

CIGAR BOX BULLETIN



Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc.
1 West Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT 06830



www.greenwichrma.org

Chair/Editor: **TIM BROOKS**

Scribes: **Mike Abrahams, Joe Angland, Kris Bratberg, Jim Dean, Bob Giaquinto, Arnold Gordon, Michael LaGamma, David Michonski, John Reese, Frank Scarpa, Charlie Shapiro, Fred Wu**
Archivist: **Tad Larrabee** Website: **Mark Geimer** Format: **Len Carusi, Mark Geimer**

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SCRIBE: ARNOLD GORDON

March 6 Scribe: CHARLIE SHAPIRO, charles.louis.shapiro@gmail.com

*Reverend Edward Everett Hale, when asked if he prayed for Senators, replied
"No, I look at the Senators and pray for the country."*

President **JACK WEIR** began the business meeting at 9:45 am. **JIM BUTLER** led us in the pledge and **TOM HEALY**, using his Melody Men's voice, with **BOB MORGAN** at the Steinway, led us in singing "This Land Is Your Land," "I've Been Working on the Railroad," and the "Tennessee Waltz."

JACK thanked all the many men who do yeomen's work in organizing and supporting our meetings: scribe, formatter, CBB editor, projectionists, volunteer advocate, greeter, mentor, audio/video, set-up and refreshments. He then mentioned that the RMA has been invited to participate in the St. Patrick's Day parade down Greenwich Avenue on Sunday, March 17 at 2 pm. He hopes that at least 20 to 30 members will come to march behind our banner. The RMA Nominating Committee under **JOE MANCINELLI** is continuing its work and is expected to have its report on the proposed slate of officers for 2024-2025 by March 20. Following its posting for two weeks, voting will take place on April 4, when nominations from the floor (if any) will be possible. **JACK** reported that there will be a special board meeting on

Monday, March 4 to decide on our dues and other budget items for the coming fiscal year.

Has anyone seen the new RMA bell that **JACK** likes to ring? It has gone missing since the last meeting. If you have any idea as to its whereabouts, please let him or **BOB BISHOP** know.

Treasurer **JEFF JUNKER** pointed out that our dues have remained at \$100 for several years while inflation has increased our expenses, including the rent we pay to the church for use of the social hall and a second-floor meeting room. A board subcommittee composed of **MICHAEL AMBROSINO, ARNOLD GORDON, JEFF JUNKER, JOE MANCINELLI** and **WILL MORRISON** have prepared a proposal for needed changes to our budget that the board will discuss at the abovementioned special meeting.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY REPORT

ARNOLD GORDON introduced **STEVE BOIES** who delivered a memorial for the recently deceased **TOM CAHILL**. You can read **STEVE's** comments below. **TOM's** daughter, Christine, came to the meeting and generously donated **TOM's** supply of cigars, which many members eagerly took during the break.

[Remembrance of Tom Cahill](#)

Following the recent successful RMA food drive for The New Covenant Center organized by **MICHAEL AMBROSINO**, he received a wonderful letter of thanks from John Gutman, the executive director, that we would like to share. Mr. Gutman presented some impressive statistics: 1550 families receive 10 days' worth of groceries; 325 meals every weekday for the hungry and homeless; 75 to 100 meals to partner organizations, such as two shelters in Stamford. Be proud RMA! You can read the letter here:

[New Covenant Center Thank You Letter](#)

Speaking of important charities, you are all no doubt familiar with the Neighbor-to-Neighbor organization. They do a lot of good for the less

advantaged in our Greenwich community. They have a weekly food and essentials drive every Tuesday from 9-11 am; among donations needed are lots of knit hats, cereals, spreads, sauces, pastas, as well as personal care items. A very worthy cause. For details:

[Neighbor - to Neighbor Weekly Food and Essentials Drive](#)

ARNOLD reminded everyone to be very careful to avoid financial and other scams that have become more devious and sophisticated, especially with the use of AI. He asked how many have received phone calls from someone who says: "Hello Grandpa," followed by an attempt to scam money using a fictitious tale. A recent article entitled "The Day I Put \$50,000 in a Shoe Box and Handed It to a Stranger. I never thought I was the kind of person to fall for a scam" is worth reading. Thanks to **TIM BROOKS** for calling it to my attention.

