

# THE MIDDLE GROUND

## *Daily Life & History of West Bath, Maine*

WINTER 2010 • PUBLISHED BY THE WEST BATH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In Memory of Wilbert B. Small, 1925-2010

## Littlefield School Memories

Roland Barter, who grew up in West Bath (and still summers in Phippsburg), attended the Littlefield School for 5 years – from 1940, when he entered our one room schoolhouse as a “bona fide First Grader,” as he proudly remembers, to the end of the school year in 1945 – when the school was closed by the town fathers and the kids were transferred to Bath schools.

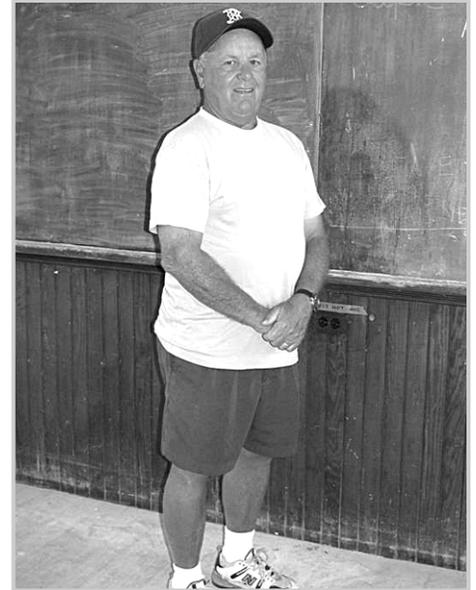
This past summer he shared some of his memories in writing with the West Bath Historical Society – and gave a wonderful talk at our June Board meeting. We would like to pass along some of these vivid recollections to readers of *The Middle Ground*.

Following are excerpts in quotes ...bracketed with our editorial explanations for the sake of brevity. (If anyone would like to see the whole text of his words, please let

us know and we will be glad to oblige.) Enjoy!

*[Although he didn't officially enter school until he was five (no kindergarten was offered back then in West Bath)]... “I spent a lot of hours ‘visiting’ because both my older brother and sister were there. At that time our family lived directly across the road from the school in a big farmhouse that belonged to George and Alva Jewett. We lived in a large apartment upstairs ...There were five of us children then – four boys and one girl; Merrill, Anita, Roland (me) and Hubert and Albert, our twin brothers who were born just prior to our father being discharged from the Army in 1937.*

*“Merrill started at Littlefield in the fall of '37. Miss Fisher was the teacher then. My sister started there in 1938 and that was when I started wandering across the road to visit.*



**Roland Barter visiting Littlefield School last June.** Kerry Nelson photo

Miss Fisher must not have minded as she usually let me stay for a while. Sometimes she would have

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## Wilbert B. Small

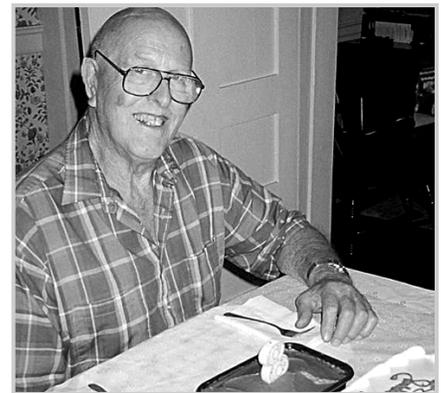
Wilbert B. Small, 84, a lifelong resident of Berry's Mill Road, died Jan 8 at Maine Medical Center as a result of injuries sustained by being hit by a car on Dec 12, 2009, as he crossed the road to attend a West Bath Grange supper.

He was born in Bath in 1925, the son of Loring D. and Alice R. Bates Small. He attended West Bath's one room Littlefield School just down the road from his family's farm and graduated from Morse High in 1943. He was a member of the Morse Alumni Association, and served as president from '91-'93.

He served in the US Army during WWII and was stationed in Italy. Returning to Maine after his army service, he was employed for 34 years with the Civil Service: at the Navy Fuel Depot in Harpswell from 1954-1962, the Coast Guard Base in South Portland from '62-'68, and then the Bath Post Office, until his retirement in 1986.

