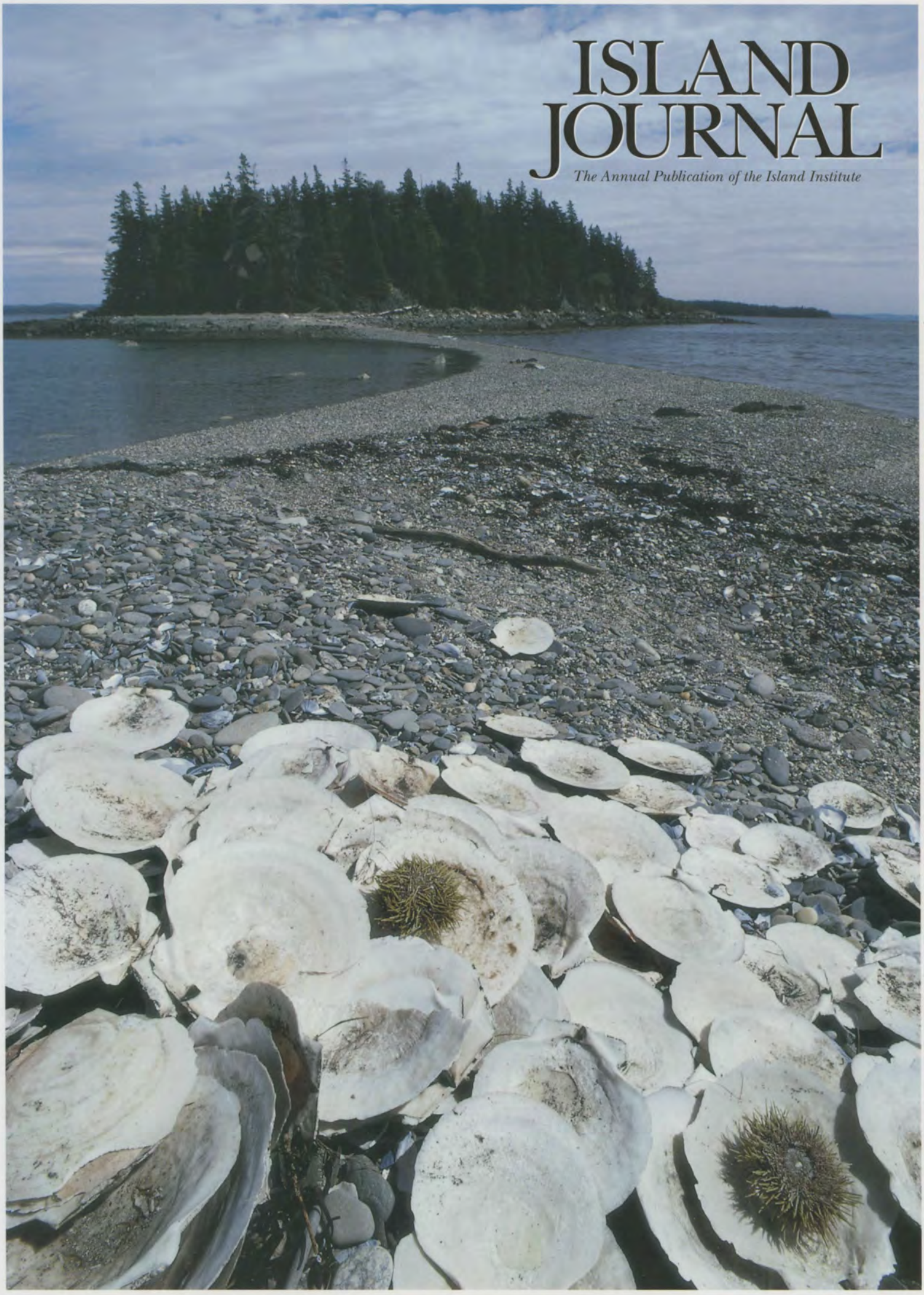
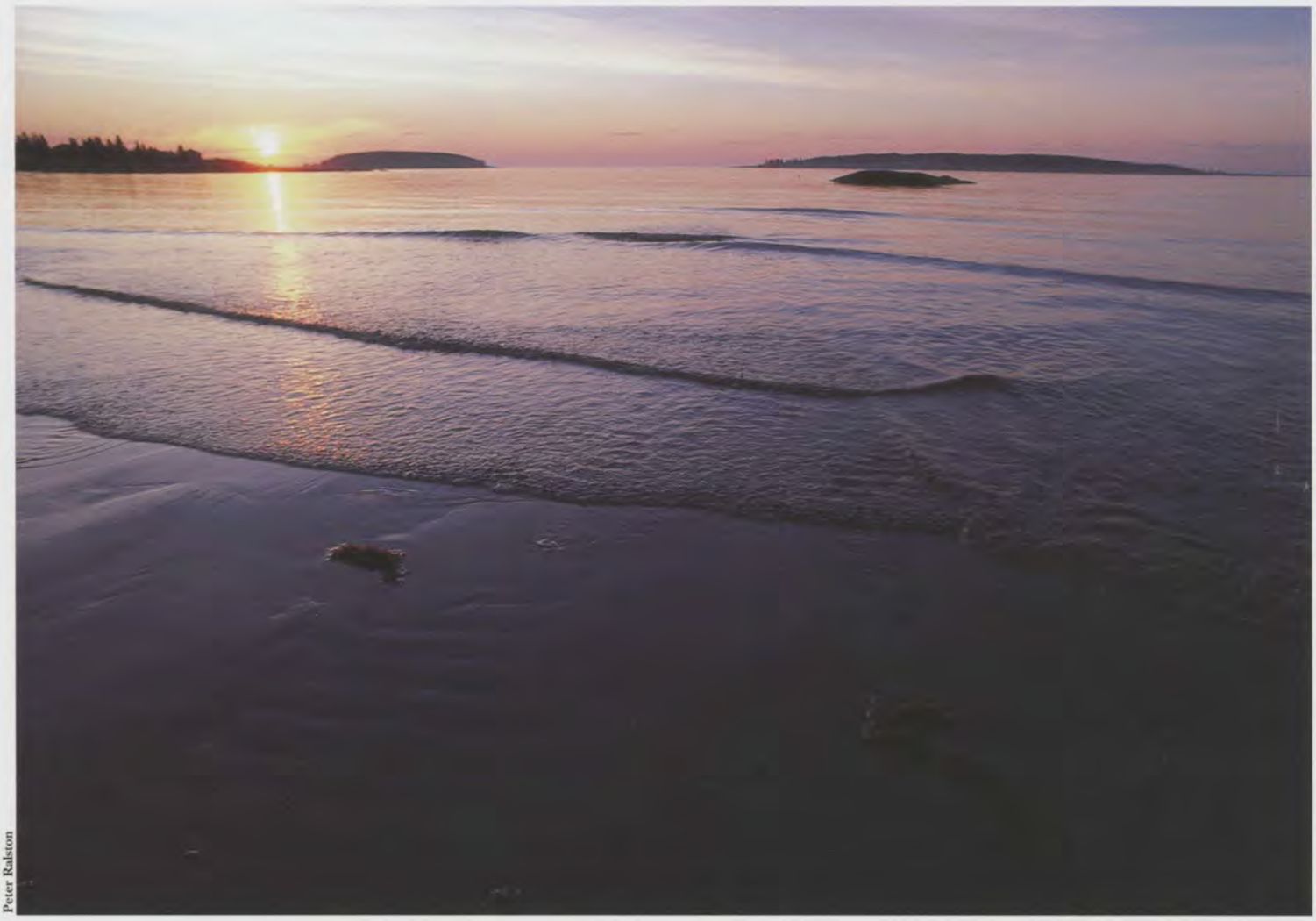


ISLAND JOURNAL

The Annual Publication of the Island Institute



Peter Ralston

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To our readers

Peter Ralston

Moments

Islands will teach us if we let them. They inform by example; they pass along collective experience; they convince us of the power and subtlety of the natural world. To know islands is to appreciate their wondrous ability to enhance our own lives.

A young teacher and his wife purchase an abandoned island just before World War II. With their children, their students and their many friends, they transform it into a magical place where human beings, garden plants, wild and domestic animals and the sea must co-exist. The humans, at least, are transformed by a series of unforgettable "teaching moments" that span three generations.

In Buddhist fashion a retired couple decides to devote a third of their life together to service. They spend 18 winters on the Isles of Shoals, tending buildings and boats in the off season, allowing that bleak place to teach them, as nothing else could, about their own lives and values.

Halfway around the world, two volcanic chains in the northwest Pacific teach a visitor about his own back yard. Protected from exploitation by remoteness or by reasons of national security, the teeming wildlife and marine resources of the Kuril and Aleutian islands provide glimpses into what the sea on our side of the North American continent — the Gulf of Maine — must once have been.

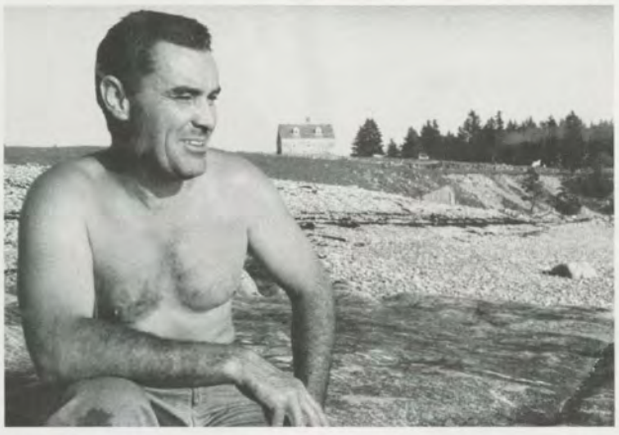
Through the Island Institute's new fellowship program, a recent college graduate is able to spend several months in two Maine island communities, Monhegan and Chebeague. The "teaching moments" are all around her — aboard lobsterboats, in fish houses, in island homes and island schools. Again, islands are working their magic.

Volume 17 of Island Journal is all about these moments. Allowed to flower within us, they will change our own lives and transform the lives of others we touch.

The Editors

ISLAND JOURNAL

The Annual Publication of the Island Institute
Volume Seventeen



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ISLAND INSTITUTE
Publishers of Island Journal
Serving the Islands and Communities of the Gulf of Maine

ISLAND JOURNAL

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RAVEN
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LOG OF *RAVEN*

Seventeen Years Along the Archipelago

PHILIP W. CONKLING

In the cultures of people of the circumpolar North, the raven is given a variety of mythical powers, including its ability to see into both the past and future, to foretell death and to be a steward, recycling old life into life anew. As the previous century now cycles into the dawn of a new millennium, it seems appropriate to use this opportunity to look backwards and forwards, like the mythical bird of the North, to see where the actual black-hulled RAVEN has carried us in our travels through time during the last two decades, and to imagine where its sleek, mythical form may carry us in the coming years. Thus, we have decided to use this first part of Island Journal to step outside of our usual narrative convention of summing up last year's expeditions of the vessel RAVEN, and instead sum up our last 17 years and launch them into the outlines of a vision of the future.

Beginning at the beginning, many years before there was an actual RAVEN, the Institute began germinating out of a set of experiences grounded in the hard thin soil and wind-blown spruce of Allen Island, a 450-acre island midway between Port Clyde and Monhegan. Peter Ralston and I began working there in 1980 for its new owner, Betsy Wyeth, and the visions that we collectively hammered out beginning then have not stopped growing and spreading in the 20 years since.

Allen Island, the site where George Waymouth and his crew chose to base the first systematic exploration of the coast of Maine in 1605, was granted to John Allen following the Revolutionary War. The island became a moderately prosperous fishing and farming outpost throughout the late 18th and first half of the 19th century, but would probably have been abandoned if it were not for the development of a market for fresh lobsters in places like Boston and New York in the 1880s. Suddenly there was new life for islands like Allen and hundreds of others along the far-flung coast of Maine where lobsters crawl in immense numbers to shed old shells and recycle themselves into new life.

For several decades at the end of the 19th century, Allen supported a school that boasted at its height over 80 students drawn from the families of fishermen who were berthed at Allen, Benner and the surrounding islands. But with the introduction of modern marine engines, first the make-and-break engines built in Camden shortly after the turn of the century and with later incremental improvements, it was possible to live in bigger towns ashore with their greater social and educational opportunities and commute to the rich lobstering grounds around islands on a daily basis. After the first decade and a half of the 20th century, hundreds of island communities like Allen fell into a long and increasingly steady decline that did not arrest itself until the 1970s.

Peter Ralston (2)

Packing and shipping salmon from Swan's Island

The Lunts cut cod in Frenchboro

Betsy Wyeth, the new owner of Allen, was interested in the island's history, and especially how its natural resources could be used to sustain the year-round economic base from which she and her artist husband, Andrew, had always drawn such admiration and sustenance. Peter Ralston, a photographer and family friend of the Wyeths, and I, a consulting forester and naturalist working then for Hurricane Island Outward Bound, were hired to propose plans for resurrecting a year-round economic base on and around Allen.

Peter and I quickly developed a forest and pasture management plan to recreate some of the historic pasturage on the island and began thinning out stands of forest spruce, much of which had been subject to the ravages of wind and witch's broom. We brought in logging contractors, one of whom set up a sawmill to cut beams for a new barn Betsy designed. After the pasture clearing, we brought in a flock of sheep from nearby Metinic Island on a soft foggy day, which Peter captured in a marvelous photograph that became the cover for the first Island Journal two years later.

In 1983 when the Institute was launched, with support from island conservationist and philanthropist Tom Cabot and the gift of 10 signed reproductions of one of Andrew Wyeth's iconic Maine coast images, we were off to the races. We understood that as new arrivals to the coast we needed to navigate carefully among the ferocious bastions of rugged individualism offshore where islanders, whether of great or reduced circumstances, were equally proud of their families' deep local history and were not likely to be impressed with a pair of newcomers from the Brandywine Valley and Hudson River, where Peter and I had respectively grown up. But we also knew, instinctively perhaps, that a conservation ethic was a natural if unconscious part of island living, and that one role no one else was paying any attention to was recognizing that a deeply rooted island ethic existed here — that didn't need to be awakened by missionaries for the island environment.

Events soon overtook us, however, in Casco Bay where the coastal real estate bubble economy of the mid-1980s was already out of control. There, on an island only two miles off the booming Portland waterfront that was in the process of being "condoized," a group of developers proposed to renovate an abandoned fort property on Great Diamond Island into 238 condominium units and 78 house lots around its perimeter. Casco Bay islanders were horrified, but in the heady days of the go-go 80s when everyone was making a killing selling to the next biggest rube, Portland City Council and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had both approved the plans essentially as the developers had requested.

Margery Foster, a summer resident of Great Diamond, and a professionally trained economist, was not so easily impressed. Together with a group of her compatriots from the Casco Bay Island Development Association, she appealed for help from the two-year-old Island Institute. This battle, which consumed the next six years of all our lives (and put several local lawyers' children through college), changed the way a lot of people came to view the Maine islands.

The issues were varied and complex, but ultimately turned on the design and location of a sewage treatment plant that was a crucial part of the development's infrastructure. As originally proposed, the plant would discharge effluent over 60 acres of previously productive clam flats. Because these flats were already closed to swimming and clamming due to other local pollution, the DEP ruled that an additional discharge would be acceptable:

a "you can't pollute pollution" kind of logic, the islanders termed it. Today this approach would not pass the straight-face test, but then it seemed to be an acceptable tradeoff for the renovation of the long abandoned, once-grand buildings of Fort McKinley.

After being outgunned and outmaneuvered at the local and state level, the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) joined the fray and we jointly appealed to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which finally sustained the islanders' objections and required a system redesign. By the time plant redesign was completed, the project partners were bankrupt, as Margery Foster and her associates had already predicted. The project's lender, Maine Savings Bank, also sank under the weight of millions of dollars of losses on the Fort McKinley project and other unsustainable real estate ventures.

Bill Schwicker

RAVEN and crew downeast at Head Harbor Island

In the meantime, concern over pollution in Casco Bay spawned a series of upgrades at municipal sewage treatment plants and led to the creation of the Friends of Casco Bay, which has "watchdogged" the bay in a non-confrontational manner ever since.

Meanwhile, outside Casco Bay, the Institute was involved in community development activities. In 1987 we began an island schools support program to bring teachers, administrators and parents together with education service providers and resources on the mainland. The North Haven school, an innovator and leader among island schools, was an important island schools project supporter, including an island parent, Chellie Pingree, who later became school board chair, then a state senator, and Senate Majority Leader. When we set up our own free-standing nonprofit organization, Chellie Pingree and Margery Foster became founding trustees.

One of the Institute's earliest community development projects took shape on the island of Frenchboro, eight miles off Mount Desert. For most of the time since the end of World War II, Frenchboro has been the smallest surviving year-round island community with a population that has hovered between 40 and 60 rugged souls. In the 1960s when their school population decreased to a lonely pair of children and the state threatened to close the island school, the islanders rallied and adopted foster children to keep the school open. But by the mid-1980s the number of island school children dipped again. This time the islanders, with the help of a visionary planner at the Hancock County Regional Planning Commission, Jim Haskell, developed an audacious homesteading plan to make low cost houses available to those who would come out and become permanent residents of the island.

The Institute served on the founding board of the organization implementing the plan, the Frenchboro Future Development Corporation, along with the Maine Seacoast Mission and a handful of islanders under the leadership of islander David Lunt. We set out to raise funds and political support for a complex plan to build seven houses served by new roads, septic systems and wells. We helped recruit community members. For reasons in retrospect still hard to fathom, the Frenchboro homesteading project attracted national media attention well before we were prepared for it. Frenchboro was featured in articles in the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *People* magazine, local and national TV and scores of other outlets. One of the least reliable national scandal magazines headlined its coverage: "Come Live with Us on Fantasy Island." Board members and islanders were soon overwhelmed with many hundreds of applications, scores of prospective islanders who wanted to visit (some real, some really "out there"), all attracted by a traveling media circus selling lunatic notions of island romance.

To make another long story short, the project finally succeeded in acquiring land for the housing through a donation from Frenchboro's then major landowner, the Rockefeller family, raising the necessary funds to build seven small houses and finding occupants for them. While only one of the original homesteaders who entered the program has stuck it out, three of the seven houses have now been sold to year-round families, one has been permanently reserved for the school teacher and the rest have been rented. Best of all, the Frenchboro school is, if not full, at least not in danger of shutting down.

Throughout the 1980s and early 90s, the Institute maintained a presence on Allen Island, which continued to be a place to test and demonstrate projects that might have relevance for other island communities. In 1987 the Institute and Betsy Wyeth began a small scale salmon aquaculture operation there in partnership with Tad Miller, a local lobsterman, and his sister, Susan. Through the tireless efforts of Tad and Susan, the project operated for four years at a break-even point. But the economics of small family fish farms, like other small family farming enterprises, are stacked against these kinds of operations. So instead of scaling up with a large corporate partner, we elected to quit while we were, if not exactly ahead, at least not in the hole. We had learned a lot.

Around the time we phased out of the Allen Island salmon farm, another island fish farm on Swan's Island had gone into receivership. Its bank lender was about to put it on the auction block. By this time the Institute had grown substantially. We expanded our publications program to initiate Inter Island News, which was edited by an itinerant, freelance genius, Cynthia Bourgeault, then living on Swan's Island. Cynthia, who was both a Ph.D. and an ordained Episcopal priest, began working with us and had often spoken in awe of the political skills of Swan's Island's First Selectman Sonny Sprague. Sonny had not only survived two decades of island politics — no mean feat in a small community with a long memory — but had taken those skills to Augusta on many occasions to lobby successfully for far-reaching visions for his community. In 1984 Sonny had led the effort to

Peter Ralston (2)

Allen Island salmon farm, 1988

create a special island lobster zone within two miles of Swan's, concurrent with a lobster trap limit no other community on the coast of Maine (save Monhegan) had been able to agree to.

Cynthia encouraged us to meet Sonny Sprague, which we did one evening after bringing RAVEN by Hockamock Head at the entrance to Burntcoat Harbor. Anchoring near an elegant lobsterboat named PRINCE OF PEACE, we rowed ashore, walked up to Sonny's house as twilight deepened and knocked on his door. I can only imagine what Sonny thought when he found us on his doorstep asking to talk to him about the salmon farm. Sonny agreed to come back out to RAVEN with us and talk. Following that encounter, throughout the rest of the fall and winter, we yoked ourselves to Sonny's vision of a community-based salmon farm employing local people, and locally owned. The full story is long and convoluted but can be distilled into this: we jointly raised enough capital ($50,000 from several major benefactors of the Institute) to leverage a $550,000 line of credit. The money gave Swan's Islanders, under Sonny's leadership, the opportunity to demonstrate whether local knowledge and common sense among islanders could compete in the global marketplace where salmon are an increasingly abundant commodity. And we're happy to report that the huge gamble that we all took together has paid off in terms of the original vision and goals. The farm has paid off all its debts, has competed successfully in an extremely competitive international environment and has recycled many millions of dollars of payroll and services through the Swan's Island community.

Through the Institute's increasing involvement in the marine resource scene along the coast, we became familiar with the fact that the Maine islanders, their mythos to the contrary notwithstanding, are fully aware of changing conditions in the global economy. This should come as no surprise, as today's island lobster boat, to cite but one example, with its sophisticated electronics, large string of traps and dependence on worldwide markets puts to rest the notion that islanders live in a simple world removed from ordinary mainland reality. Islanders no longer live in insular empires of self sufficiency (if they ever did), but instead manage their interdependencies with the mainland economy and culture in a more constrained and self conscious fashion than the rest of us. Islanders, in other words, are part of, and we would argue an essential part of, the fabric of the working life of the Maine coast, all of which depends on the health of the marine environment of the Gulf of Maine. To understand these interconnections and interdependencies and to enter the debate over their future, the Institute launched *Working Waterfront* in 1993 as a forum for the visions and revisions of the future of this great interconnected coastal region.

David Platt, formerly of *Maine Times* and the *Bangor Daily News*, joined us to head up this new enterprise and we slowly fashioned a community-based editorial forum that encompasses the views of both working boats and recreational sailors; the vital interests of both commercial realtors and wilderness conservationists; and of public and private visions of our collective future.

Working Waterfront gave us the platform to launch a much more ambitious undertaking: the establishment of a marine resources program whose goal is to provide decision makers in this fractious and contentious theater with access to better information, especially ecological information, on which to base resource management decisions.

One of the early projects of the program was envisioned by Ted Ames, a fishermen who had grown up on Vinalhaven, gone to the University of Maine and become a teacher before returning to the sea where his father, uncles and forebears had made a living. As a groundfisherman and one-time president of the Maine Gillnetters Association based in Stonington, Ted had seen firsthand and had participated in the "fishing down"of once productive inshore fishing grounds among the islands of the Gulf of Maine. He had heard stories from old timers of "whale cod"; of great schools of ripe and running fish that had come way up the bays of Maine to lay their eggs. But he could get no one in the National Marine Fisheries Service or other regulatory circles to take seriously his view of Gulf of Maine cod as a constellation of separate and distinct spawning populations, rather than as a great mass of fish cycling along the coast of Maine from Georges Bank. With a small research grant provided by the Institute, Ames went out to interview the elders of various fishing communities along the coast and map the locations where they had caught ripe and running cod. So as not to bias the survey and to provide additional rigor, no spawning group was mapped unless it had been independently confirmed by two or more fishermen.

The picture Ames ultimately compiled, when converted by the Island Institute into computerized maps, showed that over half of the nearly 1,100 square miles of spawning grounds of cod and haddock in the Gulf of Maine had once been inside Maine state waters in such unlikely places as the mouth of Somes Sound, up the deep water reaches of Blue Hill Bay and in the inner parts of Penobscot Bay off Cape Rosier and Fort Point, usually on sand and gravel bottoms. This startling new picture of a large number of discrete inshore spawning populations in state waters translated several years later into the largest ever closure of state waters to fishing activities: the legislature, with broad fisherman support, passed a law prohibiting fishing in 2,900 square miles of state waters from West Quoddy in Lubec to the Isles of Shoals on the New Hampshire border for three months a year for five years.

Shortly after Ames completed his project, a new marine conservation battle began looming on Monhegan's horizon. Twelve miles out to sea, Monhegan has a long and lively fishing history that dates back to Waymouth's and John Smith's original voyages to this island landfall early in the 17th century. For most of the 20th century Monhegan has had the only legislatively recognized distinct fishing territory on the coast of Maine, a two-mile zone extending around its northern, eastern and western boundaries in which only a dozen Monhegan fishermen are allowed to fish, and then only during a restricted six-month winter season.

As the inshore cod, haddock, shrimp, scallop and urchin fisheries upon which mainland fishermen once depended declined throughout the 1990s, the pressure on lobster stocks began to increase. Lobsters were the only fishery that had held up to the intensity of modern fishing methods. Many more mainland lobstermen were fishing more and more traps throughout this period of rapid build-up, and perhaps it was inevitable that Monhegan's productive waters would become a target. A two-mile limit protected most of Monhegan's waters, but the seaward boundary off its southern shores had never been defined. In 1997, a group of five Friendship-based fishermen moved in their lobster traps, provoking an intense, potentially violent confrontation.

The confrontation pitted a large number of mainland boats and fishing practices against the island's limited resources and handful of fishermen. But it was really a confrontation between two competing views of the ocean commons. The mainland view held (and much of it still holds) that the waters of the Gulf of Maine are a public resource open to all who can successfully wrest a living from its capricious waters. The island view, at least from Monhegan, is that the small zone surrounding the island is the key to community sustainability; that it has been successfully managed for a century by limiting the number of fishermen and the season of the year they can fish there and that it should be protected from outside intrusion. The two views could hardly have been more diametrically opposed and unsuited to compromise: the open ocean as the last bastion of rugged individualism versus a community-based fishery based on a conservation ethic.

Thus the confrontation landed back in the legislature, where State Senator Marge Kilkelly, at the time also a member of the staff of the Island Institute heading community programs, helped Monhegan islanders present their case. Kilkelly helped Monhegan draw up a bill that would close the circle around Monhegan's seaward side at three miles, and codify into law many of the conservation practices that had grown up informally during the past century. A handful of Monhegan islanders actually moved to Augusta during a six-week period before the final vote, including a whole family whose 10-year-old son took to running the elevator in the State House to collect commitments from legislators who couldn't avoid his appealing presence. The vote, when tallied near the end of the session, was lopsidedly in favor of Monhegan's view. Doubtless it was partly based on a growing recognition that many of the Gulf of Maine's abundant resources have been squandered, and it marked a turning point away from a view of allowing the ocean commons to be open to all — toward a fisheries policy based on a conservation ethic and local stewardship principles.

Just as the Monhegan confrontation was heating up, the Island Institute began its involvement in what has become the largest and most complex project we've undertaken to date. Introduced to us and inspired by our Maine Lights concept, Senator Olympia Snowe, the Chair of the U.S. Senate's Oceans and Fisheries Subcommittee, helped connect us to a NOAA program that manages the data collected by the nation's constellations of orbiting satellites. Known in government circles by its acronym, NESDIS (the National Environmental Satellite Data and Information Service), it provides a wealth of information on the vital signs of the biosphere. But like a thirsty man who wants a drink of water from a fire hydrant, getting the data stream into a drinkable form is a challenge. Senator Snowe suggested that the Maine coast could be used as a demonstration site where satellite age information could intersect the lives of real people with real questions about the health of the marine environment.

Sonny Sprague at Island Aquaculture cod hatchery, 1996

The Penobscot Bay Marine Collaborative, initiated in 1997, proposed to integrate a variety of new technologies to survey the marine environment of the second largest embayment on the United States' Atlantic coast. The collaborative's members are trying to answer a question both simple and complex: why are lobsters so abundant in Penobscot Bay and will this abundance last? The only way to unravel such a complex question is to integrate the observations of a large number of experts from different walks of life, including the lobster fishing community. A dozen different principal investigators (PIs as they are known to the research community), along with 75 lobstermen, have participated in collecting data on the lobster ecology of Penobscot Bay. They have mapped ocean currents from satellite observations, compared these with buoy measurements and generated a circulation model of the bay. They have collected tiny lobsters from larval tows, mapped lobster populations with subsurface diving techniques and compared their population numbers with intertidal samples collected by volunteers. And all along, the researchers have benefited from a collaboration with lobstermen who have taken aboard interns to record and map catches of the number of broodstock females and juveniles returned to the bay. Collectively we are developing the first predictive model based on an integrated set of ecological parameters; we are, in other words, "piloting"ecosystem management techniques for the first time in a United States marine fishery.

As we at the Institute are helping to integrate new technology into the management of marine fisheries, we are renewing our commitment to working with local communities. We have just launched an Island Fellows Program, in which recent college graduates and graduate students will live in remote community settings along the rim of the Gulf of Maine. These fellows will spend part of their time working on high priority, locally driven, community-based projects, and part of their time in schools and libraries transmitting new learning and technologies to tomorrow's community citizens.

Institutions such as schools and libraries are important in places other than islands, but perhaps nowhere else are they viewed as the difference between community life and death. Places such as Frenchboro have shown over and over that

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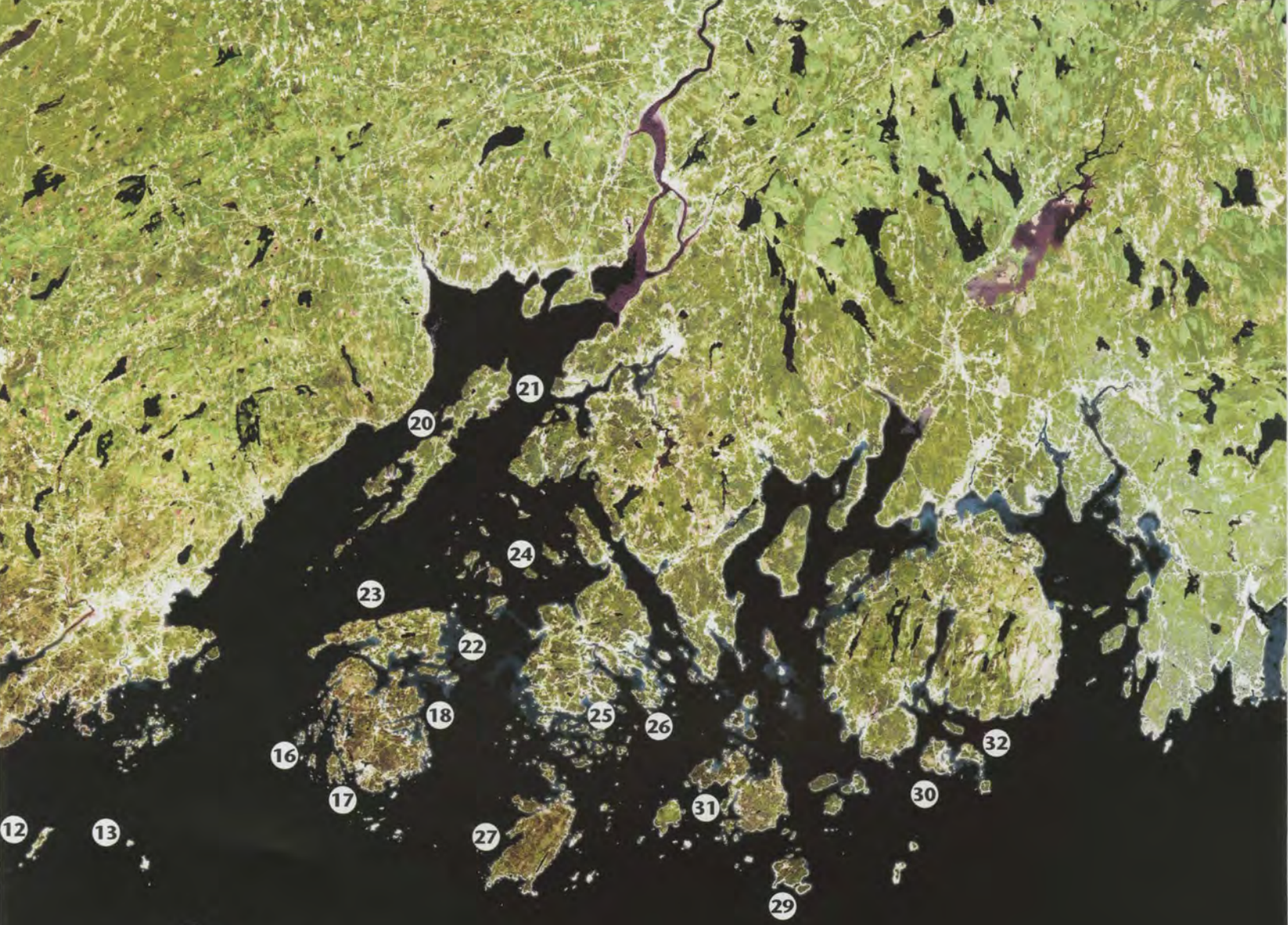

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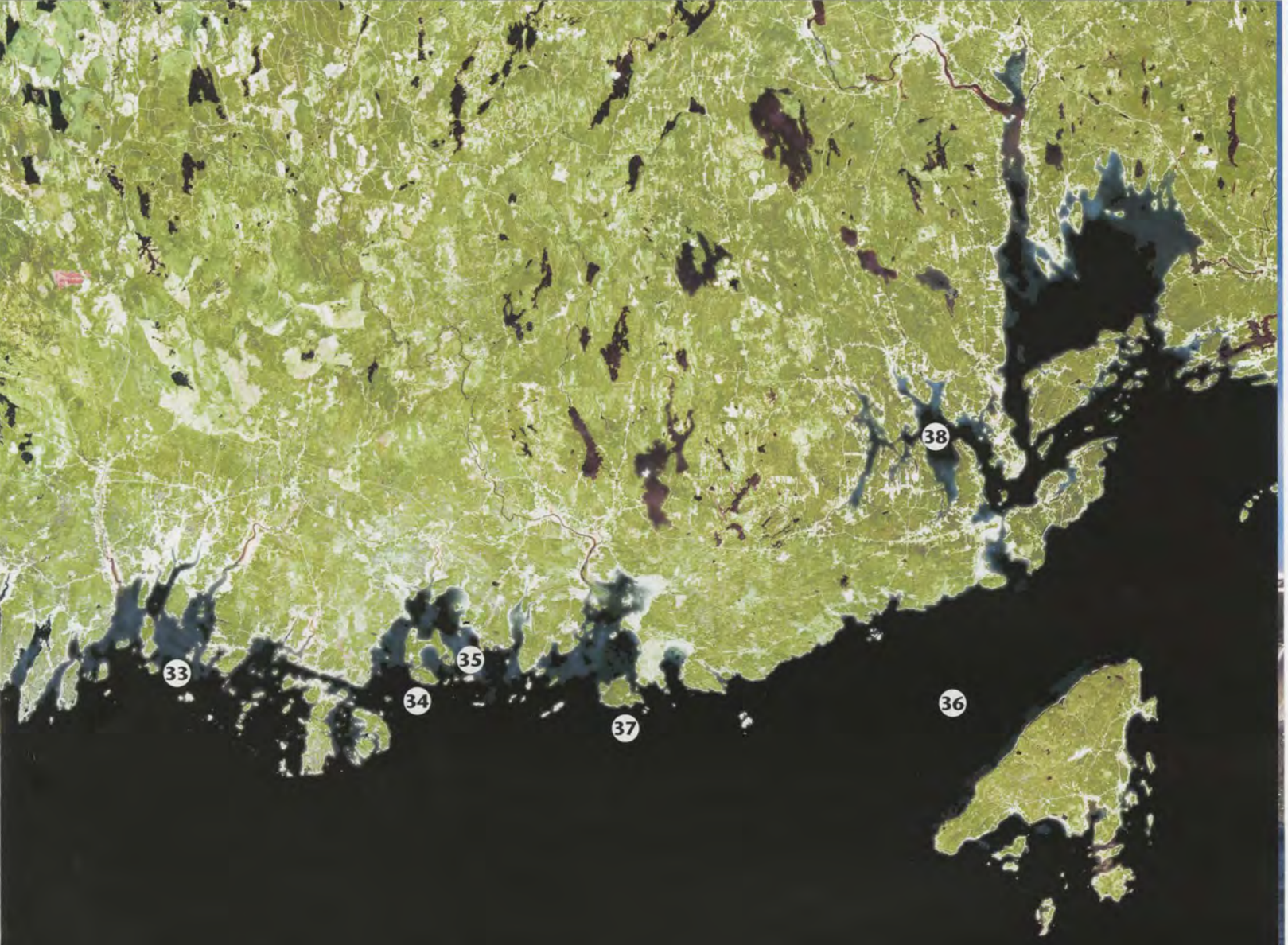
29. FRENCHBORO LONG ISLAND
Affordable Housing
Economic Development
Ferry Service
Conservation Land Purchase
Mussel Raft Aquaculture
Phone Service
Schools



30. GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND
Forest Management
Great Cranberry Futures Group
Schools

31. SWAN'S ISLAND
Cod Aquaculture
Fisheries
Maine Lights
Phone Service
Salmon Aquaculture
Schools

32. ISLESFORD
Library
Schools
Sea Sampling
Island Schools Conference

33. PLEASANT BAY
Satellite Imaging Project

34. ROQUE ISLAND
Resource Management
Aquaculture

35. HALIFAX ISLAND
Resource Inventory

36. EASTERN GULF OF MAINE AND GRAND MANAN
Atlantic Herring Spawning Project

37. CROSS ISLAND
Resource Management

38. COBSCOOK BAY
Scenic Analysis

ISLAND INSTITUTE PROJECTS 1983-2000

Recordings

SUSAN LITTLE

3 DECEMBER, MONHEGAN

We've finished our work for the day. But the fishermen are just getting started. I just came back from Trap Day, where a team of islanders and mainlanders loaded a dozen boats with 600 traps apiece. Everyone showed up at dawn dressed in their worst, guzzling coffees, cokes and cookies to refuel throughout the day. The pier was stacked ten traps high like a giant maze when we arrived, and the piles never seemed to go down, being constantly replenished by new loads from the trap yard, carefully delivered onto the pier by a pickup guided between the stacks of traps by several onlookers.

Island Institute Programs 1983-2000

When the Island Institute came into being 18 years ago, no one had really counted the islands in Maine's magnificent coastal archipelago. The number of miles of coastline, including islands, was at best an estimate. Island communities and their isolated counterparts on the mainland had been in decline for much of the twentieth century. The services that mainland communities expect — good schools, a useful transportation system, assistance with economic development, resource management, health care and the like — were generally less or lacking on the islands where year-round communities had survived.

