

# the Society News

Vol. 1 No. 4

a publication of the Harsens Island – St. Clair Flats Historical Society

November 2010

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Editor: Michele Komar

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**NOV 27  
GENERAL MEETING  
2PM @ LIONS HALL**

## **from the president**

I can't believe that October is nearly over and this was a month without a General Membership meeting. That doesn't mean your Society is in a do nothing mode. The Board had its October meeting at Readers Cove and the agenda was the biggest of the year. Membership is always one of the first items to be discussed and for the first time it has gone over the hundred mark. Total membership is now 101 families and individuals of which 55 are Charter memberships. We have come a long way from the group that Nancy Boulton assembled in December of 2009 at the Readers Cove. At that time I thought, December, most of the summer people gone for another year. But more than twenty Islanders got together to form a Historical Society, WOW. Now our membership meetings take place at the Lions Hall because we quickly out grew the Readers Cove. From that first meeting our by-laws were developed and they were one of the items on our agenda for the October Board meeting. Our Society has changed so much from the first by-laws that I formed a committee of Bernard Licata, Chuck Miller and Michele Komar to review and update them. They are working on that task now and when completed will be presented to the entire membership for approval. Another agenda item was preparing a new meeting schedule for the balance of 2010 and all of 2011. That has been completed and will be emailed to the membership soon. Another item was a new membership application form as Charter Memberships are no longer available. The new application form is available at the Readers Cove and at [www.HISCFHS.org](http://www.HISCFHS.org) website. Our new meeting schedule will be posted there also. The Building Committee under the direction of Bernard Licata continues to work on a permanent home for our Society. The historic Fire Hall is still our first choice; the present owners are asking \$145,000 from the Society with the current listing at \$155,000. An offer was made by the building committee of \$125,000.00 with conditions and was rejected by the owners. One of our Charter members, Drew Peslar, has pledged \$25,000.00 from his foundation to put us over the top. That pledge is for three years so we have a lot of work to do to acquire the balance of \$120,000.00 to make the purchase. I know we can get it done, so if you are looking for a tax deduction, please donate to our building fund. We are a 501(c)(3) and it is an allowable deduction on your income tax. At our November 27th General Meeting our Treasurer, Chris Wludyka, will cover what can and cannot, be a

?cont. pg

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## **Island Memories from 1941 - 1958 by Julia Quinn**

*Julie Komar Sears Quinn was born in Detroit in 1931 to Maude and Joe Komar. She had two older brothers, Joe (b. 1926) and Earl, commonly called Bud (b. 1929).*

Our summer home was originally built as the caretaker cottage for the Rothschild subdivision. They had 5 homes in a row. Ours and Flurey's were the only two remaining homes. Dick Flurey, his wife and daughter, Beth, lived in the house in the front. Bob Flurey lived in the boathouse in the back. They only lived there during the summer. It was definitely a boat house, because Beth and I used to go to the upstairs part where her uncle lived. He kept a racing boat downstairs. It was real swampy behind both places but it dried up in the fall.

There was also the Java house. It was a two-story structure imported after the Chicago World Fair (1893) but was falling apart during my time.

The house was bought in 1941 and Mom sold it after Dad died, probably around 1958. It was used as a summer home as there was no central heat. We would go there a few times during the winter to check on it and go ice skating.

cont. pg 2

## Island Memories from 1941 - 1958 by Julia Quinn

The house had a beautiful screened-in porch that wrapped three quarters of the way around it. We entered the house through a large front dutch door into an entry hall. There was a living room with a fireplace and stairs to the second floor. Also on the first floor was a large dining room, pantry, kitchen, back porch, bedroom and a half-bath. We bought the house completely furnished.

Upstairs was a master bedroom with a fireplace, four more bedrooms, a full bath, linen room and a walk-in closet.

On holidays we had a huge American flag that hung between the two tall trees that were in the front yard. The flag came from a courthouse somewhere.

Outside was a circular drive that went around the back of the house. In the backyard was a garage and Dad's Purple Martin house that had 50 rooms!

We owned three lots just to the south of the house. Dad kept a huge vegetable garden. The vegetable garden was Dad's pride and joy. He would plant all kinds of things – corn, tomatoes, etc. He took care of it himself.

