

Under the Hump

SOCIETY BUSINESS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next Meeting:
Feb. 17, 6:30 pm
CBMS

- Please note the meeting is being held one week later than usual and the potluck dinner starts at 6:30 pm.
- Elections will be held at the meeting.
- Memberships expired Dec. 31, 2014. Please see reminder on this page.
- We will be hosting the morning snacks and lunch at Town Meeting. Please see information on next page.

Last Issue's Photo:
Justin Blackman



The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17, at the CBMS cafeteria. Please note that this meeting is being held one week later than usual (due to scheduling problems). Please be there by 6:30 pm SHARP as this is a requested potluck dinner before the meeting. Also, if possible, please bring a hot dish, salad, or a dessert to share (please, no nuts of any kind or foods made with peanut oil, per school kitchen rules). The utensils, beverage, and paper products will be furnished.

Our business meeting will follow at 7 pm and will include the normal annual election of all officers and those scheduled trustees. This is your opportunity to get more involved with your Society if you wish.

Our program will be a narrated show about the early bridges of Duxbury with an emphasis on the tragic story of a particular railroad bridge. Come to the meeting and find out more! Skip Flanders will direct this program, assisted by Donnie Welch.

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS RAILROAD BRIDGE?



Dues Reminder

Annual memberships expired on December 31, 2014. The bylaws state that if membership dues are not received by February 1, 2015, your name(s) shall be removed from the membership list. We hope you wish to continue supporting the Society. If so, please remit your dues to treasurer Mark Morse at the address shown on the last page of this newsletter to avoid this being the last newsletter edition you will receive.

SOCIETY BUSINESS

Duxbury Historical Society Food Sale

On Saturday, November 15, our Society held a food sale in front of Kinney Drugs in Waterbury. We wish to thank Kinney's and all that donated or assisted us in any way. Our proceeds were \$160 and we were pleased to offer free cups of coffee to all that stopped by.

~ Mary Welch,
Food Committee Chair



Alison Magnani photo.

Town Meeting 2015

The Historical Society will sell coffee, snacks, donuts, etc. during the morning meeting and hosting the potluck lunch around noon, per usual. Any snacks for the morning meeting will be appreciated. For the lunch, please bring a hot dish, salad or dessert (please, no nuts of any kind or foods made with peanut oil, per school kitchen rules). Price for the lunch will be \$5.00. If you have any questions, please call Mary Welch, 244-7558. Thank you for your participation!

Archival/Preservation Committee Report

Members: Eulie Costello, Debbie Sweetser, Lori Morse, Bonnie Morse, Mark Morse

Finished scanning family photographs we currently have on file. Organized files and artifacts.

Donation Artifacts/Documents

- ⇒ Duxbury Corner School 1962 class ring. ~ Joyce O'Neill
- ⇒ 22 issues about the 1927 flood in the Burlington Free Press & Barre Daily Times. ~ Carol Perry
- ⇒ Slate headstone of Jesse Arms. ~ Daryl Izor
- ⇒ Harwood Union Literary Magazine 1995-1996. ~ Alison Magnani

Monetary Donations

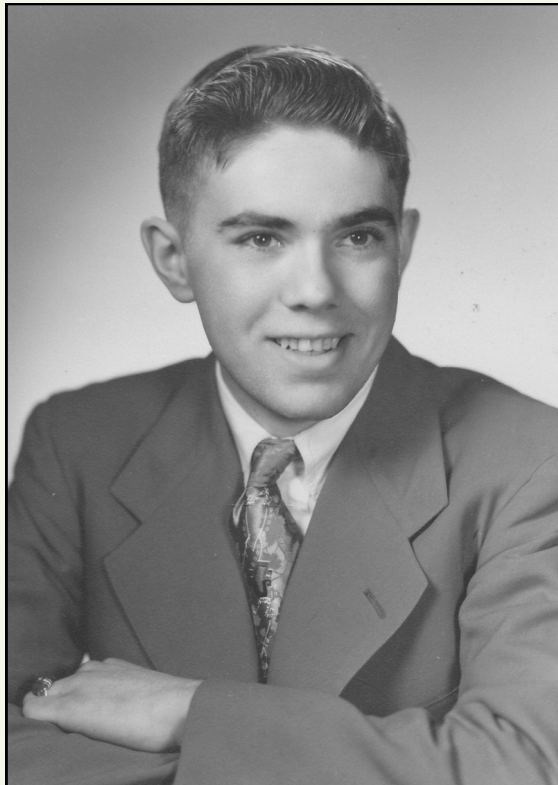
Bernie Moreau	*	Jim & Wendy Welch	*	Dale Christie	*	Brian Lindner
Mo & Barb LaVanway	*	Kelley Taft	*	Kim Greenwood	*	Alan & Beverly Young

