

# The Island Reader

Anthology of Maine Island  
Artists and Writers

Volume 19  
Summer 2025

# The Island Reader

## Island Time Edition



Summer 2025

Cover image by  
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(Photo credit, Margaret Snell)

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*The Island Reader* offers space for creative self-expression for island artists of all ages and experiences. Each island has specific traditions and names. We do not regulate names so that *The Island Reader* can reflect the diversity of island culture. For example, Islesford and Little Cranberry are two names for the same island. Both names are used interchangeably throughout this anthology.



Kimberly Peabody  
Matinicus

## Letter from the Editors

The 19<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Island Reader* explores the theme of island time through prose, poetry, and visual art. Island time can be nonconforming, defined by ferry schedules and tides. Island time means planning ahead, only to have wind and weather remind us of the limits of our control. But when we embrace the dynamics of island time, it offers many delights.

Traditions like July 4<sup>th</sup> parades, town meetings, cribbage tournaments—during island time, we set aside differences with our neighbors, because we know we will need each other in the future. The slowness of island time allows us to pay close attention to our surroundings and savor the gifts that the island gives us.

We would like to thank the Maine Seacoast Mission for supporting *The Island Reader* and all the talented artists and writers who submitted their work to this volume.

Breathe deeply, and give yourself over to island time.

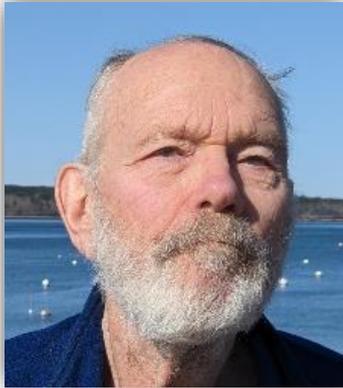
**Volume 19** is dedicated to Thruston “Toby” Martin,  
an *Island Reader* editor from 2015 until 2024.

Toby was a long-time resident of Islesboro,  
a creative powerhouse, a well-loved curmudgeonly soul,  
and a fierce advocate for *The Island Reader*.

The best part about life  
Is putting things away  
Where the past can be  
Like stuff in a drawer.

Excerpt from Toby’s poem, “The Best Part about Life.”

We miss you, Toby. Your fellow editors.



(Photo credit, *The Island Reader* Archives)

## Island Magic

I used to be afraid of forestry –  
only able to see beyond what was right in front of me.  
Until crossing the waters...

the salty air, releasing a feeling of ease.

Like wearing a snug sweater  
or receiving a hug from a trusted friend,  
finally able to breathe,  
simply knowing  
that the sea  
is just beyond the trees.

Sara Danielle  
Vinalhaven



Jack Merrill  
Islesford

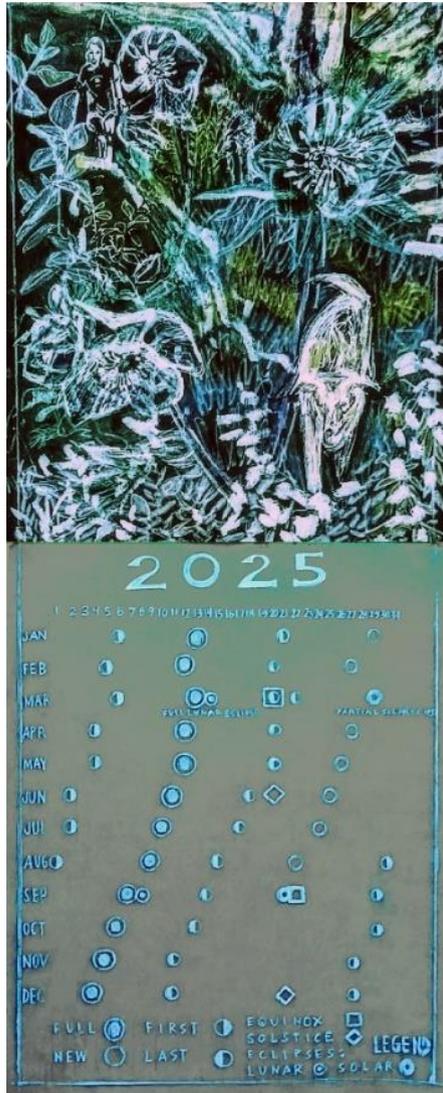
## After the Storm

For a day at least, the ocean tore away at our edges,  
peeling back the beach, leaving rocks in unfamiliar places.  
She carved trenches and laid down dune grass,  
Found lost things and left them  
for dogs and children to examine, nudging  
with a wet nose or the toe of a boot.  
A glove. Half of a buoy. A water bottle, yet unfinished,  
cap screwed on tight by a fisherman or last year's  
sunbather. The sole of a shoe. She spat out clam shells  
and ripped seaweed from perches, holdfasts severed,  
and laid them out on the flattened sand,  
thallus and vesicles splayed out like arteries.  
On the point, where the waves roll in  
from both the south and the west, she piled pebbles,  
their little moon faces smooth and shining  
and upturned, uncovered, here for now.

