

THE TOWN CRIER

TOWN OF SEARSMONT

FALL 2014

MELVIN SHURE RECEIVES BOSTON POST CANE



First Selectman Bruce Brierley presented the Boston Post Cane to the Town's oldest citizen, Melvin Shure, at the November 12th meeting of the Searsmont Historical Society. Mel has been at least a seasonal resident of Searsmont since he was a child, when his mother rented and later purchased the family home. Originally from New Jersey, Mel and his wife, Sally, retired to Searsmont to live full-time in that home, and have been active in the Searsmont Historical Society, of which he is the Treasurer, as well as many other organizations and municipal committees over the years.

Congratulations, Mel—Long may you reign!

SECRET BALLOT ELECTION

RSU #71 SCHOOL BOARD DIRECTOR
JANUARY 13, 2014
2 – 6 P.M.
SEARSMONT TOWN OFFICE
Absentee Ballots available until
January 8th

Upcoming Events

January 13, 2015

Secret Ballot Election
 RSU #71 School Board Director
 Polls open 2 – 6 p.m.
 Searsmont Town Office

January 28, 2015

Donation Committee meeting
 7 p.m.
 Searsmont Town Office

February 17, 2015

Department Head Budget Mtg
 7:00 p.m.
 Searsmont Town Office

February 24, 2015

Town Budget Meeting
 7:00 p.m.
 Community Building
 meeting room

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News from the North End of Town

Three Searsmont Soles and the trip to “the Pond”

By David Marceau

6/29/12

The fishing trip to my favorite pond with two of my best friends was a very special story for many reasons. First, in order to appreciate this story, you must understand the history behind the legendary place I and a few of my friends call “the Pond”.

I have always loved fishing and finding those ponds in Maine few people know about. It has taken me 37 years to find the ponds I fish so it is no small thing for me to actually tell you where they are. When I go fishing I prefer not to see anyone who is not in my fishing party. Thus, by definition those ponds I fish are very remote. Also, I make certain that the people I choose to go with on any fishing trip will respect the environment that I have spent a lot of energy to find. In my youth I found many such ponds to fish, but told others about them I did not know well. Those ponds were exploited.

I found “the Pond” the same way I have found others I have fished. First, I examined the Maine Atlas, looked for a remote place; then I ask people who knew the area. Next, I spent many hours driving around in order to find the best, or only, access to the place I wanted to fish.

2003 was my first trip to “the Pond”. Then the land was privately owned. Access was an old logging road, which required a four-wheel-drive truck and a 3-mile hike up a sparsely marked trail with many obstacles. Furthermore, roads leading to this area were so new that they were not shown on any map; GPS was not available and being able to use a compass was a valuable skill. Since that time access to “the Pond” has changed dramatically; the land adjacent to our sacred place has been sold to a landowner who denies vehicular access.

Our trip to “the Pond” was my seventh visit. It had been five years since my previous trip because it is has become so difficult to get to, and I was trying to figure a way that I didn’t have to tell anyone where we were going. However, new trails shown on a public map, leading to our sacred place for all the world to see made me rethink my strategy. In the end I figured if I didn’t go soon, I may never see “the Pond” again.

Our trip was also memorable because my best fishing buddy “Chip (a/k/a Nute)” who loves “the Pond” as much as I do, came down with cancer last fall and could not make this years trip even though he wanted to very badly. Many of my thoughts were with my bubby Chip as I hiked, fished, laughed and sweated with my friends.

Planning for this year’s trip took three months. I chose John Thurston who had been to “the Pond” with me twice before, and a nine-year-old-boy, Lucas Walker, whom I mentor in the Big Brother’s program. John is a well-worn traveler of the wilderness, and, to tell the truth, has probably packed many more miles than I have. John is also more organized than I am so he packed his stuff and was ready three days earlier.