MY HEROES WERE NOT ALWAYS COWBOYS

My Heroes Were Not Always Cowboys

By Steve Grace

Photos courtesy of Donald Welch and Louise Welch



David Welch's Waterbury High School graduation picture
Class of 1952 – Salutatorian

Most of us who were raised on rural Vermont farms in the 1940s and 50s lived an insular life. Even by those days' standards, Crossett Hill was very isolated from the outside world. We spent endless hours with our siblings or nearby neighbors – if nearby neighbors existed. We did not see or meet many people outside our small universe, so most of our heroes were imaginary ones – those we followed fanatically in handed-down comic books or well-worn children's books and those that flashed across the screen at the Rialto Theatre in Waterbury. We did venture forth from our hill farm on many Saturday evenings. Mom and Dad visited close family relatives in Waterbury and we kids headed up to the Rialto to see a movie, sometimes a double feature. One of the movies was always a western movie, although the term 'western' did not exist in those times – we were going to a cowboy movie! We'd marvel at the heroics of Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, Tom Mix, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Lash Larue, the Cisco Kid, ... what a deal!

But I never could really buy into the hero worship deal for those pistol-packing, hat-waving, sash-buckling figures flashing across the silver screen. I guess the realist in me dimmed my ardor for these icons. I wanted to see a real hero, close up and personal, to be able to admire a real guy or gal, one that I could see and hear and touch first hand.

In 1950, when I was nine years old, David Welch, who I believe was sixteen years old, entered my cloistered world. Prior to 1950, Dave's family lived on a farm at the end of what is now called Atwood Road, down in civilized Duxbury in contrast to our more primitive Crossett Hill existence. David's father and mother, Ferd and Lois Welch, had six children – Barb, Dave, Donnie, Callie, Judy, and Joyce – same number of kids as my family. The children were close in age to us Grace kids. Ferd and Lois bought what we all called the Crossett Farm – a very nice farm at the time, nicest one on Crossett Hill in my opinion. A hill farm, that's for sure, but a lot of acreage, a nice big house, and probably the nicest barn (aside from the State Farm barn) in the town.

We Grace children did not know any of the Welch children before their move to Crossett Hill. But I did know Dave and Donnie by sight. The first time I ever saw them



Photo of the Welch family taken in 1945 or 1946 on their farm at the end of Atwood Road – youngest child, Joyce, not born yet. Big kids: David, Barbara, Donnie. Little ones: Carol and Judy.

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A couple of battle-hardened vets of 1945: Donnie and Dave Welch

was out in the cow pasture/makeshift baseball diamond below Howard and Katherine Sherman's farm on Route 100. Howard and Katherine provided a field out in the back pasture on which local folks, young and old, would come and play ball, being mighty careful to dodge the puddles of cow turd when rounding the bases, fielding ground balls, and circling under fly balls. More than one pair of pants got some serious stains and stink on them in the course of a game ... but that's a tale for a future time. That field is proof positive of what is now a sports cliché – "if you build it, they will come" – cow turds and all.

My brother John and I – and brother Dick before us – would travel down through the woods from our farm at the top of Crossett Hill to that back pasture field in back of the Sherman farm for weekend games and pick-up games on selected evenings during the summer days when daylight hours expanded. I recall vividly that the walk, or more precisely run, down through the woods in bright daylight was a fun deal – anticipating the enjoyment of playing ball for a couple hours. But the return trip was not so pleasant; decidedly less pleasant, I can assure you. Trudging

up that mountain, tired from our ball game activity, through the woods, uphill every step of the way, no flashlight – I did not stray far from my big brother I can tell you.

I liked and admired David almost from the first time I saw him at these back pasture ball games. He was a quiet fellow – very quiet. No loud yelling or cursing from David. He raised his voice a trifle to encourage a teammate, give a youngster's confidence a boost, or urge the guy on the mound to throw strikes. I never saw him berate an umpire, a teammate, or even an opponent. He played the game with a dignity and control of his emotions beyond his years (far from my behavior, I ruefully admit). Dave's younger brother, Donnie, was a good guy and a good player. Even though he was five or six years younger than Dave, I recall Donnie hit the ball with a lot more authority than Dave. But for some reason, Dave struck a chord with me – a nice guy, a student of the game, and always willing to answer any questions.

