The Barnard Bulletin

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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.

Lillian Hatch Marcotte 1916 – 2012

Lillian Marcotte in her greenhouse, 2004

What makes a good memoir? What is essential to a memoir that absorbs the attention of a reader unacquainted with the memoirist? Almost anyone would be inclined to value an autobiography penned by a great-grandfather or great-grandmother, no matter how fragmented, superficial or cliché-ridden such a narrative might be. But for a writer to create a personal account that engages the attention of a stranger is a challenge.

Read this opening of a self-published memoir created in Hartland, Vermont, in 1989, by a woman who never went to college (but was an avid reader all her life) and rarely ventured beyond her acres at the crest of Town Farm Hill Road:

> *I have found much of interest that was good in the way our ancestors lived. I am writing this so that this way of life, that is gone forever, will not be forgotten. I would like to share this.*
>
> *After Wendell and I were married, we bought a piece of land from my father's farm—from the land my grandmother bought from Wendell's father. We built a home up here on the hill where we look down across the valley; it is a place where we are still left much to ourselves. I had learned I wanted to be on the farm. We grew up living at a slower pace, with horses, and much alone, but the cup was not bitter.*
>
> *We have worked hard since we were young at whatever needed doing, but it was not distasteful to us. We loved the land. In the quietness we could think.*

Such plain-spoken, majestic prose is full of authority. Writers can endeavor all their lives to acquire such a voice and never come close. But effortlessly Lillian Marcotte, in her early seventies, sat at her desk and wrote down her story, trusting her own words.

Any autobiography has to cover certain facts—one's ancestry, parentage, birth, early memories, education, siblings and so on. To wrestle these bare facts into vivid reality for a reader will test a writer's powers of description. The writer must trust that memory will deliver the details. People often forget what hasn't been stamped into their minds by emotion. Emotion is the key to memory. Here Lillian Marcotte recalls her Grandmother Hatch's flowers:

> *In her partly shaded, west bedroom window she had an asparagus fern planted in an old tin dipper. Several begonias were in the living room. Outdoors between the pantry and the woodshed she had both climbing and dwarf nasturtiums. The west end of the pantry had a nice row of foxgloves. A woodvine climbed up to the roof on the north end of the house and cinnamon roses bloomed faithfully every June… Each side of the woodshed steps was wire and sweet peas filling the air with fragrance. How I loved those! In fact, I loved them all.*

Because young Lillian *loved* the flowers, "loved them all," she easily remembered them decades later and could write vividly about her grandmother's home.

Lillian in her greenhouse, 2004

To write a fascinating memoir like Lillian's *Looking Back While Going Ahead* does not require an unusual life—it requires impeccable observation and a conviction that events or details often dismissed as everyday or ordinary are precious. In a hard-working Vermont childhood lived on a subsistence farm, a young girl being taught to milk cows wasn't uncommon.

Cont. next page - Marcotte

Marcotte - Cont. from previous page

> *I learned to milk at five years old. I was fascinated watching my father milk. The quiet time with the steady streams of milk going into the pail, I loved. So I teased my parents to learn, and my parents, knowing the time to teach a child is when he is ready to learn, got me a small pail, a stool, and seated me by an old white Ayrshire cow. Showing me a little, I soon "got the hang of it" and often milked this faithful cow that rarely moved.*

As Lillian grew up and her help with the milking was needed, she sat beside many more difficult cows and was occasionally kicked "and got black and blue shins (but not very often)." She adjusted:

> *...I have had cows that will move their rear-ends along sideways as far as they can, a little at a time, so you have to get up and move the stool to keep up with them. I often wondered if a stool with castors wouldn't be good, then I could move along without getting up!*
>
> *...While I am milking, to keep the cow's tail from switching, I try to hold the tail between the milk pail and my knee in a firm grip. But by continuously pulling she may get the tail free. If she does, she will most certainly switch full force across my face, or maybe it will be wrapped around my neck—a tail that may be dripping wet, not with water...*

Having that sense of the comic side of life and a flair for getting a reader to laugh are strengths in Lillian's memoir. Any long account benefits from the writer's using a variety of tones—being by turns elegiac, speculative, suspenseful, tragic, funny, even silly. Lillian also availed herself of a precious resource; she had in her possession old family letters and diaries which she quoted to good effect. A vivid memoir is capacious enough to incorporate such voices from the past, as well as snatches of poetry and favorite recipes.

