

## Lincoln Wind Tower May Require Act 250 Review

By Sabin Russell

A legal challenge to federal authority over projects on federal lands is looming in the winds above Lincoln Mountain.

The storm is brewing over a state Act 250 official's contention that the first phase of a plan to put giant wind turbine generators atop Lincoln Ridge falls under the jurisdiction of Vermont's land use and development law.

Federal officials are contesting the opinion of Michael Robinson, District 5 Environmental Commission coordinator, who determined that a Green Mountain Power Corporation project to place a weather tower at a proposed windmill site required an Act 250 permit.

Robinson told *The Voice* that he advised the utility that a permit was required because the project site is above 2,500 feet.

But Green Mountain National Forest Supervisor John McArdle has contested the opinion, saying that the U.S. Department of Energy-sponsored project on federal land is exempt from state regulation.

"I'm not trying to pick a fight with the state," said McArdle. "But except where specifically covered by law, a federal project on federal land does not have to meet state permit requirements."

Parties in the growing controversy over the windmill project expect that the Vermont Environmental Board will schedule a hearing on the dispute and make a declaratory ruling on whether Act 250 applies to the project.

A ruling against the Forest Service would surely be challenged by federal lawyers. However, the attorney for a citizens' group opposing the windmills said he would file a court challenge if the Environmental Board rules in favor of the Forest Service.

Richard Taylor, attorney for the Save Lincoln Mountain Committee, said "it could be devastating for the Forest Service if a federal judge determines that many Forest Service activities should be reviewed under state land use laws."

Please Turn to Page 13

## State Seeks Room for Training School Kids

Sputtered by a lawsuit pending in federal court, state officials are shopping at high schools from North Clarendon to Vergennes for classroom space for 40 residents of the Brandon Training School.

Commissioner of Education Robert Withey in recent weeks has visited the superintendents of seven school districts along Route 7 in hopes of finding room.

Sixteen of the youngsters were taught last term in classroom space made available at the Vermont State Police Academy in Pittsford. Department of Mental Health plans originally

called for all 40 of the Brandon high school-age residents to be taught in Pittsford, but after state legislators complained about the arrangement the number of students bused to the academy was reduced to 16.

The legislature directed the Department of Education and the Department of Mental Health to find more adequate classroom space for the students.

That directive was given impetus by a lawsuit filed in federal court on behalf of the students by the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Law Project.

Please Turn to Page 19



FOAM ON FIRST: A flying Foam Former beats the throw to first by a Burnham infielder. The action was part of the first annual Jeff Burnham Memorial Tournament, and there are more pictures on the center spread.

## Vergennes Emergency Shelter Gets Green Light

By Sabin Russell

Backers of a plan to operate an "emergency shelter" in a Vergennes rooming house cleared a major hurdle last week when the city Planning Commission agreed that a conditional use permit was not required for the project.

On July 1, a non-profit corporation called the John W. Graham Emergency Shelter Service will purchase an eight-bedroom rooming house at 69 Main Street in Vergennes and make it available to low-income people who find themselves temporarily without a home.

Although city officials grumbled about the proposal, they concurred with the opinion of zoning administrator Ken Theiss, who said that no permit should be required because the use of the building would remain the same.

That was also the opinion of shelter attorney William Meub. The lawyer explained that his client intended to operate the building in the same fashion as current owner Wilfred Pollender, except that the new organization planned to hire a live-in supervisor. "We can run a more efficient rooming house out of it," Meub told the commission. "There is no supervisor there now."