Our family's relationship with the Welch family changed dramatically when they moved up to Crossett Hill in 1950, Ferd and Lois having purchased the Crossett Farm as we called it back then, and started operating one of the biggest dairy farms in Duxbury, possibly the biggest at the time except for the State Farm down near Duxbury Corner. I began to see the Welch siblings on a frequent basis – neighbors within easy walking distance and with



1949-1950—Photo of Duxbury Town Team, proud warriors of the 'Sherman Field Cow Turd Dodgers.' Top row L to R: Dick Grace, Larry Kidder, Dick McGrath, Ben Kidder. Bottom row L to R: Donnie Welch, Earl Demas, Donny Demas, David Welch, Roger Merchant.

MY HEROES WERE NOT ALWAYS COWBOYS



Duxbury Red School House – 1943

Front L to R: Beverlee Grout, Billy Harvey, Howard Eastman, David Welch, Bev Harvey, Burton Eastman, Bob Merchant, Roger Merchant.

Back L to R: Bob Harvey, Harold Chamberlain, Bob Sherman, Ruth Phillips (teacher), Betty Harvey, Phyllis Eastman, Barb Sherman, Mae Eastman.

several children close in age to our Grace tribe. The Welches were good neighbors – solid citizens, willing to help out a neighbor in times of need, and with respect for their neighbors and the law.

I then began to see Dave through a different lens. No longer was he just a fellow ballplayer, but I could see many other traits that even I, as a youngster, noticed were rare and admirable for a fellow his age. Dave was in high school at that time and I was in elementary school so I never went to school with him, but it was easy to see that he was a highly intelligent guy – and not one to brag about it. Whenever I reached out to Dave to help me understand something – most often baseball related be-

cause that was a passion of mine and of David as well – Dave would patiently take the time to instruct me on what he perceived to be the best way to understand the question. His quiet communication skills clicked with me. He taught me many of the nuances of this wonderful game of baseball and made me a better player – he would point out the little things that make a huge difference between being an average player to one with good technical skills.

My folks almost always had a milk cow, sometimes a couple, in our barn. But we had a large family which consumed a lot of milk and when our cow 'dried up' while carrying an unborn calf or produced less milk than satisfied our family needs, my folks would buy raw milk from

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David Welch in 1945 with two of his dad's work horses, Mag and Pat. Picture taken at Welch farm at the end of Atwood Road in Duxbury.

the Welches. We'd trek down to the Welch farm, stainless steel milk jug in hand, and Ferd or Dave would fill the jug. My Dad would often go down with us; he liked to visit with Ferd, the two of them discussing local, state and national news items of the day – it seemed to me that they were in disagreement just as often, maybe more so, than they were in agreement. We kids rather enjoyed their lengthy discussions; gave John, Donnie and I more time to horse around or play baseball or basketball. Dave didn't take part in the debates or the games for the most part. He might join us after the barn chores were complete, but he wasn't a guy to leave a work task undone to join a game. I look back on those times now and marvel at his work ethic and assumption of responsibility – he was just a high school student at the time but he was there every night it seemed to me, working side by side with his father, and I never once heard him utter a complaint. He was dependable and mature beyond his years and, young as I was, I saw this trait in Dave and would silently admire him. Damn, I'd think, this guy's a special fellow – a real hero, not one of those guys in the make-believe roles at the Rialto.

Dave was an excellent student at Waterbury High School, always on the honor role, a class officer, a student council representative, a member and officer in the Boy's Athletic Association, a Boys' State representative, and a member of the baseball and basketball teams. He was just an outstanding student scholar/athlete and classmate. He graduated as salutatorian of his graduating class in 1952 and enrolled at UVM as an agricultural student.

Dave stayed at UVM for only one semester. His sib-



1951-1952 Waterbury High School baseball team. Back row L to R: Frank Hickory, Dick Russell, Spencer Morse (?), Herb Lovely, Harry O'Brien, Skipper Morse, Dave Welch. Front row L to R: Dick Campbell, Roger Gilman, Brian Atherton, Bob Russell, Carrol LaHue, Coach Steve Doran, Manager Greg Orton.

lings don't know why his attendance was of such short duration; maybe he just did not like it, more likely he ran out of money ... whatever the case, Dave came back to the farm to work beside his father for a time and then he embarked on his own career. He worked for the State of Vermont in the Agricultural Department as a plant inspector for a time and later on for the State Police as a dispatcher.

