

# EAST MONTPELIER SIGNPOST

Volume 2, No. 6

July/August 1992

## MINNIE LANE: ONE TOWN CLERK TO THE OTHER

Minnie greeted me with her infectious smile. We had worked together in the Town Clerk's office in 1983 and 1984, and we always seemed to know what the other would do when problems occurred. Being a Town Clerk, as Minnie noted, was like being a "sounding board". You listened to the problems of the property owner and tried to give some understanding of how taxes are arrived at.

Minnie's father, Charles Gidney, came to the United States from England when he was 18. He met Clara Beckley from North Montpelier when they both worked on the Louis Coburn farm. (Louis was grandfather to David Coburn and Gladys Dunkling.) He returned to England and worked for the railroad for a time, but then he came back and looked up Clara. They were married shortly after and lived at what is now the Cate farm. Minnie, born in March 1917, was the youngest of six children (one son and five daughters). Her sister, Rachel McAllister, lives in Montpelier.

The Gidney farm was located on North Street in Montpelier, bordering the East Montpelier town line. In 1909, Minnie's parents purchased an adjacent 12 acre piece in East Montpelier, still owned by the Gidney family. The

children walked 2 miles to Montpelier to attend school.

When Minnie was in high school, her father exchanged the farm with her brother's place further down North Street. After graduation in 1935, a friend, Catherine (Gladding) Breer, lived with her at her parents, and both worked at the State Unemployment Office.

Social activities were oriented toward the East Montpelier Center and North Montpelier areas of town as Minnie had friends and relatives living there. Travel was also difficult down North Street into Montpelier because of the road.

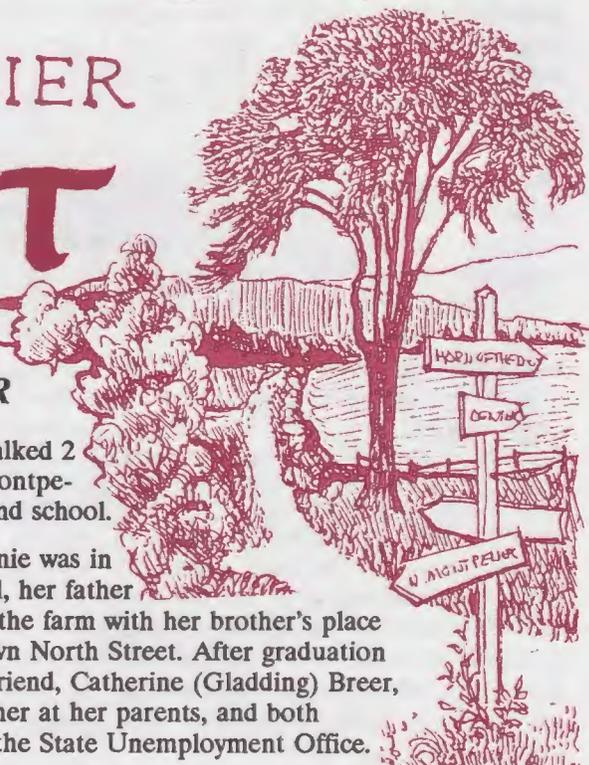
Minnie met George Lane at a dance in North Montpelier. Though George grew up in the Horn of the Moon area of East Montpelier, they hadn't met until after graduation. George went into the service in 1942. They were married in 1943 when he came home on leave. He went back to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where Minnie joined him for about a month before he was shipped out to Italy. He was discharged in 1945, and shortly after, was hired at Washington Electric in East Montpelier where he worked until retirement in 1984.

When first married, George and Minnie rented the apartment upstairs in the house then owned by Dwight & Irene Clark, (later Ronald & Therese Ferland/Ramon & Marion Spooner) across from the Post Office. In 1951, they moved to their new house in the village. Their only daughter, Cynthia, was born in 1953. Minnie was a full time mother for a while and helped with school events and sometimes with the school lunch program. Cynthia attended the Village School which is now the Town Clerk's Office.

