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## New Kid on the Block



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It was back in August Of 2003, that Chuck Hayes wrote in the European Tour newsletter the following: "By the way, get Griff involved. He's the funniest guy that never attended GHS." Well, Griff finally decided to get involved.

## Clan MacMillan Society



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Phillip C. McMillan (pictured left and right), President of the Clan MacMillan Society of Utah, has been appointed a Trustee of the Clan Centre. Following his attendance at the Clan Conclave in June 2000 where his positive contribution was much appreciated by the Chief and Trustees, Phil volunteered to open an American bank account for the Centre which would save us a great deal of

the trouble and expense of having many small sums of US dollars exchanged into Sterling. This has been a great boon, and Phil's continuing advice to the chief - and unstinting help to one and all at GR2002 - earned him a unanimous vote of welcome to the Board of Trustees.



# Tales From the Byram Woods

By Hoa Nguyen Staff Writer  
The Greenwich Time

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Urban legends live under a leafy canopy of trees that lets through only blisters of sunlight. To the east is the dull hum of highway traffic, and all around are the sounds of wildlife. Brewing in these 5-acre Byram woods are stories of a roving homeless man, the wolf that ate a Jack Russell terrier and the children who went bicycling and never returned. None of the stories are true, according to officials and parents, but that doesn't stop the stories from spreading.

"There are two broken bikes at the entrance," said parent Laurie Palastro, 40, recounting one of the urban legends. "Those are the bikes of the children who died in the woods." The woods, recently the subject of a controversial plan to build a new playing field for New Lebanon School, are a treasure trove of urban lore. The stories have spread fast among children and have some parents viewing the woods with suspicion.

"It has an ominous nature -- just something about it," parent Andrea Vaz, 47, said. Decades ago, the land belonged to the estate of Walter C. Teagle, a prominent town resident. The town acquired the land and earmarked it for the future New Lebanon School, which opened in 1957. Since then, the woods have stayed relatively untouched and are still one of the few forests in town.

There are a zigzag of informal paths and a thick mat of leaves and twigs, along with hills, troughs, plenty of rocks and a few fallen timbers. The few marks of human life are candy wrappers and some crushed empty beer and soda cans by the fence dividing the area from the highway.

On one recent afternoon, Nick and Kate Palastro, Tate Hatter, Django Vaz and Meghan Collins, all New Lebanon students' ages 6 to 8, were standing near the entrance to the woods. They talked about the stories of homeless people and the dangers that lurk in the woods. Some said despite the stories, they still go in the woods to bike or find wildlife, such as salamanders. But others stay away.

"It gets scary," Meghan said, squirming and rubbing her fingers together when she talked about the woods where she heard that bears and wolves lived. Besides urban myths are things parents said they actually witness, such as teenagers partying in the woods at night, strangers illegally dumping garbage or, on one afternoon, a group beginning a game of paintball before being chased away.

There also are the odds and ends that the children find in or near the woods. "I found a piece of a car," Django said, triumphantly holding up part of a car bumper. "This is the classic example of what's in the woods," his mother said. But while the woods have earned a notorious reputation among some, police said there were actually few incidents there.



"There hasn't been much of anything," said police Officer Mark Zuccerella, the department's community liaison for the area. "I walked through last week. It's relatively free of any litter. No signs of anybody hanging out and doing anything." Zuccerella said that a few years ago, police were called on reports of a homeless man living in the woods. "That was unfounded," Zuccerella said, adding that some people may have mistaken a child-made fortress for a makeshift shelter. "There were never any signs of any homeless people living there."

One reason some parents and children view the woods suspiciously may be because there are so few similar areas left in town, said Nils Kerchus, a researcher who grew up in Byram. "It's surprising that it's still there," he said.

Another popular tract of woods in Chickahominy by Western Middle School was razed years earlier. With fewer forests in Greenwich within walking distance of neighborhoods, residents might not know what to make of these areas, Kerchus said. Some residents said that they appreciate having such a unique area in their neighborhood.

"There are so few areas where you can get some fresh air and take a walk," said Bob Bain, who has lived next to the woods for two dozen years. Although some parents talk about the woods as a dangerous place, Bain feels safe and visits the woods with his children. They sometimes go to pick wild mushrooms and often stop to marvel at the large trees. "It is the last strand of mature trees on this side of town," Bain said.

## The Byram Woods



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It seems like this issue of the Newsletter is going to be about the McMillan Family, but I will quell that theory immediately. This is about, being from Byram and the Woods, which were the center of Byram life from our humble beginnings.

