



STAR ISLAND NEWSLETTER

Star Island Corporation • Autumn 2008 • Volume XXXIV, 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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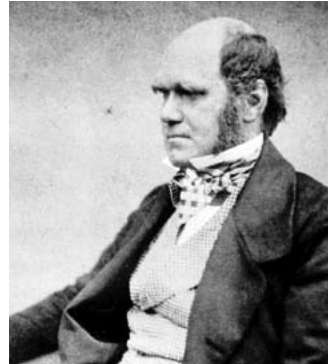
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Edited & produced by Brian Winters and Irene Bush with invaluable assistance from all contributors. Thank you!

Darwin Conference Comes to Star, Summer 2009

2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the date he published *The Origin of Species*. Star Island will mark this anniversary with a Darwin Conference co-chaired by Dr. Michael Ruse, an expert on Darwin and a strong voice in the ongoing debate between evolution and creationism, and Dr. Joseph Travis, an evolutionary biologist and Dean, College of Arts and Sciences at Florida State University, an expert in the ecology of natural selection. Rev. William Falla, who wrote his thesis on the religion/science interface, will be the minister-of-the-week as well as the managing chair of the conference along with the two academic chairs. Bonnie Falla will serve as the registrar.



The Darwin Conference will feature a series of lectures and workshops. Highlights will include segments on Darwin and religion/science; Islands—from the Galapagos to Star—and the importance of islands in evolution; and issues related to teaching evolution in schools. Ruse and Travis are co-authors of the forthcoming *Evolution: The First Four Billion Years* which is

about to be published by Harvard University Press. Every adult registered for the conference will receive a copy, autographed if they wish.

Drs. Ruse and Travis are uniquely qualified to speak to Darwin and related themes tailored to the interests of our conferees. A Shoaler, Michael Ruse, Ph.D., is

Director of the Program in the History and Philosophy of Science at Florida State University in Tallahassee and the author of *Charles Darwin; Darwinism and its Discontents; The Evolution/Creation Struggle; A Darwinian Evolutionist's Philosophy; Darwin and Design: Does Evolution have a Purpose?* and many other books on Darwin and the philosophy of science and religion. He is the co-editor of the *Cambridge Companion to the Origin of Species*. He is writing a book now with the title *Making Room for Faith: Christianity in an Age of Science*. He has been an expert witness in the courtroom for the ACLU in the fight against Creationism.

The research of Joseph Travis, Ph.D. at the intersection of ecology and evolutionary biology, focuses particularly on how ecological forces act

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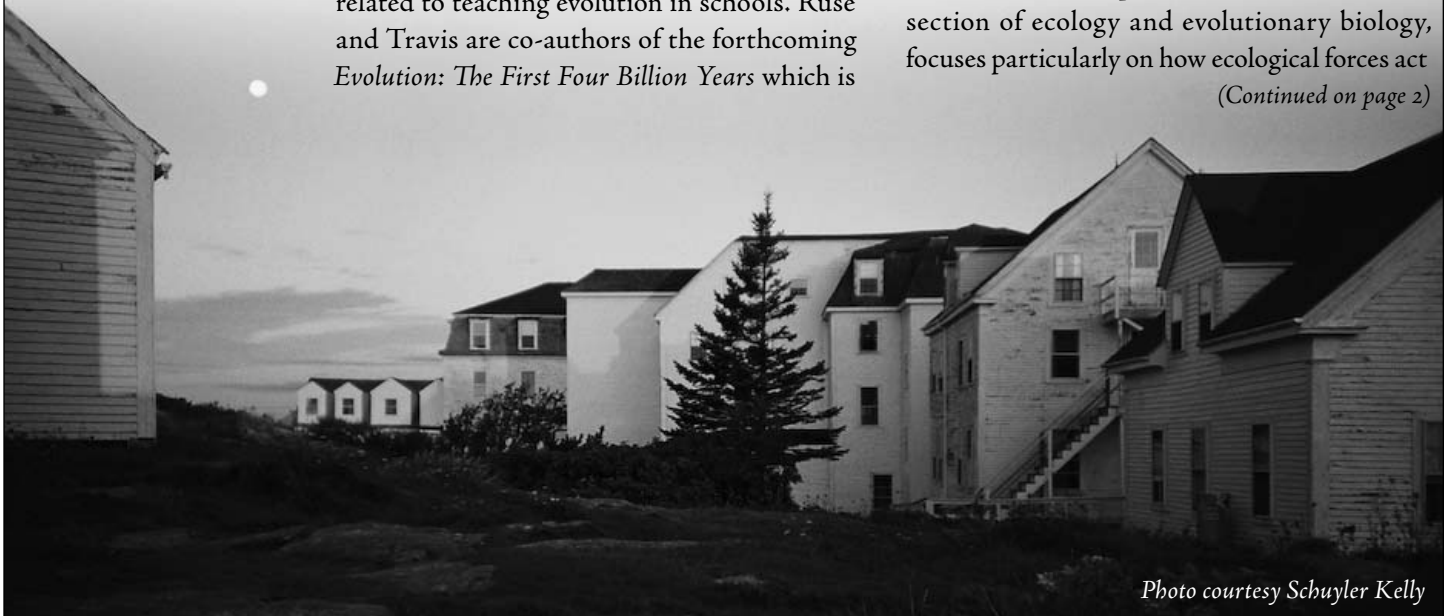


