

# Benton Beach Beacon



April 2008

## BBC Spring Work Day

Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>

9 am and on....

It is finally spring and time to turn our attention to getting Benton Beach ready for the new summer season. Even though it may be too early to say with complete certainty, it seems that the beach has weathered the winter/early spring fairly well. There has been no great loss of sand, nor (as was the case last year), a huge deposit of extra sand on top of the deck.

We need to do the usual spring projects-putting out the dock, putting up the canopy, tidying out the beach house. In addition, there will be a couple special things we hope to do.

First, in an effort to ensure further stability for our very important granite breakwater, we have been advised by Bill Leete, who built the breakwater, to fill in a lot of the cracks with granite chips/pieces. We will have a load of these to shovel/wheelbarrow into place.

Also, Kathryn Benton is constructing the long awaited compostable outhouse this spring. We may need to do some work or digging that day to get it correctly sited in the same spot that our port-a-let has been for the past several years.

We also hope to purchase the first of 3 new and badly needed picnic tables this year. (The ones under the canopy) The remaining 2 tables may need some TLC at the workday to coax them through another year or two. We are hoping to purchase one per year.

There are lots of other small chores, something for everyone, as they say. Bring gloves and a shovel, maybe a wheelbarrow if you have one. If you can't make it Saturday, but want to help, just check the poster in the beach house when

you do get to the beach to see what chores may still need to be done. Coffee and donuts will be provided Saturday morning.

## Annual Summer Benton Family Picnic

Place: Benton Beach

Saturday, August 9th

Two years ago, for our annual picnic, we hosted an extended family reunion, including our Norton family members as well as our immediate Benton family. It was a wonderful success and we have since heard that there are other family members who were not able to attend but would have loved to. So, we are again this year going to include both the Norton and Benton clans and hope that you will mark this date on your calendar. We will be sending notices to members of both families in the next few weeks with more details.

## Memories of '36

*Adapted from a telephone conversation with Marjorie Spalding.*

Marjorie Spalding recalls with the help of her diary that on June 4, 1936, she moved back to Sachem's Head after living in Leete's Island for eight years. The following day, she began using a pickup truck to deliver milk from the Benton farm.

For fourteen days in June and eight in July, Marjorie and Milton delivered milk. This was before Milton had his driver's license, so Marjorie drove the truck and Milton delivered the milk to the door of each house on the route and brought the empty bottles back to the truck.

After finishing the route each morning, Marjorie would drop off Milton at school and return home with the empty milk bottles for her mother to wash.

## The Hooray's (and our) Big Adventure

By Ellen Fales

This is a story little known outside our immediate families. Sandy and I did not tell our spouses for years because we figured they might accuse us of neglectful parenting and frown on our annual camping trip to the beach, which did not include them!!! Since the kids are now pretty much grown and seem to have turned out ok in spite of us, it seems safe to finally spill the beans!

The Hooray is the Benton Beach white dinghy that belongs officially to Joel but is used by so many of us for a little row around Benton Beach bay. Our kids spent hours in the boat.

One lazy summer day in late June of 1995 found our families (Sandy's and mine) on our annual camping trip and our kids out in the boat. Sandy's son Dan (age 13) was rowing and Missy (10), Cassie (9) and Andrew (6) were in the boat. They seemed to be having a lazy row around the bay and were, in fact, not far beyond the swimming rock. Sandy and I were up on the deck at the picnic tables, relaxing and chatting, not a care in the world.

Suddenly we became aware of some commotion on the water. There was a lot of yelling and it took us a minute to realize what was happening. Someone had lost a water shoe. It was still floating and Dan had stopped rowing and jumped over the side of the boat to retrieve it. In the minute that he was out of the boat, it became apparent that there was a very strong offshore breeze and current, and with no one at the helm, and with less weight in the boat, it began quickly being pulled further out into the bay. The boat had quickly gone out of Dan's reach. His attempts to swim to it were futile, it was moving too fast. Missy was not a strong enough rower to overcome the wind and current. She made a quick decision to jump over the side and yelled to Cassie and Andrew to do the same, as the boat would soon be out of the bay into the open Sound. Cassie jumped out, but Andrew would not. It had taken a couple

years for us to get Andrew to "let go" of the sides of our 4-foot pool here at home and to say he was very fearful of new water experiences would be a tremendous understatement. He did have a life preserver on, thank goodness. Finally, faced with the choice of being pulled out to sea alone or jumping, he jumped. Missy and Cassie swam with him to the rocks on the Turkey Point side of the bay and staggered out of the water.