Katie Norton  
Long Island



Kristy McKibben  
Matinicus Island



Jessica George  
Peaks Island

## The Moment Caught

I wonder which  
of my ancestors  
stood  
silent in the mist  
on great cracked stones  
among booming waves  
and stared so hard  
breathed  
so deep  
the moment caught  
and sailed  
down  
through centuries  
to a landlocked mountain hollow  
where it touched a girl  
who would  
one day  
find that place  
and know she was home

Barbara Caldwell-Pease  
Islesford



## Life Lessons

Well Marge, you won't believe it;

it was there before my eyes  
I stopped and stared with mouth aghast  
and shaking in my thighs.

It did not growl or make a move  
as it had not seen me yet.  
But the look upon this creature's face  
you could tell it was no pet.

I had seen it many years ago  
when it was very young  
being taught life lessons  
by a very patient Mum.

I just had to take a picture

for all the world to see.  
This creature now is fully grown  
and what a sight to see.

It was then it turned and saw me  
well Marge I froze right on the spot  
but from my mouth these words emerged

“Be careful dear, it’s hot.”

Eileen Colby Richards  
Great Cranberry Island



Dorian Edwin  
Matinicus

## August

The Kitchen is cluttered with wet towels  
And half full cracker boxes  
The sun has parched the green grass to brown.  
The dried stream bed leaves a wide mud  
Path across the property, and it's hot!

The old man is napping in his easy chair.  
The cat went under the house.  
A hint of a breeze moves the wind chimes to sing  
As the crow talks of happier times.

Mama fumbles with needle and thread,  
Her fingers grown stiff from despair.  
She is patching the knee of next winter's pants  
While she waits for the day to wear down.

The garden lay needful and weathered  
And dry, neglected in lieu of a song.  
And the August sun laughs on the edge  
Of the cliff bringing dusk  
To the island once more.

Paula Greatorex  
Isle au Haut

## Scary

Only five passengers on the ferry today, and three cars. Slow day. When I walked on I said to a crew member lingering on the empty deck “not too busy today” but he heard only “busy” and followed me, telling me about how he cleans and sanitizes every surface of the boat at six AM every day—demonstrated with a wiping motion along the handrail to the passenger cabin. He was a bit rotund, with a smiling rosy face and flyaway hair set off by his Day-Glo safety vest. A few minutes later, still waiting for the 8:45 AM departure when he could go back to work, he found me in the passenger cabin. Was he stalking me, or just a chatty guy? I was looking out the window at a bird swimming near the boat’s bow, maybe a loon, the right head shape but too much white on its sides, and he started talking about watching birds and watching the water. He said it was not a loon but a relation, and we agreed the bird dove as well as looked as if it could be a loon, but was not. He told me he likes to look for whales, especially when he can be up on the bridge, but has never seen one. Sometimes he sees a scary, he said, waves crashing on rocks sticking up in the bay, and thinks it might be a whale breaching, just for a moment. The rocks, mostly submerged at high tide, are dangerous to navigation if you don’t know they are there. He said that in Canada and in Scotland and in some parts of Ireland they are called scary. He is a kind man, I thought, full of the joy of life and eager to share it. I wanted to ask his name but wasn’t sure about island protocol.

An hour later, walking off the boat, I said goodbye (he was the outgoing as well as incoming greeter) and he said remember, scary—Canadian, Scots and Irish. It’s spelled s-k-e-r-r-y. I looked it up. It means a rock emerging from water near the edge of a bay or a fjord. Nothing about crashing waves or whales or curious men.

A few days later I took the early boat back to the mainland. Clouds darkened the dawn light. The unrisen sun striped the water and cast black silhouettes of long rows of bare rocks. Somehow I could see the patterns they made along the edges of the bay, now that I knew what to call them. I remembered something the island geologist said: that these rocks, their tops protruding from the surface of the water, might mark the edges of a huge crater created by the volcanic eruption that had blown apart the land 400 million years ago. When the land collapsed, it was filled up by what is now Penobscot Bay, invisible now except for the islands, and the skerries.