Please Turn to Page 7



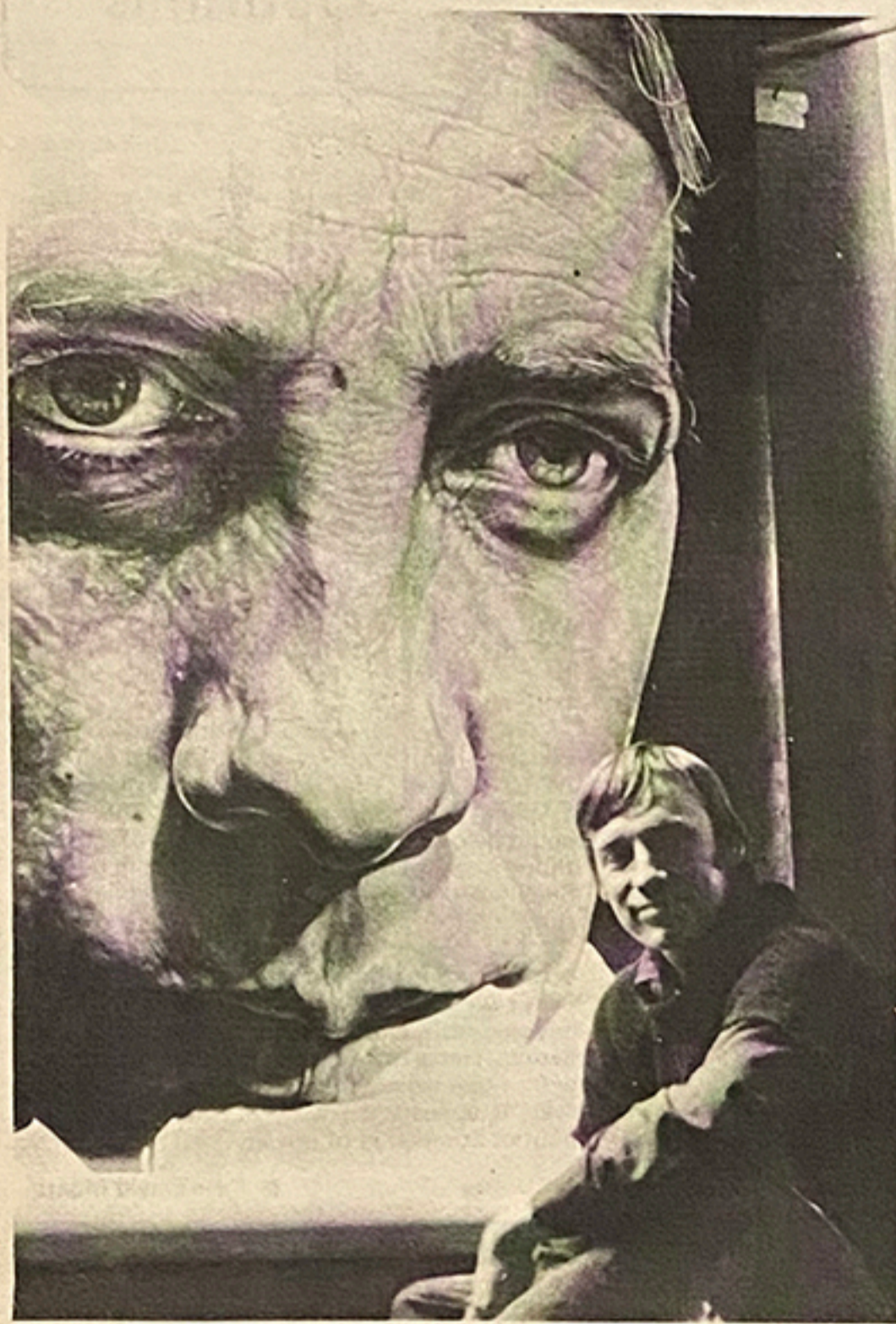
MELVIN HAWLEY: How many would live at shelter?



LOOKING AT YOU: Bill Ramage is a Sudbury artist who has nearly completed a massive self-portrait. Meet him on Page 3.

## A Close Look

Bill Ramage self-portraits challenge the way we see



RAMAGE AND RAMAGE: When his pencil drawing is unrolled it dominates his living room.

By David Moats

The shades are drawn. His pencils are arrayed like ammunition on a table to his right. He stares into a mirror at his left then turns toward his work: a self-portrait that stretches from ceiling to floor and stares into the room with gloomy intensity.

It is Bill Ramage. Ramage is an energetic, outgoing artist and Castleton State College faculty member, who lives on a dirt road in Sudbury with his wife Debbie, their daughter Zoe, their dog Puddin', and a motley assortment of cats.

He also lives with his monumental drawing, which, when it is unfurled, dominates his living room. It is the third in a series of large, detailed self-portraits that he has done, and he has already spent 900 to 1,000 hours on it. His previous self-portrait, which features a bearded Ramage, who oddly enough is wearing earphones, was purchased by Ohio State University for \$6,000.

The drawing is not what one would call flattering. The Ramage that stares out is creased by wrinkles and pores. Every pit and mole is present, and each hair is distinct. Yet as Ramage observed, "I'm drawing less than half of what I see."

