



STAR ISLAND NEWSLETTER

Star Island Corporation • Fall 2011 • Volume XXXVII, Issue 3

Our mission since 1916 is to hold and administer Star Island and other properties we acquire for religious, educational and kindred purposes.

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Edited & produced by Jon Wahlgren with invaluable assistance from all contributors. Thank you!

Hurricane Irene proved no match for Star crew

Preparations began in earnest on Friday afternoon when it became clear that Hurricane Irene was on a path toward New England.

Conference Center Manager Justina Maji was stationed in the lobby directing the effort to close the Island down, in what became a dress rehearsal for the end of season shut down to come a month later. Down came the flagpoles. Outdoor furniture and equipment were piled into the lobby and Elliott Hall. All of the floats and small boats were taken in. Windows and doors were boarded up as though the



Hurricane Irene versus Star Island. Jack Farrell photo.

end of the season had arrived. The last of the guests left as scheduled on Saturday morning, and final preparations were made for what had the potential to be a major

weather event. A skeleton crew of eleven intrepid souls, all of whom had volunteered, were selected to ride the storm out on the Island. These included

Please turn to page 3 for more

The last days, last hours, last minutes...

As we pulled away from the island on the luggage boat Sunday, Sept. 18, for the last time in 2011, I was struck by the activity you could see from the dock: traditional dancers, yoga practitioners, musicians playing, people knitting, children running and some bopping to the music — all those elements that make for a wonderful week on Star Island.

Images from the last weekend are typical of the summer:

• Brownie scouts hiding in

- the bushes and playing hide-and-seek,
- A local author doing final edits on her book from a rocking chair “desk” on the front porch,
- A family visiting the new Memorial Courtyard to reflect on their ancestor’s role on Star,
- Volunteers tackling the painting of the flag pole, and discussing world affairs,
- The last swimmers screaming their way into the water, and sunning like lizards on the warm rocks of our

- “beach”,
- Parents calling for children who are seeking the last minutes of Star Island time,
- Staff beginning the “close-up” rituals as screens come down, wind covers are secured, and the hotel porch is prepared for the boarding up of all the windows,
- And finally, the last chapel service is completed, and the lanterns are stowed away for another summer.

Please turn to page 6 for more

BECOME A STAR ISLAND AMBASSADOR

The Ambassador Program is a group of active volunteers seeking to share their love of Star Island with potential new visitors. Generate interest in Star Island through fun events within your community! For information, visit www.facebook.com/StarIslandAmbassadors.

Remembering 9/11: A Poet on Star Island

By Steven Ratiner

I've been coming to Star Island for thirty summers now. At first, I attended the Arts Conference, invited several times to teach the poetry workshop but later to enjoy my own personal writing retreat. But for the past decade or so, I visit Star each September during Midweek II for a period of writing, solitude and reflection. Though unaffiliated with any religious institution off-island, I think of the Gosport Chapel as the only congregation I've truly felt a part of since I was a boy.

And so on that brilliant blue morning which inaugurated Midweek, September 11th, 2001, I was sitting in the empty Chapel after the morning service chatting with Mary Lou; I was asking her questions about the rickety pump organ she plays to accompany the hymns. I'd quietly begun the first lines of a poem about the organ during the service, and now chatted happily, trying to make sure I accurately understood how the instrument really worked. When someone entered and overheard the tone of our conversation, they stared at us and said simply: "You don't know, do you?"

Later on, after learning all the details of the day's awful events, I returned to the Chapel and found my organ poem spilling

onto the page, but radically transformed by the grief of the day. The following week, I read the poem, "On the Morning We'd Heard They'd Blown Up The World" on a WBUR-Boston radio program. And so now, on the tenth anniversary of the WTC attack, WBUR was putting together a set of brief interviews, remembering the tragedy and considering the effects it's had on our lives. My story, one of 500 submitted, was selected to be one of five produced for airing. Normally they record such conversations at the radio studio or at the subject's home – but I talked them into returning with me to Star where, I promised, even a sound-portrait of the island – gulls, bell buoys, sea-surge, the throaty voice of the pump organ – might convey something of the spirit of the place. Neither the producer nor videographer had ever visited the island before and so, in mid-August, we took The Uncle Oscar out to Star and spent three hours recording all around the island.