Yet change was in the wind: pressure from tourists and developers was on the rise; new technologies had put many of the Gulf of Maine's fisheries at risk; a communications revolution was beginning that had the potential, at least, to make island living far less disadvantaged than it had formerly been. It was time, by the mid-1980s, to recognize the ways that these and other changes were already beginning to alter life on Maine's islands.

Born on Hurricane Island in September, 1983, the Institute became a catalyst for a multitude of island-based projects. At the suggestion of the many islanders who sparked the new organization's founding, the Institute involved itself in the things that mattered at the time: the condition of island forests, what to do about solid waste, how to develop a sustainable economy in an isolated place, how to prevent unwanted or unwise development. From there, over the years, the Institute (still at the urging of its island constituents) branched out into schools, fisheries, sustainable development, aquaculture, satellite imagery and geographic information systems, publishing, research — always in the hope that these varied activities would affect public policy toward islands in a positive way, while encouraging responsible, meaningful economic development on the islands themselves.

Based on satellite imagery, a technology that by the mid-1980s was already revolutionizing how earthbound people thought about themselves and their world, the map in the adjacent pages suggests the breadth of the Institute's involvement in its home waters over the years. The actual number of projects is far larger than could be included here; the map focuses on the highlights only, and it's limited to the inshore waters.

Views of the earth from space may be at many different scales, and the same is true of the Island Institute's many projects. Some have been very small: books for an island library, a mini-grant to a historical society, a partial scholarship for a college-bound student. Others have been bigger: forest thinning and pasture restoration, rebuilding an island breakwater. And still others span the length of the archipelago: Island Fellows; an inter-island newspaper; far-reaching demonstration programs in aquaculture and marine resources.

All in all, a remarkable number of initiatives in a very short span of years.

— The Editors

This image was derived from a mosaic of Landsat TM (Thematic Mapper) imagery, enhanced by J.S. McCarthy, Printers, and Andy Boyce of the Island Institute Information Department staff. The Institute has used Landsat data for a variety of projects including the analysis of circulation patterns in Penobscot Bay.

I was out here on Monhegan for a couple weeks last January, nearly a year ago, doing research on these same boats. To get out here last night I had to take a couple of boats, a shuttle, and then drive many miles to get from one bay to another. I've been living on Chebeague Island now for a couple months, also doing lobster research and helping out in the schools on Chebeague, Long and Cliff Islands. It's good to be back on Monhegan and to witness the day their season begins, while most fishermen in Casco Bay are finished now, working on boats or fixing gear over the winter, their traps all out and stacked until spring.

I wanted to remember everything from Chebeague; I've already forgotten so much about Monhegan. I made lists of birds, fishing words and descriptions of the sky and of people; I kept a journal; I took pictures — all in hopes of somehow boiling all my experiences down to something I can hang on to when I again become a mainlander. This is the scientist in me that wants one definite conclusion with a simple explanation, which I now know islands do not have. An island is a complicated chunk of land because you must understand it as an independent unit, yet not forget the ferries — their link to the mainland world. It's an interesting link that is difficult to grasp, but keeps me trying. This is my remembrance of the islands, Monhegan and Chebeague, my attempt to record if not encapsulate island life.

Bill MacDonald

Susan Little in class, Cliff Island

I am sitting in Monhegan's little white schoolhouse on a blustery Maine day while the kids are playing volleyball (in the schoolhouse). The desks are moved aside, and a balloon replaces the ball. This afternoon we made a Monhegan School Field Guide: an urchin, a barnacle, a mussel, and a periwinkle, four animals for four kids. Now, as they leap about the room I am taking my morning's work off the tape: the length, the molt, the claws, the sex, of each lobster. My voice straining, "First trap: 84 ... old hard ... two claws ... female ... no eggs ... no notch. Seventy-seven ... new hard ... one claw ... male. Ninety-two ... old hard ... two claws ... female ... with eggs and a notch."

My words are nearly lost in the low rumble of the engine, the sliding whine of the hauler as it stops and starts, and the melody of Mattie's clear whistle floating over the top of it all. But a lumpy rhythm emerges, beating amidst the noise. I convert my observations into numbers, each lobster possessing its own code. Carapace length measured in millimeters from the eye socket to the base of the tail is followed by a string of zeroes, ones and twos: male or female, hard shell or soft, two claws or one — a grid of scientific simplification. "Next trap in five fathom double: empty," my voice says on the tape, hanging on the word empty with the weight of the disappointment of an empty trap. Just a few crabs in for a free feed. Mattie says, "That's why we're shiftin' 'em, these fives," explaining the empties as he pulls them off the gunwale and into the boat, "'cause the lobsters go deep this time of year." Gulls shriek in scooping cadences, coming down to the water for the rotten herring tossed out of the bait bag and over the side, now limp from a five-night soak.

We steam out to deeper waters. It's still warm down there, the water holding onto the August heat while January has taken hold of the shallows. The yellow wire traps each get a fresh bag of bait. "They like the yellow ones, like a bright spot in the dark waters," Mattie says. I listen for these words between the lines of data, to break the monotony of entering strings of numbers, and my stare at the computer screen full of eye-numbing patterns.

The traps scratch and slide off the wide stern, disappearing beneath the water, sinking to the bottom for another round of fishing. The traps will fall onto the hard bottom where the lobsters will climb out of their nooks in the rock for an easy meal. They'll be seduced by oily fish, climbing up the netting of the head and through the funny eye into the kitchen of the trap, where the bait hangs. Then, curiously, they'll scuttle through a second head into the parlor where they'll be stuck, full and stuck until they're hauled up through the water and into the light and air, their claws banded and then they're tossed into the crowded tank.

After all the data is entered, I run it through an analysis program that spits out neat numbers summarizing each trip. This is all stapled into a packet full of all the information for that day and then is sent out to the fishermen. But I have to remember the good stuff — the stories and the images that don't have a place among the data. These were the things I remembered at night while I looked out my bedroom window atop Horn's Hill at water on all sides.

I have no neat record of my first day on the island, no grid to run through the tests, spitting out the punch line for the day. I arrived on the mail boat the LAURA B., as everything does to Monhegan. The island's generator was out, so the loading dock was stuck in the up position and the tide was low. Milk, mail, firewood and fruit were all carefully hoisted up to outstretched hands atop the dock that hung above us, as passengers climbed the ladder up the side of the barnacled pier. The whole island seemed to be there, waiting for new things and people.

I was met by Charlie and his big black truck. Charlie was going to be my neighbor. He'd been in World War II and walked with a cane. He came to Monhegan after the war for a quiet summer and wound up staying year-round, bearing the winters the summer people could not. I heaved my big green pack into the back of his truck, and we bumped up the dirt road to the top of Horn's Hill. I wandered into a dark empty house and found my way to my room where I began laying out long underwear and wool sweaters and stacked the load of books I'd brought to keep my nights busy. My room had a pale green feather bed in the center, a night stand, a closet and large windows on two sides. It was simple and open. As soon as I'd unpacked, sorting the crumpled things from my pack into piles and rows, I went back outside.

A graduate of Bowdoin College, ***Susan Little*** *is the Island Institute's first Island Fellow.*

Facing page: Island fellow Susan Little aboard STRIKER
Photograph by Christopher Ayres

Bill MacDonald (2)

Susan Little in class, Monhegan

21 OCTOBER, CHEBEAGUE

Tonight, just as I settled down in my cozy little firehouse apartment to read a book, the power went out. No storm or visible lines down, but it was out. Just as I found matches and lit the candles, my two overhead lights came on — no radio or refrigerator, just the two lights. With them came a roar — the generator. I'd forgotten about the generator for the firehouse, which also powered my place. I think I'll have to pile some pillows over my head so I can get some sleep with all the noise and still get up at sunrise for a day measuring lobsters. While having the light is nice, darkness is always exciting, as I remember the frequent dark nights on Monhegan, due to the new generator, when I tried by headlamp to plan my next afternoon with the school kids.

I spent the rest of the day following a series of branching paths through the Cathedral Woods, which covers more of the island than people do. Not paying attention to my direction, I walked in irregular geometric shapes. At first I thought the repetitions I noticed were merely nature's symmetries: pools frozen similarly in concentric rings and broken branches leaning diagonally across the trail, but finally realized that I had come back to the same fork in the path and could choose my way all over again.

10 OCTOBER, CHEBEAGUE

My first weekend on the island. I wandered over the roads by bike and foot, in the fall winds — fall's fight against dropping its leafy colors. I kept seeing the same people, who would always wave and say hello. I wonder how many times I'll have to see them before we'll stop and talk and introduce ourselves. Chebeague is a big place with people coming and going, and it could be awhile before I really know it.

I walked, sometimes back over the same paths and sometimes treading new, limited only by the island's edge and the sinking sun. I had mental if not physical freedom. I had not laid out a route or set a time to head back, I'd just started walking, turning wherever I liked. Light and shadow hinted at direction, but created strange and confusing patterns on the dirt and rock beneath my feet. The path wove in and out of trees, periodically allowing glimpses of the water. Each glimpse was like a photograph, perfectly composed. A white pine on the bluffs stretched its branches particularly far out over the water on one border, and on the other the view stretched back into the woods from the bluff's edge. My eye was drawn to the water, out to the horizon. I felt selfish knowing that no one else could see what I saw just now and wished I could keep these pictures, full of air and water and light, three dimensional in my memory.

Without ever consciously turning around I somehow arrived back at the road into town. I stopped to watch the afterglow of the sunset from the rocks just past Fish Beach, sitting sheltered by a boulder from the cool west wind, looking at nothing but horizon. Walking back up the hill, I tried to locate myself on the island, drawing a map in my head of where I was and where I'd been, 13 miles out from Port Clyde.

8 OCTOBER, CHEBEAGUE

I ended the day just down the hill from the firehouse at Division Point, to watch the sunset, but the horizon was thickly clouded. I watched the lights go on in Portland, a few at a time, until the whole city was lit up against the darkening sky. A heron flew across the lights in silhouette, legs trailing straight out behind. This is the purpling hour — where dark reds on dark waters all fade into night.

My host, Robert, had returned from fishing by the time I returned from my walk. Smelling of bait, and with a happy grin, he greeted me and told me I was expected for dinner up by the school house. Robert's wife Tralice was inshore for the week and had planned an elaborate dinner schedule for me while she was away, not trusting Robert's culinary abilities. Tralice and Robert had gone to high school together and were married on the island last year. They'd designed and built their house, complete with a tuna painted on their roof. "I'll probably be asleep when ya get back, so I'll see ya down by the fish houses early tomorra," Robert said, handing me a flashlight to find my way back up the hill after dinner. The fish houses are where all the fishermen keep their gear and meet for some rum to warm up at the end of the day, often staying long after dark.

11 NOVEMBER, CHEBEAGUE

I walked up to Ed's store this morning for my first coffee. All the fishermen were there — it's blowin' a gale. It was good to meet some more people, as well as seeing some familiar faces, and to take part in a Chebeague morning ritual. I left the firehouse about 9 a.m. and somehow didn't get back until 2 p.m., stopping to talk along the way, and getting invited in for lunch. I'm on island time today, where the day just disappears and no one minds.

As I walked to dinner, I noticed the island's fire truck parked in my hosts' yard; the island owned a tiny piece of land at the edge of their yard that was just big enough for the truck. At dinner, they told me about their days in art school and out here at the Trailing Yew, a place where art students visiting Monhegan used to stay. I heard stories of the stout little cook who made countless meat loafs for hungry artists. Everyone at the table had stayed with her, spending the days capturing the island in sketches and paintings. I, too, wanted somehow to condense the island into a little nugget that I could take with me. I think it's the geographical limitation of an island that makes one try to take every bit of it in.

After several glasses of wine, plates full of homemade pasta and hours of conversation, we headed home late. Walking back up the hill, flashlight in hand, I watched the light pulse from the light house on the ridge. Inside, I sunk down into my feather bed and looked out at the black water shined by the moon.

Christopher Ayres

After a day of tagging, Casco Bay

26 OCTOBER, CHEBEAGUE

Two nights in a row out to dinner! I've definitely overbought groceries this week. It's been nice getting to know some people on the island, and it's certainly filling up my evenings. But, my perfected work and sleep schedule are happily out of whack. I'm beginning to put personalities to all the passing faces, and getting to know the families behind the kids I teach at the school.

After the first day, things became a bit more regimented. The ring of Charlie's phone call was my 5 a.m. alarm clock. He always called Robert with the island weather report, before he called it in to the radio, since winter weather can make fishing rough. I had an hour to get to the fish houses for a day of field work. After a cup of coffee and some raisin bread, I put on my boots and oil skins, grabbed my orange plastic box of tape recorders and rulers, and headed to the fish houses in the early morning light. I met Mattie and his stern man, and rowed out to STRIKER in their punt. It was cold and the sea smoke was thick on the water. We headed out and were quickly hauling traps. I'd look up and have no idea where we were, I was so busy slipping the notch of the ruler into the eye socket, pulling it along a mottled, glossy back, turning it over to check the sex, for a notched flipper or for clusters of eggs that looked like blackberries. I tried to figure out which part of the island I was looking at from the water, but I'd seen more of the island from the inside out than from the outside in.

12 OCTOBER, CHEBEAGUE

The colors were beautiful on the water today — layers of maple reds and spruce greens streaking the islands. I tried to keep track of where we were relative to the island. Good thing, since I wound up steering a good deal of the way back. We ended the day in "third finger strait" where 10 or 15 years ago some guy put gloves with the third finger standing up on top of a bunch of buoys. I guess someone cut his gear and he got mad. The name stuck. I finished tagging the lobsters for the Chebeague kids — 21 berried females for 21 students. They would hopefully be recaptured so the kids could plot where they'd traveled. I'll tell them all about it tomorrow in class. I'm excited to get to know the kids and to give them each their assigned lobster, watching them draw and name their lobster, and then hang its picture proudly on the wall.

The females get a notch, cut by the fisherman in the flipper second from the right when looking down on the lobster's back, if she has eggs. A notch means she's protected, that she's illegal to sell, so that anyone who catches her won't keep her. These berried females were put back into the water, set down on it gently, respecting the next generation of lobsters they held on their bellies. The short lobsters were just tossed over the gunwale, too small to sell. But, eggs were a mark of importance that guaranteed a careful release. A lobster would sometimes curl its tail in my hand, hiding its belly, and then flip its tail out and back in, attempting to swim away from me, but unable in the air.

The shorts were particularly feisty and I had to wait for them to stop so that I could measure them and toss them back. There was an art to launching a short. One had to time it perfectly between the movements of the stern man and the captain, while compensating for the rocking of the boat so as not to cause a collision. Once released, you could watch it spin slowly in the air, reach the water and sink.

The lobsters would have to grow enough to split their shells. Then, soft-bodied, they'd hide among the rocks like beady-eyed hermits in their little caves until they toughened enough to leave, shooting around the bottom with ease. They got bigger with every molt, and kept growing until they were caught. We caught a really big one that I had to pick up with two hands to put back in the water. It must have weighed six or seven pounds and been smart to avoid all those traps. It was a fierce-looking creature.

18 OCTOBER, CHEBEAGUE

I'm afraid I'm going to have nightmares tonight of snapping claws. There were loads of V-notchers today and they were aggressive! At one point I thought I was going to lose a fingertip. It's probably leftover anxiety from my crazy weekend. Friday, after teaching, I took the afternoon boat back to Chandler's Wharf at the southern end of Chebeague. It got in at 4:20, I hopped on my bike and sped back to the firehouse. The firehouse just happens to be at about the highest point on the island, so coming home is always a chore. Finally, I rolled across the parking lot and up to my deck, spotting one of the Fire & Rescue cars out of the corner of my eye. I ran inside, threw a pair of socks, jeans, a sweater, underwear, my toothbrush and a book into my backpack and was out the door. Luckily, I got a ride down to the Stone Pier at the northern end of the island, so I could catch the ferry into Cousins at 4:45. I think I had less than a minute to spare, but somehow made it onto the ferry, sat down

Continued on page 86

At the Cliff Island School

OFFSHORE

WITH MR. GAMAGE AND MR. CRAMER

To go to sea in a wooden ship is
"to know the world aright"

RICHARD J. KING

Harvey Gamage and Corwith Cramer likely never sat together and shared a beer. Gamage built boats. Spare with words and fond of his engineer's cap and his dog, he built more than 250 vessels, establishing himself as one of the most prolific and respected Downeast craftsmen in history. Cramer attended Yale and taught English at a private school. Tall and lanky, he grew up learning and sailing on yachts and tall ships, and he became a friend of one of the fathers of American sail training, Irving Johnson. In 1971, Cramer co-founded what would become the Sea Education Association (SEA), a college maritime studies program that spends half the semester on the ocean. Mr. Cramer once said, "We didn't want to teach people to sail ... what we wanted to do was take them to sea so they would learn to love the sea. "Harvey Gamage had his own thoughts about going offshore: "Well, went to Yarmouth on the ferry once. Drove me crazy. Nothing to do at sea."

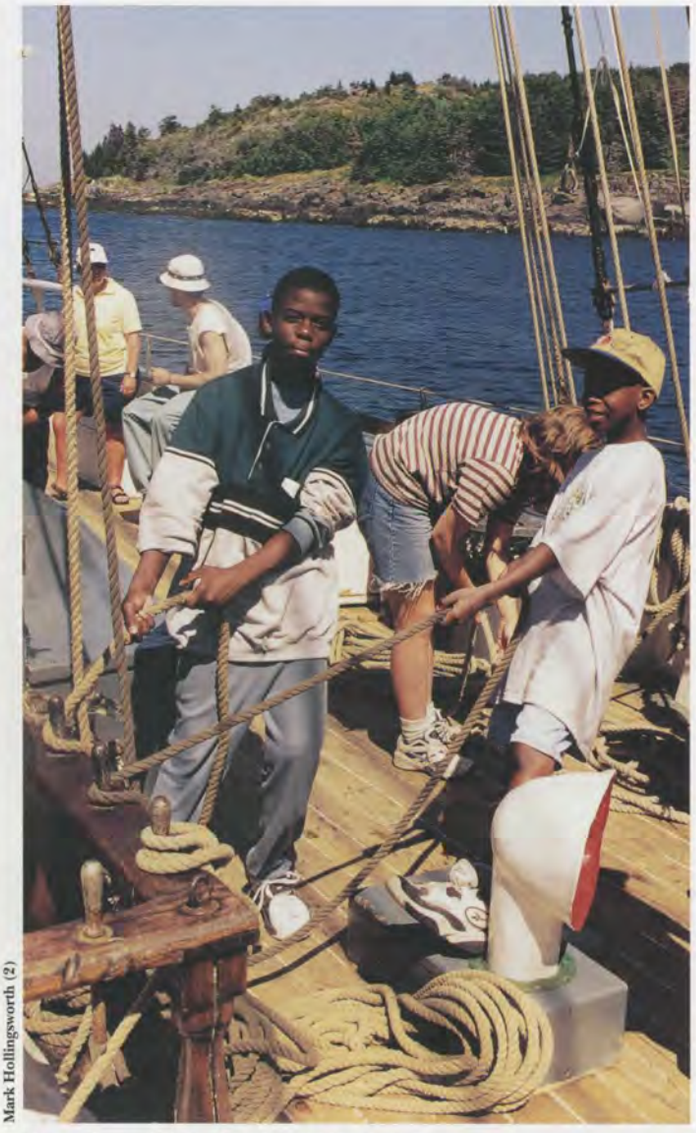
The two sail training vessels that bear their names, the wooden schooner SSV HARVEY GAMAGE and the steel brigantine SSV CORWITH CRAMER, are likewise different vessels, but their missions are nearly the same. These ships sail with students as crew to teach them about the ocean, hard work, our country's maritime heritage, community and a bit about themselves. Dozens of tall ships around the world sail with students aboard, and a few others, besides HARVEY GAMAGE and CORWITH CRAMER, sail the Gulf of Maine. BOWDOIN sails for Maine Maritime Academy; TABOR BOY for Tabor Academy in Marion, Massachusetts. A few Maine windjammers run educational trips now and again, but no other organizations are as committed to education at sea as are the Schooner HARVEY GAMAGE Foundation and the Sea Education Association. HARVEY GAMAGE Foundation sponsors Ocean Classroom, a fully-accredited high school semester at sea that ranges from Nova Scotia to Venezuela.

Because of the demand for its vessel and its programs, HARVEY GAMAGE Foundation leased five other ships during 1999, all plying Maine waters. In one program called "Maine Islands Youth," students from several island communities join together for a voyage. CORWITH CRAMER and her sister vessel, SSV WESTWARD, meanwhile, have taken over 4,000 college students to sea, sailing the Gulf of Maine, the North Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Bahamas. Last summer, as a teacher and crew member, I sailed in the Gulf of Maine aboard both HARVEY GAMAGE and CORWITH CRAMER. The two programs were vastly different, but the way these ships and the professionals aboard affected students was wonderfully similar.

EPIPHANY

Danny Joazard's parents come from Haiti. He is tall for his age and soft-spoken with a clever wit, but occasionally his social behavior is poor, sometimes mean, so his teachers worried about how he would do at sea. Last summer, along with 18 other fifth graders from Epiphany School, Danny sailed on HARVEY GAMAGE. Epiphany is a tuition-free Episcopal middle school in Boston for economically or socially disadvantaged kids, many with roots in the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. Epiphany required them to take swimming lessons before they came on board, and they studied geography and weather in class.

When the kids arrived at the wharf in Portland, they rolled out of the bus like small bears stepping out of their hibernation cave. Up the night before with excitement and worry, most were groggy with Dramamine. Their duffel bags dragged on the dock because the shoulder straps were too long. Most of them had never been on the water before, and none of them had ever sailed.



Mark Hollingsworth (2)

Danny Joazard (left) aboard HARVEY GAMAGE

Three Epiphany teachers and two members of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts joined the students. The crew waited on board: the captain, the cook, an academic teacher, three mates and three deckhands. The Reverend Archdeacon Mark Hollingsworth seemed more excited than anyone. Hollingsworth organized and helped fund this voyage. He had sailed Maine waters since he was a child, and he wanted these urban kids to have the chance to be as profoundly affected by the sea as he had. Hollingsworth made this trip happen. He bought "Epiphany at Sea" T-shirts, hats and a white "Epiphany at Sea" flag. He also stepped onto the ship with his own brass cannon and a sheepish grin under his handlebar mustache.

The Epiphany students hauled their bags on board and began to look around, and up. HARVEY GAMAGE is almost 11 stories high. Hewn from Douglas fir, her two masts rake aft. She is 131 feet long, from the end of the main boom to the tip of the bowsprit. Completed in 1973 in South Bristol, she is the last vessel Harvey Gamage built. Below his name, hand-painted in blue, is "Islesboro," her home port, but she spends less than a week there all year. HARVEY GAMAGE holds 800 gallons of water and 250 gallons of diesel fuel, a portion of which the engineer pumps to the day tank for the galley's original stove, a finicky old thing nicknamed "Soufriere" after a volcanic mountain in Dominica. Three times a day the cook must cajole and cuddle Soufriere to make sure she can boil water and bake and create her meals.

A few feet from the stove sits the ship's primary fresh water

Richard King

Corrin Pennella of Bates College speaks to the ship's company on some of the events of the last 24 hours

source, a red-handled pump. Students normally wash their dishes with salt water then rinse with fresh. The HARVEY GAMAGE shower is a bucket of seawater or a dip in the ocean. Epiphany students had the chance to swim a few times, including once in the deep, glassy waters of Jeffreys Ledge, but few enjoyed their week without a private shower. One student, along with most others, wrote that the least rewarding part of his entire trip was that "I didn't get to take a shower."

HARVEY GAMAGE left Portland the same day Epiphany came aboard and before she tied up in Boston six days later, we had hiked the bluffs of Monhegan Island and had toured the Shoals Marine Lab and beach of Appledore Island. We anchored in Gloucester and heard from historian Joe Garland. Joe told local stories, including the tale of dory fisherman Howard Blackburn who could not find his schooner in a gale. Blackburn froze his bare fingers around the oars allowing him to row 65 miles to shore. Every finger and half his toes fell off because of frostbite, but that did not stop him from sailing alone across the Atlantic. Twice.

Despite these experiences, the ship herself is the heart of the voyage. The crew needs all hands to raise sail and weigh anchor. Students are assigned to one of three watches. They trim the sails, stand lookout, steer the ship, keep an anchor watch. We sailed through the night for two of the evenings, with one watch on duty at all times. Students watched the sun set and rise on an ocean horizon and worked the ship under an offshore night sky while their shipmates slept. Danny wrote that the part that he would most remember in 10 years were the stars. The kids also got to see how quickly those stars disappear when the fog rolls in; how tough it is to sleep when the watch officer is blasting the horn every two minutes.

The Epiphany fifth-graders had a hard time adjusting. They had no perspective or experience of how to live on a boat at sea. They had to wait in a line of 20 others before they could eat. They had to clean the entire vessel each day. They had to learn most of the lines before they were allowed to go aloft or out on the bowsprit. They had to follow orders without question. The gear on a tall ship is heavy and dangerous and occasionally a crew member would ask them to move before explaining why, using a strange names for ropes and objects and actions.

One of the students took a green crab out of the aquarium and boiled it in a cup of water intended for hot chocolate. Another student cut a doll's T-shirt out of some sail canvas that a crew member was using for another project. Another interrupted the captain while he was in the chart room to ask if he knew where the soccer ball was. They would ask, "Is the engine on now?" or "How will we get ashore?" Their experience was not new: 150 years ago, Herman Melville wrote in *Redburn*, "People who have never gone to sea for the first time as sailors cannot imagine how puzzling and confounding it is. It must be like going into a barbarous country."

Being at the helm and going aloft usually define the most memorable experiences for first-time sailors of any age. At the wheel, he or she controls the fate of the ship's company, and the Epiphany kids had at most driven a bicycle. Fifty years after Melville, Jack London described his own first experience at the wheel when he was 17:

"With my own hands I had done my trick at the wheel and guided a hundred tons of wood and iron through a million tons of wind and waves ... When I have done some such thing, I am exalted. I glow all over. I am aware of a pride in myself that is mine, and mine alone. It is organic. Every fibre of me is thrilling

Mark Hollingsworth (2)

Danny and Rich on the crosstrees

Practicing sailors' knots aboard HARVEY GAMAGE

with it. It is very natural. It is a mere matter of satisfaction at adjustment to environment. It is a success."

The feeling is no different today. The kids might not grasp the full responsibility when a crew member stands beside them, but they have seen the captain at the wheel in movies, and here they are doing this thing themselves, some on their tiptoes trying to see the compass, others fighting to keep their eyelids from closing with fatigue.

English teacher Frannie Abernathy wrote, "I watched many of them mature in incredible ways during the week," and Epiphany's business manager and Spanish teacher, Ken Binsack, said, "They grew academically, socially and personally. Prior to the trip, the sea [for them] was simply a vast body of water that yielded fish and was good for swimming on hot summer days."

When we sailed into Boston, family and friends shouted and waved balloons at the wharf. After the students and crew furled the sails and the captain addressed the students one last time, the Epiphany guests came on board. The stories began before the hugs. "It was sooo hard. I went aloft. Only a few of us went all the way up. I had to clean the head — that's the toilet. You see that canvas bag that Tiffany is giving to Mr. Finley? I helped sew it. We saw whales. Minke whales and maybe a humpback. I was up at two in the morning. We were on an island. I steered the ship."

MR. BAZOOTIHEAD GOES TO SEA

Two months later I sailed with the Williams College-Mystic Seaport Maritime Studies Program on CORWITH CRAMER. When we stepped off the bus in Woods Hole, the Williams-Mystic students chatted and skipped, only a few groggy with Dramamine, and many laughed as one student dropped a sea boot and made bad puns about throwing up. Williams-Mystic students spend a semester in Connecticut at Mystic Seaport: The Museum of America and the Sea. They take courses in all disciplines of maritime studies and spend a great deal of time in the field. They sail offshore, explore the West Coast by caravan, and study the island of Nantucket. They spend countless hours outside the classroom, speaking with local and national policy makers, learning maritime skills from the staff at Mystic Seaport and working on science projects in the Mystic River estuary or a local marsh.

The Williams-Mystic students were about as ready as any group could be to go offshore. They had applied to come to Williams-Mystic to study the ocean and many had tall ship experience. This semester, Meredith Mendelson, from Pittsburgh and Bates College, had sailed on the HARVEY GAMAGE as a high school student with Ocean Classroom. Charlotte Redway from Wilsonville, Oregon, and Mt. Holyoke College, had sailed throughout Europe and the Indian Ocean aboard SSV CONCORDIA of Canada's high school semester at sea. Lauren Morgens from South Norwalk, Connecticut, and Cornell University, had been a student and even a deckhand with SEA. All of the students had been on a boat before. In Mystic, they read selections from Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s *Two Years Before the Mast* and learned about the New England fishing industry, the oceanography of the Gulf of Maine, the different types of sailing rigs and our culture's connection to the maritime world. On the bus ride, nervous and eager to do well, the students practiced their knots.

The Williams-Mystic students hauled their bags on board and began to look around — and up. CORWITH CRAMER is a two-masted brigantine, designed to sail offshore with science students.

The vessel is equipped with labor-savers: a diesel anchor windlass, steel winches and travelers, and two square sails that

Mark Hollingsworth (2)

furl from the deck. Her hull is steel, capable of holding 3,500 gallons of fuel, 5,650 gallons of water and 36 people below deck. CORWITH CRAMER has showers, flush toilets, dry and cold stores for the galley, and a study cabin with two computers and bookshelves. Dan, the engineer and a graduate of Maine Maritime Academy, has enough space in the lower deck of the engine room to gather eight crouched students and try to convince them that the color-coated system of pipes, valves, pumps and engines is really quite simple.

The science lab holds chemicals, microscopes, computers, salinometers, a dozen electronic doodads and a hundred other tools with names like Mr. Bazootihead, a pipette bulb that looks suspiciously like a turkey baster. A reverent framed photograph of the television character Kramer hangs on the bulkhead, and in a closet hangs a feathered tiara that students wear on their head when titrating sea water, otherwise known as "winkling." Just forward of the lab, at the base of the foremast, is a hydrographic winch that can lower a conductivity, temperature and depth recorder down to 3,000 meters. CRAMER sails with a captain, a chief scientist, three mates, three assistant scientists, a cook and an assistant cook. Crew of the CORWITH CRAMER like to say, "Science and rust never sleep."

From Woods Hole, CORWITH CRAMER spent the night at anchor, then motored through the Cape Cod Canal, staying near shore because of heavy offshore swells from recent hurricane Dennis, ending in Rockland, Maine, 10 days later. Through most of the voyage, the breeze remained light and the fog thick, but we managed to sail to three science "super stations" on Wilkinson Basin, Stellwagen Bank and Jeffreys Ledge to collect and analyze data for interpretation back in Mystic. We sailed to the edge of Georges Bank and talked about the history, science, policy and literature of the groundfishing industry. Each day, students presented a summary of our cruise track, weather and consumption of fuel and water over the past 24 hours. Each afternoon, professors and crew presented an academic lecture and a nautical science class on the quarterdeck. Students watched the crew demonstrate a tack, listened to sail theory, then practiced the maneuver themselves, with one student in charge. They listened to a lecture on the legends of sea monsters and a short lesson on the lobster industry when we navigated through miles of pots south of Penobscot Bay. Over the radio, we listened to the Coast Guard fumble a bit when we asked about current right whale protection regulations. We saw whales and ocean sunfish, and we dragged a surface net to recover buckets of gelatinous creatures called salps. Watches competed to see who had best learned their lines and who could tack the ship and recover a buoy fastest. Off watch, students wrote in their journals, learned how to sew canvas, spliced and whipped rope or wove a Turk's head necklace. Williams College Professor Jim McKenna, the chief scientist for the voyage, said, "It doesn't matter how much the students know before they come. There is so much to learn out there. About everything."

On day three, we tacked in towards Cape Ann to watch the end of the Gloucester Schooner Race, a dozen sails on their way back through the breakwater. HARVEY GAMAGE passed within yelling distance. New Bedford's SSV ERNESTINA, a Grand Banks fishing schooner with her huge mainsail, brought the students to the rail with cameras and binoculars, watching a graceful scene more fit for 150 years ago. (This summer, this scene will be repeated all over the U.S. East Coast as tall ships from around the world celebrate the year 2000, ending their U.S. leg with a race through the Gulf of Maine to Nova Scotia.)

LEARNING TO TRUST YOURSELF

One Williams-Mystic student who crowded the rail was KC Bryan from Richmond College and from Buffalo, New York, where she had spent little time on the water. KC asked me later to take her aloft. On the top of the foremast of CORWITH CRAMER, past students painted quotations for those that are willing and able to climb all the way. Once you have read the messages you are not supposed to share them with those on deck. We put on our harnesses and began to climb. Windward side. Hold onto the shrouds, not the ratlines. Take your time. We climbed past the course yard crosstrees, and on up. The ship made four or five knots, leaving a modest wake. KC had to clip in and hoist herself up into what feels like empty space, climbing beyond a gap of several feet from where the shrouds end to the cap of the mast. She didn't want to go, then she pushed herself. Her feet clutched the mast as if it were a coconut palm. KC's face flushed

A visit to Monhegan's museum

red, she breathed hard, and she read the messages, trying to commit them to memory through her adrenaline. She said later, "I don't think I have ever trusted myself that much."

Perhaps because KC has cystic fibrosis and was not always sure that she would live to be a college student, perhaps because of KC's nature, she not only pushes herself, but she asks tough questions. She had asked me, "What are you most proud of? In your whole life. I mean, what gives you the most satisfaction?" I couldn't think of anything off the top of my head, and I am half-convinced she asked me to take her aloft to help me answer.

Seeing her pride in getting up there, watching her gasp at the bird's eye view of the ship and the sails at work was magical. I had taken Danny aloft on HARVEY GAMAGE's mainmast, after he had earned the right to go by learning his lines. He stood on the crosstrees like a natural, laughing loud and smiling wide, amazed and proud. The Reverend Mark watched from the crosstrees of the foremast.

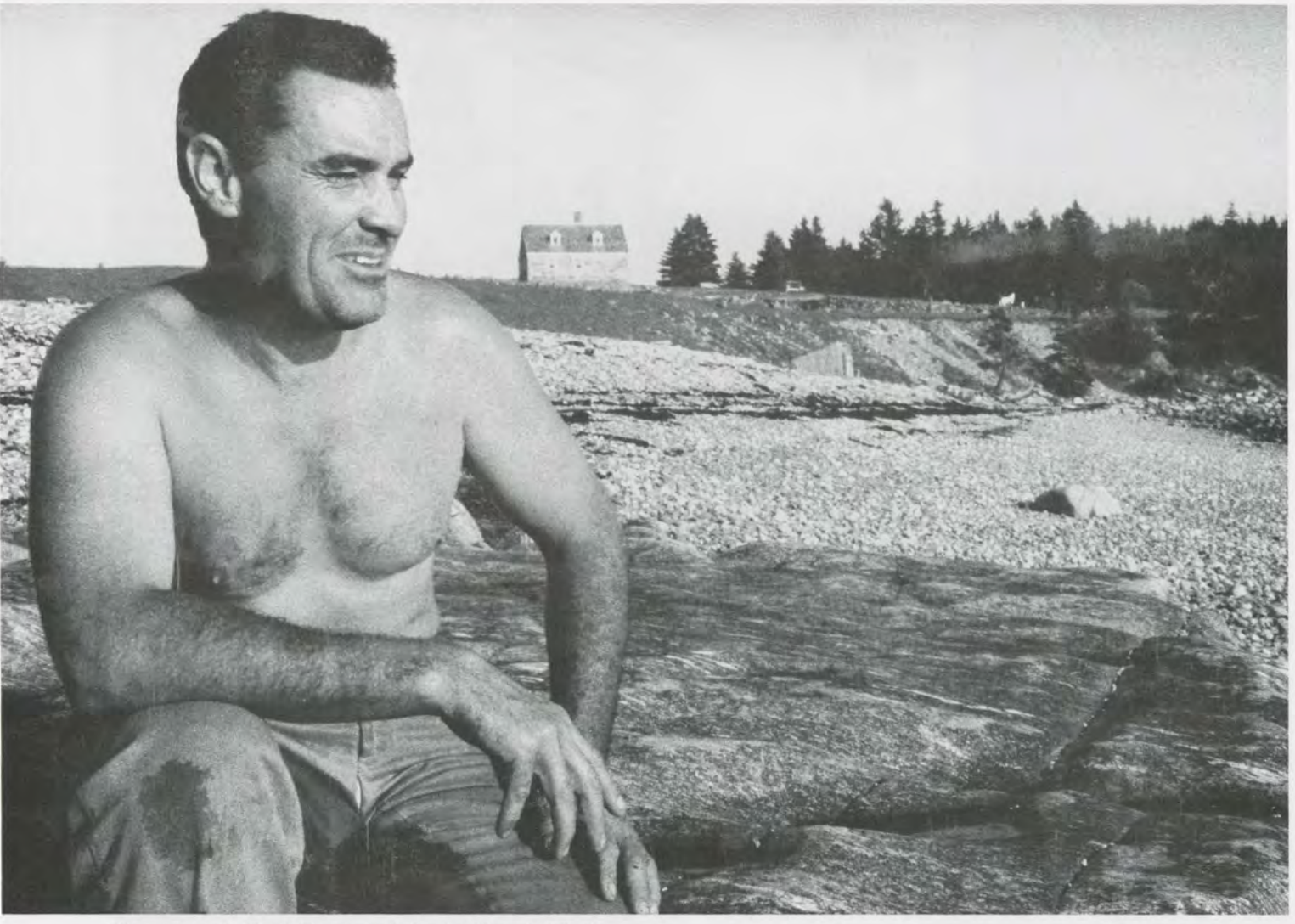
Right now, professional mariners and teachers aboard tall ships, thanks to the work of men like Mr. Harvey Gamage and Mr. Corwith Cramer, show students these views: the sight from aloft, the sunrise from the bow, a stiff mainsail that they hauled up themselves, a brilliant bell that he or she just shined, a grand, globed horizon with nothing but sea. In the 17th century, Thomas Traherne wrote what remains true, and what KC might as well have read on the top of the mast:

"You will never know the world aright, till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed by the heavens and crowned by the stars: and perceive yourself to be sole heir of the whole world."

