



# CIGAR BOX BULLETIN

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

[www.greenwichrma.org](http://www.greenwichrma.org)

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**March 20 Scribe: KRIS BRATBERG, [KRISBRATBERG@GMAIL.COM](mailto:KRISBRATBERG@GMAIL.COM)**

*"Content makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor"*

- Benjamin Franklin

President **JACK WEIR** called the meeting to order at 9:45. **TAD LARRABEE** led the membership in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. **JIM BUTLER** led the group in singing "America the Beautiful," "My Wild Irish Rose" and "When Irish Eyes are Shining," accompanied by **BOB MORGAN** on piano.

## **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS**

**JACK** began by acknowledging the many members who have offered support for today's meeting and the CBB: **JIM BUTLER** and **BOB MORGAN**, for our opening music; **TIM BROOKS**, CBB editor, and **JIM DEAN**, CBB scribe; **LEN CARUSI** and **TONY COCCHI** as projectionists; volunteer advocate **TOG PEARSON**; greeter **JOHN KAVANAGH**; mentor **PAT MacCARTHY**. Today's set up was completed by **BOB BISHOP, JIM BUTLER**, and **JOHN CRANE**. **JERRY COLEMAN** was responsible for refreshments.

**JACK WEIR** invited members to join the RMA marchers at the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday March 17. Park in the Island Beach parking lot and take the

shuttle to Town Hall to meet at 1:30 pm. The RMA will mass as a group behind the RMA banner in the Town Hall parking lot. If you cannot find the group in the lot, the check-in desk in front of Town Hall can advise as to the precise position in the parade line-up. If you prefer to park near the Town Hall, there will be a shuttle back to Town Hall from the parade end. Bring cameras and cell phones to help get photos of the group. Please wear something GREEN. Erin go Bragh!

## **CORRESPONDING SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**ARNOLD GORDON** announced that Greenwich Adult and Continuing Education is looking for talented people with great hobbies to teach in our Continuing Education Program. They are open to new ideas and creative classes. Instructors do not need a degree. Here is their current catalog, [www.greenwichace.com](http://www.greenwichace.com). If you are interested in teaching a class, please contact Braulio Santiago, coordinator of adult and continuing education, at [braulio\\_santiago@greenwich.k12.ct.us](mailto:braulio_santiago@greenwich.k12.ct.us). **WILL MORRISON** teaches a Tai Chi class. Former member Av Rivel taught a computer class.

On Saturday, March 16, the Greenwich Lions Club will hold its 61<sup>st</sup> annual pancake breakfast. It's a fundraiser for all the great work the Greenwich Lions Club does in Town. Plus, there will be other non-profits attending this year as well and telling people more about the work they do and how you can get involved and help. The breakfast will be in the Greenwich High School Student Center from 8 am to noon and tickets can be purchased for \$8 in advance and then \$10 at the door. Tickets are \$8 for kids aged six to 11 and kids five and under are free. Advance tickets can be purchased at Perrot Library in Old Greenwich. Pancakes with syrup, sausage, orange juice, coffee, tea, and milk will all be served and there will also be a bake sale, door prizes, face painting, and other entertainment. There will also be free eye screenings for kids aged two to six. This is an event well worth supporting to benefit the Greenwich Lions.

**ARNOLD** reported that one of our jokesters, **CARL WHITE**, has had to resign from his post. We thank him for his contributions and wish him well. **ARNOLD**

is looking for a volunteer to replace **CARL**; please contact him if you are interested ([ajgordo@verizon.net](mailto:ajgordo@verizon.net); 203-340-9336).

**ARNOLD** mentioned that he was substituting for **PAUL CAMPION** today, as the scheduled joke teller could not make it to the meeting. With that he warmed up with some twists on various expressions:

“A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.”

“A will is a dead giveaway.”

“When you have seen one shopping center you've seen a mall.”

“Practice safe eating - Always use condiments.”

“Shotgun wedding - A case of wife or death.”

“If you do not pay your exorcist, you get repossessed.”

