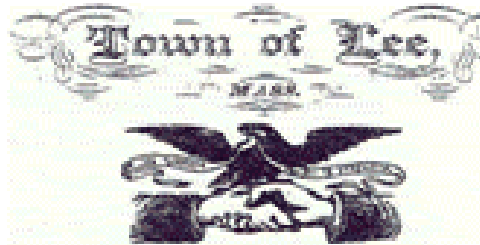


Lee Historical Society Newsletter

Vol. 9, No. 2



February 2012

Lee Historical Society, Inc.
Crossway Tower
P. O. Box 170
Lee, MA 01238

Visit us: www.leehistoricsociety.homestead.com
Contact us: Lee_Hist_Soc@msn.com



On January 12th, Lee Police Chief, Joe Buffis spoke to the society and guests on the history of the Lee Police Department. The program was well received and well attended and brought many questions and comments from the audience. Chief Buffis included pictures of some of the past chiefs and patrolmen of the Lee Police Department as well as some old documents of its history. One of the audience members was Rico Smachetti, a retired Lee Police officer who also related some experiences of his "crime solving" days on the Lee Police Department. It was a great program with refreshments served at the completion of the program.

Our next meeting will be on **Thursday, February 9th starting at 6:30 p.m. in the Hyde Room at Crossway Towers.** It will be a business meeting for officers, board members and any interested members.

We are also asking members and local people to send us an article or story on a subject of interest about the history of Lee that they are willing to share with our readers.

The society, with the help of Board Member and Collections Chairman Marion Leach, will open its room at the Crossway Towers to visitors on a limited schedule on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m... Those who might be interested in stopping by should probably call Marion at 413-243-0907 to make sure that she is "open for business" and let her know that you will be stopping by. We are also looking for volunteers to lend Marion a hand during these hours. Anyone that is taking a chance that Marion is there on those days will find the outside door to the building locked and will need to ring the doorbell that is marked "Historical Society" and then wait a minute or so until someone comes to let you in. Please stop by, see what we have or just chat. We'll be happy to see you.

CONDOLENCES:

The Lee Historical Society sends its condolences to society members Nancy Cecchinato, on the passing of her father, Donald Leach, and to Marion Leach, Mr. Leach's sister-in-law.

NEW MEMBERS TO WELCOME:

D. Stephen Hyde, 3210 Swarthmore Road, Wilmington, DE 19807
Wilcox Plumbing & Heating, P. O. Box 561, Lee, MA 01238

ON THE MOVE:

Society Member Peggy O'Neill Westergard has left the smog of San Diego, California for the plains of Lawrence, Kansas. Good luck in your new surroundings.

We need to mention the tragic fire on the evening of January 3rd that caused an estimated two million dollars damage, to the Dresser Hull Company warehouse on Railroad Street that belongs to our friends and society members, Dick Shields and family. On this cold evening the Lee Fire Department and fire departments from several surrounding towns battled the blaze. We give our highest praise to all the firemen who battled the fire and the weather on this occasion. The Shields family never missed a beat as far the running of the business. The Dresser Hull Company was open for business, but maybe not as usual at 7:00 a.m. the next day. I think this event had very positive thoughts about the Shields family, their employees, our fire department and those of surrounding towns and of all the great and caring people who helped in so many ways during this tragic fire. Dresser Hull expects to have a new warehouse built within the next few months and will also have a new fleet of trucks to replace the six that were destroyed in the fire. We wish them only the best and graciously thank all the volunteers that helped on the night of the fire and in the days that followed.

A LEE LIBRARY PROGRAM:

On **Thursday, February 16th, at 7:00 P. M.**, Arthur Dutil, expert in preservation and Disaster Planning, will speak on Preservation of the Lee Historical Collection, housed at the Lee Library.

The talk will take place in **the J. Peter Scolforo Gallery at the Lee Library**. This program is free and the public is encouraged to attend.

During the month of February, an exhibit of items from the Lee Historical Collection will be on display in the Lee Library Gallery. Please come and visit our exhibit during regular library hours to see a sampling of our treasures.

A REMINDER THAT THE 2012 DUES ARE BEING ACCEPTED AND WE ASK THE MEMBERS WHO HAVE NOT RENEWED TO PLEASE DO SO. THANKS. PLEASE DO NOT MAKE US WASTE POSTAGE BY SENDING OUT LETTERS TO ALL WHO ARE LATE.