***Richard King** is a staff member at the Williams-Mystic Program and lives in Mystic, Connecticut.*

Richard King

First mate Chris McGuire teaches Williams-Mystic student Gretchen Sweeney, from Mt. Holyoke College, how to find the CRAMER*'s position at sea using a sextant.*



The quintessential Frank Trevor, on the beach at Mosquito Island

TEACHING MOMENTS

On Mosquito Island in Frank Trevor's day, learning was a way of life

DAVID D. PLATT

Many years ago a wonderful biology teacher flashed through my life, stunning me with his intensity. His name was Frank Trevor, and the setting — a starchy boys' boarding school in upstate New York — made him seem all the more fantastic. In that dressed-up world, he was the teacher who didn't believe in coats and ties. He was a liberal surrounded by conservatives; surely a Democrat in a place (Dutchess County, New York) where the gentry, at least, were all — except for the Roosevelts of nearby Hyde Park — Republicans. Frank Trevor was a veritable hurricane of fresh air at the Millbrook School for Boys, and when it came to hurricanes, he knew what he was talking about: he owned an island in Maine.

Photographs courtesy of Gail Trevor McEnroe

Frank and his wife, Janet, bought Mosquito Island off Port Clyde in 1941. It couldn't have cost them much — even a big island like Mosquito had little cash value at the end of the Depression. It was wild, inaccessible and remote; wholly different from the places most prep school teachers or their students might go for their vacation escapes.

Yet Mosquito pulled like a tide at the Trevors, their young family, other Millbrook faculty members, Frank's students and a host of family friends. Over the years many people made the long trip to the island, staying in accommodations that might charitably have been described as "stimulating." Between World War II and the late 1960s, they experienced an isolation, a closeness with the outdoors that wouldn't become popular among Americans until the recreation explosion of the 1980s and 90s.

Don Abbott, a student of Frank's in the 1950s who later became headmaster of Millbrook, recalls a routine visit to the island that became an adventure: "It was September 1954, to close up the homestead, but it turned into four days of roofing an outbuilding and battening down the hatches as Hurricane Edna churned out of Hatteras in preparation for a frontal assault on New England," Abbott remembers. "As it turned out, the eye passed right over us. With Frank ever holding court, we were fearless. But I can still hear the wind passing into the house, through the seams between those huge granite blocks that made up the walls."

Frank Trevor "holding court" in the eye of a hurricane: anyone who ever knew him will understand exactly who and what Don Abbott is talking about. Here was a man with an opinion (an informed one) on topics ranging from weather to wildlife, from masturbation to the 1960 presidential election. While his biology class was a serious place, it was one where a brave student could ask just about any question and get a stimulating, often provocative answer. "And if you asked a stupid question," adds Don Abbott, "you'd learn and remember the next time how to ask a good one."

Along with all of the opinions and answers there were skills — construction, animal husbandry, land management — and knowledge. Lots and lots of it.

"A TRUE TEACHER"

"He was a true teacher at heart," says his daughter, Gail, who grew up summers on Mosquito Island in the early 1950s. "He seemed to know what he was doing and where he was going."

Jim Buckley, another student of Frank Trevor's who subsequently served in the U. S. Senate and as a federal judge, arrived at Millbrook in 1936, the same year that Frank Trevor did — "he with an Imperial boa constrictor and female sparrow hawk, and I with a pair of armadillos." Quite naturally, the two struck up a friendship, and Buckley went to work on the project that is one of Frank Trevor's great legacies to the world of natural science: Millbrook School's Trevor Teaching Zoo.

"It may have been this influx of livestock that planted the idea of the need for a zoo," Buckley speculates. "In any event, I was a happy conscript into the first zoo squad, which quite literally set about building the original structure — pouring the cement, erecting the framing, etc. It was from that vantage that I was first exposed to Frank's extraordinary energy and the diversity of his talents."

Like Don Abbott and many other Millbrook students, Buckley visited Mosquito, which the Trevors had already begun transforming from an abandoned outpost to a lively summer encampment.

"I saw what that same energy and jack-of-all-trades capabilities had accomplished," Buckley remembers. "The abandoned structures had been rendered livable and usable which, if I recall correctly, required scooping out huge quantities of dirt and debris. Electric generators had been installed, piping from a spring or well put in place, and fencing erected for his sheep. On arrival, I was immediately enlisted in the operation of cutting off the tails of the lambs as well as other chores."

Jim Buckley's brother, William F. Buckley, Jr., never visited Mosquito. But he did experience Frank Trevor's biology class at Millbrook, and at the age of 15 was already sufficiently sophisticated to give his teacher a run for his money in classroom arguments. He never got to the island, which was probably fortunate for all concerned. "They would have killed each other," says Gail with a chuckle.

Gail's characterization of her father as a "true teacher" resonates with everyone else's recollections of him, including my own. Mr. Trevor (his closer student friends eventually got to call him "Frank"; I never did) treated students as his equals. I didn't come to Millbrook with an armadillo in my suitcase, but I did bring some carpentry skills. Almost immediately I found myself closing in a new building at the school zoo, cutting and fitting the siding, nailing on the trim, installing windows. Frank Trevor was there, watching and making suggestions, answering my questions about what the finished job was supposed to look like, interested in my opinions, respectful of my modest skills. He was a senior member of the faculty, a distinguished science teacher whose opinions were valued at the Bronx Zoo; I was a

Above: When the Trevors bought Mosquito in 1941, the interior of the island's granite house was in shambles.
Left: The stone house that was home to the Trevors and their many friends for four decades.
Right: All materials and supplies had to be landed on the beach. The operation involved considerable ingenuity and frequently the application of the laws of physics.

The Trevor family in Mosquito's woods, from left: Janet, Doan, Frank, Abigail and Mike.

teenager in an unfamiliar setting, trying not to make mistakes. The relationship with him, however, was customer to contractor; man to man. I'll never forget it.

The late Edward Pulling, Millbrook School's founder, told the story (there are various versions) of Frank Trevor's arrival many times over the years. In Pulling's telling, a rattletrap car pulls up the school driveway in the late 1930s; out jumps Frank in his trademark checked shirt. Introducing himself to Pulling (Groton-educated, Princeton graduate, served in the British Royal Navy), Frank (Cornell graduate, part Cherokee) shows off the various animals in the car and declares that, "if you'll give me half an hour, I'll give you a zoo."

Pulling, who believed that one of the secrets of good teaching was imparting "truth through personality," hired this particular personality on the spot. He never regretted the decision; if any one faculty member could be credited with putting Pulling's then-new school on the map, it was Frank Trevor.

Personality, in fact, was the reason my parents sent me to Millbrook in the 1950s. For some reason they believed a boarding school, at least, ought to be of relatively recent origin, and that it should still be run by its founder. Three of my older siblings had attended the Putney School in Vermont when it was still run by Carmelita Hinton (another powerful teaching personality), but by the time I came along she had retired and they looked elsewhere. I guess the results in my case were satisfactory. In any event, I was subjected to the personalities of Ed Pulling and Frank Trevor for three grueling years.

Bill Porter, another Millbrook graduate who would visit Mosquito, remembers his first encounter as clearly as Jim Buckley does: "My first sighting (and it was a 'sighting') of Frank was the day I arrived as a frightened 'new boy' in September of 1936," Porter remembers. Looking anxiously out a window onto the quadrangle he spotted "a knot of students surrounding one strange-looking man. He had a hawk on his leathered arm, a large snake around his neck and a grin on his face that attracted like a magnet."

The young teacher "was introducing the boa constrictor around his neck, Josephine, to the awed throng around him while he fed the hawk pieces of meat to keep its interest away from Josephine."

Bill Porter and Frank Trevor would become good friends; in the 1970s, Porter painted a portrait of Frank holding a fledgling gull, probably at Mosquito. The portrait hangs at the school today.

"He allowed eccentric people to be themselves," observes Don Abbott, retelling a couple of other Trevor legends — encouraging an oddball student who liked to chase butterflies to pursue his hobby on the football field during a game; Frank himself parading up and down the sidelines at another football game with a cheetah on a leash.

Frank Trevor provided as many "teaching moments" on Mosquito as he did at Millbrook. "The day was well organized," remembers Jim Buckley, who, like all non-family visitors to the island, seems to have immediately been assigned some job, "and by the time the evening cocktail hour arrived, we all felt satisfied we had earned the privilege."

"Early memories of Mosquito are clear and spare," says David McGiffert, a Millbrook graduate who became a successful film director (his credits include *Tootsie*). A contemporary of Frank's older son, Doan, McGiffert visited Mosquito several times.

"I can hear Frank as he excitedly points out the spectacular universe contained in one of Mosquito's (then pristine) tidepools," McGiffert remembers, "and the echoes of [Frank's and McGiffert's fathers'] laughter as they watched Doan and me shriek with glee then shock as we leapt into the icy pool to explore, clad only in our underwear."

In Gail's recollection, "our vacations were never holidays, but rather prime opportunities to get the barn re-roofed, to shear sheep galore, and/or to clean the septic tank."

And the teaching went on, relentlessly. "As a pre-adolescent on Mosquito I remember tuning into the microcosmic world of tide pools, with one of the best narrators around," recalls Gail. She also notes that there were there were occasional escape attempts as well: "sleeping on the moss-covered forest floor in the late afternoon, and trying to get lost in the morning fog as a means to escape the endless chores that Frank had lined up for us every day."

For Don Abbott, Mosquito was "organized chaos of the best sort, every man (or boy) for himself ... [Frank] was always teaching us about weather patterns, how to do good woodworking, how to dock a sheep's tail. We were apprentices to a Renaissance Man – a carpenter, a boatman, a weather expert, a veterinary."

FAMILY ISLAND

The Trevors didn't just purchase Mosquito — that would have been too simple. No, goes the family story, they were picked for the part. "Roscoe Hupper chose to sell to my dad and mom," says Gail, "because the two other people [who were interested] he chose to turn down. One wanted a mink farm and the other airplanes. Mr. Hupper didn't want airplanes overhead. My dad

and mom were science teachers and Mr. Hupper liked them." So in 1941, he sold them the island.

Millbrook School would close down for the summer by early June, and immediately the Trevors would decamp for Maine. "Trevor vehicles were usually 10-15 years older than any current mode of transportation," explains Gail. They had to accommodate "three to four dogs, two cats, maybe a pet rat or raccoons, a sparrow hawk or miniature donkey, and three children." Having driven all night, the family would arrive and park in the open field of the Roscoe Huppers' house, which fronted on Martinsville Harbor near Port Clyde. (The Huppers may have sold the Trevors an island, but the deal, it seems, included taking on long-term responsibility for most of the family's shoreside activities. "The Huppers got to look at various broken-down automobiles parked on their ledges for 45 years," Gail says.)

"We would all fold out of our caravan looking for shoes that would match six feet," she continues. "I always felt 'green' riding in our cars — maybe it was the feet or just possibly some slightly less-than-perfect muffler systems." Cats meowed in cat boxes; someone would leash the dogs to a small tree. A "ready box" containing emergency items, jumper cables, flashlight, keys, pliers, wrenches, screwdrivers, gloves and hats and boots was placed in a prominent position. ("A 'ready box,' Gail explains, "is basically Y2K compliant, 40 years early.")

The family would turn over the dory it had left on the shore, place log rollers under it, rotate it 180 degrees, push it down the beach and launch it. Attaching an outboard motor that usually started ("sometimes we rowed"), Frank, Janet and their human and animal crew would shove off on their annual migration to Mosquito Island.

Once on the island, the family settled into a rich routine consisting of housekeeping, gardening, building maintenance, shepherding, wildlife observation. Everyone had a job.

"I was the one responsible for running ahead in the woods or along the shore to collect sheep," recalls Abigail Doan, a Trevor granddaughter whose earliest memories of the island date from the 1960s. "I also had to strategically corral the stragglers along the water's edge all the way back to the shearing barns." The job meant lots of running — after a summer of it, "track and field was a breeze. I learned to run on Maine's coastal rock beaches."

Artist Jamie Wyeth was a regular visitor in the 1950s, traveling to the island from the Wyeths' Cushing summer house in a small outboard piloted by his father, Andrew Wyeth. "It was a problem to land there," Jamie Wyeth remembers. "There was no dock. There was an outhaul — you'd row in and go up the beach."

Wyeth family visits to Mosquito were built around picnics. "[Frank Trevor] would organize them — it was always a great adventure," Jamie Wyeth says. "Here was a family that lived on an island. It was almost a commune, sort of Swiss Family Robinson. There were animals everywhere, and [the Trevors] produced everything they used there." He adds that Mosquito "really tweaked my interest in islands," and was behind his own decision in 1960 to buy a place on Monhegan. Today, Jamie Wyeth and his wife, Phyllis, spend much of the year on Southern Island, at the entrance to Tenants Harbor and within sight of Mosquito.

Every Mosquito visitor carried away an impression. For Tom Lovejoy, a Millbrook student of Frank's who became a world-class tropical ecologist, the water was "ohmigod cold." So cold, in fact, that years after a visit to the island, when Lovejoy described Maine's coastal waters in his preface to the *Smithsonian Guide to Northern New England*, it was Mosquito he had in mind. "The seawater itself is ohmigod cold," Lovejoy wrote, "but the sea life, from harbor seals to seabirds, is bounteous, and every tidal pool is a treasure chest of marine life." In Lovejoy and other biologists who were inspired by his teaching, Frank Trevor's lessons live on.

VIEWS TO DIE FOR

On the island the family occupied an unusual house, constructed of massive granite blocks during the first half of the 19th century. When the Trevors first came in the 1940s the house was in a ruinous state; over the years, thanks to Frank's considerable construction skills, they transformed it, room by room, into a very livable summer home.

Gail, from the 20-page reminiscence she penned 15 years after she last saw Mosquito:

Every floor of the house was actually a large circle. The fireplaces, chimneys, closets and walls were on the inside to create a square center. On the different levels of the house rooms were placed around the outside of this center structure. You had to go through one room to get to the next room. Most of the rooms were open, joined together with very few walls. The ground floor was a large dining room ... At one end of our dining room next to the kitchen Dad built a 14-foot sideboard. People would jump up and sit on the sideboard or visit with the folks in the dining room or kitchen. Underneath it was our stored water system, gravity fed by the well about 300 feet away. The kitchen cabinets were made to hold not a can of soup but a case of soup ... We got everything by the case. Our storage area for the kitchen was as big as our dining room,

Sheep were part of life on Mosquito before the Trevors arrived, and remained so throughout the family's tenure.

Frank Trevor, vacationing teacher

all painted white to deflect the light around. My mother cooked on a kerosene stove. We had an Electrolux icebox my parents bought in the '40s and was still working when we left the island in 1986. It might only make two ice cubes, just enough for my parents to enjoy a cocktail while watching a sunset on our "patio."

"Outside the house," Gail continues, "we were surrounded by open space and large stone walls."

About 300 feet away were the barn and sheep corrals ... on both sides of the barn were our outhouses. Although we had bathrooms we never used them, to save water. The only time they were used regularly was when my grandmother at age 85 lived with us. The rest of us either used "garden view" that overlooked the garden, or "ocean view" that overlooked my mother's flower garden and the view from Leonard's Head all the way by Martinsville down to Port Clyde. Garden view was our main outhouse in the 40s and 50s. I do not remember a door on the front. I do remember being escorted by an older person, who would stand by to make sure I didn't fall in ... you slowly learned to keep your elbows out, not panic and you could wiggle back up to safety.

Utilizing large amounts of sheep manure, Janet Trevor employed her considerable gardening skills (in winter she oversaw the greenhouse at Millbrook) to grow "enough lettuce, carrots, celery, broccoli, cantaloupe and summer squash to keep us going, and all our visitors," writes Gail. "Altogether the garden was about 50 feet long. There was a self-closing picket gate and granite stepping stones to the swinging Dutch door of the outhouse."

It's easy to forget, in an age of cellular phones, that an island like Mosquito — a mile off the coast at most — could be very isolated. To the Trevors, however, isolation meant self-sufficiency: gardens that grew vegetables, animals that produced wool and meat. When communication with the mainland became necessary, the method adopted was completely in keeping with the Trevor do-it-yourself philosophy.

A signal to the mainland that the Trevors were in trouble, Gail recalls, "was three orange towels hung outside the third floor windows. Three fires on the beach were also a signal. We never used either in 46 years."

Other signals included orange towels hung outside the windows at Sherwood Cooke's house in Martinsville: "an important message — come in." Unannounced visitors would often sit on Hupper's Point and wait for a human figure on Mosquito to go from the house to the barn. "If they were lucky," says Gail, "they would flash a mirror at us. We would answer back the same way, and then go in and pick them up. My mother and I would count heads through the fieldglasses, 'four adults, two children' or 'one child and a dog.' We then would run around and make beds before the boat hit the shore."

VISITORS AND FRIENDS

"Important people always came to the island," Gail writes. "They were the who's who of this or that."

I would drift around the long pine table lit by Aladdin kerosene lamps. Adults would enter into important points and sometimes loud discussions ... I drifted around through the evening until it was time to interrupt to say good night. Then off we went up the stairs, flashlights wiggling and the clatter of little feet on wood stairs. A multiple of dogs always followed; they kept us extra warm in bed. As we got to the third floor we barely could hear them.

Important discussion always went on whether it was on the island or in our living room at Millbrook. As I grew, I always listened, fascinated by the constant stream of unending special people. Now I cannot remember who they were or what they said. There was no connection to my world.

But other people connected to Mosquito Island life made a more lasting impression. "They were a part of what made the island last so long for us," Gail writes. "Without them, our journey would have been altered to an unknown course."

While it's hard to imagine anyone teaching Frank Trevor anything, Clarence Dyer did just that. A lobsterman who lived on the nearby mainland, Dyer "taught my parents how not to kill themselves off the first few summers," Gail says. "He took them under his wing. He showed them how to make a hand winch for the boats. He made sure they bought a 'good' Friendship wood dory. He taught them how to strap boats together to move moorings, how to set up a mooring and to navigate in the fog and windy weather — Dad didn't always learn his lessons well. For about 40 years Clarence went out every year and placed a pole on a ledge rock my father and friends used to hit regularly. It gave Clarence entertainment — he felt sorry for us."

Roscoe Hupper and his family, who had sold Mosquito to the Trevors, allowed their front yard to become a mainland base for the island.

They were over-generous, putting up with a wandering parade of visitors to Mosquito Island. We were always dragging something on or off the island. They let us decorate their beautiful docks and wharves with 55-gallon kerosene drums. We also piled a couple tons of lime for a few years... The Huppers also had a "cold box." Somehow our butchered sheep ended up in their cold box with some left behind for the Huppers. Roscoe loved to take friends for a ride in his "lobster boat." Pretty lawn chairs but no lobsters. My father would see him coming across the bay. In all the years we lived there, Dad was never able to explain how a "pulley line" worked for our boats. Roscoe would swing through our cove waving. Dad would be gesturing, "stay back off the pulley line." The more Dad waved, the more Roscoe would wave. Roscoe's engine would swing right over the line, and if the line was on the surface — slice it in two. If the line was down in the water, we were OK. My brothers would run down and swim out and get the dory before it drifted to Port Clyde. Roscoe never caught on, but you could tell how often he came

Laundry was often an outdoor project.

to the island by the number of knots in the pulley line.

Sherwood and Gwen Cooke, other mainland neighbors, "had us parade in and out of their homes for almost as long as the Huppers had to put up with us," writes Gail. "We piled into their kitchens with wet clothes, dirty boots, winter-frozen people on crazy winter vacations. We probably borrowed and used anything that had to do with a two-cycle engine. We built a sheep pen in their field. One summer we put my donkey in it. My donkey chased island sheep for fun, so got banished to the mainland." The Cookes sold the Trevors an ancient logging truck in the 1950s, and its transport to the island — via a leaky barge — became something of a legend over the years, as did the way the truck had to be maneuvered on Mosquito's beach.

It took us a while to figure out how to get the truck up and down the beach. You backed it down the loose rocks with peeled 15- to 20-foot spruce till stuffed between the back dual wheels. Once on wet sand you were OK. Load the cargo from the boat to the truck. Then Dad at the wheel up across the dry sand with stuffed-under wheels — onto the loose stone and steep rise. All the time leap-frogging long poles between wheels including the front wheels.

ENDURING MAGIC

To Tom Lovejoy, the Trevors' student and friend who achieved global status as a tropical ecologist, it is important to consider Frank and Janet Trevor as a team.

"They practiced their magic in and out of the classroom with a skill which even the greatest of alchemists would envy," Lovejoy told participants in a 1973 memorial service following Janet Trevor's death. "An equal partnership it was ... and I, for one, could never tell where one began and the other left off — it was impossible to escape [from the Trevors' basic biology courses] without learning that we can't eat our biological cake and have it too."

Their teaching, Lovejoy continued, "was a celebration in the classroom of the wonders — in all their diversity — of life — this exciting apparent exception to the second law of thermodynamics. It is interesting to recall that no group of organisms was neglected by their attention, reflecting both their broad ecological view and their profound sense of democracy. Whether it was the marvelous micro-organizational world of sauerkraut, or vinegar eels, or a marine annelid called the sea mouse with 'fur' that shimmered with oil slick colors, it was always worthy of attention and appreciation."

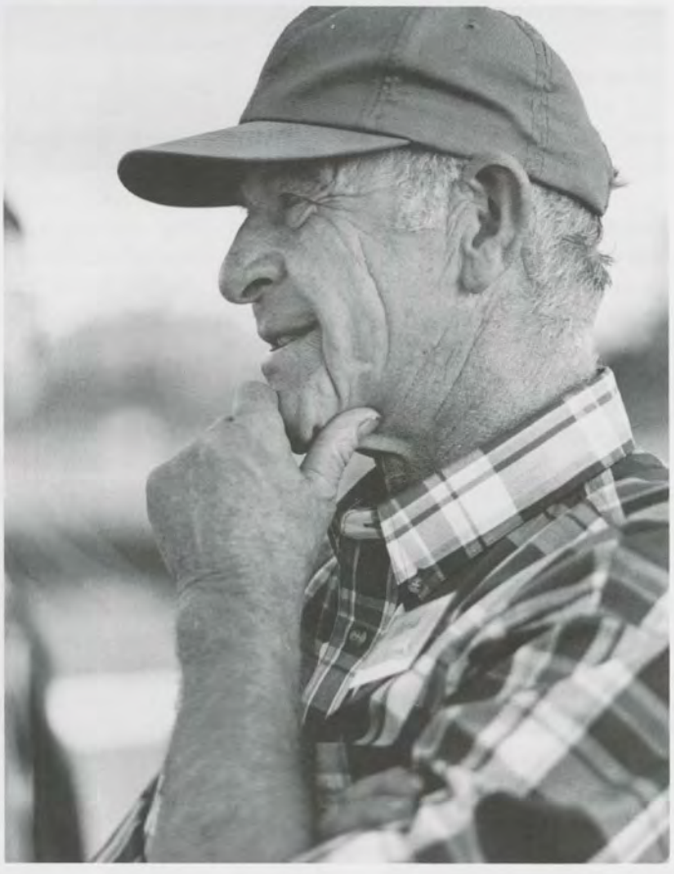
David McGiffert connects Frank Trevor's many lessons directly with Mosquito. "I can distinctly remember feelings I once had as I stood watching the sea from a grassy slope on the weather-side of the island, with the summer sun scorching my back and neck," he remembers, "while my face and hands stung from the bite of a north wind. There were lessons everywhere — that island and the people who fit into it so perfectly, the Trevors, will always live in my heart. Perhaps one day, my children will have the priviledge of finding a place that for them, seems to mirror heaven. I did."

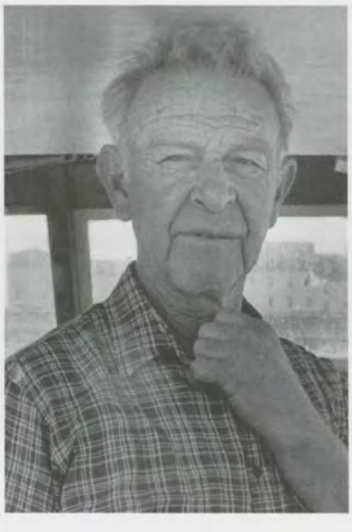
The Trevors practiced what they preached in many ways, but one odd piece of lore seems to sum things up: on Mosquito Island, they kept the family cats chained so they wouldn't disturb the native wildlife. "Our cats were always chained in the summer," recalls Gail. "Dad felt that his island wildlife was not used to predatory house cats — my cat Jerry enjoyed at least sixteen years of island summers." A teaching moment, repeated every year for the span of a childhood. It was the Trevor way, and no one who experienced it will ever forget.

***David D. Platt** is Editor of* Island Journal.

Bill Porter, a student of Frank's who became a lifelong friend, painted this portrait on Mosquito in the 1970s. It hangs today at the Millbrook School.

ALONE ON A DOME IN THE SEA





BRENDAN DONEGAN

Photographs courtesy of Dave and Edith Pierson

"Winterkeeping" brings you face to face with yourself

On Halloween in 1984, Dave and Edith Pierson, a couple in their late 50s, decided to play trick-or-treat on their neighbors. They hadn't seen anyone else for six weeks, and were feeling somewhat lonely. The winds were light and the seas were calm as they set out in their 12-foot aluminum skiff from their home on Star Island, the third largest of nine islands and 12 rocky ledges that form the Isles of Shoals, a small archipelago six miles out from the New Hampshire coast.

The Bunkhouse, Star Island

Dave steered southwest towards White Island, a half mile away. An 85-foot tall lighthouse stands perched on one end of this exposed crag. Before it was automated in 1986, two Coast Guard lighthouse keepers lived there, often going for months without seeing another human face. Dave and Edith's plan was to land on the rock, creep up, knock on the door of the living quarters and surprise those inside by calling out: "Trick or treat!"

Landing at White Island is particularly difficult even for those as experienced with boats as Dave and Edith. Those who want to go ashore there must place the bow of their skiff between a pair of wood rails, three feet apart, that rise up at an angle of about 30 degrees. These form a slipway that runs from below the low water line to a boathouse nestled above out of the reach of the waves. One person must then jump ashore, steady the boat and drag it up the inclined slipway until its stern is out of the water. Only by doing this can they prevent the boat from being smashed against the rocks by the ever present swells. Make a mistake and the boat can end up in pieces and its occupants tossed into the cold and unforgiving waters of the Atlantic.

Dave steered the boat in deftly and ran it up on the rails as far as his six horsepower outboard motor could push it. Just as Edith was stepping ashore, however, a swell came across the rails and lifted the boat up and off. Struggling to manage, with the boat now half on and half off the slipway, Dave knew that he was in danger of losing the outboard motor off the stern transom. His impish plan had gone awry. He called to Edith to get help. She went up and knocked on the door of the lighthouse keepers' Victorian cottage. Instead of the traditional Halloween greeting, however, she asked: "Can you please come and help us land our boat?" A Coast Guardsman came down to the slip, waded in and helped drag the boat further up on the rails to safety. "We all went up to the lighthouse keepers' cottage for a brief exchange of greetings," Dave remembers. They returned to Star Island after the sun went down without further incident. "I'm not too sure who tricked or treated whom," said Dave, "but it did provide diversion for all of us."

Dave and Edith Pierson needed to create their own diversions. They were isolated from human contact from October to April every year when they lived on Star Island. Even though they stayed there year-round, protecting the property from intruders, they were known to all as the "winterkeepers."

During the summer months, thousands visit Star Island, many attending week-long conferences run by the Star Island Corporation, a nonprofit group associated with the Unitarian and Congregational churches. Each day, 500 men, women and children crowd onto this 40-acre rock. Two hundred and sixty-five are guests who stay in an old resort hotel, 100 are eager young workers in the hotel, known as "pelicans," and the rest are day-trippers from the mainland coming out from Portsmouth on the ferry, the 90-foot THOMAS LEIGHTON. Come September, all the guests, workers and visitors go ashore, leaving the winterkeepers to guard the island and take care of the buildings until the next summer comes around.

Since the end of World War II, except for the lighthouse keepers on White Island, the winterkeepers on Star Island were the only people who lived through the winter on any of the nine windswept Isles of Shoals. There must have been something unique and enchanting about the Isles of Shoals that attracted Dave and Edith to commit nearly two decades of their lives out there. It wasn't as if they were going home to their birthplace: they were not natives of these islands, nor even the nearby coast. Both were born inland, Dave in West Orange, New Jersey, and Edith in Ithaca, New York. There must have been something special about this couple and the nature of their relationship, both to each other and to the island, that allowed them to face extended periods of isolation, sometimes in harsh and rigorous conditions, during their successive winter vigils.

ONE THIRD OF ONE'S LIFE FOR SERVICE

The nine islands that are collectively known as the Isles of Shoals are arranged in an oval three miles long, running roughly north and south, and one-and-a-half miles across. The border between Maine and New Hampshire runs through them. The largest islands — Appledore, Smuttynose, Star and Cedar — are arranged in a semicircle creating the small, snug Gosport harbor. Two manmade breakwaters made of huge granite blocks link Star, Cedar and Smuttynose islands, giving additional protection to the east from the frequently raging Atlantic.

Domes of granite, born out of fire deep in the earth and full of pearly quartz and glistening mica, the islands look like a string of seashells strewn along the horizon when viewed from the mouth of Portsmouth harbor, eight miles away. The tide in these parts rises and falls about nine feet twice a day, and when it is out, a wide band of dark-brown seaweed girdles the rocks, giving the islands a faintly mournful look. There are no trees. Grass and knee-high barberry, wax myrtle, wild roses and blackberry brambles take hold in the middle and flatter parts of the islands where the soil is held tight within the rock crevices, safe from the snatching fingers of the wind and the waves. The verdant grass and low vegetation turn khaki and an azure-tinged gray during their winter slumber. The bleached granite, exposed where the waves wash around the perimeter of the islands, has a distinct

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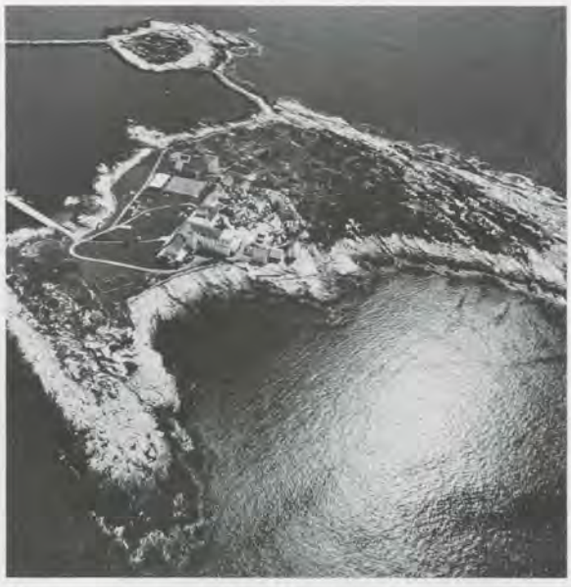
pink color. These rocks are incised by narrow furrows torn by the toenails of retreating glaciers, their edges rounded by the relentless action of the sea. When I visited Star Island on a clear February day, I had the uncanny sense that I was stepping on the exposed brain of some monstrous sea god who was resting just below the surface of the ocean. I felt that I had to be careful not to step on a sensitive spot, or he might startle and rise up, casting the brambles, the soil, the buildings and me into the ocean.



There are no trees on the Isles of Shoals. Vegetation grows where soil is held tight within rock crevices.

Approaching Star Island by boat, I saw first the white clapboard four-story hotel, with its slate roof, its dormer windows, its long verandah that looked out across a wide lawn reaching down to the waters of Gosport harbor. Up behind on the highest point of the island, 58 feet above the sea, stood a stone church, crowned by a wooden belfry and a weathervane shaped like a fish. Around and about were many stone and wood cottages, some of them remnants from the former fishing village of Gosport.

Landing at the stone pier on Star Island — the only place on all of the Isles of Shoals where a vessel of any size can tie up — and walking east beside the water of the harbor, passing beyond the lawn and the tennis courts, I eventually came to a group of cottages. Standing alone at the end of the cluster was the "bunkhouse," hastily built by the Coast Guard during Prohibition to house a crew that intercepted rumrunners. It was here in this frail, uninsulated, one-story cottage, standing uneasily on rickety stone pilasters, that the Piersons, and the winterkeepers before them, lived during the harsh winters on Star Island.

Dave and Edith Pierson, now in their mid-70s, spent 18 years between 1976 and 1994 winterkeeping on Star Island. Retired, they live now in a simple, pale-green Cape Cod house overlooking a tidal creek on the mainland at Eliot, Maine. Both are gray-haired and their weather-beaten faces tell of a long life outdoors, reminiscent of the farming couple in the American Gothic painting by Grant Wood. Dave is tall, six-foot-one, has a wide forehead and a muscular build, and walks with a slight limp. Gathered around a small wood table in their snug dining area, they often defer to each other to finish making a point. Edith sometimes sits quiet and pensive, casting her brown eyes down as if she is scrutinizing her large hands or her long arms. She occasionally rises to fetch tea brewing on a wood-burning range in the kitchen nearby. She wears a black-and-white knitted cardigan over an aquamarine T-shirt that she picked up at an entomology conference held on Star Island in 1992. It is adorned with a huge print of a black beetle with thin white stripes that seems to be crawling upwards towards her neck. As the smell of burning oak from the kitchen range permeates the house, Edith explains why they left the easy life ashore, and took up the challenge of winterkeeping on the Isles of Shoals. "For me," she says, "moving out to the island was the fulfillment of a long-held dream."

Edith first heard about Star Island when she was 16, attending a Unitarian church camp in western Massachusetts. A friend from Syracuse, who had been to Star Island during an earlier summer, convinced her that she might as well quit living if she did not get there immediately. But Edith couldn't get there right away. "The war came, I got married, I became a nurse, but 20 years later the dream was still alive." She first visited the island with Dave and their five small children in 1962. "We spent one night on the island. The next day we went to the top of Mount Washington, 95 miles inland, and in the clear air we looked back and saw Star Island brilliant in the glistening sea."

Dave also fell in love with the place. "If he had not been touched by the spirit of the island, our life would have been quite different," says Edith. When their last child graduated from Oberlin College in 1976, they were in their early 50s. Dave had been an engineer in Connecticut, but had been laid off even before the word "downsizing" was invented, and was now in a dead-end job teaching in a local vocational school. In the autumn of their lives they both were available and ready to go winterkeeping on Star Island.

They looked forward to living close to the basics in the manner of their grandparents. "Both of us are not completely comfortable with the modern lifestyle of consumerism. The fact that I didn't have to go to the mall every week was wonderful," said Edith. They knew the island — both had worked there for the five previous summers — they knew the people, and more important, they knew each other. They also knew that it was time.

"I remember something written by a either a Hindu or a Buddhist," Dave said. "The first one third of your life is for getting educated, the second third is for raising children and dealing with the world and the last third is for service." They felt that they could be of service both to their friends and their church by winterkeeping on Star Island.

A SPIRITUAL PLACE

When Dave and Edith first moved onto the island in the fall of 1976, the housing conditions were primitive. The thin wood walls of the bunkhouse had cracks around the windows that let in rainwater and cold winds. It was near the harbor and exposed to the north. "A place on the south side of the island, tucked in from the wind and facing the sun, would have been far better for winter living. But we had to watch the harbor as part of our job," said Dave. "Otherwise we would have been running out every 10 minutes to check."

There was no running water in the bunkhouse. For drinking water, Edith would use a bucket to draw water from a well on the lawn in front of the hotel. For washing, she would collect rainwater in a cistern beneath the bunkhouse. To flush the toilets, she would bring salt water from the sea in a bucket. In the depth of the winter when the drains froze up, the bucket became the toilet. A wood-and-coal-burning kitchen range provided heat. They took baths once a week in a tub filled with water heated on the range. For electricity, they would occasionally crank up a noisy and fitful generator, but they preferred the peace without it. They had no telephone. The flickering flame of a gas lamp, too dim to read by, lighted their way as they moved about the house after sundown.

Edith would spend an hour meditating each morning, and Dave would use that time to read. They tried to get outside at least once a day, even in the foulest of weather. They found that after a while they began to live their lives by the rhythms of nature, matching their activities to the cycles of the tides, the vagaries of the weather, and the rising and setting of the sun.

Even though they had ample provisions such as root vegeta-

bles, canned food, flour and oatmeal, they tried to live off the resources of the island as much as possible. Occasionally a Coast Guard crew would bring by their mail and fresh milk when it was "doing logistics" for the lighthouse nearby. Once a week, Edith would harvest mussels off the seaweed-covered rocks near the low water line. These were a large part of their diet. She used them for pasta dishes, oriental dishes, chowder and omelets. She knew a tidal pool higher up that was accessible at high tide, and she would put the harvested mussels in there. "I would go out to this pool in the days following and take just what I needed for that day," said Edith. From the rocks she also harvested dulse, an edible seaweed, and Irish moss, another seaweed she used for making desserts. Each afternoon she would bake bread on the kitchen range. Dave would sometimes trade fresh bread for fish with fishermen from Gloucester who tied up at the pier. They made omelets from seagulls' eggs until Edith became mildly allergic to them. They had their own chickens, bantams, so that they always had fresh eggs. They knew that they never need go hungry during the winter.

Winter storms are frequent and sometimes spectacular.

Nor would they get bored. The island was always changing. The clouds, the sea, the state of the tide, the winds, the sun, the light, the shadows, the birds, the very mood of the place varied from moment to moment. Dave, as the island engineer, could immerse himself in many projects on the island and focus intensely on what he was doing. For Edith the island had a strong spiritual meaning. She viewed it as a sacred place.

When the last guest went ashore in the middle of September, a small close-up crew would stay behind to help Dave put shutters on the ground floor windows of the hotel and drain the water systems. When everybody else was finally ashore, Dave would get his boat ready for the winter. It was a wooden 30-foot Novi powerboat named STURGEON, built in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. He would beach her on a small swatch of sand near the pier, scrape the barnacles off her and give her a fresh coat of bottom paint. The boat was their lifeline to the mainland.

With the close-up crew gone, Dave and Edith would be all alone. They knew that they would not see anyone else on the island, except for an occasional visitor, until the open-up crew came out in May. They particularly enjoyed those first few weeks alone together. "October was a special time of the year for us because we first met during that month," Edith said.

Fall was their favorite time on the island. It was warmer than the mainland, and it lasted longer. Sometimes the temperature would be 14 degrees higher on the islands. There were no bright foliage colors because there were no trees. However, they would watch large flocks of birds migrating south from Canada. Monarch butterflies would stop awhile as they flitted their way to Mexico. The small birds who nested on the islands, the yellow warblers, the blackbirds, the grackles, the sandpipers, the eiders, the barn swallows and the starlings all left to go south. The noisy gull colony migrated to the mainland nearby. To Dave and Edith, fall was a period of disconnect from the outside world, of saying good-bye to summer friends, and a time to brace themselves for the harsh blasts of weather to come.

