

ISLAND JOURNAL

The Annual Publication of the Island Institute

DEDICATION



Donald C. Campbell (1954–2011)

As I write, winter is making its muddy way into spring on Matinicus Island. It's the edge of dark; I hear a small airplane flying over my house. The engine sound fades as the plane climbs and heads toward the mainland. A pilot has come to the rescue once again—somebody's rescue, something important, and it could be almost anything. A worker injured? Somebody's medication? A child's birthday cake?

The pilots who fly over the waters of Penobscot Bay provide islanders a lifeline. They bring the mail, yes, and carry passengers, but that's just the beginning. Showing up with the Valentine's Day flowers makes them our auxiliary sweethearts. Flying in ahead of the snow with the much-needed furnace parts makes them heroes. Years of carrying the smallest children of the island make them everybody's uncles.

Last year, pilot Don Campbell died on Matinicus Island when his plane was flipped by a freak weather event; he crashed carrying groceries. The extraordinary combination of intelligence, common sense, compassion, and guts that these pilots show was truly exemplified by Don. A gentleman, a warrior, a mechanic, a historian, and a skilled aviator, Don was—above all—a good friend.

Eva Murray

Margaret L. Snow (1914–2010)



Margaret L. Snow was the consummate teacher. A native of Portland, Maine, she returned to teach in Livermore Falls, Westbrook and South Portland schools after receiving her BA from the University of Maine in 1937, and earning graduate degrees from Northeastern University and Boston University. Miss Snow finished her long career at Waltham High School, where she is remembered as an especially kind and caring teacher. She died at the age of 95 in Franklin, Massachusetts, on April 23, 2010, but not before leaving behind one final lesson.

Although she had been an Island Institute member for only four years before she died, Miss Snow left the Institute a bequest of more than \$300,000—one-half of her estate.

As someone once said, "The mediocre teacher tells; the good teacher explains; the superior teacher demonstrates; the great teacher inspires." Margaret L. Snow's legacy of generosity after a lifetime of service to others is as humbling as it is inspirational. It makes all of us here at the Institute renew our commitment to the many exceptional students out there in Maine's small, isolated island and coastal classrooms.

The Editors

TO OUR READERS



Peter Rablston

Islands are often viewed as scenic, rugged and remote. Some consider islands a throwback to a simpler, better time—a retreat from the hustle and bustle of the modern world. Rarely are islands described as being full of youthful vigor or on the cutting edge of technology.

Both of these things, however, are very true.

Islands have a way of drawing young people, especially young families, to their shores. They come to raise their children surrounded by families and loved ones; to live in a place where young people can roam free, without the fear of danger or violence; and, increasingly, families are moving to islands to take advantage of the incredibly unique educational experience that island schools are able to provide.

In order to survive and thrive in remote island locations, these young islanders, along with many who would consider themselves merely “young at heart,” are becoming extraordinarily technology-savvy. Residents are building businesses based on digital advertising and sales, ferries are being fitted with wireless Internet, and students are traveling the world through videoconferencing units.

In keeping with this ever-increasing use of technology, we are pleased to announce the launch of a digital version of the *Island Journal*, available for the first time on iPad and Android tablets. Through this new platform, you will get a glimpse of the digital lives young islanders are living: You will experience the interactive digital campaign poster that the newly elected president of the inter-island student council developed; you will see and hear E. O. Wilson discuss how islands have influenced his study of the natural world; you will hear the stories of Swan’s Islanders, anchored by their faith; and with each story, you will see more photography than you’ve ever seen before.

We are honored to follow the lead of these enterprising young islanders, and we encourage you to take the opportunity to explore everything the digital *Island Journal* has to offer.

The Editors

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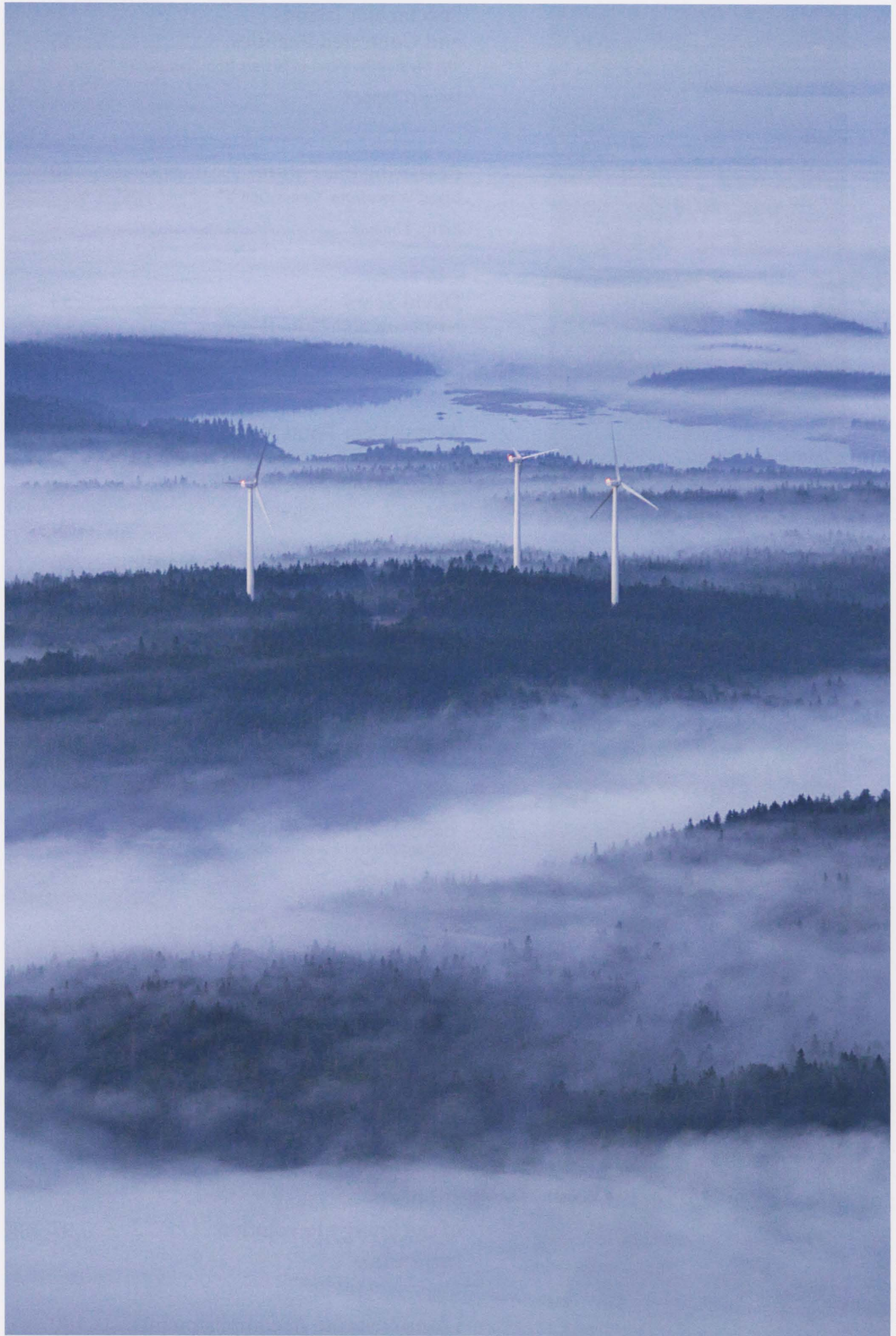
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FROM THE HELM



Islands as Models

PHILIP CONKLING

A long time ago, when Congresswoman Chellie Pingree served as one of the founding trustees of the Island Institute, she made a point of emphasizing how islands are models of community. She used the same line when she ran for the Maine State Senate from the island of North Haven. When we began repeating that islands are models for rural towns across the country almost a decade ago, we hoped that people outside of Maine would listen. It is, however, somewhat amazing to realize how widely this view has come to be accepted.

None of us should be shocked to learn that, in the great scheme of things, Maine's 4,589 year-round island residents, scattered among 15 isolated communities, do not rank at the top of the state—or the nation's—agenda. Nor are national and state leaders particularly focused on the educational priorities of the islands' 325 students attending 13 different island schools across the archipelago. It is not that our leaders don't care about islanders; it is just an ines-

capable political fact that they have bigger fish to fry, so to speak, in larger communities where there are more voters.

However, there is a case to be made that island schools, like island communities as a whole, might actually show the results of a specific action or decision more clearly than in larger communities. Economists call this process "input-output" analysis. But because the variables at the state or national level are so complex, it either takes a long time or is impossible to figure out how changing something actually works out in the real world.

As an example, consider the national policy of issuing H1B visas.

After 9/11, to improve national security, Congress tightened up the nation's visa policy, making it much more difficult for foreign nationals to come to work in the United States. But the tech industry howled, because they had been

Above: Frenchboro school students

recruiting 70,000 to 80,000 software engineers and technicians from foreign countries through the nation's H1B visa program, to keep their businesses' engines of innovation running. So Congress directed the National Science Foundation to use the funds from this visa program to increase the number of American students interested in science, technology, engineering and math (called STEM) careers. Easy to understand the policy, but how does anyone implement it, and how do we know if we are on the right track?

Well, we said, island schools would be a good place to start, precisely because these schools are small and isolated, and if teachers and principals can be engaged, the results can be more easily observed and measured. Thus began a five-year stream of funding from the National Science Foundation to islands and other small rural Maine schools through a program called CREST (Community for Rural Education Stewardship and Technology) that provided a successful model for increasing STEM learning results.

The approach, called "nonhierarchical learning," began with a hypothesis that could be tested and replicated. The central question was whether students, who are usually more comfortable with new technology, could help teach their teachers while their teachers became their students' students during an intensive training time, such as a summer institute. And if so, would this empower students to significantly increase their technology literacy and excite them to enter STEM career tracks? Over the course of its first three years, the project provided a resoundingly positive answer. However, the value of this project to the NSF was not the number of new engineering students it produced *per se*, but that a replicable model had been tested in

more than a dozen schools, and the results could be measured.

The experience of the CREST program is just one example among many where island communities have served as "pilots" to test innovative approaches to complex questions.

If Maine islands can be models for other communities across the country, there is another interesting question: Can islands from other regions provide models for Maine? Let's look at another example. When the communities of Vinalhaven and North Haven, known as the Fox Islands, were contemplating a wind power project in order to control the cost of their electricity, the most compelling example of an island community that had achieved that goal was Samsö Island off the coast of Denmark. Soren Hermansen—the islander who led Samsö's successful drive for energy independence, and was one of *Time* magazine's environmental heroes—presented a highly compelling story of his community's experiences to year-round Maine island residents. Islanders instinctively trust other islanders, even if they are "from away"—including far away.

As a result of the broad-based community support and press coverage the wind project sparked, a start-up technology company in Rhode Island approached George Baker, who was the CEO of Fox Islands Wind while on sabbatical from the Harvard Business School. The company, V-Charge, proposed testing the potential for using excess energy in the winter from the wind farm to charge electric-storage thermal heaters on the islands, with instructions for turning them on dispatched over the Internet. Six electric heaters successfully heated a downtown business, a commercial greenhouse, a historical society, and several homes on the islands. Partly as a result of this "model" application



The CREST program tested an approach called nonhierarchical learning, in which students and teachers worked together as peers to learn new technology.

on the local island grid, V-Charge has since raised significant capital to scale up its “smart grid” technology to much larger distribution systems. But the islands were (and are) a critically important model for this start-up company.

Now as a result of the interest the Fox Islands Wind project has generated, island students in these two communities have become part of a new National Science Foundation study to test whether the installation of electric meters in schools, which

enable students to view and learn how energy is being used in “real time,” is an effective strategy for teaching energy efficiency—another important “model” result.

On a completely separate front, following the financial crisis that spiraled almost out of control beginning in 2008, and dragged lobster prices down with it, the fishermen’s cooperative on Chebeague Island decided to do what no other group of lobstermen was willing to do at the time. They organized themselves as marketers of a line of value-added lobster products, raised risk capital, and created Calendar Islands Maine Lobster. As they have grown during their first full year of operation, more lobstermen have joined the co-op to market their local Maine brand, of which they own a significant share. Several other lobster co-ops have waited to see how this new island business model would work out, and are now beginning to make new investments in a variety of other value-added lobster-marketing enterprises across the region.

The interest in the Calendar Islands Maine Lobster model has also been noticed in many other fishing communities along the American coastline, including the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the Louisiana coast, and on the West Coast, including all the way to Alaska. As Maine’s islands and other small working waterfront communities have begun sharing their ideas and experiences with other waterfront communities around the coasts of the United States, it is clear that not only are islands places of great innovation, but also that small enterprises that work locally have a potentially large audience of interested partners who want to expand on these models.

A growing network of political leaders is starting to pay attention to all of these innovative models that Maine island communities have initiated. Small, rural resource-based communities around the country share common concerns about many issues. How can working waterfront communities protect their access to the ocean, where tourism and second-home development put waterfront property out of reach? How can small communities retain their local schools in an era of consolidation? How can locally



Chebeague fishermen celebrate the launch of their company, Calendar Islands Maine Lobster.

produced products be branded and marketed to consumers beyond their local markets? Start-up companies might want to ask that question of Steve and Kate Shaffer of Black Dinah Chocolate, who have developed an inspirational web-based business on Isle au Haut.

In order to share additional experiences, the Island Institute has brought islanders and community-based business groups from around the country to Rockland annually for the past three years to share their stories and strategies. We call this gathering the Sustainable Island Living conference. A couple of years ago, Alton Ballance, a native of Ocracoke Island on the Outer Banks, described his island’s ever-shifting balance between its identities as fishing community and tourist destination, even as the very sands on which the community was first founded shift their position in the ocean. Almost every Maine islander instinctively understood and applauded Alton Ballance’s irrevocable commitment to his island community, despite the forces arrayed against it. At the Sustainable Island Living conference last fall, Bill McKibben provided an eloquent discussion of why the world needs to think more like islanders than ever before. Excerpts of his remarks are part of this year’s *Island Journal*.

We believe that island consciousness is on the rise across the globe because island communities are microcosms where innovations are being tested to address the big questions facing this country, and most of the rest of the world. How do we control energy costs, provide healthy local food and seafood, educate our children in a technologically saturated age, develop alternative energy sources, or conserve marine resources after centuries of exploitation? These questions are not going to go away, and as long as islanders remain rooted to the local rock, sand and soil of their historic communities, islands will continue to provide compelling models for the solutions the rest of the world so desperately needs.

Philip Conkling



“The Best Decision We’ve Ever Made”

New Families Move to Long Island

JUDITH PAOLINI

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER RALSTON

Sitting on the porch of their cottage one Saturday morning in August 2007, Peter and Lynn LaMontagne were commenting on how quickly the summer had passed. In a few weeks, Peter would be flying up from D.C. to drive the family of seven back to their home in suburban Virginia. “I don’t want to go,” Lynn found herself saying. Peter replied, “Then don’t.”

With their twin daughters only eight months old at the time, Lynn envisioned their lives strapped into car seats as she drove their three older brothers to sports practice, music lessons, and Scout meetings, their Saturday “family time” consisting of more programmed activities and errands—more driving and spending money—conversations over the headrests of their minivan.

Instead, the couple made a decision that had been a long time coming. Lynn and the children would stay on the island year-round; Peter would join the growing ranks of weekly commuters, making most weekends long ones. Four years later Lynn laughs at some of the perceived drawbacks listed in their original pros and cons list. “Aside from getting married, it’s the best decision we’ve ever made.”

What looked to others like an impulsive move was actually the couple’s response to a strong magnetic draw they had felt for years. Born and raised in the Portland area, Lynn and Peter had lived abroad in Taiwan and Beijing, but it was a tiny ad in a 1993 issue of *Down East* magazine for a sum-

Above: Three new Long Island families gather with friends.

mer cottage on Long Island, with “old lilacs, some antiques,” that pulled at their hearts. They fell in love with the island immediately, and Lynn returned from China the next three summers. After the birth of their first child, Benjamin, Peter started a consulting business and the family moved into the cottage year-round. But the business took Peter away for three to four weeks at a time, so when, in 1999, a client offered him a job in the D.C. area, he jumped at it, and the family relocated there.

With the births of Christian and Julian, the family was living what many consider the American dream, in a big, busy, suburban community with all the bells and whistles—good schools, plenty of recreational opportunities, shopping and restaurants. But Peter put in long hours, often leaving home before the children were awake and returning after they were asleep. Lynn was the classic taxi mom, and the boys’ activities kept them programmed six and sometimes seven days a week. The memories of their own unscheduled childhoods got the couple thinking that simplification was the way to go. Watching their twins, Agnes Mae and Carol Anne, playing in the waves on the island beaches during that summer of 2007 probably sealed the deal.



Pierre and Janice Avignon loaded their bikes on the ferry for their first trip to Long Island in 1998. Janice’s brother, Eric, who was living in Portland and building houses on the Diamond Islands, thought they might enjoy the area. One year and several trips later the newly mar-

ried couple bought their own island house and immediately started extending the concept of summer to nine months of the year. They spent holidays on the island, and only closed up completely if Eric did not move into the house for the winter. “From the very beginning we had one foot on the island all year,” remembers Janice.

When their daughter, Emeline, was born, the couple juggled their jobs at the same large high-tech company in Massachusetts to accommodate her schedule and to spend as much family time on the island as possible. The idea of staying year-round was in their minds for a long time, but it wasn’t until Emeline was in the third grade that they realized they needed to make the move quickly so she could experience the island school, which only goes through grade five.

The decision was made for Pierre to become a full-time dad while Janice continues to work for the same company, telecommuting 90 percent of the time from her home office on the island. The availability of high-speed Internet and the reduction in the number of power outages on the island helped with the transition. They installed a generator for backup, and they can also take advantage of the library’s high-tech capabilities if necessary. They swapped a lot of driving time in Massachusetts for the 45-minute boat ride and a short walk to lots of amenities in Portland. Their mainland car can go unused for two to three weeks at a time. And the couple credits the growing number of on-island home-maintenance services for making their move an easier one.



Janice, Pierre and Emeline Avignon



Ann and Phil Thorpe, with their children John and Hannah

Ann Caliendo Thorpe's father grew up in Portland in a family of ministers. He did his student ministry at the Evergreen United Methodist Church on Long Island and loved it so much he convinced his parents to buy a retirement home there. When Ann was a baby, her parents bought their own summer island home. Ann grew up in New York but returned every summer to this place she loved, and when she married her husband Phil in 2006, it was in a small ceremony on Fowler's Beach.

Phil Thorpe, British cancer research scientist and professor, was recruited from London to Dallas in 1991. While he looked for a new family house in Texas, Ann and her children, John and Hannah, extended their stay on the island into the fall, getting a taste of life in the off-season and what the school had to offer. After Thanksgiving, they all moved down to Texas where the children enrolled in a Dallas suburb school and Ann landed a job teaching gifted and talented students. Life was good.

Because of Ann's teaching position, she, John, and Hannah could spend summers on the island and be close to Ann's mother in Portland. Phil joined them as often as possible and began to fall in love with the place himself. They started to consider the possibility of Phil working closer to Maine sometime in the future, and the idea of making island life a full-time reality soon followed. "Mom and Hannah were fish out of water in Texas," John remembers. "We didn't like the heat and spent too much time indoors." Ann's job took her to a wide variety of local schools, but, having taught for several years, they were not what she had envisioned for her children.

Bolstered by the LaMontagnes' successful move, in the fall of 2010 the Thorpes embarked on what they thought would be a one-year experiment. Ann quit her job in Texas, they began the process of winterizing the house, and the children enrolled in the Long Island school. That winter

was particularly harsh, and Ann recalls that with each storm they added another tool to deal with all the snow—increasingly more sophisticated shovels, a roof rake, a small snowblower, snowshoes and a sled.

Phil has stayed in Dallas to continue his work but commutes to the island about one week each month. "I work like a lunatic when I'm in Texas so I can completely shed the work and enjoy time with the family on the island," Phil explains. To help extend his island time, they converted an unused closet into a small desk area where he can do administrative work and document writing.

This summer they made the decision to extend their one-year experiment. "This is permanent," says Ann. "We all just love it." They plan to put the Dallas house on the market and, when it sells, Phil will live in smaller accommodations there and continue his monthly commuting schedule.

In September, John entered the sixth grade at King Middle School in Portland, and Hannah began third grade on Long Island.



Even though each family found a different path to Long Island, when asked what factors drove their decision to stay, their answers were remarkably similar. "In Texas I would never have been able to read chapter books," Hannah remarks. "Now I can read really fat ones!" Instead of classrooms of 25 or more students and a concentration on standardized state testing, Hannah's experience on Long Island included reading out loud, thematic work and individual attention. When the family had an opportunity to travel to Europe with Phil's job, the school saw it as a great learning experience, giving them assignments to share with the class when they returned.

"Our boys were in strong academic schools in Virginia, but the education on the island matches or exceeds it," Peter LaMontagne says. "It's not really the size of the classes as much as the quality of the instruction. The faculty puts in the time to make sure their students learn." He also credits the multigrade classrooms for providing a continuity of education from year to year.

Emeline Avignon's friends in Massachusetts were in awe of the STORMS project her class did last year, a partnership between the Long Island school and the Island Institute, which involved research at the beaches, classwork, and a presentation at the University of Southern Maine. She looks forward to a similar "Oceans" project planned for this year. But in addition to what happens in the classroom, Emeline's father Pierre is also impressed with the wisdom of the school schedule. "Instead of herding them off the bus right into a classroom where they sit all day, the Long Island students arrive early to play and release energy before the first

"We may be the last generation that did not have our childhood programmed; we saw a way to let our children gain that same sense of independence and responsibility we had."



Benjamin, Julian, Christian, Carol Anne, Agnes Mae, Lynn and Peter LaMontagne

lessons begin.”

“But it’s not just the schools,” adds Janice Avignon. “For a tiny island there are an amazing number of activities.” She goes on to list the theater company, music lessons, church and recreation programs, teen center, historical society, community garden, library and movie nights as just some of what the island has to offer.

“The children left behind some friends when we moved,” notes Ann Thorpe, “but we have lifelong friendships here, and they are so much stronger. We share a common love of the island.”

Lynn LaMontagne had initially listed the boys having to leave their Boy Scout troop as a “con” on her list. However, when a strong storm took down most of the trees on the LaMontagnes’ property a few years ago, the boys helped to clear the land and developed skills they would not have been able to acquire living in the suburbs. “Ben had to earn his first pocketknife in Scouts, but I got mine as soon as we came to the island!” boasts Christian. “And I can use a chain saw,” say Ben. His parents quickly add, “Not without supervision.” Lynn and Peter think the lessons their children would have learned in organized team sports in D.C. are easily matched on the island with less-competitive sports programs through the recreation department, sailing and swimming lessons, and multigenerational theater and music performances.

But much of what these families appreciate about living full-time on Long Island has nothing to do with organizations. “We may be the last generation that did not have



At home with the LaMontagnes



Phil, John, Ann and Hannah

our childhood programmed,” says Peter LaMontagne. “We saw a way to let our children gain that same sense of independence and responsibility we had.” When he was just seven, Julian could ride his bike across the island to play with friends. Ann Thorpe occasionally sends her children to the store to enjoy a pizza and some time to themselves. One week, when their house was being worked on, the children “reverse-commuted” to school while staying with Ann’s mother in Portland. With the help of the school-bus driver, the contractor, and the Casco Bay Lines crew, the experience was a great one. “Where else can you send your kids five miles by public transport without having to worry?” asks Ann.

The families are quick, however, not to sugarcoat their experience. The LaMontagnes plow their own half-mile-long driveway, and the three boys have to share a bedroom. With two of the boys in schools on the mainland, the logistics of after-school activities can be difficult. Peter regrets that he misses some of the children’s activities. “This is not about trying to capture the idyllic nature of summer vacation,” says Peter. “Long Island is a real place with challenges, but it feels genuine, authentic and right.”

For the long term, they promised themselves to assess the situation every year. They have no plans to move back to a large metropolitan area, or out of Maine. The challenge is replicating Peter’s job here in the state. All three of the boys are dedicated to staying on the island for the long term; in

“The children left behind some friends when we moved, but we have lifelong friendships here, and they are so much stronger. We share a common love of the island.”

fact, Julian has already staked out his own house lot. “Maybe you should see if someone else already owns it,” suggests his mother.

Now that their one-year “island adventure” has been extended to two, the Avignon family is looking ahead, taking it one step at a time. “We don’t feel like we’ve given up anything moving here from Massachusetts,” says Janice. “It’s all about choices. This life isn’t for everyone—people either totally get it or they don’t.”

After just one year, the Thorpes have decided it works for them. In the move, they gave up the second salary of Ann’s job, and Hannah and John said good-bye to a few friends. But as Phil and the kids plan their jumps off the pier into the wake of a departing ferry, Ann talks about how their relationships have never been better. “When Phil is here we have him all to ourselves. And the independence the children have on the island is a real gift. It’s the best of all worlds for us.”

Judy Paolini is a writer and designer with tpda in Portland, Maine. For the last 20 years she has lived on Long Island with her husband, Jim Thibault, and a succession of very singular cats.



To see interviews with the families featured in this article, download *Island Journal* for iPad® and Android™ tablets.

Thinking Like Islands

Sustainable Island Living Conference Keynote Speech Excerpts

BILL MCKIBBEN



Courtesy Bill McKibben

When my brother Tom went off to Matinicus to teach, I had no real idea where it was. I went there to visit, and I knew that this was a sort of different place when one of Tom's students picked up me and my family at the boat to drive us to the parsonage where we were staying. The fellow who was driving was nine years old. *Okay, I thought, we're in a different place now.* It is a real pleasure to be associated with a place as splendid as Matinicus, and by extension, all the other islands here in Maine. Though I have spent my life in the mountains, I have a strong affinity for island places, which is a point I want to start with.

We have been through a long period of time—50 or 75 years in this country—when small places and small scales have seemed kind of charming and quaint, but very much something of the past. Now I think we are headed into a very different country and world, where smallness of scale will actually turn out to be a great asset and a great lesson

for the rest of the country and the rest of the world as we move forward. In some sense, many parts of our society are going to have to start thinking more like islands, and we are going to have to start taking advantage of the great lessons that such places offer us.

What do I mean? One of the most interesting and painful phrases to come out of our history of the last couple of years marked the beginning of the financial crisis, when we started describing banks as “too big to fail.” What that phrase meant in political terms was that the banks had gotten so big we had to go give them a lot of our money so that they would not fail. But if you thought about it for a while, the real meaning of the phrase *too big to fail* is simply that these banks are too big. Anything that is too big to fail is, by definition, too big, and it is time to start figuring out how to make them smaller.

It turns out that there are all kinds of arrangements in our economy that have found themselves too big to fail, and

hence, too big. I think of agriculture and energy, to name just a few of the most important commodities that we depend on, which are at least as brittle, top-heavy, overbuilt, overconcentrated, and vulnerable as our financial sector turned out to be. If they fail—or, as they fail—the consequences will be even more unpleasant to deal with than the fallout from our financial crisis.

Let's talk about food for a minute. We have built a huge industrial, agricultural machine that runs entirely on fossil fuel, which is using up topsoil at an enormous rate and produces vast quantities of food, that—while cheap—is not particularly good for us as we can tell by our health outcomes, and which is probably not long for this world, at least in its present form, if we begin to take seriously the fact that we need to get off of fossil fuel.

The good news is that this is starting to happen. Farmers' markets are the fastest-growing part of our food economy and have been for 15 years. Over that time their number has doubled and then doubled and then doubled again. Last year the USDA said that for the first time in 150 years, there were more farms in the U.S. instead of fewer. The most dominant demographic trend in America since the end of the Civil War has bottomed out and reversed itself because there are now lots of people taking up farming, including lots of young people.

About a decade ago, I became the first faculty advisor for a farm and garden project at Middlebury College. When we started it, it was very hard to get the administration to take it seriously. They were worried about it. I remember a dean saying to me, "We wouldn't want anyone to think that

we were an agricultural school." I said, "I don't think that's a big issue." I did think it was odd, however, that you are allowed to major in every other kind of culture, but for some reason we did not have a course in agriculture. We still don't, but now there are 10 or 20 kids that graduate every year from Middlebury with no desire to do more than grow garlic someplace. It's not, perhaps, what their parents had been counting on, so I try to make myself scarce at commencement. But I'm exceptionally proud of them.

One of the reasons that farmers' markets are interesting is for their ecological value. It clearly makes more sense to drive a tomato 5 miles than 5,000 miles—and similarly in culinary terms. I've actually traveled 5,000 miles this week and I know how I feel. But the most important thing is the social experience at farmers' markets. This will instantly make sense to anyone who lives on a small island setting, where your interactions are similar to a farmers' market experience. A couple of years ago a pair of sociologists followed shoppers first around a supermarket, then around a farmers' market. At a supermarket, you know how it works. You walk in, you fall into a light fluorescent trance, you visit the "Stations of the Cross" around the market, and that's the experience.

But when the sociologists followed shoppers around a farmers' market, the shoppers were having, on average, 10 times more conversations per visit. Not 10 percent more, 10 times more. It is a very different experience, and precisely the kind of experience that we need in a society that has spent the last 60 years basically spending its wealth building bigger houses farther apart from each other. Because of



From STORMS to WeatherBlur

STORMS was a one-year pilot project funded by the National Science Foundation, through which students in K–8 schools learned to create GoogleEarth maps telling the story of how their islands and their families had been affected by shifting weather trends and climate change.

One highlight of the project came when students from three Maine island schools joined 15 lobstermen and 5 fisheries scientists gathered at the Island Institute for the fifth annual Fishermen's Climate Roundtables. Via videoconferencing technology, the students shared weather data they had collected, part of their learning to use digital mapping, digital storytelling and graphical analysis to discuss the effects of climate change on their communities.

Because fishermen rely upon current, accurate weather reporting, they were surprised and delighted to find that the students' weather blogs and videos were among the most current and accurate—and extremely entertaining. Students became even more highly motivated when they started receiving comments and posts from fishermen on their blogs.

At the Frenchboro school, students took the project one step further, inviting the town's fishermen in to reclaim an old Frenchboro tradition, the "coffee shop," to talk about the decisions they make and to share anecdotes about past weather events, such as the time the ocean froze over between Swan's Island and Frenchboro. "It really brought fishing into the school," said the teacher, Doug Finn.

The Frenchboro students are now using their newfound weather expertise in another way. Every morning at 8 a.m., the students fire up their VHF radio and bring all the fishermen in the vicinity up to speed on the NOAA forecast, the marine forecast, and the current weather conditions at Frenchboro school.

STORMS has now evolved into a new project entitled WeatherBlur, which will bring the dialogue between students, fishermen, and climate scientists online to create a space to share and explore questions related to community impacts of climate change.

that practice, the average American today has half as many close friends as the average American of 50 years ago. That is one of the reasons we have so much trouble dealing with our problems and figuring out how we are going to agree on anything politically. Farmers' markets are how everybody on Earth shopped for food until 70 years ago, and 70 percent of the planet still does. Of course we like it. We're socially evolved primates. This is what we are built for—being in touch with each other.

Think about energy, similarly. Now hyperconcentrated in a few huge places, the logic of fossil fuel is that because it only occurs in few places and because it is rich in BTUs and easy to transport, we take it all to one big power plant, burn it, and then run some lines everywhere you need them to go. The logic of renewable energy is kind of the opposite. It's omnipresent but diffuse, so we need to figure out how to do what the engineers call "distributed generation." Depending on where you are, we need millions of people with solar panels on their roofs instead of a few huge centralized power plants. I have solar panels all over my roof in Vermont. On a sunny day I am a utility. I am firing electrons down the grid. My neighbors are cooling their beer before the Red Sox game with sunlight that is falling on my shingles.

It is incredibly exciting to see the work that the people of Vinalhaven have been doing in pioneering the making of energy close to home. The sight of those three turbines spinning is a remarkable thing. It takes some money and it takes people making it happen and it takes a while. But once the turbines are there, the wind just comes for you.