Lillian cooking with Laura Beth Wood (L) and Ada Wetmore (R)

An astute memoir writer will keenly observe not only exterior details, but interior states of feeling. To create a self-portrait that is accurate and credible takes an extraordinary psychological detachment. Here Lillian makes a reader aware of how a persistent habit of mind is formed early:

> *The outdoors always fascinated me. When I was too small to go to school I would spend hours down by the brook watching and listening to the water go slowly over the rocks and down stream. In a big water pool I sometimes saw fish. In the woodsy area I'd watch striders skip around on top of the water. They looked like spiders to me, but I loved to watch them as they always stayed on top. I'd stand on a mossy rock quite a while watching the clear water go around my bare feet. How good it felt! ...Alone in this blissful atmosphere I would forget my fears and worries and rest in peace for a while. I liked being alone and felt safe.*

Perhaps the most important characteristic of a compelling memoir will be its honesty. When addressing the past, the writer cannot limit the account to only the most pleasant, most humorous anecdotes, nor give only the sunniest interpretations of the motives of others, nor offer only reverent portraits of family members. A good memoir is not a giant "Christmas letter"—all high achievements and happy days. A memoir worth reading will struggle with the darker and more sinister aspects of the writer's life.

Lillian Marcotte grappled with deep anxiety from an early age. In the quotation just cited, a careful reader will have noticed that being alone outdoors was where Lillian felt "safe." ("I would forget my fears and worries.") Yet at that particular time of her life, she was remarkably young—"too small" to go to school. The accomplished memoirist mustn't shrink from speculating how such persistent worries and fears originated. A remarkable part of this author's memoir is its account of an early trauma that left an indelible mark:

> *These early years of my life were not all pleasure. There were many things I feared... My father, tho' a very good man, was also a very strict parent. I minded him immediately with never a question. I didn't dare ask or talk back.*
>
> *One sunny day I got what they called a "strappin' "—that is, I was beaten with a piece of harness. I was quite young, I'd say about four years old. It is one of the first things I remember, so maybe I was only three. We had just eaten dinner in the dining room. My father was fooling with me and I was standing up in the rocking chair. He told me to be careful the chair didn't rock back and break a window, but he didn't stop fooling with me, so I kept on until, alas, the chair rocked back and broke a window. I was taken out and the kitchen door shut..."*

The "strappin' " happened only that once. "But this once left me full of fears. I think if he had not been fooling with me, it would not have seemed so bad. But he was." Her distress felt overwhelming, and she raced outside where she cried and cried, while "over and over" she repeated to herself, "If only I had never been born!" The mature memoirist, however, is forgiving ("my father was

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a good man. Mostly he was very good to us."), but the "dreadful effect" this incident had on her life is illustrated in many later incidents that she recounts.

> *Going to high school was the hardest part of the Depression for me. I know how it feels to be made fun of because you don't have good clothes. My folks were not to blame. They just didn't have any money for clothes… This was the age of "bloomers": big, baggy, full bloomers that came down to just above the knees. Even these were made from the ever-plentiful grain sacks… Socks were darned and darned some more…No matter how we were dressed my fears kept me from complaining. I hated being yelled at, and I certainly didn't want another lickin'.*

