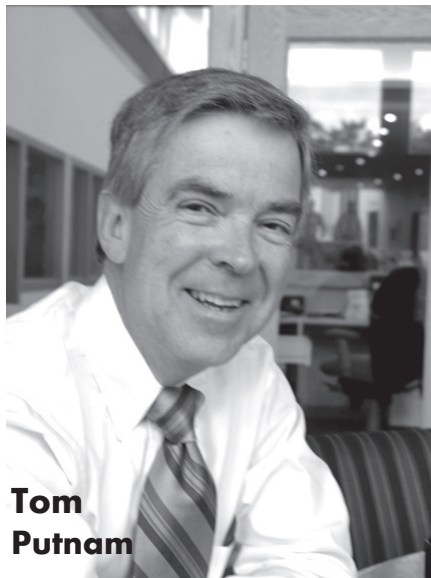


## THIS ISSUE: Putting faces on those who support SOS

*Different perspectives have led different long-time Schoharians to embrace the movement for the town's future*



**Tom Putnam**



**Naomi Wikane**



**Gene Amedio**

*'... when we think of expansion, we can't think about only what is going to happen today or next year, but about what is going to happen 40 years down the line'*

Fenimore Asset Management Chairman and CEO Tom Putnam pauses to gather his thoughts before he responds to a question about his stance on mine expansion in Schoharie, then selects his words carefully. "A business has a responsibility to more than just *itself*," he begins. "A business's responsibility and community responsibility go hand in hand."

The principal he espouses arises from a personal mantra: "Expansion has to be done in a way that is good for the community. Doing the right thing for the community is also doing the right thing for the business."

Mr. Putnam -- who grew up in neighboring Cobleskill and founded

*(continued on page 2)*

Naomi Wikane traces her Schoharie roots all the way back to Jacob Zimmer, a Palatine settler who first came to the valley in the early eighteenth century. Mrs. Wikane's father, the late Chester Zimmer, began a hatchery and poultry business in Gallupville in 1931, an operation that she recalls at one time was the largest of its kind in the Capital District.

Professionally, Mrs. Wikane worked as a consultant for the Mohawk Valley Library Association Adult Services. Her love of local history, sparked by her father (who was also one of the most prominent antique tool and Americana collectors in the northeast), runs deep, and she acknowledges that she continues to hear his voice in her life: "I do think about what my father

*'There are many other options for money flow that will preserve our prosperous historical, rural character.'*

*(continued on page 2)*

As village resident Gene Amedio hikes his way up the steep grade leading to Lasell Park, he stoops to retrieve several discarded soda and beer bottles on the shoulder of the road. Then, as if fate put it there, he locates a white plastic bag in a ditch, and drops the mounting litter into it. Once inside the park, he will toss the bag out in the park's trash can, which he knows will be there. Mr. Amedio knows this park well, as he cares for *it* -- and the local environment in general -- *personally*.

*'[Lasell Park] has enjoyed a resurgence since Kiwanis began taking care of the site.'*

Taking a neighbor on a walking tour of Lasell Park, he cannot contain his enthusiasm for the site: "It's a part of Schoharie and its history," he says, "just like the Stone Fort and the Lutheran Parsonage,"

Buoyed by that attitude, fifteen years ago Mr. Amedio first approached his Kiwanis group to take

*(continued on page 5)*

## Citizens weigh in on their concerns for Schoharie's future . . .

**Tom Putnam: Revival awaits end to quarry expansion threat** *(continued from page 1)*



*"... mining deeper into a populated area carries unintended consequences that are not compatible with a vibrant downtown business community."*

his highly successful investment business in 1974 -- asserts that, while mining *helps* the community in certain ways, the proposed expansion of Cobleskill Stone Products' quarry deeper into the mountainside flanking the village of Schoharie would ultimately be "more detrimental than helpful."