It's a beautiful little piece, with Ali, a young Pel, substituting for Mary Lou at the organ (who was not able to attend.) Unfortunately, the edited version did not provide the panoramic vision of the whole island that I'd hoped for – such is the necessity of so brief a broadcast segment – but Gosport Chapel is shown in

ONLINE

To read Steven's full poem and to watch the video produced by WBUR, visit starisland.org/news.

all its simple beauty. And it does convey the living metaphor we who love Star have long felt; as the poet John Donne once wrote: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." As isolated as we felt on that terrifying morning, we somehow experienced as well an uncanny sense that we were intimately linked to Americans everywhere, part of a vast family experiencing the shock of loss and the yearning for relief. Though my poem never specifically mentions the tragedy (aside from its elliptical title), my hope is that the sound-scape it captures is the music of a wounded soul seeking expression in the shared world.

Steven Ratiner is a poet and educator, conducting poetry residencies each all around New England for students and teachers. His collection of interviews Giving Their Word: Conversations with Contemporary Poets has been re-issued in paperback. He is completing work on a new collection of poems Island Eyes – Poems from Thirty Summers on Star Island.

Stay connected with the Shoaler community year-round online

With the 2011 summer season passed we hope that you were able to catch up with the Star community during your visit this year, but did you know about all of the other ways to stay connected to Star Island conferences, events and Shoalers during the rest of the year?

Facebook is a great way to keep in touch with friends, and we've set up a number of ways for you to keep in touch with not only us but fellow Shoalers as well. Star

Island Corporation, the Ambassadors program and Gosport Regatta event each have their own home on Facebook available through www.facebook.com/starislandcorp.

Many of the conferences can also be found on Facebook, including YAC, Youth Empowerment and Spiritual



Health (YES, formerly YRUU), Isles of Shoals Historical and Research Association, Pelicans are Pelicans, Natural History, International Affairs, All Star I 2011, Write by the Sea – Joyce Maynard, Historic Star, LGBTQ and Clergy.

And those looking for gifts, souvenirs and mementos can shop for gifts year-round online through the Star Island Gift Shop at <http://shopsonstar.com/>.

Passages



Courtesy photo

Bethany Soule married Mitch Duyser on June 18th, 2011 on Cape Cod.

Carol Allen passed away on July 11, 2011. She was a former YPRUer and had been a Pelican in the 1930s.

Richard V. "Dick" Wilson passed away on July 31, 2011.

Dick attended LOAS along with his son and daughter-in-law, Rick and Wendy.

Jeannette Hopkins passed away on August 4, 2011. A renowned book editor and social justice advocate, Jeannette attended the IRAS conference in the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

Catherine (Katie) Nelson passed away on December 26, 2010. She was a long-time Natural History Conference and Arts conferee.

Emily Leber Conlon passed away on August 19, 2011. Emily spent many happy summers with her family on Star Island.

Five generations of Shoalers



Courtesy photo

Making up five generations are great-great-grandmother Marge Millett, 94, who lives with daughter Lesley Morcombe of Hillsboro; Kimberly Phoenix of York, Maine, granddaughter; Ashley Menard of York, Maine, great-granddaughter, and Abbey Rose Menard of York, Maine, great-great-granddaughter.

Weathering Hurricane Irene (cont'd. from page 1)

representatives from the medical staff, buildings, maintenance, IT, wastewater and the kitchen. Jack Farrell acted as Island Manager, happy to have the chance to see his first big blow on Star.

The Perseverance left the Island late on Saturday afternoon with the last of the shore-bound crew to ride out the weather safely at the dock at Portsmouth. The weather was still calm at that time, but the air felt especially damp and heavy. The sky was grey with warm tropical clouds streaming across it, pushed out ahead of the approaching low pressure. The Island crew settled into Elliot Memorial Hall to await Irene's arrival. A buddy system was imposed for travel beyond the immediate buildings. By dark, a breeze had picked up from the Southeast and the seas were beginning to rise outside of the breakwater.

During the night the wind continued to rise and first light revealed an impressive scene. The largest breakers sent white water more than half way up the tower at White Island. The storm's path over Long Island and inland

through New England resulted in Irene's soon weakening into a tropical storm. The wind peaked late in the afternoon on Sunday. Sustained winds were in the fifty knot range with occasional gusts to sixty.

In spite of it, the situation on Star never seemed especially dangerous. Through it all, Gosport Harbor remained free of large waves. The huge breakers rolling in from the Southeast thundered into, over and through the breakwater, leaving the inner third of the harbor white with foam. In the afternoon, the crew went out together to the Smith Monument to watch the seas roll in. Wave heights turned out to be less than predicted, but were still in the ten to twenty foot range, rolling in fast and grey and ferocious. The sea to the Southeast was amazing to behold. Salt spray filled the air and the ground shook when the largest waves hit the shore.