Winter brought winds that howled and moaned around the buildings and the rocks for days on end. Sometimes an Arctic wind would come in from the northwest, right from the top of Mount Washington, which Dave could just see on a clear day. "I remember many times walking across the tennis courts and the lawn in front of the hotel, walking at a 60-degree angle, bent against the wind." He got no relief from the blast until he got to the shelter of the hotel. "It was invigorating." Margery, his daughter, remembers one winter excursion with her father when he went out in his boat to Star Island to check for storm damage — this was a winter before they moved out there to live. "It was sunny, the seas were calm and it was windy," she said. "When we got out there, all I wanted to do was to hunker down behind a rock or a building to get out of the wind. Dad went off, striding across the rocks, hiking around the island, checking this and that."

When the wind came in hard from the northeast, usually all hell broke loose. Nature would display its brute force in fierce "Northeaster" storms that hung in for days on end. Thirty-foot waves would pound the island, almost sending shudders through the rock. Massive breakers would throw spray clear over the White Island lighthouse. Screaming winds, sometimes up to 90 miles per hour, would tear at everything on the island. One storm grabbed a large shed that covered the pier and flung it into the boiling sea. "We have seen water come up where it didn't belong," said Dave. One time he saw it cover Cedar Island completely and cut across the center of Appledore. He also saw it come across the west side of Star Island between the cemetery and the hotel. "We were never afraid during one of those storms."

Even though they lived close to the harbor in the bunkhouse, they never had waves barreling in their front door. If the seas did come up, they could move further up on the island. "Once, when we heard on the radio that a bad storm was coming, we laid in food, water and firewood in the parsonage, up close to the church, but we never needed to go up there."

Their biggest concern during the storms was for their boat anchored in the harbor. With waves breaking over the breakwater, and a swell surging back around the islands into the harbor from the west, the boat would sometimes saw back and forth on its mooring line. "We would watch the lines through binoculars. If they were chafing through, there was nothing we could do. We couldn't go out and attach another line. All we could do was watch," said Edith. One morning after a particularly bad storm, they saw that the mooring lines had parted, and their beloved boat was on the rocks near the breakwater. There was a big hole in the hull and the engine was damaged beyond repair. "It was hard. You need to mourn for a boat like you need to mourn for a friend or a pet, but we were faced with the challenge of getting

The hotel, as summer tourists never see it

another boat as soon as possible," said Edith. They bought a another Novi within three weeks. Dave decided then to leave this boat up on the land beside his house at Eliot, Maine, from December to March.

Edith was happy that the boat stayed ashore during the depth of winter. "I didn't like to see Dave climb about on the boat when the weather was very cold and there was ice on the deck." Dave has fallen in more times than he can remember. He ended up putting car tires as bumpers on his boat so that he could have something to grab onto as he clambered back on board. "It's one thing if a storm comes up and the water temperature is 45 or 50 degrees, but if a storm comes up and the water is 38 degrees, and you fall in, then you are dealing with severe hypothermia," said Edith. When they began to leave their boat ashore during the depth of winter, they became even more isolated than they had ever been without their lifeline to the mainland.

NO ESCAPE FROM EACH OTHER

Isolation did not bother either of them. "I enjoyed the solitude, and the one-to-one relationship with Dave," said Edith. "Being alone doesn't necessarily mean that you feel lonely." The separation from friends and co-workers made Dave and Edith more dependent on each other than they would have been ashore. If they got into a tiff, neither of them had someone to turn to, no friend to guide them to reconciliation. "We have had our times when it would have been better if we had someone to intervene," Dave said.

Both of them knew, however, that if they did not resolve an argument quickly, they could drop down to a more cruel form of isolation, that of being detached from each other. "We worked things out. We forced the issue. We knew that we didn't want to be apart," Dave said. "We had too many years together." There was no escape from each other, not even away to the world of work. "Some other couple out there might have ended up with butcher knives and axes," said Dave. Edith said that there is something about the island that relieves pressure. "A walk around the island just listening to the surf and watching the waves beating against the rocks can settle an awful amount of stress."

Edith enjoyed strolling around the island at any time, even when she was not under stress. Sometimes she would wander out on the flat rocks on the southeastern side of the island to a place called Marine Gardens and peer at the wondrous things there in the small tidal pools — purple anemones, tiny fish, transparent shrimp and barnacles. From here, she could look south and see the lighthouse on White Island and hear its foghorn, a mournful bleat every 15 seconds in the key of C, sounding all day and all year long, fog or no fog. At other times she would go to the western edge, beyond the hotel and the pier, and watch the sun set behind the undulating line of the New Hampshire and Maine coast. After a storm, she would go to the high rocky cliffs on the east, and watch the waves, after their long fetch rolling across the Atlantic, stand tall like prancing horses as they broke a half a mile out on Cedar Ledge, spilling their immense energy in a foamy spread all the way in to the breakwater.

Or she might have stood for a while at the seawall along the southern edge of Gosport harbor and seen the bottom 40 feet below in the remarkably clear waters. If the tide was fully out, she saw the fronds of seaweed lie flaccid against the rock and smelled their muted pungency. If she stayed awhile to watch the tide coming in, she saw the seaweed begin to sway, floating on its yellow-brown air sacs, dancing to the return of the waters. If she lingered long enough, she caught the moments when the seas began to reach and inundate the tidal pools higher up on the rocks, swirling and filling every crevice and cove with sparkle.

When she felt adventurous, and the waves were not high, she could walk and climb along the breakwater to Cedar Island and on again across the longer breakwater to Smuttynose. On the southern tip of this long narrow island she might stop and look back across the empty harbor to Star Island and see the long white hotel building, the church high up in the back, the parsonage beside it and the stone and wood cottages down close to the harbor.

Perhaps she could imagine the heyday of Star Island in colonial times, when the harbor was bustling with activity and full of square-rigged sailing ships, Grand Banks fishing schooners and skiffs, when villagers milled about in Gosport, once home to 600 souls. From where she stood on Smuttynose she saw the sweep of the shore along the harbor where long-gone wooden sheds and tall outdoor drying racks once stood. The racks were used for "dunning" fish — a curing process that was unique to the Isles of Shoals. It used little salt and imparted the fillets of cod with the color of port wine.

Turning her head and looking north, Edith could see Appledore Island close by. On top of the nearest hill was a concrete radar tower, a defunct sentinel from World War II. Over on the other side of the hill, hidden from her view, were some former Coast Guard station buildings. These housed a laboratory where marine biology students from Cornell came in the summer to study the flora and fauna on the rocks. On rare calm days during the winter she might have gone with Dave on their boat across to Appledore Island. The Star Island Corporation also owned this island, and Dave needed to check it occasionally. On her visits there, Edith often saw the concrete foundation walls of the Appledore Hotel, the only remnants of a great 19th-century wooden resort building that was destroyed in a raging fire in 1914. The foundations of a Victorian house consumed by the same fire lie nearby. This was the home of the poet Celia Thaxter, daughter of a lighthouse keeper from White Island. In the latter half of the 19th century, Thaxter hosted a colony of writers and painters there, kept a beautiful garden and wrote about life on the Isles of Shoals.

After the hotel on Appledore burned down, its sister, the Oceanic Hotel on Star Island, fared poorly. In 1916 the Star Island Corporation bought this hotel, the church, the cottages of Gosport, the pier and the rest of the island for the princely sum of sixteen thousand dollars so that it could continue the summer conferences it had held there since 1897.

WINTER PHANTOMS

Dave and Edith went ashore to their families every year for Thanksgiving and Christmas, but they made sure that they would always be back on the island by New Year's Eve. Just before midnight they would walk up the gravel pathway, interlaced with faded blue mussel shells, to the small stone church on the highest part of the island. Here, in the cold and candlelit darkness, they would welcome in the New Year by ringing the bronze church bell in the belfry above. The peals would echo off the bare rocks, and resonate on the uninhabited islands nearby. They didn't care if nobody else heard the bell. It was their celebration to each other.

Winter brought more than winds and waves. If the air was particularly cold they would sometimes see Arctic sea smoke. When the sea was still warm, say in early December, a bitter cold wind blowing across the water from the north would raise a mist from the water. Dave remembers one time, returning from Portsmouth in his boat, when he had difficulty finding his way because of the sea smoke. He knew it was different than fog because he could see the sun overhead. By the time he eventually reached Gosport harbor, he saw that the mist had reached higher up, and was forming ice crystals, creating snow that fell on the islands. Peg Sullivan, now 84, who was a winterkeeper with her husband for five years after World War II, loved to watch the Arctic sea smoke come in. "It formed only over the water. It was like someone cut it with an knife along the edge of the island," she said. "It would only be up a little ways so that from the higher land you could see things on top that looked like fairy castles or magical places." Celia Thaxter also wrote about this surreal scene: "After some periods of intense cold, these mists, which are never in banks like fog, rise in irregular whirling columns reaching for the clouds; shadowy phantoms, torn and wild, that stalk past like Ossian's ghosts, solemnly and noiselessly throughout the day."

"A SINGULAR GAIT"

Spring came to the island a little later than to the mainland. March would sometimes bring calm days when the sea was flat and reflected the sky like a huge mirror. Dave and Edith would start looking forward to guests and friends coming back to the island. "I never forgot my friends, even during the depths of the winter," said Edith. "I would sometimes go to the church, all bundled up in the cold. Up there I felt a deep spiritual connection to my friends ashore and I would talk to them." At other times as she walked through the deserted hotel she would almost hear the voices of those that had been there in the summer. When March came, Dave and Edith knew that it would not be long before their isolation would be broken. Sometimes it seemed all too soon.

March also brought back the birds. The gulls returned on the first warm day. Even before first light, they began their incessant squealing, squalling and cawing. "I never noticed them leave in the fall, but I knew when they returned by the racket they made," said Dave. Flocks of migrating birds, including Canada geese, larks, hawks, marsh wrens and plover would stop by before they continued on in their way north. The three or four snowy owls who spent winter on the Isles of Shoals would move back to their nesting grounds in the northern tundra. Len Reed, who with his wife, Ruth, winterkept on Star Island for four years before the Piersons came out, remembers one spring day when he had just mowed the lawn in front of the hotel. He saw what looked like a whole field of dandelions that had suddenly sprung up. When they took off into the air he realized that they were a flock of goldfinches.

Large colonies of herring gulls and great black-backed gulls nest on the Isles of Shoals. Recent surveys counted 7,000 pairs,

Edith and Dave Pierson

one of the largest gull colonies in the world. Dave remembers when there were few gulls out there in the early 1970s. The great black-backed gulls are very aggressive and drive out other species. For years the Audubon Society of New Hampshire and the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game have been trying to re-establish colonies of terns, but the great black-backed gulls carry off their young as soon as they hatch.

The great black-backed gulls create problems for humans too, especially on Star Island. As soon as the young are hatched, the adult gulls will attack anybody who approaches too close to the nesting area. The gulls will strike the highest part of the body, so those in the know carry sticks when they go out on the rocks. These are not for striking the gulls. They are held upright a foot or two above the head, and the swooping gulls, believing that the stick is a body part, will concentrate on attacking it rather than foreheads and scalps.

In the early 1980s, Edith started a gull control program under a permit from the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service. She had heard that there was a increase in the number of guests coming to the island's first-aid station during the summer requiring sutures on the tops of their heads. In spring, as soon as the gulls had laid their mottled eggs, Edith went out on the rocks and perforated some of them with a needle. This small hole ensured that the eggs would be non viable, but the unknowing mother gulls continued to sit on them until it was too late in the season to lay another clutch. When she went out on the rocks the gulls seemed to know her, and did not attack her as she went about her deadly rounds. "They saw me pick up the eggs out of the nest, and put them back again. They ignored me. They probably suspected that I would do them no harm." Her family planning program for gulls turned out to be quite successful. "Over the years we treated between 800 and 1,000 eggs per year, and the number of black-backed gulls did come down," said Edith.

Once Edith fell on the rocks when she was piercing the eggs. She thought that she had cracked her skull and injured her back. She could not get up. Luckily she had her dog Smutty along. He went and found Dave, and brought him to her. Dave took her on the boat to be checked at a hospital ashore. Her head and back were found to be sound. "I never worried about them out there during the storms," says their son Will. "Sure, they could fall off a cliff and drown, but I was more worried about them falling on the rocks, or falling off a ladder or Dad cutting off a finger with a circular saw."

Walking out on the smooth and sometimes slippery rocks took a certain amount of dexterity. Margery felt that anytime she went

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MAN, NATURE AND WHITE-TAIL DEER

Islands are a testing ground for the limits of game management

JOHN N. COLE

Eunice Curran (2)

The first settlers of what is now Maine had good reasons for building their homes and raising their crops on offshore islands. There they were relatively safe from attack, winters were milder, growing seasons longer, wild game, fish and shellfish were plentiful.

The region's white-tail deer were welcome and occasional island visitors soon converted to venison steaks and deerskin wearables. Relationships between Man and Nature were straightforward; "game management" was a term some 200 years down the road.

And there were significantly fewer deer. As the 20th century began, less than a million white-tails populated the entire nation; today there are more than 18 million. The 1999 Maine herd numbered about 290,000, a small fraction of the national total, but significant because the state is at the extreme northern limit of the ruminant's range. With close to 20 million acres of livable habitat, it seems reasonable to assume that overcrowding is not yet a problem for the state's white-tails.

Were it not for a score or more of Maine's offshore islands, that assumption would prevail. But during the past decade, the very game management policies that have added more than 150,000 deer to the state's herd have also helped create painful deer dilemmas for many island residents and visitors. When more and more deer seek to share a small, finite space with more and more people, the consequences test the very limits of game management. The results, as demonstrated with such depressing frequency over the past several years, are often crisis situations that beget controversy, property damage, fiscal discomfort, marathon town meetings and the bitter realization that the peaceful coexistence of Man and Nature is a goal that eludes the reach of today's game management technologies, no matter how diligently applied or sophisticated they may be.

What has come to be known as "the deer problem" has generated crisis situations from Monhegan, 11 miles offshore, to Peaks Island in Casco Bay. Lobstering is Monhegan's leading occupation; Peaks is peopled primarily by summer visitors and a year-round cadre of commuters who work in nearby Portland, Maine's largest city. Residents of both islands, however, have spent many long and often emotional hours debating solutions to the problem of too many deer in too little space.

And they are not alone. Even a casual offshore listing includes a string of islands where deer debates are ever ongoing and often inconclusive. From Appledore to Great Cranberry, from Chebeague to Vinalhaven, Isleboro, Isle au Haut, Swan's, Frenchboro, Great Diamond, Cushing and

more, the deer problem's momentum maintains itself, year after year.

It is a crisis of deer management success. Since 1975, Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IF&W) has implemented long-term strategies to improve the health and numbers of Maine's white-tail deer. Since 1995, those efforts have proved more fruitful than even the most optimistic projections. Boosted by three successive mild winters, IF&W's fine-tuning of deer hunting regulations, its attention to predator control, deer-yard conservation and poacher patrols have combined to increase Maine's deer herd from 160,000 in 1983 to almost 300,000 in 1999.

Nearly double the number of deer in less than two decades: it's a remarkable management achievement. In Augusta, there are more than 100 million good reasons to be pleased. It's reliably estimated that at least $100 million is added to Maine's cash flow by resident and out-of-state deer hunters who spend a combined two million hunter-days afield each November. IF&W deer research specialist Gerald (Jerry) R. Lavigne and his fellow wildlife biologists can take justifiable pride in their success.

But life is full of surprises, some less welcome than others. Now that optimum deer numbers have been so painstakingly attained, the number of deer hunters has not kept pace. For the 300,000 figure that emerged from IF&W computers as the state's ideal white-tail population was part of a configuration that assumed at least a 15-percent hunting season mortality. But that has not happened. A combination of less-than-ideal hunting conditions (almost no November snow) and a steady annual decline in the number of hunters during the past decade has meant a declining deer kill. In 1998, it was down 10 percent from the previous year. Which is disturbing news for deer-herd managers operating within precise parameters.

From the deer's point of view, however, declining hunting pressure and successive mild winters have combined to create a happy herd. When abundance prevails, white-tails will, like many wild creatures, breed up to available food supplies. Instead of a single fawn, does will drop twins, even triplets. During the spring of 1999, many Maine observers reported seeing multiple white-tail siblings.

Bottom line: there are more deer in Maine then ever before. Quite a contrast to the start of the century when reports of white-tail sightings often made headlines in community newspapers.

What a difference a century makes. Maine's deer headlines continue, but now they shout of depredation, crop damage, vehicular mayhem and, most troubling of all, the spread of disease. And more than 90 percent of the depressing deer news originates on Maine's islands: wildlife management district 30 in IF&W's lexicon, a district that stretches the length of the coast from Kittery to Cutler on Machias Bay, from Appledore to Monhegan, and from Monhegan to Great Wass. Nowhere else in Maine have relations between Man and Nature turned as rancid as they have on the inhabited islands of wildlife management district 30. For which, in almost every case, you can blame the white-tail deer and the islanders who have yet to establish working agreements for co-existence, if, indeed, co-existence is possible.

The very game management policies that have added more than 150,000 deer to the state's herd have also helped create painful deer dilemmas for many island residents and visitors.

For the worst-case scenario (and what some believe is the worst-case conclusion), look to Monhegan. Ironically, it's a drama that need never have happened. The 600-acre (about one square mile) island is a bit more than 10 miles offshore, separated from the mainland by a turbulent Atlantic not even the most reckless white-tail would elect to swim. But for reasons lost to history, in the early 1950s some of Monhegan's several hundred year-round residents decided the island's already legendary ambiance would be improved if only a few deer could be seen grazing in the evening fields.

So it was in 1954 that six healthy white-tails were transported from Port Clyde aboard the oversize lobster boat that served as the island's only public link to the rest of Maine. Released in what was (and still is) a predator-free environment, the animals fared well and multiplied. For three decades, criticism — if any there was — of their presence was muted. But during the 1980s, islanders noticed the increased disappearance of ornamental flowers and garden vegetables. In some cases, dooryard plots were entirely stripped of tulips, and vegetables intended for winter nourishment vanished overnight. The hoof prints of Monhegan's brown-eyed ruminants were all that was left of rows of lettuce, tomatoes and sugar snap peas that had been so tenderly nursed through Maine's chilly spring.

As the 1990s began, complaints were no longer muted. "The deer problem" became a recurring article on Monhegan town meeting warrants. What had begun as the rather whimsical importation of a half-dozen deer in 1954 had become the

presence of more than 100 white-tailed garden rippers who stopped at nothing. But although debates were long and fiery, they were without resolution. They could well have continued to be were it not for the island's near-epidemic of Lyme disease that began with a single case in 1987 and continued to gain ground until, by 1998, 11 cases were documented. In relation to the island's total year-round population, the infection had struck nearly 16 percent of the residents, a number some researchers classified as "epidemic." And although it is the deer tick, and not the deer itself, that is the Lyme disease infecting agent, the tick cannot do its work unless it has a deer to feast on early in its career. Before they agreed on the final antidote, islanders voted to support Dr. Peter Rand of the Maine Medical Center and his efforts to administer a program designed to poison the ticks before they could spread disease. The plan pivoted around feeding Monhegan's herd a two-year diet of corn treated with Invermectin, a formula that poisoned deer ticks but did not harm the deer.

Peter Ralston

Deer have become tame members of more than one island community — Frenchboro, in this photograph — with mixed results.

Ah, the subtleties of Nature's responses to Man's attempts at control. Invermectin, it turns out, acts as a kind of deer fertility drug. Monhegan's does began producing multiple births, so while a few ticks may have died, those that did not had more deer on which to feed. Not only that, because the deer were eating poisoned corn, they were no longer safe for human consumption, which put an end to what limited hunting the island had allowed. After a brief trip back to the drawing board, a deer sterilization effort was implemented. As you may have guessed by now, that too went nowhere.

Which is why 29 Monhegan voters assembled at a special town meeting on December 3, 1996, to approve or dismiss the meeting's single article: "To see if the residents will vote to ask the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to facilitate the reduction of the deer herd on Monhegan." Twenty-two of those voters said yes, even though the term "facilitate the reduction," as islanders later learned, was a euphemism for "killing."

That began on April 3, 1997, when Dr. Anthony "Tony" DiNicola arrived on the island with his equipment and crew. Called in from his Connecticut base, Tony DiNicola (whose doctorate is in wildlife management) has specialized in the ecology and control of deer in suburban areas. In his mid-20s, Tony DiNicola (his corporate name is White Buffalo, Inc.) is known nationwide as a responsible and effective deer-removal specialist, a reputation enhanced by his effective dispatch of 52 Monhegan deer with 53 cartridges on that first visit.

"Doctor Death," as he has been tagged by some, makes careful preparations and uses highly specialized equipment. The preparations and the equipment have one primary purpose: to kill deer cleanly, quietly and quickly. As proved on Monhegan and in other venues, Tony DiNicola is very good at what he does. Using a .22-250 rifle with a night-scope sight and silencer, he shoots his own, special hand-loaded cartridges over baited sites ringed by electronic early-warning systems that tell him when deer are on their way and where they're coming from. His bullets do not fragment nor break the sound barrier. Fired at a range of 20 to 30 yards, most often squarely between a deer's eyes, the ballistics are both efficient and discreet.

In an interview with Bangor Daily News columnist Tom Hennessy, IF&W's Gerry Lavigne, who observed part of the Monhegan shoot, described it as "a smooth and unobtrusive operation. Talk about humane, those deer never knew what hit them. I watched him drop a group of seven right in their tracks. It was unbelievable. And most of the people on the island didn't even know we were there."

By spring 1999, after more meetings and more requests for Tony DiNicola's specialized services, what has been declared to be the last deer on the island was shot, dressed out, transported to the mainland and donated to a food services organization. "As far as we have been able to determine," said an IF&W spokesman in Augusta in November of that year, "there are no longer any deer on Monhegan Island." Mary Beth Dolan, who worked on the deer problem for years as the island's second selectman, agreed. "There are no deer on the island," she said, firmly and conclusively.

So that, as far as Monhegan is concerned, would seem to be that. After 45 years, this is one Maine island where deer debates have ended. "To me," island health officer Luke Church told a reporter, "it's the same old thing that's been going on in this country since the first white man arrived — if you can't control something, you get rid of it."

"They just stand there and look at you"

Well, yes, perhaps. But as Peaks Island residents and visitors have been learning the hard way during the past several years, getting rid of a problem is seldom as easy as it might seem. At roughly one square mile, Peaks is the same size as Monhegan; but that's the only data shared by the two. With some 1,500 year-rounders and a summer-resident and tourist population that tops 4,000, Peaks is more suburb than offshore outpost. In the shadow of Portland, just a brief ferry ride away, Peaks is a Casco Bay commuter island governed by the city.

Which hasn't bothered the deer who, over the past decade especially, have made

Peaks a favorite grazing ground. Unlike Monhegan, well beyond the white-tail's swimming range, Peaks is an easy crossing from the mainland and the scores of other neighboring islands: Chebeague, Great Diamond, Cushing, Long and many more. Protected for years by a majority of islanders and nourished by the bumper crops raised so diligently by Peaks gardeners, the island's deer herd numbered more than 200 by the mid-1990s.

And they had become almost as tame as house pets. "They are not afraid of people," said one Peaks homeowner. "They just stand there and look at you with those big dark eyes. There are some that are hand-fed by the island children.

"But still, the deer are eating about everything that grows," this islander continues. "They have browsed their way from one side of the island to the other. Every leaf and branch has been devoured as high as the deer can reach. You can look around now and see houses you never saw before. Well, except where there are those huge fences some folks have built to keep the deer out of their gardens."

The Peaks "deer problem" has energized annual votes on herd control since the start of the decade. And until May 4, 1999, the deer always won. "I like the deer a lot better than some of the people who oppose them," said one voter after the August 1996 vote, won by the deer: 410-234.

But when the Portland City Council ruled early in 1999 that non-resident Peaks property owners could vote, some 600 absentee ballots made a crucial difference. The deer lost: 796 to 298. And once again the call went out to White Buffalo, Inc. As winter began and the year 2000 loomed, Peaks Island braced for nocturnal visits by Tony DiNicola and crew. City councilors have asked the sharpshooters to reduce the Peaks herd to about 30 deer, the number wildlife biologists say the island can support without sacrificing its vegetation.

Shortly after the vote, Philip Carlo Paratore of Portland wrote a letter to the editor of the *Portland Press Herald* offering to volunteer his services to help trap, crate and ship Peaks Island deer to Maine's wilderness areas. His strategy is one of several alternatives to a bullet between the eyes that has been suggested, tested and in almost every case, proven impractical.

Trapped deer, as game managers have learned, do not travel well. Mortality rates often exceed 80 percent and in every case stress factors are extreme. Sterilization of does has been dutifully tested and also decreed impractical as well as costly. In situations like Peaks Island, the effort is negated by new white-tail arrivals from the mainland and neighboring islands. The purposeful re-introduction of predators is an option unsuited to islands where the absence of coyotes, wolves and cougars has long been considered a virtue.

Which leaves fencing as a costly and not always effective deterrent, along with the planting of certain plants known to be deer resistant. List of such flowers and shrubs were circulated on Peaks Island by residents who favored peaceful coexistence with the island's deer. As the vote made clear, however, the strategy was not persuasive enough.

As the folks at the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife have been saying all along, hunting is the most dependable and proven deer management alternative. Instead of costing money, it makes a profit. But these days (as opposed to colonial times) Maine's islands, by their very nature, do not lend themselves to deer hunting. In compact, island settings, high-powered rifles are high-risk implements.

Well aware of this, many Maine islands are trying a selection of variations on the hunting theme. Chebeague allows hunting but limits hunters to shotguns; North Haven and Vinalhaven go along with mainland hunting regulations and allow both an archery season and the standard firearms seasons. In 1998, Great Diamond and Little Diamond in Casco Bay gave a single hunter permission to hunt through the winter. He killed 25 deer, and was invited back for the winter of 1999-2000. Islesboro is open to bow hunting only. And until 1999, the Cranberries, Swan's, Frenchboro and Isle au Haut prohibited deer hunting of any sort.

Eunice Curran

"They just stand there and look at you with those big dark eyes," says one Peaks homeowner. And like bears in some national parks, they know where to get a handout.

However, at a special town meeting in September 1999, residents of the Cranberry Isles voted 51-6 to petition the legislature to amend the law that prohibits hunting on the island. The meeting lasted three hours at the firehouse on Great Cranberry. "I didn't hear anyone speak in favor of the deer," said Philip Bowditch, a summer resident for more than 50 years. "There's no question, the island is overrun with deer. If you want a garden, you have to have a fence. If you don't have a fence, you won't have a garden."

According to an IF&W spokesperson at the meeting, the Cranberries can support seven or eight white-tails. The herd now numbers in the hundreds. Such numbers are not likely to encourage harmonious relations between Man and Nature. It's more than likely they will prompt a telephone call to White Buffalo, Inc.

A Maine-based freelance writer for more than 30 years, ***John N. Cole*** *is author of* Striper *and other books.*

AN ISLAND TOWN

IMAGES OF VINALHAVEN, 1950-1990

Henry Yule, who worked aboard the VINALHAVEN **Millie Cheney**

I began organizing these slides in 1987. My effort was a love affair from the start, originating with the personal search by my mother, Millie M. Cheney, for beauty on film and canvas, followed by my own desire to preserve and present these images. The result, a slide show with music and two projectors, is an affectionate display for all who know or can ever know Vinalhaven.

The show was first given as part of Vinalhaven's bicentennial celebration on July 2, 1989, at the Union Church. People were deeply moved; I was deeply grateful. The show isn't sophisticated, slick, or chic; it's simply an honest undertaking. I accomplished what I set out to do. It is a trip through time and place; a bridge to the past — may we never forget the people, their work, their fun, their beauty.

Through these images and hundreds more I've included in the show, the island speaks to us of quiet peace, creeping fog, apple trees, days of open sky, the tall pointed spruce, and land shaped and reshaped, sandpapered by the winds, rains, ice and snow.

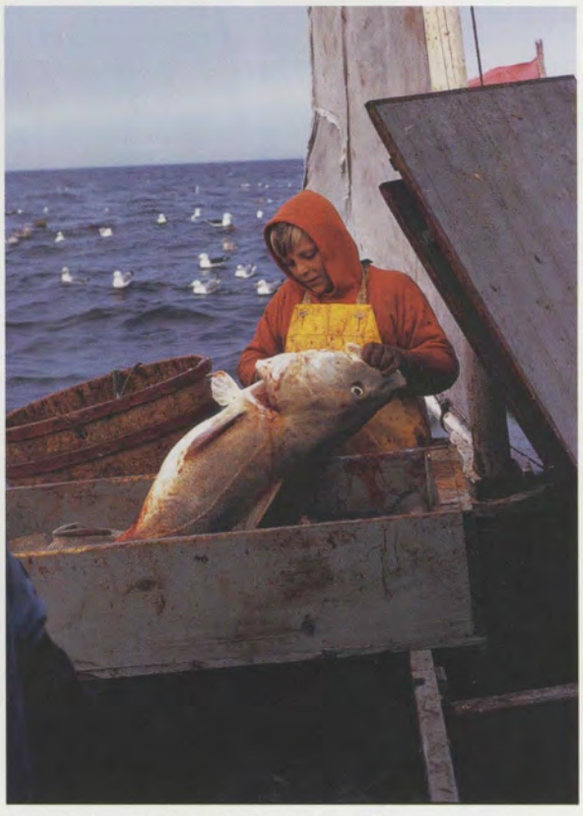
— Sally Cheney Thibault

Millie Cheney

Henry Young, 1968

Millie Cheney

Fourth of July parade, 1963



Georgie Gross, fishing with Doug Hall, 1971

Chandler Blackington

Neil Blackington with a fish house model made by his father, 1964

"My grandmother Moss, Linnie Smith, Hazel Dyer. I won the dollhouse in 1959 — it was made by an islander, along with all of its furniture." — Sally Cheney Thibault

Millie Cheney

Bodine Ames and Jackie, 1960

Chandler Blackington

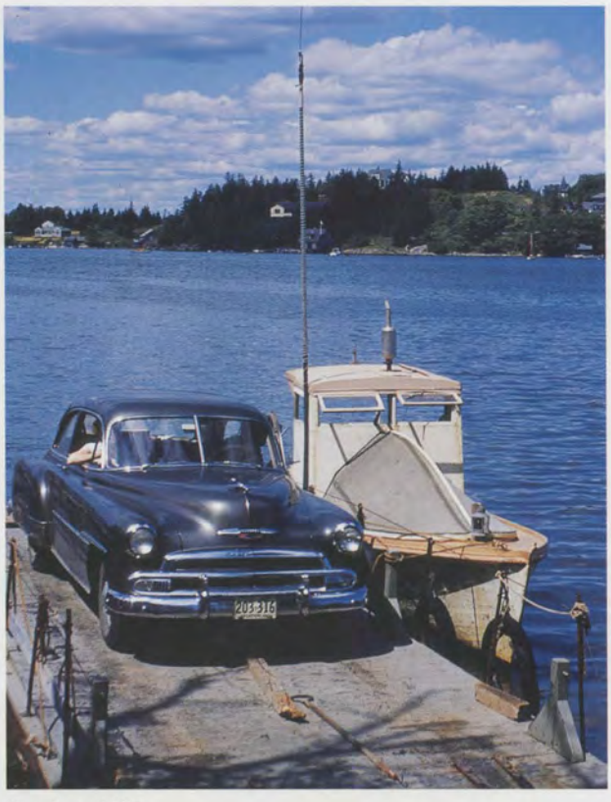
Howard Liddy aboard the GRAY GHOST, *1955*

Chandler Blackington

Zelia and Chester Brown loading herring into the bait house, Roberts Harbor, 1956

Hula hoops: Susan Dyer Radley, Katie Hamilton Durkee, Debbie Hamilton Webster and Margaret Hamilton Beverage, 1958

House fire, 1971



Car ferry, 1953

Millie Cheney

Frozen harbor, 1968

Millie Cheney

Dot Sutliffe's nursery school, 1958

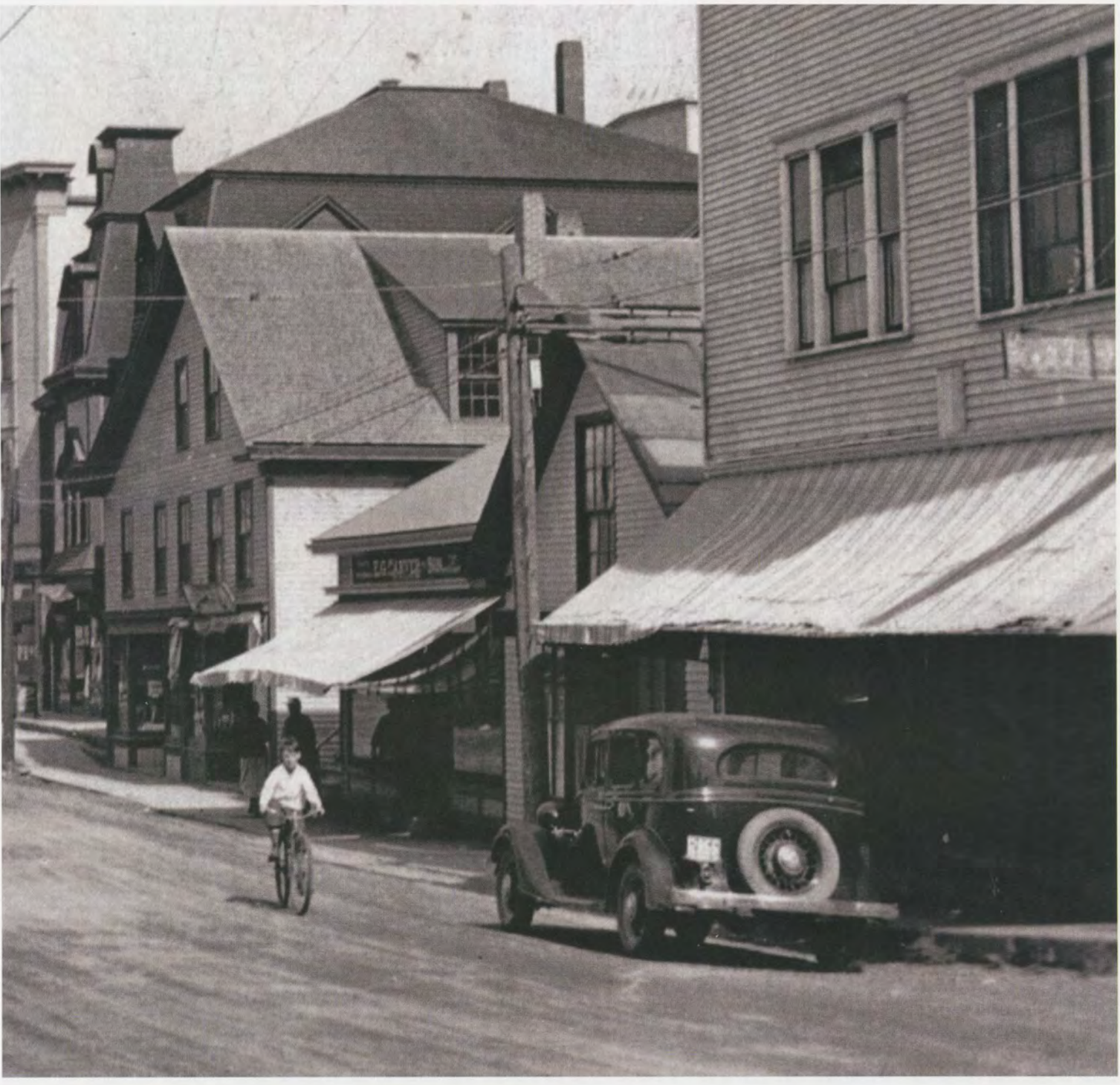
courtesy of Vinalhaven Historical Society

Vinalhaven in the 1930s.

On Our Own

AN ISLAND ADVENTURE IN AUGUST, 1934

JEAN B. WETHERBEE



Grand Central Station was hot and humid as we sat waiting for our train. We had walked only three blocks from our parked car, but already we were dripping with perspiration. A half hour until train time. Mother and I had dropped onto a long bench in the slightly cooler waiting room while the indefatigable menfolk, 15 and 40 respectively, went off to explore the station. The excitement at the prospect of two weeks' pioneering on a Maine island had come to a boiling point, and I sat in a vague silence as Mother thought of a dozen things yet to tell me: the raincoats were in the large trunk; the rubber boots in the crate marked "tools"; the ax was packed with the outboard. I nodded abstractedly and watched a group of ragged boys pass, a bored policeman in their wake.

courtesy of the Vinalhaven Historical Society

With an earsplitting howl from the whistle, our 60-foot vessel made its dignified departure.

A sudden thought struck me. Did I still have the tickets? And the money Dad had given me before we left home? Yes, there they were — two through tickets to Rockland, Maine, upper and lower berth reservations, and in my new red billfold, two ten-dollar bills and eight singles. The amount didn't appear much to my inexperienced eyes. Two years in college hadn't taught me much about running a "pioneer" household, even for a short two weeks. Perhaps that was why Bob and I were being allowed to go on such an astounding adventure. Two months before, in May, the family had become surprised owners of a six-room house and an acre of land. The fact that it lacked all plumbing and electricity, and was isolated from civilization as we knew it, only increased its value in our eyes. And the disadvantages of the house were entirely forgotten when we considered the beautiful island surrounding it. Twelve miles out from the coast of Maine is the island of Vinalhaven, and at the far tip, five miles from the tiny town, is our small island — 60 acres in all. For although legally we owned only an acre, we would be the sole inhabitants, with only an occasional rabbit to disturb us. And to connect us with civilization was a narrow bridge of granite blocks, over which we would start a five-mile walk to town, or, at the other end of the island, a 15-foot rowboat with a two-cylinder outboard motor.

Abruptly, Bob interrupted my reverie, waving an airplane magazine at me, and exclaiming at one and the same time, "Look at that German bomber!" and "The train leaves in 12 minutes!" We snatched up the bags and straggled toward the gate, Bob still exclaiming over bombers and Mother peering at the clock. Bob presented our tickets at the gate with a dignified air, and in a short time we were seated in the lounge car, watching Mother and Dad wave an envious farewell.

The next few hours were something of a letdown. Our interest in the train was soon expended, but I was too excited to sleep. Bob had gallantly taken the upper berth, and having once climbed up, was too tired to climb down. Though I felt doubtful of the approval of the porter, who, after all, couldn't know, I cautiously pushed up the curtain in my darkened berth. The moon was full and shone too bright to lend any mystery to the empty fields we were speeding past. I lay back and watched a network of wires dash through the sky. My last thought before falling to sleep was to pull down the curtain.

