



THE WAYFARER

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251 DOCUMENTARIAN

Woodstock native Michael Leonard grew up in a family with Vermont roots ten generations deep. But it was “New York City or bust,” when the time came to leave home for college. “It was not long after I landed on the Greenwich Village campus of NYU (New York University) that I realized how special rural Vermont is,” recalls Mike. “I could not stop bragging about it to college friends who seemed shockingly detached from their home towns and cities.”

In 2006, during the summer between his sophomore and junior years, Mike decided to take ownership of his bragging rights by further exploring Vermont’s nooks and crannies. Inspired by the stories of his 251 Club member grandparents, Mike convinced his two best high school friends, also home for the summer, to join the club and share the adventure.

“It was a wholesome plan but everyone thought that three, twenty-year olds, working full time, were collectively nuts to undertake an extensive road trip,” says Mike. “Nonetheless, after talking up my home state to friends in the city, I was very serious about cementing my identity as a Vermonter.”

The threesome surprised everyone when they finished their 251 visits by summer’s end. Equipped with their (pre-cell phone) camcorders, they made random connections throughout the state, compiling ten hours of interviews and scenic footage. Mike also wrote about their experiences in a series of fifteen articles that were published in his hometown newspaper, *The Vermont Standard*. “I learned that the 251 Club is much more than traveling around the state,” says Mike. “It is a way of connecting to your neighbors, to the next town over, and to a bigger place you call home in a leisurely way that anchors your identity.”

Mike’s return to New York that fall started a decade-long stint of being away from Vermont. After earning a degree in anthropology and geography, he stayed in the city to work for an international school. He left to travel extensively in Europe while completing a Masters in Tourism Management, followed by two years in Iceland working on a PhD. In 2012, while studying in Slovenia, Mike met

Kevin Quigley, a French teacher from Belfast, Northern Ireland. When Mike decided to return to Vermont to spend time with his aging grandmother, Kevin came with him. They now live in Woodstock where they were married in December 2012.

“I am deeply attached to Vermont and always intended to come back,” says Mike. “And I always knew that I wanted to revisit the 251 Club.” In early Fall 2017, he returned to some of the same places to interview people he met twelve years before. He wanted

to learn how Vermont had changed, how it had stayed the same, and how the 251 Club had shaped his identity forever.

Within a year, Mike conducted 40 interviews and compiled another one hundred hours of film footage. “I never set out to be a filmmaker, but I realized that film was the best way to share the stories that I started telling in 2006,” he explains. “It took a lot of slicing and dicing, rigorous editing that I thought of as ‘killing my darlings,’ to create a one hour and forty-five minute documentary, *One Town at a Time*.”

In the film, Mike invites others to hop in for a ride around Vermont’s 251 towns and cities, while telling a coming of age story with a combination of retro and contemporary footage that reflects on Vermont’s changing cultural and physical landscape. Included are the diverse voices of 251 Club member

Governor Jim Douglas, Ben & Jerry’s co-founder, Jerry Greenfield and a cross-section of 251 Club members.

Mike created a trailer for the documentary that can be seen on the News page of the 251 Club web site, where you can learn more about the project, which premieres in Woodstock on May 24, the Spring/Summer screening schedule, or how to arrange a showing in your community. Visit: http://vt251.com/vt/vt_news.php

There are currently fourteen scheduled screenings in: St. Albans (6/1), Rochester (6/6), Richmond (6/13), Canaan (6/14), Brattleboro (6/15), Brookfield (6/20), Montgomery (6/22), Newport (7/19), Rockingham (7/20), Middlebury (7/26), Bethel (8/10), Williston (8/21), Hardwick (8/22), and Hinesburg (8/23). Mike will talk about his project and show selected film clips at the October 13 Annual Meeting in Montpelier.



Fall 2018. Michael Leonard on the banks of the Connecticut River in Fairlee on the first day of filming for *One Town at a Time*, a travel documentary and coming-of-age story that explores what it means to be a Vermonter.

NOTES FROM THE ROAD

“When we joined the club we decided to camp at all the Vermont State Parks and haul our motorcycle from town to town. We started our journey Memorial Day weekend 2011 at Brighton State Park in Island Pond. But we couldn’t find Lewis! During the next seven summers and autumns we visited all the other towns, returning to Brighton State Park on Labor Day weekend 2018 to finally find Lewis. Fortunately, we met a sweet gentleman named Gordon at the Island Pond Historical Society who volunteered to escort us. Gordon had not been to Lewis for several years and really enjoyed showing us the way. It was such a pleasure to meet him that we hope to reunite next year and start our 251 adventure again.”

Al & Robin Bachand
Readsboro, VT

“On October 27, 2013, we started our 251 visits in Addison and ended in Avery’s Gore on September 2, 2018. Our tours were typically over three-day weekends – July 4th, Labor and Memorial Days, and Thanksgiving week. We would leave at 7:00 a.m., have breakfast or lunch on the road, and be back home by 4:00 p.m. Butch drove while I took photographs and navigated using road maps and GPS. We especially enjoyed Route 5 along the Connecticut River and our unexpected visits to the King Arthur Flour and Crowley Cheese factory stores.