He reminded everyone that on occasion **PETER UHRY** has made it possible for us to purchase RMA caps. Now he is offering some special T-shirts suitable for our members. **ARNOLD** showed ten examples, with expressions on them such as: “My wife tells me I have only two faults. I do not listen, and another one.” “I am great in bed. I can sleep for days.” “A little gray hair is a small price to pay for all this wisdom.”

Just in time for St. Patrick's Day, **ARNOLD** shared a warm story about taking his son for his first drink to the local pub. "I got him a Guinness. He did not like it, so I drank it. Then I got him a Kilkenny's, he didn't like that either, so I drank it. Finally, I thought he might like some Harp Lager? He didn't. I drank it. I thought he'd like whisky better than beer, so we tried a Jameson's; nope! In desperation, I had him try rare Redbreast, Ireland 's finest whisky. He wouldn't even smell it. What could I do but drink it! By the time I realized he just didn't like to drink, I was so drunk I could hardly push his stroller back home!"

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

**PETER STERN** provided the membership report. Attendance was 101, plus seven on Zoom, for a total of 108 (Count by **PETER STERN**).

With **BOB MORGAN** at the piano, birthdays were celebrated for:

**STEVE MESKERS**, 66

**LOU TROVATO**, 84

**FRANK ZAVATTARO**, 93

**JOHN FEBLES**, 80

**BILL HOWLAND**, 83

**BO JARNSTEDT**, 81

**LEE LUNDY**, 81

**LARRY DeVAN**, 76

Two guests were present, George Warnock, guest of **JOHN REESE** and **DAVID WATKINS**; and Rich White, guest of **KRIS BRATBERG**. Returnees were **RICK HOLZ** from Lauderdale-by-the Sea, Florida, and **BRUNO SCHRAGE**, from Milan, Italy

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

**TROY JOHNSON** announced a trip to the New York Botanical Gardens which will include a tour of the Orchid Show and lunch on Friday, April 12.

Reservations must be completed today; the \$110 cost will include round trip transportation, the tour and lunch. Bus will depart St. Paul's Church, Riverside Avenue at 9:30 am and return at 2:30 pm.

**SKIP AUCH** announced a walking tour of the Yale University campus on May 4, with lunch to follow at Morey's. Members will carpool to the gathering spot.

**MIKE RYAN** has purchased a block of 20 tickets for the May 11<sup>th</sup> performance of Madame Butterfly at the New Rochelle multi-plex theater. He urged members to please seriously consider attending. This applies particularly to those who have never been to a Metropolitan Live HD performance. They are done so well - to the point that one gets hooked the first time out. This Met production of Butterfly is quite simply a masterpiece. It's sure-fire enjoyment. Tickets are \$24 each. Contact Mike at 203-698-0441 or by email

- [ryantomac@netscape.net](mailto:ryantomac@netscape.net).

## **SPEAKERS PROGRAM**

**BOB RIMMER** previewed today's speaker, **MIKE ABRAHAMS**, who will speak on "Major Bridges in North America—Design and Construction Challenges." **MIKE** is a graduate of Bowdoin College and Columbia Engineering School. **MIKE** and his wife Elena, a retired teacher in the Greenwich school system, live in Old Greenwich. **TIM BROOKS** announced that next week's speaker is Dr. Peter Muir, who will both perform and speak on "Pioneers of Ragtime." This will be a virtuoso exploration of the toe-tapping piano style that emerged a hundred years ago and gave rise to music such as blues and jazz. It should be lively and entertaining!

## **HUMAN INTEREST**

**STEVE BOIES** and **BOB BISHOP** spoke about the Greenwich Book Swap, aka "the Dump." **STEVE** explained that a few weeks ago, **JACK** approached him and **BOB** and asked them to do a human-interest story about The Book Swap. After 13 years working at The Swap, I am now emeritus. **BOB** still works at The Swap and often opens, as he does here every Wednesday.

If you are not familiar with The Book Swap, it is located in those two red sheds behind you when you are unloading your recyclables and tossing your trash in the bins at Holly Hill, which most of us still refer to as "The Dump." To get in, you are required to have a dump permit hanging in your rear-view mirror, but all the books there are yours for the taking, limited to 10 books each time you come, unless you are a teacher. The Book Swap is open from 8:00 am to 12:00 noon on Fridays and Saturdays. In addition to books, it accepts, and has available for the taking, LPs, CDs, DVDs and loads of "Cookbooks" and "Coffee Table" books.