That is the idea of distributed generation and of farmers' markets. I think this is an extraordinarily exciting moment, and all of you are in an extraordinarily exciting place to be a part of it. I know that because I am in Vermont, in another one of those places where this is happening. Which begs the question of why I'm almost never home anymore.

Here is where we're going to get a little grimmer for a moment. The answer to that question is that there is really one thing above all else that can derail this transition to a saner world. And that one thing above all else is the rapid destabilization of the climate of this land.

The story of the last 20 years is that CO₂ is pinching us a lot faster and harder than anyone suspected. The reasons are twofold. First—and this is important to understand when you think about these issues—scientists are, by their nature, very conservative and very cautious and far more likely to underestimate than overestimate the consequences of CO₂ buildup in the atmosphere. The second reason that the climate issue is so much more serious than we thought is we just did not understand how finely balanced the planet is. For all the time that we've been around—the 10,000 years of human history that we call the Holocene—the planet has been very stable. The climate has been benign in a way that underwrote the rise of civilization.

So far we have raised the temperature of the Earth about 1 degree. We've added about three-quarters of a watt per square meter of solar energy to each square meter of the planet's surface. That's been enough to knock us out of the Holocene. Within the lifetime of everybody in this room, we have left behind the 10,000-year period of the Holocene



Michelle Finn

Seth, a student at the Frenchboro school, learns about clouds as a part of the STORMS project.



Roll cloud over East Point, Chebeague Island

and moved into something else. The only questions now are how far into it we are going to go, and just how much damage is going to be done.

I've devoted my most recent book, oddly titled *Eaarth*—with an extra “a” in the middle, which to pronounce you have to kind of channel your inner Schwarzenegger—to describe this new world. The ocean is 30 percent more acidic than it was 40 years ago, because the chemistry of seawater changes dramatically as it absorbs carbon from the atmosphere. Those of you old enough to remember the first pictures that came back from *Apollo 8* of our planet: We saw this beautiful blue-and-white marble floating in the black void. Those pictures are as out-of-date as my high school yearbook picture. Now in the summer there is 40 percent less ice in the Arctic than there was then. I could go on like this for a very long time, but I'm only going to talk about what's happened since that book came out 18 months ago, to provide you with a picture of what is going on.

2010 was the warmest year for which we have records on this planet. Nineteen nations set new all-time temperature records. Some of them were pretty unbelievable. We were on the phone one day with our 350.org crew in Pakistan and one of them said, “It's hot here today.” I was surprised to hear him say that because it's always hot in Pakistan in the summer. He said, “No, it's really hot. We just set the new all-time temperature record today. It was 129 degrees.” Okay, that is hot. Where I live it doesn't ever get to 100 degrees. It might get to 96 or something once a summer, and if it does, rest assured we are all bitching and moaning. Add 30 degrees and take away any air-conditioning for 98 percent of Pakistanis, then you get some sense of what's going on when you have heat like that. Bad things happen.

However, the one aspect I want to concentrate on is what happens to the planet's hydrological cycles, meaning the way that water moves about the Earth. Here is the one

basic physical fact you need to know to understand the century we are now in: Warm air holds more water vapor than cold air. The planet's atmosphere as a whole is about 4 percent wetter than it was 40 years ago, resulting in an almost unbelievable change in one of the basic physical parameters of the planet. That percentage, with minor variations, had probably stayed more or less steady for 10,000 years. But with 4 percent more water vapor in the atmosphere, dry areas are becoming more arid because increasing temperature increases the rate of evaporation.

We have all seen the results—the drought, for instance, in Russia, in the summer of 2010. You remember the great fires filling Moscow with smoke. That was bad, but what was really bad was an absolutely record heat wave that fanned the fires. Russia has been measuring temperatures for a long time, and it had never reached 100 degrees in Moscow, but they broke that mark eight times in the beginning of August 2010. The record heat really scared the Russians. Their grain harvest was so reduced that they stopped exporting grain to the rest of the world. They literally turned grain ships around, which is bad news because in a normal year Russia is the third-biggest grain exporter on the planet. The price of corn and wheat immediately went up about 70 percent.

Now as Americans, we can deal. When you buy a box of corn flakes you are probably paying more for the cardboard than for the corn. So increased corn prices do not put us in bankruptcy immediately. But if you live someplace where you go out every day and buy corn meal to make tortillas for your family's dinner, a 70 percent increase in the price of corn matters. The number of hungry and malnourished people in the world has spiked each of the last three years after declining for a number of years. Because of these bad harvests, we have added several hundred million more people to the ranks of the malnourished.



Krista Hayward

Of course, Russia was just the beginning; the price of grain has stayed that high ever since 2010 because we have had big crop failures in Western Europe, in China, and in parts of Australia. Right at the moment there is a horrific drought and famine under way in the Horn of Africa, and there is a staggering drought under way in Texas.

Once that water is up in the air, the average residence time of water vapor in the atmosphere is only about a week. And it's going to come down somewhere. By putting so much more water into the atmosphere, we have loaded the dice for downpours, deluges and floods. Back in the summer of 2010, it was Pakistan. There is an area up at the top of the Khyber Pass that normally gets three feet of rain a year, and they got 12 feet of rain in a week, which is why the Indus River swelled to the point where it covered a quarter of the country and 20 million people had to leave their homes.

You saw the pictures of the epic flood from Queensland in Australia in December 2010. Because they do not have as many TV cameras, you did not see similar pictures from Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and big parts of Brazil and elsewhere. You did see the epic flooding along the Missouri and Mississippi River Basins in the spring of 2011. More water than had ever flowed through these rivers, due to the record snowpack, which is what you get when you have record rainfall with the temperature below 32 degrees. The snow melted and while it was melting, we had record rainfall. And so there was just an ungodly amount of water pouring through, flooding and causing all kinds of trouble.

In Vermont, when Hurricane Irene came up the East Coast, the seawater off of New York and New Jersey was warmer than had ever been recorded, which because of the principles of physics that I was describing earlier, caused Irene to pick up an incredible freight of water, which she carried inland, and dumped an awful lot of it on Vermont

where I live. One of the ways you could tell that it was an unusual event was the pictures of covered bridges as they floated down rivers after they washed away. Those covered bridges had been there for 150 or 200 years; that is, they've taken everything that nature has seen in that time, but this was something different.

How do we know scientifically it is different? You look at the numbers. If you have a place like Vermont that's been keeping rainfall records for a couple hundred years, there are tens of thousands of rainfall events that people have cataloged. So the odds of setting a new record are very, very small. But if you set a new record it is usually by something like a millimeter, which is how records work, more or less, when you have a long-established pattern. If the old record for running a mile is 3.54, the guy who breaks the record is not going to break it by a minute and a half. But for one day of rainfall records for Vermont and for parts of the southern tier of New York from Irene and the storm that followed, those one-day rainfall records broke the old marks, in some cases by 25 or 30 or 60 percent. This rain is falling on a different planet than we are used to.

There are a couple of other things we also need to bear in mind. First, we are just at the beginning of this new period on Earth. We have seen what happens with a 1-degree increase in temperature. There is probably another degree already in the pipeline from carbon we have already emitted. The ocean stores some of that heat for a while, but eventually the increase expresses itself in the atmosphere.

But even worse, unless we get our act together very quickly—and by “get our act together,” I mean get off coal and gas and oil way faster than any government is planning to right now—climatologists have predicted that we are looking at an increase of 4 or 5 degrees before the century is out. This is not the worst-case prediction; this is the mainstream consensus view.



A global climate-change visualization, Sydney, Australia

There is no reason to think that our planet can cope with anything like this. Forget droughts and floods. A couple of years ago a team of agronomists at University of Washington and Stanford did the simple calculations for what happens to grain yields with these kinds of temperature increases. Corn, wheat, soybeans and all of our other important food crops are just as adapted to the Holocene as we are. What the agronomists found is that, from this point on, every degree of increase in global average temperature will yield about a 10 percent decline in grain productivity.

Try to imagine what happens to stability, to progress, to development, to war and peace, to all those things if we take the planet we have now and start subtracting 10 or 20 or 30 percent of calories from people. Nothing good. And here is the kicker that goes back to where we started tonight, with the description of beautiful, emerging, local, self-sufficient economies. Even these economies cannot deal with this scale of change. Good local agricultural systems are more resilient than a huge Midwestern monoculture, but there are limits to its resilience.

Let me tell you about what happened to one of my favorite places when Hurricane Irene stormed into Vermont. It is a place called the Intervale Center in Burlington, a nationally recognized center for sustainable agriculture. The farm is located in the old dump in the center of town on about 120 acres that has been divided up into about 10 farms. Farmers come there and get three years to learn their craft. They are mentored by other farmers and develop a market, and then after three years they go out someplace else in Vermont to continue growing while someone else takes over. It is a beautiful spot, and it provides about 10 percent of the fresh food that the biggest city in Vermont consumes. So it is not a pilot; it is very important.

When Hurricane Irene came through, it completely wrecked the farm. Nothing got harvested there this year. The whole thing was under feet of water. And some of its topsoil is now gone, replaced by sand from the Winooski River. If we don't figure out how to deal with carbon, you can build the best darn local system of anything you want, but if it does not rain—or if it rains every day for thirty days—you still do not get to grow anything. And similarly with all the other facets of a local economy. The kind of change we are making to the Earth is too large.

So our task becomes a very simple one: How are we going to keep that from happening?

The bad news is that it's not going to be easy. It should be easy because we know much of what we need to do. We have much of the technology. If Vinalhaven can do it, then the whole rest of the world can also. Vinalhaven is an excellent place, but it is not so much wiser than the rest of civilization that it has set an un-followable example. The problem is politics. For 20 years we thought that if we sat patiently with scientists and had them explain to our political leaders that the worst things that could ever happen in the world were in the process of happening, that they would do something about it.

We did not reckon on the fact that while we were talking patiently in one ear, the fossil-fuel industry was going to be bellowing in the other ear. And with a series of threats and promises that so far has proved entirely equal to the task of preventing action, which is all those industries want to do, because they at the moment are the most profitable enterprise human beings have ever engaged in. ExxonMobil made more money last year than any company in the history of money. And you all know enough about our political system to know that it takes only a small fraction of that money, wisely dispensed in Washington, or Augusta or anyplace else, to keep action from happening. The easiest thing in the world is to stall things, to delay, to prevent action. That is what has been going on and what continues to go on to this day. In Washington we have a 20-year bipartisan record of accomplishing absolutely nothing on climate change.

I think an important point to try and get across when you talk to your neighbors is to ask who are the radicals here? Because it is not us. Radicals are people who are willing to alter the composition of the atmosphere and the people who are changing the chemical composition of seawater. Those are the most radical things that people have ever done in the history of human civilization. And in that sense, those who are trying to keep the world looking something like the way it looked when we were born are the real conservatives.

I do not know if any of this is going to work. It is possible that we have waited too long to get started. But I am hopeful that we may at least begin making this transition into a world that offers some promise of being sustainable and durable and human-scale and remarkably beautiful and pleasant and filled with human meaning.

I don't know if we're going to win. But I know it is the question of our time. And I know that there are people all over the world, from Vinalhaven to Matinicus and to the Maldives, who will keep trying to fight this battle as long as it is possible to do. And I just look forward to getting to fight it side by side with you going ahead.

*Bill McKibben is the author of a dozen books about the environment, beginning with *The End of Nature* in 1989, which is regarded as the first book for a general audience on climate change. He is a founder of the grassroots climate campaign 350.org, which has coordinated 15,000 rallies in 189 countries since 2009.*

The Many Lives of Dix Island

HARRY GRATWICK





Maine Historic Preservation Commission (5)

West view of Shamrock Boardinghouse

A few miles south of Owls Head, on the edge of Penobscot Bay, lies Dix Island, one of the abandoned quarry islands in the Muscle Ridge Channel. There are other quarries on the Muscle Ridge Islands, but Dix has always been considered The quarry island. Although the quarry business ended on Dix well over a century ago, the island has gone through several transformations since then.

Quarry Days

Shortly before quarry operations began on Dix Island in the mid-19th century, the remains of an Indian burial ground were discovered. A historian at the time gives us a description: "Many skeletons, much decayed, seem to have been buried in a circle, with their feet pointing inwards toward the center."

In 1850 Job Rackliff sold the island, "together with all buildings thereon," to a millionaire entrepreneur from New York named Horace Beals. Rackliff may have been the first owner of Dix Island, but clearly the island's history began well before the arrival of Europeans.

"Whether Rackliff was more fisherman or farmer, we do not know," wrote Charles McLane in *Islands of the Mid-Maine Coast*. Nor is it clear why Beals purchased an island that he reportedly called "a good place to commit suicide." Some speculate it was in payment for a bad debt; others see it as simply an extension of Beals's real estate operations.

Nevertheless, by the mid-1850s Beals had opened a quarry on the southwest corner of Dix Island.

Horace Beals died during the winter of 1863–64, but before his death he began to build a mansion for his Philadelphia-born wife Jennie, on the northwest corner of the island. The elegant structure became a landmark in the area for many years. Although the mansion compared favorably to General Henry Knox's famous home, Montpelier, in nearby Thomaston, it was dwarfed by some of the summer "cottages" on Mount Desert Island.

Stories abound about the beautiful Mrs. Beals, who inherited her deceased husband's island. We do know she was not, as one legend suggested, a Russian princess. According to Norman Drinkwater, who wrote an article about Dix Island in *Down East* magazine, "she was an astute businesswoman."

The shrewd Mrs. Beals used her Philadelphia connections to secure lucrative contracts for Dix Island granite. She also appears to have spared no expense in completing the "mansion" her husband had begun. The building had marble fireplaces in every room, vaulted ceilings and an ornamental garden. A nearby carriage house contained horses and carriages that carried the imperious Mrs. Beals to the boat landing. When she eventually left the island, Jennie Beals went on to marry three more husbands, one of whom was an English peer.

Well before the outbreak of the Civil War, word spread



Peter Ralston (3)

Shamrock Boardinghouse foundation

that the Dix Island Granite Company had been formed and that skilled granite cutters and carvers were needed to fulfill the government contracts. The pay was good for that time. A skilled granite worker could earn from \$2.50 to \$5.10 for an eight-hour day, attracting men from as far away as Europe, who were faced with low pay and poor conditions. Workers poured in, especially from Ireland, Italy and Scotland. Some estimate that as many as 2,000 people lived on the island. At one point 1,485 men were on the Dix Island Granite Company payroll.

To house this multitude of stonecutters, four large boardinghouses were built on the 65- to 70-acre island. This included the four-and-a-half-story Shamrock Boardinghouse, built to accommodate 400 to 500 Irishmen, and

the Aberdeen Hotel, constructed to house an equal number of Scots. At the height of the boom there may have been as many as 100 buildings on Dix. Additional stonecutters, some with their families, lived in smaller boardinghouses scattered around the island.

An 1874 map shows that 40 of the structures were long, rectangular cutting sheds. Charles McLane informs us that "at the peak of operations eight quarries were worked on the island and 52 oxen hauled stones from the quarries to the sheds." The sheds were aligned in rows on an eastern end of the island that was gradually extended by grout or slag from the quarries.

Hazel Young, in her book *Islands of New England*, proclaims, "The town built for the quarrymen was more im-

pressive than any other island community on the coast of Maine." There was a post office, a general store, a school and a blacksmith shop. In addition, there was an opera house seating 450 people on the western side of the island that featured concerts and performances by touring players. During the winter of 1879 the quarrymen put on a production of *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, which was probably as close as the workers got to liquor on an island where liquor was prohibited.

During these years Dix was a dry island. Norman Drinkwater tells us that when Frank Crockett took over as superintendent he ruled the island's quarrymen with an iron hand, including the prohibition of alcohol on the island. Crockett had nothing but scorn for the men who left

The Beginning of the End

In 1881, as quarry operations were winding down, the Dix Island Granite Co. received a favorable decision in a case they had brought before the United States Supreme Court several years previously. A synopsis of the case follows:

In the 1870s the Dix Company had contracted with the United States government "...to deliver at the site of the Post Office in the City of New York all such granite as might be required for the construction of the building, wrought and dressed in such manner and style of workmanship as might be directed by the United States."

The case revolved around the question of the size of the stones provided by the Dix Company for the post office. The government argued they had not agreed to pay a higher price for the larger stones that were delivered. The difference in the amounts resulting from the two interpretations as to the price of the granite delivered was \$70,745.74. When the case eventually reached the Supreme Court, the judges found in favor of the Dix Company by a 6-3 vote. Mr. Justice Field delivered the opinion of the Court:

"...nor is there anything unreasonable in the increased



New York Post Office

price for the larger stones required by this interpretation. We do not therefore appreciate the force of the objection urged by the government to the construction for which the claimant insists."

Unfortunately for the Dix Island Granite Company, the decision came too late to avert the closing down of quarry operations on the island.



Smith's House during Dix's quarry era, and the foundation today

the island on weekends and spent their hard-earned money in Rockland.

Weekdays the island was an uproar of noise. The only quiet came on weekends when many of the workers went to the mainland seeking pleasures not found on Dix. Bruce Grindle writes in *Tombstones and Paving Blocks*, "It is reported that a large share of the weekly payroll wound up in tavern registers in Rockland on Saturday nights".

When Jennie Beals left the island in the early 1870s, the driving force behind the Dix Island operations became Cortland P. Dixon. Along with General Tillson of Hurricane Island, Milton St. John of Clark Island and J. R. Bodwell of Vinalhaven, Dixon was known as one of the "Granite Ring," according to Vinalhaven historian Bruce Grindle.

Dix Island flourished into the 1870s when its granite was used to build post offices in New York and Philadelphia, as well as the Charleston Customs House and pilasters for the U.S. Treasury building in Washington. Following the Panic of 1873, however, the quarries were shut down and labor unrest developed. Operations were resumed in 1877, but Dix Island's glory days had passed, as manager C. P. Dixon was faced with dwindling orders and the gradual disappearance of workers.

With demand for Dix Island granite slowing down, many of the workers sought work at other quarries, or left the area entirely. In 1883 the *Boston Journal's* review of Maine's granite industry noted, "The Dix Island quarry, which was quite celebrated in the past, shut down about two and a half years ago."

There were, however, sporadic efforts to revive the granite industry on the island. At one point in the 1890s it was reported that the stone for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York would be quarried on Dix Island. Jennie Beals reappeared, and repairs were made to the boardinghouses and the old derrick was replaced. Unfortunately for Dix, it soon became apparent that Vinalhaven's Bodwell Granite Company had the inside track on landing the lucrative St. John's contract. Jennie Beals died in 1895, and by 1900 the population on Dix was reduced to two families.

Frank Crockett married the island's schoolteacher and remained on the island until the 1920s as caretaker for the defunct Dix Island Company. He lived in the superintendent's house and apparently kept a menagerie of animals, including a ram named Obie, who roamed through the deserted Beals mansion. The other Dix residents were the family of Angus Carlson, who began the tradition of local residents using the island seasonally for fishing and lobstering.

Three Grandfathers

For much of the 20th century, Dix Island was occupied by fishermen who used lumber from the old buildings to build modest cabins to live in during the fishing season. In 1930, the William Underwood Company bought Dix, along with other Muscle Ridge islands, for weir rights. One of the weir fishermen was Alvin McNeilly, who lived to be 94 years old.

Alvin McNeilly was born in 1861 and is one of the transitional figures between the quarry era and the current owners of Dix Island. When I contacted his 90-year-old

grandson Al to ask him about his grandfather and his Dix Island memories, he told me to call back because he was about to “go hauling.”

I knew immediately I was dealing with a remarkable person. From our subsequent conversations I discovered that after serving in World War II, Al graduated from the University of Maine with a degree in chemical engineering. He played a season of professional baseball before taking a job with Esso, now the Exxon Corporation. In due course Al rose to be a vice president of the company, until he retired in 1961.

Al grew up helping his grandfather maintain his three weirs on Dix. As a young man, Al spent his summers playing baseball and working on grandfather Alvin's weirs, located near Poverty Nub off of Dix Island. This is not the place to describe the operation of a weir, but suffice it to say, it was a complex, time-consuming procedure.

I asked Al how Dix Island had changed, and he told me he remembers seeing the remains of the wooden buildings. “There were pieces and parts of them lying around. Fishermen who came to live on the island took the lumber and built small houses for themselves.”

Al also told me the water in the quarries was beautiful. “They looked like Harvard's swimming pool,” he said wistfully. “Today some are pretty muddy-looking.” He also remembers his grandfather talking about the enormous size of the oxen on Dix. His grandfather didn't know where they came from, but told him “they looked like damn water buffalos.”

Another transitional figure was Bill Butman, one of the last fishermen to live on the island. He bought Dix with three other fishermen in 1945 and built a cabin that is still used today. Bill had worked for people who had worked in the quarries. He heard stories about the “quarry days” and passed them on to the present generation. As a result, much of what we know about Dix Island's history comes from Bill.

Bill lived on Dix seasonally before moving to the mainland in 1952, but his legacy continues with his grandsons Matt and Wes Wasgatt. Following in their grandfather's footsteps, they recently built a house on the island.

The third grandfather was Maurice Smith, who joined the original four fishermen who bought Dix Island in 1945. He bought out his partners in the 1950s and continued to set his traps around the island, until 1976. One day he walked into the offices of the Hurricane Island Outward



Morris Smith (left) and Bill Butman (right) tend a herring weir at Dix Island.

Bound School in Rockland and announced he was retiring. Were they interested in buying Dix Island? Sharon Lawrence and her husband, Frank, heard about the offer and were intrigued. Sharon told me that when they visited the island on a foggy day, “It was love at first sight.”

The Lawrences initially tried to get a group of Outward Bound trustees to buy Dix, but nobody was interested. Sharon then went out to Dix Island and found Maurice Smith in his cabin. For the next half-hour, she told me, they negotiated through the screen door until he agreed to give her an option to buy the island for \$100. (Sharon said when they finally bought the island he began to call her “dearie.”) Smith knew the environmental and legal difficulties she faced, however, and told her “You'll never pull it off.” Smith was later invited to be part of the ownership group that was formed and today his grandson, Scott Erskin, is one of the owners.

The Greening of Dix Island

Sharon Lawrence McHold has been president of the Dix Island Association since its formation in 1978. If anyone is responsible for the way the island functions today, it is Sharon, an energetic, enterprising 70-year-old. Sharon interviewed 150 people in the process of forming the Dix Island Association, which ultimately consisted of eight families.

Because the Lawrences lacked the means to own the whole island, they invited the aforementioned fisherman, Maurice Smith, to be part of the group, which reduced the



Abandoned finials in the mown fields of Dix Island

asking price. Another of the new owners was Barbara Butman Wasgatt, the daughter of fisherman Bill Butman.

Before proceeding with her dream, Sharon wrote a “declaration,” the premise of which was that each of the island’s eight families agreed to certain operating procedures and principles. Dix Association members own their own cabins but the rest of the island is owned in common.

Dix Island is thus a condominium owned jointly in “undivided interest” by the Association members. In the process of selecting the group, Sharon discouraged folks with different notions, including a good friend who wanted to put a big house on his lot. I asked Sharon how they dealt with someone who wanted to sell out. She said, “You can’t think of this as a money-maker. We love the island for what it is and for how it makes us feel when we are here.”

One of the Dix Island rules stipulates that the size of the individual cabins shall not exceed 1,000 square feet, including deck, loft and outhouse (1,000 square feet was the approximate size of the fishermen’s cabins that were built in the 1940s). Association members do not have electricity or plumbing, although most of the cabins are equipped with solar panels and propane refrigeration.

One resident describes Sharon as “being in the middle. She holds the place together.” Working with her island neighbors to develop the Dix Island Association is where Sharon honed her mediation and arbitration skills. She and her second husband, Tom Settlemire, a Bowdoin professor, live in Yarmouth. At her business, Conflict Solutions in Portland, Sharon specializes in working with extended families who share real estate problems.

“Island residents run the spectrum from tree huggers to pioneers,” I was told. Although everyone respects the island’s fragile ecosystem, opinions vary as to how the island

***“We love the island
for what it is and for
how it makes us feel
when we are here.”***

which are shared jointly, in addition to a couple of outhauls. All decisions are made by consensus. For example, Sharon told me it took 10 years for her to be persuaded that the island needed to buy a tractor, since the fields needed to be mowed in order to maintain a variety of birds.

As we walked along a shoreline path I was told to be careful; holes sometimes opened up between the pieces of granite rubble. Sharon showed me the foundation of the 155-foot-long Shamrock Boardinghouse, as well as the foundations of the Aberdeen Hotel. The boardinghouses faced the mainland on the western side of the island. Most of the quarries, the cutting sheds, the barns and the blacksmith shop were on the opposite side, looking out on Penobscot Bay. We ended our walk at Sharon’s house, which served as

the maid’s quarters for Jennie Beals’s adjacent mansion.

Twenty-first-century Dix Island is thriving. Fields filled with wildlife surround thick stands of spruce. In addition to eight water-filled quarries, eight little cabins are scattered around the island, blending into the landscape. Visitors are allowed on Dix Island, although they are requested to respect the privacy of the owners and stay on the marked paths. Fires, camping and unleashed pets are not permitted.

With no electricity or plumbing Dix may seem like a “utopian” community, as one writer observed when the Association was first formed. The results, however, speak for themselves. Since 1978 Dix Islanders have preserved the natural setting of a scenic Maine island while enjoying life with a minimal reliance on technology.

Harry Gratwick is a lifelong summer resident of Vinalhaven and author of many books, the most recent of which is Stories from the Maine Coast.

should be maintained. Some want it to remain wild and natural, with spruce trees growing everywhere, while others want more of a park-like atmosphere, which involves mowing the trails and clearing the brush. Sharon told me she is particularly interested in maintaining a diversity of plants and animals. Currently there are a large variety of song- and shorebirds, as well as several deer on the island.

Dix Island is run in a way that would satisfy even the most ardent Quaker. The Association has four moorings,



“There’s Nothing to Do on This Island”

Mentoring Teens and Tweens

CAITLIN GERBER

Sanford’s Skating Pond is the place to be in the winter-time on Chebeague—or so I was told by the island’s teenagers when I first arrived. What they didn’t say is that it must be shoveled after each blizzard. It was an early January evening when the season’s first snow started coming down, wet, heavy and at an angle. This was my initiation to Sanford’s Pond, and I saw an opportunity for some team building.

Determined to clear the pond, I threw on my serious winter gear (including my goggles) and set out on bald tires to find help. Somehow I managed to convince a few teens to leave their cozy couches and video games to come pitch in. Once safely at the pond, we fired up the duct tape-covered boom box. We could barely hear the music over the salty, howling wind coming off of the nearby ocean, but it was enough to energize us and we started shoveling. The only light to be seen through the driving snow was glowing at the house of 92-year-old Sanford Doughty and his wife, Mabel, the pond owners. They managed the skating pond for generations, making it into a community treasure using money from donated returnable bottles. They recently passed off management responsibility to the Rec Center, although they can still be seen supervising the action from their back window.

After a couple of hours we turned on the rink lights, and by then I discovered our ranks had grown; I was clearing

alongside a group of about 10 teens. No matter how hard we pushed the snow into mountains around the rink, however, it seemed to pile up on the pond even faster. We were all drenched under our parkas and couldn’t tell if our hair was wet from snow or sweat.

Just when we were about to give up, the massive chunks of snow that had been falling from the sky all evening turned to dainty flakes. We did a little cheer and used the last of our energy to enjoy our reward: a short game of pond hockey. There, on that ice, I realized we had formed a bond. I saw a determination in those island teens that I had never seen before.

Chebeague Island’s Recreation Center operates a Teen Center, a place for young people ages 13 to 18 to hang out. They have access to the gym and their own “teen room” every Friday and Saturday night from 7 to 10 p.m., and five nights a week during the summer. More than 70 teens used the program in 2011, with 17 of the 19 year-round teens taking part.

The program is supported through regular organized fund-raisers. Off-island activities such as haunted hayrides and whitewater rafting trips are also planned. For the past year and a half as an Island Institute Fellow I have been in charge of organizing, leading and attending these activities, as well as staffing the Teen Center most Friday nights. Although running the program is just one of my many re-

sponsibilities as an Island Fellow on Chebeague, it is arguably my most challenging job.

One of the benefits of growing up confined to a small island is that students regard the whole community as their family. Because of the ingrained feeling of safety and protection that comes from being surrounded by pseudo relatives, these kids have an unparalleled sense of freedom (although technically their area to roam is small). Thanks to this limited peer group and community size, the kids roughhouse like siblings and treat all adults like aunts and uncles. In most cases this is a very good thing, except when you're the adult trying to organize them.

I walk a fine—and sometimes difficult—line of attempting to play the role of friend so that they will want to hang out at the Teen Center, while at the same time being a disciplinarian so they will respect me and take me seriously. Because there is such a large age range in the group, at times it can also be tough to navigate the different maturity levels.

For example: our Fourth of July car wash and bake sale fund-raiser. With half the island cars—or so it seemed—lined up waiting for a wash (and to support our program), the 15 teens on hand initially spent more time spraying each other than washing cars. Despite my best efforts, it took a parental voice of authority to finally get everybody to work. I confess, I felt defeated.

These teens face their own, very real, set of challenges. Being a teenager is tough (I know from experience), but commuting to school on the 6:40 a.m. boat every morning doesn't make life any easier. I often hear complaints that "there's nothing to do" on the island, while their mainland friends seem to have the whole world available to them. The transition to a big mainland school from tiny Chebeague Island School after fifth grade is very overwhelming, and some island teens never truly adjust.

But for every challenge there is a positive. There is nothing more enjoyable than summer on an island in Maine. For teens, no place is off limits to bikes; they have their choice of beaches and wharfs to play on, and social life expands when summer kids arrive. Even so, there's something special about being an "island teen." Last summer, the Teen Center sponsored a trip to Cow Island to participate in the Casco Bay outdoor adventure program Rippleffect. I was the chaperone. For two nights and three days we slept in yurts and played up high on a ropes course and at sea level in kayaks.

But June in Maine is always risky. On the last day we awoke to freezing rain. Almost no one had warm clothes, and I dreaded a long day. I had misjudged my companions, however; their spirits came through. They spent the time huddled next to an electric heater under a plastic tarp with wind and rain whipping all around them, entertaining themselves by singing, playing hours of games with just pens and paper, laughing and joking the whole time.

Living on an island has served them well. They don't know it yet, but they have developed positive attitudes and a sense of creativity that I believe are rare qualities in today's youth. I saw it on that cold night on the ice pond. I saw it again under the wind-whipped tarp. These young people are masters at making the best out of a bad situation. I feel honored to be included as part of that chorus.

Caitlin Gerber, third from the left below, is the Island Institute AmeriCorps Fellow on Chebeague, where she is working to sustain and expand the Chebeague Recreation Center.



To hear Caitlin talk more about her experience as an Island Institute Fellow, download Island Journal for iPad® and Android™ tablets.



