

A Thank You and Memories of Jerry Mahoney

Hilary, Colin and I thank members of the WNRDC for your thoughtfulness in the pear tree dedication in their father and my late husband's name at Pipestave Hill.

As I mentioned at the dedication, when Jerry Mahoney, a self-appointed dedicated city boy, was persuaded to move to West Newbury - primarily to find a home with stabling for my ancient horse - he readily adapted to the country life. The first good sign was his discovery of what end of the hammer to hold. This was very helpful in the ancient (1750ish) money pit we purchased, which became our happy home, raising two kids and a variety of critters for 33 years.

Next, after we found a stable mate for our old Morgan horse Artie, Jerry became (somewhat) a rider. His new sport was an inspiration to build fences, become adept in pasture management, manure removal and barn repair. Subsequently he discovered the woods and old trails and convinced our neighbors, The Society of St. John The Evangelist, the need for a trail network on their property - and cleared them.

In the early 70s with our mutual love of trail riding, we expanded our trail horizons in town and with help from other local riders, resurrected the West Newbury Riding and Driving Club, initially formed in the 1920s, for the purpose of trail preservation. Pipestave Hill, at the time, was owned by the Cardinal Cushing Academy, which welcomed riders through the property.

The former city boy became somewhat a small town politician who served on the planning board, conservation commission and was on the elementary school building committee. When he learned confidentially from one of the Academy's administrators they were closing the school and offering the land and buildings to a large commercial real estate firm, his reaction was two-fold. The town could use the buildings for classrooms and the land could be conserved for passive recreation (in his wife's mind - specifically for riding).

He told his source he couldn't keep the secret because it was in the town's best interest to be informed. The sale of the former Cardinal Cushing property was unanimously passed at town meeting and new classrooms were formed for elementary students.

Jerry was appointed the first Mill Pond Committee Chairman and was instrumental in trail development for cross country skiers, hikers and riders. The old Academy ring was refurbished by WNRDC members and

the Pentucket Pony Club assisted in constructing a cross-country course, which was used for pony club rallies and later for 3 phase events.

Job done, we thought, and the WNRDC went in to hibernation for a while. Jerry was one of the first to react when he learned that there were other interests for the “equestrian” portion at Pipestave Hill. The WNRDC was reactivated and in retrospect, reacted somewhat emotionally. Cooler minds prevailed and a fair agreement was formed to share the facilities with other interests and, as in Jerry’s dreams, conserved.

I, of course remember Jerry as a great partner, wonderful father, supporter of all things horse (despite his city up-bringing) and a man who grew to love West Newbury, the trails, Pipestave Hill, an old house, our various animals.

I share images with others of Jerry on his old Ford 8N (1953, I think), a brushhog behind, wearing his Willy Nelson kerchief to keep the sweat from his eyes, mowing Pipestave Hill, various West Newbury trails, including the Myopia Hunt run and his obvious presence at town meeting supporting conservation efforts.

Thanks again, WNRDC for acknowledging his efforts.

Mary Lee Mahoney Camp