He married Laura M. (King) Voter and they made their home at his family homestead. He was very active in the West Bath community. He never missed a town meeting; in 2008, he and Laura received the Board of Selectmen's Special Recognition Award for their many years of service.

He was a member of the West



**Wilbert celebrating his 81st birthday.** Courtesy of the Small family

Bath Grange for over 60 years; a volunteer fireman from 1949, serving as chief from '67-'68 (in

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## Littlefield School Memories

*Continued from page 1*

my sister take me home, or my mother would come looking for me. I can't imagine that happening in this day and age!

"As I recall, there were many functions held in that little building. My most vivid memory is Miss Fisher having me play the part of Tiny Tim in 'A Christmas Carol' that was put on by the students at Christmas time in 1939 (even though I was only four and not even a student!) Dana Small was Bob Cratchet, and my only line was: "God bless us, everyone!" The play was put on in the evening and most students and their parents were there. I don't know how all those people got into the place, but I do also remember that there were lots of good things to eat, including fudge and sandwiches.

*[By April of '39, there were 6 little Barter's, with the birth of Roland's youngest sister, Loretta.]* "Anyhow, in September of 1940 I entered Littlefield School as a *bona fide* First Grader! I believe I was the only one in that grade. Names I recall that first year were Dana Small, Perry Thompson, Bud Thompson, Graydon Smith, Merrill Barter, Anita Barter, Richard Tremain, three Littlehale sisters and there were others.

"Miss Fisher had left for another teaching position, so we had a new teacher. Her name was Miss Helms. Thus I began my formal education at Littlefield School on Berry's Mill Road in the Town of West Bath.

"Here is a list of amenities (so called) that were available – or not! – to the students in all eight grades.

**Water:** There was no running water in the school. There was a well behind Harry Rich's barn but it was apparently deemed undrinkable. Water was brought to the school in a pair of 2-gallon milk cans. This was usually a job assigned to some older boy in the upper grades. In five of the six years

I was there, this task was assigned to one of the Barter boys. I think this was because we lived closest to the school! I remember there being a cooler on a shelf in the corner of the classroom; it had a cover and one of the cans was dumped into it first thing in the morning. We used this for drinking water all day. I believe there was a metal drinking cup hanging on a piece of string. Everyone drank from the same cup, unless they brought their own from home.

**Restrooms:** There was an outside pit toilet that was connected to the school by an enclosed walkway. This was divided into two entrances – girls on the left and boys on the right. Remember; no running water, so no flush toilets. I'll leave the remainder of this description to the reader's imagination.

**Lighting:** There was no electricity *[out that far on the Berry's Mill Road then]*, so we didn't have electric lights. There were kerosene lamps that didn't provide much light, and of course, windows. The lamps were located along the East and West walls in iron brackets that rotated out toward the classroom. (I have often wondered whatever happened to those lamps and the brackets that held them.)

**Heating:** There was no central heating; the classroom was heated by a wood-burning upright stove that stood at the back of the room. Sometime in late Oct or early Nov, Mr. Thompson (Bud & Perry's father) would come and move it out from the back wall towards the middle of the room. I don't recall how or who provided the wood, but it was mostly of the slab variety and was pine. An older boy was given the task of opening the school in the morning and starting the fire. Our brother Merrill had this job for two years, and it became one of my duties the last year the school was used.

**Playtime:** Our school day was divided into morning and afternoon. The morning session started at 8 am with a mid-morning break at 10 for recess of about 15 minutes. All the kids went outside to play with the exception being if it

was pouring rain, bitter cold, or a raging blizzard!

I can remember it being so cold outside that the classroom could not be completely heated. When that happened, the teacher would have us pull chairs around the stove where she would read to us while the stove was kept stoked with wood. Can remember the stove being red hot, while the water was freezing in the drinking can five feet away! ...At the end of each school year, the PTA would have a picnic for all the kids. Our mothers would pack lunches and we usually went down to Mill Cove to swim, if the tide was in, and have our lunch. If the tide was out, we would run around in the mud flats and go home pretty filthy!