Peter Ralston



“A World Away”

*A Collection of Photographs
of Young Islanders*

PATRISHA McLEAN



Bonnet Farm Caretakers' Daughter, Betsy, Islesboro



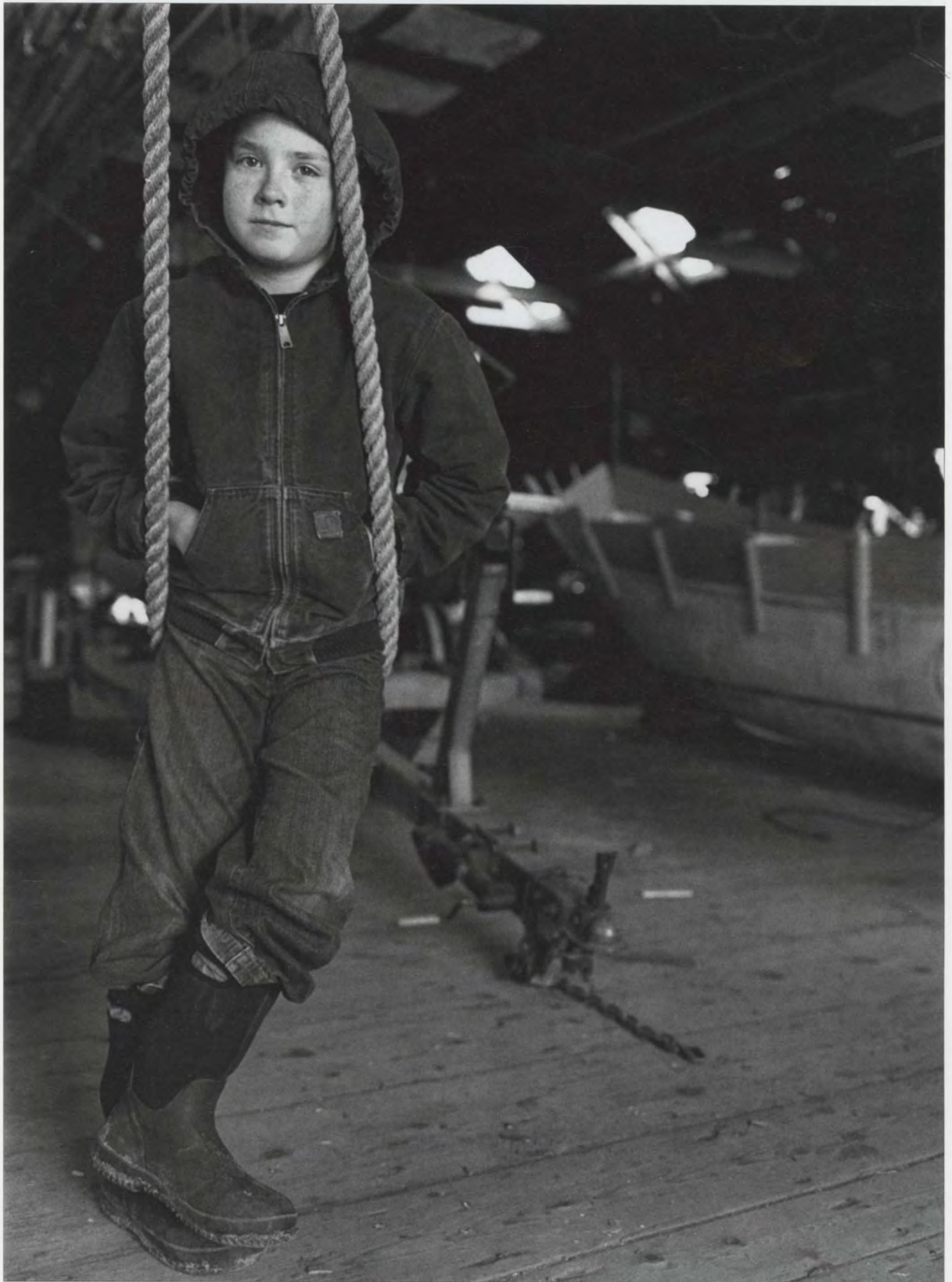
Ava with Chicken and Eggs, North Haven

The highlight of summer for my two children and me has always been our bicycle trips to Islesboro, North Haven and Vinalhaven, which are a short ferry ride—but a world away—from our home in Camden, Maine. We started this tradition when they could just ride bikes, and Wyatt and Jackie are now in college. For all this time I have been intrigued by the children who live year-round, and seem to own, these magical island places. Two years ago I decided to focus in on some of these children with my camera.

Patrishia McLean

People think it's the best thing in the world to be away from everything, and it's not.

Sierra, 15, Islesboro



Peyton in Family Boatyard, North Haven



Emily's Island, Islesboro



First Rifle, Adin, Islesboro

Summer residents ... pretty much stay confined to the lower, Dark Harbor, part of the island and to programs at the Yacht Club and Big Tree Boating. We kind of stay away from most of those if we're not running them.

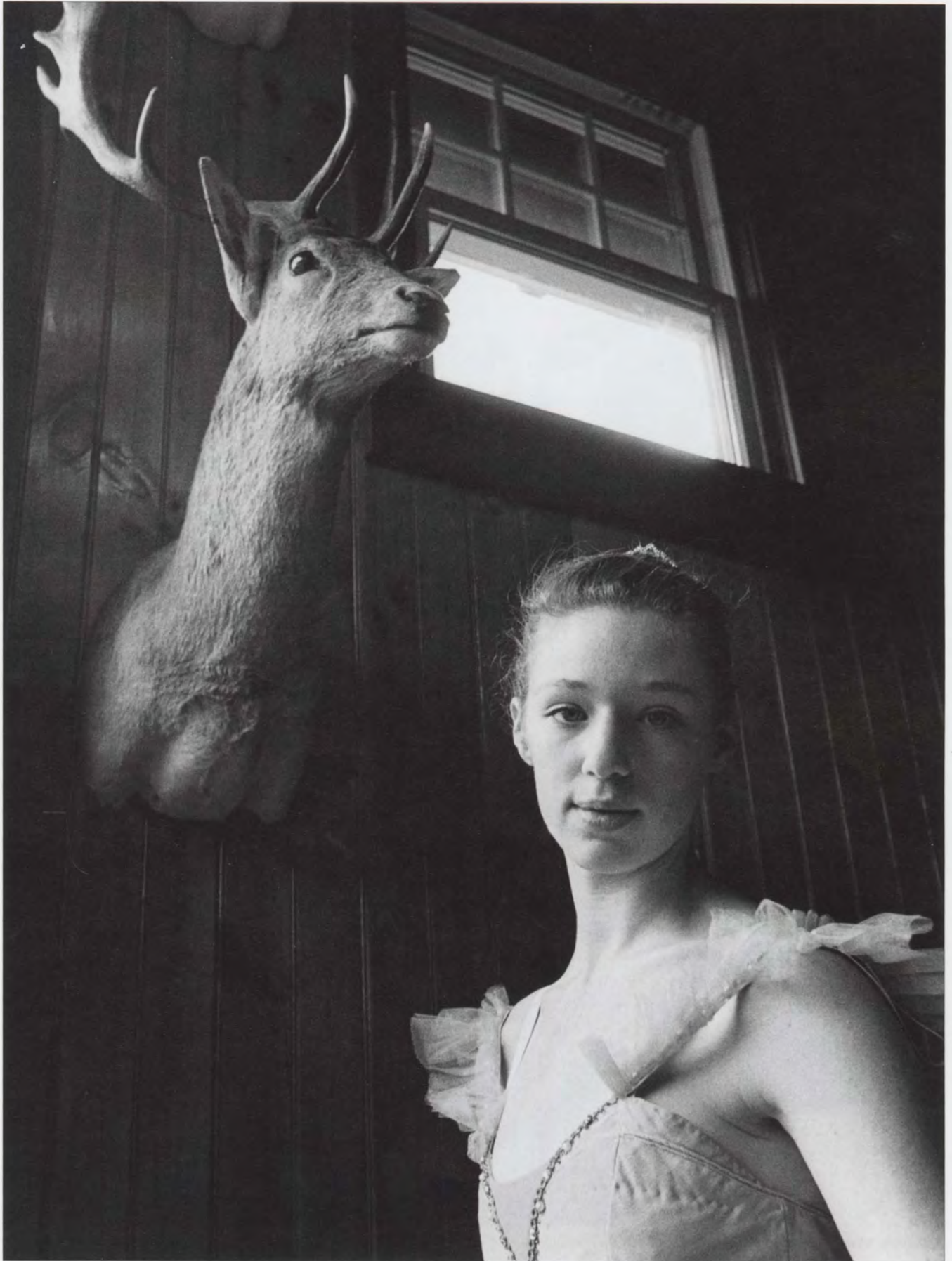
Ben Rollins, 16, Islesboro



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Everybody from the mainland thinks that it's really small, but when we're here we think it's the biggest place on Earth.

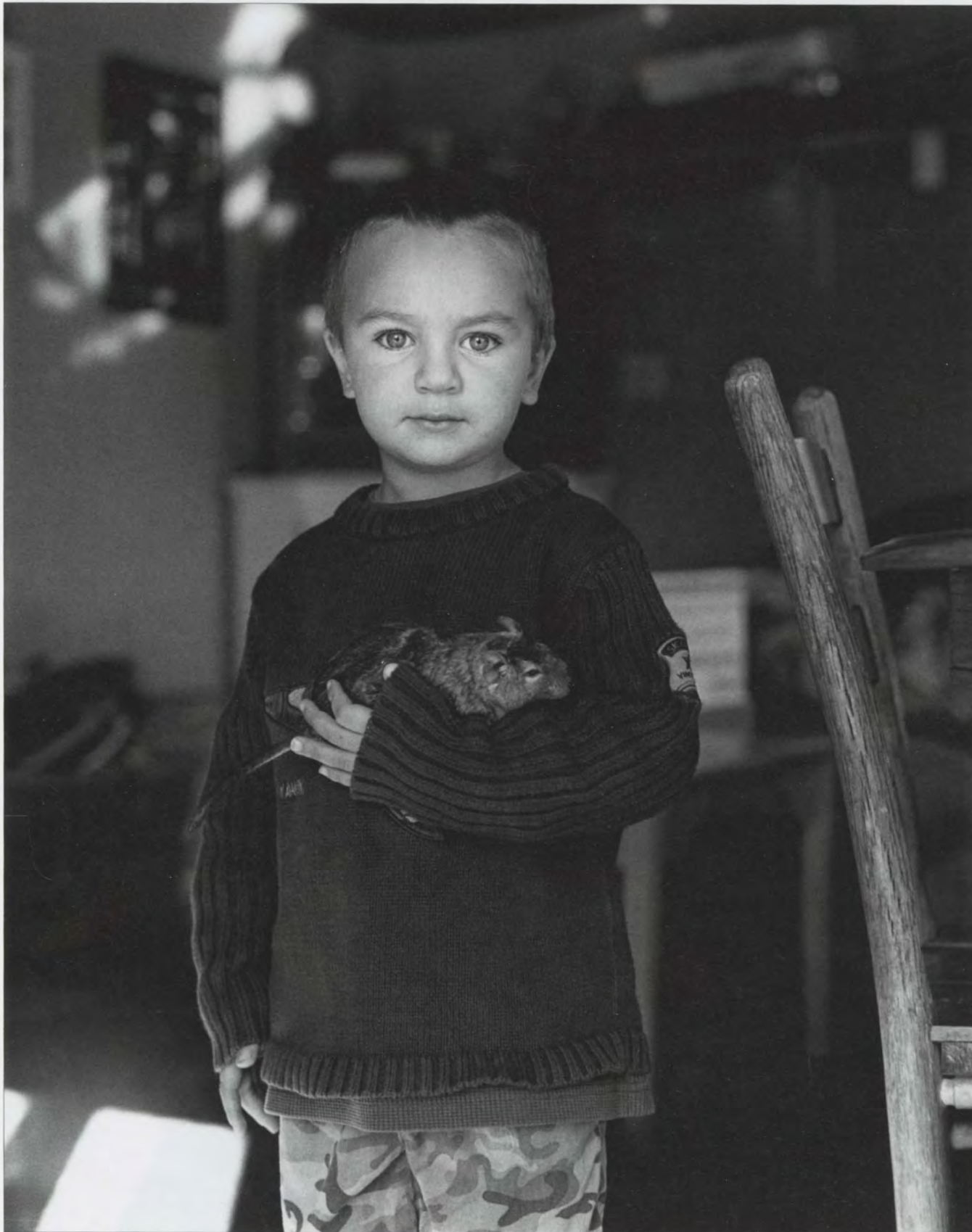
Lila Rose, 10, Vinalhaven



Ballerina and Buck, Claire, Islesboro

A year-round restaurant and a movie theater would be nice, but being out here you get more creative with finding things to do. We get inside empty, 55-gallon bait barrels and roll down the hill in them.

Avery, 15, North Haven



Anthony with Pet South American Squirrel, Vinalhaven



No School Is an Island

The Outer Islands' Inter-Island Classroom

ANNE BARDAGLIO

It is January 11, 2012, and Dalton Burroughs, 13, sits in a low-backed orange chair facing a videoconferencing system next to his younger brother, Quinn, and his teacher, Jessie Campbell, in the classroom of their one-room school on Monhegan Island, 10 miles off the coast of Midcoast Maine. There is a MacBook laptop perched in his lap and a sheet of yellow paper torn from a legal pad in his hand. Dalton leans forward slightly as Jessie says, “Welcome to the first inter-island student council meeting of 2012!” Students on Cliff Island and Islesford cheer through the videoconferencing screen, and Jessie picks up her laptop and turns it to face them. Jessie is Skyping with students from Matinicus Island who are on a field trip, skiing for a week in the western mountains. As the clapping subsides, Dalton glances at his notes outlining the agenda for the meeting, adjusts the gray hood of his sweatshirt, and announces the first item of business for the afternoon.

This inter-island, multi-school, virtual student council is the most recent development of a larger project known as the Outer Islands Teaching and Learning Collaborative (TLC), an initiative to connect the students and teachers of Maine’s one- and two-room island schools through aligned curriculum, technology and field trips. The Outer Islands TLC is the brainchild of a group of veteran island teachers who formed a support network for themselves in 2008 as a way to strengthen and refine their teaching practices and guard against isolation—isolation that had, until recently, been an unofficial part of the job description of being a teacher on a small Maine island.

Island schools have been sharing resources and ideas for years—just ask Ruth Kermish-Allen, the Island Institute’s education director, who coordinates the Island Teachers’

Above: Dalton and Millie in Monhegan’s one-room school

Conference and dozens of inter-island professional development opportunities for teachers, or Reverend Rob Benson of the Maine Seacoast Mission, who organizes annual winter retreats for island middle school students and summer get-togethers for outer island teachers on the *SUNBEAM V*, the Mission's iconic 75-foot boat that serves as a mobile community center for the outer islands.

The first time, that I heard of the Outer Islands TLC as an idea—as a specific, coordinated effort to engage the outer island schools in daily collaboration—it was the spring of 2007, and I was sitting at a kitchen table on Matinicus Island with Lindsay

Eysnogle, one of two teachers on Islesford, and Natalie Ames, the chair of the Matinicus school board. I was an Island Institute education fellow on Matinicus then, working closely with the school board and the teacher to bring resources into the school—textbooks, library books and new technology—and on the more-intangible side of things, helping to develop processes for capturing the institutional knowledge about the school that had been lost with every new teacher. We were also laying the foundation for a four-year rotating curriculum that would take another two years of full-time work by another Island Fellow, Lana Cannon, to complete, and would eventually become the basis of the curriculum that the TLC adopted across five islands.

Lindsay had come to Matinicus to help me learn how to write standards-based curriculum units, and after a few hours of poring over the Maine Learning Results and examples of rubrics, our talk turned to an idea that



Anne Bardaglio

Islesford and Monhegan students gather for a writing class.

Lindsay had—a way of formalizing the kind of mentoring and collaboration that we were experiencing at that kitchen table. She didn't call it the Outer Islands TLC—the name came later, in a moment of late-night clarity as another teacher, Donna Isaacs, was pulling together the final pieces of the TLC's first grant from the Maine Community Foundation—but she described a collaborative approach to working and teaching in the outer island schools that was a complete overhaul from what I had observed during my first year on Matinicus—one teacher, working and struggling alone to adjust not only to life on an isolated island, but also to the intricacies of lesson planning for a classroom of K-8 students. I left for graduate school the following year, but I remember telling Chris Wolff, the director of the fellows' program, "Tell me if the teachers decide to start that inter-island collaborative. You have to let me know."

Laying the groundwork for the TLC to fully take

shape occurred in 2008 when Donna Isaacs, a new teacher on Islesford at the time, suggested that the outer island teachers begin a Critical Friends Group, a kind of professional support network that allows teachers to reflect upon their teaching practice by presenting student work, dilemmas, or questions to a group. One of the central tenets of a CFG group is "Your practice is as important to me as my practice; your students are as important to me as my students," and in many ways, this value has given rise to everything that has happened since 2008 to shape the TLC.



Jessie Campbell (5)

Islesford teachers lead a science class for the rest of the TLC.



The Outer Islands TLC Student Council president, Dalton, presents to his fellow students.

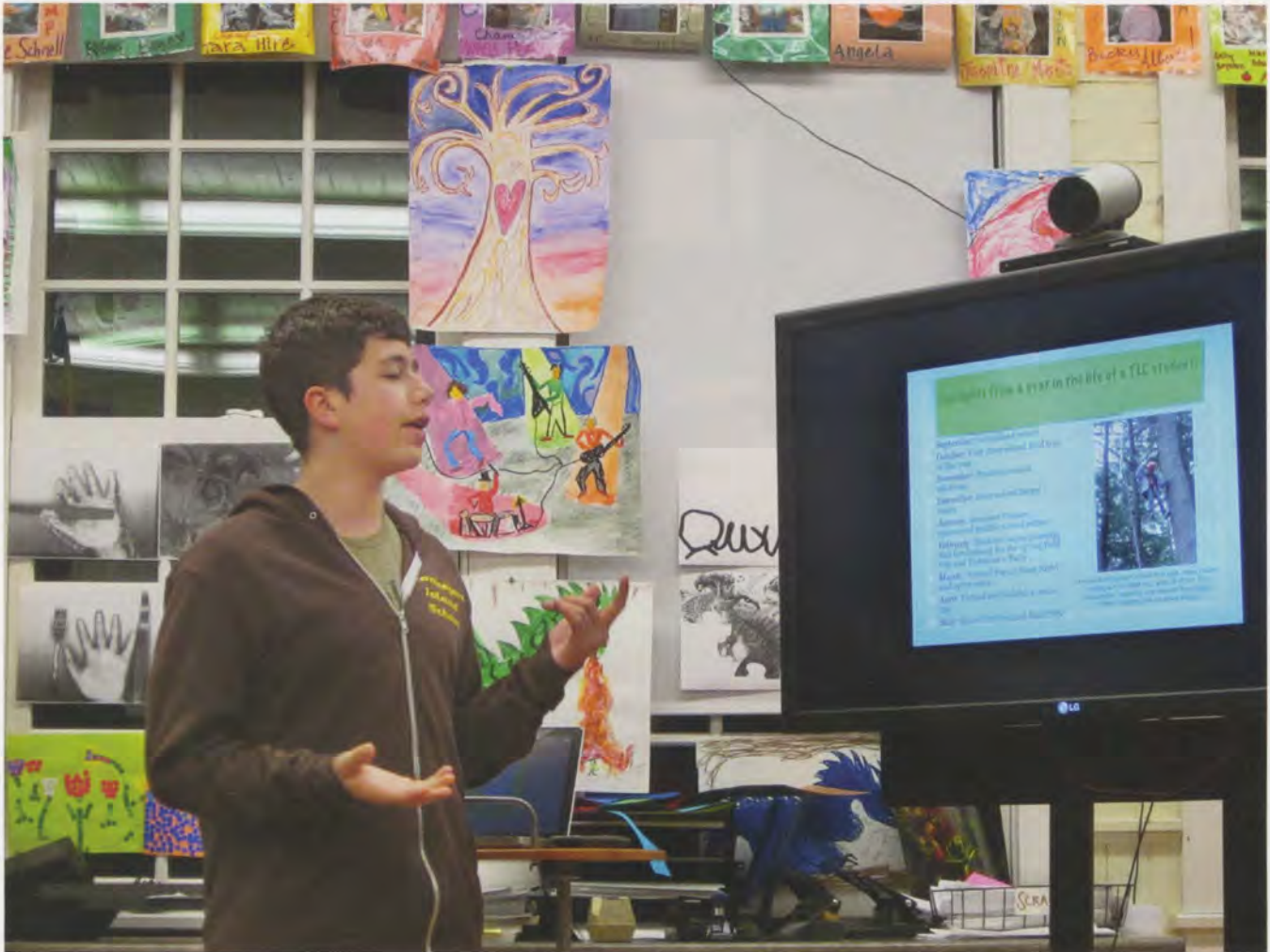
In the winter of 2010, Jessie, the Monhegan teacher, came to the group in a moment of crisis now jokingly referred to as “The Jessie Moment.” The Monhegan school population was projected to drop to just three students the following year—Dalton and Quinn, brothers who lived next door to the school, and a preschooler. There was concern about what this meant for the students and for the vitality of the school. Dalton had just started middle school, Quinn was in fourth grade, and they would no longer have a peer group on the island. Many of the other outer island schools faced similar projections, and Jessie’s dilemma resonated with the group precisely because the other teachers understood how, for island schools, tenuousness and resiliency are not conflicting descriptors, but rather the very embodiment of what it means to be a tiny school that is the heart of a community—communities that believe in their schools so strongly that they fund them almost entirely through taxes, with minimal state assistance.

Across the initial four schools—Monhegan, Matinicus, Isle au Haut, and Islesford—the teachers had enough students to populate what would have amounted to an average-size classroom in a mainland school. In the course of that one conversation about Jessie’s dilemma, the group decided to form a virtual classroom and extend the sense of connectivity they had developed between themselves to their students. The schools had laptops from the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, and videoconferencing

technology purchased through a USDA Rural Development utilities grant awarded to the Island Institute. In creating a virtual classroom as a complement to the physical classrooms of the outer island schools, the teachers hoped that the expanded peer group would lessen the pressure for families to move off-island in search of larger schools.

A few months after “The Jessie Moment,” Natalie called me in Columbus, Ohio, where I was in my second year of a three-year master’s program for creative writing at Ohio State University. “You’d better call Chris Wolff,” Natalie told me. “I think the teachers are putting in an application for a fellow to coordinate that inter-island collaboration.” I knew before leaving Matinicus that I would move back to Maine after graduate school. It had been a bit of a running joke on the island at the end of my first fellowship that I would never actually leave, since I found reasons to delay my departure until 36 hours before my first graduate class in Ohio began. As soon as I heard that the project was actually happening, I knew I’d be moving back to Maine even sooner than anticipated. I arranged with my thesis advisors to complete my thesis remotely during my third year of the program, packed up my small house in Columbus, and was back in Maine before I had even finished grading the last of my students’ papers at the end of the spring semester.

My first day of work, aptly, was the teacher retreat on the SUNBEAM that August. By the end of September, the full-scale collaboration between the schools had begun, with the



Dalton presents using a videoconferencing unit.

Cliff Island school also joining in from Casco Bay. It was a year marked by firsts—the first round of inter-island book groups, held over Skype; the first inter-island field trips, during which students observed marine life in Acadia’s Frenchman Bay in the fall and built traditional shelters with former Penobscot Nation chief Barry Dana in the spring; the first time an island student with cystic fibrosis didn’t have to miss class during a routine hospital stay—because his class was virtual. Due to the limited day-to-day support staff available in many of their schools, the teachers already filled numerous additional roles beyond that of lead classroom teacher, including nurse, guidance counselor, principal, building maintenance manager, and secretary. Now they also began the complex process of planning, implementing and evaluating curriculum with their inter-island colleagues, spread out across three bays and connected by technology that rarely worked exactly as it was supposed to.

The teachers quickly realized that if the TLC were to remain sustainable, the students would need to feel genuine ownership of the project. They were already engaging students in the curriculum development process, setting aside a day at the beginning of each school year

for middle school students to review social studies and science standards and brainstorm ideas for projects and assessments together, collecting student feedback at the end of a unit about what worked and what needed to be improved upon, and building in time for “inquiry-based” projects that were shaped around students’ personal learning goals and research questions.

This approach to curriculum development not only exemplified educational best practices as defined on both the state and national levels, but it was also indicative of the kind of community the TLC was deliberately building: a nonhierarchical, from-the-ground-up collaboration that prioritized, over everything else, students’ experiences in their schools. One of the unofficial mottos of the TLC—“Keep the baby in the middle”—came from a summer teachers’ retreat and a day of

“Now that I’m actually the student council president, I feel like I’ve become even more of a leader. I’m helping other mini-leaders by mentoring them a tiny bit.”

curriculum development that saw our group sitting in a circle with our laptops and pads of paper, pausing our discussions occasionally to roll a ball or crawl-chase after Cove Henry, the ten-month-old son of the Cliff Island teachers. He was sitting happily in the middle of the circle, reminding us with his cheeky outbursts not to take our work too seriously. At the end of the retreat, Paula Greateorex,

the teacher from Isle au Haut, remarked that developing curriculum while playing with a baby was a good example of the TLC at its best, noting that as long as we kept the baby—or the student—in the middle of everything we did, we would know our focus was where it needed to be.

During the same summer retreat, the teachers began to talk about an idea that Jessie had proposed—a virtual student council. In addition to giving students an organized way to offer their input on the project—and helping to ensure that the teachers would always “Keep the baby in the middle”—the student council would also serve as a social outlet, and, since the group had just wrapped up a unit on Maine state government, an important civics lesson. “The idea for the student council originated,” Jessie explains, “when we thought about having the kids involved in developing curriculum and the TLC project as a whole. It made sense that the next step would be to gather a group of kids who would be a part of that process.”

Campaigns began in November 2011—and they were, of course, virtual. Students made interactive, multimedia posters and posted them to a wiki—a kind of easy-to-edit website that the group often uses as a platform for curriculum units. They filmed campaign videos with testimonials from classmates, teachers, uncles, older

cousins and family dogs and posted them to YouTube; ballots were distributed via Google Docs. There were five officer positions available; president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and public relations representative. In addition, each school had a slot for a write-in school representative, who would be responsible for attending all meetings and reporting back to the rest of their classmates. The presidential race, which was anxiety-inducingly close, featured four students from four different islands and in

four different grades. A third grader ran for public relations representative. Dalton, in his campaign for student council president, offered an example of his innate diplomacy by promising a wider variety of sandwich options on field trips. Alex, a student from Isle au Haut, announced

his intention to expand the science curriculum if he won the presidency by conducting cold fusion experiments. Quinn wasn’t interested in an officer position, but made a campaign poster to join the student council “as himself.”

The schools videoconferenced to hear the election results announced, and when the Internet went out on Monhegan, Isle au Haut called Jessie, Dalton and Quinn on a good old-fashioned landline and they listened in by gathering around the speakerphone. The student with cystic fibrosis happened to be in the hospital that day, so he videoconferenced in from his hospital bed. One of his

“You can’t really be a leader in a class of three—this is a different kind of leadership.”



Dalton’s brother, Quinn, votes with both hands during the student council elections.



Members of the TLC meet for the first time in person on Matinicus.

friends, a middle school student from Cliff Island who he met through the TLC, had stopped in to visit, so she joined in as well. Curious parents and a handful of school board members stood behind desks of students lined up in front of the videoconferencing screens, and Matinicus students hung a banner and displayed placards with their names and the positions they were running for.

Jessie, who now serves as the student council advisor, explains that for many of the students, it was the first time they had ever participated in such a formal competition. “To have to run for a position on the student council was really exciting for them, and also brought out feelings of anxiety and nervousness,” she says. “The kids were talking about it at home; they were having experiences they had never had before.”

Dalton won the presidency, and his close competition, Emma, a sixth grader from Matinicus, was elected vice president. She plans to run again for the presidency next year, and prepares, in part, by meeting with Dalton before every student council meeting to help plan the agenda. This is one of the aspects of his new role that Dalton seems to enjoy the most. “Now that I’m actually the student council president,” he tells me later, in an interview over Skype, “I feel like I’ve become even more of a leader. I’m helping to lead the other mini-leaders in this student council by mentoring them a tiny bit.” Jessie agrees with him. “You can’t really be a leader this way in a class of three—this is a different kind of leadership. This has been huge for him.”



And today, during this student council meeting in January, the first of the new year, the students want to talk about fund-raising—specifically, a read-a-thon for the

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. This was one of the very first ideas the council voted on in the fall, and Dalton wants to see how far along everyone has come. Jessie holds up her laptop showing Emma’s face on Skype to the rest of the group. “Matinicus is done with their reading,” Emma announces. “We’re now collecting donations.” Meg, an eighth grader and the public relations representative from Islesford, reports that the Islesford school has also wrapped up their reading, but wouldn’t mind a few more weeks to collect donations. The student council votes unanimously to continue the fund-raiser through the end of

the month, and the secretary, a second grader, records the decision on a notepad. Later, he will scan his page of notes and upload them to the student council wiki so the rest of the group has access to the record. The students’ commitment to the cystic fibrosis fund-raiser is, in many ways, one of the strongest manifestations of the community that has been created by the TLC and the student council. A year and a half ago, the students on the other islands didn’t know they had a peer with cystic fibrosis. This year, during the fall field trip, each student and teacher decorated a square of fabric that is being sewn together into a quilt by the education technician on Isle au Haut. And when the TLC presents the quilt to their friend, they will do so “face-to-face”—which is how they now refer to getting together over videoconferencing.



“There’s so much possibility,” Dalton says, referring to the future of the student council and the TLC. “And there’s so much we can accomplish—the possibilities are endless. If we put our minds to it and get the support from our teachers and the rest of the schools, anything can be possible. I hope we keep doing this—even when I leave, when there are new teachers and new students. As long as the islands have schools, I hope this program is in operation.”

Anne Bardaglio is the Island Institute’s TLC Senior Fellow.



To view the students’ interactive campaign posters, download the Island Journal for iPad® and Android™ tablets.

On Duck

CHRISTINA MARSDEN GILLIS

I see a glimpse of Duck Island in a photograph of a boy on a bicycle. “On Duck,” a scribbled label on the image reads. I imagine someone arranging family pictures in a hurry, perhaps with a stack yet to go through. It’s an old photograph, sepia gray. Even in the e-mailed version I have just been sent, I can see the tatters around its edges.

The boy on the bicycle seems to have been interrupted; he’s seated on the old fenderless bike, one high-top sneaker-type shoe on the ground, his face only partially visible. The face, what I can see of it, is quizzical, perhaps even a bit cheeky; it hints at some secret awareness.

“Hey, I want to take your picture,” someone with a camera may have called out.

The boy would have stopped and turned.

“Okay, take my picture,” he may have said. “But I have places to go, other things to do.”

On Duck Island, however, he couldn’t have gone far and he couldn’t have gone fast. The ground is marshy: to the right of the boy in the photo are the “boardwalks,” constructed wooden walkways—not called, like those in Venice at flood tide, “duckboards”—requisite to easy

movement across an uneven, soggy area. This place, now the nesting habitat of the largest colony of Leach’s storm-petrels in the eastern United States, could not have been easy for bicycle riding. And how far could the boy have ridden on a 220-acre Maine island off the south coast of Mount Desert Island? “We walked to the other side of the island, where a boat dropped off our supplies,” the boy would explain to a reporter many years later, “and we brought everything back to our house in a wheelbarrow.” Christmas was the only exception, he said, when an airplane flew over and dropped

a box containing a turkey, tobacco, and candy.

The boy’s father is the lighthouse keeper, and the family lives in the tall angular house that rises up in the background of the photograph. That’s a Maine house for sure, an island house. Slightly to the right the wall of a large shed or barn is just visible. The boy has been stopped on ground between the house and the lighthouse. But the white lighthouse, built in 1890, would have been behind the camera and is not visible to us. Neither does this photograph tell us that the ocean pounds in on granite berm only yards away. We cannot hear the ocean that must have drummed continually in the ears of the boy on the bicycle, the boy who lived on Duck.

“We’d love to go out to Duck,” we used to say to Lyford Stanley. Lyford, who ran the boat that took us out to our house on Gotts Island, several miles to the west of Duck, never really responded. We knew he had lots to do in the summer, hauling people, freight, and baggage between Bass Harbor and Gotts in the Stanley 36, one of a series of classic Maine boats that he had designed and helped build. And all this was in addition to fishing. We knew there was no harbor or dock at

Duck, and the area in the photograph had become a preserve for ornithological research run by the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor. Visitors, outside of those formally connected with COA, were not welcome in the nesting period, April through October. We didn’t—couldn’t—push the matter, and it wouldn’t have made any difference if we had. It was clear that Lyford didn’t really want to make any special trips out to Duck.

Lyford had left Duck Island behind him years before. He was the boy on the bicycle.



Courtesy Roxanne Lewis

“Okay, take my picture,” he may have said. “But I have places to go, other things to do.”