Photo courtesy Schuyler Kelly

Scout's Butterfly Playground



This sample CedarWorks playset will give you an example of the style of the new play area. It is not the final design.

New playground equipment is being designed for the front lawn in memory of Scout Fuller. Scout was an IRAS conferee every year of her life, from age 1 1/2 months with her parents, Abby Fuller and Neil Wollman and, later, her younger sister Leo. Scout died last summer of cancer at age 8.

Star Island was Scout's favorite place on the planet. Her favorite color was purple; she loved butterflies. On Star, she spent countless hours on the front lawn playground. In happy coincidence, Star Island needs new playground equipment and Scout's family and



friends wanted to honor Scout in some way on Star. Many IRAS Shoalers and members of other conferences are joining Abby and Neil in funding a new playground to replace the one worn to bits by countless children that was so generously donated many years ago by the Clegg family and friends in memory of Chris Clegg, long-time All Star I Con-

feree and wife of former Board Chair, Bill Clegg.

Abby and Neil wrote in the IRAS Star Beacon that "Scout was a kind and wise soul, for any age, who lived a full life in eight years, and who continues to inspire those who knew and loved her. If you

would like to know more about her life and what those around her felt about her, see www.caringbridge.org/visit/scout."

Keith Noyes, director of operations and maintenance, and other staff working with the Fuller Wollmans will be visiting Cedarworks (www.cedarworks.com) to

finalize designs and plan for a Memorial Day installation. The playground is expected to be ready for the 2009 season. Contributions are welcome for this special project; checks should be payable to Star Island Corporation and "Playground" should be noted on the memo line.



Darwin Conference (Continued from page 1)

as agents of natural selection on life histories. He works with graduate students at the Travis Lab at FSU and is also deeply involved in the education of science teachers. As dean, he has embarked on a major program to upgrade the quality of science education in Florida. Moreover, he is a leading figure in the fight against the introduction of Genesis into the biology classrooms of the state.

The opportunity to hold this special conference was developed by long-time attendees of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science (IRAS) Conference to fill the gap left by the IRAS Council decision to move their 2009 meeting to New York. The Darwin Conference will take place from Saturday, July 25 to Saturday, August 1, 2009 on Star Island. Complete information will be listed in the Blue Book. Until then, contact Bill and Bonnie Falla at (610) 432-8711 or bfall@enter.net.

—Irene Bush

Photo of Charles Darwin by Messrs. Maull and Fox, circa 1854.

