

The Island Reader

15th Anniversary

Sustaining Islands Edition

Summer 2021



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The Island Reader offers islanders a platform for creative self-expression. For instance, Islesford and Little Cranberry are the same island but used interchangeably throughout this anthology. Using the island names submitted by artists is *The Island Reader's* way of honoring island identity.



Elsbeth Russell
Matinicus

Letter from the Editors

We are excited to share *The Island Reader* with you. This is our 15th anniversary, the “Sustaining Islands” edition.

Islanders are excellent stewards of island resources. The creative works submitted by this year’s artists highlight how islanders take care of the islands we call home.

Picking up beach trash, helping neighbors, protecting our waters for future generations to fish and harvest, creating art that showcases our experiences, islanders know that sustaining islands is a labor of love and key to living off the Maine coast.

We want to thank Maine Seacoast Mission for funding and distributing *The Island Reader*, and special thanks goes to the writers and artists who submitted work. Your voices sustain us all.

Lastly, thank you, readers. Donations make it possible for Maine Seacoast Mission to showcase creative islands. Your generosity is caring and appreciated.

Happy reading.



Lindsay Harlow, Matinicus

Volume 15 is dedicated to all our island friends, neighbors, family, artists, and writers who have moved on from this beautiful and unpredictable world.



Kimberly Peabody, Matinicus

Sustaining Islands

The Isle au Haut school really cares about our island in many ways. Our beaches have a lot of trash on them, so we did a beach clean-up. All of the students participated. Even Audrey Barter who is still in preschool. Parents and teachers helped, too. This is one way we care for our island.

One way we care for the people on it is by writing cards. If someone isn't feeling well, we write them a card. If somebody is in the hospital, we will write them a card, and if somebody has gone out of their way to do something kind for us, we will write them a thank you card.

We try to care for our community in all ways possible, and I hope we will never stop doing it because it makes our people feel good and happy when we write cards, and it is good for the environment when we do beach clean ups.

Isabelle Teague
Isle au Haut



Karen Tucker
Great Diamond Island



John DeWitt
Isle au Haut

Swan's Island Memories

Fast asleep
Trucks beep
Harbor chatter
Boatyard clatter

Coffee in a mug
Workout on a rug
Morning run
The day's begun

Lighthouse walks
Hiking trails talk

Cold water swims
Visits to TIMS

Picking blackberries
Never too wary

Rock decorating
Tradition creating

Swiss chard and garden treasures
Cherished time spent together

Short paths taken to reach
Fine Sand and Irish Beach

Dinner games and crazy eights
Off to bed, it's getting late

Captain Jason's Island tour
We couldn't ask for more

Porpoise pods
Fishing rods

Casting and waiting
Seals sunbathing

First fish feast?
No. Catch and release

Boating fun
A lobster for everyone
Farm to table?
For those who are able

Conversation with Charlie
Jack on a Harley
Roscoe running
Tennis ball hunting

Fog dissipates
REDUX awaits
Wind fills the sails
Happiness prevails

Pudgy tours
Seagulls soar

The Pickups cookout
Cozy swings and lookout
Jay's first s'more
He wants more

Quality family time
Even better than boxed wine

Sunset countdown songs
Swan's is where we belong

Delicious pizza pie
Time to say goodbye

Waiting is always rough
Summer can't come soon enough.

Susan Heebner Cushman
Swan's Island



Susan Sidwell
Matinicus

Islanded

Isolate back to isolé,
further to insula.
But in reversal,
this small island is
safe, no
disease here. Native
islanders want
to be insulated,
protected from those
from away, those
bearing virus in their
greetings, even
while distanced,
unmasking insular anxiety
fear of exposure
to a not-so-distant
plague – consequences
of transporting
the infected
off-island,
massive.

Starr Cummin Bright
Little Cranberry Island



Nancy Calvert
Isle au Haut

My Cushion

Everyone has one, at least everyone should—memories of a special place which can become a soft cushion when life gets overpowering, sadness grips our lives, or when we just need to escape. It waits patiently and quietly, but never fails to appear when needed. It slips into our mind—no knocking, no loud greeting—it is just there.

My cushion is Matinicus Isle.

I first visited the island in 1962, and the following summer a relative gave my family the use of her cottage on the harbor. We were hooked. The details of how we were able to buy an adjacent piece of land and build a small cottage is

fodder for another story. But, this tiny spot in Penobscot Bay is my soft cushion.

I can consciously think of the special times we have had in this tiny community and I enjoy doing that, but it is the times that Matinicus quietly enters my mind without invitation that are most precious to me. It seems to know when it is needed—like a comforting parent, understanding mate or true friend.

Is the island perfect? Of course not. After all of these years I truly know its warts, and I'm sure it knows mine. But warts do not define a cushion.

A cushion may have spots and spills. If it is a really good one it will show signs of use, and maybe even have a tear or two. But these warts don't diminish its comfort.

I often think of Matinicus and savor the memories of picnics, church suppers, meeting the old Mary A when it arrived at the wharf to deliver mail and groceries, watching the plane head down the dirt air strip, and helping clean the parsonage in preparation for the arrival of the summer minister. But, these are not the things that my cushion provides. They are conscious thoughts. My cushion is different.

My cushion knows when I need it to flood my mind. It knows when my brain requires a cleansing. Not even Mr. Clean could wipe away smudges and irritants as does my cushion. While it is doing its magic I am unable to think of anything else—it takes over, and when it slips away, I am refreshed.

I can't find the words to describe the difference between conscious memories of Matinicus and the soft, calming aura that fills my mind when my cushion is in charge. I

guess you have to have experienced it to fully understand. Conscious memories are pleasurable and I enjoy them, but when Matinicus slips into my being, uninvited, it offers a respite that I often did not know I needed.

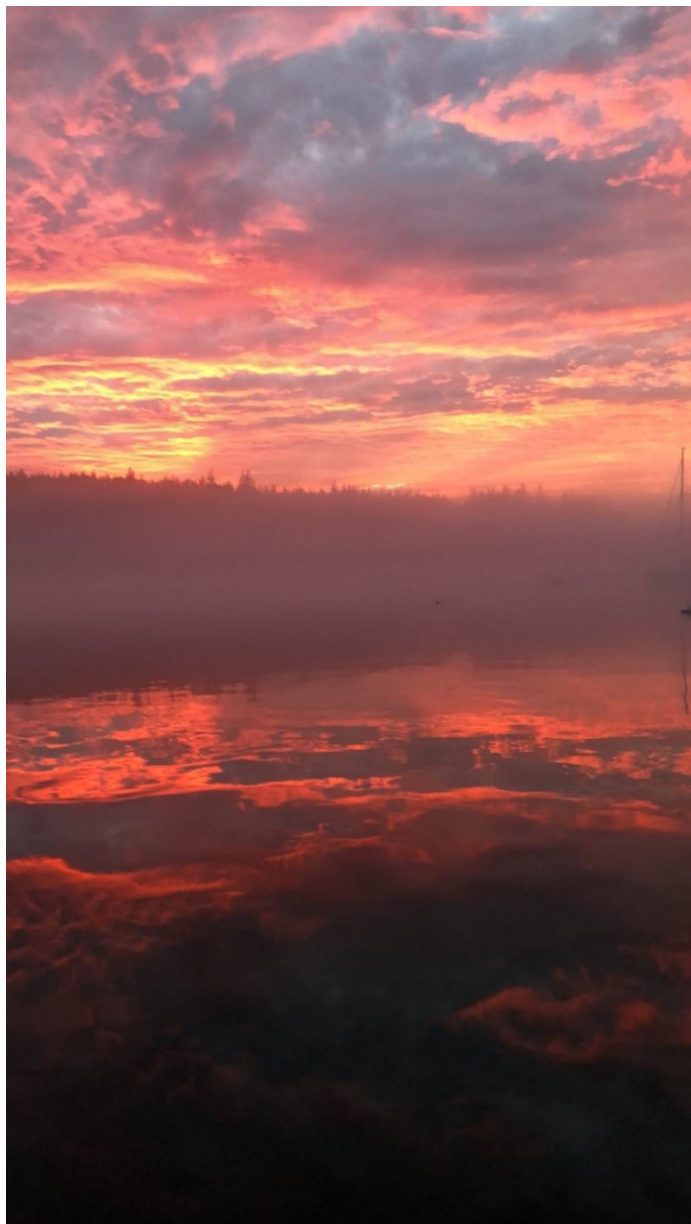
Cushion—time has no specific focus, one passing thought flows into another often unrelated memory, and frequently a smile sneaks onto my face. I connect with friends of the past, I hear the bell buoy, I recall numerous kind acts done for me, the island solidarity in crisis time and the life-long friendships that are so precious to me.