[The Day I Put \\$50,000 in a Shoe Box and Handed It to a Stranger](#)

For some free musical entertainment, each Wednesday at 12:15 pm throughout Lent there are organ recitals by visiting artists at the First Congregational Church of Greenwich at 108 Sound Beach Avenue in Old Greenwich. You might be a bit late, but you can get there just after the RMA speaker program; just drive carefully.

We all need a lot of humor these days and for lots of laughs, you can see the Nights of the Round Table Comedy at the Greenwich Lounge at The Stamford Diner on Saturday, March 2, from 7:00-9:00 pm. There will be several comedians from places like Mohegan Sun. Interestingly, there is another comedy show the same night at the Stamford Comedy Club starting at 8 pm at Tutti Pazzi, 269 Bedford St, Stamford, CT, 06901.

[Nights of the Round Table Comedy](#)

In traditional fashion, **ARNOLD** spread a little wordplay pain:

“Why did the banana go to the doctor? He was not peeling well.”

“What is a good Christian’s favorite sport? LaCross, of course.”

“What is the favorite movie of reptiles? The Lizard of Oz.”

“Why couldn’t the sailors play cards on board? The captain was standing on the deck.”

From church bulletins, some actual announcements:

“The Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 pm. Please use the back door.”

“Weight Watchers will meet at 7 pm at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use the large double door at the side entrance.”

And here’s a bonus pun he inserted post-meeting: “The Roman emperor’s wife hates playing hide and seek because wherever she goes, Julius Caesar.”

JOE MANCINELLI then took the stage to tell some authentic jokes! He said that he loves February because it contains two of his favorite annual events: Groundhog Day and the State of the Union Address. One involves a meaningless ritual in which we look to a notoriously unreliable mammal for prognostication with no basis in reality. The other involves a groundhog! He followed that with a tale about a silent order monastery that allowed the monks to say two words every 10 years. In a 30-year period, Brother Michael’s words to the head monk were: Food Bad, Bed Hard, I Quit. For the latter, the head monk responded: “I’m not surprised. You’ve been complaining ever since you got here.” The next tale was about a woman on her death bed in the hospital who pleaded with God to let her live and was given 30 years. She was so excited she did a makeover with various procedures in the hospital to improve her appearance. When she finally left the hospital and was crossing the street, she was run over by a car. At the pearly gates, she asked God why he broke his promise. God said “I did not recognize you.” Lastly, **JOE** related the tale of a woman who asked the pharmacist for Nair hair remover; he cautioned her not to use it under her arms (causes chaffing) or legs (too sensitive). She said that she was not going to use it for those areas, whereupon the pharmacist asked what area she wanted it for. She said “It’s for my schnauzer,” and the pharmacist told her not to ride a bike for two weeks.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT



Marasso, Nguyen, Wu

PETER STERN tallied up the attendance as 71, with 9 more on Zoom. The day's greeter was **JOHN KAVANAGH**. An induction was held for Bao Nguyen (pronounced Nwin) who was sponsored by **FRED WU** and **SAM MARASSO**. Bao was born in Hanoi, Vietnam, and is the first RMA member to have served the South Vietnamese army; unfortunately, he was

imprisoned in a re-education camp for over two years. He is a talented man, having worked for Columbia University, Bell Labs, and for 23 years at IBM, focusing on artificial intelligence. He has many interests and will have an exhibit next month of his AI-inspired artwork. You can read more about Bao's interesting life in **FRED's** nominating comments. Bao was approved for membership unanimously.