The photograph of Lyford was taken at the far southern point of Duck. I have another image of the island—in fact, several, if I count the various maps displayed on the College of the Atlantic website. Great Duck (there is also a small one) is shaped like a stretched-out parenthesis or kidney bean, “elongated north-south with a long axis of 1.9 km and a short (east-west) axis of 0.7 km,” according to the informative description provided by the COA. Most of Duck Island is a joint tenancy of the State of Maine and the Maine Nature Conservancy. Its perimeter is a rocky belt that slopes gently to sea level on the southwest end of the island and rises in “sheer cliffs approximately 10m in height at points along the eastern and northern shores.” A low-lying brackish wetland at the narrow “waist” of the island occupies what scientists call an “old surge canal” that once separated the island into two parts, north and south. This area has been dubbed “the Slough of Despond” on the COA map. The name, recalling John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the place where the Christian pilgrim becomes mired in sin and despair, is, I learn, of more mundane origin: “I called it the Slough of Despond after a particularly hot & bothersome day counting gulls, and the name has stuck,” COA’s chief ornithologist John Anderson explained in a message responding to my query.

But there is much that any map or graphic description leaves out. Partial or isolated views of an island do not explain its presence and pattern. The “segregation of parts is independent of knowledge and meaning,” psychologist Wolfgang Köhler wrote in his classic 1947 work on gestalt cognition. “Darkness and mist” obscure the element, whether temporal or spatial, that is “segregated” from the whole. Whatever clarity or understanding we can achieve must come from putting the pieces together. On Duck Island, a space that appears demarcated from its surrounding sea, a limited but real cast of characters has made their en-

trances and their exits. They came, and went, for different reasons, but the boy on the bicycle, the islanders who preceded him, and those who arrived later—some seeking, like Bunyan’s Christian hero, help for pain and despair—are all linked in the history of Duck Island.

Charles McLane tells us in his masterful history, *Islands of the Mid-Maine Coast*, that Great Duck was named as early as 1720, was inhabited first by members of the Gilley family from Baker’s Island, and became, in the late 1850s, the home of Charles and Mary Harding, who had recently arrived from Stoke Poges in the British Cotswolds.

The Hardings settled on the north side of the island, acquired title to the entire island in 1867, and by 1882, through brute hard work, had become reasonably comfortable. They owned about 200 sheep, and, according to a local newspaper report, 60 to 100 lambs were sold each fall. But life was soon to change for the Hardings and the nephew who lived with them. Stove embers from the chimney are said to have ignited the

newly tarred roof of their house, which, along with adjacent outbuildings, was destroyed in the resulting fire. The family decamped for Gotts Island, and after spending several years living in a fish house by the shore, purchased the substantial house on the west side of Gotts, which remained in the family through World War II.

North of the Slough of Despond, within easy walking distance of the spot where young Lyford Stanley had posed with his bicycle, and close to the land where the Hardings had been settled, another image imposes itself. A man wearing a French beret crouches down to feed a small pig. A pony looks on attentively, and the curved roof of a yurt dominates the background space. The ground is spare and rocky; only a few skinny spruce rise up behind the yurt. The man is a psychiatrist and gestalt practitioner named Dr. George Cloutier. He is slim and bearded, appearing older than his 44 years. He looks directly at the camera. He and

On an island, people cut loose and have a chance to be themselves.



College of the Atlantic (4)

One of Dr. Cloutier’s yurts where patients stayed on Duck



All of Cloutier's patients arrived by plane, landing on a runway built by the psychiatrist.

the place where the photograph is taken are the subject of a short essay in the "On Scene" section of *Newsweek's* July 21, 1975, issue, titled "Gestalt on the Rocks."

George Cloutier was an adventurer. He had spent time at a weather station in Thule, Greenland; delivered a baby in the back of a single-engine plane near Fort Yukon, Alaska; and led an eight-man expedition up Mount McKinley. And he was, apparently, a man who loved islands. "My life here on Duck is more meaningful, useful, content," he told a writer for *Down East* magazine in 1975. He had "kicked" his big-city life as a successful psychiatrist and had become a "happy man." Cloutier sees his private patients in Bangor on Fridays, *Down East* tells us, and then he flies in his own small plane back to Duck Island (to the runway he built himself), and to patients he treats as full-time residents on the island. When the plastic dome he built on the island did not work out, he built another dwelling. He uses a well that was dug over a hundred years ago, perhaps a remnant of the Hardings' tenancy on the island. Dr. Cloutier calls gestalt therapy "one of the newest humanistic trends in mental health treatment. . . . We teach people self-utilization: how to relate better to others, and how to take and accept life's risks," he says. "I feel that most people utilize only 10 to 15 percent of their potential." In the *Newsweek* article he is more expansive: On an island, he says, "people cut loose and have a chance to be themselves."

By 1975, we had been summer residents of Gotts Island for 11 years, where we were far less prone to "cutting loose." Our perception of Duck Island was vague at best, a tissue of rumor and myth. If the local fishermen knew more about the island, they didn't talk much about it to summer islanders like us. Duck, a distant speck of land, its lighthouse just

barely visible, was particularly "other." If all other islands remain something of a mystery to the inhabitants of small islands, this island—defined in the imagination as the home of bizarre people—was all the more so. Any person encountered on the dock at Bass Harbor who looked remotely strange might be thought of as destined for the essentially unknown and far less understood Duck Island. "Going out to Duck, huh?" a teenage neighbor once asked friends of ours who, though wearing odd floppy sun hats with layers of white sun cream on their faces, were simply waiting for a boat that would take them to Gotts Island. The teenager, like most of us, couldn't fit Dr. Cloutier's community into any pattern that she knew, or understood.

***Any person on the dock
at Bass Harbor who
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essentially unknown
Duck Island.***

Yet Cloutier's Duck Island was hardly a unique experiment, and its language of "self-utilization," of the need to realize one's personal potential, was emblematic of its time. In California, at the Esalen community founded at Big Sur in the early 1960s, people were also "cutting loose," and gestalt therapy—the attempt to "focus on the subject's conscious experience and construction of the here-and-now"—came into its own. George Cloutier studied gestalt therapeutic methods in California in 1971 and 1972 with James Simkin, a well-known second-generation therapist who worked with the more famous master, Frederick (Fritz) Perls, at Esalen in the late 1960s. Simkin emphasized the interaction of the individual with the total environment when he argued in his book, *Mini-Lectures in Gestalt Therapy*, that "unaware behavior is the result not of the unconscious or preconscious, but rather, of the organism's not being in touch with its external environment: unmet needs influence our sensory involvement with the world."

Boston psychotherapist Richard Borofsky told me that



Buildings on Duck, each with its own style

he could readily understand George Cloutier's attraction to the environment of Duck Island—why he gave up, as the *Newsweek* article says, a flourishing psychiatric practice in Boston, a closet full of Brooks Brothers suits, a Porsche, and lunches at the Harvard Club. Dr. Borofsky, who knew Cloutier professionally, had visited the Duck Island community but was never a practitioner there. He is, however, also a lover of islands, and of Duck Island in particular. He owns land that once belonged to the Harding family, passed through other owners, and then became part of the site of Cloutier's experimental colony. This is now the only private piece of property on Duck, a plot of about five acres where Borofsky and his wife have built a substantial house and spend several weeks each summer. On the day I spoke with him, he was just back from a trip to California, to Esalen.

From Rich Borofsky I learned that George Cloutier started out as a summer resident on Duck and then turned a personal retreat into his "life's work." And it must have been difficult work. Although the Duck Island community offered short-term therapy for more-common life problems such as marital stress, some of the half-dozen or so people in longer-term residence suffered from serious mental ill-

ness. The *Newsweek* account provided some cases in point:

Martha, a manic depressive who ran away from a state hospital where she had been administered heavy doses of tranquilizing drugs; Susan, a brilliant marine biologist who wears a tattered parka and a wounded stare; Sylvia, a Maine bank teller whose jaw muscles are knotted and whose teeth enamel is worn off because, Cloutier says, "[S]he kept her mouth clamped shut for years against the rage she felt"; and Jack, a witty, formerly alcoholic Episcopal priest who has lost his parish.

"One of the women killed a sheep with a knife," Rich Borofsky reported to me. The unfortunate sheep would have been part of the animal entourage that included, in addition to the pig and the pony, a pet doe, a 200-pound Newfoundland dog named Melissa, two cats, and a beagle.

The patients paid \$450 a month, surely not a lot for room, board, and treatment (rental of a house on Gotts Island, with an uncertain amount of running water and no heat or electricity, would have been about \$200 per month at that time). They participated, Dr. Borofsky explained, in a process of "expressive therapy" aimed at emotional release. Sometimes, he said, the patients were joined by the coastguardsmen who were at that time still staffing the lighthouse; given the isolation of their job, they were apparently desperate enough to seek human company at Cloutier's sessions.

But it was always the identification of Duck as an island, a space traditionally (if often erroneously) equated with limits and differentiation, that, in Cloutier's terms, "made the enormous difference" in his work. Concentrating, even distilling, experience, the island enabled that "immediacy of sensory involvement" sought by psychologist Simkin. As it had been for Robinson Crusoe, that early fictive island dweller who perhaps also "actualized himself" in years of lonely, insular exile, the island as therapeutic space is the place of the "here-and-now."

But an island—whether pastoral ideal, therapeutic site, or a combination of the two—is ultimately not enough. The "successful" therapy, psychologist Ernest Becker argued in a lecture published in *The Gestalt Journal* in 1993, turns out a person "who has come to see the conditions of life on this

planet as they really are.” This individual no longer needs the island as a space for self-actualization. Like Lyford Stanley, he or she can leave the island behind and take on the “conditions of life” offered in the broader world.

In different epochs of the past, all the inhabitants of Duck departed for destinations and lives I cannot know. But I suspect they did not see themselves as turned out of Eden. Lyford Stanley left to attend school on the mainland, and his father left his lighthouse post when new staff was hired, and ultimately, the Coast Guard took over the lightkeeping responsibilities. The Hardings, as we have seen, were driven out by the fire, but even though they moved to Gotts, they continued to pasture a flock of about 140 sheep on Duck, with the help of another island family, right up until the beginning of World War II. At that point the two families sold the island together, but still continued to care for the new owner’s sheep throughout the war. None of the fragments I have of the story of George Cloutier’s community exactly explain its demise. Rich Borofsky reported that he does not know the details of the last chapters of Cloutier’s life, but he told me of a marker erected on Duck in Cloutier’s memory. It’s near the old airstrip and the Slough of Despond, and dedicated to a man who loved islands.

The birds did not leave Duck Island. And, as the College of the Atlantic website so well documents, the island as laboratory and nature preserve remains. The guillemots, burrowed down into their small rocky strongholds, are but one species comprising a vast population of seabirds occupying the Maine offshore islands, a number equal to half of all seabirds east of the Mississippi. As early as 1900, Duck’s seabird population was protected; the first lighthouse keeper was also the warden. A visitor to the island in 1913 reported large numbers of dead trees and gulls nesting in among the broken stumps. The gulls are presumed to have killed the trees, perhaps nesting there in order to escape domestic animals brought on by the lightkeepers. Under the large boulders in the berm that marks the island’s periphery, the black guillemots build their nests, “laying one to three eggs, which they incubate in crevices along the shoreline.” The research team from the College tries to band the guillemot chicks, but the rocky substrate of the nesting and roosting habitat quickly wears out the bands.

At the same time, some 5,000 pairs of storm-petrels forage as far as 200 miles offshore and return after dark to the breeding colony. They nest in shallow burrows up to one meter in length and lay a single egg. Their name, “petrel,” derives from St. Peter, who is said to have walked on water, although COA ornithologists say that “strictly speaking, the petrels don’t ‘walk’ on water, but dabble their feet while fluttering over the surface.” Not far away, in the Slough of Despond, migratory black ducks—for whom the island is named—stop off for a rest every autumn, while the much more numerous eiders build warm and insulated nests on neighboring Little Duck. This smaller Duck, unlike the larger, has never known permanent human habitation.

... *Robinson Crusoe, that early fictive island dweller, perhaps also “actualized himself” in years of lonely, insular exile.*



A plaque memorializes Cloutier on Duck.

Peter Ralston (2)

On a brilliant day in August 2005, my husband and I did make it out to Duck. We were invited to join an expedition of schoolteachers participating in an environmental workshop at the College of the Atlantic. The COA launch picked us up at Gotts Island. Scott Swann, a COA instructor and our Gotts neighbor, was the guide.

The trip to Duck felt like an adventure, a long-anticipated event finally coming true. Off the eastern edge of the island, as the boat rocked on its mooring, we piled, three by three, into the dinghy that landed us on the island’s rocky belt—the only way to arrive on an island with no real harbor or dock. Once the passengers were all offloaded, the dinghy was hauled up on a pulley into a boathouse at the top of the high rocks.

We walked the path toward the southern shore, to the lighthouse, and the very place where the unknown photographer had caught the young Lyford Stanley on film. We stood on the “boardwalks.” We listened attentively to the ornithologists’ discussion of their project on Duck; we saw the petrel chicks and the guillemot nests, our eyes squinting in the bright sunlight that reflected off the pure white lighthouse.

The path in the other direction, to the northern side of



Great Duck is now home to the College of the Atlantic's field ornithology program.

the island, was mainly shady. Weeds and brush clot what remains of George Cloutier's landing strip, and while his community's large, log-cabin dining hall is still there, assorted small cabins and the yurts have all but disappeared. Duck is, of course, not entirely uninhabited—the ornithologists are regularly there—but the appearance of desertion is everywhere, the remains of the island's various periods of habitation seemingly flowing into one another. A few foundation markers hark back to the time preceding Cloutier's construction. A straggling stone wall, meandering down toward the shore, may have been built by the Hardings, or possibly even the family that preceded them. Rock and stone endure beyond neglected wood and frame.

And then, too soon, our visit to Duck was ending. The dinghy was lowered once again from its high perch back into the water. Again, three by three, we clambered awkwardly aboard, and then, with even more difficulty, we climbed from the dinghy into the still-rocking COA launch. Especially for the uninitiated, neither arrival nor leave-taking at Duck Island is easy, but finally, with the boarding accomplished, we were all settled in the boat. The engine moved into action, and we began our trip home.

We had gone, we had seen; but once back on Gotts, our accustomed place, everything slipped back. We were seeing what we had always seen from the easternmost side of "our" island. The lighthouse, the paths, the remains of Dr. Cloutier's community—all fell into a pattern of their own, strangely still opaque and distant. Like all the islands we see from our own speck of land, the Ducks, big and little, may beckon, but they still retain their remoteness. Island-to-

island connections are undeniable but nonetheless remain always tenuous. The open fields that marked the old Cloutier property, the ground we had walked, were now a vague green emptiness, like the background of a canvas awaiting the image. The lighthouse that had blinded us with its white presence on the day we visited was once again just barely visible from the granite on Gotts's eastern edge, a mere outline.

This was the image we knew. We organize and interpret—imagine and remember—Duck Island as best we can. Lyford Stanley's daughter could not tell me why her father left Duck Island, or why he did not want to speak about that departure: "He was an energetic man, and he never would have been happy on a small island," she said. Neither could she shed any light on why her father was unwilling to return to Duck, even briefly. I think we must be content with that, and learn what we can from a photo of a man with a pig and a pony, or one of a boy on a bicycle on a small island—a boy who went on to live an active, productive, and essentially mainland-based life and died at age 81, not on a small island, but in a hospital in Bangor.

Trained in 18th-century English literature, Christina Marsden Gillis was for 16 years associate director of the Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley.

A version of this story previously appeared in the journal Raritan.

Spectacular Islands and Contested Realities

The Media's Portrayal of Islands from Vanuatu to Maine

DOUG CAMPBELL

Eighteen American castaways are struggling to make a fire, find food, and build a shelter on an empty stretch of tropical beach. They have been warned that this is “a land with a history of cannibalism, where rituals like sorcery and black magic are still a part of daily life.” Their initiation has already demanded that they take part in an authentic tribal “rite of passage” in order to stay. Everything about the place is foreign. One of the Americans—Eliza, a pre-law student—looks into the camera and says, “It is just horrendous.” But there is a million dollars at stake, motivation enough to leave “civilization” behind and forego the comforts of home for 39 days. This is a story about the reality television show *Survivor*. It is about how islands are imagined and realities can sometimes be contested. It is also about young people from diverse and distant cultures who have remarkably similar desires to engage and maintain connections with their communities.

Six years ago I began my relationship with the Island Institute. I was invited to work with CREST (Community for Rural Education Stewardship and Technology) as a digital ethnography trainer in this innovative program. At the CREST Summer Institutes I had the pleasure and challenge

of encouraging students and their teachers to use a video camera to tell stories about their communities. Together, for an intensive week at a time, a group of us would learn camera technique, digital video editing skills, and how to go about visually documenting what people find meaningful in their everyday lives. I come from a background in cultural anthropology where this kind of work has traditionally been done in faraway places, in an effort to gain an understanding of how people from other cultures make sense of their world. Now video ethnographers are just as likely to be found working close to home. The CREST video ethnographers were already cultural experts about the places where they would be doing their ethnographic work: their own communities. At CREST our goal was to get the students and their teachers thinking about the value of this cultural knowledge.

The reason I was asked to work with students on storytelling in Maine was because of my experience working with young people on the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu. Vanuatu is a country made up of over 80 islands, most inhabited by varying numbers of the 250,000 people who live there. Vanuatu became an independent country in 1980. As



Gillian Thompson



the New Hebrides it had been a colony of both England and France, who co-administered Vanuatu as opposed to going to war over the place. The result of this arrangement was pretty much the total duplication of government institutions, school systems, and even prisons. English and French are still taught in the schools. The national language of the country is Bislama, a pidgin that provides an important unifying role in a country where there are more than 100 distinct language groups.

Vanuatu has the highest linguistic density per capita in the world, and, correspondingly, there are a wide variety of cultures within Vanuatu itself. The people refer to themselves as *ni-Vanuatu*. There is a strong sense of belonging to the land, and this is expressed through beliefs and practices they call *kastom*. Performances of *kastom* reaffirm their relationship to place and their connections to one another. There is a political dimension to *kastom* as well. These cultural practices stand as a testament to their resiliency and assert their post-colonial identity as an independent nation. However, Vanuatu also has a long history of Christian missionization that began in the mid-1800s. Some of their earliest missionaries actually came from Prince Edward Island. There are a remarkable number of denominations represented, often in the same small community. In fact, the country's motto is *Long God yumi stanap*—"In God we stand."

I did my fieldwork in the "happiest place on Earth." In 2006 Vanuatu was ranked first on the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index (HPI). The NEF states that the Happy Planet Index measures "what truly matters to us—our well-being in terms of long, happy and meaningful lives—and what matters to the planet—our rate of resource consumption." They say, "The results turn our idea of progress on its head." The HPI does not deny people's potential for happiness in the richer, developed countries, but it does reveal that people in less-wealthy countries, with significantly smaller ecological footprints, can have high

levels of life satisfaction. The HPI shows "that a good life is possible without costing the Earth." Island nations seem to do particularly well as far as happiness goes, according to the NEF. The NEF has an explanation for this: "Perhaps a more acute awareness of environmental limits has sometimes helped their societies to bond better and to adapt, to get more from less. Combined with the enhanced well-being that stems from close contact with nature, the world as a whole stands to learn much from the experience of islands." Perhaps the sentiments of such think tanks do not sound too unfamiliar to the residents of Maine's islands.

My research in Vanuatu involved working with a group called the Vanuatu Young People's Project (VYPP). We worked out of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in Port Vila, which was established to ensure that Vanuatu's diverse cultural heritage is sustained, documented, archived and made available to its own people. For 10 years after independence there was a moratorium on foreign research in Vanuatu. During this time the Cultural Centre was developed as an indigenous research facility, creating a network of fieldworkers to document cultural activities on each island. It is an unusual institution born out of an understanding that the country's cultural



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identity should be produced locally—not, as is often the case in countries that were former colonies, by foreign researchers and experts. Part of this initiative involved setting up a video and sound unit to document ceremonial life, festivals and various regional events.

The Young People's Project was eager to produce videos addressing the overlooked experience of youth. They tend to be left out of political discussions and decision making (not that unusual), and yet they are often blamed for social problems that accompany rapid social changes (also not that unusual). Young people use the ironic expression *SPR Kampani* to describe their predicament. SPR stands for *Spirim Pablik Rod*—"hitting the road." For SPRs, walking the streets of Port Vila looking for scarce employment has



become their “business.”

I traveled with a group of young ni-Vanuatu researchers and videographers from island to island, recording young people’s views on education, employment and what they anticipated for their future. One of the videos produced by the Young People’s Project dealt with a controversial ongoing discussion regarding young women wearing Western-style clothing. In Vanuatu, chiefs hold the leadership position in most villages, and some have banned young women from wearing Western-style “trousers” and shorts in their villages. The video, called *Wan Naes Wan*, was made by young women, which is remarkable in itself. It made the serious connection between the traditional island dress favored by the chiefs, pastors and many parents, and the young women’s fear of, and experience with, sexual assaults. The young women argued that island dress leaves them vulnerable, as well as unable to take certain types of jobs or to play sports. The customary island garb for women—a loose “Mother Hubbard”-style printed dress—was introduced by missionaries years ago, and has become the recognized national dress for women. As more young women get jobs in tourism and elsewhere in the wage economy, they are choosing Western clothes and paying for them with their own money. This issue is at the forefront of many debates surrounding the push for economic development and the role of women in these changes. The video premiered at the National Museum, and changed the nature of the conversation on this issue, because the voices of the young women themselves were heard and acknowledged.

A few months after I left Vanuatu in 2004, another kind of filmmaking took place on the island of Efate, just outside of Port Vila. This enterprise involved a large influx of personnel and equipment, the construction of a base of operations, and the strict control of an area of coastline and surrounding waters. Not since World War II had there been such an impressive American presence. The reality televi-

sion series *Survivor* had chosen Vanuatu as the location for their ninth season, called *Survivor Vanuatu: Islands of Fire*. The “Islands of Fire” tag is due to Vanuatu having some of the most active volcanoes in the world.

The two competing *Survivor* “tribes” were named after Lopevi, a massive cone rising from the ocean that became so active several years ago, it was abandoned by its residents, and Yasur, a volcano on the island of Tanna that is constantly spewing ash and lava. The premise of *Survivor* is a game of attrition based on a survival-of-the-fittest ideology. The tribes usually compete in some sort of physical challenge on each episode. Winners get rewards, and the losing tribe must vote one of their own out of the game. The contestants must “survive” while playing the game for 39 days in a location that is supposedly remote, isolated and lacking any modern amenities or comforts of home. The point is that they are not supposed to be able to access civilization while struggling to “survive” against nature, and each other. Contestants can win those highly desired comforts of home as a reward. This is a perfect product-placement scenario for the companies who pay to have their products, often various junk foods or car manufacturers, appear on the show. The incentive for all the competing and surviving is a million-dollar prize for the last remaining contestant.

For each season, the producers of *Survivor* try to find a new spin to keep viewers interested. For *Vanuatu: Islands of Fire*, one of these new elements was to include some encounters with local people. The first episode begins with a welcome from chanting “natives” who arrive in dugout canoes wearing grass skirts, their bodies painted. The natives escort the 18 wide-eyed Americans from a sailboat to the shore. There the contestants are greeted by warrior men running at them, yelling and brandishing spears. One contestant asks, “How are we supposed to defend ourselves? What are we supposed to do?” His nervousness may have stemmed from host Jeff Probst’s introduction, where he



Photo ©Chesher(3)

tells the contestants that before the game can begin, they have to be granted access to the land. "You are going to take part in a tribal ritual," Probst says. "It is going to impact each of you differently. At times you may find it beautiful. At times you may be repulsed. And at times you may be frightened." Probst adds, "The tribes of Vanuatu take their spirituality very seriously." This narration is augmented by shots of skulls, painted natives with spears, ceremonial masks and drums. The low, ominous soundtrack features a crescendo of generic jungle sounds, grunts, and yells. The contestants are then separated, men from women; they witness ceremonial dances presided over by chief Mormor, "a real chief," and watch as a live pig is clubbed to death. Having survived all this, the contest begins.

Later we see the two tribes of contestants miserable on the beach, drenched, hungry and complaining. One contestant says, "The beach is uncomfortable. The water is uncomfortable. It is freezing at night. Everything is damp. Like, you always feel wet and cold. I mean, it is beautiful, like, looking at it, but, like, to live here, it's just so miserable."

Vanuatu is packaged to be as entertaining as possible for *Survivor*'s television audience. Its spectacular and wild nature is presented through series of intercut shots of fast-moving clouds across a full moon, volcanic plumes, flying foxes, and close-ups of reef-dwelling sea creatures. Its "natives" are also contained within this portrayal. They become the South Sea cannibals of our imaginations. The trailer for the series announces: "18 new castaways hit the shores of Vanuatu to do battle with the elements, the wildlife and themselves. In a land known for a history of cannibalism, find out who will feast on the gold and who will be swallowed whole! *Survivor Vanuatu!*" Again, this monologue is accompanied by frenetic drumming and the generic jungle soundtrack.

One reward involves winning the services of a local man named Da for one day. He wows the hapless contestants by effortlessly climbing palm trees, splitting coconuts with his bush knife, and pointing out that there is plenty of food underfoot (since they have been tromping around the whole time through people's gardens). To live in this savage land, his prowess and abilities must be equally savage. However, within the allotted 24 hours he has become their own ni-Vanuatu Man Friday, and there are culturally inappropriate hugs all around when he departs.

Eliza: "I was surprised how emotionally attached we all

got to Da just within 24 hours. I mean, we were all, like, you know, practically crying when he left." Of course, Da—who is originally from Ambrym, but at the time lived just outside of Port Vila—does not wear a grass skirt or travel by dugout canoe in his daily life. Likewise, those warrior men with the spears are the same performers you or I would see if we chose the advertised "Melanesian Feast" when we disembarked from our cruise ship in Port Vila—the only difference being, we would be sipping our tropical drinks as the spear-bearing warriors approached. And, I guess the real kicker is that the remote location where all the surviving is going on is actually a short taxi ride from Port Vila, a lovely town that offers all the civilized amenities of a tourist destination, including French pastries (thanks to its colonial past).

destination, including French pastries (thanks to its colonial past).

The one thing the producers of *Survivor* will allow to abruptly shatter the "reality" they have so cleverly created is product placement. A challenging, remote, isolated, uncivilized location for survival? Suspend those thoughts while host Jeff Probst drives up in a brand-new Pontiac G6. This reward is met by gasps: "No way! Oh my! That's a nice car!" Later, three contestants are whisked off to a Vanuatu resort on roads suddenly appearing from out of the jungle. There the lucky competitors luxuriate in all the tourist pleasures they have been craving. After a hot shower Ami tells us, "I actually feel human again"—perhaps an unintentional comment on how *Survivor* represents the lives of



ni-Vanuatu outside the gates of the resort.

The producers of *Survivor* do everything they can to present Vanuatu as an exotic, dangerous and visually spectacular attraction so that the show will be eagerly consumed by television audiences. However, we should not assume that the ni-Vanuatu who appeared on our television screens were unaware of this creative and highly selective reality. They have been savvy purveyors of these exotic representations of themselves in order to encourage tourism. Both play into our imaginings of islands in the far-off South Pacific.

So what of our imaginings of islands closer to home? Or, perhaps a more-entertaining question to consider: Could the *Survivor* series come to an island in the Gulf of Maine? Certainly there must be a stretch of beach somewhere that can be made to appear untouched, without evidence of human activity. Surely there is a Maine coastline that can be described as isolated, remote, wild, and savage. There must



be a place where there can be no doubt as to the lack of potato chips, chicken wings, and other indicators of civilization. It only has to conform to this reality for 39 days. It might even be possible to keep away the spoilers who would surely be snooping about. The filming would have to take place in the summer so the buff guys could strip off their shirts and the buff women could don their bikinis—both critical elements for success in the ratings.

But what of those encounters with the locals? How would islanders portray, well, islanders? This is reality television after all, so there are no actors allowed. Reality television depends on the understanding that the viewing audience is watching real, ordinary people. It does not work unless they could be you. Authenticity is key. (Just ask the ni-Vanuatu extras whose bodies became the canvas for some TV producer's idea of war paint and traditional costumes.) What would be tolerated or encouraged to secure such an unexpected boost to the local economy? Some reports said *Survivor* brought in a crew of 130 and catered for almost 400 people after hiring local help in Vanuatu. Hotels and restaurants flourished while the shoot was on. Even years later, there are still "*Survivor* Tours" of the beaches where the tribal camps, competitions and tribal councils were staged. Not only that—tens of millions of people worldwide saw local landscapes made more dramatic and alluring than anything reproduced in the best tourist pamphlet or website. Highly skilled shooting from helicopters with high-def cameras on Steadicams and fancy postproduction can do this. As for the possibility of an encounter with a cannibal? Well, these days, adventure and a little danger are all part of a truly exciting vacation.

Mainers know all about this stuff. I am reminded of Eva Murray's mild exasperation at the tourists who feel they can stick their noses into the Matinicus Island classroom. Their small schoolhouse was viewed by these admirers as quaint—an idyllic throwback to simpler times. Or how about overhearing the conversation that goes something like, "Do you really think they'd miss one trap? It sure would look good by the pool back home in Arizona."

Would there be a general consensus that everyone should comply with a television producer's request to rearrange the boats along the wharf to suit his or her idea of what an East Coast fishing village should look like? And who would be cast as Maine's Man Friday—the one who would wow the contestants with his or her local knowledge of clamming? Of course, he or she would have to have "the look"—robust, dressed in flannel, rosy cheeks. And who would be prepared to have their performance critically reviewed by the show's avid fans on Internet blogs with names like *SurvivorFever.net* or *SurvivorSucks.com*?

Another consideration—one that probably matters far more to those living on South Pacific or Gulf of Maine islands—is how different representations can produce identities for people that help to sustain flourishing communities. The Vanuatu Young People's Project and the CREST videographers will be adding their images and sounds to massive media flows that are at once global, national, regional and very local. How people come to know Vanuatu or Maine is beyond anyone's control. Stereotypes do affect how we act toward each other, but in a world where realities compete with one another, the work produced by these young ethnographers will be even more relevant and meaningful.

A teacher from Vinalhaven expressed how the connections made between these young CREST ethnographers and their communities will strengthen their own sense of belonging. "We are getting kids out into the community. They are learning more about who their neighbors are, and of the history of our island." Locally there is no doubt their work will be a valued resource. Where will people from elsewhere look to learn about the realities of life on the islands, whether in the Gulf of Maine or Vanuatu? It will depend on what speaks to those who are doing the looking.

Doug Campbell is an independent documentary filmmaker. He currently teaches in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Western Ontario.

Revisiting the Future

Island Voices from “Generation Y”

EMILY THOMAS

The third Sustainable Island Living Conference was held October of 2011. Among the speakers, including Bill McKibben and Ben Hewitt, was a panel of young islanders discussing their island experiences. Marya Spurling (Islesford), Brenden Myers (Great Diamond) and Izza Drury (Vinalhaven) were members of the panel moderated by Hannah Pingree, North Haven resident and former Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives. Each of the panelists gave their own unique view of their islands, and the effect that island living has had on them as individuals. Several themes came through, such as the feeling of community and the support and safety net gained from island life, but each person also discussed the difficulty they face as they consider how their island homes will fit into their future lives—an important question not only for them, but also for their communities. The following are excerpts from interviews with these three promising young islanders:

I really hope that young people start thinking about their future—and their island’s future—earlier, rather than when they are about to leave for college.

Izza Drury



Peter Ralston (3)

Izza Drury, 17, has lived on Vinalhaven since she was a year old. Her family moved there when her father got a job as a captain with the ferry service. She is currently living at home on the island and is a senior at Vinalhaven High School. Her plans for the future include attending college this coming fall and earning a degree in business and economics.

How do you see your island being a part of your life in the future?

Izza:

I hope to always return during summer vacations and breaks that I have from school in the next four years while I’m in college, and after that, who knows?

