

HILLTOPPER

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Please send your news, views and photos to rlphprkns@yahoo.com or to mailbox #1. Thanks, Jay Leavitt and Sue Hammond, for contributing to this issue.

WATCH FOR DETAILS OF COMING EVENTS

THE BEST-LAID PLANS...

Due to continuing concern about COVID19, the House Committee's planned schedule of events has changed and is subject to more change at any time. To stay up to date, watch the notices posted on the Hilltop House bulletin board and in our mail cubbies.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

4 P.M., Hilltop Patio or Barn

Hilltop Players, your talented neighbors, will perform one-act play readings under the direction of Nancy Stone. Both places have been reserved; weather will determine the location. Watch for updates, as noted above.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

Annual Oktoberfest -CANCELLED.

Let's look forward to toasting the hops harvest in 2021.



Home at Hilltop

Does the banner above look familiar? If not, you have yet to visit the current exhibit of fiber art in the card room. The Hilltop Crafters are proud to show the results of their "Rose of Sharon Challenge", where members were challenged to use a traditional quilt pattern's elements - flower, leaf, circle, vine - in original design. The quality and variety of the results are astonishing. Eight different forms of handwork are on display.

This banner's message is timely. Our new residents don't have the usual opportunities to become known, due to the limits on social events imposed by COVID19 guidelines. Your friendly greetings and self introductions as you meet new neighbors walking about or collecting mail are more important now than ever. Below are some names to go with the new faces you may see -for now, from the nose up.

Nancy Stone's granddaughter, Emma Bloksberg-Fireovid, and her husband, Edgard Ngono, are now making their home with her in Unit 120. Edgard is studying for his Master of Public Health degree at the Dartmouth Institute. Emma works from home as a salesforce software consultant.

Karin Collier, who has owned Unit 3 for years, is moving in gradually herself. Born in Germany, she spent her high school and college years in New London. Now she's returning, having retired from a career in the Boston area. Her interests include music, art and reading.

Expected to move in during the month of September: Julie Larsen, who has purchased her mother's Unit 78 and will move from Florida; Debra Chapin, daughter of Marybelle Chapin (Unit 51), will soon move into Unit 81; Nick and Marion Skinner, will move to Unit 137 from Hollis, NH.

Ralph's Field Notes: Air Battles...at Hilltop?

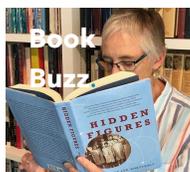
Joan and I have spent much of the summer watching aerial battles right outside our window. No it's not Fenwood or Great Pines invading, it's hummingbirds vs. yellow jackets and their allies (bald-faced hornets and paper wasps). Even as I write this on August 15, the hummers are constantly fighting to drive off the slower but better-armed wasps. I've never seen a wasp actually touch a hummer, but I must assume it occasionally happens, as the hummer has spent millions of years developing an evasive response. On the other hand, I've non-threateningly waved away hundreds of yellow jackets, including from the aforementioned feeder, without ever being stung. However, stomping, swatting or threatening is sure to cause a more violent reaction. Once, as a child, I ran home with more than 50 stings on my head. My mother held me under the cold water faucet and scrubbed my head with baking soda. I have no idea if this helped, but being nearly drowned took my mind off the stings.

Yellow jackets, like most hornets, other wasps and bees, have an interesting life cycle that helps explain why and when they do certain things. In the fall a young female mates and subsequently produces "antifreeze" in her body, which enables her to survive the winter under bark, dead leaves or whatever - the only member of her hive to survive. In the spring, she builds a papery nest, usually underground, where she lays a single egg in each of 20 to 30 hexagonal cells and feeds the larvae insects which she kills or finds dead. She, herself, and all other



Looks beautiful, smells even better! Clethra (shown above), Joe Pye weed, Star Gazer lilies and other fragrant plants now abound in Hilltop gardens. Too bad we can't print in "scratch'n'sniff" format!

Fire Safety Tips .Hilltop Fire Prevention and Safety Committee, chaired by Sue Mosley, is at work preparing a publication of tips for unit owners. One important advance tip: Know what smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detection equipment you own and how to maintain it.



Whether it's shared taste or because we've been relying on one another for book loans, Hilltoppers have been reading a lot of the same books. Very popular among Hilltoppers this summer: Pelosi, Molly Ball's biography of the Speaker of the House.

J. L. Tonner found the book riveting: "so fascinating to follow along on her rise to power." Jan Hostage and Phyllis Piotrow both noted how it showed how different is the path to political leadership for women than for men. Phyllis was particularly impressed that "it was all about the money", i.e. that the way Pelosi proved her mettle was by raising money for other candidates well before she entered any race herself. How did she develop her courage and strength? Having five kids in six years helped!

hornets eat only vegetable matter - sweet petals, flower nectar, etc. As an aside, let me point out that wasps are truly the gardener's friend, killing innumerable harmful caterpillars and other pests. After a few weeks, the fully grown larvae pupate for another two weeks, then hatch out as adults. The mother's only remaining job is to lay several thousand more eggs. Now it's midsummer, and the nest grows quickly. It's usually bigger than a football; a nest in the South may overwinter once and exceed 2 feet in diameter.

Early fall - "yellow jacket season" - is when the nests are at their biggest and filled with hungry larvae, so the working adults become especially aggressive, both in defense of their nests and in getting food, raiding garbage containers, open drink cans or hot dogs that you're eating the other end of.

Now you understand some of what those hummingbirds feel!

