The politics of calling off school
by Chris Carraway
It's local wisdom that if you don't like the weather, then you are, you ought to Danville and find it different. And weather really can cause drastically varying conditions on the town's 100-plus miles of roads.
If the fluky weather in this hill town which lay as at the bottom last week of Danville's odd pattern of keeping school, on Monday and Tuesday, the two Danville schools were among only a few in the state to be open. On Wednesday, when many other schools were open, Danville closed at 1:00 p.m. On Thursday, Danville joined the majority and closed, after buses had already left on their morning routes.
But Friday was the real puzzler. Danville was perhaps the only school in the state in that close day that, according to Robert Congdon, superintendent's liaison with the School Department of Education, "what was going on, several parents and teachers wondered?" Danville residents were about at a Thursday night meeting, but did not formally discuss the situation, according to Robert Congdon, Robert Field. Other principals also wondered, as the week's news of whose school opened and whose school closed continued.
Who decided?
Daville Principal Rodger Boyd would not discuss the closing pattern with The Independent, referring a call to the Daville School Board. "Mr. Boyd is probably the scapegoat for us," said Board Chairman Robert Swart's said.
It turns out Boyd, contrary to more in the watch, is not solely responsible for keeping or closing school. The reason is:
See Closing Page 11

Danny Gore: a true Vermonter
by Jim Kenyon
In a state that often boasts of pure Vermont maple syrup and cheddar cheese, you don't ever hear much said about the pure Vermont. But recently, I met him. I call him, at least, his name is Danny Gore—embodied in a man named Norm Lewis, who also happens to be the other half. I think.
Confused? Well, I was too until I took a long drive up to Derby Line the other one, and decided to find out the real story for myself.
Norm Lewis lives a quiet residential street near the park in Derby Line. He is superintendent of schools in this area. His house is a small board and batten style ranch. Outside, on the front porch, stand four old cow stanchions; lined in a row. They came from the farm in Lunenburg where Norm grew up, and where his father and family tried to survive by milking 10 cows. This is the first sign to a visitor that Norm has not forgotten where he came from, nor the tradition out of which he forged his way of thinking.
Inside, there are more remnants of the past. An old bellows made into a table. His father's favorite milking stool.
A hand-forged horseshoe fixed with long sharp ice chisels, made into a kind of tool decoration by Norm himself. The room is rich with Vermont.
My first task is to unravel the mystery of the so-called Representative Daner Gore, the town (or non-town) from which he hails, his origin, and his political validity. But before I can get started, Norm is handing me papers, and pamphlets, and record albums, and more information than I can possibly absorb all at once. I decide to let it happen. The story will unfold, I tell myself. And so it does.
No more mud season
He is a short man with a hard-lined face and thick mutton-chop sideburns. He is in constant motion, leafing through a stack of notebooks and newspapers, pointing to a line here, an excerpt there, all the bits and pieces of information that will eventually become Rep. Danny Gore's material.
"Here's one," Norm says. "If you see Page 16