Marya:

I do want to be part of the year-round community eventually, and in the meantime, I really do take it with me wherever I go. Before I’ll be able to come home to settle, I still have to finish school and then complete three or four years of residency, and then I’ll have to

find (or create) a job that allows me to live there, either working nearby on Mount Desert Island, or perhaps traveling to provide medical care for the various offshore islands, which is my dream. I’m hoping to do that, but I know it won’t be easy.

Brenden:

I, of course, want to stay in touch with my island while in school, and, most importantly, stay in the loop of how my work with health- and elder care affects efforts on the islands of Casco Bay. I hope to return to Maine in three to four years to complete my medical education, and so plan to visit Great Diamond often.

Before I'll be able to come home to settle . . . I'll have to find (or create) a job that allows me to live there.

Marya Spurling



Marya Spurling, 25, grew up on Islesford, as did her father before her. She attended the Islesford School through eighth grade, graduated from Mount Desert Island High School in 2004, and from Gordon College in Boston in 2008. She is currently at the end of her third year of medical school at Tufts University and is living in Farmington, Maine. She is studying in the Maine Track program at Tufts that allows students from Maine to do their rotations within the state. She will be moving to Portland for her fourth year. She hopes that in the future she will be able to practice rural primary care medicine on the coast of Maine, with the potential for international work as well.

How do you define a sustainable island community? What are the key parts of your community that make it tick?

Izza:

I think a sustainable island community must have a school, or some way to provide an education for the children, and there should also be a place for the elders of the community to get the help and support they need. There are several other logistical necessities, like the post office, medical services, grocery stores, etc., but I believe the key to making Vinalhaven sustainable and [to having] a viable year-round community are the things that serve the youth and the elders.

Marya:

A sustainable island community has members across the age spectrum—it needs families with young children, young working adults, middle-aged empty nesters, and elderly folk. It needs to be a place where it is possible for all those types of people to live and thrive. For that to happen, we need good-quality schools with intense community support for the youngsters; we need housing that is affordable for working families; and we need to support the elderly so they can stay in their homes. And we need everyone to be involved. I think that Islesford does a really good job of all those things. We already know that Maine has the oldest median age in the country, and Maine's islands have an even older median age than the rest of the state. I've seen a lot of my peers from high school who went away after graduation and are not coming back, so we are seeing the direct effects of this throughout the state and on the islands.

Brenden:

A sustainable community must be able to both attract new families and retain families already living there for generations to come. An island community must have civic-minded citizens who understand that living on an island is a unique community experience, cherish that fact, and work to keep the island vibrant.

What are your hopes for how young people can influence islands in the future?

Izza:

I really hope that young people start thinking about their future—and their island's future—earlier, rather than when they are about to leave for college, when they become aware of the challenges that island communities face. I hope they will make choices with that information in mind, setting a positive example.

Marya:

I really liked what Representative Hannah Pingree said about young people being involved in the town government. I'm really encouraged when I see my former schoolmates on committees like the school board or the planning board or the harbor committee. I also remember dreading being required to go to town meeting every year for school, but looking back, I can see how important it was in forming my understanding of how the town works, and my role in it. It's another one of those examples of how it's important that people all across the age spectrum be involved in the community.

An island community must have civic-minded citizens who understand that living on an island is a unique community experience, cherish that fact, and work to keep the island vibrant.

Brenden Myers



Brenden Myers, 23, has lived on Great Diamond Island in Casco Bay since he was five. His family had maintained a summer cottage on the island for several generations prior to becoming year-round residents. He attended school on Great Diamond and graduated in 2011 from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. Currently, he is splitting his time between Falmouth and Great Diamond while taking a gap year between college and either graduate school or medical school. He would like to study child psychiatry and would like to return to Maine in the future.

Brenden:

Young people are one of the most vital resources for keeping an island community vibrant, bringing new ideas and youthful energy to their islands. It's always good to shake things up from time to time. Young islanders—and, in turn, island communities—also benefit greatly from leaving the nest for a while; this is why the Island Institute's Island Scholars Program is so important.

What is one project that you believe there's a need for—either one that's already started, or something that you hope will happen—and why?

Izza:

I think that on Vinalhaven there have been many projects started, such as Partners in Education's (PIE's) drama program, the arts enrichment at school, the Arts and Recreation Center's work on local foods, the sustainability effort, and the wind turbines. I believe all of these are so crucial to life here; now our main task is to maintain these efforts and not let them fade away.

Marya:

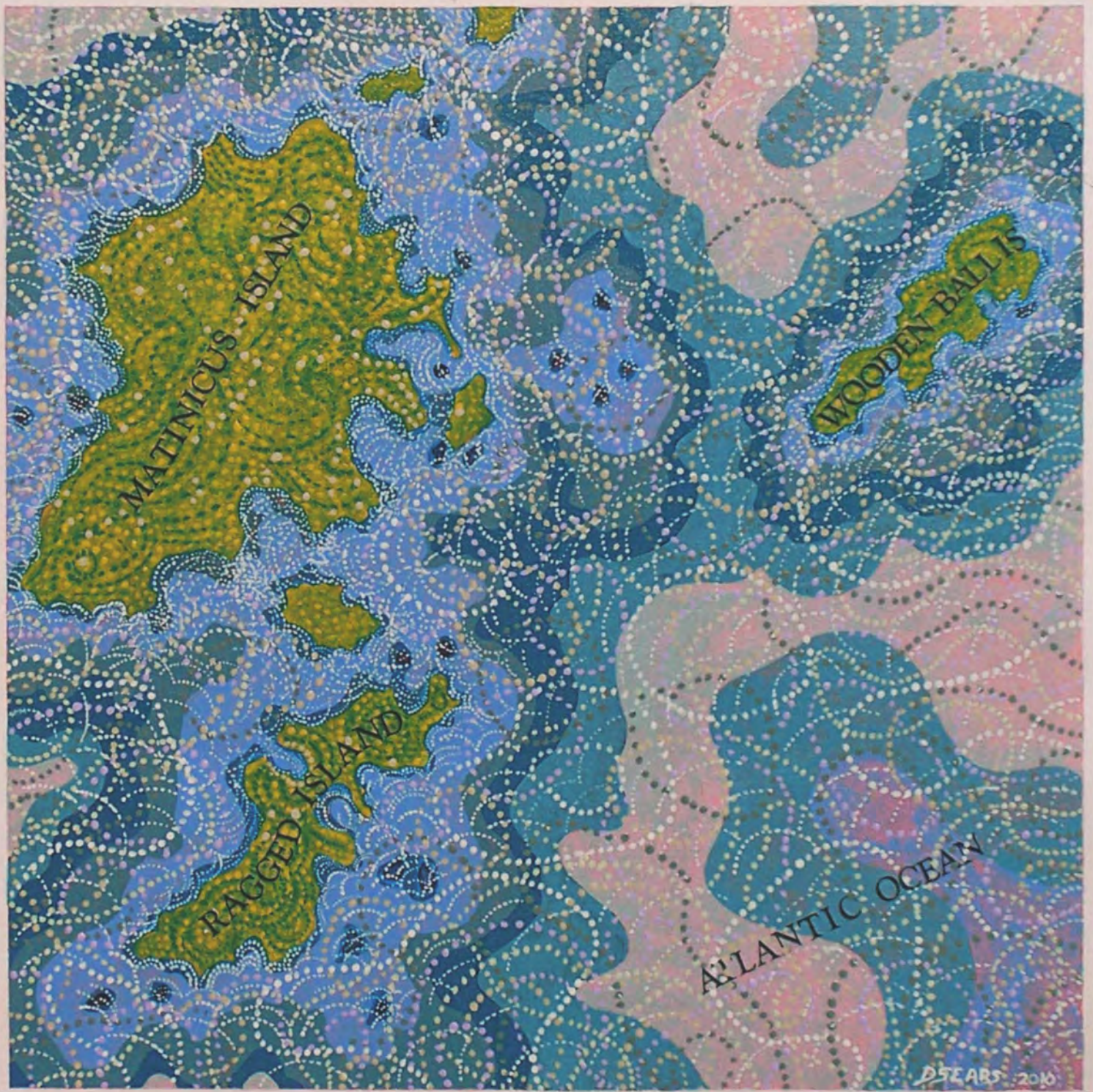
Affordable housing, and also quality schools. This ties into what I think the islands need in order to be sustainable, which is the opportunity for young families to be able to live there year-round. This is a constant and recurrent issue for all offshore island communities, and I've heard of various strategies that different islands have used to address it. I think it's something that's always in the back of everyone's minds at every town meeting—the fear and understanding that it could only take a generation or two to become just a summer community, so what can we do to prevent that? It takes good ideas, and community effort.

Brenden:

I sincerely hope that my work with health services in Casco Bay can kick-start a plan to address the lack of mid-level services on many of the Casco Bay islands. I think that communities can be much more inviting for new families with these kinds of projects, and this can greatly increase the sustainability of an island community.

Each of these panelists shows the passion for their islands that keeps the vitality of islands alive, both now and in the future. While there are challenges associated with island life, Marya, Brenden, and Izza have all highlighted the positive aspects that draw people to islands and encourage them to build a life and community there. While none of them know exactly where the future will lead them, with young islanders such as these, the future looks very bright indeed.

Emily Thomas grew up on Islesford as the daughter of a fisherman and a librarian. She is currently attending the University of Prince Edward Island and is working toward receiving her Master of the Arts in Island Studies, with a focus on fisheries policy in Maine and Newfoundland.



EDGES

David Sears

A Matinicus Artist Charts His Course

CARL LITTLE



Sitting down to interview David Sears in his High Water Studio on Matinicus Island this past October, my attention was continually drawn to the paintings that surrounded us. On one wall hung a handsome clutch of acrylic studies of stones. Elsewhere, a seagull eyed me from behind a white wing, and land- and seascapes, some of them built from dots, shimmered and swayed.

Most compelling of all were Sears's chart pieces, dazzling inventions that play with the idea of Maine islands, coastlines and passages. And here is where the amazement kicks in: This special ed teacher from Pennsylvania only took up a paintbrush around 10 years ago and already has achieved a signature way of representing the world.

Sears came to art late. Born in Brockton, Massachusetts, in 1949, he earned degrees in education from Ursinus College and Temple University, dedicating his life to helping kids—and their teachers—address the challenges of special needs in private and public schools in Pennsylvania. There were a few art courses along the way, and a visit to the studio of sculptor and designer Arieto “Harry” Bertoia, where Sears fell in love with the idea of living the life of an artist.

Always maintaining a creative outlet, including still photography and film, Sears fantasized about making a career from this work. Then, around 2000, he began homeschooling himself in the ways of acrylic, pastel and watercolor. He started out being “very tight-ass and realistic,” he said, but kept moving further away from strict representation.

Growing more confident, Sears began to consider paint-

ing full-time. On a New England college tour with his son in 2003, he experienced an epiphany. While wandering through the studios at the Maine College of Art in Portland, he felt completely at home—and ready to embark on a second career.

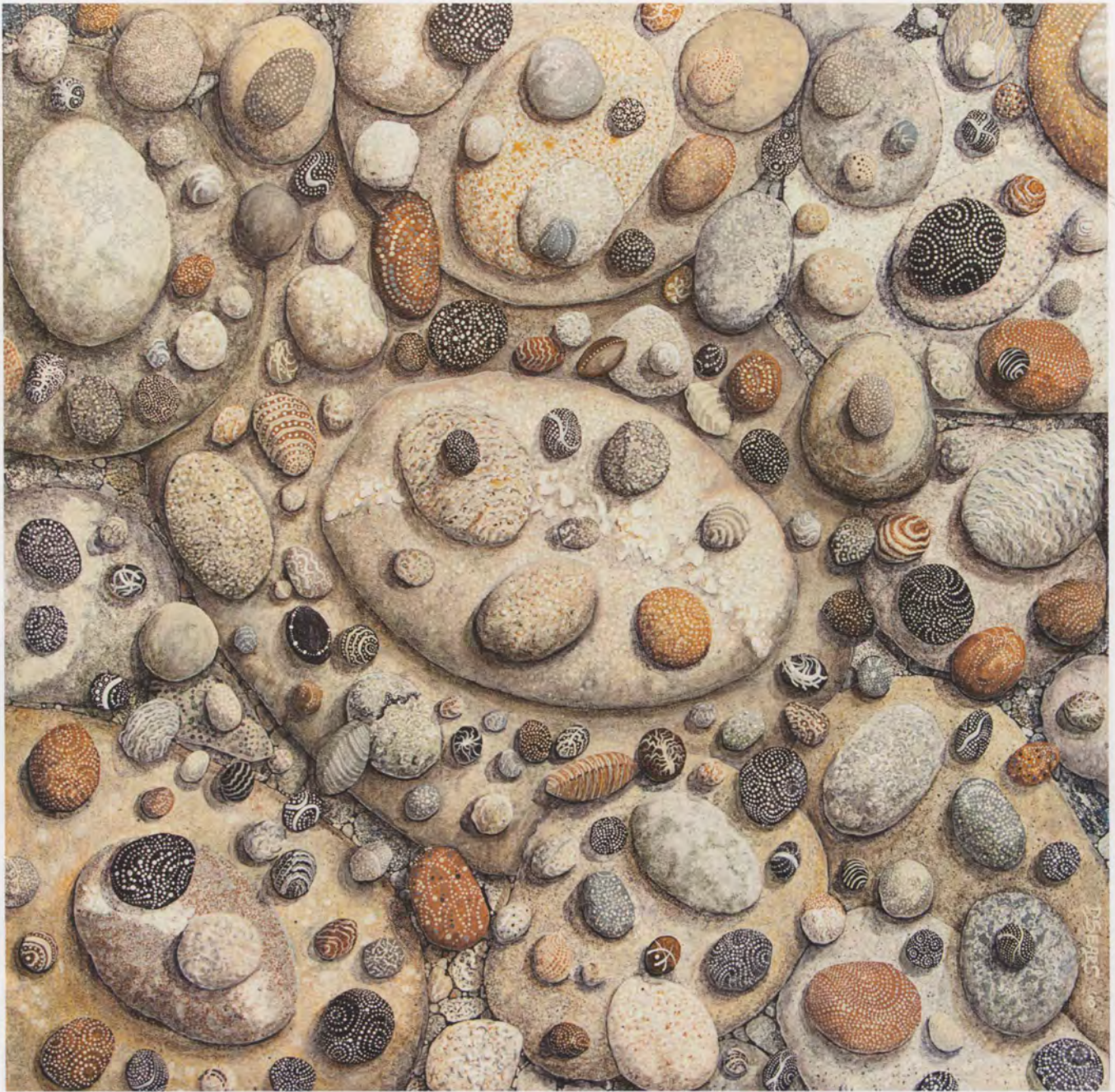
All along, Sears learned from copying, often turning to art books for inspiration. He remembers that trying to reproduce a Stephen Etnier seascape taught him how to feather the paint. His images of cobblestones, inspired by visits to Condon Cove on Matinicus, in many respects pay homage to Alan Magee, that master realist whose work Sears greatly admires.

In the chart pieces Sears often pays tribute to his favorite American artists, among them, Jasper Johns, Robert Indiana, Brice Marden and Sol LeWitt, incorporating their stylistic traits. Painting titles are sometimes spelled out with lettered Bananagrams tiles affixed to the frame, an idea Sears borrowed from Jamie Wyeth, who has used Scrabble pieces in a similar manner in some of his seagull paintings.

The painter deploys dots—strings, circles and arcing lines of them—in a manner that recalls Australian aboriginal art. The dots serve as a way to convey the idea of routes, sometimes real, sometimes random. At times, actual nautical charts are the foundation for these paintings, but just as often the configurations of islands and coastline are imaginary, or based loosely on concepts of land and water. The paintings have a decorative appeal, like quilts. Indeed, the complex overlays are a kind of embroidery.



Approaches, 2011



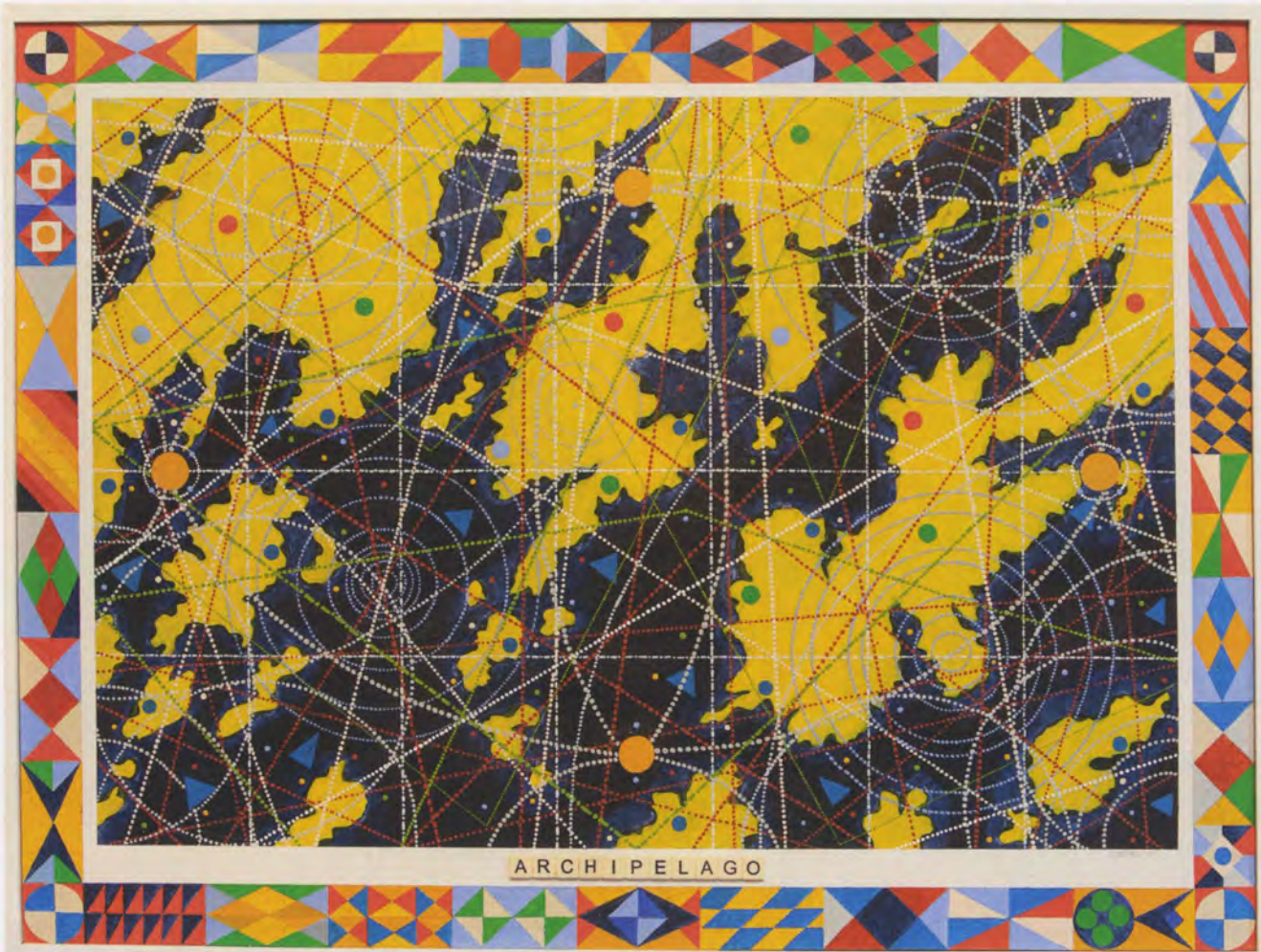
42 Black Rocks, 2010



Yellow Stones, 2003



Ledge, 2003



Archipelago, 2011



Inside Passage, 2009

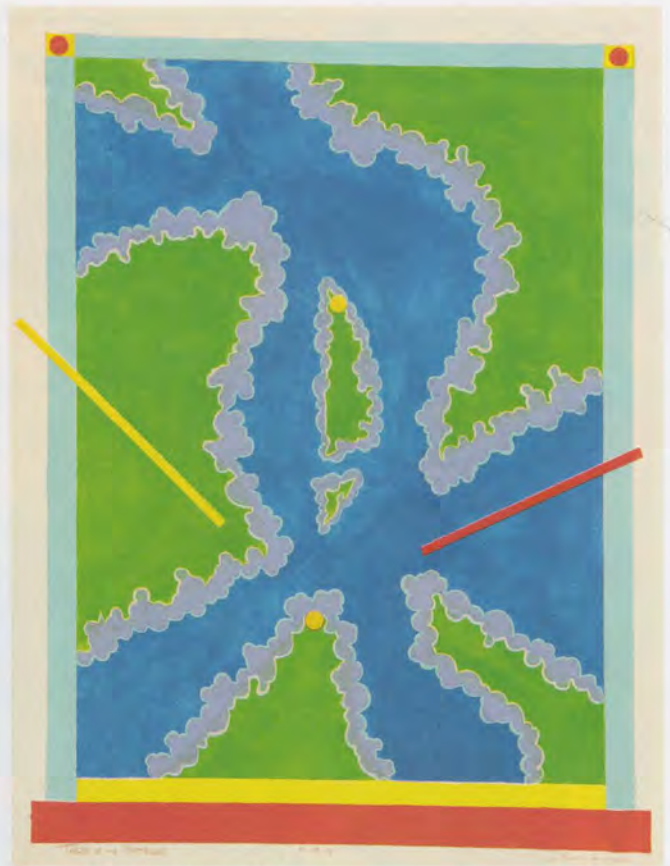


Cloud Bank, 2008

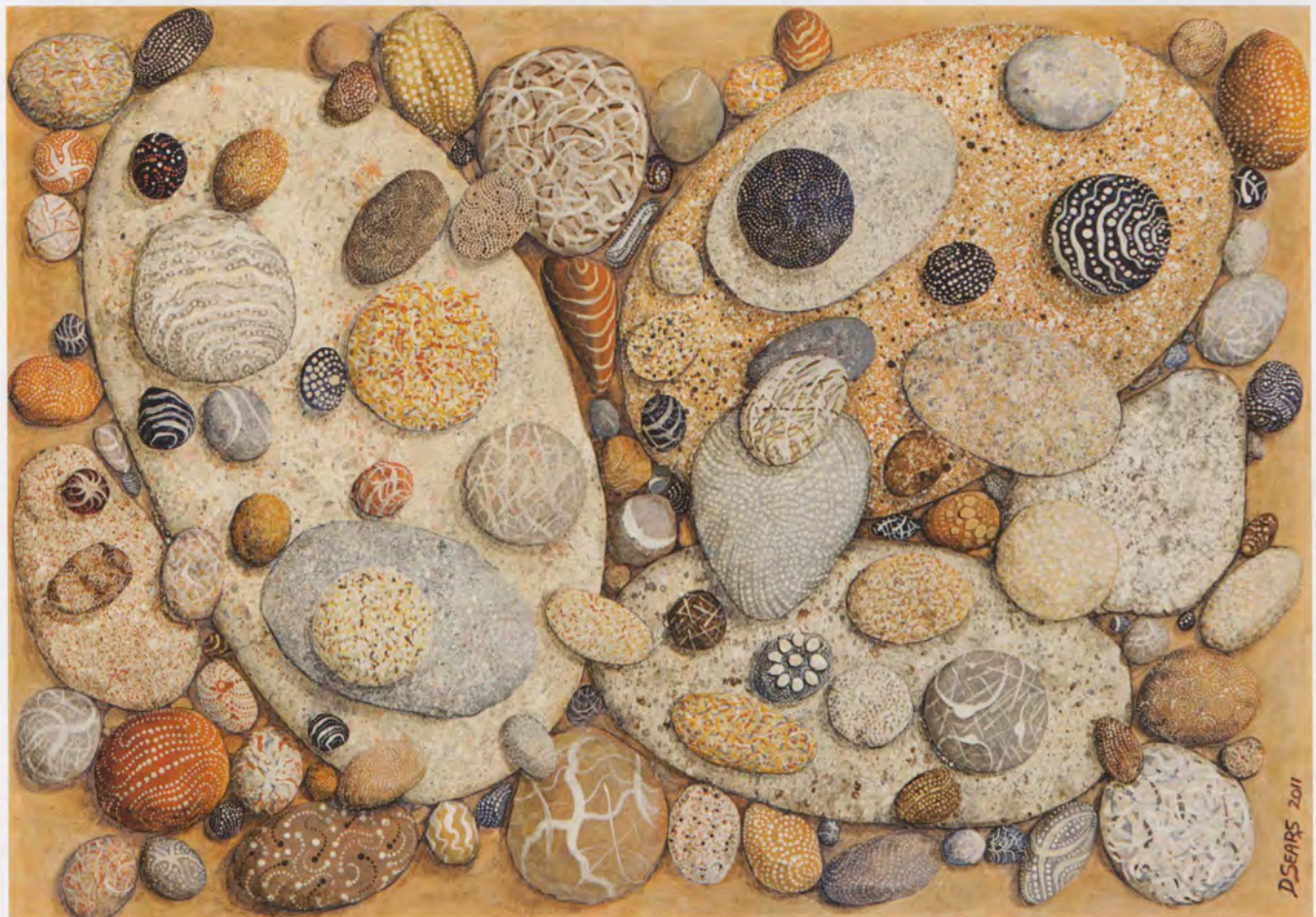
Archipelago Fine Arts Gallery will host a show of David Sears's work from June 29 through August 24, 2012. For more information, visit www.islandinstitute.org/davidsears.



Islands, 2011



There Is No Pattern, 2011



Consciousness of Stones, 2011



Bright Wave, 2006

Sears works almost exclusively in acrylic, although he has taken to labeling some of his recent pieces “water medium,” because the paint has been diluted to near transparency. He continues to experiment with various formats and ideas.

How did Sears end up on Matinicus, one of Maine’s most remote islands? He and his wife Judy started visiting nearly 20 years ago as seasonal renters. They sought a retreat of sorts, but also a world that might replace a Cape Cod they had once loved, but that had become overrun and even hostile. With their adopted Korean children, Abbie and Ben, they found a home away from home, which is Erwinna in upper Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

In 2005 the couple bought an island house. After six years of renovations, the place feels new, yet its history remains visible. A previous resident scratched the ghostly outlines of masted boats into the plaster walls of the living room, while someone else painted the lines of Edna St. Vincent Millay’s famous “Matinicus Sonnet” along the top

of the wall in the kitchen.

The simple and airy High Water Studio a few steps from the back door now serves as Sears’s haunt from April to October. He considers himself a Matinicus painter, and he likes the fact that fellow islanders respect his commitment to art. “It comes down to what you do to contribute to the island,” he states, as the interview comes to a close. In any case, Sears says, “I’m having fun,” adding, “Where do you stop? No idea.”

Carl Little is the author of Edward Hopper’s New England, The Watercolors of John Singer Sargent, Art of the Maine Islands, and many other books. Little lives on Mount Desert Island.

Visit the artist’s website at www.dsearsart.com



To hear David Sears describe his paintings and to see more of his work, download *Island Journal* for iPad® and Android™ tablets.



Across Deer Point Narrows Blood Connects Families on Long and Chebeague

DONNA MILLER DAMON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER RALSTON

When Great Chebeague and its nearby islands seceded from Cumberland in 2007, many people looked to neighboring Long Island as a role model. This small Casco Bay island community had successfully transitioned from being a minuscule district of Maine's largest city to become an independent town. Comparisons between the two adjacent islands were to be expected, but no two islands are the same despite persistent stereotypes to the contrary. Less than a quarter-mile of water separates the two, but it might as well have been 20 miles for all that some of the younger inhabitants and newcomers knew about each other. There were others, however, who remembered a time when inter-island dances, ball games, ferry rides and fishing crews were commonplace. Some islanders on both sides of the Deer Point Narrows still look forward to attending inter-island events, including weddings.

When Long Islander Sharon Doughty Marr traveled to

Chebeague to perform the marriage ceremony for Mary Taylor and Andrew Todd on September 11, 2011, she joined together descendants of Chebeague and Long Island's founding families—the Cushings and the Hamiltons. But Taylor and Todd are not the only Chebeaguers and Long Islanders to marry. In fact, Mary's mother Pat married Chebeague's Bill St. Cyr about 20 years ago. At that time Pat and Billy faced a serious dilemma shared by these islanders numerous times before: Would they live on Long Island—where Pat was the constable and an EMT, and owned a house—or would they move to Chebeague, where Bill had a thriving business? Ultimately, Chebeague won a family and Long Island lost its constable.

Sharon Marr has her own Chebeague roots. Her grandfather Everett Doughty had rowed over from Chebeague to court her grandmother Minnie on Long Island. Everett and Minnie lived on Long Island during the early years of their marriage, spending their later years on Chebeague.



There was a time when such inter-island marriages were routine, but the memories of these unions have faded over time. Many islanders have no idea that their neighbors have roots on other islands, for they have not been privy to the love stories of the past.

Family narratives are treasured in societies around the world, but they are especially important in isolated villages such as the islands along the coast of Maine, where a community's past is intertwined with the family histories of many of its inhabitants. Many of the stories of Chebeaguers interacting with Long islanders are focused on folks who lived on the West End of Chebeague, the section of the island closest to Long Island.

One of the earliest stories passed down through the generations has a religious bent. During the early 1800s many people on Long and Chebeague left the Congregational Church and joined the Methodists, who sent wave after wave of missionaries into the area. Stephen Bennett, a zealous convert from Chebeague, preached all over Casco Bay. According to the story, he was such a strong orator that he could stand on Deer Point (the point on Chebeague closest to Long) and preach a sermon loudly enough to be heard by Chebeaguers and Long Islanders alike!

Folks on both islands have passed on some of the same stories, although the details sometimes vary. Such is the story of Stephen Bennett's grandson, William Hamilton, who was drowned while returning from Long Island with

his cousin Benjamin Hamilton and Benjamin's new bride, Mary Horr of Long. For generations family members on both islands have heard the sad tale of the newly married couple that drowned on January 25, 1861, when they were caught in a freak snow squall while rowing in a dory from Long Island to Chebeague.

Long Islanders say that the tragedy occurred on the couple's actual wedding day, but the Chebeague version contends that they had been married previously and were just returning from a visit. The Long Island account reports that they left from the beach in front of the Horr house, which faced Chebeague, whereas in the Chebeague rendition they left from the front side of the island. Chebeaguers had only heard about Benjamin, 21, and Mary, 18, while Long Islanders include mention of a second man, Benjamin's cousin. Both stories describe the accident as occurring near the Stepping Stones, which are small nubs surrounded by breaking water located on the outside of Long Island. So what really happened?

Portland's three newspapers recorded conflicting stories. The *Eastern Argus* reported that the tragic event happened on a Friday, which is consistent with the date on William Hamilton's gravestone in the Chebeague cemetery. According to the *Argus* account: "William, Benjamin, and Mary Hamilton of Chebeague Island, having been on a visit to Long Island, started in a boat from the latter place at half-past one o'clock to return home. At half past three

The Rich family stands on the beach at Bennett's Cove, Chebeague (left), with the east end of Long Island behind, while the Johnson family (above) stands on Long Island's East End Beach, overlooking Bennett's Cove.

o'clock Mr. Green, who had been gunning, discovered the boat capsized. The bodies of William and Mary were found, but that of Benjamin had not been discovered on Saturday."

The *Portland Transcript's* story differed: "On Saturday last, as Benjamin and William Hamilton, accompanied by the wife of the former, were returning from Long Island to their home on Chebeague Island, the boat was swamped by the ice, and all three were drowned. The bodies of the woman and one of the men have been found. Mrs. Hamilton and her husband had been married but about three weeks."

Finally, the *Portland Advertiser* reported that the drowning took place on Saturday morning, and that the accident occurred when "rounding a point, their boat grounded out on a bar, and the boat was swamped by the ice . . . the bodies of Benjamin and the woman were subsequently recovered."