In 1965, Minnie was elected Auditor and served until late 1969 when she was appointed Town Clerk upon retirement of Arthur Brackett. She only had two weeks of training. Minnie then took on the job single-handedly and the office was moved to the present Creamery Store/Home Center on Route 2. In 1973, the Town Clerk's Office was moved to its present location which had been the Village School. It was being used by the School District as a Superintendent's Office,



Minnie Lane with grandchildren Stephanie and Craig



and an office was walled off on the right hand side of the building for the land records and safe. In 1975, when the Superintendent moved out, the Town Clerk moved into the renovated left side of the building and a large safe was built. Peg Sibley was Minnie's first Assistant Clerk. Others were Mildred Gray, Ivy Hudson, Margaret Collins and myself.

Minnie served as Town Clerk for fourteen years until her retirement in March, 1983. She was then appointed as my Assistant Clerk for about a year. Minnie commented that work has certainly increased since she left. She used to record deeds by manually typing them, some on pre-printed forms and inserting descriptions to conform to the original deeds. Now the deeds are copied on a machine from the original and recorded. Minnie remembers that she had her doubts about using the new machine and never was inclined to have Selectmen purchase one.

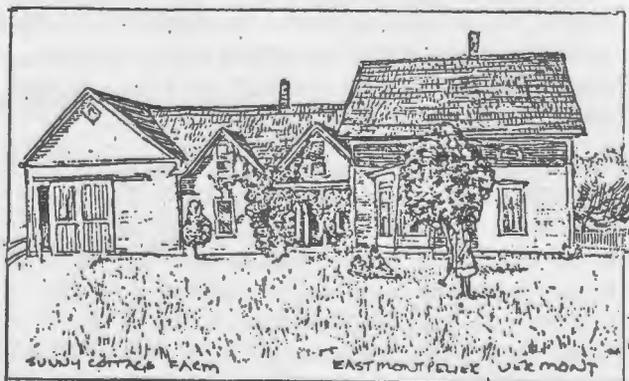
Minnie has kept busy during retirement by doing crafts, learning quilting, knitting an afghan or two and travelling to South Dakota. The hand made quilt she is working on will be an heirloom to be handed down in her family, I'm sure. She has done extensive genealogy work on the Gidney family. Minnie has been involved with the Brick Church in the village, where she was Treasurer for 34 years, and has worked in the Brick Church Club with suppers, crafts, and anywhere she was needed.

In the late fall, Minnie and George drive to Colombe, South Dakota, to visit their daughter and family for the winter months. They have two grandchildren, Stephanie, 12 and Craig, 9, who are their pride and joy.

Minnie's job as Town Clerk was most important to her. She considered herself the person in charge of the Town's most important records which are a history of our Town. She is still interested in what we do and how things are going. One recent change that I showed her was our new Land Record books which use only half the space of the old ones and weigh only half as much. She felt that was a good change.

My visit with Minnie was a renewal of our friendship. Minnie loved her job as Town Clerk. Reminiscing over some of these memories gave me a feeling of how precious time really is.

*Sylvia M. Tosi*



## FROM THE TOP OF THE SIGNPOST

*This column will be about Rally Day.*

*In the last issue, we asked the question "What is a community"? One answer is that a community is strong when people have lots of opportunities to work together and to play together.*

*That is what Rally Day is all about! This will be the fourth year our town has worked on this day of celebration. It was dreamed up as a way we could all have fun together and get to know the town better. The program includes ball games, hikes, tours, food, shows, demonstrations, and fun for all ages. In the evening the Variety Show, which has packed the school gym in past years, will parade local talent of the most amazing variety. It leaves us at the end of the day with the feeling that we live in a wonderful little town.*

*Do you remember the parade which was the highlight of last year's Rally Day? Another very special event to be the centerpiece of the day is in the planning stages for this year, and you will be hearing more about it soon.*

*How can you take part? The planning is going on right now, and you can join in by calling 223-2951 or the Town Office. Or you can offer to help out on Rally Day itself. We always need people to scoop ice cream, sell popcorn, staff the Information Table, run errands - whatever. Or you can just bring the family and join in the fun. However you participate, make yourself part of the community on September 12.* — Jean Cate

## CHURCH CHIMES

*Old Brick Church  
Old Meeting House*

Worship services are held jointly between OBC and OMH in the summer. July services are at the Meeting House and August services are at the Brick Church and begin at 10:00.

The OBC will host a lawn sale on Saturday, July 18, at 10:00. There will be antiques, games, baked goods, garden tools etc. for sale. A hotdog lunch will be served.