The wind shifted into the Southwest during Sunday night, becoming gusty as the storm pulled away. It blew hard enough during the night to blow small boats around the lawn a bit and flip the 16' aluminum skiff right over.

Damage from Irene was limited to one



Pels board up the windows of the Oceanic Hotel in preparation of Irene. Emma Whitford photo.

of the outfall lines below the main pump station being ripped from its moorings by the waves and surge. It was easily repositioned when the seas went down. Monday saw the return of much of the crew and a rapid reversal of the close-down process. The Island was back to normal and ready for business by Tuesday. Those of us who were privileged to remain on Star for the show were reminded of the awesome power present even in a downgraded storm such as Irene, and the isolated and exposed nature of our facility.

Memorial Courtyard christening and service of remembrance

Shoalers have long talked of having a place on Star Island to memorialize loved ones. The new and beautiful Memorial Courtyard is a treasured addition to the island that will serve many generations in honoring ancestors in the most dignified way. A specially designed compass rose sits in a sea of rock upon which Shoalers may place memorial stones engraved with the names of those remembered.

Debbie Weiner Soule read aloud the following meditation, titled “Set in Stone” by Victoria Safford from the book *Walking Toward Morning*, for the christening ceremony and service of remembrance held during this year’s Pelican Reunion conference:



The new Memorial Courtyard. Bruce Parsons photo.

In a cemetery once, an old one in New England, I found a strangely soothing epitaph. The name of the deceased and her dates had been scoured away by wind and rain, but there was a carving of a tree with roots and branches (a classic nineteenth-century motif) and among them the words, “She attended well and faithfully to a few worthy things.”

At first this seemed to me a little meager, a little stingy on the part of her survivors, but I wrote it down and have thought about it since, and now I can’t imagine a more proud or satisfying legacy.

“She attended well and faithfully to a few worthy things.”

Every day I stand in danger of being struck by lightning and having the obituary in the local paper say, for all the world to see, “She attended frantically and ineffectually to a great many unimportant, meaningless details.”

How do you want your obituary to read?

“He got all the dishes washed and dried before playing with his children in the evening.”

To learn how you can commemorate a loved one with a courtyard stone, contact Angela Matthews at amatthews@starisland.org

“She balanced her checkbook with meticulous precision and never missed a day of work—missed a lot of sunsets, missed a lot of love, missed a lot of risk, missed a lot—but her money was in order.”

“She answered all her calls, all her e-mail, all her voice mail, but along the way she forgot to answer the call to service and compassion, and forgiveness, first and foremost of herself.”

“He gave and forgave sparingly, without radical intention, without passion or conviction.”

“She could not, or would not hear the calling of her heart.”

How will it read, how does it read, and if you had to name a few worthy things to which you would attend well and faithfully, what, I wonder, would they be?

FRIENDS HONORED

Candles were lit in remembrance of the following Shoalers during the service of remembrance:

Bob Allen	Ruth Koe
Carol Allen	Harry Lent
Jean Caldwell	Fred McGill
Albert Doolittle	Ginny McGill
Edith Doolittle	Theo Nash
Bob Frost	Lenny Reed
Hildreth Frost	Lyman Rutledge
Rozzie Holt	

The following placed the first stones in the Memorial Courtyard in honor of loved ones:

Bob Holt, for Rozzie Holt
Melanie Elliot, for Edith Doolittle
Dick Case, for Albert Doolittle
Ben Soule, for Fred McGill
Deb Weiner Soule, from Susy Mansfield, for Ginny McGill
Kate Brady, for Ruth Koe

Shining the Star: The Promise Fulfilled

Over the summer, many conferees attended a debrief and progress report on the Shining the Star capital campaign. Evidence of the results of the campaign were apparent everywhere on Star beginning with the new roof on the Oceanic. It's the first thing you see as the M/V Thomas Lighton approaches the pier and it is impressive.

And only on Star would a bathroom be a new tour highlight. The second floor bathroom of the Oceanic is a gem of a renovation that sets a new standard for capital projects. The new floors in the Founders units even inspired a group of All Star I volunteers to purchase the supplies and donate the labor to expand the Founders deck. And a restricted gift supported the creation of a new Memorial Courtyard, an area located behind Marshman and reclaimed from a former stone-surrounded garden or animal pen. A more complete update of campaign progress



The new red roof on the Oceanic Hotel was paid for using your contributions to the Shining the Star campaign. Thank you!

can be found at the Star Island Web site: starisland.org/donating/capitalcampaign. All that has been accomplished to date has been raised quietly from the pledges and gifts of 125 Shoalers, a grant from the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, and two foundations, McIninch and Hunt.