Dad, most of the time, was an easy going person. He had lots of friends through his business. He was a very lucky person. He would always win in lotteries, drawings, etc. One time he won a pig in a drawing at the island, so he had Evelyn Harm raise it all winter. When it was time to have the meat, he had it butchered, and Mom cooked up a beautiful pork roast. Since we had named it Matilda, it was like one of the family. Unfortunately, we all took one look at the platter, and no one ate Matilda!

Another time Dad went up north hunting. He came back with a puppy. That was Tag, our dog. When we were having a game of croquet out on the front lawn - when no one was looking - Dad would try to move his ball closer to goal, just to see if he could get away with it. He was a tease. If Mom was doing dishes or cooking, he would untie her apron strings. One time, when I was getting dressed for school, I couldn't find my shoes. He had hidden them on top of the fireplace.

Uncle George and Aunt Louise Weaver, Eveline and Charlie (Malinak) had a cottage down next to the Flurey's place. They would come over to play cards. Of course, it was the men against the women. Every now and then, you would see the cards flying! I think the men had their secret codes. He was pretty strict with me. Once he saw a pack of cigarettes in my purse and I



got quite a lecture. The spring before he died, the garage door hit him in the head. I think that was what eventually led to his death in 1956 of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Mom did all the cooking unless it was a big potluck. On the weekends there were usually 15-20 people and most people always brought something. On Sundays there would usually be more as a lot of folks just dropped in. Mom had a big roaster that she cooked in – stews, stuffed cabbage, chicken and roasts. She expected everyone to be there when dinner was ready. She would ring a dinner bell to call everyone in for the meal.

Nannie was Mom's older sister. She had been living with us since before I was born (1931). She was in a terrible car accident that left her crippled. Nannie spent summers at the cottage so we kids could stay up there all summer, too. Sometimes Mom would go to the city to be with Dad for a few days.

I remember one time the Twins and I and Bud and his friends all snuck out at night. Nannie was in bed. Returning home, Bud stepped on a skunk on the porch steps. The next day, Nannie was complaining about the smell. Bud had no choice but to jump in the river to try to wash off it off.

The weekends always brought a lot of people to the island. There were Mom and Dad's friends along with friends of mine and my two brothers, Joe and Bud. My city friends were Joan and Joann Benoit. They are twins. Dad would pick them up on Friday when he came up after work. My island friends were Beth Flurey, Margie Herschelman, Betty Ann Diedrich, Gates Maize and Alphie & Bobbie Dandron. Joe hung around with Bob Wickland and Jack Esslinger. Bud's friends were Andy Peterson and Dick Todd.

Going to Sans Souci a block away was fun. There were only a few buildings there. Krispin's Market, a hardware store, a bakery with delicious goods, the Sans Souci Tavern and Harm's drugstore. I spent a lot of time at the drugstore racking up free games on the pinball machine. After Joe got



*Crazy Dress-up Day – There was no reason for this event, it was just something to do. Joe Komar Sr is second from the right.*

out of the service, he would hang out there to see Dolly (Harm). One time he had invited a girlfriend he met in the service to visit. Dolly made a point of hanging out around the house when she was up. That ended that romance pretty quick!

There was a restaurant across the street from the drugstore owned by Al Bedoin. I think he later bought the Sans Souci Tavern that had been owned by Kenny Ring. It was located next to the ice house at the gas station. The restaurant served up great hamburgers and shakes.

One summer I worked for the Post Office on Boat Day. Boat Day was just a name we used for any day when one of the boats would arrive with passengers for Tashmoo Park. I hand-cancelled the postcards that people were sending back to family and friends.

As I got older in my late teens, the kids would all hang out at the turnaround by the Old Club. We also hung out at someone's hayfield on the Middle Channel. The guys would pretend that the hay bales were North Koreans and try to run them over.

Tashmoo Park was open for a few years. We would usually go there when a boat was in port. There would be groups there for big picnics and would have games with prizes for the winners. We would join in, too. The Indians would be along the fence selling their wares. I loved the smell of the sweet grass baskets!

I have good memories of all the fun we had on the island. One of the worst memories I have is when Bud rolled Dad's DeSoto. Bud and a couple of friends were on the way to the Catholic Church to swim as it had a nice sandy beach. Bud missed the turn into the church and made a U-turn. Unfortunately, he collided with another car. The twist in the story is that the DeSoto was a replacement for another new DeSoto that our brother Joe had totaled near our home in Detroit. Joe was rear-ended by another driver.

I met Steve Sears in 1950. He was one of the guys that we hung out with. Steve lived with his Uncle Joe Soulliere and his grandmother who lived to be 107. They lived down in the Flats. His dad was William Sears and his mom was Alice Soulliere. He had some sisters that lived in Algonac.

