

Tom Morganti Recipient of Natural Resources Award

Harry Spring

At the March 7th meeting of the Town Council, Chairman Richard Hines and Michael Beauchamp, Chairman of the Natural Resources Commission, honored ALT President Tom Morganti for his tireless efforts over the years in environmental preservation.

In bestowing the honor, Mr. Hines outlined the history of the town's recognition of the need for thoughtful stewardship of the rich environmental heritage of resources enjoyed by Avon. Town agencies such as the Council itself, Natural Resources, Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning Commissions, town staff in Planning and Conservation, the independent Avon Land Trust and a number of private citizens have contributed to this legacy.

Dr. Morganti has served as President and Director of the Land Trust. He has blazed trails and negotiated the acquisition of some open space parcels and conservation easements on others. He has led field walks for interested citizens and, with his wife Nan and their sons, James and Alex, worked as a family in stewardship for several open space areas in town.



Michael Beauchamp presenting award to Tom Morganti.

Especially Sensitive Area Preserved

Harry Spring

Avon resident and Connecticut native, Mr. Ken Dixon has demonstrated great ecological awareness and exceptionally responsible land ownership. He has granted a conservation easement to the Land Trust on one of two substantial vernal pools on the crest of Avon Mountain. The other pool was conveyed to the trust many years ago. Mr. Dixon points out that stewardship of this area rested for decades in the able hands of Mr. Howard Pfirman and his late wife, Elenore who recognized the fragile nature and immense ecological value of this area and carefully preserved it. In recognition of Mr. and Mrs. Pfirman's service to the natural resource base of Avon, Mr. Dixon has designated this area as "The Howard & Elenore Pfirman Conservation Area".

These pools, which ordinarily fill with snow melt and rainfall in the spring, provide two of the last few breeding grounds in the state for several rare and endangered species of amphibians. They are unique in their biology because they are not permanent water bodies. Permanent water bodies go through ecological development of a group of plants including algae, aquatic and emergent vegetation and "good" bacteria, animals which feed on these, and predators and diseases which "feed" on these animals. In other words, a "food chain or web". Vernal pools provide a water environment in spring and summer but, in many years, dry up in the autumn. This drying prevents the buildup of predators and diseases which interfere with reproductive success. Creatures which have difficulty in successful breeding become locally or globally extinct. This is the threat to several species which depend on these two pools in Avon. Mr. Dixon's action is of major significance. We wish to express our gratitude and admiration for Mr. Dixon's generosity.

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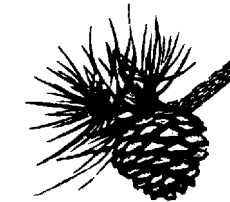
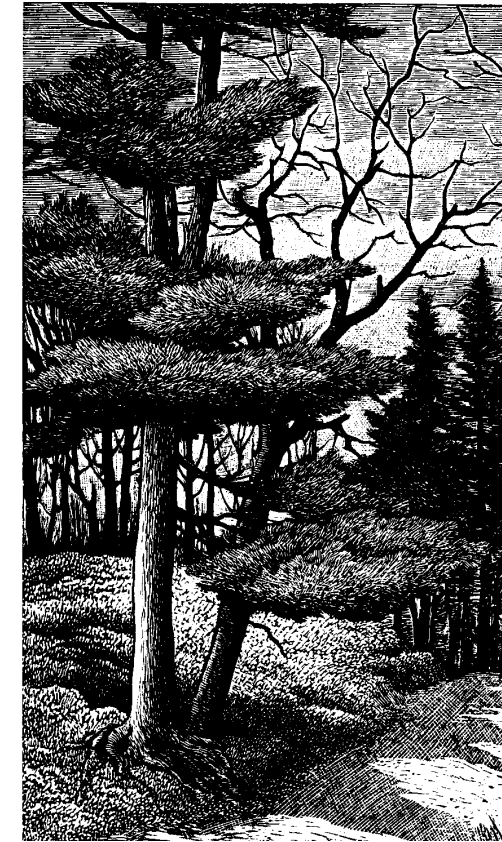
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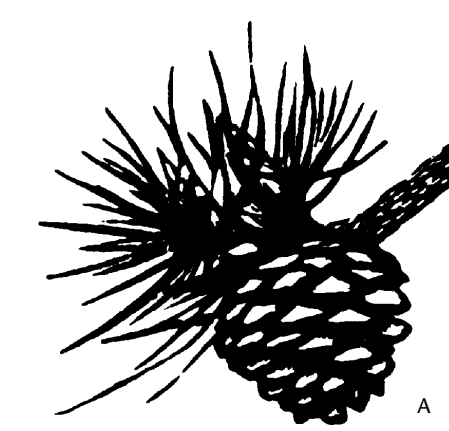


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THE *Avon* LAND TRUST

Future generations may not remember our names, but they will certainly be glad that we were here.