There is a sandbar that connects Long Island and the adjacent Crow Island, in the vicinity of Horr Beach. William Hamilton's grandfather's house was located directly across from the Horrs, in Bennett's Cove on Chebeague. Were they swamped there before drifting to the Stepping Stones? Were all three bodies recovered? Gravestones have been found for William Hamilton on Chebeague and Mary Horr Hamilton at the Apple Tree Cemetery on Long. But



Carol Todd Sabastrenski

Sharon Marr marrying Mary Taylor and Andrew Todd

what of Benjamin Hamilton? There is a remnant of a broken gravestone next to his mother's stone in the Chebeague cemetery. His grandniece contended that his body was found, frozen, draped over the dory and clinging to Mary's hands. We will probably never know for sure.

Fortunately, not every story has a sad ending. For generations Long Islanders have traveled to Chebeague to attend dances, and not always with their parents' permission. If a mother found sand in a girl's shoes on dance night, it was a sure sign that she had crossed the bay to Chebeague Island Hall! As far back as 1916 Long Island boys were traveling to Chebeague, looking for girls, and occasionally they found one. Such was the case with summer boy Ben Sawyer, who went to a dance on Chebeague on

a warm summer night and met Danietta Miller. In January of 1918, the bay was frozen over, so Ben walked from the Eastern Promenade in Portland to Chebeague to marry Danietta. After their wedding they walked past his summer home on Long Island on their way back to Portland.

Danietta's grandmother Rachel Doughty Miller was born on Chebeague in a house overlooking Coleman's Cove. Her mariner husband left on a trip in 1880 and never returned. The family had no idea of his fate until 20 years later when a lost letter was found in the Chebeague post office. A New York hospital official had written to say that

William Miller had died in New York, and asked the family to come and claim his personal effects. It was too late. During those 20 years Rachel Miller had moved her family around Casco Bay, working as a midwife and housekeeper, struggling to provide for her children. Her older sons, William (born in 1866) and Lewis (born in 1868), went to sea at an early age. During the 1880s they found berths on a Long Island fishing vessel. They would not be the last of the Miller descendants to move to Long Island. The only available house on Long Island was located on the backside of the island, opposite the Little Chebeague wharf, and was thought to be haunted. Rachel's grandson, Albion Miller, who grew up under her tutelage,



Pat and Bill St. Cyr



Bob and Beverly Dyer

related the following story in the 1980 *Cracker Barrel Tales from Chebeague Island*:

She was one of these old ladies that are not afraid of anything . . . and she said, "If there is a haunt in that place I will find him! I'm not afraid of a haunt." Well, she went the first night. I heard my father [Lewis] tell about it. The first night they was living there this noise started up in the chambers—in the old house. And so she says, "I'll find him!" Well, she went up and she could hear it. It seemed to be up overhead in the attic, and she gets something in her hand, I don't know what, and she got up there and she says, "If there is any haunts in here I'll dig them out!" She got up there and began to look around—could hear the noise—and after a while she sort of pinpointed it. She went over and down in the eaves was this whiskey bottle, I guess. Some kind of a bottle, and that wind was coming through the eaves enough to roll that [bottle] back and forth. "Here is the haunt," she says.

The Millers stayed on Long Island long enough for Rachel's youngest daughter, Christiana, to marry Long Islander Alonzo Gustavus Dyer, known as Gus. Gus Dyer moved to Chebeague, and he and the Millers built houses in Coleman's Cove, beside the home of his wife's sister and brother-in-law, Annie and John Calder.

The Calders had a large family, and several of their descendants moved over to Long Island. Their daughter Nancy married English-born Charles Train, a legendary

baseball player on Chebeague whose pitching was recognized all over Casco Bay. A great baseball rivalry existed between Long and Chebeague for most of the 20th century, when boatloads of spectators and players went back and forth between the islands, engaging in friendly competition. The Trains' daughter Bea married Ernie Horr and moved to Long Island. Their descendants recall that Ernie's mother, Emma Doughty from Chebeague, would become homesick as she looked out her window on Long Island, gazing at her home over on Chebeague.

Ray Ricker, son of Will and Annie Belle Calder Ricker, met a young woman named Vera Doughty at a dance in Cape Elizabeth. Vera came from neighboring Long Island, but according to their daughter, Pearl Mahany, they had never laid eyes on each other until that dance. They were married on Chebeague in the late 1920s. Afraid that islanders might try to disrupt their wedding night with a serenade, as was the Chebeague custom, Ray asked his best man, Al Hutchinson, himself a former Long Islander, to take Ricker's boat off the mooring after dark. When Ray's friends saw the boat head toward Long Island, they gave up and went home. In the morning the island boys were surprised that Ray and Vera had spent their wedding night on Chebeague in his uncle Silas Calder's front bedchamber. Ray, known as a clever prankster, was proud of his wedding caper! Ray and Vera moved to Long Island. It wasn't long before his brother Elliot, known around Casco Bay as Pood, and his younger sister, Dorothy, married Morton siblings from Long Island. Pood and Bunny (Elizabeth Morton) Ricker lived out their lives on Long Island. Some of their descendants, including their daughter, Doris Wood, still live on Long.



Doug Ross, a Chebeague Johnson descendant

The traffic between Long and Chebeague flowed both ways. Bunny Ricker's sister, Mabel Morton, married Ray Ricker's neighbor, Henry Dyer, at a ceremony on Long Island, and Mabel moved to Chebeague.

Unlike their Ricker neighbors, Henry and Mabel Morton Dyer raised their children on Chebeague. Their son, Bob Dyer, still lives on the island, not far from Coleman's Cove, where his ancestors fished for generations. While Bob still has a few traps that he and his cousin Richard haul on calm summer days, most of Bob's career has been spent ashore. He has never found a mechanical problem that he could not solve—although not always in a conventional way! As a young boy he watched his late brother, Henry Jr., transform an old car into a truck.

While his father and brothers fished, Bob kept their engines tuned. A whiz at math, Bob became a self-educated engineer. Over the years he has jury-rigged cranes, backhoes, trucks, cars, fishing-boat engines, and various pieces of road machinery. He single-handedly built a plywood lobster boat and retrofitted an engine to create a winning entry in the lobster-boat races. After he retired as Chebeague's road foreman, Bob returned to his roots and worked with Long Island's Dick Clark to upgrade Long's roads. A gifted generalist, Bob is the poster child for island innovation. Never afraid of hard work, he was challenged by one of his future brothers-in-law to split 12 cords of wood before he could marry the youngest Calder daughter, Beverly. Bob created an ingenious machine for the task, but the engine played out after 11 cords. After some reflection, the Calders decided that even though he was unable to fix the engine, he had earned his bride nonetheless! With Bob's deep Long Island roots

and Beverly's connection to Long Island through her Ricker and Train cousins, Bob and Beverly Dyer might well have settled on Long Island rather than Chebeague.

Like many other Casco Bay families, the Riches have family members on both sides of the Deer Point buoy. Zoeth Rich came to Long Island in the 19th century and settled on the shores of Harbor de Grace, on the outside of the island. Zoeth's grandson Jim Rich was a young boy growing up on Long Island when his father, Joseph, was drowned after a government boat ran him down during a snowstorm. But Jim was not deterred from following the sea. During the 1920s he found a berth on Gus Dyer's fishing

vessel and moved to Chebeague. It was not long before he became acquainted with the Doughtys, another West End fishing family. Gus Dyer and Gus Doughty were both well-respected fishermen with large fishing vessels, but Gus Doughty had something Gus Dyer lacked: a lovely young daughter. Jim Rich married Nettie Doughty and joined the crew of Gus Doughty's vessel.

The Riches had five children, three of whom live on Chebeague today. These siblings are talented artists and artisans, as are many of their children and grandchildren. Ten of Jim and Nettie's grandchildren live on the island, and currently the couple's great-grandchildren comprise one-third of the students in the Chebeague school.

Long Island has also benefited from the Chebeaguers who moved across the Deer Point Narrows. In-migration is significant on islands, but nothing can compare to the impact of the Johnson family's move from Chebeague to Long Island. James and Susan Littlefield Johnson had at least 10 children, which included two sets of twins. There was noth-



Susan Campbell, town clerk, daughter of Bob and Beverly Dyer

ing unique about large families in 19th-century Casco Bay, but what is extraordinary is the fact that eight of James and Susan Johnson's children moved from Chebeague to Long Island between 1860 and 1880. Seven of the children and their families lived on Long Island in 1880, and comprised 15 percent of the total population! At least six of them have descendants living on Long Island today.

Queen Victoria's children married into families throughout Europe, and it seems that the Chebeague Johnsons did the same thing on Long Island, for they married into nearly every Long Island family.

Meredith Sweet and the Long Island Historical Society compiled an illustrated Johnson family tree as part of the Society's 2011 exhibit, and connected many Long Islanders to the Johnson siblings from Chebeague. The genealogy reads like a Who's Who of Long Island. Folks with surnames such as MacVane, Floyd, Clarke, Alexander, Doyle, Bruns, Stevens, Woodbury, Stewart, Latham, Ladd, Knecht, Brown, Norcross, Peterson, Horr, Doughty, Braley, Wood, Rich, Ross, and Cushing—among many others—can all make the same claim: There's a little bit of Johnson in all of us!

Some of the Johnsons made their way back to Chebeague. In 1899 the *Six Town Times* reported that Reuben Cleaves and his family moved to Long Island to work in a grocery store. While on Long Island Cleaves's daughter Margery married next-door neighbor Frank Johnson. Her family moved back to Chebeague in the early 1900s, and Frank helped the Cleaves family establish their bakery there.

Frank's descendants still live on Chebeague. His great-grandson Doug Ross was a transition representative during the secession, and is actively involved with the administration of Chebeague's public safety. When interviewed for this story, Doug Ross—who has recently been bitten by the genealogy bug—was surprised to learn that the Long Island Johnson side of the family had originally come from Chebeague.

As the years go by it is easy to lose track of previous generations, but some families stay put, and they pass on the stories. Having a knowledge and understanding of the past helps to stabilize a community. Members of the Johnson family continue to live on Long Island. Dawn Train Johnson's children, Nancy Johnson Norton, Steve and David Johnson all live year-round on Long. Their roots run deep on both Long Island and Chebeague, and they are do-



David and Paula Johnson

ing their part to sustain Long Island as a viable year-round community. For example, all of David Johnson's children have returned to Long Island to raise their own families. Nathan, Michael and Moira Johnson have built new homes in close proximity to their parents. One can speculate that their heritage and sense of place drew them back to Long Island. They descend from many of the families who moved

to and from Chebeague and Long Island, such as the Bennetts, Littlefields, Doughtys, Millers, Calders, Trains, Horrs, and, of course, the Johnsons. For generations the Trains, Horrs and Johnsons have made an annual Memorial Day pilgrimage to Chebeague to decorate family graves in the cemetery. In fact, several large adjoining plots are known collectively as the Long Island Section. The gravestones are visible reminders of Long Island and Chebeague's shared past.

Many other family associations exist between Long Island and Chebeague, and their stories have yet to be told. Few people know the story of Long Islander Jim Burgess, who was set adrift after his crew mutinied. Nor do folks know the story of

the two-masted schooner, *LADY WOODBURY*. Owned by a Long Islander with Chebeaguers in the crew, the schooner disappeared during a Caribbean voyage in 1878.

Just about every longtime Casco Bay family has some inter-island connections, and projects such as Meredith Sweet's 2011 illustrated Johnson family exhibit help to remind all of us that the old adage is true: No man is an island—especially if his family lived in Casco Bay for any length of time.



Donna Miller Damon's roots go back before the Revolution on Chebeague, where she helped to found the Chebeague Island Historical Society.

The Life and Letters of Jim Hardie

Fisherman, Farmer, Captain and Caretaker

LUCILLA FULLER MARVEL



Feb 9 1934
 To James Hardie
 Dear friend Wolcott your letter received
 Monday I was very glad to hear from you
 and to hear you are well but very sorry
 and surprised to hear of your mother's death
 I am well nice here she was in a very
 good mood to me well Wolcott this winter
 is a tough winter here the Bay is frozen
 up over boats frozen in the harbor we
 can walk to little Spruce and to
 north island down to use by tea bed
 and crab tree joints worth a
 can visit those few times but don't
 expect we will get to the fort office
 as cold as they had 12 below zero this winter
 it got up ice last week had 20 inch thick
 this is nothing we could have had 40
 if it was not for the ice

“No man is an island entire of itself,” John Donne wrote, but Captain James Hardie came as close as any person to being one. Jim Hardie, as he was known, was the caretaker on Bear Island, a family-owned island in the middle of Penobscot Bay, Maine, during the first half of the 20th century. Jim, his wife Alice, and their seven children were the only year-round occupants, sharing the island with the extended family of owners during the summer months. An orphan from Scotland with no formal education, Jim was employed at Bear from 1910 until 1946. He then bought neighboring Scrag Island and lived there until the time of his death in 1954.

Jim was an extraordinary man: smart, prodigiously strong and capable, and entirely self-taught. Jim’s occupation as an island caretaker in those years meant a life full of sacrifices, hard times, and resilient survival. He exerted great influence, not only on his own children, but also on the children and grandchildren of Caroline M. Wolcott Andrews, including her son, and my uncle, Buckminster Fuller. Jim’s legacy—of heroic dimension—still permeates the island spirit today.

Jim Hardie came from harsh beginnings. According to his family, he was born in Scotland in 1884, orphaned, sent to Nova Scotia at a very early age, and then raised in a foster home on Prince Edward Island. According to Buckminster Fuller, who wrote of Hardie in *The Bear Island Story*, Jim fled his foster home. “At eight years of age he was convinced that he was being kept at home as a slave worker for his foster parents. He ran away to sea. He sailed first as a cabin boy and then an able seaman on Antarctica sealing vessels. It was a tough life. His eyes became permanently bloodshot

by exposure to the Antarctic sun.”

At some point in his voyages, Jim came ashore at Bangor, Maine, and made his way to Penobscot Bay, where he settled on Little Deer Isle. There he worked at the Sargentville Iron Works and on Pickering Island with his father-in-law, Louis Shepard. Jim first arrived on Bear Island in 1908 after rowing six miles from Little Deer Isle, in his “double-ended lapstroke, sailing/rowing pea-pod,” according to Uncle Bucky, and he became the full-time caretaker in 1910, at 26 years of age.

Jim’s life as a year-round islander who raised a family and augmented a meager salary by fishing and farming during two world wars and the Great Depression would be a fascinating account under any circumstances, but it is even more compelling when told in Jim’s own words, through his correspondence. My father, Wolcott Fuller, collected Jim’s letters that were addressed to him and to other family members over a 40-year period.

Although Jim had very little schooling, his native intelligence was so sharp that he taught himself to read and write. Newspapers were an important source of his self-learning. Wolcott Fuller gave Jim a subscription to a Boston newspaper as a Christmas gift for many years, and later sent him a subscription to the *Maine Coast Fisherman*. Bucky Fuller described how Jim used the radio as well as newspapers to make sense of language, beginning by identifying words found in the captions under pictures. His letters reveal that Jim expressed his thoughts well, even though he wrote phonetically and in phrases. He generally used spacing

Jim and Alice Hardie, Bear Island, 1940, by Geoffrey Baker



Haying by the Big House, 1916

rather than grammar-book punctuation to end his sentences. Nevertheless, his letters are lively and descriptive.

Shortly after the family started coming to the island every summer, my grandfather, Richard B. Fuller, died in 1910. A special bond developed between Jim and the children of Caroline Andrews Fuller, Mr. Fuller's widow. Jim became a father figure and a mentor in the lives of the young Fuller children, Bucky, Wolcott, and Rosy. Jim often writes of his friendship with the family for whom he worked, and would mention how much he was looking forward to the summer, when the family would be there: *"i will bring this to a close for this time and hopen to hear from you agin i love to hear from you it makes me think of summer . . ."* (2/4/1916).

Jim taught the young Fuller children and their cousins many lessons from his own personal experience—all about the sea, the tides, the wind, boats and sailing. Jim's only instruments were his eyes, his wristwatch, his compass, and his retained information and knowledge. Wolcott Fuller was an expert sailor and navigator, and said that he received all of his learning from Jim. Jim and Wolcott had a special affection for one another, a friendship that lasted till Jim's death. Jim named his second-born son Wolcott Hardie.

Buckminster Fuller wrote in 1967: "Few men affected [my] early life to greater extent than did Jim Hardie, because of Jim's sailorman's skill with boats and his vast physical drive to build and his innate urge for self-teaching." Bucky described Jim as highly competitive, and wrote: "Jim also competed with Bucky because Bucky had 'schooling.' Bucky competed with Jim because he was so physically strong and was so rich in sea lore and fundamental skills." Rosy Fuller Kenison wrote in 1971, "No telling of the Island would be complete without telling about Jim Hardie. . . . He was a great man and brought me up, and if it weren't for him, none of us would be going to the island now."

Although the Hardies and the Fuller children lived in independent spheres, they formed a meaningful, interdependent association, learning from one another. Jim's letters reveal his expectations of the family, especially the boys, often scolding Wolcott for not writing: *"well wolcott i here that you have Bin down to Bar harBor and found the wego i was verry much soprised when i herd that you was down there and did not get here to see us"* (6/11/1917).

simpney Boy is on great sproos head yet he has got his bil from his wife now and he is hunting for a nother wife now he is just as silly as ever

Jim Hardie,
letter from 2/4/1916

From the letters it is evident that Jim kept track of Bucky and Wolcott during World War I. He knew that Wolcott was going back and forth to Europe on troopships, and made reference to this in a letter. He also knew, of course, that the WEGO, the family boat, had been commissioned the USS WEGO, with Bucky as chief bos'n and Wolcott as deck-hand, and in another letter expressed his concern for the Fuller boys.

Jim's letters provide a vivid firsthand account of a multi-skilled, self-sufficient man and his family surviving in the face of harsh elements and weather conditions, including harrowing walks across a frozen Penobscot Bay for food and communication. Written mostly in the late fall, winter, and spring months, from 1914 to 1937, with two written in 1953 shortly before he died, Jim's letters offer dramatic descriptions of his life as a fisherman, boatman, hunter, builder, farmer, family provider and island caretaker.

Jim wrote of living with the seasons and the sea, of farming and fishing. He describes life on the water and activities that the weather permitted, including fishing for lobsters and scallops and digging for clams. Sometimes to earn money, Jim would spend many days away from home: *"where the times is so hard i have bin away clamming in my boat i youst to go away on monday and stay until satday"* (6/11/1917).



The Hardies, 1935



Jim and Billy the ox. Jim dressed for work with a tie, vest and always a hat, 1921.

Jim also describes the difficulties of trying to make ends meet during the Great Depression, but he was stoic about conditions and taking care of his family: “we are all well at present and had a nother Baby Boy born march 16 it is offel to have a adishing to the family these hard times But cant Be helped” (6/6/1933). He wrote often about his children, including taking them to schools on neighboring islands by boat, depending on the weather. Jim described collaborating with other fishermen and caretakers on nearby islands in Penobscot Bay, as the men looked out for one another.

Jim’s all-around skills were well known and appreciated by both his own family and the summer family. In one letter Jim writes of how he managed to carry out building and carpentry tasks the Fuller family had asked him to do: “well wolcot in regards to the cotteg i should think it wood tak Between 2 to 3 hundret dolors but to seprate the estmashen from inside and out side it is impossoBel But By doing the work it can Be ceap seprat when get done But one thing aBout it wolcot if i do it it will Be don onest i wood rather then to take and i will use everything that is fit to use But have no rotten wood that is the reasen i cant tell Just the cost for i dont no aBout the flor Beams until i start and get the flor up and i think in regards to the plaster i will Be aBel to patch it and mak it look verry good” (10/22/1934). According to his daughter-in-law, Evelyn Hardie, “When Jim was asked by the Fullers if he knew how to do something he would say no, but when he started out he knew how to do things.”

Jim and his family lived in the Harbor House. This was home. Jim and Alice’s descendants still call it home today. Alice related that for one three-year period she didn’t go to the mainland except for one day. After Jim and Alice moved there in 1910 with their firstborn, Lillian, who was three months old at the time, Jim asked Mrs. Fuller if he could build on to the one-room structure. He was told “he could build anything as long as he didn’t make it too high to spoil

the view of the harbor.” Jim and Alice had seven children: Lillian, James, Wolcott, Martin, Carl, Winslow and Pearl. Alice would go to Little Deer Isle for the births of the children. Josie Shepard, Alice’s sister, and Josie’s son Walter Shepard also lived with them.

In addition to fishing, Jim and his family farmed on the island. They had cows for their milk, horses and oxen to help with work, and pigs, chickens, sheep and goats. Jim gave names to his larger animals; they were like pets to him. A letter of Jim’s dated February 4, 1916, mentioned: “i hav not got Billy the ox now I have another one he eant as big as Billy was he is nise and quite ox but he is not verry strong.” The larger animals served for food as well. Jim wrote: “i cild my pig december 27 and december 28 i cild my black calf and i wish you cood of bin here to help me” (1/3/1917). Jim had several gardens on the island, including an interior garden and a potato patch. “i hav a nice vegetable garden,” he wrote on June 21, 1914.

Jim hayed the fields and kept the hay barn in the middle of the island well stocked. There were apple trees for fruit, still producing today. There are other artifacts of Jim’s farming activity still found around the island. The old sheep fence where the sheep were rounded up for shearing is still evident. The whole family shared in the work. Mrs. Hardie dedicated time to knitting. She spun and used the wool that Jim and the children had gathered from the sheep. It was wonderful, thick, gray wool with natural lanolin. She also knit bait bags for the lobster traps.

Winter was the most stressful season, when food supplies frequently ran low. Jim often wondered if they would last. In a 1917 letter he wrote: “we cant by eanny pettos here or eanny sugar so i dont know what we are agon to do if it ceeps on” (2/25/1917). During the winter of 1918 the bay froze over, making fishing and getting out for supplies difficult, if not impossible. Jim wrote to Wolcott: “i tell you we have had a terrebel winter here you cood go eany ware on the ice there has ben some men walk from pulpit harbor to camden this winter but i did not go much on the ice for i don’t like it going on the ice without i gotto but i did walk to eagel and dirigo once but i walked to great sproos head about all winter” (3/24/1918). A decade later he wrote, “we had one of the worst storms this winter that i have see ever since i lived on the island and it came rite on the big run of tides and it wasnt safe to go on the warf for you cood not stand up and the tide sweep rite across the see wall from the boat house to the woods” (5/24/1928). To supplement their food supply, as well as occupy their time, the boys hunted mink, weasel, and duck.

The Hardie children went to school when the weather permitted. They attended school first on Great Spruce Head, then on Eagle Island, and later, when they were older, they went to Deer Isle. During the week the children boarded with the Quinns on Eagle, coming home on the weekends. On Deer Isle they would stay with their maternal grandmother, Viola Shepard, in Mountainville. Jim writes in his letters several times that winter weather was so bad, he couldn’t get the children over to Eagle for their schooling. Sometimes he even towed them in a dory or a row-



Geoffrey Baker

Jim Hardie, 1940

boat over the frozen bay. Eagle Island also had a post office where Jim received his mail, so he could combine taking the children to school with picking up his mail.

Putting up ice from the swamp provided refrigeration for both the Hardies and the Fullers during the summer months. In one of his letters Jim says that cutting ice was the “one job that i dread” (2/4/1916). In one letter of Jim’s there is reference to Mrs. Hardie helping to cut ice. Jim also helped to cut ice at Great Spruce Head, even though it was a job he disliked, and about the only one he ever complained about in his letters, along with the cost of gasoline: “i do not youse the may flower now for the gas is so hy that i cant aford to run her gas here is 30 c a gallon” (2/4/16).

The letters also reflect Jim’s intelligence, good spirits, and the interest he took in matters beyond Penobscot Bay. Newspapers provided a constant source of goings-on in the outside world, and Jim was grateful for the subscriptions:

“Dear wilcott . . . i am geting the paper all rite and i tell you i am verry interested in it i go to the mail every day for to get my paper” (3/6/1916).

“Dear wolcott . . . i thank you verry verry much for the thots of me to send me the maine cost fisherman” (12/10/28).

Jim’s letters also reveal his wit:

“simpney Boy is on great sproos head yet he has got his bil from his wife now and he is hunting for a nother wife now he is just as silly as ever” (2/4/1916).

“my father in law don’t stay with me winters you cood not give him money enofe to stay on here in the winter” (3/16/1916).

“i am still working at the house and i am very pleased of the house and also mrs hardie is of corse you no it takes lots of room for mrs hardie to get around when she is so little” (3/4/1923).

“there isent a thing around to do cant as much as catch eny fish guess they have gon on a strike” (6/6/1933).

I was fortunate enough to know Jim; I remember him clearly and dearly. There was a personal magnetism about him, and he was very handsome. Even when he was older and stooped by hard work, he radiated strength. He sported a mustache, always wore a hat, and usually boots. Jim took pride in his appearance, and early pictures show him always dressed for work, sometimes with a tie and vest.

Jim’s health was not the best later in life, and continuing to work as a caretaker and lobsterman was difficult. After he left the job in 1946, he continued to visit, frequently stopping by the island. Jim died in October 1954 as a result of several heart attacks, a few days after his 70th birthday. Mrs. Hardie describes him as good-looking even in death: “Nov 24 1954 Dear mrs and mr fuller I rite to thank you for the simpetied you give me well Wolcott Jim look as nice when he was lay out if you see him you woud say he was about 30 years old.”

The last letter in the collection is from Mrs. Hardie, dated December 29, 1954, after Jim had passed away, in which she states: “I miss Jim a lot for I file I have lost the best frend I had ever.”



The Hardie family, 1944

Lucilla Fuller Marvel has a lifelong association with Bear Island, Maine. She and husband, architect Thomas Marvel, have lived, worked and taught in Puerto Rico for over 50 years.



To read one of Jim Hardie’s letters, download Island Journal for iPad® and Android™ tablets.



One Fish, Many Fish

George Putnam and the Making of Gorton's Seafood

ROB SNYDER

Formative experiences that emerge early in life often shape who a person becomes. For each of us, our birthright shapes us as exceptional. This was certainly true for George Putnam, who began his boyhood fishing off a wharf in the 1930s. Later, he would help to make decisions that changed how fish were eaten in America. He witnessed how a fish caught on a line from plentiful stocks around Maine's near-shore ledges later shifted to a consumer-driven need for fish to supply the nation's appetite for processed products. His is a story of how one fish became many.

Looking southeast from the shores of Pretty Marsh on Mount Desert Island, the leading edge of the morning sun glows orange on the horizon of a clear, calm August day. Fishing rods and tackle boxes in hand, father and son make their way across a dew-covered field to their wharf, where a neighboring lobsterman is waiting with the boy's cousins, already on board.

It is 1935, and as the roar of the engine throbs in the

hull of the classic wooden Maine lobster boat, nine-year-old George Putnam and his father assist the captain as they lay a course toward Isle au Haut. A long-anticipated day of fishing awaits them at the fabled near-shore cod-fishing grounds off Marshall Island.

The boat slows to an idle and the quiet morning drifts over men cracking open the mussels that will provide the day's bait. Then, the first long lines begin their descent—10 fathoms, 20, 30—until George's hands feel the familiar dull thump of lead weight hitting bottom.

The boat drifts, and the weights slide along what feels like a rocky bottom. Nothing . . . And then a hit, and another and another. By the end of the day, each member of the family has caught a dozen beautiful cod, 10 to 15 pounds each. Three feet in length, they shine silver under a blue sky.

*George Putnam overlooking the Gorton's Plant in the
Magdalen Islands, June 1955*



George Putnam (4)

Workers “candle” fish to remove worms at the Gorton’s plant.

This experience of catching a fish, perhaps more than any other, is how we imagine our food system ought to function. It represents a respect for local knowledge, a shared resource that anyone can access by catching a few fish at a time and respecting the environment in its endless beauty.

The experience of glimpsing the silver flash of the first fish caught in our youth, then struggling to keep it on the line, getting it into the boat without mishap, and finally, appreciating a meal with family, is unforgettable—all the more so for having caught it ourselves. These moments connect us all to George Putnam.

George’s father, George Putnam Sr., arrived home every Tuesday from Gloucester, having visited Gorton’s Seafood, where he presided as chair of the board, a role he took on in 1924 after the death of his father, and held for the rest of his life. Upon his arrival, his eager son and namesake looked forward to sampling the newest flavor of cod-liver oil-based cough drops (licorice was his favorite), as Gorton’s endeavored to make the health benefits of fish oils more palatable. Along with packaged salt cod, canned chowder, and its well-known Ready-to-Fry, Gorton’s primary interest in cod focused on extracting vitamin D for dietary supplements.

At the age of 10, the young George Putnam traveled to nearby Essex, Massachusetts, to watch the launching of the WILLIAM LOWELL PUTNAM, a fishing schooner named after his grandfather, Gorton’s founder. A lawyer by training, he died shortly after creating the Gorton-Pew Fisheries by merging several Gloucester seafood companies in 1924.

The launch of the W. L. PUTNAM marked a turning point for Gorton’s. It was the last fishing vessel the company would build for its own use, and own outright, and the thrill of its launch drew young George into a deeper connection with Gloucester and Gorton’s. After her sinking early in World War II (she was on antisubmarine picket duty off Newfoundland), most vessels were individually owned and fished more locally, off George’s Bank and Jeffrey’s Ledge.

Toward the end of the 1930s, Merck and other pharma-

ceutical companies synthesized vitamins A, C, and D, which replaced cod-liver oil in the marketplace and forced Gorton’s to reconsider its future. Looking for an entry into the rapidly growing frozen-food business—the original Birds Eye plant was in Gloucester—Gorton’s purchased Fulham Brothers, whose Four Fishermen brand of fish sticks had an important share of that market. This was the first of a number of new products achieved through corporate purchases.

As a teenager, George spent summers working the docks at Gorton’s for a formidable wharf manager named Mr. McLeod. He helped boats land, secured lines, and cleaned up around the docks, “doing whatever was needed, keeping the place tidy,” he recollects.

Following World War II service in the Army Air Corps, George enrolled at Harvard and majored in biochemistry. One summer he helped in the labs of Procter & Gamble, where scientists were studying the similarities between cottonseed, peanut, coconut, palm and soybean oils. These studies helped to form the basis for the Food and Drug Administration’s eventual conclusion that cotton and soybean oils were virtually identical, and could be used in shortenings and margarine without specific labeling. This decision became important to Gorton’s when it sought interchangeability between cod and haddock in the manufacture of fish sticks.

By his college years, George had spent enough time hanging around the docks in Gloucester so that when offered a trip to Newfoundland on the BLUE PETER, he jumped at it. The BLUE PETER was the flagship of the Blue Peter Line, a fleet of small freezer freighters traveling to the Canadian Maritimes, Newfoundland, and Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, primarily to pick up frozen blocks of cod and haddock fillets. He made several trips that summer as an informal representative of Gorton’s, and developed a lifelong admiration for the beauty and people of Maritime Canada.

The trips to pick up cod blocks took a week, round-trip, he explains. “The import duty was such that you couldn’t bring fish into the United States, processed, but you could bring it in frozen. Fillets were stacked into blocks, frozen, and then shipped to Gloucester for processing. They would saw up the blocks on a band saw. They would bread them, cook them, freeze them, and sell them as fish sticks. They were delicious. I love fish sticks. It was easy, and it was very good fish,” he says.

Soon after George graduated from the Harvard Business School in 1951, he became more involved in Gorton’s. George’s father enlarged the board to balance the interests of two very good friends that he had recruited to help run Gorton’s: Bob Kinney and Paul Jacobs. Bob and Paul had been the principals at the American Cat Food Company in Bar Harbor, the first significant business to establish markets for crab bycatch in the lobster industry. Bob was a Mainer and a partner in Wyman Blueberry Co., a Bates College alumnus and a logistics genius. “Paul was a market-

ing man from Marblehead who had created the Three Little Kittens brand of cat food for the American Cat Food Company,” says Putnam. The third member of what was to be a very successful management team at Gorton’s was George’s cousin, Harvey Bundy, chief financial officer and head of administration.