ISAUU "Clergy Grants" for 2009

The Isles of Shoals Association Unitarian Universalist offers grants for UU ministers and their families to be first-time attendees of a Star Island conference of their choice. The grant, intended for spiritual enrichment, funds room and board; recipients pay their own transportation and registration fees.

To apply, visit the ISAUU web site, shoals.org, and click on the link for Clergy Grants; or email Rosemarie Smurzynski at email.smurzynski@verizon.net.

Deadline for requests is February 15, 2009.

First Impressions and Random Thoughts From Victoria Hardy, CEO

It was my first experience of Star Island in the summer season...and with twice a week, overnight visits, there were many new experiences to share...

Vegetation—as a gardener, this new environment was a constant source of amazement at what survives the harsh winters...

- the massive numbers of daffodils (some of which we brought to the Annual Meeting)...
- the lilacs in full bloom, and the fragrance they launched...
- the glorious rugosas...every color and six weeks of blooms...
- the wild flowers tucked into every rock and cranny...
- the incredible green of the lawn after our rainy July...
- dead-heading the annuals and flower boxes as weekly therapy...
- watching the monarchs arrive to dine

on the milkweed plants...

The transitions from conference to conference, each with their own identity and flavor...

- many, many children or no children...
- wake-up singers in the halls in the early morning hours...
- the screams of the “polar bears” in their

early morning swims...

- dinner rituals, including but not limited to, “theme” nights (pirates?), birthday celebrations, the “lobster bodies” cartel, and “calling out” the kitchen staff and waitrae...
- standing at the top of the chapel path and watching my first candlelight procession come up the hill from the Oceanic...
- voices drifting out from the chapel in song and chant...and fighting the mos-

(Continued on page 7)



The staff of Star Island participating in the 2008 seasonal review at the staff retreat on September 30. Photo by Brian Winters.

From the President, Brad Greeley

When I was a Pelican 50 years ago, I would never have thought I'd be writing a column headed “From the President” although I'd always known that



Pels have gone on to many roles within the Star community—from open-up or close-up volunteers to conference leaders, SIC members and, definitely, to supporters of Star Island in so many ways.

There are still a number of Pels around who worked on Star a generation before I did. I was sitting at the Pel ReUnion last

Labor Day, enjoying the sparkling day, the presence of my two kids (both Pels in their time) and thinking that having been a Pel 50 years ago was pretty good. Then the announcer at lunch noted, to everyone's delight, that there was one among us who had served the Island in 1938! (I wasn't even born yet.) And what a delight it was to meet her. Roberta Reynolds had served in the dining room in 1937, 38, 39 (I'm told I was there that last year.) She was at table with her daughters and a grand daughter. All were enjoying a marvelous visit, hearing old stories and making new connections all around.

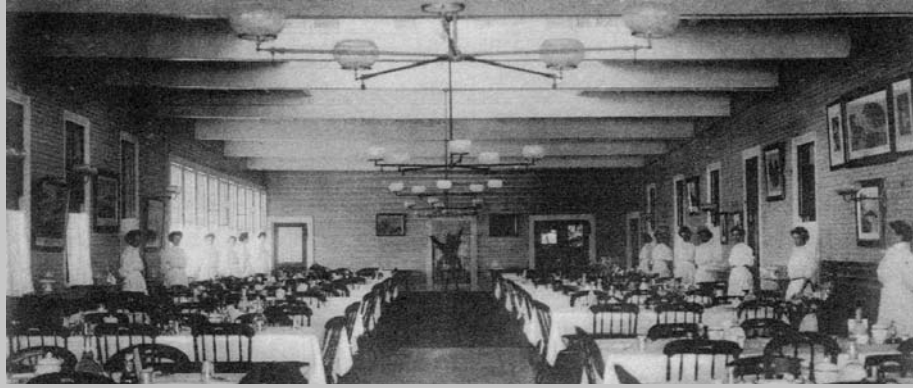
I think the differences between the years Mrs. Reynolds and I were Pels were far less than the years between my kids and me. When she and I were working here, we had curfews and uniforms, very separate sleeping quarters, a couple of days off

ALL SUMMER, no smoking, zero tolerance for drinking, showers?, a gratuity box to worry about (rain or shine—the natural beauty of the week affected how much folks felt like putting in the kitty), no say in anything, and no formal evaluations up, down or sideways.

