

DUNBARTON NEWS

By Nora LeDuc



◆ **TOWN OFFICES CLOSED** **Reminder:** Due to Covid-19 Town Offices are closed to walk-in business per Board of Selectmen. Appointment Only for transactions that cannot be processed online or through the mail. Business hours on Thurs. are 8am to noon. Please call or email the Town Offices to check if the situation has changed before you go.

◆ **THE LIBRARY** “No-Contact” Pickups will be offered on their front porch, and Returns will be accepted in the red bin. Items go to quarantine for 72 hours, then are disinfected and checked in. Do not worry if they remain on your account. Please practice strong social distancing and wear a mask when picking up. Please, do not enter the building. You may ring the doorbell if you need assistance

◆ **THE DCC BOOK CLUB** will be reading *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison the month of January. Discussion on Zoom will be the first Thursday in February.

◆ **READ TO DOGS** will return *Virtually* on Thursday, January 28, from 3-4 PM, with Mr. T and Nancy. Murray and Liz are scheduled for Thursday, February 11, from 3-4 PM. Please call the library to schedule your child's 15 mins of reading.

◆ **VIRTUAL BOOK CHAT FOR ADULTS** is scheduled for Wednesday at noon February 17. Check with the library for the arrival of copies: Here if you need me by Kate Braestrup.

◆ **FIRE DEPARTMENT REMINDER** If you would like to burn brush you should have frozen precipitation that is 100 feet around the burn pile. Due to the recent rains the snow has melted in most areas. To acquire a permit, please go online to get one.

◆ **BOSTON RED SOX**
Enjoy a virtual journey with “*The Ultimate Presentation*” for Red Sox Nation! Presented by Marty Gitlin.



Thursday, February 18, 2021
via Zoom, 7:00 PM.

Contact the library for the link info or FMI. Take a fun and enlightening journey through Boston Red Sox history with the author of the *Ultimate Boston Red Sox Time Machine Book*. This presentation features videos and photographs of the greatest and most fascinating players, teams, events and moments in franchise history. The program also includes trivia questions for patrons to ponder and covers Sox history from the Royal Rooters, who launched Red Sox Nation, all the way to the four World Series championships and beyond. It will conclude with a question-and-answer period. Author Martin Gitlin will have autographed and personalized copies of his book available online following the program. Go Sox!



HAVE YOU HEARD OF CRISPR?

It may have crossed your consciousness in some article, blog, or news clip. It stands for **Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats**. Basically we are talking about gene editing, and I would like to consider some of the implications, both pro and con, and let you think through what your position will be on this topic. Gene editing is changing a gene in order to change the final outcome: such a change could eliminate a disease such as sickle cell disease or Duchenne muscular dystrophy. It could be used to make apples last longer in storage, to make a more nutritious ear of corn or to make humans stronger and more intelligent. It could be used to make viruses into very effective biological weapons. The list of possibilities continually grows, both the positive and the negative.

For this short article I will not discuss the agricultural pros and cons of genetically modified food or the weaponization of viruses. I'd rather have you think with me about the benefits to humans, the risk to humans and the underlying procedures and policies that must be accepted to achieve the results we may think we want to see. For starters, I would suspect that we all would like to see a disease like sickle cell disease or Duchenne muscular dystrophy eliminated. It may be possible to do that with “somatic gene editing”, meaning the editing would be done to the person with the genetic problem. Germ cell editing would try to fix the problem at the level of the sperm or egg with the anticipation that future generations of that cell line would be free of said disease. There are very few things about our body that are only controlled by one gene. I believe red hair is one of those unique things. In addition, one gene exerts control over the production of many different proteins. Hence the real unknowns are the unintended consequences of the altered gene guiding the production of several different proteins. And what about the many ‘other genes’ that might have to be altered to achieve the desired outcome? It is a very complex issue, but it is becoming ‘doable’. I suspect that you and I can agree that helping humanity by eliminating a serious disease is a good and noble cause. However, we might disagree on what risks and consequences we are willing to accept to get rid of any given disease.

But let's look at what can happen when we are not so altruistic. What about our human nature that thrives on striving for success, beauty, strength, intelligence? Call it ‘perfection’ as you envision it. Is aging a disease? Attempts of eugenics in the past to try to produce a superior race, a better human, have been determined by those who ‘defined’ what that better human should look like. Some have said that since evolution has no moral compass, and since we humans know what we want, we should control the development of the human race. Let us assume that technology continues to advance to levels where “we” can create the humans we desire. There would then be no need for love or compassion. We will be only interested in perfection. No disease, no suffering, and long, if not eternal life.

We will shop for our “designer children” because we want perfection. I'm not talking about the stuff of dystopian movies; this is a real potential in our future.

And then there are the questions of experimentation and procuring stem cells:

1. Are we going to continue to use embryos for experimentation and harvesting stem cells?
2. Do we create our own embryos for this work?
3. How many embryos shall we create?
4. How long will we keep the embryos alive?

Are we able and willing to use this science in ethical ways for good, or will we genetically manipulate ourselves out of humanity? I encourage you to read *The Birth-Mark* by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

