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New Kids on the Block



Arnold **ALBERO**
Mesa, AZ (Currently in Hungary)
arnealbero@hotmail.com



Charlene **RUSKOVIC** Shultis
Cos Cob, CT
cshultis@securityspecialists.com



Sharon **LANE** Lurix
Alto, NM
sharonlurix@trailnet.com



David **MACKENZIE**
oliver775@sbcglobal.net

It's A bout Jim from Phoenix



Marylou **EICKMEYER** Coe . Traverse City . MI
malucoe@hotmail.com

Jim Nowland's words about margarine brought back memories. I was born in Madison WI - you know, the Dairy State - and margarine there was only white. I guess they didn't want it to look too appetizing so as to not compete with real butter. I can remember after moving to Greenwich that margarine came in bags with little food coloring nuggets included. You then got to smush the coloring around in order to have yellow margarine. In those days, who knew that it was so bad for you? It was fun to do the smushing though!

I also loved the article about Island Beach. We from central Greenwich spent many happy hours there as kids in the summers, and riding the Beach Boat back and forth was always a highlight of summer visits with my Mom and Dad after I moved away.

Riverside School Overhaul Retains Its Written Legacy

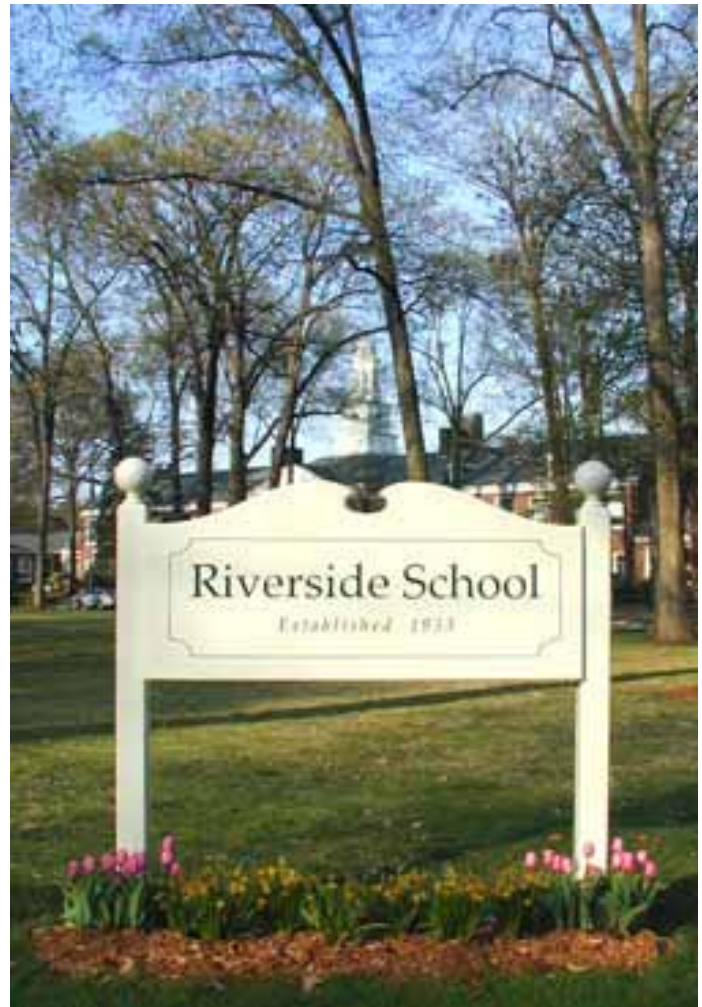
By Keach Hagey . Staff Writer
The Greenwich Time

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When crews removed the scaffolding and put the last coat of white paint on Riverside School's refurbished cupola last week, Joseph Hunt, 78, breathed a sigh of relief. From the exterior, the wooden dome looked just as he remembered it when he graduated from the school in 1941.

But still he wondered, what did it look like on the inside? Since the school was built in 1932, students -- most of them boys -- had been climbing up inside the structure to write their names on its wooden walls, ladders and beams. In his last weeks of eighth grade, Hunt, as the editor-in-chief of *The Cupola*, the school's literary magazine, had climbed inside the dome to write an article about it. While he was up there, he added his name.

"I could hardly find a space, there were so many others who had been up there," he said. Ten years ago, the lifelong Riverside resident visited the cupola again with his younger brother, and



was pleased to see that his name was still there. But when crews began working the wooden dome last fall, he feared that might be the end of the structure's secret legacy. "So many of us were up there in the '30s and '40s and wrote our names inside, it's a bit of history," he said. "I wonder if they have been preserved in any way."