The Hooray, liberated of its occupants, positively skimmed across the water, out of our bay, pulled by the wind out into the open water. Sandy and I ran out to Turkey Point, thinking maybe we could intercept it, but it was long gone by the time we got there. We all went back up to the beach and watched it through our binoculars. It was moving so fast that after a few minutes we could hardly see it. When it was just a speck on the horizon, a fishing boat motored across our view and appeared to slow. We could not see for sure, but thought maybe it had come across the dinghy, decided it was a gift from the heavens and had picked it up.

We spent the next half hour figuring out how to tell Joel we lost the boat and would buy a new one. But then we thought, "Where do those fishing boats go?" I decided to go to the town docks, see if the Dock master was there, tell him we lost Joel's boat and ask his opinion of where the fishing boats might head.

Kate and I took our old station wagon and sped to the docks. We parked and walked up. To our amazement, at that moment a fishing boat was gliding into the boat basin, loaded with netted sacks of clams and the Hooray on top. We could not believe our eyes. There was a big dog on the boat and the name of the boat was "Lil' Growler".

We waited while the two men on the boat secured it, then we walked over. We related our story, hoping they would not just say, "too bad, we found it". It turned out that one of the men was Tom Dolan, who graduated from Guilford High School with me. I had not recognized him.

Together, we lifted the Hooray off his boat and, miraculously, it just fit into the back of my station wagon with the hatchback left open. Kate and I drove triumphantly (and slowly) back to Benton Beach.

When we pulled into the beach road, we realized that my Dad was right in front of us, driving down for a visit. When we got to the

bridge on the beach road, the rest of our families could see that we had the boat, and ran to the parking lot cheering. Dad thought for a minute that HE was getting a hero's welcome.

So that is the story of the Hooray that ended happily. The only casualty was a lost oar, so the Hooray got a new set of oars that week.

The moral for us was that the power of the water and wind should never be underestimated. We were extremely lucky and we knew it. Benton Beach always seems like a little safe haven but nature can conspire at times to show us otherwise. We approached all our boating and water expeditions from that date with newfound caution, care and respect and the Hooray still provides beach visitors with hours of fun.

## Return of Cattle to Pasture

By J.E. Helander

The Hammarlunds' beef cattle are due to return to "Long Lot" pasture owned by Benton Beach Corporation in early May. It will be a welcomed sight—not just for the family, but for the neighborhood and community at large. Tom Baker is the other partner in Hammarlunds' beef-raising venture.

Meanwhile, Eliot Benton has been toiling at the edge of the meadow with the endless chore of fence repair, including overhaul of the main gate off the Beach Road. Fifteen new cedar poles and heavy gauge barbed wire are some of the materials for this job.

Meanwhile also, the BBC Board of Directors visited the Hammarlund Farm on Crooked Hill Road in North Guilford on Saturday morning, April 19. Besides a royal tour to greet old animal friends, there was a discussion about the early return of the cattle, which is a major objective of the Board.

The tentative plan is to bring six cattle into spring/summer pasture, including three Holstein beef cattle named "Van," "Goober," and "Rock," plus two Hereford steers named "Timba" and "Butch," plus also a Hereford shorthorn named "Tundra."

Rock is decidedly the celebrated leader of the pack, now weighing in at 2700 pounds. Young Tundra, discovered and named by Danielle Ott in September 2007, now weighs 600 pounds.

## Marshes of the Moon

By Ernest Waterman

Submitted by Holly Whelan

"Our destiny as stewards of the planet is determined by our ability to live in accord with rhythms set by the heavens. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the coast.