**Various duties:** [in addition to fetching water and starting the woodstove] included raising and lowering the flag, cleaning the blackboard, cleaning the chalk erasers, sweeping the classroom floor, etc., and were assigned by the teacher. At some point in time, I held every one of these duties, but not all at the same time.

There was a certain progression that was followed. Only older boys only were assigned to start the fire. We were paid for these various jobs. I believe the pay scale was from 15 cents a week for the easier jobs, up to 50 cents for bringing water to school, and \$1.50 a week for starting the fires. I'm not sure, but I think the monies for these jobs came out of the teacher's monthly paycheck. Think about it: from a salary of about \$19 a week!

*[When West Bath closed the school at the end of the '45 school year, and transferred all the kids to Bath] ...*

"The downside for the kids at the Littlefield School closing was that all of us were required to repeat the grade we were in when we entered the Bath school system. Outside of that...it was an exciting time for all of us from the Berry's Mills section of West Bath. We were riding a bus, going to schools with central heating, running water, and flush toilets. We were on top of the world!" ▲

## Old Meeting House Foundation Inspection

On a hot sticky morning in early September, our intrepid Board member, and engineering expert, Pete Guild, suited up to inspect the foundation. With camera in hand, he crawled through a space where the granite blocks under the Old West Meeting House had separated just enough for him to squeeze through. On hand to call the fire/rescue folks, just in case, was WBHS prez Avery Meyers, who remained safely outside the building with her cell phone at the ready. Less than an hour later, Pete re-emerged, a bit dirty but unscathed.

He took over 120 photos and said that things looked better than we had thought. Here is his report:

“In general, the perimeter sills of the building looked very good, and without measuring, they looked to be about 10" x 10". As one looks at the rock foundation from either underneath the building looking “out” or from outside of the structure, there is much daylight to be seen. However, the building’s sills seem sufficiently supported around its perimeter .... Additionally, the stout sills are sufficient to carry the spans between supporting points. There are two primary, north/south sills of about 10" x 10" timbers, one on the east side of center, and one west of center. Secondary floor joists span east/west on about 30" centers and are well connected to both the primary N/S joists, and the perimeter sills.



**The NE corner foundation.**

Pete Guild photo



**Pete Guild climbs out from under the Meeting House.** Avery Meyers photo

However, the various original rock and “new” cinder block primary joist supports (no doubt added during restoration) need wedging so that the flooring joists are properly supported. With a full load of 110 people, such as during the Christmas services, one must suspect lots of sag in the floor’s center. The good news is the space under the floor runs only from 12 to 24 inches above the ground, so if a failure occurred, the drop would not be much.

The building has definitely settled since it was built in 1839; the main floor has a definite pitch down to the NW corner. However, since its restoration in 2005/2006, which included all new interior plastering, none has cracked since which would tend to indicate the building has not settled recently. I would not suggest doing anything that would change the existing settled shape of the building, or we would be inviting cracked plaster, dislodging well



**Rocks holding up one of the main support joists.** Pete Guild photo

## WBHS Board Member Leaves: Seeking New Candidates!



Susan Levey and her husband, Dan, moved to Minneapolis in January, prompting, to our regret, her necessary resignation. Susan, who has served on the board since 2006, has been an active member and we shall all miss her (and Dan too, who, as a crack accountant, often gave us some good pro-bono advice!).

With Susan’s departure, we are actively seeking at least one, if not two, new board members. If anyone is interested, or knows someone who might be, please give us a call. ▲

set siding, and maybe damage to the windows. Additional support could be added to the perimeter foundation if and when plaster cracking is noticed in the future.

The wood sills on the south (front door) side look very good from under the building. However ... the paint work on the outside of the building is in terrible shape. Old paint, covered over with new paint during the restoration, is peeling off everywhere. The entire exterior needs to be thoroughly scraped, primed, caulked, and finish-coated quite soon (as Paulo Isnardi has been doing to the Littlefield School).”

