

THE STORY OF FRIENDS OF CHATHAM WATERWAYS: Decades of Dedication

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THE STORY OF
FRIENDS OF
CHATHAM WATERWAYS:
Decades of Dedication

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Cover Photo, "Oyster River Afternoon" by Gordon Zellner

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DEDICATION

To the more than 100 women and men
who, over the years, have brought
both skill and energy to giving life
to this organization, so vital in
helping maintain a special quality
of life in Chatham, Massachusetts.

FOREWORD

My years of working with Friends of Chatham Waterways have been fascinating. The organization is dedicated totally to Chatham. Its directors have been participative, energetic and truly focused on whatever project or initiative they have undertaken. Always a diverse group, these 21 officers and directors have brought strong and varied talents, as well as intellect, to our monthly meetings. For a local citizen volunteer effort, "FCW" must be almost ideal.

Although I happen to be the president at the time of the Friends's 20th anniversary, six other presidents have helped guide FCW through much growth and progress since the early 1980's. As many as 100 members have served as directors. Every one of them who has given thought, time and energy to this enterprise has to be proud of our accomplishments.

So we determined that this was the time to collect our initiatives, activities and achievements -- including some failures -- into a readable history. A director at the time, Rob Carlisle came to Chatham from a background in the media, and has recently written six books about the town and the Lower Cape. That was a lucky break for FCW. A fine interviewer and careful listener, Rob met with a number of people involved officially or unofficially in areas of direct interest to FCW. Many caring citizens have contributed to *The Story of Friends of Chatham Waterways*.

FCW hopes you enjoy reading about volunteering in this town and what it has achieved.



Chatham MA
August 1, 2003

PREFACE

Friends of Chatham Waterways has a valuable, long-standing tradition: it has a “working board,” that is, every member is expected to take on a project. For me, it came as an invitation from George Olmsted to write *The Story of Friends of Chatham Waterways*. Efforts stemming from that request got underway two years ago. Not that it’s meant toiling away at the lathe day in day out – other projects diverted me – but that’s when the always-intriguing process of interviewing started.

This past June 11, recent FCW director Hillary LeClaire and I talked by phone about his first-of-a-kind nonstop flight in a jet fighter across the continent. That was the 41st interview, by head count. But actually, the total was close to 50, when you figure on phone clarifications and two or more sessions – Debby Ecker and John Geiger described the ever-challenging Zoning Bylaw Revision process in two visits totaling three hours. And so it went for months. I’m most grateful to all the individuals who put aside their time – no one in Chatham is ever unbusy – to offer memories to my tape recorder. (The names of those interviewed are in the back of the book.)

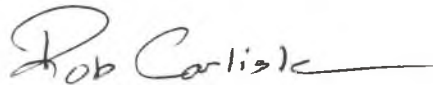
In the summer of 2002, the paper research got going, touched off by the high energy and organizational skill of college freshman Emily Donnan. As they say, “awesome!” Then, as always, the library’s Amy Andreasson periodically filled in my inevitable divots. Among the interviewees, some brought perspectives going back to FCW’s launching; Lew Kimball and Martha Stone came up with early recollections, corrections, nuances. Batch Batchelder had a lot to say, too, while more-recent functionaries – Walter Butler, Jane Harris, Kurt Hellfach, George Olmsted – authenticated the draft at various points. I’m also grateful to Town Manager Bill Hinchey, Director of Health & Environment Dr. Bob Duncanson, and Director of Coastal Resources Ted Keon. In short, a lot of people pulled an oar on this project.

One of the most important oarsmen, for a certainty, was photographer Gordon Zellner, with whom I had worked with pleasure in producing *Behind a Cape Cod Fish Pier* in the Nineties. More than being an outstanding man behind a lens, he has a sense of organization, harnessing Excel to keep a complex picture inventory straight. Chatham’s waterways offer some of the best vistas on the Cape. Luckily, Gordon, yet another busy man, found time to shoot those harbors and ponds, and the people concerned about their health and survival. When we were through collecting images, we had almost 150 to choose from.

Still others have contributed critical strengths to the publishing process. Early FCW director Doug Rhodes drew on four decades of life experience in the printing profession to be intermediary on lining up a printer. Marie Williams combined creativity and technical know-how in handling the design and layout steps. (You'll also find a few of her waterscapes among the photos.)

A writer of books like this one has to have agents who know the subject and can serve as dependable back-ups. I was fortunate to have four who performed that essential duty in a timely way: current President Olmsted, and FCW board members Dr. Butler, Lew Kimball, and Martha Stone. I'm certainly thankful to them for hours spent, checking facts as well as syntax – and then, in some cases, taking a brave trip through the text all over again.

Finally, it would be a distinct Senior's Moment to overlook how much of a learning time these two years have been for me. More than that, it turned out to be stimulating, largely because of the bright, energetic, variously experienced individuals – all but five of them volunteers – who helped so materially to pull together this story of FCW. It was a little like that exciting moment when the young Swedish woman determined to lift her golf by playing against some of the game's biggest and best men. Only in this case, thanks to the focused activity of so many, I do believe we truly made the cut.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Carlisle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chatham
August 1, 2003

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Foreword by George Olmsted

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CHAPTER ONE

A Board at Work





Oyster River, protected by a squad of hungry sentries
Gordon Zellner

Chapter One

Each month throughout the year, the 21-member board of Friends of Chatham Waterways meets at a director's house. Historically, it is a working session, with reports on the status of projects and on various members' assignments, as well as discussions of future options. The meetings seldom run less than two hours. What follows reflects a typical session in 2002.

Friends of Chatham Waterways Minutes of Board Meeting December 9, 2002

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by President George Olmsted.¹
2. Secretary/Recorder report: Minutes of previous meeting approved as drafted.
3. **Treasurer's Report:** Walter Butler reported that Roy Meservy Accountancy is preparing 2001 audited operating statement, balance sheet and tax return. Also, in connection with change of our fiscal year to calendar year (as voted by members at Annual Meeting 2001), additional registration with State Attorney General is required and is now in process.
4. **Report on Chatham Marconi Maritime Center (CMMC):** Guests Roz Coleman and Barbara Cotnam presented an update on plans to mark Marconi centennial celebration during January 2003. Roz spoke of recent, successful demonstrations of the existing antennae to complete transmissions to the Virgin Islands and other remote places. CMMC has received its own wireless call letters: WA1WCC.



Treasurer Walter Butler usually reports at FCW board meetings. Dr. Butler also serves as Vice-president.

Gordon Zellner

CHAPTER ONE

Barbara described plans to turn the former MCI property into a permanent park, Ryders Cove Park. It would include picnic areas, more parking spaces for cars and boat trailers, walking trails, an amphitheater, and garden areas.

Walter Butler offered the guests some background information on previously proposed uses for the property and issues that arose during public hearings on them.



The Chatham Marconi Maritime Center, overlooking Ryder's Cove. Local volunteers are campaigning to turn this historic site into a multi-purpose facility, including a museum and recreational options. CMMC's perennial boarder, the osprey, nests atop the transmission tower. *Gordon Zellner*

5. **Report on Preservation of Zoning Bylaw amendments:** John Sweeney brought directors up to date on status of two amendments of four proposed by FCW and approved by voters at Town Meeting May 2001.
 - (A) Buildable Upland Coverage: *Percentage of coverage by structure being challenged by homeowner in Appeals Court. Town hiring Special Counsel to defend amendment as voted at Town Meeting.* Its importance: Long Range Plan says 1,000 acres are still not built on. A number could be broken up for construction.
 - (B) Inland Conservancy: *State Attorney General requesting overlay maps to confirm amendment as voted at Town Meeting. It became clear that this amendment could be augmented to create both coastal and inland buffer zones by amendment of Chatham's Wetlands Protection Bylaw, the guidelines for our Conservation Commission. Such is the situation in most Cape towns. A subcommittee has been named to pursue a similar amendment for Chatham.*
3. **Report on Bay's Legal Fund:** John Pappalardo reported some significant changes may be happening to fisheries food supply around Cape Cod Bay since "outfall pipe" began operating. This could impact fisheries including Chatham's. More research needed so people will know better how to manage fish populations. *Hook Fishermen's Association recently received grants to take part in*

tagging 15,000 codfish over the next two years. Bay Legal Fund is regional organization to represent many neighboring towns that may be affected by outfall pipe. Chatham has been invited to participate, but has chosen not to appoint a representative. John thinks now may be the time for FCW to find a rep for interview and appointment by Board of Selectmen.

4. **Report on Route 28 Development Issue:** Kurt Hellfach, speaking as co-president of the Alliance for Preservation and Conservation, explained the upcoming February '03 forum sponsored by the Alliance on "What's Down the Road: Sharing a Vision for Chatham's Route 28." People who work or live in the 28 corridor will be asked to give their perspectives on the matter.

5. Other Reports:

A. Education Outreach: For her four-member committee, Pat Tarnow reported that a letter had been delivered to all Chatham's public schools, giving the March 1 '03 deadline for proposals. FCW has budgeted \$4,000 to underwrite school projects, but there's no obligation to spend it all.

B. Davis Dock issue: Martha Stone presented status report on the long history of efforts to remove Davis dock on Stage Island (*going back to 1986*). The board agreed to form a sub-committee to work on this matter.

George Olmsted will recruit volunteers to work with Martha on this issue.

C. Wind Mill installation: George reported contact by Parker Wiseman wondering if FCW would be interested in studying and/or supporting use of wind turbines for generation of electricity in Chatham. Some directors questioned relevancy to FCW purposes. George will poll directors for volunteers who have interest in pursuing this matter further (example of wind mill plan: Hull, MA).



Kurt Hellfach, member of FCW's executive committee and former president. Before retiring, he was an assistant to GE chairman Jack Welch, working on strategic planning. Currently, he co-chairs the Chatham Alliance for Preservation and Conservation. *Gordon Zellner*

- D. Zoning Bylaw Rewrite:** An update on its efforts was presented by Jane Harris. This committee had met to talk about how the town might intensify its Bylaw rewrite activity. Discussion centered on forming a new group to move toward a public referendum on critically important zoning issues. Directors also raised questions on why funds from the \$91,000 approved by Town Meeting had not yet been drawn upon to pay for Bylaw rewrite. Debby Ecker urged the board to send Zoning Bylaw rewrite objectives to the Finance Committee in the hope that it might press the town to push ahead with the project, *using a professional consultant*.
- E. Looking Backward & Forward:** The floor was opened for discussion on what FCW has done and how it might operate in the future.
- Lew Kimball:** “We used to do things the town couldn’t do for itself. As the town matured, there were less and less opportunities to take on these duties, and we became ‘nattering’ monitors, finding fault.”
- Jeanne Eaves:** “Sometimes we should say we appreciate what someone does.”
- George Olmsted:** “We should be positive as much as possible, and try to work with the town in a cooperative way.”



Jutting into Stage Harbor from Stage Island, the “Davis Dock” has been a subject of controversy for many years. Among others, the Town wants to have it demolished as a danger to boating. The abandoned Coast Guard Station, at right, may have a use in the future for growing shellfish.

Gordon Zellner

John Pappalardo: “Could there be a ‘report card’ on town actions? People my age don’t really know what’s going on.” To this end, much discussion was directed at changing the newsletter. Marina Zellner suggested that it be shorter and more frequent – one page, front and back. The idea was well-received.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

¹ These minutes are a composite of the actual minutes of several board meetings during fall of 2002. Certain explanatory notes have been added in italics.

CHAPTER TWO

The Dedicated People of FCW





Inner Stage Harbor, south of Old Mill Boat Yard

Gordon Zellner

Chapter Two

America's conscience about its fragile environment was stirring uneasily in late 1970 when a minister's wife in Wellesley, Massachusetts, called a special meeting on the urgency of protecting the exhaustible resources of our world. After she appealed to parishioners to join hands and work together, Mrs. Jason (Martha) Stone rose to speak. "Why don't we think about starting a recycling program," she asked, remembering a ground-breaking California project she'd read about.¹

The words were scarcely out of Martha Stone's mouth when another attendee, distinguished Harvard professor Marshall Goldman, got up. No one could miss his point: there was no way Wellesley could start to recycle, and it would be better to drop the idea. Obviously, Dr. Goldman did not know Martha Stone. Daughter of a spunky mother, she rarely turns her back on joining committee efforts to take up issues she sees as vital to her town. Gearing up a recycling program in Wellesley was no exception.

True, the Stones had three children. But while they were in school, Martha and the new committee went into action. They got a commitment from the town to use an area at the dump, then arranged to run a notice in the paper on February 11, 1971, appealing for old glass. "The first two weeks," she says, "we were simply overwhelmed." In short order, she was point person for contacting dealers to buy the recyclables and for persuading the town government to open a separate account to bank the money earned.

"We did a bang-up job," Martha Stone acknowledges. "We ended up being designated the best recycling program in the nation for populations of about 25,000." She prefers never to fly solo in her volunteer efforts, but when it comes to tackling big issues through a committee, "I've had a lot of practice," she



Martha Stone, an FCW stalwart since the earliest days in the 1980's, has repeatedly brought drive and intelligence to the board's initiatives. Rarely has she taken "no!" for an answer, and rarely does she forget things. *Gordon Zellner*

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concedes. It deserves more than a foot-note to add that as a result of her zealous activity, she became the first female elected to the Board of Public Works in Wellesley, thus finding out, as she puts it, “how municipal government is *supposed* to work.”

That background transposed easily to Chatham, where the Jay Stones have been confirmed summer vacationers since 1964. Mrs. Stone and her family took to sailing and racing out of Stage Harbor Yacht Club, and when neighborhood people worried in the early Eighties about what might happen to the Old Mill Boat Yard on Stage Harbor, it was only a matter of time before she was approached about joining their cause. Ever since, she’s been a board member of what is now Friends of Chatham Waterways, energizing a variety of FCW initiatives, such as organizing “Chatham Water Watchers” with George Olmsted in 1999 and orchestrating a well-attended public seminar in June 2002 on the threat posed to Chatham’s biodiversity by non-native plants. She is a classic role model for follow-through.

From its birth, FCW has not lacked for relevant experience in its directors. Along with Martha Stone, two current directors also played roles on the first board, and were officers then. Richard D. Batchelder, called “Batch” (never Dick), and Lewis E. Kimball (“Lew”) served the original board as vice-president and corresponding secretary, respectively. Both had unique qualifications for bolstering FCW’s effectiveness as an independent, meaningful town organization.² And, apart from their love of the water, they had something much in common: for a total of 26 years, they’d both been teachers.

For two decades and more, Batchelder has been a tangible presence at innumerable Chatham meetings, made visible by his crown of curly white hair.

Coaching a student cast for a play at Chatham’s Main Street School, Richard Batchelder taught there from 1949 to 1957 (in the saddle-shoe era). Later he served in leadership roles for regional and national teachers’ organizations. He has been a valued, concerned FCW board member and officer from its beginnings.

From the Batchelder Family Archive



Beyond having a distinctive appearance and authoritative voice, he enters the lists with a long memory, firm convictions, and a temporizing streak of benevolence. He first came on the Chatham scene in 1949 when, fresh from three years' duty as an ensign in the Navy Air Corps, he drove down to the Cape in his '37 Ford convertible to start teaching at the Main Street School.³ Soon, he was named head, in turn, of teachers' associations in Chatham, Barnstable County, and Newton, Massachusetts. Afterward, he worked up through the hierarchy of the National Education Association, the largest teachers' organization in the nation, and by the mid-1960's, he had reached NEA's presidency. That led to other jobs in teachers' and labor groups in California, Florida, and New Bedford. As of 1984, he returned to Chatham full-time as a realtor, and, increasingly, as a willing, vocal, unhesitant participant in town affairs.

It was not long before "Batch" got to know a like spirit, Lew Kimball. Tall and erect, Kimball has been a calm, cool supporter of FCW's activities ever since its founding. When he speaks, it's in a resonant voice that any producer of radio commercials would envy. But beneath mere sound quality, there's a consistent underpinning of good sense and reason in what he has to say. He can draw on 42 years of experience in independent schools – as teacher, coach, director of admissions, and headmaster (in Santa Barbara, California, McLean, Virginia, and Dover, Massachusetts). In twenty years as a school head, he learned a lot about working with boards of trustees, as well as coping with fractious students, aging school plants, and thirsty budgets.

Martha Stone, "Batch" Batchelder, and Lew Kimball – these longtime FCW directors epitomize both the strengths and diversity of Friends board members going back to the beginning in the summer and fall of 1983. Names, faces and backgrounds may have changed, but quality has seldom been compromised.



Before settling year-round in Chatham in 1999, Lewis Kimball ("Lew") devoted a lifetime to independent school education. Summering in Chatham in the eighties, he shouldered tasks for the new Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways. Ever since, he's been a director and often an officer.

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From Different Walks of Life

In the beginning, brand new bylaws authorized the Friends to have a board of 21, but during the first months only seventeen men and women were recruited. Of them, two-thirds were summer residents. In contrast, the board of 2002-03 has the full slate of 21, and only four (19 percent) are summer folk only, testimony to how the complexion of Chatham's population has changed in recent time, with more and more retirees settling in the community.

First president of the organization was Mrs. John (Joan) Kimball, a Chatham summertime visitor ever since 1943. She had been president of the League of Women Voters in two Massachusetts towns, and had also presided over a forum charged with deciding on future land use in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Without question, she had excellent qualifications to be FCW's first head. One fellow director put it succinctly: "Joan Kimball probably is a genius." But with the arrival of fall, she and three other officers of the board left town for primary homes elsewhere. Today, all of the board's six officers live in Chatham year-round. And even in the chilling grayness of a typical winter, they and their fellow board mates can focus their energies on ongoing Friends initiatives. Season no longer shrinks the output of these volunteers.

This evolution notwithstanding, the makeup of the board has continued to reflect strength and diversity. And whenever possible, a distinct effort has been made by nominators to include Chatham-area natives and job-holders. The backgrounds of Mrs. Hoyt (Debby) Ecker, Hillary LeClaire, Bob Denn, James Blankenship, and John Pappalardo suggest the blend of uniqueness and variety that marks recent FCW boards.

Former director and president Debby Ecker entered the realm of FCW activity with an almost ideal background. With degrees from Vassar College and Brandeis University, and living in the Boston suburb of Weston, she had immersed herself in affairs of the statewide League of Women Voters; at her



Joan Channing Kimball summered in Chatham since 1943. When a group came together in '83 to protect Stage Harbor and its environs, she emerged as a natural leader and was elected first president.

Courtesy of Mrs. John Kimball

urging, the state league undertook a five-year study of fiscal policy in the Commonwealth. In Weston, she served on the Conservation Commission and was the first woman to go on the Finance Committee. Through a Governor's appointment, she joined the Special Commission for a Master Tax Plan in the Commonwealth. Then, in 1972, Governor Francis W. Sargent named her associate commissioner of the tax department.

"I felt I was kind of a crusader on the backs of local assessors to adopt computer-based assessment systems," says Debby Ecker. "They didn't like that. It was very early in the field of computers." To sharpen her skills, she began in 1974 an evening study of computer programming. One thing led to another: an invitation to head up the staff of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, concentrating on tax policy, local aid and revenue forecasting. To her, "That was a very exciting period of another five years."

Gradually, the Weston-based Eckers extended their stays in Chatham, and in 1998 they moved down full-time. Even before then, Debby Ecker had brought her experience to bear for FCW. Early in 1997, she presented her economic study of the town to a large breakfast audience at Chatham Bars Inn. The following year, she joined FCW directors Barbara Streibert and John Geiger in focusing a town-wide assessment of the community's "Quality of Life." No sooner had that been completed than FCW launched an initiative to rewrite the town's Zoning Bylaw; for long months, Mrs. Ecker, along with Geiger, lifted the heaviest loads on this muscle-bending project.⁴

Harwich native and South Chatham resident Hillary LeClaire joined FCW's board with an entirely different range of experiences. In retirement he was working regularly as a shellfisherman; that gave FCW a direct point of contact with the town's commercial fishermen. His earlier life could scarcely have had less in common with scratching for clams: for more than 35 years he flew Marine fighter planes. In flight training during the Korean War, he moved into



One of FCW's my dynamic board members for years, Mrs. Hoyt Ecker ("Debby") completed two economic studies of Chatham, co-managed FCW's Quality of Life project in 1988, and joined John Geiger in the memorable effort to revise the Zoning Bylaw to help guide town growth.

Photo by Rob Carlisle

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piloting jets like the Skyhawk A-4, out of South Weymouth Naval Air Station. At the base, he commanded a squadron, VMA 322, manned by a complement of 230 Marines; on retiring in 1985, he had made the rank of colonel. During his time on the FCW board, LeClaire thoughtfully advised his fellow directors to weigh the opinion of some townspeople that Friends of Chatham Waterways is too “different” for its own good. The board appreciated his candor, viewing his observations as constructive and hardly frivolous.

Another board member in the Nineties also had fishing in his background. As a young man from Newton (where FCW director Barbara Streibert had been his English teacher), Bob Denn came down to Chatham in the early Seventies, picked up work at the Fish Pier, and, as he says, “never left.” In his time at the pier, he scalloped, quahogged, and cut “tons of (cod) cheeks.” Then he got a chance to help Billy Nichols put together a new store selling everything a fisherman might need. When Nichols died in 1978, his widow and Denn decided to keep the venture alive. Finally, at the end of 1992, Denn and his wife, Rosemarie, bought out Mrs. Nichols and have been running Cape Fishermen’s Supply – “Cape Fish” – ever since. It’s a flat-out operation, but Denn still felt obligated, when asked, to serve on the Chamber of Commerce’s board. Once that term ended, he agreed to join FCW’s board – “the only person to be on both boards,” he says. Like Hillary LeClaire, Bob Denn



South Chathamite Hillary LeClaire served on FCW’s board in the 1990’s. A Marine pilot flying jet fighters, he retired as a colonel, then turned to a life as a shellfisherman. Here he is at the Oyster River fishermen’s shacks.

Gordon Zellner



Former FCW director Bob Denn, with his wife Rosemarie. Together they own and operate Cape Fishermen’s Supply -- “Cape Fish.” Now and then they can be seen on their motorcycles, a Honda Valkyrie and a Kawasaki Vulcan, riding “quietly,” says Rosemarie.

Gordon Zellner

spoke his mind, especially about FCW's taking on too many tasks. "Let's reel it in," he urged. More often than not, that advice has been hard for the board to take – there simply have been too many relevant challenges. Denn had just left FCW's board when another resident, a Vietnam War veteran, was nominated in '99 to come on as a director. Native New Yorker James Blankenship served in Vietnam for ten months as a public information specialist; at his discharge in November 1968, his grade was specialist 4th class. Casting about for a civilian job, he happened to connect in March '69 with a small Manhattan-based public relations firm. "I started out as a grunt," he says, "and when I left in April 1992 I was executive vice-president."

When Blankenship's wife, Jane, was assigned to London, he joined her, keeping busy by going back to college for two years to steep himself in ecology. He even did a PR stint as a board member of the London chapter of the Salmon and Trout Association. Returning to the U. S. in May 1997, the Blankenships gravitated to

Chatham, where Jane Blankenship had summered ever since she was three years old. While she worked weekdays in Boston, he scouted out volunteer opportunities on the Lower Cape, winding up on the board of Friends of the Cape Cod National Seashore; it had been actively searching for "someone with a communications background." The fit was good: Jim Blankenship had almost 30 years' worth of pertinent experience. That track record was just as appealing to FCW, and he himself had been looking for a way to "get to know what was going on in Chatham," the town where the Blankenships were going to make their home. He accepted a bid to join FCW's board, and in short months, new information links to people in Chatham's dispersed corners were being shaped on the anvil of Jim Blankenship's background in publicity at the national level.



On his discharge from duty in the Vietnam War, Jim Blankenship started as a "grunt" in public relations, winding up as executive vice-president of his firm. Now an FCW vice president, he is explaining a measuring device to fellow Water Watcher Joan Dillon.

Relevance Is Ageless

Of the 21 men and women on FCW's current board, thirteen have reached their Sixties or Seventies. On that board are eleven men, nine of whom

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are retired; several of them had posts of distinction during their working years, one as General Electric's manager of business planning in Europe, another as vice president and general manager of a division of GE Aerospace/Lockheed Martin Corporation, a third as head of his own company in the health-care products and services arena.

One of two on the board still working full-time stands a long way from retirement — and could hardly be more busy if he tried. He also happens to be by far the youngest director, now approaching his 31st birthday. This is John Pappalardo. Not only is he the youngest, but also he's the biggest — six feet five inches tall, and 275 pounds, a size that suited him well in football, wrestling and lacrosse.

Owner of a twenty-foot boat, “Big John,” as associates call him, fishes with rod and reel three or four days a week for striped bass, scup, flounder, black sea bass, cod. But he does better financially through his job as policy analyst for the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association, headquartered in North Chatham. And, as if he weren't stretched out enough with those demands, he's joined the important New England Fisheries Management Council — important because, as he puts it, “the eighteen of us sit down and essentially decide who gets to catch what” between the Canadian border and Long Island Sound.

How did Pappalardo ever wind up in Chatham flooding his hip boots in fishing issues? After growing up in West Hartford, Connecticut, he went from Portsmouth Abbey boarding school to an English/Philosophy major at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, came to Cape Cod where his parents had a summer home, wound up teaching for a year at the May Institute (“*very* challenging,” he says), then joined Paul Parker in assembling what is now the Hook Fishermen's Association (with a staff of six and an annual budget of \$775,000).



Youngest and biggest of FCW directors, John Pappalardo fishes professionally when he isn't doing policy analyses for the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association. “Big John” serves on the critically important New England Fisheries Management Council.

Courtesy CCCHFA

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In 2000, FCW's board decided to step up its support of the community's commercial fishermen. That led to devoting the August 2001 annual meeting to the subject of "bycatch," the unwanted fish tossed back into the sea, where they often die. At the same time, FCW's nominating committee had approached Pappalardo about joining the board. "Naturally curious" about the organization, he found the idea appealing. "I was reading about it in the paper," he says, "and they seemed very involved and proactive in protecting the environment." So he said yes, and began quietly raising searching questions at board meetings, while briefing the directors on the issues, often job-threatening, faced by the area's commercial fishermen.

Young or otherwise, FCW board members have tried for years to, as "Big John" perceived, protect the environment. That was very much on their mind in the summer of 1983 when a burst of real estate energy seemed to put the shoreline of Stage Harbor in serious jeopardy.



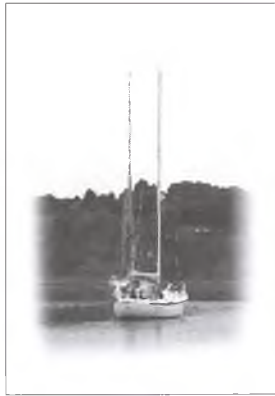
At the eastern end of what is now Scatteree, in about 1900, stood Minister George Kent's home, between a salt pond and Pleasant Bay. This was how the site came to be known as "Minister's Point." The picture is proof, if any is needed, that Chatham has had unique and fascinating waterways long before memory's ancestors roamed the area.

Courtesy of Joseph A. Nickerson

- ¹ Approved in 1969, the National Environmental Policy Act set up the Environmental Protection Agency.
- ² FCW has never placed a bylaw limit on how long a person may serve as a director. Currently, directors are elected for three-year terms and can be re-elected at the end of a term, if they choose to continue.
- ³ The author, twice an Army man, was puzzled about the historical authenticity of “Navy Air Corps.” A search was launched – Google, four volumes including Richard Knott’s *A Heritage of Wings* (on Navy aviation), talks with four people at the Navy Dept. Confusion persisted. With dusk approaching, the CAG called off the pursuit. Hence, the author accepts former Ensign Batchelder’s firm recall as veracious.
- ⁴ More details on these important FCW initiatives can be found in Chapters VII and VIII.

CHAPTER THREE

A Launching At Stage Harbor





Oyster River on its incessant journey toward Stage Harbor.

Gordon Zellner

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It has to be one of the oldest commercial sites in Chatham. With a pedigree going back at least to 1840, the Old Mill Boat Yard has changed hands now and again, but in its strategic location on a shoulder of land thrusting south into Stage Harbor, it has given boat owners, both private and otherwise, access to that waterway for all those years. And when an out-of-towner wanted to remake it in a major way, neighbors were jolted into action. Largely, that was how what is now Friends of Chatham Waterways came to be.

As it happens, the Old Mill Boat Yard did not always wear that name. As far back as 1840, it simply was a “marine railroad,” one of the few then available in the whole area. Rails running into the water enabled an operator to haul out a boat for maintenance or storage. An 1858 map names the site a “wharf.” In making their 1890 map of Chatham, the two George Eldridges labeled it the “railway wharf,” and by 1928 it was being described as the “steamboat wharf.” In years that followed, Alton Kenney took it over and designated it Chatham Marine Railway. That’s how it stayed until he decided in 1970 that it was time to retire. He only had to reach to the Mill Pond for a likely buyer.

**The Old Mill Boat Yard, a
fixture on Chatham’s
landscape since the mid-
19th century. Today, it is
Town-owned, thanks to
FCW volunteers’ efforts,
and houses the
Harbormaster’s office.**

Courtesy of Nancy Ennis Geiger



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That individual was Tom Ennis, former M. I. T. student and World War II veteran. He had gone into boat building with the accomplished craftsman Spaulding Dunbar at what is now Pease Boat Works & Marine Railway, at the end of Eliphamet's Lane. Talks between Ennis and Kenney went smoothly, and Ennis bought the property at the corner of Champlain and Stage Harbor Roads "on a hand shake" for \$100,000, as Ennis's daughter, Nancy Geiger, explains. Ennis brought with him from the Mill Pond his corporate name of Old Mill Boat Yard; that's stuck ever since. His move to the 3.3-acre site came about in 1971.¹

On arriving, the Ennises stepped into a virtual Smithsonian collection of marine items — "every screw, every nail, every piece of string that had ever been there," says Mrs. Geiger. "My first job was to start going through those drawers. I think they made 95 dump runs that first summer." Ennis focused on boat repair, manufacture, and storage. With as many as eighteen on his payroll in his best years, he had a good 350 customers and defied the odds against a boat yard's turning a profit. But when his wife fell seriously ill in the fall of 1981, the reality struck home: he'd have to sell.

A man from Virginia who summered in Orleans, one Sherwood "Woody" Pierce, stepped forward to see if Ennis and he could make a deal.



Tom Ennis, the well-remembered owner and operator of "OMBY" from 1971 to 1981, when it came perilously close to turning into a commercial "dockominium."

Courtesy of Nancy Ennis Geiger



In its lifetime, OMBY has stood up to many a storm. This was how the yard looked after a devastating hurricane blew through in the World War II years.

Courtesy of Nancy Ennis Geiger

Pierce came prepared: he had formed a limited liability partnership under Delaware law and lined up a number of partners, at least eight of them Arabs. By no means was it clear that “OMBY” would continue operating as a boat yard, but Ennis felt his only choice was selling. Says his daughter, “It was a very difficult decision.” On November 6, 1981, they closed the sale at a price of \$315,000.

Gradually, the business at the boat yard changed. No more boat storage, no more maintenance services. “That broke my father’s heart,” recalls Nancy Geiger. It just added insult to injury when word whispered around that some developer wanted to turn OMBY into a “dockominium,” with boat slips sticking out into Stage Harbor. When the plans were unrolled before the Conservation Commission in June 1982, according to *The Cape Cod Chronicle*, they displayed a concept for extensive dredging and installing 44 slips.² And if there was no hitch in the paperwork, the transformation could start by late 1983.

For the amateur sailors living near Stage Harbor, that prospect was alarming. Others voiced concern, too. “Chatham needs more docking facilities,” wrote Shareen Davis Eldredge in *The Chronicle*, “but let it be town-owned and managed, not just for pleasure boating, but for commercial boating as well.” However, this wasn’t the only source of annoyance generated by real estate goings-on in that immediate neighborhood. There was the contretemps over “Big Mac’s Tabernacle,” at 89 Champlain Road.

A man of independent means, the Rev. Terence McDonald served as assistant minister at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church in Chatham. Deciding to build a home overlooking Stage Harbor, he hired architect James Timpson and elaborately defined what he wanted. However, construction had no sooner gotten underway when McDonald’s fortunes turned sour and the work stalled out; McDonald went into bankruptcy and finally left the scene in March 1982. The ark that he had ordered amounted to what neighbor Dr. Bea Barrett describes as “the first mansion in the area...a monster that looks like it belongs in New Jersey.”

With the house’s future murky, Edward Noyes Sr. of Stage Island and other officers of Monomoy Yacht Club made a pitch for converting it into a



As a teenager, Nancy Ennis Geiger worked for her father at OMBY. Doing payrolls for him drew her into a career in accounting. Today she is Chatham’s assistant town accountant.

Gordon Zellner

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larger home for their club. At that, already piqued by the non-Cape look of the broad, brooding building, the neighbors became further exercised and threw up impenetrable roadblocks. When this option was defeated, the home went to auction, and was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Landy, the current owners.

Those years in the early 1980's found the Chatham real estate market turbulent, to say the least. An April 1980 newspaper piece noted that "Condominiums (are) blossoming these days around Chatham" – 51 units were either under construction or planned for development. That same year marked the second highest level of building in a decade: 435 building permits were granted, reported *The Chronicle*. That construction would add up to more than \$7.8 million. For 1982, permits were issued for more than \$12 million in new construction. (By way of comparison, 64 building permits were issued in 2001, as well as 29 permits for demolition, a likely step toward further building.)

Stage Harbor neighbors scarcely overlooked that turmoil, but they focused more on what was happening to Woody Pierce's plans for OMBY. Many of those families weren't on the Cape in January '83 when the boat yard was on the agenda for a Conservation Commission meeting. If they got *The Chronicle* at home across the Canal, they easily spotted the headline: "Old Mill Boatyard gets permission for improvements." Those changes added up to a "face-lift," but the commission balked at approving construction of 44 slips and boat-storage racks on the opposite side of Stage Harbor Road. Before workmen could unlimber at the site, one hurdle remained: the project, because it would be in a town conservancy district, would have to be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Through winter and spring of 1983, the matter simmered on a back burner. Then, on July 13, the Zoning Board of Appeals gave a unanimous O. K. to the Pierce concept. The improvements would include installing two dressing rooms with showers and toilets for visiting yachtsmen, plus a 2,000-gallon, underground holding tank for septic waste. In the words of OMBY's lawyer, the work was intended for "upgrading facilities and improving the appearance" of the yard, reported *The Chronicle*. But the plans didn't sit well with many at the meeting. Bristling at the concept, at least fourteen stood to protest, among them current FCW board member Nancy Rhodes. Said



A devoted summer vacationer in Chatham, Nancy Rhodes was among those who stood up to protest converting OMBY into a new-fangled marina for visiting yachtsmen. Mrs. Rhodes is an FCW director today.

From the Rhodes Family Archive.

opponent Lewis Horton, the whole scheme amounted to “grandiose expansion,” posed a traffic danger to the 200 youngsters using Stage Harbor Yacht Club, and implied that the advocates were going about the project “piecemeal.” Horton’s forceful insistence: “We don’t want another Nantucket.”

The eventual answer to the future of OMBY was out of sight over the horizon. Still, in and around the Stage Harbor area, a chain reaction had begun, and no safety rods would neutralize it. The neighbors, summer sailors all, were determined to protect their harbor, the focal point of a quality of life that drew them back to Chatham year after year.

In the Landys’ Living Room

On a Thursday evening in August 1983, some 50 people came together in the capacious living room of Lynn and Richard Landy on Champlain Road. In three terse paragraphs, the newspaper described this as the “organizational meeting of the new ‘Friends of the Stage Harbor Waterways.’” (Later on, the widened portfolio of the committee dictated changing the name to Friends of Chatham Waterways.)

The women and men at the Landys’ had been invited to help “determine what interest there would be in the proposed neighborhood group, what organization could be formed, and what its purposes might be.” Interestingly enough, among the 50 on hand was the chairman of selectmen, William G. Litchfield, current Town Moderator.

The die was cast. Before breaking up, the group agreed that a sequel meeting would be held on September 2. It would address structure and nominations, an agenda for an October session, “Issues to Watch,” the purpose of the new enterprise, and organization reports. No one among the eighteen at that second meeting (at the Champlain Road home of Judy and Pete Hoyt) doubted that Joan Kimball of Lincoln, Massachusetts, was precisely the right person to chair the proceedings. One early board vice-president, Spencer Grey, well remembers her persistence. “Many mornings before I went off to work [at the Sail Loft],” he says, “I was on the phone with Joan. ‘What are we going to do now? What should we do next?’ She was the one who did most of the organizing and was behind the thing.”



Along with her husband, Richard, Lynn Landy played a critical role in creating Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways in 1983.

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One important procedural step was announced early on by Lynn Landy: her husband would finance “FSHW’s” incorporation and its designation as tax-exempt and non-profit. Understandably, that gesture was greeted enthusiastically.

As she remembers that September gathering, Joan Kimball says that those present were concerned about “vistas, water quality, shell-fishing and appropriate development that would respect the harbor.” But the single memory that stands out for her was discussion about a commitment to “keeping Stage Harbor as it was.” While they were not forgetting OMBY, the organizers had clearly gone beyond it in voicing their determination to safeguard every facet of this choice Chatham waterway.

The minutes of the meeting on September 2 suggest that vaporous platitudes would have been unwelcome. Rather, the group wanted to get going on substance. A ten-member nominating committee was formed, while Sue Wilmot urged her companions to spot and address issues on the horizon.

That called for forming study groups, but everyone agreed that FSHW “should not take any stands at this time.” Among issues identified: appointment of a town waterways commission; what to do about the Coast Guard Station on Stage Island (still a problem today); the need for a second police boat; questions about numbers of moorings for inner and outer harbors; water quality; problems particular to Oyster and Mill Ponds; and even what tracts of land might be coming on the market. And, going back to its root cause for getting together, the new association concurred it should be a “watchdog” to monitor traffic at OMBY.

Certainly they’d soon need a statement of purpose. Batch Batchelder, on the threshold of a new life as a full-time realtor in Chatham, said this formal declaration should state that FSHW is for “‘appropriate economic development’ so that the people who make a living on and by the water realize we are concerned for them also.”

Five weeks later, on October 9, the new association met at the home of Spencer Grey. After recapping the short history of FSHW, chairwoman Joan



When a handful of issues threatened the charm and safety of Stage Harbor, Joan Kimball (here with her two children) took on the task of organizing and then becoming first president of what is now Friends of Chatham Waterways. *Courtesy of John Kimball Family.*

Kimball staked out what its role should be:

- to do research and find out about issues;
- to be broad-based to reflect the “uses and cares of all”;
- to serve as a means for people – winter/summer, town officials – to know each other; and
- to learn how the town works, and “how we can work with it.”

Her conclusion: “We can have a positive and active role in protecting our natural resources for our use and for our future.” The chapters that follow will show over and over how resolutely the organization has carried out that broad aim.

Among items of business, the assembled group considered the freshly drafted bylaws. One of Mrs. Kimball’s early proposals as president had been to form a separate sub-committee to write them. As she explained recently, “I have seen far too many groups stagnate over the (boring) details of creating bylaws.” So she had turned to Batchelder and Douglas Rhodes to take on the task. After hearing their report, the members voted unanimously in favor of their draft, including a stipulation that FSHW have a 21-member board, made up of seven officers and fourteen directors. Thereupon, Lew Kimball and Spencer Grey presented the slate:

President: Joan Kimball
 Vice President: Richard Batchelder
 Vice President: Spencer Grey
 Corresponding Secretary: Lew Kimball
 Recording Secretary: Libby Mottur
 Treasurer: Sue Wilmot
 Assistant Treasurer: Judy Hoyt



As owner and operator of the Sail Loft store on Stage Harbor, Spencer Grey was one of two vice presidents on the first board of the Friends. *Gordon Zellner*

The designated directors: Dr. Bea Barrett, Martha Batchelder, George Douglass, Prescott Dunbar, Barbara Gryska, Francis Jones, Lynn Landy, Douglas Rhodes, Martha Stone, and Douglas Wells. In this group, the one native was “Fran” Jones, a Class of ‘47 graduate of the Main Street School and a fisherman. Participants were urged to come up with candidates to fill the four remaining board vacancies.³

As research chairman, Martha Stone laid out a prospectus that still resonates two decades later:

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We are very interested in the quality of the water. At present the checking is done randomly and infrequently. The county lab is so overworked and understaffed that all they can do is put out brush fires, of which Oyster Pond is one...Is there interest in getting citizens to pay for additional tests?

(We) feel we should keep pressure on so something will be done. We want to show that we wish for improvements.

(We) suggested we gather information that Board of Health needs and then let them follow through legally.

Before the meeting wound up, issues chairman George Douglass invited his colleagues to “look to the issues which concern everyone.” Out of the discussion that ensued, these five concerns were cited as being of greatest importance to the board: water pollution, harbor patrolling, dredging, use (having to do with crowding, docks and moorings), and land development.

Two weeks later, *The Chronicle* took notice of the meeting under this headline: “Stage Harbor Friends now organized.” Acknowledging the steps taken at the October 9 session, the paper reported that FSHW already had 93 members. It existed “to provide an informational resource for members and other interested parties concerning the condition, development and preservation of Stage Harbor waterways and adjoining lands.” The Friends had hoisted anchor and was sailing close-hauled into a brisk wind.

Cape Cod Chronicle, October 27, 1983

Stage Harbor Friends now organized

CHATHAM — Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways, a new association formed here last summer, has completed its organization process and has elected officers.

The 93-member group, according to its recently adopted bylaws, exists to provide an informational resource for members and other interested parties concerning the condition, development and presence of Stage Harbor waterways and adjoining lands.

Specifically, the group will concern itself with pollution, patrol of harbors, dredging, the general use of harbors, and land development.

At a meeting October 9, Joan Kimball was elected president; Spencer Gray and Richard Batchelder, vice presidents; Sue Wilmot, treasurer;

Judy Hoyt, assistant treasurer; Libby Mottur, recording secretary; and Lewis Kimball, corresponding secretary.

