



# The *Weathervane*

Summer

A Quarterly for and from West Gardiner

2020

Happy Birthday Maine!

West Gardiner Bicentennial Celebration Luncheon—March 14, 2020



On March 14, 2020, West Gardiner joined many towns across the State of Maine to celebrate our State's March 15, 2020 Bi-Centennial. As we all know, our world changed dramatically during the week of March 9, 2020. The lunch did take place on the 14<sup>th</sup> at the Fire Station and a few residents turned out. Of course, this was before social distancing and masks. There were 26 in attendance and the food was great. Judy Marsh made her famous homemade biscuits, too! We will have large gatherings with happy times in the future. Stay safe and well.



## Living & Working During a Pandemic by Debra Couture

The world has definitely changed in the past few months. Our teachers are teaching from home, using Google to communicate with their students. Our parents are helping their children with lesson plans that they pick up at Helen Thompson School each week or students receive via email. Our first responders and medical personnel are working long hours to help save lives. Our grocery stores are open so that we can get the food and necessities that we need. We have all been staying home as much as possible to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep us all safe. We applaud and thank everyone for the great work that everyone is doing to help get us through this crisis.

In our historically fast paced world, some of us have rediscovered cooking, are taking time to read more or finish that book we started months or years ago, are putting together puzzles, or just getting to know our family members better. I also believe all who have children in school and even many who don't have gained a greater appreciation for our teachers.

The signs that the students, staff, and our community have posted at Helen Thompson School and on the sides of our roads (and on our school buses) remind us of how we all need to work together, help each other, and be kind and patient during these trying times. Some signs make you smile or laugh and some remind you that there are better days ahead. Thank you to all who have helped to make our days better with these signs and all their kind words and gestures.

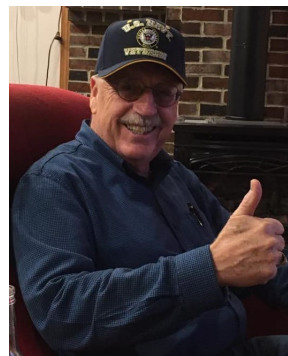
## Tales from West Gardiner,

### Maine with Maine Humorist—Gary Crocker

Gary has been making us all laugh for many years, but now his daily "Tales from West Gardiner, Maine" are really important. We not only smile, but also learn some very important facts about Maine and our town.

You can find Gary on Facebook every day. He started his tales at the beginning of our quarantine. Today was Day 60. All you have to do is put his name in the Facebook search field and there he is.

If you do not have Facebook but have a computer, just google "Gary Crocker – Tales from West Gardiner, Maine" and you will get to his channel. The video pops right up. I tried it and it works great. If you have not had the opportunity to watch any of his tales yet, you can see all of them right there. As Gary said today,



"Kind is the new cool."

During these difficult times, we know that every day may not be good, but there is good in every day. Gary, thank you for giving us some good times every day.



### Tiny Diary, March-May 2020 ~ Susan Emmet

It's raining again today and the force of Nature continues to comfort and astound me despite so missing being in the presence of family and friends. A bi-weekly trip to the grocery store just doesn't do it.

I'm now 71. My mind has been full, remembering polio, AIDS, SARS and MERS and Ebola, Zika and malaria and all kinds of other bacterial and viral plagues, let alone historical pandemics. But this one is different somehow because it is coupled with bewildering fear. We need to connect, but also isolate in radical ways. How do we do that?

And there are so many questions, old and new. Dire climate change? Local, county, state and federal elections? The vast number of people losing jobs, applying for unemployment programs? The plight of small businesses? The incredible lack of PPE and testing regimens and supplies for workers on all fronts? The crying need for people to get out and see each other, to go to beaches and parks and campgrounds or summer rentals or homes? The pandemic's tragic affects on nursing and congregate housing? The huge gap in people's ability to pay for food and rent and mortgages, the clear fault lines of economic inequality? The roaring lies circulated on social media about treatments and timelines and "reopening?" The effects of distance learning on students and staff?

And then I see how much people are stepping up nationally, state-wide and locally. Food pantries popped up. People check on each other and provide services for those who can't get out easily. Meals-On-Wheels. Chrysalis and Faith food pantries. MSAD 11's ten pick-up sites. Teachers checking in on an array of students at risk in their homes. Facebooking to offer materials, masks, services. Call lines set up by Rep. Charlotte Warren and Sen. Shenna Bellows to connect people in need with services. Our federal elected officials also offering help with their votes and advocacy. Local officials staying in touch as best they can to monitor and offer help. The ability to use the transfer station albeit in altered form.

On walks in our little neighborhood, we see people planting and clearing brush and helping each other with tasks, masked and at a distance as necessary.

