and even a rarely seen Kaiser-Frazer or a stray rocket-nosed Studebaker, plus some old Fiats, Soviet-era Ladas, and some Peugeots and Renaults. Models abound that summon Doo Wop music and early Elvis or The Coasters – ’57 Chevies with fins, huge old ’56 Cadillacs, etc.

Because exports of vehicles and replacement parts were embargoed by the US, many oldies have now been converted to diesel engines. Their 50s-style column shifts may remain, but drivers use three on the floor after their conversion to floor/stick shifting. We didn't see any automatic transmissions. Cars are in every state of repair from the rare pristine to jalopies *cum* real clunkers that are mostly used for Cuban riders. They often have new paint jobs in garish pinks, reds, greens, blues, and whatever bi-color combinations occurred to the owner. Several taxis we took regaled us in

Spanish with the esoterica of their old jalopy being worth about US \$30,000 and increasing in local value every year. That is why people drive carefully and never tailgate! Many tourists negotiate a couple of hours spin in an old and often top-down convertible beauty touring Havana with family or friends.

Always ask before getting into a cab, and negotiate, that means politely bargain, a price to your destination with 5-10 CUCs being a common Havana fare for a few kilometers ride in an old or newer car. When did you last ride in a 1951 Chevy sedan anyway? Sexier 1950s cars are a bit more, and convertibles for sure. Get into the spirit and enjoy your stay. Cuba is supposed to be fun! Who cares about riding in a recently imported Korean KIA or Chinese Gilly sedan when 1950s sentimental spirits offer a hoot of a ride that you will always remember?

Where to stay

There are numerous renovated hotels, usually in grand old edifices from the Spanish colonial period or first half of the 20th Century – but make reservations if you go at peak times. Also Airbnb has over 300 listings in Havana, with some in other cities and



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locations. Most are quite acceptable with photos on the website, priced and paid online from US \$25 to less than \$100 per night for a few people. Some are apartments, houses, or small European-style pensions. Again, book and pay before you travel. Old Havana and the central parts of Havana are accessible to walk, eat, stroll, visit museums, etc. There is a lot to see. Our two bedroom in a *casa particular* in Cienfuegos was immaculate for a total of 40 CUC per night including our great 5 CUC breakfasts. Cuba is very cheap! Bring comfortable walking shoes or sandals, and daytime Bermuda shorts, T-shirts, and not much of anything dressy unless you plan to stay in one of the few high-end hotels and step out at night. Casual is the way to fit in.

We learned to each buy a 60 minute Wi-Fi card for 3-4 CUC at big hotels with Wi-Fi and then to access the Internet. Or some young entrepreneurial man on the street nearby will sell you a card that he has purchased in bulk which he scalps to tourists for a small mark up. Just ask at a large hotel and they will inform you what to do, or where you can get cards and Internet service. There wasn't a Verizon plan for Cuba, so we can't comment on telephone issues, though we've been told you can use your phone for calls and later pay high voice and data rates. We used our iPhones and iPad for email, to FaceTime, and as cameras without any issues – instead of carrying a larger camera.

In Havana we sat with beer and daiquiris in a spacious old hotel lobby with a nice bar and logged on under large vintage framed photos of “Papa” Hemingway in Cuba, since this was a hangout and his Havana residence for about five years. His countryside house is about 40 kilometers outside the city and can be visited by taxi.

What to see

The capital city has many sights and neighborhoods. In general, strolling is the best way to take it in. The exception may be getting to the Malecon, which is the long, wide boulevard and sea wall-protected promenade along the curving Havana sea front. A huge early January storm in the US southeast also whipped up the seas and winds here, so large waves came splashing over this famous area that temporarily was closed off to cars – really dramatic! You can also reach the Malecon by strolling down the long elevated Prado where local artists display their canvases for tourists to negotiate a souvenir to roll up and take home.

Old Havana or “Havana Vieja” is a large area with blocks of beautifully restored colonial buildings, cobblestone streets and plazas lined with outdoor cafés and live Cuban music in the evenings. Other areas of the old city are quainter, or still rundown with locals living in centuries-old buildings lining narrow sidewalks with laundry hanging out to dry and wrought iron-ringed balconies. Don't miss visiting the Museo de La Revolucion, which chronicles the Cuban government's version of the lead-up to and events of the Castro-led Revolution, and its politics and achievements since then. Both the US and Cuban versions should probably be taken with a healthy grain of salt. You may not agree, but this museum is well worth seeing, including parts of an American U2 spy plane shot down over Cuba in 1962 during the missile crisis period. There is a reason that the revolution succeeded, and you may begin to understand it after your visit. And be glad that JFK deftly managed the removal of the Soviet missile threat.