They have. As part of the \$75,000 capital improvement project, the district put in new windows, fixed leaks in the roof, removed the louvers to repaint and repair them, installed new clapboard on the exterior and new copper flashing on the widow's walk and gave the whole thing a new coat of paint -- but didn't touch the beams inside. Thin chalk scripts commemorating visits by "Tom Richey '45," "Bob Pots '47" and "Harry Finch '48" bump up against looser scrawl by "Chris Lowenstein '82" and a coordinated message in orange and white paint by three friends wanting to be known simply as "Stan, Don and Ted." The most recent names were left in black permanent marker near the rose window in June, proving that the allure of forbidden places does not change by generation.



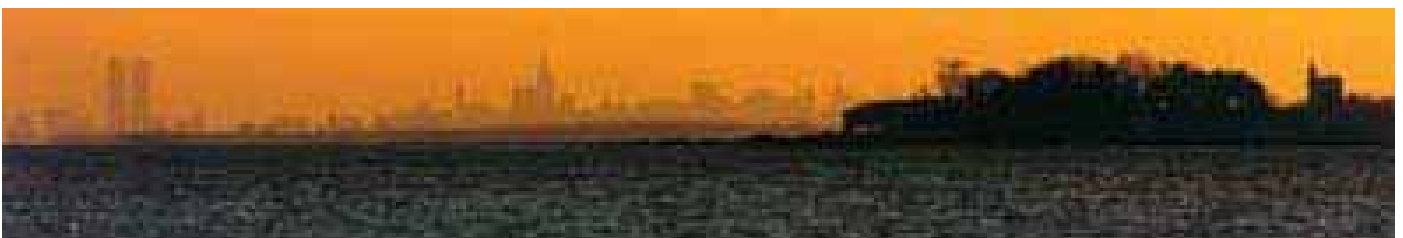
Cynthia De Reiner said her son Peter, now at the high school, had wanted to repeat Hunt's stunt when he was a reporter for the school paper in fifth grade. "He did a story of the secret places of Riverside School," she said. "He got to go down to the boiler room, and the old locker room where boys and girls used to change before gym class, but he wasn't able to get into the cupola. He wanted to. There were always stories about signatures, people carving out their name there to prove that they had been there."

For those who haven't figured out the trick, Hunt has some hints. "It's never been open," Hunt said. "You have to know how to get up there. And you have to do it when no one is looking." "There's a big supply room that has a ladder and a trap door," he said. "You go up the trap door, across the attic floor, up stairs and then more ladders to the cupola." The trip, though dangerous and dirty, has its rewards. "You get a spectacular view of Long Island and Long Island Sound," he said. "You're above a great canopy of trees. There is the occasional chimney that sticks up through the green. When you are down on the ground, you don't realize it, but when you're up there it's like a vast forest preserve." John Grasso, the school's principal, said he was so touched by Hunt's story that he has invited him to help ring the bell on the first day of school next Tuesday.

Uncertainty Keeps Visitors From Refuge

By Michael Dinan . Staff Writer
The Greenwich Time

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Cos Cob native Chris Tella, a lifelong sailor, hasn't set a rawhide-laced boat shoe on Calf Island since the federal government acquired the property two years ago. The 29-acre island, a popular stop-off while owned by the Greenwich Family YMCA, was officially reopened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last May. But sailors like Tella say they don't go there anymore because they don't know where to dock, where they can go, when it's open, what they can do there, or whether they need a permit to do it.

"I'm out there sailing in Captain Harbor all the time, and I don't know what the deal is," said Tella, 46, a Riverside resident who belongs to both the Old Greenwich Yacht Club and the Mianus River Boat & Yacht Club. The complaint echoes a theme of widespread confusion over Calf Island's accessibility to sailors, power-boaters, recreation-seekers and others.



In reality, a large portion of Calf Island is open from sunrise to sunset for anyone who can get there, said Andrew French, manager of Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. Calf Island joined the refuge, a 70-mile stretch of islands from Greenwich to Westbrook, when the federal government acquired it. Since taking over, the fish and wildlife service, together with the Calf Island Conservancy Inc. -- a Greenwich-based nonprofit organization that helps manage the property -- have installed 140 feet of dock space and an information kiosk, re-equipped the restrooms and organized a series of cleanups, French said.

The two organizations want to rehabilitate the island's pavilion and fireplace, remove invasive plants, and clear a number of trails, French said. The work should be completed within two years, he said. Tella claims that the confusion over access is intentional on the part of conservationists seeking to preserve the island. "I think they feel if it's ignored and left alone, that's what's best for the environment," Tella said. "I don't want it turned into Coney Island. I'm a staunch environmentalist and feel it needs to be preserved, but it was a huge mistake to lose one of Greenwich's islands to the federal government."

"The notion that the property's new owner is discouraging public use is inaccurate," French said. The fish and wildlife service doesn't keep track of how many people visit Calf Island daily, although federal officials are on the island approximately three to four days per month. "We wouldn't be sinking money into the development of trails, rehabilitating the pavilion and dock, and encouraging overnight environmental education if we didn't want the public out there," French added.