Marian Godfrey  
Vinalhaven



Tommy Massaua  
Long Island

## Scales

The tide turned back with Old Cove soaked in.  
Fog densely hung bringing condensation on the  
Viognier glass and Mrs. Beasley's aging face.

Bell buoy with her three quarter time-clang.  
A steady ding dong ... ding  
ding dong ding.

Something brushed the shore.  
Maybe a dislodged trap as it's been the oddest of summers.

Singular scrape.  
A little splashing slap.  
Deeper prolonged scrape.  
Double time  
dig & slide  
intervals.

A little naughtier splash.  
Three quarter time.  
The Melusine's Waltz.  
Went on for hours.

Not sure what took place down on Old Cove as  
the sea had hung her curtains.

The next day the fog lifted as she is destined to do~  
surfboard scales buoyant on the ocean's surface.  
Dichroic flotsam pulled around the bend as the strange  
current headed towards Condon Cove.  
Vivianite & tempting  
what blues.  
Like Gretel's breadcrumbs but that was the forest~

Something had churned up underneath the clandestine fog.  
An occurrence.  
And the children were thrilled.  
Middle of the night sort of stuff.  
Out they went.  
No return in sight.  
Mrs. Beasley hung up her binoculars to rest her eyes.

Jeanne E. Hutchins  
Matinicus



Kathleen Newell  
Peaks Island

## The Tree and Me

As I sit and look at a nearby tree  
I realize how much it is just like me.  
Once upon a time we both stood straight and tall.  
While now we appear to be ready to fall.  
Not only do we both stand with a tilt,  
Our garments no longer are as smooth as silk.  
In days gone by my skin had nary a wrinkle,  
And the tree's leaves had not yet begun to crinkle.  
If I walk too fast, I fear that I might "trip,"  
And the tree worries what branch a wind might "rip."  
But we both have deep roots, that hold us to the earth,  
And are able to swing and sway – still filled with mirth.  
Today I am happy to sit and watch the world go by,  
And the tree lets leaves fall to the ground nearby.  
The tree understands that each leaf must drop,  
So soon it can grow a brand new crop.  
I know that I have a different role to play,  
And I intend to adjust – each glorious day.  
I remember past pleasures and the joys I have had,  
They far outnumber the times I was feeling sad.  
My friend, the tree; misses every fallen leaf,  
But the production of more is its strong belief.  
We both eagerly greet each morning–The Tree and Me.  
And look forward to pleasures for the tree, me–And Thee!

Margret VanOrden Maloney  
Matinicus

## I Knew It Would Suit Me

I moved to a small island  
last year, and that means  
changing how I do things.

No more running out  
at the drop of a hat  
for one quick thing, like  
an iced coffee,  
more Christmas lights,  
a birthday card,  
a cheeseburger because I feel like it.

Now I plan for when I'm  
on the mainland,  
"going to town," as we say.  
I try to remember, like  
oats for baking,  
cold medicine just in case,  
light bulbs,  
a new box of Kleenex.

But my mind is fallible,  
so I do without or I get  
what's available at the tiny store, like  
frozen green beans,  
cake mix and pie filling for quick dessert,  
one lonely red pepper,  
whatever brand of decaf coffee.

People are amazed that  
I love this new way  
of living so much, like  
needing a ferry,  
having no takeout,  
gas pump open eight hours a week,

barely 225 people as neighbors.

But I knew it would suit me,  
since I've lived simply for decades,  
needing only the basics, like  
a warm house,  
a good friend,  
a starry sky,  
a quiet night.

Karen Boss  
Long Island



Janet Moynihan  
Matinicus

## Remains Grateful



When mainland school life becomes contentious and full of educational, political strife, I can always decompress on the Casco Bay ferry ride out of Portland Harbor. Traveling up through Hussy Sound, I can smile at familiar faces and coves, find my significantly used truck in the lot, and maintain the ten miles-per-hour speed limit to avoid any new potholes on the paved and dirt roads. As I head up Atlantic Lane, I see the charred remains of the Johnson house. Last year's accidental fire brought departments and volunteers from Long Island, Chebeague, and others. With hugs, tears, and town support for the Johnson family, I'm reminded of what Maine author Lewis Robinson wrote in his latest novel, "This land has its own story. A lot of blood and sweat in this soil. *Islanders*. That's what they were. *Islanders*."



The Long Island Facebook page rightly boasts of new library hours, winter wreath workshops, and the Wellness Council's annual online auction. Pictures of the past and present show the Long Island improvements accomplished since seceding from Portland in 1993. A Fire Department with top-quality equipment and support, an intimately accommodating K-5 elementary school, a pottery studio and workout facilities within a Community Center, and one of Maine's lowest tax rates are welcome attractions beyond the peaceful winds and noted views of the Atlantic Ocean. However, news from the Year-Round Housing Committee offers disturbing trends which endanger its way of life. Aging residents and a significant housing crisis put constraints on inviting young families to live on Long Island, the key to its long-term viability.

