

Machias Valley News Observer



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Gene Townsend. Boyd Thompson photo

Eugene Townsend, Co-Publisher of MVNO, Dies

by Karen Hinson

On October 25, 1967, the first edition of the *Machias Valley News Observer (MVNO)* under the ownership of Eugene M. Townsend and Jay B. Hinson was published. The six-column headline announced "*Machias Valley News Changes Hands.*" The weekly county-seat newspaper had been owned and operated for many years by the Parlin family.

Townsend, Gene to all who knew him, was a lifelong resident of Calais. He served in the Air Force from 1941 to 1945 where he distinguished himself as a premier personalizer of the 32nd Bomb Squadron's planes, even getting noticed (in 1943) by the future curmudgeon of *60 Minutes*, Andy Rooney. By the end of the war Sgt. Townsend had painted over 40 planes (many times under adverse con-

ditions) with such name as the "Hun Pecker," "Sleepy Time Gal," "The Bad Penny," and "Lead Foot."

He attended art school in Connecticut. He was a self-employed commercial artist and a sales manager for WQDY radio in Calais. After becoming co-publisher, Gene became the *MVNO* advertising manager, a position he held for years.

For 42 years Townsend and Hinson were partners at the *Machias Valley News Observer*. In 2006 their wives, Patricia Townsend and Karen Hinson became partners in the company. As of Friday, December 18, with the passing of Townsend, the remaining partners are Jay and Karen Hinson and Patricia Townsend.

We at the *MVNO* extend our deepest sympathy to Pat.

Dike Hearing Spurs Variety of Issues

by Ruth Leubecker

Sharing a wide range of potential impacts, concerned residents, legislators and public officials gathered last week for the first of several public hearings on the best option for repairing the deteriorating Machias dike.

"This is a significant project as you can see by the turnout here tonight," said Devon Anderson, project manager for the Maine Department of Transportation. "Rights-of-way, environmental concerns, traffic and the historic aspect are a few of the things coming into play. We're currently in a two-year work plan, and presently funded for \$250,000 for preliminary engineering."

Tom Schaeffer of Maine Fish and Wildlife, Wendy Mahaney a wildlife biologist with the federal agency and Ernie Atkinson from Maine's Department of Marine Resources, were among a handful of officials who took the first hour to present their relevant information. No one attended from either Environmental Protection or the Army Corps of Engineers, the two permitting agencies the audience was most interested in meeting.

"The bridge is now rated structurally deficient and eligible for replacement," said Anderson. "Rot and embankment washout are happening, even though emergency repair was done two years ago. The bridge is in serious condition, rated a three on a scale of one to nine, with nine being optimum."

According to the state, the

bridge is not considered historic. Described as a straight, wide stretch with only one accident reported in recent memory, 9,154 vehicles travel the dike daily, with 12,000 projected five years from now. Although obviously not a dangerous piece of road, Anderson acknowledged the challenges of whatever option comes to pass.

"Water on both sides is an inhibiting factor in moving the poles out. There's a substantial tide range, and a lot of activity," he said. "We would try to maintain two lanes of traffic, plus the trail, and possibly a pedestrian sidewalk. It would be tough to build a detour because it would be costly and there's too many businesses."

Competing with other state projects, the earliest possible date for the dike project to begin would be in 2012-13, according to Anderson. Two options are presently under consideration, the first being a like replacement of the existing structure, the second the construction of a conventional bridge.

"It may be a two-season project," said Anderson. "It's going to be a wide bridge to accommodate all it needs to do. The permitting will come from a number of agencies, with many weighing in on the decision, and that's vital because these bridges only get replaced every 75 to 100 years."

Many varied citizen comments were raised, beginning with those from Valdine Atwood, local historian, who

ended her remarks: "We believe that this structure has served this part of Maine for 141 years and should be repaired in the manner of that construction back in 1866 – a dike with a clapper, so that the large area above the dike can remain free of salt water, and so that the wildlife and landowners can continue to use the land as they have these many years."

"We're interested in seeing the tidal flow restored here," said Mahaney, also adding that the federal Fish and Wildlife agency has no decision-making power. "There are migratory birds, species of fish, and endangered species, such as the salmon."

Although several townspeople said that salmon was not a factor, the fish having not been in these waters for generations, official opinion differed. "We are focused on restoring Atlantic salmon to the region," said Atkinson of the DMR. "Also alewives, herring and smelt could be restored by removing the tide gates. For this reason we support replacing the tide gates with a bridge."

"A bridge would have a devastating effect on landowners," said Rep. Howard McFadden, referring to the many viable, income-generating acres that would be reclaimed by tide-water.

"I disagree about the value of the land, which you will flood," said Ed Pellon, local businessman. "We own 150-plus acres along Middle River. We need to leave it with the clapper. See *Hearing*, page 5."

Machias Valley News Observer Holiday Hours

We will be closing our office at noon on both Thursdays, December 24th and December 31st.

We will be closed on both Fridays, December 25th and on January 1st.

The ad deadline for those two weeks will be on Wednesday (12/23 & 12/30) at 3 p.m.

We wish all of our readers a peaceful and joyous holiday season.



Volunteer laying wreaths donated by Worcester Wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery. Blackanthem Military News photo

Wreaths Across America

Sen. Susan Collins

It has become a poignant holiday tradition. For 18 years, Morrill and Karen Worcester, owners of Worcester Wreath Company in Harrington, have delivered beautiful, Maine-made balsam fir wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery. They are meant to honor all of those who served and sacrificed for our freedom. But this annual wreath-laying is also a heart-warming experience for all of those who participate.

Earlier this month, a convoy of Mainers set out with truck-

loads of wreaths. They were escorted by Maine State Police, members of the Civil Air Patrol, volunteers, veterans, Gold Star Mothers and the Patriot Guard Riders. The group arrived at Arlington on Saturday, December 12th and was greeted by a stirring round of applause from several thousand people who had gathered in the cemetery, including several members of my staff who are from Maine.

One by one, volunteers laid a wreath, each adorned with a See *Wreaths*, page 21.



Wreaths Laid in Wesley

The Wesley Community Church Teens laid wreaths on veterans' graves on Sunday, December 6. The wreaths were generously donated by Flo's Wreaths of Marshfield. Pictured left to right are Chelsie Hawkins, Lindsey Jundt, Pastor Waite, and Taylor Durling.

Photo courtesy of Donna Hawkins

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Merry Christmas
From all of us at
MVNO to all of you!