

Retirement Brought Out The Volunteer In Chuck Bartlett

by Debra Lawless

Chuck Bartlett, 84, first visited Chatham with his mother and siblings during World War II, while his father served overseas.

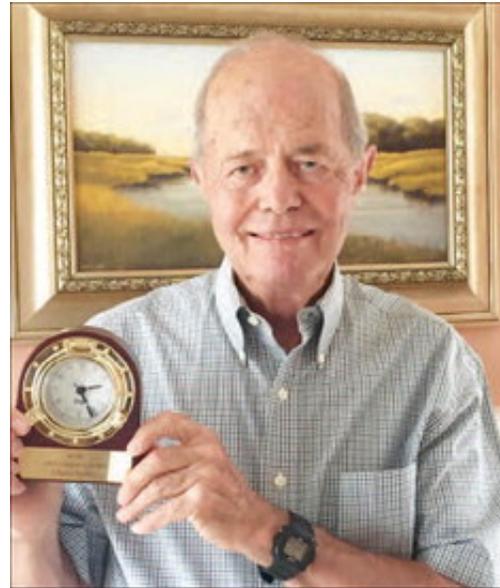
"Gas was rationed, so my mother had to save up to get enough gas to drive down from Dedham," Bartlett recalled during recent interviews conducted via Zoom and email. "She also with her friend did a lot of canning of vegetables from the garden, all of which we had to fit into the trunk of the car to drive home at the end of the summer." In Chatham, Bartlett learned to sail. After the war ended, his parents built a house on Kendrick Road and Bartlett continued to spend his summers here, sailing and racing at the Chatham Yacht Club.

Later on, Bartlett studied engineering as an undergraduate at Yale University, and went on to earn a master's degree followed by a Ph.D. in aeronautical engineering at MIT. He eventually served for seven years as a professor and head of the manufacturing and industrial engineering

graduate program at the Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, N.Y.

In 1978 Bartlett and his wife, Stephanie,

Continued on **Next Page**



Chuck Bartlett with the Captain's Award given to him this year for his work with the Friends of Chatham Waterways. COURTESY PHOTO

Retirement

Continued from **Previous Page** built their own summer house next door to his parents' house. When Bartlett retired from Bell Laboratories in 2001, the couple decided to expand that house and move here full-time from Madison, N.J. where they had raised their two sons. They are now the grandparents of four and still live on the familiar North Chatham street.

In a way, that pivotal early stage of life when Bartlett learned to sail was the first step that led up to Bartlett receiving the Captain's Award from the non-profit

dissolved oxygen and kill fish, a process called eutrophication.

Starting back in 2004, Bartlett's name began to be associated with discussions of Chatham's sewer system. That year, the issue revolved around reducing the amount of nitrogen entering the Oyster Pond watershed. Bartlett soon became involved with the Chatham Water and Sewer Advisory Committee. Now, you might assume that building a sewer system would necessarily be a huge improvement over individual septic systems. But residents worried that sewers would boost further development in Chatham.

Friends of Chatham Waterways (FCW) during the group's virtual annual meeting on Aug. 18. The group gave Bartlett the award, which was first given in 2001, for being "instrumental in developing Chatham's highly successful sewer plan," according to the FCW website.

Bartlett's gift was a handsome brass Weems & Plath clock with a plaque.

Bartlett was invited to join the FCW board not long after he moved here fulltime, and he served for about 11 years, including as the board's president.

It so happens that Bartlett's house overlooks a marsh that has a creek with a small pond at the end.

"I first became concerned about water quality in the bay in the '90s when I would see algae build up in the pond, becoming a solid mat that would last through the month of August," he says. "Looking around, I could see other signs of algae in the bay, especially in the ponds." Sailing up and down the bay in his Marshall 18 sailboat, "I could see that the eelgrass was disappearing and you couldn't see the bottom even in some relatively shallow waters. This was different from what I remembered from when I was growing up and had to be related to the development that had gone on in Chatham."

Locally, development has meant septic systems, and while home septic systems can do a great job removing pathogens, nitrogen, an element in waste, remains in the wastewater. It is primarily nitrogen that has been fouling the Cape's waterways. Nitrogen causes the excessive growth of aquatic plants that deplete the water's

"Everyone had a story of some town somewhere where this is what happened," Bartlett says. That idea needed to be countered and that is how the selectmen unanimously endorsed a "growth neutral" plan in 2009. "There should be no adverse effect to having a sewer run by your house."

Over the past decade, as sewers have been built, "the focus has been on the critical watersheds on the south side of town," Bartlett says. This area includes Stage Harbor, Oyster Pond, and more. It will take 20 years to get through Phase I of the plan which is "critical for improving estuaries." The plan calls for extending the sewers to all properties by 2040.

As well as his work on the FCW, Bartlett has had a second love through these years – the Chatham Marconi Maritime Center (CMMC). He is a past president of the organization and serves on its board as the education director now. As such, he is responsible for the education programs including its summer series of interactive STEM activities for "Families with Curious Kids."

He has also served on the steering committees of the Earth-honoring faith committee at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Chatham, and of the Pleasant Bay Alliance, which is charged with implementing the Pleasant Bay Resource Management Plan.

In retirement, Bartlett became a key volunteer for this important groups and made a tremendous contribution to the town through his volunteer work.

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