Lucas and I had a hard time figuring out what we could and should bring on the trip. So, we did not decide what were taking until the morning of our journey. After all, Lucas knew virtually nothing about what he was getting into (even though he claimed he knew all about what we were about to do). Thank God I thought to tell his Mom that I would pick him up the night before and look over the things he wanted to bring. He had no sleeping bag, many heavy items (which I brought but left in the car) and some punk rock type sneakers that almost fell off even as we were preparing to go. I couldn't afford, nor justify, buying him a pair of hiking boots so we managed to find some high top sneakers that gave him reasonable support and were okay to get muddy. Then we found a sleeping bag that his brother had. Next my wife, Dianne, fashioned a bag out of a bag she found from something else we had at the house and we managed to stuff the sleeping bag into it. In the end, the bag fit rather nicely into the Kelty pack that someone gave Lucas just for our trip.



One difficult problem was figuring out how much stuff we really needed with a nine-year-old in tow, then, what he was going to carry. So I could figure out if I could even fit everything else into my pack. I decided to give him his sleeping bag, only the clothes he absolutely needed, his life jacket, and numerous other light-weight items. Everything else was mine. Well, I don't know how much my pack weighed but it was the heaviest pack I have ever put on my back.

Our fourteen hour journey started early in the morning. We traveled to Bangor then north with one stop at Morrill Store for gas and another at Old Town Trading Post for a few Weeping Willows (special lures for "the Pond"). We passed through a gate where we paid a fee for the days we were to stay and arrived at the parking lot where we left our car.

Still undecided about what we should take, we tossed few more items that we had put in our packs into the car and tanked up on fluids. On the 10 mile trek to "the Pond", which was longer then I had anticipated, John and I agreed to take turns with Lucas because we knew we had to work together to get him to "the Pond". He was great for the first two miles. Then, "How much further is it?", "Why do I have to carry this pack?" and "When are we going to be there?" We thought that we were in big trouble, that we knew how far we had to go, and that we would never make it. However, the complaining never really got any worse, and the breaks between hard labor seem to do wonders for Lucas unlike the two aging men he was with. After much sweat, many words and a start to finish elevation change of about 900 feet, we landed at a small pond which was about a half mile from the pond we were to fish. Then, we more or less, dragged ourselves to the shore of "the Pond" near the outlet where we have been many times.

Because the trail near "the Pond" looked a lot different than it did five years before, I wondered if I could find the canoe I thought no one knew about except us. Years earlier my brother-in-law and I dragged my canoe three miles up the mountain to "the Pond" and hid it in a place where it remained for five years even though we found evidence that people had been within 50 feet of it since we had last visited "the Pond".

Now, here is the surprising part. I don't know what bears in Baxter Park find to eat but they sure do love canoe bows and sterns! We found numerous holes letting in daylight through the canoe, including one about the size of a small apple, that a bear had bitten out of the canoe. We surmised that the bear, smelled the slurry of fish blood and slime, a remnant of our last trip, and tried to get a piece of that tasty smell. Well, thank God for duck tape, and, wouldn't you know it, Lucas had a bag of bubble gum. We used that gum as a filler for the big hole which we managed to tape over. The funniest part of the trip was seeing John, Lucas and I chew bubble gum to fill the holes in the canoe so that we could get to our camping spot (remember, we all looked about like death warmed over by that point). As it turned out we floated the canoe the entire trip without any real trouble although we had to be real ginger with it at the shore because of the location of the holes.

We started fishing at 5:40 pm and we caught seventeen trout off of the beach next to the campsite by 7:30 pm. Then we figured we had better put up the tent and get some food in our stomach. We had three beautiful tasty trout that night for supper. The seventeen we caught were your average "the Pond" trout: eleven to fifteen inches.

The next morning we picked up where we left off and caught another ten trout from our campsite without even getting into the canoe. Finally, John said "Well, we ought to see what is going on at the Ledges". So, I brought John over to the Ledges (which are on the back side of the 20 acre pond) then I returned for Lucas. We got into the canoe, but Lucas said he was scared, so I decided to leave him and John on shore at the Ledges. They fished for about two hours and caught a bunch of fish. We kept two big ones for lunch and spent most of the day between the camp site on the north end of "the Pond" and the Ledges at the west end of "the Pond". I tried to keep

track of all fish caught. I think we caught forty more trout on Friday.