Mr. Putnam and his wife Dusty have lived in the village of Schoharie for 35 years, and he is familiar with efforts within his hometown to reinvigorate Main Street businesses. "The overall impact [of quarry expansion] would not be positive in regard to the character that we have, and hope to better," he says. "It would not encourage attracting businesses into

downtown. It would, at minimum, be a large negative impact on the aim we seek."

Analytic and methodical by nature, Mr. Putnam again applies the same standards to the idea of quarry expansion that he does to his business decisions. "To me, it boils down to the idea that, when we think of expansion, we can't think about only what is going to happen today or next year, but about what is going to happen 40 years down the line."

"We can make our community a place where business and residential can co-exist pleasantly," he reasons, "or a place where the relationship is an onerous one. We have an obligation to preserve our place and, drawing on the example of communities around us, to revive ourselves. Such a revival needs a strong, vibrant downtown."

Mr. Putnam sees harm being done at present simply by the continued threat of possible expansion. Though Cobleskill Stone Products application for a mining permit was the first ever denied by the Region 4 DEC, that denial is being appealed by CSP.

"With the specter of mine expansion looming," he observes, "the community is essentially postponing improvements that otherwise might take place. The future rural development of our community's character is subject to potential detrimental impacts due to the location of the expansion proposal. Even those who don't live here can see that."

He concludes with a reflection: "The mining business, by its nature, is not bad, but mining deeper into a populated area carries unintended consequences that are not compatible with a vibrant downtown business community. The expansion should be reconsidered."

## Naomi Wikane champions historical integrity *(continued from page 1)*

would say about the quarry issue," she says in measured words. "I try to say what I think *he* would say."

And what *would* he say? "Even if it [quarry expansion] had no environmental impact, I am in tune with the history of this area, and in keeping it as intact as possible with its rural integrity. That is my perspective."

"When I was a little girl," she remembers, "I was taken to the old quarry -- which was much smaller -- and told that, 'This is where the stone to make our local roads

comes from.' I recall having felt respect for that notion."

"However, from 1982 until recently, I lived in the Driftwood Apartments [situated on Prospect Street, one of two access routes to and from the quarry]. I was *astonished* at the change in the quarry over time. It was no longer just serving our community. It had become *big* business."

Now living on Grand Street with three cats, along with a long and a short-haired Chihuahua, Mrs. Wikane maintains her stand against the idea of local mine expansion:

"I don't think the village needs the quarry to have a good economy or quality of life here. There are many other options for money flow that will preserve our prosperous historical, rural character. People come to Schoharie to experience that, and we *already* have done harm to it with the size of the quarry that is now here."

"This [Schoharie's character] is what I fight for. The quarry has already grown too much. When it dies, it dies."



## Long-time Schoharie teacher regards quarry's side effects as incompatible with school, village life

You know," says Joan Marciniak, when I contemplate our current situation regarding quarry expansion, I'm struck by this question: 'How did the quarry *already* get so big?' and 'Who was regulating their explosive expansion in the past?'"

Mrs. Marciniak, who grew up in a house on the corner of Fair and Main Streets and recently retired after 30-years as an elementary school teacher at Schoharie, has a personal basis for comparison. She now lives less than a quarter mile from her original home, nearly a mile from the quarry. "I don't recall our house shaking or dust escaping quarry premises when I was growing up," she says. "This is now the routine. *How* did we let it get that way?"

"In addition to our walls trembling during a blast, the grill on my deck shakes and pictures on the wall are thrown off kilter."

Her experience as a classroom teacher was also alarming. "When I was a student at Schoharie, we barely noticed that the quarry [which adjoins school playing fields] was over there. Even as a teacher, for years it had no noticeable impact on us. In the last ten years or so, that has not been the case. The vents in my classroom were always clogged,



despite frequent cleanings. The custodians just couldn't keep up with it. They would clean out the filters and, within days, they would be filled again with these dark gray dust bunnies."