They do, however, want to protect the island's coastal wetlands for migrating birds, fish, plants and other wildlife. So, while the island's eastern half corner is open, visitors must acquire a special, free permit to travel to the property's western area. "We're trying to strike a balance between providing public use and vital habitat to migratory birds, both in spring and fall migration," French said. "Habitat is very important and we can do both."

About 3,000 feet off Byram's shore, Calf Island features cowbirds, yellow warblers, starlings and catbirds that fly through sassafras, hickory, maple and beech trees covering the island's understory of oriental bittersweet and multiflora rose. Diamondback terrapins inhabit the island, as well as ospreys and Canada geese. Officials hope to preserve a wading bird colony on the western side of Calf Island, but sailors and

power-boaters can unload supplies at the island's dock, drop anchor offshore, kayak from the mainland, French said, or pull up to a beach in the middle of the property's eastern shore. The northeastern portion of the island is open for hiking, photography, fishing, and environmental education.

All other activities, including overnight camping, require a special permit, available for free through the fish and wildlife service. Conservancy members want access to Calf Island for non-boaters, either through a private vessel or a town-owned ferry, said David A. DeWahl Jr., the group's secretary and incoming president. "It is definitely our wish and intent to have scheduled access to the island, and programs for youth and adults," DeWahl said. "We have a long ways to go to make people aware of the island and go out there. Obviously, many people don't have boats or kayaks or canoes, we want it more accessible."



The fact that a permit is required for some uses of the island, rankled a group of Greenwich residents long opposed to its sale. The Calf Island Community Trust Inc. is still in court appealing the transfer of the island from the YMCA to the federal government in 2003. The full story of Calf Island's sale goes back much further.

In 1954, a benefactor gave the island to the YMCA, which began running children's programs there, including Camp Monakewaygo. The camp operated on the island until 1997, when losses of about \$26,000 for that year and the termination of a ferry service led to its closure. That same year, the YMCA began searching for a single wealthy buyer willing to build an estate or maintain the island as a nature preserve. The proceeds would be used to fund the \$32 million rehabilitation and expansion of the YMCA's building on West Putnam Avenue. In 2003, the federal government paid the YMCA \$6 million and acquired Calf Island through eminent domain, skirting a lawsuit filed by the community trust. The community trust wants to continue the island's history of recreational uses and said the sale would violate a deed restriction.

"It was always open for all kinds of things, especially for parties and overnight camping. We took the overflow from Great Captains Island for years," said Charles Gallagher, the community trust's secretary. Gallagher said he expects the court to issue a decision on the community trust's appeal sometime after October.

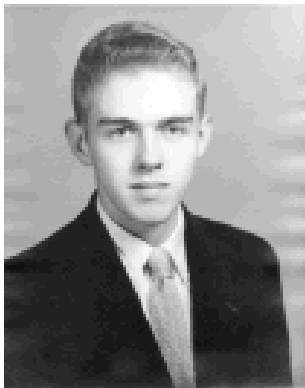
For Greenwich resident Bill Drake, who fondly recalls fruitless "snipe hunting" at Camp Monakewaygo, visiting the property would be a trip down memory lane. But Drake said he and other sailors are hesitant to approach Calf Island. "I don't know how big it is or what's on there, or even what end of it to go dock on," said Drake, 50, a Stamford-based venture capitalist who belongs to the Riverside Yacht Club.

Tella didn't attend Camp Monakewaygo, but wishes he had. "As a kid, my parents always sent me to sleep-away camp, and I was envious of friends who went to Monakewaygo," Tella recalled. "They'd always reminisce about it and I thought my own kids would go to that camp, but now it's not an option." The YMCA of Greater New York actually did run a five-day camp at the island this month, French said, and the fish and wildlife service and conservancy are both eager for more overnight visitors.

"The reason we want a permit for overnight camping is because, no matter how careful you are, it's easy to disturb the wildlife there," French said. "A lot of wildlife gets settled in for the evening and they get flushed just because somebody walks by." For more information about Calf Island, call the Westbrook offices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge at 860-399-2513, or Calf Island Conservancy Inc. incoming President David A. DeWahl Jr. at 422-6500, ext. 26.



A Tree Grows in Riverside



Peter **HUCKEL** . Deep River . CT
phuckel@comcast.net
www.ghs57.com

How many of you remember the elm trees of Riverside and Miltiades (sp)? They are no longer here, as the Dutch Elm disease has taken them... But there are other treasures in Peter's Archival Collection of Riverside and its environs. Perhaps we can convince Peter to write an article for W3W2 publication every now and then.

Also, while you are on your computer, surf on over to Peter's Class of 1957 Website and get acquainted.

www.ghs57.com

It's Worth the Surf

