

## Grins and groans

**THE ISSUE** | Grins and groans from news of the week.

**OUR OPINION** | A grin to Corning Natural Gas and jam band Phish. A groan to Mother Nature.

### Grin

Corning Natural Gas is continuing its annual work to upgrade the gas systems' aging lines.

Major work this season is being done in the city of Corning, Bath and Hammondsport.

Jerry Sleevy, Corning Natural Gas vice president of administration, said the company annually replaces seven miles of gas line. The work costs on average of \$3.5 to \$4 million annually.

Since the program began in 2007, Corning Natural Gas has replaced more than 42 miles of service lines affecting more than 2,300 customers. CNG serves about 15,000 customers and has about 400 miles of line.

### Groan

While recent flooding wasn't nearly as bad as it was in Binghamton and other areas of the Northeast, it still caused major problems in Horseheads and Wellsburg.

Creeks in both towns overflowed causing flooding, closing roads and forcing evacuations.

Crews have worked to clear mud and debris from sites. A state of emergency was declared in much of Chemung County. Luckily, there were no reports of major flooding in Steuben County.

### Grin

Two months after their Fourth of July blowout at Watkins Glen International, jam band Phish will cap a long summer of touring with a flood recovery benefit concert Wednesday evening in their home state of Vermont.

All proceeds will be distributed to flood relief in Vermont through Phish's charitable arm, The Waterwheel Foundation, and the Vermont Community Foundation.

The show will be held at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds near the city of Burlington, where the band – guitarist Trey Anastasio, bassist Mike Gordon, keyboard player Page McConnell and drummer Jon Fishman – met during the college days. Several still live in the area.

Wednesday's benefit sold out quickly, but local fans can still catch the show as the band is offering a pay-per-view webcast at phish.com. The band webcasts a handful of its shows, and fans often throw "Couch Tour" parties, hooking up their laptops to high-def TVs and speakers.

Tickets for Wednesday were \$75 a pop, and there was also a \$250 package with box seats, a craft beer tent and other perks. Merchandise sales will also be donated, and so will proceeds from the \$19.99 webcast, with fans across the U.S. likely to be watching. All in all, it should raise a tidy sum for a good cause, a nice move by the band.

The 30,000 fans who attended Phish's three-day concert at The Glen this summer got good reviews for their behavior from Schuyler County officials and WGI staff, and afterward all parties involved left the door open for a possible return here by the band.

### LETTERS POLICY

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**ON THE FRONT PAGE**  
Corning clocktower by artist  
Larry Barone

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### ARTIST'S VIEW



COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

## The labor of rebuilding

The aftermaths of Hurricane Irene, likely to be among the top 10 costliest natural disasters in American history, and, now, Tropical Storm Lee remain devastating.

As our nightly news-casts have continued to show us day after day over the past two weeks, the northeastern United States was particularly hard hit – especially many upstate New York communities, including our region.

The damage in numerous upstate counties is astonishing. Roads and bridges in rural regions have been entirely washed out. Main Streets were turned into riverbeds. Of course the losses for countless individual homeowners are heartbreaking and simply unimaginable.

And the storms have hit upstate agriculture at the worst possible time with the year's harvest underway. The terrible losses of livestock, crops, barns, and equipment are unfathomable and, in most instances, unrecoverable. "I've been involved in agriculture my entire life," the state's agriculture commissioner reflected, "and there have been times when the weather has wreaked havoc on livestock and farms, but I don't think I've ever seen anything on this scale here in New York."

So clearly the recovery and the rebuilding effort will demand the attention of federal, state and local leaders for months and months to come. Government plays a vital role in these responses. You can stay updated on the effort through Governor Andrew Cuomo's website, <http://www.governor.ny.gov/>. The damage assessments will be ongoing. The governor has estab-

lished an Upstate Storm and Flooding Recovery Task Force to coordinate the statewide response. The hard work of putting these communities back together will be intensive.

The bottom line is that we will carry on. That was the message being delivered again late last week.

"All levels of government are working together to help New York recover and we will not stop until the job is done," the governor said. Or as one upstate farmer who suffered enormous crop losses summed it more philosophically to the *New York Times*, "You put your boots back on and deal with it."

What comes to mind most quickly in assessing disasters like these is, again, the overwhelming response from New Yorkers as a whole. One upstate daily newspaper wrote in an editorial, "If any additional proof were needed that it is a new day for New York, it came on a day that, ironically, many New Yorkers would surely have traded for a new day ... Communication was constant. The governor's office updated the media constantly on road conditions, power outages and the like. Cuomo's demeanor at press conferences was nonsense but reassuring. It all added up to an executive in control – something the state had gone largely without in many ways for at least the past four years."