There will be a free outdoor concert at the OMH on July 16 at 7:00 P.M. featuring The Green Mountain Brass, a quintet from the Montpelier area. They play a variety of music, show tunes, marches, light classical, Gay 90's, ragtime, and more. Tom Rolland is the founder and director of the group which has been together since 1985. It will be an opportunity for the community to join together for a night of music and fellowship. There may be a supper before the concert.

Neighbors and friends came to hear William Sloan Coffin, well-known activist for civil rights, peace, environmental and social justice issues, and former Chaplain of Yale University, preach at a joint worship service at the Old Meeting House on June 7.



THE SELECT BOARD

Weston Cate, Allan Couch, Edie Miller

March 25, 1992

▶ Heard concerns from Jan Otto regarding condition placed on a construction permit for his five lot community septic system. Agreed to amend permit condition that the Sewage Officer conduct an annual site inspection to check leach fields.

▶ Re Brazier curb cut application. Alice Angney expressed concern over location of driveway and questioned the process for the Town to make the Brazier right of way a future town road. The access permit does not assure that the driveway will ever become a town road. Voted to approve the Town Highway access permit subject to the condition that culverts be placed as specified in application.

▶ Discussed proposal for a historic district designation for the Center. Voted to write a letter to the Division for Historic Preservation requesting they hold a public hearing.

▶ Vehicle weight permits given to five companies.

▶ Reviewed and signed liquor license for Creamery Country Store.

▶ Approved farm tax stabilization contract for John and Grace Mekkelson for 25 acres leased to Hugh Hawkins.

▶ Approved \$300 cost overrun to Chenette Engineering.

▶ Accepted Planning Commission recommendation to appoint members Stuart Friedman as representative and John Riley as alternate to Regional Planning Commission.

▶ Voted to ask Judy Cookson to serve as Chair of Recreation Board.

April 8, 1992

▶ Voted to pay \$500 deductible to cover expenses incurred when town dump truck hit an electrical line and damaged a resident's car.

▶ Heard concerns of Fred Tubbs

regarding delinquent taxes. He noted that when tax due date falls on a Sunday, state law says payments are accepted the next Monday. Also questioned tax collector's refusal to collect a partial payment, and questioned the date on which interest should accrue to the balance of delinquent taxes.

▶ Discussed review of roads and summer work to be completed.

▶ Appointed Karen Saudek to Zoning Board of Adjustment.

▶ New dog pound arrangements finalized with Onion River Animal Hospital.

April 22, 1992

▶ Approved access permit for two lot subdivision for Richard Copping on Kelton Road.

▶ Discussed request of Madeleine Mongan to have meeting agendas available by mail for Planning and Zoning Boards. Discussed costs involved, open meeting law, etc. Bill Bryant will contact the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to see how other towns handle this.

▶ Discussed several legal matters with town attorney:

(1) Continued problem with Mr. Hedges; awaiting a court date.

(2) Delinquent tax matters raised by Mr. Tubbs. Determined that delinquent tax penalty and interest had been appropriately charged; however, felt that interest should not be added until 11th of the month if taxes are due on the 10th. Stated that statute did not apply to town because tax deadline is set at Town Meeting.

▶ Steve Sinclair reported a vacancy on the Conservation Fund Advisory Committee and a term due to expire in June. Will advertise vacancy and ask incumbent if he wishes to continue. The Committee is also reviewing its policies for applications.

▶ Accepted resignation of Road Foreman Clayton Davis effective May 8. Will advertise for new position.

▶ Discussed request from Austin

Cleaves for permission to purchase fill from the old town pit off Route 14 for a new barn. Discussion ensued about state of the access road, VOSHA regs, status of permits and price to charge.

May 6, 1992

▶ Executive session to discuss recruitment of new road supervisor.

▶ Voted to pay Butch Davis 2 weeks vacation pay plus unused sick time.

▶ Bids sent out for 1992 road paving projects. Inclined to do Center Road instead of Towne Hill Road this year.

May 13, 1992

▶ Request from Rose and John Riley regarding discontinuance of portions of Town Highways #11 & 27, Foster Road. This is a Class 4 Road in one part and a legal trail in another. Vehicles still use roads, tear them up quite badly, and have parties out there. The proposal would be to give up the roads to the abutting property owners, the Rileys, who would in turn grant a ten year renewable easement for a public trail. The Select Board will consider this request further.

