

particular source of great pride occurred at the 45th reunion of his Trinity Class of '52, when a fundraiser was initiated to raise \$250,000 for a William J. Goralski Scholarship. By their 50th reunion, success had been achieved and the scholarship was announced. It is awarded annually to a Trinity student, male or female, who qualifies as both scholar and athlete. The first two recipients were men, and the next five were women. Their athletic specialties ranged from football to lacrosse to basketball to cross country and beyond. Bill feels great loyalty toward Trinity, and he is proud to be in any way associated with opening its doors to other young people.

Trinity is obviously proud of him as well. In the fall of 2003 Bill's football jersey number 15 was retired.

Since 1973 he has been happily married to Norma Neri Covert, former teacher at Roaring Brook School. He has written and published five non-fiction books and a short novel. He still wonders who sent those day-brightening cards he received daily throughout his hospital confinement. All were from "Your Secret Pal." I regret that space limitations prevent my telling more of Billy Goralski's inspiring story. For lots of reasons I consider him very, very special. (He's also the only student I ever had who, during his busy college career, once sent me a valentine!).



Bill was no. 5 on the Canton High School football team.

## Avon Energy Pioneers Go Clean Green!

Two Avon residents recently helped both themselves and the environment by installing solar photovoltaic systems on their roofs. ALT board member Rick Dubiel and Avon

Board of Finance member Steve McGuff both took advantage of a new incentive program offered through CT's Clean Energy Fund, to help pay for their new systems. "McGuff Electric" utilizes a 36 panel system to generate 5,940 watts, while "Dubiel Electric" utilizes a smaller 24 panel system to generate 3,920 watts.

The Dubiel family will be reducing their monthly electric bills by approximately 60%. Any surplus electricity that the two Avon families don't use is sold back to CL&P at full retail rates. In addition to reducing their bills, Avon's two clean energy pioneers will also receive additional annual "green tag" rebates for contributing clean energy to the grid. The solar systems are expected to pay for themselves in less than nine years - even sooner if rates continue to increase, as they did recently.

Both families had their systems installed by Sunlight Solar of Milford, CT. Sunlight Solar is one of nine approved vendors which underwent a strict screening process by the CT Clean Energy fund. In addition to residential clients, they do commercial projects including the installation of a major photovoltaic system on the roof of the Oregon State Capitol.

For more information, and to view pictures of the Avon solar installations, visit the following websites: [ctcleanenergy.com](http://ctcleanenergy.com) or [sunlightsolar.com](http://sunlightsolar.com).

### OFFICERS

Bob Breckinridge  
*President*

Chris Gackstatter  
*Vice-President*

Dorothy J. Blanchard  
*Secretary*

Jennifer Aldag  
*Treasurer*

### DIRECTORS

Leslie Chaput

Richard Dubiel

Diana Goode

Debra Krauss

Thomas Morganti

Richard Rendeiro

Heinz Rosskothien

Susan Rietano-Davey

Harry Spring

William Stokesbury

Mary J Pellino  
*Editor*

Ruth Maher  
*Writer*

[avonlandtrust.org](http://avonlandtrust.org)

### THE Avon LAND TRUST

#### membership form

*please check one:*

- \$100 Life Membership  
 \$15 Family Membership  
 \$10 Individual Membership  
 Additional donation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

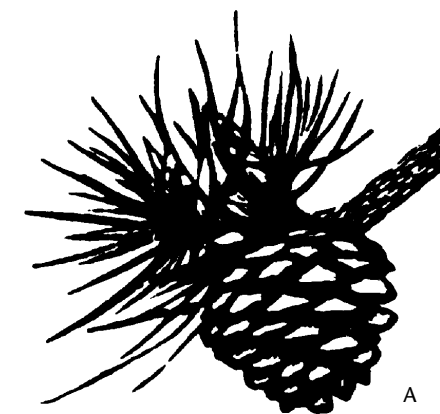
*Please make checks payable to The Avon Land Trust. All contributions and memberships are tax deductible.*

*Yes, I can help with:*

- Mailings     Program Planning  
 Land Maintenance

*Please mail to:*

THE AVON LAND TRUST  
P.O. Box 267, Avon, CT 06001



# 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

Spring 2005

## WELCOME TO THE AVON LAND TRUST

[avonlandtrust.org](http://avonlandtrust.org)

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

America's private land trusts have conserved almost double the acreage of all of the National parks in the lower 48 states combined. Avon's own land trust has acquired hundreds of acres in town for preservation as open space, in large part due to existing laws that have been in place for over 25 years.