The more than four centuries (1589) old Spanish forts lining the entrance to Havana's harbor are spectacular and best visited in the morning or late afternoon when the Caribbean sun is less intense. Who knew that the British took Havana? Consult your guidebook (*Lonely Planet* probably is the best) for ideas and the array of other things to see and do in Cuba. Be sure to read up beforehand about Havana and Cuba on Wikipedia, Wikitravel.com, and elsewhere.



Outside Havana

In our nearly 300km trip southeast to old Cienfuegos on the southern coast, with nearby Playa Luna for excellent snorkeling and spear fishing, the decently maintained “Autopista Nacional” highway passes through agricultural regions. Traditional Latin American panoramas of country life abound; palm, banana, mango, papaya, flamboyant, and other trees border poorly cultivated pastures with Cebu and other cattle. Large fields of sugar cane in various stages of cultivation are observed, from fields of sprouting shoots to those ready for the harvesting of the ten-foot-high canes that will be converted to sugar and other derivative cane products like rum. Not much machinery was visible other than some dated tractors, tillers, and a few harvesting machines. Horses and horse-drawn carts provide transportation in the rural areas along with old trucks and the frequently stopping passenger buses. Individual houses are not well maintained; some have little vegetable gardens, a few chickens and possibly a scrawny guard dog hanging out nearby. The exposed soil is usually bright clay red, washed by intense tropical rains that have removed unprotected topsoil. Picturesque roadside juice and coffee stops, or occasional open air thatched restaurants, provide a chance to eat and stretch in peaceful country settings.

Using rented equipment, my son snorkeled at Playa Luna, 17km further east of historic Cienfuegos,

and was surprised by the variety of reefs, colors, and abundant sea creatures. For lunch under a tree on the beach, we enjoyed the fish he had speargunned that was cooked at a tiny open air beach café and washed down with beer and mojitos – and big smiles at our luck. The woman who served us was a government employee and we learned she only earns the equivalent of US \$15 each month. We left her a 10 CUC tip and she cried. She said that day was the first time she had ever served Americans. The snorkeling guide and his equipment for a few hours cost only 10 CUC.

East of Havana some 140 kilometers on the northern coast is Varadero, a long narrow international tourist beach hotels destination somewhat analogous to Mexico's Cancun. We did not visit, though over one million do every year according to Wikipedia (mostly Canadians and Europeans) who fly into that airport from abroad. But we didn't go to Cuba to be at a resort.

Eating

The customary Cuban food is tasty and very cheap, with variations on chicken, pork, beef, and seafood. Like most standard Cuban meals, rice, platano (Plantain), manioc (yucca), and black or red beans are the accompanying fare along with some vegetable. My best meal was a *Ropa Vieja* (“old clothing”) which is a traditional

Continued on next page ...



Cuban dish of stewed shredded beef in delicious sauce. My son's favorites were a pork loin in sauce and a stewed chicken meal. Cubans prefer dark meat chicken legs and thighs, often deboned, rather than the white breast meat that Americans seem to expect.

Food preparation and offerings in Cuba run the gamut in quality and taste, and price is no sure determinant of how delectable it will be. There is no shortage of places to eat, from luxury hotels to modest little cafés. Most entrée plates are less than 12 CUC or so, often 4-6.

Cubans are known for their skill at cooking pork in various tasty ways. Other common menu items are *pael-las*, Criollo dishes, good breakfast *café con leche*, freshly prepared tropical fruits and juices, ham, some basic good cheeses, and desserts like flan, ice creams, and cakes. Espresso and cocktails, many types of Cuban rum, and local and imported beers are ubiquitous and cheap. Even a serving of imported Scotch whisky often is only 3-4 CUCs.

Reflections

Cuba had a roughly four century-long colonial history under Spanish rule until 1898, and there are intact buildings galore in most towns and cities from what we could see. Havana is now celebrating the 497th year of its founding. Enjoy wide prados, nice central plazas with palms and trees shading benches, old churches, arcade walkways along blocks of old colonial buildings with shops where one strolls protected from the hot sun and tropical rains. Like most Latin cities, with litter and sidewalks not in great shape, many are swept most every morning when the roosters are crowing.

Cubans are remarkably calm, and not upset, bitter, or unhappy – something I wish we Americans could observe about our fortunate selves. They look people in the eye when speaking, are warm, listen attentively, and are responsive and respectful. Eye contact is considered an invitation to chat. Cuba is peaceful and safe, and that was a big surprise because much of Latin America isn't. We did not see one argument, unpleasantness,

fight, violence, or crime anywhere. We didn't encounter any obese Cubans, only the tourists were overweight.