Putnam recalls that Gorton’s first purchase about that time was to acquire the Four Fishermen brand from the Fulham Brothers, the inventors of the fish stick. Gorton’s bought them around 1950, and quickly built the product into a major component of their business. “The business led very naturally from fish sticks to frozen fillets and fillet dinners, and to all the different sauces you put on them. That is what Gorton’s sells today. It hasn’t changed in 40 years,” says Putnam.

With the Putnams at the helm, under Bob’s leadership, Gorton’s purchased a half interest in National Sea Products, in Louisbourg and Halifax, Nova Scotia. The company then built a large plant in Caraquet, New Brunswick, in the early 1950s. George recalls Bob’s skill at dealing with labor issues in Caraquet, located in French-speaking New Brunswick, which, for all intents and purposes, was run by the Catholic Church that organized the union and supplied the workers.

It was a great plant because in the upper portion of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the cod thrived on the nutrients brought down from central Canada by the St. Lawrence River. Haddock preferred the saltier water farther down the gulf, so the proportion of cod caught was relatively high. Unfortunately, the low salinity meant flesh worms, so the fish had to be candled before packing. “I recall light tables with lines and lines of women in their white coats, picking the tiny worms out of the fillets with tweezers. We used to say it cost you 25 cents every time you used the word *worm*—we learned to call them *parasites*,” recalls Putnam.

The demand for fish sticks was growing at such a clip that Gorton’s eventually built two more plants, this time on



Gorton’s Seafood leaders arrive on the beach at the Magdalen Islands.

the Magdalen Islands, right in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, roughly halfway between Caraquet, which is on the Bay of Chaleur at the northern tip of New Brunswick, and the southwest corner of Newfoundland. “We had a plant on each of the main islands of the Magdalens, Amherst and Grindstone. Early on we had a board meeting on the Magdalen Islands, to visit the new plants. We went to Prince Edward Island, and from there we flew in an old DC-3, which landed on the black-pebble beach on Grindstone. To get from Grindstone to Amherst we had to drive in a large, ancient Packard with oversized wheels at dead low tide along a sandbar, to ford between the two islands,” recalls Putnam.

Maurice Duplessis, the long-standing premier of Quebec Province, came to the islands for a day at the opening of the plants. Putnam remembers it as a special occasion. “It was the first time that Premier Duplessis, or, in fact, any premier of Quebec, had ever visited the islands. We were there for three days. It was a big deal on the islands and warranted a major celebration.” The plants, with their own generators, brought regular electric power to the islands for the first time.

“There were no hotels on the Magdalen Islands—no public accommodations of any kind,” George recalls. “Most of us stayed in the then-new Sisters of Charity Hospital, which was also being dedicated at the same time.” Putnam remembers, “I was the newest board member and low man on that totem pole. As a result, my accommodation was in the morgue! I had it to myself for two nights, and I remember it as being quite comfortable.”

Putnam recalls that “the hospital was the heart of a very Catholic community, where the mother superior was queen. She spoke no English, and my French was weak at best, but we enjoyed meals together. Her right-hand lady who ate with us grew up in Lowell, Massachusetts, and probably spoke English better than any of us—but she wouldn’t speak it in front of her



Rendering excess catch into fish meal at the Gorton’s plant

boss.” They were very grateful to Gorton’s, which not only brought money and more regular incomes to the islands, but the electric power that Gorton’s supplied was far more reliable than what little they had had before.

With his easy smile and gift for conversation, George became quite friendly with the mother superior while sharing thirteen consecutive meals of lobster in some form or other. “Fried eggs and cold lobster are delicious for breakfast, and it was the only fresh food anyone had to eat,” says George fondly. “The Magdalen Islands were always a treat and an adventure.” He ended up going there three or four more times to visit the Gorton’s plants, although he never again had to sleep in the morgue, as the company eventually acquired its own guesthouse.

By the 1960s, challenges began to emerge regarding where and how to source fish for Gorton’s. “There was less and less in-shore fishing. Cod had become scarce, and haddock was becoming scarce. The remaining stocks were intermingled so that you could not easily target one kind of fish.” Gorton’s responded by bringing a case before the FDA, asking permission to use cod and haddock interchangeably, without separate labeling. “This was important, as we began to need to buy Danish, Swedish and Icelandic blocks, and they didn’t separate the species in those places,” says Putnam.

At the same time, Gorton’s took it upon itself as a corporation to fund the implementation of a government inspection system. It was the first time that fish processors had made regular use of government inspectors. The inspectors were right there in the plants at Gloucester, checking not only sanitation and the condition of the fish, but also confirming that the fish sticks maintained a minimum of at least 35 percent fish.

By this time, one fish had become many, and after World War II, the technology and government investments in fisheries meant that it was relatively easy to access fish from anywhere in the Atlantic. “The Poles had a huge mother ship, and they were paying the best price, so American and Canadian fishermen would sell their catch in international waters to the Poles. It was the first big mother ship. Gorton’s would then buy the product—the blocks. The Poles did quite well until the Russians came in with a better mother ship and put the Poles out of business,” says Putnam. “Of course, the 200-mile limit came in during the late 1970s, and all of this changed, too, as the fish were becoming scarcer and scarcer.

“The 1950s were a frozen-fish heyday for Gorton’s,” re-

calls Putnam. Fish sticks and TV dinners featuring frozen fillets with many different sauces were very popular, and, of course, McDonald’s “fishwiches” were a big market (especially on Fridays). Building on this success, the company endeavored to diversify within the seafood business. “Bob Kinney was interested in expanding by acquisition, and we went into a lot of different businesses. There was a very successful shrimp operation that was run out of Miami, and even one in India, jointly sponsored with UNESCO. We had a big Ecuadorian fish and fertilizer operation,” says Putnam. “It was a well-run local industry and a well-run company,” he says.

In the 1960s many large companies were on the prowl for successful businesses to add to their stables. General Mills made Gorton’s an attractive offer. They wanted to diversify into the frozen-food business, and were probably also looking at Bob Kinney as a talented manager. They purchased Gorton’s in 1967, and it wasn’t long before Bob was running General Mills and George had joined its board. George looks back fondly on the 1950s and ’60s as the glory days of the fish business, where thousands of industry jobs were created in Gloucester and elsewhere.

For many years, Gorton’s used Gloucester’s famous *Man at the Wheel* statue as the logo on its well-known yellow-and-blue labels. This statue, symbolic of Gloucester and its principal industry, bears the haunting words, *For those that go down to the sea in ships.*

Thousands of fishermen became one fisherman through

this image, just as interchangeable whitefish from increasingly distant shores began to make up the contents of the product the logo came to represent. George Putnam understood this shift, saying, “I witnessed the food system in this country change over my time with Gorton’s.” Yet the attachments that he developed during the fishing trips of his youth, where one hook caught one fish, have remained strong.

And so, too, for the rest of us; our choices are changing as well. Today many of us increasingly seek to know the fisherman that caught the fish we eat, and where their fish came from, in an effort to stay connected to a time when our fathers and grandfathers could go out in a small boat among the Maine islands and offshore ledges and jig a cod for dinner.



Peter Ralston

George Putnam, Sawyer Cove, 2011

Rob Snyder is executive vice president of the Island Institute.



The Fish They Catch

Photographs by
Corey Arnold

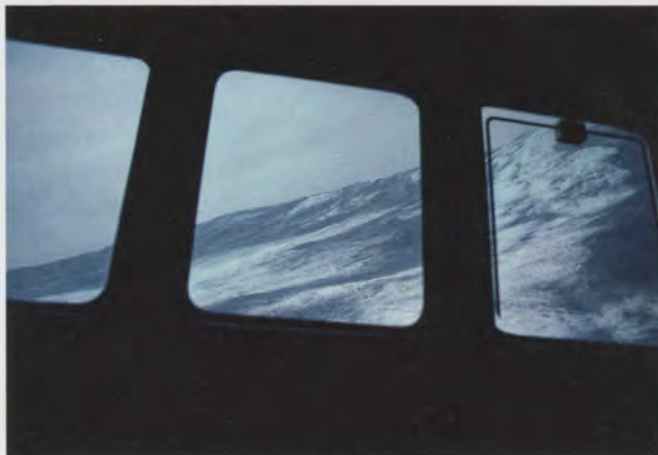
Introduction by
Philip Conkling



Shark Men, Vigo, Spain



Big Sei Set, Norway



Forty Feet, Bering Sea Alaska

A few years back, one of this country's foremost historians of islands and oceans, John Gillis, wrote an essay in *Island Journal* suggesting that there is not much we like about fishing communities until they have disappeared, when we then mourn their passing. While we seem content to celebrate fisheries of the past, their present existence does not attract a lot of admiration, perhaps because fish and fishermen are often such strange and unlovely creatures.

Fisherman-photographer Corey Arnold has turned that equation around by celebrating the strange bond between fishermen and the fish they catch. During the past half decade, Arnold, 35, has become the world's preeminent photographer of fish and fishermen in all of their strange and wondrous glory. And although some of his admirers have asked, no, none of his images have been Photoshopped.

Fish and fishing occupied Arnold's mind from his earliest years growing up in Oceanside, California, where his father reportedly took him fishing while he was still in diapers. In the introduction to his arresting book of Alaska fishing photographs, *Fish-Work: The Bering Sea*, Arnold remembers how early and completely fish possessed him. He electrified his classmates in fourth grade by showing them a three-foot mako shark he had caught and brought to school in a cooler. And for four consecu-

Page 75: Cleaning the Mast, Bering Sea, Alaska
Right: I Am Brian Greer And I Will Destroy You With Two Giant Crab, Bering Sea, Alaska





Dutch Harbor Pigeons, Dutch Harbor, Alaska



Loneliness, Bering Sea, Alaska (self-portrait)



Greater Monkfish, Peterhead, Scotland



Injury #17, Bering Sea, Alaska



Kitty and Horse Fisherman, Bering Sea, Alaska



Torsk Racks, Norway



ROLLO Crew 2006, Bering Sea, Alaska

Right: *The Cable Splicer*, La Guilvinec, France



tive Halloweens he dressed up as a big-fish slayer, complete with rod and harness.

After graduating from art school, photographic jobs were plentiful in California during the dot-com bubble. But when the bubble burst, Arnold was running out of money and facing large college debts. He left the sunshine for “higher-paid work in Alaska,” as he prosaically put it. He got a job on a small 43-foot fishing vessel as a deckhand on a two-month experimental cod-jigging voyage along the shores of the Aleutian Islands chain. “Big country,” as his captain called it, whereupon he graduated (again), this time onto a 103-foot crabbing boat in the Bering Sea, where he fished for the next seven winters, earning a year’s salary during three months of dangerous, sleep-deprived 20-hour days of bone-chilling labor.

In Alaska, Arnold also met a Norwegian girl and moved with her to Norway for the nine months he was not crabbing in the Bering Sea. Here he discovered a whole new world. Arnold began traveling with his camera along the coastline of Norway, trying to stay above the Arctic Circle, which was “more remote, more fascinating, less photographed,” to use his words. Arnold’s work attracted the attention of the American-Scandinavian Foundation, which sponsors art exchanges. They provided him with the opportunity to spend three to four months in 2005, “hopping from boat to boat, living in small towns, doing in-depth studies of these places.”

By this time, the fisheries advocacy group, the Pew Charitable Trust, also noticed his work. They were beginning to gear up for their “Ocean 2012” campaign, to reduce wasteful bycatch in European fisheries. Arnold was cautious about having his work used for what amounts to a political campaign, but after researching them carefully, he decided he shared their goals. “[They want to] eliminate the massive amount of fish dumping in EU fisheries,” Arnold notes. “They also realize that conserving the human aspect of fishing is just as important as keeping fish life cycles going.”

Thus, Arnold agreed to spend a good part of last year photographing fishermen in eight European Union countries: Spain, Greece, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Scotland, and Ireland. “I am not taking sides in general,” he said. “I am just trying to help keep coastal fishermen alive.”

It is a passion we share.

Philip Conkling is president and founder of the Island Institute.

Visit the artist’s website at www.coreyfishes.com.



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Bering Sea Birthday, Bering Sea, Alaska







“I Know He’s Watching Me”

Swan’s Islanders Live Their Faith

MEGHAN VIGEANT

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER RALSTON

Their eyes get big. The waves start pounding. At this point in their journey Reverend Paul Joy turns to his passengers hitching a ride, and says, “This is where I ask, ‘Is everything all right between you and the Lord?’” He hopes the answer is yes.

Three times a week Rev. Joy delivers the mail from Swan’s Island to the nearby island of Frenchboro in his lobster boat, and occasionally gives rides to visitors. He is usually cautious about going out in foul weather, but the sea is known for dangerous surprises. Joy says, “I like being out on the water knowing that He’s always watching.” The idea that God is constantly watching inspired Joy to pick a special name for his boat.

The story of his boat’s name begins on Paul Joy’s first day of theology school. He was handed a set of scripture texts to study. *His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He’s watching me . . .* This passage from Matthew explains that God sees

all things, sparrows and humans alike. If a sparrow were to fall, God would be watching. Shortly after reading that passage, Joy was standing outside and a sparrow landed on his shoulder. “I thought, Well, isn’t that amazing.” So, he named his boat the SPARROW.

Joy is the recently retired minister of the Swan’s Island Church of God, although he’ll tell you that he’s not any less busy after retirement. He’s still running the mailboat, lobster fishing, driving the school bus, chopping trees, and doing general handiwork, only now he can take Sundays off. Joy and his family have lived on the island for over 25 years, increasing the island population by seven percent—nothing to blink at in this small isolated community.

Swan’s Island, a community of about 350 year-round

Reverend Joy with two of his many grandchildren; Joy’s extended family makes up seven percent of the island’s population.



residents, is six miles off the coast of Mount Desert Island. There are four church buildings; three have active, year-round congregations, and two of those combine forces in the winter due to their small numbers. So it basically boils down to two church groups with about 125 regular members between them.

Signs of faith are sprinkled throughout the daily fabric of life, from a hill called Noah's Ballast, to the names of lobster boats in the harbor: AMAZING GRACE, DAILY BREAD, ATONEMENT, PRINCE OF PEACE, PRAISE THE LORD, NEVER ALONE, FIFTH DAY, BORN AGAIN, and of course, SPARROW.

Swan's Island is blessed with an active lobster-fishing industry, but with that blessing come the perils of the sea. Many fishermen have credited God for stewarding them safely home in storms, while others have been called into the depths of the sea. Rev. Max Creswell, the minister at Advent Christian Church, notes that Psalm 107:23 is often heard at island funeral services. *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; they see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. . . .*

Even if the weather does not try the spirits of men, men have been known to trouble each other. When Bernita Joyce was a young girl she remembers her father asking God to bless the waterfront every day, to "keep the arguing down" so the lobstermen could have "a peaceful existence with each other."

Like her father, Bernita prays regularly. She says a special prayer when she hears the Life Flight helicopter flying over her trailer on Stockbridge Hill. *When I'm afraid I'll trust in thee (Isaiah 41:10).* "I ask God that whoever it is, just keep your hand on 'em. Keep 'em safe."

She learned about the power of prayer from her mother, Laura Joyce, who had a deep faith and a cheerful disposition. Even when Laura was terminally ill, visitors came out of her hospital room exclaiming, "I went in to cheer her up, and she cheered me up." Joyce knew her mother was headed to a better place. It was her father, Llewellyn Joyce, who she worried about the most. She prayed, "God, you know my

father's not gonna make it on his own. Find somebody for him as soon as possible so he can have someone else in his life."

A few days after Bernita sent up that prayer, her mother revealed the answer to it. In the hospital room Laura asked her daughter, "Have you met the lady who works in the cafeteria, with the dark hair?" Bernita answered no. Laura said, "Well, next time, you go ahead and see if you can pick her out."

"Why are you interested in her?" Bernita asked.

"She's been in here and has talked to me several times on her breaks," Laura whispered. "I think she'd be perfect for your dad."

Laura passed away on March 21. Three and a half months later, Llewellyn and Jeannie, the lady with the dark hair, married. Bernita says, "I couldn't have handpicked a better person."

Lately it has been uncomfortable for Bernita to sit through church services due to a joint disease; instead, she watches a minister on TV. "I'm not big on religion," she says. "I'm big on God." It is a sentiment many other islanders share.

Lobsterman Norman Burns says, "I'm not a churchgoer, [but] I do believe in God." He feels you've "got to believe in God. If you don't, your life is going to be miserable." Burns lives his life by a code he learned from his father. "My old man . . . felt that if you was honest in life you'd get



The Advent Church, Swan's Island

ahead just as well as the next fella. You just try to be equal and try to be honest.”

Burns’s parents went to church once in a while as he was growing up, and they even gave money to the island churches. Rob Benson, a minister with the Maine Seacoast Mission, has observed that like the Burns family, many islanders up and down the coast might not actually attend a house of worship, yet they still express an appreciation for them. It is more than a building. Church members often help to raise money for charity, or deliver meals to an older person. An island church is often a vital community center, and on a deeper level, it is, as Benson says, “a place that is theirs, where they can experience the sacred.”

The Maine Seacoast Mission provides ministry and health care to remote Maine island communities. As the pastor to the outer islands, Benson has witnessed the dynamic relationship island people have with their churches. He remarks that the value of churches has remained constant in places like Swan’s Island. They provide a sense of intimacy, “of being known, being loved, and being cared for,” that has not diminished in the face of changing times.

For Donald Carlson, his church is like a family. Carlson is a deacon at the Advent Christian Church. Although he wasn’t sure he was up to the task when he first accepted the role of deacon a few years ago, he knew God would provide him with the needed strength to be a leader to his church community.



Donald Carlson

You have to have trust and faith that what is going on is what God wants to be going on.

As a young man, after two years of forestry school, Carlson set out to find his dream job. There were so few available positions in forestry, and competition was fierce. Eventually he came home and went stern for his lobster-fishing father, but he was plagued by seasickness. He would cry out to God, “I can’t understand. Oh, Lord, why am I here? This doesn’t seem to be what I’m supposed to be doing.” He laughs at his former predicament. “All through those times I believe the Lord was building me. I needed to be matured.” Eventually Carlson started a business building lobster traps. “It wasn’t the thing I expected. Wasn’t the thing I was planning. It’s what I do, and I really don’t mind doing it.”

Carlson says, “You have to have trust and faith that what is going on is what God wants to be going on. If you believe that God is in control of all situations, and I do, then you realize there’s a purpose behind all these situations, whether they be good things or bad things.”

Carlson found that God provided the strength he needed during many trying situations, such as when he was going through cancer, and when he cared for his sick mother during her last few years of life. He didn’t do it alone. Folks from around the island took turns preparing meals for them, and others helped provide her with much-needed care. Carlson believes that God “sends people your way to help you in those situations.”

One of the people God sent to help those who struggle is Dorothy Stockbridge. She’ll tell



Nancy and Norman Burns



Marion Stinson

you she's never had much money to help out, but she does have her hands. Her hands have helped cook many benefit suppers over the years to help raise money for those who are sick. Each week her sturdy, wrinkled hands offer cans and boxes of food to needy families at the Bread of Life Food Pantry. In this economy, Stockbridge says, "The food pantry is a must right now. I could see that yesterday when I opened. I mean, people were just there in droves, coming in to get food."

There was no food pantry on the island when Stockbridge's husband drowned and she had to raise seven children on her own. "But God got me through. They had clothes. They had something to eat, and a clean house. Wasn't always easy."

Stockbridge admits that she does not always understand God's plans. Her second husband, Paul Stockbridge, suffered a long illness. When he died, she found herself alone again, and lonely. She asked herself, "Why did God do that to me? What have I done?" Yet, she knows that God has a plan for us all, and he must have done these things for a reason.

Jean Ranquist sometimes finds it hard to feel those "hugs from God" that some people talk about

feeling. She says, "I know God loves me. I have no question about that, and I know He wants what's best for me."

Ranquist's plan for herself did not match up with God's plan. She wanted a family and a home. Instead, she lives alone in an apartment in the senior housing unit. She says, "I've been happy just the same." Ranquist says it's normal to question God. It's okay to be angry. "But you get over it."

Ranquist may not have gotten what she asked for, but she dearly loves her nieces and nephews, and while she may not have her own home, she enjoys an amazing view of the sea and the mountains on Mount Desert Island. "I can sit in that chair right there and look out that window and see [God's] creation. Creation amazes me. I think to myself, 'How can people not believe in a God when they see this beauty?'"

Marion Stinson says she never knew God while she was growing up. Next to the Advent Christian Church where she attended Sunday school was a large rock with the words *GOD IS LOVE* etched on it. She did not understand what it meant. "So I just shrugged my shoulders. I didn't know anything, really, about God till I grew up."

As an adult she started attending the Church of God. One



Bernita Joyce

Sunday, she walked up to the piano, where the minister's wife was playing, and started playing with her. "It brought me closer to the Lord by doing that." As a young woman Stinson had entertained dancers at the Odd Fellows Hall, playing with the band. These days she plays more church music than dance-hall tunes, but always with her own unique flair. She can turn an old New England hymn into a ragtime jazz tune, and a contemporary Christian ballad into a honky-tonk country song.

"Faith to me is being able to live every day at my age, and trusting the Lord—though I [do] get a little devilish once in a while," she says with a chuckle. At her home in the senior housing apartment, Stinson often walks around, talking to God. "People must think I'm half crazy. But He's never failed me. He's always been there for me."

She takes comfort in the hints she finds that let her know she is not alone. Stinson goes to the beach frequently to hunt for sea glass to make into jewelry, and she never returns empty-handed. "I say, 'God, you have never led me to the beach where I couldn't find at least one piece of sea glass.' And that means a lot to me spiritually."

Keyona Colbeth is a senior in high school with a tattoo, but it's not your typical "teenage rebellion" body art. She rolls up her sleeve to reveal an infinity symbol and the inscription FAITH FOR INFINITY, JEREMIAH 29:13. If you look up the verse, her purpose in life is revealed. *You will find me when you seek me with all your heart.* "My faith is what pretty much keeps me going every single day. God's my everything," Colbeth says with enthusiasm.

It all started with an unwanted present from her father. "For Christmas all I wanted was a [Nintendo] DS, one of those little PlayStation things. I wanted it so badly." She was allowed to open one present on Christmas Eve, per family tradition. She picked out the one that most resembled a wrapped DS. Her mother advised that she might want to save that particular one till Christmas morning, but Colbeth was determined. "Nope, nope," she responded. "You're trying to convince me not to." She unwrapped



Keyona Colbeth



the present. It was a Bible. "I remember being just like, 'Ugh!'" she says, laughing.

She started to appreciate her present while studying the Bible with her youth group. There she connected with her peers, as well as with the Word of God. In the summertime she and her friends from church go up to the lighthouse to hang out. They often help each other work through their problems. In the confusion of teenage life she welcomes their Christian point of view.

Now, Colbeth has found her calling. She is going to college in South Carolina next fall to study the Bible. She plans to become a youth leader. "I know that God wants me to be preaching His Word, and showing people His love. I definitely know that's what I'm supposed to do."



Faith can be a sensitive subject. People practice their faith in so many different ways. They have differences of opinions and doctrine. They vote differently. They go to different churches. Some don't go to church at all. But, as Paul Joy says, "They are all terribly alike." They all make mistakes. They all stumble on their journey to attain closeness with a higher power.

In the grand scheme of things, Bernita Joyce reminds us, "Life's too short to be down about stuff." Swan's

Islanders, in big ways and many little ways, are helping each other to have faith in times of trouble—to carry on. For people everywhere, faith will always be accessible. You just have to believe.

Meghan Vigeant is a multimedia producer and writer living in Midcoast Maine. She served as the Island Institute Fellow on Swan's Island, where she produced the Swan's Island Memory Project.



To hear Swan's Islanders talk about their faith, download Island Journal for iPad® and Android™ tablets.



Peter Rakston

Faith

Faith is our mate alone
Searching for an eastward light,
Straining for the whistle's moan
Certainties in the dead of night.

Faith is the harbor rounded
Beyond the roiling, last long beat,
A solid hull the seas have pounded
Soon, soon, our sail's complete.

Faith is the ember's fire
Alight in windows from ashore,
The single steeple's spire,
The open hearth beyond the door.

Faith may be a simple thing
A tune you knew from birth to sing,
Or hard-gained through blinding snow,
It does not matter how you know.

Philip Conkling



Behold the Island

Conversations with Naturalist
E. O. Wilson

DAVID CONOVER

In 2009, I interviewed Edward O. Wilson for a documentary film project we are working on, *Behold the Earth*. Wilson is, arguably, the most influential naturalist of our time. For years I'd read his work, most of which grows out of his intense lifelong study of ants. His opus is impressive: He's published over 25 books, won two Pulitzer Prizes, launched entire new fields of inquiry, and earned accolades from both eminent scientists and respected humanists. Along the way, he's also initiated an encyclopedic survey of all life on Earth, and popularized the meaning and value of the concept of *biodiversity*.

Wilson's book, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, is what triggered my visit. Wilson structured this book as if he were writing a letter to a Southern Baptist pastor. For a secular scientist, the book represents a highly unusual outreach to evangelical Christians, the largest faith community in the United States, representing

approximately 30 to 40 percent of Americans. The motivation behind Wilson's literary decision is quite focused. In this book he takes action as a citizen conservationist, work he began in 1980 after years of observing many degraded habitats. *The Creation* represents Wilson's willingness to reach beyond the specialist boundaries of an entomologist (one who studies insects), fluently seeking common ground within the realms of ideas, emotions, art, music, beliefs, and values. It is not the first time he's ventured into these waters. I visited Wilson in his Cambridge office because I greatly respect this cross-discipline fluency and activism, but my primary motivation was to discuss why Americans are increasingly divorced from the outdoors—from *Creation*. Why are we neither noticing nor understanding the changes that he and his colleagues have seen for decades?

When I knocked on his door, I was greeted by a man in his 80s, the semiretired Pellegrino University Research Pro-

fessor in Entomology at Harvard University. Wilson began with a smile and a request: "Please call me Ed." Soon, we were well into it. He began by identifying a general common feeling of unease he had noticed in recent years, among all sectors of society. "We have Stone Age emotions, medieval institutions, and godlike technology. It's a very dangerous mix. And that's why it's so very important that we strive to have a better understanding of who we are and where we came from. We can't do that without discussing science and religion, the two most powerful forces in the world."

For Americans, the intersection of these forces is particularly acute, he continues, because we are the most religious people (of an industrialized country) in the world. The root influences of science and religion are pervasive, formative, and intertwined with many other fields of inquiry and knowledge in American life. These two influences are also apparent, I know, in the life and work of Edward Wilson himself.

Island Beginnings

From the very beginning, islands run like a rhumb line through Wilson's published work, and they are very often the places where he encounters the twin influences of science and religion. His first book, *The Theory of Island Biogeography*, was published in 1967 with co-author Robert MacArthur, a brilliant and unfortunately short-lived mathematician and ecologist. That work dealt with the comings and goings of island species and the places they know as home. The focus was, literally, on the numbers of species on islands. How many are coming? How many are leaving? The phrasing of the scientific question was: Given an island habitat of a certain size, in certain proximity to other like habitats, could one predict how many animal and plant species could be supported or "carried" there, and what might the average yearly turnover in the number of species be? Subsequently, Wilson tested hypotheses in future publications.

In pursuit of one such hypothesis, Wilson determined that if every insect was removed from a small island of known size in the Florida Keys, he could precisely track the island's repopulation of insects, noting who came back and in what numbers, and he could then predict the island's future insect population equilibrium. Other hypotheses and scientific discussions ensued, with an increase in the citation record of the original Wilson and MacArthur island biogeography book every year. Fifteen years after publica-

tion, *The Theory of Island Biogeography* was cited 161 times by other scientists pursuing their own questions. This is the big leagues of scientific relevance and influence, as writer David Quammen notes in his influential book, *The Song of the Dodo: Island Biogeography in an Age of Extinction*, which is informed by Wilson's work.

The original scientific focus on island biogeography turns out to be rich indeed. Why? Quammen believes that the primary reason is its broad applicability to other mainland habitats. The questions, learning, and tools developed from an island's insularity have direct application to "island-like" habitats elsewhere; for example, an island of native grass in the middle of the American prairie, surrounded by development, or a pocket of marine life on an inaccessible seamount surrounded by a seafloor that is easily reachable and overfished. The most debated and practical example of this "island concept" is the establishment and management of nature or marine reserves. Is it better to have one large reserve, or many smaller ones? Can Wilson and MacArthur's tools predict populations sufficiently to allow planning and assessment of either arrangement, and determine which is more likely to sustain a desired population? Quammen is clearly correct as far as the primary and specific impact on science. But I'd go further to suggest that the theory of island biogeography is also rich because of its interdisciplinary resonance.

The richness of Wilson and MacArthur's island focus also reflects those points where the narrow scientific questions intertwine with the larger existential questions traditionally tackled by literature, art, psychology, history, and religion. In this case, the narrow question—a numerical effort to define and predict the equilibrium of species on an island—leads directly to a much larger question: "What is the balance of nature?" The balance of nature, as popularly understood, is more than an equation. The phrase underscores the qualitative aspects of how we humans fit into the big picture of life. It surfaces when people ask big questions about big topics—such as how much development is too much? Should we build this massive hydroelectric project? Should we strictly regulate carbon emissions from human activities?

The richness of Wilson and MacArthur's original focus question ripples even wider. How does life on this insular planet fit into the immigrations and extinction that may be happening throughout the universe, and beyond? The balance of nature is not just about numbers. In a characteristically playful and literary fashion, Wilson makes clear that



Edward O. Wilson, age 13, collecting insects in a vacant lot next to his home in Mobile, Alabama, shortly before his first major discovery

his connection to islands is more than numerical. “I’m a Nesiophile,” he states, modestly inventing the term *Nesiophilia*, which he calls “the inordinate fondness and hungering for islands.” Using this word probably will not get you the last 50 cents to buy a ferry ticket home, but who knows.

The island rhumb line in Wilson’s work is not, I believe, accidental. I would suggest that an island sensibility is as much a requirement for advancing the science-religion conversation in *The Creation* as it has been for the balance-of-nature conversation of *Island Biogeography*, and all of the other work that has grown out of Wilson’s life.

But back to our interview. He tells me that his first home was in Alabama, where he was born. At age seven, he visited Paradise Beach on the Gulf Coast and marveled at the medusas and giant rays that navigated those waters. This beach represents, perhaps, Wilson’s very earliest interest in islands, his first significant visit to the vast sea that surrounds islands and separates them from the mainland. Every child comes to the edge of deep water, he says—in a deliberate echo of Rachel Carson—with a mind prepared for wonder. At this same early age, he became aware of himself as a Southern Baptist, the religion of his ancestors. He describes himself today as a nearly lifelong member of a different tribe, a tribe he identifies as “secular humanist,” or, occasionally, as “provisional deist.” Yet in many ways, the words of his former tribe have continued to flow throughout his life, like the capital of an ancestral inheritance he continues to draw upon. This base of experience is as formative as islands and the wonder they evoked.

“We have Stone Age emotions, medieval institutions, and godlike technology. It’s a very dangerous mix.”

“My Favorite Island”

At one point during our interview, Wilson declares that everyone should write an autobiography in his or her lifetime, even if it is not published. He wrote one, titled *The Naturalist*, in which he recalls his days as a field biologist setting out for the South Pacific in 1954, to explore and collect ants on behalf of Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology. By December of that year, he recounts, he was on the island of New Caledonia, off the eastern coast of Australia. “I had reached what I would afterward call my favorite island. The very name of the place meant, and still means, ‘alien’ and ‘distant’ to me.”

These are the same distant Pacific Ocean waters where the two great evolutionary biologists, Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace, had worked. By the time Wilson was working on New Caledonia, his approach to islands had moved well beyond his earliest days on the shores of Paradise Beach. He was a fully trained 24-year-old evolutionary biologist. He knew that the Answers were all around him, but he was focused instead on finding the Questions. Which were the most important ones? His plan was to look at the ecology, note ant behavior, and collect species samples. All the while, he was asking: What patterns do the data form? What is their meaning? What is the story I can tell?

