



The *Weathervane*

Fall

A Quarterly for and from West Gardiner

2020

Post-Vietnam Era Veterans ~ Michael Collins, MSgt, USAF (Ret) by Debra Couture

Mike had always considered enlisting in the military and there were not a lot of jobs around at that time. However, he also mentions that his wife’s stepfather (who didn’t like him very much at the time) sat him down with a case of beer and told him he should take the beer and enlist into the Air Force. “If you and my daughter are still together after that, you have my blessing to get married”. So Mike took the beer and enlisted in the Air Force. Of course, his step father-in-law didn’t know that he had planned to join the military and was already engaged to his stepdaughter at that time...

Mike enlisted in the United States Air Force on January 7, 1994. He attended basic training at Lackland Air Force Base (AFB), San Antonio, Texas and then went on to Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas where he received training as an Aircraft Mechanic [Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) - 2A]. Over the next 8 years, Mike was stationed at the Special Operations Command at Hurlburt Field AFB, Elgin AFB, and Duke Field. All these bases are located in the Florida panhandle. Wanting to go to a new location, he requested orders out of Florida. He received orders to Elmendorf AFB, Anchorage, Alaska, where he worked in his AFSC as an aircraft mechanic. In 2006, Mike and his family were transferred to Cheyenne, Wyoming. He was attached to the Wyoming Air National Guard, where he was tasked with setting up an active duty unit within the Air National Guard. Mike spent over 6 years in Wyoming and flew on many missions with the unit. He deployed 5 times to Iraq while attached to this unit. In 2012, Mike received orders to McGuire AFB, New Jersey. It was at McGuire that Mike moved from working on C-130s to KC-10s and C-17s. Over the years, Mike advanced from Section Chief to Flight Chief to Air Mobility Chief. Mike retired on November 1, 2014.



He enjoyed all that he did in the Air Force and is very glad that he enlisted. He was honored to serve his country. The only thing that he would change if he had to do it all over again would be to go to college first, not for the reason of being in command, but for the financial stability. He would advise someone who was thinking about joining the military to either finish college first or start college courses as soon as they finish basic training, then apply for commissioning. Mike completed his Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics after retiring. He now works at the VA Togus. Mike, thank you for your service to our country.

Not just for the birds ~ by S.E. Costell

We are now in the midst of Fall, and although it seems that all the flowers have bloomed and passed, many are now producing seeds for the next season. Occasionally there is a flower whose seeds are edible, I refer here to the sunflower. You may have some seeds in your bird feeder, but they are not just for the birds! Nutritionists have long considered sunflower seeds to be the perfect food. They contain selenium, which plays an important role in antioxidant functions, vitamin E, and foliate which help the heart stay healthy, and many other vitamins and minerals such as, copper, magnesium, fiber, iron and zinc. Aside from a food source Native American Indians cultivated the sunflower for use as oil, medical ointments, fabric dyes and body paint. Just one of the many gifts from nature to be thankful for.



Wreaths Across America - West Gardiner Event ~ by Debra Couture

National Wreaths Across America Day will take place on Saturday, December 19th, 2020. Despite COVID-19, there are still plans to decorate the West Gardiner Veteran's Memorial and to lay wreaths on the Veteran's graves in the 7 cemeteries in town. The ceremony is planned for 8 AM next to the Town Office. The ceremony is planned for outside. If the weather is bad like last year, we will move inside the fire station. We are looking for volunteers who can help to decorate the cemeteries. Only 1 or 2 people will be designated for each cemetery so that we can maintain the social distancing requirements. Please contact Debbie Couture at 582-3897 if you can help with the decorating.

We are in DESPERATE need for more wreaths to be purchased for this special day.

There are over 190 Veterans buried in the 7 West Gardiner cemeteries. Last year there were enough wreaths to decorate approximately 115 graves. It would be wonderful if all the Veterans had a wreath on their grave this year. We have been set up as a non-profit this year for the wreath purchase. That means that for every 2 wreaths purchased, we will receive 1 wreath free. That is 3 for the price of 2. Wreaths are \$15.00 each.

