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MEMORIES OF A SENIOR SENIOR

Our family's connection with Sagamore Beach goes back a long long way. Our Mother and her family spent the summers of 1906 and 07 camping along the shores of Shaume Pond in Sandwich. Later in 1911 & 12 she taught at Sandwich High School, and one winter Mother and a friend rented a horse drawn sleigh and drove around Sagamore Beach. She remembered the Bay being frozen over out beyond the fish weirs . During the summer she and her friends frequently canoed along the shore and enjoyed the beach.

It was natural therefore when Mother and Dad were looking for a summer vacation area that Mother should lead the family here to Sagamore. We rented a cottage at the Highlands in 1926 & 1927 and then Dad in 1928 built our first home on Sagamore Road.

Back in those days it took almost all day to drive from Newton. Divided highway Routs 128 and Rt. 3 had not been built. We had to travel through Braintree, Weymouth, Hanover, Pembroke, main street Plymouth, Manomet, Cedarville, and finally Old Plymouth Rd. Incidentally, at that time Cedarville was called Nameloc. It is Coleman spelled backwards. Dr. George Coleman, one of the founders and mentors of our Colony, and Club President in 1914 owned that property. His home stood on the land where now John and Therese Adams have their guest home and swimming pool. At the time the Colony was being developed there was a trolley that came here from Plymouth. The ticket office was located at 110 Clark Road, a portion of the present day home of Mike and Mary Phillips. It was built to bring prospective purchases to view the available lots and to deliver guests to the two new luxury grand hotels –the Sagamore Lodge built in 1906, was located on Sagamore Road at the site of the Public Beach and Jack White's home, and the Bradford Arms, built in 1908, was located on the water at the foot of Bradford Road. They were connected by a very sturdily built Board Walk protected from the eroding cliffs by a rugged six foot high creosoted wooden retaining wall. The Hotels were quite upscale with all the amenities and a dining room menu to please the most demanding guest. Ladies with their parasols would stroll along the Board Walk.

Back in the 1920s & 30s, just like today, Fathers worked during the week and commuted to be with their families on the weekends. A few were fortunate and able to commute nightly from Boston. As automobile transportation was out of the question, they took the nightly train leaving South Station at 5:00 PM arriving Buzzards Bay about 6:30 and the trains then continued on to Falmouth and Woods Hole. The Dads left the next morning at 7:00 AM for an 8:30 arrival in Boston. The New York Dads left Grand Central Station at 3:00 Friday afternoon and arrived in Buzzards Bay about 8:00 PM. Then Sunday night they would return to New York via an overnight Sleeping Car leaving Buzzards Bay at 8:00 PM and arriving Grand Central at 7:00 the next morning in time for a full day's work.

The social center of the Beach for all the children over about 8 years of age revolved around the Post Office. The Post Office was open twice a day for outgoing mail at 9:00 Am and 3:00 Pm and twice a day for incoming mail at 12:00 noon and 7:00 Pm. Mail was the Big Event of the day! You could meet everyone there coming or going, but the real nerve center was the evening mail. The girls got all

gussied up, fixed their hair, put on lipstick painted their nails, and wore their snappiest dress. The boys all showered after the day's activities, slicked down their hair, dressed up in collared shirts, neckties, sport coats, and penny loafers. The girls all left together to one of their homes for giggles and girlie talk. The boys also left separately to play cards and tell jokes. However, more than occasionally the boys would crash the girl's meeting, and the evening would become a real social get together with games, perhaps dancing to a wind-up victrola, and once in a while "spin the bottle".

Remember that this was the era before televisions, computers. Cell-phones I-phones, smart phones, three car families, and air conditioning. Our Mothers cooked over kerosene stoves, there were no refrigerators or freezers, the iceman came when a sign was hung in the window, the fire places burned drift wood, and telephones were on multi-party lines with crank boxes. The telephone operators and switchboard were located in the large office building just over the old drawbridge in the business center of Sagamore. In addition to the office building, the center included a Drug Store, Hardware Store, Bank, Doctors Offices, and the First National Grocery Store. These were the Depression years! Gus in his fruit truck called out his wares as he traveled our neighborhoods, fresh fruits and vegetables delivered to your door. An alternative was to call Gurney's General Store and have your order delivered and paid on a monthly billing cycle. The smiling happy Sorenti Brothers began to make their presents felt as they collected our trash and garbage. The Waste had to be carefully separated as the garbage was food for the pigs. It was also the era of Prohibition and Rum Running. Our home was at the north end of Sagamore Road, quite isolated and across from a slight promontory on which there was a pathway to the beach. It was the site of an old burned out farmhouse. Many nights, after we had gone to bed, we would hear strange noises coming from the promontory. When we went to our window we would see a coupe model automobile with the trunk up exposing a powerful search light. It would send short and long flashes out to sea. Moments later there would be answering flashes from the ocean. Next we would hear the muffled sound of a power boat as it came into shore. Then we would hear voices and the clinking of glass as the cases were being carried across the beach and up the sand dune to the waiting coupe. When loaded they sped away without headlights. Once in a great while we would hear the Coast Guard Patrol Boat come roaring out of the Canal, and the Rum Runners would dump their cargo and disappear. Years later my scuba diving son and nephew would occasionally bring home, instead of a lobster, a straw wrapped empty bottle of Scotch Whiskey. I was never able to find out what happened to its contents.