I once was told that the mind can only think of one thing at a time—so true—and therefore when my cushion is filling my thoughts with beloved memories, I am content and all else can wait.

To be sure, reality does re-enter, but my cushion has softened its landing and I can move on and handle the necessary.

If you don't have one—FIND A CUSHION!

Margret VanOrden Maloney
Matinicus



Jonathan Barter
Isle au Haut

The Natural Dream

"Every great dream begins with a dreamer."

-- attributed to Harriet Tubman

"I sing the body Electric, I celebrate the me that's to come."

-- Walt Whitman

"Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

-- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

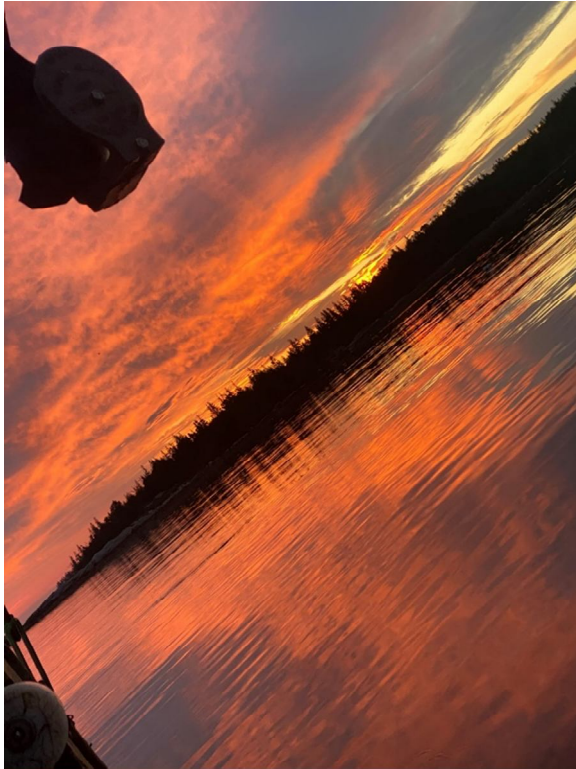
The natural dream is the dream of freedom,
the grace to follow your thought like a leaf
that blows and skips and goes where God sends it,
the ease to stretch to all the gods
in all their forms
and splendors, the answer
to a call demanding Ransom with the ringing sole word:
"Paid!"-- to feel all there is
to feel, undiminished, when fear is not present,
when fear does not require mention even once
or twice, when life means expanse and not avoidance, when
shelter is luxurious
embrace, not a hole
to hide in...

The natural dream asserts itself
in ripping breaths and beams and surges itself upward, even
while I'm running
from guns, other people like me, chains and whips, all the
honored
instruments of torture, I'm hurling myself
toward the unknown open, I
elevate myself as I scramble
and crawl, I hold myself high above my own knowing,
for I am made of that which is greater
than this weighty treacherous mud
of unspeakable memories, because I encompass unmapped
constellations and every unseen
ocean on all existing
and not yet created shores.
In salt and mineral and the blood of the slaughtered these

dream oceans wash all substances free,
including the substance of my own dream emerging,
my natural dream born bearing the caul
of my own keening longing, whole and inviolate,
ahhh still here,
dependable as morning,
as reliably as I believe in tides, I know
the evidence of things most ached for,
for they are the largest
part of my being, the explosive
material of Re-creation, of which my seething searing body
is
the latest spark. I want the long Arc of my natural dream
to be always visible as the Milky Way is, as if my striving
could cut
through the scrim of Heaven, for Heaven is the natural
waking
of my unquenchable rising dream, the dream that lifts
the raft and the river, in territory where
all roaming ceases, we sink our roots in the sand of living
fully, without desperation, beyond compulsion, allowed to
be
mothers and fathers who carry inside us
the embryonic stars of future skies,
and the drowned cannot pull down the swimmers,
the bodies of the murdered cannot bury the escaped,
the agonies of the lynched will not drench our exulting, but
color it scorchingly,
dye the night brighter, blinding incarnadine...
and shame will not keep us from the halls of high office,
and work-torn hands will not keep us from mounting
thrones, we will endure
in ascension, be redeemed
by our own redeeming, we will jazz the sky with hot
lavender lightning, and green
eclipses, and from here on, alive, ordinary,
we lie down in blazes of dazzling

peace, every night... soak in glory,
rise up rested, we'll live, we'll live
what carried us over, what animates us:
the will of the master dreamer, the natural dream.

Kathleen Lake
Islesford



Michael Barter
Isle au Haut

Peaks Island

There are places to see
Things to do

You can collect beach glass
You can go for a ride on your bikes by
The seaside

When the day is done, you will find
Everyone down by the ice cream shop

Then the next day make marvelous
Meals to have a great stay

It's peaceful and quiet
You might want to buy a house by the
Ocean edge

Margaret Kelly
Peaks Island

Island Farewell

Written for Louise Millar

It was a good death, peaceful, she slipped under the waves, a final letting go. She almost made it to 100. It was an honor to have been part of her care team. Those last few weeks full of her wonderful stories told between laboring for each breath.

She shared how she met her one great love and her fiercest wish was to die on this island and be buried next to her. And, all her adventures in life...she told tales of her many Labradors because she knew how much I loved dogs. My corgi, Maddie, nestled in her bed and gave her kisses.

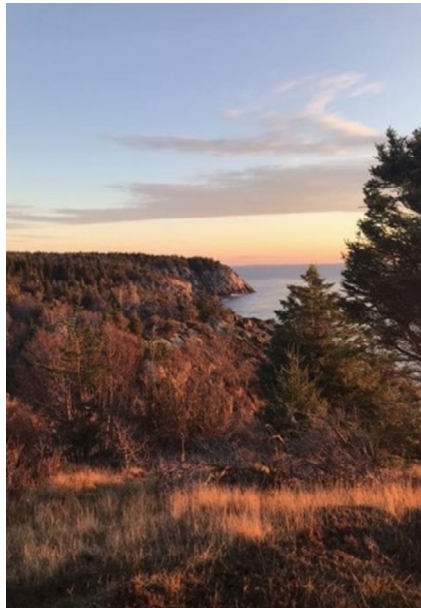
The final morning, the last story, was of an island blizzard years ago. They spent it with one of my very favorite people, the artist Carl Nelson. As the snow pounded on the doors and windows Carl (who looked like Santa Claus with his white hair and beard) recited a Child's Christmas in Wales. Frustrated, she could not remember the author. I said quietly...Dylan Thomas...she smiled and said Ah, Yes.

It was a motley cortege of island vehicles that slowly traversed the island to the Stanley Cemetery. We gently laid her in the grave carefully dug by Blair. We all said goodbye and then celebrated her with Manhattans and a wonderful spread that Karin brought. Fair winds and a following sea, Lou...

Pixie Lauer
Great Cranberry



Kathleen Lake
Islesford



Melanie Greateorex-Way
Monhegan Island

Sustainable Chickens

I have 10 chickens. You should have some hens.
And I only need one rooster. That gives us chicks too.
They are very pretty and always there for you.
It's a Pretty Good deal because you get a good meal.
They take care of Lyme and don't waste the time.
All you need is feed and a coop.
Give them some water and they will be happy as you.
If you get chickens you will be sustainable too.



Gianna Smith
poem & image
Isle au Haut



David Sears
Matinicus Island

Isle au Haut as a National Park
it has trees galore
and more than you can count.