Saturday it was very foggy and surprisingly cold. The fishing had tailed off a lot, but we still caught eight more trout. The best fish story of the entire trip happened later that morning. John decided that he wanted to take the canoe to the other side of the pond where we had hardly fished at all. But Lucas and I decided we were going on "an adventure". Lucas asked what that was and I said "you will see". So, we started around the back-side of the pond where there was no trail, only moose-chewed firs, steep slopes and big boulders. We stopped at two cave-type places and looked for evidence of animals (where I suspected bears stay during the winter, but didn't tell Lucas because I didn't want to scare him). After about a half hour we managed to climb out onto a big boulder, not too far from the spring that runs off of the mountain.

Lucas, for some reason, liked to cast in shallow water (which I thought was not good) but boy was I wrong! He cast into about two feet of water and the water came alive! Lucas said "David, I can't hold him, you need to take the pole". For a moment I was a little worried because it was about 4 feet down if we were to have fallen. I grabbed the rod. Once I felt the rod I knew he could handle the fish, so I handed it back to him and said, "This is your rod, and your fish, so you bring him in". The trout gave him a good fight, but we managed to get him in and put on to a nylon stringer attached to the canoe. He was a beautiful male sixteen inches long. We fished a while longer but didn't catch any more fish. So, we decided to start our journey back to the car, and eventually home.



However, before we left John took me aside and said "David, I don't think Lucas's trout will keep for our trip back". Until that point I hadn't considered the fact that we had no ice and we had to travel 10 miles in 70 degree temperatures. It dawned on me that John was right, the fish would rot if we try to bring it home. So, I asked Lucas to come over by the canoe where the trout was (I could tell that he was reluctant to do so because he sensed we were going to tell him something bad). I said "Lucas this is a beautiful trout that is one of God's creatures and we have to respect this fish and its beauty. It would be a real crime if that fish were to spoil. So, John and I have talked it over and we think that you should let him go". He said, "But David, this is the biggest trout I have ever caught." I said "I know, but we just don't think he will keep for the ride home". He said " but I can't let him go". I said "Okay, I'm going to treat this the same way I would treat you as

if you were an adult. It was your thrown lure that caught him, you reeled him in, and you can decide to keep him if you take all responsibility for him. However, you need to understand that we cannot guarantee that he will be any good when we get to the car."

After about ten minutes consideration Lucas said in a whisper as he cried "I want to keep him". I said "I'm sorry but I can't hear well, are you saying you want to keep the trout?" He said "yes". I said "Okay, then it is decided. But, you must kill, clean, and care for the trout during our 10 mile trip to the car." So, he cleaned the trout, found peat moss which we wetted to store the fish in for the trip, and put him in his pack to carry home.

The trip back to the car was not without its adventures as well. Before we left, we stored the canoe in, what we felt, was a safe place and sprayed insect repellent where the bear had chewed out a hole (hoping that would stop him from chewing anymore) and threw some boughs over the canoe to hide it. We traveled to the lean-to at our halfway point and found a spring to put the trout in. However, I told Lucas, "Raccoons, otters, skunks and many other creatures love trout so he may be gone in the morning." As it turned out nothing found the trout, and it was kept cold by the icy waters of the spring, so we repacked the trout in Lucas's pack with soaking wet moss and took off for the trip home. There are several spots on the trail where the mud was knee deep and Lucas took a good header into one of them. Clearly he was determined to get that trout home so that he could show his family what he had accomplished. We stopped at a stream along the way and John caught a few nice small trout for me to take home to Dianne.

After starting from our lean-to at 8 am we landed at the parking lot where our car was at noon. The trout Lucas decided to keep was still firm when we got to the car so we put it on ice. As it turned out, it was Lucas who made the right decision to keep the trout and I made sure I told him he was right and we were wrong.

I know that this is a fishing trip that John, Lucas and I, will never forget for as long as we live. A true treasure.

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF PROGRAMS

We encourage all residents to access the tax relief programs that are available to them. Applications for the two most common programs can be obtained at the Town Office. They include:

HOMESTEAD

Exemption Eligibility:

- Legal resident of the State of Maine
- Have owned homestead property in Maine for at least the past 12 months
- Declare this homestead as your permanent place of residence and don't have a homestead exemption elsewhere.