It does not accept encyclopedias, textbooks, self-help books, financial books or religious books. If you want to get rid of any of these books, or any books, you can drop them into the blue bins of Discovery Books on any day The Dump is open. The Book Swap was started at the former Greenwich High School, around 1970 by two guys who obviously loved books and were interested in re-cycling. **STEVE** provided a picture of Doug Francefort, who many will

remember. When the old Greenwich High School was converted to our current Town Hall, they moved their operation to “The Dump.”

Those were the days when a Townie like Doug could ask a Townie like “Zip” Roddy, the Head of Public Works, to do him a favor and build the two sheds down at Holly Hill. One shed contains our Library and the other contains our inventory for restocking shelves and for staying out of the elements. Doug continued to run The Book Swap until he died in 2020, getting grouchier with each passing year.

In 2009, when I started volunteering at The Book Swap, all of us volunteers were members of the RMA. Working conditions were far from ideal. We had no heat, no electricity and we froze in the winter. And we had nothing to keep off the rain when we took in the books that were dropped off on rainy days. Filling boxes full of our rejects and stacking them in a container was hard work. People who did not know us thought we were Town employees. And people who did know us were surprised to see us working there. But we all loved doing it. And everyone appreciated what we were doing.

There was a time when the Town threatened to close The Book Swap. The then manager of Holly Hill and the head of Public Works thought our patrons were impeding the flow of traffic and were likely to cause accidents. I will admit I saw a few close calls, but I never saw a single fender bender in all the years I worked at The Book Swap. Things changed when Patrick Collins was put in charge of operations at Holly Hill. Patrick is a great guy and is a big supporter of the Book Swap. He provided us with a Port-A-Potty!

Lorrie Stapleton started volunteering at The Book Swap in 2015. Lorrie had taken early retirement from a high-pressure tech job at Barclay’s Bank in lower Manhattan and was looking for something to do. And she had a mission. Lorrie has not only improved the working conditions for the volunteers, but she has also turned The Book Swap into a profitable non-profit.

When I started, Doug had a company in Massachusetts periodically pick up the books we had no use for. But along the way, we lost that outlet, and we started tossing all our rejects into a city carting bin that the Town had to pay to have

hauled away. Lorrie found “Discovery Books” which for some years now has come once a week to haul away all our unwanted books. And they pay us \$0.02 per pound. Per Lorrie’s Excel worksheet, in 2023 alone, Discovery Books hauled away 67 tons of books saving the Town a lot of money. Lorrie has used this income to significantly improve the working conditions for volunteers. They now have a generator for lighting, a decent heater and two canopies, so volunteers do not have to stand in the rain and snow when people drop off books in bad weather. But more importantly, in 2015, Lorrie started Books4Everyone.org. Her goal was to find a home for all the clean used books The Book Swap can’t use. Since then, Lorrie and her helpers have distributed over 250,000 books to more than 30 schools and organizations in Greenwich, Stamford, Norwalk and Bridgeport. Lorrie now has a roster of 14 volunteers who work at The Book Swap, many of whom are women. This list includes Bob and Ed Parker and his wife Debbie who are regular volunteers at The Book Swap.

Before we close, we need to salute **GERHARD PETER** who has been distributing books from The Book Swap to Senior Centers in Greenwich since the beginning of time. If you are interested in learning more about The Book Swap, you will find a small pile of brochures on the table at the back.

### **OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**JACK** and **SKIP AUCH** had lunch with **RUSS HARDEN**. **RUSS** expressed that he misses the RMA group and hopes to return soon.

**JOHN REESE**, chair of the Tech Group, requests that if you would like to be included in the group mailing list, please see him, email [jreese@validea.com](mailto:jreese@validea.com), or text him at (860) 519-5140. The group shares and discusses their experience, interests, and questions about using technology. The group has been focusing recently on ChatGPT and other breakthrough products in AI covering questions ranging from how to best do something using AI to existential societal implications of ChatGPT and AI. **JOHN** advised that there will be a program on Wednesday, March 21 at 4:30 pm regarding AI. This will be a virtual meeting via Zoom. Contact **JOHN** for a link to join the meeting.