She says she was not alone in noticing bothersome air quality: "Many teachers began bringing in air purifiers to use in their rooms because they were experiencing allergy-like symptoms. In particular, teachers who worked in the interior rooms without windows relied on the school's vent system for their clean air. Some of them complained of having regularly irritated eyes and other symptoms they sensed might be attributable to contaminants in the air."\*

In Mrs. Marciniak's experience, conditions have continued to deteriorate. "Since retiring, I remember subbing one spring day. The back doors leading to the playground were left open,

and a blast occurred at the quarry. Teachers had not been notified that it was to take place. You could see clouds of dust floating in the air over the playgrounds and through the open door into the hallway. That just shouldn't be."

"I hope and pray," she says fervently, "that our

town fathers, zoning board members, and anyone else connected to oversight of our community, will be good stewards and look out for the future health and betterment of this beautiful, historical region more carefully than has been done in the past.

### \* Filter analysis shows mine dust migrates to school

In October 2000, another teacher at Schoharie, concerned about what she perceived to be the large amount of dust blowing into the school from the quarry, decided to conduct an informal experiment. She simply placed a filter material over the vent of the air exchange unit (which drew outside air) in an attempt to capture the dust being introduced into her classroom. She was concerned enough about what she saw that she kept this filter sealed in a plastic bag until June of 2007, when she gave it to SOS.

SOS sent the sample to the laboratory at the Upstate Freshwater Institute in Syracuse, NY, where it was analyzed by individual particle analysis using a scanning electron microscope interfaced with automated image and X-ray diffraction analysis.

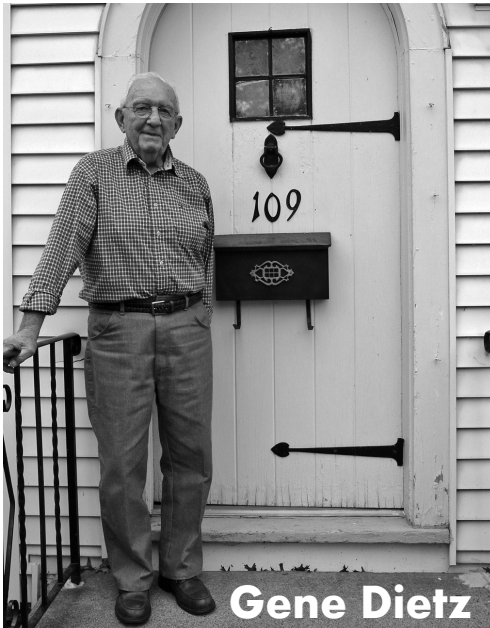
Without the mine, it would be expected that organic material would dominate the dust near the school - small particles of grass and other vegetation, pollen, mold spores, windblown seeds, soot from wood stove smoke, and bus exhaust.

An assessment of the results from the sample, though, suggested that only ten percent of the sample consisted of organic material consistent with the non-mining sources surrounding the school. This indicates that the playing fields, farms, and bus traffic contribute an insignificant portion of the dust entering the school.

However, the study showed that seventy percent of the sample dust particles entering the school were made up of elemental indicators associated with crustal material derived from quarry activities.

Of course this is only a single sample, so comparisons to upwind conditions cannot be made. However, based on the types of materials found in the dust sample it can be concluded that the mine is the overwhelming source of dust at the school. These results strongly suggest that fugitive dust is leaving CSP quarry and reaching the school.

## Wants changes that are 'for the good of the village'



It is a bright morning in the kitchen of Gene Dietz's cozy cottage in the village of Schoharie, and he has a pot of coffee brewing for a visitor who has arrived to interview him.

As he pours a couple of cups, a friend happens by and is invited to join the discussion.

After some good-natured back and forth ritual ribbing between the two neighbors, Mr. Dietz offers a cup of coffee to his old friend and a little biographical information about himself to the visitor.

His career with General Electric was a long one and found him working at a variety of positions. At various times, he was a toolmaker, a machinist, and a methods specialist who wrote product manuals. He worked on everything from washing machines, to a ceramic housing for an electrostatic gyroscope and a gun sight for Lockheed's F106 fighter plane; "It was always something

different and always something interesting," he recalls.

