



STAR ISLAND NEWSLETTER

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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 Brian Winters with invaluable assistance from all contributors. Thank you!

A Pel's Reminiscence: Summer, 1952

In 1952 (such ancient history), I had never been to Portsmouth, never mind knowing anything about the Isles of Shoals; however, the Unitarian Youth Group I belonged to in Nashua, NH, was led by some very charismatic men who inspired me to throw myself whole hog into flinging “the banner of youth.” So off I went where no one I knew had gone before...to be a Pelican on Star Island!

The Koboko braved all kinds of weather to transport us, a welcoming committee sang us ashore and a new life blossomed before me. We girls lived in “The Shack.” right on the rocks, a stone’s throw from the ocean. It was on those rocks that I read and wrote poetry in my time off. I wished all summer for the drama of real storm but none came. When it rained hard you would find many of us in our bathing suits, a bar of soap in our hands, on the front porch where the roof only covers half of the porch, taking impromptu showers. Lying in my top

bunk on the top floor of my abode, I felt closer to God than anywhere in the world.

I had just graduated from high school and had spent the two previous summers as a waterfront counseor at a Girl Scout Camp. To keep up my Red Cross Certification, I taught swimming at the small beach to two of the administrators kids. It took 5 minutes for them to get wet in the freezing water, 5 minutes to practice what I taught, then OUT.

As a waitress, I noticed that Wednesday nights brought a lot of neophyte lobster eaters face to face with that huge, red bug, so I suggested to the hostess that if she would put such conferees at my table, I would give lobster eating lessons. This I did! I was able to make sure that not a scrap of lobster meat went into the stainless steel bowls. Also, noting that many people at other tables, after separating the claws and tail, threw the whole body into the bowl, my friends and I devised a rescue plan.

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Photo courtesy Brian Winters

From the President



Photo courtesy Jeff Spoor

Can the glass can be half empty and half full at the same time? I am so optimistic for the future of Star and, at the same time, I have some concerns. Now, that I am in the last few months of what will be nine years on the Star Island Corporation Board of Directors (the only person on the board elected in the last century!), I have some perspective on the changes within the board itself, in our professional leadership and the many changes on Star Island itself.

With the Vision 2000 strategic plan, we articulated our deepest values and hopes for Star Island. We developed strategies and action plans around each of them and we accomplished so much. This strategic plan brought us to the point of more sustainable staff organization and progress in many other areas—especially our understandings and actions with finance, facilities, Pelican relations and hospitality. At the same time, we coped with very major unforeseen and unavoidable projects—the pier repair, complicated and costly Oceanic and Gosport fire safety renovations, installation of our own water treatment plant, the grounding our electrical system, lightning protection and finding a new boat company to transport conferees. And, we also dealt with emergencies like the lightning strike that, in destroying our fire board, almost closed us down and a storm that blew the Well

House away and sent a chimney through the roof of a truck—just to name two of the more dramatic occurrences.

I have had a bird's eye view of how hard staff and the board have worked over the last nine years. I believe we have been prudent and focused. The world has changed and the way we do business has had to change. Yet our soul, the spirit of Star is strong—sparked long in the past when few people were aware of our rocky island, even before there was such a thing as non-profit, 501(3)c status, before their was an EPA and DES and Fire Marshals honing in on us. We are not running on empty!

So, is the glass at half full? I guess I come back to the life affirming values we articulated in Vision 2000, especially what we said about needing to find a balance between values that are often in conflict. We talked about sustaining creatively this tension by finding a way to hold two desirable but conflicting values at once. While it is key that we do so in many areas—for example, we must attend to revenues and fundraising to remain in business, but we also must remain affordable), I am not sure this is possible in all areas. Decisions must be made that gratify some and disappoint others even when the underlying values on both sides are commendable (for example, preserve the Chapel as is vs. increase occupancy). My

concern is about how we move forward in the face of disappointments and differences about the right or the best way.

The more openly and transparently the SIC communicates, the more differences of opinion are surfaced and, sometimes they are expressed harshly or as a demand. While we are moving towards ways to differ constructively, change often requires that choices be made and we need to work harder at how we communicate and relate when we don't agree. These differences can be in areas of concern to a few or to one or two constituencies of Shoalers—like what kinds of flowers are planted and where a flower bed is located or the start date of the first conference which mostly affects the first and last conferences. Or, they can affect the whole community—like how we go about fundraising or what is done or not done to enhance accessibility and occupancy and, even more abstractly, how we go about being stewards of the Shoals.