**DON ROTZIEN** announced that the recent **ROMEO** luncheons have been very successful. The latest was on March 7 at Apizza, in Stamford (at left). If you reserve a seat and are unable to come, please let **DON** know immediately so that he can advise the restaurant.

**BILL GRAF** announced that the League of Women Voters of Greenwich is sponsoring a book discussion on "The Nation that Never Was." Join LWV, Greenwich Library, and Connecticut Public for this thought-provoking discussion featuring UPenn law Professor Kermit Roosevelt, III, in conversation with Yale law Professor Akhil Reed Amar. They will discuss and debate Professor Roosevelt's new book, *The Nation That Never Was*. The event is on March 18, from 7 pm to 8:15 pm at Greenwich Library, Berkley Theater.

**JOE MANCINELLI, JIM SANTORA** and **JOHN CRAINE** presented to **MIKE RYAN** the Golden Golf ball Award, as a thank you for his years of serving as captain of the RMA golf team. **JOE** also announced that the upcoming 2024 golf season will kick off on April 2. We welcome new golfers to join our friendly group at all skill levels. We play 18 holes but also welcome nine-hole play. It's fun! You will get some exercise and a laugh or two. See the sign-up sheets on the bulletin board at Wednesday meetings. Also be advised that the Greenwich Senior Resident rate is \$110, but for tee times after 4:30 the rate increases to \$130.





## GAMES MEMBERS PLAY

**Pickleball.** **PAT MacCARTHY** reported that RMA pickleball days have been changed to compete with the aggressive and popular play of the platform team in the hope of pirating some of their players.

**Platform Tennis.** **JIM DEAN** reported the paddle courts season will end on March 26. It has been an active season and the presentation of loving cup for the outstanding player will be made on March 27.

**Bridge.** **RON MURRAY** reported that last week's gathering had eight players. Top scores were **ANDRE MAZUREK**, 4460, **RON MURRAY**, 4040, and **TONY COCCHI**, 3670. Congratulations to **ANDRE** and **RON F.** for a small slam of six hearts, **ANDRE's** second slam in two weeks. We play on Wednesday afternoon in the cafe on the ground floor of the Greenwich Library. Lunch is available. We invite all members and guests who are interested in bridge, whether newcomers or experienced players, to join our group. Don't worry if you have just recently started to play bridge or are an experienced player who's a bit rusty - we have a number of fine players who would be happy to answer your questions.

**Hearts.** **BOB SHULLMAN** advised that on March 6 after the RMA meeting, eight members met at the Greenwich Library to enjoy the afternoon playing hearts and listening to delightful music. The members created two tables of four players and played a total of eight games. At Table 1 four games were played. The winners were **MIKE AMBROSINO**, **JOHN STANKUNAS**, and **JOHN KNIGHT**, who played to a tie, as well as **BILL FAKUNDINY**, who won one game like no one has ever won a RMA hearts game according to a member who has been playing for many years. **BILL** won the game while taking absolutely no hearts and not taking the queen of spades. The best any player could recall ever happening before was a member won a hearts game going to a total score of 100 while taking only three hearts. There were also four moonshots at this table: **BILL** and **MIKE** each had one while **JOHN K.** had two. At Table 2 four games were also played. The winners were **DON CONWAY**, **TOM HEALY**, **JOE DOWLING** and **BOB SHULLMAN**. There were also three moonshots at this table, **JOE** had two while **DON** had one.

**Tennis.** **JOE MANCINELLI** reported that the opening round winners on Court 1 were **HOLMES** and **MacCARTHY**; on Court 2, **MANCINELLI** and **JOHNSON**. Final Round: Court 1, **MANCINELLI** and **HOLMES**; Court 2, **UHRY** and **FRIEDMAN**. Next week's captain will be **PETER DODGE**.

**Walking Group.** **TAD LARRABEE** said that last Thursday, the group met at Crawford Park in Rye, NY. The weather was a bit "iffy," but it ended up being perfectly dry with nice mid-forty's temperatures for this time of year. We had an enjoyable time exploring new neighborhoods to the west of Port Chester and east of the Westchester Country Club.