We were married at the cottage on June 30, 1951. Steve worked for Harry Fruehoff on a yacht at the Old Club. After we married, we moved to Detroit and he went to work for Dad at Lafayette Tool & Die as a die maker. We eventually had five children – Guy, Glenn, Cherie, Greg and Joanne.

Bud was married to Margaret Ferguson the same year I married Steve. The Ferguson's had a cottage on North Channel. Bud and Margaret had a daughter, Karen.

Joe married Dolly Harm in 1949. They had two children, Michele and Joe. Dolly grew up on the island as her parents managed Tashmoo Park until it closed. I really didn't know the Harm's until after Joe & Dolly were married. One time in the fall, I was mad at Steve because he had some muskrats he was taking home to cook. I stayed to go home with Joe & Dolly so I was invited to dinner at the Harm's. Lo and behold, they cooked venison! It was either eat it or go hungry. It was very good. ■



*Maude & Joe Komar with Julie & Steve Sears on their wedding day in 1951.*

From the *Delta News*, Vol.5 No. 2 August 3, 1951:

"Mr. and Mrs. Stephan William Sears spent their honeymoon in the East following their marriage on June 30<sup>th</sup> at the summer home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Komar of So. Channel Drive.

The bride, the former Julie Anne Komar wore a ballerina length gown of white lace over satin with shoulder length veil trimmed in seed pearls. Two white orchids on a white lace fan served as her bouquet. Her twin bridesmaids, Joan and Joanne Benoit of Detroit wore light blue lace over net and carried blue lace fans with pink rosebuds. An evening reception was held at Mid Channel Country Club at seven o'clock for one hundred and fifty guests from Detroit, Chicago and Port Huron."

## from the president *cont. from page 1*

dedication on your federal tax form on monies donated to the Society. We are working on a building fund pledge drive and your Building Committee will make a report at the November meeting. If you have ideas please contact me at [garygrout76@comcast.net](mailto:garygrout76@comcast.net) and I will pass them along to Bernard Licata.

I hope everyone is enjoying Indian summer here on our Island and I know I am. It is a wonderful time of year! I am a Harsens Island history buff, and relative of Jacob Harsen, through the marriage of Charlotte Stewart to my 3<sup>rd</sup> cousin Vallonene Grout. Charlotte Stewart was Jacob Harsen's great granddaughter. I often wonder what this time of year would have been like when Jacob Harsen lived here? History tells us that James May, Patrick McNiff and Jacob Harsen signed a lease for a track of land on the River St. Clair with the Chippewa Chiefs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of February 1797. We all know what February of 2010 was like on the North Channel where Jacob settled - solid ice! All I can say to that is thank you James, Patrick and Jacob for making Harsens Island available to us. That is what this Society is all about, preserving their memory and the memories of all the people who have enjoyed Jacobs Island, as it was first called, from then, now and into the future.

*- Gary Grout*

### new members for oct 2010

Carolyn & Paul Engel  
Mary Ann Kaiser  
David F Korthals  
Jeff Shook



The Riverside Hotel

**ebay**® **Watch**



#### **Drake Redhead**

attributed to unknown St Clair Flats, Michigan carver

Age: approx 1920s/1930s

Size: approx 12.5" long, 6" tall

body good condition / paint worn/fair condition, painted eyes, no keel, hollow body, body has loose shot or other material inside, rattles when shook **SOLD: \$154.01 on 10/3**



**1958 Duck Hunters**, St. Clair Flats, MI Wire Photo  
**SOLD: \$9.99 on 10/4**



**St. Clair Flats Canvasback Drake**, maker unknown. Est. ca. 1900. This decoy's body is in old gunning paint and has nice alligating. The head appears to be a more recent repaint and also looks to have had a scar repaired on the top, right side of the head. 15" long; 5-1/2" wide; 5" tall. - **SOLD: \$232.5 on 10/17**

# HISCFHS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SUMMER ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: Harsens Island STATE: MI ZIP: 48028

