

Newspaper Reports From 1982

Every so often someone attempts to start a local paper, and while some may be in existence for years, most have a shorter life. Such was the case twenty-five years ago when the publisher of a bi-weekly Sandisfield paper decided that Norfolk, Colebrook, Barkhamsted and New Hartford would prove to be fertile ground to expand into. It was a bad choice, as volume 1, number 1 was published on April 3, 1982, and the final edition, volume 1, number 9 came out on August 7, 1982. In a long editorial in the last edition the claim is made that the then local paper, *The Winsted Citizen* had continuously failed to provide adequate local coverage, hence the need for this paper, *The Record*. In this final editorial, one of the main complaints was that commencing with *The Record's* third edition, the *Citizen* began to cover events as never before, causing the *Record*, published only once every other week, to contain stale news.

In spite of its short run, there are several items that are newsworthy twenty-five years later.

On the front page of the first volume is a photo taken inside the old Center Fire Department's recreation hall (now the Colebrook Senior and Community Center). The event was a sock hop with music from "the fabulous fifties" to honor eight Colebrook residents who had recently attained the ripe old age of forty. Three songs that were mentioned were "Love Me Tender", "Devoted" and "Itsy-bitsy, Teenie-weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini" made memorable by Rev. Ron Newlin's enthusiastic refrain "Tell the people what she wore!"

The eight honorees were: Penny White, Ray Swanton, Jane Franklin, Judy Kochey, Ron Newlin, Jo Ann Lake and George Gray. In addition to the forty year olds, there were two eighty year olds (double forty), Mary Bickford and Helen Smith.

Colebrook's correspondent was Harriet Smith, a lady who passed away quite recently, and is remembered and missed by all who knew her. Harriet was an entertaining writer, and could turn a dry report into something memorable and enjoyable. For example, in her opening paragraph in the April 3 copy, she begins: "To those impatient for the first wake-robin, winter stays like the cat in the doorway, not coming in or going out, pretending not to know you'd like to close the door."

She continues: "There's been a true baby shower in Colebrook lately. Beginning with Adam-Jon for Debbie and Jeff Levine on January 19, then a daughter, Emma Lawton-Crane, born February 16 to Marsha Lawton and Michael Crane, and on February 17, James Emerson Thompson to Tara and Jake Thompson. And more joy is promised us this summer."

Also: "The news in Colebrook Center that everyone regrets is that JoAnn and Fred Zebrowski have decided to sell the Colebrook Store. Under their creative hands it has become a place of congeniality and charm, as well as groceries, home-baked goodies and handmade gifts. It's been so pleasant to drop in the store for a cup of coffee and a neighborly word."

Harriet makes note of the fact that three officers of the Colebrook Historical Society, president Marguerite Fearey, vice-president Nancy Blum and curator Elaine DeLarm, attended a meeting in Hartford.

One final entry of interest in the first printing: "Zoo story: Caroline Elizabeth Betts, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Betts of Smith Hill Road, has been granted an

11-week internship at the London Zoo for her junior year abroad from Lake Erie College, Painesville, Ohio. A biology major and honor student, Caroline left March 29 for England to study and participate in the operation of all departments of the zoo, from the office to the care of the animals.”

From the May 15, 1982 edition we find: “On a dirt road we can only hope the pavement never finds, Marguerite Fearey took her Sunday School class last Sunday, instead of having a lesson from a book. The children filled tiny May baskets with yellow violets, spring beauty, hepatica, adder’s tongue, red trillium, fiddlehead ferns and bloodroot. Tricia Gray, Mandy Wynn and Leshia Brennan were especially fascinated by the story of the Indians using bloodroot for war paint.”

“Shirley and Floyd (Skip) Jespersen will hold an open house Saturday, May 22, at the Colebrook Center Fire House to celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. They were married at the Colebrook Congregational Church parsonage by the Reverend Walter Stone.”

Long before the advent of the Colebrook Senior and Community Center, there was an organization known as the Colebrook Senior Service League who visited shut-ins and senior citizens for both socializing and to bring baskets of goodies; in each of Harriet’s columns, there is mention of the most recent doings of this group.

In what I suppose could be called the “what else is new” department, Harriet makes mention that Judy Kochey’s fence has suffered its annual assault. Some driver wallowing through Colebrook Center has knocked down the same section that suffered last year” [If it isn’t someone’s white picket fence, it’s the fence around the Common in front of the church that gets flattened on a continuing basis. This in spite of the fact that the speed limit through the Center is either 25 or 30 miles per hour, depending on which direction you are traveling. There is even an entry in Catherine Carrington’s diary for 1881 that the church fence was demolished by the runaway horse of an inebriated North Colebrook man. The horse made out all right, but the wagon and fence were goners, and the driver was faced with a recovery time of several weeks.]

A photo and accompanying story reminds us just how recent the advent of the computer age has been. The caption reads: “The computer captures the attention and the imagination of the students and faculty at Norfolk’s Botelle School. Here the children are learning how to program in BASIC, a computer language. The computer program at Botelle has been such a success that the school has ordered a second Apple computer, and will be taking one of its classrooms and converting it into a computer room for next year. All the students have found the computer useful, even kindergarten children are doing arithmetic on the computer”

Visit any of our local elementary schools today and try to visualize its operation without computers; and all of this in one short generation.

Historic Bytes

Bob Grigg