We can't let up. We must hope. We must follow guidelines and avoid conspiracy claims and "theories" of all kinds. We must support each other as we've always tried to do, but on a larger scale. The only thing we know for sure now is that it all changes daily. It's hard to keep track of all the claims and changes. It's hard to clear a cluttered mind. Find ways to laugh and cry and laugh again. And hope! Hope that after the virus threat subsides, we'll continue to expect more of each other, to look out after each other, to listen well and think, "Yes, we can figure this out."

## Social Distancing by Hannah M. Rose

As I look at my world each day I can't help but recognize the drastic need of adaptation. Nothing in our society was ready for such an event such as our recent pandemic. Coming from a young adult's perspective, I offer an alternative outlook towards our future as humankind.

I can't help but feel this pandemic is a reminder from our Mother, the Earth and Universe, that we as a human race need to come together in order to protect our home. A reminder that we have been on a cycle of constant stimulation that has led to a spiritual and emotional disconnect. If we all take the blame away from the equation it is easy to see our main concern lies in our global disconnect from each other. We may be "connected" using social media platforms, but are we truly connected to others, or more importantly - are we connected to ourselves?

Most people's day- to -day lives entail such a hectic and stressful load that many of us get caught in the cycle of work, eating, and little sleep. Ask yourself when the last time was that you just took a day off work to enjoy your own company? When the last day was that you focused on a long term achievement of yours? For me, it was rare. I am a full-time student and a full -time employee at a Medical Practice. I couldn't remember the last time I really gave thought to my next day's plans. I got caught in a cycle of reaction to the responsibilities I had. My mental and spiritual health had gotten a little funky, if you will. Then the pandemic hit. I still had to go to work mind you, while also moving into online courses to finish the semester. However, for the most part, the world came to a complete halt.

I'd have to say the fact that our entire world didn't have plans for when a pandemic hit was utterly shocking. But, then I realized, this could be a historical moment in time. This could be our opportunity to put all the past to rest, create a society where its people can enjoy their lives alongside working. Rebuild systems that are not able to adapt post pandemic. That's when I realized the silver lining really is always inside chaos. The most important part to take away from this event in time is to remember how important spending time with your family is. By family, I mean anyone you surround yourself with that you care for. To spend time with friends, and to reconnect with yourself so that you may hear your intuitions.

From the Front Porch— "What It Is" — Mike Wing

Some events become landmarks in our lives, like a new home or a new life partner. "Remember before we moved here," or "After I met you"? Turning points are permanent. "During the Plague" is the new one. That's what I'll call the Corona Virus. Before the Plague, we shook hands and shared hugs at funerals. We waited for school busses as the local children hustled on board. We walked into a store and browsed the shelves. I miss those pleasures, even waiting for the bus to load. Gone.

Susan and I are cautious, sanitizing purchases and doorknobs and reluctantly staying six feet away from our children and grandchildren. Air hugs just don't cut it. Susan has learned to "Zoom," and we see the faces, hear the voices, laugh the laughs. Not the same. Remember the days of normal. Forget that.

The wheel turns a little each day. Remember when getting the firewood in started in July or September. Take a ride around town and see what staying at home encourages. Piles of split wood are drying, gardens looked tilled and larger, lawns are mowed early, and brush has been trimmed and hauled away. Remember when kids carried those clunky backpacks to and from school? Children's spines will adjust to better postures as we all adjust in our own ways every day.

The discombobulated economy and society are stressful, even disastrous, but people around here seem capable of living as best they can, facing up to the strain of doing with less. Our road is a walkway for strangers who smile and wave. Friends stop by to say howdy, maybe to check on us because they think we are old. Isolation is not the same as fear. Solitude isn't anger. Peace is within, little grasshopper. If this sounds hopeful and optimistic, it is.

## Zoom! Zoom! Learning during COVID-19

### Gardiner Area Students write about their remote learning experiences

Isaac Boyce, Thanos Dacus, Xandra Malinowski, Derek Malinowski



Derek Malinowski is a freshman at the University of Southern Maine.

I miss the friends that I have made this year and playing lacrosse. We practiced every day and the season had just started when we were sent home.

All of our assignments are posted on "blackboard". We got all the assignments at the beginning of the semester for some courses and some professors posted the assignments weekly with deadlines for each assignment – usually about 5 days after the posting. Some classes were also held via "Zoom" meetings and assignments were given at the end of that meeting.

The hardest part is being motivated to complete them on time. The professors set deadlines but were very flexible about when they were passed in. The reason for that is because when we are on campus, the professors know that we have good internet connections but they do not know each student's situation concerning internet connectivity when they are home. Therefore, they have been generous about giving extra time to anyone who needs it. I have had to make sure that I completed every assignment on time, even though I know that the professors would let me have extra time. I could not procrastinate. We also had the option to choose how we wanted to be graded – either pass/fail or a number grade for each class. I chose some of each.