– Pete Guild

*[Ed. Note: In late fall, after this report was filed, the firm of Morse & Doak, at the behest of Jim Drake, came in and did the necessary shoring up. Basically, using Pete’s photos, they installed wedges between the existing center supports, and the underside of the floor beams to give proper support where needed.] ▲*

# CHANNEL BUOYS BIRTHS



**Delaney Mae Withers**, born Oct 1 to Sarah Murphy and Jack Withers IV, Woolwich. Grandparents include **Jack Withers**, West Bath.

**Valerie Ann Swenson**, born Oct 11 to Bryan & Julie Johnson Swenson, Woolwich. Grandparents include **Hank & Carole Swenson**, West Bath.

**Brooklyn Lee Lair**, born Oct 12 to Karl & Maggie Byrnes Lair, Bath. Grandparents include **Joseph & Pamela Byrnes**, and **Jeff & Tammy Reynolds**, all of West Bath.

**Lillian Louise Curtis**, born Oct 14 to **Donald & Catherine Blanchard Curtis**, West Bath.

**Charlotte Avery Clifford**, born Oct 14 to **Derek & Courtney Cotter Clifford** of West Bath.

**Katelyn Winn Marines**, born Oct 28, to Jonathan & Sarah Albis Marines. Grandparents include **Hank & Maryellen DeRuiter**, West Bath and **John & Annette Albis** of Litchfield and West Bath.

**Wyatt Dennis Frohmiller**, born Nov 9 to **Chad & Joy Burch Frohmiller**, West Bath. Grandparents: Deborah Burch, Bath; Chuck Frohmiller, North Bath.

Noah Eli Craney, born Dec 18 to **Nathan & Maureen Reece Craney** of West Bath.

## NUPTIALS

The wedding of **Jennifer Rae Lord and Leon Dennis Doyle III** took place on Sept. 12, 2009 at the Brunswick Golf Club. It was officiated over by the groom's boxing coach, **Jack Albis** (former summer resident of West Bath). The groom is employed at Electric Works in West Bath and is the son of **Joyce Doyle** and the late **Leon Doyle, Jr.**, both of West Bath. The couple resides in Bath. ▲

# TOWN CRIER



**News Flash!** For the convenience of our residents, the West Bath Town Office has expanded its counter hours. Beginning February 8th, the lobby & counter will be open on Mondays from 8:30 am until 5:30 pm. Business hours for Tuesday - Friday will remain the same: 8:30 to 4:00. Additionally, Ellis Reed, Codes Enforcement Officer has expanded his hours on Mondays from 1:00 pm to 5:30. His hours on Thursdays are still 3:00 to 5:00.

**Reminders:** Have you licensed your dog(s) for 2010? Renewals were due January 1st! Get ready for your 2010 recreational season by registering your boats and ATVs. Need a new fishing license or recreational shellfish license? Have you renewed your mooring permits?

**Looking for West Bath Photos:** The town office staff is looking for some good current photos of West Bath people, places or things for

*Continued on the next page*



## COOK'S KORNER

The holidays with all those temptations of good eats and rich food are now behind us. In the interest of thinking about reducing our calories, not to mention our waistlines, we offer here a recipe for "Hummingbird Cake" - much favored by Southerners, but rumored to have New England roots (because it frugally utilizes those old soft bananas you might otherwise throw away or feed to the pigs).

In its original form, this cake is a humdinger - loaded with tons of sugar and eggs, not to mention calories. The following recipe is a much-slimmed-down version,

which manages to save more than half the calories, but still retains its good taste and fruity ingredients that are actually good for you.

### **LIGHT Hummingbird Cake**

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees  
MIX:

3 cups flour, 1 tsp baking soda, 1/4 tsp salt, 1 tsp cinnamon

In separate bowl, put:

1 egg, 2 egg whites, 1-1/2 cups sugar

Beat with electric beater on HIGH for 2 minutes. (This gives the cake lightness.)

Add: 1/4 cup canola oil, 2/3 cups buttermilk, 1 tsp vanilla

2 or 3 large soft mashed bananas  
Beat on LOW until well mixed.