Staff and board continue to grapple with how we can retain our spiritual values and also be well run. We have an extremely competent executive director who listens, hears and takes into account the many opposing points of view that Shoalers forward to her. The board too listens for the underlying value being supported and attends to the input it receives in order

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From the President (Continued from page 2)

to make the best decision possible. As we work on challenging issues, I hope we will all honor each other in the ways that our UCC and UU traditions teach us. I know we will move forward with good decisions and in right relationship if we continue our discourse with respect for the dignity and diversity of each individual & his/her perspective and with trust that decisions are made after careful consideration of all perspectives.

Now, we are beginning to plan anew for the next Star "era." We learned a great deal from writing, implementing, reviewing, refining & further implementing Vision 2000. We are poised to write Vision 2016, a much more specific, measurable, goal-oriented plan. The board met on island as usual this summer to begin this new strategic planning process that we hope will take us, in stages, to the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Star Island Corporation. Initially, our planning will focus on the first three to five years to be continued later through review and additions in subsequent years.

The board was joined at its retreat on February 16 and 17 by staff and other Shoalers representing various segments of our many communities to lay out the major strategic areas and to form work groups to further refine and prioritize what we plan to accomplish. We are grateful that long time conferees Sally Russell (IA) and Jim Prochaska (ASII) facilitated the retreat. As with Vision 2000, we envision Vision 2016 as a plan that will strengthen the life affirming qualities that Star embodies at both a spiritual and a pragmatic level. We again look forward to involving major segments of the Star community in the process at various points along the way. I hope you will stay tuned and contribute your thoughts and ideas even as you know that others may be presenting ones that are diametrically opposite of yours.

The past year was very successful year in terms of welcoming new staff, appreciating staff in new roles, and hosting excellent conferences from June through September. Each year has had its challenges and they will, of course, continue. I am very encouraged by our now not-so-

new Executive Director's ability to work on so many fronts that are critical to our safe, increasingly well-maintained and hospitable operations. Amy, Joe and the rest of the senior staff along with next seasons Pelicans will be a strong team in summer 2007. This year probably challenged us financially in a way that we haven't been challenged for a while—with its double whammy of equipment failure and weather-related losses. We go forward with many sound ideas about doing a better job with maintenance and about the impact of this year's deficit on cash flow come spring—but we are confident that our increasingly better planning and the support of Shoalers will carry us into summer 2007, if not with ease, with a Star spirit of determination and style.

In addition to the important work of strategic planning, there is much to be done. Yes, the glass is more than half full. Star spirit, our Star soul, will prevail. Your time, treasure, voice and support are most welcome and needed.

With Star spirit,

—Irene Bush

Passages

Births

Liam Scott Barry, born to UCC conferees **Jenny Giering** and **Sean Barry** on September 28, 2006. Jenny has been a conference co-director with her father, former SIUCC President **Warren Giering**.

Deaths

Marie Bestul, one of the original "porch rockers" and Life on a Star conferee since 1963, on January 19th at the age of 84. She created many beautiful pieces cross-stitch on the island and is survived by her husband of 59 years, **Alden**, as well as four children and seven grandchildren.

Phil Carson, "accidental Shoaler" and husband of **Buffy Bierman Carson**, on February 19 at the age of 65. He was known for his barbershop-style singing and wonderful sense of humor.

Ruth Koe, co-founder of the Star Island Gift Shop and devoted Shoaler since the 1930's, on January 15th at the age of 88½. After first visiting the island with a church youth group while in high school, she volunteered and worked in many different jobs over the years on Star. She was influential in starting several conferences' children's programs in the 1950's. She volunteered for many years on-island and worked for the Star Island Corpo-

ration for 30 years. She founded the gift shop (as we know it today) with her best friend, Edith Doolittle, and spent many years there and serving on the Gift Shop Committee. She is survived by her daughter, **Nancy Searle**, five grandchildren (**Melanie Elliot**, **Kate Brady**, **Phelan Brady**, **Judi Searle**, and **Rick Searle**) and one great-grandchild, **Patrick Elliot**.

Mayno Sorensen, nurse and long-time Shoaler, on December 8th at the age of 70. She is survived by her loving friend of 50 years, **Dan Sorensen**, and their three children, **Kirsten**, **Erik**, and **Tove**.

☒

From the Executive Director

I had the pleasure of spending a windy chilled day on Star Island yesterday. I am pleased to report that although the skies have been their typical winter grey, the winter has been mild and the island and its buildings are in their peaceful sleep. The January edition of *Yankee Magazine* has a wonderful photo essay about Star in winter this year, framed around the experiences of Alexandra De Steiguer, one of Star's two winter keepers.