Benefit: exempts \$10,000 of the value of your homestead property from taxation

VETERANS

Exemption Eligibility:

- Must have served during specifically recognized periods of war and have reached 62 years of age
- And/or meet one of the other service or non-service connected disability criteria.
- Must provide proof of dates service and/or disability (DD214/VA form)

Benefit: exempts \$6,000-\$7,000 of the value of your resident property from taxation

There are additional programs for tree growth, open space, and farmland. Go to Maine Revenue services at <http://www.maine.gov/revenue/forms/property/appsformspubs.htm> , or contact the town office for more information.

PROPERTY TAX FAIRNESS CREDIT

Eligible Maine taxpayers may receive a portion of the property tax or rent paid during the tax year on the Maine individual income tax return whether they owe Maine income tax or not. *If the credit exceeds the amount of your individual income tax due for the tax year, the excess amount of credit will be refunded to you.*

Who is eligible for the Property Tax Fairness Credit? Homeowners or renters who meet all of the following requirements:

1. Were Maine residents during any part of the tax year;
2. Owned or rented a home in Maine during any part of the tax year and lived in that home during the year as a primary residence;
3. Paid property tax or rent on the primary residence in Maine during the tax year;
4. Meet certain income and property tax and/or rent paid limitations during the tax year.

See the applicable Schedule PTFC to see if you qualify:

- Tax Year 2014 (beginning January 1, 2015)

How does someone apply for the refundable credit? To claim the credit, file Form 1040ME and Schedule PTFC for the tax year during which the property tax or rent was paid.

Is assistance available to apply for the credit? Yes, Maine Revenue Services will assist taxpayers with Form 1040ME and Schedule PTFC. For help, call 207-626-8475 weekdays 8:00 am – 5:00 pm or visit Maine Revenue Services at 51 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME 04330, weekdays 8:00 am – 4:30 pm. Closed on State recognized holidays.

Where can taxpayers get Form 1040ME and Schedule PTFC? Forms are available at <http://www.maine.gov/revenue/forms> or call 207-624-7894 to request that a printed form be mailed to you. Call (207) 626-8475 for Additional Information.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN SNOWPLOWS AND MAILBOXES

Every year as the snow flies, the Town Office receives a few telephone calls from residents complaining that the snowplow has taken out their mailbox. While we know how frustrating this can be, it is important to understand that these are not purposeful acts on behalf of the snowplow drivers.

Residents should also be aware of the following:

- In Maine, a 3-rod right-of-way (49.5 ft.) is typical on local roads. This includes the road, shoulders, ditches, and any backslopes or adjacent property. Measuring from the center of the road, the right of way extends 24.75 ft from the centerline of the road. This extends well beyond the roadbed and shoulder, and allows for room for snowbanks and to push back the snowbanks if they get large.
- It is optimal to have your mailbox placed far enough back that the postal delivery person can pull all four tires off the pavement when delivering mail.
- It is often the force of the snow coming off of the plow, not the plow itself that causes the damage to the mailbox.

The US Postal Service provides the following guidelines for mailbox installation:

Placing the Mailbox

- Position your mailbox 41" to 45" above ground level.
- Place your mailbox 6" to 8" back from the curb. If you do not have a raised curb, contact your local postmaster for guidance.
- Put your house or apartment number on the mailbox.:
- If your mailbox is on a different street from your house or apartment, put your full street address on the box.
- If you are attaching the box to your house, make sure the postal carrier can reach it easily from your sidewalk, steps, or porch.

Installing the Post

The best mailbox supports are stable but bend or fall away if a car hits them. The Federal Highway Administration recommends:

- A 4" x 4" wooden support or a 2"-diameter standard steel or aluminum pipe.
- Avoid unyielding and potentially dangerous supports, like heavy metal pipes, concrete posts, and farm equipment (e.g., milk cans filled with concrete).
- Bury your post no more than 24" deep.

The following tips will also help:

- Place reflectors on the side of your mailbox visible to approaching traffic.
- Posts that are more substantial in construction than those specified by the USPS are considered "deadly fixed objects" and are not permitted within the Town Way.
- Mailboxes should be installed at least 42 inches high to provide clearance for the plow wing. We recommend the use of an extended arm type post with a free-swinging suspended mailbox. This allows snowplows to sweep near or under boxes without damage to supports and provides easy access to the boxes by carrier and customers.