By U. S. Navy Retired Commander Vic Mottarella,
A native of Lee
(Continued from January – 2012)

The Fly Off to Quonset Point

On the morning of October 2, 1948 Flight Quarters was announced on the PA system. We were about two hundred miles south of Rhode Island. The Air Officer routinely announced "Stand by to start engines" followed by "Start engines". After starting up and going over my checklist the ship turned into the wind and I was catapulted in my Grumman Hellcat F6F-5 Bureau Number 78975. Exactly one hour later I landed at our home station, Naval Air Station Quonset Point R.I. where Ensign Frank Posch and I decided to become roommates. Frank was the oldest Ensign in the squadron. He had applied for and was accepted for the cadet program after serving several years as an enlisted man during the war. His prior rate was Aircraft Machinist Mate First Class. He was a fine gentleman, very knowledgeable in aircraft engines and was highly respected in the squadron. In addition to his flying duties he was assigned as Assistant Maintenance Officer where he excelled. I felt honored that he asked me to be his roommate.

RECOLLECTIONS XI

FALL IN NEW ENGLAND, 1948

Our return from the Mediterranean to Quonset Point, Rhode Island in early October was at the most ideal time of year and Ensign Frank Posch was a perfect roommate. He was several years older, a lot more mature and tended to keep me out of trouble. At least, he kept me out of trouble for several months. New England was just beautiful at that time of year. Frank and I took several auto tours of the area scanning the horizon to observe the colorful foliage as well as the surrounding rustic coastline. On one of the trips he introduced me to Maine Lobster that was plentiful and reasonably priced. Before this event, I could not imagine eating anything with that kind of looks but he finally coaxed me into giving it a try. Since that day I have loved the taste of these ugly creatures.

Air Show Over Baltimore

Our squadron was assigned to conduct an aerial demonstration over the city of Baltimore on October 19, 1948. I don't recall the circumstances that led to this assignment. I can only assume that the city initiated a request through the Navy Department in Washington and the assignment was passed down through channels to a highly responsible and respected Squadron Commander such as Duke Windsor. I can remember being assigned a position in the formation that would put me directly behind Lieutenant Senior Grade Jack Armstrong but for some reason the order was changed at the last minute.

We were provided a thorough briefing by the skipper. We would take off and join up in four divisions totaling sixteen Bearcats. He decided that we would fly with full belly tanks and return to Quonset Point upon conclusion of the flight. When reaching Baltimore at about one thousand feet we would dissolve the four plane division formations and form a single column based on the briefed order. This would put sixteen Bearcats in a tail chase position (follow the leader). Because of the tremendous prop-wash created by the powerful engines it was necessary for each following Bearcat to fly in a slightly step down position.

The skipper led the squadron through a series of maneuvers over the city including slow rolls, loops, wingovers, split-esses, immelmans and barrel rolls. While executing one of several immelmans someone in the formation transmitted over the radio: "Jack, you just lost your belly tank". At that point I was thankful that I was not flying directly behind Jack Armstrong because in a step down position my Bearcat could have collided with that runaway belly tank. After a few seconds Jack's response was: "No problem, I've got plenty of fuel". I don't remember the exact words by Duke Windsor that followed. What I do clearly remember was that the words were quite strident and very unkind, to say the least. We were directly over the city and the skipper had no idea of what damage might have been done to property and personnel below. The air show was immediately suspended and we returned to Quonset Point.

Immediately following our return Duke Windsor made an official report of the incident. We were all very curious as to what damage or casualties might have been caused. On the following day we learned that the tank had landed directly in the center of a fruit stand. Fortunately, it did not ignite or explode. Later reports revealed that the fruit stand owner merely wanted compensation for his losses. It was also learned that a black lady indicated she had lost her sight as a result of the incident and with the help of a lawyer was suing the government for several thousand dollars. The case went to Federal Court and the FBI got involved. A few months later we learned that the FBI filmed movies of the lady on her front porch. She was reading a newspaper. It was the last news that I recall about the incident.