▶ Approved authorization for Planning Commission to purchase mapping services out of special planning funds.

▶ Approved extension of contract with Cynthia Hartnett for editing Town Plan.

▶ Discussed septic field at the Municipal Building. It appears an evaluation by an engineer is needed.

▶ Discussed possibly changing tax due date to October 31 to avoid confusion with Veteran's Day.

▶ Approved access permit for a residential driveway off legal trail/Kelton Road extension for Austin Cleaves.

▶ Approved access permit for agricultural driveway to service a proposed barn and milking parlor off Lyle Young Road as submitted by Austin Cleaves. Condition attached that driveway be level for a minimum of

one truck length from the road, and be graded and maintained as to not drain onto the road.

- ▶ Heard Treasurer's report: Voted to authorize Treasurer to borrow \$120,000 in anticipation of taxes at 4.15% from Chittenden Bank.
- ▶ Executive session on the selection of road supervisor.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION**

*Chair: Johanna DeMartino*

**April 16, 1992**

- ▶ Approved preliminary plat plans for 3-lot subdivision by Norman and Carla Messier.
- ▶ Approved proposal for log depot by Cary Smith and Albert St. Cyr on Route 2.
- ▶ Heard C.V. Landfill presentation by Chris Walsh of the Regional Planning Commission.
- ▶ Asked Select Board to approve funds not to exceed \$200 to hire a consultant to review the application, proposed host agreement, and for guidance through Act 250 process.
- ▶ Staff from Division for Historical Preservation will hold a public meeting on proposed Center Road district.
- ▶ Copies of draft Town Plan handed out for review and comments by 4/24.

**May 7, 1992**

- ▶ Gave final plat approval to Norman and Carla Messier for 3-lot subdivision on Route 2.
- ▶ A general discussion about the regional landfill problems was held, specifically the competing applications of Palisades and CV. Decided to invite Jonathan Lash, our representative to the District, to next meeting.
- ▶ Bernie Chenette explained why digitizing the agricultural land maps took so long and overran budget. Voted to recommend to Select Board that Chenette Engineering be paid the extra \$300.
- ▶ Voted to ask Select Board to approve the purchase of four maps from Regional Planning Commission.
- ▶ Approved Washington Electric

proposal to tear down four garages between their office and the Brick Church and replace it with a 800 square foot office.

- ▶ Joyce LaMountain asked to bring in a 10 x 50 trailer for temporary storage. It was agreed that Zoning Administrator could issue permit with a condition that it not be used as a residence.

- ▶ Discussed Benoit's request for another sign permit. Asked that they meet with Planning Commission as they appear to be running a non-permitted used car lot.

## **BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

*Chair: Earle Ellingwood*

**March 30, 1992**

- ▶ Continued discussion of Hedges' application to replace an existing barn on Fair Road. Voted to recess hearing and plan site visit.
- ▶ Public hearing on Earth Construction desire to expand operations and set up stone crushing facility at the former Pike/Cooley Gravel Pit on Coburn Road. Co-owner Rod Jordan described scope of project: presently asking for extraction of up to 100,000 yards/year (50-120 trucks/day). Lengthy testimony from neighbors, abutting land owners. Voted to recess until 4/20.

**April 13, 1992**

- ▶ Site visit at Hedges'. Reconvened at Town Clerk's Office. Application granted with condition of moving barn 8 feet further back.
- ▶ Reopened hearing on Brazier gravel pit. Board agreed there was substantial change in application to rehear. Discussion as to whether Karen Saudek (new BOA member replacing Edie Miller) should participate given her opposition to Brazier pit in past hearing. Voted to allow Karen to participate since this is new application and new testimony. Heard lengthy testimony from neighbors and expert witnesses.

**April 20, 1992**

- ▶ Continued Earth Construction application with lengthy discussion and testimony. Recessed again.

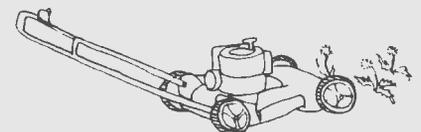
- ▶ Discussed Select Board's request to discuss length of term of BOA. By statute, length and term is determined by legislative body of town. Currently, this is for as long as members are willing and able to serve. Board members agreed that if Select Board wanted terms they would go along with three-year terms.