The day was a great framing for the beginning of the 2007 season at Star, which is kicking off already in an exciting way. We have received over 200 Pelican applications thus far, exceeding applications for the prior two years! We look forward to starting with a terrific team for the summer. Shortly we also kick off work on the next strategic plan for Star Island Corporation. I look forward to getting to the point of having a plan that will bring your best ideas to fruition in a sustainable way for the long term at Star.

The purpose of my visit yesterday was to begin the work on one of our most important projects for the year—perhaps in many years—a sensitively designed second door in the chapel. As many may recall, due to fire safety regulations the chapel can hold 50 people in its current form. The staff and the Board of the Corporation, in working toward a solution to the limits placed on occupancy, placed a high emphasis on the importance of offering worship services in the Chapel during our conferences as well as the historical and spiritual significance of our 200 year-plus building.

These factors influenced the nature of our conversations and the alternatives considered as we tried to find a way to honor fire safety regulations while providing the opportunity for more people to be inside the chapel building during worship services. This matter has been studied for some years by the Board, our Facilities

Committee and its working groups, and by a number of dedicated individuals as well. Many of you have offered suggestions and opinions, all heartfelt and designed to help us address issues of safety, occupancy, a wish for communal worship, and a way to maintain the history and traditions of the Shoals and Star Island religious and educational conferences.

At the end of 2006 the Star Island Corporation Board decided to add a sensitively designed second door to the chapel for fire egress. If funds allow, the board voted to also improve the path to the chapel. Our preference is to do both projects at once. Once approved and constructed, the additional door will allow us to increase the chapel occupancy limit to 80 people instead of the current 50-person limit.

In coming to this decision the board considered input from many Shoalers during 2006. In addition, it consulted the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources and the Rye Historic District Commission, both of which indicated support for this solution. At the fall, 2006 Council of Conferences meeting, a straw poll vote also indicated strong support for this solution. The board also considered other options ranging from doing nothing but holding chapel services in other buildings, to constructing a new chapel on the island. Given all the input and factors such as cost and use of buildings, the board decided adding a second door was truly the best option for Star.

The design and public approval process will continue through the spring and early summer. It will take about two weeks to create the door, so we plan to do construction in the fall to assure that no conference chapel experiences are disrupted during the summer of 2007. Again, if funding allows, we will also do the chapel path improvements in time for the 2008 season.

The highest need at this phase in the process is money to support the cost of the project. Our current total estimate to install the second door in the chapel is \$15,000, and to complete path improvements at the same time we estimate the total cost at \$45,000. If you or your conference are able to help in this effort, we would love to hear from you.

If you have questions, thoughts or concerns about the chapel path please call or e-mail at any time, (603) 430-6272 or alockwood@starisland.org. I look forward to seeing you this summer on the island!

—Amy Lockwood

The Newsletter Needs Pels & Penguins!

We're looking for former Pels to write about some aspect of island life in days gone by, and current Pels to compare and contrast their experiences. Email bwinters@starisland.org if you'd like to participate.

How to Join the McGill Society

- Include Star Island in your will.
- Add a codicil to your will.
- Name Star Island as a beneficiary on a certificate of deposit, life insurance policy, commercial annuity or retirement plan.
- Open a bank account in trust for Star Island.
- Name Star Island the beneficiary of a charitable remainder trust.
- Make a gift to benefit Star Island through a charitable gift annuity.

From the Development Office



Thank you to everyone who helped make 2006 a successful year for Star Island!

The 2006 Annual Fund raised \$577,067. And we received another \$425,745 for our endowment. (including both bequests and outright gifts from generous Sho-lers).

That's more than \$1 million total!

This would not have happened without you. And in this issue, we celebrate you.

A Small Change

In the past, we listed all donors and volunteers together in one category because all of your contributions—whether through money or through your hard work—are an integral part of keeping Star Island the special place it is.

We are making a small change in our recognition in this newsletter—not because we consider one form of giving more important than the others—but because we want to show the many ways there are to support Star Island. Many people will find their names in more than one category.

A New Opportunity

We also are excited about a new giving opportunity that many people consider a great way to support an organization they care about and receive a guaranteed lifetime income and tax benefits.

A charitable gift annuity is an arrange-

ment through which you make an irrevocable gift of cash or appreciated securities in exchange for a nonprofit's promise to pay a guaranteed lifetime income. Rates are based on age and never change.

Because Star Island is affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association, you can use the UUA's charitable gift annuity program to benefit Star Island. The minimum age is 55. The minimum gift is \$5,000. And this program is open to anyone who would like to support Star in this way—regardless of religious affiliation.