Board members are Beatrice Barrett, Martha Batchelder, George Douglas, Prescott Dunbar, Bobbie Gryska, Martha Stone, Francis Jones, Lynn Landy, Doug Wells, and Doug Rhodes.

Martha Stone heads the organization's research committee, and members include Bobbie Gryska for Stage Harbor, Marge Upson for Mill Pond, and Matt Plum for Oyster Pond.

The Friends' bylaws call for the annual meeting to be conducted on a weekend sometime in July or August of each year. Individual groups will meet as necessary during the year.

This was the first of many articles *The Cape Cod Chronicle* has written about the Friends since it came into existence. This story appeared on October 27, 1983.

OMBY Changes Hands

Almost three years passed, and suddenly the Old Mill Boat Yard was back in the news. In the interim, Batchelder had succeeded Joan Kimball as president. In a way, that was fortuitous. Not only was he a year-round Chatham resident, but also he knew from the inside out what was going on in the real estate market. The three full-time selectmen were quite aware of Batch's strengths when the matter of OMBY came before them. In a word, Woody Pierce wanted to sell the facility and had set an asking price of \$950,000. He and his associates were looking at a site in Maryland where they figured it would be easier to create high-end condominiums with boat slips at water's edge.

As Batchelder remembers, he brought the matter to the selectmen in an executive session. "This land is going to be developed and it's right on the water," he told them. "We need the access for our commercial fleet as well as recreational fleet, and we ought to do something about it. We ought to see if it can be purchased." Their reply was straightforward. "Why don't you see what you can do," they said. "You understand. Why don't **you** try to do it?" Batchelder acquiesced, insisting that he'd do it *pro bono*.

This was in the summer of 1986. A special town meeting had been scheduled for December 9-10. It would be ideal to have the issue resolved

there. So Batchelder went into action. It happens that he is known as a superb negotiator, but time was working against him. Private interests indicated they wanted a crack at buying OMBY. However, Pierce said he'd wait until after the December Town Meeting before listening to them.

By November, the Waterways Advisory Commission, chaired by Richard Hiscock, had entered the scene as an advocate of Town purchase. "The idea is to get public access for Chatham residents, people who have boats in Stage Harbor," said Hiscock at an open meeting, "while trying to keep the neighborhood the way it exists." This was against a backdrop of ongoing negotiations; the ultimate price had not yet been agreed upon.



Richard Batchelder in an earlier time. This was when he was speaking in the mid-1960's to the National Education Association as its president-elect.
From Batchelder Family Archive

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When citizens gathered for the December 9 special meeting, the cost had finally been resolved. Article 17 of the warrant held that the town would issue bonds in the amount of \$600,000 to pay for the acquisition. The vote was called and the tellers counted 360 in favor, with 45 opposed. In July 1987, the official papers changed hands, and Harbormaster Peter Ford set about relocating his department to the OMBY site. Town-ordered improvements would continue being made at the yard well into 1988.

Cape Cod Chronicle, September 11, 1986

Chatham selectmen meet with boatyard owner

by Tim Wood

CHATHAM - Selectmen met briefly recently with the owner of the Old Mill Boatyard, informing him that the town is interested in exploring public acquisition of the facility as a municipal marina.

Residents of Stage Harbor and Champlain Roads, as well as members of the Stage Harbor Yacht Club, also met with officials, raising concerns over the impact town ownership of the boatyard would have on the area.

"Their concern is if you make a public access there and it gets overly used, what's going to happen to the overflow," stated Eldridge. "These people are very aware of the problems we face, but they don't necessarily want the solution in their backyard."

Richard Batchelder, president of the Friends of Chatham Waterways, said there is already a parking problem in the area during the summer months. More than 100 people use the Stage Harbor Yacht Club

Frank added, "We reminded them it's in the planning stages. We'll have to go to Town Meeting to get approval."

Harbormaster Peter Ford said another consideration is the loss of services currently provided by Old Mill Boatyard should the town take over its operation. Retail sales, boat storage, hauling and launching are things the town would not be able to carry on. Ford said he is positive if the other boatyards in town

In the fall of 1986, the destiny of the Old Mill Boat Yard was coming close to a decision. FCW President Batchelder wanted to make sure that no decision would be made without “adequate discussion.” From *The Chronicle*, November 9, 1986.

It had been four years since Stage Harbor aficionados had coalesced in a move to protect their waterway from over-commercialization. But that was hardly their only objective, and by 1987 they had fanned out to try to resolve several other dilemmas.



OMBY today, sixteen years after voters approved spending \$600,000 to buy the yard and turn it into Town property. Now it provides space for the Harbormaster’s office, as well as a landing for both recreational boaters and commercial fishermen. The sway-backed roof line (center) is a pointed reminder that this is one of Chatham’s historic sites.

Gordon Zellner

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¹ Much of the information on the Old Mill Boat Yard is drawn from an interview with Nancy Ennis Geiger.

² While the paper's full name is *The Cape Cod Chronicle*, it will often be called *The Chronicle* hereafter.

³ Among the earliest participants in forming FCW, the following still hold memberships in 2003: Dr. Bea Barrett, Richard Batchelder, George Douglass, Spencer Grey, Judy Hoyt, Lew Kimball, Libby Mottur, Doug Rhodes, Martha Stone, and Doug Wells.

CHAPTER FOUR

First Quest: Pollution Control





Oyster Pond, asleep before a weekend

Gordon Zellner

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The Friends vessel had hardly made its way south through the cut when all hands took to their knees to holy-stone the deck. Or so it seems, looking back. In Mrs. Kimball's crew, there was work for **everybody**. That's the way it's been for FCW's board right to this day.

As president, Joan Kimball could have delegated assignments to others. That was not her style. Even when her husband, John, and she left their Stage Island home at summer's end and returned to Lincoln, she'd be in touch with colleagues and drive down to occasional meetings in Chatham on week-ends. And she invested her energies in various tasks in Lincoln – putting out two newsletters in the first year (with editing help from Lew Kimball) and assembling a "President's Book," containing minutes, reports on actions, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, and newsletter copies. Along the way, she was guided by a new, formal statement of purpose.

That declaration had been worked up by the time of a nominating committee/bylaw meeting September 11, 1983, at the Hoyts' home on Stage Harbor. What the ten members fine-tuned there won ratification when the full membership gathered on October 9. That Statement of Purpose read:

*The association's **purpose** is to be an informational resource for members and other interested parties concerning the condition, development and preservation of the Stage Harbor Waterways and adjoining lands.*

*A **primary interest** of the association shall be the development of the recreational and economic uses of the waterways compatible with the protection of the natural resources and the character of the area.*

*The **responsibilities** of the association shall include the monitoring and/or creating of informational sources; defining issues of concern; disseminating information to appropriate agencies; and initiating action on issues as determined and approved by the membership.*

It is gratifying to see how much subsequent boards have stuck to the spirit and indeed the letter of this statement. As one example, FCW used its

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annual meeting on August 12, 2002, as an information vehicle for disseminating basic facts from Board of Health Chairman Jean Young about the growing threat of nitrogen loading in Chatham waterways; 115 people attended, and the presentation and question-and-answer period made page 1 in *The Chronicle*. Under a different heading but also consistent with the declared purpose, in September 2002, a team of 140 FCW-recruited “Chatham Water Watchers” finished the fourth year of water testing at 25 stations. Registered on technical instruments, their findings were funneled to Dr. Robert Duncanson, director of the Town’s Water Quality Laboratory, to help build a research data base for the ongoing Waste Water Management Study.

From early in the organization’s life, that declaration of purpose set a compass course for the directors as they voiced concerns, undertook studies and proposed solutions. Going into their November ‘83 board meeting, members were worried about people’s uses of Stage Harbor for fishing, shellfishing, moorings, and commercial activities. The basic question: “how long can (those uses) continue to increase without seriously hurting our waters?” Answers were needed soon. Then, pollution had to be dealt with somehow. If its sources could be pinpointed, what could the board do about them? Based on the signs of pollution, a call for property mapping was voiced as Step Number One toward coming up with a solution.

One of the first trustees, Yale graduate and architect Theodore (Sam) Streibert, agreed to do that job. “They were discovering coliform content in various waterways,” he recalls, “and we wanted to know what was contiguous in terms of property and where people lived.” Using assessors’ maps, he developed a matrix of properties for Stage Harbor and Oyster Pond. It became “a focus for discussion (and) part of problem-solving.”



**FREE Public Seminar
on the Environment**

ALIEN INVASION! **How Non-Native Plants are Threatening Chatham’s Biodiversity**

**Monday, June 10, 2002
7:30 PM**

**Eldredge Public Library
Main Street, Chatham**

A panel of conservation experts will discuss:

- how to identify harmful invasive species
- alternative plants for home gardens and landscaping
- how to remove/control/manage invasives without harming native plants or our fragile ecosystem
- rules and regulations which impact the control of invasive plants in Chatham

PANEL: Kristin Andres, Chatham Conservation Agent
Chris Matfrick, New England Wildflower Society
Seth Wilkinson, MA Invasive Plant Evaluation Subcommittee

All are welcome!

Ever since its earliest months, the Friends has met its own challenge to bring critical information to townspeople. This flyer advertised a 2002 presentation on the threat of often-voracious alien plants.



Stage Harbor in 2002, looking south. As picturesque as any of Chatham's waterways, it has much in common with many of the other water bodies in town: it has not been able to avoid the ominous spread of pollution draining into it from man's homes and activities on shore.

Gordon Zellner

On that first board, you would have found no skeptics about the threat of pollution. In her report to the executive committee that November, Martha Stone told of coliform measurements running from 350, to 540, to 1,600 at three different sites. An acceptable level, she had learned, was 70. And evidences of that threat could be seen with the naked eye. Recalls Mrs. Kimball, "Several people did an informal 'shoreline' survey around the harbor and found toilet paper. They were really horrified. We realized that our actions on land directly affected the harbor." It could easily be inferred, she said, that "Drainage from malfunctioning septic systems would bring harmful bacteria to the harbor and beaches, impacting public health, shellfish, and recreational values."

As she looked back to those first days and weeks, Mrs. Kimball recalled in 2001: "I felt we ought to know the conditions of septic systems." If towns like Newton could require that smoke detectors be



Yale-educated architect Theodore ("Sam") Streibert, member of the Friends board at the start, agreed to map properties along Stage Harbor and Oyster Pond to back up the organization's exploratory research projects.

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installed in a house when it was put up for sale, why couldn't the same procedure be applied to septic systems? Martha Stone picks up the sequence of events at that point. Joan Kimball had said to her, "we should have a regulation in this town that every time a piece of property is transferred, the septic system has to be inspected; these are the requirements..." Mrs. Stone's reply: "Let's go for it."

Locally, they faced one obstacle: the Board of Health, says Martha Stone, was "not interested in the idea (of a new regulation). There weren't enough professional engineers around" to handle the inspections, they told her. This is the kind of answer that quickly turns into a challenge for her. So both Mrs. Kimball and Mrs. Stone sat down at their phones. Systematic calls told them that (1) qualified engineers **were** available, and (2) installers had enough manpower to do the actual work. With this information in hand, Mrs. Stone went back to the Board of Health. Could it draft a regulation? Again, the reply was negative – no staff for that. "Well, then," said the visitor from FSHW, "How about if **we** write it?" That was acceptable. "Bring it to the next meeting," she was told.

Now the tiller was handed to Joan Kimball. Drawing on advice from a helpful Department of Environmental Protection in Lakeville and legal assistance from her husband, she set about writing the regulation. The Board of Health looked over her draft and tossed it back. More research and more rewriting followed – the board was dubious about how defensible the rule might be, and there were no precedents.

Months traveled by, and then, after all the wrinkles had presumably been ironed out, the Board of Health finally issued the regulation in mid-November 1985; it would be effective January 1, 1986. Clearly, the board merited applause for its innovative and bold step. Joan Kimball and Batchelder took care of that detail. "We believe that the Board...is to be commended for taking this action to protect our public health," they said in their letter to health officials. "It was an ideal relationship between a citizens' committee and a town board," summarized



Martha Stone, active in Friends affairs from '83 on, stepped into a big part in making a reality of the Town regulation requiring septic system inspection at the time a house is being sold.

Rob Carlisle

Mrs. Kimball, “each contributing their time and skills to protect the town and the harbor.” Another relationship that had gelled, an “inside” one, was between Joan Kimball, Martha Stone, and Batch. Says Mrs. Kimball, “Each of us did what we loved and had experience doing: Batch’s negotiating skills, local contacts and knowledge as a realtor were of great benefit, as were Martha’s outreach and organizational skills; I enjoyed the research, weighing pros and cons, and drafting the bylaw.”

Did the new regulation make a difference? Martha Stone took on the task of digging for answers. As soon as reports of septic-system inspections began coming in, she headed for the Board of Health to check the numbers. No wonder the Board was, in her word, “alarmed.” She says, “Something like 14 percent had outright failed; sewage was running out in the yard. And sometimes it was up as high as 20 percent failed.”

It did not take authorities long in 1986 to see what the fall-out from the regulation amounted to. In the first six months, according to *The Chronicle*, of the 143 real estate transfers, 21 were “found to have circumvented the regulation.” That September, twelve more violations came to light. Two months later, *The Chronicle* reported an assertion from Board of Health members that “some attorneys and real estate agents in town have been advising clients to ignore the regulation because it is unenforceable.” During the spring of 1987, the board bore down on amending the rule to make it more watertight.

Ever since pursuing that first initiative, the Friends enterprise has found far more than once that its ideas and projects do not always win unanimous approbation. Often enough, someone will barge into an FCW plan and charge it with, say, violating an individual’s property rights. FCW directors have had to wear heavy-weather gear, while sharpening their understanding of all the nuts and bolts of issues. But even with the septic-system inspection regulation of the late Eighties, there was at least one gratification for the Friends. Within a few years of Chatham’s approving the rule, says Martha Stone, “every town on the Cape had adopted our language almost verbatim.”

In the meantime, while the regulation was slowly taking root, within the Friends organization there had been a changing of the guard. At the end of March 1984, Joan Kimball reached a decision. Because she had school-age children at home and was taking two science courses at Wellesley College, she wrote fellow board members saying she’d have to step down as president as of the annual meeting July 28. Her successor: Batch Batchelder.

Another fundamental change occurred the next year at the ‘85 annual meeting, held July 29. What had been created as Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways was now to be given a more-encompassing name: Friends of Chatham

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Waterways. Directors felt that the young association should be concerned about all the community's rivers, harbors, ponds, and, to be sure, even Pleasant Bay. And it should not be overlooked that the original Statement of Purpose dictated that members stand up not only to problems (in the first instance) of Stage Harbor's waters, but also on "the adjoining lands." That proposition – that what happens on adjacent turf will impact the waterways – has rubbed some citizens the wrong way. But Friends adherents, convinced that that premise was far from flimsy, have stuck to their guns.

Again, it would be wrong to assume that internal matters like these and generating the septic system regulation were all that FCW was doing in its earliest years. Far from it. From the start, Friends boards have aimed routinely at more than one objective, so much so that in recent time at least two directors have stated that the organization was juggling too many balls at once. But that's become the way of the Friends.

This readiness to pluralize commitments manifested itself as early as the seminal Friends executive committee meeting of November 27, 1983. Eight different voices offered thoughts on how Sam Streibert should proceed with his mapping mission. Five directors made points of record about the pollution issue; that led eventually to giving life to the septic-system inspection regulation. And several had something to say about the overall condition of Chatham's waterways. Said Joan Kimball on that topic, "There will be a need for input from our group with documentation regarding waterways usage." Then she joined Doug Wells in underlining some specifics, such as "mooring and anchoring; dredging; Stage Harbor entrance." Of general concern, they added, were "which areas are for 'recreational use' such as wind-surfing..."

Out of this exchange about town waterways came the Friends's extensive engagement in helping to finance and draft Chatham's Stage Harbor Management Plan, setting a precedent for all the smaller seaside communities in the Commonwealth. That major project was to keep many town volunteers busy from the late Eighties into the Nineties; inevitably, it will continue to do so until well into the future. At any rate, the birth of that plan helped establish FCW as one of the major figures among all the town's volunteer committees.

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Better Management for a Harbor





Stage Harbor's fleet poised for duty in Nantucket Sound

Gordon Zellner

Chapter Five

In the half-light of a midsummer dawn, Stage Harbor lies asleep, a poetic water color by Jack Garver, an eye-catching narrative in oil by painter Sam Vokey. Hundreds of craft of all types, docile and immobile, are tethered to their moorings, waiting to stretch their limbs and escape.¹

Little more than an hour from now, the flat pasture of this waterway will be plowed by the restless, pulsing power of dozens and dozens of vessels, heading for the cut, Nantucket Sound, and freedom. From every corner of Little Mill Pond and Oyster Pond, from every mid-stream docking raft in Oyster River, from the two yacht clubs in this haven, the procession of out-bound boats will swell.



The subtly toned watercolors of Jack Garver -- often of the Stage Harbor environment -- grace the walls of more than a few Chathamites.
Gordon Zellner

It will transform the harbor into a watery I-95 in New Haven at rush hour. And not surprisingly, many potential users are fretting on the shoreline, waiting to be assigned their passport to flee land — a mooring. Overall, Chatham's water courses offer 2,200 of them. A number of the 900 on the waiting list want a buoy in the Stage Harbor area. It promises entrée to a world of marine adventure and recreation.

Selectman Douglas Ann Bohman has lived in Chatham since 1966. Over her long years on the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen, she has watched the Stage Harbor waterway. "It's a problem," she says, "because we have so many outsiders coming in. That harbor is an accident waiting to happen. I worry about it." Members of FSHW and then FCW worried about it no less, ever since their beginnings in 1983. They and others have seen the urgent need for *some* kind of plan to manage and control this lush salt-water shelter.

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Compass Course Toward Action

In its time, the organization now called Friends of Chatham Waterways has been active and visible on many different fronts. It has undertaken *at least* twenty initiatives, projects it has originated on its own for the most part, or in some cases has shared an evolutionary role with others. A dozen times and more, it has offered public information sessions, such as its 2002 meeting on the risk to soil and water of nitrogen loading, or its 2001 program on “bycatch” and the alarming damage it brings to fishing stocks. Then, half a dozen times at least, FCW has put its public information machinery behind such issues as the Community Preservation Act, the Land Bank, and a proposed ban on “PWCs,” personal water craft. Not all Friends efforts have won a trophy. But the organization has established itself as one-of-a-kind in town, willing and able to start a project and take a stand, if those steps can help sustain the town’s enviable quality of life.

Of all FCW’s ventures, none has taken longer to bring about than helping to make a reality of a Stage Harbor Management Plan. There had been audible talk of writing such a plan as far back as the mid-1980’s; the final document was formally accepted by the Commonwealth’s Secretary of Environmental Affairs on August 19, 1994 in an official ceremony – for which people received a printed invitation – at the Old Mill Boat Yard. At the same time, FCW spent more of its own coin to bring the plan to life than it has on any other project. For the sailors of FCW who doubled as its board members, putting a set of harbor regulations in motion at long last had to be highly gratifying. And in the perspective of one director, Kurt Hellfach, who served as co-chairman of the plan-drafting committee, it may well stand as the most important project that FCW has undertaken in its short life.

What were Stage Harbor’s problems that needed curing? Richard Miller, environment defender and eventual chairman of the Town’s Waterways Committee, has his own view.



Richard Miller worked together with Kurt Hellfach for long, sometimes difficult, months to draft a management plan for Stage Harbor -- Hellfach as co-chair of the drafting committee, and Miller as head of the Town’s Waterways Committee

There had been “rampant shoreline development,” he recalls. “We knew we had an increasing water quality problem which has been blamed rightfully on ground water run-off.” Also, he added, there was the dilemma of “mooring congestion. There has been a mooring problem here for years.”

Another early motivation was voiced by Andy Meincke, operator of Stage Harbor Marine since 1979. It had to do with state funding. At some point, he explained, the town learned that “the state was going to require that you have a harbor management plan in place, if you were going to obtain state funds ...money to repair town landings, money for dredging. You would get priority if you had a plan in place. So we got on the bandwagon.” There was one hitch, though, as Margo Fenn, town planner in Chatham since 1986, remembers. “The appropriations just never came through,” she says. “So we decided we weren’t going to wait (for the state). We were going to see what we could do on our own.” That was where Friends of Chatham Waterways stepped in.



Andy Meincke, president/operator of Stage Harbor Marine, has worked at harborside since 1979. As such, he has developed first-hand knowledge of the many changes and stresses impacting that harbor over almost a quarter century.

Gordon Zellner

Even in its first months as Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways, this independent body had concerns about the harbor that was right outside the front door for many members. It’s worth recalling that in the weeks before FSHW slid down the ways in the fall of ‘83, this perplexed directors as much as any other issue.

As early as September 2, 1983, when the executive committee pooled its thinking at the Hoyts’ house, harbor questions bubbled up. How many moorings were permitted for inner and outer areas? What was water quality like? What should be done about the cut-through and the periodic need for dredging away the shifting sands? A guest at the meeting, Chairman of Selectmen William Litchfield, offered one augury of things to come: a waterways committee was going to be appointed. As it turned out, it would earn a major part in drafting a harbor management document in months ahead.

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At first, Friends President Joan Kimball astutely reached out to officials in town to tell them that FSHW had waterways on its mind. Writing to the chairman of the Conservation Commission, John Doane, she listed committees already formed by her board. Number 1 was a group assigned to be “looking at concerns relating to harbor use.” It would intend to be “in close touch” with Town boards and the Harbormaster, as well as with the Waterways Committee, once it was operational. In a letter to Selectman Litchfield, she reminded him that FSHW members had voted that fall of ’83 to look into such relevant matters as “(1) possible pollution of the harbor; (2) use of the waterways; and (3) long range use of the harbor and its lands.”

Early on, though, FSHW had a mix of projects on its mind – pollution control, whether to help the town pay for a second patrol boat and to cover expenses of the new town laboratory, rebuilding a bulkhead at OMBY, increasing membership (100 as of winter ’84), cranking up a newsletter and public relations (the latter to be handled by board member Doug Rhodes), pursuing tax exempt status, and, in Joan Kimball’s words, “solidifying our structure.”

Meanwhile, as Bill Litchfield had forecast, another new player had run out on the field: the Waterways Advisory Committee. In months to come, the Friends and W. A. C. would find that they had kindred missions among other items on their respective agendas. If any territorial skirmishing took place, it was never of famous proportions.

Birth of the Waterways Advisory Committee (W.A.C.)

As Richard C. Hiscock remembers, “several of us had been pushing the idea (of a waterways committee) for some time” when the Board of Selectmen acted on the proposal in November 1983 and formally created the body. There had been no charge to do it from Town Meeting, but the then-existent Departmental Reorganization Committee had urged that the step be taken. Six men were appointed to the new board, and Hiscock was picked to be chairman.

As a starter, selectmen gave W. A. C. a specific assignment: write guidelines for reviewing and approving “private piers.” The Ebb Tide Motel, now Oyster Pond at Chatham condominiums, on Route 28, had been pushing for permission to thrust a pier out into Oyster Pond. Opponents had no use for that, and the selectmen joined with them. But the board, said Hiscock, did so “without any criteria or guidelines.” Town Counsel advised that that was a risky way to operate, and selectmen took his message to heart. As an outcome, W.A.C. spent the winter of ’83-’84 laying out a list of requirements.

Soon after, committee members began looking at several other projects. One had to do with all town landings. What were they suitable for? How adequate was parking? Were improvements and expansion called for? Then, secondly, W. A. C. set about the formidable task of doing a “complete re-write” of the waterways bylaw. The committee also shared some of the load with FCW in bringing off the Town’s purchase of OMBY. In that connection, advises Richard Hiscock, “The Friends, primarily Batch, was key in this effort. He negotiated the deal...and we used the Waterways Committee as the vehicle to promote the proposal.”

Discussions about re-writing the waterways bylaw had begun in July 1984, and a good part of the focus was on Stage Harbor. The committee’s 1984 Town Report explained why: “The area of the greatest concern involves waterways activities on the increasingly crowded Stage Harbor.”

In its re-write, W. A. C. took up other issues, such as posting speed areas in the harbor, barring certain activities in the entrance channel, creation of two mooring-free zones, and mooring regulations. Some of these same matters would be examined once more when drafting a Stage Harbor Management Plan (SHMP) got rolling in earnest a few years later. But in 1983 and 1984, FSHW was busy enough with other commitments. In future time, it would add its energies to devising an up-to-date plan for managing Stage Harbor and contributing water courses.



In late 1983, when the Town set up the Waterways Advisory committee, Richard C.

Hiscock was named its chairman. More recently, he was a leading advocate of banning Personal Watercraft (or Jet Skis) on waters such as Pleasant Bay. *Provided by R. Hiscock.*

FCW Takes an Oar

The year 1986 was gathering speed. FCW’s first major initiative, the septic-system inspection regulation, had gone into effect. Working together, Joan Kimball, Batchelder, and Martha Stone had “successfully shepherded” (Mrs. Stone’s words) the Board of Health through the process of instituting that ruling, against some impediments. One was the health office’s lack of staff. It had no secretary, so Sue Wilmot of FCW’s board agreed to be its volunteer secretary, remaining on deck there for almost a year.

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Having put the septic-inspection regulation into action, FCW was not about to sit back and applaud itself. In Martha Stone's memory – generally known as a superior one — “we said to ourselves, ‘What shall we do next?’” The new direction came from lawyer John Kimball, Joan's husband. “Why don't you work on a harbor plan,” he suggested. That was just the gentle push that his wife and Mrs. Stone needed.

“We went to a meeting on Beacon Hill,” recalls Mrs. Stone, “and came back to Chatham with a ‘red book’ telling what a harbor plan was and how a town goes about developing one.”

Red book in hand, the two women then headed for a Waterways Committee meeting. When their turn came, they explained their thinking that initiating a harbor plan had a lot of merit. Initially, committeemen had contrary views. Mrs. Stone heard such comments of theirs as: “We already have copies of the red book,” and “It would cost too much to develop a plan,” and “We don't know who would serve on the committee.” Another sound of skepticism came from builder Harvey Huetter, U. S. Naval Academy graduate and a future selectman. “Our harbor's been here for 300 years,” Mrs. Stone remembers him saying, “and there never was a plan. I don't see why we need one now.”

FCW was not easily dissuaded. At a meeting in August 1987, Friends president Batchelder, rarely shy about taking sides on an issue, stated that, as reported in *The Chronicle*, “it behooves the town to have its own plan for the town's protection,” rather than accept state oversight. It was clear how the whole FCW board felt about the matter. Minutes of the August 1987 board meeting reflected that. Secretary Maureen Vokey, an Englishwoman by birth, used English spelling to note that directors felt “Harbour management policy is very necessary, and there is none in this town.”

The Waterways Committee may have had misgivings at the outset, but by September 1988, Chairman Richard Miller appointed a subcommittee to concentrate on harbor planning. Its makeup came from the communities of fishermen, boaters, marina owners, waterfront property owners, and conservation groups. Its co-chairmen: native son Dave Ryder, lifelong fisherman and admired three-term selectman, and Kurt Hellfach, part-time Chatham vacationer for years and full-time resident since 1987, who, before his retirement, had worked directly for G. E. chairman Jack Welch on strategic planning. Hellfach, later a director and president of FCW, could see how wise it was to pick Ryder as co-chairman. At first, locals, especially fishermen, were “highly suspicious,” says Hellfach. Appointing Ryder “really lent credibility to the selectmen. Even his presence there. He's a very quiet kind of person, but when he speaks, people listen and he has

something to say.” Actually, both of Miller’s choices for co-chairs were about as judicious as you can get.

For nine months, the new subcommittee toiled away, then readied itself for a presentation at Town Meeting on May 8, 1989. It put together a budget (\$62,800) and an information flyer, one of many authored by FCW over the years. Voters approved the elements of the plan, but when a second vote was held on June 29 – on whether to override Proposition 2 ½ limits on municipal spending – the measure lost. That was a blow, generating real concern that the momentum behind the proposal would fizzle out – that the subcommittee would “lose confidence,” as the minutes put it.

But FCW was not about to lower its sails. By early July, its response was set: it would raise money to keep the work going. At a July 4th Parade party in Colette Clark’s yard, Martha Stone took up the challenge with Mrs. Clark and Sara Dunbar. They reacted quickly, according to Mrs. Stone, remarking that an effective sum “would be a snap to raise.” And it was. “We raised \$25,000 and more in such a short time,” she says, “that it was unbelievable to me.” That Thanksgiving week, FCW President Batchelder handed a check for \$28,000 (including \$5,000 from the Shellfish Advisory Committee) to the selectmen. Appropriately, Town Planner Margo Fenn added a forecast: it would take about a year to round out the plan.



A fisherman for much of his life, Chatham native Dave Ryder willingly accepted shore-side tasks, such as being a selectman for three terms, and then co-chairing the committee that defined what a Stage Harbor Management Plan should be.

From the Ryder Family Archive.

The Plan Unfolds – Slowly

With FCW’s August 13, 1990, annual meeting on the near horizon, President Batchelder wrote a letter canvassing for new members. He was buoyant about prospects for the harbor management plan and vowed that FCW

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would keep on working for its passage at Town Meeting. Then, in case the prospective member didn't know it, he asserted that "without the support of FCW, (the plan) would have been literally 'dead in the water'."

In a confident frame of mind at the subsequent annual meeting, he assayed a little levity in introducing the two main speakers. "Scott Horsley and Margo Fenn are the two people who got us into this fix," he said. Fenn, of course, was Town Planner. Horsley came as a principal in the consulting firm of Horsley Witten Heggemann, Inc., only company to submit a bid for the final phase of writing the management plan.

After the chuckles ebbed away, the presenters went to work. Horsley thought his listeners had better face reality. "There will be a lot of difficult decisions the town is going to have to make," he warned, as *The Chronicle* noted.² His firm's study had grappled with issues of public access, navigational safety, fishing and shellfishing, water quality and natural resources, recreation, land use, and visual character. The compelling question: how do you balance these issues so that everyone can keep on enjoying all these attributes? Winding up, Horsley offered fifteen non-regulatory strategies the town could pursue – everything from tackling storm water drainage problems to requesting Cape Cod Commission designation of Stage Harbor as a District of Critical Planning



Margo Fenn worked as Chatham's first town planner from 1986 to 1991. She is now executive director of the Cape Cod Commission. *Cape Cod Commission*



Chatham Shellfish Constable Stuart Moore knows very well that shellfish beds in town are particularly susceptible to the poisons of pollution from human sources. *Gordon Zellner*

Concern. (The latter would direct a one-year moratorium on all building bordering on the harbor complex.)

That item of storm water drainage spawned the most questions that evening. Why did runoff always seem to wind up in Oyster Pond, someone asked. Planner Margo Fenn went to bat, explaining that the town's storm water drains emptied directly into that body of water. Then Shellfish Constable Stuart Moore shook up some of the listeners, according to *The Chronicle*, when he reported that in a recent measurement of contamination, "the highest counts were in Mill Pond, not Oyster Pond." Hence, he said, Mill Pond might well be the next site to be closed to shellfishing. Obviously, the problems being addressed by harbor management planners were far from theoretical.

Taking over as the new FCW president, Martha Stone decided in September 1990 to write the Harbor Planning subcommittee, expressing "enthusiasm" for its draft. Along with her congratulations, she observed: "We are pleased (and not at all surprised!) that the Draft Report has been recognized beyond Chatham and is serving as a model for other communities in the Commonwealth."

Not everyone was entirely enthusiastic about the draft, and through the next months the subcommittee made adjustments dealing with nitrogen loading, wetland buffer areas, and dredging. Pointing toward a public hearing on the plan on August 12, 1991, the drafters published an eight-page insert carried in *The Chronicle* beforehand. It covered "Goals and Policies For Resolving Harbor Issues



This eight-page supplement to the *Chronicle's* issue of August 8, 1991, just ahead of a public hearing four days later, was paid for by FCW as a public service.

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and Action Plan.” Publication was paid for by FCW, more evidence of its commitment to the process. (Cost: \$1,700.)

The crucial chapter of the document covered actions to be taken, recognizing that “The success of this plan is ultimately measured by its implementation.” Those actions ranged from # 1 – managing Stage Harbor as a multi-use harbor, and # 2 – managing Oyster Pond, Oyster River and Mill Pond as natural estuaries to “Optimize Shellfishery”; to #14 – revising the Chatham Zoning Bylaw, #15 – conducting a public education program, and # 16 – implementing and enforcing the plan.

Reflecting on three years of effort, subcommittee co-chairman Kurt Hellfach told *Chronicle* reporter Tim Wood: “The committee has been a very participatory one. The process has really permitted us to go from stage to stage and agree upon our objectives and goals, with quite a bit of input.” Committee member Alice Popkin added that the endeavor “allowed us to meet the major



As picturesque as a vista like this may be, it cannot camouflage the fact that shellfishing is a major livelihood for men like this - and unchecked pollution could put him out of business.

*Courtesy of
Jennifer Eldredge Stello.*

goal of the study, which is keeping Stage Harbor a multi-use harbor, which is quite unique.”

Few negative voices greeted the plan when it was presented to the public meeting that August afternoon, as the *Chatham Current* reported. “We’re off and running,” Waterways Committee Chairman Dick Miller told the 40 people on hand. He wanted to be sure they understood that about \$60,000 had been spent on the plan-drafting, but not a nickel of it came from local taxes. Rather, FCW had put up \$27,000, and the balance had come from Commonwealth excise taxes on boats (half of the amount comes back to the town for improving waterways). The “real challenge,” said consultant Scott Horsley, was yet to come. As he explained, it involved balancing commercial, recreational and environmental issues in order to manage a multi-use system.

The task was not yet over, and work on the draft went on mostly under the sweep of radar. During the weeks of late summer and early fall, revisions were woven into the document by FCW board member Debby Ecker. On September 3, 1991, the selectmen approved the plan “in concept,” but were worried about the cost of implementing it, said *The Chronicle*. In November, Kurt Hellfach and Dave Ryder’s subcommittee gave the draft a resounding “Yes!” vote, and one month later, the Waterways Committee did the same. By February ‘92, both the Planning Board and Board of Health had signed on, too.

Before FCW’s summer-1992 annual meeting, the Friends had made two more dollar investments in further revisions of the plan. That January, the organization sent \$750 to consultants Horsley Witten Hegemann to cover updating and clarifying nitrogen-loading limits. Further, a loan of \$5,000 to the Town was approved by FCW’s executive committee on July 30, to “pay for the engineering needed to prepare a Stage Harbor mooring grid.” In his letter to Waterways Committee’s Miller, FCW President Lew Kimball underscored his

Friends of Waterways to boost harbor plan

by Edward F. Maroney

CHATHAM — The Friends of Chatham Waterways will live up to its name once again today.

The group’s executive committee is expected to approve a gift or “loan” of \$5,000 to the town to pay for studies that will lay the foundation for a mooring grid plan for Stage Harbor.

several years. Town Planner Margaret Swanson said the plan has been received by the state for review.

Chatham is one of just three towns that had their harbor management plans under way when the state adopted its regulations, according to guest speaker Jack Wiggin, chairman of the Coastal Resources Advisory Board. Boston had completed its plan and

The harbor master revealed some interesting facts about the local waterways. Last year, he said, six moorings owned by the town were available. He called 34 boat owners on the waiting list to ask if they’d like to rent one, and found nary a taker.

“I can give you a mooring in Stage Harbor tomorrow,” he told the audience.

The meeting, which should not be mistaken for

In late July 1992, FCW’s executive committee decided to lend the Town \$5,000 to get on with engineering necessary to plot a mooring grid for Stage Harbor. Earlier that year, the Friends laid out \$750 to pay a consultant for another phase of the harbor management plan’s development.

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board's "conviction" that mooring problems in the harbor were "critical." FCW expected Waterways to "vigorously pursue implementation" of the plan's provisions on Stage Harbor moorings, "with the initial stages being in place for the 1993 boating season." Following Summer Town Meeting, Kimball wrote *The Chronicle* to state his view that "The plan is superb. Now we all need to help ensure that it goes into effect as soon as possible." However, Chatham's voices were not yet singing in unison.

"The price of neglect"

This was *The Chronicle's* headline over its single editorial in the issue of August 13, 1992. In a word, Town Hall, said the paper, had a history of neglecting Chatham's waterways. The resources devoted to them were "feeble, at best." To be more specific, during that year the community was devoting "less than two percent of its overall budget to waterways-related departments."³

That editorial declaration paralleled tough comments that same week by Dick Miller, in speaking to selectmen. He was there to announce formally the \$5,000 being advanced by FCW. But he had more to say. His remarks, he said, were the "opening salvo" in the town's budget season just ahead, adding:

I am astounded when I hear otherwise rational people – including some town officials – say that they'll be damned if they'll pay for services on the water out of the tax base. Well, I can tell you right now there wouldn't be any tax base if it weren't for the attractions of the water.



Richard Miller, front, had no sympathy at all for those in Chatham who said they'd "be damned" if they would pay for services related to the waterways out of the tax base. *The Chronicle* chimed in, saying it was time for the town to "put more of its money where its resources are."

The Chronicle editorial echoed Miller's hard-edged tone. The Stage Harbor plan was "an excellent beginning, a template for how the town should treat all of its waterways." Then the editorialist singled out the role of FCW in advancing the plan:

Private organizations such as the Friends of Chatham Waterways should not have to step into the void left by an unfocused government, as they have by providing seed money for the plan...It's time for Chatham to put more of its money where its resources are. Otherwise, future residents will pay the price of our neglect."

In spite of this prodding, when overall, updated management of Stage Harbor could be brought into a mooring eluded any precise forecasting. FCW's \$5,000 enabled the town to hire Tibbetts Engineering Corp. of New Bedford to crank up the process of writing a mooring plan for the harbor. That was in October '92. One year later, the scheme surfaced, and critics almost tumbled over each other to express discordant reactions. Tibbetts speculated that harbor moorings would nearly double, from the then-current 400 to 700. "Physically, you can't do it," commented Andy Meincke, owner/operator of Stage Harbor Marine, as reported in *The Chronicle*. To Harbormaster Peter Ford, the concept was "unrealistic...This needs a lot of fine-tuning." Further, in his judgment, there was no rush. "We don't have a real problem that needs to be resolved today." Against that backdrop, hiring a firm to relocate moorings would probably have to be put off. As for revisions of the Tibbetts approach, they should not be allowed to stall approval of the final version of the management document.

A major step toward giving this paper document life in the real world came that same month of October. Officials from the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) office and Department of Environmental Protection drove down to Chatham to look at chapter and verse of the plan on the ground. Behind the scenes that fall, a drama was playing out, as Martha Stone tells it. After all the months and years of work, she says, Dick Miller and Kurt Hellfach "came to the point where they just about gave up." Why? Because of their frustration over working with consultant Horsley Witten. Typically, Mrs. Stone took it upon herself to phone the firm to ask what the problem was. She was told that another \$8,300 would be needed, if their work was to be wrapped up. When FCW's board agreed to get up the money, Mrs. Stone reported to Miller that (1) FCW would provide the dollar boost, and (2) the consultant had pledged to do the remaining work in eight weeks. Miller's response: "Well, we've come this far, so why not wait two more months?"

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As it had agreed, Horsley Witten concluded its activities in the two-month span. But its report cried out for house-cleaning, and once again FCW joined that effort. To Martha Stone's recollection, Debby Ecker prepared the index, then worked out an implementation grid showing which town board would be responsible for each goal of the plan. Mrs. Stone took on inserting page numbers and appendix references, while acting as intermediary with Chatham Printing on duplication. Town Planner Margaret Swanson, Margo Fenn's successor, rewrote the critical action phase of the plan.

Winter was approaching, and the new year of 1994 was just around the bend. In mid-December, the honed and re-honed document went to Secretary of Environmental Affairs Trudy Coxe for approval.

But there was yet another hitch: planner Swanson wanted to reword a section on how, in

The Chronicle's language, "local bylaws would supplant less stringent state regulations if the plan is approved." That was duly accomplished, and back the draft went to the Coxe office. Next step: a public hearing in Chatham conducted by the Office of

Coastal Zone Management. Now the derailments were technically behind. But the year 1994 had to age a good bit before the plan would shed its skin and materialize as full-fledged town mandate.



Successor in 1991 to Town Planner Margo Fenn, Margaret Swanson rewrote the all-important implementation part of the Harbor Management Plan.

Cape Cod Chronicle

Stage Harbor Plan Captures Attention Of EPA's DeVillars

by Tim Wood

CHATHAM — In an ironic twist, while town officials and waterways advocates were giving federal Environmental Protection Agency Northeast Region chief John DeVillars the lowdown on the Stage Harbor comprehensive management plan last Friday afternoon, the harbor itself was being closed to shellfishing.

Assuring continuation of the multi-use nature of the harbor — including commercial and recreational shellfishing — through water quality regulations and guards against over-crowding, is one of the chief goals of the plan, slated to be signed by Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs Trudy Coxe tomorrow, Aug. 19, at a 2 p.m. ceremony at Old Mill Beach.

But the news of the shellfish closure had not yet spread last Friday. Instead, the meeting with DeVillars focused on the public-private partnership that kept the harbor plan from sinking out of sight in the seven years since its inception.

During Friday's meeting and a harbor tour Saturday morning, DeVillars praised the plan and encouraged the town to follow up on its recommendations, including giving his initial support to a no-discharge zone designation for Stage Harbor.

Statewide, only Boston has a completed, certified harbor plan, which was in the works at the time the Chapter 91 waterways regulations were reauthorized while DeVillars was Secretary of Environmental Affairs under the Dukakis administration. The reauthorized regulations contained provisions for individual communities to incorporate local bylaws into the Chapter 91 regulations through the harbor planning process.

"We recognized one size didn't fit all," DeVillars said. "The same standards might not work in every community."