His intention clearly was not to draw Ramage the Handsome, or Ramage the Cheerful. He is simply drawing the Ramage he sees every day under controlled conditions in his mirror. And like it or not, the Ramage he sees has as many pores and wrinkles

as the rest of us. Staring at one's mirror image from three inches away can be a disillusioning experience, and Ramage's painting represents more than anything an effort to see without illusion.

The 38-year-old artist was raised in Rhode Island, studied art at the Philadelphia Museum College of Art and at the University of Massachusetts and taught at UMass and Ohio State before moving to Vermont nine years ago. Since then he has done all kinds of things: working at a movie theater in Rutland, teaching at the Weeks School. For two years he has taught at Castleton.

As a boy, he recounted, "I always drew, all the time. When I was young, I used to be compulsive about it," he said with a smile. "Now I'm obsessive about it."

Ramage, whose face seems younger, more boyish, than is reflected in his drawing, brings a certain intensity to his work, and to his play. He admits he is a softball "fanatic" who plays four times a week in Rutland. Softball is "just an indulgence," he said, but he acknowledged, "When I'm playing softball, I forget I ever drew." But he does draw, and the absorbing project that he has been working on since last July is almost complete. Yet after all the work completed so far, Ramage contended, "The drawing itself doesn't amount to a hill of beans. It's the whole activity that caused the drawing that's important."

This activity has involved an exploration of the nature of percep-

tion, of the process of seeing. He argues that we perceive only a fraction of what is there, only enough to allow us to function. His drawing, therefore, is intended to be more than just "likeness."

His self-portraits began two years ago when he abandoned his work as a sculptor in an effort to better capture the detailed surface textures that stone cannot adequately reflect.

As he continued drawing, his portraits became bigger. "The main reason they got larger," he explained, "was I kept getting closer to the mirror." As he stared at the mirror, he found more and more "information" to put into the drawing.

Yet from day to day the information changed. He controlled fluctuations in exterior lighting by keeping his shades drawn. Nevertheless, on a warm day, he said, his skin warms up and its texture changes. In addition, his lips look different, depending on whether they are wet or dry. He was even startled to discover that the lines on his face change from day to day.

He also had to decide on whether he was going to draw his face as seen by his left eye or by his right eye. Each eye sees the face from a slightly different angle, and because his portrait is a left-eyed view, the face seems slightly turned to the right.

Looking at his own face in the mirror, therefore, was in a way like watching a motion picture. Even the rods and cones in the retina of his eye fluctuated in the degree of their activity, thus altering the detail that he saw. One faint, small "c" shape on his forehead seemed to appear and disappear when he looked for it, which a colleague at Castleton ascribed to variations in the activity of his eyes.

But because he must eventually decide on how to draw his lips or his pores, he said, "the whole thing becomes a lie. I'm making this all up. I tell myself I try not to draw anything I don't see, but..."

So what will become of that giant portrait with the penetrating stare? "I can't imagine anyone wanting that hanging in their house," he said. But he added, "When I think I might be making art, the last thing in my list of

priorities is their living room."

After two years of studying it, Bill Ramage has not tired of his face. "I don't have to pay myself," he said. "I don't have to talk to myself when I'm not in the mood. It's just an available thing. Whenever I want to work, it's there."

His next work, he said, will be a further exploration of the way he sees his face. The left side of the face will be drawn as seen from the left eye, and the right side as seen from the right eye. As a result, 120 percent of his face will be visible.

His enthusiasm for his work is infectious, and in his view, his own professional activities as an artist are his main qualification as a teacher. The college experience is unique, he said, because the teachers bring their own "professional involvement" before the students for the students to exploit. "I'd like to think that if I wasn't working, if I wasn't making things, I wouldn't teach," he said.

The struggle to survive in Vermont has not always been easy, though Bill said, "Complacency is the antithesis of trying to make art."