The train was to arrive at Rockland at seven o'clock, and I had left a call with the porter. But it was five-thirty by my watch when I awoke with a start. I peered out the window, and all I could see was a wall of gray fog. It was impossible to guess the time. Perhaps my watch had stopped. I had often forgotten to wind it. Quite possibly in the excitement of leaving I had forgotten again. I could imagine the train pulling into Rockland within the next five minutes — and I totally unprepared. I reached into the upper berth to call Bob. But he had disappeared. Hurriedly, I began to dress, yawning with every move. As I reached the last stages of dress, my curtains were yanked apart with what I recognized as a lack of brotherly reserve, and Bob's head entered. "Are you getting up?" he marveled, "It's only quarter to six." I sank back on my pillows with disgust — a foggy day and getting up at five-thirty was too horrible a combination.

Slowly we approached Rockland. My nightmare of arriving too soon had turned to visions of never arriving. We crawled through fog-festooned woods and fields at a turtle's pace, stopping at every cluster of farmhouses along the way. Finally, the porter approached and our bags were piled forlornly in the vestibule. One more station — then, reluctantly, the train crept into Rockland. In a swirl of fog and steam we were handed off the train and snatched up by a smartly uniformed taxi driver, who belied his sophisticated attire with a sprightly monologue on the weather, made as obscure by his accent as were the distant islands by the fog. Down to the wharf we went to check our bags, then back "up street" for breakfast. This last was our driver's suggestion and we were in no condition to disagree. Breakfast was a marvelous idea we had not yet considered, and despite our guide's belief the "the fog wouldn't break for a stretch yet," we had quite an appetite. The boat wouldn't leave until 11 o'clock, and since the City of Rockland offered few diversions, we planned to spend as much time as possible on breakfast.

Seated at the spotless table in the restaurant, my thoughts turned to finances. One dollar had been spent on the taxi; two and a half more would go for boat fare. Mother had allowed for a meager seven or eight dollars for supplies after reaching Vinalhaven. Happily we discovered that 35 cents each could buy a magnificent meal, so we feasted on pancakes while I went over my lists — everything from food to furniture — and anxiously discussed the weather. The waitress had volunteered the information that the sun had not been seen for two weeks, and we cheerfully agreed that this being the case, the dreary weather couldn't last much longer. Then forgetting all financial and

household duties, we went out to spend the next three hours — part of the time exploring a dusty antique shop, the rest of the time wandering along the wharves. The latter held more enchantment. Owners of small fishing boats were glad to tell of the past winter, and a large Coast Guard launch went silently out into the bay as we imagined superb plots of smugglers and spies.

Eleven o'clock neared, and our particular dock grew busy. A mail truck raced down the cobblestone street. Crates of canned goods, eggs and milk and boxes of dry goods and machinery were placed in the hold. A protesting cow was led slowly down the gangplank, and would low dismally during the entire trip. Finally a car lumbered down the runway into the last small space left below decks, and we were ready to go. With an ear-shattering howl from the whistle, our 60-foot vessel made its dignified departure. Out into the bay we slipped, further and further from land, until all we could see was an occasional inquiring seagull. Every minute or so, the wavering foghorn answered a neighboring call and a distant bell.

Our trip across was uneventful. The few passengers other than ourselves were uncommunicative. We sat and stared down at the waves from the cabin windows until the motion made us uneasy. The fog seemed to have a soporific effect, and we scarcely realized we were on our way until small islands began to appear on either side and we knew Vinalhaven was near.

courtesy of Jean B. Wetherbee

Our house's empty windows stared vapidly out to sea, a hundred feet distant. The shattered boardwalk that led from the "driveway" was a menace to my ankles.

As we slipped into the harbor the fog seemed to lift a bit, and we could see the weather-beaten houses scattered over the two hills that made up the tiny town. At the far end of the harbor towered an enormous fish wharf; on the other side of the bay rose the great black arms of a crane over piles of granite blocks that had been hewn from this same island. The only activity lay at the wharf we were approaching. Boats of all kinds lay at anchor, deserted until the weather broke. The town lay dormant under the spell of the fog. At the boat wharf, however, the whole town seemed to have gathered. Bored by inactivity, they had turned to the only diversion of the day — the arrival of the boat from the mainland. Bob and I viewed the reception with great interest. And we in turn were inspected, casually by the summer people, with curiosity by the natives. At the end of the gangplank we were met by the local garage and taxi man, who, on hearing our destination, appeared to know immediately who we were. Within a short time we found ourselves in front of the local grocery store, while our driver disappeared on an unknown errand, promising to be back in a short while. The main street, we gathered, was this grouping of perhaps a dozen stores, post office and pool room, facing a line of wharves, a lumber yard, and a diminutive "movie house" along the edge of the harbor. When we emerged from the store ten minutes later, we found that the townspeople had moved from the boat wharf to the post office, and the street that had been so deserted when we had arrived was buzzing with activity. Our driver, helping us load the food into the car, advised us that mail would be out in a half an hour, and that if we hoped to receive any, it would be necessary to come to town. Bob and I wondered mournfully if any mail we would receive would be worth a walk into town, but that worry was soon forgotten in the wild ride that followed.

Traffic rules seemed never to have invaded Vinalhaven, and along a narrow, winding road we dashed, coming to breathless stops as cars abruptly appeared from the opposite direction. The roads had undoubtedly been built by one with a passion for the roller coaster, for every curve incorporated an unexpected rise that threw us skyward. Between bumps and curtains of fog, we did manage to catch glimpses of the ocean that never seemed far away, and a heavy growth of evergreen made a high fence on each side of the road. Our wild journey came to a sudden halt at the foot of a slight slope, and Bob and I gasped as we prepared to slide right into the ocean below us, but as we slowly proceeded, a bridge of granite blocks appeared beneath us, and we recognized it as the one leading to "our island." Across the bridge the land was flat and covered with blueberry bushes, and out of the fog appeared our house, backed by tall fir trees.

A more dismal sight I have never seen. We had thought the houses in town weather-beaten. This house was a nauseous yellow-gray. The empty windows stared vapidly out to sea — a hundred feet distant. A torn screen door banged in the wind that had been imperceptibly rising during the last hour. Shingles and shavings vied with the thistles in the front yard in a campaign of chaos. Even the talkative driver was affected by the sorrowful spectacle, and in silence we stopped in the high grass beside the house and began to unload the luggage. The shattered boardwalk that led from the "driveway" was a menace to my ankles, harmless-looking boards springing up to tear at my stockings and then go tumbling into the grass.

The rain slowly began to fall as I stood waiting for Bob to unlock the front door. The front yard went directly down to a rocky edge of the ocean that was now a surly green-black. The fact that our boat was not in sight did little to cheer us.

courtesy of Jean B. Wetherbee

Our nearest neighbors, Blanche and Claude Swears

Orrin Timothy Swears

Impatiently I turned to Bob, rain dripping down my neck. The brand new key was having trouble coordinating with the ancient lock. The rain moved the taxi driver to action. Around to the back door we went. It took a moment to remove planks, an ancient ladder and the battered storm door that leaned against it, but then only a lusty kick was needed to send the door banging open. With a damp sigh of relief, we entered our "summer home."

It was with more than a sigh of relief that we viewed the inside of our house. Although shameless confusion reigned, with mattresses on tables, and pots and pans piled on the kitchen floor, the newly painted and papered rooms were bright and dry, the low ceilings a gleaming white. Our taxi-man was hastily dispatched with a reluctant dollar, and Bob and I were ready to take up housekeeping, although a bit undecided as to where and how to start. On the first floor were three rooms — which we immediately designated as dining room, living room and bedroom — and a kitchen. At the top of the narrow, precipitous stairs, worn concave by years of use, we found two large bedrooms. Much of the furniture, in various stages of unpacking (the painter and his wife had begun this job for us), we recognized as discarded from home. The rest was the result of Mother and Dad's constant shopping over a mail-order catalogue. While I sat undecided on an unopened trunk, Bob made the momentous and obvious decision that we needed a fire. Vague mentions had been made about a load of firewood, but clearly, no one had gotten around to ordering it. Thoughtfully, I considered my too ingenious parents. Was this a hitherto unknown part of our pioneering? There would undoubtedly be driftwood along the edge of the island, but it would be hard work to gather and chop it.

Our tour of inspection had taken us around the house and past the large well that would supply our water. Around at the back door again, we approached the long shed stretching away from the house, until now unopened. We stood aghast at the confusion within. It was impossible to get beyond the door. Two rooms were filled with trash, broken furniture, crates, stacks of age-old shingles — all covered with cobwebs and a fine dust. Our only consolation was that we had a bountiful supply of dry firewood — for it was raining in earnest now. I left Bob collecting shingles for kindling, and dashed back into the house to change into more suitable clothing.

Quickly, order emerged from the confusion. A warm fire crackled cheerfully in our rusty stove — a ten-dollar purchase viewed pessimistically by friends that was proving itself efficient if not a thing of beauty. An even more advanced idea — that of having two fires, a second one in the living room stove — was soon discouraged. Our shining new stove had apparently lost its chimney somewhere in the melee. We were not disheartened. With the windows glued tight by the paint, we'd be warm anyway. And more than that, we could forget about screens for the time being. We had gulped a lunch of bread and jam and cocoa, and began with an energy that would have astonished and worried our parents. In the newfound solitude we set to work — and wondered what we would do without a radio. Together we set up

the beds and a puzzling sawbuck table. Rugs were laid, linoleum tacked down in the kitchen, pots and pans placed in the kitchen closet. Everything was thrust into cupboards with great dispatch and a resolution for a neater arrangement in the near future.

While I made the beds, Bob wandered down to the shore in his newly appreciated raincoat and boots, returning to report that the boat was nowhere to be seen and was probably still down at the town. No boat would be coming this way until the fog lifted and we certainly would not pay an outrageous price for its delivery by truck. There was no hope for it: we were without any means of transportation but our own reluctant feet.

The author

Suddenly it was five o'clock and we were ravenous. With the weary groan of a hard-working man, Bob sat down with a magazine to await supper. For a moment I wavered. Why should I get supper alone? Hadn't I worked as hard as he? But that moment of indecision won the battle. He had worked harder and more willingly that day than any I could remember. Could I spoil it now? In the role of a martyred housewife I got supper — chiefly out of cans, I must admit. But in spite of the fact that I fully enjoyed my martyrdom, it was soon forgotten. I was too busy to play the part competently for we had yet to do the dishes before we could rest and, unhappily for my conscience, Bob quite willingly helped.

All that afternoon we had been so engrossed with the house that we had ignored the weather. It wasn't until we stood drying the dishes that evening that we realized that the rain still fell, quietly and determinedly. Our island was enveloped in fog, and at six o'clock, night had fallen in a dismal curtain. Oil lamps shed a soft light in our snug living room. With a self-satisfied feeling of fatigue, Bob and I settled down, he with a magazine and I to write a letter home. I would have little more to worry about concerning my accounts. Our entire expenses so far had added up to 12 dollars and 20 cents, leaving me $5.80 for the remaining two weeks. Our staples, including canned goods, had been purchased, and nothing but an occasional loaf of bread and a half-dozen eggs would be needed. My letter home was a masterpiece of scrambled facts, written in pencil over 10 sheets of yellow scratch paper. I doubt if Mother and Dad quite figured it out. Their questions upon their arrival at the end of the two weeks proved that. Bob sat reading quietly and the evening passed in silence — so silently that I glanced up, disturbed by the stillness. We were enclosed in murky clouds of mist and rain. The wind was a low undertone to the higher drone of the falling rain, a dark lament punctuated by the rustle and crack of the fire. I lay down my letter, distracted in some obscure way, and stared out into the night, until an enormous yawn from a brother less susceptible to unrestrained imagination snatched me back into a realm of earthly failings, including overwhelming drowsiness. Within as short a time as possible we had tumbled into the twin beds crowding the tiny first-floor bedroom, too tired to worry about the desolation and solitude of our house. We had even faced the challenge of a trip to the nearby outhouse — the final trial of a long day.

Stealthily, the dark night shaded into a dismal gray. The wind and the rain lessened, leaving our cloud-bound world a soggy medley of gray-green and black. No hint of sun came through the fog when Bob and I were aroused by a furtive rustle in the bushes outside our windows and a dull bumping near the cellar door. We lay there quietly; maybe we were still asleep. Nothing could possibly happen. But the noises continued. People were moving about in the yard. Again that thump against the house. The idea was fantastic, but we knew now that we were awake and something must be done. But what? Finally I sat up. The noise was now right outside the window nearest Bob's bed. Fearfully, we peered out. And staring into the window with the same expression our faces must have held was a bewildered and decidedly upset sheep. With a yell, expressing relief and defiance, Bob was out of bed. The astonished sheep wheeled and dashed off into the fog, and after it a dozen more. Aghast at this quiet house suddenly come to life, they scrambled through the bushes and out of sight, while Bob and I fell back into bed, slightly embarrassed by our lack of hospitality and greatly relieved. But the experience with its anticlimax was too much. We were thoroughly awakened and quite prepared to start the new day.

Experiencing one of the disadvantages of being man of the house, Bob shivered his way to the kitchen to make a fire. Then, while I dressed, he brought in firewood and water. Breakfast was a luxurious meal: half an orange, cereal, bacon and eggs, cocoa and toast, made by placing the bread in the hot oven for a few seconds. This was the only time of the day we were to use canned milk, but we scarcely noticed the difference as we ate our cereal. It was entirely possible to buy bottled milk in Vinalhaven, but delivery to our island was out of the question, so we soon forgot this lack. The breakfast dishes out of the way, I prepared to hang curtains while Bob unhappily unpacked the useless motor for our boat. I soon found out that my job included more than merely slipping curtains over a rod. Puzzling little hooks had to be attached to the tops of the windows, and Bob was called in to help after about 10 minutes of pounding my fingers with a hammer. He scornfully informed me that we did own a tack hammer, after all, and proceeded to tack up the hooks with great dispatch. Meanwhile, I attempted to puzzle out the color schemes that Mother had planned. There were dazzling piles of blue, yellow, orange and red material scattered over the living room.

After long cogitation, I was able to match the curtains to the wallpaper in each room. The white curtains for the kitchen were the least of the problem. Just as I had narrowly missed falling down the stairs while attempting to hang the curtains at the stairway window in Bob's room, a knock was heard at the door, and Bob and I grabbed at the doorknob simultaneously, presenting a breathless welcome to our unknown visitor. In the doorway stood a genial, weather-beaten islander, our nearest neighbor from the next cove. He was the lobster fisherman who had done all our painting and papering, and was to paint the outside of the house. We were delighted to find someone with a boat who might take us to town and an islander who would keep a cautious eye on our activities until our parents arrived. His visit made our day.

A former newspaper reporter who retired to Vinalhaven, ***Jean Wetherbee*** *edits* The Wind, *the island's weekly newspaper.*

courtesy of Polly Noyce

A FINE BALANCE

The Art of Rick Alley, Lobsterman

CARL LITTLE

Tammy Packie (4)

In the tradition of wildlife artistry, from John James Audubon on, Alley prefers to work directly from the bird.

It's mid-November on Little Cranberry Island. The summer folks are long gone and autumn color has fled the landscape, leaving a palette of somewhat severe browns, grays and greens. The island, often referred to by its postal address, Islesford, is quiet but far from asleep.

I have traveled over from neighboring Great Cranberry on the 11 a.m. mailboat to interview Rick Alley, fisherman and artist. He is there at the bustling dock, helping people load or unload their groceries and sundry supplies. We hop in his pickup and head across the island.

Alley and his wife, Stefanie, who also lobsters, live near the end of the Coast Guard road, or "Lobster Lane" as the islanders sometimes call it. The house is a short walk from the southern end of Little Cranberry, which is only about three-quarters of mile wide. Their daughter, Ashley, lives off-island with Kevin and Mary Russell from Big Cranberry so that she can attend Mount Desert Island Regional High School. The Alleys' son, Jeremy, graduated from the high school last year and now tends lobster traps like his parents, working with his cousin Cory Alley.

Alley offers me a crabmeat sandwich and homemade chicken soup. When we sit down to eat and talk, he shoos his black lab Dodger, "the old mooch," he says with a chuckle, out the door. A woodstove warms the kitchen. The house has electric heat, but the family tries to get by on wood, a wall of which is stacked and stored just outside the front door. A slip of paper pinned to a doorsill provides a list of things to make sure get done before leaving the house, including seeing to the stove.

Richard Alley, Jr., is a Cranberry Islander born and bred. He started lobstering with his dad, Richard Alley, Sr., when he was six or seven; they also went after tuna, after the lobster traps were pulled. Rick attended the small island school through eighth grade, then went off to Lee Academy, a boarding school just above Lincoln, Maine — "up in the woods," he describes it. His classmates included other Cranberry islanders, including several Fernald brothers and David Bunker, who captains the Beal and Bunker mailboat, which services the Cranberries from Northeast Harbor on Mount Desert Island.

Alley graduated from Lee in 1969; his class recently held its 30th reunion. In his last year there, the school offered a painting class, one period a week, and he "jumped right on it." He couldn't control a brush the way he could a pencil, but eventually he mastered the medium.

From high school Alley went to the Portland School of Fine and Applied Art, now the Maine College of Art. The school was small at the time, about 60 students, and it wasn't accredited. This latter fact didn't matter to Alley. "All I wanted to do was

Alley's winter pieces capture the chill of the season; you can tell the artist knows weather firsthand.

learn how to paint — that was my main objective." He recalls what a change and challenge it was, going from Lee to Portland. He was out on his own for the first time and didn't know a soul in the city.

The school's curriculum consisted of a variety of art courses in a range of disciplines, including sculpture, pottery and metalwork, but Alley liked painting best. Among the professors was John Laurence, a painter who has worked on Great Cranberry. "He had an open mind," his student recalls.

During his four years at the school, Alley lobstered in the summer to pay his way. In 1971 his father had wanted to get out of the fishing business due to problems with high blood pressure. He sold his gear to his son.

After art school Alley hardly painted anything for 10 or so years. He bought a bigger lobster boat, the one he has now, named STEFANIE, after his wife, whom he married in 1977.

Stephanie's father was in the Navy, so she describes herself as "mostly" from Minnesota. She found her way to Maine through Acadia National Park, where she worked as a Student Conservation Association volunteer. She credits Louise Libby, daughter of Islesford Museum founder William Sawtelle, with introducing her to the island and its history. She eventually moved to Little Cranberry to work at the snack bar on the dock and then to lobster, which is when she met Rick.

Alley took up the brush again in the mid-'80s as a means of making the most of winter, downtime for a lobsterman on the coast of Maine. "That's when you use your reserves till you can get going again in the spring," he explains.

Alley had tried shrimping and scalloping. He liked the former, but the shrimp fishery tended to work in cycles — every few years, after the stock had built up, the bottom would drop out. He didn't like scalloping at all: "It's so bang, crash, everything's heavy, all those rocks, it's hard on the boat." Weatherwise, both occupations were rough.

Most years, Alley starts painting after Christmas and works till March. "That's usually my time," he remarks, "otherwise I'm into fishing." Once he has set his traps in the spring, there's no returning to painting. He describes the two endeavors as requiring "different mindsets."

There were a few springs when he didn't go lobstering, choosing to wait until July to take to the waters. Those years, he painted landscapes in addition to the pictures of wildlife for which he has achieved his greatest acclaim. "I didn't get a whole lot of work done last winter," Alley reports, due to trap work that had to be done, "but this year I'm hoping to do a lot more."

Alley's studio is a Spartan space in a separate building behind his house. A couple of paintings are hung on the walls and there is a stack of pencil drawings next to a simple worktable. A windowsill holds an array of brushes and his palette displays a mess of colors.

The space is also used for other kinds of painting: several lobster buoys are getting decorated, red, white and orange — Ted Spurling, Sr.'s colors, as it happens, which this scion of Islesford passed on to Stephanie Alley when he retired from lobstering. And there is a wall of decoys, evidence of a favorite seasonal pastime.

Maine held its first official Migratory Waterfowl Hunting Stamp contest in 1988. There were 84 entries and one winner: Rick Alley. His painting of green-winged

teal landing in a marsh was reproduced on the duck stamp, which hunters purchase and affix to their licenses.

The yearly contest draws quite a spectrum of art and artists. The judging occurs around the end of March. Well before that, the organizers announce what the next year's duck will be. Alley won again in 1995 with a picture of white-wing scoters and, most recently, in 1999, with a black duck.

The first year Alley won, he received a $1,000 cash prize, plus a sheet of 10 duck stamps and 25 artist proofs of the print made from his winning picture, which was featured in an exhibition of wildlife paintings that toured the state. Due to budget cuts, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife no longer makes a print nor exhibits the winner and runners-up; one year they even canceled the contest.

Duck stamp winners must sit out the following two years to give other artists a chance. This year, Alley will be a judge of the contest, which he describes as sometimes being more nerve-wracking than painting because of one's familiarity with the artists. "You'd like to put a bag over your head," he remarks with a laugh.

In the past Alley has entered the Federal duck stamp contest, as well as competitions in other states, but without success. He has taken third place in the New Hampshire contest a few times. He plans to keep trying.

Duck stamps are highly prized collectibles; many are sold each year to hunters and non-hunters alike. "A lot of wetlands have been bought with these stamps," says Alley, "which is a good thing." The artist is clearly proud of the role he plays in this conservation effort. "If you don't have habitat," he states, "you don't have wildlife."

In the tradition of wildlife artistry, from John James Audubon on, Alley prefers to work directly from the bird, often shooting it himself, then keeping it in a freezer until it's time to paint. Accuracy counts for a lot in the stamp contests. "You have to have everything just right," he observes, a point borne out by the exacting likeness of a drake that won him the 1999 contest.

He prefers the dramatic or unusual view. Many of his waterfowl paintings show the birds in mid-flight, taking off or landing. They are dynamic renderings.

Alley's landscapes have a different quality, looser than the duck pieces, but tied nonetheless to the reality of his surroundings. Most of them are views of the island, of such landmarks as Twinkie's Rocks and Maypole Point. There's "Moonlight over Baker's," a lovely nocturne, and, looking in the other direction, a view of Mount Desert Island.

A number of pieces show hunters staked out on the shore, awaiting ducks. Alley's winter pieces capture the chill of the season; you can tell that the artist knows weather firsthand.

Alley's lobsterboat is the STEFANIE, *named for his wife, whom he married in 1977.*

Some years, when he has painted in the spring, Alley has turned out 25 or 30 of these landscapes. "I can do one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and rework them a bit later on." He paints on site, finding the results much fresher and more immediate than studio work. The landscapes are painted on canvas, whereas the duck paintings are done on Masonite, which, Alley notes, allows for much finer detail.

The waterfowl pieces may take Alley a week and a half or so to complete, working a few hours a day. That includes the preliminary pencil sketches he makes as he establishes the overall design. Once he gets something down on the gessoed Masonite, he tends to leave it alone, although he will make changes if necessary. His prize-winning black duck originally had a second bird setting in the water, but it didn't look right so he painted it out.

Ducks are not the only winged creatures painted by Alley. Other native species include the Maine state bird, the chickadee, woodpeckers, blue jays, barn swallows and a snowy owl. One piece depicts a seagull attacking a warbler, a scene the lobsterman has witnessed while tending traps. Another canvas shows a tiny winter wren nearly camouflaged in a woodpile.

Alley shows his work in several galleries. He has had success with Island Artists on Islesford, a gallery run by fellow lobsterman and island painter Dan Fernald and his wife, Kate. The Fernalds boast an impressive stable of artists, a number of whom have national reputations. The roster includes Henry Isaacs, Marian Olin, Michael Torlen, Emily Nelligan, Peter

1988

1995

1999

Rick Alley has won Maine's Migratory Waterfowl Hunting Stamp Contest three times.

Alley's studio is used for more than one kind of painting: lobster buoys get their colors here as well.

Rudolph, Edith Wright and Ashley Bryan.

The Bayview Gallery in Camden and the Whale's Rib on Great Cranberry have also handled Alley's work. More recently, he has started selling his paintings at the Islands of Maine Gallery in Rockland, but most of his customers are nearby, island residents and summer people. He also showed in the "Art of Cranberry Isles" exhibition in the Ethel H. Blum Gallery at College of the Atlantic in 1995.

Once in a while Alley is asked to do a commission, which usually consists of painting a fisherman's boat or someone's sailboat. "The wife will usually get it for the husband," he notes. He enjoys this work a great deal.

Looking through a log of his sales, one recognizes the names of many of the wealthy families on Mount Desert Island. Alley recalls selling out much of his exhibition at the Northeast Harbor Library. "I came back to the show in the morning and there were red dots everywhere," he says, clearly still awestruck by his success.

At the same time, a review of Alley's work from the past 15 or so years reveals a maturing artist. There is greater detail and assuredness in his wildlife pieces.

Alley has had paintings reproduced in Maine Fish and Wildlife and Gray's Sporting Journal, a hunting magazine published in Augusta, Georgia. By happenstance, he has also achieved some international exposure. A Danish gentleman visiting Maine last year purchased a painting of buffleheads from the Islands of Maine Gallery. He subsequently reproduced the painting on a handsome company notecard. While a bit upset that his permission was not sought, Alley is still flattered by the card.

After lunch, Alley invites me to take a walk to the old life-saving station, a marvelous structure left over from the days of schooners. The building overlooks the bar between Little Cranberry and Baker's Island where many a vessel sailed onto the rocks in the era of downeast shipping.

On the way out, we take the dirt road that follows the shore. Great banks of wild rose make for imposing thickets. Dodger trots up every so often with some treasure in his mouth — a sculpin head, the corpse of a waterfowl. Alley rolls his eyes at these offerings, but also admires his companion's ability to sniff out just about anything. He even retrieves antlers dropped in the underbrush.

Alley is clearly attuned to his surroundings. He has a seasoned hunter's eye for signs, the scrape of a deer on a tree, fresh tracks in the mud, and he can identify a distant bird, tell the age of the island woods, recount the movements of the tides.

When he speaks of hunting, Alley tends to dwell more on the experience of woods and weather than what he managed to come home with. "It's good to get in the woods," he says, "especially after pounding around lobstering." He expresses disappointment at the recently reported slaughter of moose, deer and an eagle in northern Maine, and hopes the perpetrators are caught and punished.

On our way back to the house we take a narrow trail Alley has cut through the trees for cross-country skiing. Pointing to a marsh, he recalls the day he had his easel set up to paint a landscape and heard a commotion in the water behind him. A school of minnows was racing down the marsh channel, with a mink hot in pursuit.

The animal practically bumped into Alley as it raced past.

Another story involves a canoe trip with his son on a stream above Graham Lake, north of Ellsworth. Again, Alley proves an engaging storyteller, describing a black mouse scurrying across fine grass that lay across the shallows. "That grass wouldn't hold a dime, but there's this mouse walking around, almost like he's walking on water," he recounts with wonder. The same trip yielded a bull moose, who, when he ambled off, displayed what Alley calls an "eat-up-the-miles gait."

Alley is a community person, taking part in island activities. He expresses concern with the loss of year-round residents. He also knows how an island can be affected by tragedy. He was one of the men who recovered the body of fellow fisherman John Fisher tangled in the mooring line of a sailboat in the harbor a few summers ago. The body was discovered on the day of an island wedding.

Alley is well versed in the broader issues that impact his community and livelihood. He is fearful of the pressure that massive commercial fishing is putting on fish. While new technology can save lives, it also makes it more difficult for stocks to hold their own. "The fish don't have a place to hide," is the way he puts it, "they get pounded day and night." This past summer he recalls two big midwater trawlers fishing in a favorite gathering spot for herring and how there was little left after their visit. "I heard a rumor that they caught about 20 million pounds."

During my visit, Alley received a phone call from State Representative Jill Goldthwait of Bar Harbor, who reported that the Maine Legislature had agreed to consider a bill to allow deer hunting on the Cranberry Isles. Alley was pleased by the news: he has been working on this proposal for two years. He mentions the possibility of Lyme disease, but his main concern lies in the herd's size, which has grown to the point where deer have starved for lack of forage. "There is no problem about controlling the deer,"Alley reports, "just controlling how it will be done." He has worked hard to establish the parameters of a safe hunt and hopes the legislature will pass the bill.

Two years ago, Alley and his family were featured in *The Cranberry Report*, a documentary film made by Maine Public Television as part of its "Our Stories" series. "I like doing things with my hands," Alley tells the interviewer at one point. As to his art, his goal is modest but heartfelt: "I'd like to show other people, maybe, what I see, I guess. That'd be about it."

Between lobstering and painting, working for his community and looking after his family, Alley has his hands full. With the success of his painting, he hopes that one day he might eventually ease off fishing a bit, but he is not ready to devote all his time to art as, say, the great bird carver Wendell Gilley from Southwest Harbor eventually did. For the time being, he has a balance in his life that appears to suit him just fine.

Carl Little *is the director of public affairs at College of the Atlantic. His most recent book is* The Watercolors of John Singer Sargent *(University of California Press).*

Many of Alley's waterfowl paintings show birds in flight.

ON ISLAND

A Century of Community and Change

Writer John Fowles uses the term "island-ness" to describe a quality he prizes in his own work and seeks out in that of others. He uses the term as a metaphor for the "essence of being," an understanding of the essential nature of things and our selves that he finds more readily evident in an island environment. "True islands always play the sirens' trick," he writes. "They lure by challenging, by daring. Somewhere on them one will become Crusoe again, one will discover something: the iron-bound chest, the jackpot, the outside chance.... It is this aspect of islands that particularly interests me: how deeply they can haunt and form the personal as well as the public imagination."

Shaped in part by his own long association with life on islands including Maine's Monhegan, Fowles's ineffable quality of "island-ness" speaks directly to the work included in the Farnsworth Art Museum's summer 2000 exhibition "On Island: A Century of Continuity and Change." All of the artists in this show share in this sense of "island-ness." Informed by their own deeply held experiences with true islands — those not connected to the mainland by bridge or road — their work expresses the juxtapositions that are a constant of island life.

"Stimulated by ever-present encounters between land and sea, man and nature, wild and tamed, generations of creative people have accomplished great things on Maine islands," wrote the editors of Island Journal in 1999. The visual artists included in On Island are some of these many creative people who, through their art, allow us all to share a bit of "island-ness."

Spanning the twentieth century, the show celebrates the opening of the museum's new Jamien Morehouse Wing. The exhibition, and the new galleries in which it is shown, are dedicated to the memory of Jamien Morehouse, who shared with her husband, Philip Conkling, the co-founder and president of the Island Institute, a commitment to ensuring the preservation of Maine's island communities and the natural environment they inhabit.

Comprised of over 85 works by 49 artists, including some of America's most noted, the show is drawn largely from the Farnsworth's own significant collection of island related art, including a number of works rarely before exhibited. Additional works have been borrowed from public and private collections. Among the artists represented are John Singer Sargent; Childe Hassam; Willard Metcalf; Frank Benson, Robert Henri, George Bellows, Rockwell Kent; Marsden Hartley; N.C., Andrew and Jamie Wyeth; Raphael Soyer; Fairfield Porter; William Kienbusch and Eric Hopkins.

— Suzette Lane McAvoy

Suzette Lane McAvoy *is Curator of Contemporary Art at the Farnsworth Art Museum*

(all paintings from the collection of the Farnsworth Art Museum unless otherwise noted)

An Exhibition and Celebration at the Farnsworth Art Museum

Andrew Winter, *Seguin Island Light*

N.C. Wyeth, *Mosquito Island*, undated, collection of Jamie Wyeth

George Bellows, *The Fish Wharf, Matinicus Island*, 1916

Fairfield Porter, *The Dock*, 1974-75

Eric Hopkins, ***Spring Islands,*** **1988**

William Kienbusch, ***Quarry Hill, Hurricane Island,*** **1955**

WHERE DO OSPREYS GO IN WINTER?

"Tags" on a pair of ospreys that nested on Sutton Island allowed the birds to be monitored by satellite.

Photography by Charles Duncan, The Nature Conservancy

The Sutton Island birds were the northernmost pair to be banded on the East Coast during 1999.

For many years, Dan and Polly Pierce have shared their Sutton Island summer home with nesting ospreys, enjoying close-up views of a large nest through an unobtrusive telescope inside the house. The Pierces became aware of a nationwide osprey tracking project mounted by The Nature Conservancy's "Wings of the Americas" project and the Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota. A year ago, at the Pierces' suggestion, the Sutton Island birds were fitted with "tags" that allowed them to be monitored by the ARGOS satellite maintained by NASA, NOAA and the French space agency.

The female osprey departed Sutton Island in August, 1999, and was tracked to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Her mate (male ospreys tend to remain on the breeding grounds longer) departed in October and spent the winter in Vero Beach, Florida. The results were somewhat surprising, according to Mark Martell of the University of Minnesota, who noted that birds frequently fly much greater distances on their winter migrations. Mated pairs almost never winter together.

Satellite technology enables researchers to follow individual birds more closely, and over a wider area, than other methods. It allows more frequent "fixes" and provides a global view. Such information doesn't come cheaply: the cost, including banding and tracking, is about $10,000 per bird.

The national osprey tracking project involves birds from the West Coast, the upper Midwest and the entire East Coast, and is an effort to learn ospreys' migration routes, where they spend winters and whether regional or sex differences are significant in migration patterns. The Sutton Island birds were the northernmost pair to be banded on the East Coast. Martell hopes to return to Sutton Island during the summer of 2000 to check the pair again and band the year's offspring as well.

—David D. Platt

Dan and Polly Pierce, with one of the birds they monitor from their Sutton Island summer home

Osprey-watching is a regular pastime on Sutton Island.

The ospreys' nest is visible from the Pierces' bedroom.

GLIMPSES OF LOST WORLDS

The Kurils and Aleutians can teach us much about the Gulf of Maine

PHILIP CONKLING

Along the margins of the chains of islands that circle the seas of the globe, marine life is always abundant. Whether we think of the fabled Galapagos with their thousands of diving seabirds and lounging marine iguanas, or humpbacks nursing calves near the shores of the Caribbean and Hawaiian islands, the images of abundant sea life are nearly synonymous with islands. This circumstance results partly from nutrients washing down the slopes of islands, fertilizing underwater gardens and nurseries where the critical life stages of marine life emerge, and partly from upwelling currents and swirling tides that keep these "littoral" or nearshore waters stirred into a rich and endlessly renewed broth.

On two occasions in the late 1990s I participated in expeditions to remote archipelagoes — to the Kuril Islands between Russia and Japan, and along the Aleutian Island archipelago in the Bering Sea. I sailed aboard TURMOIL, a 151-foot exploration vessel owned by Gary Comer, a member and supporter of the Island Institute.

The expeditions provided a rare opportunity to compare remote, cold water archipelagoes and to reflect on the question of what the differing histories of these two island regions have to offer us here, along the rim of the Gulf of Maine.

THE ALEUTIAN ISLAND EXPEDITION

During the early part of the summer of 1997, TURMOIL's crew had traversed the North Pacific to bring the ship to Petropavlosk, the largest Russian city on the Kamchatka Peninsula. With a small group I flew across the Pacific to join the ship and cross the Bering Sea as Vitus Bering had done in 1743, from west to east. We would explore not only the sea that was named for him, but the Aleutians, named for their aboriginal settlers.

We landed in early August at the former military airstrip on the outskirts of Petropavlosk where rows of once-expensive Soviet MIG jets, now useless relics of the Cold War, had been pulled off the tarmac. The harbor of Petropavlosk in Avacha Bay is an admiral's dream: deep, wide, protected by surrounding high headlands that are easily fortified. In fact, a still top-secret nuclear submarine base is nested on the far side of the bay, completely separate from the commercial port which is trying to reinvent itself as a container trans-shipment station for the Far East.

From Avacha Bay, TURMOIL would explore the wild volcanic shorelines of the Kamchatka coast northward for several hundred miles before turning eastward to cross the Bering Sea for the Aleutians.

Atu Island Landfall, August 17-18, 1997 — We've steamed all night and wake to a foggy low ceiling and gray lumpy seas, having traversed the Bering Sea during the past 40 hours. From the portside windows, a shroud of low clouds and fog obscures most of the vertical elevation of Atu Island, our first landfall at the extreme western tip of the Aleutians. Most of us have slept fitfully; winds and sea from a developing low pressure system have increased throughout the night and rock TURMOIL with a short steep chop. Around 4:30 a.m. a very powerful wave slams into TURMOIL broadside and sends a sharp pulse reverberating through her hull. Everyone reports vivid and disturbing dreams.

Shortly after daybreak, Mike, our captain, picks his way carefully into Massacre Bay. Foaming ledges flank the entrance. We round up and drop the hook in a little cove, neatly protected from the most of the force of the southeasterly sea that continues to build outside. This bay was named for an infamous incident during the last century, when Russian fur traders rounded up the native Aleut inhabitants of Atu and proceeded to slaughter the defenseless men, women and children.

Atu Island, a treeless island 32 miles long and 15 miles wide, is now the site of a small U.S. Coast Guard station that beams out Loran C radio signals, part of an international grid used for navigation purposes. The station, built up on a hillside above our anchorage, is an easy walk from the beach. We launch TURMOIL's jet boat for a visit.

In 1942 the Japanese landed 2,600 troops on Atu, not only because of its strategic value as a foothold on the North American continent, but also to divert American attention from Japan's real goal of taking Midway Island in the middle of the Pacific. The Japanese dug into the hillsides of Atu, dug tunnels, established artillery positions and prepared for the inevitable counter reaction from American forces. In 1943, 13,000 American troops landed in waves on three different beaches on the eastern end of Atu. The battle, which the military thought would take two or three days, instead lasted two weeks, mostly in the hills, where both American and Japanese artillery were concentrated. Down to his last 800 men, the Japanese commander ordered a frontal assault up Engineer's Hill, the center of the American artillery position. Military historians recognize the

Gary Comer (6)

Urup Island: Venturing into grizzly habitat alone and unarmed, a not unusual experience in this region.

charge for what it was: a suicidal assault which cut down virtually all of the brave Japanese who made the charge. Out of the 2,600 Japanese, only 26 survived, a fearful symmetry for the aptly named Massacre Bay.

Today the hills of Atu are serene and peaceful, more likely to be visited by birdwatchers than military men. Perhaps due to the fog and murk, we see only a few seabirds cruise in and out of Massacre Bay while at anchor here. On the way to shore, however, pink salmon leap clear of the water while a pair of sea otters surface and roll over on their backs and crack open shells of mollusks and urchins, their seafood of choice.

Kagalaska Pass, August 19, 1997 — Thinking we might encounter seals or seabirds, we elect to explore a very narrow passage between Adak Island and Kagaska Island, marked Kagalaska Pass on the charts. At the very least, it will be an interesting piece of water, so Mike, our captain, puts the helm over after rounding the northeast point of Adak, where a secret navy base built during the Cold War is about to be handed over to a Native Alaska Corporation.