Mr. Dietz, who was widowed this past April, says that he joined SOS because "I hate to think of the quarry expanding."

He remembers a kinder, gentler Main Street: "There used to be this man in the village," he says, "with an old dog that had the habit of crossing the street whenever it wanted to, and at its own leisurely pace. Cars would stop for it. I doubt it could survive doing that today. I've seen the mining business grow, and the noise and truck traffic from the two quarries have changed the character of Main Street."

"I believe in what SOS is trying to do and believe in trying to help people protect their homes and way of life," says the 68-year-long resident of Schoharie, who has been involved in the Masons, Kiwanis, and the fire department over the years.

Mr. Dietz's friend, who, up to this point, has been content to quietly listen, finally sets his coffee cup down emphatically to weigh in: "Y'know," he says, "it was always a little operation 'up there at the end of the town;' Now we have the quarry crawling along the village and on both ends of town."

Seconding that observation, Mr. Dietz emphasizes that he regards stopping further quarry expansion as imperative: "I don't have much longer for this world," he muses. "Whatever happens to *me* personally doesn't matter a great deal . . . but *for the town*, the effects of expansion would be felt for a long time. I am bothered to think that there might be changes that would not be for the good of the village."

## Too close for comfort

Betty Eaton's good works and good nature are well known throughout the Schoharie community.

Widowed, Mrs. Eaton has lived for 60 years atop Warner Hill Road in a picture book farmhouse blessed with a stunning panorama of the descending mountainside, the village of Schoharie and the mountain range to the west.

The quarry, as it already has been expanded, affects Mrs. Eaton in ways that make her shudder. Yet another expansion, which would see the quarry extended to land within eyeshot of her property, is unthinkable to her.

"It's too close to home for me!" she says, meaning it literally.

*Standing on the front porch of her farm house, Betty Eaton can't imagine that the CSP quarry could contemplate moving outward toward even more homes, one of which would be hers.*



**Betty Eaton**

Each of Mrs. Eaton's eight children went through the Schoharie school system, and she used to work at the school. "The blasts were not that powerful back then," she insists. [In communications to SOS, DEC officials have verified the truth of this observation, that the power of detonations has indeed increased over the years.]

"Of course I'm concerned," she says. "When they blast, I can see the dust cloud from my house [as the crow flies, as little as half a mile away]. If it's breezy, the dust coats the windows and my front porch. Imagine if it was closer to me. I'm also concerned about my water

*(continued on page 5)*



# Lasell Park key piece of Schoharie's history

## *Another component to the argument against extending the quarry*



site. It hosts graduation parties, weddings, high school and Sunday school picnics, cross country meets, class reunions . . . you name it," says Mr. Amedio, who has also served on the Village Board and in various community organizations over the years.

As the retired 42-year Schoharie resident walks along the roughed-out road that encircles the park, he points to "posted" signs on trees belonging to the land CSP proposes to mine, in some spots a mere ten yards from the road along the eastern side. On the north edge, a near 50-foot high berm of stone from the *current* quarry already looms about 100 yards from the park's perimeter road. Expansion would move the berm closer.

These ominous signs belie the tranquil atmosphere found under the towering hemlocks and scenic views of the village and mountain range from the west edge of the park.

The lack of sensitivity inherent in the notion of this mine expansion troubles Mr. Amedio, whose experience has taught him: "Even if the quarry doesn't reach its outer limits in the next five to ten years, a quarry does not care about a park . . . even one that has existed as a park for 124 years and was left to the community *forever*."

### Gene Amedio speaks on behalf of local gem

*(continued from page 1)*

on the stewardship of the then deteriorating park, deeded to the Village of Schoharie back in 1884 *"to improve, beautify and adorn the village and the approaches thereto, for a public park for the benefit and social enjoyment of the citizens of Schoharie forever."*

Mr. Amedio, with fellow-Kiwanian Mike Langan, became co-chairs of the park initiative. "First, we were able to stabilize the pavilion and other buildings," he says. "Next we obtained a \$4,000 grant for roof repairs, stump removal, road repair

and the construction of stonework columns to mark the entrance."