Chatham, he said, should consider itself the first community to earn harbor plan approval. "Boston had already done a harbor plan and had more or less perfunctory approval. We'll find some angle to make you first on this."

DeVillars said he found it "incredible" that half of the money to complete the plan had to be raised privately.

Members of the Friends of Chatham Waterways, which provided the impetus for the plan by voicing concerns about the town's waterways over the next 20 years, raised some \$30,000 to fund the technical research aspect of the plan after the funds were defeated in an override vote. Much of that money came from summer residents, according to Martha Stone, one of the group's vice presidents and founders.

Voters subsequently approved another \$30,000 from the waterways improvement fund to complete the plan, which made it a "true public-private effort," said Richard Miller, former chairman of the town's Waterways Committee. That money probably wouldn't have gotten approval if the Friends hadn't raised the initial amount, suggested Richard Batzfelder, a past president of the Friends of Chatham Waterways. The harbor plan, he said, "would not have happened if it had not been for the private fund-raising."

A subcommittee of the Waterways Committee, the

Harbor Planning Committee, was formed to develop the plan, with members representing all facets of the harbor.

"This was really a very participatory effort," said the chairman of the subcommittee, Kurt Hellfach, providing guidelines so town departments know where their responsibilities lie.

Batzfelder compared the harbor plan to initial efforts at zoning in the 1950s. In an almost naive way, the group believed the town would recognize the need to manage its harbors. But after the override defeat and the private fund-raising effort, many people continued to question why town resources were being used to continue the harbor planning process.

"It gets very personal when you start to talk about mooring locations and limitations," Batzfelder noted. The group was also critical of the state's harbor planning office.

"It took us four years to do the plan and three years to do the bureaucracy," said Lewis Kimball, the

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The Harbor Management Plan arrives at a crucial point: an inspection by John DeVillars, Northeast Regional chief for the Environmental Protection Agency. In this August 1994 picture, DeVillars is at the center, flanked by Debby Ecker and Richard Miller, at left, Kurt Hellfach, at right.

That moment came in August '94. In an important preliminary, Northeast Region chief John DeVillars of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency came to town to look at the inner workings of the harbor management document. He was impressed with what he saw, according to *The Chronicle*. In his view, Chatham had a perfect right to consider itself as first among all Massachusetts towns to come up with such a plan; Boston had already finished its plan, but that was a vastly different order of magnitude. What DeVillars found to be "incredible" was that half the money to do Chatham's management scheme had to come from private sources — from FCW.

In hard fact, by that point in a process that seldom got out of first gear, Friends of Chatham Waterways had spent a total of \$38,680 on the project (including the \$1,700 for printing the eight-page plan, word for word). An additional \$5,000 had been donated by the Shellfish Advisory Committee in the early stages.

Talking with DeVillars on that day in August '94, FCW President Lew Kimball was hardly reticent about the difficulties faced in completing the plan. "It took us four years to do the plan and three years to do the bureaucracy," *The Chronicle* quoted him as saying. "Somehow it seems to me there ought to be a way to cut through the amount of work we have to do to get this accomplished." DeVillars, the representative of Washington bureaucracy, agreed. So, surely, did others in the FCW camp.

The final step on having the plan get underway and on course came in the afternoon of August 19. Formal invitations in hand, people gathered at the Old Mill Boat Yard for a ceremony approving the two-volume document by Trudy Coxe, the Commonwealth's Secretary of Environmental Affairs. It was a memorable event, and *The Chronicle* and the *Cape Codder* gave it full coverage.

Chatham's Stage Harbor Plan Heralded As Visionary

by Tim Wood

CHATHAM — As the first town in the state to receive formal approval of its comprehensive harbor management plan of Stage Harbor, Chatham's officials should be ready to field a barrage of questions from many other communities. Secretary of Environmental Affairs Trudy Coxe said last Friday as she put pen to paper and officially signed the two-volume document.

"This is important encouragement to other communities that are only now launching this effort," Coxe said at a brief ceremony at Old Mill Boatyard, which overlooks Stage Harbor.

"You really have a lot to be proud of and a lot to teach others throughout coastal towns in Massachusetts," she told about 40 people, including many members of the private group the Friends of Chatham Waterways, which was responsible for launching the plan six years ago and providing funding and volunteer help to keep it alive during a protracted bureaucratic review period.

The Friends worked on the plan in conjunction with town officials and the volunteer Harbor Planning Committee, developing an extensive data base on the harbor complex — which includes Stage

Harbor, Oyster River, Oyster Pond, Mitchell River and Mill Pond — as well as a vision for the future of the system. Key to that outlook is a multi-use harbor where commercial and recreational interests function side by side, as well as clean water, continued public access and retention of harbor views and vistas.

"This offers a balanced vision, as well as looking toward sustainability," Margaret Brady, director of the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management office, said of the plan.

Coxe called the plan a "bible" that can be referred to as a guide for future decisions, especially when issues of conflict appear.

"This is the result of visionary thinking," she said. "I think so many of you saw the need to prevent haphazard development and provide a guide so the harbor isn't degraded. This demonstrates that a vision can become a reality with patience and hard work."

The next step, she added, is to implement the nine actions contained in the plan relating to water quality, mooring designations, and plan-

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Trudy Coxe, Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs, signs the town's Stage Harbor management plan last Friday at Old Mill Boatyard. TIM WOOD PHOTO

On August 19, 1994, the Commonwealth's Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Trudy Coxe, came to the Old Mill Boat Yard to give formal approval to the Harbor Management Plan. Chatham was the first town in the state, other than Boston, to finish such a set of procedures.

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Chatham had earned the distinction of being the first town in the Commonwealth to win approbation of a harbor management approach. Calling Chatham's concept a "bible" and "the result of visionary thinking," Ms. Coxe said, "This is important encouragement to other communities that are only now launching this effort. You really have a lot to be proud of, and a lot to teach others throughout coastal towns in Massachusetts."

Chronicle reporter Tim Wood made clear what FCW's role had been in moving the process to conclusion that August afternoon. The Friends group, he wrote, "was responsible for launching the plan six years ago and providing funding and volunteer help to keep it alive during a prolonged bureaucratic review period." Margaret Brady, director of Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management, joined Ms. Coxe in praising the commitment of FCW to the project, as "a model public/private partnership."

In drafting the Chatham plan, participants included some provisions that differed from state regulations; either the local clauses were more stringent than the state's, or amplified them. These aspects included on-foot passage, public rights to waterways, access to town landings, mooring assignments, and dredging and resource protection. Another requirement obliged the selectmen to name a committee to carry out the plan. That step was finally formalized late in 1995, another reminder to citizens that their government tends not infrequently to proceed cautiously with reefed sails.

Without the water...

"Without the water," said Richard Batchelder in January 2001, "we could be in Montana." But Chatham has water in an amazing variety. And in the summer of 1994, it finally had a Commonwealth-okayed plan to manage a unique segment of its waterways, stretching in an ungainly "U" from Little Mill Pond on the northeast, down Mitchell River into Stage Harbor, through the Oyster River as it snakes northwest, then northeast, into Oyster Pond.



Reporting for *The Chronicle*, Tim Wood had followed the evolution of the Stage Harbor plan for years. Looking back, he observed that FCW had been "responsible for launching the plan . . . and providing funding and volunteer help to keep it alive" *Gordon Zellner*

It had absorbed almost seven years to conceive and rear the management plan to maturity, from the first, hesitant steps in 1987, to the signing ceremony in August '94. Why such a long time? To Kurt Hellfach, it was "because our plan was the cutting edge. We were the first town, the first harbor (other than Boston) to go through that dreadful procedure. In many ways, the Office of Coastal Zone Management didn't know how to review the process. They were groping along as we went along."

Without question, the designers had to work their way through unfamiliar and possibly treacherous waters. Happily, they were able to achieve their most important objective. In Kurt Hellfach's words, "The most overarching part of the plan was maintaining a balanced use of Stage Harbor, a balance among competing interests. If we hadn't watched out, all of the harbor would have become a mooring basin, like Marblehead. We had a very strong interest in maintaining the outstanding shellfishing in Stage Harbor."

As to whether the overall drafting process was an unflawed success, the judgment would seem to be: not quite. The key man leading the Waterways Committee through the crucial years, Dick Miller, decided that instead of hiring a consulting firm, "we should have hired a full-time person, a processor, to keep the initiatives going and then farm out the science." Management of the Stage Harbor concept's evolution was "a little bit too loose. (There was) never a clear line. No czar... This was cumbersome."

One of FCW's most-engaged volunteers, Debby Ecker, would concur. In her Boston experience as a computer-savvy associate commissioner in the Commonwealth's Tax Department, she had learned more than many about process. "The consultants really let us down on the report," she recalls, "and charged an arm and a leg." When the time came to turn that document into a professional submission, Mrs. Ecker had to go up on deck in foul-weather gear and start hauling fish. "My contribution," she says, "was to try to get the report to look decent, which I don't think it does to this day. They sent me the disks and I physically reformatted it, putting in capitals, and so on." She spent "hundreds of hours" on that step, then took the result to the consultants and said, "You really should go through this before it is completed. They were just glowering and furious."

Still, the plan passed muster, and FCW had been a major factor, contributing time, dollars, and persistence, hanging in until the official signatures were on the line. To the first chairman of the Waterways Committee, Richard Hiscock, FCW had been almost pivotal in giving Chatham proper harbor management.

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“There is no doubt,” Hiscock said in 2002, “that FCW played a key role in getting the plan done. Had it not been for their money, there probably would not have been a plan then, maybe never.” It should also be quickly added that, had it not been for the energies and talent of people like Richard Batchelder, Debby Ecker, Lew Kimball and Martha Stone, there certainly would never have been a plan.

What their coalescing over years behind plan preparation did for Friends of Chatham Waterways cannot be ignored. Says Mrs. Ecker, “I think it was really what made FCW what it is today. It took such a group effort to get the plan through.” Agreeing, Kurt Hellfach elaborates:

When FCW started, it was strictly focused on Stage Harbor, on water issues, and nothing else. As we went along with the planning process, all of a sudden we realized that what happens on land is more important than what happens on the water in terms of water quality, nitrogen loading, and so on. That’s why FCW has become involved in so many issues in town, because of the land use matter. This project really transformed FCW.



Low tide on the Oyster River, and the clammers are out.

Gordon Zellner

The Town realized that, notes Hellfach. Hence, when it set up an implementation committee for the harbor plan, it stipulated that FCW should have two seats on it. And now that the 1994 plan is being brought up to date, FCW has not two but three members on the committee: Hellfach, Patricia Siewert, and Martha Stone.

There was one more outcome of bringing the original management design to conclusion: it gave Friends of Chatham Waterways greater self-confidence and finesse for creating and launching new initiatives. Thus, it was better equipped to carry out its own mandate of concentrating its manifold energies on “the condition, development, preservation and enhancement of Chatham waterways and adjoining lands.”

¹ As of October 2002, the entire Stage Harbor complex, from Little Mill Pond to Oyster Pond, has 1,250 private and commercial boat moorings. The waiting list has grown “tremendously,” according to the Harbormaster’s office. In the last three years, 92 people have gone on the list just for craft 0-20 feet in length. The individual on the list for the longest time put his name down in 1991.

² Here and elsewhere, we have shortened the newspaper’s official name, *The Cape Cod Chronicle*.

³ In ‘03, Chatham will spend \$2,028,030 on all “water-related expenditures,” out of a total budget of more than \$29 million, or 6.85 percent.

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Broad Reach: From Pollution to the Economy





Little Mill Pond, placid, but ailing.

Gordon Zellner

Chapter Six

In days of yore – *distant* yore – ocean-crossing passengers lived with certain rigors hardly familiar today. Aboard the *Mayflower*, the 102 Pilgrims stayed “tween” decks – the crew didn’t want them above: they’d only get in the way. The men, women and children had several four-pounder cannon as bunk mates, and little or no privacy for the three mothers who gave birth during the 66-day crossing. Undoubtedly it was a trifle odorous: crew-members treated themselves to one bath a year. The menu? A tasty selection of salt beef, salt fish, peas porridge, oatmeal, dried fruits, and beer.

When bodily functions called for relief, voyagers had two options. Up forward, in the “Beak’s Head,” they’d find a privy, if that was to their liking. If not, they could crawl out on a “channel,” a black shelf sticking out over the ocean, and hang on for dear life as *Mayflower* pitched and rolled. Yes, it was a grueling trial for these landlubbers.¹

On dropping anchor off Plymouth just after Christmas 1620, *Mayflower* had indeed reached fair harbor. Three and a half centuries later, boaters cruising toward Chatham’s waters reached a harbor fair but increasingly foul, far more so than anything *Mayflower’s* Master, Christopher Jones, could have imagined. That condition, some Stage Harbor skippers of the 1980’s recognized, would have to be fixed. That was where the activists of Friends of Chatham Waterways and their allies came in.

* * * * *

“Martha, have you seen the brown scum floating on Mill Pond?” Several times in years past, Mrs. Stone had received phone calls like that. “I had no idea where the scum came from,” she says. “But several of us wondered, ‘Is that sewage that we’re noticing?’ It was a discomfiting possibility, even if not true.”

In the best of all possible sailors’ worlds, it should not have been true. But, true or not, FCW had made a firm commitment to get at the causes of waterway pollution in its childhood months, and so it engaged with this issue.

An actual framework of regulations had been in place for some time. Federally, a Refuse Act had been law since 1899; it prohibited throwing refuse of any kind into waters of the United States. Following up, the Coast Guard laid down basic standards. Among them: pulverized or ground wastes could not be

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dumped within three miles of nearest land. Further, any boat with a head had to have a “marine sanitation device” on board. If an operator wanted to use the craft in waters where dumping of sewage was barred, the M. S. D. would have to be padlocked or wired in the closed position. Coast Guard pamphlets and periodic boat inspections make those rules thoroughly clear.

As the number of hulls using Stage Harbor climbed, the potential for violation went up, too. At Stage Harbor Marine, owner Andy Meincke calculates that in the 30 years his family has managed the yard, the boat census has gone up at least one-third. With the gradual closing of previous channels from Chatham Harbor, more and more big boats were using Stage Harbor; above 25 feet, they all had heads. But, adds Meincke, “All of them had the ability to pump out directly into the water. There was concern.”

The down side was quite apparent to those writing the Stage Harbor Management Plan. So they addressed the issue as one facet of the materializing document. There was no set-in-stone requirement from the state to create a pump-out station (P. O. S.). But it seemed wise to the planners, and they fixed that option into the plan’s language.

Among the seventeen actions spelled out in the draft of July 29, 1991, number 7 aimed to “Develop Pump-out Facilities.” Why? Because, “Given the high number of moorings in the Stage Harbor system, it is important that there be no dumping of untreated and treated sanitary waste in the harbor.” The details stated that the P. O. S. should be at Old Mill Boat Yard or a commercial marina, and the service should be free to skippers and boat-owners.

In actuality, Chatham had already made up its mind to create such a facility. At a Town Meeting May 9, 1989, the 415 present voted unanimously to appropriate \$10,000 for a pump-out station. And as early as 1990, Bob Duncanson, director of the Town’s laboratory, was sizing up the mechanisms for making that concept an actuality.



Spending his working years at the edge of Stage Harbor, with boats coming and going all the time, marina owner Andy Meincke has known more than many about the risks of boat-caused pollution.

Gordon Zellner

Before residents assembled for that Town Meeting in spring '89, they had become targets for a blue FCW flyer calling on them to "Protect Chatham Waters." Friends board members were hardly bashful about handing out this sheet. As Richard Batchelder recalls, director Judy Hoyt, staked out at the main Post Office, worked "like a tiger" to get people to take a copy of the appeal. Among items that FCW would support at the May 9 meeting, the flyer stated, was Article 33, budgeting funds for a pump-out station. Voters followed through, but there, as happens now and again in Chatham, the matter languished for months and months. As Duncanson reconstructs that puzzle-ment, "writing the harbor management plan was underway at the time, and sometimes individual things get wrapped up in larger things and maybe lose their urgency. Budgetary difficulties at the time may have impacted the situation, too."

To FCW, that delay seemed less and less acceptable. So board members elected to become, in Batchelder's words, "the guiding sponsor of the whole project, endorsing and promoting it." And thus, FCW back-flipped on stage to be its cheerleader.

More than a year after residents approved the dollars for a P. O. S., Martha Stone, as FCW president, sent a memo to co-chairmen Dave Ryder and Kurt Hellfach of the harbor management plan committee. While applauding their progress in writing the document, she said that recommendations on matters like "implementation of boat pump-out facility plans...should go forward as aggressively and forcefully as possible."

But the wind dropped, and two years drifted slowly by. Now, Lew Kimball, as FCW president, scheduled an executive committee meeting at his house September 17, 1992. Board member James Davis had gone earlier to a Waterways Committee meeting and reported, the minutes stated, "There was no quorum & no one seemed to know about pump-out plans." That drew quick agreement: Mrs. Stone, Davis and Batchelder would "prod Waterways Committee on this."

More calendar pages fell to the floor, and the flow of time arrived at August 1993. Secretary Maureen Vokey, in her board meeting minutes, reported a



In years when Chatham's selectmen were full-time, Dave Ryder managed to handle his tasks in three terms on the board, while taking out fishing parties when daylight hours permitted. *Gordon Zellner*

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comment that “The Pump-out Station is to be here within a week.” At that, she recorded, “(Everyone fell about laughing!)” An observation was made that the station had first been discussed in 1989 – “a case in point about doing something—it has taken 4 years to actually get the...station! Richard [Batchelder] said they’ll probably pump out the first boat in 1994 – 5 years!”

President Kimball echoed board sentiment in his fall ‘93 member newsletter. Perhaps the people of FCW remembered that a year before, he had written that the facility would be in operation by summer ‘93. “It was a vain hope,” he conceded. He could report, though, in late ‘93 that the station was fast becoming “a reality...available to boaters for the 1994 summer season.”

Ironically, by that time in ‘93, the P. O. S. was a reality. In *The Cape Cod Chronicle* issue of October 7, 1993, a photo showed Harbormaster Peter Ford explaining the brand new, 200-gallon portable pump-out station beside him. Inevitably, questions and doubts simmered, as Martha Stone recalls, but they weren’t new: people had been grumbling since 1991 and 1992. “No one would use (the unit)...No one was trained in its use...Boaters would not know of its existence...No survey had been done as to the need for such a device...Where would the sewage be disposed?” It was the familiar refrain of local skeptics. But, if anything, the volume of the grumbling had been turned down.

As the seasons revolved, boaters slowly got accustomed to the P. O. S. In that respect, says Andy Meincke, they were well behind cruising sailors from other ports. “All around Nantucket Sound,” he says, “it’s gotten to be routine. Transients who come in for an overnight or a weekend want to know if they can get pumped out.”

The original trailered 200-gallon tank has now been joined by a 2,000-gallon station, lodged permanently at the Old Mill Boat Yard. It had been



In early fall 1993, the Town’s new mobile pump-out unit was put on display. Here, the late Harbormaster Peter Ford explains how the station was to operate. The Stage Harbor Management Plan required the community to provide this service.

The Chronicle

financed by a grant from the Commonwealth; the 1994 application had been prepared by Bob Duncanson as project director, in cooperation with the Harbormaster. Approval in August '94 led to design, engineering and construction the following winter, and the completed 2,000-gallon station went on line at OMBY in August '95. One year later, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency approved the state's authorization designating the Stage Harbor complex as a "No Discharge Zone."

Who were the main drivers on creating the P. O. S.? Certainly FCW, along with lab director Duncanson, the Waterways Committee, and, initially, operatives like Andy Meincke of Stage Harbor Marine. Maybe FCW wasn't the source of the idea at first, maybe it didn't raise a Philips-head screw driver to put the tank in place. But raise its voice it did, and that certainly made a difference. By the mid-Nineties, the organization had a decade under its belt. Individuals like Martha Stone, Richard Batchelder, and Lew Kimball knew what buttons to press to wake the public and get its acceptance; they were hardly shy about doing so.

At the same time, Friends endorsement counted in another way, as did strong affirmation from the Waterways Committee. Explains Bob Duncanson, "We went to them for letters of support. They wrote to the grant agency to endorse the request for a fixed pump-out station, and also wrote to the state and the EPA as part of our petition for the No Discharge Zone. Those agencies look much more favorably on requests if there are letters from...private groups such as FCW, showing that there's a lot of public support for it."

By those years of the mid-Nineties, people were beginning to pay attention to FCW. Mildly curious, business and government leaders listened when the Friends turned its energies to preparing an extensive economic study of the Town of Chatham.

On Analyzing a Community's Economy

Something quite out of the ordinary happened in Chatham in the winter of 1997. On the brisk, clear morning of January 7, about 120 people gathered for a sumptuous breakfast at Chatham Bars Inn's Digit Hall (now Monomoy Meeting House). They listened to the 45-minute premiere presentation of "An Economic Study of Chatham, Massachusetts."



As a former associate commissioner in the Commonwealth's Tax Department, Debby Ecker had the background to undertake an economic study of Chatham.

Rob Carlisle

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Why was this event unusual? Because the speaker was not a high-priced consultant but a nonresident taxpayer who had put in close to a year as a volunteer to assemble the research and write the report. Nor was the session sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, or the merchants, or Town Hall. Instead, it had the formal backing of the not-for-profit Friends of Chatham Waterways. Further, the presenter, Deborah Ecker, had credentials that any Cape town would prize in a resident. Maybe some listeners didn't agree with everything she said, but her background made this breakfast well worth eating.²

Remember that before settling full-time in town, Mrs. Ecker had worked in various state-level posts dealing with revenue and taxation – as analyst of the entire Massachusetts revenue system, as associate commissioner in the Commonwealth's Tax Department, in the Federal Reserve Bank's research department, and, among other posts, as head of a State Senate staff on tax policy, local aid, and revenue forecasting. After years of experience, she was scarcely timorous about raising her voice in meetings. In mid-90's Chatham, her face had become more and more familiar at public and Town Hall meetings. One occasion had arisen as far back as 1985. The issue was a new tax.

A Tax That Bred Controversy

As the 1980's made their entrance, Boston faced a money crunch. Looking for cures, legislators narrowed their gaze to the room-occupancy tax fixed on hotels, motels and B&B's. Out of the debate arose a provision to let cities and towns statewide put an added tax on top of the state's existing one. But Chatham declined that option.³

For its part, FCW was only a year old in 1984 when its board discussed with intensity how the town could raise money to buy land. At that meeting, Debby Ecker, sitting in as an observer, and others knew that purchasing land was the best way to protect it from development. But while adding a tax on hotels/motels might have merit for that purpose, it nevertheless rubbed the respected ownership of Chatham Bars Inn (CBI) the wrong way, and residents voted it down at Town Meeting in 1986.

Some months passed, and then, new CBI owners — outsiders — arrived on the scene; that cleared out some of the mines along the road toward a piggy-back tax. Moving ahead, Mrs. Ecker wrote a Town Meeting article in favor of an added motel/hotel excise levy. As a new member of FCW, she would soon go on its board. But FCW directors shied away from endorsing her proposal. Says Mrs. Ecker, "they had organized in '83 to be an educational organization, and thought they could not transgress on that."

That wasn't the only negative. When she asked the Chamber of Commerce for its support, officials came back with a resounding "No!" But she's not one to be shot down that easily. So she got the necessary signatures and Board of Selectmen approval, as well. And while she was not yet a Chatham voter, Moderator Tim Pennypacker allowed her to make a pitch for the tax at Town Meeting.

Meanwhile, a segment of the town's business community armed for combat. The front page of *The Chronicle* for January 14, 1988, laid out the issue in a vigorous headline:

"Motel/hotel tax proposal has inn crowd seeing red." William Gray, then owner with his wife, Audrey, of the Bradford Inn, framed his opposition like this: "A lot of people think the tax is unfair to one segment of the tourist industry



Operators of inns, motels and B&Bs left no doubt about their opposition to increasing the room occupancy tax. The spearcarrier for that change was Mrs. Ecker. Squeaking by at Town Meeting in 1988, the measure today brings in almost \$1 million.

From the Chronicle.

and one group of small business people...I don't think that people who travel a lot want to pay that kind of tax." The general manager of CBI, Paul Ronty, made another vibrant complaint. His industry was "already taxed enough as it is...How would shop owners feel if their sales tax suddenly went up to 10 percent?" Cut down to one word, Mrs. Ecker's proposition was "unfair."

In spite of the funereal roll of muffled drums, the measure went before the 1988 Town Meeting. It was a cliff-hanger. According to the after-action *Chronicle* account, there were only three voters above a quorum (of 350). The night before, almost \$300,000 in expenses had been approved above the tax levy. That piqued the citizenry. Wrote Tim Wood, they were "in the mood to approve a new source of revenue above property taxes." As the hour grew later and later, Moderator Charles Weidman faced a serious threat to his razor-thin quorum. So he had police lock the doors to keep every single resident on hand. And at the appropriate moment, they approved Mrs. Ecker's four percent hotel/motel tax "overwhelmingly." (Right afterward, the trapped citizens voted "indefinite postponement" of an article dedicating receipts from that levy to land acquisition.)

In that first year, the add-on tax brought in \$225,212 – none of it, to be sure, for land purchases. Rather, as Finance Director/Assistant Town Manager

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Don Poyant explained in 2002, it has always gone into the general fund. In FY 2002, the tax yielded \$932,517, or 3 ½ percent of overall income.

Her 1988 success in winning approval of the hotel/motel tax did not mean that heavy weather had cleared for Mrs. Ecker. In a later year, while her husband was driving them down from Boston, she read an article in *The Chronicle* reporting that the Chamber of Commerce wanted to draw on the new tax's proceeds to promote tourism, increasing the percentage each year. "Needless to say," recalls Debby Ecker, "I hit the roof! This was exactly the opposite of what we had in mind." Maybe the dollars could not be dedicated to buying land, but they certainly should not go undesignated into the general fund.

Realizing the scope of this Chamber tactic, she suited up to go on offense. This time things were different. "The selectmen did not treat me kindly," she says, "and supported the Chamber's proposal." Once again, back to Town Meeting. And once again, Moderator Pennypacker allowed her to take the floor, even though she still was not a voting resident. Mrs. Ecker reminded listeners that direct appropriation to an outside organization such as the Chamber was not allowed under state law. A selectman then scratched out an amendment favoring the Chamber and bypassing the restriction, and the measure passed. Ever since, the Chamber has received a chunk of town funds (\$81,500 in FY 2003) for its purposes. At any rate, baptized by these skirmishes with local opponents, Mrs. Ecker was fully prepared to energize an even broader assignment.



Jay Stahl was chairing the Chamber of Commerce when Mrs. Ecker rolled out a summary of her economic study data. He brought associates into a meeting with her about her findings on the threat of over-development.

The Chronicle

Chatham's Economy: Under the Microscope

When Town Planner Margo Fenn opted to accept a job at the Cape Cod Commission in 1991, Bradenton Florida's planner, Margaret Swanson, was named to succeed her. Reporting for duty that July, she immediately faced lingering problems triggered by the North Beach breakthrough of 1987. That made it impossible for her to address a task broached when she was first interviewed: Chatham's need to draft a long range plan (LRP).

By '92, Mrs. Swanson was ready to take on that considerable obligation. Many elements would be familiar, but she was perplexed by what should be said about the town's economy. Serendipitously, Mrs. Ecker came through her door at almost that moment. Just possibly, Mrs. Swanson had not bargained for getting the services of that experienced a volunteer.

When the new Long Range Planning Committee had previously put out a call for members, Mrs. Ecker had stepped forward. But three people had applied for two slots, and she was passed over. (There were intimations that she may have been "over-qualified," that is, too potent.) Putting that turndown behind her, she offered to help Margaret Swanson, the lead figure in drafting the plan. To the question about writing an economic section, Mrs. Ecker replied, "That's something I know how to do. I've prepared regional economic studies. When I was with the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, I wrote a book [later published] on the regional economy of Massachusetts." How could Margaret Swanson turn her down?

Somehow, however, something intended to fit into the Town's official LRP process metamorphosed into an independent FCW project. In FCW thinking at the time, a link tied together the money spent on promoting tourism and what was allocated – too little – to shield land from development. The FCW board liked what Mrs. Ecker proposed. "Right on!" they said, and voted in favor of her doing an economic study actually apart from the Town's LRP.

Having been through that kind of mill before, she started by lining up three individuals with strong backgrounds in economic analysis, all of them summer residents. They were Denis McSweeney, then assistant regional commissioner, New England regional office, U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Roy C. Smith, former Goldman, Sachs partner and teacher of economics at New York University's Stern School of Business; and Jeff Fuglestad, who had prepared economic analyses for a bank in New Jersey. They talked about general directions, and the first two agreed to be Mrs. Ecker's readers. Then, on her own, she set about collecting essential data.

At the outset, she knew that some numbers could be gleaned from the Federal Unemployment Compensation program; it was widely viewed as accurate. That was a start. But there was a "down side," she recalls: the data did not cover the self-employed (fishermen, house painters, small-staff carpenters). "I suspected," she says, "that large numbers of Chatham's workers were not being reported." What to do? Some numbers were in hand, but they were "all over the map." To improve on it, Mrs. Ecker took Mrs. Swanson's suggestion, went to then-Town Clerk Joanne Holdgate and asked her to write a new questionnaire.

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The questions in Mrs. Holdgate's 1996 survey included "How are you employed?" "Are you retired?" "Where do you commute to your job?" Before long, this questionnaire was in the mail.

Soon, returns were winging in: 3,000 of them! The Planning Department couldn't begin to take on harvesting this rich crop, so Mrs. Ecker had to do it; she hired Denis McSweeney's daughter, Mairade, to help, and they set to work in the heat of summer at the Annex. One read the form aloud, the other keyed in answers on the computer – "a dog of a job," says Mrs. Ecker. When they completed 1,000 returns, she announced, "That's it! It's a statistically defensible number, one out of three." Computer-savvy, she converted this lode into graphics and saw that she was sitting on "a tremendous amount of original research...It was extraordinary."

One target had been to see what property owners, residence owners and retirees contributed to Chatham's economy. Calling the National Association of Home Builders of the U. S. in Washington, she learned how they figured what stimulus every house would contribute to the local economy. Applying that tool, she did some calculating and determined that "taking a balanced look at the economy, there's going to be a retail segment, but there's also an enormous portion that is based on residential property owners." To be precise, 91 percent of the taxes came from them. And so, she concluded, the town "should be cautious about stimulating commercial development in a community so dependent on the attraction of its natural resources to bring in all the high-paying property." Simply put:

"If you haven't protected your environment, then people will not be attracted to your community."

Data summarized and graphed, Mrs. Ecker then determined to get the Chamber of Commerce engaged early; Chamber Chairman Jay Stahl agreed, and a meeting was scheduled. "It was like a junior high school dance," Mrs. Ecker remembers. "All the Chamber people were lined up against one wall, and FCW people on the other." It could have been touchy. After all, the way her analysis was headed, it would say that, on one hand, the Chamber was boosting tourism, while, on the other, there were real risks of over-development and over-stimulation beyond the capacity of Chatham's economy and natural resources to handle.

Then something happened. Out of the corner of her eye, Debby Ecker could see one of the Chamber's nucleus nodding his head up and down in obvious approval of her message.

Importantly, he was Chris Diego, general manager of Chatham Bars Inn. When the session broke up, he said to her, "Let me know what I can do to help you." Before many days passed, six individuals were sitting on CBI's veranda –

three from the Chamber, three from FCW. “We had the most astonishing consensus,” recalls Mrs. Ecker. “We had to protect natural resources and not overdo development.” The last thing CBI wanted was a cheapened Main Street. Diego’s strong view: “Let’s make sure that we maintain quality.” Further, he agreed to sponsor Mrs. Ecker’s formal presentation to Chamber members and town officials, offered what is now Monomoy Meeting House and its audiovisual equipment, and even steered her into using the Powerpoint program to convert her tables and graphs into slides.

By late fall of 1996, the economic study had been filtered into booklet form, with an alluring cover picture by local photographer Gordon Zellner, and 62 pages of text buttressed by 36 tables and graphs.⁴ The idea, says Mrs. Ecker, was “to have it like a comic, with simple statements and no big blocks of copy. Let the pictures tell the story.” People attending the January 7, 1997, breakfast could pick up the report as they left.⁵

Meanwhile, guests were treated to a “top-of-the-line feast,” recalls Mrs. Ecker. “It was as though we were on the Q. E. II. [Queen Elizabeth II]” Conscious of image as the presenter, she wore a double-breasted dark green dress, “because I wanted to look like a woman corporate CEO...I don’t think I’ve ever worn it since.” Then, as the clinking of dishes subsided, she stood and went into her talk.



General Manager Chris Diego of Chatham Bars Inn was just as eager as Debby Ecker about maintaining quality in the town. He made the CBI facilities available for her presentation in January 1997.

*Courtesy of
Chatham Bars Inn.*

The Study’s Main Points

Among the town’s major economic assets, the Powerpoint slides testified, were these research-based items:

- ◆ Chatham’s “highly valued” residential properties. Statewide, they ranked 11th out of 350 other cities and towns. Ninety-one percent of the community’s tax base consisted of those properties.

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- ◆ The retirement population was a second major asset. Planners value these men and women because they put little demand on local services.
- ◆ Owners of second homes amounted to yet another source of economic strength: those whose primary residences were outside Chatham were paying more than 60 percent of its property taxes.
- ◆ The fishing industry was a “major contributor” to the local economy. Landings in Chatham/P’town added up to “more than two-thirds” of the entire Cape catch.
- ◆ The summer population was “even greater than” a few years before.
- ◆ Biggest impact of those visitors was on the town’s roadways. The Cape Cod Commission forecast that in mid-summer 2005, Route 28 between Route 137 and the rotary will reach gridlock proportions.
- ◆ Population pressures on the environment were headed toward becoming “insidious,” affecting the land, drinking water, waste disposal, and marine embayments. By 2015, reported the Cape Cod Commission, Chatham could expect “significant shortfalls” of water during the summer.
- ◆ Development of the town had reached a point at which it “would be desirable economically, as well as for the natural environment, to adopt policies...designed to manage growth in accordance with plans that protect and nourish the town’s existing economic assets.”
- ◆ The people of Chatham should “anticipate ways to accommodate visitors without threatening the overall attractiveness” of the town.

Mrs. Ecker well knew that skeptics would have to see hard numbers pegged to her analysis. So her study was laced with such figures as these:

- ◆ Between 1970 and 1990, Chatham’s population had grown at a “far more rapid rate – 47 percent – than the rest of Massachusetts – 5.7 percent.

- ◆ Sixteen percent of the town's workers are self-employed, while 4 percent are in landscaping.
- ◆ Of the various vocations, fishing accounts for 12 percent of Chatham workers; wholesale and retail businesses, 10 percent; and those in landscaping and nursery firms, 4 percent.
- ◆ Job growth: Chatham's employment increased almost 50 percent between 1986 and 1995; 1030 new jobs were created, 92 percent of them in service trades.
- ◆ The U. S. Census for 1990 showed that more people come to work in Chatham from outside (1259) than go out to jobs elsewhere (877).
- ◆ Between 1980 and 1995, housing units in Chatham increased one-third, a rate of increase more than double the state's.
- ◆ In 1995's fish landings, Chatham/Provincetown reported 77 percent of Barnstable County's entire catch.
- ◆ The community's residential properties accounted for 91 percent of the tax base. About 60 percent of those properties were owned by out-of-town residents.
- ◆ Chatham's revenues from the room occupancy tax climbed in 1990-95 more than three times the average for Cape Cod as a whole.



A gull seems almost complacent about contents of the fish box in the dockside boat. Mrs. Ecker's findings stated that fishing accounted for 12 percent of the town's workforce, larger than any other occupation.

Gordon Zellner

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Thinking back to that January morning, the study's author doesn't recall that her presentation touched off much discussion. Nor did she get "a lot of feedback" on the 62-page report. But Mrs. Ecker was pleased with press coverage.

In his 27-paragraph article, starting on *The Chronicle's* front page, Tim Wood quoted her as saying, "We hope the study will be used by town officials when making decisions on directions the town should take." She also hoped, the article stated, that her text could be drawn upon for the evolving long range plan. Planner Margaret Swanson agreed. Wood also had a chance to talk to Margo Fenn, Chatham's former planner who had gone on to be chief planner for the Cape Cod Commission.

"It's really great to have a study focus on the town itself," she told the Chatham reporter. Ms. Fenn expressed enthusiasm about using the town census to assemble relevant information, saying, "That will provide comparable data year-to-year, whereas the Federal census is three years out of date before it's released."

Postmortem and Postscript

What happened, once the FCW study began to circulate? Not as much as author Ecker had wanted. She had thought that her statistical assessment might lead the selectmen to "back off" from making annual tourism-related appropriations to the Chamber of Commerce. That didn't happen. And the issue continues to be an irritant for some – it was brought up at Town Meeting in 2002 when speakers, including Debby Ecker, tried unsuccessfully to get voters to turn down a 50 percent increase in appropriation to Chamber functions. (As an addendum, though, Town Manager Hinchey was made aware that this funding was at least irregular in that no contract existed between Town and Chamber.)

At the same time, Mrs. Ecker believes that the Chamber did hear some of the message. "There seems to have been less full frontal promotion of mid-summer tourism by the Chamber," she says, and quotes Executive Director David Bocksch as saying, "We are no longer promoting Chatham, we are managing the tourism we have." Where management begins and promotion leaves off is a little fuzzy. As it stands, the Chamber is heralding tourism in the shoulder seasons (May-June and September-October). Would this have happened, anyway, without the FCW study? It could have, believes Mrs. Ecker, then adds, "I think it brought it more to general consciousness to have this open confrontation over the issues."

The FCW-sponsored economic study had just marked its fifth birthday in January 2002 when a new member of the Long Range Planning Committee

circulated a second study. It addressed what it labeled as errors in earlier documents, then concluded, in Mrs. Ecker's words, that "economic development (in Chatham) should move ahead full throttle." The proponent of this drastically different approach asserted that pressures on Chatham from growth are a fiction. FCW members monitoring the planning process quickly got word to Debby Ecker, and she reached a sobering conclusion: "I realized that I would have to update FCW's economic study in order to challenge this man." As chairman of the LRP committee, Richard Batchelder got a postponement of the issue until May '02. By then, ironically, the revised study's author had moved out of town.

To Mrs. Ecker, that coincidence scarcely closed the book. Rather, she proceeded to update and recast Study # 1. By putting her nose to the grindstone, she finished the revision in six weeks; the first time, it had taken her just about a year. This time, she came up with a restatement that she calls "a better study." Rather than including matters such as preserving natural resources, she focused tightly on Chatham's economy alone.

The first time around, author Ecker had leaned on this premise: "Watch it, folks! You've got to protect the environment if you're going to protect the economy." That could be played down because other chapters in the Long Range Plan were being thoughtfully worked to make that point. In the revision, she visualized a three-legged economy: retirees, second-home owners, and the business community. Adopting a share of planner Margaret Swanson's viewpoints, Mrs. Ecker acknowledged the importance of "economic development focused on helping people of low and moderate incomes, but not just a broad-brush 'Oh, let's bring more business to town.'"

In the year 2003, this profile of Chatham's economy, a product with indisputable social utility, will most likely survive as the LRP's declaration on what that economy should look like. It reflects a process that goes back to 1996 and earlier, a process carried out under the FCW umbrella by one of its most determined board members. But by no means do those two studies add up to FCW's only initiative in its second decade.

¹ From Scholastic, Inc., 1996. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/thanksgiving/mayflower/passlist.htm>. Also from Chris Merrow, assistant director, public relations, Plimouth Plantation, 18 September 2002.

² Ironically, when FCW co-founder Joan Kimball approached Mrs. Ecker in mid-1983 about forming the Friends, she remembers being "rather negative" about it. She felt "there were other organizations in town that could handle some of the issues that Joan was talking about." But Mrs. Ecker soon came around. At this point in the winter of 1996-97, she was FCW's president.

³ What follows is drawn largely from extensive interviews with Deborah Ecker.

⁴ He is Photo Editor of this book; most of its pictures were taken by him.

⁵ Mrs. Ecker had help from several FCW board members. Herbert Bernard plowed through the Yellow Pages, the 1992 town census, and shellfish data, while Lew Kimball and George Olmsted assisted with editorial matters. Financial support for publishing the study came from The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Enhancing a Quality of Life





The admirable expanses of Pleasant Bay
Gordon Zellner

Chapter Seven

Sometimes in the life of institutions, a threatening caller knocks on the door: his name is Change. That happened to Chatham in the mid-Nineties. A Home Rule Charter was adopted; selectmen, formerly full-time, turned into part-timers handling policy matters, but in principle no longer micro-managing the town. Day-to-day tasks fell to the community's first manager, Tom Groux, who came aboard in January 1994. With government organization expanding to meet the times, municipal affairs got to be more complicated. Inevitably, that colored FCW's contacts with a new-fangled hierarchy of town employees.

As it happened, the FCW of the mid-Nineties was changing, too; it was growing up. Directors' hands showed seasoned sailors' calluses. Chances are that helping maneuver the Stage Harbor Management Plan into port would do that for any committee.

In his 1993 President's Report, Lew Kimball analyzed why FCW was undergoing a metamorphosis. Gradually it had turned into a year-round enterprise. He saw that "the majority of the Board and the Executive Committee (were) Chatham residents," no longer only summer folk. Further, he noted, "our growing partnership with the Town's water-related agencies demands that we be able to function on a year-round basis."

The president's conclusion: "We have matured into an organization recognized and respected for its broad range of interests and its ability to take effective action when appropriate." Taking action: there, he drew directly on the "Purpose" in FCW's bylaws (as approved in 1984). Among the organization's responsibilities, the last sentence read, was "initiating action on issues as determined and approved by the membership."

