

# Island Opinion

## • EDITORIAL •

dear santa...

**H**ey, big guy. 'Tis time for our annual letter. Everyone here has been reasonably good. Just make sure you've got wheels strapped on your sleigh runners 'cause it's doubtful that we'll have a white Christmas.

Here on the island, all is quiet and the outlook is bright. Observe the large hole in the ground as you're flying down Narragansett Avenue. That's where our new town hall is under construction.

I know we say this every year, but just maybe by the time you return in 2007 there'll be a hole in the ground for a new highway barn. Don't hold your breath, though. Those public works folks sure are patient. It's nice they got all that new equipment to tide them over.

We're all worried about what the scientists say will happen to your home at the North Pole. Perhaps you've got enough time to float the whole place on pontoons. Otherwise, your retreat may join the lost city of Atlantis.

Santa, the best present you could bring us all is to help that guy in the White House, along with the Ford Motor Company, to see their "way forward." A little extra common sense in their Christmas stockings? Your call.

While you are cruising the world this Christmas Eve, please spread a heavy helping of goodwill around the globe. As Elvis Costello sings, "What's so funny about peace, love and understanding?"

Our best to your elves and the reindeer troop at the front of your sleigh. Don't forget those who are less fortunate in life.

Merry Christmas!

— Jeff McDonough



## • LETTERS •

### Bike race is a fund raiser

We are writing to support the Jamestown Rotary's efforts in organizing and managing the Columbus Day Bicycle Race. Many people are unaware of the philanthropic goal of this race and how money that is earned from it is put to use.

As members of Northeast Optometric Services to Humanity, we are acutely aware of the importance of fund-raising activities such as the bicycle race. We have been running optometric, medical, dental, and audiological clinics in Nicaragua, which is the second poorest

country in the western hemisphere, second only to Haiti. Two years ago, we began to work with the Wheelchair Foundation to supply wheelchairs to this impoverished population.

Family members carry their crippled loved ones to the clinic to receive one of the 280 wheelchairs that are supplied. We are required to pay for these wheelchairs at a reduced rate through the Wheelchair Foundation. A container of wheelchairs is then shipped to our clinic site, where we bring physical and occupational therapists and other volunteers to appropriately fit people to their new chairs.

This year's race required

a great deal of work from the Rotary. As a result, a challenging and professional competition took place.

We gratefully received \$7,500 as a donation from the Jamestown Rotary directly from the race earnings. This contribution has allowed us to continue ordering and delivering wheelchairs. Without this donation, it would likely not be possible.

Carl Sakovits, OD  
Joseph England, MD

### Enjoy those open vistas

The Conanicut Island Land Trust has given a gift to the entire community and

one that truly celebrates the meaning of Christmas. The view driving south on North Main Road is breathtaking as I look across Hodgkiss Farm. You and I can now enjoy that open vista thanks to hard work, physical labor on the part of our friends and neighbors. That effort truly exemplifies the Christmas Spirit. Last year, the land trust cleared the left side of the road abutting the Neale Farm. Now as we drive along, whether we look to the left or right we are aware of how fortunate we are to have a dedicated group of citizens who work for the preservation of open space.

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The news of 10 and 15 years ago is from the Jamestown Press. The news of 25, 50, 75, and 100 years ago from the Newport Daily News comes from the collection of the Newport Historical Society.

#### 100 years ago

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 20, 1906:

The last meeting of the first series of Club whists was held in the "Den" Tuesday evening, and resulted in a win for the steamboat team, but by so small a score as not to change them from last place.

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 21, 1906:

Today's fog and rain have stopped all outside work and greatly interfered with the Christmas shopping.

#### 75 years ago

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 18, 1931:

The town of Jamestown is to request of the state unemployment commission a loan of \$5,750 on the total amount allotted to the town of Jamestown, for relief of the unemployed, in said town, subject to the act passed by a special session of the legislature, approved November 24, 1931.

(At the town council meeting) it was voted to move the fire whistle to the new fire station.

Is Fort Wetherill on Conanicut Island to be used as a detention station for immigrants: The Jamestown town council, fearing that this may be so, has voted to protest. When this was called to the attention of the authorities at Fort Adams today, Lieutenant E.R. Thorpe the adjutant, said it was the first time they had heard of it. Furthermore, if the government did plan a detention station, to replace the old ship now at anchor in Providence harbor, it was believed that Fort Greble and not Fort Wetherill would be selected. There are no buildings at Wetherill, whereas Greble has an extensive plant which could be used for this or other purposes.

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 19, 1931:

The annual Christmas tree for the children of veterans sponsored by the (American) Legion and auxiliary was



## This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden  
Week of December 21

held in the town hall Friday afternoon, when about 140 children were present.

#### 50 years ago

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 17, 1956:

The combined absentee, shut-in and service ballots, reversed the Nov. results and reelected Sen. Alton Head Jr. and Rep. Lewis W. Hull of Jamestown, General Assembly positions these Republicans had held for years.

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 20, 1956:

Newport's Council, by a 5-1 vote, last night opposed the building of an oil refinery in Jamestown or in any section of lower Narragansett Bay.

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 21, 1956:

Christmas lights have been turned on all over Jamestown in one of the biggest displays ever seen in the town.

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 22, 1956:

Reduced toll rates for the Jamestown Bridge will go into effect Feb. 1. Principal decrease will be from 85 cents to 75 cents for one-way trip for passenger cars.

#### 25 years ago

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 17, 1981:

Gov. Garrahy has told Jamestown officials the state will try to meet their concerns over the width of a proposed new Jamestown Bridge and routing of Newport-bound traffic across Conanicut Island. The proposed new bridge, expected to cost \$73 million, would be built 300 feet north of the existing bridge. The state has been pushing for a 79-

foot-wide span., Congress has said it can be 69 feet, and the state has had differing impressions from the Federal Highway Commission.

#### From the Newport Daily News, December 18, 1981:

More than 300 youngsters turned out Thursday night to meet Santa Claus at the annual firemen's Christmas party at the station.

#### 15 years ago

#### From the Jamestown Press, December 19, 1991:

Today's holiday celebration for town employees set for 3 p.m. at the Town Hall breaks with tradition and reflects the attitudes of the season. Prompted by the sagging New England economy, town employees elected not to have the council host the traditional Christmas celebration dinner. Instead, employees chose to collect food for the St. Mark Food Closet.

Mary S. Wright has been named the 1991 Volunteer of the Year. The award is presented annually by the Jamestown Press to honor an islander for outstanding community service.

#### 10 years ago

#### From the Jamestown Press, December 19, 1996:

Town officials will start enforcing local laws that prohibit homeowners from discharging roof runoff and sump-pump water into the municipal sanitary-sewer lines.

If it were not for two years of hard work by some dedicated Rhode Islanders, including many Jamestowners, there would be green metallic Jamestown signs rather than the new wooden signs lining the Jamestown section of Route 138. (photo caption) Artist Eleanor Gravdahl and architect Ron DiMauro helped make the new welcome signs possible. The signs were recently installed by the state DOT.

A new cast and a new donkey will be the only changes to this year's Christmas Pageant — which, as always, will have the same charm it has maintained for the past 20 years.