Strangely over the past weekend at the Picnic, Kathie **NEILSON** Trumble was talking about this exact subject, and then there is The Greenwich Time's article posted above. The woods were severed in two by the New England Thruway in the Sixties, but they will never be erased from the minds of any kid growing up in

Byram. The thruway removed the "sole" of the woods and eliminated what was the Grand Central Terminal of Byram.

The kids, separated by age, neighborhood, sex, and sometimes family, found their peers within the boundaries of this marvelous and massive tract of land. The Teagle family, lived on Byram Shore Road and owned this piece of property, which crossed most of Byram to border on the four neighborhoods of East Port Chester (Byram-New Lebanon). On the east (water) side, was Byram Park and the rich and famous, toward the south were the "up and coming", to the west was South Water Street, the Byram River (the most colorful river in the world) and Port Chester; and lastly to the north was the home of the McMillan's and the main drag called Delavan Ave, then up the hill to where the railroad separated Byram from Byram.

The woods were abuzz with gangs of kids raging in size from 2 or 3, up to enormous sizes with established territories and forts, where scouts would pan out to see who was invading your territory. In these little "cultures" you would always have a look-out to protect you while you "did your thing". I can not speak for everyone, but this was the place where I had my first sexual experience, and I am sure there are others who will say so as well.

The most famous event of the woods, will always be the "Great Beer Can War" on the late Fifties. It was a Saturday night and the gangs within the woods had gathered tons of beer and soda cans, to fill with water, or dirt, so you could get distance out of the old, rusted (they were tin cans, not aluminum) and ragged cans. Then the war began and ended quickly when the Cops rounded up all the participants and dragged them to their homes, to be scolded by parents and cops together. I think my brother Phil can give a better report of this adventure, than I could; as he was the one in our house.

## DEP to Test River for Contaminants

(The Most Colorful River in the World)

By Hoa Nguyen Staff Writer  
The Greenwich Time

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The legacy of Greenwich's industrial past sits at the bottom of the Byram River. The factories and mills are long gone from the river banks, replaced by homes, stores and offices. But harder to erase are the pollutants that these industries may have released during the more than two centuries that factories operated along the river, according to environmental officials and community activists.

"It's there, it's got to be," said Jo Conboy, head of Save our Shores, an environmental advocacy group in town. "The whole river was an industrial site. The whole history is industrial." Officials

of the state Department of Environmental Protection tend to agree and will visit the river later this month to collect sediment samples and test for contaminants.

Pollution is likely to be found, officials said, not only because of the area's industrial past but because of tests New York officials conducted in 1999. The test results showed that sediment in the Port Chester estuary of the Byram River -- which is downstream of the river as it travels through Greenwich -- was polluted with PCBs and heavy metals.

"Some of the contaminants were found in the harbor and we're looking to see whether upstream we may find the source of where they may come from," said Jeff Wilcox, a DEP environmental analyst. "Water runs downhill. These things were carried from upstream from somewhere."

If and where pollution is found, officials could use the sediment test results to order a cleanup of the contaminated areas, if they can show that it came from a specific source. "Is there anything that we can identify in the river that could point to a source?" Wilcox asked. "Could we identify the issue from a remediation standpoint?"

The Byram River shore has a history of factory activity stretching back as far as the 18th century, when a saw mill began operating near a waterfall that provided power. The American Felt Co. took over the mill in

the 1900s, and after the company left the site in 1979, a mix of retail and commercial businesses moved in.

Pollutants that could have been discharged into the Byram River from the mill include sulfuric acid from dyes, as well as asbestos, which may have been discharged by another business that once operated nearby, according to Conboy and others who researched the area's industrial past.

But while there is concern about contamination at the bottom of the river, state health officials declared in a 2003 report that the possible contamination posed no public health hazard to nearby residents. The report said that not only was the river unlikely to be significantly contaminated, but that people were infrequently coming into direct contact with the sediment.

Conboy disagreed with the state health finding, saying that the area is densely settled and features many recreational uses such as boating and fishing that bring residents and their children in contact with the sediment. Also, the 2003 study was done before state officials had a chance to actually test the river sediment on the Greenwich side for pollution. Conboy said she is hopeful that the tests the DEP plans to do will prove her right and lead to a cleanup of the river. "We could make it vibrant again," she said. "That has to be cleaned up. You can't just leave it."