**May 11, 1992**

- ▶ Deliberative session on Brazier gravel pit. Went into executive session. Approved the following conditions:
  - \* Maximum quantity per day to be 140 yards;
  - \* Hours of operation to be 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday;
  - \* No operation on Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays;
  - \* Operation to occur between May 1 and November 15 only.

**May 19, 1992**

- ▶ Deliberative session on Brazier gravel pit continued in executive session. Voted to approve permit for 10 year period with review every 3 years, with the following additional conditions:
  - \* Load per truck not to exceed 14 cubic yards;
  - \* Applicant shall identify the seasonal high water table through monitoring wells, test pits and shall maintain the excavation vertical limits to no closer than 2 feet from that level;
  - \* No fueling or lubrication of self powered equipment in the gravel/sand extraction area;
  - \* A crusher not be set up in sand extraction area;
  - \* Equipment be well maintained;
  - \* Calcium chloride be applied by applicant to Class 3 part of road;
  - \* Records of all materials extracted, # trucks loaded, total yards removed be available for yearly review;
  - \* A crusher be limited to 2 weeks per year;
  - \* The loader be equipped with radar controlled beeper;
  - \* Applicant will make any project related repairs to Class 3 portion of road.



**EAST MONTPELIER  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Jan Aldrich, Sue Stephen, Rich Davidian,  
Tony Klein, Burr Morse*

**April 2, 1992**

- ▶ Gave permission to Dennis Carver to install a juice machine in the hall on a temporary basis.
- ▶ Voted to renew Laura Johnson's contract.
- ▶ Problem with gym roof leaking every spring. Is still under warranty. Tony Klein and Burrell Roofing will look at it.

- ▶ Discussed flooding problem outdoors by kitchen. Laura will ask Gene Bowen to submit an estimate for a long term solution.
- ▶ Hot lunch profitable for the month of March. District looking into the contract food service that Barre City has.

**May 7, 1992**

- ▶ Discussed home-schooled children and their role in graduation activities. Students who have completed the curriculum of EMES will receive a certificate at graduation. Children schooled at home will not, but may participate in graduation ceremonies.
- ▶ Robin Gannon spoke in regard to amount of time that is spent on math and writing portfolios in the 4th grade and explained that students already take a standardized test in math and writing. Board approved her request that 4th grade be exempt from Stanford Achievement Tests.
- ▶ Fran Weinbaum updated the Board on the activities of the Schools for the 90's Committee. Suggested that this committee be incorporated into PTO.
- ▶ Claire Rivers will be retiring at the end of this year. A new school nurse will be hired; Sue Stephen and Laura will conduct interviews.
- ▶ Proposal for flooding problem behind kitchen area received for \$6600 plus \$1000 for paving. Will look for another solution.
- ▶ During a recent fire inspection, an inspector noticed door stops on the doors. Doors have to be closed. Magnetic door holders could be installed at a cost of \$1800.

▶ Laura asked if a Home-school/School Policy is needed. Board felt current precedent is set and they will continue with this.

▶ Discussed juice machine and letters from parents and staff about it. Voted to remove it after 30 day trial.

▶ Four Corners Association will take possession of the Four Corners School on September 1, 1992.

**FOUR CORNERS  
SCHOOLHOUSE ASSOCIATION**  
*President: Don Donnelly*

The hand-craft show was held on May 16th, and our appreciation goes to the following exhibitors: Diana Fielder, quilting & smocking; Irene Clark, rug hooking & ceramics; Mary Stone, whistles; Jennifer Boyer, pottery; Patricia Hambro, needlework; Ellen Urman, dried flower wreaths.

The new well has been drilled, so bathroom repairs can be started soon.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

The East Montpelier Fire Department would like to remind everyone that on June 1, 1992 the fire and ambulance emergency telephone number changed to 223-5555. The EMFD has joined Capital West, the dispatching service operated by the Capital Fire Mutual Aid System. One benefit is that the people who reside in the 223 and 229 telephone exchanges can dial 911 to access fire, ambulance, and police in an emergency.

New phone stickers were mailed out in late May. If you did not receive any or would like additional ones, please contact any member of the Fire Department.