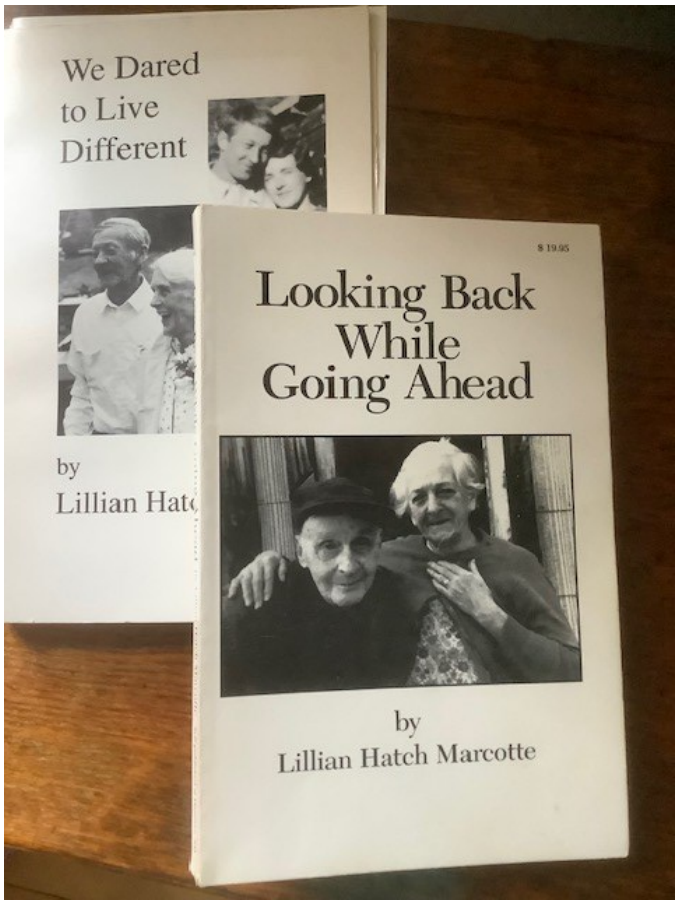
Lillian Marcotte was instrumental in preserving Hartland's Eshqua Bog

In a satisfying memoir, the narrative arc usually moves from imbalance to equilibrium, and from hardship to triumph. How an author will achieve a solid moment where the forward-moving narrative can halt is always interesting to observe. There is a knack to creating a finale with no loose ends that isn't a pat wrap-up, forced and unconvincing. Lillian Marcotte prepares the reader for her last page by inserting early on some observations such as this:

> *The trials of life were many, but I doubt if we would ever have appreciated the simple things in life if it hadn't been for the hardships we experienced. The poverty made us grateful for what we did have. We knew the difference between necessities and luxuries.*

The memoir concludes by introducing a remarkably modern element. The author, with her husband, found "a good psychiatrist that not only helped [me] but became our friend…He told me I had paid a high price… Gradually life became happier for me. But the fears were an important part of my life; without them I would never have practiced faith to live every day, one day at a time, as I was forced to do."

A reader can easily imagine that the very act of writing such a memoir helped bring about a profound catharsis. The author's healing seems assured in her final sentence: "So life goes on and we are still looking farther and farther back while going ahead."



The two memoirs – all photos by Margaret Edwards

Lillian Marcotte also wrote another memoir, a volume entitled *We Dared to Live Different*, self-published in 1994. The title's past tense suggests what had happened: in 1988 her beloved husband, Wendell, died. Her life with him is recounted in this second book: building their home by themselves, birthing and bringing up their two children, raising turkeys and chickens for market, making and selling maple syrup and butter. Lillian also self-published a nature journal, *Here Above the Valley*, as well as two children's books. Over a score of years, numerous short articles that she wrote appeared in farm periodicals.

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Lillian Marcotte, laughing -- 2004

Into her eighties and nineties, Lillian's spirit was mostly fun-loving. She had never learned to drive a car but was never isolated. She baked or cooked something delicious every day. She fed birds and took long nature walks and worked in her garden and wrote her manuscripts. Until the end of her life, she lived alone in her same small house "above the valley"—where her nearby children, grandchildren and her great-grandson, along with her many friends, often visited.

The Danforth Library of Barnard, Vermont, owns both privately published volumes of Lillian Marcotte's memoirs: *Looking Back While Going Ahead* and *They Dared to Live Different*. However, these books were printed in paperback editions only and their bindings are weak. As a consequence, they are shelved with other rare books in the library's office, and they do not circulate. They can be read by special permission only in the library itself.