In January, the Joint Committee on Taxation of the US congress recommended several changes to current laws governing charitable donations including property, land and easements. These include extensive limits to the deductions that landowners can take for donating a conservation easement. There would be no deduction for an easement on property used by a taxpayer for their personal residence and a limitation on deductions for a conservation easement to no more than 33% of the easement's appraised value. In addition, the Committee recommends lowering the deduction for donated property to the taxpayer's basis in the property rather than its market value.

Why does this matter? Because if the Committee's recommendations pass into law, land preservation through donation or reduced sale will become increasingly, financially difficult for property owners, and the efforts of land trusts to preserve open space will be severely hampered. Federal and state land acquisition for open space preservation is suffering from political indifference and lack of funds due to rising deficits. At a time when private voluntary conservation of open space is sorely needed, the Committee's proposed changes would unintentionally support further development of our farmlands and forests.

You can help prevent this by contacting your congressional representative and voicing opposition to any laws that would make land preservation prohibitive for property owners. Our US congresswoman, Nancy Johnson, can be reached by phone at 860-223-8412 or you can send an e-mail through her web site, [www.house.gov/nancyjohnson](http://www.house.gov/nancyjohnson). One individual and five minutes really can make a difference.

As always, we welcome any ideas or suggestions you might have concerning Avon's open space. If you haven't already, we encourage you to enjoy these beautiful properties. For more information and maps of land preserved for you and our future generations by the Avon Land Trust, visit [avonlandtrust.org](http://avonlandtrust.org).

Bob Breckinridge  
President ALT

Learn more.

Become a member.

Or just take a walk!

[avonlandtrust.org](http://avonlandtrust.org)

*After over ten years of service,* our editor, Ruth Maher,

has decided to step down. Ruth's whimsical writing style and tireless efforts to research and write about various aspects of Avon and its long time residents will be greatly missed. She was a devoted teacher in the Valley for many years and continued educating us through the ALT newsletter almost single-handedly twice a year. We wish her the best and thank her for her hard work on behalf of us all.

# People of Avon

by Ruth Maher

William J. Goralski

*Billy Goralski knows something* most of us can't even imagine. He knows what it means to be the tenth-born in a family of eleven children. Growing up with three brothers and seven sisters is one way to learn about discipline, self-imposed or otherwise. It encourages sharing, caring, and sometimes wearing "hand-me-downs." Bill had little chance of becoming spoiled or self-centered, but he drew strength from the love and loyalty that existed among the members of his large family.

We first met in 1939, when Billy was in my fifth-grade class at the old Towpath School. I couldn't help noticing, first of all, those deep dimples that were always visible because he was always smiling. Everybody loved him. He was bright, ambitious, and already known for his outstanding sports skills.

Bill attended Canton High School, where he starred in baseball, football and basketball. Through the efforts of Canton's Don Viering, he was offered a full scholarship to Trinity School, a private prep school in New York. Grateful for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, he made the difficult decision to leave family, friends and the familiar surroundings of Climax Road. From 1946-1948, he was a student at Trinity School on West 91st Street in New York City. What a complete change of environment for a country boy from rural Avon! In 1948 he entered Trinity College with the

Brownell Scholarship, a full-tuition grant of \$500. His job in the Hamlin Dining Hall earned him three meals a day, and money saved from summer jobs paid for room, books and student fees. As a freshman, he joined the Air Force ROTC.

Sophomores were eligible for the varsity teams, so in his second year Bill played on Trinity's football, basketball and baseball teams. He continued to maintain a scholastic grade average that allowed him to retain his scholarship. During the summers of 1950 and 1951, he played baseball in the Blackstone Valley League in Massachusetts. In his own words, he was "thrilled to be coached by Jack Barry, baseball coach at Holy Cross and former Red Sox Manager, the same 'Black Jack' Barry who was the shortstop on Connie Mack's 'million dollar infield.'" For Trinity's 1950 baseball season Bill's batting average was .400.