On May 5, the EMFD held its annual meeting at which members were elected or reelected to the following offices: Chief, Michael Garand; President, Jon Winston; Vice President, Deborah Schick; Chaplain, Larry Brown; Board of Directors, Robert Van Zandt, James Brown, Earl Smith and Bill George.

*William H. George, Jr.*



**NEW STRAY DOG  
PROCEDURES**

The Select Board and Town Constable have worked out a new set of procedures for the handling of unlicensed stray dogs. These dogs will no longer be sent to the C.V. Humane Society, but will be kenneled at the offices of an area veterinarian. Persons missing their dog or wishing to report a stray dog should contact Constable Dennis Carver or the Town Offices at 223-3313.

Owners will be given five days in which to recover their lost animal. Proof of proper licensing and vaccination, along with payment of pound fees of \$12 per day will be required before the dog will be released. Fees will be payable at the Town Clerk's office only during regular business hours.

After the five days, unclaimed animals will be put up for adoption or put to sleep depending on the age and condition of the animal. Please contact Administrative Assistant Bill Bryant at the Town Office if you have any questions about these procedures.

**Deadline for September/  
October issue is August 1.  
Please get copy to Janice  
Waterman, RR 1, Box  
4330, Montpelier, VT  
05602, 223-5826.**



✱ Polly and Dave Coburn visited Scotland even as we typed.

✱ Stop in at the Town Clerk's office to see the display on North Montpelier put together by the Historical Society.

✱ Wes Cate is recuperating from his week in the hospital.

✱ Richard Czaplinski will be in Poland working for the Institute for Sustainable Communities, an organization based in South Royalton.

✱ Helen Eldred continues her Peace Corp stint in Poland. She has been in Czechoslovakia and is leaving for Russia at the end of June. Her new address: Helen Eldred, PCV; Skota Biznesu; Patac Stadnickich; Nurvojown 1; 33-335; Poland. It takes about 15 days for her to get a letter.

✱ An improvisation group will begin July 20th and meet every other Monday in the Community Hall next to the Old Meeting House. Members may be oriented towards choreography, personal growth, or just plain fun! No previous dance experience is needed. The group will be kept small. No fee, but a donation will be requested for use of the hall. Call tarin chaplin at 223-5844 for more information.

✱ School begins on Wednesday, September 2, 1992!

✱ The Elementary School is in dire need of a dependable studio piano. The current piano does not stay up to concert pitch, does not remain in playable condition after tuning, and is not moved easily. A new piano would be used daily in all the general music classes and in all the musical concerts and functions. If you would like to help, you can donate to the EMES Piano Fund, or call Pam Somers.

✱ Did you receive this issue of the Signpost promptly on (or even before) July 1? We hope so. Last issue we tried a new system for speedier deliveries. It seemed to work. Do keep us posted if yours comes late, if your address changes, or you know of new residents for our list. We will also send your Signpost to your winter address if it is different. Please be sure to let us know.

## MILESTONES

(Received by the Town Clerk by June 1)

### BIRTHS

♥ Kayla-Rae Aja Marcotte born on February 2, 1992, to Nina-Maria Aja Marcotte and Richard Joseph Marcotte.

♥ Corrie Elizabeth Schrum born February 27, 1992, to Julie Marie and Leonard William Schrum.

♥ Jessie Louise Phillips born April 20, 1992, to Deborah Ann and Robert William Phillips, II.

### MARRIAGES

♥ Jack F. Collins and Alyce J. Yahn on April 11, 1992.

### PASSINGS

Agnes Mae Wiles passed away on April 18, 1992. She was mother of Lorinda Knowlton who lives on Codling Road.

### LAND TRANSFERS

(Received between February 13-June 1)

43 acres on Upper North Street from Eric and Jean Pearson to Michael & Margaret Czok.

520 acres on Brazier Road, Towne Hill Road, and Cherry Tree Hill Road from Jan & Glenda Otto to Christopher Pratt, Peter and Vera Pratt.

14.3 acres and dwelling on Jacobs Road from Sharon Shatney to Paul & Alison White, Jr.

Mobile Home in Sandy Pines from Ray's Homes to Bradley Perry and Nichole Ainsworth.

One-fifth interest in 215 acres and house on Putnam Road from John & Donna Hall to Stuart & Robyn Hall.

55 acres and house on Cherry Tree Hill Road from Jan Peter Otto to Cheryl Potter.