Stir in by hand 8 oz can crushed pineapple. Then add the dry ingredients & 1/4 cup chopped nuts.

Stir by hand just until moist. (Don't over mix.)

Pour batter into an oiled & floured Bundt pan. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes. Let cool 15 minutes on rack & turn out onto plate.

While the cake is still warm, sprinkle with confectioner's sugar mixed with a little cinnamon & mace, or pour over it a slight glaze made with 1/4 cup rum, 1/3 cup confections conf. sugar and a bit of butter melted together.

Enjoy! ▲

- Avery Meyers

*Town Crier, continued*

possible inclusion in the 2010 West Bath Annual Report. You may email them to deputy@westbath.org. We'd be happy to print "Photo courtesy of ..." with your photo!

**Note:** The lien process for unpaid taxes from 2009 will begin in June.

**Meeting Notifications** - Residents who would like an e-mail notification of any Town or Committee work session or other public meeting may submit their email address to the Town Clerk at townclerk@westbath.org, or call us at 443-4342.

**Municipal and State Elections** are scheduled for Tuesday, June 8th at the West Bath Fire Hall, and **Town Meeting** is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9th at the West Bath Elementary School. See you there! ▲

– Rob Morris, Town Clerk

## Christmas Service and Carol Sing was a Big Hit!

This year's traditional Christmas event, held on Dec 13, was real crowd pleaser – made even more so by the participation of a number of local school children.

The service, sponsored by the West Bath Historical Society, was conducted by Rev. Mark Wilson. West Bath students participating, either reading a scripture passage, or singing in the choir were: **Kyle Hietala, Courtney Estabrook, Zachary Alley, Caitlyn and Emily Belanger, Dempsey Carignan, and Brianna Coffin.** Adult singers were Jennifer Bradeen (West Bath School music teacher), Sherry Masters, and **Kathy Totten.** The choir was led by Steve Masters, with Bill Gilman playing the old pump organ. Adult readers were **Robin Hansen, Ernie Stallworth, and Bruce London.** Official greeters were student, **Elizabeth Nelson,** and our new Selectman, **Abby Yacoben.**

## Dr. Henry "Scott" McClintock: West Bath's Renaissance Man

He was a man of many talents, eclectic interests and always, always, a curious mind. Born in 1950 in White Plains, NY, he attended the Taft School, Yale, and then McGill University Med School. While completing his residency in radiology at Maine Medical Center, he met and married his wife, Frances.

They bought a farm on Foster's Point Road, where they raised three girls, not to mention numerous mules, goats, horses, donkeys and dogs. Scott had many passions, from music to animals to nature conservancy; from fast sailing to, of course, science. He was an enthusiastic tutor in science, math and physics, especially to his children.



**Scott McClintock.**  
Courtesy of McClintock family

Eldest daughter, Ellen, fondly remembers his intelligence and enthusiasm. "He'd always buy us chemistry sets when we were little. We'd sort of lose interest, but then he'd show us a more interesting chemical reaction to make it more fun ... He always was trying to get us interested in the things he was interested in," she told the *Portland Press Herald*.

"He really loved where we lived, and nature. He did a lot to preserve the land, to make sure it stayed that way for us ...," said his youngest daughter Mary.

During his 30 years as a radiologist, he worked at Bath Memorial, Regional Memorial, Parkview and then Mid Coast hospitals. His musical interests began when he picked up the trombone in grammar school and continued as he played with the Bath Municipal band for almost the same number of years as he practiced medicine. He also played the piano and organ, and even picked up a few obscure instruments along the way, such as the theremin which produces spooky Halloween music sounds.

In addition to the band, he was active in the West Bath Grange, Bath Country Club, and American College of Radiology, as well as the West Bath Historical Society.

