

## Congratulations to all the 2020 Graduates

Good morning Woodstock and surrounding towns. The week that was featured rays of sunshine and a hint of normalcy. We set up the Town Hall Theatre for the Village Trustee meeting, blocking off seats for the appropriate distancing, and fired up the sound system for the wireless mics. The meeting capped a day where a record number of folks turned out to vote. Folks dutifully paid heed to the safety precautions as they voted and attended the meeting.

It was also senior week for the Woodstock Union High School class of 2020. Scholarships were awarded, student achievements were celebrated and highlighted in this paper. I was so pleased to award Pentangle's 2020 scholarship to Owen Spann in recognition of passion creating as he described "useful art tools" out of metal and wood, and his commitment to continue to work with his hands at the Wentworth Institute Of Technology in Boston, Massachusetts. This paragraph from Owen's essay submitted with his application captures the beauty of art and his passion for it.

"I know no matter what happens in my life I will always have a passion for creating art.

The thrill of seeing a project go from a sketch on a page to a final product resting in your dusty hands or hanging on your wall, still minutes old but with a life that could outlive your own is a feeling that can only be described as love."

Congratulations Owen!

Seniors received their diplomas in a masterfully organized ceremony which culminated in a "car parade" of seniors and family members. The parade route was lined with signs of congratulation and celebration. Seniors waved to parade watchers through sunroofs, windows, and open rear hatches of their decorated cars.

The hint of normalcy continued when we welcomed Pete's Posse to the Village Green. The Posse created a lively and celebratory feel as the car parade circled the green. Megan Henderson and I tested our aim tossing bags of candy to the passing seniors.

We wish all the graduates the very best wherever their future plans take them. On Saturday our oldest son, Pete graduated virtually *cum laude* with distinction in English, from Carleton College in Northfield Minnesota. He lives in a house so was able to remain near the campus for online learning. His spring took quite a turn with the murder of George Floyd a mere 45 minutes away in Minneapolis. He and his mates ferried supplies to the city, dropping some off on the site of Floyd's death. They also assisted protesters remotely informing them of the police movements throughout the city. I think he would agree that it was an impactful experience even if not the traditional end to a senior year.

In a darker view of the week that was black men continue to be killed by police. HBO Max - whatever that is - pulled the 1939 classic *Gone with the Wind* from its roster – but not entirely since it will return with historical context – whatever that means! Keep in mind black actress Hattie McDaniel (Mammy) was not allowed to sit with her white co-stars during the Academy Awards ceremony in 1940.

This takes me back to June 2015 when I pulled *Gone With The Wind* from our *Thank-You Thursday Free* movie series. A decision (and yes it should not have been on it in the first place) made in response to the spate of police killings of unarmed black men. A decision that created such a stir that WCAX dispatched a reporter to interview me for the evening news. He likened my decision to a form of censorship. A bogus claim since it is part of my job to decide on timing and appropriateness of movie screenings. I do say “I”, since at the time I thought the decision innocuous enough to make without counsel from our Board of Trustees. I received angry and threatening calls from southern *Gone with the Wind* fan clubs and from several angry individuals who would not say where they were calling from. Lessons learned all the way around.

Lastly, we continue to investigate future short- and long-term programming possibilities with staff and safety measures in place.

In the meantime, I recommend Spike Lee’s *Da 5 Bloods* now streaming on Netflix. The film follows four African American vets and their return to Vietnam seeking the remains of their fallen squad leader and the gold fortune he helped them hide.

The film melds past and present with original footage of the era. Lee opens the film with historical footage of Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X, the latter declaring that “when you take 20 million black people and make them fight all your wars and pick all your cotton... sooner or later their allegiance towards you is going to wear thin”.

Be well. Be safe.