I remember driving up a one lane dirt road to take a photograph of Glastenbury Mountain and thinking that I sure would not like to be stuck here! We later read that the area is part of the Bennington Triangle, the scene of terrifying mysteries involving people who disappeared there and were never found.

We have visited all the towns and cities, but our tour has not ended. There is so much more to see in Vermont and so many places we want to revisit. It has been a memorable history lesson for us that we are going to continue by visiting all of the state’s historic sites.”

Butch & Patricia Clark
Middlebury, VT

“My borther-in-law, Jeffrey Larkin, and I started our 251 quest on March 5, 2012. It was a great experience and Jefferey was a great cruise director. We took photos of each other in every town, kept a color-coded map of the towns we visited on each date, and a log which included the number

ONE JOURNEY LEADS TO ANOTHER

“I’ll let you in on a secret: my kids completed their 251 quests long before I did. Because of our son Seth’s interest in maps and geography, my husband Doug and I began taking him and our daughter Maria on 251 Club trips in 1988-89. (Maria became a Plus member at 5 years old.) When I became pregnant for our third child Silas, I had to bow out of long drives and cramped hotel rooms with bouncing children!

In 2015, I was ready to start my own journey through Vermont. Over the next year and a half, I eagerly plotted day jaunts and mega trips. Having been a Vermont school librarian, I concentrated on photographing town libraries and historic buildings to mark my progress. Our beautiful state surprises at every turn. I yielded to moose in Brunswick and spotted a bobcat stalking a great blue heron on thin ice in Saint Albans Town on New Year’s Day. Stannard appeared like Brigadoon at the crest of a hill, and a garage armored in license plates welcomed me to Victory. The leaves were just past peak and the afternoon shadows



long as I wound through Hartford, Pomfret and Barnard on October 14, 2017. It didn’t seem like an ending – more like a fresh beginning. And maybe I’ll take Silas along next time!”

Angelica Harris
Swanton, VT
Belmont, NC

of miles traveled, the weather, etc.

As a 9th generation Vermonter, it was wonderful to visit all of our state’s towns. We observed that most have good schools and well-kept cemeteries that represent the value Vermonters place on education and the respect they hold for those who have passed.

We decided to be on the road for fairly long days. After fourteen days, our journey came to an end in Plainfield on May 24, 2018. We recommend doing this to all who love Vermont!”

Gordon Wood
Waterbury, VT

Idabelle and Bert Mills of Newport, New Hampshire, discovered the 251 Club’s web site on line and decided to join. “Since I was born in St. Johnsbury and Idabelle in Northfield, and we already planned to have our ashes buried in Vermont, the idea of visiting all 251 cities and towns seemed appealing,” says Bert.

They started in Rockingham on April 6, 2016 and finished in South Kirby on September 15, 2017, logging 7,220 quest miles. The couple did not use GPS, opting

for the *DeLorme Atlas and Gazetteer* and a Vermont road map.

“It was satisfying that the Vermonters we met on the trips were friendly and interested in our effort,” recalls Bert. “They were always helpful too. Most of the people we stopped to chat with had either heard of the 251 Club, or thought it was a good idea. ‘Are you doing that 251 thing?’ a gentleman asked when we stopped on Main Street in Fletcher.”

Idabelle and Burt did not talk about their trips with their four Vermont families since they planned to surprise them with notebooks of their trip logs and a DVD of their 251 photographs for Christmas gifts. “Wouldn’t you know?” exclaimed Idabelle. “On our first trip to the Brattleboro area, we stopped at the Guilford Village Store, and were spotted by the stepmother of one of our intended gift recipients who wanted to know what we were doing in Guilford!”

It is not easy to keep secrets in Vermont.

Correction: In the Winter 2019 *Wayfarer*, David and Barbara Arey’s last name was misspelled as Avery. Apologies to these gracious members who did not bring the mistake to my attention. SL

**2019 ANNUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 13
CAPITOL PLAZA, MONTPELIER**

We are now accepting reservations for the 64th Annual Meeting, which will feature a presentation by *One Town at a Time* director Michael Leonard, who will show selected clips from the film.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Registration: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Silent Auction Bidding: 12:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Buffet Lunch: 1:00 p.m.
Business Meeting
Presentation: 2:00 p.m.

RESERVATIONS

- Advance registration is required. Reservation Deadline: October 7, 2019. Cancellation requests will be refunded in full through this date.
- Reservations are limited to the first 251 members and guests to register.
- Parking is free in the large lot behind the hotel.
- We are holding the \$30.00/person price (includes gratuity, tax, and service charge) to make the event accessible to as many members as possible. Please send a check to the 251 Club, 100 Gilead Brook Road, Randolph, VT 05060 and include the name(s) in the reserved party, with their town/state for nametags.