Now, every three years, Kiwanis contracts with the village to maintain and improve the facility, which now boasts water and electric service, not to mention the county's tallest eastern hemlock tree, as judged by the Landis Arboretum in 1999. Permits for public use are obtainable through the Village office on Main Street.

"Granted, people don't use the park as much now as they did before the advent of the automobile, but it has enjoyed a resurgence since Kiwanis began taking care of the

### *How, other than 'personally,' should she – or we – take expansion?*

*(continued from page 4)*

supply."\*

"I do not favor expansion. I wish it would all just go away."

**\*NOTE:** Regarding potential damage to wells, Cobleskill Stone Products owner Emil Galasso has said publicly that he would arrange for a supply of water to any family who could *prove to him* that his operation had affected its water supply. That assurance, of course, could not restore

the damaged well.

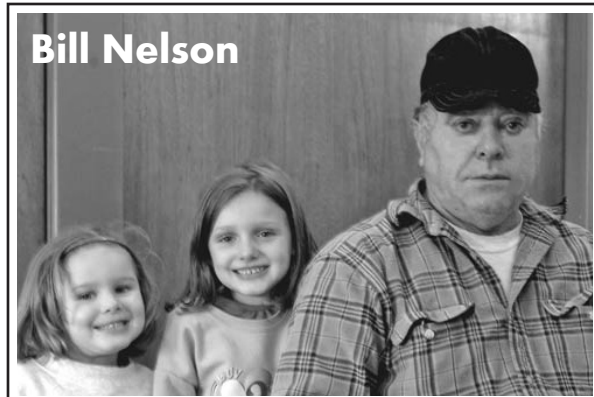
Beyond this, the matter of establishing such proof presupposes a family suddenly without water could afford the time and expense involved in arranging for hydrological tests, a lawyer, and what could turn into an extended, costly court case.

Even then, no guarantee exists that the court would come down in favor of the home owner, since CSP could attempt to refute any claim with its own tests and

legal representation, thereby potentially reducing the argument to a case of superior economic resources.

However well-intended, this gesture from CSP ignores the larger reality that closer proximity of an ever-sprawling quarry creates many undesirable circumstances for Schoharie's population that extend beyond the issue of water supply, and beyond the reach of compensating measures.

## Sees destruction of precious land & poor air quality as honest issues



**Bill Nelson**

*Flanked by grandchildren Kristen and Ellen, Bill Nelson, whose family has now called Schoharie home for eight generations, worries about what progressive quarrying, particularly of the sort that has taken place in the past 8-10 years, will do to the region, should it be permitted to proceed unchecked.*

Bill Nelson is sixth generation Schoharie County, the son of a contractor who built houses and specialized in excavation. "When I was a kid around here," he recalls, "I used to come to the [Schoharie] quarry with my father. It was about a sixth of the size of what they have now."

In terms of the sheer volume of stone being removed, Mr. Nelson has seen a huge change over the years: "The blasts and holes are *much* bigger," he says with certainty. A

44- foot-long flowboy trailers which carry up to 50-ton payloads.

In addition to his warning that the eastern mountainside along the village of Schoharie is being increasingly carved up and hauled away, Mr. Nelson worries about contaminant dust from the current quarry blowing to the neighboring Schoharie Central School.

Before he retired several years ago from a 39-year-long career as a journeyman plumber/pipefitter, one of his final assignments was to work

truck today is not a truck of yesterday."

"People forget how much more stone is going out of here. I don't think people realize, in terms of capacity, how much the mine has already expanded or how much more they are planning to excavate."