Here's how it works:

- Contact Star Island for information about how the gift would work for you. If you want to proceed, we will facilitate your gift and maintain contact with the UUA about any issues of concern to you.
- The UUA will accept your gift, prepare the contract, make your payments, provide your tax information and distribute the remainder to Star Island after your death.
- The UUA uses rates recommended by the American Council on Gift Annuities which currently range from 5.5 percent for age 55 to 11.3 percent for someone over 90.

Looking to the Future

Year after year, families return to Star

Island to find renewal and share the special sense of community that can only be found on our special island. Some people have been coming to Star for more than 50 years. They brought their children. Now their children's children are Pelicans.

Making a gift to Star Island through your estate or through a gift that pays you a lifetime income and leaves the remainder to Star Island can help insure that Star will be here for our grandchildren's grandchildren.

We started the Fred and Ginny McGill Society to encourage people to support the long-term needs of Star Island through their estates. There are many ways you can become part of this special group and help insure that Star will be here for future generations.

Please consider a legacy gift.

If you would like to know more about how to do this or how to take advantage of the benefits of a charitable gift annuity, please give me a call at 603-430-6272 or send me an e-mail at kmuldoon@starisland.org.

If you've already included Star in your plans, please let us know.

Thank you again for making 2006 a successful year.

—Karen Muldoon, CFRE

Joe Pescatello
 George Phinney
 Peter Phipps
 Lisa Phoenix
 Lori Picarazzi
 Barbara Birgitta Piel
 Gary Lowe and Bia Piel
 Sofia Piel
 Hallie Pope
 Julie Pope
 Yusef Ramelize
 Marty Random
 John Read & Beth Lilly
 Jesse Reid
 Shannon Roecklein
 Dan Ronco
 Elaine & Chuck Roy
 Nancy Russel (Cooley)
 Nancy Russell
 Deborah & Al Sampson
 Heather Saunders
 Heather Saunders
 Laurence & Peggy Saunders
 Sara Schoman
 Jake Sears
 Judith Shapiro
 Anne-Lise Smith
 Dale Smith & Sarah Silk
 Ted & Ann Smolen
 Debbie Weiner Soule, Ben & Abby Soule
 Nate Soule
 Peter Squires
 Susan Stefanec
 Athena Steinkraus
 Harriet Kerr Swenson
 Kit & Kathy Taylor
 Susan Thorner
 Dave Tucker
 Keith Ward
 Arlyn Weeks
 Jonathan Welch
 Jill Wenker
 Jennifer Whitall
 Susan Whitehead
 Dan Williams
 Cathy Wolff
 ☒

Poetry: Pass the Stick

*Pass the stick from me to you
 Pass the stick and do just like I do*
 —Old Game

for Jacqueline

The place we're talking about
 is ten miles off the coast
 out of the country
 No trees there
 maybe some scrub alders
 Found this stick
 in the seaweed low tide
 end curved just right for the hand
 peeled some of the bark
 let it dry out
 Stays with me
 all the time on island
 You and I
 poke around tidal pools
 clamber over rocks
 At night walk the trail
 at the sea edge
 see the lights of America
 across the bay
 Before we go off island
 in the fall
 I hide the stick
 never mind where
 tell you later sometime
 It will change to a snake
 if anyone else finds it
 It spends the winter
 sheltered from storms
 waiting for spring
 knowing I will come back
 or you
 or the children
 or their kids

—Dudley Laufman

A Pel's Reminiscence (Continued from page 1)

All kitchen staff were advised to take said bodies out of the bowls and put them on a tray in the back room where we hand washed silver and glasses. Later they were consumed by anyone willing to take the time to dissect and eat them.

That back room was a place where we often gathered after the evening meal was cleaned up. It was on the big tables out there that we gave back rubs to the weary bus boys and received them in return.

My best friend for most of that summer was a night watchman so I often got up early and went to East Rock with him when his shift was over, to watch spectacular sunrises. The gulls were not so intrusive back then so East Rock was a very popular place to sit with friends and contemplate LIFE. Needless to say, the community of Pelicans and other staff was genuinely accepting, affirming and far closer than can be found else where in one's life.

My last night on the Island, when the hotel had been put to bed at the end of the season, there were 10 or 12 of us left. My brother came out to see where I had been working all summer and to drive me home the next day. We entertained ourselves that evening by playing Sardines with the whole hotel as our playground. What a hoot! Under beds, in closets, we ranged far and wide and had a lot of laughs to remember. Driving home, my unimaginative brother complained that the hotel was spooky and wondered how I could have enjoyed living on that barren rock all summer. I, on the other hand, 54 years later, treasure my memories of Life on a Star, and go back to visit whenever I can.

—Ann Schultz



Helen Burgess

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