The school year ended at the beginning of May. I still keep in contact with my friends, but I am looking forward to getting back to classes in the fall and seeing everyone.

Xandra Malinowski is a sophomore at GAHS.

I miss my friends. I also miss drama. I had a part in Princess Bride that was to be performed in April.

I get my assignments through Google classroom. The assignments are completed digitally. We receive groups of assignments, usually late on Fridays or over the weekend. They are due by the end of that week. We have class meetings through Google meetings at the beginning of the week so that we can review the assignments and ask questions during the meetings. The teachers are great about having individual meetings if you ask for them, too. The most difficult thing about working from home is staying motivated to complete the assignments. There are many distractions, including the pets.



Xandra Malinowski- con't

You get all the assignments at once and have a whole week to complete them. You need to stay motivated to complete them and not get distracted, and not procrastinate about completing them.

One of the best things that happens each week is Mrs. Dostie's luncheon that she has on Fridays through Google meetings. I get to see my friends at the Google meeting and we have a great time talking. The luncheon is open to any student who wants to attend. I spend some time each day Facetimeing with my friends and occasionally do group chats. I am looking forward to school ending for the summer, but it will be nice to be back in drama in the fall. I am hopeful that we will have classes at the high school this coming fall.

Isaac Boyce is in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Helen Thompson School.

My teacher is Mrs. Hanley. I like my class very much. I miss going to school and seeing all my friends and playing sports.

It is very strange that I cannot raise my hand to ask a question if I do not understand something that we have to do. I can email my teacher and we have Google classes a couple of times each week, but sometimes there is a long time in between when we get the assignments and the Google class and I may forget the question. My mom helps me with questions that I have, too.

I miss visiting and seeing my friends. I can email them and talk to them on my PlayStation because I know some of their internet user names. I am glad that the weather is better and we can get outside more and play some sports and go swimming.

I am looking forward to school in the fall and seeing all my friends again.



Thanos Dacus is in the 7th grade – Team Bigelow at GRMS.

I miss my friends and sports. Keeping your grades up enables you to play sports by maintaining your school sports eligibility. I play soccer.

School seems very repetitive right now. The assignments are assigned in the same way each week. We have dates when they are due. The hardest part is that we don't have any interaction with other students or the teachers in the classroom. It is good to be part of a classroom and discuss what is being assigned. We have google meetings, but it is not the same. You also have to make sure that you do not procrastinate about your assignments.

I will be glad to have summer vacation and also to return to school in the fall and play team soccer.



## Mert's Last Day of Assessing

This picture, taken on May 11, 2020 was Mert Hickey's last day of assessing property in the Town of West Gardiner.

As Mert said, "The Town of West Gardiner got an extra year of assessing out of me." Normally, the new selectman would have been elected on March 21, 2020 and that person would have assisted with the assessing during the first week of April this year. However, these are not normal times and the assessing needed to be completed once the Governor determined that certain activities could take place. Therefore, Mert, as part of the team and driving his Lincoln, completed his 34<sup>th</sup> and final year of assessing. Mert, thank you for your service to the Town of West Gardiner. We love you. You will be missed.



L to R: Angie Phillis, Greg Couture, Mert Hickey, Randy Macomber

### Wake-up Call by Mert Hickey

When my kids (5 boys and Wendy) were young, they wanted badly to go into the wood lot on weekends and school vacations. By the time they were 12, they all had their own chainsaws and could yard wood with Jack and King, the horses. They all could drive skidders, too. After school they would come to work in the woodlot if they had no homework. They never seemed to have much, kind of like me. On weekends they would tell me to be sure and get them out of bed by 5 a.m. Often it was quite a struggle, but they'd be upset if I didn't wake them.

I had an alarm clock called a Battery Fence Charger. I would take it to their rooms with the wires sticking out and they would hear the thing clunking. I never had to use it because they'd leap out of bed wide-eyed, ready for the day. Wendy hauled a lot of firewood. I wished they'd played more sports, but they liked to work. I am glad I didn't have to tickle them with the fence charger.

### Joining the 21<sup>st</sup> Century– Phil Davis

Covid-19 has compelled me (dragged me against my will actually) to join the ranks of twenty first century online chatter. My brother's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday could not be celebrated as a get together so other siblings and nieces arranged a Zoom Happy Birthday sing-in. There is no choral conductor in the electronic heavens and singers were spread over 12 time zones with computer systems of wildly different speeds so Tom undoubtedly heard a song in many musical time signatures. It was actually fun and justified the couple of weeks I spent installing, learning and practicing Zoom before the sing-in.



WEST GARDINER NEWSLETTER

# The *Weathervane*

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## LOCAL POSTAL CUSTOMER

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.**

Call 441-9752 or write [coleneoneill@gmail.com](mailto:coleneoneill@gmail.com)