By the 1990's, FCW had put its energies into a handful of initiatives, either building them from the foundation up, or putting its shoulders behind projects constructed by others. From 1994 on, still other concepts have come out of the FCW shop. Different as they have been, each has helped enhance the community's quality of life. These were some of those projects:

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1. You've Come a Long, Long Way, Chart-maker!

Among all ye Cheats that ye World are
dayly abus'd with, none had been more
Scandalous than that of maps.

Sometimes New ones are put out by
Ignorant Pretenders. Sometimes mean and
imperfect forreign Maps are Copi'd and
published by them as their own, and having
no Judgment or Knowledge of what is good
or bad, correct or incorrect...

— From an advertisement on a map made in
1711 by Herman Moll, Dutch-English map-maker.¹

Ever since he was seven, going to camp in Maine, George Olmsted has had a passion for life on the sea under sail. The taste of salt air clung to him through college (Williams '55) and careers in three different fields (paper manufacturing; electronics, turning out components for marine two-way radios, CB radios, radar receivers and the like; and making optical elements). It certainly didn't slacken when his wife, Mary, and he bought a Mill Pond home in 1985, retiring to it ten years later.

Olmsted had learned many things along the way. After Williams, he had gone to Navy Officers Candidate School. One course that stayed with him was navigation. In civilian days, that would continue to be useful, especially on a cruise to Bermuda in 1987, when every hand had to perform many duties. Had he wanted, he could have taken his eighteen-foot Marshall cat over the horizon and back.

But to be that enterprising, he knew he ought to have current local charts. On investigating, he found that he could buy four National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency charts for Chatham-area waters – at \$24 a piece. Price notwithstanding, Olmsted also saw that neighboring sections of those charts were in different scale and did not match up. That led him in 1994 to the Chatham door of a prominent sailor with exceptional blue-water credentials, the late Jim Davis.



Jim Davis, one of Chatham's finest blue-water skippers, joined FCW's George Olmsted in developing a navigational chart (# 50E) that is a "best seller" at local stores. *Courtesy of Mrs. James Davis.*

Like Olmsted, Davis had been sailing and racing since boyhood on everything from his first sailing canoe to other people's ocean-going boats; he came to be a sought-after navigator on races to Bermuda and elsewhere. At six feet eight, he was too tall for World War II service, so, on graduating from Princeton as an engineer, he joined Pan American Airways in West Africa, later transferring to Miami as a flight navigator. Years passed, and he and his wife, Peggy, moved to Chatham – “because of the marvelous waters,” as he put it. There, they fashioned a custom of sailing their Bristol each fall to the Bahamas. He loved nothing more than passage-making and delighted in planning long voyages. Says his wife, “He had enough meticulously numbered charts of waters he'd cruised to wallpaper an entire house. He was a superb navigator, and even in the worst of conditions he was never lost.”

Davis also was a dedicated civic volunteer. Hearing a bit of Olmsted's story, he agreed to help. In their talk, the two resolved to design a chart – under the banner of FCW – that would show all local waterways, from Meeting House Pond in Orleans, on the north, to the tip of Monomoy Islands in the south. To add firepower, the pair invited Harbormaster Peter Ford, marina operator Andy Meincke and fellow boater Lew Kimball to make up a committee with them. The latter three, says Olmsted, “advised, critiqued, and edited,” while Davis and he handled the “engineering.” They discovered soon that most chart-makers worked from NOAA data, even though it often was “five to ten years out of date.”

With preparations well advanced, George Olmsted turned contact man. He approached five of the most important chart publishers, “four of whom listened courteously, said the market was too small, and politely kicked me out.” A touch disheartened, he still had one outfit to go, the one farthest away, Waterproof Charts, in Punta Gorda, Florida. To his surprise, the tone on the other end of the line suddenly turned upbeat. The Florida-based cartographer told Olmsted that he was an in-law of Eric Hilbert, then running Countryside Gardens in Chatham. Another man in the Florida shop actually boated in Chatham during the summer.



Checking the chart that the late Jim Davis and he produced, George Olmsted figures the two of them spent as much as 100 hours -- as volunteers -- to do the necessary contact and research work. *Gordon Zellner*

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The upshot was straightforward: “They agreed to develop a Chatham chart,” says Olmsted. “I said I’d provide all the data they needed from Chatham and Orleans sources.” But what about cost? FCW had been ready to put seed dollars into the project. That subject never came up; Waterproof Charts didn’t mention it at all. Jim Davis’s reaction to Olmsted: “You’ve just stepped into a bucket of honey.”

So far so good. Now the work began. FCW’s “engineering” participants scoured NOAA charts, edited where necessary, and corrected errors and omissions. As an example, the NOAA source showed that Chatham’s most recognizable landmark was a single water tank on Great Hill. There was one mistake: the hill had two towers, not one. To cure this, George Olmsted went to Great Hill with his gear, measured the tank not shown by NOAA, took a compass bearing from the other, and sent the specifics to Waterproof Charts.

Data in hand, the Florida cartographers leaned over the drawing board to turn out a draft. Recalls Olmsted about the result, “It was in boater-friendly scale on two sides of plastic stock, northern waters on one side, southern on the other, and they included a credit for FCW as well as its logo.” Local harbor masters and marina operators studied the draft, and the Davis-Olmsted team fed their suggestions back to Punta Gorda. That enabled Waterproof Charts to produce a first edition in 1996. With copies under their arms, Davis and Olmsted visited various potential sales outlets and found quick acceptance. The new chart, priced at \$20, had been printed on durable stock and could be rolled or folded; equally important, it was smaller than NOAA’s version.

With boat use surging during the bubble years, the chart moved rapidly from store shelf to sea. And even though the economy sagged, sales kept rolling. The Mayflower Shop regularly orders half a gross (72 copies) a year, while Cape Fishermen’s Supply, on Depot Road, usually moves 100 a year (at \$19.95 apiece). What are the particular advantages of this Chatham-area Navigational Chart # 50 E? Says the co-owner of “Cape Fish,” Bob Denn, “it’s accurate, waterproof, and the customer’s buying two at once.”

To Chatham’s director of Coastal Resources, Ted Keon, the product probably is “the most popular waterways chart used by local boaters in this region.” Whenever he has to do a show-and-tell about area waters, he hauls out Chart # 50 E. Keon happens to be one of the prime contacts for updating Waterproof Charts, enabling the firm to publish a new version almost every year.

There’s a larger point. Through their almost 100 hours of work, the FCW team enabled local merchants to serve a specific need, thus carrying out one of the key purposes of the Friends: being “an informational resource for members and other interested parties...” It’s no surprise that commercial outlets

have welcomed FCW's involvement, as Cape Fish's Bob Denn echoes: "I can't say enough about George Olmsted's efforts, his initiative, in putting out this chart." Yes, navigational charts have come a long way since 18th century satirist Jonathan Swift derided the maps of his day:

*So, geographers, in Afric maps,
With savage pictures fill their gaps,
And o'er uninhabitable downs
Place elephants for want of towns.*²

2. Cultivating a Garden for Cape Cod

It may be hard to visualize, but Chatham homes have not always had putting-green lawns and plantings fit for Longwood Gardens. Joshua Nickerson 2nd remembered growing up in the early 1900's with the back of his home more barnyard than anything. "Not everyone had pigs," he wrote in 1987, "but we always had two — 'Napoleon' and 'Caesar' — They met their fate every fall."

When the town assessor counted heads in 1909 on livestock and fowl, he found 187 horses, 117 cows, 1,795 chickens and roosters, and eight common cattle.³ Not much chance that weedless, mole-free lawns and brightly flowered borders could survive that competition.

Chatham native Joe Nickerson pictures the landscape in the late Twenties and early Thirties. As teenagers, his cousin Willard Nickerson Jr. and he worked at the family-owned Old Harbor Inn, above Scatteree Road. A shuffleboard court had been laid out, and when the grass got to be six inches high, Willard and he would mow it down. No esthetics involved, just practicality. No one had watering systems. "If it rained, fine!" recalls Joe Nickerson. "If it didn't, there was nothing they'd do about it."

Then, change started arriving in bulk. When Eldredge Public Library inherited Kate Gould Park in 1932, says Nickerson, "they did a lot of work there, planting trees and making the lawn." Meanwhile, a widening stream of suburbanites flowed down for the summer, importing their tastes (and funds). Among early ones was Roy E. Tomlinson of Montclair, New Jersey.

Originally a Chicagoan, Tomlinson spent a lifetime in the National Biscuit Company, going back to 1902. He was named president in 1917 and chairman in 1929, finally retiring in 1965. Living in a New Jersey suburb, he was used to seeing fine yards enhancing massive homes. He took that standard with him in 1923 when he bought the Rufus W. Page estate on a slope above Old Harbor Road. As Joe Nickerson reconstructs that period, Tomlinson eventually

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had four yard men working for him, including one Buster Crowell, a man of imprecise age who looked after the green house and, on the side, tended a baby alligator in a tank. If the era of manicured, fertilized, automatically watered grounds didn't begin with Roy Tomlinson, he certainly gave that drastic shift in Chatham life style a noteworthy boost.

In the years since Tomlinson's death in 1968, that tradition has pervaded all the Chathams. No matter how small the site, each place must have its foundation-hugging fringe of "meat-ball" shrubs and a lawn. And, to put greenery into the scenery, fertilizers and pesticides are spread across virtually every new yard. Greencape's Sue Phelan and the Cape Cod Commission's hydrologist, Gabrielle Belfit, agree that these chemicals began worrying land protectors in the late 1950's. But, adds Phelan, it wasn't until ten years ago that Cape residents turned into heavy users. That coincided exactly with the building boom. People had to have suburban-style lawns – and workers to look after them.⁴ Today, the Yellow Pages pinpoint at least eleven landscape gardeners with Chatham addresses; others truck their Gravellys from out of town.

More homes meant more septic systems; more homes applied more toxic chemicals on lawn and border. The threatening outcome: greater amounts of nitrogen seeping through soil into the waterways, jeopardizing their age-old life cycles. For years, FCW has stood shoulder to shoulder with people troubled by this ominous result.

Down to the Roots of the Matter

The idea had gone nowhere in Wellesley. But as a resident there at the time, Lew Kimball turned into an emissary, importing the plan to Chatham, where it gained a foothold.

Lee Kimball and William Hayes at the Environmental Demonstration Garden site close to the Oyster Pond beach. Lynn Landy was instrumental in starting the first phase (different grasses) in 1996. At least nine other FCW members worked afterward to expand the original project into a garden.

Gordon Zellner



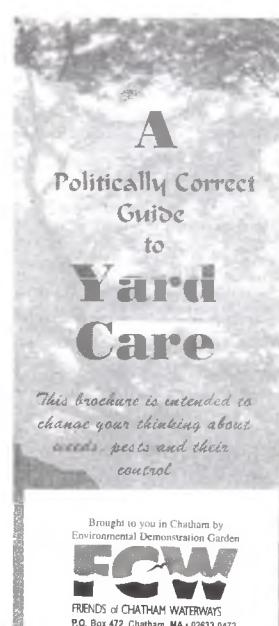
The concept called for creating a demonstration garden to see what plants might last in a harsh location, with minimal water and fertilizer. Now, seven years later, the project remains alive, thanks to a cluster of FCW members ready to do the necessary planting and pruning.

Arriving on the wind in 1996, seeds of this idea could hardly have come at a better time. Local development had reached a frenetic pace. The year before, 357 building permits had been issued; said the Town Report, that total “represents the most permits ever issued in a single year and the largest growth for the town.” Then, ‘96 brought in 332 more requests for permits. Some may have been for new wings, others for renovations. But even if half of the jobs in those two years gave birth to new homes, that would have meant 334 more septic systems and, inevitably, that many more lawns to be watered and medicated with pesticides and fertilizers.

Rather than simply fulminate about risks to soil and water, a group of FCW members decided to put the Wellesley plan to the test. Their project had two phases. First, under the guidance of Lynn Landy and FCW colleagues, a plot northeast of the Oyster Pond parking lot was planted in spring ‘96 with three different grasses. The aim: to see which would survive best with “minimal care, fertilizer and water,” in the words of committee member Lee Kimball.⁵ Mrs. Landy researched the grass choices; Barbara Streibert worked on selecting them, with input from Loft Seed Inc. But before doing anything on site, Mrs. Landy obtained permission from Dan Tobin of Parks and Recreation to use this Town-owned, 10-by-50-foot area – and with that okay came consistent, welcome cooperation from his department. Three years later, with the experiment completed, the grasses were plowed under.

At least one, “Salty,” had not worked and was replaced by the popular Cape Cod Special Mix. But with three years’ experience, the committee decided the test had yielded useful clues and cues for grass growers-to-come.

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1996, the FCW-sponsored committee moved into Phase II, creating a garden, as Mrs. Kimball puts it, “to display perennials that have been proven to be hardy on the Cape, that can survive with



The brochure distributed by FCW to “change your thinking” about weeds and pests and what the home gardener can do to control them.

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little water and fertilizer and minimal care.” Gardens by McVickar dug up the plot, topped it with good garden soil, and put in plants readily available on the Cape, ones, as McVickar explained, with “colors that were pleasing and would go well together.”

In an effort to “go public,” FCW applied for a Cape Cod Community Foundation grant, and that fall of ’96 its request was approved. Friends received \$1,000 to educate people on kindred environmental issues. That meant installing signs, writing pamphlets about the goals of grasses and garden, and making a display in Eldredge Public Library. Meanwhile, several articles appeared in local papers about the demonstration garden.

It wasn’t long before committee regulars could spot which plants thrived and which were unhappy in the wind-blown Oyster Pond plot. Lee Kimball provides this wrap-up:

“Cardinal flower did not make it through the first winter. *Dianthus* has gradually disappeared...By 2002, the grass (*panicum vergatus*) had been removed. We found it to be “invasive” – bits of it are still popping up in the garden. Butterfly bush (*buddleia*) has been added. The yarrow (*achillea*) has moved about in the garden and into the lawn! The goldenrod has thrived and has been thinned back. Part of the *rosa rugosa* will be removed and replaced; it has not bloomed well and has vicious thorns.



The environmental garden as it looked during the spring of 2003. Some species did not care for the site, but others, such as *gaillardia*, turned out to be a “great success.” A species of *rosa rugosa* had to be removed: too many thorns, and it didn’t bloom well.

Added have been *gaillardia*, a great success; black-eyed Susan (*rudbeckia*), a fall beauty; chrysanthemums, shasta daisies, *heliopsis*, and bachelor button. Daffodil bulbs have naturalized and more will be planted. Dahlias have been planted, but must be removed annually and replaced in the spring. They do not survive the winter.”

Periodic losses may be disappointing, but the FCW garden persists in 2003. Jeanne Eaves and Mrs. Kimball work as the regulars on the case, joined recently by William Hayes (“He has both knowledge and a strong back,” says Lee Kimball). For interested passersby, the plants are identified, and a sign explains the garden’s purpose. FCW’s yearly budget for the project: \$250, with the largest cost being mulch (to hold any water the plants may get, add attractiveness to the garden, and keep the weeds down).

“It’s my belief,” says Mrs. Kimball, “that the garden has had some value, as people have become aware of the environmental damage caused by over-fertilization. Observers can see a garden that is attractive in spite of abuse by the elements, minimal watering and little care.”

Even so, this may not be a project in perpetuity. The FCW people knew when the grasses were first planted that the Town had plans for a first-flush runoff catch basin at the Oyster Pond. Where would it be built? Right where the demonstration garden and adjacent park stand today. So, grass and garden could be only temporary. But Lee Kimball is reminded that while the basin may still be “in the works,” it’s been seven years since the FCW initiative took root. That gives FCW the license to enjoy having steadily heeded the 1759 dictum of Voltaire: “We must cultivate our garden.”

3. The Environment: *Everyone’s* Subject

When John Geiger stepped down from FCW’s board in 2001 after two terms of admirable, exhausting service, he took one reality with him: he was the only board member with children in the local schools. Sixteen-year-old Megan attended the high school, while Jack, eleven, was in the middle school.

Geiger’s exit could have deprived the board of insights on public education in town. But that wasn’t the case. In fact, the directors had already been in regular contact with the school system, helping to underwrite instruction on the delicate fabric of our environment. Targeted FCW grants, born in 1999, are now an annual commitment.

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Actually, FCW had made dollar awards to individual students for a few years before '99. Named the Alice Hiscock Grants, they honored an extraordinary citizen of the town. Among longtime residents, her story is legend. Moving to Chatham in 1952, Mrs. Hiscock was tapped almost over night to serve on the Planning Board; she was active on that stage for fifteen years. She also put in 20 years on the Conservation Commission. When she died on the first day of spring in March 2001, she was known in every corner of the community as a tireless, fearless advocate of all ways of conserving and shielding the environment.⁶

Unfortunately, the Hiscock Grants withered on the vine. Then, at the June 1999 FCW board meeting, an effort came to life to restore them as a new species. A budget measure for the next year included this item: "...the addition of monies for special projects to be called the Hiscock Grants for environmental outreach." The motion carried unanimously. (As a backdrop, at this time, as FCW directors knew, Friends of Pleasant Bay (FPB) was giving money to schools for environmental projects. It was an enterprising investment in the future.)

By October '99, FCW directors Ilene Bendas and Pat Tarnow had stepped up the pace on instituting an education-grant proposal for Chatham schools. They had met with Superintendent of Schools Dr. Vida Gavin and others. What were the school system's needs in environmental instruction? What could teachers do "on topics pertaining to the waterways of the Town"? As a model, there were those existing FPB grants.

Very soon the FCW concept had headway. Mrs. Bendas and Mrs. Tarnow talked further with teachers and FPB people, then drafted an application form. When the Friends board convened in January 2000, Mrs. Bendas reported that a grant of \$3,000 could be made that spring for activities in the school year 2000-01. Her fellow directors, reacting warmly, approved the money without dissent. Shortly after, grant packets went to all Chatham teachers, against a return deadline of April 1, 2000.



Science teacher Jean Avery of Chatham High School, concentrating on a class experiment, won the first FCW education grant in 2000. It was to help her refine the six-year-old Frost Fish Creek Water Quality project.

Gordon Zellner

Within days, the team had picked a winner: Jean Avery, chemistry teacher at Chatham High. Her proposal called for improving the Frost Fish Creek Water Quality field project, already six years old. She requested five items of equipment to help refine students' measurements. Her goal was practical: "to determine whether predicted threats to (the) Creek such as failed septic systems, fertilizer and pesticide use, and road-runoff, pose any definite danger to the water quality of the creek." In prior seasons, student testing had shown "consistently elevated...levels of nitrates...and (varying) fecal coliform levels." Year in, year out, these investigations had shown enough promise to stand as "an integral part of the chemistry curriculum," in Mrs. Avery's words.

By the time EPA's regional coordinators visited Frost Fish Creek in October 2002, the teenagers' "QAPP" (quality assurance project plan) had already earned the Federal agency's endorsement. That was meaningful: no other high school in the region had an EPA-approved QAPP, as Tim Wood reported in *The Chronicle*. Diane Switzer, EPA Regional volunteer monitoring coordinator, explained why this was of value. "We can't be everywhere," she said. "These people are our eyes and ears." Because the quality of the Frost Fish Creek data was assured, she added, those statistics might soon be posted in a national water quality monitoring database. "That's pretty good for a high school program," she concluded. Partisans could label that a modest understatement.

Jean Avery's project got the FCW education-support project going. In due time, the program welcomed the energies of two more directors, Jeanne Eaves and Lew Kimball, who joined in awarding funds for these successive activities:

- ◆ **School year 2001-02:** Sixth Grade Middle School teacher Cindy Macomber received \$1,860 to design and build an indoor watershed model of the Lover's Lake/Ryder's Cove ecosystem, following the

Teacher Erik Berg with three of his science students at Jackknife Cove. He needed \$500 to buy items of equipment for his "Marine Biodiversity" project. FCW met that request as one of its education grants for 2001-02.

Gordon Zellner



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flow of water from Great Hill northeast to Lover's Lake and winding up in Ryder's Cove. As *The Chronicle* told it, she anticipated that the model "will be a powerful way to motivate students to do hands-on research and experimentation in their own community watershed." At the same time, Erik Berg, science teacher at the High School, was awarded \$500 to enhance his "Marine Biodiversity" project; the money covered purchases of more than a dozen items of equipment. Berg's endeavor had these goals: (1) catalog the marine biodiversity of the Muddy Creek estuary; (2) analyze any trends in that diversity over the span of the study; and (3) analyze the effects of environmental factors (water temperature, light intensity) on biodiversity. Berg has his own web page for reporting results of this ongoing research. (To support his activity, he also received \$3,000 from Friends of Pleasant Bay.)

- ◆ **School year 2002-03:** A total of \$4,000 met two different purposes. As lead teachers in the Fourth Grade proposal, Diane Littlefield and art specialist Linda Simonitsch requested \$3,000 for their elementary-level project called "Connecting with the Waterways of Chatham," integrating art, science and language arts for study of local nature and environs. FCW decided to aim the remaining \$1,000 toward purchases of books, periodicals and instructional materials — in Dr. Gavin's words, "to increase awareness and understanding of environmental issues."



FCW's funds for educational support have made it possible for Chatham High's teachers to enrich the field learning experiences of students like these. Items covered include waders, chemicals, and transportation to off-campus sites.

Courtesy Jean Avery

In mid-fall '02, *The Cape Codder* caught up with the Fourth Grade field work, titled "Nature Journaling." Setting up shop at Jackknife Cove, the boys and girls sketched whatever plant and animal life they found. Then, said the newspaper, "They will use the information and drawings...with other research to write expository reports on the waterways of Chatham."

- ◆ **School Year 2003-04:** Grants of \$1,000 will go to each of the three schools to be applied to these respective project areas:

**** The High School's** Science Department, with supervision by teacher Jean Avery, will "continue and strengthen" its nine-year-old Frost Fish Creek Water Quality Project. An estuarine tributary, the creek feeds into Pleasant Bay, considered to be "one of the most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats on the East Coast." Mrs. Avery will be working in partnership with the Pleasant Bay Resource Management Alliance, under the guidance of Bob Duncanson, who runs Chatham's water quality lab. The funds will pay for additional chemicals and one pair of hip waders.

**** At the Middle School,** Principal Rosemary Williams and Cassandra Kloumann, instructional leader, intend to use the grant to enable more students to take part in study of the local seashore environment. Working at a site such as Oyster Pond, students will record data about specific areas visited in previous seasons. They will have a chance to observe weather, soil and water temperatures, watersheds, tides, wildlife, and plant life. Out of the \$1,000 grant, \$700 will cover added transportation, while the balance will pay for waders.

**** The Elementary School** undertaking, titled "W is for Wetlands: A Chatham Waterways Alphabet," will involve hands-on activities designed to achieve various goals. These include improving students' understanding of the wetland's importance, promoting observational skills and the ability to express those observations through language and arts, and helping identify problems impacting wetlands and liable to harm life forms living there. Working together, students will pick items or objects whose names coincide with letters of the alphabet. At the end, these learners will use technology to assemble a finished

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hard-copy or electronic report. The FCW grant will be used to hire an environmental educator, who will augment the instruction of the teacher in charge, Beverly Peninger, and others.

Superintendent Gavin warmly endorses FCW's education grants. "It's a wonderful project," she exclaims. "It gives us that little extra funding (to address) these important environmental issues that affect us all." In similar vein, the mother of Megan and Jack Geiger, Assistant Town Accountant Nancy Geiger, is unequivocal in praising this FCW undertaking. She called the funding "vital to the educational programs in Chatham," adding, "Since Chatham is surrounded by water on three sides, it's very important for students to learn to understand the marine life around them. Both our children have been on field trips to various sites like Oyster Pond and Jackknife Cove."

For those with a yen for statistical underpinnings, it's enough to say that this young FCW program has already brought invaluable hands-on learning to more than 270 boys and girls in Chatham schools. As Nancy Geiger puts it, what could be more vital for tomorrow's citizens in a town with such a fragile, ever-shifting natural environment?



Jackknife Cove as seen by infrared film. It is an important site for ongoing science experiments by Chatham students, with financing by FCW. *E. Linsey Grey*

4. To Honor the Protectors

When you look closely at the gears and pistons of Chatham's governmental affairs, does Chatham's battalion of volunteers really make a difference? For two officials in a position to know, the answer is a firm "Yes!"

School Superintendent Vida Gavin had come to the community in 1991. Right away she wanted help to draft a five-year plan for the schools. Sending out a call, she was amazed to see how many people signed up – 87 in all, everyone a volunteer. Not long after, two women suggested to her that parents might be willing to join teachers on the firing line. Today, 104 are registered to serve as "Volunteers in Public Schools." Dr. Gavin speaks candidly about their value. "We can't do it alone," she says. "We need everybody out there, because our children are our most valuable commodity."⁷

Selectman Douglas Ann Bohman has been able to assess close up the efficacy of town volunteers – through her twelve years on the Finance Committee and ten subsequent years on the Board of Selectmen. In the latter position, she's often teamed with others to interview candidates for committees appointed by selectmen. The town has 40 of these committees, from the Airport Commission, to the Zoning Board of Appeals. All 250 of their members serve without pay. Are they of value? "This town couldn't run without them," says "Dougie" Bohman. "It's just too involved. We really need those volunteers."

But that's not the end of the story. Chatham also has at least 20 more committees independent of Town government. Among them: the Chatham Historical Society, the Conservation Foundation, and Cape Cod Concert Opera. And again, the people named to those boards are all volunteers. That goes for FCW, as well.

Inevitably, a time comes when a director's term ends, and it's farewell and off into the sunset. Maybe fellow board members give a round of applause, or approve a letter of appreciation from the reigning president. Maybe the departing warrior will feel that the ultimate reward will come in heaven. Then again, maybe not.

Friends of Chatham Waterways decided in 2000 that a 30-second roll of applause wasn't enough to celebrate years of unpaid engagement in trying – at times, scrapping may be a better word – to conserve local waterways and nearby land. Like a kayak probing Stage Harbor marshes, a concept moved slowly into FCW consciousness. At the September '00 board meeting, a voice suggested that "perhaps an award should be made to those who make an environmental difference."⁸ At that point, this gossamer disappeared behind the moon; other issues

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dominated the subsequent meetings, especially the controversial revision of the all-too-inscrutable Zoning Bylaw.

Even so, progress on spelling out the idea of an award went forward. By November 2000, establishing an annual one was listed among sixteen project ideas targeted by FCW for action. Behind the scenes, these details were defined in the following weeks:

- ◆ The honor would be called the “Captain’s Award.” Former Navy man George Olmsted – creativity, it would seem, was one of his Military Occupational Specialties — found the name in his inner recesses, and proposed that its symbol be a Navy captain’s shoulder board.
- ◆ Criteria were agreed upon by early January ‘01. The yearly award, to be presented at FCW’s annual meeting, might go to an individual, group or organization. It would honor, as an early information flyer put it, “distinguished service in protecting and preserving Chatham’s waterways and neighboring lands.” And further:
- ◆ A plaque would be designed and ultimately hung in a prominent location.
- ◆ Of importance, current FCW board members would not be eligible. Not stated but understood, a candidate would not have to be an FCW member to qualify.

In 2000, the Friends put together a project aimed at honoring individuals or groups for distinguished service in protecting local waterways and adjacent lands. Called the “Captain’s Award,” it was the first of its kind to be presented annually. Copies of this poster appeared in town to beat the drum for nominations.



**Who should win
THE "CAPTAIN'S AWARD"
FOR CONSERVATION?**

Friends of Chatham Waterways (FCW) has set up the "Captain's Award" to honor distinguished service in protecting and preserving Chatham's waterways and neighboring lands.
The award will be presented at FCW's Annual Meeting on August 9, 2001.

MAKE YOUR NOMINATION NOW!
Help us pick the most deserving individual or group.
Send your nomination to Rob Carlisle, Box 316, Chatham, MA 02633
Please include a full explanation of what your nominee has done to help conserve the town's unique natural resources

NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 9
If you have any questions, call Rob Carlisle at 508-945-9160

Bear in mind that no handbook told how to make a reality of such an award. So, while the details were falling into place, directors were still off-shore on how the winner would be chosen. By April '01, George Olmsted had a solution: he'd ask two senior town employees to join him in picking the candidate, with a final yea or nay from the full FCW board. Those two men were Chairman of Selectmen Ron Bergstrom and Ted Keon, director of Coastal Resources.

The author – in Olmsted's term, the project "spark plug" — took off to get a plaque made. An excellent Chatham woodworker, Michael Stello, accepted the challenge, including trimming the mahogany perimeter in white nautical rope. He also fashioned a smaller board to house FCW's gift to the first winner, a tide clock.

By the June meeting of FCW's board, six nominations had been received. That was fine, but some steam arose over the selection procedure. Was it a "unilateral decision" to invite outsiders to take part? "More or less" was Olmsted's reply, stated the minutes. Why hadn't the executive committee been consulted? In fact, it hadn't, but it would be in the future.

At any rate, the more people thought about it, the better they liked the choice for the 2001 Captain's Award. He was marketing consultant Richard Miller, Chatham resident since 1984. He had served the town memorably in chairing the committee that drew up the critical Stage Harbor Management Plan; he also headed the steering committee formed to draft the Pleasant Bay Resource Management Plan. The Captain's Award was announced at FCW's annual meeting August 9. Later, the large plaque with Dick Miller's name on it went on the wall in the Town Manager's outer office.



Richard Miller receives the first Captain's Award in 2001 from FCW President George Olmsted. Miller was cited for, among other achievements, chairing the committee that produced the Stage Harbor Management Plan.

Photo by Jim Blankenship



FCW's Olmsted presents the 2002 Captain's Award to Douglas B. Wells. He has served the community as chair of the Conservation Commission and also the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Photo by Jim Blankenship

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Slow-paced spring was just appearing in 2002 when FCW appealed for nominations for year number 2. This time the list had six candidates, four of them carryovers from 2001, two of them new. And this year, the selection process would be different: the task would fall to the six-member executive committee. That seemed sound, but when the group met on June 14, it had shrunk to two (Maureen Vokey and Lew Kimball), plus the “spark plug,” the author; George Olmsted, away at that point, voted by proxy. Proceeding anyway, that nucleus ended by picking Douglas B. Wells, long a member and chairman of the Conservation Commission, and more recently chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals. He received the award at FCW’s August 12 annual meeting.

In spite of inevitable growing pains, the Captain’s Award was here to stay. And from the evidence, it *did* fill a void. Many of Chatham’s residents have cringed over suburban creep in their town. Until 2001, volunteers who have invested long hours trying to conserve and preserve waterways and bordering land have had far less visibility than the unavoidable builders’ signs cropping up beside huge tumuli of earth, fresh foundations, and Sand Castles. Perhaps the Captain’s Award can help shore up the town’s all-too-vulnerable quality of life by applauding someone who has given his or her energy and time without pay to saving Chatham water and land for future generations.

Chatham’s Quality of Life: At Risk?

It began quietly, with no fanfare. An editorial column in *The Chronicle* inspired a Letter to the Editor. A cluster of FCW directors liked its message, and nine months later, the Friends staged one of the most ambitious projects in its history. That undertaking asked what residents of all neighborhoods thought about their town’s quality of life, an essence that has been luring visitors since the middle of the 19th century.

Written in early October 1997, the original column ran under *Chronicle* Associate Editor Tim Wood’s byline. In it he urged townspeople to think seriously about what change might be doing to their community. Two weeks later, on October 23, *The Chronicle* printed a letter from a resident who’d moved to Chatham in 1989. Thanking Wood for putting the town on Yellow Alert, the writer went on this way:

...(W)ho in this ever more-crowded community worries about ephemeral quality of life...? Perhaps we need yet another volunteer committee to frame with both reason and style the issues of quality. Give this "Quality of Life Council" nine months to poll a sample of residents and produce its findings in nonacademic text...⁹

Actually, that's pretty much the way things worked out. The chief exceptions: the nine months turned out to be eleven, and the nonexistent council became Friends of Chatham Waterways, which, by dint of its independence, can pick up an idea and run with it, if directors say "Go!" In this case, they did, and without vacillating, they put on spiked shoes and headed for the cinder track. Frankly, they had to get out of the starting blocks fast. Otherwise, wrapping up the project by September '98 could have been a disheartening misfire.

To start, a pair of board members, Barbara Streibert and John Geiger, decided that looking into the town's quality of life (QOL) was important and tailor-made for FCW. The team had both the drive and the strength to move the project forward. Graduate of Vassar with an M. A. degree in teaching from Wesleyan, Mrs. Streibert taught high school literature and writing from 1963 to 1980 (with time off when each of her two daughters was born). Losing heart about educating teenagers, she responded to her instinct to be a manager, jumped ship, and signed on with cable TV in Newton, Massachusetts; in due course, she was Continental Cablevision's director of government relations for the eastern region, doing franchising. When the charm wore off,



FCW Board member Barbara Streibert, shown at her Greensleeves potting bench, was instrumental in launching the 1998 Quality of Life project, along with another FCW director, John Geiger. *Gordon Zellner*



A new member of FCW's board in '98, John Geiger thought the time was ripe to "canvass the community and see what it had to say" about issues such as the pace of development. *Gordon Zellner*

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she homed in on another instinct: to be a serious gardener. So, when Small the Florist on West Main Street, Chatham, came up for sale, she and her husband, Sam, (they had been Chatham vacationers for years) bought it and opened Greensleeves in 1991.

As for John Geiger, he'd graduated from University of Colorado with a B. A., and had run a ski area for five years before traveling east to Chatham. Looking about for challenges to match his interests, he signed on with the Conservation Commission, winding up as chairman for nine years. Later, he accepted a bid to join the Historic Business District Committee; he also went on the Stage Harbor Implementation Committee to help put the plan into effect. While that plan was materializing, he learned what FCW was doing to energize the process. As a natural outcome, by 1997 he was invited to join the FCW board, of which Mrs. Streibert was already a member. At the time, quality of life was in the news. "Barbara and I started talking about it," he recalls, "and figured it might be a really good thing for FCW to take on." But their thinking had a more specific dimension. Says Geiger, "It was clear that FCW's board was getting more involved in...what the Board of Selectmen is doing and what it's not doing that it should be doing." And he added:

*We realized that with that kind of momentum
beginning, it was a perfect time to canvass
the community and see what it had to say
about all these issues.*

As 1997 marched into a new year, the Geiger/Streibert concept went before the other FCW directors. They liked what they heard and told the pair to sail on. Later, Deborah Ecker enlisted in their effort. With that strong a crew on deck, there wasn't going to be any turning back. Fortunately, *The Cape Cod Chronicle* welcomed the project, too, and said it would cooperate.

At FCW's first board meeting of '98, on January 12, details could now be discussed. The two proponents had prepared a list of questions to put to residents, questions about how people defined the town's QOL. If townsfolk replied, *The Chronicle* offered to run their responses in the paper. It also indicated that, stimulated by Geiger/Streibert's visits to school principals, it would carry essays and drawings sent in by school children. The whole point, said FCW President Kurt Hellfach, was "to raise people's consciousness about the many special traits of this town."



By February 1998, *The Chronicle* had thrown itself into the new FCW initiative assessing citizens' feelings about the quality of life in town. Some of the responses were quoted in this February issue of the paper. The intense effort pointed toward an all-morning wrap-up session in September.

FCW's newest venture seemed to catch the public's fancy. For its February 12 issue, officially launching the undertaking, *The Chronicle* carried a sixteen-paragraph lead story under the headline: "Chasing Chatham's Elusive Quality of Life." In parallel, the paper quoted excerpts from letters that had already arrived. As president of the Art of Charity Foundation, Otis T. Russell said, "The essence of Chatham is that she is not an instant community. She has a sense of history, a sense of promise and a sense of place." Carole and Louis Maloof — they called themselves "Retired," but their regular performances as singer and actor belied that — wrote with a poetic lilt: "We like Chatham because it's 'The First Stop of the East Wind.' We like the whitecaps on the harbor and the sound of surf on North Beach...The smell of the marsh at low tide. In winter, the loneliness of the beaches with our golden retrievers running..." When this phase of the project ended, it had logged in sixteen essays and poems from residents, as well as essays and drawings from 78 elementary school children.



Art of Charity President Otis Russell was happy to write about Chatham. Giving the town a feminine gender, he said, "She is not an instant community (and) has a sense of history . . ."

The Chronicle

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Moving from spring into early summer '98, two more steps to gather information were taken: a questionnaire was designed and sent to 100 individuals (one out of three replied), and face-to-face interviews, coordinated by Mrs. Ecker, were conducted. Starting on July 21, in little more than a month, she and the author taped interviews with 24 men and women — from store-owner Kathy Doyle and artist Jack Garver, to Planning Board Chairman Earl “Skip” Kendrick, builder and teacher Robert Stello, and school nurse Pat Vreeland. It was an intense but productive period.

The pace hardly slackened with all this raw stock on the table. One large commitment remaining called for scheduling a daytime meeting to end the project: it would draw out residents further on risks to the town's quality of life and possible solutions. More than 200 would be invited to CBI where, once again, General Manager Chris Diego offered to supply both facilities and food. An arrangement was made, as well, to pull in a facilitator (Michael LeFevre) to run the all-morning session. The date: September 21, a Monday.



Cape Cod Chronicle, April 16, 1995

Chatham's Quality Of Life Independence Day Parade Theme

Event Promises A Break With Tradition

By Tim Wood
CHATHAM — This will not be your parents' Fourth of July parade.

Major changes are in store for the town's traditional Independence Day celebration. Cash prizes for p floats and a rock and roll concert at the end of the parade, and a theme that stresses Chatham's quality of life are all on the drawing board.

"It's going to be a nice hometown parade," said Mayor Fryer, chairman of the Public Greenways Committee, the town-sponsored group in charge of organizing the event, which attracts many thousands of people to Chatham's Main Street and is one of the major events of the summer.

"Basically, the parade's for Chatham," said Fryer, spinning that over enough money of those who line up parade routes and those who line up the parade — the committee is working to gear it toward local residents by involving more community groups, such as in elementary school bands. "It's nice to do this for everybody, but we're trying to bring it back to Chatham."

That's reflected in this year's theme, suggested by the Friends of Chatham Waterways Committee as "highlight the things that make Chatham's quality of life special." Selected songs will also highlight the theme.

Fryer said About \$14,000 in town funds will be used to help pay for six to 10 local bands, rather than bringing the outside in from around the state and New England.

Never fear, however: The old standards will be there, including the Chatham Band. But this year, the town band will be asked to play prior to the parade at the Whit Thorton Bandstand in Kane Gould Park, and join the parade in progress.

In another break with tradition, parade participants won't gather for a big cocktail after the event. Instead, Fryer said that local service organizations, such as the Lions Club, are being asked to set up picnics at Veterans Field, where the parade terminates. And instead of parade participants such as the Highland Light Scottish Band entertaining the crowds during the time between the end of the parade and the award ceremony at the parade terminus, the 100 and 500 rock and roll band Fred's and the Mayday's will perform.

"We're going to expand the soul of the parade," Fryer said.

A grand marshal has yet to be chosen. Fryer said the committee will make their selection soon.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Public Greenways Committee, which, established by a group of people meeting at the Chatham Square after celebrating the 50th year. Fryer said a celebration will be planned later in the season for those who have contributed and participated in committee-sponsored events over the years.

In the meantime, the group is mulling assembling a history of the Independence Day parade to provide a record of parade marshals, prize winners and other aspects of the event.

Fryer added that anyone wishing to contribute information or help out with the parade should contact him at 945-4954.

Essays: Chatham's Quality Of Life

The following essays were written in response to the Friends of Chatham Waterways Committee's "highlight the things that make Chatham's quality of life special." Selected essays will also highlight the theme.

ring, and perhaps people who live elsewhere most of the year are able to see that a bit more clearly. I'm reminded of it whenever I get back after spending a few days in the village. There's no better way to understand what makes Chatham special than to live here.

By April '98, the "QOL" project was gathering speed, and now and again, *The Chronicle* offered a window on progress and what people thought about their town. It's "all about ebb and flow," said Brian Morris.

School nurse Pat Vreeland was one of 24 women and men interviewed for a QOL booklet that FCW intended to publish by summer's end. Few have a more intimate view than she about teenage tensions. *Gordon Zellner*

Meanwhile, the project committee went to work on filtering the testimony into a booklet. It was titled "Storm Warnings." Town Manager Tom Groux, feeling that was a little stark, suggested adding as a subhead store-owner Jon Vaughn's perception: "A Quaint Village with an Urban Problem." The following 69 pages were brightened handsomely by Jack Garver's drawings and fifteen of Tim Wood's photos.

In her "Summary Notes," Mrs. Ecker advised readers that the report "relies entirely on the actual statements of those interviewed...to convey town residents' messages about Chatham's quality of life, the risks to it, and possible solutions for the town's problems."

To the question "What do you think is special about life in Chatham?" residents waxed poetic. Peggy Davis spoke of "The miles of shoreline with a beach for any wind," while in John Whelan's perception, it was "The dramatic beauty of the ocean." Edie Hamilton's view: "The houses, hydrangeas, picket fences, hedges." Asked if there were any risks to Chatham's QOL, 53 percent tagged "over-development" as the biggest dilemma. To former selectman Ben Goodspeed, the many challenges stemmed from the "Developers!" As for Scott Tappan, the "greatest threat to Chatham is nitrogen loading from Title V septic systems." What might be solutions? "A close look at the remaining open space," said Bill and Roz Coleman, "and protecting it by buying it or increasing the lot size to, say, five acres." Barbara Knowlton and Steve Wardle favored a stern action: "A moratorium on all new buildings." Jean and Andrew Young had several suggestions. Among them, the first was: "Implement a building 'cap' of no more than 75 to 100 permits per year for any new construction or additions to existing structures..."

The booklet's conclusion pointed up who the respondents were: "they are representative; mostly full-time residents...These men and women live throughout Chatham...and they have varying backgrounds and interests. (They



"Storm Warnings," summary of quality-of-life opinions collected by the FCW project, had a subtitle: "A Quaint Village with an Urban Problem." Through the report, a diverse sample of residents told it as they saw it. A key comment about Chatham came from Theresa Malone, director of Monomoy Community Services: "It's still a gift."