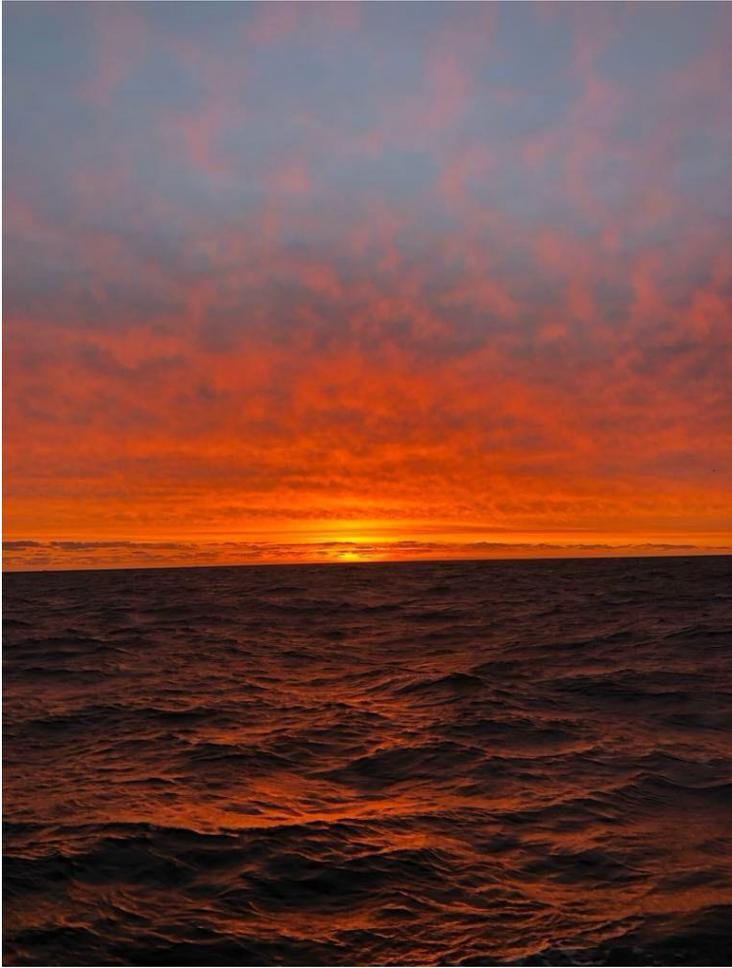


There are challenges which all Maine coastal communities face. Rapidly rising real estate prices, prohibitive building costs, and the increasing number of seasonal rentals by non-resident homeowners make young families feel priced out. School populations dwindle, and replacements for fire and rescue, town boards, and local services shrink. Hosted by the Island Institute, the Maine Islands Coalition offers Zoom forums on housing and other common interests. Long Island formed a Year-Round Housing Corporation with 501c3 status, offering resources for designs, estimates, and options. Its objective is to maintain Long Island as a vibrant town for people of all ages to live and to engage in a community life. Will this be enough to stem the tide?



At the end of Robinson's novel, the protagonist says, "It's the life we've made for ourselves. Sometimes it's hard to see how our choices have gotten us to where we are. We try to remain grateful." Those who live in Maine's coastal communities have a lot to discuss and to decide. It must be island time.

Darren Redman  
Long Island



Andy Smith  
Frenchboro

## An Island Off the Coast of Maine

The Queen Anne's lace  
curls in on itself. High  
above the ground it reaches  
for the blue sky on brown  
stems. The sun is warm  
for October. Its light  
shimmers off the ocean,  
like it has something to prove.  
The children play  
with sticks in the grass, games  
of make believe.  
The powerlines cut  
across the clear sky,  
and I wonder why  
men had to go and make  
the world so ugly.  
On a ferry full of people,  
my daughter screams under the table.  
Islanders and tourists fight  
for space. An old woman yells at me.  
My daughter is ruining her tour.  
She tells me I should shake her.  
She demonstrates  
the vigorous motion  
with her hands, her face  
blooming anger.  
I thank her for her input.  
The sunrises on the island  
are the most beautiful  
I've ever seen—  
the way the orange globe  
bleeds a path into the dark sea,  
but it's the fog  
I find the most enchanting,  
as if I too

might be swallowed up  
into the white nothing.