[Bao Nguyen Nomination Remarks](#)

Four birthdays were honored, with **BOB MORGAN** at the piano:

RALPH NEWITTER	81
DON ROTZIEN	82
PHIL SCIBONA	81
ED MASTOLONI	87

There were four guests: Rob Goldie, guest of **BRIAN MAHONEY**; Gerry Brown, guest of **JIM SANTORA** and **JOHN KAVANAGH**; George Warnock, guest of **JOHN REESE** and **DAVID WATKINS**; and Shane MacCarthy, visiting from Washington, DC as a guest of his brother **PAT MACCARTHY**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Speaker Program: **BOB PHILLIPS** encouraged us to stay for today's talk by Phil Vitiello, a student and book-writer of historical events. "The Story of the Hunley" is about a submarine used by the Confederacy during the Civil War. It was the first submarine to sink a ship in combat. **BOB** also mentioned that he received a message from Josh Wright, who spoke to us on February 7 about ideas42. If you would like to learn more about the relatively new organization, or would consider supporting it, please contact **BOB** (203-629-1736; phillipsro2@aol.com). **BOB RIMMER** told us about next week's speakers, Sam Romeo and Tony Johnson, who will address "How Greenwich Communities Can Save Greenwich from Overdevelopment." Sam Romeo is the Chairman of Greenwich Communities, formerly Greenwich Housing Authority. Tony Johnson is the CEO. They welcome your toughest questions about affordable housing in Greenwich. They will answer questions about the impact of adding affordable housing on traffic congestion, parking, the tax mill rate, racial imbalances, and State Law 8-30g. If you have a question and want to make sure it is asked, send it to **PETER BERG** at PeterEBerg@gmail.com. A big turnout is expected for this always controversial topic, so be sure to come!

Donations: **TIM BROOKS** reported that when **JACK** took office as president, he asked a few members to work on bringing the RMA "into the 21st century" by enhancing our online capabilities, including the ability for members to send funds to the RMA electronically as well as by paper check. We have just added that capability, in a way that will also help to address the considerable deficits the association has been running in this period of rapidly rising costs and stagnant income. A few members have already made voluntary donations to the RMA to help address the budget shortfalls and maintain our public service activities. Members and non-members who wish to can now donate online via the RMA website at <http://www.greenwichrma.org>. In the upper right-hand corner click on "donate." This takes you to a page that explains how to donate to the RMA by either mailing a check, or by using the "Zelle" service offered free by most banks. When you use Zelle to send money from your account to the RMA it is quick and easy, and there is no charge to either the sender or the receiver. Any donations are greatly appreciated. It should also be noted that

since the RMA is incorporated as a "social organization" rather than a "charity," under IRS regulations donations are not tax deductible. **TIM** ended by thanking **JACK** and the board for initiating and supporting this project (round of applause!), and by promising future reports as more capabilities are added.

Special Events: Although there was no regular report, **JACK** said that from now on there will be weekly reports. Also, **TROY JOHNSON** provided more information about the planned trip to the New York Botanical Gardens on April 12, especially to see the highly lauded World of Orchids exhibit. The bus will depart at 9 am and return at 2 pm. There will be a guided tour and a Chef's Buffet lunch at the Stone Mill/Garden Terrace on the grounds. An RMA member is on the NYBG Board and has been helpful in planning the trip. The cost will be announced soon. FYI, if you are a member of the Garden, or if you join prior to the trip, there will be a \$30 discount. Meanwhile, if you have any questions about any planned events, contact **JOHN FEBLES** (203-550-5049; jfebles13@gmail.com).