Holland Carroll
Isle au Haut

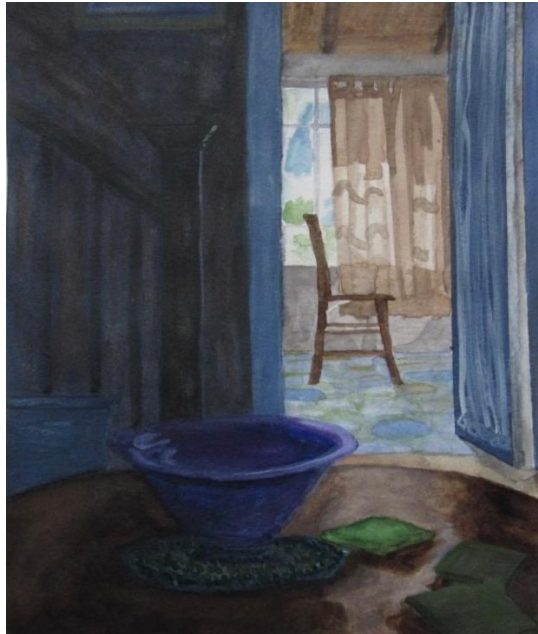


Linda Prybylo
Great Island

The Sea

Boats come and boats go
Where they used to row,
Now motors hum low.
The sea may ebb,
And the sea may flow,
But this one thing I surely know,
I plan to stay here 'til I go.
Some think it's well out to sea,
But I think it's just right for me!
It is here that my mind wanders free,
And I feel the beauty of the sea!

Anica Messer
Matinicus



Fiona Moseley
Peaks Island

Your Trash Could Be A Treasure

Your trash could be a treasure
But not for the sea
It hurts me to witness
What we are doing is key

Your trash could be a treasure
But not for the sea
To someone like me
But please leave it be

Your trash could be a treasure
But not for the sea
I can take your glass bottles
To make art that is free

Your trash could be a treasure
But not for the sea
Come here and let your mind wander free
Make art for everyone to see
But please save the sea.

Isabella Messer
poem & image
Matinicus



Secret Place

Up on the hill is a secret place.
I can almost see it from the top window
over the field of waving grass.
 The path wanders up the rough face
 of a rock outcropping
 spongy with gray lichen and dry moss.

I must push through the harsh
stiff branches of innocent spruce
to find it.
 It is a little meadow
 overhung with quivering aspen. A marsh
 of miniature diamonds is nestled in the sluice
 of a hidden water source, buried in the shadow.

I seek it early on a spring morning heavy with mist.
The whistling buoy sounds clearly,
carried by an easterly wind to the island's western crest.
 Above Burgess Cove the loon's forlorn call hovers
 and rimming the marsh the pink lady slippers
 bloom early,
 bathing their delicate root toes and whispering secrets
 in clustered comeliness.

Elsbeth Russell
Matinicus

The Lucky Ones

We were the lucky ones—we had a cottage on an unbridged island in Maine. We loved that cottage, joyfully taking down the window boards when we arrived, hot and tired from the road. Dusting, chasing bugs and rodents, wading through the hip high grass in the yard. The lights came on, the ancient fridge hummed to life, and water clanked through the old pipes, welcoming us to one more idyllic summer ripe with friends, music, and Italian sandwiches in oily wax paper. The house warmed with joy, we kicked off our shoes, dragged out our bikes and wandered off to see who else had already arrived in paradise (or had never left).

The days were long and sweet. Mother's tales of war and hunger were only stories here, unmaterring fantasy mostly left unheard by our young and distracted ears. The bombs and air raid sirens and endless clattering of fleeing trains were sounds that only she heard – that she would always, always hear. While we, the lucky ones, would never smell the tangy dust of crumbled buildings or the acrid, unbearable stench of the dead. They were only stories, told alongside Baba Yaga and a repertoire of original Hans Christian Anderson horrors...only stories to our lucky, innocent ears. Mother's days on the island were just as sweet as ours, I suspect, even more so if any of her stories were true. Our children-selves never absorbed the meaning of her startled responses to sudden airplane noises, nor did we ever understand why it was so important to eat that last little crumb of dinner, or why every small thing, such as plastic bread bags and wire tires, was saved carefully for future use. The understanding would come later. As adults, we lucky ones would find that we carry more than just our own experiences and memories into the weave of life. Mother played the piano. Not like other people played the piano. She played with the heart and soul of Russia before it died. She played like Tolstoy wrote, grandly telling epic

tales of a way of life now gone forever. You could feel the passions of the old world in her renditions of Chopin and Rachmaninov. The island loved to hear her play. Friends would sit on the creaky metal bed, lean on the old brick oven, wander in and stand in the doorframe – and she would play and play! Music poured out of our little house as we children ran happily around it, absorbed in it, our souls glowing in the magic of it all.

When Mother's special granddaughter was three years old, she gave the cottage its name–The Heart. It was, it really was – and still is–our Heart. It loved us and waited alone for far too many years before we returned to hold it and heal it and bring jubilant life back between its walls. It has heard all our tales and loves us none the less, perhaps more. Crumbling piers were rebuilt, shiny new paint hand brushed the wooden slat siding, new roofing topped the addition we so painstakingly floored and walled so many long years ago. The Heart is happy again now, for this season. We pray that there will always be a Baggins under this Hill, but all is temporal here and the best that we can hope for is that our luck holds.

Father was a painter and wallpaper hanger. He painted houses in Brooklyn and Queens until his thumbs seized and he could no longer hold a brush. He would drive us to The Heart after school let out, packing all five – then six - of us into a small sedan and driving the seven hours to Portland, Maine where the cobblestones and trolley tracks rumbled us awake and the smell of salt and fish perked up our heads to peer out the windows at the old board and brick buildings that guided us on to the Rebel for the foam-sprayed ride across the bay. The joy of coming home was tangible and sweet, the air tasted delicious, the safety was sure.

Father built campfires in our yard. We roasted hot dogs and marshmallows on sticks in summer twilights. He built us a fabulous swing; a long, wide gray board hung by chains between two grand white birch trees. Six kids could cavort on that swing at one time, screeching and laughing as it twisted and flew and dropped in all directions, little legs pumping chaotically, hanging on to chains and each other. Father would leave us for weeks at a time to go back to the city and work. Mother sang lullabies to us, on those summer nights, adapting the words of a favorite to croon, "Your father is in New York Land but he will soon be back again." Time would turn those words into a threat, but peace returned eventually and we now sing them to our grandchildren, too...even though Father will never return again.

We called the baby Bubi. He ran around the cottage yard in a diaper, chasing his sisters and their friends, giving away hiding places, occasionally falling into grass covered depressions that he was too small to avoid. We chortled in glee at the cuteness, stood him back on his feet to keep running, and called those holes Bubi Traps. Today, even though our beloved brother has dropped his ring into the fire and taken the last ship to the Grey Havens, we still call those holes Bubi Traps. His job was done well, rebuilding much of our Heart, adding years and years of strength and memory with every nail and board and shingle. He was the best of us and the end of us.

At four years old, Bubi and his same age friend took a bucket of pennies from the Heart and set off without a word to find New York and their fathers. The Island neighborhood found them quickly, heading in the opposite direction of the ferry, but the terror in the interval was truly terrible. He had his own room in the Heart, at the top of the stairs, tiny, just before the only other room up there where we girls slept. Many hours were spent on the floor of the

bigger room, looking and listening to the adults in the kitchen below through the grate covered heat hole in the floor. Mother and her friends would play cards at the kitchen table and talk and talk into the night. We would also play cards late into the night when given the chance, on the porch, at a friend's cottage, by candlelight during power outs.

This spring, the “purple Kool-Aid” irises came up again in the side yard. They had been squashed for two years by temporary sheds and piles of construction debris from the rebuilding of the piers, but this year we lucky ones cleaned up and the irises came back, though a bit thinner. We told Father on the phone how the Heart was holding up, of all the new things and old things. He told us then that we were the Lucky Ones. We were lucky to have lived our whole lives without falling bombs or invasions or homeland war. He had been three years old in Sicily when his parents fled their city home for their summer house in the foothills of the mountains, running from encroaching war, hoping the bombs would not find them in the country. But the bombs found them there anyway. American bombers, surprised by a large contingent of German planes, dumped their bombs to gain speed to flee. His mother had just gone into the house with her small son by the hand when the bombs began to fall. They survived, just barely, shaken and scarred, and fled higher into the mountains to wait out the war. Grandmother Marianna died ten years later of cancer, leaving her children behind, motherless. Father arrived in America in 1963, fell in love with a beautiful young Russian pianist, and stayed forever.