HOT LUNCH BUFFET

- Fresh Baked Rolls with Cabot Butter
 - Tossed Garden Salad
 - Two Entrees are included in the Buffet. You do not need to make a choice.
- Enjoy:
- Shrimp Scampi over Bowtie Pasta with Garlic Butter White Wine Sauce
- AND
- Grilled Chicken with Apple Cider Sauce & Fresh Diced Apples
 - Oven Roasted New Potatoes
 - Chef's Fresh Seasonal Vegetables
 - Carrot Cake
 - Freshly Brewed Vermont Coffee Company Coffee & Assorted Tazo Tea

SILENT AUCTION

This year's Silent Auction focuses on Vermont products and services. We appreciate the efforts of the club's Board of Directors who bring a diverse selection to the auction tables. If you would like to make a contribution to this annual fund-raiser, please contact me at sandy@sandylevesque.com, or call 802-234-5039.



Time To Renew Your Membership?

Please check the address panel of each *Wayfarer* to keep up with your dues. A message will appear only when your renewal is due. You may return the form below, or print/complete a copy of the membership form on vt251.com (link from the JOIN page).

- Membership Renewal** ___ \$10, one year ___ \$45, five years
- ___ \$2, Decal ___ \$8, Pin ___ \$5, Patch ___ \$18, Ball Cap
(shipping included for all of the above)
- ___ \$18, Vermont Travel Journal (plus \$4.00 shipping & handling)

First Name Last Name

Secondary Member

City or Town State Zip Code

Telephone

Email Address

Mail to: 100 Gilead Brook Road, Randolph, VT 05060

IN MEMORIAM



Carla Hodgdon of Bethel, Vermont at the October 14, 2018 Annual Meeting.

"I live to serve," was Carla Hodgdon's standard response to the many requests that came her way from family and friends, her church and community, as a Peace Corps nurse and university professor volunteer for two years in Honduras, and throughout her long career as

a public health nurse in California and Vermont. A member of the 251 Club with her husband David Hodgdon since 2003, Carla served on the club's Board of Directors from 2011 to 2018, for much of that time as Secretary. On April 20 she left us as she lived, with a positive attitude and at peace after a long struggle with cancer. In Carla's familiar words, "Onward and upward."

Betsy Berardinelli of Bristol, Vermont notified us that her husband, the Reverend Frank Berardinelli, passed away in November 2018. Betsy hopes to continue with the treks around Vermont that she and Frank enjoyed.

At the October 2018 Annual Meeting, Eleanor "Elly" McIntyre of Montpelier modestly accepted accolades for completing 251 visits age 93. She joined the club in 2011, embraced the challenge with her characteristic enthusiasm, and attended all of the annual luncheon meetings that followed with her daughter Anne Maxfield of Morrisville. We will miss Elly's warm presence.



SPECIAL EVENT

2019 ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, October 13

Capitol Plaza
Montpelier, VT



100 Gilead Brook Road
Randolph, VT 05060-9602

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251 FIDDLERS ON THE GREEN

The Northeast Fiddlers Association, Champlain Valley Fiddlers, and Young Tradition Vermont are collaborating to document a fiddler or fiddlers playing in every one of the state's 251 towns and cities in 2019. They need at least one dated photo of a fiddler(s) playing on the town green, at the meetinghouse, a dance, a grange hall, a Farmer's Market, or just in her/his own back yard. To learn more about the project visit fiddlersonthegreenvt.com. Photos may be mailed to Fiddlers on the Green, PO Box 644, Townshend, VT 05353.

Dear Friends @ 251,

Before my mother Helen Crossman passed in December 2015, we completed visits to mid- and southern Vermont towns with great delight. Now my sister Janet and I are intent on re-starting the adventure and finishing in our lifetime. Thank you for your amazing programs and for supporting Vermonters and others who find true pleasure and passion in exploring small towns and great places - without rules.

Sharon Crossman, Janet Crossman Goodwin,
and Helen Crossman (R.I.P.)

I have been a member of the 251 Club since the 1960s. My Massachusetts license plate is "251." My husband and I are not able to travel anymore but we love to hear all the news in the *Wayfarer*.

Marjorie Burns Ohs
Holden, MA

This from member David DeVarney of Bristol, Rhode Island, who set a new record for the club when he completed the goal of running through all of Vermont's 251 towns and cities in November 2017.

If you love running or walking in races as well as visiting Vermont's 251 towns and cities, please consider joining our Facebook group VT251: The Race Less Traveled. Our goal is to participate in various types of running and walking events that pass through all of Vermont's community borders.

Events of all types, including snowshoe trekking qualify. Obviously not every town in Vermont will have a race, so we periodically hold group challenge events in those communities that lack a race. You can find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/360157931155264/> or contact us by email at vt251theracelesstravel@gmail.com.

... from Lilacs

by Amy Lowell

*May is lilac here in New England,
May is a thrush singing "Sun up!" on a tip-top ash tree,
May is white clouds behind pine-trees
Puffed out and marching upon a blue sky.
May is a green as no other,
May is much sun through small leaves,
May is soft earth,
And apple-blossoms,
And windows open to a South Wind.
May is full light wind of lilac
From Canada to Narragansett Bay.*

The road beckons...
Sandy Levesque, Editor