Distances on the chart are deceiving; what appears to be a modest passage, when actually measured, turns out to be a 14-mile-long strait that connects the Bering Sea with the North Pacific. A high craggy ridge looms out of the mist to starboard and the broad green shoulders of a volcanic cone guard the entrance to port.

Once inside the gates of this passageway, the tide is running at full flood against us. Water begins to boil up around as the tide spills into a 35-fathom deep basin. We are all clustered on the bridge while the instruments begin telling their story: at the narrowest part of the passage, we are making 11 knots through the water, but only three knots over the bottom, meaning that eight knots of current are being driven through here.

We have the sensation of going uphill over the water surface. Boiling whirlpools form to port and starboard, drawing TURMOIL's bow first one way and then another as if some gigantic force field were bending our course. Peter notices the remarkable temperature change in the water; in the space of a quarter-mile it descends from 45 degrees to 34 degrees, indicating that frigid ocean bottom waters from great depths are drawn up through this pass. The dramatic difference in temperatures between water masses always concentrates feed in the oceanic environment, and in areas of vertical mixing and tidal gyres, the biological activity increases immensely.

Just then, as if to prove the point, a dark-phased peregrine falcon swoops by the pilothouse, banks off to starboard and then stalls over a whirlpool. Everyone has it in their field glasses, holding a collective breath at the spectacle, the sheer beauty and power of its presence. The peregrine flaps slowly a couple of wingbeats in place and drops like a stone on a puffin surfacing in the whirlpool. It grasps the heavy-bodied seabird in its talons and then flies slowly off to lunch. The pace of biological activity is almost palpable here. A pair of eagles sits on a ridge off to port, another to starboard and two more appear after we turn around and begin picking up steam with the current. We decided it would be appropriate to rename Kagalaska "Five Eagle Pass."

Back out in the waters of Asuksak Pass, we spot the fin of an orca, then another and another, then the fin of a minke whale and another. Soon we are literally surrounded by whales — a great, surging feeding convocation. It's rare to see two species so close together and indicates that a great many fish are being chased through these waters. Three orcas swim so closely by TURMOIL's starboard side that we can clearly see the eye of the closest one.

Among all the special events of this voyage, no day has produced such a rich variety of wildlife — a great day scored for Bering Sea biodiversity.

Russian scallop boat after one day's haul

Islands of Four Mountains, August 21, 1997 — As we traverse the northern shores of this group of islands midway along the Aleutian chain, we are alert for signs of sea lion activity. We hope to catch a glimpse of the Stellar's sea lions that were first sighted here by Bering's naturalist, Georg Stellar, during the expedition of the 1740s. Finally, on a sloping beach at the eastern end of Alaid Island, we see the tawny bodies of some large marine mammals and quickly round up and launch the shore boat. The four animals we have sighted scoot themselves into the water as we pick our way carefully and quietly through the ledgy waters around some sea stacks. Hidden from view on a small beach between two giant sea stacks is a group of two dozen sea lions that see us a few moments after we see them. There is a great grunting and bellowing as the large mammals heave themselves off the rocky beach, transforming themselves into sleek torpedoes around our suddenly small craft.

Unalaska Island, August 22, 1997 — Now that we have traversed 700 miles of the Aleutian chain and are on the final leg to Dutch Harbor on Unalaska Island, it's a good time to look back as well as ahead. In our wake is an extraordinary collection of sights and impressions from our voyage along one of the world's longest, least traveled archipelagoes. How does one organize all these disparate impressions into a whole picture, and then roll that picture forward into the future, to ask what will happen here in the years and decades ahead?

First, the backlit impressions. No words can adequately convey to first-time visitors the scale of this landscape. We tend to think of islands as miniature worlds — pieces of a continent that have slipped their moorings and drifted out to sea. But the Aleutian Islands quickly disabuse you of this notion. They are immense, towering volcanic mountains that rise gigantically out of the sea to tops that have either been blown off in later eruptions or endure as perfect cones, mostly cloaked in mist and scudding sea cloud. Perhaps the sense of scale is distorted by the way mist and cloud obscure the peaks, even during good weather (and there is not much of that) leaving the imagination to play tricks on the mind. Or perhaps it is because the peaks and headlands rise directly out of the sea, with no foreground but the shadows cast by their hulking shoulders. The peaks, after all, range from only 4,000 to 8,000 feet (above sea level!). How, you wonder, can they be so grand?

Then there is the water. On sea charts the Aleutian archipelago looks like a chain of little pebbles and stones separating two great bodies of water, the North Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea. The titanic interchange between these enormous reservoirs of seawater is of a scale nearly impossible to describe. Polar seawater coursing south out of the Arctic Ocean pours through the sieve of the Aleutians where it collides with the clockwise flow of the North Pacific. In the innumerable straits and passes between the Aleutians, where these northerly and southerly flows collide head-on, the effects are stupefying. In the spring, the tides run eight hours to the south out of the Bering Sea and then flood for four hours to the north. But in the fall, the flow is reversed, as the Pacific floods northward for eight hours into the Bering and then ebbs for four to the south.

It's as if these internal forces are greater than the galactic pull of the moon. The narrower the channel, the more intense the effect as we discovered in Kagalaska Pass. But the effects are apparent every time we traverse a cut in the island chain; standing waves of frothy white mark the shifting boundaries of these oceanic collisions. And in such places biological activity is maximized.

THE KURIL ISLAND EXPEDITION

During the first two weeks of July, 1999, TURMOIL explored the Kuril Island archipelago, a 700-mile-long chain of volcanic islands that extends in a northeasterly arc between Japan and Russia. The archipelago lies on a contested international border between these two North Pacific powers, and the area has been closed to all outsiders for virtually the entire 20th century.

Jacqui Hollister dries out hundreds of fog-drenched petrels.

TURMOIL was, to our knowledge, the second vessel to have cruised these waters since the region was opened to outsiders earlier this year.

For two weeks we sailed through dense clouds of seabirds, tens to hundreds of thousands of sooty shearwaters, murres, kittiwakes, puffins and auklets. Around each island we came to out of the fog, vaporous spouts from pods of orcas exploded from the surface of the sea. We went ashore every day armed with a shotgun because the grizzlies were so numerous. Each stream, river and pond is still choked with Dolly Varden trout and salmon. Sea eagles cruise the cliffs and the arctic meadows are choked with wildflowers. During the Soviet regime, when the archipelago was so heavily armed and fortified, commercial fishing was prohibited anywhere near the islands.

Returning a petrel to the light airs of the Pacific

Today the Kuril Islands are still closed to all fishing (except scalloping) within 12 miles. As a result the seas around the islands are still teeming with fish, on which astounding concentrations of seals, sea lions, orcas and seabirds depend. The Kuril Islands' history clearly shows — if there were ever any doubt — that the key to their abundant wildlife is the health of the marine fisheries that envelop their coasts.

Kunishir Island, July 8, 1999 — We have steamed all night after a paralyzingly deep sleep. We have crossed 11 time zones since the day before yesterday and our clocks don't really know if it's yesterday or tomorrow. Sometime during the night we crossed into Russian waters, although you can still see the high northern tip of Japan a mere dozen miles away. The seas are unusually calm, although thick clouds hover above.

As we enter the anchorage of our first stop in the Kurils, Sergey Frolov, our Russian guide from Petropavlosk, tells us the island has a population of about 3,000 scattered among a few villages along its 20-mile length. Most of the islanders are fishermen, catching groundfish offshore throughout the year, diving for urchins and netting salmon during their summer season. Although trade with Japan is supposedly strictly controlled, the open secret is that a lively illegal trade drives the local economy.

A large delegation of military border guards and customs agents comes aboard, partly to check our credentials and visas, but mostly to get a look at the vessel that will carry this expedition where few other westerners have ever gone.

Brother Chirpoy Island, July 10, 1999 — Beyond the northeast tip of Urup Island lie two isolated volcanic peaks, the islands of Chirpoy and Brother of Chirpoy. We know we are in nutrient rich waters when we start to see flocks of shearwaters — a few hundred soon grow into thousands and then upwards of tens of thousands of soot-colored shearwaters, thick as a rain of pepper. They cruise along the port and starboard windows and stream out aft of TURMOIL, following the widening wake looking for morsels of marine life disturbed by our passage.

The slopes of Brother of Chirpoy, which we reach first, are covered by luxuriant emerald-green growth, thick as a blanket over the black skin of rock. At the southern edge of the land, there is an immense saucer-shaped depression where an eruption blew a hole in the side of the island.

As we approach the sheer coastline, we see the dorsal fins of a pod of orcas cutting through the crests of the waves, exploding in showers of spray. A second pod appears closer to us, then a third, fourth and fifth. There must be 30 to 40 of them, cutting to port and starboard on streaking feeding runs. As TURMOIL slowly circles, one of the pods works its way closer until it's right off our starboard quarter.

In the lee of a freshening breeze off the Pacific, just inside a little sea stack marked "Skala Levî" on the Russian chart, we find a colony of Stellar's sea lions on a large sloping ledge the size of a football field. The captain, Philip Walsh, cuts the throttle back as we glide quietly closer. Even before we can make individuals out, you can hear the colony intermittently in the wind. From the mass of tawny bodies, moaning sounds reach the ear. Edging closer, we see it's a breeding colony with scores of dark young pups and harems of cows clustered around statuesque bulls, alert on their territories. The hoarse din now is almost palpable, growling, groaning and barking noises rise over the winds. Off to the edges on separate rocks are solitary males, too old to defend territory and out of the competition for females. Peter Quesada, one of TURMOIL's passengers, says they're like retired Morgan Stanley partners, still healthy and comfortable, but not powerful enough to attract breeding females. This is a new colony, says Sergey, and we estimate it to be composed of 400 sea lions.

SEA LIONS AND CONFUSED PETRELS

Dolgaya Skerry, July 12, 1999 — Moving northeast through more fog, TURMOIL rounds up so the crew can launch the outboard. Somewhere out in the murk, according to Sergey, is a seal and sea lion rookery. But we must take this on faith because the mist is so heavy. Within a few minutes we must be close to the rookery because a series of splashes disturbs the surface. And then they are suddenly there, the whiskered faces of fur seals popping up around the Zodiac. Not a bit shy, they begin leaping clear of the water both to port and starboard, traveling with us in convoy, seemingly escorting us toward their island roosts. Occasionally when they get too close to the boat, they roll like a barrel and slap the water with a flipper. They jump clear of the water or roll on their backs and extend all four flippers up in the air.

Unlike the harbor seals, the fur seals have small external ear flaps. They can rotate their rear flippers forward, which gives them greater mobility on their rocky haulouts. They are still harvested in the Commodore Islands off Kamchatka, but not here in the Kurils where their numbers are estimated to be 200,000.

We can hear the sea lions before we see them, an impressive guttural caterwauling. And then they materialize out of the fog, the massive bulls in their tan pelage are magnificent to watch.

The largest of them weigh in excess of 1,000 pounds and they define the edges of their territories by lunging at intruders, snarling and growling in ritualized threat displays. Arrayed around them like a sultan's harem are the cows, less than half the size of the biggest bulls. These females are a dark gray in color with longer fur around their necks, and they bawl and moan in accompaniment to the roaring of the bulls. Darkest of all are the silky-furred pups, almost black in color and seemingly only a few weeks old.

Sea lion colony at Dolgaya Skerry

We cut the motor and drift slowly by this timeless North Pacific scene. The fur seals cruise by and slap the water or pop their long necks up, only a few feet from the boat. As we drift slowly out of sight and head back to TURMOIL, in the distance we can hear the groaning and roaring continuing, as if we had never even been there.

Zakatnaya Bay, July 13, 1999 — I get a call from the bridge at 5:15 in the morning from Gary. There are petrels on deck and he needs a hand clearing them away. When we arrive on deck a few minutes later, both sides of TURMOIL's decks are choked with sodden fork-tailed and Leach's storm petrels huddled in piles too wet to fly. Surveying the foredeck, there are another score or so, along with little pink piles of euphausiid shrimp they have apparently regurgitated in the night.

We decide to bring them back aft on the fantail to see if they will dry off enough to be able to fly. After the first handful are laid out in boxes, where they flap and cry haplessly, we hear more petrel cries from down below in the lazarette. Gary goes to call Jacquie Hollister, who actually studied petrels for five years at Kent Island in the Bay of Fundy as an undergraduate, while I check below. The sight below is appalling. Hundreds and hundreds of petrels have piled themselves in the corners of the lazarette where they are huddled amid the diving gear, in between the toolkits, and even secreted in the shoes and seaboots that have been left here to dry. We estimate that 500 petrels have come aboard during the foggy night, landing on TURMOIL rather than in their nesting colony a half mile away onshore. Once they land their instinct is to look for burrows which are dry and warm, which is exactly what they've done aboard TURMOIL.

Up on deck, meanwhile, Jacquie Hollister is drying off individual petrels and releasing them one by one in the morning sun that is vainly attempting to burn through the fog. We open the stern door and lower the diving platform to start clearing the lazarette. The crew is now alerted and Aaron, the first mate, opens a hatch to check below in the bilges where we hear some muffled cries. The initial report is even more appalling; the first compartment is choked with petrels.

We load buckets full of petrels to bring them up on deck. After the first compartment is emptied, crew members Aaron, Thomas and Duncan begin taking up the remaining deck plates, revealing additional compartments stuffed with petrels. More than 1,000 will eventually be pulled out from below where they have crawled looking for warmth.

Some of the birds are able to dry themselves off by preening and drying their flight feathers. We take turns launching these into the air and initially many of them fly off out of sight. A few that are insufficiently dry flutter to the surface of the sea and begin paddling away, attracting the attention of gulls which quickly descend upon them for a quick gulp and go.

There are now hundreds of birds on the fantail, with more being handed up all the while. It seems cruel to feed the sodden ones to the gulls. So the crew rigs up a turbo heater while others are put in boxes to conserve their energy and dry off. Soon, however, the numbers overwhelm us. Hundreds more are crammed into the bilges where clearly they cannot stay. There is hardly more room on the fantail for them to spread out and dry.

Tania, one of the crew members, tells us that they started coming aboard on her watch about 9 p.m. the night before, lighting on the mast and boom and fluttering to the deck faster than she could clear them. Apparently disoriented and attracted to TURMOIL's lights, the first few that landed began their eerie cry and lured others in — and so on, since their strategy is usually to stage offshore before returning to their nesting islands under the cover of darkness.

In the end it takes us five hours to clear the decks, holds and bilges of the more than 2,000 petrels — and a few crested and whiskered auklets and a single sooty shearwater — that had spent the night aboard. Everyone has had quite enough of a wildlife experience for the time being.

Ptichiy Island, July 14, 1999 — We leave Atlasova Island astern and steam toward Second Kuril Strait, a narrow channel that separates the waters of the Pacific surging up out of the Kuril Trench from the waters of the Sea of Okhotsk. Enroute, several spouts explode off the water a mile off our bow, evidence of pods of orcas in the area. As we steam toward the spouts, the dark triangular fins of several pods merge. There are clearly a lot of orcas in the neighborhood. Cutting back our speed, we come up behind them very closely and get the best views and pictures of the voyage. At one point a pod of five orcas — a lone bull, two females and some younger ones — appear right under the bow where most of the crew has gathered. To get pictures, they need to lean over and shoot downward.

As soon as we enter the Second Kuril Strait, we begin seeing sea otters. They are off both to port and starboard lying on their backs as we steam by. We pass upwards of a hundred within a few miles.

There are four knots of current running through the Strait, which runs against us until the far end. We enter the open ocean headed for four rocky outposts where sea otters breed. The fog scales as we approach in the fading light at the end of the day. It's already 8:30 and there is less than an hour of light remaining. We launch the shore boat and head toward the nearest rocky pinnacle. As we approach in the evening light, clouds of seabirds — puffins, murres, kittiwakes, gulls and cormorants — wing by us in an unending procession of flight.

We head off toward the third islet, which is a stunning example of columnar jointing in basalt, its geometrically shaped blocks tilted slightly at the water's edge, one of the most beauti-

ful bits of geology we've seen on the whole voyage. Just offshore of this last island, floating amid the kelps, is a whole raft of sea otters. And many of them have little pups snuggled down into their fur over their bellies. We drift close enough to hear one of the little pups squeaking to its mother. It is hard not to anthropomorphize such an apparently tender encounter between a mother and her offspring.

LESSONS TO LEARN

When I first visited the Aleutians in 1997, their wildlife seemed so rich compared to what I had known in the Gulf of Maine. Two years later — in comparison with the stupendous abundance of seals, sea lions and seabirds we observed in the Kurils — the Aleutians and their wildlife seemed suddenly paltry.

In the Aleutians each day, we saw hundreds to thousands of seabirds, a few score sea lions and three sea otters. In the Kurils, we saw hundreds of thousands of seabirds virtually every day, hundreds to thousands of sea lions and fur seals in many colonies and hundreds of sea otters. The differences were an order of magnitude more dramatic.

Yet these two Pacific archipelagoes are both washed by cold Pacific Ocean waters of similar temperature. Both are surrounded by nutrient-rich upwelling currents, stirred by similar tides. The only logical explanation for the differences between them is that the Aleutians have been intensely exploited for their fisheries, especially during the past two decades, while the Kurils, by historical accident, have excluded virtually all fishing for most of the past century.

What lessons are we in the Gulf of Maine to draw from the Kuril and Aleutian island examples? The answers are not obvious. Here in the Gulf of Maine, where a rich fishing tradition has been an inseparable part of our history and identity for 400 years, no responsible person would seriously suggest we simply exclude all fishing (as in the Kurils) to recreate pre-colonial abundance.

The pitched battles now being waged between powerful fishery and environmental interests in the Aleutians also have little to offer us in the Gulf of Maine. During the past year, a consortium of environmental groups including Greenpeace and the Center for Marine Conservation have sued the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Endangered Species Act to create 40-mile-long no fishing zones around the historical rookeries of Stellar's sea lions in the Aleutians, whose populations have been plummeting, presumably due to depletion of pollock, the sea lion's main food.

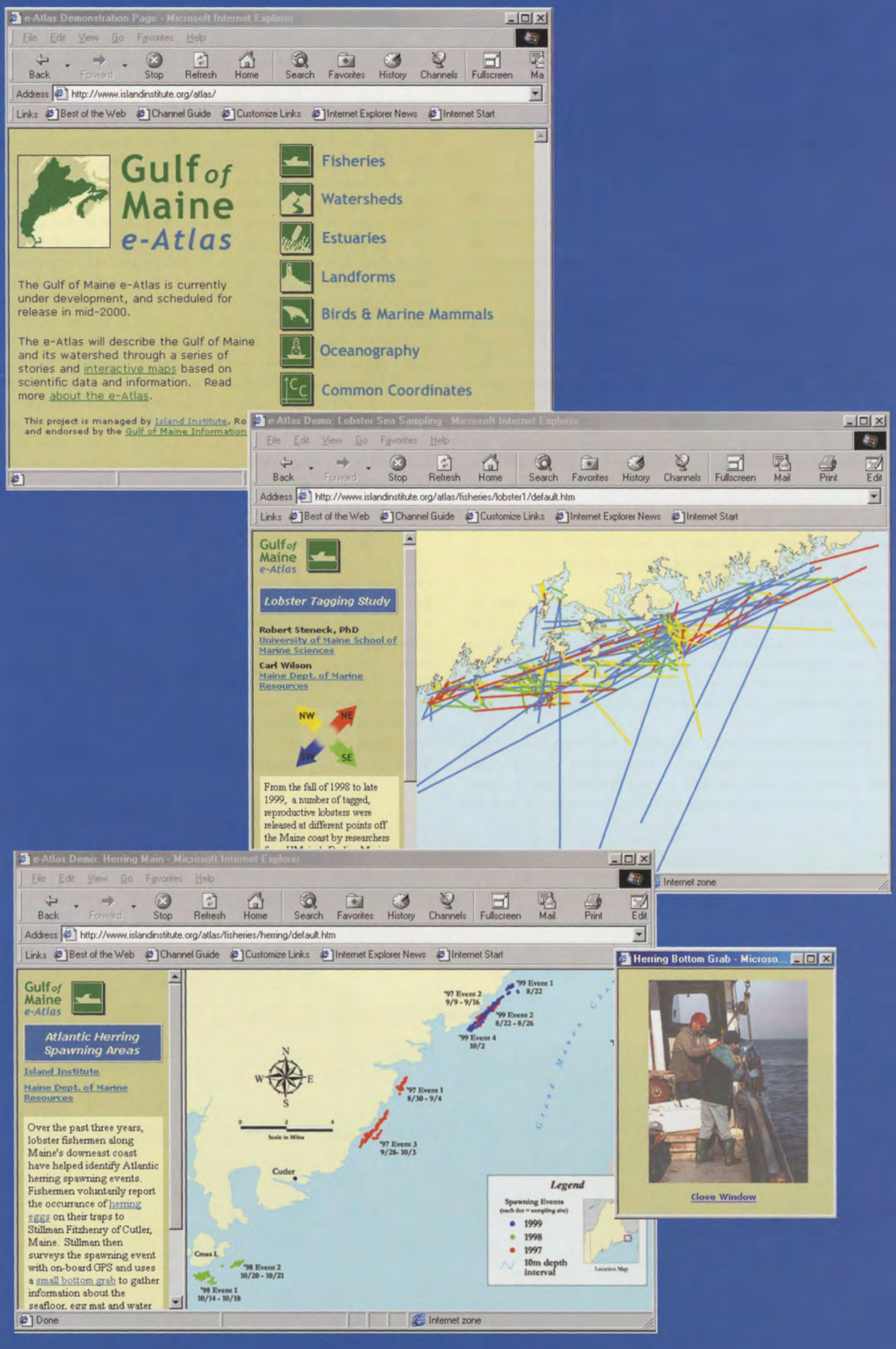
In the Gulf of Maine, the marine stewardship task is too complex for the sort of two-sided confrontation that has become so typical of modern natural resource debates. There is no option of "restoring" a pre-colonial "natural ecosystem" here. That condition is irretrievably gone; we are simply missing too many of the major species, including virtually all the biomass of the great whales which once cruised our shores, as well the large halibut and the great schools of "whale cod" that once exerted major shaping influences on the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. And besides, none of us would volunteer to be the first to vacate our homes and livelihoods to "remove" to somewhere else for the sake of a vision of the future based on a vague notion of past plenty.

So what should we do? At a minimum, we should support and encourage those groups of fishermen who see themselves as part of a larger ecological framework in the Gulf of Maine, who agree to limit some fishing activities to help create a more abundant system for us all, themselves included. Self interest is, after all, the most powerful human motivation — arguably, it's more worth betting on than an emotionally sterile appreciation of Nature itself.

The good news in the Gulf of Maine is the existence of a small but robust conservation ethic among even the most individualistic fishermen. How else does one explain the astounding agreement among all groundfishermen in Maine who supported a five-year ban on the taking of groundfish by any method within 2,900 square miles of state territorial waters during the three-month spawning season? How else does one explain the gradual "build down" of lobster traps toward a limit of 800 traps in state waters, supported by a very substantial majority of lobstermen? Or another handful of conservation methods, designed by lobstermen and implemented in Gulf of Maine waters? These developments are evidence of a stewardship ethic, or at least the

Continued on page 88

Abandoned women's prison camp on Atlasova


e-Atlas Demonstration Page - Microsoft Internet Explorer
Address http://www.islandinstitute.org/atlas/
Gulf of Maine e-Atlas
Fisheries
Watersheds
Estuaries
Landforms
Birds & Marine Mammals
Oceanography
Common Coordinates
The Gulf of Maine e-Atlas is currently under development, and scheduled for release in mid-2000.
The e-Atlas will describe the Gulf of Maine and its watershed through a series of stories and interactive maps based on scientific data and information. Read more about the e-Atlas.
e-Atlas Demo: Lobster Sea Sampling - Microsoft Internet Explorer
Address http://www.islandinstitute.org/atlas/fisheries/lobster1/default.htm
Lobster Tagging Study
Robert Steneck, PhD
University of Maine School of Marine Sciences
Carl Wilson
Maine Dept. of Marine Resources
NW
NE
SW
SE
From the fall of 1998 to late 1999, a number of tagged, reproductive lobsters were released at different points off the Maine coast by researchers
e-Atlas Demo: Herring Main - Microsoft Internet Explorer
Address http://www.islandinstitute.org/atlas/fisheries/herring/default.htm
Atlantic Herring Spawning Areas
Island Institute
Maine Dept. of Marine Resources
Over the past three years, lobster fishermen along Maine's downeast coast have helped identify Atlantic herring spawning events. Fishermen voluntarily report the occurrance of herring eggs on their traps to Stillman Fitzhenry of Cutler, Maine. Stillman then surveys the spawning event with on-board GPS and uses a small bottom grab to gather information about the seafloor, egg mat and water
'97 Event 2 9/9 - 9/16
'99 Event 1 8/22
'99 Event 2 8/22 - 8/26
'99 Event 4 10/2
'97 Event 1 8/30 - 9/4
'97 Event 3 9/28- 10/3
Cutler
'98 Event 2 10/20 - 10/21
'98 Event 1 10/14 - 10/18
Legend
Spawning Events
1999
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1997
10m depth interval
Herring Bottom Grab - Microso...
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An Electronic Atlas for the Gulf of Maine Region

Chris W. Brehme

In 1995 the Island Institute and MIT Press published *From Cape Cod to the Bay of Fundy: An Environmental Atlas of the Gulf of Maine.* The atlas quickly became a popular reference book about the region. Illustrated with satellite images, it touches on themes that range from geology to biodiversity. The book uses current research results to describe the Gulf of Maine environment.

Today the atlas is five years old and some of its information must be updated. The World Wide Web, which barely existed when the atlas was originally published, now offers an exciting alternative to another printed book. A web-based atlas could take advantage of the wealth of data and information currently on-line, and could be updated easily to include the latest research projects from around the region. With this in mind, we began work on the Gulf of Maine e-Atlas.

The e-Atlas will be more than just an on-line version of the 1995 book. It is being developed to take advantage of existing databases and websites via the Internet.

Its foundation is a geographic information system (GIS), which uses digital map layers to visualize and analyze data. This software can combine several sets of disparate data to illustrate otherwise hidden patterns. The combination of seafloor topography, geology and ocean currents, for example, can help identify areas with suitable lobster habitat. Using the latest web technology, the Gulf of Maine e-Atlas will provide GIS data and mapping tools that allow the user to create his or her own on-line maps. The e-Atlas is designed as a resource for fishermen, researchers, students, teachers and anyone with an interest in the Gulf of Maine and its watershed.

In many ways the e-Atlas remains close to its printed roots. It contains several "chapters," including Fisheries, Estuaries and Watersheds. Each section independently describes an element of the regional environment with text and images, and offers links to supporting maps. This design allows the user to learn more about a specific subject each time he or she visits the site, just as one might peruse a book from a coffee table.

The e-Atlas requires the cooperation of numerous agencies and institutions around the Gulf of Maine. In return, it will provide contributors a place to describe themselves and their work. Paul Schroeder, is a University of Maine doctoral student and Island Institute intern who is interested in data and information sharing among Gulf of Maine institutions. His "Common Coordinates" project will become a section of the atlas and act as a resource for small organizations, identifying those doing similar work in the region. It will also allow e-Atlas users to learn more about the contributors and their projects. "Common Coordinates" will provide a venue for communication and sharing among organizations that can rarely afford to look outside their own regions of interest.

The e-Atlas is designed to give institutions and organizations of all sizes an opportunity to describe their work on the web. By dividing the Gulf of Maine watershed into ecological, rather than geographic components, the e-Atlas can present information independent of scale, recognizing projects in small corners of the region. This approach will also help illustrate that the collective work of numerous institutions is frequently more effective than a single region-wide project.

The e-Atlas will be developed in sections beginning with fisheries. This section will include maps depicting where groundfish congregate at certain times of the year, herring spawning areas, lobster distribution and abundance, as well as information about fishing rules and regulations. It will draw extensively on fishermen's knowledge, and highlight how that experience can complement current marine research.

The development of an estuaries section will come next. It will include profiles of the significant estuaries from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia. It will also highlight ongoing restoration efforts in Massachusetts Bay, the coast of Maine and the Bay of Fundy, and will include the results of an assessment of tidal restrictions along the entire coast of Maine. Subsequent chapters will cover watersheds, landforms, birds, marine mammals and the ocean. As data and information are collected from around the Gulf of Maine, the "Common Coordinates" section will be updated to include profiles of organizations that participate in the e-Atlas project.

At present, several information systems provide data and describe research from around the Gulf of Maine. Most of these serve particular audiences and none comprehensively describe the regional environment. Their goal is often to make data available to scientists and highlight the research accomplishments of a particular institution. Unlike these, the Gulf of Maine e-Atlas will use current research and ongoing projects from numerous institutions to characterize the region. It will rely on its contributors to update much of their own data and information, while highlighting their efforts on a central website. The e-Atlas is pioneering the concept of a collaborative, interactive website focused on the environment.

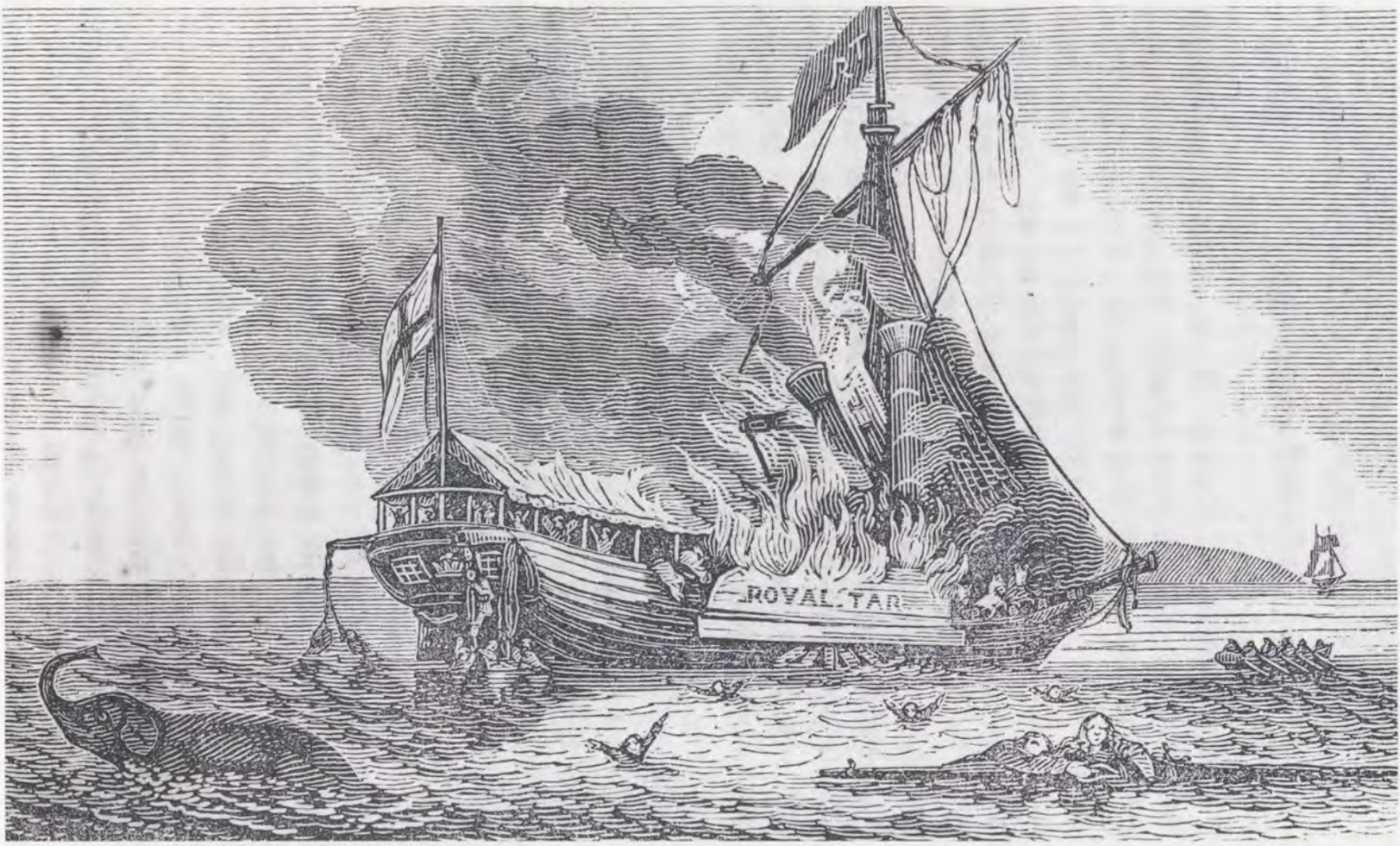
Portions of the e-atlas, along with a near-real time data feature called "This Week in the Gulf of Maine" *will be available on the Institute's website* ***<www.islandinstitute.org>*** *by the summer of 2000.*

Chris W. Brehme *is GIS manager at the Island Institute.*

DISASTER!

Many died when the ROYAL TAR burned in 1836, but the legends born that day still live

RANDY PURINTON



Historic illustrations courtesy of the New England Antiquarian Society

The ROYAL TAR should have enjoyed a long career as a passenger and cargo-carrying steamship, but within half a year of her launching she burned and sank, resulting in the loss of many lives both human and animal. The disaster was avoidable. Had those responsible for the maintenance of the ship's boiler been vigilant, the story of the ROYAL TAR would not be yet another oft-told coastal Maine legend.

Built in 1835 for the run from Saint John, New Brunswick, to Portland, Maine, the TAR was a marine hybrid. She looked like a sailing ship of the era but her sidewheels and smokestacks were clues that inside the hull was a wood-fired, steam-powered engine. Nobody was ready to abandon the age-old reliance on sails in favor of the new technology, and the design of early steamships expressed the transition of sail to power by taking on the appearance of both sailing ship and steamer.

Named for a British king who had served as a sailor in the Royal Navy, the 160-foot ROYAL TAR was built of wood in Carleton, New Brunswick, by William and Isaac Olive. Her copper "vertical donkey" boiler created steam from seawater pumped aboard mechanically. The steam powered a cross-head engine that turned large horizontal shafts. At the end of each shaft, paddlewheels or sidewheels hung off either side of the hull and rotated inside large, semicircular cases called paddleboxes. Smoke and steam exited through stacks. The TAR had a bowsprit and carried gaff-rigged auxiliary sails.

The ROYAL TAR was owned by a group of Saint John businessmen and was operated by the Eastern Steamboat and Mail Line. Captain Thomas Reed of Saint John was skipper. He had experience operat-

ing a steamship between Saint John and Eastport, Maine, and he had a reputation for civility and professionalism. Pilot Joseph Atkins was from Portland. His son, Owen, and the second engineer, N. Marshall, played key roles in the drama that preceded the burning of the ship. Francais Black of Saint John served as mate.

The Eastern Steamship and Mail Line, like other companies, kept no formal, accurate passenger lists. It was not until the turn of the 20th century that such lists were kept, after enough ships went down and lives were lost to lead people to conclude that lists might be useful, at least for the relatives of the dead and the missing. According to one source there were 85 passengers aboard the ROYAL TAR; according to another there were 72 passengers and 21 crew. Most of the crew were Canadian. At least one was African-American.

A number of Irish immigrants were among the passengers. Canada was a favored destination for Irish before the potato famine of the 1840s and some made their way south to the States during that time. The Irish aboard the ROYAL TAR might have hoped to settle in Boston. Not until the 1850s did New York replace Quebec as the preferred port of entry for Irish immigration to North America. Steamships that operated along the Maine coast during the mid-19th century probably carried hundreds of Irish.

In addition to its regular passengers the TAR contracted to carry a circus with all of its equipment, personnel, band instruments and animals. The Macomber, Welch & Company's traveling circus out of Boston was returning from a profitable three-month tour of the Maritimes. With the circus were two menageries advertised as Burgess & Dexter's Zoological Institute and also the Burgess Collection of Serpents and Birds. The list of animals was more complete than the passenger list: a circus elephant named Mogul, two lions, a leopard, a tiger, two camels, six horses, a wildebeest, two pelicans and an assortment of reptiles. Herbert Fuller of Bedford, Massachusetts, operated the circus and he would later write an account of the disaster, which took the lives of all the animals.

The circus elephant was too large to keep below decks so it was shackled in a special stall built for it on deck amidships, between the sidewheels and directly above the boiler. To reinforce the deck against the weight of the elephant, pieces of wood were wedged between the top of the boiler and the deck support beams. This arrangement became the major reason why the ROYAL TAR burned. When the water in the boiler became dangerously low, the boiler itself became red-hot and set those wedges on fire.

A large circus wagon weighing two tons was secured on the main deck. The big cats were caged and stored in the hold. The horses, camels and wildebeest were probably tethered on the main deck. Passengers recalled watching the animals being led around the deck for exercise.

There wasn't enough space on deck to accommodate all the animals, equipment and the wagon so two of the four lifeboats were left behind in Saint John. Despite the unusual contents of its cargo and space constraints on deck, nobody, not even Captain Reed, could imagine an emergency dire enough to warrant the need for more than two lifeboats.

A Canadian newspaper of the time optimistically claimed that passage between Saint John and New York, with stops in Portland and Boston, could be completed in about two-and-a-half days if all things were ideal. If the ship were loaded on time, the crew were all present, the weather were perfect and all connections were made according to printed schedules, then the newspaper's claims might have proven accurate. But conditions were rarely, if ever, ideal.

The ROYAL TAR steamed out of Saint John on Friday, Oct. 21, 1836, a day or two behind schedule. By the time the ship arrived in Eastport, its only scheduled stop, a strong and persistent northwesterly wind convinced Captain Reed that it would be wise to remain in port until the wind diminished. They waited two days.

On Monday, October 24, the ROYAL TAR left Eastport and proceeded south along the Maine coast until the northwesterly wind forced Captain Reed to seek shelter in the Little River at Cutler, only 20 miles southwest of Eastport. A voyage that should have taken little more than a day was well into its fourth day and nowhere near Portland.

The direct route from Saint John to Portland would have skirted Penobscot Bay, but on October 25 the northwesterly wind continued to hinder the progress of the ship. In late morning, Captain Reed decided to turn northwest into the bay in an effort to find calmer water. He coaxed the ship into the wind and ordered Joseph Atkins, the pilot, to head for the Fox Islands Thorofare, the sheltered strait that separates North Haven from Vinalhaven. The passage between the islands was a challenge to a ship that size, but Capt. Reed was confident that he could find relief from the wind that was buffeting the ship and causing discomfort to all on board. But a crisis unrelated to the weather intervened.

