

WACHAPREAGUE Times

*A flounder town
with a small
mulching problem*

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A Tale of Airplanes, Love and Adventure

Wachapreague man
publishes a novel based
on his life as a pilot.

'FLYING CROOKED' has everything that anyone wants in a book, or in life itself, says its author, Wachapreague citizen Steve Borgess. It has drama, community, adventure, romance, and a character who risks his life while doing something really good for someone else.

The book, written over the course of 20 years, is a novel, based on the story of Borgess' real-life flying career, which began, he says, when he was 2 or 3.

He remembers a flight with his dad and grandfather, in a two-seater plane, with Dad piloting, Borgess' grandfather in the passenger seat and Steve, a toddler, between them. When his father began to head in, Steve started to cry.

"He knows we're landing," Steve's dad said.

BORGESS, 72, GREW UP on Long Island. He enrolled in the Maritime College at Fort Schuyler, in the Bronx, but left before he finished his first year. He'd had enough of all-male environments, he said - but then, he got a 59 lottery number in the draft, and so he was off to another all-male environment - Vietnam.

He was one of the last in, and one of the very last out, working, in a 25-man unit, to supervise the cease-fire.



*Borgess will sign
copies of his novel
at the Book Bin on
Saturday, March 1,
from 10-noon*

Afterwards, unlike many others who fought in the war and whose time owed ended with the war, Borgess was told that he would finish out his term. The Army stationed him in Washington, DC, where he worked as a radio operator, a job, he says, that didn't require much of his time.

This situation allowed him to do the flying and the work he needed to earn his private pilot's certificate. Then, when his Army time was done, and with the help of the Veteran's Administration, he began to pile up the hours he needed to earn his commercial license, for multi-engines and instrument flight.

He worked as a charter pilot, he says, taking jobs that included flying business people to cities for their work, and also flying bodies for mortuaries.

Finally, with the hours he needed and the certifications he desired, he got a job as a copilot for a company that flew freight.

And this, he says, is where the book takes off.

As he tells it, his career and the book based on it is a thrilling tale of pilots and

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A Bingo Brawl in Wachapreague?

GORDON VINCENT ESTIMATES that, over the course of 18 1/2 years as the judge of the General District Court on the Eastern Shore, he heard about a half-million cases.

Many of them stuck with him, but one in particular set him off on a creative journey that ended in "The Case of the Great Wachapreague Bingo Brawl," which plays Friday and Saturday, Feb. 28 and March 1, at the North Street Playhouse in Onancock.

VINCENT, WHOSE WIFE Carol is the treasurer of the Playhouse, has acted in plays there and has been supportive of many productions. One involved the audience playing bingo, as a part of the play.

This was a big hit, Vincent says, and he began thinking about it, knowing that the theater's artistic director Terry Bliss was interested in

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This and That

JD BRADSHAW, driving, and Dylan Eder probably aren't going to miss the old trash truck, at least once the new one arrives.

That earth-shaking event is scheduled for Monday. The town agreed to pay \$98,000 for a new-to-us 2023 diesel Isuzu trash hauler with a 2016 packer.

Wachapreague negotiated the price with Tom's Truck Sales of Bealeton, VA, to include delivery.

SUSAN SPRINGER, who left the job of town clerk of Wachapreague to take a similar job in

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Flying Crooked

planes, schemers and dreamers, hope and desperation and a willingness to bend the rules at a time when such bending was, if not allowed, at least mostly ignored.

BORGESS' WRITING JOURNEY began during a conversation with his sister-in-law. He was talking about his adventures and she suggested it would make a great book.

In the long run, he says, though it's a book about flying and risk and danger, it's really, "about people. About character. Why are they doing these things. How did they get to where they are?"

The protagonist, Jack Dolan, gets involved with a shady airline company that focuses on flying Muslims to participate in the Hajj, a once-in-a-lifetime trek to Mecca that each Muslim promises to make.

And, like Borgess, once the protagonist is involved with the airline and the people, he finds it so compelling, he doesn't want to leave.

BUT BORGESS DID LEAVE, ending up working for American Airlines, and living in Winchester, VA. He and his wife Jeanne loved it there, raised their children there, and, while they were still living there, in 2002, bought the house on Powellton to use as a fishing getaway.

In 2010, he retired from American Airlines, and they moved to Wachapreague full-time. He was 58, seven years younger than the mandatory pilot retirement age, but he had seen the financial fallout from 9/11 and from the bursting of the 2008 financial bubble, and he decided that "if I can get my

money and get out, I'm doing it."

Their two children were in college by then, and Borgess and his wife did a lot of fishing, often going way off shore in the Jeannie B. They spent time in the winters in the Florida Keys, where Borgess learned to scuba dive and did some dive charters, mainly as a hobby.

He started writing the novel there, and over the years, showed it again and again to a group of readers, mainly women, he says, who were pretty tough on him. He says that listening to them, and getting a thick skin in the process, helped him learn how to write.

WHEN HE WASN'T fishing, editing, writing, or working to get the book published, on line and in bookstores, he volunteered for Hospice. Though that work ended with the pandemic, he is looking forward to starting it again.

"It's the most rewarding work I've ever done."

Borgess will be signing books on Saturday, March 1, from 10-noon at the Book Bin. You can buy "Flying Crooked" there, or at Amazon.com

This & That

Exmore, where she lives, has returned as town clerk here.

She had taken over in Exmore from a person who had to leave to care for a family member. That person was able to return.

Springer says she missed the people of Wachapreague and is delighted to be back. She says she can do more good here than in Exmore.

Brawl

having another bingo-participation event.

Knowing this, he and his wife took off on a road trip in July, and Vincent found himself thinking about bingo, and about characters based on that long-ago bingo-focused court case.

He got excited about it, began developing characters and a plot, dialogue, drama and comedy, and soon enough, had what he needed to make an outline and, in time, a play.

THE DISPUTE AT THE center of the piece took place a long time ago, at a bingo venue other than Wachapreague.

But, motivated by a deep love of the Wachapreague Firemen's Carnival, and especially the food (soft crab sandwiches in particular, he says), he set the piece at the carnival bingo hall.

Vincent says that the characters aren't based on real people, but on "real types of people we all know on the Eastern Shore."

VINCENT WROTE MANY letters, emails, court documents and the like during his years on the bench, but this is his first play. He has written skits for a jurisprudence-centered group. But he says he harbored no secret desire to be a writer.

Bliss says that "Working with any novice playwright is always an interesting experience, especially if their end product must fit into specific parameters. Every writer is going to champion their own work, as well they should. Then it's my job as the producer/director to work with the first time author to mold what they've written to fit the production for which it is being developed."

THERE ARE ABOUT 20 actors in the play, and they will be allowed to have scripts on stage, he says.

He himself will be in the production, playing the role of the judge who hears the case (art imitating life?). His wife, whom he describes as "one of the real talents of North Street," is one of the contesting bingo players.

There will be five audience-participation bingo games during the play; if you go, you'll be handed a bingo card and a dauber. And while there will be no monetary prizes, there will be a gift basket for each of the winners.

You can buy tickets online at northstreetplayouse.org, or call 757-787-2050 for information. Tickets are \$15; seating is general admission. The shows are Friday, Feb. 28 and Saturday, March 1, at 7 p.m.