Black powder
This sport can be practical and fun

Dad Ferris says junior must go
by Bob Hookway
The scene takes place in the lobby of the thirty-six year old building at the corner of Railroad Street and Eastern Avenue in St. Johnsbury. A quartet of men are descending the main staircase. The first is Malcolm Whelt of the Vermont Department of Labor and Industry, and then state safety inspector Glen Smith, followed by St. J. fire chief Jerald Fournier. The last to come downstairs is Louis Ferris Jr., owner of the building.
"So whaddya think, is it o.k. Ferris asks.
"I don't know, we'll have to see what they say over in Montpelier," one of the men replies.
The inspection will determine whether the tenants will be forced to vacate the basement, and whether or not the building will be closed.
Local media people are abuzz, as they have been since the previous week, when an inspection of the property was covered in a fire regulation violation in the apartment section of the former railroad building.
There were problems with the fire alarm system, extinguishers, broken glass, an open elevator shaft and one of the fire doors. After the inspection, ordered by state Commissioner of Labor and Industry Dean Pilese, it is determined that Ferris has corrected those problems.
If the inspection and its accompanying attention are bothering the landlord, he is not letting it show.
"Ah, they went through and found a few added miscellaneous items; a door latch, and we left some temporary lights. They didn't like those, but the seventy, the North Avenue over, everyone's pretty well taken care of," Ferris says.
Before the day is done, Ferris will agree with that assessment.
"If Ferris has made a good faith effort to correct the situation, if he has been honest on there will be no problem." There's a problem with the ice and the fire doors going to be fixed, but I really think he did do what he told him to do," Pilese said.
"It's better be the temporary repairs. They didn't like those, but they liked the outside over, everyone's pretty well taken care of," Ferris says.
Before the day is done, Ferris will agree with that assessment.
"If Ferris has made a good faith effort to correct the situation, if he has been honest on there will be no problem. There's a problem with the ice and the fire doors, going to be fixed, but I really think he did do what he told him to do," Pilese said.
"It's better be the temporary repairs. They didn't like those, but they liked the outside over, everyone's pretty well taken care of," Ferris says.
Before the day is done, Ferris will agree with that assessment.
"If Ferris has made a good faith effort to correct the situation, if he has been honest on there will be no problem. There's a problem with the ice and the fire doors, going to be fixed, but I really think he did do what he told him to do," Pilese said.
"It's better be the temporary repairs. They didn't like those, but they liked the outside over, everyone's pretty well taken care of," Ferris says.
Interview

Leroy Nelson and the lost art of ice harvesting

by Peggy Pearl Daniels

A team of horses, a 36-inch cord wood saw, ice saws, pike poles, a raking bar, a 17-foot elevator, and cold weather. Put these all together with Leroy Nelson on Ticklenaked Pond and you have the lost art of ice harvesting!!

Leroy and Martha Nelson live on a farm overlooking Ticklenaked (perhaps a story in itself) Pond in Ryegate. Part of their land borders the pond and it is here that Leroy cut ice for several years.

Before Leroy took over the business in the 1930s, he cut with his brother-in-law Calvin Murray. At that time the work was done entirely with horses, including the scoring, or cutting, of the ice with a horse drawn iceplow. When Calvin and Leroy worked together there were two plows, one 6-inch and another 12-inch plow (inches refers to the length of the teeth on the plow)—"had to go over it several times. It had several teeth; each one could cut in about 1/4 of an inch.

When Leroy took over harvesting the ice, things changed. The horse drawn plow was replaced by a mechanized saw. Power was supplied by a Model A engine. "That's a cord wood saw—had to put in a awful lot of set in that saw, terrible lot. I used to take a monkey wrench and bend one tooth one way and one tooth the other—36-inch saw. I could raise or lower the blade with the wooden bar," Leroy explains. "One cut would go down 13 inches—had to hold it back if it (ice) was good and smooth but if the front was rough it went hard. Leroy had done this alone but preferred to have two on the saw as the saw weighed around 1,000 pounds.

14 inches thick

Usually the harvest began in the early part of January or as Leroy says, "when the ice got 14 inches thick, that's when we begun to cut. I intended to cut within three inches of the bottom." By doing this it was still safe to walk on.

There was a road right through their dooryard right down to the pond which the town plowed and sanded.

Leroy harvested the ice, he did not store it or peddle it in the Summer months. The only ice he stored was for his home and for some of the campers on Ticklenaked Pond. This was put in a small icehouse where it was packed with a foot of sawdust around the sides and a foot on top of the ice. From the pond he supplied some 20 or more farmers who received word when Leroy was cutting. They would appear with trucks or horse drawn sleds and take it away to their individual icehouses. They would pay around eight cents a cake—a cake being 18x24 inches or 36 inches with a minimum thickness of 14 inches.

