The Barnard Bulletin
JUNE 2022 Vol. XXXVII No. 6

# A VERMONT WRITER

BY MARGARET EDWARDS

*This column is an offering of The Danforth Library in Barnard and a chance to introduce a Vermont writer who deserves wider renown.*

**Shirley Jackson** **1916 - 1965**

"Deserving wider renown"—that phrase applies to the prolific work of Shirley Jackson, because she dropped into relative obscurity after her death. Her fame during her lifetime was meteoric, a sudden burst and then an unremitting glare, all because of one short story among the very many that she wrote and published. Perhaps it's more accurate to say "The Lottery" itself and not its author became a celebrity upon its publication. Arguably the most famous of all 20th century American short stories, it came out in the June 26, 1948, issue of *The New Yorker.* The setting is a New England village, much like the Vermont village of North Bennington where the author lived. The opening is crisp and matter-of-fact:

> *The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took only about two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.*

The tale marches along at a steady pace, with a selection of deliberately stereotypical townsfolk who are involved in an annual town ritual being quickly sketched by the author and given names. What they are preparing to do is explained in the same upbeat tone. Readers learn that the lottery leads to a legal, sacrificial murder. The story's horrific end, which entails the stoning death of an ordinary, innocent woman, a wife and mother familiar to all who live in the small village, is presented without any authorial flinching or comment. The whole town participates. Even the victim's little boy gets to throw a few pebbles. The victim's screams are simply part of the ordinary, the acceptable, and the everyday.

Reader response to "The Lottery" was cataclysmic. In these times it's hard to imagine that this story, chilling and horrific as it is, caused such a profound disturbance. Outraged letters to the editor poured in, many of them hateful. *The New Yorker*, to that point, had never received such blowback—and that still remains true today.

Why the hatred? The story had obviously touched a nerve. It became a short story assigned throughout the American high school curricula. "The Lottery"'s title is universally known, even if no one can quite recall who wrote it. Its astonishing popularity is perhaps rooted in the date it appeared: 1948. That's when the American public was coming to terms with the fiendish legacy of the Holocaust. How could nice people living in picturesque villages turn on their neighbors and send them to be destroyed in gas chambers?

Shirley Jackson was born in San Francisco and grew up in comfortable but not wealthy circumstances in Burlingame, California. Her parents seemed conventional and traditional. Her mother was the stand-out—a cruel, vindictive, hyper-critical scold whose urge to torture her daughter, in person and through letters, never let up.

Jackson worked on creating fiction as a teenager and was determined even then to become a recognized writer. She married a fellow student, Stanley Edgar Hyman, whom she met at Syracuse University; together they had four children. When he became a professor at Bennington College, and they moved into a capacious old house in North Bennington, Vermont, Jackson became what she grew to detest: a "faculty wife."

Her husband at first had encouraged her creativity, but came to insist that his own scholarly labors were primary and was dismissive of her increasingly lucrative career, yet controlling of the money she made. He insisted on an "open marriage"—for himself, but not for her. Much of Jackson's writing stems from the age-old tension between being a busy housewife and mother while trying to find the time and energy to write. But this theme had its grim underside; her heroines were

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often trapped in agonizing circumstances from which there was no escape.

Critic Zoe Heller gives a succinct summary: "Jackson's adult life was ostensibly a rebellion against her mother and her mother's [traditional] values. She became a writer; she grew fat; she married a Jewish intellectual… and ran a bohemian household in which she dyed the mashed potatoes green when she felt like it. But she never quite shook [her mother's] grip, or ceased to be tormented by her disapproval. And in her marriage … she found a person with whom to replicate the abusive relationship."

In 1959, eleven years after "The Lottery" appeared—or *erupted*—Jackson published a well-received novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. It is still regarded as a masterpiece, one of the finest "haunted house" fictions. In her lifetime, she would produce six novels, two memoirs, and over two hundred short stories. Her prolific output—plus film options on her various fictions—earned her considerable money, but literary esteem eluded her.

Evaluating why Jackson's literary star never rose higher, Zoe Heller writes: "Here's how not to be taken seriously as a woman writer: Use demons and ghosts and other gothic paraphernalia in your fiction. Describe yourself publicly as 'a practicing amateur witch' and boast about the hexes you have placed on prominent publishers. Contribute comic essays to women's magazines about your hectic life as a housewife and mother."