A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

May 2002

WELCOME TO THE AVON LAND TRUST

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In early March of this year, the Board of Directors braved sleet and spring mud to walk a ten-acre parcel of land that links Avon's Huckleberry Hill Recreation Area and Found Land to the north. This property, donated to the Trust by the Connecticut Water Company of Clinton, CT, runs the course of an infrequently used trail, and includes several landmarks that would be familiar to any child raised in the Huckleberry Hill area. One gigantic glacial boulder, affording a 360-degree view of the valley, has inscriptions dating back to the 19th century and includes the names of several local families.

This trail will be featured on the ALT's spring hike on May 18 (see below). The terrain is easy to maneuver and the round trip is about 3 miles. If time permits, we'll also include some of the historical points of interest within the boundaries of Avon's Found Land, including old wells, cellar holes and a road once used by George Washington to move troops during the War of Independence.

Come and take a walk with us, see some of our unspoiled Avon and perhaps see something that you never knew was there.

Tom Morganti,
President ALT

spring Hike

The Avon Land Trust will hold this year's Spring Hike on Saturday, May 18 at 1:00 pm (*rain date, Sunday, May 26*). Parking will be available at the top of Northgate Dr. (*Huckleberry Hill Recreation Area*) and will proceed north to Found Land, round trip approximately 2 1/2 hours.

Use Your Telephone and Support The Avon Land Trust

Rick Dubiel

If you are an SBC SNET All Distance Telephone subscriber, **SNET will make a contribution in your name to The Avon Land Trust**. All you have to do to sign up is call or use the web site. There is no cost to you. SNET will donate 5% of every dollar you spend on SBC long distance calling to The Avon Land Trust.

Call 1-800-635-7638. Give the SNET representative your name, phone number and 3 digit code at the end of your account number on your bill or Social Security Number linked to your account. Provide the Group Name—The Avon Land Trust—and Group Organization Number—#3212.

Or go to the web site www.snet.com/community

> **click** > 'Community Service'

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Complete the information about your name and address. The Group Name is The Avon Land Trust. The Group Number is #3212. City is Avon.

People of Avon

by Ruth Maher

Bob and Kathryn Whitty

HOLLY FARMS

*...and on that farm there are daylilies. C-O-L-O-R
With a red lily here and a pink lily there,
Here a ruffle, there a fragrance, everywhere another beauty,
Oh, what a sight is Holly Farms! C-O-L-O-R*

(...with apologies to Old MacDonald)

You too will feel like singing when you see Holly Farms in all its glory. Be prepared to watch an exciting show during its fourth season, between May and September, 2002.

Kathryn and Bob have always enjoyed gardening, even while they pursued busy careers, Bob with Pratt & Whitney in Middletown, and later as CEO and Chairman of the Board at Edac Technologies in Farmington. Kathryn was Director of Administration at Hartt School of Music. It wasn't until 1990, when their children were grown, that they strayed into the world of daylily devotees and were totally captivated by the beauty and diversity of these incredible flowers. They happened to visit the Washington DC Botanical Gardens during the DC Daylily Club's exhibition.

Unfamiliar as they were with daylilies, they thought those gorgeous flowers were orchids. Some of the blossoms do indeed resemble orchids. Over the next few years they studied, consulted and experimented, and in 1996 they visited more than 60 gardens from Maine to Florida.

Bob already owned a dump truck and a John Deere tractor with backhoe and rototiller, so the next year they made good use of their equipment and the knowledge they had gained. Bob plowed up their 2-acre plot of fertile ground at 773 West Avon Road. He installed an efficient irrigation system and laid out neat beds separated by 5-foot walkways of grass so green I had to ask what magic had been applied. The answer was that well-aged horse manure had been thoroughly mixed with the soil before seeding.

For more than twenty years the Whittys have lived on Old Mill Road. Attached to their home is a greenhouse complete with carbon dioxide generator, computer system, and halide lights that move on tracks, making it easy to focus light where plants need it. In 1999 they began experimenting with all they had learned about hybridizing daylilies, and in the process they continued to learn.

Exact replicas of any particular daylily can be obtained only by dividing the plant or by proliferations, which are offshoots that grow out of the stems. Contents of the seed pods of one daylily may produce several variations. Kathryn showed me a small sealed



Holly Farms



Abbott's Magic



Siloam Shocker



Siloam Dry Winniford

* * * * *

non-registered seedling
photos below from left:
looking west at Holly
Farms; partial view of
daylily field; Bob and
Kathryn in autumn
2001; barn and gazebo.

plastic bag filled with chilled daylily seeds, which were being refrigerated at 40 degrees for six weeks prior to planting to simulate winter conditions. She referred to the shiny jet-black seeds as "black pearls," and if strung together, they would indeed form a stunning necklace of delicate gems, at least until sprouts began to appear.

At Holly Farms no chemical pesticides are used. Daylilies are naturally resistant to many of the problems that plague other garden flowers, but in the beginning the Whittys left nothing to chance. They provided housing for a substantial population of ladybugs purchased from a supplier. Twenty different species of toads live and multiply among the plants. Rabbits, wild turkeys and bluebirds also find the farm a hospitable environment that offers a bountiful smorgasbord. In return they render reliable service in controlling insects, weeds and other pests.