One of his great interests at the time was the Dillingham Grange. He was an active member of the grange, an officer for several years. When the old Grange Hall located at Duxbury Corner burned to the ground in the 1960s, Dave, along with his friend, Richard Williams, spearheaded the effort to build a new hall on land deeded to the Grange by Howard and Katherine Sherman. Dave was active in the design stages of this civic project and in the building's construction – not only in the planning process but driving nails and lifting rafters. In typical Dave fashion, he not only talked the talk, he walked the walk. And did not seek attention or praise in the process.

Dave married a Waterbury Center lady, Louise Saurin, in 1960. Louise, also a graduate of WHS, seemed to me to be a lot like David; intelligent, quiet and kind – and a nice looking lady to boot, as an old Vermonter might say. Dave and Louise had two children, Jonathon and April, early in their marriage and seemed to be on the road to a pleasant life's journey.

Then, in 1977, when Dave was 43 years old, things took a turn for the worse in his and his family's lives. Dave was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). From what little I know about MS, it affects people in a wide variety of severity. Some people are diagnosed with it and re-

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David and Louise Welch just days before Dave passed away in 1980.

spond to medical intervention to live long, though usually compromised, lives. Others are diagnosed and suffer rapid health and mobility declines and, sadly, Dave was one of the latter. Dave was soon incapacitated to the point where he was in a wheelchair whenever I'd see him around Waterbury.

But David did not allow this dreaded disease to defeat him. He did not seek people's tears and pity; he strove to continue to live his life in a positive manner, contributing to society rather than curse his fate and become an embittered person. Dave was blessed to have a devoted, faithful wife – Louise was a study in decency and compassion. She took wonderful care of David, but was always careful to urge and encourage David to do everything he could possibly do to retain as much independence and self-pride for as long as possible. Dave was intent on making the best of a tough situation, and Louise was instrumental in making this happen. Dave isn't the only hero in this remembrance of Dave's life; a strong case can be made for Louise as well.

Although Dave's physical decline was rapid and a sad thing for his friends to see, his mind stayed strong and his mental strength and courage served him well in this life-long struggle with MS. Dave became accomplished at leather work; I hear that he had quite a local reputation as a real craftsman at this art. He also began a research project on the history of Crossett Hill – its farms, its families, its schools and its commerce. Dave never finished this project. But his brother Donnie took the baton after Dave finished his leg of the race – and the result of Donnie's endeavor was his production, The Cause of the Will, which I have read (more than once) and is a rare pleasure for an old Crossett Hill boy.

Dave was an inspiration to me as a youngster – and although departed for some time now, he still is. When I see Donnie, which is quite often, my thoughts drift back to Dave with a touch of sadness. But then, I think, Dave wouldn't want it that way. He'd want me to remember the good days. The days of playing baseball at Sherman's field or 'mini-games' on the front lawn of the big farm house on Crossett Hill. Or teaching me the proper grip for throwing a curve ball. Or showing me how to integrate my legs and hips into the processes of hitting and fielding a baseball. Or extolling the heroics of Stan Musial, Enos Slaughter, Red Shoendienst, or Harry Brecheen, and countless others of his beloved St. Louis Cardinals baseball team – while I maintained that they couldn't hold a candle to Ted Williams, Bobby Doehr and Johnny Pesky. Or I simply think back to those days when I'd catch sight of Dave as he quietly went about the business of working that large hill farm with his Dad and brother Donnie; doing the things a real hero does in my way of thinking.

(When reading this article about David Welch and other tales of my Crossett Hill youth, the reader should keep in mind that these articles are not meant to be interpreted as 'literal history.' They should be more accurately defined as first-person remembrances of people and events in my youthful years; people and events that gave me a lot of pleasure in my youth, and give me a lot of pleasure in my old age in the recounting of them.)

The above is a collaborative effort of Steve Grace and Alison Magnani.

D U X B U R Y H I S T O R I C A L S O C I E T Y , I N C .
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If you have any comments or contributions for the newsletter we would love to hear from you.

www.DuxburyVT.com

DON'T FORGET THE NEXT MEETING - FEB. 17
CROSSETT BROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL - 6:30 PM

D U X B U R Y H I S T O R I C A L
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