Last September, Dr. McClintock died after a courageous battle with cancer. He was 59. In lieu of flowers, because of Scott's interest in his great uncle – Walter McClintock, an ethnologist who was adopted by Blackfeet Chief Mad Wolf – the family asked that donations in his name be made to the Blackfeet Higher Education Program, PO Box 850, Browning, MT 59417. ▲



**2009 Christmas Service choir.**

Avery Meyers photo

There were about 80 community members filling the benches at the Old West Bath Meeting House – including several proud parents and a few exuberant toddlers. It was indeed a special evening, and although it was raining a bit, at least there was no blizzard to contend with! ▲

# CROSSING THE BAR



**Mark J. Syvester**, 52, of West Bath, died with his family by his side Nov 1, after a short illness. He was born in Rockland, the son of Kenneth and Margaret Sylvester, spent his childhood in Woolwich and graduated from Morse High in 1976. In 1984, he married **Victoria Morse** and moved to West Bath to raise their family. He worked at Bath Iron Works for 30 years, mostly as a stage builder. He was a member and past Exalted Ruler of the Bath Elks Lodge. In addition to his wife, he is also survived by his parents; a son Sean and his wife, Wendy; many cousins, nieces and nephews.

**Edward J. Secskas**, 60, of West Bath, died Nov 7 after a brave battle with cancer, at his home on Sea Kiss Point, surrounded by his loving family. He was born in Bridgeport, Conn, a son of Julius and Edna Mae Secskas. He received a business degree from UConn, but realizing his true passion was teaching, he went on to receive a Masters degree in education from S. Conn. State College. He met his wife **Elaine**, now a doctor at Mid Coast Hospital, during his graduate work and they married in 1977. For several years he worked in computer sales to support his wife's medical studies.

They moved to West Bath in 1985, and for over 20 years he taught at the Phippsburg Elementary School. An imaginative and much admired teacher, he was voted Phippsburg Educator of the Year in 1999. He founded an after-school garden club for young aspiring gardeners, and co-founded an exchange program that brought students from a tiny farming community in Aroostook County to experience life in the fishing community of Phippsburg. In return, his students would spend several days with a northern Maine family, where they would pick potatoes and learn about the region's timber trade. Mr. Secskas also enjoyed using his crazy

collection of neckties, which included ties with lobsters and fish prints and Christmas themes and he even had a Groundhog Day tie. "The neckties were a visual accompaniment to the day's lesson," his wife told the *Portland Press Herald*. He learned to play music in his 40s and played clarinet and sax with the Phippsburg Elementary Band and encouraged his daughter to learn as well.

In addition to his wife, **Elaine**, and their daughter, **Maxine**, he is survived by his mother Edna; two brothers; three sisters; and many nieces and nephews, as well as his mother-in-law **Muriel Gosselin**, of West Bath.

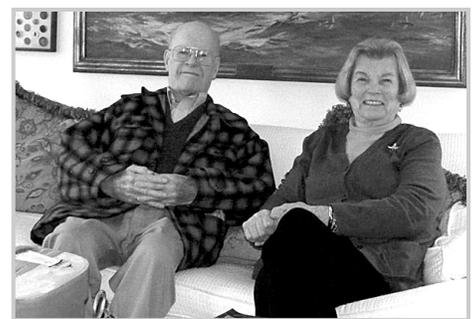
**Robert M. Smith**, 83, of Turner, died Nov 7. A native of Akron, PA, he and his wife, **Jean Van Buskirk Smith**, moved to West Bath in 1976, when Bob became Director of Industrial Relations for BIW, and then served as VP of Human Resources until his retirement in 1985. The couple resided in West Bath for 25 years until her passing in 2001. In 2002, he married **BettyAnn Hamlin** and they moved to Turner in May of 2004.

Bob was active for many years in various aspects of Mid Coast Health Services, including the planning for the new Mid Coast Hospital. He continued to serve as Honorary Trustee of MCH until his death. He belonged to many professional organizations and was a member of the Bath Rotary Club, Southern Maine Personnel Executives Council, and served on Bath United Way Board, and the Boards of the Maine Maritime Museum and the Salvation Army, and was a VP of Bath Area Chamber of Commerce, among many other activities.

He is survived by his second wife; a sister, a son and daughter living in the Bath area; four granddaughters; a great granddaughter and numerous nieces and cousins.