Routine Air Operations

In addition to the Baltimore air show we conducted a few routine weapons delivery flights throughout the month of October. These included dive-bombing and rocket flights to various targets as well as an occasional instrument refresher flight. We were occasionally scheduled to merely bore holes in the sky to maintain flight proficiency. Depending on whom I was scheduled to fly with and considering the fact that no one in authority was anywhere in sight we often strayed from some of these non-specific assignments. All of these flights were conducted in Bearcats. A review of my logbook indicates that my very last flight in Hellcats (F6F -5 Bureau Number 78975) occurred on October 27, 1948. The Hellcats were declared obsolete and in excess of tactical requirements. Both of the squadron's two Hellcats were flown to Naval Air Station Litchfield Park in Arizona where I learned later they were cut up for scrap metal.

At various times during October most of the junior officers in the squadron accompanied me to the hometown in Massachusetts where we put on an aerial demonstration involving different maneuvers such as loops, barrel rolls and immelmans as well as low passes at maximum power and RPM. None of these deviations from the flight schedule were authorized but it was part of being a fighter pilot. I suppose the purpose on my part, at that young age, was to get some recognition. Although I had not been a particularly good student I wanted to demonstrate to the town there was finally something I could do well. It was not very smart but at this late date I excuse these excursions as the challenges, adventures and the exuberance of youth.

LTJG Leo Krupp, my assigned section leader, accompanied me on one of those flights. He followed me as I flew down main-street at minimum altitude with maximum power. I pulled up sharply where we rolled vertically to well over ten thousand feet. As I pushed over to resume level flight and while experiencing several negative g's, I felt a sharp pain in my lower abdominal area. While the pain subsided somewhat, it did not disappear. For me it was a straight, level and gentle flight all the way back to the home base. A visit to Doctor Vorrhis, the Air Group Flight Surgeon, revealed that I had torn some tissue resulting in a hernia. He had me check in at the Naval Hospital for an operation. I did not fly again until December 22, 1948. I was hospitalized for about a week and was told that I could not fly for at least a month. Doctor Vorrhis, at the time, was a Navy Commander with whom I had become acquainted while aboard ship. He later became the top Admiral in the Naval Medical Service. I was in the hospital during the Presidential election of 1948. I listened to the election returns all night. Being a staunch Republican I favored Dewey and was greatly disappointed with the election results.

Since I couldn't fly for over a month I inquired about the possibility of getting a month's sick leave. My purpose was to visit Shirley Shanley in Robstown, Texas. (Mentioned in Recollections VI). Although I was dating a cute Navy nurse at the time my heart never left Texas. Shirley was not the most beautiful gal that I had dated but she possessed several qualities that really appealed to me. Up to that point in my life there were only two women that I had really cared for. The first was my high school sweetie whom I mentioned in earlier writings and the second was Shirley. Shirley and I had corresponded frequently since I left Texas in January 1946. Doctor Vorrhis greased the skids for approval of my leave request.

(To be continued in the March-2012 issue)

Officers of the Lee Historical Society for the year

President – Stephen Cozzaglio – 413-243-3204 or scozzaglio@roadrunner.com
Vice- President – Gary W. Allen – 413-2543-2140 or garywallen@earthlink.net
Treasurer – Mal Eckert – 413-243-1797 or MalEckert@msn.com
Secretary – Bambi Johndrow – 413-243-2845 or disdeer62@netzero.net

Board of Directors of the Lee Historical Society

Mary Morrissey	Maria Hopkins	Peg Biron
Matt MacNayr	JoAnn Zarnoch	Marion Leach
Robert Kelly	Ethel Noonan	Annette Perilli
Dolores Eckert	Brenda Liebenow	

Society Historian – Charlotte Davis
Newsletter Editor – Mal Eckert

On page 345 of the book, *LEE, A CENTENNIAL and A CENTURY*, by Hyde it states that the State census for 1875 gives the value of the products of manufacture of Lee for that year as \$1,616,760.00, and the agricultural products as \$116,682.00. Of the population of the town, 864 were foreign-born, 105 were blacks, 8 were paupers, and 285 were engaged in agriculture and 687 in manufactures. The number of dwellings was 707, the number of families 858, and the number of voters was 821.

THE LAW OF THE GARBAGE TRUCK

One day I hopped in a taxi and we took off for the airport. We were driving in the right lane when suddenly a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded, and missed the other car by just inches! The driver of the other car whipped his head around and started yelling at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean, he was really friendly. So I asked, "Why did you just do that? That guy almost ruined your taxi and sent us to the hospital!"