Shirley Jackson, guilty of all these *faux pas*, "was largely dismissed as a talented purveyor of high-toned horror stories," Heller concludes. " 'Virginia Werewoolf,' as one critic put it." And the reputation stuck. There have been efforts to revive serious interest in Jackson's work, but these efforts have not been as effective as her fans would wish.

An examination of her often-anthologized story "Charles"** may hint why Jackson's work is overlooked or dismissed as skillful but shallow. It opens, as most of her stories do, with a clear picture of a traditional domestic scene—nothing amiss:

> *The day my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt; I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.*
>
> *He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his cap on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody here?"*

When his mother asks him how his day went, Laurie is dismissive. He gives a curt answer to his father's similar question. But then he says, "The teacher spanked a boy, though"—and that gets his parents' full attention. They are told the naughty boy's name is Charles. The next day comes another report:

> *Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher." "Good heavens," I said, mindful of the Lord's name, "I suppose he got spanked again?" "He sure did," Laurie said.*

The narrative focuses on reports of the bad behavior of Charles, but at every turn the account is being enlivened by Laurie's antics: spilling his baby sister's milk, insolently teasing his very proper dad, stealing a cookie, and leaving the table without permission. The mother is worried:

> *"All this toughness, and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence." "It'll be all right," my husband said reassuringly. "Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later."*

As the week progresses, Laurie reports how Charles's misbehavior escalates: injuring a little girl at recess, pounding his feet on the floor very loudly during storytime, throwing chalk. No punishment seems to subdue him.

The parents try to learn the last name of Charles, to place him as a child belonging to some family they know. But Laurie has no idea. He continues to report how the bad boy "kicked the teacher's friend" who had been invited to address the class.

The parents are alarmed. Yet because the baby has a cold, the mother can't go to the first Parent-Teacher meeting. They regret not being able to learn who Charles is.

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> *Charles [became] an institution in our family; the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled telephone, ashtray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, "Looks like Charles."*

Then the tide seems to turn as Laurie comes home to tell them:

> *"Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple." "What?" I said, and my husband added warily, "You mean Charles?" "Charles," Laurie said. "He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper."*

When finally the narrator/mother goes to a P.T.A. meeting, as eager as her husband is to learn the identity of Charles's mother, she doesn't see any woman who looks "haggard enough" and no woman stands up to apologize for her son's transgressions. As the meeting breaks up and everyone stays for refreshments, Laurie's mother decides to have a talk with her son's teacher.

> *We maneuvered up to one another cautiously, and smiled. "I've been so anxious to meet you," I said. "I'm Laurie's mother."*
>
> *"We're all so interested in Laurie," she said.*
>
> *"Well, he certainly likes [school]," I said. "He talks about it all the time."*
>
> *"We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so," she said primly, "but now he's a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course."*
>
> *"Laurie usually adjusts very quickly," I said. "I suppose this time it's Charles's influence."*
>
> *"Charles?"*
>
> *"Yes," I said, laughing, "you must have your hands full… with Charles."*
>
> *"Charles?" she said. "We don't have any Charles in the [class]."*

End of story.

If you guessed this ending in the earlier paragraphs, the story falls a bit flat. It needs its punch line, as a joke needs the same. Jackson's story has the most ancient narrative structure. In essence its development is based on three motifs. Consider the Three Pigs, recalling that the first house is made of straw that the bad wolf easily blows down; the second house, made of twigs, is more resistant, but with effort the wolf demolishes it; the third house, of brick, thwarts him until he thinks to use the chimney. But he falls down the chimney into a boiling pot. For another example, you can reconstruct the tale of Goldilocks the same way.

The formulaic quality of a story like "Charles" keeps it from opening out into a more suggestive and interesting plot. Its effect relies too heavily on a final surprise, and not enough on an imaginative insight. Jackson's firm expertise as a storyteller is a guarantee that she will entertain us. But can she move us? Or enlighten us? In "The Lottery" she gave her many readers a nasty surprise. In that story she famously managed to illustrate what Hannah Arendt, a more intellectual philosopher of the day, had described as "the banality of evil."

Is it fair to blame Shirley Jackson for her clever mastery of two genres? She was an expert at horror fiction and equally adept at turning household domesticity into dramatic narrative. She sold a lot of stories to the ladies' magazines. One of her stories, and just one, struck literary gold and summarized for millions the 20th century's central catastrophe. Shouldn't that be enough? It's possible to think of Jackson's sudden death of heart failure at the age of 48 as the perfect quick exit after a blazing triumph.

