

PERSONALITY
Profile

STORY BY VANESSA PELLECHIO
PHOTOS BY DARRYL WHEELER



Charlie Gomer

Peacocks, daylilies, and teaching fill Gomer's colorful life



Charlie Gomer may be known as “Mr. Gomer” to his former students, spending most of his 35 years of teaching at Gettysburg Area High School.

But there is more to the 63-year-old Chambersburg native than his extensive business and technology education career.

Gomer, who moved to Gettysburg in 1975, has been retired from the school district since June 6, 2006 and taken on other interests like growing more than 1,000 daylilies and owning 21 peacocks at his home, a pre-Civil War house on 15 acres adjacent Little Round Top.

“I did feel my service was to give students some kind of economic education whether it was teaching business math or accounting,” Gomer said. “You could use common math skills in shopping, measuring portions in recipes and accounting is the language of business.”

Gomer's wife Anne said former students still approach Charlie and say how he was their favorite teacher by giving practical lessons they took with them to college or their own businesses.

“When I say I am Anne Gomer, people always ask if I am married to Charlie Gomer,” Anne said. “That is how I went through life.”

Since teaching, Gomer has gotten involved in the community by joining the board of the Adams County Arts Council and the Penn State Master Gardeners in Adams County. Gomer also volunteers as an usher, reader and greeter at St. James Lutheran Church.

Gomer has been working at the Dobbin House since 1979 and still works two days a week.

For the Penn State Master Gardeners organization, Gomer took a master gardening class after retiring in 2006.

Students who took the 13-week course met once a week for a couple of hours to discuss different topics from soils and pesticides to fruits and vegetables. At the end of the course, students must pass the test with a score above 80 percent.

Gomer said he passed the test and dedicated 50 hours of volunteer service with master gardening in the first year as a requirement. Now, the volunteer service could not be physical work and needed to involve applying their knowledge from the course. After the first year, the requirement is 20 volunteer hours.

At one of his master gardening meetings, a woman brought in pictures of daylilies and described the different colors.

“I did not realize the variety of daylilies there were,” Gomer continued.

Gomer became a member of the American Hemerocallis Society, which is a nonprofit organization looking to promote and encourage the development of daylilies. He also joined a daylilies club in Maryland where he met people “from all walks of life,” he said.

“After being a teacher and being in my own little group of teachers those years, it was nice to meet people with totally different vocational backgrounds,” Gomer said.

He started collecting daylilies in 2008 and the most expensive one he owns is about \$200. Gomer plans to sell his daylilies next year. With the extensive collection he has, the gardens are designated regional display gardens.

Every morning, Gomer and Anne have a routine of drinking their cups of coffee while walking through their yard to see which daylilies have bloomed.

To have the daylilies in his garden, Gomer needed to tear down a fence that he used for the pasture for the all the horses he owned and bred over the years.

Since eighth grade, Gomer had horses and raised show prospects. He is a life member

of the United States Equestrian Federation. "My best pony was named Stuart Little and he was actually second in the whole United States," Gomer recalled. "He went for over \$200,000 at one time."

Gomer explained how it could cost thousands to show a pony a year, but there were a lot of wealthy people who wanted their children to have the winning pony.

"I did grow attached to them, but most of them went to nicer homes," Gomer said. "They went to good places."

In 1996, Gomer realized his dream of owning horses was not feasible. There was a terrible snowstorm and Gomer owned nine horses but only six stalls, he said.

As a teenager, Gomer showed horses and paid for at least one year of college by selling horses.

a story book," with peacocks walking all around, he said.

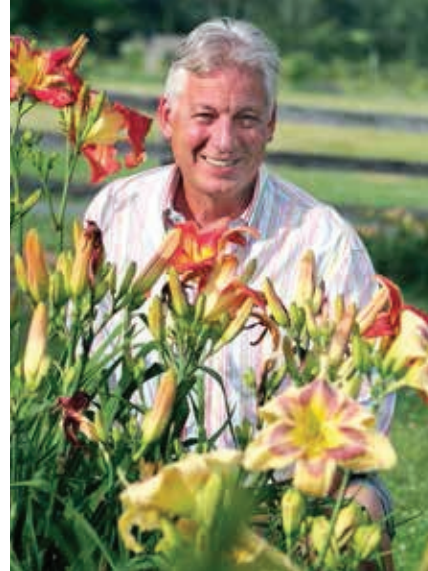
Gomer bought a young horse from a retired colonel and the colonel's wife offered peacock eggs to him. Gomer's father hatched the peacock eggs and Gomer bought a male peacock from him a year or two later.

For more than 20 years, Gomer has owned peacocks. He is member of the United Peafowl Association.

Last year, Gomer hatched 32 pea-chicks and sold 28 in one week.

Besides the most familiar color, India-blue, he owns

bronze, midnight, peach, white, pied and cameo peacocks, but Gomer has learned it can be challenging to care for the young pea-chicks because they are easily susceptible to



Gomer said he was always looking for the next horse and heard of one in Hagerstown, Md., that he went to see with his mother.

That is where he saw a farm "just out of



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sicknesses and do not recover most of the time. He continues to raise pea-chicks on his farm and sell them to this day.

In addition to peacocks and horses, Gomer has a soft spot for animals in need.

Gomer saved three stray cats that were roaming around in his barn. The three cats were taken to get their rabies shots and stay in the barn as outside cats, according to Gomer.

Just two years ago, Gomer and Anne rescued two Chihuahuas who were in a hording situation at a home in Chambersburg. The two lap dogs protect the house from intruders and enjoy snuggling with their owners.

Gomer, who has traveled to Dubai, Australia, Hawaii, Ireland, Europe and Mexico, hopes to continue to explore the world.

Out of all the things Gomer has done in his life, he said his biggest accomplishment is his family. He raised his sons Phillip and Drew, who are both independent and doing well.

He is also grateful for his wife he met at Gettysburg Area School District in 1973 and got married in 1978.

“It has been an interesting ride throughout,” Anne said. “Charlie goes after things wholeheartedly.”



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