The meeting was adjourned by **JACK WEIR** at 10:45.

### **TODAY'S SPEAKER**

**BOB RIMMER** introduced today's speaker, **MIKE ABRAHAMS**. **MIKE** is the former chief structural engineer for WSP, USA Inc., formerly Parsons



Brinckerhoff, an American multinational engineering and design firm. He described his experience in the design and construction of several major bridges including Fremont Bridge, Portland; the Coleman Bridge, VA; Ford Island Bridge, Hawaii; Lions Gate Bridge, British Columbia; Cooper River Bridge, South Carolina; and Kosciuszko

Bridge in NY.

The Fremont Bridge in Portland has a center span where the rib of the arch is above the deck, and is 902 feet (275 m) long. It was fabricated in California then assembled in Oregon. After assembly it was floated on a barge for a 1.7-mile trip to the construction site. On March 16, 1973, the 6,000 short tons steel arch span was lifted 170 ft using thirty-two hydraulic jacks. At the time,

it was listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the heaviest lift ever completed. The Cooper River bridge was the longest cable bridge at the time it was built with a main span of 1,546 feet. Today it is the third longest among cable-stayed bridges in the Western Hemisphere. The Kosciuszko Bridge, originally built in 1938, is one of the most central pieces of NYC infrastructure. It is the hyphen in the Brooklyn-Queens expressway that connects two boroughs over Newtown Creek, a 3.5-mile creek which empties into the East River. A new Kosciuszko bridge had two phases. The East bound bridge opened in 2016 and the West bound in 2019.

**MIKE** also spoke about leading failure investigations when a bridge collapses, such as the Mianus River bridge which fell when connecting pins failed. He discussed the long history of cranes in the building of bridge spans, including the Fremont bridge.

The talk included an informative question & answer period. 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 →**KRIS BRATBERG**←. 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](http://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](mailto: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** and **TIM BROOKS**.

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### 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 – <a href="mailto:wdmorrison@gmail.com">wdmorrison@gmail.com</a>  |
| Mondays                       | 11:00 am         | Pickleball  | Pat MacCarthy – <a href="mailto:pmacCarthy415@gmail.com">pmacCarthy415@gmail.com</a><br>Michael LaGamma – <a href="mailto:mdlagamma@optonline.net">mdlagamma@optonline.net</a> |
| Tuesdays                      | 9:30 am          | RMA Golf, the Griff Golf Course, Greenwich          | Mike Ryan – <a href="mailto:ryantomac@netscape.net">ryantomac@netscape.net</a>   |
| Tuesdays                      | 10 am-12 pm      | Platform (paddle) tennis at Loughlin Field, Cos Cob | James Dean - <a href="mailto:Jhdeanco@gmail.com">Jhdeanco@gmail.com</a>  |
| Wednesdays                    | 9:45 to 10:30 am | RMA Weekly Meeting                                  | Horst Tebbe – <a href="mailto:onehorst@optimum.net">onehorst@optimum.net</a> or Len Carusi at <a href="mailto:lencarusi@gmail.com">lencarusi@gmail.com</a>                     |
| Wednesdays                    | 1:00 pm          | Hearts  | Bob Shullman – <a href="mailto:bob.shullman@gmail.com">bob.shullman@gmail.com</a>  |
| Wednesdays                    | 1:00 pm          | Bridge  | Andre Mazurek - <a href="mailto:Mazurek.a.j@gmail.com">Mazurek.a.j@gmail.com</a>   |
| Thursdays                     | 9:00 am          | RMA Walking   | Tad Larrabee - <a href="mailto:tadlarra@optonline.net">tadlarra@optonline.net</a>  |
| Thursdays                     | 10:00 am         | Pickleball  | Pat MacCarthy – <a href="mailto:pmacCarthy415@gmail.com">pmacCarthy415@gmail.com</a><br>Michael LaGamma – <a href="mailto:mdlagamma@optonline.net">mdlagamma@optonline.net</a> |
| Friday                        | Contact Holmes   | Indoor Tennis                                       | Andy Holmes - <a href="mailto:Andyholmes56@gmail.com">Andyholmes56@gmail.com</a>   |

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