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** The story "Charles" appears in *Shirley Jackson: Novels and Stories* (The Library of America, 2010), pages 73–77. This book is currently on order for The Danforth Library. "Charles" originally appeared in *Mademoiselle* (July 1948). The copyrights to Jackson's stories were renewed in 1976 by her four children: Laurence Hyman, Barry Hyman, Sarah Webster, and Joanne Schnurer.

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## MT. TOM FARMERS MARKET

### Reopens On Saturday May 21

We will be located at the **Suicide Six parking lot in South Pomfret**. We will operate every Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm. Woodstock Resorts has generously donated the new location. Fifteen of the vendors from last year will be returning.

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## WCSU SCHOOL CALENDAR

May 30, Memorial Day (school closed)
June 10, High School Graduation WUHS Graduation
June 16, Last student day includes 5 snow days
June 17 Teacher In-Service Day (No Classes)

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## MOON LIGHTING FARM CSA SHARES

Moonlighting Farm is offering market shares this year! These shares will work like credit for all vegetables at the Barnard townhall market stand or any other farmers markets the farm participate in.

You can purchase a share in any amount that works for you and you will get 10% additional credit (a $200 share will purchase $220 of produce). You can also arrange a pickup during the week if you can't make it to the market. Contact moonlightingfarm@gmail.com

## GLAD RAGS SALES

### May 21 and May 22, 2022

The next Glad Rags Sales will be on Saturday, May 21 from 9:00am to 3:00pm, and Sunday May 22, 2022 from 10:00am to 1:00pm.

All prices on Sunday will be marked down to 1/2 of Saturdays prices. The sales are to be held at the Masonic Lodge in Woodstock, VT.

Please be flexible, we may or may not limit the number of shoppers in the building, and we may or may not have a dressing room available.

Masks will be required inside the building.

For updates please join our Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/145529065206/

The Glad Rags Sale Association, Inc. supports agencies that provide health and welfare services to the greater Woodstock Community. Thank you for participating in the Glad Rags Sales.

Check our website at https://www.gladrags.org/

## LOCAL CRYPTOGRAM

A cryptogram is a code in which one letter is substituted for another. For example, the word "Church" could be written BWMSBW. The letter B would be the letter C and would be so throughout the entire message. In this message B = O. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

"BJ NUQD EHJT SYA NUT KHSD QJ VA CYXSTJ YXT YFVBDN YD TJPUYJNQJC YD NUT BGTJ LFBZTXD. NUQJCD QJ KHS KXQJC, QJ NUT UTYN BL Y EHJT JBBJNQST, NUT XTPBFFTPNQBJ BL NUT FBMTFQTDN SYAD BL NUT ATYX-NUBDT SYAD BL VYA ZUTJ YFF QD DHCCTDNTS, JBNUQJC ATN LHFLQFFTS."

-LXYJPQD IQJC

## TRANSFER STATION SUMMER HOURS

Beginning May 25, in addition to the normal Saturday hours, the Transfer Station will be open Wednesdays, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM through September.

## NEWS FROM BARNARTS

### Five Women Wearing The Same Dress

Written by Alan Ball and directed by Jill Clough

Performances will be outdoors at Feast & Field in Barnard, June 24 - July 3.

### BarnArts Thursday Night Music Series 2022

Opens Thursday, May 26th, in partnership with our friends at Feast & Field!

Pete Sutherland and Oliver Scanlon of Pete's Posse perform on Open Night with artists from Young Tradition Vermont!

May 26: Pete Sutherland and Oliver Scanlon with YTV Youth Commission, folk/roots
June 2: Rachel Clemente, Celtic
June 9: Noah y Maurizio's Acoustic Nomads, newgrass
June 16: Mikahely, music from Madagascar
June 23: Low Lily, folk
June 30: Mal Maiz, cumbia
July 7: Bow Thayer and Krishna Guthrie, folk/rock/blues
July 14: E.T.E, Quebecois
July 21: Ben Krakauer, bluegrass/jazz/new acoustic
July 28: Dobet Gnahoré, Côte D'Ivoire, Dance
August 4: Strangled Darlings, indie-folk
August 11: Zili Misik, New World Soul
August 18: Myra Flynn, indie-soul
August 25: Mister Chris & Friends, kids music & music for all ages
September 1: TBA
September 8: Wright, Burds and Park
September 15: Puuluup, Estonian Zombie-folk
September 22: The Beecharmers, folk/Americana
September 29: DJ Dance Party

Full Feast & Field event info coming soon!