The scarce police carry a police baton, are strolling, have no guns, and are pleasant and barely noticeable with no apparent need to harass anyone or assert their authority. We repeatedly were told that crime is scarce, though many buildings do have the traditional Latin crafted wrought iron window and door grates – perhaps a stylistic colonial holdover from more socially conflicted pre-revolutionary times (1959) and going back centuries.

Air pollution is a big problem in Cuba, primarily caused by the diesel powered vehicles lacking any modern emission controls – cars, trucks, buses, scooters, put-put taxis, small cc 2 cycle motorcycles, etc. But bicycles, pedi-cabs, horse-drawn carts, and a few larger horse carriages are also common. Walking is best, slowing down to observe and appreciate this trove of interesting and varied new sights. To repeat, nobody bothers tourists other than the frequent taxi invitations and maybe an occasional invitation from a hospitable shopkeeper in tourist areas.

Animals in Cuba serve two purposes: for food and for labor, with minimal concern for their grooming or signs of affection from their owners. Not many pets are in evidence; dogs are often scavengers and accustomed to barking when strangers come near, from what we could tell. Street cats exist to keep the rodent population under control. Caged birds caught our eyes only twice in our week in Cuba. Wild birds are not common. There do seem to be many roosters vocalizing, even in urban locations like a block from Cuba's Capitol building (modeled on the US Capitol).

Shopping

What is there to buy to take home? Rum (about 10 CUC), cigars (Cohibas to MonteCristos), leather goods, *papier-mâché*, ceramics, carved handicrafts, earrings, key chains, handmade cloth dolls, Cuban music CDs, artisan mobiles, painted birds and fish, bracelets, carvings, aluminum and wood jewelry, T-shirts, straw hats (3-25 CUC), lots of colorful tourist paintings, shell or stone items, apparel,



sandals, scarves, some toys, etc. My favorite was a handmade textile doll purchased for my young granddaughter with a reversible long skirt and two heads and torsos, white or black, depending on the skirt location.

We saw no antique stores, and my wife's one request to bring back an old Cuban ceramic floor tile gift was unrequited. If you get to the airport for departure from Cuba and still have some leftover CUCs in your pocket, you can buy various items in the shops, including rum, cigars and souvenirs, on both sides of the hassle-free immigration and security before boarding your flight home.

Musings at departure

My son and I kept asking ourselves what is the political and economic path that would improve the lives of Cubans. While destroying the privileged life of some Cubans, the Castro Revolution improved most Cubans' lives – something few Americans know or acknowledge. But Cubans lost other important things, that most of them never really had anyway.

Cuban literacy has risen from 10% pre-Revolution to almost 99.8% (#11 globally) today versus the US (#45) with 32 million illiterate US adults and 21% of US adults reading below a fifth grade level, all according to the CIA World Fact Book. Also nearly comparable with the US, Cuba has a life expectancy at birth of 78.7 years (#55) while the US has a life expectancy of only 1.1 years longer (#42). All Cubans have access to good free

basic healthcare and education.

But Cubans do not have basic political freedoms or much hope for their lives improving. Or much crime, addictive drugs, or gun deaths. It does cross one's mind in pondering all this, was there a reason that Fidel, Che, and Camilo started the 1957 Revolution that succeeded? These are not things you should try to discuss with Cubans or publicly.

The Castro regime's expropriation of foreign corporations' investments and wealthy family's holdings (real estate, telecom, oil refineries, banks, sugar, casinos, etc.) may have blinded us to considering why the revolt against the Batista regime succeeded many years ago. If the US at some later point had treated nearby Cuba as a difficult cousin and troubled neighbor, and not implemented the half century plus embargo, perhaps Cuba would have evolved into a normal Latin American neighbor with the usual internal problems, more political freedoms, and a stronger economy. Where do you come out? Younger Miami Cuban-Americans seem to be much more amenable to considering how to re-integrate Cuba and the US for their mutual benefit after both sides having been so provocative over the years. It could be a beautiful thing to again be friendly neighbors. You will have a lot to think about while flying northward to our divided, free, and plentiful country. Don't believe everything you hear or read. Go see Cuba for yourself... ●