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

CELL: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

WINTER ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

WINTER PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

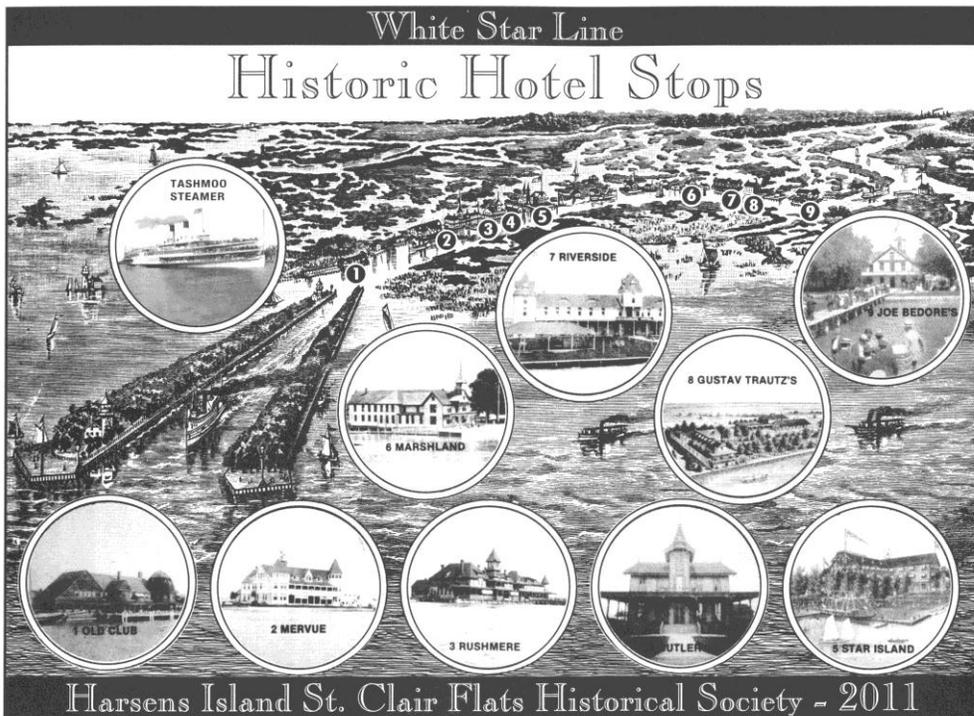
## General Membership Dues:

- \_\_\_ Individual: \$15.00
- \_\_\_ Life Individual: \$150.00
- \_\_\_ Family: \$20.00
- \_\_\_ Life Family: \$200.00
- \_\_\_ Business: \$25.00
- \_\_\_ Patron: \$25.00

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND WITH CHECK MADE PAYABLE TO:**

HISCFHS  
P.O. BOX 44  
HARSENS ISLAND, MI 48028

**Members** – you joined because of your passion to preserve the history of Harsens Island. Please ask your family, friends and neighbors if they would like to join as well.



## HISTORIC HARSENS ISLAND 2011 CALENDAR

**ONLY \$10.00**

**EACH MONTH FEATURES A  
DIFFERENT ST. CLAIR FLATS  
STOP THE STEAMER TASHMOO  
MADE ON THE RUN UP THE  
ST. CLAIR RIVER.**

**LIMITED QUANTITIES  
AVAILABLE.**

**CONTACT NANCY BOULTON  
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The cover to the calendar is from the Special/Patrons edition of Mike Dixon's first book. It was a labor of love that he commissioned an artist to compile it with illustrations from his collection.

HARSENS ISLAND ST. CLAIR FLATS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PO BOX 44  
HARSENS ISLAND MI 48028



### Calling All Aspiring Storytellers

Do you have a family story to tell?  
Any skeletons to rattle? Do you have a  
passion for the Island you want to share?  
Maybe some old time photos?  
Email us at [Email@hiscfhs.org](mailto:Email@hiscfhs.org)



**Edmund Fitzgerald**

Passing beneath the Blue Water Bridge

Gene Onchulenko Collection

## **the ill winds of november**

Many people on Harsens Island share a love for the freighters that pass by our island. Let us take a moment of silence on Nov. 10 to remember the 29 officers and crew that went down with the EDMUND FITZGERALD.

She was built by the Great Lakes Engineering Works in 1958 at River Rouge, MI. The 729-ft ship foundered on Lake Superior during a severe storm on Nov. 10, 1975 around 7:10 pm about 17 miles northwest of Whitefish Point in Lake Superior. She was loaded with 26,116 tons of taconite ore pellets from Superior, WI bound for Detroit.

Her sinking was so quick that no radio message was given even though she had been in frequent visual and radio contact with the ARTHUR M. ANDERSON.

The exact cause of her sinking is unknown as official inquiries vary.