Beyond this 2-acre garden, on the opposite side of West Avon Road, Kathryn and Bob cultivate another larger plot that also blazes with color throughout the lily blooming season. They have a great interest in hybridizing to create new varieties. To register a new variety, the growers must choose a unique name, one not previously used. They must provide a color photo or slide of the blossom and a complete description that includes height of the plant and type of foliage, width of the flower, colors and features such as ruffles, fragrance and distinctive markings. The Whittys have developed thousands of new varieties, but to date they sell only one of them, the one they named "Holly Farms." This plant has a lovely big, bright lemon-yellow blossom and lots of buds that give it a long blooming period. It is a vigorous grower that produces many "fans," or new plants.

Hybridizing can become an addictive pastime. Granddaughter Aubrey made her first attempt at the age of three.

Pollen from one chosen plant is carefully applied to the stamens in the flower of a different plant. This must be done early in the morning before the bees begin their rounds. After the flower has had its day in the sun, the seeds it produces may offer some wonderful surprises the following year. Be fore-

warned, however, that waiting is difficult. If the new hybrid has features that make it desirable for growing in salable quantities, it will take six to eight years of planting, dividing, replanting, dividing...not a hobby for the impatient.

All parts of the daylily are edible. The small tubers found among the roots are crunchy in salads, and the spring's first shoots can

be prepared and served as tasty greens. "Sweet-n-sour" buds and blossoms add unusual flavor and exotic appearance to the dinner plate. Even if these plants were not appealing to the palate, they are always a feast for the eyes.

This family farm was named for daughter Holly Whitty-Moulton, who lives next door with her husband, Steve,

and their children, Aubrey and Wyatt. Holly, one of Bob and Kathryn's five children, is a Senior Financial Analyst at The Hartford. Avon Police Sergeant Rob Whitty is well known to many local residents. Dr. David Masopust, a research scientist in immunology, specializes in infectious diseases. Suzanne Whitty is Assistant Comptroller at Yale University, and Beth Whitty is a housewife who keeps very busy with homes in Danbury and Westbrook.

Holly Farms is a Registered Display Garden listed by the American Hemerocallis Society, an international organi-



zation and the only agency authorized to register new daylily varieties. The selection was announced after the farm was visited last July by the National Chairman of Display Gardens. Both Bob and Kathryn are Garden Judges qualified to judge growing seedlings. In February of this year Kathryn's picture appeared with an article in "Fine Gardening," an international magazine.

Kathryn often works with her brother, Robert Leahy, who has degrees in botany, chemistry and engineering. He has a particular interest in developing new varieties of hosta plants. With Kathryn's background in art, biology and business, this team has created some pretty impressive garden designs. One example can be seen at the corner of Climax Road and Route 44 in Avon. In the fall of 2000 they were asked to design a garden that would resemble a miniature park, a place of natural beauty that would offer employees a sense of tranquility, perhaps even solitude. Just such an atmosphere is found in this lovely garden throughout the growing season. They have also designed several gardens for Farmington Woods and for private homes.

Kathryn's talents are apparent not only among the flowers. Last year, for Region 4 Daylily Society, she wrote a very entertaining article describing events that led her and Bob down the garden path toward a love affair with daylilies. She also plays the beautiful baby grand piano that stands in one corner of their "great room." She enjoys making hooked rugs, and their stairway to the great room is fully carpeted with a runner she designed and executed. Each tread represents something meaningful in the lives of family members, beginning with the morning sun and ending with the good-night moon. In between are symbols of birth dates, holidays, the sea-

sons and shared personal memories. The risers repeat the stencil design that decorates their outstanding one-of-a-kind kitchen. That's where I was introduced to two other enthusiastic, affectionate and beautifully behaved members of this fascinating family. Lily is a black Lab whose tail is in perpetual motion. Daisy is a chocolate Lab, and they are inseparable.

Bob and Kathryn grow more than 2,500 daylily varieties that are considered hardy in Connecticut's climate. Blooming periods range between May and September, and some varieties bloom a second time between August and first frost. They come in just about every color, with blossoms of many different shapes and sizes. Heights vary, some have ruffled edges, some are fragrant, some have "eyes" or "halos," and there are spectacular flowers that sparkle with "diamond dusting." Worldwide there are at least 46,000 varieties.

Although daylilies are the specialty of Holly Farms, several varieties of astilbe, clematis, ferns, hosta,

hydrangea, ornamental grasses and other perennials are also grown there. Slide presentations regarding various gardening topics are available to garden clubs and other interested groups.

Farming is not easy (Kathryn says she has no fingernails between May and October), but in more than one sense it's a way of life

that gives people roots. The dedicated farmer recognizes and cherishes his nurturing role in the life cycle of his plants and animals. His greatest satisfaction comes from the honest pride he feels when his hard work produces a superior product.. Bob and Kathryn are strong advocates for the preservation of undeveloped farmland, and they hope the land they know so well and love so much will remain forever as it is today.