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Max's Auto Detailing

Bring your car's paint back to life. mstrompf@hotmail.com

Max Strompf has been detailing cars as a hobby for the past 10 years, but in the past three years business has really picked up. Word spread through social media and the local community. Max offers paint correction. If your paint is looking dull, tired, or has faint swirls and scratches, Max can rejuvenate the paint to its former glory through a series of buffing and different coarseness along with high quality products, and patience. Max says, "You'd be amazed to see what's hiding under that haze!" He serves the Columbia, Dutchess, and Berkshire County areas. He is fully insured and resides in Copake, NY. He can come to you, pick your car up, or you can bring your ride to him. He is a one-man band. "I take the calls, do the work, and pride myself on the results. My goal is to ensure your satisfaction throughout the whole process." While you may be able to get it done quicker and cheaper elsewhere, you can rest assured that Max's meticulous nature and high quality work will be incomparable to his competitors. Max says the most rewarding part of this business is the reaction of the owners when they see the results. "There is nothing more gratifying than that." In the future, Max would like to set up a permanent establishment for the business and continue to bring cars' paint back to life.



Bash Bish Bicycle

A shop to buy, service, or repair your bicycle. 247 NY-344, Copake Falls, NY 12517. (518) 329-4962.

Bicycles are ingrained in our culture. People who ride bikes, the bikes themselves, and the stories cyclists tell are as diverse as our society. Grant Hermans rode his bike everywhere as a kid and later on repaired them as a hobby. In 1996 he went back to school and acquired a business degree with an eye on opening a bike shop. Bash Bish Bicycle opened in the spring of 1997 and continues to sell bikes and accessories, as well as servicing and repairing bicycles, too. And if you are ready for a biking adventure, but don't have the right equipment, you're in luck! Bash Bish Bicycle has some rentals available. According to Grant, all bicycle shops seem to be unique. Bash Bish Bicycle is a relatively small shop, "I think many customers like the intimate atmosphere and our upbeat, helpful, and non-intimidating attitude," says Grant. Although most customers are local, Grant is always amazed by those from other parts of the world who pass through their little shop's doors in Copake Falls. As the Harlem Valley Rail Trail expands, Bash Bish Bicycle hopes to become an even greater asset to the region. As for bicycles themselves, Grant thinks electrically-assisted models will grow in popularity as battery technology improves, their weight is reduced, and prices come down. Now, who's ready to ride with the wind?



Millerton Auto & Truck Supply, Inc.

Automotive parts supplier. 6024 NY-22, Millerton, NY, 12546. (518) 789-4474.

Mike Taylor owns two NAPA stores; the Millerton and Pawling store locations. Being a locally-owned small business gives them the drive and the pride to help support a small community. NAPA is affiliated with the National Parts Distribution Center, that has been established longer than any other, providing NAPA with superior availability and a wider range of parts. They are proud to provide a much higher level of customer service and expertise than the dot coms or the corporate chain stores. Millerton Auto & Truck Supply sells automotive parts, paint, and body supplies for domestic and imported trucks, tractors, motorcycles, ATVs, heavy-duty, agricultural, industrial, municipal, small engine, marine, and RVs. With a total of 20 employees, they have a combined total of over 300 years automotive parts expertise. Visit them 24/7 for the online catalog with purchase ability for in-store pick up, repair tips for common maintenance issues, and to enroll in the NAPA Rewards program. Along with monthly specials, they also make hydraulic hoses, rent tools, send out machine shop services for rotor turning, and support many local and non-local charities. If you are ordering parts from a garage, corporation, or farm, ask about delivery options. Mike says, "Being able to help our customers and the ability to provide our customers with the correct part the same day is very rewarding!" Please like us on Facebook too!



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If you need a ride to airports such as JFK, LaGuardia, or Newark (at a flat fee), or perhaps you need a driver to take you on a New York City day-trip, whether it be to a doctor's appointment or to go see a Broadway show, Scott Tyson of Designated Driver of Dutchess is your man. He is a licensed chauffeur and has been driving professionally for seven years. He will make sure you get to your destination on time and safely, in the comfort of your own car. As a local resident to Millerton, Scott services Northern Dutchess and Litchfield counties. Scott lived in NYC for 20 years and is very comfortable navigating through the flow of city traffic. Scott encourages you to call and book your travel date(s) and time(s) with him as far in advance as possible, however he will try to accommodate you should you need last minute transportation services. Scott will meet you at your house and drive you to your desired destination, and return your car back to your house after he drops you off. This is often more convenient, cheaper, and easier than leaving your car in a parking garage. To save you even more money, Scott says that there isn't a need to leave him a tip. So give Scott a call and he'll bring you to where you need to go.