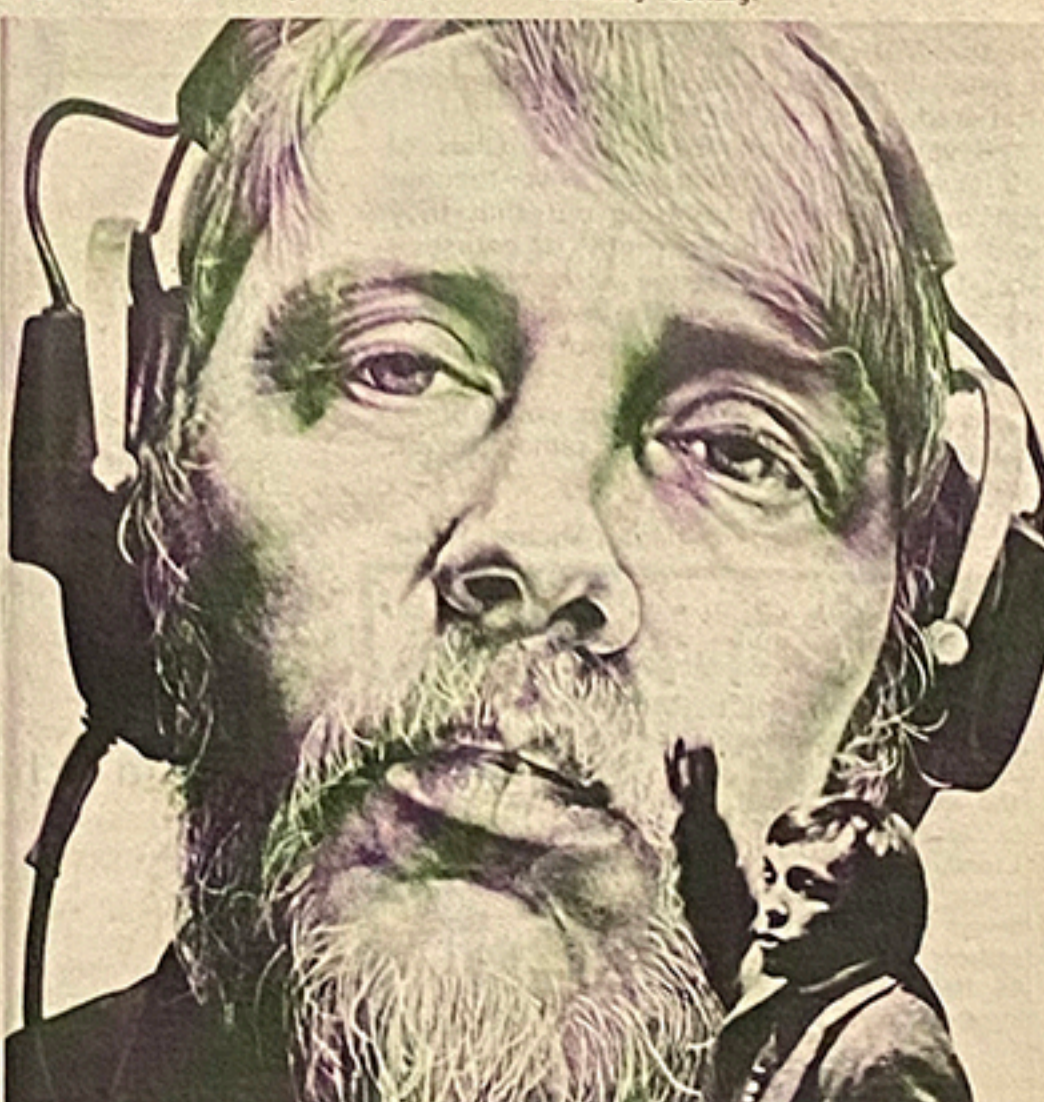
He is not complacent. As he works his mind whirls and on the wall above the desk that holds his pencils he scribbles his thoughts on a long piece of white paper.

Next to a magazine photograph of Picasso at his easel, he has written "The End," signifying his belief that the current Picasso exhibit in New York is a "bookmarker" for Western civilization, signaling the end of an era that began with the Renaissance 500 years ago.

Ramage wonders, laughing, whether he, with his shades drawn on his dirt road in Sudbury, is qualified to recognize a new era. And he is not averse to laughing at himself as an artist.

He recalled that his eight-year-old daughter Zoe was asked at school what she had learned by working with a visiting artist. "Nothing," she said. "I live with one."

Yet if new eras are heralded by observant artists, Bill Ramage is not likely to miss the latest one if it occurs. He is certainly looking.



AN EARLIER RAMAGE: This drawing was purchased by Ohio State University for \$6,000.

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