Volunteer Programs: **WILL MORRISON** requested input from members on potential volunteer programs that they are keen to support. **WILL** thanked **STEVE BOIES** for his excellent memorial for **TOM CAHILL** and was impressed by the description of both men's volunteerism at the book swap, located at the Greenwich Transfer Station (aka the dump). They would be there with many other members receiving, sorting and arranging donated books, but mostly carrying on, a model volunteer experience - equal parts helping others and having fun together. If a cause you support or would like to support might offer this opportunity, let him know! **RUSS HARDEN** reports that Call-A-Ride is in serious need of drivers. Some 20 members with a core of about 10 drive on a regular basis, taking fellow seniors on errands, to doctors' appointments, and for food shopping. Rich conversation with clients is the priceless reward. Contact **RUSS** or **HORST TEBBE** to find out more. You can also call the dispatcher at 203-661-6633 to sign up.

[Call-a-Ride Poster](#)

ROMEO: DON ROTZIEN reported that the ROMEO lunch is still scheduled for Thursday, March 7 at 1:00 pm at Sally's Apizza, 66 Summer Street, Stamford (next to the Majestic Theater). There is a town parking lot behind Sally's and you may also be able to find a spot around the corner on Park Place. The restaurant needs a firm count for the reservation so please email **DON** at dsrotzien@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Pickleball: PAT MacCARTHY reminded us that RMA pickleball is played, weather permitting, from 11 am until 1 pm on Mondays and from 10 am until 12 pm on Thursdays at Christiano Field. Unfortunately, rainouts were experienced last week. If you want to join the pickleball contact list, please email **PAT** at pmacCarthy415@gmail.com. He promised that the weather will favor the players in March!

Tennis: ANDY HOLMES reported that last Friday, eight tennis players gathered at the Old Greenwich Tennis Academy to play two doubles tennis matches. In the opening round, the winning doubles team on Court 1 were **ANDRE MAZUREK** and **ART DELMHORST**; on Court 2, the winning doubles team was **JOHN KNIGHT** and **TROY JOHNSON**. In the finals round, the winning doubles team on Court 1 were **ANDRE** and **JOHN** and on Court 2, the prize went to **RANDY MOTLAND** and **BILL HOWLAND**. This week's captain will be **JEROME COLEMAN**.

Tai Chi: WILL MORRISON gave his usual invitation to all who wish to join his group for lessons in health-promoting exercises and for improving balance. New movements are being introduced Monday mornings that focus on improving balance and focus, and addressing forgetfulness. Contact **WILL** at 203-869-5129 or wdmorrison@gmail.com.

Hearts: TOM HEALY dealt the results for February 2. There eight players with the following results:

<i>TABLE 1</i>	Games Won	Moonshots
BOB SHULMAN	1	0
MICHAEL AMBROSINO	2	1
ANDY HOLMES	1	1
JOHN STANKUNIS	0	1
<i>TABLE 2</i>		
JACK SWEGER	2	2
JIM DEAN	1	1
TOM HEALY	1	2
JAY SCHONDORF	0	0

Bridge: **RON MURRAY** summarized the results for February 21. There were eight players at two tables. The top three scores were by **ALEX KOSSEIM**, 5,260 points; **STEVE SHAPIRO**, 4,090; **ED MASTOLONI**, 3,900. Unusually, there were two winning slam games, both involving **ALEX**. He and **RON FRIEDMAN** bid six no-trump (and made seven); **ALEX** and **TONY COCCHI** bid six spades (and also made seven). **RON** wanted to make sure that his use of the term no-trump was not meant to be a political statement! Play takes place every Wednesday at 1 pm in the Library Cafeteria of Greenwich Library. Lunch is available. All those interested, whether beginner or not, are welcome to join the group.

Paddle Tennis: **JIM DEAN** reported that on February 27, there were 12 players. Both courts were used for some very competitive games. Six members played, changing partners, for a total of 12 sets. Courts have been reserved for Tuesday mornings, 10 to noon, at Loughlin Avenue Park, Cos Cob. Play will continue until March 26, when the courts will be closed for the season. For weather playing information, call 203-861-6100. Each week, a sign-up sheet will be posted on the bulletin board for the following week. Or, call or text **JIM** at 203-550-0657.