"The tonnage hauled by the average-sized modern truck," he observes, "is several times that of the old trucks." This is not to mention the increasingly common sight of 37 to

on the school's air filtration system. At the last DEC public hearing, he described the components of the air system he inspected and cleaned or replaced as the most seriously clogged, filthy ones he had ever seen in many years working with the units.

"When we pulled those air handlers," he says, "the outside big mesh was so clogged that air was not even getting through to the actual filter."

"The school should, over the course of a year, have the filters on top of the school [the major air intake sources] checked and tested to see what they are drawing in. That's the air those kids and teachers are breathing in every day."

Compounding his concerns even further, Mr. Nelson's son Randy several years ago built his home on Warner Hill, on a property whose edge bumps up against the proposed new quarry site, land zoned only as agricultural and residential.

A practical, realistic man who has nothing against quarry operations or honest, hard work of any sort (he saws and stacks all the firewood that heats his home), Bill Nelson nevertheless regards any expansion of the existing quarry in Schoharie, for any number of reasons, as simply wrong.

## A gift from downstate

A letter that SOS treasurer Patti Conboy opened recently was unlike any others in two respects.

**First**, it came from a woman who lives in Suffern, NY, quite a distance from Schoharie.

Second, inside were four one dollar bills and a signed note reading: "You are in my prayers. Sorry I can't manage more at this time, but I am disabled and on a fixed income."

Wanting to thank the woman for such a touchingly supportive gesture, and curious about the Suffern-Schoharie connection, Mrs. Conboy retrieved her phone number through

information and gave her a call. A spirited Therese Consolo was happy to explain her bond to Schoharie.

**While she has lived** most of her life in NYC and downstate, Mrs. Consolo says her family bought a two-story house [which has since been razed] back in the 1960s on land overlooking the valley on what is now Terrace Mountain Road. She says the property did not even have indoor plumbing, but that her family liked the outdoors and treated their excursions to Schoharie as camping trips, where the scenic, rural setting made roughing it worth the inconvenience.

Because her name is on the town property rolls used by SOS to build its mailing list, Mrs. Consolo receives a copy of the newsletter. Her memories of Schoharie's profound beauty were

so fond that, upon reading the newsletter, she felt compelled to send a contribution to SOS's cause.

She says an automobile accident 22 years ago left her disabled and, for the past 16 years or so, wheelchair-bound, putting an end to her dream of one day building a log cabin on the site.

**A devoutly religious** woman who is proud of the relative independence she manages, Mrs. Consolo says that she lists "SOS" in her prayer chain. "They may not know what SOS is, but there it is, and people *pray* for you," she says with obvious optimism and conviction.

Patti Conboy assured Mrs. Consolo that SOS is deeply thankful for her donation and her prayers.

# SOS

## UPDATE: Where are we now? What lies ahead?

By John Poorman, SOS Chairman

*If you find yourself feeling a little out of touch with regard to the status of the proposed expansion of the Schoharie quarry, you're not alone. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation process continues to move along, slowly, and is far from its conclusion.*

**Cobleskill Stone Products'** permit application continues to be considered in an adjudicatory process – a process which began with **DEC Region 4's** recommendation for denial of the application based on conflicts with community character.

After hearing public comments in June 2007 and informal testimony from experts at an "issues conference" later that summer, and after awaiting **DEC Commissioner Grannis'** decision on legal appeals, **Administrative Law Judge Casutto** released his findings on the issues this spring. Keep in mind that his findings address *only* the matter of **which issues he believes are appropriate for adjudication** (which are the issues he will seek further information about later in sworn testimony).

Of the many, many issues raised last year, Judge Casutto has ruled that some matters are "adjudicable" and subject to further scrutiny before a final ruling on the mining application.

Since the time that the Judge issued his findings, CSP has filed an appeal asserting that there are no issues that merit adjudication and has prepared legal briefs in support. **The Town of Schoharie, Village of Schoharie** and **SOS** have filed a joint appeal and have prepared legal briefs in support of the community's position.