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deserve respect for their ideas – they know their town and love it. These ideas may work.” Solutions to the litany of problems were to be augmented at the final meeting in September 1998.

Concentration on a Synthesis

It was one of those late-summer mornings on the Lower Cape, with a perfection of blue sky and waves dancing offshore that would hold the eye in a *Travel* magazine photo spread. By 8:30, more than 125 men and women had congregated in CBI’s meeting hall. They included natives and wash-ashores, present and former selectmen, realtors and store owners, people from the Non-Voting Taxpayers Advisory Committee, Town Manager Tom Groux and department heads, and individuals like the Chief of Police, who read an apt quotation from Somerset Maugham to explain how much Chatham appealed to him.

The meeting never stopped moving. By the time it ended at 1:30 P. M., 48 different individuals had spoken out– almost 40 percent. If there was discord, it was not rancorous. And at the end, several praised the long morning’s exchanges. Realtor Norman Howes, a seasoned public servant, observed, “Any committee in the world would give its eye teeth to have the input that can be given to the committees from this meeting as representatives of different parts of the community.” Marina Zellner, a League of Women Voters volunteer, voiced a strong appeal. “It would be a very sad day for Chatham if we all left here,” she said, “and went on about our business. I hope you won’t...**Do** something with all this information! I think it’s very important for Chatham.”

What was the spectrum of this information? It had two basic fractions: one cited many ways in which the town’s quality of life was in jeopardy, the other, a wide span of possible cures. Early on, 87-year-old Francesca Stone reminded the audience that, “we waste so much water in Chatham.” For one thing, she stated firmly, “People don’t fix leaks. Every woman should learn how to put a new washer into a faucet. If you don’t know how, I’ll be glad to come and teach you.” It’s small wonder that people were openly appreciative.



One of those speaking at the September wrap-up to the QOL project, Marina Zellner, appealed to the 125 or more on hand. “Do something with all this information! It’s very important for Chatham.”

Gordon Zellner

Mrs. Stone may have been the first on hand worried about Chatham's tenuous water supply, but by no means was she the only one.

FCW board member George Olmsted pinpointed words from "Storm Warnings" that, to him, epitomized the challenges facing Chatham: "congestion...too many people...too many cars...too many houses...over-development." Planning Board Vice-Chairman Dave Donnan relayed his absent daughter's concern that "we really need to concentrate on the preservation of our shoreline and all the marshes around town."

Preservation was also expounded by store-owner Jon Vaughn. "We need to be better stewards of the land," he said. "Every time we construct a new home or a new store, we take more water out of the ground and we put more sewage into it. We are fouling our own nest." Maybe it was time, he ventured, to think about a moratorium on local building. Later, a member of the Non-Voting Taxpayers Advisory Committee echoed that sober view: stopping issuance of building permits might give the town a better chance to finish writing various crucial management plans.

And so the presentations went until 10:15, when a break was called; the rest of the morning would deal with solutions. Early in the second half, Town Planner Margaret Swanson told of progress being made on formal responses to some of the problems: drafting a long range plan, implementing the Stage Harbor Management Plan, and the ongoing study of waste water management.

One essential in pursuing solutions, remarked Patricia Siewert, a member of FCW's board, should be building a legal defense fund. That would enable Chatham to fight against those people "who want to do something that's not right...as far as buildings go, hire lawyers, (who) dominate the scene, and the plans are accepted."

Could a change in the Zoning Bylaw help the town? This question, addressed by Dave Donnan of the Planning Board, was the first time that morning that zoning was given the spotlight. Of great concern to him, people seemed to be building on marginal lots, ones that "may be able to support a septic system, but can they



The complex subject of zoning was brought up at the meeting by long-time Planning Board member Dave Donnan. His concern: people were building on marginal lots. Maybe they can support a septic system, he said, "but can they support a well?" *The Donnan Family Archive*

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support a well?” That well, he explained, should provide potable water for an entire household. He urged that the town adopt a policy on this, either through a Board of Health regulation — probably a faster avenue of the two options, he felt — or by changing the Zoning Bylaw.

Representing the Board of Health, Jean Young welcomed Donnan’s suggestion. “It’s a great idea,” she said. “I’d love to see it happen, but can you legally hold that up in court?” Her postscript: “We’re going to have to have darn good lawyers out there.” At the same time, local boards and agencies facing these stiff challenges would have to be supported by Town government. Selectman Ron Bergstrom spoke directly to that issue. “I’ll promise you that whatever I have to do, I’ll back you up,” he asserted. Veteran Board of Health member Paul Kelley emphasized a parallel note: “You have to empower the individuals who are taking the risk, to take the risk. We need legal support!”

The town needed something else, according to William Schweizer. “Do away with grandfathering,” he appealed. “If we could eliminate that, we could change all the zoning in this town.” A further insight on that issue came from Chatham’s first planner, Margo Fenn, sitting in as an observer from the Cape Cod Commission. A provision in the act forming the commission addresses grandfathering, she advised. It’s the section allowing a town to set up a “district of critical planning concern.” Once a “DCPC” is established, regulations adopted “are not subject to grandfathering provisions...It’s a tool the town should be aware of.”

Chatham’s director of Community Development, Kevin McDonald, picked up on the zoning matter, offering a judgment and some advice. “It would be easy,” he said, “to characterize our Zoning Bylaw as more lenient than any other I’ve ever seen.” He then underscored the role of the Planning Board as being “ready to listen to anyone with any proposals.” Those might have to do with density. If you want to control density, he said, “you need to address the smaller lots.” Further:

“Obviously, tear-downs are a concern...in the smaller neighborhoods. Those can be addressed also, as we’ve tried to do with...new regulations...of reducing lot coverage from 25 percent down to 15 percent. But really, attention has to be paid to how many lots you want to grandfather.”

Go to the Planning Board, he stressed, adding, “If you present the right things to them, they have to sign them.”

Other solutions to Chatham's well-identified problems came from all sides. Restrict the size of trucks downtown. Tell guests to conserve precious water. Get involved in completing the Long Range Plan. Try to cut down on day trippers. Limit B&B's to one to two units. Make buses park behind Main Street School and pay a fee. Protect the town's beleaguered fishermen. That's just a sample.

With the meeting winding down, facilitator LeFevre posed a question: "How do we move this process forward?" Distilled answers pointed to the importance of ongoing communication. Store-owner Kathy Doyle favored taking comments generated that day and then "come up with some plans." Several concurred. To realtor Howes, the next step should be "dispensing (the morning's) information to the various committees responsible for the (many) issues... We should make the results known the best way possible."

As meeting chairman, FCW President Kurt Hellfach expressed the hope that the five-hour session was "just the beginning (of) a process that we can take...into other parts of town...We ought to really move forward on evolving a program." His benedictory comment: "It was a wonderful experience." In many ways, it was. Inevitably, speakers had axes to grind, some defensive, others off-base, still others less than realistic. But no one made a more touching point than octogenarian Francesca Stone:

"Think about everyone except yourself...Forget our personal priorities...That's what the forefathers who settled this country did...What is important is to keep this town functioning as a whole and leave something for those who come after me...Do what's best for the town."

No speaker in that long morning's kaleidoscopic proceedings received any warmer applause. Mrs. Stone's appeal had been the only one aimed at residents' better nature.

When the FCW board convened three weeks later, Kurt Hellfach had some feedback to share. Norman Jenkins of the Non-Voting Taxpayers Advisory Committee had high praise. It had been "a memorable & worthwhile event...a wake-up call for all, but it will all be for naught if there is no follow-up."

For its part, FCW settled on its own follow-up. It would try to revise the Zoning Bylaw as a way of improving growth control. That demanding project ran into more hard-shelled, entrenched opposition than any FCW undertaking before or since.

¹ From Louis A. Holman's *Old Maps and Their Makers*. Boston: Charles E. Goodspeed & Co., 1936

² See Holman's *Old Maps and Their Makers*.

³ See Nickerson's *Days to Remember* and Robert Carlisle's *Weathering a Century of Change*.

⁴ Based on interviews October 4, 2002, by Amy Andreasson with Gabrielle Belfit and Sue Phelan.

⁵ Other FCW members involved: Susan Atwater, Grace Busk, Liz Carey, Ann Charlesworth, Jeanne Eaves, Carolyn Hamilton, John McCall, Libby Mottur, and Barbara Streibert.

⁶ Mrs. Hiscock, her son Richard and his wife, Ginger, had left Chatham for a home in Orleans not too long beforehand. Explains Richard Hiscock, "We wanted to stay together as a family, but there was nothing available for the three of us (in Chatham)...In Orleans, the coyotes used to walk down our driveway!"

⁷ See page 221, *Weathering a Century of Change*.

⁸ It happens that the author, an FCW board member, made the proposal, having felt for years that too often, volunteers fail to get their due. No sooner was the idea broached than it became the author's assigned turf.

⁹ The author of *The Story of Friends of Chatham Waterways* happened to have been that letter-writer.

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Revising the Zoning Bylaw: No South Beach Picnic





Low tide on Oyster River, looking northeast.

Gordon Zellner

Chapter Eight

Zoning is “a snarly little animal”

Margaret Swanson, Chatham Town Planner

Few could find fault with the “Purpose and Intent” statement in Chatham’s current Zoning Bylaw (ZB). With a “Brave New World” innocence, it says:

The purpose of this Bylaw is to manage growth and development in the Town so as to insure the appropriate use of land, encouraging those qualities which distinguish Chatham as a desirable community for year-round and seasonal residence, commerce, tourism and recreation...

Transparent as that lead-in might seem, it overlays a set of regulations making up what lawyer William Riley labels “an incredibly complex document,” the Zoning Bylaw. For all too many, it might as well be written in ancient Sanskrit. Any layman set on altering the Bylaw stands at the edge of a mist-layered, poorly marked mine field. Says Riley, who’s scouted that territory for 30 years, “you make a change here and it bulges out there. It’s very difficult.”

That lesson FCW has learned the hard way, starting in 1999. The organization chose to face off against that “snarly little animal,” zoning. Along the way, it contested with people who rejected its proposed Bylaw changes and who were ready to spend big money to fight them. Several FCW functionaries came close to burnout after months of skirting the anti-personnel mines and contending with adversaries like Bill Riley; pulling no punches, he declared in one open session that FCW’s ZB revision drafts were “awful...horrible.” There never was any doubt about which side he was on.

It wasn’t that the opposition rejected all regulation of land ownership. After all, similar rules had been around since Chatham’s founder, William Nickerson Senior, cast a long shadow over his family’s many acres more than three centuries ago.¹ In 1696, an order was made public that “all the householders...should kill twelve blackbirds or three crows and bring the heads to the selectmen on pain of forfeiting six shillings.”² Writes historian William

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Smith, this was “a common regulation in those days for the protection of farmers.” Protection of land-holding farmers in the 17th century: how does that differ from protection of property rights in the 21st century?

In much more recent time, kindred issues have cropped up. Through its short life, FCW has been fully aware of them. With the year 2000 approaching, FCW directors wanted to do what they could to help improve management of growth and development in the town through the fairly young Zoning Bylaw.

Birth of the Zoning Bylaw

Half a century ago this spring of 2003, sentiment was stirring in Chatham in favor of preparing a “new protective By-Law,” as it was formally called.³ The measure got as far as 1953’s Town Meeting. Voters were given plenty of details to mull over, but they balked. Their preference: to name a committee to put together a set of protective measures “at some subsequent date.” A year later, Town Meeting went at the matter again. As required in state law, the entire Bylaw had been sent to the Attorney General for review. Because he didn’t respond in 90 days, the rules went into effect.⁴

Not everyone in town was satisfied with them, however. And when Town Meeting was opened in 1956, a motion went to the floor to rescind the adoption two years earlier of the Protective Bylaw. More people were opposed to rescinding (295) than in favor (247), and the measure died. But unhappiness with the new code persisted, so another committee was formed to study it. In January ‘57, the members gave selectmen their findings. One of them reported that residents almost entirely agreed that “some form of protection of the general character of the Town was desirable.” With that, the members passed their conclusions along for a vote at Town Meeting later that year. There, the existing “Protective By-Law” of 1954 was amended as the study committee had proposed. The vote: Yes, 262; No, 86.



Lawyer William Riley is a formidable competitor, not only in zoning matters but elsewhere. He’s skied the Headwall at Tuckerman Ravine perhaps ten times, and skipped Bermuda races at least seven times, taking two firsts and a second.

Gordon Zellner

From that moment on, a Zoning Bylaw has been a fact of life for Chatham property-owners. As aficionados know all too well, it has never stayed intact for long.

Conditions keep changing. Take population. The 1960 census showed 3,248 Chathamites; by well into the Nineties, the head count had more than doubled. As for housing units, at the end of World War II, there were 1,315; by 2000, that total had quadrupled and then some, to 6,700. Inevitably, the pressures of more people wanting more houses put an earlier Zoning Bylaw to the test – and calls for amendments regularly followed. This has kept local lawyers like John Farrell, William Hammatt, and Bill Riley busy for decades, tweezering intricacies under a magnifying glass, analyzing and questioning proposed revisions.

After Town Government was reorganized in the mid-Nineties, the new Town Manager, Tom Groux, took some time to get his feet on the ground, then in 1997 brought on a new staff member attuned to zoning matters. He was Kevin McDonald, who had worked for Groux in Duxbury and Winchester, Massachusetts; both men attended the FCW Quality of Life conference in September 1998. As director of Community Development, McDonald, speaking there, opened the playbook on the Zoning Bylaw and how to modify it. In a kind of chalk talk, he diagrammed the basic steps:

“You can go to the Planning Board. You can ask for zoning changes. You can go to Town Meeting. You can vote for those changes. And you can affect the density and the destiny of a town like Chatham in a very simple way.”

It would oversimplify matters to say that McDonald’s tutorial alone triggered FCW’s later course of action. But it certainly didn’t smoke-screen the options.

Let the Process Begin!

If there was one feeling that people took home at the end of that Quality of Life (QOL) meeting, it boiled down to this: “Let’s keep this exchange going!” FCW was more than willing to do it. And so, in particular, were directors Debby Ecker and John Geiger. Along with Barbara Streibert, they had done the main pick-and-shovel work preparing for that conference. Now, in the fall of ‘98, their energies still peaked on the meter.

Zoning Bylaw revision: that surfaced as the prime target for the Ecker/Geiger team. To them, the QOL session had pinpointed that option. But rather

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than charge off in all directions, the pair decided that, as Step # 1, they'd better see what the Bylaw actually said. So, as Debby Ecker recalls, "I remember volunteering to review the town Bylaw, and John agreed on doing it also." By FCW's board meeting of February 1999, Town Clerk Joanne Holdgate had already started pulling out for them Chatham's Bylaws and regulations. Meanwhile, Kevin McDonald, directors were told, was "very open" to a review. As a result, one FCW project for '99 gained focus as a commitment to work with him on changes in ZB rules "in line with concerns expressed in the 'QOL' conference."

From then until far along in 2002, virtually every FCW board meeting included talk, some of it heated, about the status of Bylaw revision. For those engaged, the effort was never less than demanding; at times, it had bright moments, but more often it was downright frustrating. To paraphrase lawyer Riley, pushing the rewrite in one direction only made it pop out in another. Sharpening the intensity as time went by, the warm relationship between players gradually chilled; "we" metamorphosed into "we-they." Maybe that's not surprising: under Town Hall's mantle, people's livelihoods were involved. Further, defensiveness over turf prerogatives frosted the air even more.

As winter '99 warmed into spring, Mrs. Ecker suddenly had to handle a family crisis: her husband, Hoyt, had triple bypass surgery while the Eckers were vacationing in Florida. Realizing she could no longer pull her usual weight on the rewrite, she proposed that FCW hire a consultant. The board gave the go-ahead, the Ecker/Geiger pair laid out a scope of work, and by November, Harwich's former Town Planner, Michael J. Pessolano, newly retired, was in the stirrups.

Before he came on the scene, however, the question of Bylaw changes arose in two other contexts. At the 1999 Town Meeting, residents cast their votes against three modifications put forward by the Planning Board (all questioned or opposed by FCW). The moral of that, said Planning Board Chairman Skip Kendrick, was that from then on, "the Board must work more closely with organizations like FCW." The June issue of FCW's "Member Newsletter" concluded that, maybe reflecting Kendrick's view, "Chatham officials are cooperating fully with FCW" on the Bylaw revision project.

But surprise lay ahead. At their meeting in October '99, Friends directors learned that Town Government intended to review the Bylaw on its own, a move sure to complicate FCW's start-up undertaking. The following month, Michael Pessolano was introduced to FCW board members. He felt it was only fair to tell them he had heard concerns that FCW was "interfering in the doings of the Town." That theme recurred in months ahead, but, undeterred, consultant Pessolano moved ahead with his research. By December's board session, he presented his first-phase draft of a "Model Zoning Bylaw Project."

Next: Phase II. Before the tailoring on that draft was finished in February 2000, a core of FCW directors (Hellfach, Kimball and Olmsted, along with Mrs. Ecker) sat down with a Town Hall nucleus (Town Manager Hinchey, McDonald and Margaret Swanson). It had not gone well. Said Kurt Hellfach, “it became obvious that there were differing opinions on how the bylaws should be changed.” To that, George Olmsted added that the FCW consultant’s output so far was “naturally being resisted” in Town Hall. But, he underscored, it was “imperative” for FCW to work with the Planning Board and Community Development – hardly the last time this obligation was stressed within FCW

In his Phase II, Pessolano looked at how other communities dealt with planning issues, and he studied the Cape Cod Commission’s Zoning Bylaw models. With that phase behind, he now faced a stiffer challenge: his Phase III, dead-lined for March 2000, called for drafting specific zoning amendments. And in time, he came up with nine. Facing that sheaf of revisions, FCW acted on advice from the Cape Cod Commission’s executive director, Margo Fenn. She had recommended to Ecker/Geiger: “pick your battles. Don’t bite off more than you can chew.” That made great sense to FCW’s directors, so they cut Pessolano’s nine amendments down to seven.



FCW director John Geiger, a key player in the Quality of Life project with Debby Ecker, joined her in initiating an effort to revise the local Zoning Bylaw as a means for guiding the swift run of development.

At that point, Debby Ecker and John Geiger figured they should bring the drafts into the real world. That meant running the amendments before Douglas Wells, chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals. There was every likelihood that the revisions might eventually go before ZBA; the two delegates from FCW wanted Doug Wells’s reactions up front. They waited with anticipation as he read through the proposals. To their chagrin, the ZBA chairman found “major problems with the draft,” recalls Mrs. Ecker. “It was shocking to us.” In hindsight, though, Geiger believes that Pessolano had done “what we asked him to do,” and for precise wording of the revisions, they’d have to bring in a lawyer. Their candidate: Jonathan Witten, partner in the Sandwich firm of Horsley & Witten. A decade earlier, Witten’s partner, Scott Horsley, had helped complete the Stage Harbor Management Plan.

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Hardening their timetable, the FCW project team aimed to put the amendments before voters at Town Meeting in May 2001. But the channel was shoaling more and more. What steps had to be taken before then? How could Friends get the main gatekeepers behind the proposals? One point was sharply focused, as board minutes reflected in December 2000: the “biggest hurdle” for FCW advocates was “the attitude of (town) staff members.” That may have been so, but Friends people knew they had to make every effort to get along with Town government. The feeling was voiced that Bylaw amendments must not become a “staff versus FCW confrontation.”

Battling Heavy Winter Seas

While they always hoped to win allies to their cause, Friends activists found it a lot easier to spot adversaries. On that score, a meeting with selectmen December 19, 2000, left no doubt in anyone’s mind. Lawyer Riley, a hawk-eyed regular at any and all zoning discussions on behalf of his clients, the developers, rose to declare his views. Because of FCW’s proposed amendments, people were “being hurt – individual home-owners, truck drivers, carpenters.” And there was FCW, “forcing (its amendments) through, insisting on moving them forward...I think these (drafts) are terrible!”

Two weeks later, Riley took to the “Letters” page of the January 4, 2001, *Chronicle*, questioning FCW lawyer Jon Witten’s experience. “I had been under the impression,” wrote Riley, “that (he) was an environmental consultant who recently graduated from law school.” The following week, lawyer Riley went public with another letter, saying it had not been “my intention to show (Jon Witten) in a poor light, but only to point out as dramatically as possible the unreasonableness of the Zoning proposals put forward by (FCW).”

By this time, Witten had already been committed to the fray. To explain the amendments, he had appeared before selectmen on the previous October 3 and then the Planning Board on November 28. During those weeks, selectmen decided to accept the seven proposed revisions. FCW had gone before them on the advice of Kevin McDonald. FCW’s gratification at that gesture was still running high when McDonald and Margaret Swanson took a new tack, saying, in John Geiger’s words, that “we were premature and we shouldn’t be bringing up these issues as yet.” Geiger and Mrs. Ecker heard that shift of opinion “open-mouthed. Why had they told us several weeks before to (go to the selectmen)? We really felt we were set up.”

Anyone revisiting the events of late 2000 and early 2001 would have to concede that whether FCW's amendments would ever survive got to be stickier than old-fashioned fly paper. Making matters worse was that perturbing tension between "town and gown," Town Government and FCW's board. This was John Geiger's recollection in fall 2002:

"There was a bitterness that developed. They didn't like us interfering...I think Margaret and Kevin both had a problem with us as...an independent group coming in and flexing our muscles as to what we felt should be included in Bylaw revision...They were very resistant...I think that resentment still exists today."⁵

A tuned ear could pick up another minor-key leitmotif underneath the flow of events. Late in 2001, Bill Riley translated it into words. "To the extent that (FCW was) aiming at modifying the Zoning Bylaw," he said, "really just to prevent development, I felt they were way off-base. I thought that mission creep had occurred."⁶ His implication was transparent: FCW had overstepped the boundaries of its own Statement of Purpose.

By no means were FCW directors unaware of this possible interpretation. Says John Geiger, "I think the board started to see itself as becoming a little more politically active than they ever had before, so we did tweak the (mission) statement to encompass the community, not just from a waterways position, but (in terms of) overall health of the community, given that all these things are linked." That refinement had been approved by FCW members at their annual meeting in August 1996. It began: "Additionally, the Association has an interest in broader municipal issues that may have an impact on Chatham's maritime heritage or upon the natural environment of the community." That helped validate the Ecker/Geiger team's pursuit of Zoning Bylaw revisions. But it certainly didn't make their formidable task any easier.

During the ebbing fall of 2000 and into the winter weeks, headlines in *The Chronicle* gave pithy synopses of what was going on during this nerve-stretching process:

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November 30, 2000:

“Friends Urged To Withdraw Problematic Zoning Amendments”

The proposals could have “unintended consequences that could impact many property owners.” They should be “withdrawn and folded into a comprehensive rewrite of the protective bylaw.”

December 7, 2000:

“Friends of Chatham Waterways Refuse to Withdraw Zoning Amendments”

“We’re going to get sued until the cows come home,” warned Kevin McDonald. Replied John Geiger, “We’re sticking to the program.” FCW recognized, he said, that some properties might be impacted immediately by the revisions. But it believed there was a “wide consensus” that something must be done to slow development.

December 14, 2000:

“Fate of Friends’ Bylaw Changes To Be Decided by Selectmen Next Week”

Selectmen had accepted the FCW revisions, but then had second thoughts. “I don’t think the board understood the ramifications of what we voted on,” said Board Chairman Ronald Bergstrom. One of the selectmen’s options was to rescind their October 3 acceptance. They took that route.

February 8, 2001:

“Planners, FCW Meet To Discuss Zoning Amendments”

Selectmen, while withdrawing their earlier acceptance, told the Planning Board and staff to “work with” FCW to modify the revisions and “clear up any inconsistencies.”

February 15, 2001:

“Scaled Down FCW Zoning Bylaw Revisions Due This Week”

FCW was about to present to the Planning Board a reduced version of its amendments. It would be “a whole lot lighter, less wordy,” said Geiger. Added FCW President George Olmsted, “We’ve done a lot of listening. I hope the results are easier for the planning board to embrace.”

And so it went, as the winter days lengthened. Remembering that FCW’s proponents of ZB change had been over this stove for two years, it shouldn’t be surprising that they felt dejected at times. A communications committee set up just for this project met February 23, ‘01, and board member Nancy Rhodes, recording minutes, noted that “all our...members spontaneously expressed varying degrees of discouragement.” But their unity was tight, and they heartily agreed on something else: “respect for John Geiger’s steadfastness in long and difficult negotiations and in getting anywhere at all.” They were absolutely on target with that judgment.

About this time, events suddenly tacked to starboard. Mrs. Ecker happened to be down south. Reports from Chatham had left her

Cape Cod Chronicle, December 7, 2000

Friends Of Chatham Waterways Refuse To Withdraw Zoning Amendments

Complications Could Have Opposite Impact Than What Proponents Intended, Officials Warn

by Tim Wood

CHATHAM — Directors of Chatham’s Planning Board and Zoning Board last week said they were disappointed that the Friends of Chatham Waterways (FCW) refused to withdraw its proposed zoning amendments.

“I’ve got a permit here from a guy who wants to put a swimming pool in his back yard. The board is not going to let him do it,” said the board’s president, George Olmsted, who said the board was not going to let the FCW’s amendments pass either.

Cape Cod Chronicle, December 14, 2000

Fate Of Friends’ Bylaw Changes To Be Decided By Selectmen Next Week

by Tim Wood

CHATHAM — Selectmen and Zoning Board members will meet this afternoon to decide whether to recommend the Friends of Chatham Waterways’ (FCW) proposed zoning amendments to the town’s selectmen.

Despite the proposals’ more significant changes, such as creating “setbacks” to be enforced rather than “setbacks” to be enforced, the selectmen are far from sure. The selectmen are far from sure. The selectmen are far from sure.

Cape Cod Chronicle, February 5, 2001

TOWN HALL

Planners, FCW Meet To Discuss Zoning Amendments

CHATHAM — Members of the planning board and zoning board of appeals will meet this afternoon to discuss the Friends of Chatham Waterways’ (FCW) proposed zoning amendments. The group’s proposals are being reviewed by the town’s selectmen. The group’s proposals are being reviewed by the town’s selectmen.

On almost a week-to-week basis, FCW’s drive to amend the Zoning Bylaw in 2000-01 made news for *The Chronicle*. At times, the unfolding story took on all the fascination of a cliff-hanger scenario. Who was ahead? What were the latest tactics? The issue would not be resolved until Town Meeting in May.

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“totally frustrated.” Why? Because the developers were “beginning to get into this.” Now she may have had critics in her day, but no one ever said she lacked chutzpah, and in short order, typically, she put in a long-distance call to developer and properties owner David Oppenheim.

“David, what’s going on here?” she asked. “We’re trying to work with the Town. Your long-range interest with your high-end real estate investments is the same as ours: to protect the quality of life in town... We have the same goals. Why aren’t we getting together? Why are we getting this resistance?”

Hardly off-balance, Oppenheim had a quick answer: “I have some concrete suggestions of what you can do to make it workable for the developers. You have to meet with Jack Farrell.” That was no whimsical proposal. Farrell has a reputation for knowing as much about Zoning Bylaw as anyone else in town. Buoyed by Oppenheim’s advice, Mrs. Ecker then called another builder, James Gable. He echoed David Oppenheim. Meet with Jack Farrell, he urged. And Debby Ecker boarded a northbound plane to do just that.

In fact, the FCW team did more: they convened with Farrell, Riley, Gable, and surveyor Terry Eldredge. Mrs. Ecker was delighted at Jack Farrell’s response: “I’m really interested in this,” he told her. “I want to help you.” And he meant it. Basically, he supported FCW’s amendments. But he felt he could “tweak” them and make them more acceptable to the developers. It’s important to add that by then, only four of FCW’s original nine amendments remained on the table. They were these:

- ◆ **Conservancy Buffer Zone Overlay District:**

Provided additional zoning requirements for Inland Conservancy Districts.

- ◆ **Criteria for Increases in Nonconformity:**

Expanded guidelines for the building inspector and Zoning Board of Appeals when reviewing requests for tear-downs or expansions of non-conforming properties.

- ◆ **Maximum Allowable Building Coverage:**

Preserved neighborhood character, discouraged over-development, saved rapidly dwindling open space.

◆ **Dimensional Exemptions for Grandfathered Lots:**

Brought Chatham's grandfathering provisions into conformity with state law, without changing any protections.

To lay people, those measures were esoteric and then some. But as Debby Ecker saw them at a later point, “We really weren’t doing anything terribly drastic.” Geiger’s postscript: “Not compared with where we began.” Even so, FCW could hardly ease up on its oars. Instead, its communications nucleus kept pulling, with “advertorials” in *The Chronicle*, a one-page fact sheet, newsletter copy, and speaking duty. Board President Olmsted drafted a letter to FCW members, emphasizing that it would take a two-thirds vote to pass the ZB revisions at Town Meeting, then asserting in bold face: **“WE NEED YOUR VOTE.”**

By April, lawyer Jack Farrell was helmsman for FCW. When selectmen met to look over the four Friends amendments, he stood to make several points. FCW had put “a great

deal of time and effort” in defining the revisions, he said. In his judgment, those deliberations had “come up with a middle ground that made sense to everyone... (resulting in) something that fulfills the intent of the Town and something that Town Meeting can support.”

When that session ended, selectmen had agreed to include the FCW articles on Town Meeting’s warrant. At that point, endorsements of these revisions had come from the Planning Board and the Finance Committee, as well as from the selectmen.

Cape Cod Chronicle, May 3, 2001

Friends Get Clean Sweep On Endorsement Of Bylaw Amendments

By Tim Wood
CHATHAM — It took months, but with last week's unanimous vote by the planning board, the Friends of Chatham's Waterage finally secured the support of all of the board's major boards for the state of zoning. The board's decision is a significant step in the process of revising the town's zoning bylaws. The board's decision is a significant step in the process of revising the town's zoning bylaws. The board's decision is a significant step in the process of revising the town's zoning bylaws.

Two weeks to go before Town Meeting. The Planning Board had voted unanimously in favor of the FCW proposed Bylaw amendments. That meant that all major Town boards favored the changes after months of debate and modifications.

On To Town Meeting

Many of the big crowd that converged at the high school for Town Meeting on May 14 were hot under the collar. The issue was **not** FCW’s four articles but an anticipated presentation on what to do about the ghostly Main

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Street School. But even before that elaborate report began to unfold, Mrs. Ecker and Geiger found themselves staring at a curve ball: a warrant article submitted by FCW's opponent, lawyer Riley.

Indefatigable as point man for his clients, he had decided to enter a regulation changing the similar FCW article (on structure coverage) by a few percentage points. On a table greeting voters as they funneled into the gym, stacks of information sheets on various warrant items had been displayed. Among them: a spread sheet prepared by Town Planner Margaret Swanson comparing Bill Riley's article with FCW's — without identifying the advocate of the former. This discovery was a low blow to Debby Ecker and Geiger. In retrospect, she labeled it "outrageous." Quickly, they wrote to Town Manager Hinchey to protest, and the advocacy piece was just as quickly withdrawn.

However, that first night of Town Meeting had one big plus for the FCW people. The Main Street School discussion loomed as something so potent and engrossing that its spot on the warrant was shifted forward, while the FCW articles were moved back apiece on the warrant. "We all breathed a huge sigh of relief," recalls Mrs. Ecker. "It was an angry crowd," all too ready to vote anything down. Result? The FCW items were bumped to the next night, and then, when that second session ran long, the ZB articles wound up on the docket for the third night. Again, a big sigh of relief among FCW partisans. As they looked around that third evening, most everyone there was familiar — friends.

When his turn came, lawyer Farrell took to the lectern to present the four ZB articles parented by FCW. On the first, about Conservancy Buffer Zones, opponent Riley spoke at some length. The vote was taken, and the FCW article passed unanimously; Bill Riley chose to shelve his views on most other ZB matters. Meanwhile, as presenter for FCW, Jack Farrell was in top form. He was a local man, someone "everybody knew and respected," says Debby Ecker. As he addressed the floor, in Geiger's memory, "he was very matter-of-fact. 'This article is what it is, and you make the decision.' He didn't incite anyone. It was a job well-done."

The second article, dealing with Criteria for Increases in Nonconformity, came up, and more than a two-thirds majority favored it. The third issue



Chatham lawyer Jack Farrell, one of three local specialists in Zoning Bylaw matters. In the spring of '01, he agreed to help FCW's team take the Bylaw revisions through Town Meeting. *Cape Cod Chronicle*

concerned a more sensitive matter: Maximum Allowable Building Coverage. This time, Moderator William Litchfield called for a hand vote; the response: 175, Yes; 46, No. And the last item, Dimensional Exemptions for Grandfathered Lots, passed with flying colors. The third-night crowd approved it unanimously.

So, almost two years' heavy-duty lifting by the Friends won voters' endorsement. FCW had heard the concerned voice of the Quality of Life conference in September 1988: "What can we possibly do to manage growth more effectively?" Soon afterward, the Ecker/Geiger team had gone to work to bring off this finale at Town Meeting 2001. As Jack Farrell observed, "they learned a great deal in the process," but wound up with "regulations that work, that accomplish what they want without harming other interests." The package, as reporter Tim Wood put it, "would limit the size of homes that can be built while protecting the rights of owners of smaller, undeveloped lots." Speaking for the developers, Riley had one shot left. The building coverage item, he said, "encourages verticality," and would spawn, as reporter Wood heard him saying, "ugly, box-like homes being built in order to maximize square footage."

However, selectman Douglas Ann Bohman saw the evening's result in a different light. She thanked FCW for staying on task so well, after a "somewhat rocky start." It should lead to "an eventual rewrite" of the entire Zoning Bylaw. To do that, voters at the meeting had already given the Town approval to spend \$94,000.

But, as that revered savant from New Jersey put it years ago, "It ain't over till it's over." And in the case of FCW's Zoning Bylaw revisions, now part of Town law, the game **wasn't** over. Instead, it was going into extra innings.

FCW WATERWAYS

TOWN MEETING
SPECIAL EDITION

FCW to Present Four Articles for Improved Zoning at Town Meeting

In an effort to ease threats to Chatham's valuable natural resources, preserve the character of residential neighborhoods, and maintain a high quality of life for all residents, FCW will present four articles for improved zoning at the annual town meeting on May 14. The articles cover diverse subjects, from tighter conservancy district protection to modified building coverage limits and criteria for judging the impact of changes to non-conforming structures. Yet they all focus on a single critical theme: better management of the town's land growth, development and its development.

The vote at town meeting will be the culmination of a two-year effort involving research, study, writing, public hearings, debate, editing, more hearings and, finally, placement of the articles on the Town Meeting warrant. In the last several weeks, the articles received a welcome boost when the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Finance Committee voted overwhelmingly to support them.

Here is a brief description of each article and its benefits:

Article 23 - Conservancy Buffer Zone Overlay District adds protection for wetlands by requiring special permits from the Zoning Board of Appeals for filling or grading within 50 feet of all Inland Conservancy Districts.

Article 24 - Criteria for Increases in Non-Conformity protects the rights of neighboring property owners, and adds muscle to the town's defense of legal challenges, by providing specific guidelines for the building inspector and Zoning Board of Appeals to use when considering applications for changes to non-conforming structures.

Continued on page 2

YOU are the Deciding Vote

Passage of zoning by-law amendments at Town Meeting requires a 2/3 majority. That is why attendance and a YES vote by every supporter are critical for success of our proposed improvements. Historically, vote tallies on zoning issues have been close. Even one vote either way can swing the outcome. That one vote could be yours. We hope we can count on you and your support on May 14.

MAKE SURE YOUR VOTE COUNTS Plan for a Two-Day Town Meeting

The warrant for this year's Town Meeting is extremely full, and there is a possibility that some of the proceedings, including the vote on our proposed zoning improvements, will be carried over to the next evening. Therefore, we ask all supporters to clear their calendars for Tuesday evening, May 15, in the event our articles are not brought to a vote until then. If you are unable to attend on Tuesday evening, please plan to attend both nights of Town Meeting to make sure your vote counts.

**VOTE YES FOR ZONING IMPROVEMENT
SUPPORT ARTICLES 23, 24, 25 & 27
AT TOWN MEETING MAY 14**

FCW's newsletter *WaterWays* told the Bylaw story in clear terms. This issue was mailed to all members on May 7, a week before the Town Meeting where the Zoning amendments would be voted on.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Under a Red Sunrise Sky

They say that growing old is not for sissies. If that's true, then it may be equally true that playing zoning hardball is not for sissies, either. Town Meeting 2001 may be part of Chatham history's gauzy memory now, but, as far as the FCW-proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments go, two of them are still involved in a tense pitchers' duel.

A casual incident in the spring of 2002 suggests how regrettable things had turned in the Friends's dealings with Town government. At a meeting of the Conservation Commission, board member John Geiger was sitting beside Town Conservation Agent Kristin Andres. An application had come before ConsCom dealing with site alteration next to an inland wetland. There was something different about the request, Geiger realized: it was unlike any of the applications presented over the previous five months.

Leaning toward Ms. Andres, he whispered, "This may be a good place to apply the new Zoning Bylaw on the conservancy buffer zone." Her reply gave him a jolt. "Oh," she said, "that Bylaw was rejected by the Attorney General." The A. G.'s decision — actually, he asked for updated maps — had evidently reached Town government in September 2001.

Reality suddenly dawned on John Geiger: neither he nor Debby Ecker had been told of the turndown. Nor did the full FCW board know about it, either. "But the developers knew about it," Geiger could now tell, "because their (construction) plans were changing. We were back to where we were in the fall of 2001." Maybe the revered Yogi had it right: wasn't this "déjà vu all over again"?

CHATHAM VOTERS: Join the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Finance Committee in their support of important upgrades of our zoning by-law

**Vote YES on Articles 23, 24, 25 and 27
at May 14 Town Meeting**

**Here is what these proposed zoning improvements
will mean for you and the future of Chatham**

By voting to adopt these regulations, you will:

- Help protect the town's valuable natural resources
- Help preserve the character of residential neighborhoods
- Help sustain a superior Quality of Life for all residents

NOW is the right time to improve these zoning regulations because:

- Development continues to accelerate
- Implementation of the Comprehensive Long Range Plan and a full-scale rewrite of the zoning by-law are at least several years away
- The amendments FCW is proposing focus on critical residential sections of the by-law that need immediate action
- The threat to our waterways and other natural resources already is substantial

Each proposal has important benefits for everyone:

- **Article 23 - Conservancy Buffer Zone Overlay District** adds protection for wetlands by requiring special permits from the Zoning Board of Appeals for filling or grading within 50 feet of all Inland Conservancy Districts.
- **Article 24 - Criteria for Increases in Non-Conformity** protects the rights of neighboring property owners, and adds muscle to the town's defense of legal challenges, by providing specific guidelines for the building inspector and Zoning Board of Appeals to use when considering applications for changes to non-conforming structures.
- **Article 25 - Maximum Allowable Building Coverage** saves rapidly dwindling open space and helps preserve neighborhood character by modifying allowable building coverage on larger lots. Lots under 20,000 square feet would keep the present coverage limit of 15%. Lots over 20,000 square feet would have 10% allowable coverage. Lots between 20,000 and 30,000 square feet would have a sliding scale to transition from 15% to 10%.
- **Article 27 - Dimensional exemptions for "grandfathered" lots** closes loopholes in ambiguous wording by changing the language of two "grandfathering" regulations to exactly match State law.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?
Bring your questions to a special
Citizens' By-Law Information Workshop
Saturday, May 5, 10:00 AM to Noon
Eldredge Public Library



**This message comes from Friends of Chatham Waterways...
a group of over 300 caring individuals
dedicated to protecting our waterways and adjacent lands
and preserving the highest Quality of Life for all citizens!**

The Cape Cod Chronicle May 8, 2001 Page 16

FCW put its money where its sentiment was. On May 3, it ran a half-page ad in *The Chronicle*. The cost: Almost \$400. It described the four Bylaw amendments and urged voters not only to raise a hand for "Yes!" at Town Meeting, but also to come to an information workshop beforehand on May 5.

What this situation amounted to was that the Bylaw revision passed by Town Meeting in May 2001 was, in Geiger's words, "not being enforced by the Town zoning officer." After an irritating delay, Mrs. Ecker finally got from the Planning Department a copy of the Attorney General's September 2001 letter. With that in hand, she reached the A.G. in Springfield. His explanation, she recalls: "I approved the substance of that Bylaw. The Town needs to send in maps."

This opened up a new, tricky issue. The FCW operatives gathered that by Town estimate, it would cost \$100,000 to \$250,000 to prepare the maps. Mrs. Ecker reminded Town Manager Hinchey that Town Meeting had approved the article, so what was Town government going to do about those maps? To Bill Hinchey, that was something to be solved by the appropriate appointed board (like Planning), not his office.

All the previous back-and-forth meetings and phone conversations boiled down to a sharp disappointment for FCW directors. In Mrs. Ecker's view, the stand-off reflected "a turning point" in FCW-Town relations. No longer did the Town Manager seem willing to mediate between his departments and FCW. Rather, he now had "a negative attitude" (Mrs. Ecker's words) toward the Friends and the team of Debby Ecker, John Geiger and their newly added, astute colleague, John Sweeney, an FCW director since 2000. On the matter at issue, the Conservancy District Buffer rule, if Town staff felt it could not be enforced, then an alternative would have to be explored. Determined to see some kind of regulated buffer zones defined by Bylaw revision, FCW encouraged the Town to search for a remedy, as Geiger put it, "sooner rather than later" – and even offered to help.

In the fall of 2002, a second of the revisions approved by voters in May 2001 looked to be in trouble, also. This amendment redefined the Building Coverage Bylaw. It was being challenged by a property owner under the state's "grandfathering" law.⁷ The Town's zoning officer and then the Zoning Board of Appeals had denied a permit to put up a building larger than the coverage allowed by the Bylaw passed in 2001. Thereupon, the owner contested the decision, asserting that grandfathering provisions protected his building plan. The only recourse: go to court, to argue the question of whether the new Bylaw would apply or not. Representing the claimant: lawyer Bill Riley.