Walkers and Talkers: **TAD LARRABEE** reported that 12 walkers met at St. Paul's church in Riverside and strolled along a number of neighborhood streets down to the Riverside Yacht Club and meandered back. The weather was beautiful for an invigorating winter walk! Good conversations were had as was enjoyment in seeing some interesting architecture in two 100-year-old

houses overlooking Cos Cob Harbor built by two Japanese businessmen (thanks to **JOHN DENNE** for the history lesson).

TODAY'S SPEAKER



BOB PHILLIPS introduced Phil Vitiello, a life-long New Haven resident, who described a fascinating, relatively unknown story about the first submarine to sink an enemy ship in combat with a torpedo, and during the Civil War no less: “The Story of the H.L Hunley.” He is a charter member of the Friends of the Hunley organization, which focuses on this first combat submarine. Phil previously spoke to the RMA about the Titanic about two years ago; he is a member of long standing in the Titanic Historical Society. He is the Director of

Marketing for the food broker, Northeast Food Marketing, while actively researching and writing as a student and book-writer of important historical events. He is a Civil War historian and re-enactor and visits war sites for his research.

He pointed out that the Civil War formed the grounds for modern warfare through the introduction of ironclad boats, machine guns, electrically exploded bombs and “aircraft” in the form of a passenger balloon. While most of us have heard about the Monitor and Merrimack boats used during that war, very little has been known about the H. L. Hunley, a submarine that sank mysteriously on February 17, 1864, after a tortuous life that began in Mobile, Alabama.

Phil explained the strategic situation that drove the development of the Hunley. Union General Winfield Scott had proposed blockading Southern ports and controlling the Mississippi River to cut the Confederacy in half. While laughed at by other generals, his “Anaconda Plan” proved correct. The naval blockade was eventually very effective, almost completely stopping the

flow of arms and supplies to the South. The Confederacy hoped that submarines could break the blockade.

In New Orleans in 1862, engineers James McClintock and Baxter Watson began construction of submarines financed by Horace Lawson Hunley. The first two subs (named Pioneer 1 and Pioneer 2) sank, but they salvaged material for a third attempt, the H.L. Hunley. She was an improved design: 42 feet long, 5 feet high and 4.5 feet wide with a crew of eight. It had advanced features for its time, such as ballast tanks. It weighed 14,991 pounds and had a speed of 1-2 knots, 3-4 in sprints, propelled by a hand-cranked propeller (there was no engine). They hoped that the submarine would be able to dive under sea close to enemy ships while towing a torpedo held at the end of a movable spar that would detonate on contact. After successful harbor tests in Mobile, the sub and crew were sent 627 miles by rail to Charleston, SC in 1863.

The first of several mishaps occurred when on arrival, the over-eager new military crew sank the Hunley while attempting a test dive. Three men escaped and five were trapped inside and died. The sub was raised and a new crew volunteered, even after being informed of the previous loss. On the next manned test, Horace Hunley himself took command to train the crew. But due to a pilot error, the Hunley failed to surface after a practice dive, killing a second crew, including Hunley, who was aboard. At that point the Confederate military ordered all work stopped on what they deemed a failed weapon.

But Lt. George Dixon, who during a previous land battle had survived a bullet which was deflected by a gold coin given to him as a lucky charm by his sweetheart, passionately pleaded for one last chance. Impressed by his bravery and confidence, the generals relented, despite thinking the boat more dangerous to the crew than to the enemy. Dixon trained his hand-picked men exhaustively for a complicated night attack. Given the sub's short-range, which was only six or seven miles, they had to carefully calculate distance and tide conditions.