This was an era during which we had to amuse ourselves. We did a lot of swimming, diving from the high dive and springboard on the raft, rowed back and forth to our homes, and played tennis. We would, several times a summer, pack a lunch and walk to the Canal Breakwater, wading the Scusset River in route or we would walk to MANOMET POINT, swimming the Ellisville Harbor inlet along the way. There was a fleet of eight 9 foot long Capey class sail boats, single sail, sloop rigged, with center boards and made from special particle board. We raced these boats every Saturday and Sunday for several years until we graduated to larger 16 to 18 foot sail boats with mainsail and jib. These boats had to be anchored out on moorings and provided the added adventure of sailing to Manomet or to the Canal to watch the coastal freighters waiting for the green signal light which permitted them to proceed through the one way Canal...

The present Tennis Center was always known as the PLAYSTEAD. It included two clay courts facing north and south, but on different levels. The upper court as it was called was about ten feet higher than the lower court. South of the lower court was a huge sand dune on top of which was a tall American flag pole and a play area including swings and a see saw. On what is now the open field, there was a clay croquet court. There were both croquet and tennis tournaments. Leaving the tennis center and going up the path toward Hawes Field today you pass under a deluxe overhead sign that is a replica of one that was in its place seventy years ago and invited everyone to the SAGAMORE PLAYSTEAD. Across the street and next to the Post Office was an authentic Chinese Pagoda which housed an enormous bell to be rung in case of a fire. It was the fire alarm system for the Beach. Across the street was Hawes Field, and then as now, it was the site of the Fourth of July games. The "Town Crier" traveled the road ways awaking the Beach to the cry of "Hear Yee Hear Yee" and announcing the games at Hawes Field. The activities then were – road races, potatoes race, three legged, wheel barrel, egg on a spoon, marsh mellow eating etc. The winners names were noted in a book and that night everyone gathered on the beach in front of the Sage cottage, now the Doran home. Each family had their own little fire for cooking a supper of hot dogs, hamburgers, watermelon, and marshmallows etc. Then the big events of the day continued with the presentation of the blue, red and white ribbons to the eager participants, at dark the community fireworks were set off, lasting over an hour and then the finale, the igniting of a huge community bonfire. For a week the teen agers had been gathering drift wood, tree branches, logs, discarded wooden household items, surplus building wood, and anything that would burn until we had a pile that was 16 to 20 feet high. The flames shot up thirty or forty feet, and everyone joined in watching the fire and singing the popular tunes of the day.

The Fourth of July was the first of the three big affairs of the summer. The second big affair was Colony Day. On that occasion the First Families of the Beach—the Clarks and Chases, the Sages, the Tinkhams, Lathrups, the Colemans, the Whites, the Allens etc., etc. to names just a few. They all dressed in authentic Pilgrim costumes—the men wore tall black hats with buckles, the big white collars, long sleeved shirts, coats, pantaloons type pants and the high black lace shoes -- The ladies wore lace bonnets trimmed with frills, long sleeved, floor length belted dresses and the high black lace shoes. Most of the young boys chose to dress up as Indians. Everyone gathered at the Post Office and paraded up Clark Road to the DELL. The Dell is that large hole in the ground across from the water tower and behind the Johnson's white home. The deep holes in this area, according to my Mother, were made by meteors and called kettle holes. The Dell is like a bowl. A natural amphitheater or a theatre in the round. The grassy slopes were carefully mowed and provided an ideal sitting area. When we had all settled into the Dell there would be perhaps a few speeches, but always some lively entertainment. One year I remember I had a part in Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer's Night Dream". The entertainment was always creatively written to make it personal to the members, the Colony, and Cape Cod.

The third big event of the summer came in early August. It was the Wyndacre Farm Horse Show. The Johnson family owned the land bordered by Clark Road on the South, Norris Road on the North, the Water Tower on the East, and almost to Old Plymouth Road on the West. The Buildings that are now

alongside the Water Department Office driveway were some of the stables. The stone pillars on Tecumseh Road marked the entrance to the corral and the main large horse barn. It is now the site of the Nuovo home. Notice the similarity of the beautiful stone work foundation and the several sets of stone pillars in the area. The whole property was laced with horse trails. The public tennis courts and the ball fields were the pasture land, and the area for the show. Horse trailers came from all over the East, by the dozens. It was a two day event that included awards for the Equestrian competition, for the overall appearance of the carriage of the horses and riders and for general horsemanship. Mr. Johnson wore the classic red Jacket and the attire of the participants was proper and colorful. It was an exciting time for Sagamore Beach.

Schools and colleges started later in those days, but LABOR DAY still marked the end of Summer, and this marks the end of this chapter of my memories.

Bob W. Fisher
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