I don't know about the thirties, but I suspect time hasn't changed much attitudes about winning the softball game, making good connections with our peers – in particular – the opposite sex, and those who bossed us around. Lots of us had been to conferences when we were younger but there were still plenty of Pels who landed brand new to the place. I don't remember that distinction mattering much after the first few days. I'm told it doesn't now. In fact, it could be very much a disadvantage for first year Pels to have been here

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Pre-World War II Pelicans Still in Touch



Star Island waitresses from Something Like a Star by Frederick T. McGill, Jr., and Virginia F. McGill.

Genie Woodbridge, nee Alice Eugenia Elder, took a job as waitress on Star Island during the Great Depression to “rustle up some money to go to college.” From a family of long-time UUs, she’d been recommended for the job by Rev. Robert Brooks Day.

Now in her 90s, Genie is still in touch and visits 3 other pre-WWII waitresses, Alison Brayton, long-time IA Registrar and corporation member; Edith McGregor Christiansen, and Janet “Connie” Walkley Cares.

In her day, the waitresses (they weren’t yet called waitrae as all were female), wore uniforms everyday except on banquet night when they donned a white dress. The tables had full table cloths at each meal and a cobalt blue vase on each table for which the waitress had to pick flowers.

Genie reports one bad experience: On banquet night, each waitress carried a tray containing 10 plates of food—each one covered, five on top of five. As she neared her table, Carl Witherell (first clerk of the corporation) came out of the office and stood in her path waving his arms “first one way and then the other.” Alas, there was a big crash and her table had a bit of a wait for their dinners.

Genie also recalled a conferee that the waitresses knew as “Cornflakes” because, no matter what the meal, she insisted on ending it with a bowl of cornflakes.

Prior to coming to the island, food was scarce at home and Genie weighed 99 lbs. She reports that she “got fat because it was the first time she had food”—bread was always available on a counter and she ate a great deal of it. In fact, her mother had to sew and send her a white dirndl skirt made from a sheet and a new blouse to wear on banquet night because her dress had gotten embarrassingly tight.

The waitresses all lived in the Shack. For entertainment, they watch sunsets and held dances in the Shack.

The Star and UU connections in this group of four are many. Genie and Alison’s fathers were both class of 1899 Harvard and, in fact, Alison’s father, when Genie moved to Medford where he taught, recognized the Elder name and had Alison look out for Genie in the overwhelmingly large Medford High School. Genie met her husband Dudley through her Pel friend “Connie” when they both sang in the MIT choir and Genie introduced her Pel friend Edith to her husband.

Genie and Dudley attended a family week on Star when their son Steven was in high school. About ten years ago, they spent a Memorial Day Weekend day on Star with Alison Brayton. Up until four years ago, they attended Pel Reunions in Boston area. Star connections run deep!

—Irene Bush

From the President (Continued from page 3)

before. It made it all to easy when senior staff was looking for a volunteer among the beginners. Wet clothes, a burgeoning snack bar bill, commonly read books, important mentoring and being stir crazy could also have all known no time limit.

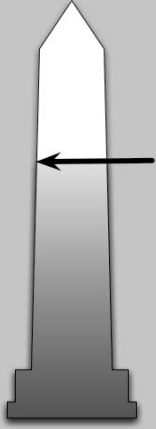
And I know it’s true that my children made those connections just as I did and they have been among the strongest we made over the decades since they were forged. Peter Mercer and I slaved over a steamy dishwasher for a couple of years. Our connection is still strong and it has spread out to our spouses and kids (who also connected as Pels). And I watch as my two come on Island for Pel ReUnion and greet, hug, and walk off in deep conversation with their Pel peers.