At the shoreline, the rhythm of life is set by the moon and the sun. The ebb and flood of the tide is created by the attraction of these heavenly bodies to our home planet and governs the activity of everything from crabs, clams, worms, and snails, to fish and fisherman. It is one of the few astronomically driven cycles that we are conscious of in our daily lives. And it all begins in the stately dance of planetary orbits.

The moon orbits the earth and the earth orbits the sun because the pull of gravity attracts them to one another. The side of our planet nearest the moon or the sun experiences a slightly greater pull than the planet as a whole, while the far side experiences a slightly lesser pull. This imbalance deforms the earth so that it bulges slightly in the direction toward and away from the moon and the sun. Oceans show the most pronounced response.

The moon causes the greatest tidal bulge, about twice that of the sun, because it is closer to earth. As a result, the dominant beat in the rhythm of the tide - the 24.84 hours it takes the earth to completely rotate in relation to the moon - creates two high and two low tides in a lunar day, as the earth spins through the bulges on the near and far side of the planet. The bulge created by the sun, which runs on a 24 hour cycle, modulates the rhythm of the effect of the moon, creating a change in the range of the tide. Tides reach a peak twice a lunar month (the 28.5 days it takes the moon to complete one revolution around the earth) at the new moon and again at the full moon when the sun, the earth, and the moon are in alignment and the lunar and the solar bulges add together.

The land between high and low water is a rich, productive zone, with the most extensive inter tidal zone being the salt marsh. The marsh is usually dominated by salt marsh cord grass, with salt marsh hay named by the colonists for its use as livestock fodder. Nearer the upland border is black grass, spike grass, switch grass and marsh elder. The animal inhabitants of the

salt marsh are a mix of land and marine animals: marine worms, ribbed mussels, crabs, snails and other marine invertebrates. Within the grasses reside grasshoppers, flies and spiders, as well as mosquito larvae. Numerous species of finfish, shellfish, and minnows use the tidal channels to forage. Shore birds probe the marsh surface and inter tidal mud flats, and song birds feed on flying insects above the marsh surface”.

In appreciation of the rhythms of life set by the moon and the sun, and the resulting interactions of the salt marsh... enjoy summer 2008 at Benton beach!

## Camping Highlight: Boat Trips with Joel

By Kate Fales

Camping at Benton Beach has been a part of my summer for as long as I can remember (and I'm 23 now!). I have always looked forward to that special time with my family and relatives in such a special place.

The one event that truly defines our trip each summer is a trip in Joel's boat. It never fails that each summer I go out in his boat I am in awe of the amazing beauty of Long Island Sound, Benton Beach, and the world in general. Each time I go for a ride I feel at peace. With the sun shining and the breeze blowing, laughing as we bump over the wake of a nearby fishing boat, I am reminded of how grateful I am to be able to enjoy life and all of its blessings, including our beloved beach. I am sure that many people also feel as privileged as I do to take a trip into Long Island Sound and see the beach from a different point of view. Thank you to Joel for giving me and many others a gift to remember for the whole year.

## New Neighbor at 101 West Lane

By J.E. Helander

The skyline east of Benton Beach will take on a new appearance in the weeks and months ahead as a new house rises from the property formerly known as the old Daniel Brown Leete Farm. Some family members may remember the property best as the former Albert Stevens

property: a delectable 14.65 acre tract that runs down to the promontory known as Turkey Point.

The development plans are a matter of public record in the Planning and Zoning Department of the Town of Guilford. They are astonishing due to the size and scope of the building project, which will be a new family residence for Barry and Rochelle (“Rikki”) Kaplan of Scarsdale, New York. The Kaplans purchased the vacant property in February 2006 for \$6.2 million. Last year, they renovated Al Stevens garage/boathouse into a 866 square feet accessory apartment. When you walk the waterline around turkey Point, notice the Sachem weathervane on the cupola attic vent.

This year, they poured the foundation for what promises to be a trophy house. It will be a genuine mansion compared to the awesome Beckerman place next door at 111 West Lane. The architect's plans show a 2-story elbow-shaped house, traditional in design and containing 11,958 square feet of living space, excluding the attached garage with 1489 square feet. There will be eight (8) bedrooms and seven (7) bathrooms, including an extensive wrap of covered porches and terraces.