The plot soon thickened. Technically, FCW did not qualify as a party to the case; it was not an abutter. So it was up to Town Government to defend the 2001 Bylaw article. And, because Town Counsel Bruce Gilmore had previously gone on record against it, the Town would have to hire special counsel to defend its actions in this case. Curiously enough, selectmen decided to employ Jon

CHAPTER EIGHT

Witten, whose credentials had been questioned by Riley in *The Chronicle* months before. Selectmen insisted on one ground rule: Witten, as *their* man, was to have **no** contact with FCW

In the winter months of 2002-03, the contest over the Building Coverage Bylaw waited it out before trial in Superior Court. For its part, FCW formally endorsed the Town's position on enforcing the coverage restriction of that Bylaw change. In the meantime, a few Friends board members, looking back on tedious efforts to pass growth-managing zoning amendments, understandably lacked full confidence in the process. Further, it was going to take more than a little time for the two sides – FCW and Town government – to clarify misunderstandings and shelve chronic resentments. As a gratifying sequel, however, the court **did** uphold the Building Coverage Bylaw revision. "This decision," notes FCW's Walter Butler, "has done much to rebuild confidence that our efforts to strengthen the Zoning Bylaw have been effective and worthwhile. To me, that court decision is a milestone."

Time For a Review

For FCW, after-action debriefing led directors to do some hard thinking about their overall achievement. Of the original revisions generated by their consultant, nine shrunk to seven; over months, they spun through a Kafka-esque grinder, and four survived. Those four won definitive voter approval at Town Meeting in May 2001; of them, two stand as Chatham regulations, a third was considered unenforceable, and the fourth had been challenged in court. Meanwhile, in the spring of 2003, a new interest arose in possibly using the Wetlands Protection Bylaw to achieve the same result as was intended by the Zoning Bylaw change. It had in mind creating a new 50-foot buffer zone around inland ponds.

Was it all worth the exercise? First of all, two amendments **did** become local law. And participants learned from the process; the respective parties fully agreed on that. Further, don't doubt the steel of the Friends centurions in sticking with the mission; rivals would certainly concur on that.

On the sober side, consider the time invested: the work began in late 1999 and was still going on three years and some months later. But bear in mind that FCW stalwarts have logged more time on at least one other undertaking, bringing the Stage Harbor Management Plan to fruition. Consider, too, the dollars spent by FCW: \$36,376 went to one consultant and two lawyers, as well as for related expenses. Was that figure out-and-out excessive? If FCW had had to pay its own three directors toiling on the project for three years as consultants,

the total – at a modest \$150 an hour – could well have exceeded \$150,000. Even so, Project ZB Revision swelled into a distinct charge against FCW's time, energy and dollars.

Regardless, most of the organization's 21 directors stood by the prolonged commitment, some openly supportive, others less so. At least one, Mrs. Pat Siewert, has objected. "I think (it) was a foolish move," she said. "It wasn't really our job. And what good did it do us? I just think it was misdirected...it was over-reaching."

Well, what good **did** it do FCW? John Geiger, for one, has as realistic a sense of that as anyone. His conviction: "If it wasn't for FCW, none of this...would have happened, and it's all very important."

On the flip side of the question – what harm, if any, came from the project for FCW? – go to the threesome of Mrs. Ecker, Geiger and Sweeney. They recognized that FCW's name had become "detrimental" to what they are determined to do in proposing further ZB revisions. On that view, John Geiger gets specific. In one-on-one sessions, he talked to three current selectmen. Each one, he says, "doesn't like the term FCW" Nor do key staff of the Department of Community Development and several members of the Planning Board. So, in the winter of 2002-03, the FCW core group began enlisting non-FCW people to help propel their renewed drive to put Bylaw amendments before town voters. In hard fact, John Geiger says without reservation, "We've exhausted FCW" as a promoter of ZB change.

It's worthwhile to tap into the thinking of others not linked to FCW. As a Planning Board member for eighteen years, Dave Donnan contributes his own perspective. On balance, he found FCW's Bylaw revisions "very well-intentioned" and conceded "there was a lack of support from the Planning Board on some of them." He saw long ago that Chatham's Zoning Bylaw "is the most complicated one I've ever read." Sometimes a "well-intentioned" article may be proposed, but by its nature, it "creates loopholes that are worse than what's there." Was the FCW enterprise worth all the energy? "That energy's never wasted," he says. "It puts something on the table. It continues to make you think." Overall, he is sure that the FCW process was "a learning one for everybody."



Former teacher and one of Chatham's most ubiquitous volunteers, Pat Siewert rarely lets a chance pass to be an active participant in discussions about issues and initiatives. *Gordon Zellner*

CHAPTER EIGHT

As playing coach of Chatham's Government, Town Manager Bill Hinchey has had four years of observing the community's volunteer committees in motion. Thinking back to when FCW's Bylaw project began rolling in 1999, he says without hesitation, "I can do nothing but commend (FCW) for what (it) did."

But Hinchey has other colors on his palette. The landscape tells him that Chatham should have considered writing a comprehensive Zoning Bylaw "years and years ago." But it didn't. Then along came FCW, aiming to revise the Bylaw "piecemeal." That was unfortunate, Hinchey believes. Hence, if the FCW effort was "not successful, it was because of one primary reason: we know that if we're going to change the Zoning Bylaw...it needs to be done comprehensively...(It) has to be done in its entirety." That will be the only way, he says, for the town once and for all to face up to a basic question: do residents want to amend the Bylaw "to be much more strict about growth"? That would entail putting together a "comprehensive" set of regulations.

Failure to draft such a complete overhaul, as opposed to FCW's more-limited approach, generated "bad feeling," explains Bill Hinchey. "It had a lot to do with egos on both sides." Inevitably, communication problems arose. "Do I accept some of the blame for that?" the Town Manager asks himself. "Yes, I do."

However, rather than let differences between staff and FCW simmer unresolved, Manager Hinchey has had "conversations" with his people. "When you give professional advice and it's not accepted," he told them, "you back off...If your opinion is you don't think (amendments) are enforceable, I don't care. We're going to enforce them because that's what Town Meeting said. That's our job." And if the matters are overturned in court, "then so be it." As to whether his staff harbored any resentments stirred up by the FCW-initiated project, Bill Hinchey is emphatic: "I will tell them not to, and they won't. But that doesn't happen on the other side of the ledger."

Finally, the Town Manager expects his employees to learn from this Bylaw episode. He is insistent on that. "I have no doubt whatsoever," he states, "that my staff, at my direction, will learn from this process, will mend their ways to achieve my goal: to get a revised Zoning Bylaw before Town Meeting."

Then there's the opinion of FCW's leader, George Olmsted. Through the long months of this project's maturation, he made a consistent effort to keep the lines open between Bill Hinchey and himself. Both stepped in to try to advance the unfolding interplay of the Bylaw amendment effort. For his part, Olmsted well knows what FCW's board learned from what he calls the "never-to-end saga" of meshing land use laws with Chatham's carrying capacity and natural resource preservation.

“We learned how vital it is,” he says, “to work at cooperating with Town officials and professional staff. We learned to anticipate the natural resistance by Town employees to our cooperation. And we learned, as well, about outreach – about encouraging contacts and suggesting meetings so we could listen to people from many constituencies.”

Looking back, George Olmsted recognizes that “misunderstandings, rumors, and negative reactions developed around town, mostly due to inconsistent, even inadequate communications.” But even so, FCW did become convinced that “a dedicated citizen’s group can develop improvements in Chatham when Town boards and staff cannot take the time to work through the technical aspects of such issues.”

As someone widely involved in town affairs since moving to Chatham full-time in 1995, FCW President Olmsted’s perspective tells him that “the threats to wise land use and natural resource preservation will not go away. They have to be managed by citizens and Town officials working together as closely as possible.” That, of course, is what FCW set out to do in pursuing ZB revisions.

At times, it might have seemed that pushing for these major zoning changes was the only business before the Friends. Not at all. During that project’s nearly four-year life, the board sanctioned other initiatives that are proving to have, in different ways, distinct value for the community at large.



Town Manager Bill Hinchey commended FCW for what it had done in shooting for changes in the Zoning Bylaw. But the effort, he said, was “not successful . . . we know that if we’re going to change the Bylaw . . . it needs to be done comprehensively.” *The Chronicle*

¹ Historian William Smith notes old deeds suggesting that William Nickerson died in late summer, 1690.

² See *A History of Chatham Massachusetts*, by William C. Smith, 3rd edition. Published by Chatham Historical Society, 1981.

³ By-law is actually spelled “bylaw,” or “byelaw.”

⁴ See Town Reports for 1953, 1954, 1956 and 1957.

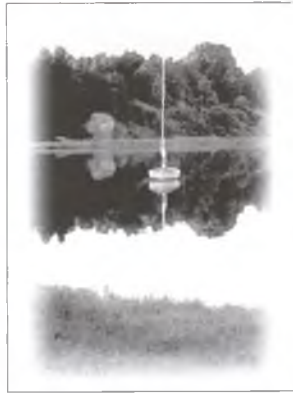
⁵ From a joint interview with John Geiger and Debby Ecker on October 18, 2002.

⁶ From an interview with Bill Riley in December 2001.

⁷ As defined by John Geiger, grandfathering is a “State and/or local mandate that protects properties from certain changes in the local zoning bylaw and freezes a lot’s dimensional requirements to the time the lot was recorded with the local planning board or town clerk. . . (It) protects a property owner against any changes that might occur in area, frontage, width, yard or depth requirements of the zoning bylaw of any non-conforming lot.”

CHAPTER NINE

Condition Yellow for our Fish, Waters and Beaches





Below Chatham Light, a low-lying tombolo curves gracefully to the north and links the mainland to South Beach, a fortunate barrier, but one without guarantees.

Marie Williams

Chapter Nine

“Big John” Pappalardo, all 6’ 5” and 275 pounds of him, sits motionless in a lazy wicker arm chair, listening intently to his two visitors on a late morning in January 2003. Seasoned commercial fishermen, “John” and “Dick” have come for his counsel. They could hardly have come to a better man: when he isn’t fishing himself, he is putting in a tote-full of hours as policy analyst for the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen’s Association, lodged in a building on Route 28 in North Chatham. Still wearing his tight wool cap, he’s been at his desk since 5 a.m., when he came in to plow through fat reports on the uneasy state of rule-bound, supply-threatened commercial fishing off the Cape.

John and Dick want Big John’s help drafting a presentation on the outlook for the striped bass fishery. As they talk, fragments surface, fragments that every commercial fisherman on the Cape lives with:

Too many people in our fishery...2 a.m. – you can’t even get into Ryder’s Cove...an over-abundance of yahoos... We’re creating our own glut...We’ve got to do something about the number of commercial licenses, up from 3,200 to 4,000 in the last two years...How about a Monday-Thursday fishery?...We should be able to sell the bycatch...The data we always use is two years old...People are looking to get a better quality of life, a cleaner life.

After an hour and a half, the meeting dissolves. Big John agrees to look over draft documents that John and Dick have brought with them, to help them shape up their presentation. The two visitors leave, but not before one of them takes out his billfold to pay for an associate membership in CCCHFA. Then Pappalardo is out the door, on his way to sign papers in Dennis. As a member of the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission and an appointee to the New England Fisheries Management Council, as a fisherman himself, as a board member of trade associations, Big John is a man deep into his job for much of his sixteen-hour days. So are most of the six other full-time staffers (plus one half-timer) of the Hook Fishermen’s Association. In a new century, the troubled realm of the Cape’s commercial fisheries demands no less.

CHAPTER NINE

Countless Years of Abundance

Long before Bartholomew Gosnold anchored off the Lower Cape in 1602, fishing had gone on for generations to feed the Monomoyick Indians. In the mist of unrecorded time, they mastered the skills of using weirs and wide-spread nets; the corrugations of the Cape's landscape have revealed their tribal mounds of discolored clam shells. Chatham founder William Nickerson and his heirs learned a lot from these farmers of coastal waters.¹

By late in the Colonial period, Chatham had joined Barnstable and Harwich as the main fishing ports on the Cape. Venturers with money might have breasted blue water in round-bottomed, two-masted schooners, but most men shoved off in chunky sloops or whaleboats. When Georges Banks came within reach in the 1820's, enterprising Chatham fishermen began plowing across that terrain, pursuing cod and halibut.

Nearer to shore, men like Captain Isaiah Baker experimented in the 1850's by drawing shut a purse seine around an unsuspecting school of fish. It worked.

In those days, catches were measured in "quintals"; one quintal equaled 220 pounds. In 1837, Chatham fishermen, working the waters in 22 vessels, brought in 15,500 quintals of cod, as well as 1,200 barrels of mackerel. Three decades later, the cod catch had fattened to 25,361 quintals, or almost 2,790 tons. The curve certainly was up. The same held true for mackerel harvesting. Measured by the number of inspections, Town authorities checked out 240 barrels in all of 1840, 3,000 in 1854, and, twenty years later, 10,765 barrels.²

For Chatham, commercial fishing has kept on being of real importance ever since. True, there have been ups and downs; there were years when fishermen packed up and left in search of richer grounds. But when Debby Ecker of FCW went public with her economic study in January 1997, her figures showed that landings in Chatham and Provincetown accounted for more than two-thirds



John Pappalardo is one of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association's most knowledgeable sources of information on the length and breadth of restrictions on fishing. "Big John" has been an FCW director.

Courtesy of CCCHEA

of the catch recorded for **all** the Cape. More than that, 12 percent of Chatham's work force fished for a living, a larger slice than any other occupational group.

Still, inexorable factors have also been intensifying. When Chatham catches soared in the mid-19th century, America had a population of 23,191,876. By 2000, the nation had ten times as many mouths to feed. In contrast, the population of the world's oceans has remained finite, alarmingly so. The threat of serious reductions of the stocks came all too close in the 1960's when foreign factory ships loomed just over the twelve-mile coastal border. Federal legislation pushed that barrier out to 200 miles. But shortages persisted, endangering the welfare of Chatham's fishermen more and more. By the 1990's, some of them realized that, to survive, their only recourse was to join together to defend their livelihood.



A catch being unloaded at Old Mill Boat Yard. In the late 1990's, according to the economic study of Chatham made by FCW board member Debby Ecker, fish landings in Chatham and Provincetown added up to more than two-thirds of the catch for the entire Cape. *Courtesy Shareen Davis*

To Save a Maritime Tradition

It began during the Nineties in the basement of a church. A band of fishermen met there in 1991 and started talking about hauling on a common line to counter forces working against them. Maybe they needed a single organization to represent them all. But, to engineer that, they had to have a spark plug. For eight months, Lori Lefevre filled the post. Then the fishermen turned to Paul Parker, a local fisherman with a Master's Degree from Duke University.

To get started, Parker set up shop in his grandmother's basement on Morris Island. By 1998, he had lined up a full-time ally, John Pappalardo, who was willing to work for nothing to turn a cloudy concept into reality. Recalls Pappalardo, "We had one computer, a few pads of paper, and an ever-growing Rolodex of contacts. My parents thought I'd lost my marbles giving up a perfectly good job to do it." That was the beginning of the Cape Cod Commercial

CHAPTER NINE

Hook Fishermen's Association, one of the first in a growing number of commercial fishing groups in the country with a strong commitment to guard the environment in order to preserve their industry.

Today, CCCHFA has a membership of 1,628; some 900 of them live in Chatham and, of those, 130 fish for a living. As executive director, Parker has a staff of six (and one more, half-time) with a budget of \$775,000 that comes from a diverse funding stream. Half of the total represents Federal Fisheries Research Grants; 20 percent is from national foundations, such as the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Pew Charitable Trusts. Another 20 percent is brought in by local fundraising events; the Hookers Ball has a playful part in contributing there. And, finally, 10 percent is from membership and local foundations.

Recently, CCCHFA wrote a statement of purpose. The group would focus its efforts on "campaigning for a healthy marine environment that supports a secure and viable future for sustainable commercial fisheries. We educate, support and empower the fishing industry and the public to effect policy changes that integrate environmental, social and economic issues." Among the association's core objectives:

- "To build bridges of cooperation and understanding between fishermen, scientists, environmentalists, policy makers and the public," and
- "To preserve a resource, tradition and way of life for commercial fishermen, their families and coastal communities."

Once these objectives had been defined, partisans could see that CCCHFA had something in common with another young, vigorous, local organization, the Friends of Chatham Waterways. It was easy to spot their shared goals. FCW's mission statement committed it to preserving Chatham's "proud maritime heritage"; what could be a more vital part of that tradition than the town's centuries of fishing? Then, too, the Friends dedicated its energies to "serving as an information resource to the community on relevant issues." From the earliest,



Paul Parker, executive Director of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association and a professional fisherman himself. He has built the organization into one with a staff of half a dozen, and a budget of \$775,000.

Photo by Barry Donahue.

the Hook Fishermen's Association knew that a key effort had to be feeding the public more information on constraints affecting the livelihood of its members. Maybe the two enterprises should team up, at times.

For FCW's part, that possibility surfaced at its board meeting on October 2, 2000. Prompted by directors' talk of concentrating more on local waterways than had been the case recently, the author "put forward the idea that education on the fisheries would be a good idea for FCW (and) do this as a community service." Board member Herb Bernard cast out another line, suggesting that people like CCCHFA's Paul Parker be interviewed, as a point of departure.

That cue was on target, and later that month, the author went on an expedition to the association's first-floor headquarters at Nickerson's Corners, North Chatham. In the hour's exchange that ensued, Parker underscored his enthusiasm about future involvement with FCW. At that time, he said, fishermen felt they were being "persecuted." In an after-action memo, the author speculated that "FCW could do a lot of good by joining with (the association) to help explain to the publics...why they feel this way – and what might be done to ameliorate that frame of mind." While that concern was not going to be tackled right away, further discussion late in 2000 tagged a topic that could be ventilated at FCW's 2001 annual meeting. Bringing it into public consciousness at that point would serve the aims of both CCCHFA and FCW.

That topic was "bycatch." That's not a word you'll find in standard dictionaries. But fishermen know exactly what it means. As much as a decade ago, *Audubon* magazine explained the word this way:

It is no secret that while world fleets are over-fishing many food species, they're also scooping up a bycatch of billions of other creatures they can't use.


The fish tossed back – the bycatch – are mostly dead. What's the scope today of this awesome misuse of food? The Hook Fishermen's John Pappalardo points to an Australian researcher's analysis of 100,000 tows over four years. He determined that "for every pound of fish that was caught and brought to dock, an equivalent amount was discarded at sea." In short, a discard rate of 50 percent. That has to be of staggering consequence in a world where millions regularly go hungry. However, bear in mind, CCCHFA says, that people don't go hungry simply because of a lack of food. Rather, it's due to meager distribution efforts. Then, too, when it comes to bycatch, you have to remember that it often includes unwanted species that individuals don't eat.

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Pointing toward FCW's 2001 annual meeting, the Hook Fishermen's organization suggested that bycatch could be a critical subject to take up there. FCW agreed, and the wheels began turning on planning the August 9 event. CCCHFA's communications coordinator, Melissa Roberts Weidman, energized a drive to tell her members about the meeting. And for FCW, director Jim Blankenship unreeled various promotional lures. Meanwhile, Paul Parker's team set about lining up a panel of experts, and they were impressive.³


When the annual meeting arrived, the assembled panelists got right to the point. Dr. Anthony Chatwin told his listeners that in 1999, the amount of bycatch equaled the total world catch for 1950. It will always happen in fishing, he added, but "we have to manage that bycatch." One of the biggest difficulties, said Pappalardo, has been that this discard phenomenon is "something that is generally not documented." Hence, the industry badly needed a better flow of information, because, as panelist David Pierce echoed, the bycatch problem locally is "severe."

What were possible solutions? For one, netting information on what is actually happening at sea. Then, the panel agreed, "gear modifications...with the cooperation of fishermen." Further, there should be efforts to promote "a different type of fishing...that has less impact on the ocean bottom (and) deals with this discard problem." That "better way," said one expert, would be hook fishing. Beyond that, the need for more data from the fleet afloat could be met, panelists concurred, by having "a wide-spread observer coverage program (with) individuals who go out to sea with fishermen (to) record what is caught and what is discarded."

**Mark your calendar!**

Your Board of Directors is pleased to announce the
2001 Annual Meeting
Thursday, August 9 at 7:30 PM
Forgeron Room, Eldredge Public Library

HELP LAUNCH OUR NEW INITIATIVE ON
CHATHAM FISHERIES EDUCATION



In cooperation with the
Cape Cod Commercial
Hook Fishermen's Association
we will present a panel discussion on

Bycatch! Is there a solution?

What can be done about Bycatch, the indiscriminate catching of fish and other marine life other than those a fishing vessel intends to capture?

What is the impact of Bycatch on the marine environment, the supply of fish and the future economy of fishing communities like Chatham?

What are practical solutions? What is being done now to address the problem? How can interested persons get involved?

The Panel of Experts	
Dr. Anthony Chatwin	Staff Scientist, Conservation Law Foundation
Dr. David Pierce	Deputy Director, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
Chris Glaus	Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
John Pappalardo	Policy Analyst, CCCHFA

Moderator: Melissa Roberts Weidman, Communications Director, CCCHFA

FCW's flyer for its 2001 annual meeting included this invitation to members and others to attend and learn something about the regrettable phenomenon of "bycatch," the part of a fisherman's haul that is tossed back and very likely destroyed.

Winding up the program, Paul Parker of CCCHFA appealed to his listeners to help his organization move a campaign to bring those observers to Massachusetts waters. And he ended with a hearty plug for FCW, citing it as “a phenomenal asset to our community.” Fishermen, he explained, “sometimes have communications difficulties in telling folks about our issues.” Hence, FCW’s people are “an incredible value to us.”

The presentation that evening had to be an eye-opener for people on hand. Unfortunately, though, the turnout hardly reflected the energies funneled into making the program both interesting and informative. In hard fact, 40-plus showed up. Of them, one-half were FCW board members and spouses. Was FCW disappointed? Yes, but not dismayed. The organization’s been around long enough to know that it can’t expect to draw a Super Bowl crowd for every one of its events. (In this case, the Board of Selectmen at the last moment had called a meeting on the fate of Main Street School.)

Notwithstanding the thin numbers, this occasion was an important start for a new, promising relationship. CCCHFA is as dynamic and critical an organization as any functioning in Chatham today; it represents a part of one of the town’s biggest economic sectors; it has an essential commitment to sustaining the community’s maritime heritage. Hence, its interests intersect with FCW’s. They’ll work together again, for a certainty. John Pappalardo puts this linkage into words. “The FCW board is a tremendous group of people,” he believes, “who could be helpful to our cause, and vice versa. Our association will benefit, but the industry at large will benefit from this type of collaboration. Before, it was very black and white; you were either with us or against us. That was disastrous.”

This winter, CCCHFA put FCW’s leadership on the list to receive its Friday-afternoon e-mail message. That terse document wraps up the actions and deliberations of the association’s weekly board meeting. As a result, the bond between the two enterprises can only be tightened.



The eye goes exploring on Mitchell River, toward Little Mill Pond and downtown.

Gordon Zellner

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On Troubled Waters

7:30 on a Tuesday morning in summer. Weather: partly cloudy. Wind force: Beaufort 2. Direction: southwest. Water condition: cloudy. The four of us get into realtor John's outboard. Russ, a retiree, Barbara, who runs a greenhouse and is our "captain," and I load \$1,300 worth of testing equipment. We head south to the middle of Chatham's Oyster Pond and an orange buoy. Anchoring close by, we begin our water-testing. The four of us are among 140 volunteers out this morning to use science to check on how much our waterways have deteriorated, over-loaded with nitrogen. Soon our data will underpin the Waste Water Management study. It will tell citizens the sobering cost of extending sewers and other waste water treatment systems through this ever-growing town.

Barbara feeds overboard the black-and-white Secchi disk. How deep is it when it disappears? What's the depth when it reappears, as she reels it in? Russ squints through an optical instrument to measure salinity. John pays out the heavy Niskin cylinder to collect water samples at different depths; the lab will assess them later. Using a hand-held meter, Barbara takes readings on the pond's dissolved oxygen, along with surface and bottom temperatures. As scribe, I jot down the measurements. Then our job is done, and by 8:15, the water samples and my notes are on the road to the lab. This effort by volunteers will save the community \$200,000 a year in wages alone. And far from being make-work, the information is essential⁴.

* * * * *

The seven summer-season outings of the 140 Chatham Water Watchers are what gives voluntarism a good name in this seaside town. The savings in

Barbara Streibert, a team captain for Chatham Water Watchers. With her are Russ Barclay, in front, and John Lynch. Each crew member does a different task of measuring certain properties of water at a designated site. The results from the various sites -- 25 in all -- are then turned over to the Town's lab for shipment to New Bedford.



money outlays, the clear legitimacy of the annual research over a span of five years, the feeling of “community” that mellows for those women and men shipping out every two weeks: it is a win-win situation for all hands. As far as Town government goes, there’s no question about the impact of these volunteers and many others. In this case, Chatham Water Watchers has written one of the brightest success stories in the life of FCW – and, as Martha Stone points out from her long involvement with FCW, “it’s layer # 4.” In other words, #1 was instituting septic inspections in 1985; # 2, the call for a pump-out facility in the Stage Harbor Management Plan; and # 3, that same plan’s requirement that “No Discharge Zones” be shown on charts to benefit visiting boaters. Mrs. Stone advises that C. W W.’s testing might have just been for coliform bacteria, had it not been for levels 1—3, which shaped the Water Watchers’ obligation to test mainly for nitrogen.

It would disavow reality to say that FCW’s putting together a team of Water Watchers happened uneventfully. Now entering its fifth season, this water-testing project eases along smoothly, but at genesis in the mid-Nineties, rocks in the stream tended to interfere with the flow. Once again, a volunteer venture came up against the age-old antipathies that too often go hand in hand in “town-and-gown” relationships.

Chatham’s ample experience with this fact of municipal life calls for a little background, reaching back to about 1986. Up to then, the town had been governed by a three-man board of full-time selectmen; they doubled as assessors. But ever since World War II, growing pains stretched that arrangement more and more. Responding, a Government Advisory Committee urged that the three full-timers be replaced by five part-time selectmen. Town Meeting in May ‘86 concurred. A sequel was naming the town’s first executive secretary, the late Jim Lindstrom. His office, in turn, was upgraded in 1994, calling for greater experience; a town administrator, Tom Groux, took over, and became town manager – Chatham’s first – in 1995. This was the fall-out of ceaseless growth.⁵

That irrepressible process brought expansions in government below the top rung. In another 1986 change triggered by thickening complexities of management, Margo Fenn, now executive director of the Cape Cod Commission, came on the scene as the Town’s first professional planner. The next year, with pollution threatening the long-admired splendor of this resort community’s waterways, a professional was hired as director of town laboratories. He was Dr. Robert A. Duncanson, now director of Health & Environment.

Even before his arrival, Town officials had had to face the matter of dirty water. That recognition goes back at least to 1965, when overflow from a cesspool under a downtown restaurant wound up in Oyster Pond. That made

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installing a sewer for downtown almost inevitable. By the end of 1973, more than 100 homes and businesses were tied into a new underground system. But hard evidence showed that this was scarcely a total cure: somehow, some way, threatening bacteria still migrated into Oyster Pond. And when the state closed the pond for shellfishing in 1983, livelihoods were hit hard, and Town Hall heard about it. By the next year, Chatham had its own small laboratory to do the testing that county labs were too overloaded to do quickly. This facility came to be Bob Duncanson's headquarters when he reported for duty in 1987. For him, it was a good fit. It involved a lot of fieldwork; he liked that. Also, he'd be quite independent, reporting straight to the Town Manager, "not getting pulled into other arenas," he recalls. "For me, that was very attractive." And, with his doctorate from University of Rhode Island, he had very applicable academic underpinnings: his dissertation dealt with a coliform membrane filtration method for public drinking supplies.

Thus, the stage was set for creating a water watchers' project — but not until the Nineties came around the corner. The starter's pistol actually went off when the state approved Chatham's Comprehensive Harbor Management Plan (CHMP) in August 1994. The pace was slow, painfully so for activists. The first hazard to overcome involved a mandate for the selectmen to form CHMP's implementation committee.

It was late in 1995 before that happened.

Among its members, three were drawn from the FCW board: Kurt Hellfach, Pat Siewert and Martha Stone. They share a middle initial: A, for Action!

Among requirements in CHMP, one called for "Water Quality Monitoring, to provide a baseline for nitrogen concentrations in the Stage Harbor system." There should be four rounds of samples taken from three locations: the middle of Oyster Pond, Mill Pond, and Stage Harbor. Essentially, this task would fall to Bob Duncanson, his small lab staff, and their one boat. They faced variegated details: deciding what substances they should be looking for, writing a testing protocol, setting up a budget, buying the sophisticated measuring gear. In the ways of Town management, all that would take time. And Duncanson had



With the change in its form of government during the mid-Nineties, Chatham hired Tom Groux as first Town Manager. That was an acknowledgement that governing a community like Chatham was becoming more and more complex.

Cape Cod Chronicle

other missions. So, to do the job right, more people than just his staff would be needed to cover the field systematically.

Even so, the CHMP obligated the community to get on with it. In 1996, the FCW board, concurring that steps had to be taken, gave its okay for Martha Stone to call Dr. Brian L. Howes, senior fellow at “CMAST,” the Center for Marine Science and Technology at U-Mass Dartmouth (the Center’s now a School). Would he advise on how to launch a water-monitoring project? It would have to be sponsored by the Town, he explained, but a far bigger problem had to do with lining up volunteers to do the field testing. That was easy fishing for FCW. Mrs. Stone assured him that the Friends “would willingly recruit, train and supply any and all volunteers to collect samples” and even deliver the containers to CMAST in Dartmouth.

Spurred by this exchange, FCW’s board encouraged Martha Stone to contact Dr. Duncanson to ask about formalizing the monitoring program. He was planning to do it, he told her, but then came a familiar caveat: how could they possibly assemble enough volunteers to handle the duties? Still, he was prepared to work on the idea. Again, Mrs. Stone emphasized that FCW would put together the volunteer force. In spite of that assurance, the project stayed in neutral for the balance of that year. During 1997, the matter was raised once more with the lab director, who echoed his intent to get the sampling moving. By now, the RPMs of high-octane FCW directors were climbing.

In the warmth of early summer ‘98, FCW decided that another step was in order. With Mrs. Stone as spearhead, calls went to Dr. Howes and Town Manager Tom Groux to sit down with a nucleus of Friends directors to revisit the CHMP’s requisite monitoring project; in his stead, Groux sent Bob Duncanson. Dr. Howes was the right resource person for that moment. He explained how monitoring programs worked in other towns and why collecting the data was so vital in managing salt-water embayments. That stimulus was undeniable, and Duncanson followed up by saying he’d proceed with getting the testing gear.

Everyone had hoped that sampling could begin before the summer of ‘98 had headed south. And for its part, FCW made a valiant try. At the August annual meeting, a call went out for more volunteers; Mrs. Stone and George Olmsted had signed up eighteen, but wanted twenty, to start. By early September, Dr. Duncanson had pinned down seven testing stations in the Stage Harbor complex and had ordered the measuring devices. Late that month, he and Dr. Howes set about training FCW’s volunteers. That field force tried its new skills for the first time in October; the seven teams made up of twenty women and

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men brought in results from sites ranging from Oyster Pond, to Little Mill Pond, to the Stage Harbor bell.

Ever since then, it's been onward and upward for Chatham Water Watchers. At its full strength of 140, C. W. W. tests at regular biweekly intervals at 25 stations; they run from the Harwich line in Pleasant Bay, south and west to the Harwich boundary beyond Forest and Pleasant Street beaches in South Chatham.

At this juncture, the routine is fixed. Bob Duncanson coordinates the testing, while FCW recruits and assists him in training new volunteers. Happily for the lab director, he doesn't need to nurse those field workers. As he puts it, Martha Stone and George Olmsted have to "deal with the frantic phone calls of 'I'm sick and I can't go out tomorrow.' They do the scrambling to make sure the slot is filled."

If there was any discord in early time, the cause was transparent. "It took time to get the budgeting in place," Dr. Duncanson says, "so we had to wait a year. Then it took time to sit down with the experts and decide where (to test), how many stations, what kind of equipment. So there was a little bit of frustration on some parts, including mine."

But that was then — past history now. Looking back, how has it been for him working with FCW's teams in this context? "The volunteers are absolutely wonderful," Duncanson asserts. And again, their systematic output validates the whole project, producing more than 300 samples a year — hard data from 25 stations — to shore up the ongoing Comprehensive Wastewater Management Study. Chatham's future health and welfare will depend as much on putting that study's recommendations into play as almost anything else on the horizon.



A group of new Water Watchers learn the ropes from the man in charge, Dr. Robert Duncanson, Chatham's director of Health & Environment.

Gordon Zellner

As Chatham Water Watchers slides into a fifth season, the testing goes on without incident. Well, almost without incident. Now and then, an essential outboard takes an inopportune holiday. Maybe a team finds it has to row out to its station. Or the Niskin cylinder balks at admitting testable samples of water. Or the anchor won't set, so a crew suddenly realizes their craft has drifted a hundred yards off-station. But those incidents rarely cancel a testing. And the C.W.W. track record has turned out to be so strong that George Olmsted hesitates not at all in calling it "one of FCW's greatest triumphs."



Pat Tarnow, at right, and Lew Kimball, both FCW board members and both Chatham Water Watchers during the summer. FCW has lined up as many as 140 women and men to volunteer for C.W.W. duty, but is usually looking for more to keep a full complement.

On Shifting Sands

On a November morning in 2001, the phone rang in the George Ryder Road office of Ted Keon, Chatham's director of Coastal Resources. It was Jim O'Connell, a man often in touch with Keon about shared concerns. O'Connell, who works for both Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, had a proposal. It captured Ted Keon's fancy right away.

For months, O'Connell had been putting together local projects to measure coastal beaches to see how much they changed at regular intervals and before and after major storms. Teams had already started to monitor stretches of beach in Marshfield, Duxbury, Sandwich, East Dennis, Eastham, Truro and Falmouth. Now he was wondering if Chatham would join up, to give him yet another set of site-specific data. What cinched the deal for Ted Keon was that all these other communities used volunteers as monitors. Intrigued by the proposal but too busy to be a manpower recruiter himself, he spotted an immediate solution: he'd call on Friends of Chatham Waterways. Hadn't it assembled that company of 140 to measure the health of local bays and harbors, rivers and ponds?

Following up, Keon got in touch with FCW's hierarchy. "They had an obvious interest in matters like this," he recalled. "They jumped all over it. They

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were interested right from the get-go.” Soon the project went beyond the talk stage. FCW directors Jane Harris and George Olmsted were tagged “spark plugs,” their call went out for volunteers, and FCW had itself another community-service project.

Chatham’s Restless Beaches

Visitors to the town’s Lighthouse Overlook learn soon enough about what can happen when storm, moon and tide gang up on poorly protected sand and dune. The memorable breakthrough of 1987 tore up enough of North Beach to create a wholesale gap between harbor and ocean that remains to this day. That historic event rewrote all the dynamics of Pleasant Bay far north into its upper reaches. The basic evidence of the ‘87 storm’s destruction was easy to see.

What the visitor may **not** spot is what coastal forces accomplish naturally. Left to their own devices, those actions keep borrowing sand from one beach front and depositing it elsewhere. That process never ends. O’Connell’s interest in signing up Chatham for his project had a lot of justification: it offers a unique combination of water courses, from an impinging ocean and restless bay, to Nantucket Sound, where the shifting wave patterns do not have much respect for the shoreline.

Ted Keon paints a word picture of the tireless change at the fringe between Chatham’s land and water:

Nauset Beach is growing south, but also retreating west at the same time. So there’s a narrowing of that beach. South Beach has an extensive erosion trend right now...At Andrew Harding’s Lane, the area has undergone a lot of erosion. The town has done repeated beach nourishments there to try to stabilize it; that’s been quite effective...



Jay Stahl, former executive director of the town’s Chamber of Commerce, doing his stint as a Chatham Water Watcher. Some of the volunteers go on from early morning testing duties to daytime jobs.

On Nantucket Sound, at Hardings Beach, change has a certain character, and then, to the west, Cockle Cove is quite different. It's directly down-drift of all the shore protection groins along Forest and Pleasant Street Beaches. That's a very very sand-starved location. Erosion's extremely rapid there.

Focusing on that one-of-a-kind profile, Keon and O'Connell put their heads together to pick sites where volunteer measuring teams could set up shop. Ted Keon recommended Andrew Harding's Lane to "see how much sand from the Town's nourishment is lost and the rate of loss." Jim O'Connell was interested in a Nantucket Sound location, so the two settled on Hardings Beach. Then they agreed on Cockle Cove. Says Keon, "That site appealed to both of us. That's where I'm actively involved planning a beach project. It's perfect timing for the volunteers to provide some pre-project surveys and then post-project, to see how the beach erodes, how it responds to nourishing."

The locations determined, the pair then picked their measuring sites: two at Andrew Harding's Lane, two at Hardings Beach, and four at Cockle Cove. At each one they drove a ten-foot copper pipe deep into the sand behind the dune crest. Then the Parks and Recreation Department made for each volunteer team an "Emery Rod"; it enables the measurers to take readings of the dune and beach profiles by sighting to the horizon. It was now time to put the volunteers to work.



When Director of Coastal Resources Ted Keon was approached about starting to measure Chatham's beaches, he knew exactly where to turn to line up volunteers: FCW. Friends leadership was quick to sign on, and in no time Keon had his team of Chatham Beach Watchers.

Gordon Zellner

FCW Gets Into the Act

On March 6, 2002, Friends volunteers, eighteen in all (now 28), gathered to learn their tasks in the field. As instructor, Jim O'Connell managed the session, both indoors and outside. Afterward, the teams dispersed to their respective sites.

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In time, the new activity turned routine. At each location, the teams, sighting on the Emery Rod, measure two “transects” (a transect, says Webster, is a “sample area...usually in the form of a long continuous strip”) in five-foot increments right down to low water. Explains Jane Harris further, “The profile for each transect is completed and site observations, such as location of the wrack line, dry/wet sand interface, and density of dune vegetation, are noted.” At first, FCW’s participants went out twice during the year; now they go to their posts quarterly, as well as after exceptional storms. What’s the value of their field results? In Mrs. Harris’s words, “The data is important to the Town for guidance regarding dune and beach nourishment/restoration and for conditions for seawall or revetment construction, and it’s important to the State for the development of Shoreline Change Maps.”

Just like the Chatham Water Watchers project, Chatham Beach Watchers, as this newer, volunteer-manned FCW venture is called, costs almost nothing (after initial capital investment), in contrast to the potential expense of having professional surveyors take on the assignment. To start, C. B. W bought plumb bobs, stakes, compasses, and instruction sheets, plus minimal wood for the Emery Rods. Jim O’Connell’s office covers the cost of photographing the transects during each profiling outing.



Mustached Jim O’Connell from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute came to town to orient FCW volunteers on the measuring technique already being used in half a dozen beach-front communities.

To Chatham's director of Coastal Resources, the project has tangible value. "It's giving the Town an opportunity to understand its beaches more than it's ever had before," says Ted Keon. "That data set has never existed. The time and effort are usually beyond what we can do, particularly when there isn't a dire need to have it for a specific project." Beyond that, the results are informative enough to make Keon think that C. B. W.'s sweep should be widened to include Pleasant

Bay areas, such as at "smaller, more narrow" beaches like Scatterree's. In the past, sand has been brought in from Aunt Lydia's Cove to nourish Scatterree. Doing transects there, says Keon, "would help us get a good understanding of how the Pleasant Bay shoreline changes compared with other beaches."

For the FCW crews, there's a bonus beyond just the satisfaction of doing a volunteer stint. Her teams, explains Jane Harris, have "a strong interest in scientifically identifying changes in a beach close to where they live and where they walk." By going from semi-annual to quarterly profiling, that's likely, she believes, "to increase the sense of camaraderie among our volunteers and their feeling of ownership of the project." In short, in this FCW undertaking, **everybody** benefits.



Braving the nasty winter air, a pair of the first volunteers go about the task of determining how much one of Chatham's beaches has changed in the past three months.

Gordon Zellner



Chatham Beach Watchers go on location quarterly -- and after any major storm. Their efforts provide an ongoing perspective on beach changes that Chatham has never had before.

Gordon Zellner

¹ For further background on the Cape's centuries of fishing, see Henry C. Kittredge's *Cape Cod: Its People and Their History*, first published in 1930 and reprinted in 1987 by Parnassus Imprints.

² See the most informative *The Chatham Celebration: 1712-1912. The Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town of Chatham*, published in 1913.

³ They were: Dr. Anthony Chatwin, staff scientist, Conservation Law Foundation; Dr. David Pierce, deputy director, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries; Chris Glass of the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences; and John Pappalardo. Ms. Weidman, an accomplished facilitator, was designated as moderator.

⁴ From an essay written by the author for a major reunion year book at college.

⁵ See *Weathering a Century of Change* for more details on the town's growth in the latter years of the 20th century.

CHAPTER TEN

On FCW's Busy Waterfront





The crystals of winter at Oyster Pond chill any memories of summer.

Jennifer Eldredge Stello

Chapter Ten

For so many, World War II led to sad — often final — farewells. Composer Frank Loesser wrote a plaintive ballad just right for that time: “Spring will be a little late this year.” It’s a song that still resonates for veteran Chathamites. That war may be back-watered on video store shelves now, but residents know that, inevitably, spring will be a little late this year.

Regardless, come rain or come shine, the work goes on for the Friends of Chatham Waterways board, month after month. New members learn quickly that they’re expected to get up in the rigging by tomorrow’s sunrise and shake out the sails. True, it wasn’t always this way. In the early years, summer-only directors kept the business going from late spring till early fall; a hardy few, mostly at home across the Canal, studied current issues through the long winter. For the most part, though, FCW huddled under a taut blue boat cover.