You can make out your check to Wreaths Across America and note West Gardiner in the memo block. The checks can be left at the Town Office or mailed to the Town Office at 318 Spears Corner Road, West Gardiner, ME 04345. If you want your wreath designated for a specific Veteran who is buried in one of the 7 cemeteries, please also note that on the check. You can also purchase wreaths online for the West Gardiner cemeteries directly from Wreaths Across America at www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org/ME0073. Thank you all very, very much.



Beginnings and Endings ~ by Valerie Kenney

Everyone always says that high school will be over before you know it; that it will be over in the blink of an eye. No one ever believes that though. Why would they? It's four years of tough work and one of the hardest stages of life. But it really does fly by if you take it for granted. I'm now a senior in high school and it feels like only a few months passed since I first walked through the lobby doors as a freshman. There is actually a fun juxtaposition to my first day: when I was a freshman I was so anxious and nervous, but then I went to the library and got introduced to the librarians and my anxiety calmed and I felt okay. Three years later and once again I was feeling very anxious about going back (especially with COVID) but then I went to the library. The librarians happily gave me air hugs and told me how much they missed me. I spent the rest of the period helping them shelve books and talking about upcoming projects. Time hasn't changed the library's effect on me. I have grown so much since that first day and I'm just now realizing it. Enjoy your years in high school because it will be over in the blink of an eye. So live in this moment because it won't last long. It will be worth it, I promise.

I know for a fact that I am in for a busy year. Not only do I have to keep track of all my classes much more closely, but I also have additional expectations resting on my shoulders. I am in charge of making sure I have all my credits, that I either am taking or have taken the required classes and earned 60 community service hours. It feels like I have all these new expectations from all the staff because I am now a senior who should be a "practically perfect" student with good grades. I do not want to let them down. If I do something they do not approve of, I know that they will be proud, no matter what I choose. All the teachers and guidance counselors are there to help me find my path into young adulthood (scary) and I know that no matter what I decide, they will help and support me. Having someone tell you that any path you choose is the right one if it fits all your needs is a priceless gift, freely given.

I Just Got to Thinking ~ by Mert Hickey

Norm and Dan coached Little League together for many years. Dan told Norm he wouldn't be helping the next season because he had too much stuff to do. Come spring, Norm called Dan and said, "Practice starts tomorrow." Dan said, "I told you last year I couldn't do it." Norm said, "No time to tinker. See you at the field. The little ones will be waiting." So Dan went to the field. During the season Norm promised three kids they could be the starting pitcher the next Saturday. Dan wondered how Norm was going to handle that. Saturday came and Norm announced he was going to sit on the bench and it was Dan's duty to handle the game. He had three kids looking at him, big-eyed and eager. I don't know how Dan handled it. He never said. I hope he used all three. Norm was quite an athlete in his day. If you hit him, he spun away every time. And he was one of the best and most faithful fans of Gardiner teams.

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Years ago, my Uncle Lloyd got invited to go up country with the Gardiner Snowmobile Club. He was looking forward to a great time riding, his wife on the back. He had a Ski-doo one-lunger that could travel about 15 mph. They all got to the parking lot, unloaded, and fired up their machines. The blue smoke from all the snowmobiles and the churned-up snow choked pretty much everyone. My aunt and uncle just stood there and then got on their machine and slow-rode through the woods.

From The Porch ~ by Mike Wing "Coydog"

Last month, just before dark, Susan called out, "Coyote coming up the road." It trotted along the edge of the yard and up toward the woods. I opened the back door and yelled, "Git outta here." It never broke its easy lope. It looked right at me, arrogant, maybe amused. And it was not a coyote. Long-legged, shortish tan hair, and tall ears, an animal I'd never seen before. The first reference Google gave me was a picture that could have been taken in our yard just then.

Coydogs started showing up early in the 1900's when the wolves were hunted regularly in Maine. Nature hates a vacuum, and when that predator was gone, another took its place. This hybrid is the result of a male coyote coupling with a domestic female canine in heat. The offspring benefit in size and elusiveness from both parents. Experts argue about how many may exist, but at least one is in town, residing or passing through.