Typical day

Besides harvesting ice, Leroy farmed. Still, he managed to make it to the pond by seven a.m. When cutting to supply area farmers, he hired one or two other men. The first thing they would do was cut a canal between several strips with the mechanized saw. This was done leaving three inches of attached ice.

The ends of the strips were freed with the use of a five-foot ice saw which was operated manually. Then the cakes of ice were split off with a breaking bar which was a heavy steel bar with two or three prongs on one end that were perhaps an inch or more thick.

The ice cakes were then grabbed and guided toward the elevator by pike poles. This was a long wooden pole with a pulley hook on one end and a pusher point on the other side. These poles could vary in length from eight feet to 16 feet.

A channel way led to a 17-foot elevator. The cakes were fed onto the elevator and loaded right onto the trucks. Power for the elevator came from a three horsepower oneunger engine. Leroy said there were usually two men on the truck. All this labor for eight cents a cake!! Ice cutting was often a job that knew no boundaries as far as hours were concerned. Leroy tells us, "I was up there by seven a.m. I have cut ice til 11:00 at night to finish up a job."

White Brothers

Another part of his ice harvesting involved filling an icehouse located in the vicinity of the beach area today. The icehouse belonged to White Brothers Creamery of South Ryegate. "The icehouse down at the beach was the same size as my barn," tells Leroy. "There was a hole right up the middle so you could raise the chute as you filled it."

The cakes were 18x24 inches and the chute was made up of sprung logs with hooks that carried the ice upwards. Not for power they used horses. "We had three horses that we alternated. They went back and forth in a straight line. We could put eight cakes a minute up (three cakes at a time with one hook). Sometimes it would come back at you—we watch out then!" recalls Leroy.

Inside the icehouse, Leroy explains, "poles and tongs were used to haul it around in the icehouse and we smoothed up the floor before the next layer." Twelve or 15 men were needed to fill the icehouse which usually took a week to fill.

Horse tale

Horse power was also used in scoring snow from the ice. It must be remembered that snow had to be removed after every snowfall to obtain the maximum thickness of ice. For that purpose, Leroy had a horse drawn scraper that was made by a blacksmith by the name of Mason in Woodsville, N.H. (It is on exhibit at the Fairbanks Museum.)

It was while scraping one day that a chilly incident occurred. "I was out there all alone with a pair of horses trying to make it down the road," says Leroy. "A rein got caught as I was turning. Weren't either one of them scared of water—ones walked right off into open water. I got them separated—reins, got the everen off. I got a pole and hooked into her bridal and pulled her back. I chisled off a corner and pulled her out with the help of the other horse. I brought her back to the barn, put blankets over her, and rubbed her all over—had her back out that afternoon."

Although Leroy didn't go in that particular time, he does remember other unexpected swims. "When that water gets up to your chest, you don't think you're ever going to breathe again."

There were some things that made ice harvesting a little more bearable and easier on Ticklenaked Pond. Leroy had a 16 x 2 foot house on runners that was taken on the ice. Leroy says they "kept the saw in there. When we had a box of stove in there and the men could eat their lunch there."

Creepers were available for their overalls—all had some little spikes in the bottoms for better footing on the ice.

Horses were sharp shod for the ice.

Although the icebox has given way to the refrigerator and ice harvesting has become, for the most part, a lost art, there are plenty of memories left as it wasn't long ago that ice harvesting was a yearly ritual.

Chances are, you've moved to Vermont or remain here because you like country living. This notion conjures up a number of familiar images depending on the season of the year: the smell of burning wood in the winter, steamy sugar houses in the spring, new mown hay in the summer, or autumn color leaves. Regardless of the season, you may expect to receive the benefits of country banking from the Caledonia National Bank.

The Caledonia National Bank

is synonymous with the history of early Caledonia County, having served area residents since 1865. In fact, it's the oldest, independent bank in the state. Yet, it's one of the most innovative in the area, offering the most up-to-date investment and loan options.

CALEDONIA NATIONAL BANK
DANVILLE, VT • 804-8991
HARDWICK VT • 244-2655
Member FDIC