The night before the disaster, the chief engineer had been up until a late hour working on the boiler. Whether he was performing routine maintenance or making a repair will never be known. Anyway, the chief engineer told his second engineer, N. Marshall, to oversee the boiler while he went off duty and got some sleep. Sometime during the morning of October 25, Marshall passed on responsibility for the boiler to a fireman who probably assumed that the second engineer had checked the boiler and that the water level was normal. It wasn't.

Three valves could be opened to check the level of water in a marine boiler of the type that was in use during the early decades of steam propulsion. If the topmost valve released steam when opened, that meant the level of water was below the valve. The second valve, lower than the first, released water if the level was normal. The lowest valve on the boiler, if opened, would release water as well. If it didn't, that would mean the boiler was nearly dry.

The ship had been making way against the northwesterly wind and waves for hours. The engine and boiler had been working hard to meet the demands of the pilot and captain. Surely the firemen in the engine room had kept the fireboxes filled to capacity. Around two o'clock in the afternoon, Joseph Atkins' son Owen, either because of his own concern or under orders from his father, opened the lowest valve on the boiler and no water came out. He told his father, who in turn notified Marshall.

The danger of an explosion was very real. If the fire in the firebox underneath burned through the nearly-dry boiler's base, any water remaining, as it met the fire, would flash into steam, expand a thousand times in volume and blow boiler and ship apart.

Because so little water remained to absorb the heat from the fireboxes, the boiler glowed red hot. The second engineer, Marshall, was responsible for monitoring the boiler while the chief engineer was off duty, and the danger should have alarmed him. But Marshall resented being told that there might be a problem.

Randy Purinton *lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, and contributes regularly to Island Institute publications.*

Word that the boiler had run dry reached Captain Reed while he and Joseph Atkins were piloting the ROYAL TAR toward the eastern approach to the Fox Islands Thorofare. Knowing that continued demand on the engine would risk mechanical failure or an explosion, Reed anchored the ship some distance east of Coombs Bluff, Vinalhaven.

The ROYAL TAR had steamed halfway down the Maine coast when her boiler ran dry. If the ship had been able to proceed just two more miles, it's likely most of the passengers and many of the circus animals could have swum to safety or been rescued by Vinalhaven residents. The omission of two lifeboats wouldn't have made much difference. Instead, Captain Reed rightly decided under the circumstances that it was prudent to anchor a mile off Vinalhaven's east shore, still vulnerable to the wind and waves wrought by the strong and persistent northwest wind.

As the Captain left the pilothouse to survey the problem in the engine room, the wedges that supported the deck under the elephant ignited. Making his way below, Reed could see through the hatches and gratings in the main deck that the boiler was no longer the problem; his ship was on fire.

Reed hoped that the fire could be extinguished so he wouldn't have to call a general alarm. Soon, however, attempts to bring the fire under control were abandoned due to the intense heat and thick smoke that threatened to overcome those engaged in the effort. As it became clear that an inferno was in the making, two things happened. Marshall, the second engineer, along with some crew members and a few passengers who understood the seriousness of what was happening, rushed to the larger of the two lifeboats, cut it loose, boarded it and rowed hard (with the wind) toward Isle au Haut, then about three miles distant. Simultaneously, one of the firemen ran up the engine room stairs to the main deck and yelled "Fire!" Captain Reed reprimanded him, but now a general alarm and an orderly emergency procedure were impossible.

Reed thought quickly. Knowing that there was only one lifeboat left, he ordered Atkins and mate Francais Black to cut the anchor line, raise the sails and try to ground the ship on the nearest shore, then about a mile away. As Atkins and Black worked, and as the perilous situation became known among the passengers, Reed and two men left the ship in the last rowboat. (Days later, some accused Captain Reed of cowardice, but he had a professional responsibility to command the only boat left that could do any good. He was prepared to save as many lives as he could without sacrificing the boat.) With the Captain overboard and the ship clearly doomed, panic spread.

Passengers packed their money and belongings in trunks and threw them overboard, expecting to retrieve them when they screwed up the courage to plunge into the bitterly cold water. Others ran screaming around deck with their clothes in their arms. Mothers prepared to throw their children overboard and themselves after. Some untied the restraints holding the circus wagon and tried to push it overboard for use as a raft, but it was too heavy to lift over the rail. It became fuel that fed the flames.

Reed, meanwhile, filled his boat with those brave enough to jump overboard and swim toward him in the heavy seas. But when his boat could hold no more he could only offer encouragement to the many for whom he could provide no assistance. He watched with the others in his boat as Atkins and Black attempted to raise the sails and get the ship underway, but a sidewheeler in gale-force winds would have been difficult to maneuver. But the sails were consumed by flames, adding to the certainty that there was little anyone could do, save cling to whatever he might find and pray for rescue.

From Vinalhaven, the scene must have appeared apocalyptic. African animals, tragically out of place aboard a steamer off the coast of Maine, perished under circumstances that denied them opportunities to use their instincts to save themselves. Wind and fire joined water and wave to spawn terror, destruction and death. Opposites and extremes prevailed.

It is impossible to arrange events of that afternoon in chronological order. At some point the circus personnel released the animals tethered on deck and forced them overboard, hoping that by some infinitesimally small chance they might swim the ever-increasing distance to the Vinalhaven shore. The camels, backed off the burning ship, quickly sank, their desert instincts no match for the North Atlantic. Someone unshackled the elephant from its stall over the boiler. The animal made its way forward to the bow of the ship and, after deliberating, decided that swimming was preferred to being burned alive. So it jumped into the bay, some say onto a hastily assembled raft, crushing the people who clung to it who thought that perhaps they might survive after all, never expecting an elephant to fall on them.

All six horses were forced into the water. Three of them swam toward the distant shore and were never seen again. Three others swam in circles around the burning ship until they drowned.

One man, too attached to worldly goods, jumped overboard with all his silver and then sank to the bottom. Another man sacrificed his trunkful of money and belongings to save two other people who would have drowned had he chosen not to help. The three were eventually saved.

Just as it seemed to Reed that nothing more could be done to save the scores of remaining people on board, help came. The VETO, a revenue cutter under the command of Captain Howland Dyer of North Haven, saw the smoke from the burning ship at a distance and came to assist. (This revenue ship, called a cutter, was one of a fleet of armed schooners built by the federal government to patrol the East Coast and enforce maritime commerce laws. This service was the prototype for the United States Coast Guard.) VETO was stationed in Castine, but it seems likely that she was either anchored near the harbor of North Haven or was sailing through the Thorofare when her Captain spotted the smoke from ROYAL TAR.

Captain Dyer had reason to be concerned about the safety of his own vessel as he drew near the burning steamship. He was carrying gunpowder and his sails were in danger of catching fire as the TAR's had. He could not pull alongside a ship engulfed in flames, and he couldn't heave-to as close as he would have wanted. He made one close pass but his ship caught fire in several places and a couple of his crew members were burned. He had to stay upwind of the TAR to avoid flying embers.

Reed, in his lifeboat, recognized the schooner as his only hope of saving those still alive or clinging to the burning ship. But he and those with him now had to row against the gale-force wind to reach the VETO. Some on the boat complained that the effort was too great but they responded with new resolve when Reed threatened to throw them overboard.

Herbert Fuller, the operator of the circus, sat on the stern rail of the ROYAL TAR until his coat caught fire. Then he lowered himself with a rope and took his chances in the water. He was among a dozen or so desperate people under the stern of the ship. Some drowned when they grew too weak to hold on. Fuller recalled having three people clinging to him.

Fuller said that Joseph Atkins was there, too. Atkins prevented a woman from drowning by holding her with his foot. When her arms failed he held her by the neck with both feet for five minutes, but then she was washed away. She drifted against an Irishman who held her fast.

Historic illustrations courtesy of the New England Antiquarian Society

Fuller, Atkins, the woman and the Irishman all thought that they were about to be saved when a lifeboat from the VETO rowed near, but the officer in charge of the boat was so overwhelmed by frenzied cries for help and by the fury of the wind and fire that he ordered the boat to turn back to the schooner without rescuing anyone. Seconds later Reed moved in and saved the four of them. Captain Reed was credited with saving at least 40 people that day. As soon as his boat was full he rowed back to the VETO, left them and returned to save others.

By six o'clock there was nobody left alive on the steamship or clinging to the burning wreck. The VETO filled her sails and headed downwind to Isle au Haut, leaving the smoldering and charred remnant of the ROYAL TAR to drift where it might.

Anyone who survives a disaster has a story to tell. Fuller wrote his recollections of that awful afternoon in a letter to a friend in Boston. Later, that letter was printed in the *Boston Post.* Francais Black, the mate, survived the disaster and wrote his story for the *Saint John Courier.* One survivor was on the burning ship for three hours and witnessed most of the chaos on board. Charles Ellms, who wrote a narrative of the tragedy in a book he published in 1841, printed the account of William Marjoram, described by Ellms as a "pious passenger."

Marjoram's story is colored by his religious enthusiasm. Among all of the panic-stricken passengers, he alone seemed to find meaning in the fury and flames that consumed the ship. His effort to come to grips with the chaos around him was shaped by his faith that despite an imminent and terrible death, a strange sort of salvation was at hand if one only believed.

His words might not have been appreciated by all at the time: "I endeavored to exhort the people to be calm, and to meet their approaching fate with calmness and to trust in God, and his son Jesus, as our only hope of being saved; reminding them that they had been sinful creatures. With some it appeared to have great weight."

The scene on deck must have appeared to Marjoram like Judgment Day: sheets of flame fanned by gale-force winds devouring the sails and superstructure faster than belief, passengers wailing, mothers tossing their children overboard, exotic animals running in and out of the smoke, burning in their cages or, like the horses, sharing the fate of those who flung themselves into the sea. In the thick of this bizarre and horrific scene Marjoram called his countrymen to repentance and salvation like a prophet of old. He may have relieved some of the passengers' panic, and maybe that was just enough for a few to choose to take their chances overboard, where Captain Reed was ferrying survivors to and from the VETO.

Marjoram was a deeply sympathetic and energetic man, to the point of being a pest. After three hours on the ROYAL TAR, Marjoram was rescued by Captain Reed and brought to the VETO, where Captain Dyer ordered him below deck because he could not tolerate his excited behavior and reckless advice.

Marjoram came back on deck after a short respite and assisted others as Captain Reed brought survivors alongside. Among the rescuers, said Marjoram, was "a colored sailor, that belonged to the steamboat, who was the means of saving a great many lives, having been in the rowboat a long time." The sailor asked Marjoram to take his place, which he did. Captain Dyer would have preferred to get underway so the survivors could get rest and care on Isle au Haut, but Marjoram insisted. He and another sailor returned to the ROYAL TAR to check a last time for survivors.

As they rounded the front of the burning ship in their rowboat, Marjoram saw a woman clinging to the bowsprit. She had a child in her arms. Their plight must have moved the excitable Marjoram deeply, but he was unable to reach them before they drowned. They were most likely the last to die of the 32 people who perished that day.

All except the last woman to be rescued, whom Dyer and Marjoram revived on board the VETO, found hospitality and care among the residents of Isle au Haut. A day or two later a schooner brought the passengers to Owls Head, where they boarded the steamer BANGOR for the final leg of their voyage to Portland. An official inquiry praised the conduct of Captains Reed and Dyer, and eventually the press turned its attention to other news.

Over time, the tragedy generated stories that entertained listeners but might not have reflected the truth. A hundred years later, Charles Bernard wrote that the elephant swam ashore, amazing an island farmer. Then the elephant made its way to the mainland in search of hay, Bernard's account continues, and vanished in the Maine woods. Perhaps, Bernard speculated, it was the same elephant that was later shot, skinned and stuffed in New Hampshire. Most accept the story that the elephant drowned, drifted and came ashore on Brimstone Island, around three miles off the southeast shore of Vinalhaven. An article in the October 19, 1938, issue of the Vinalhaven Neighbor reported that two residents of the island owned leg bones from the carcass of the elephant. If these two legbones still exist, and if they were tested for their true origin and found to be elephant bones, they would be the only two known surviving relics of the tragedy, the anchor having been retrieved, sold and lost to history. The boiler

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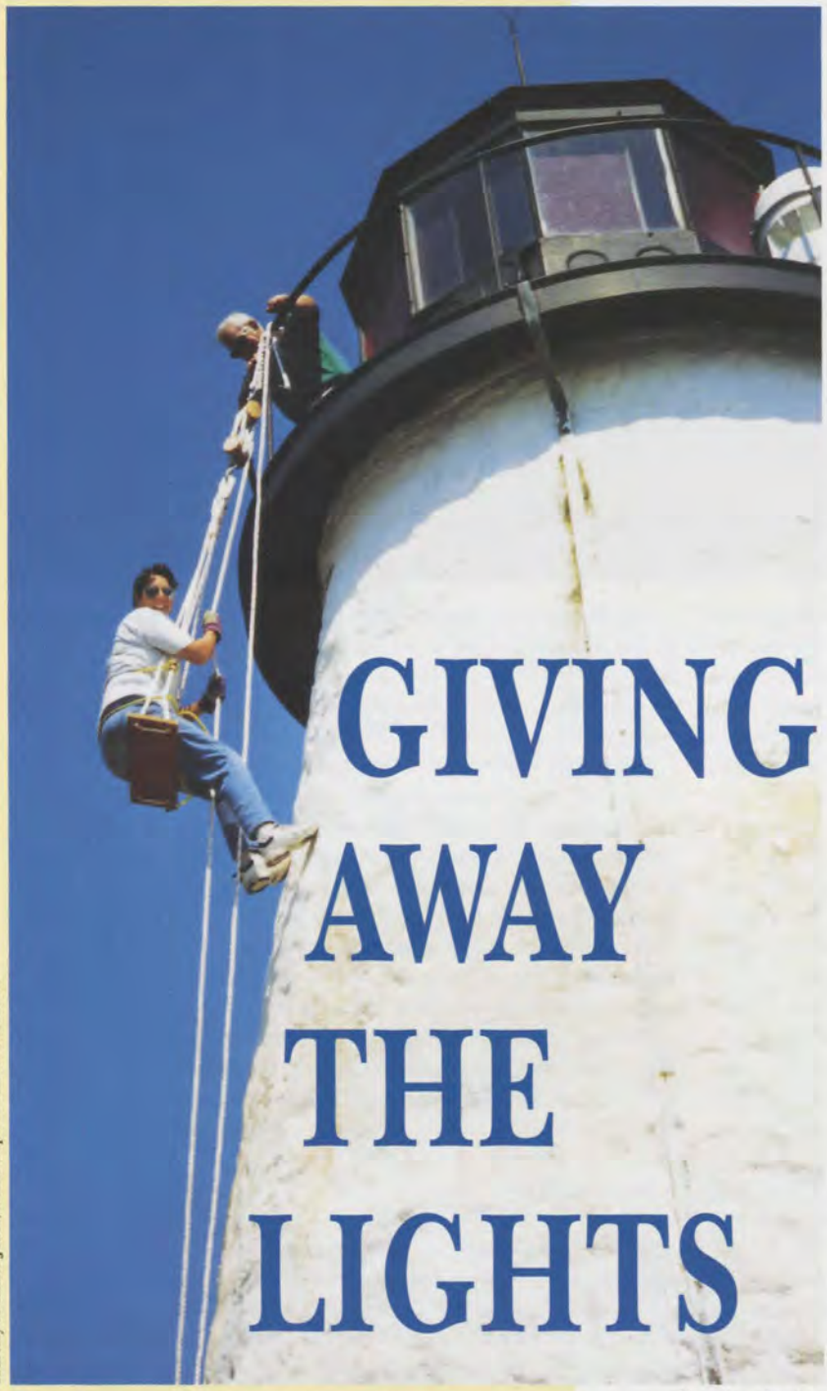


courtesy of Elaine Jones, Maine Dept. of Marine Resources

Elaine Jones swings aloft for maintenance at Burnt Island Light.

GIVING AWAY THE LIGHTS

How the Island Institute helped find deserving owners for the lighthouses the Coast Guard no longer wanted

STEVE CARTWRIGHT

Astride the busy channel into Boothbay Harbor lies a quiet, natural oasis: five-acre Burnt Island, home to wild berries, birds and a lighthouse with a 179-year-old stone tower, the second oldest original lighthouse in Maine.

One of the last manned light stations in the country, Burnt Island was fully automated in 1988. The last family to live there pushed off for the mainland. The old house grew musty, the roof sprang a leak. Weeds took over the yard where once the keeper's children played.

Until Elaine Jones came along. "I'm the kind of person who says I'll find a way," said Jones, 44, who — on behalf of her employer, the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) — won custody of Burnt Island Light over a competing proposal from a group that had leased the property since July 1992. Jones is confidently planning a living history museum and unrestricted public access to the five-acre island.

She doesn't just talk, she rolls up her sleeves and scrapes and paints, and she has a knack for persuading others to pitch in, whether the matter at hand is cutting brush or donating funds and furnishings for the keeper's house.

Through the Island Institute's Maine Lights Program, the deed to Burnt Island was transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the DMR, which maintains a facility at McKown Point, just a brief boat ride from the lighthouse and island it now owns. Jones, a tenacious advocate for education, preservation and public access, is using volunteers to turn Burnt Island Light Station into a light keepers' museum, complete with period-dressed staff and overnight accommodations for Maine students. "I'd live here year 'round if I didn't have a young family," she said.

Jones has located former light keepers and their descendants, such as the octogenarian great-granddaughters of keeper James McCobb (1868-1880), who have agreed to help with restoration details. "I'm an educator," Jones said. "To see the kids [who visit the light] react is motivation. Burnt Island is a legacy I'm leaving to the people of the State of Maine and the country."

Previously, Jones built another educational facility for DMR, a public saltwater aquarium at McKown Point where children can see and touch the fish.

Burnt Island is just one example of how 36 coastal stations in the Congressionally-approved Maine Lights Program are being restored and returned to the people of Maine. These lighthouses must be maintained to high standards and the grounds kept open to the public.

The Maine Lights Program officially ended in the fall of 1998, when title to 27 of the 36 lights were awarded to new owners. The remaining stations failed to attract support because of remote location, lack of land or hazardous access.

Anne Webster-Wallace, who for two years directed the daily activities of the Maine Lights Program for the Island Institute, said she hopes proposed legislation now being drafted by lighthouse preservationists will assure that these remaining Coast Guard lighthouses stay open to the public.

In all, Maine has 64 coastal lighthouses plus a small stone lighthouse on Cobbosseecontee Lake near Augusta. Some of these are already privately owned. Webster-Wallace, who lives on Georgetown Island, brought to Maine Lights her experience organizing Friends of Seguin Island Light, a station that dates to 1795 and was recently deeded to that group. "One thing I didn't realize would be helpful," she said, "was that I had 12 years in real estate. It really did save us a lot of legal fees." Nevertheless, the Island Institute was obliged to invest $300,000 in the effort, largely legal fees and title research.

College of the Atlantic

While some "non-program" lighthouses remain in limbo, others have new owners but await needed maintenance and restoration. "Some things were more agonizing than they needed to be, but in general it was very successful," Webster-Wallace said. "The applicants took the responsibility very seriously."

Burnt Island is one of the most exciting success stories among many that grew out of the Maine Lights Program. As in all cases, the deed changed hands through the work of a five-member selection committee whose members included Vinalhaven Town Manager Susan Lessard, who lives at Brown's Head Light, which, thanks to the program, is now town property.

For seven years she has lived at the 1832 light station as a perk of her job. "It's a wonderful, 150-year-old house," she said. "It's a 270-degree water view ... eight months of the year it's an isolated location. You get quite proprietary about it. I don't have to light the lamp [which was automated in 1987] but I do mow the grass and pick up the trash."

Lessard, who heads a new coast-wide lighthouse owners' group called Maine Lights Inc., speaks highly of islanders. "They judge you entirely on your work ethic," she says. "This community is a good fit."

She must share her homestead with summertime picnickers and picture-taking tourists, and even puts up with romantic proposals when published stories mention she is single. She said those who propose to her don't know she sometimes lugs water through biting winter wind when her "interesting" water system fails. "The word 'romantic' isn't the first word I'd use to describe the place. It's a physically demanding life."

Pine Island Camp

At Whitehead, a new roof went on during the summer of 1999.

MOUNT DESERT ROCK, GREAT DUCK ISLAND

Both deeded to College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, these still-active lighthouses will provide remote field stations for students involved in environmental studies, according to college spokesman Ted Koffman. A mere ledge 23 miles from shore, Mt. Desert Rock Light dates to 1830, although the existing granite tower was built in 1847. A two-family keeper's house and a few outbuildings offer lodging and a lab. Whales, seals and birds are plentiful. The 1890 light on 242-acre Great Duck Island, six miles out to sea, includes a keeper's house and brick tower and 11 acres of land. Both residential and day trips are possible. Acquiring the lights "catalyzed a lot of excitement among the faculty," Koffman said.

ROCKLAND BREAKWATER

Built 98 years ago at the tip of a 4,400-foot jetty, Rockland Breakwater Light is now owned by the City of Rockland. The newly-formed Friends of the Rockland Breakwater Light is taking the lead role in restoring the light, easily visible — on clear days — from downtown Rockland and even from North Haven across Penobscot Bay. By 1973, nine years after the light was automated, the Coast Guard was prepared to raze it. The light appeared doomed until the nearby Samoset Resort agreed to lease the property. The hotel's interest in the light waned, and now an energetic support group is planning to restore the keeper's house to its circa 1950 appearance and install a ramp and float for easy access from the water (you can also walk out on the breakwater). Robert Davis, curator of Shore Village Museum in Rockland, said the breakwater light is special. "It's the only one like it in the U.S. No other light has brick and wood, ceramic tile inside."

Friends of the Rockland Breakwater Light (2)

The interior of the Breakwater Light keeper's house is still in need of extensive restoration.

RAM ISLAND

Built in 1883 near the approach to Boothbay Harbor, Ram Island Light was unmanned and automated in 1974, and the walkway from the island to the offshore granite and brick tower was dismantled. The new owner of the light station, the Grand Banks Schooner Museum of Boothbay Harbor, hopes to rebuild the walkway and is already restoring the keeper's house. Bob Ryan, museum director, said his goal at this point is simply to maintain the traditional appearance of this active aid to navigation. Ryan also serves as director of the Boothbay Railway Museum.

Grand Banks Schooner Museum

CAPE NEDDICK

Better known, at least to locals, as The Nubble, this is a 19th century steel and brick tower, plus wood-frame keeper's house, lying less than than 500 feet from the mainland. York Town Manager Mark Green said the town has leased the light for some 15 years from the Coast Guard, and residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of owning the property at town meeting. The Nubble's proximity to the mainland makes it popular with tourists, and a nearby town-run gift shop's profits have paid for restoration of the keeper's house and all lighthouse maintenance; about $80,000. "Everybody in town loves the lighthouse," Green said.

Mark Green

MONHEGAN

Dating to the first rubblestone tower in 1824, Monhegan Island Light has long been a museum and tourist attraction on this heavily visited island. Ed Deci, a summer resident and president of the Monhegan Historical and Cultural Museum Association, said the transfer of ownership from the Coast Guard to his group completes a process begun in 1962. In that year, Monhegan Associates bought the hilltop lighthouse complex at auction, but the Coast Guard kept the tower and one-tenth of an acre. Now the entire property belongs to the association, and a walkway, once removed by the Coast Guard, from the keeper's house (now a museum) to the 1850 granite light tower has been replaced. Closed to the public for decades although still an active light, the tower will now be open on special occasions. In 1998, the association completed replicas of an assistant keeper's house and an outbuilding, and these buildings now house an art gallery and storage vault. The view from the top? "I can't put words to it," said Deci, who has had a key to the tower for years.

There were no takers for Franklin Island Light in Muscongus Bay, a bare tower on an island already protected as a bird sanctuary. The same was true for Halfway Rock, a barren ledge between Seguin Island Light and Portland Head Light.

Ultimately there was no formal interest in Manana Island fog signal with its soaring repair estimates; Wood Island Light, near Old Orchard Beach, is still not spoken for; neither is Goose Rocks Light, a "caisson" light on a ledge between Vinalhaven and North Haven. No one took custody of Ram Island Ledge, a lighthouse in Casco Bay that literally has no land base when the tide's high.

Two downeast lights have found no friends, at least not yet. Little River Light, at the entrance to Cutler Harbor, has plenty of potential but had no serious takers, according to Webster-Wallace. The same goes for Moose Peak, an 1827 lighthouse on Mistake Island near Jonesport.

Located at the southwest corner of Penobscot Bay is Whitehead Island Light, which takes its name from a highly-visible granite outcropping. First commissioned by Thomas Jefferson, it marks the Mussel Ridge Channel, a major highway in the age of sail and still a busy passage. The original 1803 stone tower at Whitehead was rebuilt in 1852, and one of two keepers' houses still stands. The other was demolished by the Coast Guard many years ago.

Through the program, Whitehead Light is now the property of Pine Island Camp, a boys' camp founded 97 years ago on Pine Island in the Belgrade Lakes. Pine Island now owns the keeper's house with its panoramic view — on clear days, anyway, since Whitehead is notoriously foggy. The camp also owns the granite light tower itself, while the Coast Guard retains rights to operate and maintain the actual light and a nearby foghorn as aids to navigation. This is the typical arrangement for transfer of active lighthouses. The Coast Guard needs no access to discontinued lighthouses, although sometimes these are illuminated with plain bulbs for aesthetic reasons.

Third-generation Pine Island Camp director Ben Swan wasted no time in applying for the light, which shares Whitehead Island with a former lifesaving station built in the 1880s — before there was a Coast Guard. The camp and the Swan family have owned most of Whitehead Island for the past 30 years, renovating the lifesaving station and a Coast Guard barracks in the 1970s.

Renovations to the keeper's house are already under way, much of it done by Pine Island youth, and more work is scheduled for summer 2000. Swan, 44, praised the Maine Lights Program's Selection Committee, especially the role played by its chairman, retired Coast Guard Rear Admiral Richard Rybacki of Falmouth, and the steadfast work of Maine Lights director Webster-Wallace.

"It was, for once, things the way they ought to be — almost more than any other applicant, we knew what we were getting into. We were there, and we knew what to do. Every time we needed someone, there was someone there," Swan says. Help has come from people like carpenter Nick Buck, a former Coast Guardsman who was stationed at Whitehead in 1976 and 1977. He now heads the camp's Whitehead Lightkeepers pro-

gram: two three-week sessions offering an island work experience for teenagers. David Gamage, who owns a cottage on Whitehead built by his lightkeeper grandfather, has also pitched in, researching renovation work.

Whitehead is open to visitors, and Swan is grateful the island isn't inundated by boaters. "It's an island and it's not that easy to get to, and we're thankful for that," Swan said. "We feel very fortunate that we are able to manage it." He said Pine Island's four-day visits to Whitehead can be a highlight in a camper's summer.


Peter Ralston

Webster-Wallace believes lighthouses can be a special experience for people of all ages. She is particularly pleased that the Maine Lights Program was able to present deeds to groups that already had proven themselves good stewards through existing leases with the Coast Guard. That honor roll of lighthouses includes Cape Neddick, built at York Beach in 1879; the 1833 Goat Island light at Cape Porpoise; Seguin Island, which dates to the late 1700s; Ram Island at Boothbay Harbor; Marshall Point museum at Port Clyde; Monhegan Island museum; Curtis Island at the entrance to Camden Harbor; Brown's Head on Vinalhaven; Fort Point at the mouth of the Penobscot River; and West Quoddy Head, furthest Maine light downeast.

Admiral Rybacki, who chaired the selection panel, shared Webster-Wallace's enthusiasm. "I'm very pleased with what I hear and see of the results of the work of the committee. The legislation that authorized this process was one of the finest pieces of legislation we've gotten to work with, particularly for the disposal of property." He praised involving Mainers in that process. "It was not a group of people from Washington, D.C."

Rybacki said he wasn't surprised several of the lights failed to attract support. Ease of access, the presence of a keeper's house and the amount of land were important considerations for Maine Lights applicants. But one of the rejects is a personal favorite: Wood Island Light, not far from his home. "It's one I would certainly like to own if I had had the wherewithal," he said.

A former Coast Guard group commander for Maine, Rybacki is working to bring square-rigged ships to Portland this July 28-31, in a project called Op Sail 2000; and he is developing a Maine Maritime Heritage Trail that will include lighthouses.

Graceful and purposeful, lighthouses are literal aids to navigation, and figurative symbols of guidance; of finding one's bearings and setting a course for safe harbor. For all the affection lavished on them, many Maine stations have been victims of neglect and newer technologies. Automation meant that no one was present to keep watch, to fix a broken window, a loose board. Keepers' houses and light towers rusted and rotted. Roofs leaked and sagged; a number of houses, including one of two dwellings at Whitehead Island Light, and a house at Two Bush Island Light, were demolished by the Coast Guard in an earlier, less enlightened era.

But it took the near loss, in a 1989 fire caused by an electrical short circuit, of unmanned Heron Neck Light on Green's Island in Penobscot Bay to galvanize action to save remaining lights. At first, rescue efforts focused only on the burnt-out keeper's house, since restored. But Heron Neck sounded the alarm that led to the drafting of the Maine Lights program. Without Island Institute intervention, Heron Neck "would be a hole in the ground," said Peter Ralston, executive vice president at the Institute.

Ralston and Ted Dernago, chief of rural property for the Coast Guard, worked closely on the Heron Neck rescue. Then, half in jest, Ralston asked Dernago if it would be possible to save some more lighthouses.

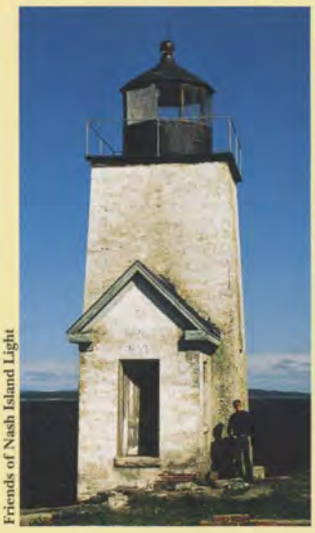
"How many more do you want?" Dernago asked. And as they discussed the idea, their lighthearted conversation turned to serious

SEGUIN

Seguin Island Light is the second oldest in Maine, commissioned in 1795 by George Washington. The current and third tower was built of stone in 1857, and the 64-acre island, all of it now protected from development, includes a keeper's house that is seasonally occupied by caretakers. The island is two miles out to sea. Phil Jermain, president of Friends of Seguin, said his group formed in 1986, and three years later signed a 10-year lease with the Coast Guard. Now there is no need to renew the lease; the Friends own the whole island including the light, which remains an active aid to navigation. The rare, first-order glass Fresnel lens is still functioning and — in early 2000 — was at the center of a tug-of-war between the Friends and the Coast Guard, which wanted to install a plastic device in its place. The Fresnel lens is "irreplaceable because the technology has been lost," Jermain said, and besides, he likes to see the historical lens in its proper context atop the 40-foot Seguin tower. Eighteen stories above sea level, the light provides "the best view in the state of Maine," he said. "You can see Mount Washington."

DOUBLING POINT RANGE LIGHTS

This pair of lighthouses on the Kennebec River is getting a new name, according to Michael Kreindler, leader of the Range Light Keepers, a group which now owns them. Henceforward, he said, the name is Kennebec River Range Lights, to avoid confusion with nearby Doubling Point Light. He explained that the 1898 twin lights were designed to help ships steer through a dogleg in the river as they sailed or steamed toward Bath and Augusta. The two lights can be used to calculate position in relation to a menacing submerged ledge. Kreindler is excited about restoring the nearby Fiddler's Reach fog signal, built in 1914 and now missing its 1,200-pound bell and interior mechanism. The Coast Guard has the bell on exhibit in New London, Connecticut. The Coast Guard has also retained the range light keeper's house for its own use. Range Light Keepers' website is <RLK.org>.



Friends of Nash Island Light

NASH ISLAND LIGHT

Actually on Little Nash Island, a couple of miles from South Addison, this was an abandoned light tower facing probable destruction. The door was broken; Jenny Cirone, daughter of a Nash Island lightkeeper, was concerned her sheep might get stuck inside. The Maine Lights program came along in time for Ed Greaves, a seasonal resident of the area, to form Friends of Nash Island Light, and over the past two summers volunteers have restored the brick tower. The keeper's house and outbuildngs are long gone. Nash Island was the only inactive station transferred in the Maine Lights Program — the light's function was transferred to a buoy offshore a number of years ago. Little Nash Island is a seabird nesting site, and now it will remain what Greaves describes as "a local landmark for a century and a half — people had affection for this part of our coastal heritage, and felt it would be awful if it were destroyed."

Friends of Nash Island Light

Peter Ralston

DEER ISLAND THOROFARE

Located on 5.5 acre Mark Island, Deer Island Thorofare Light is simply an 1850s brick tower with an active light on an otherwise undeveloped property. The keeper's house burned down decades ago, but that doesn't lessen the attraction of the island for Stan Meyers, head of the Island Heritage Trust of Deer Isle. The trust now owns six local islands outright, including Mark Island, and has easements on several more. Holdings total 400 acres and 8–9 miles of shoreline. Meyers said volunteers have pointed and painted the light tower.

planning. "The synergism between Peter Ralston and myself just exploded," Dernago said. "That was the building of a tremendous friendship that continues today."

Dernago is sensitive to criticism of the Coast Guard's role in the upkeep of lighthouses over the years. "From the Coast Guard side, we'd been maintaining and protecting these lights for years. The Coast Guard has always tried to do its very best with what little it had."

Some have criticized government officials for failing to value lighthouses. Ralston said that the agency isn't the bad guy. "Technology has blown right past these lights. To a certain pragmatic extent, they are redundant, with new navigational aids such as radar, GPS, Loran." To preservationists, lighthouses are vital beacons woven into the culture and history of the coast.

Ralston said it's too early to declare Maine Lights a complete success, although he is proud of the program the Institute has created, with crucial help from Maine Senators George Mitchell and Olympia Snowe. "On the West Coast, it took 11 years to transfer one light to a Coast Guard insider," Ralston said. "Our efforts transferred all of these lights in just two years... and they all went to Mainers, not to outside entities. The great joy is just seeing those lights saved."

His goal was to "let Mainers make the decisions, because they know more — they have the emotional and, not to sound too corny, the spiritual attachment to these lights, the passion of people caring for these icons in their backyards — I knew we could tap into that. I knew the Institute could be a catalyst," he said.

Maine Lights fits into a larger vision: "What we're trying to do is help island and coastal mainland communities preserve a unique way of life, a way of life they want," Ralston says. "When Philip Conkling and I founded the Island Institute in 1983, there were existing, good environmental groups, but nobody was looking at the whole picture... there was no single vision that included a strong recognition of environment and community."

Maine Lights is inspiring lighthouse-saving efforts elsewhere. Dernago is currently working on a Southern New England Lights Program, and coincidentally, has identified 36 lights for consideration. They range from Portsmouth Harbor Light in New Hampshire to Great Beds Light, a "sparkplug" tower (sitting on an underwater ledge) off Perth Amboy, New Jersey. They include lights on the Hudson River in New York, such as the "Little Red Lighthouse" beneath the arc of the George Washington Bridge, made famous in a children's book.

On June 20, 1998, Ralston, Snowe and several hundred others gathered on the shores of Rockland Harbor for the ceremonial transfer of the lighthouse deeds. At first, the historic event was shrouded in fog. The Lincolnville Band played, and then the fog lifted, revealing the granite jetty that stretches 4,400 feet to the 1902 Rockland Breakwater Light.

That light, awarded to the city, is now being refurbished through a Friends group, which hopes to raise $500,000 for renovations and endowment. The Friends group formed when city officials failed to take action, leaving the lighthouse in limbo for several months.

Webster-Wallace believes the lighthouses are now in good hands. "All of the lights that were awarded in the Maine Lights Program were given to people who really care about them, and have the resources and the ability to maintain and preserve them. There is not one decision that should have been made differently."

Steve Cartwright *writes regularly for Island Institute publications.*

This certificate is presented to

Commemorate

United States Department of Transportation

The transfer of 27 Maine Lighthouses

Browns Head	Fort Point	Nash Island
Burnt Island	Goat Island	Ram Island
Cape Neddick (Nubble)	Great Duck Island	Rockland Harbor Breakwater
Curtis Island	Isle au Haut	Seguin Island
Deer Island Thorofare	Libby Island	Spring Point Ledge
Doubling Point	Marshall Point	Two Bush
Doubling Point Range	Matinicus Rock	West Quoddy Head
Eagle Island	Monhegan Island	Whitehead Island
Egg Rock	Mt. Desert Rock	Whitlocks Mill

Applications recommended by the
Island Institute
and the
Maine Lighthouse Selection Committee
and approved by
The United States Coast Guard
On this twentieth day of June, 1998 at Rockland, Maine

RADM Richard M. Larrabee, Commander, First Coast Guard District	Peter Ralston, Executive Vice President, Island Institute	Richard I. Rybacki, Chairman, Maine Lighthouse Selection Committee

MAINE LIGHTS PROGRAM REPORT

A detailed report to the U. S. Congress summarizing the Maine Lights Program's work appears on the Island Institute's website, **<www.islandinstitute.org>.** The report further fulfills the program's role as a national model for lighthouse protection efforts by outlining the steps that were taken to transfer 28 Maine lighthouses to their new owners.

Peter Ralston

ISLE AU HAUT

The 1907 light at Robinson Point is Isle au Haut's only lighthouse. The brick tower is adjacent to a privately-owned keeper's house, operated as a seasonal bed-and-breakfast. The tower itself belongs to the town, following strong approval from residents. David Quinby, an islander who belongs to the Lighthouse Committee, said volunteers have worked hard to raise $54,000 for repairing tower masonry, including fixing a bulge in the brick wall. "It's done. It should be good for the next century," he said. Winning support for keeping the light wasn't hard on Isle au Haut. "There is a lot of emotion tied to the lighthouse," Quinby said. The Coast Guard keeps the light burning, but could have done so without the lighthouse itself. "Most people couldn't imagine a light pole there — The issue was: the lighthouse would stay."

EGG ROCK, LIBBY, TWO BUSH, MATINICUS ROCK

A quartet of lights was deeded directly to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; all are now considered part of Petit Manan Wildlife Refuge. The four are now protected areas for nesting birds. The properties are Egg Rock Light in Frenchman's Bay; Libby Island Light off Machiasport; Two Bush Island Light off Tenants Harbor; and Matinicus Rock Light, more than 20 miles out to sea from Rockland. The light stations' inhabitants include eiders, terns, puffins, razorbills and guillemots. Matinicus Rock is host to a rare Atlantic puffin colony.