### Race Around The Lake

Will be held in accordance with any pending State rules regarding such events. The 5K and 10K races will take place on Sunday, May 22, 2022, at Silver Lake State Park, at 250 North Road, Barnard. See the Race Information Page for more information.

## THE RETURN OF BABE RUTH BASEBALL

Babe Ruth Baseball based in Woodstock and isa competitive baseball experience for players age 13-15(age on May 1st). It is part of Vermont Division 4 which runs from Dresden (Hanover) to Bellows Falls. Players from any town in our School District, as well as Hartland, Hartford, and Windsor, can participate. More information can be found at www.wildcatsbaseball.net

## BARNARD VILLAGE SIGN DESIGN CONTEST

Show your love for Barnard by helping to create new "Welcome to Barnard Village" signs that will welcome drivers as they are enter our beautiful village – and let them know that they should slow down and enjoy it! The winner of our design contest will have their design showcased at four strategic entry points to Barnard village.

As an outgrowth of the recent study regarding traffic patterns in our busy "downtown" area, a group of citizens has been working with the Selectboard and Planning Commission to look specifically at ways to reduce speeding and improve pedestrian safety near the store and lakeside area. Our solar-powered speed limit signs are one result, and some increased sheriff presence. We hope that these signs marking our village perimeter will help as well.

We want to project a sense that we care about our special village, that it's a place to slow down and enjoy the beautiful views. The signs will make people aware that they are entering a village area with varied land uses and pedestrian and bicycle activity. Many other surrounding villages have these signs and we think Barnard should, too!

Your idea for an illustration should be simple, clear, and visible from a distance. The design could be abstract or realistic or a logo. The illustration will be approximately 12 to 15 inches, possibly a circle or an oval.

Our group will review the submissions and submit our recommendation to the Selectboard for approval. Depending on our success in fundraising, the signs could be installed by late summer.

If you think that you have just the right concept for the sign, prepare a design on paper and submit to the Town Hall, in care of Rob Ramrath by May 25.

Please make sure that you include your contact information with the submittal.

Town Hall address is P.O. Box 274, Barnard, Vt. 05031 and Town Hall is located at 115 North road.

After the design is selected, we will need to secure funding for the creation of the signs and final approval from the state and town.

We are excited about highlighting our village and look forward to creative submissions from the Barnard community!

Jim Clarke , Beth Finlayson, Kate Reeves, Ellen Miles, Anne Marie Delaney, Melanie Norton and Pat Mattson

## VILLAGE-WIDE YARD SALE

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 8:00-3:00

East Barnard Community Hall, 5026 Broad Brook Road, and area homes. Maps available at Hall. Info: 763-8627

## HAPPENING AT ARTISTREE

Artistree Community Players presents **A... My Name is Alice** with an all-local cast that includes Laine Gillespie of Enfield, NH, Laurie Marshall of Woodstock, VT, Marisa Valent of Rutland, VT, Killian White of Bethel, VT and Beata Randall of Hanover, NH. Yael Taylor of Woodstock, VT serves as Stage Manager for the production. Co-directed by the fabulous Lanni Luce West along with our own Artistic Director Josh D. Smith

A…My Name is Alice is an award-winning breakthrough musical comedy revue starring five fabulous Upper Valley women performers and accompanied by a great jazz combo. An exuberant musical revue… sophisticated, bawdy, funny and insightful. An hysterically funny, song-filled girl's night out you do not want to miss!

At the Grange Theatre

Friday, June 3, 2022 - 07:30 pm
Saturday, June 4, 2022 - 07:30 pm
Sunday, June 5, 2022 - 02:00 pm
Thursday, June 9, 2022 - 07:30 pm
Friday, June 10, 2022 - 07:30 pm
Saturday, June 11, 2022 - 07:30 pm
Sunday, June 12, 2022 - 02:00 pm

Ticket information can be found here.

Jenni & the Jazz Junketeers Outdoor Concert - Saturday, June 18th At 5:30pm. Join us for an outdoor concert with Jenni & the Jazz Junketeers in a special performance celebrating some of the most beloved jazz and blues songs. Tunes by Ruth Brown, Solomon Burke, Nat King Cole, Duffy, Ella Fitzgerald, Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin, Ma Gertrude Rainey, Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Wonder, and others. $20 advance ticket purchase - $25 at-the-gate.