We really are the Lucky Ones. Living on an unbridged, beautiful, safe island in Maine. The idyllic summers and community-strong winters are a wondrous gift to us from those that came before. Many miles were travelled, adventures weathered, relationships formed and broken, to

get us here. We are no longer whole, but we are still here,
and our Heart is still here, so we go on in the beauty of
summer on Peaks Island, and sustain what can be sustained
so that those who follow will also be the Lucky Ones.

Elizabeth Davis Virecci-Fana
Peaks Island



Douglas McCown
Long Island

July

It's like what a kiss on the forehead feels like,
In July.
You know?
I knew.
Eyes so blue, I drowned.
In silence.
My world ended a little bit,
I'd hoped you found your peace.
Feelings of acceptance,
a familiar song on the jukebox.
I can smell it.
The waves, on an empty boat.
A full house.
Still dreaming of our kitchen floor,
And a cuckoo clock.

Ashley Shultz
Isle au Haut



Cindy Thomas
Islesford



Janet Moynihan
Matinicus



Gary D. Peabody
Matinicus

The Fair Maiden

Once there was a boy, who lived on the ocean.
On a boat, made of imagination and dreams.
And every night, he would sail with fair maidens and bathe
in the light of the stars. But the boy was sad sometimes.
He wanted a life on the ocean.

He wished for adventure and setting sail on seven seas,
because that is what he had always wanted. But when it
happened he wasn't sure what to do.
One day the boy met a mermaid, with perfect hair, and she
invited him to tea.
"Sit with me," said the mermaid. "Sit with me and I will
tell you a story. The story of dreams."
Then the mermaid poured the most delicious tea, and told
her story. She spoke of dragons and beasts. Escapes and
great chases. She spoke of wildfires. And endless nights.
Lovely sunrises, and perfect sunsets.

There were always perfect sunsets.
The mermaid knew the secrets of great treasure. The
wonderful ways to be happy. And the story of the great
depression, which wasn't so great at all.

And when she finished her tea, she said, "That's it."
And she swam away with seaweed in her beautiful hair.
She was very matter of fact, as most mermaids are.
And the boy thought: there are a lot more stories to be told.
And a lot more dragons to conquer, and he promised
himself when he was sad he would think of the mermaid,
and maybe it would be just a little bit easier.

Corey Grout
Great Diamond Island

To Keep an Island Sustained

To sustain an island, there are a few things to do. For what is an island if it is wrecked and dirty? And if the beaches are trashed, then it loses beauty. To sustain an island you should keep beaches clean, trees standing, and keep animals living. The reason for that is because if the beaches are dirty, the island becomes polluted. And if the trees are cut down, not only does the air lose clean and freshness, but erosion becomes more common, and many animals such as birds and squirrels lose their homes. Finally, if you kill all the deer for example, the coyotes will lose their main source of food. And if the coyotes are exterminated, then their prey will become out of control. Those are some things to know to sustain an island.

Ocean Lombardo
Isle au Haut



Jenny Turner
Swan's Island

Eroded

How much of me do you chew
With each wave?
Each bite you wriggle
With your salty tongue?

There is turmoil at our shores
Lathered from each cardinal
I think I'm sturdy
But I'm awash

You even fight with yourself
Pulsating outbursts rise with the tide
And take me in stride

I darken and crack with each swallow
As you froth and spit

My wrinkles harden as you chisel them
A furrowed brow
And frown lines of confusion

Chaotic, yet calculated,
You strike our boundaries clearer
With each hit
Our fences grow steeper
My beaches to stone steeples
High walls to endure

The fruit is the tides that lap
Smoothed pieces of myself back
Filling my furrows and fault lines

I hope to have learned enough of you
To keep you coming back
Safe and calm

To the scars of our spars
Where I will cradle you
In the spaces you sculpted in me

For I will stay
And you will, too
Wrinkled, warped, and fractured
For there is nothing for me
If there is nothing for you.

Kaitlyn O'Donnell
Monhegan



Chelsey Bemis
Matinicus

My Island House

The first time I saw the island house was in 1966, shortly after my grandparents had bought it for \$500 cash. It sat on a high double lot in the middle of Long Island, Maine, then part of the city of Portland. The bargain price reflected the fact that it had ancient wiring and no running water. An outhouse stood to the side of the back room; two rain barrels perched on a shelf behind the kitchen. For drinking water, my grandparents filled jugs at a neighbor's house. If I wanted to get clean, they said, a good bet was to go swimming in the ocean.

My grandfather, a Maine native who had lived and taught middle school in California for decades, used books and advice from handy friends and relatives to improve the place. He built front steps, replaced cracked plaster interior walls, and covered sagging ceilings with particle board tiles.

One of my early memories of the house is lying in bed upstairs one morning while my grandfather pounded on the ceiling below. There was the sound of debris falling, followed closely by his grumbled "GOD damn it!" This was because when he opened up the ceiling, mouse droppings rained down on his head.

He and my grandmother hired a well driller and an electrician, and after a while they were able to install a small bathroom and ditch the outhouse. The place took on a 1970s feel, with thin wood paneling in the living room and a harvest gold stove in the kitchen.

In 1966 the house was barn red with white trim, a friendly, island-appropriate color scheme that it still wears today. It had an open front porch, now enclosed, and a granite ledge off the kitchen, now covered with a wide deck.

One thing hasn't changed: The house has no foundation, but stands on stone and concrete piers. A heavy rainstorm can send a river of muddy water flowing

underneath. Any attempt to heat the place would be futile, so it's barely more than a one-season residence. On a hot day, the upstairs feels warm enough to bake a pie. On a cold September morning, it feels too cold to get out of bed.

Something more important has remained through all the changes that my husband and I have made to the place since my grandmother passed it to us in the 1980s: It still feels like home. Between the ages of 2 and 18, I lived in seven different houses in Marin County, California, including for several stretches my grandparents' year-round house that they left vacant when they drove to Maine each summer. Our homes and our status changed – intact family to single-parent household to family that included our mother's boyfriend—but the island house remained the same.

If I poke around in the house or in the shed my husband built, I can find the history books my grandmother liked to read, the New Yorker books favored by my grandfather, his voluminous collection of nails and screws in jars, and her old cookbooks, including an ancient volume published by Crisco. (Every recipe features that ingredient.) There's something hugely comforting to me in the fact that my grandmother's sewing kit still sits in the decorated wooden box where she left it.

The house gets used less these days than it did when my grandparents packed up their car on the last day of school, closed their classrooms and headed for Interstate 80 east. They would stay nearly til Labor Day. Our daughter spent last summer almost entirely at the island and goes out when she can now, but she's often busy elsewhere. I drag my husband there for occasional weekends when we tend to chip away at the house's to-do list, which never gets any shorter.

At least a few times a summer, I sneak over for a night on my own – a luxury that I daydream about all the rest of the year. I clean, work in the garden, walk or drive to the beach and then return to soak in the nostalgia-tinged

solitude. At those times, I talk to my grandmother in my head. Mostly what I tell her is this: Thank you for this peace and this place.

Gail Burnett
Long Island



Alissa Messer
Matinicus

Chasing a Vision

Never simple nor easy
being a visionary,
the cut of your jib
must hang properly.

Imagining stuff
that's as yet to be,
based solely on what
one rarely can see.

Chasing a vision
is an uncrowded path,
with jeers for road signs
and a frown for your staff.

Feeling your way,
you progress in fits,
through seven impossibles,
ten maybes, eight ifs.
You quietly answer those
scolding old stumblers
of "why" and "how"
and "whatever for?"
Never knowing for sure
if it ever will be
anything more
than a whisper of hope.

So you pray for momentum
to beat the inertia that's
numbing your dreams.
It smothers them all
in a blanket of reason,
poisoning them each
with the qualms of your doubt.