In 1951 Bill entered his senior year at Trinity College. At a compact 5'8" and 165 lbs., he was a tough competitor. His strength of mind and body came from training,

following the rules and knowing himself well. He was captain of the football team, a team with an impressive record. On Thanksgiving Day, November 22, 1951, Trinity's last football game of the season was scheduled to be played at Tufts. Bill had already decided that this would be his final football game. The following year, as a graduate of ROTC, he would be in the U.S. Air Force. He planned to devote his sports activity to baseball, his first love. Based on past performance and recognition received, he hoped eventually to sign a contract with a minor league. As the game got underway, he and his teammates were filled with confidence. To describe this final Trinity game, I quote from Bill's own book, entitled **My Last Run...Back To Avon:**

*"Trinity scored in the first period to lead 7-0...Just as the first quarter was about to end, the offensive team took over again...I took the lateral pass from the quarterback and with good blocks from the linemen, I ran into the open secondary where I could 'see daylight'...which meant an open field ahead. I cut for the sidelines and started down field in front of the Tufts bench. A defensive back lunged forward and got a hand on my ankle from behind and tripped me up. As I spun around to free myself from his grasp, I fell backward and started to roll in a reverse somersault. Two Tufts linemen following the play fell on top of me as I tried to roll over. When I was halfway through the roll, with my legs in the air and my head and shoulders on the ground, the weight of the two Tufts linemen caused my neck to buckle under the force and momentum. As I rolled through the reverse somersault, it happened! I did not feel a thing...no pain, no discomfort, nothing. As I lay on the ground and could not move, I tried to get up, but couldn't. I tried to lift my arms and legs, but couldn't. I just lay there motionless. It was my last run..."*

Bill was unaware that his mother and his sister Stella were in the stands and witnessed his brutal injury.

While Bill lay paralyzed, Dr. Nicholas A. Mastronarde, Trinity's unofficial consultant for football injuries, immediately came down from the stands to join the other doctors

and the trainer. With a safety pin he pricked Bill's feet, legs, abdomen, chest, arms and neck. He found no feeling below the neck, just under the chin. With no neck brace available, and not wanting to waste precious time, Dr. Mastronarde used his hands to hold Bill's head in traction. Even when the ambulance arrived, its crew had no neck brace, and the doctor continued to hold the traction position until they reached Somerville Hospital in Medford, Massachusetts. Billy is certain that Dr. Mastronarde's skill and persistence undoubtedly prevented further damage to his spinal cord. With a neck brace finally in place, the patient was secure but "able to look in only one direction...up."

During the week of his 22nd birthday, December 2, 1951, the Student Emergency Fund was set up to raise \$15,000 to pay Bill's hospital rehabilitation expenses. He was transferred by ambulance to Hartford Hospital on January 9, 1952. Throughout the next year, Bill was examined, diagnosed and

treated by many skilled doctors and nurses. He has expressed special gratitude and affection for "Dr. Nick" and for his own sister, Stella Goralski, who was head nurse in charge of the operating room at Cedarcrest Hospital, the tuberculosis sanitarium in Newington. Stella insisted upon taking a leave of absence from her job to care for her brother as long as she felt it was necessary.

The same attitudes and self-discipline that had made him a gifted athlete now helped him through a period of total dependence on others. He remembers every detail of his grueling therapy and the kindness of wonderful doctors, nurses, family, friends and even strangers who helped him in so many ways. He felt obligated to do everything possible to aid in his own recovery, no matter how much pain might be involved. He was indeed grateful when he learned that all doctors assigned to his case had donated their time and expertise. None had submitted bills to the Trinity Fund. After ten weeks of expert care, Billy took his first steps with the helpful support of parallel bars. Nine weeks later he left the hospital and went home to Climax Road. His mother and father had been waiting a long time for this day when they could welcome him home. He has never blamed anyone for his injury. "It was an accident," he says, "and I'm extremely grateful that I regained the ability to walk. It doesn't matter that I could not run."

For a long time Bill had been planning that someday he would enjoy a walk around Reservoir # 6 on Talcott Mountain. Exactly one year after that "last run," he decided that the time had come. With his dog, he set out for what he thought was a hike of about a mile and a half. It proved to be a very challenging effort. He had underestimated the distance and roughness of the terrain. In spite of some exhausting problems, he made it just as darkness was falling. He learned from a West Hartford policeman that the distance he had covered was in fact more than four miles.

The Trinity Fund financed his senior year in college and a 2-year graduate program in which he earned his M.A. degree in history. The Fund also covered the cost of his Hartford Hospital rehabilitation program through 1955. Then he began his 30-year teaching career at Simsbury High School. His students couldn't have had a more inspiring role model, and Bill is sure he couldn't have had a more rewarding life's work. He has received many well-deserved awards and honors. One that is a

Bill's Canton High School basketball team. Bill is in seated in the front row, far right.



from left: Elinor Mullaney, a resident of Avon, is escorted to the Trinity College prom by Bill. No identification is available on the second couple.