PASSAGE

Since I first met him over 20 years ago, I have been witness to the deep streak of explorer in my friend Philip Conkling. He and I have shared many voyages and explorations, but there has been one for which I could, in the final reckoning, only stand on the shore and watch him and his family take by themselves. Those of us who love them could only watch, pray and try to "be there" as cancer took Philip's wife, Jamien, and their family on a miraculously life-enriching and, ultimately, life altering journey.

An inveterate journal keeper, Philip has kept various logs since we first started our long trip together. In these pages and elsewhere, through the years, we have shared his voyages — aboard FISH HAWK and RAVEN, through the trials and tribulations of the Institute's growth and changing role, even to remote archipelagoes on Earth's far side.

Philip has kept another sort of "log," a quiet, personal account of his inner explorations, set forth in verse. Jamien's and her family's voyage through the wrenching territory of illness and intensified life forced an immediacy that has been reflected in the poems Philip has written in recent years and, especially, in the year since her death in May, 1999.

In the following pages we share a handful, or heart-full, of those poems. They are brave, sad, haunting and noble; they are awash in love and loss. And as those of us fortunate enough to be closest know, they, like the renewal of spring, now speak increasingly of the return of hope and life and love and faith.

Through immense darkness, a passage, back, slowly, into the light.

Introduction and photographs by Peter Ralston

MAIDEN VOYAGE

I.
During the darkest hours of night,
Always when I am deepest under,
A small animal begins gnawing
Inside the plaster walls by your bed.
And always you are wide eyed,
as if in surprise.
You walk through the house,
gathering the cares of the day
Like little piles of laundry you leave
at the doors of our morning.

II.
I like to think of our first winter
at the Egg House
When I was away in the woods of
the Baskahegan.
You battled the barn rats through
a long siege
Until one finally crept into the
cupboard, knocking a jar to the floor.
You went naked in terror to the
kitchen in high heels
And surprised it between the
tomatoes
Where Tanya broke its neck
in her jaws
And laid it deftly at your feet.

III.
But now the gnawing is deeper.
You walk through the
neighborhood,
And finally into the hills
In your white nightgown
and housecoat.
Sometimes in the hills at night
You take off your coat and gown
In the dark of the moon.
Which makes me smile.
Diana the Huntress,
Coming to death's hearth
like a lover,
Giving yourself up like a virgin
to the night.

May 15, 1999

YOUR ROOM

I crossed the wooden threshold
Of your enormous summer room,
That looks out over golden heaths
Onto miles of empty ocean.
There's a first for everything
these days;
So many, many firsts
Since you finally flickered on
To some greater reward.

Outdoors now is quiet
Where once the pheasant cocks
Woke the dawn from little hillocks
And called us out of
Our sleepy summer coils.
They too must have succumbed
To the winter or the gun.
The heart heaves heavily now
On these stone shores of memory,
Spilling wave after wave
On the rosy lips of our beach.
What could endure here
At this sea-worn edge?
Except gifts from our cells
To ourselves:
Four strong boys
Who fill an empty ocean
With all the antic energy
From grand and broken dreams.
You think: This could be enough
This should be enough
But for your flag waving spirit
That slats at the eyes
In the stinging summer gale.

June 30, 1999

RAVEN'S GORE

The steep stone beach is hot,
Where a yellow wind stirs eddies against
The skin and bones of Brimstone Island.
We have steamed all morning
To be here among the gulls
That scream at us from above.

I choose to bring the children here
To celebrate this Father's Day,
Knowing we will not find you here;
Knowing we can only find you here,
Where we've been so many times before
At this entrance to the island of the dead.

Visits to these cliffs years past always
Felt so large, and time so immense;
Expanding out over the whole ocean
Like inner vision from an immortal hawk.
Days when little boys climbed the hills,
Heads poking from brown grasses
To gain some purchase on this place
Where one world meets the next.
Two decades or more ago
Here before I even knew of you,
Edging around an outcrop,
High above the breaking surf
I came face to face with a raven
Hunched on a narrow ledge
Staring balefully out to sea.

Suspended and motionless,
Neither of us dare breathe
Until the spell is broken
And the raven flings itself
Out into the void,
A broken wing trails uselessly
As it flutters to the sea,
And paddles outward bound
With its one wing waving.
Instantly the gulls are alerted, seeing
Something living, but only partly living.
They wheel and scream:
Raven down! Raven down!
And swoop on the sodden creature
To square accounts for once
With this ancient bird of death.
On its back, it rises up again and again
To greet each new tormenter,
In the agony of its impending doom,
Meeting each feint with an eerie cry
Until a clever pair time their assault
And break its neck from behind.

As we stand here with your ashes,
Three ravens grok about on a lone spruce
And then two more wing in from the west.
Five ravens now over the five of us.
Oh how your numbers have grown!
Here now with you gone
But forty-nine days ago.

I wish there were some way to make peace
Amid these warring fates
That contend for this most sacred space.
Is it your restless spirit or mine
That unleashes these winged furies
Where the sea just pounds the shore?
But, oh!, the sheen this endless rote gives
To brimstones rolled and tumbled
And piled soul-deep on this beach,
Polished parts of lifeless creation,
Now in each chamber of stone
Where I still hear your defiant call
I will carry in the inner ear
With my love to the grave.

JUNE 24, 1999

DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE

Just under the inky black
Surface of the deep,
The boat's phone shorts
This dream into consciousness.
It swamps the holds,
Seeps through floorboards
To lap at my night-gloomed berth.

From that down under place
I had dialed four-one-one,
Asking for a connection
To only God knows whom.
When you miraculously answer
And say quite distinctly,
"But Philip, you know who this is."
Your full voice, your steady gaze
Floods up in waves of grief.
As I try to answer,
But am somehow voiceless,
Pushing only air from
pounding lungs
Through a stricken passage
Of the gaping mouth,
Like a cod gulping air on deck.
Yet I know you heard
The hoarse wind shriek
Through my rigging
Like a gale offshore.

AUGUST 6, 1999

An Island Fellow

Continued from page 15

with my book by the window and relaxed. Once at Cousins I saw a few familiar faces, and had to say hello as our paths crossed, only to look up and see the shuttle pulling away. I stood in the middle of the road looking distraught, until a nice group of people offered me a ride up to my car. Everything ended well, and I had a good weekend, but I've really got to get used to living by the ferries.

We got to the end of the last string of the day. It ran east to west off the southern end of the island in pairs of bright orange buoys. STRIKER had a buoy to match, mounted on her antenna. "This is the greatest job on earth — can't imagine doing anything else but being out here everyday on the water, fishin'," Mattie said. I looked up, all the lobsters measured, banded and put in the hold for the day. His beard came up to his eyes when he smiled. "Just me and my boat, workin' for myself out here doin' what I love. Fish fry tomorrow night at my fish house." He'd brought up a huge cusk fish in one of the traps, and this called for a fry. It flopped on deck, occasionally beating my boot with its tail.

"So, ya ever think about fishin' for a living? Wouldn't that be great, a fisherman ... woman ... from Missouri," Mattie said. I hadn't ever thought of it, and this was actually a half-serious question. I just laughed, not knowing what to say, but loving that he'd asked.

As we came back into the harbor, he asked, "You down by the water the other night around dusk? I take a bottle of champagne up there, up on this guy's porch — he's got great chairs up there - and enjoy his view. He's only around in the summer, shame to waste all that view." I agreed, watching our wake curve and the sun disappear as we came in past the breakwater, back into the harbor nestled between Manana and Monhegan, close enough now really to see the island.

There is island life, and there is mainland life. In the winter the ferry comes twice a week to Monhegan; on Chebeague you have your choice of two ferries any day of the week. But, no matter what the distance, the ferry brings the mainland to the island, and vice versa. As one who travels often between the two, I live by that link, and am learning to understand its degrees.

Isles of Shoals

Continued from page 33

out in the summer it would take her feet at least two days to get used to jumping between rocks. Moving about was no less difficult for earlier inhabitants of the islands. Celia Thaxter observed: "Nearly all Shoalers have a singular gait contracted from the effort to keep their equilibrium while standing on boats, and from the unavoidable gymnastics which any attempt of locomotion amongst rocks renders necessary. Some stiff-jointed old men have been known to leap mildly from broad stone to broad stone on the smooth flat pavements of Portsmouth town."

LETTING GO

In the beginning of May, the open-up crew came back to the island. The sounds of hammering, of generators coughing to a start and the shrill whirring of portable circular saws disturbed the quiet air. By June 15, the THOMAS LEIGHTON started her regular run from Portsmouth, dropping off guests who hustled and bustled about with a mainland urgency. Dave and Edith now needed to adjust to the crowds on their island. One July morning, Edith awoke to find a man standing in her bedroom. He explained that all he wanted to do was listen to her radio. By August, Dave and Edith both looked forward to returning to the privacy and solitude that winter would bring.

After four years, in 1980, they left the bunkhouse and moved into a newly-constructed house on the island. Now they had running water, toilets that flushed, good insulation, electricity and a gas stove, and large windows that looked out over Gosport harbor. They even had a telephone, which Dave later connected to his computer to send e-mail messages ashore. The quality of their life on the island improved, and they settled in, enjoying the solitude even more. "If we had to live in the bunkhouse as we grew older, I don't think we could have stayed there too long," says Edith.

Their friends and family thought that they would stay on the island forever. By the time they both celebrated their 65th birthdays they had been out there 13 years, still with no thoughts of retiring and going ashore. "I thought that Star Island was where they lived, and that's where they would pass," said Margery.

Their son Will knew the deep affection they had for the place. "They loved being part of the island, and letting the island become part of them," he said. He tells of a painting made by a friend, which showed his Dad's head and shoulders set against the rocks and the sea. "It was amazing how the color and the lines on Dad's face were identical with the color and the lines of the rocks behind."

Will noticed that the longer his parents stayed on Star Island, the more they looked at things in a broad sweep. They never seemed to worry too much about the immediate moment. Nature had taught them that the outflowing tide would come back in, that the setting sun would rise for sure tomorrow and that the delights of spring would always return after the harsh days of winter. Things would change, and all they had to do was wait. They knew, even in those moments of deep isolation in the middle of winter, that at the end of spring their friends would always return.

As a nurse, Edith knew that as time went on and she and Dave entered their 70s, the chances of either of them having something happen to them that required immediate medical attention increased considerably. She also knew that during the winter they might have to wait as long as three days before a storm abated or heavy swells subsided sufficiently for someone to come out from the mainland to reach them.

Dave was finding it harder to leap up onto the foredeck of his boat to grab the mooring buoy when he tied up in Gosport harbor. He started thinking of his house ashore, and all the projects he wanted to do there. He started planning to get that place in shape for the next 20 years, for the unexpected "fourth third" of his life. After 18 years on the island, for the first time he suddenly said: "I have had enough of this."

For Edith, the decision to leave the island evolved slowly. She began to miss being involved in social-action activities in the spacious South Street Unitarian church in Portsmouth. She also began to feel the beginnings of a disconnect with Star Island. "I fell in love with the island in the 1960s and 1970s. I still liked the island, but it was not what I had fallen in love with 30 years ago." Modernization had come to the island in the form of a sewage treatment plant, a water treatment plant, smoke detectors and sprinkler systems, and a host of new regulations. "And much of the tradition was gone, those great rituals on the island carried on from pre-war days," said Edith.

By the time they came ashore in October 1994 they had lived on the Isles of Shoals through 17 winters. Dave was 70 and Edith was 71. Edith was ready to say good-bye to her girlhood dream. They were both ready to let go of their island.

Log of Raven

Continued from page 9

keeping a one-room island school open is the difference between whether families stay "on island" or "remove" to the mainland.

As the new millennium dawns, the Maine islands have been blessed by the interest of a new presence in their future. MBNA, the benevolent credit card giant that arrived in Midcoast Maine five years ago, has stepped in to help Frenchboro secure its future after an 850-acre parcel — over half the island — was put up for sale, threatening to tip the delicate balance of this traditional fishing island into the service economy of island caretaking. With help from MBNA and other donors, working with the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and the Maine Seacoast Mission, we have collectively raised sufficient funds to acquire the property, while helping the island secure the funds to renovate the historic island school, church and parsonage.

MBNA has also recently established a pair of grant programs for the 14 year-round island communities: the Island Schools Grant Program and the Island Library Fund. The schools program provides funding for island teachers for projects ranging from enrichment activities to new books and equipment. It also provides scholarship funding for islanders pursuing four-year degrees at Maine colleges. The Island Library Fund provides grants to upgrade collections and facilities, unmatched in the century since Andrew Carnegie helped build some of the original libraries along the coast and islands. These two programs have the potential to make several million dollars of new funding available for island communities. They will also help many families balance the conflicting desires of maintaining traditional island ties while providing their children with access to first-rate educational opportunities both on island and off.

MBNA has also helped the Island Institute move into new offices in Rockland. We hope to use the opportunities presented by new and expanded retail space on Main Street to showcase for members and visitors alike some of the unique treasures from Maine's island communities, especially the products of island culture that have helped sustain and define these isolated communities through the last century, through times both thick and thin.

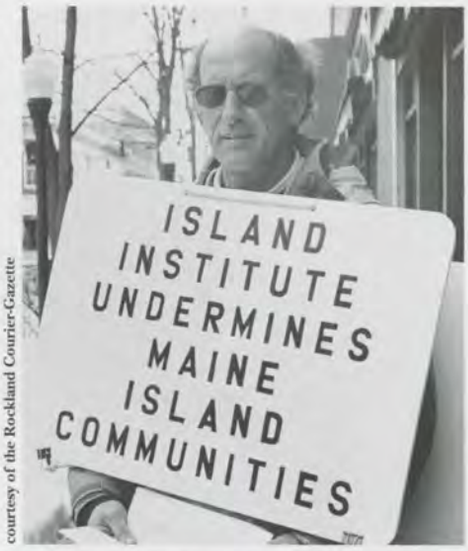
The Island Institute staff c. 1990

The staff in 2000

Finally, we hope to connect islanders with larger electronic markets throughout the "global village" with the Worldwide Web, as distinctive local cultures become increasingly rare in the rest of the world. Check out <www.islandinstitute.org> as our current version of this new interconnected world, where you don't have to live on an island year round to find island products or experience island interactivity; where the distance between the islands of Maine and the island of Manhattan can shrink to the width of a fingertip.

Whatever the future of the Institute and the Maine coast, it is indeed gratifying to know, as we begin the millennium, that island culture maintains its proud and vibrant traditions, and that it has so many friends and admirers scattered throughout an ever shrinking world.

— March, 2000



courtesy of the Rockland Courier-Gazette

The Institute has been in business for nearly two decades, so it wasn't surprising last winter when a solitary picketer showed up to object to something.

KURIL ISLANDS

Continued from page 69

beginnings of one, in this region's culture.

Finally, marine protected areas can play an important role. Such areas need not be large no-fishing zones as in the Kurils and Aleutians. Here in the Gulf of Maine we need a network of smaller, easily identified and easily enforced no-take zones, designed to serve as baseline areas where scientists will, for the first time ever, be able to separate the changes in the system that result from Mother Nature from those caused by humans — from shoreside industry and human waste disposal to recreational activities or commercial fishing.

The costs of creating and maintaining such a network of small areas should be borne widely throughout our society. No matter where within the vast drainages of the Gulf of Maine system we may live and work, we have all played a part in altering its conditions. But without a network of marine protected zones we are likely to continue the endless debates about what forces and activities are causing changes in the Gulf of Maine ecosystem, and which sector should be primarily responsible for undoing the damage.

The Kurils and the Aleutians offer contrasting examples of attempts to protect marine life and can serve as models to teach us much about the Gulf of Maine.

Author of Islands in Time, ***Philip W. Conkling*** *is president of the Island Institute.*

Gary Comer

Kitiwake colony

ROYAL TAR

Continued from page 75

lies somewhere on the bottom of the Gulf of Maine.

In 1991, David Wiberg of Stonington was diving for sea urchins and scallops in an area south of Merchant Row known locally as the Black Ledges. At a depth of about 60 feet he happened upon the charred wreck of a ship that he estimated was around a hundred feet long. He saw neither machinery nor anything that looked like a boiler, but he did salvage a couple of pieces of brass rudder hardware that his friend Clayton Gross dated to around the era of the ROYAL TAR.

A picture of the items Wiberg found was published in a supplement in the September 3, 1992, edition of the *Castine Patriot.* The picture accompanied an article that was headlined "Remains of the ROYAL TAR Found." Two round iron pieces were also salvaged. Gross thought that these might be pieces of a smokestack or parts of a winch. Some charred pieces of wood, probably from the vessel's rudder, were brought up too. According to Gross, at least a couple of large ships burned and sank in Penobscot Bay in the 19th century. Despite the headline, Gross said, neither he nor Wiberg suggested that the wreck near the Black Ledges was definitely the ROYAL TAR, although they say there is a chance it could be.

The Black Ledge shoals are northeast of the area where the ROYAL TAR burned. A sustained northwesterly wind from the direction of Coombs Bluff, Vinalhaven, would not have pushed the wreck northeast toward Merchant Row. It is more likely that the TAR drifted out into the Gulf of Maine and sank in deep water. Between noon and six o'clock, from the time the TAR anchored off Coombs Bluff until the last passenger was brought on board the VETO, the tide was ebbing. While the northwest wind was pushing the TAR, tidal currents were pulling it out of East Penobscot Bay into open water. The wreck drifted south. Residents of Matinicus Island, miles south of Vinalhaven, reportedly were able to see the glowing remains of the ship as it drifted out to sea.

More than two weeks after the fire, on November 12, a brig enroute from Sweden to Boston passed by the charred yet floating wreck of a steamship 75 miles south of Vinalhaven and 15 miles southeast of Cashes Ledge, which is itself 90 miles east of the New Hampshire coast. It was probably the ROYAL TAR, still inside the Gulf of Maine, and might have been the last time the ship was seen. What David Wiberg found among the sea urchins is still a mystery.

Fascination with the legend of the ROYAL TAR persists. As recently as 1995, Bruce Stone published a book for young adults titled *The Autumn of the ROYAL TAR.* Inspired by stories he heard about the burning of the steamship, Stone crafted a short novel about a Vinalhaven girl who helps save the elephant that jumped from the burning steamship. In Stone's story, the elephant swims toward Vinalhaven and becomes stranded on a ledge near shore. The girl and an old island eccentric compel the elephant to swim ashore and they agree to share ownership of the animal. Their joy turns to worry when they consider how much the beast will eat. But the elephant dies of loneliness the following day, sparing the island a shortage of hay. Concern then turns to the problem of burying the elephant. Saving the labor of a hundred island shovels, the carcass is rafted to the center of an island pond and sunk, probably making the water unfit to drink for years. Stone's book is out of print.

At about the same time that David Wiberg and Clayton Gross were puzzling over the wreck below the Black Ledges, legends of the ROYAL TAR inspired Tom Rowe, of folk music trio Schooner Fare, to write a song about the disaster. The song was first performed publicly in Fort Kent, Maine, as a favor to Rowe's friend Jerry White, once superintendent of schools on Vinalhaven.

Rowe said the legends he had heard were confused. Some thought the TAR ran aground on Fiddler's Rock. Some thought pirates were involved. Most people he asked associated the ROYAL TAR with the story of island people long ago who claimed to have seen a ghostly glow in the middle of East Penobscot Bay during late October when there was a northwest wind blowing hard. Despite difficulties he encountered while tracking the truth, Rowe wrote the song because of the universal appeal of danger and drama on the sea, and because maritime tragedies stir our hearts with feelings of compassion and pathos. The most enduring legend of the ROYAL TAR is included in Tom Rowe's song:

"On late October nights when the northwest gales do blow

You can see the ROYAL TAR off Coombs Point all aglow."

Though few, if any, residents of Vinalhaven nowadays claim to have seen the supernatural afterglow of the ROYAL TAR, the legend is a timeless memorial to those who died so close to land on that awful day.

THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

"Strong hardy people, faced by insurmountable natural odds"

Milestone Film
275 West 96th Street, Suite 28C
New York, N.Y 10025
<MileFilms@aol.com>

North of Scotland, beyond the Orkney Islands, lies the region the Romans called ultima thule, the last landfall, "the edge of the world." The phrase made an apt title for British director Michael Powell's 1937 film about the abandonment of the Scottish isles, a process that had begun a generation earlier and would continue until after World War II.

A cast and crew of 23, including Powell, set out for an island called Foula, the Shetland Islands location chosen for their film project, in June of 1936. Weather closed in and put things behind schedule, they lost contact with the mainland and found themselves isolated for weeks. Most slept in wooden huts, a few aboard a steamer anchored offshore. Cast and crew were finally evacuated, after a series of fierce storms, in October.

Powell ended up with 200,000 feet of exposed film. With the help of a gifted editor, Derek Twist, he assembled an 81 minute black-and-white film that is, in a word, a classic: the story of an island community that must surrender to a destiny it can't avoid. The film premiered to great reviews, and was chosen Best Foreign Film in 1937 by the New York Film Critics. A year later, Powell wrote a book about the shooting of the film entitled *200,000 Feet on Foula*. The film itself, however, sank into obscurity until 1978, when the BBC broadcast a shortened version on television and sent Powell back to Foula to shoot a reunion with all of the original participants.

courtesy of Milestone Film

Powell's theme of abandonment in *The Edge of the World* resonates with the experiences of Maine islanders who were, over generations, obliged to leave their communities in order to survive economically. Charles McLane, who chronicled the histories of Maine islands in his series of books, found that islanders on this coast "removed" for a variety of reasons: less need for security from Indian attack, plenty of available farmland on the mainland, the opening of better lands in the West. Compulsory high school obliged many families to leave; technologies such as small engines made it possible to fish efficiently from the mainland. And always, mainland culture offered attractions isolated places could never match. "You have to wonder why they removed," McLane said in an interview in 1997. "The way they romanticized their life on islands — what led them to leave in such large numbers, so quickly?" But they did, and the result, he said, was "a disorientation that affected the entire coast." Between the Civil War and the 1940s, the number of Maine islands occupied year round dwindled from 300 to 14. The parallels with the fictional island community profiled in *The Edge of the World* are striking.

As Michael Powell put it in 1937, "the story I had decided on was the story of strong hardy people, faced by insurmountable natural odds. The peat beds were giving out, trawlers had destroyed the fishing beds, inadequate harvests made bread scarce and the inhabitants were finding it more difficult to live from day to day." A starker picture, perhaps, than one might find on most Maine islands, but nonetheless a cautionary tale of courage against overwhelming odds.

—David D. Platt

REVIEWS

Letters From the Sea 1882-1901

Joanna and Lincoln Colcord's Seafaring Childhood

Parker Bishop Albee, Jr.
Tilbury House, Publishers
Penobscot Marine Museum
192 pages (hardcover)
$35.00

Reviewed by Sandra Dinsmore

Joanna and Lincoln Colcord were born at sea, the offspring of a Searsport, Maine, sea captain who loved sailing the world's oceans and his wife who hated it, though she circumnavigated the globe twice before making the 30-mile trip from Searsport to Bangor. Accordingly, the Colcord children grew up aboard ship, more familiar with foreign ports, Chinese cooks and wind and weather patterns of different trade routes than they were with schoolrooms, Sunday school picnics, or playing with friends their own age.

"No seaman likes to be outsailed," wrote Lincoln Colcord. "Happily for my piece of mind, my boyhood was spent on board a fast ship. She was the clipper bark HARVARD, a low, black-painted craft of a thousand tons register, hailing from Boston. This handsome little vessel was a jewel of seaworthiness and sailing qualities. She would lay up within five points of the wind and sail her best close-hauled; I have seen her beat to windward through a fleet of schooners. She was a marvel in light airs, rarely losing steerage way, slipping through the water at three knots in a breeze that could barely be felt, when other ships were turning around to look at themselves. Best of all, the HARVARD would tack in a teacup, and never was known to miss stays."

"In port, the rooms were full of the knick-knacks beloved in the last century," Joanna wrote, describing the family's quarters. "When the ship sailed, carpets came up, pictures and ornaments were stowed away, furniture was screwed to the floor, and every movable object was chocked off against the motion of the ship."

Sadly, for the children, their mother eventually put an end to their life aboard ship, admitting to her son that she sent him ashore for schooling so he wouldn't go to sea like his father. (She never knew the depths of his anguish the first time he watched his parents and sister sail out of the harbor without him.) Several voyages later, his sister joined him.

The letters Lincoln saved in an attic trunk were written home from 1882 to 1901; they describe the end of the era of sail. After 1903, Capt. Colcord went "into steam," where masters were not allowed to travel with their families.

"Separation between members of families for long periods created a desperate eagerness to hold the absent members close by sharing through letters every minor happening," Joanna once explained. "We children imitated our elders and kept long and detailed journal letters, both at sea and at home, learning in this way to break through the reticence of the average New Englander and describe with some degree of vividness what we saw and experienced. I feel certain that this early training in self-expression had a profound influence in turning both my brother and myself in the direction of writing."

WE ARE THE RICHER FOR IT.

Lincoln and Joanna Colcord spent much of their adult lives preserving their maritime heritage. Joanna compiled the first record of American sea chanteys, *Roll and Go: Songs of American Sailormen*, in 1924, and a second volume in 1938. She also wrote *Sea Language Comes Ashore*, in 1945. Lincoln wrote journalistic accounts of life at sea as well as a number of marine-based novels. His catalogue of ships built in the Penobscot Bay area was published in 1932, as a part of George Wasson's *Sailing Days on the Penobscot: The River and Bay as They Were in the Old Days*. He helped found the Searsport Marine Museum. Family photographs from the museum's collection enrich *Letters From Sea*.

One of the most interesting chapters describes the courses or routes to various ports. Joanna explains the Eastern Passage used by those in the China trade; Lincoln explains the patterns of the different trade winds, the doldrums, the Westerlies. Once safely past those, ships had to face a southwest or northeast monsoon in the China Sea, depending on the time of the year. The Westerlies, which prevailed from south of the South American coast to Australia, were enough to fill the heart of even an experienced captain with trepidation. "Here is found perhaps the roughest sea on any ocean," Lincoln wrote. "The

fury of the endless wind, which blows with destructive violence, the persistence of its attack, and the steadiness of its direction, combine to raise a breaking swell whose height and grandeur impress even the minds of those who have lived upon the sea."

The letters from the Colcords' parents, though, are what concern us here; and perhaps their most eye-opening aspect lies in their utter lack of Victorian reserve.

Captain Lincoln Alden Colcord was one of the last deep water sea captains. That he absolutely adored his wife and children and made no attempt to hide it gives his letters a singular, engaging charm. That he loved his life at sea and described it with skill and verve enables the reader able to feel the breeze or the gale, smell the tea and spice-filled sampans in Hong Kong harbor, and see the scenes he pictures in letters.

In 1899, he had "an eventful voyage." At two degrees south of the equator, his vessel became dismasted. Somehow, he managed to re-rig it, a minor miracle considering his tools: two hatchets, two axes, a plane, an auger and a spoke-shave.

"Well," he wrote his then-teenaged son, "the fun began to clear away the wreck — for a complete wreck it was and no mistake. To start with, the mate was no good. But the second mate and carpenter were all right, and about three men out of the sixteen knew a little, or were as good as the ordinary run of sailors. [Capt. Colcord held ordinary seamen in low regard as they usually lacked experience and tended to be drunk when in port.]

"The fore royal mast came down whole," he continued, "so I spliced that onto the stump of the main royalmast, and all was complete at the main again. We made a new foretopmast and lower topsail yard, out of spare on deck; and out of the broken lower-topsail yard made a fore topgallant and royalmast in two pieces. I can't tell you all the little jobs and difficulties we had to overcome in rigging up. We crossed the Equator three times, twice heading to the southward and once N. E., and lost just 19 days — from the mishap until we were back in the same latitude again, with the fore-topgallant sail set. And a big job it was, too."

Mrs. Colcord also adored her family, but many of her letters are filled with [well-founded] fears for her husband's safety when she wrote him from Searsport and [probably unfounded] fears for her children's health when they were ashore and she at sea. Perhaps her most moving letter explained why she would accompany her husband on a voyage. "There is not one man in a thousand who thinks of his family as Papa does," she wrote Lincoln. "He said on the boat yesterday, that he didn't feel right about taking me away, when you children are so unhappy. I know that if I said the word, I could stay at home; but I don't want to, dear boy. I want to be with our dear good Papa, who would do anything in the world for us, no matter how hard or disagreeable. If you all are well, it is my duty to go with him; but I am not by any means making it a matter of duty. Always, your loving, Mamma."

Clearly, the Colcords loved one another dearly, and that love shines through every page of the book. No wonder the children turned out so well. I enjoyed *Letters From Sea* from cover to cover, and so should readers of all ages.

Small Boats, Smaller Places to Sail Them

The Maine Coast Guide for Small Boats: Casco Bay

By Curtis Rindlaub
Diamond Pass Publishing, 2000
275 pages
$17.95

Reviewed by David D. Platt

Curt Rindlaub has set himself an ambitious task: researching, writing and publishing a set of six guidebooks, one for each of the Maine coast's distinct regions.

Rindlaub is already familiar with the entire coast, of course: following Hank Taft's death several years ago, he took on Hank and Jan Taft's *Cruising Guide to the Maine Coast*, and has now co-authored two editions of that classic, a standard (along with Roger Duncan's *Cruising Guide to the New England Coast*) aboard larger cruising boats in these waters.

The Maine Coast Guide for Small Boats, as its name implies, is designed for "gunkholers" — people who like to explore in small sailboats, canoes, kayaks, small outboards — and their never-ending need to find places even more out-of-the-way than those they visited last season. The book covers the region that lies between Cape Elizabeth (Portland Head Light) and Cape Small, a rhumb line distance of less than 14 miles. But as everyone knows, the shoreline distance is hundreds of miles greater than that, encompassing everything from urban Portland and the rivers that flow into its harbor and the Presumpscot estuary to the remote, highly complex landforms that make up the northeast quadrant of Casco Bay.

Like most standard guidebooks, Rindlaub's is structured geographically. He moves eastward from Portland, along shore, out to islands, up rivers. Along the way there's the occasional diversion: short sidebars on historical topics, island families, tuna, pogies, terns, shipwrecks and the like.

Rindlaub has a responsibility to warn his readers about some of the Maine coast's special qualities: its fragile places, particularly islands with thin soils; its weather and the danger it poses to the unwary or inexperienced person in a small boat; the peculiarities of public access, particularly on the islands that are privately owned but open to the public. He does a good job on all counts, providing his readers with weather lore, information about local customs (never haul a lobster pot), and the need to respect islanders' and coastal residents' privacy.

There is an ample index. One appendix lists organizations the traveler should know about; others list emergency numbers, pump-out stations (only seven in all of Casco Bay!), boat rentals, fishing laws, launching ramps, fuel services and restaurants. All in all, this book represents a remarkable research project, well assembled. It will be a real addition to my own boat's little bookshelf.

ISLAND INSTITUTE

Supporting the Islands and Communities of the Gulf of Maine

The nonprofit Island Institute serves as a voice for the balanced future of the islands and waters of the Gulf of Maine. We are guided by an island ethic that recognizes the strength and fragility of Maine's island communities and the finite nature of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

Along the Maine coast, the Island Institute seeks to

- support islands' year round communities
- conserve island and marine biodiversity for future generations
- develop model solutions that balance the needs of the coast's cultural and natural communities
- provide opportunities to discuss the responsible use of finite resources and provide information to assist competing interests in arriving at constructive solutions

The Island Institute focuses its programs and resources on the Gulf of Maine and its communities. Programs are for year-round islanders, fishermen, students and teachers, scientists and resource managers, summer residents, island property owners, coastal communities, state and municipal agencies, boat owners and island visitors.

The Institute's Community Initiatives programs help island communities remain viable through:

- support of island schools, libraries and other community institutions
- scholarships for island residents
- long-range planning and special economic development projects
- legislative action
- information resources linking island towns, property owners and state and federal resource agencies on a variety of issues including transportation, water quality and solid waste.

Programs in Marine Resources confront the challenges and opportunities facing fisheries, aquaculture and working waterfronts. The program staff:

- collects critical marine habitat data
- monitors marine conservation legislation
- helps manage a groundfish stock enhancement effort
- supports Gulf of Maine fishermen in researching and managing the fisheries upon which they depend
- tests new opportunities in small-scale aquaculture

Through its Information program, the Institute produces the annual *Island Journal*; a monthly newspaper, *Working Waterfront*; as well as books on a regular basis. It maintains a comprehensive geographic information system database on the islands and waters of the Gulf of Maine, including natural resource data collected from satellite imagery. Visitors to the Institute's website at **<www.islandinstitute.org>** can learn more about the organization's activities and access a full on-line version of Working Waterfront.

Twenty-eight percent of the Institute's FY 99-00 operating budget of approximately $2.5 million is expected to come from annual membership dues and from personal and corporate donations, 52 percent from foundations and 20 percent from earned income (publications, conferences, consultations, service contracts, etc.). The Institute's earned income is substantially greater this year because of a contractual agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to provide marine-resource research services in Penobscot Bay. The Institute's annual report, listing members and presenting the financial picture in detail, is available upon request.

BOAT DONATIONS

Over the years, the occasional donation of vessels has significantly enhanced our boat operations. Such gifts result either in boats we keep and use, or boats we convert into the funds necessary to run our existing fleet. Either way, should you be in a position to consider such a gift, we'd like to hear from you.

ISLAND INSTITUTE

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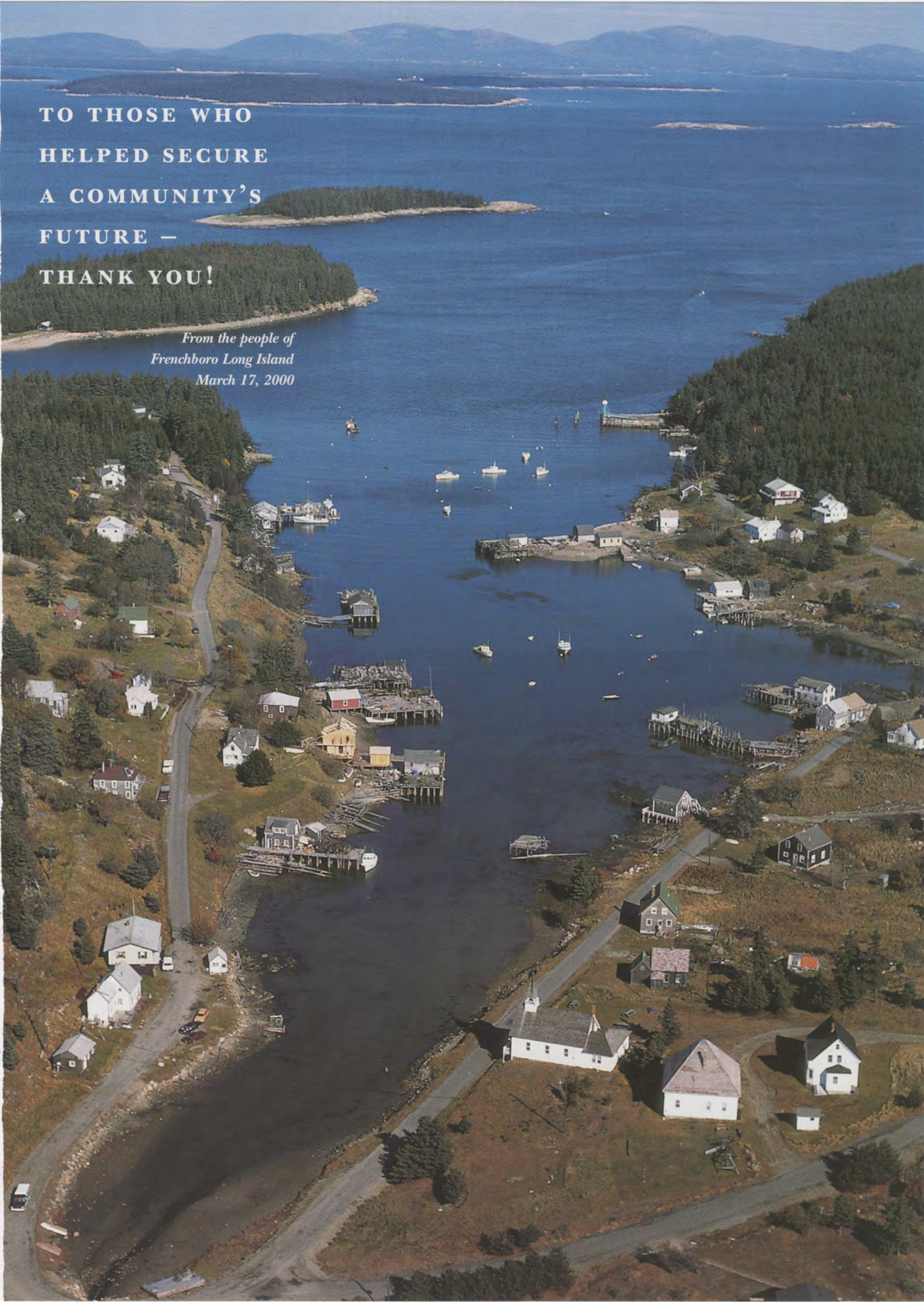
MEMBERSHIP

Membership participation from a variety of people is the only way to sustain a balanced organization, and we welcome your involvement in any capacity. Become a member — or call, write or stop in to ask for further details regarding our programs, or how you can help through donations or volunteering.

PLANNED GIVING

Contributing to the Island Institute through a planned giving program can provide a significant tax break while at the same time sustaining the communities and environment of the Gulf of Maine for years to come. Depending on the nature of the gift, it may generate a better return as a charitable gift than it did as a highly appreciated asset in your portfolio. The Island Institute offers a wide variety of planned giving options suited to your needs.


TO THOSE WHO
HELPED SECURE
A COMMUNITY'S
FUTURE –
THANK YOU!
From the people of
Frenchboro Long Island
March 17, 2000

$14.95

Peter Ralston

COME SPRING TIDE

An easterly gale drove her ashore
And ground her on the edge of our cove.
They emptied her hold, leaving her lines
For the worms and the waves
And the winter sea ice
To work away at her seams.
She laid there a year, an immovable wreck
While we hunched like gulls on the beach.

It's old fishermen who know
It's not luck, but the fates
That rule the quick and the dead.
And each Easter will fall
Following full moon,
After the equinox of spring.
Then the cod come ashore
From the dark and the deep,
And mix new life in the shoals.

When the tide's far down,
On the spring of the moon,
The sea leaps back with a surge.
With a heaving groan on the slatting wind,
She grinds up off her grave.
Somewhere out there in the gloom of the bay
A ghost hull is moving on
Like a will-of-the-wisp
On the spring's sweet kiss,
And a moon tide that floats us all free.

PHILIP CONKLING
MARCH 28, 2000

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