10.28 acres on Towne Hill Road from Jan & Glenda Otto to David & Karen Blosser.



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Graduating from U-32 High School:

Eric Anderson, Carrie Biggam, Lisa Bluto, William Buchicchio, David Burbo, Kevin Clark, Caitlin Conn, Angela Cyr, Jeffrey Deforge, Eric Ellingson, David Gallison, Christa Harriman, Shannon Hawkins, Mira Isaak, Brendan Johnson, Jenner Jones, David Langer, Mark LaPerle, William Lemieux, Forrest Lesch, Julia Longhi, Porter Lontz-Underhill, Mikeljon Mascitti, Daniel Meehan, Christopher Morrison, Elisha Pope, Debra Pregent, Mark Rochefort, Rina Schneider, Scott Slopnick, Geoff Smith, Jill Spinelli, Jennifer Syvertsen, Tara Thompson, Benjamin Utton, Jennifer Velander, Erin Welsh.

From East Montpelier Elementary School:

Rini Abrams, Jason Aldrich, Billy Amell, Kim Boardman, Dylan Brown, Katie Clayton, Virginia Cook, Joel Cookson, Jessica Deutsch, Keith Duff, Kathleen Fitzsimmons, Alison Goyette, Eric Gross, Matthew Hall, Patrick Harriman, Caitlin Hartnett, Ruchama Johnston-Bloom, Michael Lamery, Luke LaPerle, Shawna Liff, Kelly McCarthy, Katra Miller, Heather O'Hare, Katherine Poarch, Ben Reed, George Robinson, Sarah Shapiro, Tommy Syvertsen, Jared Thomas, Abbie Thorpe, Bobby Van Zandt, Ryan Wilson.

## FROM CARS TO RV'S: JOHN MEKKELSEN LIKED TO SELL!

Mekkel's Trailer Sales, located west of the village on Route 2, is the largest recreational vehicle dealership in Vermont. In terms of dollar sales in East Montpelier it ranks second to the Washington Electric Co-op, and in terms of physical facilities, it is probably the oldest RV dealership in the world.

This is supposed to be a story about John Mekkelson, the head of Mekkel's Trailer Sales for many years, but there is more to the story than just John. There is family, his wife, Grace, and children, Connie and Bruce, who have helped the business grow and prosper to where it stands today.

John was born on a farm on Beckley Hill in Barre Town and lived there until 1942 when he went to Connecticut to work at Colt Firearms. In 1944, he joined the Army and served in Ordnance and the Military Police.

Discharged in 1946, John joined the late Joseph Tofani at Tofani Motors on Route 14, now Race and Custom, selling used cars. In 1959, they opened a second automobile lot in Barre where the Grand Union is now located. Joe worked the Barre operation, and John remained in East Montpelier.

On July 9, 1969, they consolidated their operations at its present location when John and Grace bought the 135 acres and buildings from Forrest Gochey and started Mekkel's Trailer Sales with only one RV. Selling and renting the recreational vehicles was a sideline to their used car business in which they were partners with Joseph and Edna Tofani. The Trailer Sales business expanded, and Tofani Motors was awarded the Saab franchise in 1974 and Subaru franchise in 1976. At that time the business was known as Tofani Motor Sales. John, the super salesman, could probably sell snow to an Eskimo.

The front yard and barnyard became a display and work area and the dining room became an office. Grace remodeled the house into a comfortable home for the family. Connie and Bruce recall how their mother spent evenings and weekends, off hours from her profession as a registered nurse, steaming off wallpaper, scraping and painting while business was going on around her. John and Grace, supposedly semi-retired, are still right in the midst of all dealership activities as the kitchen and dining room open directly into the sales area.

Both dealerships were sold in 1986 and Joe and Edna Tofani retired along with John and Grace. Edna is still family to the Mekkel's and she and Grace have now taken up golf. Mekkel's Trailer Sales continues under the leadership of Connie and Bruce.

But back to the family story. John and Grace were married in January, 1951, and lived on the Beckley Hill farm for one month when it burned because of a chimney fire. They lived in Barre until their move to East Montpelier 23 years ago. During this time, John and Grace had four children, Jane, a teacher at the University of Vermont, John Jr., who



Connie, John, Grace and Bruce Mekkel's

died in a car accident in August 1977 only one mile from home on Route 2, Connie, recently married, and Bruce.