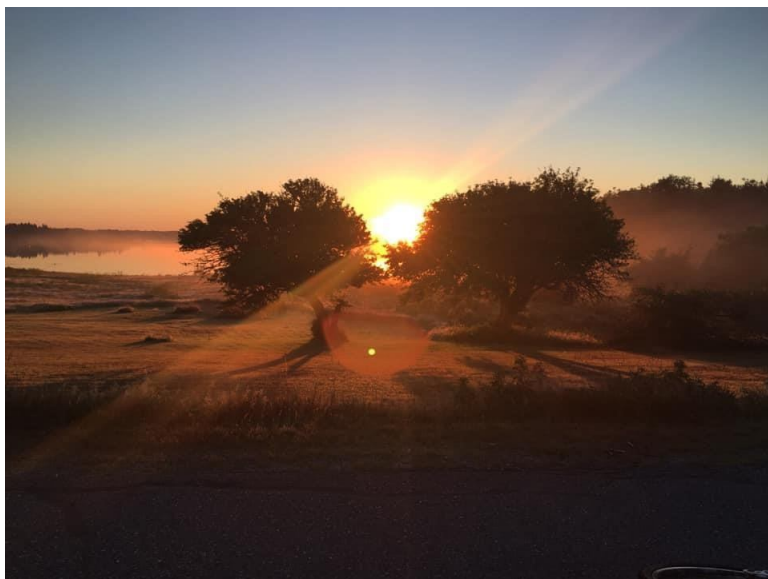
The others they are-
with good intent paved-
insulted and angered
by what is unknown.
Their dreams are held captive
their wings are unflown.
The uncertain, the chasm
wild things to be sure,
by many are feared,
to me are a spur.

Where will it all end,
how sinks our small ship?
Dashed on a great reef
by reckless reckoning?
All hands perished, all gone,
not a soul to be seen?

But maybe it goes down
in a fast drying lagoon
with all things nearby
as it were, in a dream,
here potable, there edible
all handy and fine.

It could all yet be so
'cause we really don't know
and if we did
we'd never begun.

Weston Peale Parker
Swan's Island



Elizabeth Harlan
Great Cranberry Island

Not no for an answer

Though others will,
and do,
I won't take it,
at least in secret
where all my hopes,
dreams,
and answers lie ready
for speaking out,
showing courage,
honing the sharp words,
to cut cords of bondage,
even chains of steel

and twisted cables.
My soul cries freedom
for those who want
so wordly much
with wild-eyed wishes
like demons in a dark forest
trees old and mossy
born yearning for sunlight
but shaded
by shadowy branches
and
dark birds swooping.
My soul and spirit
will break all that
burst out
into the sunlight,
and just before
bursting out free,
will reach for you
and both,
as one,
our answer
will be yes.

Thruston Martin
Islesboro

Loving Raining Hot on the Rio Grande

I found a new love on the Rio Grande
Moments in the sun that sway with the land
Gotta play out your time—gotta drink when you can
With it raining, loving hot, on the Rio Grande

Grande Rio snakes from San Louis's vale
Rips and gouges a long winding trail
Arriba, Charma, Embudo, drain the lands
That help pitch my ride on the Rio's strand

We drive the high road to Chimayo Town
Winding, climbing, then winding back down
Buy a little red chili, bought some green - bit more
My Gal's hotter than the chili, and she likes the lore!

Grapevines sip from Penasco's melt
We swing for wine at Dixon - that can no doubt help
Tease a sweet smile from her ruby lips
But another clink of glass and the canoe might tip

A long mile down the road - I could not resist
A Rio Grande dip for my "Willow Wisp"
Slight as a feather, clean sweep of lines
She flows with pleasure along the Rio's wind

Heading downstream—Valarde way
Sun's getting low, wanna make some hay
Canoe's lashed aboard, my Gal's always on the right
Santa Fe Town's ahead, she'll sleep close tonight

Loving her hot—on the Rio Grande
Moments in the sun that sway with the land
Gotta play out your time—gotta drink when you can
With it raining, loving hot, on the Rio Grande

William. F. Stevens
Isle au Haut

Sustaining Through Traditions

On my island we have a few traditions. This year we were unable to do some of them, but a few lived on. Usually we have potlucks for every holiday, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, and a few others. We couldn't do any this year, though.

We also have something called Tuesday's table. Most years we would all come to the island store, and sit together for dinner. This year because of the coronavirus, we did things differently. Instead of sitting together we did pickup for meals, like a drive through at a restaurant.

Another thing we do is an annual craft fair to fundraise for a charity, or an important movement. Last year we did the puffin project, where we donated six hundred dollars to help the puffins. This year we are donating to a place called One Tree Planted; they help plant trees all over the world. Instead of selling things in person we're doing online sales, and shipping the items people buy.

There are a lot of traditions on the island. Sometimes they have to wait, but there's one we always keep. Stay safe, and help each other.

Gaby Teague
Isle au Haut



Pat Mocarsky
Islesford

North Haven

For nearly two months, Brooklyn was silent except for relentless sirens, for the shuffling of quick feet anxious to be inside and safe. One night, an uncharacteristically quiet ambulance signaled its arrival outside our building with only flashing red and blue lights. We watched as our downstairs neighbor, a kindly woman who'd lived there for years, who told us funny stories and went to bingo weekly, who had four grandchildren and an apartment constantly full of laughing friends, was loaded up and taken to a nearby hospital.

She passed away several days later and something inside of us cracked open wide, even as we cheered together every night at 7pm for essential workers, even though we felt uplifted by the unity of the city we love.

We made preparations: we wrote out lists and purchased supplies, corralled our toddler within the walls of our 3-room apartment, ordered our favorite takeout, devised an exit strategy. We walked endless loops around the neighborhood. We cooked and cleaned and packed the car and left in the middle of the night, weeping, mourning, feeling like we were getting away with something, sickened with ourselves for not riding it out.

We arrived in Rockland in time to catch the morning ferry to North Haven.

Our plans were meticulous—as summer residents, as outsiders, we had much to prove to the island community. We quarantined for fourteen days, watching our new world from the confines of our borrowed house, getting acquainted with the dreamy sunsets, the birdsong, the quiet, the flowers blooming even in the cold. I walked laps

around the property. Our son learned new words: seaweed, high tide, backyard.

Eventually, cautiously, we joined the world again, and we were welcomed. We rode out the summer, privileged to work long hours from our laptops. We soaked in the sunshine and high winds and fog in equal measure. We saw good friends from a safe enough distance. We ate local food and plunged into icy waters from the rocky shore. We got used to close quarters with my family. In September the community center's daycare opened up and our plans to stay firmly shifted to the indefinite.

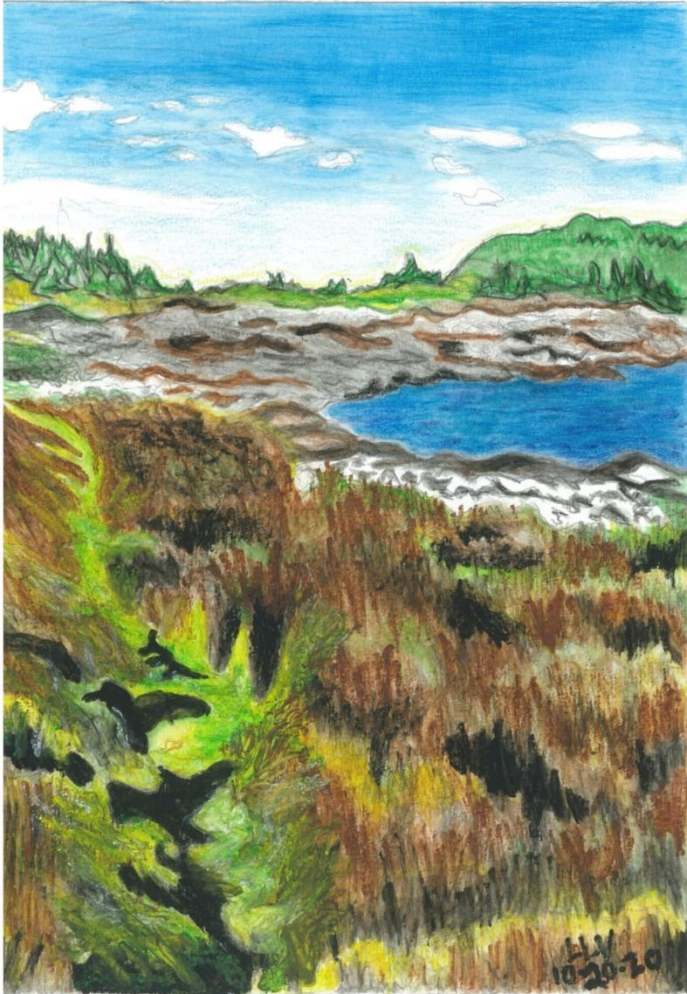
No cases had yet been recorded on the island and wouldn't be until November. And November here was March there in miniature, déjà vu, returning claustrophobia and anxiety and rage and fear. Everything shuttered, all precautions taken, whispers and testing and dread. But.