NEWS FROM BARNARTS

The Addams Family

Performance dates: Oct 21-30, Barnard Town Hall

BarnArts Thursday Night Music Series 2022

Thursday evenings, in partnership with our friends at Feast & Field!

August 25: Mister Chris & Friends, kids music
September 1: Karan Casey, Irish folk
September 8: Mountain Dog, fiddle tunes with attitude
September 15: Puuluup, Estonian Zombie-folk
September 22: The Beecharmers, roots Americana
September 29: DJ Dance Party

Gates open at 5:30, music 6-8:30

Locally sourced food and drink from The Feast and Field Farmers

Reservations are requested but walk-ins are welcome

Suggested entry: $5-$20/per person

No one is turned away for lack of funds

SELECTMEN'S NEWS

With respect to which vehicles can access Class Four Roads, in general the following situation exists.

Vermont allows any Registered Highway Vehicle to drive on a Class Four road, unless the Selectmen, or the State, restrict access to a Class Four road due to a safety issue, or if the use of the road would cause roadbed deterioration. If a road is not closed by the Municipality or the State, State Registered motorcycles, pickup trucks, or SUVs, may use a Class Four road.

ATVs are not allowed to use public roads. The Selectmen have the option to allow ATVs to use portions of Class One, Two, Three, or Four roads in their Town. Unless access to a road is explicitly granted by the Selectboard, or the State, ATVs are not allowed on any Public Roads. This is the reason that ATV clubs seek permission from the Selectmen to use particular public roads in Barnard.

On to Property Taxes. The Selectboard has set the 2022 Tax Rate needed to cover the 2022 municipal budget. This years Municipal tax rate is slightly higher than last years, primarily due to the necessity to spend more on the Highway Budget. The tax rates for this year and last year are listed on the last page. It should be noted that the State Education Tax Rates were down with respect to last year, but they are still more than three times the Municipal Tax Rate.

At the Selectmen's meeting of August 17, the Board approved a revised funding request policy that relates to funding that is part of Barnard's General Fund budget, that is approved at Town Meeting. For information on how to request Town Funding visit the Barnard Website or ask the Town Clerk for a copy of the Social Service Appropriation Policy for the Town of Barnard

The Selectmen have hired Nick Stone to assist Delmer Balch and Tarkin Clark in maintaining the Town roads. The Board is still looking for a Road Forman in hopes of bringing the Road Crew back to full strength.

Remember that BarnardVt.us is the Town's administrative website. Please check the site for Minutes, Warnings and announcements. Let us know if you think something should be added to the site that is of public interest or concern.

- Richard Lancaster, Editor and Selectman

DANFORTH LIBRARY NEWS

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

High-Speed Wi-Fi

FREE PASSES!

With summer is drawing to a close, be sure to check out one of our FREE PASSES while you can!

We have one pass for entry into any of the state park's day-use areas, one for Vermont's historic sites (both cover a carload of people!), and another for discounted entry to Burlington's Echo Center. Sign out a pass during open hours, or reach out if the hours don't work for you.

We would love to see more families take advantage of these free day passes.

First-come, first-served.

NEW HOURS!!

Stop in to your Danforth Library to welcome our returning volunteer, Kassie Tibbott. She'll be staffing the library on Mondays between 3-5. We're glad to have her back, and so happy to be able to offer more hours.

Have you heard about a new book you're dying to read?

Let us know! We love suggestions from our patrons.

COMMUNITY SPACE!

Our clean, bright community room is available for your group or class.

Start a reading group! A baby play group! Children's storytime! Movie club!

NO RENTAL CHARGE!

To book the Holway room, contact Ellen Miles 802-279-7227, ellenmiles.vt@gmail.com

OUR HOURS:

Mon and Wed 3-5 p.m. & Sat. 10 a.m. – Noon*

High-speed wi-fi available inside and in parking lot

Charles B. Danforth Library
P.O. Box 204, Barnard, VT 05031

Phone: 802-234-9408
Email: charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com

Trustees: Berna Donlon, Margaret Edwards, Judy Maynes, Susan McNulty, Ellen Miles

*PS Want to see the library open for more hours? We run on volunteer power, and we'd love to have your help. Call us to volunteer your time.