INSURING YOUR WORLD

Spring is finally here and for all you collectors and fair weather drivers, it's time to get those prized vehicles out on the road! It's so nice to see the collector cars, motorcycles, and trucks rolling down the road – yet at times I wonder if they all have the appropriate insurance coverage should an accident occur... There are two main classes of vehicles; antique, which are generally thought of as 20 years or older, and classic, which can be only 2-3 years old. The common thread to make each type of vehicle eligible for a specialty auto policy is "limited mileage use". These vehicles can be insured on a Stated Value basis, which means that there will be no depreciation applied on a comprehensive or collision loss, essentially, you can truly insure every dollar that you have invested in that car, truck, or motorcycle. The crowning glory is that the premium is generally at least half the cost of a normal insurance policy. Contact your agent today and get the right coverage!

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Pet vehicle safety

Using a vehicle restraint or containment for your animal companion is not only a safe choice, but may be the law depending on the state you live in. Many states have a "Distracted Driver Law" in place to protect those who may be put in danger on the road due to unrestrained pets. It is wise to do your research before purchasing a restraint for your companion.

Seat belt harnesses or restraint straps are among a few safe choices of restraint that offer protection for animals and passengers. Consumer Reports explains the danger of an unrestrained 60lb dog in a car traveling 35mph, which can become a 2,700 pound projectile in an accident. Remember, always refer to reputable safety reports that present different brands which have passed (and failed!) safety tests before purchasing.

Crates or pet carriers (depending on the size of the pet) are another safe form of restraint. Look for crates that pass not only structural support and integrity, but also remain attached to connection points in a vehicle during a crash. If connection fails, a crate may also become a projectile object in an accident. Solid vs. wire crates affect ventilation, which should be considered, especially in warmer climates. Wire barriers that create a partition between the front and rear of the vehicle are an alternative to harnesses or crates and may be an alternative option for Giant breeds. Barriers are not crash approved, but may prevent your pet becoming projectile in the event of an accident.

Center for Pet Safety (centerforpetsafety.org) is among the select reputable sources for crate and harness studies. Everyone traveling with their pet in a vehicle is encouraged to explore these studies.

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Tips for safety on the water

Summer is right around the corner, although it may be difficult to imagine after an early spring snowfall. Many of us will be at the beach or on the water enjoying the bright sun. Although this may be beneficial for getting your vitamin D, please be careful. The UV rays you get now can cause skin cancer later. You need a good sunblock, wide brim hat, and even if you're fair skin like me, you'll need to buy sun-block clothing. Hydration is also key. The body loses a lot of moisture in hot weather, and if you don't stay hydrated you could develop a serious condition called heat stroke. While drinking alcohol may be tasty, it is very dehydrating and can aggravate the situation. Water is best or a cool electrolyte drink is also a wise choice.

If you are boating, make sure you have life vests handy for each person. Kids should wear them, and adults too when the wind picks up and the seas get choppy. Make sure you have them on anytime you are on the water during the spring months. The water is extremely cold until late June and if you capsiz you may not be able to tread water very long before hypothermia sets in. As far as boat etiquette goes, please make sure you don't transfer zebra mussels from one lake to another. They are invasive and it would be prudent to clean your boat bottom prior to launch. Also, respect other boaters on the water and know the rules of the road. Too many folks get injured due to boating accidents that can be prevented. Keep your eyes open for other boaters and especially canoes and kayaks as they are harder to spot. Above all – enjoy the warm weather that hopefully comes soon. – Captain Nina.



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Car maintenance tips

Spring time is here; with it brings a new set of chores to be done. We start thinking about all the things in our lives we wanted to do over the winter but couldn't. Your car is usually somewhere on that list. As we know winter can be hard on your car, especially if it's a cold and snowy one. Cold temperatures can damage electrical components. Modern cars and trucks have more electronics than ever. They rely on a steady source of power from your battery and charging system [alternator and voltage regulation]. Removing winter tires and installing some good quality all season tires will not only give you good traction, it can increase fuel economy. Wiper blades should be replaced every six months or so. A thorough under-body wash will rinse out the salt accumulation that builds up under all vehicles in this area. Salt, moisture, and time are the biggest threat to your cars major components including body, frame and suspension parts. We see many good running vehicles sent to the scrap yard due to underbody rust and the safety issues related to it. Following your vehicle manufacturer's maintenance schedule will cover the necessary tune-up and fluid replacements that most cars need. Living in the northeast adds a whole new set of challenges your car has to face. Spring break may bring a road trip to you or a family member. Bringing you car to a trustworthy repair shop will insure safety, reliability and peace of mind.



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