**Priscilla MacDonald**, 78, died Nov 13 in Port St. Lucie, Florida. Survivors include her brother, **Larry K. Garside**, of West Bath.

**Alfred Burleigh Oxtan**, 83, of West Bath, passed away peacefully at Hill House on Nov 20. He was born in 1926, the son of Leroy & Ardell Harriman Oxtan, and grew up in Liberty, Maine, graduating from high school in 1944. After graduation, he drove a school bus for the town of Woolwich. Known as the man who could do anything, he also worked as an electrician for many years. From 1979-2000 he was maintenance and transportation supervisor for the City of Bath. He had many hobbies, including his special love for speedboat racing. In the 1950s and 60s he built and raced his own boats, receiving The Governors Trophy in competitive racing in 1963. He is survived by his partner in life for over 30 years, **Bonnie Goodenow**; a brother; a sister; 3 sons; 5 step-children, including **Toni Johansen** and her husband **David**, and **Jodi Johnson** and her husband **Craig**, of West Bath; several grand and great grandchildren.



**Buddy Guild with his cousin Sally Hyde Knights.** Courtesy of Pete Guild

**Eastham "Buddy" Guild Jr.**, 94, of West Bath, passed away Nov 25. Buddy and his wife of 67 years, **Mary Newell Guild**, who predeceased him in 2006, were long time residents of Bath, West Bath and the Brunswick area. He was born in 1915, in Newton, Mass, to Olive Boyd Guild and Eastham Guild, Sr.

Bud attended a number of prep schools and graduated from Valley Forge Military Academy. He attended ROTC in Washington, DC, and then Bowdoin College, but left during his senior year to marry Mary, daughter of William S. “Pete” and Caroline Moulton Newell of Bath. During WWII, Buddy worked at Submarine Signal Co. in Boston, a firm that produced SONAR for the Navy’s war efforts.

Bud and Mary (“Mamie” to her friends) moved to Bath after the war to a home at 1083 Washington Street which they sold in the late ‘60s when they moved to Birch Point in West Bath. He worked at BIW in production and planning until his retirement in 1964.

He was active on the Bath City Council and at Grace Episcopal Church. But his true love was the Maine Maritime Museum. He was also a steward of his land on the shores of Winnegance Bay and just this past summer, “Green Point,” a 45 acre parcel that Buddy donated to Kennebec Estuary Land Trust was opened to the public.

In addition to his wife, Bud was predeceased by his sister Olive “Ollie” Guild, who died when she was eight of scarlet fever, and his mother and father. He is survived by his daughter, **Olive Boyd Guild** of Conroe, TX and West Bath; his son, **William Newell (“Pete”) Guild** and his wife, **Sandy**, of West Bath and Tucson; two grandchildren: Britton of Phippsburg and Moriah of Tulsa, and two great grandchildren, Noah and Alli. He is also survived by his dear cousin Sally Hyde Knights of Portland.

**Robert C. Groat**, 65, of Brunswick, died Nov 30. Among his survivors is his son, **Todd** and his wife, **Vicki**, and their children, **Kylie**, **Zack**, **Josh** and **Luke**, of West Bath.

**Raymond Hilton True**, 75, passed away Dec 18, at Cove’s Edge Nursing Home in Damariscotta. Survivors include his son, **Daniel**, of West Bath. ▲

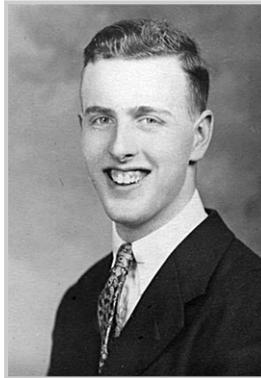
## Wilbert B. Small

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2005 the fire department dedicated its new Squad 5 Fire Truck to him); a member of the E911 and WINS committees; the Tri-Town Winnegance Alewife Commission, and the West Bath Historical Society. He was also a member of the American Legion Smith Tobey Post 21 in Bath for over 60 years.

