



Jim Pemantell

Reunion

Continued from page 1

to meet with friends they had not seen in as many as 50 years. Jim Piva, former senior vice president of alumni affairs and development at Duke University, ran into his old scoutmaster, Jim West, 94, Jamestown's oldest veteran, was a Boy Scout troop leader from 1948 to 1958. "We camped at Mount Manadnock, went to Vermont and Yawgoo," West said.

"He was really terrific," said Piva, who currently lives in Durham, N.C. He received an e-mail from Pemantell regarding the reunion and said he "decided to build a trip around it."

Sandi Peters, who currently lives in Pennsylvania, also decided to make the reunion part of a larger trip.

"We come to Jamestown every year with our grandchildren. They call it their 'summer island,'" Peters said. "We moved the week this year so that we could come to the reunion and see everybody."

And see everyone they did.

"Even people my parents' age are here," she said.

George LeVasseur, a former pilot who lives in Coco Beach, Fla. for part of the year and travels during the rest of the year, attended the reunion with his wife, Colleen, a flight attendant. They, too, included the reunion as part of a larger trip to visit family in Rhode Island and also stopped off in the Catskills and Bloomfield, Conn., Colleen LeVasseur said.

"Jim called me on the phone," George LeVasseur said. Since they had planned to escape the Florida heat with a trip up north, they decided to make a stop in Jamestown.

"This is the place to be in the summer," Colleen LeVasseur said.

The old days

In 1898, the first class graduated from the Carr School, which was



Alumni of the Carr and Clarke Schools in Jamestown line up to enter the reunion festivities at Ft. Getty. Photo by Vic Richardson

located where McQuade's Market currently stands. Prior to 1898, children on the island attended class in one-room schoolhouses that were located all over the island.

"Grades," as they are now known, did not exist and children left school at various times and for various reasons, including getting a job, learning to read or simply when they got too old or grew too big for the desks. The first grammar school with actual grades opened in Jamestown in 1897, and educated children through to the ninth grade. Students who wished to attend the tenth grade at Rogers High School in Newport had to pass an entrance exam.

In 1923, the upper grades (grades 5-8) moved to the Clarke School, then located where the Jamestown Philomenian Library now stands. With the opening of Lawn Avenue School in 1955, both the Carr School and the Clarke School were closed. By then, as one alumnus said, "The old school buildings were getting pretty rickety."

An island thing

Jamestown resident Suzanne Clarke, who attended the reunion with three of her seven siblings, has fond memories of her elementary school years.

"Everybody had a nickname," Clarke said. When her sister, Kathy, needed her memory refreshed as to the name of one of their classmates, Clarke said, "His name is Don Barry, but they called him 'Beans.'"

When asked why he was nicknamed "Beans," Barry responded, "I have no idea. It was just an island thing, I guess."

Dick Smith, nicknamed Smitty, laughed along with Barry.

"We all had nicknames then," he said.

George Viera was called "Scoop" and Joe Lyons was called "Boo," but none of them could recall exactly why. A more obvious

nickname was given to Billy Pickers, who was called "Pic." Pemantell's nickname, "Rim," was explained by his love of basketball.

Barry, who now lives in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., may not know the reason behind the island tradition of assigning nicknames, but he knows enough to keep up with local news. "Every Thursday, I go online and read the Jamestown Press," Barry said.

Saturday's reunion offered not only a chance to reminisce about the old days of Jamestown, but also a chance for classmates to catch up with those they have lost track of through the years.

"I thought you fell off the face of the earth," Gerry Leonard, a former kindergarten through grade 7 classmate, said when he spotted George LeVasseur. Leonard and LeVasseur went to school together during their days on the island, then met up again as students at the University of Rhode Island when they pledged the same fraternity, LeVasseur said.

"We both went off to different colleges, then I transferred back to URI and there he was. I haven't seen him since we graduated from college," Leonard said.

LeVasseur also reminisced about his fond memories of the Carr and Clarke Schools and his favorite teacher, Hannah Caswell. Caswell was Leonard's fifth grade teacher.

"I remember that I really liked nature and she was interested in that, too," he said.

Leonard himself went on to become a teacher and ended up teaching here in Jamestown at the Lawn Avenue School with Caswell.

"I would always call her Mrs. Caswell and she would say, 'My name is Hannah,' but to me, she would always be Mrs. Caswell," Leonard said.

Expert on local shipwrecks to speak at JHS annual meeting

The Jamestown Historical Society will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, Aug. 13, at 7 p.m. in the meeting room at the Jamestown Philomenian Library. Dr. Kathy Abbass, director and founder of the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project, will be the featured speaker.

A short business meeting, including the election of officers and board members for 2009-2010, will precede the speaking program, which will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Abbass, who has a doctorate in anthropology from Southern Illinois University and was a professor of anthropology and

sociology for 10 years at Norfolk State University, will give a talk titled "Shipwrecks in Narragansett Bay," which will focus on discoveries within the last 10 years. From 1989 to 1990, Abbass was the director of the Museum of Yachting in Newport. In 1991, she founded the Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project to survey shipwrecks in Rhode Island waters.

According to Abbass, Rhode Island has the largest number of known Revolutionary War shipwrecks, as well as the remains of many vessels related to the state's naval, commercial and slave trading history. Preserving these relics

is important to an understanding of the state's maritime history, she said, and her talk will include recently identified shipwrecks.

The evening is sponsored by the Jamestown Historical Society. The JHS is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to preserving, collecting and sharing island history. Founded in 1912, the JHS maintains and operates the Jamestown Museum, the Windmill, the Quaker Meetinghouse and the Conanicut Battery, all of which are open to the public free of charge.

Visit www.jamestownhistoricalsociety.org or call 423-0784.

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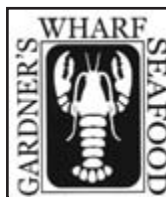
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