Equally impressive was the response from volunteers, work crews, and first responders who once more proved that when disaster strikes, so many stand ready and willing to help. National Guard units from Hornell and Horseheads were mobilized. Local Red Cross volunteers and DOT workers were sent out.

The Bath Volunteer Fire Department's Swift Water Rescue team was deployed. The list goes on.

The timing of this reminder of the willingness of people to pull together has been equally poignant – arriving as it has as the nation prepared to observe the 10th anniversary of September 11th. To this very day, while 9/11 evokes such a difficult mix of emotions, one of the most powerful feelings of all remains this one: we are Americans and above all else, in the toughest of times, we will stand together in aid, in comfort, and in resolve. This same resolve is being demonstrated again at this very moment in the ongoing storm recovery.

As a nation, we are still healing from the September 11, 2001 attacks – that process continued anew this weekend at many local observances and ceremonies across the nation. As many of us quietly walk a "Healing Field," visit a "New York Remembers" exhibit and in many other places and ways, we will remember that American decency, American generosity, and American fortitude cannot be overcome – and that reminder still serves us well and gives us hope today.

So as our thoughts remain focused on our current struggles and on one of the darkest chapters in American history, we also put at the forefront the labor of putting New York back together again. We're grateful to the volunteers, the workers, and the community leaders who will carry out that mission.

■ **Tom O'Mara is a Republican state senator from Big Flats.**

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Re-elect Hunter

**TO THE EDITOR** | I have been fortunate to know Judy Hunter for about 20 years. Our occupations united us professionally and she is respected by the local clerks throughout our county. Judy has introduced the technology of the 21st Century to the

county clerk's office. She strives to represent the constituency of Steuben County with courtesy, integrity and the professionalism that is expected of this position.

Hard work, dedication to the position, and sincere desire to serve has been evident throughout her career. Judy takes very seriously her oath of office to uphold the

Constitution and to faithfully discharge the duties of county clerk.

I encourage the voters of our county to support Judy in her bid for re-election to the position of Steuben County Clerk and to cast their very important vote on Tuesday, Sept. 13.

**Rose M. Blackwell**  
Corning

## Our luck has run out

Apparently this area has been too lucky too long. And now the odds are catching up with us.

Natural disasters are things we watch on our television screens and read about in our newspapers. They are not something we can see out of our window.

But all of that changed in recent weeks.

First the end of tropical storm Irene struck this area

and created havoc in much of eastern New York as well as in New England.

We sat on just the end of that

destruction though portions of the area did sustain damage.

But then last week the remnants of tropical storm Lee spun into the northeast and leveled a big blow at parts of the Southern Tier.

It's long been a tradition in our house to note that when weather channel expert Jim Cantore broadcasts from a specific location, that area is in the path of disaster.

Last week Cantore was in Binghamton as were news crews from around the country.

The swollen Susquehanna overtopped flood walls in the downtown area of that city and record flooding was recorded throughout the region.

As far west as normally placid Horseheads some people had to be displaced by high water.

While the farther you went east, the worse the disaster became.

For a long time we have been lucky but with more and more storms tracking farther and farther north it appears that at least for now, our luck has run out.

Maybe it's just me but it seems as if wherever there is a vacant lot in this area, somebody chooses that spot to build a new hotel.

The rate at which hostels have mushroomed in Chemung County in the past year beats any construction boom in memory.

My question is when every vacant lot is filled by a hotel who's going to stay in them?

There can't be an awful lot more said about the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Every news outlet in the world has been filled with learned dissertations for weeks. It almost seems nice to know that today is Sept. 12 and maybe all this will start to slow down.

Of course we should remember 9/11 and reflect on the lessons it has taught us – good and bad.

To many people its main impact has been the increasing ability of the federal government to get in the face of the average American.

Security measures have been ramped up across the national landscape and you can't go very far without encountering someone whose job it is to block potential terrorists.

In many areas this has gone way too far; just look at the messes our airports have become. Yet, in very few occasions, damage has been warded off by these efforts.

Is it all worth it? Probably but I'm not too sure.

■ **Bob Rolfe, a retired Leader reporter/editor, can be reached by writing The Leader, PO Box 1017, Corning, NY 14830 or theinsider1@aol.com.**