The basement will be totally finished, including a wine cellar, sauna, exercise room, and home theater with ceiling-mounted projector. The first floor includes a workshop, sunroom, laundry, powder room, hexagonal dining room with motorized chandelier lift, and a library. The second floor includes the master bedroom with two toilet rooms, two dressing rooms, a master sitting room, and its own laundry room. Outside, on the seaward side of the house, there will be an in-ground pool with an adjacent pool shower and pool toilet. The house will be wired for a propane-fired emergency generator. A motorized gate and surveillance camera will be incorporated into the driveway entrance at West Lane.

As one crosses Vineyard Creek on Benton Beach Road, beach bound, there are mounds of dirt that mark the approximate site of an extensive subsurface sewage disposal system. Over to the left of the sewage system, as viewed from the creek causeway, there will be a “sport court” with tennis court, etc.

The reported estimate of construction cost is \$4 million, contracted to the firm of Petra

Construction, whose company principals live in Guilford.

The impacts to Benton Beach of the estate now under construction are not fully known, but we must pause to appreciate several things. First, Albert Stevens effected a master conservation plan before the property was sold. He deeded 23 acres on the north side of West Lane to the Guilford Land Conservation Trust (GLCT) and placed a perpetual conservation easement on Turkey Point, prohibiting any “habitable structure.” Furthermore, Mr. Stevens restricted the subdivision of the property to no more than three lots; otherwise, the property could have supported multiple dwellings. Mr. Kaplan is maintaining the entire parcel as one, unbroken parcel. The former owner of the property, Ms. Gillin, stated in August 2006 that Mr. Kaplan was the only prospective buyer who insisted on keeping the parcel as one piece.

The Kaplans also have an extensive landscape plan with 15 species of perennials, 7 species of grasses, 19 species of shrubbery, and 9 species of trees, of which the latter include river birch, red maple, sweet gum, swamp white oak, pin oak, larch, cottonwood, shadblow, and green ash. This plan of planting, along with the wide buffer of sumacs and other hardwoods that have been left unmolested along the Beach Road, suggest that the Kaplans seek their privacy just as much as we seek our privacy.

In the next issue of the Benton Beach Beacon, a full report will be given on the Kaplans’ permits pending for a dock on the bayside of Turkey Point.

## Family Updates

Kasha Benton announced her engagement to her fiancé, Manish Mehta. They are planning to hold the wedding at Benton Beach on August 15th, 2009. May they have beautiful weather!

Abbra (Perkins) & her husband Mark Myers recently presented Curt & Eleanor Perkins with their first grandchild. Madilyn Myers was born March 13, 2008. Curt says Abbra & Madilyn are doing well.



*Photo: Madilyn & Abbra Myers*

## Calendar of Events:

Please call Heather Collinson (860-663-3076), Benton Beach Corp Secretary, for scheduling a special beach event. This is not necessary for small, spontaneous gatherings. Please also note that scheduling **does not** grant exclusive use of the beach during the event.

**May 3-4th** David Ott and cub scouts

**Saturday, May 17th** BBC Spring workday

**Saturday, June 7th** Maxwell Ruiz b-day party

**Tues, June 17th or June 24th, 5pm** Lynn Ott, Alpha Club Picnic

**Saturday, June 28th** Jennifer Ruiz, GHS 30 yr HS Reunion

**Saturday, July 5th** Ellen Fales, Fales Family Picnic

**Tues, July 15th-Sat, July 19th** Holly Whelan & friends campout

**Saturday, July 19th-Sun, July 20th** Sharon & Tim Chemacki & friends campout

**Saturday, July 26th, 2pm** Eliot Benton party

**Saturday, August 9th** Benton (Norton) Family Picnic (at the beach)

**Friday, August 15th-Thurs, Aug 21st** Fales & Schaefer Family campout

**August 15, 2009** Kasha Benton/Manish Mehta Wedding

## Content Submission

Please submit any articles or family updates to Tim Chemacki for incorporation into the next issue (*preferably by email*).

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