Ticket information can be found here.

THE PLANNING COMMISSION meets on the Monday prior to the first Wednesday of every month at 7 PM in the Town Office.

BARNARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION meets the second Monday of the month, 7:00pm, Town Hall.

BEES MEETINGS are held at 6:30pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the library at the school.

DANFORTH LIBRARY HOURS: Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to Noon. ECFiber Wi-Fi access available .

SELECTBOARD meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at the Town offices at 7:00pm.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR, Rob Ramrath, selectboard@barnardvt.us, 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR, Rob Ramrath, zoning@barnardvt.us, 234-2911 x 2, Cell 603-762-5280. By phone at any time, in person by appointment.

TOWN CLERK office hours are Monday & Tuesday, 8:00am-3:30pm. Public access is restricted. Call 234-9211 for an appointment.

THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD meets the third Thursday of the month at 7:00pm at the Barnard Town Hall as necessary.

THE BARNARD ENERGY COMMITTEE meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00pm at the Town Hall

YOGA CLASSES offered at Danforth Library, Mondays 9:00am - 10:30am with Amanda Anderson. Classes are by donation; for more information contact Amanda@innerliftyoga.com. Yoga Classes are also offered on Thursdays from 9-10:30 with Beth Umba. Contact Beth at: bethumba@gmail.com.

BARNARD GENERAL STORE, Monday-Saturday: 7am-7pm, Sundays: 8am-6pm.
https://www.facebook.com/barnardgeneralstore

BARNARD LISTSERV: to subscribe please send an email to: barnard-subscribe@lists.vitalcommunities.org

RECYCLING Click here for Hours and Regulations

THE BARNARD INN is running a "Feeding Neighbors & Sustaining Community" campaign. Purchase an e-Gift Card and in turn the chefs will feed neighbors. Whole chicken dinners (serves 4-6) and individual sized meals to help feed Vermonters in need. Thank you and please stay safe. E-Gift Cards are available at www.barnardinn.com.

ECFIBER Governing Board meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm in 012 Oakes Hall, Vermont Law School. More information at https://www.ecfiber.net/

HISTORICAL SOCIETY Programs to be announced. Questions? Email: historicalbarnard1761@gmail.com

# DANFORTH LIBRARY NEWS

**Open Hours:** Wed 3:00-5:00 p.m.;
Sat 10:00 a.m. to Noon

**The Holway Community Room has reopened**. To reserve, contact Ellen Miles: 802-279-7227 or email ellenmiles.vt@gmail.com.

**New Books**

**Memoirs:**

**For the Children. Local author, Geza Tatrallyay**, tells the story of his family's escape from Hungary and their immigration to Canada in 1956 when he was seven years old. Given the devastating war in Ukraine today, this is a timely reminder of the human costs of war and aggression, and the bravery shown by those who risk everything to live free.

**In Love, Amy Bloom.** On love and loss and painful decisions.

**Aurelia, Aurelia, Kathryn Davis.** On life's transitions.

**Emma Goldman (1869-1940). Living My Life.** The abridged Penguin Classic Edition (2006). Autobiography of a political activist and founder of the journal *Mother Earth.*

**Fiction:**

**Ann Tylor. French Braid** (Fiction) A novel about family life.

**Jacquelin Winspear. A Sunlit Weapon.** #17 in the Maisie Dobbs series. Takes place in 1942.

**Richard Osman. The Man Who Died Twice.** Book #2 of a murder mystery trilogy – soon to be a Steven Spielberg movie. *(Book #1, The Thursday Murder Club, is also available. Book #3 is forthcoming).*

**Children's Picture Books:**

**Firsts and Lasts: The Changing Seasons,** from Vermont author Leda Schubert

**A classic *Winnie the Pooh* from A.A. Milne**: WHEN WE WERE VERY YOUNG (1924)

***The Charles B. Danforth Library***
*Phone: 802-234-9408.*
*Email: charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com*

CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

"On this June day the buds in my garden are almost as enchanting as the open flowers. Things in bud bring, in the heat of a June noontide, the recollection of the loveliest days of the year - those days of May when all is suggested, nothing yet fulfilled."

- Francis King