In 1979, John was named "Man of the Year" by the Central Vermont Rotary, an award given to the person who has done the most to promote business and quality of life in Central Vermont. John has been awarded many other honors in the business field and was recently honored by the Barre Elks for his 45 years of service to the community. He is also an avid flyer and can be seen many mornings flying over the area.

Mekkel's Trailer Sales continues to grow under Connie and Bruce's leadership. John is still there with advice when needed and although John and Grace now winter in Florida, traveling in their RV, they return each Spring for two weeks to help with the annual Mekkel's Trailer Sales Open House.

Rosendo Cueto

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*An excerpt from "Reminiscences of North Montpelier" written in 1911 by Ruth Butterfield as told her by her mother.*

*"On the corner near the bridge stood the old store. The store was run by Charles Sibley, but during the great freshet of '86, this was washed away. The men worked very hard at this time to save all the property they could, thinking the saw and grist mill would go. I remember this incident being told. The men had ropes around timbers trying to get them out of the way when the rope broke letting the men into the water. Uncle Mart (Martin V. B. Hollister) was drawn under a sill. The other men came to his assistance, and held him up until others could get him out. Amongst these men were my father and Uncle Orlando (O. K. Hollister). They were near the bridge when Clarke Gray, Dr. Gray's father, came along and grabbed Uncle Mart by his hair, pulling him out. He instantly jumped back in saying he was all right. After the freshet Mr. Sibley had his store in front of the blacksmith's house."*

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## MINNIE LANE: ONE TOWN CLERK TO THE OTHER

Minnie greeted me with her infectious smile. We had worked together in the Town Clerk's office in 1983 and 1984, and we always seemed to know what the other would do when problems occurred. Being a Town Clerk, as Minnie noted, was like being a "sounding board". You listened to the problems of the property owner and tried to give some understanding of how taxes are arrived at.

Minnie's father, Charles Gidney, came to the United States from England when he was 18. He met Clara Beckley from North Montpelier when they both worked on the Louis Coburn farm. (Louis was grandfather to David Coburn and Gladys Dunkling.) He returned to England and worked for the railroad for a time, but then he came back and looked up Clara. They were married shortly after and lived at what is now the Cate farm. Minnie, born in March 1917, was the youngest of six children (one son and five daughters). Her sister, Rachel McAllister, lives in Montpelier.

The Gidney farm was located on North Street in Montpelier, bordering the East Montpelier town line. In 1909, Minnie's parents purchased an adjacent 12 acre piece in East Montpelier, still owned by the Gidney family. The

children walked 2 miles to Montpelier to attend school.

When Minnie was in high school, her father exchanged the farm with her brother's place further down North Street. After graduation in 1935, a friend, Catherine (Gladding) Breer, lived with her at her parents, and both worked at the State Unemployment Office.

Social activities were oriented toward the East Montpelier Center and North Montpelier areas of town as Minnie had friends and relatives living there. Travel was also difficult down North Street into Montpelier because of the road.

Minnie met George Lane at a dance in North Montpelier. Though George grew up in the Horn of the Moon area of East Montpelier, they hadn't met until after graduation. George went into the service in 1942. They were married in 1943 when he came home on leave. He went back to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, where Minnie joined him for about a month before he was shipped out to Italy. He was discharged in 1945, and shortly after, was hired at Washington Electric in East Montpelier where he worked until retirement in 1984.

When first married, George and Minnie rented the apartment upstairs in the house then owned by Dwight & Irene Clark, (later Ronald & Therese Ferland/Ramon & Marion Spooner) across from the Post Office. In 1951, they moved to their new house in the village. Their only daughter, Cynthia, was born in 1953. Minnie was a full time mother for a while and helped with school events and sometimes with the school lunch program. Cynthia attended the Village School which is now the Town Clerk's Office.

In 1965, Minnie was elected Auditor and served until late 1969 when she was appointed Town Clerk upon retirement of Arthur Brackett. She only had two weeks of training. Minnie then took on the job single-handedly and the office was moved to the present Creamery Store/Home Center on Route 2. In 1973, the Town Clerk's Office was moved to its present location which had been the Village School. It was being used by the School District as a Superintendent's Office,



Minnie Lane with grandchildren Stephanie and Craig