In 2012, we will invite all Shoalers to join in support of this important work. The Spring appeal will be for both the Annual Fund and for the Capital Campaign. Leadership of each conference is already talking about things like adopting a project or two

to finish up the many things that need to be done so that we can stabilize the infrastructure for the next generation of Shoalers. Your commitment to the Annual Fund is the most important commitment to maintain. A pledge to the capital projects and the Shining the Star campaign should be added on rather than subtracted from it. We ask you to be thinking about what you can do to increase your giving to Star for a period of three years and help us secure Star for the future.

*Angela Matthews
Director of Development*

Starry Night 2011 brings together fine arts, jewelry and hops

The Star Island Corp., in cooperation with Sam Adams Brewery, is proud to announce Starry Night 2011, our third annual event celebrating art, hops and harvest flavors.

This year, Starry Night returns to the Discover Portsmouth Center on November 19 with a ceramics exhibition by the Banks Gallery in Portsmouth and also features a select group of jewelers showing their unique hand-crafted pieces. RAIN for the Sahel and Sahara will also display their work. RAIN is an international non-governmental organization that works with women artisans of the Sahel and Sahara to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The evening will also feature the savory Mediterranean food of Café Nostimo in Portsmouth as well as a choice selec-

tion of Samuel Adams beer for tasting. Musical entertainment will be provided by jazz duo Kemp Harris and Scotty Vercoe who bring their own spin on genre classics.

The evening begins at 5:15 p.m. at the Discover Portsmouth Center, 10 Middle Street. Make your reservations by calling the Star Island office at (603) 430-6272 or by emailing office@starisland.org. Tickets are \$30/person in advance or \$40 at the door. VIP Preview tickets are \$50/person and allow admission at 4:00 p.m. and early access to the jewelry and ceramics displays for the ideal opportunity to view and purchase the best pieces before someone else does.

Join us for a Starry Night filled with art, flavor and fun!

ISLAND MAGIC IN YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS

Are you longing to help with the Starry Night fundraising event but live too far from Portsmouth? No problem! You can host Starry Night in your own neck of the woods.

All you need is a place, a time and date, and a theme. There are lots of possibilities for bringing Shoalers of all ages together for fun while raising some funds for Star Island.

There are no restrictions. Pick a date that works for you. We'll help you with a mailing or email blast to the Shoalers in your area. Call us at (603) 430-6272 and let us know your plans!



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Timothy Barmann photo. For more, visit <http://www.barmannphotography.com>.

Volunteer spotlight: Ginger Dixon

By Ginger Dixon

“Are you a PELICAN?” the little girl asks in disbelief, eyeing my gray hair. “Well, sort of,” I say, “an OLD Pelican.” She and her mother have returned to their room after lunch to find me emptying the wastebasket and sweeping their floor, on afternoon rounds as a member of the housekeeping crew. I explain that I’m an end-of-season volunteer, helping to fill in for many of the regular season Pels who leave Star to return to college in mid- or late-August.

My husband, George, and I have been attending conferences for over twenty years, but my many years of volunteering have been a great way to spend extra time on my favorite island. It has taught me just how much work goes into providing for all the conferees and guests, and I have a new appreciation for how hard the Pels and staff work behind the scenes. While housekeeping is not my favorite task at

home, the view of the ocean out of almost every window makes it, if not exactly a pleasure, at least well worth the effort. Getting to know the Pels is another plus – appreciating their creativity and the camaraderie and bonds they develop over the summer.

The opportunity to be close to the ocean, to watch those gorgeous sunsets and to be a part of the island is precious. But being an end of season volunteer is not all vacation! For six or seven hours a day, six days a week, I’m just another person doing what’s needed to keep the island and the conferences running. So at night I climb the stairs to my room on the third floor, (how do those stairways become longer and steeper as the day wears on?), lie down on the bed, and listen to the fog horn and the waves on the rocks. I forget the tired muscles and think about how much I enjoy the extra time I’m able to spend on Star.

Last days, last hours, last minutes: A message from the CEO (cont’d)

In these tough times, it is important to remember the peace, solace, and sense of “place” that Star Island holds in our memories through the dark winter months, and the challenges of living in

a world where many people do not have a “Star Island” home to cherish...

Thanks for a great summer, and we look forward to seeing you and your families next year. The planning has

already begun for the 115th season on our beloved island!

Cheers from the staff,

Vicky Hardy
Star Island CEO