One difference between then and now is Pel ReUnion itself. Less than twenty years young, we now have an opportunity to renew those connections each year at the place we made them. A treat I hope more Pels will take advantage of most especially those who were there 50 years ago. It would be great to see you again. Another change is the awareness that this special place we spent those halcyon summer days at years ago needs our help to be there for future generations. Never gave that a thought when I was a Pel. But today the Pels, like conferees and friends everywhere, make their contribution financially now as well as in time and talent. It’s the only way my kids will be able to gather on the Island to reminisce with their Pel friends on their 50th , or 80th anniversary.

*In the spirit of Star,
Brad Greeley, President, SIC*



From the Development Department



The 2008 Annual Fund

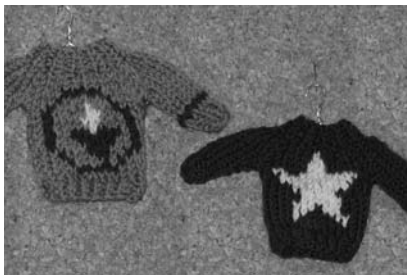
Our goal is to raise \$675,000 this year to maintain Star and its facilities.

The generosity of close to one thousand Shoalers has brought our total to date to \$415,000; can you help us find the last \$260,000?

We'd like to highlight some creative successes for the annual fund this summer and fall:

John Robbins, All Star I, produced the CD *On the Rock*, a collection of songs to benefit Star Island. The musicians, all Old Shoalers, are John Mark Blowen, Kemp Harris, Ben Krejci, Bernice Lewis, Jim MacDougall, Ron Melrose, John Perrault, Andrew Robbins, John Robbins, Adrian Sicam, Carl Sturken, Craig Werth, and Tom Yermack. It is available in the Star Island Bookstore over the summer and can be purchased year-round through John's website: <http://johnrobbins.us/starcd>.

Gail Henry, Life On A Star treasurer and conferee knitted teeny tiny, holiday ornament sweaters with a Star or some other symbol. They were sold in the bookstore for \$25 each and she is still knitting to fill orders!



Buffy Bierman Carson, Pelican Reunion, dressed up as Mrs. Wetherell doing her Old Mother Hubbard routine (c. 1919) because she said the "cupboard" was bare after the purchase of the island. Towing her "dog" played by the ever game **Joanne Bulley**, Buffy asked that money be pinned to her. She also had a "bucket brigade," passing the bucket around the dining hall

one lunch.

Dan Fenn, All Star II Annual Fund Agent, provided donors with wonderful hot pink buttons designed by his granddaughter, Kelsey Fenn, featuring seagulls and the words "You Will Give Back."

Very hardworking Annual Fund Agents in each conference have done well, but we have not yet come parallel with where we were last year. At the moment of this writing, we are \$80,000 behind where we were last year at this time. Our goal this year is \$675,000—\$50,000 greater than last year—and we must reach it in order to make budget.

The good news is that we have the same number of contributors as we had this time last year; the bad news is that on average most gifts have been smaller. We are sure, however, with the good will of

Shoalers who come through with stretch donations to Star even during hard times and with benefits and programs planned by staff, the board and various Star devotees, we will give back, we will give back, we will give back and we will make goal.

—Irene Bush & Brian Winters,
Development Department

Star Island Wants to Know: How Would You Answer This?

If you were advising the Star Island Board and its Chief Executive Officer regarding setting Star Island's highest priorities, what would they be?

- Enhancing commitment to conferees and conferences
- Enhancing physical accessibility
- Exploring off island programming and alternative Star opportunities during the off-season
- Finding new sources of revenue
- Increasing the annual fund and building the endowment
- Maintaining our commitment to liberal religion and education
- Maintaining or improving the facilities and grounds
- Maintaining the natural environment
- Providing financial aid for conferees of limited means
- Other...

We need your answer to this and many other questions so that we may realize our strategic plan goals and effectively plan for the economic future of Star Island.

On October 15th, we are launching an in-depth Star Island Survey. You will find it on line at starisland.org/survey or you may contact our office to get a hard copy mailed to you. The survey will require about 20 minutes to complete, and you will have until November 15 to respond.