This is when my taxi driver taught me what I now call "The Law of the Garbage Truck" He explained that many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it and sometimes they dump it on you.....but don't take it personally. Just smile and wave, wish them well, and move on. Don't take their garbage and spread it to other people at work, at home, or on the streets.

The bottom line is that successful people do not let garbage trucks take over their day. Life is too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so...love the people who treat you right and pray for the ones who don't. Life is ten percent what you make it and ninety percent how you take it. Have a garbage-free day!

The Lee Historical Society has the following items for sale. Any one of these would make a great gift for an out of town friend or relative.

- (1.) Picture Packet – Six, 8" x 10" colored prints of "Old Lee" for \$8.00 each or 3 packets for \$20.00, plus \$2.50 if they need to be shipped.**
- (2.) Refrigerator magnets – (approx. 2" x 3"). Three are of old street scenes from the early 1900's and one is an "Entering Lee" replica sign. They are \$3.00 each or buy all four for \$10.00 with no shipping charges.**
- (3.) Cookbook – "Boiling Water" – a 400 recipe cookbook, put together by the ladies of the society for \$10.00, plus \$3.50 if shipped.**
- (4.) "Historical Lee" – a tribute to the late Betty Dennis. A seventy-three page book containing the articles that Betty wrote between April 1971 and August 1977 that appeared in the Penny Saver. Price is \$8.00, plus \$2.50 if shipped.**
- (5.) "Third Strike"- a book, the last of three written by Ralph W. Smith that was published in 1984. It contains stories of people and tales of earlier days in Lee. The price is \$10.00, plus \$2.50 if shipped.**
- (6.) Commemorative Mugs;**
 - (a.) A 2008, #1 in our series, mug with a replica of Memorial Hall embossed on the side.**
 - (b.) A 2009, #2 in our series, mug with a replica of Central Fire Station embossed on the side.**
 - (c.) A 2010, #3 in our series, mug with a replica of the Lee Library embossed on the side.**
 - (d.) A 2011, #4 in our series, mug with a replica of the Hyde School embossed on the side.**

These mugs can be purchased for \$8.00 each plus \$3.00 shipping or two mugs for \$15.00 and \$5.50 shipping, three mugs for \$22.00 and \$6.50 shipping or all four mugs for \$25.00 and \$7.50 shipping.

Please send me (amount) _____ of (item/items) _____

Enclosed is my check for (no cash please) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

**Mail to:
Lee Historical Society
P. O. Box 170
Lee, MA 01238**

Please support our "Business Members" that support us.

The following is a list of the area businesses that are current members of the Lee Historical Society for 2012. If you would like your business listed here, fill out the membership application on the back page and send in the dues of \$25.00.

Bartini Roofing Company
290 Pleasant Street
Lee, MA 01238

Ben's Shop
68 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Charles Flint Antiques
52 Housatonic Street
Lenox, MA 01240

Karen Keenan Gifts & Home
151 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Quality Plus
260 Chestnut Street
Lee, MA 01238

Locker Room Sports Pub
232 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Frank Consolati Ins. Agency
71 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Paperdilly, Inc.
74 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Dresser Hull Company
60 Railroad Street
Lee, MA 01238

Robert M. Kelly, Paperhanging
South Prospect Street
Lee, MA 01238

Kelly Funeral Home
3 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

The Jonathon Foote 1778 House
1 East Street
Lee, MA 01238

Monk's Professional Barber Shop
91 Main Street
Lee, MA 01238

Lee Bank
75 Park Street
Lee, MA 01238

Devonfield Inn
85 Stockbridge Road
Lee, MA 01238

Hunter & Graziano P. C
10 Park Place
Lee, MA 01238

Terrace Hair Studio
135 Housatonic Street
Lee, MA 01238

Wilcox Plumbing & Heating
P. O. Box 561
Lee, MA 01238

How about becoming a member to help support our Society? Do you have an out of town friend or relative that might enjoy our newsletters? Sign him/her up as a member.

Student Membership - \$5.00

Senior Membership (one person over the age of 65) - \$5.00

Business Membership - \$25.00

Individual Membership (one person under the age of 65) - \$10.00

Family Membership (All members of one family living at home) - \$15.00

Please circle one: Student Senior Individual Family Business/Corporate

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Is this a renewal membership? _____

Would you be interested in serving on a committee? _____

Or helping out at one of our fundraisers? _____

Lee Historical Society
P. O. Box 170
Lee, MA 01238