The Town will not replace or reimburse residents for damaged mailboxes. *Maine law views mailboxes as an encroachment in the public way, put there at the owner's risk, and municipalities are not legally liable for any damage or repairs to mailboxes due to plowing operations.*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 31, 2015: Town books close.

January 29, 2015: Property taxes due by close of business to avoid being listed in the town report.

February 2, 2015: Town Office closed until 1 p.m. to close out the books.

February 1, 2015: \$25 additional late fee due for all unlicensed dogs. This applies to dogs who are over 6 months of age, and who have been in the possession of the owner for more than 10 days.

February 17, 2015: Department Head meeting.

Reports are due from Department Heads for the Town report.

February 24, 2015: Budget Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Community Building meeting room

April 4, 2015: Searsmont Town meeting, 9:00 a.m. Community Building meeting room

MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION REMINDERS

E-mail motor vehicle registration reminders are available to Searsmont residents through the Rapid Renewal service or the town office

Through Rapid Renewal:

- Go to <https://www1.maine.gov/online/bmv/rapid-renewal/>
- On the right side choose sign up under "Need a Renewal Reminder?" and follow the instructions.
- You will receive a reminder about a month before your registration expires

Through the Town Office:

- Call or e-mail the Town Office to give your email to the clerk
 - You will receive an email reminder, including the cost, about a month before your registration expires.
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SEARSMONT TAX CLUB

If you find it a struggle to save for your annual property tax bill, you might be interested in signing up for the Tax Club. The principal behind the tax club is that your tax bill is paid in monthly installments starting in April. Initially, the payments are based on your previous year's taxes. After the taxes are committed in July, the monthly payment is adjusted to enable full payment of the taxes by March of the following year. For the homeowner, they benefit from smaller regular payments, and there is no interest on the outstanding taxes, and their taxes are considered "on-time" as long as their payments are made on time. For the town, the regular monthly payments improve the cash flow during those times of the year when revenues are low, hopefully avoiding municipal borrowing.

In order to sign up for the tax club, your taxes must be current, and you must submit the application signed by all property owners, to the Tax Collector. There is a vote authorizing the tax club at Town Meeting in early April. Once approved, the Tax Collector will send payment booklets to tax club participants, with the payments being due at the end of each month, beginning in April.

See the application on page 8 of this newsletter, and call the Town Office if you have any questions.

**Town of Searsmont
TAX CLUB ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT**

I, _____, as the owner and person responsible for the payment of annual real estate property tax on property located at _____ in the Town of Searsmont, and State of Maine, do hereby enroll in the Tax Club as established by the Inhabitants of the Town of Searsmont at their Annual Town Meeting, and agree to these terms:

1. Membership is available to any individual or business that has a tax obligation on real estate property with the Town of Searsmont;
2. The taxpayer's account(s) must be current, i.e., no balances due on prior year taxes. Taxpayers must enroll in the Tax Club by Mar 31st each year.
3. Tax Club payments begin in April and end in March of the following year. The first payment is due April 30th.
4. Tax Club payments are due by the last day of each month.
5. Payments may be made in person or by mail. If paid by mail, they must be postmarked by the due date to be considered "on time".
6. Monthly payments are calculated on the previous year's tax bill(s), divided by 12 equal monthly installments. Once the new tax rate has been established for the year (usually in July or August), the increase/decrease shall be calculated and divided over the remaining tax club payments.
7. No interest will accrue on tax club payments, nor will any interest be paid on any tax payments before the taxes are committed.
8. Tax payment coupon books shall be issued by the Tax Collector on each account enrolled in the Tax Club; a revised payment book will be distributed after taxes are committed and the new tax rate is established.
9. **Late payments will cancel enrollment in the Tax Club on all accounts owned by the individual and/or business.** If this occurs after the interest start date, interest will be applied to the unpaid balance(s) from the date of the last payment or the interest start date, whichever is later. Late payments may prohibit enrollment in future Tax Clubs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I have read the above terms and I agree to follow them. I understand that if the payments are not made on time, it will result in removal from the Tax Club and penalties will be charged as stated.

Taxpayer Signature

Telephone Number

Printed Taxpayer Name

Date

**Return this document no later than March 31, 2015 to:
Tax Collector - Town of Searsmont, P. O. Box 56, Searsmont, ME 04973**