These days, it’s different. Issues seem to have a tenacious quality: they don’t drive west to the mainland for the winter, just because Columbus Day has gone over the horizon. On this past February 10, directors convened in a snow-storm at George Olmsted’s house.¹ At that point, board members had seventeen “action projects” in tow, as well as thirteen “monitoring responsibilities.” Four directors (Jim Blankenship, Lew Kimball, George Olmsted, and Martha Stone) serve on five or more board committees. They cover a broad reach, from Membership and Nominating, to Harbor Management Planning, Public Access to Waterways, and Invasive Plants. It’s safe to say that the women and men on the board don’t forget for long that, in a way, they work for the members. The emphasis there is on **work**.

Crewing For the Members

From the beginning, the people of FCW have had something in common: an affection for Chatham’s waterways strong enough to bring them back yearly from as far away as California and Oregon, Houston and St. Louis. They stand together in their concern for the quality of those waters. And over the years, they have generally stayed aboard ship. Perhaps their numbers are fairly modest — they represent about 5 percent of the town’s population. But enough of them sign on regularly to give the institution a dependable base, enabling it to

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adopt with confidence real local issues and toil over them. It's worth repeating: there's no other enterprise like FCW in town. Originally, it didn't take a group of neighbors long to welcome the option and sign up.

Through the summer of 1983, the image of what was to be the Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways, precursor of FCW, rather quickly came into focus. By November, it had grown enough to record 102 people as members. Through their \$15 annual dues, they had established a treasury account of \$1,771.25.

By February 10, 2003, FCW counted 336 memberships. Current dues and donations run about \$10,000 annually, and net worth amounts to \$56,141.63. ² Without question, every 2003 board member knows how important that balance is for an independent body sometimes up against sizable legal and consulting fees. FCW directors know how vital it is to keep on board a steady membership paying dues and making extra donations.

For the membership committees over time, sailing has never been downwind. By May 1986, the original list of memberships amounted to 97; they translated into 170 individuals. By 1993's annual meeting, President Lew Kimball could announce that 326 people belonged to the organization. Prudently, he thanked co-chairmen Judy Hoyt and Grace Busk for their "vigorous" efforts in seeking new names for the lodge. In the millennial year, the books showed 284 memberships, or 460 individuals.

As that memorable year passed, Mrs. Hoyt, backbone of the membership efforts since the early Eighties, decided to step down. She handed over the challenge to a new board member, Ilene Bendas. Fortunately, Mrs. Bendas could sign up her husband, John, as aide-de-camp – he had the vital computer know-how. Using a Microsoft Access program, he turned the names and numbers into succinct alphabetical lists as a platform for enrolling more avid waterways boosters.



Judy Hoyt, one of the earliest advocates for a Friends organization focused on Stage Harbor, took over the always-challenging work of building membership. By '93 she and others had brought in 326 people to FCW rolls.



With the passing of the millennium, FCW director Ilene Bendas assumed the chairmanship of membership from Mrs. Hoyt, who had been at the task productively for 18 years.

That level of finesse enabled FCW to analyze its family. Take the years of 2001 and 2003. In '01, the Friends recorded 363 memberships, or 551 individuals. Remarkably, one-third of those memberships (120) were held by people from out-of-state; five were living on the West Coast. Coming up to 2003, FCW rolls now list 371 memberships; translation: 553 individuals. Out-of-state? Still 120, of which seven now call West Coast communities home.

Do those two years reflect a pattern? Has FCW reached a plateau? It's too early to tell. But board management is determined to keep reaching out to sailors, boaters and waterways lovers to join up. To George Olmsted, the goal of the six-member membership committee is simple:

"...to attract all people interested in preservation of Chatham's character (in and around the waterways and our many neighborhoods). That is why our dues are cheap. We are an informational resource to the public as well as to our membership, but only members receive our WaterWays newsletters and other specific communications. Never can there be too many members of FCW."

One who certainly agrees is his membership committee chairman, Mrs. Bendas, whose efforts are bolstered by five other directors.³

"I'm sure we could get more members," says Mrs. Bendas, a race-walker and an upbeat person who exudes hope. "If we had something we were working on that really affected everybody, that had to do with waterways in a very basic way, then maybe they'd jump on board. That's why I got involved in the first place, because FCW was trying to keep our waterways clean."

The Case For Dues

When Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways's first year of 1983 ended, its cash balance, attested Judith R. Miller, C. P. A., was \$1,631, not bad for a vestigial organization. After that, annual balances hiked upward, adding backbone to the institution as they climbed.

Paddle ahead to August 1992. On the 29th of that month, FCW reported a balance of \$15,004.05; unquestionably, the treasury was healthy. That led to discussion at a Saturday morning board meeting. Reported minutes-taker Maureen Vokey, director Jim Davis "talked about investing our money." Treasurer Richard Durkin had an answer: FCW should consider investing some of its wealth in a mutual fund offered by Scudder, yielding 6.9 percent; he advised

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peeling off \$12,000 for that purpose. A motion was made, seconded and passed, and FCW has been in Scudder ever since.

The treasurer's summary for that same year testified to the board's dynamic commitment to help get things done in town. Earlier that year, when the balance stood at \$20,312.75, directors agreed to donate \$5,000 to Chatham's government. It was to be used for research on the developing Stage Harbor Management plan (hardly the only time FCW has given a share of its dues pool to a town project, or raised even more dollars for such a purpose). At any rate, drawing on the remaining funds in late summer '92, the treasurer went ahead to invest in Scudder. Since then, when a special need has come up, the treasurer has withdrawn from that fund.

Apart from its checking and Scudder accounts, FCW has a brokerage account with Commonwealth Financial Network. Should future benefactors want to contribute stock to the Friends, that account has an open door. Fortuitously, a goodly number of members often add gifts above their regular dues. As it stands, the different FCW accounts (checking, Scudder, etc.) are grouped under one designation: "Community Action Fund." That composite ensures that FCW will have the money to cope with future calls for dollar support.



Dr. Walter Butler, FCW treasurer and vice president, has brought analytical skills and computer power to keeping abreast of the ebb and flow of the organization's funds.

Looking back at recent annual reports, Treasurer Walter Butler notes that dues and donations bring in "about \$10,000 per year, or approximately 50 percent of our total income." The next largest income source stems from grants, made by five entities, in all.⁴ For many years, The Dreyfus Foundation has awarded FCW grants of \$3,000 annually, but in 2002 it scaled back to \$2,500. Other grants have been cut, as well. "This is probably a widespread trend," comments Dr. Butler, one "driven by the economic slowdown and drop in stock market valuations."

Beyond the more than \$36,000 spent by FCW on its Zoning Bylaw Revision initiative, there have been other major expenses – a total of \$9,250 in grants over four years to educational programs at Chatham's public schools; and \$2,500 given to the Town for Safety Navigation Buoys and for the Coastal Resource Donation Fund. FCW gives in another, critical way. As Treasurer Butler notes, cash donations "are augmented by the many hours of volunteer service

that FCW members provide as part of Chatham Water Watchers and other programs.”

Scan the list of the organization’s projects and you’ll see that the current dues level — \$25 for an individual, \$40 for a family — has to be a good buy. Fortunately, almost 40 percent of dues payers add an extra amount. That lifted the average response for individual and family members in 2003 to \$65, according to the Treasurer’s calculation. These resources seldom stand idle. Even if no major action project looms, FCW readily funds the costs of generating information for both members and townsfolk on issues of common concern.

Vital Mission: Communication

The Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways still had places to go on its first training cruise in late 1983 when the executive committee came together at Sue Wilmot’s Stage Harbor Road home. The November meeting was well along when the president, Joan Kimball, made a pointed remark about “futures.” In late spring, she said, “we’ll need a PR article to let people know they should have their cesspool/septic systems checked.”

Setting aside the obvious worry about overly polluted waters, the comment was noteworthy because it recognized the importance of PR, of **communication** with not only members of the Friends but also people of the community. The fact is that that determination had been engrained in enterprise thinking ever since its earliest days.

This intention had been addressed that fall in a letter Mrs. Kimball wrote to the chairman of the Conservation Commission, John Doane. “I wanted to share information with (ConsCom),” she said in her opening paragraph,” about our overall purpose...” Two paragraphs later, she spelled out that dedication to providing specific information:

“Our purpose is to provide an informational resource for members and others concerning the condition, development and preservation of the waterways and adjoining lands.”

The Friends was not about to hide its cards. Rather, as Joan Kimball added, “We hope to keep in close touch with the newly formed town waterways commission, town boards and the Harbormaster.”

Almost from the first, FSHW organized itself to include public relations in its affairs. By the board meeting of September 2, 1983, experienced printing executive Doug Rhodes had agreed to handle PR. At the same time, a report

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stated that 450 flyers about the Friends had been distributed; more were soon going to ConsCom and various clubs active on town waterways.

This insistence on talking to a lot more Chatham people than merely the choir of devotees has been written into the institution's ways ever since: "the first education grants to school teachers are being announced; let's get a photograph of the winners and take it to *The Chronicle* with an extended caption."... "Now the Captain's Award project's request for nominations is coming up; write up a paragraph or two and get it to the papers and WFCC ."... "The Hook Fishermen's Association has lined up a strong panel for our annual meeting; let's get out word through mailings and our newsletter as early as we can." In brief, almost everything the Friends takes on lends itself to an outbound information flow – to communication. No one questions that self-imposed obligation.

That determination has never reached larger proportions than in the case of FCW's initiative to amend the Zoning Bylaw. As the stem-winder of communications for the Friends, director Jim Blankenship sized up the issue this way: "It was so contentious...very controversial. (And) it was a very complex situation, not easy to understand." In fact, it was as difficult to get your hands around as any project of FCW's up to that time.

Grinding as that whole exercise was, it proved that the Friends had the horsepower for it. Out of the directors' ranks came a handful of men and women to go for it. Mrs. Ecker and John Geiger, with strong help from John Sweeney and George Olmsted, manned posts on the front line. Then, backing them up with a program of communications, were directors like Walter Butler, Rob Carlisle, Nancy Rhodes, Barbara Streibert, and Marina Zellner. In the chair: Jim Blankenship, who knows a thing or two about "account management."

Town Meeting 2001 not only had FCW's four Zoning Bylaw revisions on the warrant, but also an appeal to ban Jet Skis from waters touching the National Seashore boundary. FCW favored the ban, as this FCW *WaterWays* display "ad" explained.

Are Jet Skis racing by our beaches what Chatham summers are all about?

We of Friends of Chatham Waterways don't think so.
That's why we urge you to attend Town Meeting May 14 and
vote YES on Article 32

to prohibit operation of Personal Watercraft (PWCs)
on local waterways touching the boundary of Cape Cod National Seashore.

If you don't like the way Jet Skis pollute our air and water, or their high-speed
thrill-riding off our beaches, or their chain-saw sounds, then
vote YES on Article 32.

The background:

- By April 20, 2002, the National Seashore will prohibit the operation of these craft within a quarter mile of its boundaries.
- Extending this rule to local waters touching the Seashore boundary is a goal of each town on the Outer Cape and of the Pleasant Bay Alliance of Chatham, Orleans and Harwich.
- All these towns will be voting on a by-law change to put this regulation into effect by next year.

A relatively recent newcomer in Chatham – Jim and his wife, Jane, had moved to town in 1998 – Blankenship had the energy and the tools, literally and figuratively, to face off against the awesome need. (His basement had enough electronic gear for a modest computer store.) It's germane that, after his service in Vietnam, he put in 23 years in public relations, first in New York City, then in Boston. He started as a "grunt," in his term; when he retired in '92, he had the rank of executive vice-president.

But before distilling what his team and he did to buttress the Zoning Bylaw initiative, it's relevant to explain a key facet of FCW's personality: its role as **advocate**.

From the first, the organization pursued a course toward pleading a cause, in the legal sense. A 1983 membership form left no doubt about what its general aims were. FSHW was going to help develop uses of the waterways "compatible with the protection of the natural resources and the character of the area." Inevitably, that had to mean taking a position in favor of something, or against something else – in short, advocating. The same citation from the group's Purpose made this even more transparent: FSHW's responsibilities included "initiating action on issues as determined and approved by the membership." Those with the long view of what the Friends continuing agenda has been know that the enterprise has been advocating ever since.

Even so, the earliest board, through the voice of President Joan Kimball, had a certain worry: did the organization run the risk of lapsing from wholesome advocacy into lobbying? "This has been a concern of mine since the beginning," Mrs. Kimball wrote to New York lawyer Rebecca Citron. At issue then was incorporating FSHW.

To explain her doubts, Mrs. Kimball picked a situation of the moment. FSHW was engaged in asking Town boards to request "biological studies of the harbor and surrounding ponds to see if the high coliform/fecal counts...found in scattered tests this fall [of '83] constitute a major problem." Then she asked: "Is this lobbying?" The consensus held that it wasn't. But what if it were to back a candidate for office? Very simply, there were no prospects whatsoever that the



FCW's communications specialist Jim Blankenship, at right, with executive committee member Kurt Hellfach. Blankenship has been the keystone in carrying out FCW's determination to tell members and residents where it stands on current issues and their background.

Gordon Zellner

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Friends would ever do that, and thus threaten its tax-exempt status. As for advocacy, FCW today advocates readily and often. But lobbying? That word has been stricken from the FCW lexicon.

The Making Of a Campaign

*“Most organizations like FCW have a profound need
to communicate in as many ways as possible in
order to not just achieve their purpose but to
attract new members and retain membership...
You just have to get it all out there...”*

— Jim Blankenship.

The Cause: Persuading people to vote for FCW’s Zoning Bylaw amendments at Town Meeting May 14, 2001.

Target Audience: Residents on the fence about using these revisions as one means of helping to manage growth in town.

Approaches and Tools: Advertorials, publicity releases and interviews with key FCW board members (Mrs. Ecker, John Geiger), citizen information workshops, direct mail, informing selectmen and Finance Committee on the issues, newsletters including a special Town Meeting edition, and telephone canvassing.

Start Date: January 1, 2001.

The campaign’s bare bones give no sense of the energy that poured out when this maximum effort began to roll. To “account executive” Blankenship, it was “by far the most interesting and broadest communications project in my years with FCW.”

When the board convened in early January 2001, the communications group unfurled a nineteen-step list of information steps running right to the end of April, on the threshold of May Town Meeting. It’s small wonder that Jim Blankenship suggested a larger committee be assembled to handle the various chores; no one could object, and soon he had his team of Mrs. Rhodes, Mrs. Streibert, Mrs. Zellner, Walter Butler, and John Sweeney. There was enough work to go around.

January's output was typical. By January 18, a letter from George Olmsted went to all FCW members. "If you care about the future of Chatham," he wrote, "you must read this letter and enclosure..." His conclusion: "Managing growth and development to assure protection of our natural resources is one of the most critical"

challenges in the new millennium. Two other member mailings were programmed for March and April.

That same month of January, Jim Blankenship and the author produced lists of succinct, umbrella themes, e.g., "Chatham: We Care!" Of the author's sixteen entries, none made the cut. On January 13, the committee held a workshop, leading to Dr. Butler's drawing up a "Work Breakdown," an astute matrix showing who was doing what to implement the campaign; it was to be reviewed at a January 24 recap session, then run before the full board in February.

From then on, FCW went public repeatedly, advocating support of the remaining four Bylaw revisions. For the undecided or dubious, the committee spread out thirteen "Frequently Asked Questions," with answers. At no point did FCW deal in windy puffery. Rather, the FCW team said "Vote Yes!" – and here's exactly why you should.

On the third night of Town Meeting, that information saturation paid off: the four FCW-sponsored amendments passed by substantial margins. Within days, a leaflet was floating through the town. "And the winner is...Chatham!" it stated. Approval was important, but equally so, the body copy declared, had been a "truly collaborative" effort by a happy mix of people and groups in the community. Concluded the flyer, "THANKS TO ALL!" Privately, the FCW board understandably felt that the crescendo of applause should be primarily for the tireless efforts of Debby Ecker and John Geiger, but also for the hod carriers of the communications subcommittee.

Proposed Zoning Bylaw Changes – Fact Sheet

Town Meeting, May 14, 2001

These proposals address growing concerns, expressed throughout the community, of potential harm to Chatham from rapid growth. Over-development could harm the town's village character and its natural resources.

A full-scale rewrite of the zoning bylaw and implementation of the Comprehensive Long Range Plan will take years to accomplish. **The following proposals that address sections of the bylaw concerning population density and natural resources must take place now.**

- **Article 23 - Conservancy Buffer Zone Overlay District.** Provides additional zoning requirements for Inland Conservancy Districts
 - by creating a 50-foot wide zoning buffer around all Inland Conservancy Districts
 - by prohibiting filling and grading within this buffer zone without special permits from the Zoning Board of Appeals
- **Article 24 – Criteria for Increases in Nonconformity.** Expands guidelines

A draft fact sheet generated by the FCW communications team. This one circulated just before the May 2001 Town Meeting at which the FCW-developed Zoning Bylaw revisions would come up for a vote.

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In Support of Other Causes

The Zoning Bylaw campaign may have been FCW's largest-caliber venture in public information, in "selling" one of its projects. But the organization has also put its communications skills to work for a load of smaller undertakings. And now and again it has embraced concepts unveiled by others; finding common aims, FCW has thrown its weight behind a town-wide effort as one member of an advocacy team. One case: its support for the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

The CPA, a matter of 2001 legislative business in the Commonwealth, embodied the best of intentions. If a town voted for the measure, money raised by a local 3 percent surcharge would be matched by the state. That nice pot could only be used for projects in three categories: historic preservation, community (affordable) housing, and open space and recreation. On the face of it, the people of Chatham should find that new avenue to targeted funding appealing. But savvy folks knew it wasn't that simple.⁵

At a meeting in July 2001, selectmen appointed a committee to look into the CPA proposition and come back with recommendations by October 1. By September 25, the study group had decided: Chatham should adopt the CPA. If the town did so, a 3 percent surcharge would be added to real estate taxes, but only after cutting the assessed value of residential property by \$100,000 and exempting sites owned by those qualified for low income or moderate income senior housing. Selectmen endorsed the committee's views, then asked the seven members to stay in business to explain CPA to voters before a Special Town Meeting on January 14, 2002.

When voters approved the four Bylaw amendments at the May 2001 Town Meeting, FCW's communicators worked up this "Thanks To All!" flyer. It emphasized that while approval was important, so was "a truly collaborative effort" by many, including Town boards and departments.

AND THE WINNER IS... **Chatham!**

At Town Meeting, voters overwhelmingly approved four zoning by-law amendments that will help the town better manage growth, development and redevelopment in the years ahead. In doing so, they said:

- We care about and need to protect our valuable natural resources
- We want to preserve the character of our residential neighborhoods
- It is important to sustain a superior Quality of Life for all residents

CITIZEN/GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

Approval of these articles was significant. But perhaps lost in the shuffle was an equally important achievement: a truly collaborative effort by private citizens, town boards, town departments and officials, builders and developers, zoning legal experts, and others. This was a mixed group indeed, with varying opinions and ideas... but they were guided by a common goal: to do what is best for Chatham.

THANKS TO ALL!



The message comes from *Friends of Chatham Watershed*, a group of over 500 caring individuals dedicated to protecting our watersheds and adjoining lands and preserving the highest Quality of Life for all citizens.

For membership information write to us at: FCW, Box 472, Chatham MA 02633-0472

Soon after, FCW entered the picture. With a board meeting set for December 10, an invitation went out to the CPA study group to come explain the legislation's provisions. That request went to the committee chairman, Coleman Yeaw. A man whose family roots in Chatham stretched back to the birth of the 20th century, "Colie" Yeaw had been a soldier on the Conservation Commission for ten years, chairing it in 1995 and 1996, presiding over its rigorous schedule of four meetings a month. When it came to local land uses, he was neither dilettante nor theoretician; he knew his stuff.

Coming into the FCW board meeting, Colie Yeaw was no stranger to most FCW's directors there. Friendship aside, they pressed him on several aspects of CPA, especially on what aficionados saw as its Achilles heel, that **3 percent surcharge tax**. Hadn't the people of Chatham already been hit with an extra tax to pay for the Land Bank? Where was it going to end? At any rate, Yeaw stepped up to a few of the directors' fast balls, then left.

With that, the board raked over CPA's intricacies, and finally voted to raise its collective voice for CPA before the January '02 Special Town Meeting. Among other things, that support took the shape of a half-page ad in *The Chronicle*. When residents congregated at the special session in January '02, they voted 213 to 187 for CPA. That handed the issue along to the regular Town Election in May.

Marketing CPA: First, though, the issue had to be explained once again to voters.

A new, self-appointed committee set to work selling a "Yes" vote. And FCW stayed active, too. Heading up the CPA group, Colie Yeaw found that FCW "helped provide excellent advice on a series of (the group's) ads" in the paper. The Friends advertised, too, buying affirmative ads in *The Chronicle*. At the local election following May Town Meeting, the matter of CPA, Yes or No, turned into a nail-biter. No question, that 3 percent surcharge bugged a lot of taxpayers. But when the hands aloft were counted, citizens had approved CPA, 828 to 800. Thus, Chatham qualified as the only Cape town to pass the measure and one of 58 in the entire Commonwealth in favor of it.



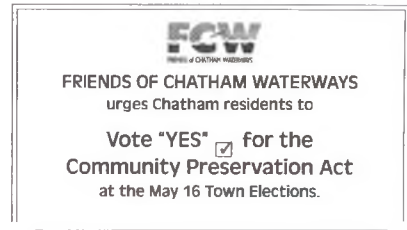
Coleman Yeaw, known to many as "Colie," led the challenging effort to win passage of the Community Preservation Act. It was touch and go, mainly because voter approval brought with it a 3 percent surcharge tax. But with Yeaw and other boosters out on the stump day and night, the issue passed not once, but twice. *Gordon Zellner*

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Then, at Town Meeting in the spring of 2003, a positive verdict came in on exactly what this hotly argued act will allocate for applications to fund Chatham's "community preservation."

Responding to nine different projects laid out in the warrant, voters approved them all, totaling \$670,000. There is a strong likelihood that the town could receive as much as \$450,000 in a state match for the same amount raised by the 3 percent surcharge on local real estate taxes. Again, the total can **only** be spent on historic preservation, community housing, and open space and recreation.

How important was FCW as advocate for CPA? Colie Yeaw has no hesitancy facing that pitch. "Without the support of FCW," he says, "the CPA would not have passed. Orleans was the only other Cape town to try, and the vote wasn't close."



Just before Town election in May 2002, FCW used its newsletter to advise members on what its directors urged -- a "Yes" vote on the CPA issue -- to help conserve open space, set aside funds for affordable housing, and do worthwhile historic preservation projects.

To Dredge Or Not To Dredge

Fourth-generation Chathamite Scott Tappan lives a tenth of a mile from Oyster River, where his family and he have had a mooring ever since 1938. When the issue of re-dredging the river bubbled up in the early Nineties, he grew concerned. But, rather than just moan and groan about it, he decided to apply for a slot on the Waterways Committee; it would be crucial in resolving the proposition. So he filled out an application, received a selectmen's appointment, and within months, circumstances eased him into the chairmanship.

As far back as 1971, dredgers had dug down in Oyster River, but only partly finished. The proposal to do it again arose as Scott Tappan settled into his Waterways Committee post. The impetus came largely from the Chatham Yacht Basin, perched at the western edge of the river, where pond and river meet; the neighboring Oyster River boat yard joined in the effort. David Oppenheim, owner of the C. Y. B., was "very intent," according to Tappan, on having the river deepened. That would encourage bigger boats to moor at the basin's docks, hence more income from servicing and storage. And to home builders, that option of larger craft berthed there had direct implications for their trade.

It was soon evident that the boat yard owners would not have easy sailing on the project. Opposed forces lined up. Among them, a hefty number of shellfishermen for whom the river was prime hunting territory; dredging would be a big hit on their livelihood. FCW took a lively interest, too. The Stage Harbor Management Plan had just gone into effect (in August 1994), and one of its stipulations held that the river, in Scott Tappan's words, was designated as "a low-impact shellfish resource, not as a mooring field for large boats." As a matter of fact, threats to the river's oyster reserves had been why dredging ended in 1971. Existent oyster grants had rock-solid priority.

All in all, whether to re-dredge in the Nineties posed formidable questions. For example, was this going to be new dredging or maintenance dredging? Recalls Tappan, "The town had conveniently forgotten that this was not maintenance dredging (but) new dredging. But there were no records anywhere. They were missing." Knowing that the state had done the digging in '71, he wrote to the appropriate state office. They sent him the 1971 blueprints, and he saw that the proposed project represented new work. That, says Scott Tappan, meant "years and years of Army Corps of Engineers permitting and a lot of money."

Meanwhile, Friends of Chatham Waterways, heeding its mission statement, was keeping a close eye on a process that spanned three years of effort. Its emissary was director Everett "Eddie" Yeaw, another Yeaw with almost a century's line of progenitors in the community. He was assigned to monitor the Waterways Committee meetings and report back to the FCW board.

To Eddie Yeaw, Chatham's waterways and the Oyster River in particular were thoroughly familiar territories. A summer resident in Chatham since 1926 and a year-rounder since 1992, he had been a customer of the Chatham Yacht Basin since the Eighties; that was where he fueled his 20-foot Sea Craft, went for repairs, and stored the outboard off-season. From personal experience, he knew that, come summer, Oyster River had more boats threading up and down it than any other Chatham anchorage. "Very often," he says, "boats would be drifting right across the channel; it's been that way for years." Yeaw also was well aware that this waterway was a major source of income for a lot of clammers. Dredging would surely nibble away at their bread-and-butter crop.

Unlike some people, Tappan remembers, "Eddie made the Waterways Committee meetings. I always felt he was almost as much a member as any of us. He (didn't) vote. But he showed up." And Yeaw took notes, to recap sessions for the FCW board. People on the committee could not fail to know how he saw things. As Scott Tappan put it, once Yeaw got rolling, "he was a passionate man."

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Obviously, the health and welfare of Oyster River concerned the FCW board, and a lot more citizens, too. So, when FCW began putting together its August 1995 annual meeting, directors decided it meshed with Friends purposes to make the dredging possibility the headline topic of the program. Once again, until the recent activation of the “Alliance” (see end note), no other group in town has regularly put on such informational forums.⁶

Days before the August 7 session, FCW took an ad in *The Chronicle* to help build an audience. The small print reminded readers that the final decision on dredging would be rendered by selectmen “within the next month or two.” A required Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was available to aid the decision-makers. In the meantime, FCW had invited a knowledgeable panel to discuss key points - the DEIR, the political steps ahead, timetable, and so on. FCW director Lew Kimball would chair the meeting, and Scott Tappan, among others, would be there to answer questions.



Scott Tappan's family has been in Chatham for four generations, close neighbors of Oyster River. When re-dredging of the river loomed, he joined the Waterways Committee to keep a sharp eye on what many saw to be a potential threat to the livelihood of river-based shellfishermen. *Tappan Family*



As an FCW director during the re-dredging ferment, Everett “Eddie” Yeaw was already monitoring meetings of the Waterways Committee. He could not vote, says then-chairman Tappan, but he knew Oyster River well and made his views known. *Gordon Zellner*

It's no surprise the issue had advocates on both sides. Realtor and selectman Norman Howes took the view that a deeper river channel would improve flushing of Oyster Pond, thus relieving periodic pollution - in his words, "the pond would benefit from a greater exchange of water from tide to tide and thus would be cleaner ... Better, cleaner water in Oyster Pond, and let the shellfishermen and boaters fight about the rest. End of issue in my mind." Consultants from Normandeau Associates, recalls Scott Tappan, determined that "the only benefit (of dredging) was bigger boats would be allowed to go at low tide, (but) no flushing benefit." To Shellfish Warden Stuart Moore, Scott Tappan notes, "it was a terrible idea."

Building up to the FCW- sponsored summer '95 meeting, the Waterways Committee and the Shellfish Department figured the only way the dredging could be stopped was to make it cost so much that the town wouldn't do it, as Tappan remembers. When the Normandeau professionals looked at the 1971 blueprints, they realized that new dredging was involved, calling for a whole environmental impact report. That, says Scott Tappan, was the "death knell." But the FCW meeting and selectmen's final vote lay ahead. At FCW's public session in August, a full house at the library reflected the tension worked up by the dredging proposal. Chairman Kimball encouraged everyone with concerns to bring them up. And they did. After all, this was "a VERY political issue," as Scott Tappan phrased it. David Oppenheirn had been invited to take part to explain why he favored the project.

One of his questioners was the venerable Robert Edwards, perennial interrogator at public gatherings. He aimed at Oppenheim's voiced concern that unless the river channel were deepened, there could be a serious accident. Edwards's comment to David Oppenheim, as Tappan recollects, went like this:

**You Are Cordially Invited To The
Friends of Chatham
Waterways Annual Meeting**

Monday, August 7, 1995 - 7:45 p.m.

**Forgeron Meeting Room,
Eldredge Public Library, Main Street, Chatham**

The program will be preceeded by a brief business meeting to
transact business.

Annual Meeting Program

**Oyster River Dredging Project
An Informational Forum**

Carrying out its long commitment to offering citizens facts and views on matters of moment, FCW bought space in *The Chronicle* to urge residents to attend the annual Friends meeting in 1995. There, they would hear both sides on re-dredging Oyster River.

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“You’re a good businessman, but your dredging of the river is not for safety. There’s never been an accident in shallow water before. People would run aground and you got them off. You’re doing this for money. It’s not for the benefit of the river or for those who live along it.”

Weeks later, the selectmen stood up to the issue. Says Scott Tappan, they “chose to abandon the dredging and return to the state the money they had gotten as a grant, because it was costing too much. The amount of effort was going to be tremendous.”

As for FCW’s August session, Scott Tappan points out that it “was a one-topic meeting. It was obviously chosen as a current, hot-button issue, and FCW was not afraid to tackle it. I think it was an excellent service.”

It’s a safe bet that, over time, FCW has lived up to one specific obligation more than any other. That is to spread out facts and figures on local issues to edify town residents. That responsibility comes straight from the organization’s Statement of Purpose: FCW’s assignments must include “defining issues of public concern for public discussion and debate, preparation of informational materials, (and) sponsoring public forums.” You don’t have to troll very long in the records to see how consistently FCW has met that mandate.

The August 1995 session on dredging Oyster River exemplifies that obligation. It could have settled for being an advocate against deepening the channel; that certainly would have fit in with its seminal concern for uses of town waterways. But the FCW board had a better idea: why not schedule an open forum to put all the pros and cons before the public? No other option could have had greater utility.

There Was Adequate Precedent

Early in 1987, FCW had found good cause to sponsor a similar public forum. In a way, the town was still reeling from the shock caused when the January 2 northeaster broke through Nauset Beach, leaving a cut that disrupted the dynamics of the inboard harbor and bay. Writing to FCW members that April 15, President Richard Batchelder spoke about the confusion stirred up by the storm, saying “there is a need for data so that public policy makers are as informed as possible.” To that end, FCW had decided to support a timely educational effort in the shape of a forum on April 25. Dr. Graham S. Giese of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution would lay out the relevant research. Then, a five-person panel would pick up where he left off; the participants: Chairman of Selectmen William Litchfield; Andrew Young, president of the

Friends of Pleasant Bay; Harbormaster Peter B. Ford; Shellfish Warden Kassie Abreu; and Paul Berquist, fishing boat captain.

That was not FCW's only step. It also paid to publish a supplement in *The Chronicle*. Its eight pages recapped a 1978 study by Dr. Giese of "Chatham's Barrier Beaches." In a potent visual sidebar, it showed through simple maps how wind, wave and storm had changed the form of those beaches as far back as 1770. Laid out on the supplement's last page, a coupon invited readers to make a tax-deductible contribution to a new Barrier Beach Study Fund.

Was the Saturday-morning forum worth the effort? As many as 200 residents must have thought so, showing up for the display of research and the discussion. As moderator, Batch Batchelder concluded, "We could not have designed an issue that has so galvanized the people of Chatham, the nation and international community." At least one item cited was sobering: the inner shore between Holway Street and Little Beach had receded as much as 47 feet, according to Dr. Giese.⁷

Again, the Frail Shoreline

Five years had gone since the Nauset Beach break-through, and blistered questions still would not heal. Who says we can't put up a revetment? What makes you think you can? What's all this about a coastal bank, and what's so different about a dune? Arguments were heading for the land of lawsuits. "All of that was swirling around," remembers Lew Kimball, "and we felt that as an organization, we really had to get involved." FCW's role: "to provide solid information to help the body politic make good decisions." This was early in 1992.

So the wintertime board of the Friends went to work. Ever-resourceful Martha Stone may have been out of town until spring, but she checked her contacts in the South. That exercise yielded the name of an authority who could explain to Chathamites the different ways of handling coastal erosion. He was Dr. Orrin Pilkey, professor of geology at Duke University and an expert on developed shorelines, "thoroughly familiar with the kind of problems Chatham was having," in the words of Lew Kimball. Pilkey agreed to come to town early in March '92, traveling at FCW's expense (plus an honorarium). On the date set, more than 250 residents went to the High School for his speech, sponsored jointly by FCW and the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod.

Covering the event for *The Chatham Current*, reporter David Reilly caught the essence of Dr. Pilkey's straightforward remarks about the complete range of

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options – doing nothing, beach nourishment, sandbags, rock revetments, concrete sea walls. On the last of these, the visiting specialist said, “Sea walls degrade beaches, period. If a community’s only priority is to preserve buildings, build sea walls. If the priority is to protect the natural environment, the only choice is to retreat ... In the long run, we will retreat from the shoreline. Either we’re going to retreat in a planned fashion, or (in reaction) to unplanned events. By 2100, we won’t be worried about Chatham, (but) about Manhattan and Miami.” Was there any other option than retreating? Dr. Pilkey thought systematic beach nourishment might “prove to be quite durable.” But it certainly would be costly.

Recently, Richard Batchelder and Lew Kimball reflected on that presentation. To the latter, Dr. Pilkey’s remarks had “provoked a good deal of thoughtful discussion.” The scientist had been quick to point out that he was not a politician, saying to his listeners, as Lew Kimball recalled, “you’re a body politic. You’ve got to decide what you’re going to spend your money on.” As for Batchelder’s snapshot, “I don’t think we listened to Pilkey ... It’s very hard to implement a recommendation that you retreat because ... it’s private property being destroyed.” Then he had an afterthought: “The urge of mankind to live near the ocean is primitive. More than 80 percent of the American people live within a few miles of the water.” Yes, it would be extremely hard, in those circumstances, to push proud owners to retreat.

Except for ordering beach nourishments at several places, the Town may not have followed Dr. Pilkey’s preference to the letter. But to Lew Kimball, that did not invalidate that FCW-sponsored event. Generalizing, he said, “We were much more active in those years, getting used to being a source of information

THE BARRIER BEACHES of Chatham, Massachusetts

On January 2, 1987, during a severe northeasterly storm, a major breach was produced through Nauset Beach; it has deepened and become remarkably well organized during the 3 months following its inception. On January 16, it was 123 meters wide at high water; by February 3 it had widened to 494 meters at high water.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

... of the system of it, because that is a major reorganization of the Chatham Harbor. Pleasant Bay estuary and barrier beach system is ... already ... This reorganization will involve the creation of a new major ... and ... the ... and elements of the existing channel; the erosion



With Chatham still stunned by the 1987 northeaster’s devastation of North Beach, FCW decided to present an educational forum that April. Key speaker: Dr. Graham S. Giese of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. Simultaneously, FCW paid for publication in *The Chronicle* of this eight-page text by Dr. Giese.

for the Town. We had several Saturday-morning informational seminars, and we'd bring in speakers ... Our annual meetings were aimed toward some local problem current at the time." This series of expositions led up to the memorable Quality of Life conference in September 1998. More and more, people were coming to see that FCW could be expected to produce an illuminating forum — and sometimes with very short notice.

The “LRP” Passes In Review: In three short weeks of October 1999, the Friends and Town Planner Margaret Swanson put together a “Working Session for Residents” on the draft of Chatham’s Comprehensive Long Range Plan. About 100 residents and officials showed up for the all-morning exchange, stepping methodically through all seven sections of the draft.

No plan in recent Chatham memory has taken longer to evolve. The final document went before voters at the 2003 Town Meeting (and passed with hardly a breath of dissent). That was about a decade after the first drafting began on a plan, responding to a mandate from the Cape Cod Commission. Along the way, the Long Range Planning Committee tried repeatedly to get local citizens to assess the draft and suggest additions or deletions, hoping to make the document

A specialist on developed shorelines, Duke’s Dr. Orrin Pilkey was brought to town at FCW expense to put on a seminar in March 1992. More than 250 heard him speak on the different measures that could be taken to hold back oceanic forces.



The 1987 northeaster made such an impression, literally and otherwise, that shore-side residents scrambled to erect stone revetments, many facing Chatham Harbor and Pleasant Bay. At \$600 a foot for an average wall, it was hardly an inexpensive solution. *Gordon Zellner*

Cape Cod Chronicle, March 6, 1992

Beach Expert Pilkey: ‘We Will Retreat’

By David Reilly

Dr. Orrin Pilkey, world-renowned expert on barrier beaches, calls Chatham’s coastal situation “very exciting for geologists.”

“It’s kind of how biologists would feel if a mammoth frozen in ice was discovered,” he said Saturday following his presentation at Chatham High School. “This is very big.”

More than 250 residents jammed the high school auditorium on a snowy, windy February morning to hear Dr. Pilkey’s thoughts on a variety of coastal issues, including the environmental impact of sea walls.

On that subject, he made his views very clear.

“Sea walls degrade beaches, and they’re not a long-term solution.”



Dr. Orrin Pilkey
Staff photo by David Reilly

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Another defensive sea wall on Chatham's shore. Dr. Pilkey of Duke had little respect for them, saying in his 1992 speech in town that "Sea walls degrade beaches, period." His harsh advice to shore-front dwellers: "retreat."

Gordon Zellner

a true representation of residents' opinions. After all, the plan was to be a "trusted guide" for Chatham through the first half of the 21st century.

When that session of October 23, 1999, ended, FCW director Jim Blankenship took the transcript and distilled a 42-page document quoting all the morning's participants who spoke up. Those comments converted easily to useful fodder for LRP committee members, as they continued to toil away on what the ultimate plan should say. It was more than clear that day, as FCW President Kurt Hellfach put it to citizens on hand, "You do care, and we do care." He

Chatham's Long Range Plan was moving slowly around the final turn toward completion in late 1999 when FCW joined with the Town Planning office and the Long Range Planning Committee to host this discussion. There, 100 people walked carefully through all seven sections of the draft. The plan finally got voters' endorsement in 2003.

All are Invited to
A WORKING SESSION FOR RESIDENTS
Chatham's Comprehensive Long Range Plan

**Saturday, October 23
Eldredge Public Library**

A Section by Section Review:
9:00 - 9:45 Vision Statement, Natural Resources, and
Economic Health
9:45 - 11:00 Land Use, Historic Preservation and
Community Character (e.g. Village Centers)
11:00 - 11:15 Break
11:15 - 12:30 Open Space and Recreation, Community
Facilities (e.g. Town Landings)
12:30 - 1:00 Human Resources and Housing

Participants may attend any or all sessions in which they are interested but all are asked to pick up and read the Plan drafts of the sessions they will be attending prior to the meeting. Plan drafts are available at the Town Annex, West Chatham, Planning Board Office. A professional facilitator will conduct the discussions. Refreshments will be available throughout the morning.

This meeting is jointly sponsored by
The Long Range Planning Committee
Margaret Swanson, Chairman
and Friends of Chatham Waterways

For further information call 945-0515

earnestly hoped they would all communicate “what we have heard (throughout) the larger community.”

FCW had taken no formal stand on the viewpoints voiced. Rather, it had simply carried out in an ideal way its self-imposed charge to give information to as many residents as it could reach. For an independent, non-governmental organization, how much more could be expected?

In its time, the Friends of Chatham Waterways has made enviable contributions to the life and welfare of its hometown. Certainly that October 1999 working session proved that. So did the Quality of Life endeavor the year before, and the all-out push to change the Zoning Bylaw, and the leadership exerted in recruiting teams of Chatham Water Watchers and Chatham Beach Watchers. Sometimes FCW has swung and missed. Sometimes it has irked this faction or that for its alleged attitude, or for stepping on the presumed turf of others. Even so, the organization knows now that it can't win every case, nor please everyone each time it takes on some cause. Of distinct importance, it has shown that, as a 21-year-old, it has both the capacity and determination to keep on growing.

¹ That evening, the author, making his fifth run at reaching the street, backed into one of his trees, shattered the tailgate window, finally escaped to the plowed road, and made it to the meeting on time.

² Much of the financial data has been provided by FCW's versatile treasurer, Walter Butler.

³ Mrs. Eaves, Mrs. Siewert, Mrs. Vokey, Jim Blankenship, and John Pappalardo.

⁴ Community Foundation of Cape Cod, Dreyfus Foundation, Fleischmann Foundation, Queenan Foundation, and SeaGrant Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute.

⁵ This account stems largely from Colie Yeaw, chair of the Town study of CPA intricacies.

⁶ Incorporated in 2000, the Chatham Alliance for Preservation and conservation has held a series of public information sessions on current issues, but is bound by its mission statement not to take positions on them. It was formed originally by the Old Village Association and FCW; it now includes ten non-profits. In February 2003, the Alliance sponsored a well-attended meeting on the destiny of Route 28. This August, it produced a session on the proposed “Wind Farm” in Nantucket Sound.

⁷ As reported by William F. Galvin in *The Chronicle* of April 30, 1987.

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Beyond Adversity to Achievement





Site of the onetime MCI property, looking south to Forest Beach and the Sound. Had it not been for dedicated volunteer preservationists, these acres could be hidden under clustered homes.