Because coydogs became established in Maine, they are considered a native species. Like their forebears, they will breed and hunt and wake you up at night with their yips and howls. In my five-second experience, I figure they differ in one way from the coyote. No fear. Coyotes race away when encountering a human. This one never sped up when I yelled. Maybe it had never been shot at or pursued. Also, it was much longer and taller, the size of a medium hound or Lab.

So on we go in West Gardiner, becoming home to unusual animals, opossum, turkey vulture, gray fox, coydog. Call it global warming or a simple shift in population. Call it the nature of the beast. I like seeing new breeds and hope we can all adapt. Hey, when Susan calls out, "Zebra in the road," I'll come running.



West Gardiner Awarded 2 COVID-19 Grants by Debra Couture

The Town of West Gardiner recently applied for and was awarded 2 grants totaling over \$4000. One grant is through FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) under the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program. This grant is in the amount of \$2240.00. Specific COVID-19 prevention items that can be purchased with this federal funding include facemasks, gloves, eye protection, and protective suits for the West Gardiner Fire Department.

The second grant is from the State of Maine, Department of Health and Human Service, Center for Disease Control (DHHS-CDC) and is in the amount of \$2238.00. The specific items that can be purchased from these federal funds include CDC posters for West Gardiner businesses and COVID-19 prevention supplies for Town of West Gardiner buildings and staff. These supplies include cleaning supplies, gloves, and facemasks.

West Gardiner Historical Society Update by Debra Couture

The West Gardiner Historical Society (WGHS) is looking for new members. The WGHS meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM at the West Gardiner Auxiliary Hall. The next scheduled meetings will be on November 18, 2020 and December 16, 2020. We are hopeful that there will be a new building in the WGHS's future.

The Town of West Gardiner recently held a special town meeting that reviewed and approved the purchase of a piece of property that may be used to eventually provide a building for the WGHS. That purchase has not taken place yet, but a purchase price has been agreed to with the seller and the town will be able to purchase the property when it is available for sale.

"Learning From The Birds" ~by Susan Emmet

I'm watching Cold Creek shimmer through the trees. The power just went out, but the kitchen window provides a panoramic view of maple, pine and apple trees. The bird feeders sit right outside the window. Since last spring, gold and purple finches, cat and cow birds, robins, cardinals, blue jays, phoebes, titmice, swallows, woodpeckers, flickers and chickadees have gorged on seeds. Small sunflowers popped up from cast-off seeds and chipmunks, squirrels, turkeys and woodchucks grabbed what they could. I know it's an "easy" analogy, but the behavior of birds and people echo each other.

I try to keep track of things I notice around town that are kind, positive, helpful, giving. Signs remind us to pay attention, to be kind, to help. Support the HTS food drives, the Tiger Food Pantry at the high school, the sharing of garden bounty (and canning supplies!) and celebrate the opening of most of the transfer station's services. Find offers on the WG public Facebook page (some free) for goods and services like yard cleanup, pick up/delivery, furniture, appliances, RVs, apartments, clothing, masks, tutoring, home- and childcare, library programs, ride sharing, new farm stands, chickens and coops galore, small engine repair and landscaping businesses, help during power outages, and referrals for plowing, hair styling, dental care, hay bales, bakeries and the like.

So where do the birds fit in? We're all part of the ecosystem and share in its upkeep, knowingly or not. Smaller birds knock seeds to the ground for the larger ones, freely offering their musical messages. Come, eat. Let the others know. Don't be afraid of the chipmunks or squirrels. Share. See the beauty, the color and texture of the world. Grow hope whenever you can. We are not birds of one feather and our differences grant us strength when we allow them to flourish.

Around Town & Announcements

Election Day! Voting— Tuesday Nov. 3, 2020, from 8-8 at the fire station. Remember the ballot is two sided and ranked choice voting is available. Masks are encouraged.

Dog licenses are due. A late fee will be assessed after Jan. 31, 2021.

You can now register your snowmobiles at the town office or online at Inland Fisheries mefishwildlife.com Tel. 207-287-8000 Transfer Station-Winter hours- Monday 9-5, Wednesday 9-5 and Saturday 7-3. The Transfer Station is closed Nov. 11th for Veterans Town office will be closed Nov. 11th for Veterans Day and Nov. 25th and 26th for Thanksgiving.