Legal rebuttals of each argument by the other party have been submitted and must be considered before the question of which issues are subject to adjudication is resolved by Commissioner Grannis. There is no estimate of when Commissioner Grannis will rule. After his ruling, an adjudicatory hearing will be scheduled for Judge Casutto to hear additional, sworn, expert testimony before he acts on the permit application.

### A unique partnership

The town of Schoharie approved its land use law in 2005, prohibiting mining on the land in question for the quarry expansion. Since that time, the town and village have worked closely together to advocate the community's position in the DEC process. **Save Our**

**Schoharie** has sought to support town and village governments in the process, volunteering considerable time and resources to data collection and analysis. Expert noise and air quality monitoring have been funded through SOS, for example.

**The unique partnership** is seen in the current work on legal briefs for the adjudicatory process. SOS and the town and village are coordinating their work to eliminate redundancy and save expense. Such a partnership is nearly unprecedented.

### Strong Support from Elected Officials

Don't allow the long DEC process to lead you to believe that the mining expansion is inevitable. It isn't. Residents and business owners in Schoharie seek a balanced future of economic growth and environmental health. Schoharie's elected officials understand that.

### Keep the following facts in mind:

- Every candidate for the town board, supervisor, village trustee or mayor since the mining application has been on the table has expressed unwavering support for the town's land use law and opposition to the proposed quarry expansion.
- Our state representatives have offered strong support for legislation that would prohibit DEC from entertaining mining applications when mining is prohibited by local law. **Assemblyman Lopez** has voted for such legislation in the past and **Senator Seward** recently offered that he supports "clarifying state law so that the DEC is not authorized to consider an application for a permit to mine where local zoning laws prohibit mining and where there is no dispute regarding the validity of the zoning ordinance."
- **DEC itself** sent the permit application to adjudication with a recommendation for denial because of the conflict with community character that could not be reasonably mitigated.

This should provide us a lot of confidence regarding the ability of Schoharie to protect its future.



**SAVE OUR SCHOHARIE**

Chairman . . . John Poorman  
Vice Chairman . . . Robert Montione  
Treasurer . . . Patti Conboy  
Secretary . . . Dawn Johnson  
Fund Raising . . . Randy Nelson  
Newsletter Editor . . . Tom Smith





## Worth Pondering:

- The following is found in the New York State Codes of Rules & Regulations (NYCRR):  
*"No person shall cause or allow emissions of air contaminants to the outdoor atmosphere of such quantity, characteristic or duration which are injurious to human, plant or animal life or to property, or which unreasonably interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property."*  
**(6NYCRR Part 211.2)**

- Members of SOS have been informed by the DEC's Alan Hewitt that the current blast holes are nearly *twice as wide and twice as deep* as they were in the past. This accounts for why local residents may be more aware of blasting effects now than they were in the past. DEC is currently working on new blasting guidelines.

- Connected to these two items, DEC has sent Nuisance Complaint Forms to SOS, encouraging the group to have local residents use them to track any incidents of homes shaking, fugitive dust, etc., and to send them on to DEC. The forms insure that the environmental agency will have all necessary information with which to assess any issue. If we don't direct our complaints through appropriate enforcement channels, we are merely whistling in the wind.

SOS will be making these forms available in the spring newsletter, when greater quarry activity resumes.

## Are you taking some part?

*The lawyers and experts hired by SOS to defend our beloved community from further quarry expansion are not inexpensive. We encourage those sympathetic to the struggle to help in whatever way they can and, if possible, to make a tax deductible contribution to SOS..*

**SOS Address: PO Box 856, Schoharie, NY 12157**

Check all that apply:

☐ **Individual Membership**

\$10 annually ☐ new member ☐ renewal

☐ **Family Membership**

\$20 annually ☐ new member ☐ renewal

☐ Donation Only \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please put me (us) on your e-mail list

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

S.O.S.

P.O. BOX 856

SCHOHARIE, NY 12157

*For those interested, the group meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Schoharie Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall at 7:00 pm.*