We hope, over time, to put your responses to use in making improvements where they are needed. Your responses will be held in confidence, and we thank you in advance for your advice & opinions!

Passages

Alden Beecher Bestul, LOAS Shoaler since 1963, passed away on April 26, aged 86. He was predeceased in 2007 by his wife Marie (after 59 years of marriage) and is survived by four daughters. Per his last wishes, his ashes will be spread over the Atlantic from East Rock.

Christian Cotner, lifelong UCC conferee, son of Karen and Graham Cotner and brother of Eric, died May 30 in Al Anbar province, Iraq. Cpl. Cotner, a field radio operator, entered the Marine Corps in 2006, and his personal awards and decorations included the National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon and Meritorious Mast. A memorial service was held on Star in August.

Priscilla Taylor Ferguson passed away February 10 at the age of 96. She began attending conferences at Star in 1926 and quickly became involved in fund raising and committee work. In 1941, along with her future husband, she assisted in the surveying of the island for planning the building of the stone village. From the 40s through the 60s she greatly enjoyed the All Star family weeks and the Religion and Science conferences which gave her an opportunity to connect with former college friend, Rozzie Holt. She is survived by her husband Malcolm, son Stephen, and daughters Gay, Betsy, and Anne and their families.

Dr. Gerard Fountain, 91, a longtime resident of RiverWoods in New Hampshire, died August 17. He was a regular Elderhostel and ISHRA conferee and had planned to visit Star this September. Dr. Fountain graduated from Yale Medical School in 1941 and practiced psychiatry in Scarsdale for a quarter-century. He was an avid watercolor painter and art framer, and served as a board member of the Ogunquit Museum of American Art and a volunteer docent at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye. He was predeceased by his wife, Polly, in 2004, and is survived by a daughter and four sons.

Reverend Laurel S. Sheridan, longtime LOAS conferee, died on May 15 at age



Artists Create Art on Star for Benefit Dinner and Art Show

The Banks Gallery's new art show, *Island Light—Isles of Shoals II* will be kicked off with a benefit dinner for Star Island at Rudi's Restaurant and a preview of the show at the gallery on November 6th. Twenty contemporary artists who show at the gallery were hosted on Star during June and August. In return, each artist donated a 9" by 12" painting framed by Tuveson Studios for benefit participants.

The reception for *Island Light* at 8pm which includes dessert—chocolates by Byrne & Carlson and wine provided by South Street and Vine—is open to all who wish to come for a donation of \$25.

Island Light can be viewed at the Banks Gallery located at Strawberry Banke, 420 Court Street, Portsmouth from November 7th through January 2, 2009. For the duration of the show, 10% of the purchase price will be donated to Star Island if the buyer mentions that they are a Shoaler. For more information about the preview or show and how it will benefit Star Island, contact Irene Bush, (603) 430-6272 or ibush@starisland.org.

Photo of T.M. Nicholas, one of the participating artists, courtesy Irene Bush.

67, following a hospitalization for numerous ailments. Once a registered nurse who taught natural childbirth education, Sheridan entered Andover Newton Theological School and earned an M. Div. in 1982. She was ordained by The First Parish Church of Duxbury and served in churches throughout New England and the northeast. She is survived by her husband, Terence, three daughters, and five grandchildren.

Nornie Temple, Arts and All Star conferee, died on May 30 in Gorham, ME, aged 85. She is survived by her husband, Bob (with

whom she was All Star I co-chair in 1973), and a son and two daughters. For those who wish, memorial contributions can be made in her memory to the Star Island Corporation; as she was an avid watercolor painter, her family has requested that such gifts will be used to create a fund to provide art supplies to the All Star II Conference.

Christopher Tobey, fisherman, boat builder, & friend to all Shoalers, was laid to rest after his boat capsized near Duck Island on May 11th. He is survived by two children, Chris & Amanda, and partner Megan. ✨

Edith Doolittle: 60 Years on Star



Edith Doolittle, 60-year devotee of the Shoals & co-founder of the Gift Shop, died on May 22 aged 91, a few short months after the passing of her husband Albert. She is survived by three sons, David, Robert & Paul, and five grandchildren.