The Barnard Bulletin is published around the twentieth of each month. On the web at BarnardBulletin.news. Send mail to PO Box 161, Barnard VT 05031-0161, Email Info@BarnardBulletin.Info or call 802-457-1792

IT IS TIME FOR THE ZACK'S PLACE HELICOPTER GOLF BALL DROP!

Only 500 chances to win 1st place prize money of $5000, 2nd Place $2000, 3rd Place $500 and 10-4th place winners of $100

Zack's Place is once again selling golf balls for the Helicopter Golf Ball Drop on September 8th 2022! Golf Balls are $50.00 each and we have a limit of 500. For the past 3 years we have sold out of balls, so don't delay go online and order now : Purchase your golf ball here.

How the Helicopter Golf Ball drop works, is on September 8th between 5:30P and 6P, a Helicopter is going to hover over the Woodstock Country Club and drop 500 balls. The ball that is closest to the hole wins $5000, 2nd place is $2000 and third place $500.00 and 4th place has 10 winners at $100 each. You can buy the balls online.

If this event is successful it will raise $17,000 of much needed funds for Zack's Place. Zack's Place and we hope you will join in supporting Zack's Place by purchasing a Golf Ball.....And you could possibly win!!!

To buy a golf ball go to: http://www.zacksplacevt.org/golf-ball-drop.php

Visit Zack's Place or to register a team or sponsor. go to: http://www.zacksplacevt.org/golf_tournament.php

Have a Safe and Enjoyable Labor Day Weekend

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 N = S. The solution is found by trial and error. The CRYPTOGRAM answer is on the last page.

"IEO JHCTPZO EPM VOOK

CHMTKZ TIM JGOMEKOMM

IEGHQZE IEO FHKIE HJ PQZQMI,

PKB EOGO PKB IEOGO P

WOCCHY COPJ MEHYM TIMOCJ

CTNO IEO JTGMI ZGPW EPTG

PFTBMI IEO CHXNM HJ P

VOPQIW YEH EPM MOOK HKO

MOPMHK IHH FPKW."

-HCTUOG YOKBOCC EHCFOM

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: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:00 p.m., Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to Noon. ECFiber Wi-Fi. Contact us: phone: 802-234-9408. Email: charlesdanforthlibrary@gmail.com.

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

EAST BARNARD CHURCH SUMMER CALENDAR

SUNDAYS AT 10:00 AM

August 28: Closing Summer Service with Rev. Jane Huber

Every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.

"The Traveling Front Porch," Music and Words into the Twilight, with Randy Leavitt and guests

The Church is always open to the community. Feel free to enter at any time and use the space for quiet contemplation, meditation, and music.

BARNARD 2022 TAX RATES

Town Municipal	State Homestead	State Non-Homestead
0.5032	1.7043	1.6487

LAST YEAR'S (2021) TAX RATES

Town Municipal	State Homestead	State Non-Homestead
0.4851	1.7326	1.7285

Tax billing and payment information can be found at https://barnardvt.us/taxes. The first Property Tax Payment for 2022 is due September 7, 2022.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE BARNARD STREET DANCE

We are planning a Street Dance for Saturday, Aug 27th at the Barnard Town Hall. We need volunteers.

Be part of bringing back this great, community-building tradition in Barnard. Join the committee or just volunteer at the event.

Being on a local organizing committee is a great way to get to know your neighbors and become more involved in the community. We need a team to make the event run smoothly, involve lots of town groups and make for a fun day for everyone!

Please contact: Linda Treash
ltreash@hotmail.com. 802-558-5354

MT. TOM FARMERS MARKET

Is open every Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm at the Suicide Six parking lot in South Pomfret.. Woodstock Resorts has generously donated the new location.

CRYPTOGRAM ANSWER

"The foliage has been losing its freshness through the month of August, and here and there a yellow leaf shows itself like the first gray hair amidst the locks of a beauty who has seen one season too many."

- Oliver Wendell Holmes