Just as at home, in good and bad times we found that this island sustains itself in remarkable, undaunted ways. Everyone relies on everyone else, and so much hard work, expertise and grit allow four hundred souls to thrive twelve miles out to sea, just as the eight million people living on top of each other in New York do. And ultimately our transition to temporary but indefinite life here, as different as it could be and is on so many levels, felt completely natural at the core. The will to survive and to connect is common to us all. Empathy and kindness for our neighbors, passion and determination for our community, humility in spades. Going out in all weather, shoring each other up, being enough for one another, giving what we can.

Our spirits can survive March and November and all of these last terrible months and the good and bad ones surely to come. Islands like North Haven and New York City are

built to withstand nearly anything because they were built
by people like us. We can withstand anything, too.

Anna Worrall
North Haven



Laura Venger
Frenchboro

Walking the Fence

Hierarchy of the hill. We lived about two thirds of the way up, across from the mill manager. The mill owner lived in a big house at the top of the hill. We were one house down from the local dentist and one above a realtor, who was across from the theater owner - we were middle hill, middle class. My father owned a store.

The mill manager's family raised horses. The mill manager was a good man, but his wife was a holy terror who didn't much care for children. We were forbidden to go on their property or near the horses unless invited. One spring evening one of the farm hands told us we could ride when the family finished their supper. One of the daughters ran a riding camp the previous summer, and was probably responsible for the rare invitation.

Crossing the road, I went down through the barn to the riding ring out back. Some older boys were already there, hanging out by the fence, smoking. They smirked at me, younger, and only a girl. One of them said, "Let's walk the fence," and looking at me, said, "She's too little." The top rim of the riding ring was higher than my head, but I knew a challenge when I heard it, and walked over and climbed up by the edge of a fence post to the top rail. It was about six inches wide, and slanted inward. I started to walk, arms held out for balance. Two of the boys got up on the other side and began walking in the other direction. It was slow going, balancing carefully, and taking one step at a time. The boys reached the far curve of the ring before I was halfway along the other side. I hadn't thought much about what might happen when we met. They kept coming, without slowing down. I thought maybe they would help me down before going on, but as the older one got close to me, he said, "Get out of my way you little shit," and pushed me off the fence. I fell landing on my arm and was in great

pain. At that point the boy jumped down, grabbed my arm, and swung it around in a circle. "It ain't broke, so you can stop your bawling," he snarled, and got back up on the fence.

Holding my arm, I dragged myself across the field, heading for home. It was all I could do to get over the stone wall without using my arms. When I got in the house, my parents were in the dining room, talking. I sat on the floor in the kitchen, sobbing softly. I didn't want my father to get mad. My mother came out and asked me what was wrong, and when I told her, she said, "We need to get you to a doctor." By this time, my father had come into the kitchen and they bundled me up, put me in the car, and took me to the hospital. There the doctor on call bound up my shoulder, putting my arm in a sling, and said to come back in the morning. They probably gave me some aspirin, but it was a long night.

The next day I was fitted with a proper cast. The break was in my right arm, just below the shoulder. The cast began at my fingertips, ran up my arm, holding it up and at a right angle to my body, and the cast continued, covering my chest down to my waist. Only my left arm remained free.

That was the summer I learned to swear. When my friends came by to write on my cast, I swore ferociously, as long as there were no adults nearby. The pain subsided after a few days, but the cast was hot and heavy, and it wasn't long before I began to itch. It drove me crazy, as I couldn't scratch. Worst of all, by this time it was summer, and I wasn't allowed to go into the water above my knees as I might get my cast wet.

I was strictly forbidden to cross the street to the neighbors, but one day the manager's wife was having a tea party on her back lawn with her lady friends. Talking and joking,

she looked over and saw me. She called me over, but I said I wasn't allowed, and would have to ask my mother. My mother said, as long as I was invited, it was OK, so I went over. What a mistake. I should have run as soon as I heard the old witch's voice. She said, "Come over here where people can see you." When I did, she turned to her friends and said, "Now you can see what happens to bad little girls who go where they don't belong."

Ann Marie Maguire
Swan's Island



Laurie Webber
Matinicus

Joe and I Go Exploring

Off the coast of Maine, there are some 2,600 islands of various sizes. When wool was very high and profitable, sheep were taken to many of these atolls and released. They were left to fend for themselves without shelter or food. Through the fringed cold of winter and the sun-drenched heat of the summer they endured. The sheep would eat the short Island grass and ocean's seaweed. The dew quenched their thirst in the summer, the ice in the winter. It was said that the sheep developed much denser and finer wool. Which in turn made it a more sought after and valuable product. In a 1900 New York Times article the plight of the sheep was reported. This came to the attention of Maine's "Prevention of the Cruelty of Animals" but nothing would be done.

The nightlife on Vinalhaven is unhurried at best. The early evening is filled with card games, board games, reading and most of all family. Summering there was an untainted and heartfelt time of life. Every now and again "a parent" would oversee a gathering of "the children." This round table discussion would be called "Farts and Craps." At this time the young could vent unfiltered anger, concerns, and troubles that were on their mind. Nothing was banned from these hour-long summits. Congress should incorporate this process into their by-laws.

We would rise at 7 am to the rapture of the mourning dove and savory smell of bacon drifting up the stairs. We dressed and made the bed, as there would be an inspection by a parent after breakfast. Our day was a simple one. We would do our chores and tasks till the towns 12 o'clock whistle blew, then the rest of the day was ours to do as we pleased. There were so many cousins, the parents would break us into small crews of 5 or 6. We worked side by side together in painting, tree removal, house repair,

gardening and any other project the seniors had in mind. Our parents' mantra was, "The summer vacation is short, the winter is long, there is work to be done."

Every morning as I stood on our porch I witnessed the splendor of Sheep Island. The Island stood center sight about one and one-half miles out from shore.

"Our Sheep Island Adventure "

One afternoon after the town whistle blew Joey and I had an epiphany. Let's row out to Sheep Island and explore. I was a junior in high school, Joe was much (but not that much) younger. We ran down to the beach, grabbed the oars and shoved off to Sea in Madre's punt the No-No. With a stiff wind at our back and the sun overhead, our adventure began. Buoys to the right of us buoys to the left as we rowed hard; we sang songs and marching chants to pace our progress. About halfway to our destination, I asked Joe, "How'd the Senators do last night?" The mere mention of the loss of Joe's favorite team made him blush in anger; it would eventually send him in a tirade. As I rowed, I said, no more. "The hook was set." I watched him squirm and sweat like a teapot. Steam was escaping from his ears; his neck muscles were bulging. It wouldn't be long now and then came the eruption. Joe screamed and yelled, questioned and answered himself in an uncontrollable baseball frenzy. Then it was over, no more lava, the boy was spent. Joey regained his sanity and his bearings and pointed to a place to land our craft.

Sheep Island is an unforgiving place about ½ mile long by 200 yards wide. The Island is covered in scrub brush and thorny bushes with no paths and no mercy. And like normal we prepared for our adventure with nothing but shorts and tees; we also neglected to tell anyone about our trip. Years of washed-up debris and driftwood littered the

shoreline; we landed the No-No, and off we went. As Joey and I ascended to the summit of the Island, a war cry was sounded, "Fresh Meat!" as a horde of piranha-like mosquitoes descended upon us, all looking for a thimble's worth of life. We persevered as any good explorer would. Onward and upward as the Island is only about 40 meters high. Our arms were swinging in a deranged pattern trying to reduce the mosquito population. When I stopped mid-step, I hollered, "What's that!" Staring at us from under a thorny bush was a large ball of matted hair on four legs. "Feet, don't fail me now," we screamed and ran one way; it baaed and ran the other. "It's a Maneater, Joe!" I yelled. Like a breeze, Joe was passed me scurrying to the top. I was right behind. As we stood mid-center on the plateau, all that was behind us was forgotten. We felt the wind driving hard on our faces, standing where few men if any have stood. We were lost in the beauty and the isolation of our new vantage point of the sea. Words were not exchanged; we were both immersed in the Island's newfound elegance. On the windward side of the island stood a single leafless tree. Nature is both wondrous and amazing.