The Doolittles began in the Religious Education conference and later came to Life on a Star. After the war, Edith and her buddy Ruth Koe were often the cooks during open up. In fact, feeding people and nurturing them were a constant theme throughout Edith's life. She and Ruth brought cooked food and supplies to make meals to feed the open up crew. When Albert was Board President, Edith also made dinners for the board members—dessert was home-made chocolate chip cookies.

When she wasn't working in the kitchen with Ruth, the two of them were busy converting what were occasional church flea market-type sales into the Gift Shop that we have today. Susy Mansfield reported that Theo Nash, then Executive Secretary of the Star Island Corporation, decided we had underutilized space so she asked Edith and Ruth to create a shop with support from the Isles of Shoals Association. For many years, first thing in the morning before the Polar Bears were up and about, the dynamic duo could be found stocking the shop or arranging items.

Her old friend Bea Miller shared that Edith always found things to do. She

always left the island with several suitcases filled with Gift Shop items. She would set up a mini-Gift Shop for the residents of Snow House where she worked part-time off-island so that the ladies could come and shop. When Edith returned to Star with suitcases in hand around Memorial Day, she would report that "The ladies loved this item" and "I sold out of that one." She'd usually make \$300 or \$400 dollars and she did the good deed of selling items to women who didn't get out much.

For many years, Edith served as the Island Nurse. Whenever a nurse didn't show up or when there was a hole in the schedule, she would fill in. She did this so often that Harry Lent, the manager, gave her the room that she and Albert occupied for many years on the third floor so that she could always be available.

The Doolittle room was production central for making those little grab bags that were sold in the Gift Shop. For years, Edith cased Dollar and other stores for bargains and went to yard sales to collect small items that could be sorted into brown paper "surprise" bags that children coveted and bought for 50 cents.

Edith was a crafter. She made great shadow boxes—including a replica of a Star hotel room—and holiday ornaments like a hollowed egg with a painted ocean and seagulls inside.

The Life on a Star Conference celebrated Edith and Al's 50th summer on Star with a service in the Chapel. Fred McGill sang their praises as did many others in attendance. Edith in all her summers on Star and her winters in Derry probably nursed, fed, or otherwise took care of hundreds of Pelicans and cared for, or worried about, or found jobs for many other miscellaneous folks. And she was famous for her chocolate chip cookies. She will be missed.

—Irene Bush

Photo courtesy Sara Schoman

From the CEO (Continued from page 3)

- quitoes on the rocks...
- the Fourth of July parade, and watching seven(!) fireworks displays from York, Maine to Hampton Beach...
- a Grand March (my first!)...

The call of the Sirens...the Gift Shop, the Bookstore, and the Snack Bar, many options for spending money! Setting a budget for the gifts and books was easy... and my family will benefit at the holidays with all the "Star" related items...the Snack Bar was harder. As a diabetic, it is a particularly treacherous Siren, but by carefully counting sugar/carbohydrates to "save-up" for a small scoop of Black Cherry...I could savor it one teaspoon at a time on the porch at sunset...and then walk off the calories with a hike down to the float dock and back up the hill...

Then there were the sounds of Star...the fog horn, the buoy bell, the laughter and shouts of children at play, the soft murmur of people in intense discussions in workshops, the choirs rehearsing, the piano players in the lobby, the roar of the waves on the rocks on the Atlantic side, and the gulls...noisy, raucous, persistent, and the earliest risers on the island!

And most treasured of all, all the chats with people eager to share their stories about life on Star...

Late at night, in my room on the third floor of the Oceanic, in a non-conforming rocking chair by the window...catching up on past issues of the New Yorker, and listening to classical music on Maine Public Radio...I know I made the right decision last January to join the Star community...

Peace,
Vicky Hardy





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