

Windham Independent column for January, 2007

On Balance

by Will Plumley

I find it fitting that I am writing my first Windham Independent column on my birthday – January 9. I am now 54 years old. For some years I have welcomed my birthday as an opportunity to look back and look ahead. Whenever possible, I like to take the day off from work and do whatever I feel like. This is one of those years.

Let me introduce myself, and then I will tell you what I've been doing today, what I think about as I look back, and some hopes and fears as I look ahead.

My wife, Rebecca, and I live on the outskirts of Little Falls Village on Main Street in South Windham. At the moment, we have two cats, Portia and Chitra. Portia is actually a guy cat with a girl kitty's name. He's a long-hair black and white, and for the first year after he adopted us, we thought he was a she. It actually took two trips to the vet when a problem arose to find out Portia's true gender. In deference to his maleness, we sometimes spell his name "Porsche."

I work for Ethos Marketing and Design on Main Street in Westbrook as a marketing strategist. Both our house and Ethos are along the banks of the Presumpscot River, and you may have seen me in the paper when I canoed to work on Commute Another Way Day last spring. I also like to help organizations (especially non-profits) with strategic planning.

Lastly, like many Mainers, I'm involved in things I care about and believe I can make a positive difference. Current volunteerism includes working on implementing Windham's Comprehensive Plan, restoring the Presumpscot River, and conserving land in the region for future generation to enjoy – generations of both people and wildlife.

When I got up this morning I had no plans for the day. I knew I wanted to get outside for a long walk or hike and decided to go to the new Portland Trails boat launch on the Presumpscot River and hike out the trail that passes through there. It's right across 302 from Riverton Trolley Park, and Waste Management has made a parking area available for kayakers, canoeists, and hikers.

I followed the trail under Route 302 and explored the trails of Riverton Park. Then I crossed over to Riverside Golf Course and walked the mile along the water's edge (if you lost a "Titleist 2" or a "Wilson 3 Middlecoff" in the woods left of the 14th fairway last year, drop me an email and I'll return your ball). I enjoyed seeing the recently planted spruce, pine, and maple trees as Riverside works to broaden the critically important wooded buffer between the river and the fairways.

In reflecting on the past year, and I thought of all the people I know who give so much of themselves to make this world better in some way. As I wrote earlier, Mainers believe they can make a difference. They get involved and affect change. It is one of the things about living in Maine that I appreciate the most, and I am grateful to all who stand up and say what is in their heart and on their mind. Belief is a powerful force. There is always a way.

I am grateful for the dedication of my fellow volunteers on the Windham Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee. Folks like Dave Nadeau, one of Windham's most devoted volunteers, and Elaine Pollock, who had the courage to enter the fray without previous involvement.

Forrest Bell, Matt Craig, and Dusti Faucher are but three of many champions for a healthy, vibrant Presumpscot River. I will have to devote a column soon to share with you past successes, current efforts, and what the future might look like along the silver strand of life connecting Sebago Lake to Casco Bay.

And I am grateful for those who do the hard work of land conservation in our region. People like Val deVuyst, Dennis Hawkes, Bill Diamond, and Margaret Pinchbeck of Windham Land Trust who have accomplished so much and now have taken on more – creating the Clark Farm Preserve. Please support this wonderful project. Richard Curtis, Marylee Dodge, and Bob Wake are making a difference with the Gorham-Sebago Lake Regional Land Trust.

The work of these people, and so many more, kept coming to mind as I reflected on the past year. And looking ahead, this column is most on my mind. I greatly enjoy writing and have feelings, ideas, beliefs, and information that I wish to share with my fellow travelers on this odd journey called "life."

My hope is that this column will, in a small way, enrich your life, and that you will find it enjoyable to read. My biggest fear is that I will fail. After all, writing anything meaningful takes the courage to share with strangers things you perhaps have never shared with anyone. I hope to find that courage as I embark on this column. As the old-time New York sportswriter Jimmy Cannon once said, "Writing's easy. All you've gotta do is open a vein and bleed."

Best wishes.

Will Plumley lives in Windham, works in Westbrook, and is involved in way too many things. But that's OK – they're all important to our future. Will can be reached at w.plumley@adelphia.net.