

HILLTOPPER

Ralph Perkins & Joan Ebbeson, editors
Ann Paulson & Jan Hostage, photographers
Fay Bronstein, Book Buzz

Send your news, views and photos to rlphprkns@yahoo.com or cubby #1. Thank you, Sue Jaggard, for your April 16 snowstorm photo. "Peeps" photos were provided by the Library Arts Center.

COMING EVENTS

Together again: Now that many are fully vaccinated and CDC recommendations have changed, Hilltop House Committee has resumed its event-planning. Committee chair Linda Colby asks you to make a priority of the Summer Party, the first official upcoming social event, and watch the bulletin board for subsequent updates and announcements.

Thursday, May 13, 10 a.m.

Budget Information Meeting, to explain details of proposed annual budget.

Saturday, May 15

Official opening day of Community Garden. Jay and Brad Leavitt (Unit 7) are the new coordinators. If you have questions, call 603-568-4082.

Tuesday, May 18, 10 a.m.

Annual HPCA Budget Meeting.

June

Cluster Annual Meetings. Watch your mail for notice of date/time for your cluster.

Tuesday, July 27, 10 a.m.

HPCA Annual Meeting.

Saturday, July 31, starting 5 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE for Hilltop's annual summer party - A Blast from the Past. See article, at right.



"I reverently believe that the Maker who made us all, makes everything in New England...but the weather." - Mark Twain

It Snowed in Mid-April: Will It Snow in July?

Not for the Hilltop Summer Party!

The Hilltop House Committee is enthusiastically planning a "Blast from the Past" to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Hilltop Place. Starting at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 31, the event will include happy hour, a summer supper, and a very special musical tribute featuring the fabulous Nancy Tripp and her trio.

More details will follow in subsequent issues of Hilltopper, but be sure to save the date. This will be a blockbuster event not just on its own merit, but it also marks the restart of Hilltop's regular social calendar. There are many new residents to meet and old friends to reunite with. Plans for an outdoor event in August are also underway and will be announced shortly.

It's Official - May 19 is Our Anniversary Hilltop Place condominium documents were signed, and the first owners, Gladys and Greenfield ("G.T.") Sawyer, received the keys to their unit on May 19, 1971. Beatrice Holmes and George and Marianne Daniel were the first to actually move in, to Units 13 and 11, respectively.

Welcome, New Owners! Karyn Toy has purchased Unit 44 and expects to move in near the end of May or beginning of June. Karyn originally moved to New London from Massachusetts in 1971 and has lived on Knights Hill Road for the last 35 years. Marge Muller, Unit 32 owner, has finally arrived from Larchmont, NY.

A Reminder The official Hilltop bulletin board, located on the wall beside the entrance to the mail room, is where important information is posted, not only official business, but also news residents or their loved ones feel is important to share. Please remember to check it

Ralph's Field Notes: Bird of a Gazillion Contradictions

In the 1975 film **Nashville** is a song, "The Bluebird." Like such other famous tunes as "Zippity Doo-Dah" it describes a friendly, tuneful, carefree soul. Don't get me wrong: I like bluebirds, but there are a few problems with this image.

Firstly, it doesn't have a bit of blue in it. I learned in college that blue pigment is almost non-existent in birds. Its feathers absorb every color but blue, therefore blue is the sky (or other light source) reflected back. Same with other "blue" birds, for example the blue jay.

Back to the non-blue thrush. It's not a very good harbinger of spring, as climate change is allowing it to overwinter in most of NH. If you compare an older field guide like Sibley's with an up-to-date range map such as Cornell Lab's, you'll see this shift.

The bluebird is not unfriendly, but it is sort of shy, preferring rural settings such as fields. One suspected reason for its declining numbers in the early 20th century is the loss of maintained farmland then. Another was a series of early spring snowstorms in the 1950s. Organic pesticides were another threat, but their subsequent control gave this story a happy ending.

The bluebird nests in cavities, for which there is fierce competition from starlings, English sparrows, and others. As a kid, I noted that the nearby Audubon Society manager always put up bluebird nest boxes in pairs, as one box would be taken by more aggressive birds (usually tree swallows) who would chase others of their kind leaving the second available for bluebirds. If you were to build a bluebird nest box, a hole of no more than 1 1/2 inches is needed to keep out starlings. Nesters in one box I erected had a days-long battle with sparrows; I considered resorting to magic, when - too late! - I saw on the ground the nest, 4 broken eggs, and a dead mother bluebird.



"Peepsboro County Fair" Susanne Stillson's remarkably detailed and entertaining creation won top prize in the 10th Annual "Peeps" Competition at Newport's Library Arts Center.



Book Buzz writer Fay Bronstein wants to hear about what you're reading and what you'd like to share about it. Please leave your contributions and comments in her cubby #36.

Book lovers: What books kept you going during this COVID year of isolation, fear, and restlessness? This was the question posed by the editors of **The New Yorker** magazine to their staff of reporters and writers.

One of their choices was **So Long, See You Tomorrow** by William Maxwell (1980). Maxwell was the fiction editor of **The New Yorker** from 1936 to 1975 and worked with famous authors like John Updike, John Cheever, and J.D. Salinger. He was also a novelist, short story writer and essayist.

In this semi-autobiographical novel, he tells the story of a young boy in the 1920s Midwest facing the trauma of his mother's death, his father's remarriage and the loss of his home and rural community. A second plot involves his boyhood friend's family struggling with a forbidden love that culminates in a double tragedy impacting both boys.

Maxwell is a fine craftsman. His characters are clear, his narrative moves, his prose is precise. Updike said it all: "Maxwell's voice is one of the wisest in American fiction; it is as well one of the kindest." *FB*

The thrush family has several prominent members of the spring bird chorus: the robin, the wood thrush, the veery, etc. I'd have to rank the bluebird near the bottom. Its song is nice enough, but too muted to be a real toe-tapper. However the bluebird makes up for this by singing up to 1,000 times per hour.

All in all, Hilltop clearly benefits by having bluebirds around. Maybe more nest boxes will appear. A friend near the NH-MA border counted up to 23 bluebirds at her feeder last year, but I'll predict that we can beat that!.