Gordon Zellner

Chapter Eleven

It was to be the first flight of its kind: a nonstop trans-continental crossing in a single-engine jet fighter. On a June morning in 1965, a four-plane flight took off from an L. A. naval air station, Major Hillary LeClaire in command. They were flying A-4B Skyhawks, and when they got to Olathe, KS, a tanker plane was to refuel them. But the procedure barely worked. Three of the jets had to land. Low on fuel, Major LeClaire was going to divert to Willow Grove, PA, but the weather was marginal there, so he decided to continue on to South Weymouth. "I figured if I was going to die," he says with a chuckle, "I'd rather for it to be near home on the Cape. Besides, I knew the landing procedures better at Weymouth."

Six hours after takeoff, LeClaire touched down on instruments at Weymouth N. A. S. "I was very stiff," he recalls, "and pretty wired, and there wasn't much fuel left at all." It was one of those risky voyages that gutsy American pilots have taken since the 1920's.

Late in the warmth of 1983's summer, "Friends of Stage Harbor Waterways" began its voyage across the uneasy waters of Stage Harbor. It had a small crew, and the vessel wasn't very large. But the men and women who built and launched it had a special kind of determination. In their neighborhood at the fringes of the harbor, they saw problems. No one else in town seemed fired up about overcoming them. But they were. And their successors in the crew on deck have been working at that ever since.

Their ports of call have been many, and many of their aims have been met. Look at the log of the "Friends," first named FSHW, then FCW: saving the Old Mill Boat Yard from a commercial fate; persuading the Town to require a home-owner to have his or her septic system inspected when the house was to be sold; putting a lot of volunteer hours and big money behind making a reality of the Stage Harbor Management Plan; pushing hard to have a pump-out station installed; backing the tireless efforts of Debby Ecker to do not one but two economic studies of Chatham.

But those aren't the only destinations reached by FCW's 21-member board. Consider the Navigational Chart # 50 E created by George Olmsted and the late Jim Davis. Or the demonstration garden, attuned to the weather whimsies of Cape Cod, that a team of FCW members made visible and successful. Or

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the grants to help Chatham teachers put in motion environmental science projects for students of all ages. Or the intensive review of Chatham's quality of life and various threats to it. There can be no forgetting, either, the successful efforts of Debby Ecker, John Geiger, John Sweeney and others to win Town Meeting's approval for four revisions of the Zoning Bylaw.

In its cruise, FCW has forged an alliance with the commercial fishermen of the town, and put together invaluable teams of volunteers to apply science to testing the challenged waters of the town, as well as the incessant shifts in its sandy borders. Meanwhile, almost from its first days afloat, the organization has put out benign background information about the waterways and the lands next to them, and now and then directed its rhetoric at local causes, from the Community Preservation Act and Land Bank, to the Comprehensive Long Range Plan.

Over its years, crews aboard the "Friends" have come and gone. But efforts to face up to new tasks continue. Go to any board meeting and you find that motion, like the migration of Chatham's sands, is incessant. In any year, directors come with varied spots: some have been teachers and school administrators; others hail from engineering backgrounds; now and then you'll find escapees from the land of the media; some worked their way up to be corporate



Eastward across Bassing Harbor to Fox Island, first property given to the Conservation Foundation in 1962. At low tide, you could walk to it.

Gordon Zellner.

or academic leaders, and some have signed on from church pulpits, or heavy-duty assignments with organizations like the League of Women Voters. If they have one thing in common, it's that all of them are **issue athletes**, dedicated to protecting the waterways and neighboring lands of their community.

Back at the beginning, these board members shared something else, for the most part: they were seasonal folk, on the Stage Harbor scene just for the summer. Of twenty elected to the board at the annual meeting of July 28, 1984, only two – George Douglass and C. Robin Turner – lived in these parts year-round. As the Friends came to be more and more visible, some citizens spotted this non-resident characteristic of most directors and wondered, “These people are different types, aren’t they? They’re not exactly wash-ashores, but they’re just plain different.”

Turning that perception into a broad-brush generalization is risky. After all, FCW’s directors have been no more “different” than the town’s commercial fishermen and women, who are so mightily different from nine-tenths of the rest of us. Most residents couldn’t begin to fashion Julia Child’s *Poulet de Charente à la Melonaise* as easily as white-jacketed master chefs staffing Chatham’s alluring restaurants. Who among us can do a hypnotic painting of Hardings Beach the way Jack Garver and Sam Vokey can? How many write compelling novels to compete with writers Anne LeClaire and Rose Connors? And only a handful of Chathamites can stand up in Town Meeting and effectively argue the minutiae of the Zoning Bylaw with experts like Jack Farrell and Bill Riley. Our town is crowded with diverse “talents” like these. But just because they’re special – and “different” – hardly keeps us from appreciating their differentness.

That matter of some citizens’ seeing FCW as different came before its board in December 1999. A director asked for a slot on the agenda; he wanted to tell his associates how the community he’s known for many years views FCW. That director was Hillary LeClaire, native Cape Codder, once a Marine colonel



Bob Denn, co-owner of “Cape Fish,” wanted to see what FCW was all about when he joined the board in the Nineties. He came away convinced that fellow directors worked hard and effectively at their board responsibilities.

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flying jets out of Weymouth N. A. S., and now a professional shellfisherman. Taking the floor, LeClaire called it as he saw it: “FCW is considered an elite group. There’s nothing wrong with that. Where you run into trouble is if you don’t recognize that yourself. Is there anyone here without a college education? One.”

LeClaire went on, raising some directors’ eyebrows when he said that “we could be a bunch of self-appointed vigilantes, (without) any function in town. We don’t answer to anyone... We do so much good work, but sometimes we don’t see how other people see us.” What should FCW do about it? He had one suggestion. “The big thing,” he explained, “is to just be conscious that our view isn’t always the view of everyone in town.” In the exchange that followed, Vice-president Jim Blankenship, workhorse of the organization’s public relations outreach, commented that LeClaire’s remarks tossed up “a challenge for the communications committee that has to do with how we are perceived.”



Late in his FCW board term, shellfisherman Hillary LeClaire spoke up at a directors’ meeting. “We do so much good work,” he told his colleagues, “but sometimes we can’t see how other people see us.” Criticism might occur, but, he added, “You can’t get too uptight about it.”

Gordon Zellner

On that December evening in 1999, the issue of FCW’s being somehow different was scarcely settled. But directors had heard LeClaire, and his final advice was on target for them: “If they’re going to criticize, they’re going to criticize. You can’t get too uptight about it.” Nevertheless, his thoughts rounded out directors’ realization that even in a well-designed vessel crewed by pros, it will be almost impossible to win every race.

The Time the Mast Broke

Just as the vaunted New Zealand crew found in the first race of their 2003 defense of the America’s Cup, sometimes the mast breaks. Friends of Chatham Waterways learned that lesson early. Some of its wins – take Chatham

Water Watchers as one example – have been uncontested and memorable. Its losses, not always visible, have stemmed from resistance by an agency, communications breakdowns, or ineptitude on the part of a supplier.

There was a time in the Nineties when one aftermath of the North Beach break-through had to be dealt with. Reacting to that storm's drastic coastline impact, some fishing boats relocated from Chatham Harbor to Stage Harbor. Meanwhile, with the economy in overdrive, pleasure boats were swarming in that same watercourse. The cure was obvious: more moorings had to be set. To move that forward, FCW said it would help pay for a mooring grid to make the most of Stage Harbor's area. But when no support was forthcoming from the Harbormaster and very little from marina operators, the Friends went ahead on its own. It spent about \$4,000 for an engineering firm to do the plotting. The result? As Lew Kimball grades it, "a flawed and unusable plan based on inadequate bottom information."

"We learned something," added Kimball. "It was that FCW simply did not have the horsepower to push through projects against the active opposition of the Town's officialdom." At another point in the mid-90's, with the Stage Harbor Management Plan going into effect, FCW stepped forward to help put it to work. Among many things, the plan called for testing saltwater embayments. FCW board member Martha Stone picked up on that particular mandate. She made a pitch to the Waterways and Shellfish Advisory committees to join FCW in buying a "Hydro Lab." The cost: \$7,000 (Waterways and FCW put up 25 percent apiece; Shellfish contributed one-half). After the money was spent, the three underwriters discovered that nitrogen in the water could not be tested with the device they'd paid for. And while the Hydro Lab could be useful in other ways, says Martha Stone, "we never got any word about any of the data col-

After years of pressure to abandon it, the onetime Coast Guard Station launch-way on Stage Island -- the "Davis dock" -- still stands, rotting away all the while. Many see it as a hazard for harbor traffic. FCW belives its seasons are numbered.

Gordon Zellner



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lected, although we had asked repeatedly.” Her judgment on this FCW initiative? “A failure.”

Then there’s been the stubborn existence of the former Coast Guard Station launchway on Stage Island, an irritation (and harbor hazard) for years. The neighborhood, the Town and the Land Court have all wanted to see it gone; the owner has dug in his hip boots and held firm in opposition. The result: a standoff. FCW director Herb Bernard, a Morris Island resident, has chaired a board subcommittee to watch that perverse situation and report when board action might be valuable. But this static matter probably won’t remain a draw forever. Says George Olmsted, “We may live to see (the launchway) gone.”

In yet another area, FCW had a misfire, this one in educational support. Motivated by its admiration for town planner and environmentalist Alice Hiscock, the Friends drafted a Hiscock Grant program in the late 90’s. Awards would go to residents (especially students) to get them engaged in conservation projects. For two years, FCW energizers beat the drum for the project. But, reports Lew Kimball, “we had no applications and the program simply lapsed.” That was a real disappointment. After that, however, the FCW board came up with a substitute in the summer of 1999: grants to local schools for “environmental outreach.” Now in its fourth year, that program, one well-received by the schools, has had little trouble getting proposals from teachers.



Chatham’s legendary volunteer planner, Alice Hiscock, was well-admired by the Friends. But an FCW program of Hiscock education grants failed to catch on. More recently, a similar initiative has met with distinct success in the town’s schools, and is now four years old.

Pass, or Fail?

There’s one other aspect of FCW’s activities over the years on which no grade can be wisely given. The subject: relations between the Friends and Town government. In the first year of Friends of Stage Harbor Waterway’s life, the sailing weather was ideal, as new directors drew together to begin their unique enterprise. At the start, two Town officials came to observe the process; of the three full-time selectmen, Bill Litchfield and Tim Pennypacker were on hand September 2, 1983, at the home of Judy and Pete Hoyt. In her minutes, Libby

Mottur noted the selectmen's presence and concluded: "It is important to work closely with the Town and to solicit the Selectmen's opinions." Ever since, with a few exceptions, it's been basic doctrine for directors to consult Town officials on initiatives of common interest.

That may be true, but you have to factor in the make-up of Friends board members. Early director Doug Rhodes had it just right in recalling, "There were many powerful people in that group (of directors)." These were individuals like Richard Batchelder, pro bono pile-driver behind having the Town buy the Old Mill Boat Yard; Judy Hoyt, vocally concerned about Stage Harbor pollution; Martha Stone, who led the charge on calling for septic system inspection when a house was being sold; and, of course, Joan Kimball, first president. "There were (board) groups interested in this or that," recalls Rhodes. "(Mrs. Kimball) emerged as the bonding force, pulling things together."

Take it as a given, though, that at the start, cordial relations existed between the board and Town administrators. But when Batch Batchelder, Mrs. Stone and others briskly hoisted sail, local officials could have felt that these volunteers had as much muscle as the "little old white-haired ladies in sneakers" who, according to public broadcasting legend, raised the funds to revive the young WGBH-TV in Boston after a disastrous fire.

Hardly neophytes, Friends directors of the Eighties pushed, if they had to, to get one or another initiative going. Inevitably, Town functionaries sometimes found the pressure off-putting. Territory was threatened. And departmental employees tended to stiffen up, to be less willing to accept a Friends concept. That certainly happened when the Friends had ideas about speeding up or improving waterways testing. Those memories still pulse in the minds of several directors. Resentments die slowly.

Relations between FCW and Town Hall reached their nadir during the period (1998-2002) when FCW set out to amend the Zoning Bylaw to help manage growth. Mrs. Ecker and John Geiger,



Early Friends director Doug Rhodes, here with wife Nancy, has never forgotten the men and women who served on the initial board. "There were many powerful people," he remembers, but first president Joan Kimball pulled it all together.

Rhodes Family Archives

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Friends board stalwarts, worked tirelessly to put revisions before Town Meeting. They were successful, and four amendments did pass at the 2001 session. However, professionals on the Town payroll smoldered at this intervention by free-standing volunteers. Now, in mid-2003, there's a good question whether attitudes on both sides have softened. It's important to add, however, that the two "managements" do work on the problem.

But the weather at the Lower Cape's elbow joint isn't *always* sour. On November 27, 2002, an E-mail went to FCW's George Olmsted and Martha Stone from the Town's director of Health & Environment, Bob Duncanson. He wanted to advise them that the Board of Health would soon hold its next "informational workshop" on the proposed interim nitrogen-loading regulation. Then he added this critical sentence: "The development community has begun to actively involve themselves in the discussion, other viewpoints are most welcome."

This notice came six days before the upcoming workshop. There was a time when FCW might not have received this "heads up" so early, if at all. In similar vein, during the winter of 2002-03, a ten-page report, bulked up with 37 tables and charts, was distributed in Chatham from the Department of Health & Environment. The subject: "Chatham Coastal Water Quality Nutrient Monitoring Program, Year 3 Summary, 2001." While the document was circulated to thirteen Town boards, committees and individuals, it was directed primarily to the 140 Chatham Water Watchers, recruited by FCW, who save the Town some \$200,000 in wages. In his memo introducing the report, Dr. Duncanson said to these workers:

I would like to take this opportunity to once again THANK all of you for your dedication resulting in another successful monitoring season. The level of dedication and commitment is reflected in the high quality of the data contained in this report.

In this activity, the men and women of Chatham Water Watchers augment a vital process for the Town. Ultimately, the data they produce will underlay the case for the greatly increased sewer systems that are almost inevitable in Chatham. So the CWW effort is unquestionably important. And the relationship today between the Town and FCW in that project is comfortable.

Beyond that interface, FCW is bringing specific experience to bear on potential amendments to the Zoning Bylaw. Is this one more intrusion by the Friends in an area where Town professionals should skipper the ship? Will the outside effort serve, once again, to threaten ties between Town and Friends? No

one would want that. The main reason, as far as FCW is concerned, is that it has willingly brought to the Town's discussions relevant know-how of several board members, as well as off-board individuals. Otherwise, the Town might have had to pay liberally to resolve the intricate challenges.¹

One director, Jane Harris, formerly a conservation agent in other Massachusetts communities, is familiar with non-zoning Wetland Protection Bylaws and other issues that relate to site development. As such, FCW was in a position to offer the Town background information and examples of Bylaw language to protect sensitive lands adjacent to inland and coastal wetlands. In this case, Town staff-members are very likely to welcome any help they can get to fix a complicated situation.

To reconstruct the backdrop, go back to Town Meeting in May 2001. There, on the third night, voters passed by a healthy margin a Zoning Bylaw amendment creating an Inland Conservancy District. Gratifying as that action was, spirits dropped after the Attorney General reviewed the amendment for approval. He rejected it. His reason? The Zoning Act dictated that there be accompanying maps showing where the district was, and none were attached. Reacting, Town officials decided that the maps they had were (1) inaccurate, and (2) updating them would cost far more than the budget tolerated.

This reality could have led to a stalemate, but it didn't: Jane Harris knew that many other Cape towns pursued a non-zoning route toward protecting sensitive natural resources that did *not* call for maps. FCW has set to work – together with the Town – to amend the Chatham Wetlands Protection Bylaw and to put into effect applicable regulations allowed under Home Rule powers permitted by Massachusetts General Laws.

In an early step, an FCW team met with Bob Duncanson, along with representatives of the Chatham Conservation Commission (ConsCom) and Planning Department. Drawing on practices in other Cape communities, the FCW participants explained how these towns had put in place bylaws and regulations for added wetland protection. Currently, FCW hopes to be a catalyst to help local departments and boards write improved standards for use in wetland buffer zones to heighten their protection. Within that framework, the Friends will apply provisions of the new Pleasant Bay Management Plan Update to help the Town develop “No Disturb” and/or “Limited Activity” zones next to inland and coastal wetlands.

In parallel with this activity, several current and former members of FCW's board – Herb Bernard, Jane Harris, Debby Ecker, and John Geiger — concentrated on helping the Planning Board draft amendments to the Zoning Bylaw not covered by the evolving Long Range Comprehensive Plan. That effort

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started in the fall of 2001 when the Planning Board formed focus groups to address Affordable Housing, Cluster Development, Site Alteration, and Site Plan Review. Building on this preliminary work, the Planning Board wrote Bylaw language aimed toward presentation at Town Meeting. FCW's representatives helped review the language and commented on details of the proposed Site Alteration and Site Plan Review requirements amendments.

As these changes took shape, they had these objectives: to keep as much as possible the natural grade and vegetation in the watershed to protect water quality and maintain existing drainage patterns; to protect habitat, natural resources and community character; and to produce regulations that included current Best Management Standards and Practices for protection of natural resources during land development and construction. However, the Planning Board ran into difficulty in arriving at consensus among its members, so many of these provisions could not go before Town Meeting 2003. FCW anticipates that the review of these issues will be ongoing, and it will continue being active in the public comment period, calling for measures to give strong protection to Chatham's natural resources.

These are dry, complex matters transparent mainly to specialists in the chess game of zoning. The larger point here reflects FCW's qualifications for bolstering Town skills to improve ground rules for guiding community growth. The Friends can serve its town in few more important ways.



In debate and discussion, Richard Batchelder has been one of FCW's strongest voices ever since the organization first worked its way into port in 1983.

Photo by Rob Carlisle

Steady As She Goes

It's springtime again in Chatham – well, almost. As usual, the seasonal change is hesitant, but a few blossoms have shown their faces. And, as usual, on the second Monday of the month, the board of FCW is in session, this time at the home of Jim Blankenship on Linden Tree Lane.

Directors are advised that the League of Women Voters will be holding a "Candidates Night" for those seeking election to the Board of Selectmen. FCW board members take turns framing questions to be directed to the five

candidates; those queries will be sent to the three women and two men before the League's event.

Then the warrant for the upcoming Town Meeting is brought up. Directors decide not to take a stand on a variety of articles, but will support (1) an increase in fees for violations of ConsCom regulations; (2) an update of the Pleasant Bay Management Plan; (3) and the Long Range Comprehensive Plan — in particular, concepts that have to do with FCW's mission. Two FCW-underwritten ads will be run in *The Chronicle* pointing to warrant articles that the Friends support and on which it favors positive votes. Blankenship will work up a special edition of FCW's newsletter, to go to all members; it will point out which warrant articles the organization favors, or where a "No" vote is recommended.

A discussion goes back and forth on Jim Blankenship's proposal to establish an interactive website for FCW. He has discussed the costs with Barbara Garside (\$350 up-front; \$18 a month to maintain the site). Some directors question the need for this added communications device. A motion by Jane Harris requests Jim Blankenship to draft a memo on the rationale for setting up the website — the whys and hows of FCW's going ahead. The motion carries.

Another topic stimulates comments. It has to do with amendments to the Wetlands Protection Bylaw, replacing one passed at the 2001 Town Meeting, but rejected by the Attorney General for lack of required maps. At a meeting on this issue, Jane Harris and George Olmsted told Bob Duncanson and his colleagues that FCW would work with ConsCom in reviewing proposed language. FCW board members ask where the issue stands. Walter Butler (a member of ConsCom's board as well as of FCW's) replies that there is no movement at present. As to next steps, Jane Harris explains that the ball is in ConsCom's court; FCW should stand by to see if its help is invited.

On updating membership names, Ilene Bendas, membership chairman, advises that Mrs. Garside has agreed to keep the lists for \$40 an hour. She will produce reports as requested by the board.



Dr. Bob Duncanson, director of the Town's Department of Health & Environment, has been among the first to applaud FCW's 140 Chatham Water Watchers for collecting a "high quality" of testing data.

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As monitor of the Waterways Committee, Bill Coleman advises that the committee would like to remove the Davis dock (on Stage Island). Members consider that the old Coast Guard station there could be good for an up-welling site. Further, the Waterways Committee is split on putting in a haul-out facility at Ryder's Cove marina. Members feel they don't have enough information to decide soundly on its merits. They also expressed interest in having the Town buy the Simonitsch dock west of the Old Mill Boat Yard. It is one of the last waterfront areas that the community could take over.

Pat Siewert indicates that in updating the Stage Harbor Management Plan, a "flood of proposals" might come in for catwalks. Some citizens are concerned these bridging devices may not be allowed in the future.

On Bill Coleman's motion, the meeting adjourns at 9:50 p.m.



Recent Friends director Jane Harris brought experience of great value to discussions of Town Bylaws relating to site development. For a time, she had been a conservation agent in several Massachusetts communities.

Gordon Zellner

* * * * *



And the construction goes on and on. In the summer of '03, earth-movers have gouged out moon craters on either side of Route 28. The woody neighborhood will ultimately be diversified by a 24-unit subdivision.

Gordon Zellner

One of FCW directors, John Sweeney, would have been on hand — and expressive — at this meeting, if illness had not benched him. Had he been there, he certainly would have chimed in, just as he did at his first board session October 2, 2000. He has been a bright bulb for FCW ever since. In several respects, his dynamics speak for his upbringing and adult experience.

A native of Summit, New Jersey, Sweeney went to Penn State, earned a Harvard MBA, and spent 30 years mostly in the services area of health care product manufacture, even buying a bankrupt business, bringing it back to life, then selling it. Off-duty, he was an avid body surfer and sailor, and early on, Chatham won his affections. In 1981, he bought a South Chatham house and gradually became a resident.

As a boy in New Jersey, he learned something first-hand about volunteering. The Port of New York Authority had designs on the Great Swamp near Morristown: it would make an excellent, 10,000-acre, international airport. Green Village and New Vernon would have been bulldozed for fill to blanket the vast marsh.² Incensed, residents and environmentalists balked; among them was John Sweeney's mother. Bit by bit, the neighbors bought up pieces of land, until the Port Authority was outmaneuvered. Along the way, young Sweeney went around with his mother, raising money and talking to architects about how to block the threatening development.

That experience stuck with Sweeney. Settling down in Chatham, he was one of the first residents nominated by selectmen for the Land Bank Committee. Further, on his own, he allied himself with the Jim Sullivans, Charles Cahoon and others in South Chatham to save the MCI/World Com properties for Chatham. So it's no surprise that FCW's nominating committee, always prospecting for directors, approached Sweeney.

At the outset, he knew a little about the Friends, but had never been asked to join. He thought, "It's just a group of people who have banded together because they have a common interest in conservation and the waterways. They're sort of the power elite in town who are working to make change."



As a current FCW board member, William Coleman has the monitoring assignment of going to meetings of the Waterways Committee and reporting back to fellow directors at their monthly sessions.

Coleman Family Archive.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Once John Sweeney went on the board, his outlook shifted. This was no “power elite.” Rather, these new colleagues were more “the intellectual elite.” Getting to know them better, he realized “(1) how dedicated they were, and (2) how they were willing to work...They actually pitched in and did a lot of the work.” Hence, his perception modulated into seeing fellow directors as “sort of a grass roots effort. But there is some truth to the fact that (they are) a phenomenally capable group of people – very bright, with very interesting backgrounds and very good education.”

Time and again, FCW board members like Sweeney have transfused energy, brain power, hours of toil, penetrating voices, even big dollars into addressing and helping resolve town-wide challenges. Overall, then, has the Friends made a difference? Can it keep doing that? There are those outside its membership who will answer in the affirmative. They see places where, without doubt, FCW can continue to be one of the agents for worthwhile change – on Pleasant Bay, or Chatham Harbor; along South Beach, or on the sands and dunes where South Chatham meets the Sound – because stubborn problems are liable to resist man’s solutions for decades to come.

One among those who know that FCW can contribute is Ted Keon, director of Coastal Resources. Among his credentials on coming to Chatham in January 1998 were bachelor’s and master’s degrees in physical geography and thirteen years with the Army Corps of Engineers in Philadelphia; his last title there: chief of the Coastal Planning Section. (To be accurate, he shares professional concerns for Chatham’s waterways with Bob Duncanson, Harbormaster Stuart Smith, Shellfish Constable Stuart Moore, who reports to Keon, and Conservation Agent Kristin Andres) As director of Coastal Resources, Ted Keon may not have trudged over every foot of Chatham’s 60-plus miles of shoreline, but he’s come close. And whenever you see a dredge plunked down in a harbor or channel, you can be certain that he knows precisely what it’s doing, why, and how long it will be grazing there.



On FCW’s board since 2000, John Sweeney has been active on various fronts, including the demanding efforts to alter Chatham’s Zoning Bylaw to better guide building activity. Here he’s with his granddaughter. *From John Sweeney*

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As well as almost anyone, Ted Keon knows how unique Chatham's location is, how rich its water resources are. This is how he describes them:

We have a lot of waterfront on three very different bodies of water. The boating possibilities and the fishing resources are unparalleled in this region. Fortunately, we're located close to some of the finest offshore fishing in the world. So we offer a diverse spectrum of marine-related activities.

But as more and more people want to take advantage of these opportunities, user conflicts and impacts on the environment intensify. As demand for coastal resources increases, so does the need for more planning, management, and operational oversight, and, of course, dealing with general use of boats and with waterways activities.

Looking ahead, Ted Keon finds sobering reasons for being concerned about the durability of Chatham's marine heritage. "There's real worry," he explains, "that more privatization of the shoreline, greater demand for the Town's overall fiscal resources, changing population dynamics, and other competing interests will just erode that heritage more and more." That, he adds, is where FCW comes in. He believes that the Friends can become an even stronger "advocate for preserving and enhancing the infrastructure and resources of our special marine environment." More precisely, he explains, FCW can be supportive of "public access, use, and enjoyment of those resources for both recreational and commercial purposes."

In Ted Keon's view, Chatham shouldn't be a community resigned only to looking over its shoulder at an admirable maritime past. Rather, "with help from FCW, the town can be assured of having an equally rich maritime future." As to how FCW has worked with Town offices, he remembers the strains in the Zoning Bylaw Revision episode. But, on the other hand, he also



Few in Chatham have a better perspective on the ever-present tensions between man and nature than Ted Keon, the Town's director of Coastal Resources. He knows that there is an enduring role for FCW in Town collaborations to protect and preserve the magical shores and waterways of Chatham. *Cape Cod Chronicle*

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saw how quickly and effectively the Friends responded to the call for a full company of volunteers for Chatham Water Watchers and Chatham Beach Watchers. That leads him to believe that there will be a lasting role for FCW in joining others to face up to challenges in a one-of-a-kind area where the sands are always shifting, blowing, settling, traveling again, and remaking the FCW-initiated Navigational Chart # 50 E month by month, year by year. Ted Keon concludes:

Visions of what Chatham should look like may differ. But how FCW sees the waterways is not inconsistent with how others see them. We're all trying to conserve them, to maintain a safe system, to try to balance different uses. We're in this together. We have to be: none of us wants to see tomorrow's problems — the real threat of deterioration — get the best of this very special place.

¹ The author is grateful to FCW Director Jane Harris for reporting on the complex matters that follow.

² Angered citizens established the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge on 7,410 acres and turned it over to U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service to administer. See www.greatswamp.org.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Heart of the Enterprise





A quiet sunrise, as Aunt Lydia's Cove awakens.

Gordon Zellner

Chapter Twelve

This story about Friends of Chatham Waterways has been written by people, by women and men with a common bond: they've all been volunteers. To be completely accurate, they share something else. They have an abiding love for the waters that surround and decorate Chatham's landscape — and quadruple its population in the welcome weeks of summer.

If it hadn't been for a compact among summer vacationers two decades back, FCW would never have come to life. This place so enriched the lives of these families that "Summer in Chatham" became a compelling continuity for them throughout the year. This place — the Band Concert, tacking into a warm southwest breeze off Hardings Beach, picnicking on Crescent Beach; incomparable views of sparkling bay and sound and ocean — drew them back year by year. And when they found that these waters were in danger, they rose to the challenge the way Americans have been doing for such a long time, going back before the 1830's when visiting Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville found voluntarism alive and vital in our young nation.

FCW hardly has a monopoly on the volunteer spirit in Chatham. Think of the more than 100 residents who help the town's teachers as "Volunteers in Public Schools." Think of the hundreds on the appointed Town boards and on such independent bodies as The Chatham Woman's Club and the Conservation Foundation. And by no means do those women and men limit themselves to stuffing envelopes and stamping newsletters. They research. They decide. They act. And, to reiterate the unqualified view of Dougie Bohman, chairman of selectmen, "This town couldn't run without them."

But when summer sailors along the fringes of Stage Harbor saw threats to that special body of water, they wanted to act. And yet there was no specific model in town. They had to write the textbook themselves. Its pages are still unfolding.

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A Congregation of Quick Students

Very early in the life of the Friends, a situation arose involving the Board of Health: it had no secretary. To cover that gap, Friends Treasurer Sue Wilmot stepped forward. And for a period of months, she sat in as the board's unpaid secretary. In a way, that says something about the make-up of FCW volunteers.

They have been a potent crew from the starting gun. When the fate of the Old Mill Boat Yard had gone down to the wire, the new president of FCW, Richard Batchelder, took his concern about it to the selectmen. Chatham simply could not let that crucial landing area fall entirely into commercial hands. The selectmen countered with a challenge of their own: "You understand. Why don't you see what you can do?" And so Batch did, working pro bono, and through his negotiations, Chatham bought the facility for \$600,000. Is there any dispute about what a bargain that was? Then, too, don't forget the persistence that marked Martha Stone's pursuit of the septic system inspection requirement back in '85. Not a lot of people applauded, but anyone with a long view on waterway protection should have.

It's not hard to pinpoint some of the factors defining the efforts of FCW volunteers over the years. Start with that quality of **persistence**. That's been a recurrent theme on these pages. Some folks still remember that moment in October '93 when, as Mrs. Stone stills hears the message, Kurt Hellfach and Dick Miller "came to the point where they just about gave up" on bringing the Stage Harbor Management Plan into port. Why? Because they were having so much



Deborah Doane, left, and Mary Price draw a sample of water from a Niskin cylinder. It is part of their biweekly duties as volunteers on a Chatham Water Watchers team assigned to test for various factors at their Outer Ryder's Cove station. This sample will be analyzed at a lab in New Bedford, along with water taken from 24 other Chatham stations.

Jim Blankenship

trouble dealing with the consultants. A problem-solver by nature, Martha Stone got on the phone to the firm. What was the difficulty? It was going to take another \$8,300 to finish the job. FCW's board said O. K., and the work was wrapped up in two months.

Look at any of the initiatives conceived by the Friends and you'll find the word **challenge** in the lead paragraph of the executive summary. Saving OMBY was the first, and ever since, FCW's project teams have had to realize right at the start that they faced big winds ahead. Those who can testify to that best: Debby Ecker, John Geiger, John Sweeney, and all the others who fought a gale to achieve the Zoning Bylaw Revisions. Chief communicator Jim Blankenship thought that the PR job linked to ZBR was "by far the most interesting and broadest communications project in my years with FCW." Perhaps it was mere oversight that kept him from adding that the mass of that task had to be among the biggest **challenges** of his FCW career. Chatham residents don't ever rush into voting for Zoning Bylaw issues. They had to be persuaded that the Friends's revisions would help guide the directions of growth. And the four revisions passed at least by ample margins.

Call it guts, or nerve, or chutzpah. Better yet, call it **courage of conviction**, that is, a willingness to take fire in the open. FCW's principals were on hand in a selectmen's meeting where the interim Zoning Bylaw changes were being discussed. Attorney Bill Riley, standing up on behalf of his clients, the developers, strode into the issue. FCW, he declared, was "**forcing** (its amendments) through, **insisting** on moving them forward." His ultimate rejection: "I think these (drafts) are terrible!" That was neither the first nor the last time that Mrs. Ecker, John Geiger and their co-workers on the project heard such an indictment. But, like Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, they stood their ground. It's fair to say that time and again FCW's initiatives have meant stepping up to a public lectern with the courage of conviction to advocate or defend an idea.

More than just raising their voices for potential projects, Friends directors have been willing to **spend money** to bring them to life. In fact, FCW has put up more than \$93,000 on its initiatives. That includes \$38,680 for making a reality of the Stage Harbor Management Plan and \$36,376 for the efforts of lawyers and consultants on the Zoning Bylaw Revision endeavor. The gross does **not** include the costs of uncounted ads in *The Chronicle* or special events, such as bringing in Duke University expert Orrin Pilkey in 1992 to lay out hard facts on how best to handle coastal erosion. And there's one other point to bear in mind: the volunteer efforts of Chatham Water Watchers save the Town of Chatham about \$200,000 a year in wages, which otherwise would go to hired workmen.

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Anchors Aweigh!

On a morning in late June '03, three men of Chatham – Charlie Christie, George Hall, and Gordon Zellner – got together around some cups of coffee. They were slated to go out the next morning to CM-2, their testing station, where Oyster River blends into Stage Harbor. They felt it was time to review the protocols they'd been following for four years as veteran Chatham Water Watchers. And, on top of that, it gave them a chance to relax into camaraderie.

The volunteer stint in the C. W. W. project has matured to a point where participants almost feel that they “own” it. But there's a lot more at issue here. The squadron of small boats that goes to testing stations biweekly in the summer may not be as important historically as the flotilla of little craft that rescued 300,000 Allied troops from the dunes of Dunkirk in 1940, before Nazi units could obliterate them. But in the lifeline of Chatham history, the C. W. W. vessels are hugely important. The town has no bigger problem than the gradual poisoning of its waterways from the irresponsibilities of man on shore. And the figures collected by the 140 FCW-recruited water testers are becoming the keystone of evidence in the ongoing Waste Water Management Study. If Chatham is to wind up with, say, a network of sewers to protect the waterways, then the C. W. W. research will be crucial in persuading residents that they have no other choice than to spend \$30 to \$50 million on such platinum remedies.

Quite properly, FCW's co-shepherd (with Martha Stone) of the C. W. W. program, George Olmsted, has labeled it “one of FCW's greatest triumphs.” Bob Duncanson, director of the Town's Department of Health & Environment, has pointedly voiced his gratitude to the volunteers for their participation. But it helps measurably when someone from outside the community, someone who has valued regional perspective, speaks up in the same vein. This was the contribution made by Dr. Brian Howes, senior fellow at U-Mass Dartmouth's School for Marine Science and Technology. In town this June to report on the signally important Estuaries Project, he said that the activities of Chatham Water Watchers had “saved the town a ton of money and provided very high quality data.” And he predicted that the goal set for Chatham – restoring water quality – was “reachable.”

At the edge of the upper parking lot at Chatham Fish Pier stands a metalwork statue of a fisherman's hand holding netted fish. Maybe some day there will be a parallel statue of a Chatham Water Watcher's hand holding a bulky Niskin water-sampling cylinder.¹

**“To pour forth benefits for the
common good is divine.”**

— Benjamin Franklin.²

Three FCW board members in 2003 have been directors – and at different times officers – ever since the organization came into being twenty years ago. They are Batch Batchelder, Lew Kimball, and Martha Stone. And if they had any more zest for their waterways work back at the outset than they still do now, it would be remarkable.

Each of the three has come to a real appreciation of what it is to be a volunteer. At the end of this voyage, their thoughts in the log are well-worth considering:

Batch Batchelder:

You have to involve the citizenry. When volunteers are involved, you develop an informed group. The individual benefits a great deal. But the community benefits, because you build a cadre of informed people who can represent an issue at Town Meeting when you need votes.

Martha Stone:

I've enjoyed being part of a group of people who believe that by working with municipal officials and volunteer groups, we can make a difference in the community where we all live.

At first, some Town employees might have a skeptical view of those “little old ladies – and men – in tennis shoes.” But when they see that we are dependable, possibly innovative, and persistent, then oftentimes there is a real opportunity for significant cooperation. Working in this arena, any appreciation comes only in the quiet satisfaction that our group has made a real and identifiable difference. For me, this is a great reward.

Lew Kimball:

The importance of this book lies not in the details of successes and failures alike, but in its affirmation of the importance of enlightened volunteerism. From its start as a neighborhood reaction to a proposed inappropriate

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shoreside development, to its present status as Chatham's most vigorous community organization devoted to conservation and controlled development, FCW exemplifies and illustrates what can be accomplished when concerned townspeople pool their talents, energies and vision for the betterment of their community.

Volunteerism takes many forms. FCW's story celebrates one case of effective participation in local affairs. It deserves a place in the recorded annals of this town.

¹ Friends of Chatham Waterways always needs more volunteers for this summertime research project. It is far from being simply make-work, and friendships can be cultivated and strengthened. The program contacts: Mrs. Martha Stone and George Olmsted.

² See *TIME*, July 7, 2003.



The generations come, and come again, to Chatham -- for its vistas, its diverse and ever-appealing waterways, its exhilarating ways to enjoy life outdoors. Over July Fourth weekend in 2003, Gordon Zellner and granddaughter Jessica Zellner Kline boated to Crescent Beach and put their rakes to work. They'll be back another day, another summer.

Rob Kline



IN MEMORIAM

To the victims of September 11, 2001

Once, this marsh on Cockle Cove Road was a freshwater cranberry bog -- until the '38 Hurricane smashed thorough its dike. Later, a shrewd developer saw houses sprinkled there but a neighbor, eye doctor Arnold E. Wordell, wanted none of it. Buying the land, he built a home overlooking the marsh, and loved nothing better than his view from the porch. "That is my front lawn," he'd say about the untouched grasses, "and I don't have to mow it."

Well after Dr. Wordell passed away, came September 11, 2001. Like so many Americans, his sons Nathaniel and Jon, heirs to these acres, were deeply moved by that tragedy. So they put on waders and planted the nations' flag in their marsh. It has been replaced several times. But a flag still stands -- a simple memorial to the innocents who died, a symbol of triumph over evil, and a perpetual reminder for Chatham resident and visitor alike to protect what little natural land remains.

Gordon Zellner

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the research phase of turning out this book, I benefited repeatedly from coverage of FCW events in *The Cape Cod Chronicle*. At the same time, the files maintained by former board secretary Maureen Vokey and longtime director and officer Lew Kimball were an important resource and a lesson in the value of preserving these fragments of history.

At the same time, I also had the vital resource of talking to many of the principals involved in FCW's life. Mostly I audio-recorded these conversations face-to-face, and sometimes went back again. At other points the interviews were conducted by phone. And in one case, an admirable letter (from Mrs. Joan Kimball) gave seminal information on the organization's earliest months. I'm grateful to the following for sharing their memories and perspectives:

Dr. Bea Barrett
Richard Batchelder (2 times)
Gabrielle Belfit *
Ilene Bendas
James Blankenship
Douglas Ann Bohman
Dr. Walter J. Butler
Bob Denn
David Donnan
Dr. Robert A. Duncanson
Debby Ecker (3)
Margo Fenn
John Geiger (3)
Nancy Geiger
Spencer Grey
Kurt Hellfach
William Hinchey (2)
Richard Hiscock
Norman Howes (2)
Judy Hoyt
Lewis Kimball
Joan Channing Kimball (letter)
Ted Keon (2)

Hillary LeClaire
Andy Meincke
Richard Miller
George Olmsted
John Pappalardo
Sue Phelan
Douglas Rhodes
William Riley
Richard Spitzer
Martha Stone
Barbara Streibert
Sam Streibert
John Sweeney
Scott Tappan
Maureen Vokey
Douglas Wells
Parker Wiseman
Everett Yeaw

* Interviewed by Amy Andreasson.

R. D. B. C.



Writer Rob Carlisle and photographer Gordon Zellner,
with the always-busy Oyster River having one of its
usual summer days behind them.

Marina Zellner

ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . .

The Story of Friends of Chatham Waterways is the tenth commissioned history written by FCW director Rob Carlisle. He's been living in Chatham since 1989. Before then, he worked as a newspaper man, *Newsweek* bureau chief, news writer for all three TV networks (pre-Fox and CNN), associate producer on NBC's *Wide Wide World*, and as a founding staff-member of Corp. for Public Broadcasting, parent of PBS and NPR.

A native of New Jersey, Rob has degrees from Princeton and Montclair State University. He served as a lieutenant in WWII and the Korean War. His wife, Joan, and he have four grown sons and five grandchildren.

*Other books by Rob Carlisle on Chatham
and the Lower Cape:*

In the Land of the Lotus-eaters, 1993

Eye of the Glider: Shadow On Cape Cod, 1996

Behind a Cape Cod Fish Pier (with Gordon Zellner), 1996

House of Memories, for a reunion book on Chatham's

Main Street School, 1998

Weathering a Century of Change: Chatham, Cape Cod—

The Story of a Seaside Village, 2000

Chatham's Admiral: Charles H. Rockwell, 1840—1908, 2002

ABOUT THE PHOTO EDITOR . . .

Gordon Zellner has at least two important strengths as the picture man on this project: he has been earnest about his photography for just as long as FCW has been in business, and he has the social skills to prevail on all and sundry to sit for his lens. (For the record, on *Decades of Dedication*, he used a Canon G-2 Digital Camera.)

Gordon took classes at the Maine Photo Workshops and the International Center for Photography in New York City. Along with that indoctrination, he studied with George Lepp, John Sexton and John Shaw at workshops in Alaska and Montana, as well as at several in the Southwest. A Navy man during the Korean War, he spent his working years in sales and marketing for Katz Communications in Manhattan. The Zellners have lived in West Chatham full-time since 1987. His wife, Marina, and he have four grown children and six grandchildren.

Gordon's exhibits include these:

Chatham, Then and Now, 1992. Creative Arts Center, Chatham.

My French Connections, 1994. Boston's French Library and Cultural Center.

Impressions of a Francophile, 1996. Columbia University's Maison Francaise.

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