Finally, on a calm night on February 18, 1864, the Hunley left Breach Inlet with an eight-man crew for her fateful mission in Charlotte Harbor. They were

four miles away from their target but reached within 100 yards of the 207-foot-long Union ship, Housatonic. They carried a 135-pound Singer torpedo at the end of the 16-foot spar with which they successfully struck the ship. The blast sent the Housatonic to the bottom in five minutes, but killed only five of 155 crewmen. Some witnesses reported seeing a blue signal light in the water afterward, meaning the Hunley had survived; such a signal had been arranged with the home base. However, nothing was seen or heard after the last sighting and the Hunley never did return to base. It remained lost for over 130 years. Numerous theories have been proposed for her disappearance - swamped by her own explosion, run over by rescue ships, trapped underwater by tides, etc. But lack of evidence made it a mystery, which has never been solved.

There were many unsuccessful searches for the Hunley over the decades. Finally, author Clive Cussler funded an expedition that located the sub on May 3, 1995, buried in silt 26 feet beneath the sea more than 1,300 yards past the wreck of the Housatonic. She was raised intact on August 8, 2000, with the spar still connected, and found to be nearly perfectly preserved after 136 years due to the protective silt cocoon. The skeletons of the crew were found inside. Archaeologists spent 15 years excavating her contents, finding many artifacts such as binoculars, a lamp, a pocket watch, and tools. Remarkably, they also found Dixon's deformed "lucky" gold coin that had a mark where the bullet had hit. On April 16, 2004, the remains of the Hunley's last crew were given full military burials at the Church of Holy Communion with 60,000 spectators and 12,000 historians in attendance, thus closing her incredible story that changed naval warfare forever.

The talk was followed by a question & answer session. The full presentation can be viewed by going to the RMA website at <https://greenwichrma.org>, and clicking on "Speakers." Note: The views expressed in RMA presentations are those of the speakers. They are not intended to represent the views of the RMA or its members.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

TO CBB CONTRIBUTORS: Scribe for the next meeting will be →**CHARLIE SHAPIRO**←. Please send a copy of any remarks you want included in the CBB to him, *via email please!*

ALL MEMBERS: Do not forget to report all your inside and outside volunteer hours at www.greenwichrma.org/log.

ALL MEMBERS: The CBB team works every week to write and publish an informative and concise bulletin for our members' enjoyment. We can always use new members to join the Scribe Tribe. Please contact **TIM BROOKS** at tbroo@aol.com if you can support this effort.

ALL MEMBERS are reminded that in addition to streaming on the Internet, RMA speakers are normally shown on the local public access TV channels, Verizon FIOS channel 24 and Optimum (Cablevision) channel 79.

Pictures by **ANDY HOLMES, TIM BROOKS**.

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Visit our website at <https://greenwichrma.org>

RMA 2024 CALENDAR

Weekly Repetitive Activities*			
Day	Time	Activity	Contact
Mondays	9:30 am	QiGong and Tai Chi Workout	Register in advance with Will Morrison – wdmorrison@gmail.com
Mondays	11:00 am	Pickleball	Pat MacCarthy – pmaccarthy415@gmail.com Michael LaGamma – mdlagamma@optonline.net
Tuesdays	9:30 am	RMA Golf, the Griff Golf Course, Greenwich	Mike Ryan – ryantomac@netscape.net

Tuesdays	10 am-12 pm	Platform (paddle) tennis at Loughlin Field, Cos Cob	James Dean - Jhdeanco@gmail.com
Wednesdays	9:45 to 10:30 am	RMA Weekly Meeting	Horst Tebbe – onehorst@optimum.net or Len Carusi at lencarusi@gmail.com
Wednesdays	1:00 pm	Hearts	Bob Shullman – bob.shullman@gmail.com
Wednesdays	1:00 pm	Bridge	Andre Mazurek - Mazurek.a.j@gmail.com
Thursdays	9:00 am	RMA Walking	Tad Larrabee - tadlarra@optonline.net
Thursdays	10:00 am	Pickleball	Pat MacCarthy – pmacCarthy415@gmail.com Michael LaGamma – mdlagamma@optonline.net
Friday	Contact Holmes	Indoor Tennis	Andy Holmes - Andyholmes56@gmail.com

*Day & time of some events may vary; check with contact