The West Gardiner Senior Citizens have enjoyed 3 meals from Dave's Diner. Thank you to the town for making this possible for our seniors.

The West Gardiner Gardeners meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Auxiliary Hall. For the winter months, a concurrent Zoom option will be available. This winter we are sharing books, films, and lectures about gardening. All are welcome; masks required. And don't miss our Card Sale, happening in the Auxiliary Hall on Election Day from 8 am to 6 pm with appropriate Covid-19 precautions.

The WG Rod & Gun Club will not be holding the annual Hunter breakfasts this year. We look forward to being able to do it again in the future.

Helen Thompson School Updates by Kady Gould

The launch of the 2020-21 school year has been challenging and rewarding! Operating in the yellow/hybrid model involves having students attend school in person in two different cohorts. All students in grades PreK-5 have been placed in either Cohort A, B or C. Cohort A students attend school in person on Mondays and Tuesdays. Cohort B students attend school in person on Thursdays and Fridays. Cohort A and B students log into their virtual classrooms on the remote, at-home learning days. They watch lessons, read articles and complete activities or assignments in their virtual classrooms. Cohort C students have opted to enroll in the MSAD 11 Remote Learning Academy, and those students (in grades K-5) are engaged in learning Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Friday in virtual classrooms. Live instruction for Cohort C is limited, following district guidelines for screen time at all levels:

Grade Level	Screen Time Daily	Independent Learning Time
PreK	¼ hour	½ hour
K	1.5 hours	1.0 hour
Grade 1	1.5-2.0 hours	1.0 hour
Grades 2 - 3	2.0 hours	1.5 hours
Grades 4 - 5	3.0 hours	1.5 hours

On Wednesdays, teachers participate in professional development, meet with grade level colleagues, offer office hours to students or families reaching out for support, and plan instruction for each cohort of students. Deep cleaning of the school building also takes place on Wednesdays, in between the school days for each in-person cohort.

Our teachers are working tirelessly to support student learning in the classroom and when they are learning from home or daycare. Teachers are incorporating daily movement breaks and outside mask breaks, along with learning time spent in our new outdoor classrooms! As a school team, our HTS staff remains student-centered and committed to creating learning experiences that are meaningful, authentic and purposeful!



HTS Staff Kindergarten Screening



Outdoor classroom donated by Kyle & Patty Peckham

The Weathervane Staff sincerely thanks all of HTS staff for their dedication to our students during these challenging times.

Cobbosseecontee Snowmobile Club News

A huge thank you to the residents of West Gardiner who have donated their returnables (cans/bottles) to the snowmobile club trail fund. Donations can be dropped off in the specially marked box at the transfer station. The 2020-2021 snowmobile season is underway. Crews meet at the Auxiliary Hall every Sunday at 8 a.m. With 25+ miles of trails that connect to surrounding towns of Litchfield, Farmingdale, Gardiner and Hallowell, there is a lot of work to be done before snow flies, appreciate any and all help. Any concerns with the trails or if you would like to help, contact David Cogley, Trailmaster, at 724-7041. Club meetings are held the 1st & 3rd Tuesday each month at 7 p.m. On the 3rd Tuesday a potluck supper is served prior to the meeting at 6:15 p.m. Memberships are: \$30 for family, \$35 for business, \$10 for associate (member of another club as well). Check us out on our website at www.cobbosseeconteesnowmobileclub.com for updates on trail conditions and club news. If you have a student that is in need of community service hours, we can help by putting them to work on trail maintenance, such as clearing brush, contact David Cogley, Trailmaster or Chuck McFarland, President. In 2019 West Gardiner had 179 individual households registered snowmobiles; of that number only 20 are members in the snowmobile club. Pitch in and help us with the trail maintenance, many hands make the work lighter for all.



WEST GARDINER NEWSLETTER

The Weathervane

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The Weathervane is a non-profit quarterly informational newsletter intended to be unbiased, non-denominational, non-partisan, accurate, and enjoyable.

Schedules of town events, organizations and activities as well as local businesses will be listed in the spring issues.

The Weathervane welcomes story ideas from our readers.

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