As we came to our senses Joey said, "Ritchie, it's getting late." With that, we both turned West to see the sun setting over Vinalhaven. We turned and hurried through the bramble and mosquitoes to the No-No and shoved off. As I pulled on the oars with all my strength, I realized we were not making any headway towards home. The wind was blowing hard from the west and the tide was going out. This wasn't gonna be fun! The best we could do was go sideways. Joe sat at my side and we both took an oar to see if that would help—it didn't. We were heading out to sea. Let's see, no life preservers, no one knows we are here, the sun is going down, white caps are slapping over the railing, the current is going out, the water is so cold hypothermia sets in, in 45 min. We were screwed! Joe quickly grabbed a

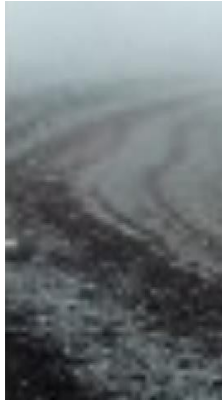
lobster buoy and pulled it into the bow of the boat, and then another until the lobster pots snagged the rocky bottom as an anchor would. Though we were not being swept out anymore, we were sitting mid-channel between two islands: Narrows and Sheep. Panic started to engulf us as we pondered our next move. While we lamented, seals began popping their heads out of the water to stare at us. I'm sure I saw one shaking his head at us in disdain. We rowed sideways to Narrows Island and this was done slowly and with great effort. Suffice to say the shore was not an easy place to land as the rocks and the ledges were abundant and massive. There was no spot to safely maneuver. A plan quickly developed. "Joe, I'll get as close to the shore as possible, and you hop over the side and climb up to safety, and go for help," I said. He did, but slipped on the slimy rocks and cut his leg badly. Adrenalin pumping, Joe finally made it up the rocks and quickly ran to the Vinalhaven side of the island to wave for help. I stood in the water on a ledge and held the boat off the granite. Being Madre's No-No we were worried that if we totaled her punt, we would probably be disemboweled. Such things swirl in the minds of young bucks. As time slowed to a trickle, Dad miraculously rounded the corner of the Narrows in his powerboat. To Joe and me, he was "A Knight in shining armor." After a profound tongue lashing, he tied the bow of the No-No to the stern of his boat and started powering us home. As we were underway, his engine sputtered and quit. Now we had two boats drifting away and being battered by the waves. The Bear (Dad) never learned how to swim. I being a lifeguard started thinking, "Who do I save when we go in?" We began checking the gas line and battery and pulled the cover off the engine to see if we could see anything (the fact that no one had any idea what we were looking at was irrelevant). We then tilted the engine up and saw that the propeller was fouled in trap rope. Free of all encumbrances the engine-started right up and our rescuer continued his rescue. We made shore and slid the No-No to

its shoreline berth. As we entered the house, Joe and I figured an “onshore berating” was imminent. We would have to endure any and all tortures coming to us. But as we cleaned up for dinner, we slowly realized that it was not to be. Dad said nothing more about it, but he gave us both “the stink eye.” With no one the wiser, all was forgotten.

Richard Flagg
Vinalhaven



Danielle D. Madore
Peaks Island



Oh You and I

live on the edge of
this endless sea
tumbled like rocks
for near eternity
Sure there is one,
we see no end,
Caught in the smell
of seaweed,
drifted wood and rocks,
we walk beaches
talking of weather,
bending to gather
gifts.
We rest and speak
of weighty things,
chattel,
chattering.

You and I love
on the edge of a
vast and
changing sea,
thinking tomorrows
will not end, but even

then, after passing,
this sea,
this beach will
buoy other loves,
a poultice
to their hearts,
its wide and sheltering
endless brilliant gray
leading
way
to near
eternity.

Wesley Staples
poem & image
Swan's Island



Geoffrey Wadsworth
Great Cranberry Island

Evening

I know every trail on this island,
through forest and meadow and bog,
along cliffs and over cobbles,
in wind and sunlight and fog.

Today I walked among orchids,
sundews and Labrador tea.
Starflowers speckled the spruce woods
and led me out to the sea.

Rockweed sprawled on the shoreline,
the tide ebbed away.
Gulls rode the swells. A fish hawk
plucked alewives out of the bay.

Wildflowers spread around me,
devil's paintbrush, blue-eyed grass,
wild strawberries and cinquefoil,
small beauties that will pass

and be succeeded by others,
each in its season and place
and all will wither and go to seed,
and all will succumb with grace.

The wind and the clouds flowed eastwards,
the sun moved into the west.
The fish hawk carried an alewife
home to the young in her nest.

The tide turned with the sunset,
the gulls hauled up on a ledge,
the paintbrush closed its petals,
and I walked out to the edge

where the sea was nudging the tideline
and the cobbles knocked and shifted.
A sudden surge wetted my feet,
the rockweed stirred and lifted,

and I stood alone in the darkening world
where all bodies begin and end,
the fish hawk, the rockweed, the blue-eyed grass,
each rises, each descends,

and I saw in the light of evening,
with all the world in motion,
that each of us lives on an island,
and all paths lead to the ocean.

Kathie Fiveash
Isle au Haut



Mike Delchamp
Isle au Haut

Rebel Hill Road

Peaches! Tumbled in the grass. Who knew?
Dropped half ripe on the road as summer fails,
as the north wind hurtles across the cove
where the white sloop plunges in the waves.

They lie there--peaches--in the dusty grass:
on the tongue a modest hint of fur and flesh
tells the swell of sweetness that might come
if ripening sun will only hold,

while the sloop in white-eyed alarm
yanks at her mooring line to be gone.

What's coming next she well knows:
We taste late peaches while the north wind blows.

Liz Grisaru
Islesboro



Kimberly Peabody
Matinicus

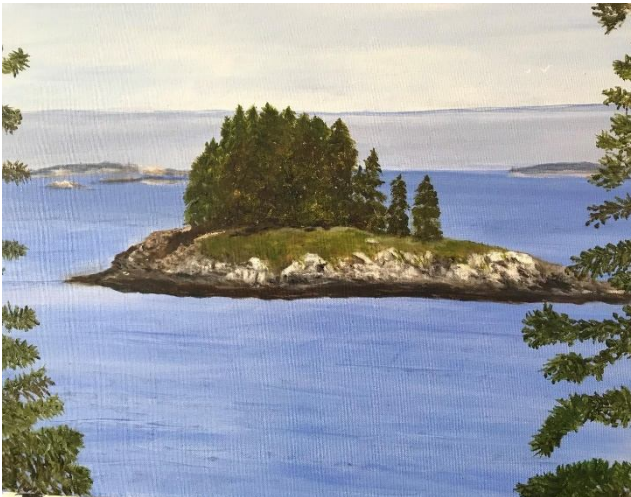
Grammy Phillips Dies, Dreaming of Islands

In her difficult dream
she balances voices and flowers,
then rows for the islands:
A wife who always wanted to row.

When the tide is flooding,
--oh moon, white ashen face of a cow--
she kneels among pinelings,
is swayed by tall waves of blue lupine.

To garner blueberries
for her cream pail there were brown fingers,
but now they drift like snow:
She has no place to put things now.

Philip W. Silver
Gotts Island



Lauri Goldston
Swan's Island

Halfway Rock

I race out to you. You,
a strange symbol, full of hope
and potential, but truly signifying
nothing. A rock. A tower. A light.
I race out to you. Lost
in the furrows of the waves,
bow carving lines that will remain
unseeded, I
race to you.
To my port a seal emerges questioning.
I seem to have slowed.
It bobs without meaning, as if wondering
what my hurry is.
Its presence, my progress immaterial.
But the minke knows. Across the starboard bow
she lumbers to the surface racing me in slow motion,
back bowed a perfect arch interrupted
with a silly, inconsequential fin.
We pull against each other. An errant wave knocks me
suddenly.
It is as if I awake.

