I am an invertebrate saver. Not a hoarder, exactly, since what I save are never things like food. And then there are no piles of stuff blocking hallways or any- thing else. What I typically save are things that interest me, and, unfortunately, many things interest me. Mostly what interests me are myself and my thoughts, for which I have saved are the million- s of words I have written, and many of those proceed when I got a computer and could file things away invisibly.

But it’s not just my own ideas that intrigue me, as fascinating as they are, but those of others. And when I hear about something that seems especially interesting, I will write it down. And save it.

Recently, I was going through a box of stuff that sits on the floor of our bedroom closet and found a little piece of paper, which simply had the words “Rent-a-Kvetch” on it, and an address in New York City. I immediately understood why I had saved it. I tend to kvetch quite a bit (and for those who don’t know, the word “kvetch” is Yiddish, and essentially means “to complain,” but not really about big things. If you’ve just lost your job and you complain about this to a friend, that would hardly be called kvetching. Similarly, for your kvetching about the world ending because of global warming. But if the washing machine you just bought is having problems, and you complain about that, now you’re kvetching.

Also, the word can be used as a noun. If, like me, you are frequently complaining about things, you are a kvetch. By the very word, the word “kvetch” is pronounced without a vowel between the “k” and the “v” sound. It is not “kuh-vetch.” This is hard for those few of us who grew up without hearing Yiddish from our grandparents, but if you work on it, you can get it. As you make the “k” sound, at the same time put your lower teeth against the top of your lower lip, along with making the “eh” sound. And if you still have trouble, don’t kvetch to me about it!

Rent-a-Kvetch

Unethical complaints

There is something wrong with the way our ethics complaints system is working. It seems that it is too easy for a person to file baseless complaints to harass/punish a town official they have a political difference with. This has happened in the past and appears to have recently happened again.

Kevin Barry, of our New Paltz Town Board, gen- erously offered his assistance to Springtown home- owners during this last year. I and other members of the floodplain community asked him to help us reform the dramatically unfair town codes that seemed to aim at destroying the value of our homes and eventually reducing our neighborhood to a street of deserted wrecks.

Our success at uncovering the nonsense behind these laws has upset a former member of the Town Board. Kitty Brown still supports these devastating laws not found in the standards of FEMA, New York State’s DEP or the town codes of other communities with far greater flood problems.

A few weeks ago, she took an additional step to punish us, so much of the power her stand by filing an ethics complaint against Mr. Barry, which is totally unjustified by New Paltz’s own ethics code. Since she is a knowledgeable former town official, it is strange that she would file such a complaint. Since Mr. Barry was advocating for the good of a large group of citi- zens, the fact that he owns some Springtown farm- land that is predominantly wetlands is not an issue.

The exception in I57-A 2 (b) allows him to represent a group of residents or taxpayers from an area (Spring- town Road residents) even though he is part of that group. The test of the town’s code is as follows.

This code’s prohibition on use of a municipal posi- tion (§ 15-4), disclosure requirements (§ 15-5), and re- quirements relating to recusal and abstention (§ 15-6) shall not apply with respect to the following matters:

(2) Any matter requiring the exercise of discretion that directly affects any of the following groups of people or a lawful class of such groups:

(a) All municipal officers or employees;
(b) All residents or taxpayers of the municipality or an area of the municipality;
(c) The general public

Right now, a person can use the system of ethics complaints to tar the reputation of a town official with unfounded charges without incurring negative consequences. Is it any wonder that our town’s com- mittees have many open positions that few want to volunteer for?

Some kind of vetting process can be added to the filing of an ethics complaint. For instance, all citi- zens wishing to make such a charge may be required to first meet with a new ethics committee to determine whether the charge has merit. If a citi- zen wishes to file the complaint even though he has been told that the complaint is baseless, he may be advised that he may be risking a charge of slander.

I ask that some kind of reform be made to de- crease the possibility of another such incident in the future and that Mr. Barry be officially cleared of these charges with all possible speed.

Caroline Paulson
New Paltz

Food for fines

As a community, we have many shared priorities and many things that need support. All of us at the Elting Memorial Library are aware of this. It makes us all the more grateful for the support of our friends and neighbors on whose recent library funding referendum.

In the nine years since opening our significantly enlarged building -- something that was long over- due for our community -- the usage of the library has grown substantially. It is heartening to see our library as a hub of activity and an anchor in our vi- brant downtown.

In the spirit of gratitude and community, we will be offering “Amnesty Days” on Friday, November 20, Saturday, November 21 and Sunday, November 22. Called “Food for Fines,” during these days, pa- trons can bring in overdue Elting library materials and, provided they bring a non-perishable food item to donate, all fines will be forgiven. Food donations will go to Family of New Paltz.

Thank you.

Richard Heyl de Ortiz, President
Elting Memorial Library

Barbara Rosenblat to be part of One Book One New Paltz

One Book, One New Paltz is proud to announce that Barbara Rosenblat, the actress who portrays Miss Rosa in the Netflix series Orange is the New Black is joining our week of exciting programming. Ms. Rosenblat will speak about the development of her character, Miss Rosa, her experience on the series and her thoughts about connections between the series and the book. She will also read from Out of Orange, a memoir by the woman who engaged Piper in drug smuggling. Join us for this engaging and ex- citing presentation on Saturday, November 21st, at 7 p.m. in SUNY New Paltz’s Studley Theatre.

Robin Jacobowitz
New Paltz

Veteran’s Day 2015

Youth’s blood fills the veins of every war. Politicians rage at the enemy, but like heat light- ning never pull the trigger themselves.

Our youth fly the planes, load the guns and dig the graves.

Front line veteran’s ask historians to never forget the holocausts we’ve made or the ones we’ve sur- vived.

The brutal truth is our cultural memory lasts no longer than the pulped paper pages the pages our his- tories printed on.

The poverty of morality in our county has more to do with the inhumane weapons we make for our youth to kill third world enemies.

Every new war surrounds our collective hearts.