In addition to his wife of 35 years, he is survived by two daughters: Jill Hick-ey and her husband Thomas, of Maynard, Mass and Carrie Walsh and her husband Brian, of Hudson, Mass; a brother, Dana Small and his wife Helen of New Harbor; two grandsons; two granddaughters; a niece, two nephews, and several cousins.

On January 12, the *Times Record* published a major tribute to Wilbert, where he was described as a “legend” and “the father of West Bath” by “those in his beloved hometown, who lauded his decades of community service and perspective on local history.” Many remembered Small – along with his friends and mentors Ed Larrabee and Red McMann – as being sought after for his prestigious



**Wilbert’s graduation photo, 1943.** Courtesy of the Small family



**Wilbert’s last call after 60 years with the West Bath Fire Department.** Courtesy of the West Bath Fire Department

lobster and clam bakes. Artist **Timothy Clark** – whose wife, **Marriott Small** (no relation) **Clark**, has deep roots in West Bath – fell in love with Small’s barn and 1950s vintage tractor, which became the focus of many of his paintings. “I asked if I could come by and paint at his barn. He said, ‘It’s a free country and we’re all friends – of course you can.’ Some of the best work I ever did came from that property.”



**Wilbert in his Army uniform.** Courtesy of the Small family

*Those of us who knew Wilbert looked past the tall fellow with the gruff, booming voice and saw the real person underneath. He was the guy who loved his family and always referred to his wife as “my bride”; who loved his town and felt it was his duty to attend meetings (he never missed a town meeting), join committees, and serve wherever he could; who served with the fire department for over 60 years; who spoke up freely, loudly, and often (whether people agreed, or not) because he lived here and cared about what happened; who helped neighbors without thinking twice; who knew the history of this town and freely shared his knowledge and stories (our WBHS archives would be considerably smaller without the many things that Wilbert, and his mother, Alice, before him, thought to preserve); who said, “I don’t know what I know, but what I do know I’ll share with you”; who loved a bean and casserole supper; who, more often than not, had a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. It was that Wilbert that I will miss: the one who was a doer, a shaker, a neighbor, a storyteller, and a bridge to an earlier time. ▲*

– Kerry Nelson

## Patten Free Library

### 2010 Midcoast Community Read & Town History Series

This year's **Community Read** is *Glory in the Name: A Novel of the Confederate Navy* by Harpswell resident, James Nelson. Nelson is a former professional sailor who is committed to bringing to life America's historical connection with the sea. This book received the 2004 William Boyd Award for Excellence in Military Fiction.

PFL's **Children's Community Read** books, *Little Tim and the Brave Sea Captain* by Edward Ardizzone and *Iron Thunder: The Battle Between the Monitor & the Merrimac* by Avi, are quite complimentary to the adult one. Read them now and look forward to great maritime activities in March!

In keeping with quantities provided at the other sponsoring libraries, Patten Free has purchased 40 copies of the book, which were added to the Library's circulating collection in early February. The loan period will be one week. It was not possible to supply free "honor system" books this year.

Check the PFL website or [www.midcoastreads.com](http://www.midcoastreads.com) for book discussions in the Bath area in March. For one, author James Nelson will make a presentation on March 18 at Maine Maritime Museum.

The History Room once again held a series of "Town History" talks on Saturdays in January and February. West Bath's talk was by Bob Bittner, owner and operator of the historic WJTO-am Radio Station off Berry's Mill Road. The title of his talk: "**Station WMMS/WJTO: Radio in Maine.**" We will report on his presentation in our next issue of *The Middle Ground*. Tune in! ▲

## THE MIDDLE GROUND

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We publish researched historical materials, local news and events that may be of later historical interest.

We do not print gossip, ads or political opinion.

To provide news items, historical photos or documents, or FMI, contact Avery (443.4449); or Kerry (443.5118)

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Courtesy of Ivon Boyer

The Old West Bath Meeting House now has a new message under the existing roadside sign: "Available for Special Functions." Anyone can use the building, for a wedding, memorial service, lecture, art show, or other private event for modest fee – about \$100. For more information, there is a telephone number on the sign – 443-4342 – which is West Bath Town Hall. ▲