What is this? Why must I make it out past that rock?
That geological anomaly halfway...Halfway to where?
Halfway what?
What difference does it make
if I am in one patch of water or another? It is all blended
together neither separate nor different.
Why must I cross that imaginary line?
Can I not just play
in the wind and the water like the seal or the gull?
Can I not look to the sky for bearings
and dangle my fingers among the soft, dead,
brown-green sea weeds?

The draw becomes painful again.
Enough with this, I am losing ground.
There will be time for insight later.
Like the minke I press on. The waves roll, the wind pulls,
and I know that once I cross that line
I will be in the open ocean
and I will be free of the land.
Then and only then will I be free of the land.

Charity Appell McNabb
Vinalhaven



Starr Cummin Bright
Little Cranberry Island

What the Tenants Drank

End-of-season clean-up,
wheeling trash up island
to transfer station

cart attachment that
usually carries grandkids
stacked with green bags

bulging with bottles and
remnants of dinners.
Tenants sorted returnables

per instructions so we
know what they drank:
lots of wine, mainly

red, some IPAs, lone
bottle of good Scotch.
Who's to judge?

Glass in hand they
toasted at our table or
sat in humble lawn chairs

sipping chardonnay before
walking to the dock
to catch the sunset,

feeling their own glow
of Maine island esprit
before returning to cities

south of here. We don't
begrudge their respite
as we wash linens,

towels, floors and hands,
turn in the empties
they left in the shed.

Carl Little
Great Cranberry Island



Jackson Laws
Swan's Island

Abandoned

Magnificently decrepit, it does not,
remarkably, fall down, though
it tilts in its patch of overgrown weeds,
this house I pass often along
the only paved road on this island.
Windows blown out or boarded,
a shutter hanging one-hinged aslant,
clumps of moss finding their opportunity
in the crease between the gable
and the rest of the roof, sickly green
gauze wadded to stanch further
deterioration. The door missing,
the dark entry could be a mouth
crying out. I can only imagine
how ravaged must be its interior,
the ruin critters have wrought,
the fungus covering walls and floors
that once formed spruce living quarters.
Behind it loom trunks and needles
of evergreens that threaten to engulf it,
take it out of its misery. The natural
impulse is to want to fix it, set it to rights,
or tear the eyesore down, but the owner
has just been, over 30 years, letting it
go slowly to pieces, allowing entropy
to do its work, letting this gray-shingled
shambles stand as a rebuke to those
who have trouble coming to terms
with the way of things.

Susan Deborah King
Great Cranberry Island



Samantha Browning
Peaks Island

Across the Ice

As I skate over the ice
All the way across the lake
Blades cut neat into the crust
And the snow gently covers my passage

This moment is forever
It lives inside a globe
That sits on top a shelf
Take it down and shake
Wake up the sleeping blizzard
Flurries fall as I push on

Dusk comes as I reach halfway
Small lights twinkle from the shore
If I wait here 'til the spring
Waking water will make me its home

This moment is forever
It lives inside a storm
That sits on top a shelf
Take it down and shake it
Wake up the sleepy blizzard
Flurries fall as I push on

Lisa Maureen Papineau
Swan's Island



Alyson Peabody
Matinicus Island

Coming Apart

I did not know what a life
I had as we took it apart
piece by piece
and doled it out by random chance,
a few trades, furniture for silverware,
passion for pragmatism
mysterious associations more
felt than known
with little said about
the whole that was passing away
through our fingers

until I came back down
that highway from town to city
and spent a sleepless night unsettled
trying to gauge
the measure of my discontent

Then I knew that we were all three
letting go of something
so much larger than any of us
and trying to cling
thing by thing
to the ineffable depths of our youth
and the stages of becoming who we are
in which first or early steps taken there so long ago
could not be captured
by every riser of the stair
we now held apart among us,

small symbols of the place
we would always call home.

Eric Best
Frenchboro

Store Beach

Just off the beach
rose hips to the side
Clorox bottle nestled buoy broken
but there
just off the rocks
stripers strafe the minnows
blew them out of the water
sprayed in reverse splash
and we watch like the Abenakis
before us
and God knows how many others
pig farmers and Victorians
we truly are just passing through
where do we get such hubris
to make such mistakes
we walk up the path
sunset behind us
going up.

Mark Didriksen
Great Diamond Island



Beverly McAloon
Swan's Island



Sandy Lilley
North Haven

Off-Grid Reverie

Every time we have a power outage, I ask why we can't all just go solar and create our own. Lots of people already have, and are living sustainably off the grid, using stand-alone DC power systems of solar panels supported by battery storage, sometimes supplemented by a backup emergency generator.

But, most of us still hunker down and wait anxiously for the power to go back on, wondering how long that will be. We look across at the neighbors, and their windows are black, too. Out come the candle stubs and solar flashlights if it's dark. And because the system more often than not cuts out between October and May, when the weather is bad and the temperatures are cold, the heating system cuts out right along with it, because the furnace only works when the electricity is coming through the grid. And you can't help thinking, out there somewhere, not too far away, people are switching on the power as they always do, calling the kids down for dinner, and looking across at the neighbors' house with its lights blazing away.

It's often a local thing, and it's doubly troublesome if you're an islander and the power comes across the bay by a long underwater cable. The winds shriek, the trees get ripped up by their shallow roots, and they crash across the power lines, every downfall blocking the efforts of the power company and volunteer chainsaw crews, not to mention blocking the passage of emergency vehicles and repair trucks that can't function until roads are clear. The wind whistles past the sides of buildings, pulling the heat out as it does, and down come power lines and trees, extending the time when things will work again.

That's when the mind turns to thoughts of independence, sustainability, the future, and a dream of off-grid reliability, and being the sole frontiersman at the end of a long, dirt road, littered with downed trees and torn branches, who sits comfortably by the woodstove, a hearty

pot of soup heating for dinner, reading a good book by a bright LED light, secure in the knowledge that these things, too, will pass, and the grid is something that's not so essential after all.

These were my exact thoughts, the thoughts of a conflicted islander, when the lights flickered and the power went out, and stayed out for a day and a half, a little while back.

Thruston Martin
Islesboro



Cynthia Jensen
Monhegan Island

Farewell

Goodbye Summer, brief kiss of warm air and sun
I longed for you deeply in COVID-time darkness
spent nights and days dreaming of living outside
then you came lifted your veils of rain n fog
showed me your brightness and heat
and I baked in your long slow-oven days
laughed with friends at a distance

I planted and reaped, roamed romped and reveled
under your stars, under your moonlight
that was so much like daylight I kept planting
and playing long after my neighbors retired
to TV lit second floor bedrooms

At first my silly fears had me hiding like a cave dweller
hiding from the force of your light
but suddenly I stopped waking to cold rooms
and no longer had appetite for oatmeal
longing for people to talk to I followed my feet outdoors

I'll save all the memories you've given me
the sad as well as the beautiful
they'll be sewn into sachets I'll put in my clothes
or burn in my mind as small fires
with large embers warming my shriveling self
in the long Winter ahead

I'll keep them until I wake anew
to the spirits of your strong sun shining
of your crickets and dew
and I promise to keep moving
as you've oiled all my rusty bits
loosened me to love n laughter
favored me enough to be stronger
shine brighter, grow calmer

having had once again the abundance
and the simple joy of you.

Paddy Noble
Vinalhaven

Maine Island Writers & Artists



(photo credit Kendra Chubbuck, Isle au Haut)

You are invited to contribute your
work to

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About Maine Seacoast Mission

Maine Seacoast Mission has been serving the unbridged outer islands and coastal towns of DownEast Maine since 1905. The Mission invests in Maine's most isolated communities by providing individuals and families with educational and social opportunities, as well as spiritual and pastoral support. It also provides these communities with critical necessities such as access to healthy food, medical treatment, warm clothing, emergency heating assistance, and essential home repairs.

The Mission provides services to Maine's islands via its 74-foot steel-hulled boat, *MV Sunbeam V*, which is equipped with telemedicine technology and ice breaking capabilities. The Mission is headquartered in the village of Northeast Harbor on Mount Desert Island and delivers land-based services from its 60-acre campus in Cherryfield, Washington County.

For more information, visit www.seacoastmission.org.



(Photo credit, Billy Black)