These are structural questions that have currency across many disciplines and experiences. They sound like a mantra—the kind of imperative that runs through the head of



E. O. Wilson inspects a vial of ants.

many an island visitor who wanders along a shoreline. Search, without knowing what will be found. Be ready. Be open. The approach feels eerily familiar to the one I aspire to employ as a non-fiction filmmaker. Yes, the answers of the world are all around us. With an informed hunch, the first step is to record some footage as evidence. This is data collection. The second step is asking questions. How does this detail piece together with others? How does it provide an opportunity to learn and experience some greater whole? Other naturalists have told me that they love to take children into a marsh or onto a beach, precisely because of the fresh questions being asked. "How can a snake breathe when it's swallowing a frog?" "What are the pink spots on the leaves?"

Of course, the naturalist's arrival in a new environment is usually intentional and prepared. Entering the strange new surroundings of New Caledonia, Wilson did have a structure and knowledge of many species from which he could orient his entry. He was, in his words, a well-equipped naturalist with "... favored organisms that were actors in his theater of vision." He knew enough to distinguish what was new from what was known. Nonetheless, he was ready for surprise and hoping for new species and new insights.

An Island of His Own

At one point in New Caledonia, the mysteriously shrouded summit of Mount Mou rose up ahead of him. Alone, Wilson was climbing up to the cloud forest that runs along the 1,220-meter-high ridge. When he entered the cloud, what he saw astounded him. "I had arrived on an island within an island, a world of my own. The warm proprietary feeling of my boyhood flooded back. My imagination drifted across epochs . . . the conifers there were ancient members of the Antarctic realm . . . some of the species of plants and animals dated back to the Mesozoic Era, where they were surely browsed by dinosaurs."

This state of informed and timeless wonder, in the outdoors, is of particular interest to me. I'm reminded of Herman Melville's evocative description in the chapter called "The Mast-Head," in *Moby-Dick*. Melville describes how the lookout on whale watch begins to lose the boundary between himself and the broad expanse of the open blue around him. Then he checks himself. Be informed, the narrator Ishmael cautions; one slip and it is all over. The won-



E. O. Wilson collects ants on New Caledonia.

der itself is not the full of it.

According to author Richard Louv, every person who is an activist and cares for the outdoors can point back to a place in their youth where their own sense of wonder memorably emerged. It could be a wood, a beach, or even a suburban drainage ditch. Everyone has such a place. As Wilson spoke, his words carried him to the same outdoor neighborhood of his experience. He shared a favored expression from the close of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, referring to a time when the first Dutch explorers "came across the fresh green breast of the New World, face to face, for the last time in history with something commensurate to humanity's capacity to wonder."

But wonder didn't end there. Soon we were talking about another moment in his boyhood when Wilson was 9 or 10, and set off into the urban woods of Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., inspired by visits to the National Museum of Natural History and his reading of *National Geographic* magazines. There were certain kinds of butterflies and strange-looking insects that he'd seen specimens and pictures of, and he thought, "I could find those things! It was like hunting for treasures . . . I just found creatures, of all kinds, fascinating, particularly if I could go through an adventure. That was key."

As Wilson said this, I could imagine him teaching introductory biology to Harvard freshmen, a class he taught for 42 years. How many thousands of times did he reach across disciplines for a metaphor, for a literary example that would help to explain a biological concept to students, many of whom were majoring in other subjects. I could see why the stories and archetypal aspects of ancient faiths show up so often in Wilson's writing, even offering an emotional vocabulary for articulating his own personal experiences on islands. In his autobiography, he added a new reflection on his time on New Caledonia in the form of an archetypal dream:



E. O. Wilson sunken in sand in the Calusa Keys, Florida

Take me, Lord, to an unexplored planet teeming with new life forms. . . . Let me be the Carolus Linnaeus of this world, bearing no more than specimen boxes, botanical canister, hand lens, notebooks, allowed not years but centuries of time. And should I somehow tire of the land, let me embark on the sea in search of new islands and archipelagos. . . . For if it was You who gave me this spirit, then devise the appropriate reward for its virtuous use.

Island Angst Leads to Planetary Action

In 1980, Wilson, influenced by his scientific career and his repeated experiences of habitat degradation and species loss, made a deliberate decision to become an activist by offering his time and perspective to those who work to preserve habitats for the diverse range of life on Earth. He decided he would write, tell stories, and reenergize language on behalf of conservation. Part of his motivation is what he refers to as “the Dream.” Not a dream like the one he faced with the overwhelming newness of the island in New Caledonia. No; this new dream was literally an anxiety dream that he continues to experience repeatedly. Interestingly, it also takes place on an island in the South Pacific, either Futuna or New Caledonia, where:

I’ve been alone for weeks, and now, as my surroundings take increasingly detailed form, I remember that the hour of my departure is approaching. I realize that I have not examined the flora and the fauna of the island, nor have I made any attempt to collect the ants, most of whose species remain unknown to science. I begin a frantic search for native forest. In the distance I see what looks like the edge of a copse and run to it, only to find a row of exotic trees planted like a windbreak, with more houses and fields stretching beyond. Now I am in an automobile. I speed down a country road; nothing but houses and fields appear on either side. There are mountains far to the north—in every dream always to the north. Perhaps some other forest remains in the mountains. I fumble with a map and locate the access road, but I cannot go; my time has run out.

Thereafter, in his writing, Wilson began to focus on how life interacts with life; how life recognizes and requires other life in order to sustain itself—not just as nutritional sources or satisfaction of some other ecosystem function. Life needs life in the sense later described by the term *umwelt*, a word highlighted by the writer Carol Yoon in her 2009 book, *Naming Nature*. We are born to organize and find meaning in that which lives around us. Deprived of such an organizing opportunity and structure, we suffer, like poets who have lost their words. Wilson’s book *Biophilia*, published in 1984 with a collection of writings from other scientists, represents a foreshadowing of Yoon’s impressive work. The yearning for certain landscapes, such as savannahs or islands, is written deep into human nature, perhaps into the very fabric of our genetic code. These feelings are not random fragments untethered to our species’ sense of well-being; finding oneself on an island is not a random occurrence.

By the time Ed Wilson published his short book *The Creation* in 2006, the culture wars were flaring again in America. Debate raged once more over the teaching of evolution in the schools. Some people of faith have decried the rampant consumption of our worldly material focus. Some secularists and atheists, such as Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, have viewed religion as a harmful, otherworldly force that should be abandoned in the wake of human progress. Wilson does not agree with Dawkins’s aggressive atheist stance. Though not a person of faith himself, he does not see evidence for concluding that religion is bad for people, that it is nonadaptive. He explained his belief: “Religion is adaptive in the Darwinian sense and extremely important to the vast majority of people on the planet.” Moreover, it is clear that he admires its parables, particularly the one about the ferryboat:

Did Noah’s Ark really gather all of the creatures of the earth? Well, one soon learns that that’s an impossibility for a ship of that size. So many cubits. So many dimensions. There are five thousand kinds of mammals alone. Five thousand or more frogs and salamanders. There are ten thousand birds. And there are well in excess of ten million kinds of insects. We now know that. And we know that they are distributed in different patterns around the world. Yet . . . to abandon the story of Noah’s Ark? The answer is . . . emphatically not! It is a wonderful parable. Earth is the ark. All of the biosphere, all of that very thin layer of living organisms that support our own life, that is the ark. And that is what we have to save, in order to prevent ourselves from being destroyed . . . Remember the command of Genesis: “Let the seas teem with countless creatures, and let the birds fly across the arc of the sky.” Clearly in the Old Testament the sentiment is that we are responsible for life and we should try and save it. And the story of Noah’s Ark reinforces that.



David Conover

The author interviews E. O. Wilson.

The Social Conquest of Island Earth

The island rhumb line promises to continue with Wilson's most recent thinking and work. Even when he is not on an island, his thinking is that of an islander. "Every park is an island," he told me, describing his recent conservation work in the Gorongosa National Park of Mozambique. In 2011, 57 years after his first trip, he returned to Mount Mou on New Caledonia, and to the other islands of the South Pacific. He led a team of entomologists eager to further expand the knowledge of ants on these islands, which they subsequently did.

Perhaps most intriguing is his most recent writing, in which he considers the possible genetic basis for the organization of the truly social (eusocial) species that populate islands, and Earth itself. These ideas are of interest to me because they represent the latest and arguably the best thinking on the social functions of religion, music, and art—structures that are vitally necessary if humans are to conserve and sustain life on island Earth.

I asked Ed Wilson what he thought about the role of music in society, having observed the music of rural Maine as it celebrates the American landscape, in tunes that unify the religious and naturalistic sentiments from the late 1800s to the present. Wilson's favorite species—ants—do not use music to unify, he says, and playfully adds, "They speak with chemical substances that they smell and taste."

His last two books address the topic of eusociality. First, *The Superorganism* looks in detail at the specialized

roles and meaning within the society of ants and bees. It examines how altruistic impulses—most likely genetically transmitted—can give one group "eusocial" advantages as a superorganism, with better prospects for survival than another group that does not practice altruism. The advantage can be expressed in behaviors such as concern and protection of "the nest."

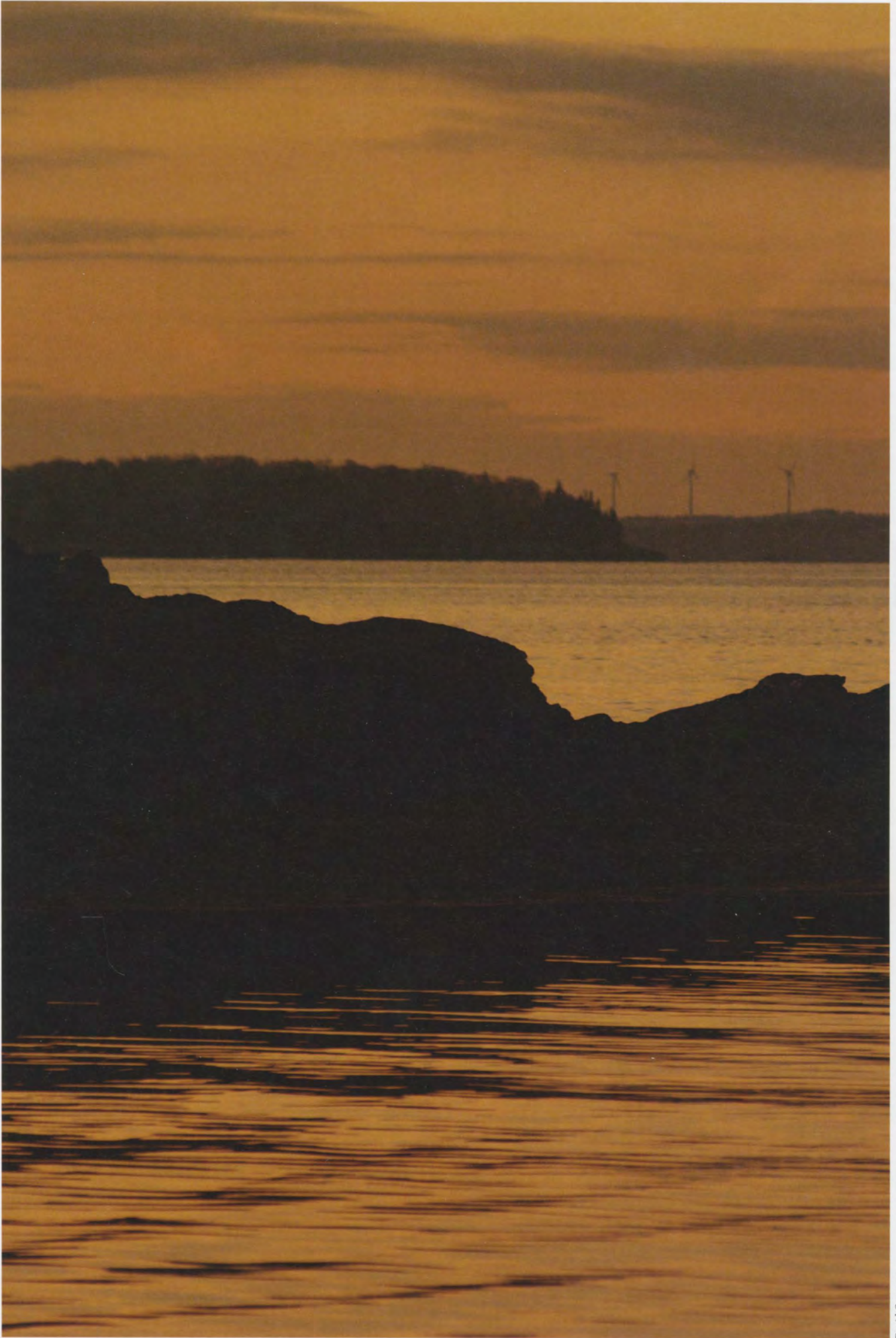
Wilson expands this thinking significantly in his latest book, *The Social Conquest of Earth* (April 2012 release), outlining its implications for human society. Our first secure campsites, he suggests, represent a major milestone of human social organization and development. From that point on, the specialization of social roles accelerates, and the concern for maintaining our own nest, the Creation, is anchored at the deepest genetic level.

I cannot help but think how welcome those first campsites on the islands of Maine, surrounded by teeming seas, must have appeared to early human inhabitants. Behold, the island.

David Conover is a filmmaker from Camden, Maine, whose upcoming film in production is called Behold the Earth (www.beholdtheearth.com).



To see video of E. O. Wilson by Compass Light Productions, download Island Journal for iPad® and Android™ tablets.



David Conover

On the Front Lines of the Energy Revolution

PHILIP CONKLING

Four years ago North Haven and Vinalhaven islanders voted to erect three turbines on an old industrial quarry property on the second-highest hill on Vinalhaven. The islanders' goal was to control the long-term cost of the islands' electricity supplies, which had fluctuated wildly and unpredictably. Three years ago, the project broke ground, and two and a half years ago, the turbines began producing all the electricity the two islands use during the course of a year.

Since the project went into operation, two story lines have developed about whether the experience of these islands demonstrates that wind is a viable strategy to achieve more energy independence, or alternatively proves that wind power is another false energy hope. One story is grounded in the community response to the project; the other story has been widely reported in such newspapers as the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, *Boston Globe* and *New York Times*, and on anti-wind power internet blogs. A film based on the experiences of the islanders, *Islands in the Wind*, produced by Camden filmmaker, David Conover, is running concurrently throughout the country with *Windfall*, a film about wind farms in upstate New York, which concludes that wind farms are a bad deal for rural communities. For better or worse, many view this small project, called Fox Islands Wind, as a microcosm for the future of wind power in the country.

In comparing the two competing story lines, it is always helpful to start at ground level; with the view from the two islands.

In a notice to its ratepayers in December 2010, the electric cooperative estimated that islanders have saved approximately 15 percent on their electric bills since the beginning of the project from the costs they would have incurred without the power produced by the wind farm. This savings amounts to several hundred thousand dollars a year that would otherwise be paid to the co-op. This figure gets obscured because it does not necessarily amount to a big savings to any ratepayer in any given month, but it adds up, especially over time. The economic effect is perhaps the single biggest factor in explaining why 95 percent of ratepayers on the two islands—when surveyed after the wind farm went online—reported they were “as supportive” or “more supportive” than when they initially approved it.

It is also worth mentioning that the project has also received a lot of positive attention, particularly for its innovative financing model developed by Dr. George Baker, a seasonal resident of Frenchboro who took a year-and-a-half-long sabbatical from the Harvard Business School to

work through the complexities of financing this \$14.5 million project. A Department of Energy national laboratory named Fox Islands Wind as one of the top five projects “in five different states across the U.S. that represent a number of ‘firsts’ — not just for the community wind sector, but for the U.S. wind market as a whole,” especially for its ability to engage the community in the process.

Another interesting and unexpected result from the wind farm is the effect that it has had in stimulating a community-wide interest in doing more about their energy challenges, particularly through weatherization. The past two winters, an island energy club on Vinalhaven built and installed 250 removable interior storm windows that cost about \$10 a piece and save an estimated one gallon of heating oil per square foot. That is another savings that adds up little by little to over \$10,000 for each heating season.

As a result of the project, both the Vinalhaven and North Haven schools (along with eight other island and coastal schools) received funding from the National Science Foundation to enable students to analyze their community's electricity data, while competing with each other to see who can save the most energy over time. The central goal is to teach students how to provide research-based recommendations for saving energy and money for their communities.

The “Energy for ME” project is the brainchild of the Island Institute's education director, Ruth Kermish-Allen. Circuit-by-circuit real-time electricity meters, eMonitors, have been installed in 40 schools, homes and community buildings throughout the Maine coast. The eMonitors are networked on the worldwide web, and enable students and participating parents to see the effects of their energy use in real time. Turn off a light or turn down the thermostat and the web-based dashboard reveals the effect of each action, each decision in real time. These island schools are helping to produce a generation of energy-conscious students, who are becoming experts in understanding how individual choices result in family or community benefit. Who could have hoped for more?

Well, newspapers, for starters. Perhaps it is no surprise that the mainstream press has focused on the conflict with a number of wind farm neighbors who have complained bitterly about the turbine noise and the impact on their property values and their health. The impression these stories have left with thousands of their readers is that the islanders who started the project with such hope and enthusiasm now have a case of buyer's remorse.

What the newspaper stories have left out of their reporting is how the noise complaints spurred the project to in-



Eleanor Conover

Fox Islands wind turbines over West Penobscot Bay

investigate all kinds of potential strategies and technologies to reduce the impact on community members. Although only five neighbors out of 1,890 ratepayers complained formally, the directors of the electric co-op have supported efforts to balance the neighbors' concerns with the economic benefits to the two island communities as a whole.

Because noise from the turbines is most noticeable when winds are blowing aloft at blade height, but not on the ground where people live, Fox Islands Wind worked closely with engineers at GE, which built the turbines, to fine-tune what is known as its "Noise Reduction Operation" (NRO) software for Vinalhaven. These software instructions—dispatched in real time from GE's Schenectady, New York, world-wide wind command center—controls the pitch and

speed of blades under different wind conditions to reduce noise without sacrificing an excessive amount of output from the turbines to the disadvantage of other ratepayers. The wind project also received a grant to explore the feasibility of "active noise cancellation" technology, which produces an outgoing sound wave that cancels the incoming wave, but concluded that such a strategy would require a computer almost as large as the one in GE's command center, and was not economically feasible with current technology.

In the meantime, General Electric hired a crew experienced in mountain-climbing techniques to scale the turbines last summer and install a blade treatment consisting of shark's-teeth-like appendages on the trailing edges of the nine blades of the three machines. The idea is to disrupt the pattern of the sound waves coming off the blades to reduce noise. GE then tested whether this novel technology had any effect, and concluded that the blade treatments reduced sound levels by two decibels. Although a decibel is hardly an easily understood measurement—defined as the smallest increment of sound that the human ear can detect—let us just say that in a litigious environment, the difference is very important. The real bottom line, however, is not whether anyone can live with 42 decibels of noise versus 44 or 45 decibels (or necessarily tell the difference); the real questions are much deeper.

The basic question is kind of metaphysical—meaning, how do



Suzanne MacDonald

A Vinalhaven storm window workshop



The Energy for ME “dashboard” shows electricity usage in real time.

any of us experience sound? It turns out that there is some pretty interesting research on this question, much of it stimulated by the very large number of wind farms that have been built throughout the Scandinavian countryside during the past decade. The research indicates that noise sensitivity appears to be an innate personality characteristic that we cannot control or change. Approximately 20 percent of any population is noise-sensitive—meaning that any audible sound will be perceived to be bothersome and can result in sleep interruptions—whereas 80 percent of a population is either noise-tolerant or only moderately noise-sensitive. And to compound the issue further, these studies indicate a strong tendency for people on either ends of the noise-sensitivity spectrum to have a hard time understanding each other.

This research leads to the most fundamental social question, as posed by the Acoustic Ecology Institute, which has studied wind turbine noise issues around the world: “What proportion of those close to wind farms is it okay to bother? 5%, 10%, 20% 40%? And how often? Ten bad nights a year; 35 nights (10% of a year)?” On Vinalhaven, there are 15 year-round residences within a half-mile of the wind farm, and another 15 summer homes. So the directors of the island electric cooperative have to struggle with the question of how many complaints is too many, and how much of the savings ratepayers are receiving should be foregone to satisfy noise-sensitive neighbors who live next door to people who are not bothered by the turbines?

While the communities of Vinalhaven and North Haven continue to debate the issues between neighbors, Fox Islands Wind will undoubtedly continue to be both a lightning rod and a beacon. As a lightning rod for concern, Fox Islands Wind presents a cautionary example to the island communities of Swan’s, Frenchboro and Monhegan. These three island communities are debating whether to develop their own local wind resources. Some people maintain that wind power is not cost-competitive with other sources of electric energy, but when you are paying 30 to 40 cents per kilowatt-hour, as Swan’s and Frenchboro residents do, or 70 cents a kilowatt-hour, as Monhegan pays (in comparison

with 15 to 16 cents ashore), the economics of wind power can look very different from other projects on the mainland.

As a beacon, the Fox Islands Wind project is a successful example of how harnessing Maine’s enviable coastal wind resources for local benefit might attract the interest of energy developers, who see potential in the much-larger wind resources in the Gulf of Maine. Two years ago, the Maine legislature directed the Public Utilities Commission to issue a request for proposals to build a pilot offshore wind energy site at least 10 miles from the coast or inhabited islands, and in deep water, where conflicts with property owners would be minimized. Statoil, a large offshore energy company headquartered in Norway, was one of the companies to respond.

It is clear that the islanders are on the front lines of an energy revolution. As with every energy revolution, there are obviously pluses and minuses, so the net effects will not be evident for several more years. It remains to be seen whether other energy sources—such as natural gas from “hydrofracking” techniques, or electricity from “clean coal” or nuclear power—will be more acceptable energy sources. But it is hard not to

admire the very large majority of Fox Islanders who took a big risk to control the future of their own energy costs. As the community-wide benefits slowly but surely accrue over time, and as many of the neighbors’ dilemmas can be accommodated as possible, it is likely that more people will come to see these islands as brave pioneers who led a transition to a new energy future. But it will happen slowly, penny by penny, kilowatt by kilowatt, and it may not be obvious for a some time yet. Slow and steady progress may not attract a lot of media attention, because it lacks the drama of conflict, but Fox Islanders are already quietly celebrating, with pride in their energy independence.

It is clear that islanders are on the front lines of an energy revolution.

Philip Conkling is president and founder of the Island Institute.



To see an excerpt from *Islands in the Wind*, a Compass Light production, download *Island Journal* for iPad® and Android™ tablets.



ISLAND INSTITUTE ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2011–2012

In 2011, the Island Institute made significant progress in sustaining core programs, as well as in achieving new goals in the areas of economic development, island education and local leadership.



2011–12 Island Fellows

Eric Wayne

CORE PROGRAMS

Island Fellows

Seven Island Fellows completed their placements in island and local communities in August. In the fall, three second-year Fellows returned and were joined by six new Fellows, bringing the total to nine for the 2011–12 cohort. The Island Fellows program is funded in part by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Maine Commission for Community Service.

Scholarships

Seventy-five year-round island students received \$100,000 in college scholarship support in May. In August, nearly \$500,000 was received for the Louis W. Cabot Island Education Fund, allocated to island scholarships, internships and leadership programs.

Publications

The Institute published the third, expanded edition of *Islands in Time* in May, written by Philip Conkling, with photographs by Peter Ralston. The 2011 *Island Journal* included a record number of articles written by and about year-round islanders, and *The Working Waterfront* newspaper and e-weekly contained several top-rated articles by young island and coastal participants in our Student Journalism Program.

Archipelago

Archipelago retail store and gallery enjoyed increased summer and winter holiday sales, and the shows by six Monhegan artists, Peter Ralston, Josie Iselin, several Maine artisans/crafters, and eight Maine artists, were all extremely successful. Archipelago provided \$90,000 in net revenues back to Maine-island artists and crafters during the year.

State and Federal Policy Support

Institute staff were effective at amplifying island voices in state-level legislative and regulatory decisions, testifying at hearings, submitting comments, holding informational sessions, meeting with high-level decision-makers, and keeping community members actively informed and engaged about decision-making processes in which they might want to be involved.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Island and Coastal Innovation Fund (ICIF)

Launched in July, ICIF is a \$2 million economic-development program designed to make micro-loans to island and coastal businesses, invest in businesses that have the potential to transform island and coastal economies, and purchase groundfish permits for deployment in island and coastal economies as fish stocks rebuild.



ISLAND INSTITUTE ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2011–2012



Peter Ralston (2)

Mapping Working Waters

Marine Programs staff produced Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps depicting the spatial relationships between terrestrial and marine communities, and demonstrating the complexity of the interactions that commercial fishermen are constantly navigating. The maps will help inform regulators, coastal managers, and other marine user groups involved with marine spatial planning and ocean renewable-energy siting.

National Working Waterfront Network

The Institute received funding to support development of a national initiative to increase awareness of working-waterfront issues and lead to preservation of working-waterfront communities and economies around the country. Later in the year, the Institute and six partner organizations received a \$296,000 research award from the U.S. Economic Development Authority to undertake a study of multiple facets of working waterfronts nationwide.

Community Fisheries Network

A \$111,000 award from the National Fisheries and Wildlife Federation allowed Institute staff to begin bringing community-based fishing organizations from around the nation together to build their capacity for

social, economic and environmental sustainability. Representatives from 11 organizations attended the first event in November. The group also drafted new shared sustainability standards and metrics, and began work on a Community Fisheries Network website.

Energy Initiatives

The Energy Team coordinated interior storm-window building workshops, launched the Offshore Wind Energy Information Exchange and began a series of technical studies evaluating the potential for a community wind project on Swan's Island. Energy Team staff also coordinated the second annual Island Energy Conference in mid-November, attended by residents from 11 Maine islands and coastal towns.

Energy for ME

Energy for ME, the educational program focused on increasing STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills among 6th through 12th graders, received a \$1.2 million grant from the National Science Foundation in early spring. Students from 10 island and coastal schools learned about energy consumption habits and effective strategies to increase energy efficiency through Energy Fairs, a week long Summer Institute, and ongoing Energy Quests during the school year.



ISLAND INSTITUTE ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2011-2012



2011 summer interns

Outer Islands Teaching and Learning Collaborative (TLC)

Anne Bardaglio, a Senior Island Fellow, provided assistance to teachers from five island schools, organizing field trips, professional training for teachers, and daily technology-enabled interactions between teachers and students on different islands. Anne also created 10 collaborative, standards-based curriculum units and 17 interisland, technology-based book groups. In November, TLC students formed the first-ever interisland student council.

Students and Teachers Observing and Recording Meteorological Systems (STORMS)

STORMS, a one-year pilot project, helped 20 K-8 island teachers and their students develop methods and curricula about weather, storms, and climate using locally focused, action-oriented activities. The goal of STORMS, which wrapped up in June, was to increase student participation in authentic science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) experiences.

Island Teachers Conference

More than 85 island educators and community members participated in professional-development workshops led by island teachers and other experts that covered a wide variety of topics. They also enjoyed lots of much-needed networking.

Island Sustainability through Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ISLE) Program

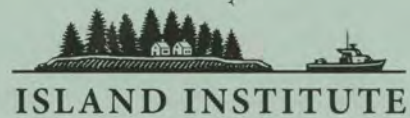
This new model for current and emerging island leaders launched in December in partnership with Leadership for Local Change, a Camden-based nonprofit. The year-long program is focused on leadership, advocacy, and entrepreneurship, and admitted 26 year-round islanders, with travel, food, and lodging provided.

Sustainable Island Living Conference (SIL)

SIL engaged 87 island and coastal participants and featured three nationally known experts, along with informative sessions on economic development, leadership, and civic engagement. Presenters included Bill McKibben, environmentalist and author; Ben Hewitt, local-foods expert; and Rick Gilkey, professor and leadership consultant. The conference was sponsored by Ramblers Way Farm, Cuddledown, the Maine chapter of the Sierra Club, the national Sierra Club and Green Sneakers.

Summer Internship Program

This new pilot program provided stipends, training and coaching, and valuable work experience for four island college students at host sites along the Maine coast. Projects included a summer camp at the Vinalhaven School, sustainable farm management on Chebeague Island, and data-gathering about aging in place in Casco Bay communities.



ISLAND INSTITUTE

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ISLAND EDUCATION FUND

CAMPAIGN FOR ISLAND EDUCATION

The goal of the Island Education Fund is to raise a \$1.6 million capital fund to double the amount of college scholarships given to island students, and to create a \$2 million endowment through contributions and planned gifts to sustain these awards, as well as to provide summer internships for college students and resources for emerging island leaders.

ISLAND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Island Education Fund will expand the Island Institute's capacity to assist qualified island students in pursuing their higher-education goals. In 2011, 74 island students received almost \$100,000 in scholarship awards; that will increase to \$200,000 in 2012, with a long-term goal of \$300,000 annually. Scholarship awards are augmented by an Island Scholars Network to help increase students' commitment to higher education, and to support them and their parents during the college years. Through newsletters, peer mentoring and online dialogue among students, the Island Institute is helping students get to college and helping them complete their studies and earn their degrees.

ISLAND INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

For too long, the most valuable export from Maine's island communities has been young people who leave after college to find employment elsewhere in the country. The Island Internship program supports island college students and recent graduates who want to return to Maine by helping them explore career opportunities along the coast. The program provides up to 10 recipients of the Island Scholarship program—upperclassmen and new college graduates—with internships in island and coastal businesses, municipalities, schools and nonprofit organizations. In addition, interns receive a \$2,500 stipend, participate in leadership workshops, and share their new knowledge and experience with their own communities.

ISLAND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Effective local leadership is the single most distinguishing feature of strong year-round island communities—whether in town government, nonprofit organizations or island-based businesses. The Island Sustainability through Leadership and Entrepreneurship program (ISLE) supports current and emerging island leaders and entrepreneurs through training, mentoring and networking opportunities. Offered in partnership with Leadership for Local Change, a Maine-based nonprofit organization, ISLE's one-year training in leadership, advocacy and entrepreneurship is free to applicants from Maine's island communities, and offers a combination of in-person and virtual sessions to build and practice new skills and make connections with other participants.

ISLAND INSTITUTE

*Publishers of Island Journal
and The Working Waterfront*



*Sustaining the island communities and
working waterfronts of the Gulf of Maine*

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This *Island Journal* is printed at J. S. McCarthy of Augusta, Maine, where 100 percent of all electricity purchases are derived from wind power. The 2012 *Island Journal* is printed on Creator Star paper, which has FSC and PEFC chain-of-custody accreditations. This guarantees the wood used in the pulp and papermaking process comes from responsibly managed forests. J. S. McCarthy uses highly pigmented nonhazardous vegetable-based inks to provide the best-quality images, while reducing the environmental impact.

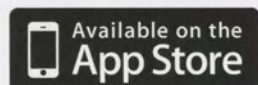


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Peter Ralston

SAYING IT

Saying it. Trying
to say it. Not
to answer to

logic, but leaving
our very lives open
to how we have

to hear ourselves
say what we mean.
Not merely to

know, all told,
our far neighbors;
or here, beside

us now, the stranger
we sleep next to.
Not to get it said

and be done, but to
say the feeling, its
present shape, to

let words lend it
dimension: to name
the pain to confirm

how it may be borne:
through what in
ourselves we dream

to give voice to,
to find some word for
how we bear our lives.

Daily, as we are daily
wed, we say the world
is a wedding for which,

as we are constantly
finding, the ceremony
has not yet been found.

What wine? What bread?
What language sung?
We wake, at night, to

imagine, and again wake
at dawn to begin: to let
the intervals speak

for themselves, to
listen to how they
feel, to give pause

to what we're about:
to relate ourselves,
over and over; in

time beyond time
to speak some measure
of how we hear the music:

today if ever to
say the joy of trying
to say the joy.

PHILIP BOOTH

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