Carrie Close  
Long Island



Tim Vallilee  
Isle au Haut

A Trodden Path

My Maple cat trods paths to her secret places  
Her feet making furrows in the tall trasses  
Distinctive well worn

Rossi Kent

In old age also made a deep rut to the shore  
To his punt  
Exactly the width of his slow feet

He rowed out in the harbor  
Reserved for old men and children  
To pull his traps  
Two or three

My father took a photo of Rossi  
His back bent to oars  
His seagull perched on the bow  
To take advantage  
Of bait to be exchanged for new stuff

Slowly Rossi made his rounds  
In the growing stillness  
Soon to climb his trodden path  
Again to home

Maililani Bailey  
Swan's Island



Valerie McQuillan  
Vinalhaven

## How Things Can Go Missing

I hear birds a lot around my yard here. Primarily crows. There are some sea gulls, eagles and osprey, geese, great blue herons, and loons mixed in but crows are the loudest, with the most to say. Besides their caws, I have had one memorable close encounter with a sea gull, years ago while family were visiting. I was putting appetizers on the deck and a sea gull flew down and without stopping, swooped off, taking away a hefty chunk of cheese. Last summer I was afraid that could happen to my new kittens, that maybe an eagle would do the same. They lived indoors until they were bigger and stronger. Yesterday I was sitting at my desk, where I have a view across Old Harbor to the City Point side. I watched a crow flying over the harbor towards the trees around my house; it was carrying what looked like a white rectangular package. The crow seemed unbothered by any bulk, flying easily while holding this in its beak. It kept going, beyond my house, maybe towards Todd's Garage. I imagined it had pilfered food, as with that robber sea gull, and that maybe someone on City Point had arrived home with groceries, carrying them indoors while the car trunk was left open, and the crow took advantage of an unmonitored moment to grab that white package I saw, off the top of a bag. I wondered what the grocery shopper (all of this, of course, my imagined scenario) would have thought, double-checking the trunk for that nowhere-to-be-seen package, scratching their head in bafflement.

Tina Cohen  
Vinalhaven

## Allure

What is it that continually draws me here?  
To a place where tales of long ago  
are still embedded in the minds of many a soul.

What is the word that can describe such a place?  
A place with so much to ponder and explore—  
Can there be one word?

What is the feeling that overcomes one when  
through the foggy landscape, the relics of long ago peer  
quizzically through the horizon—questioning  
why you are here.

What are the sounds that overtake any unconscious  
thoughts? Is it the sound of the wind as it whips gallantly  
throughout the village and along the shoreline? Is it the  
sound of the birds welcoming your return or warning you  
of what's to come? Is it the sound of engines echoing in the  
harbor as men and women prepare to head out on their  
quest for the great catch?

What are the smells that overwhelm my being at times,  
whether good or bad? Is it the salty smell that the ocean  
shares as the tide changes? Is it the smell of fish, seaweed,  
and bait mingled around the harbor?

What are the memories hidden or explored in this place.  
Are they captured through the narrow, twisting, trodden  
paths of the glorious forest or are they influenced by the  
moss, the trees, the rocks, or even the fairy houses of new  
and long ago?

So many questions and so many answers.  
Correct or wrong, I do not know.  
Whatever I have felt, heard, and smelt,

these things and more, beckon me back home.  
A home I call, Monhegan Island.

Terry L. Wood  
Monhegan Island



Sarah Trafton-Anderson  
Swan's Island

## Island Adventure



The old man carved out a routine steeped in productivity, driven by a restless fear of stagnation. Every day, after his wife left for work or church or some other excuse to get out of the house—

and away from him—he would hunch over the kitchen table, whittling balsa wood into pieces and shapes that one day would become part of larger scale models, each an accurate recreation of the various maritime vessels that enchanted him across his life. The kitchen, mainly lit by the late-morning sun, smelled of glue, coffee, the soot of his wood stove, dogs and sawdust, swirls of which permeated the air. In the afternoon, as the kitchen loses its daylight, he carries on his work beneath the glow of a fixture installed decades ago by the home's original owner, long before his time here.

This was a house steeped in countless memories—but none mattered to him. He had never truly wanted to be a parent; what he wanted was a stable household, one that he could rely on when needed, but without responsibilities of a family. He did not know how to have one without the other. The empty house was once filled with the sounds and scenes of your typical, working class, American family: the chaos, celebrations, the dramas—yet the warmth felt cold, and though distant now, it had long been overshadowed by a quiet disenchantment that lingered with him through the years. He called it The Silence. The Silence of what he missed out on by having a family and caving to their

demands. With the island and the way of life he had longed for faded in the mists of time, he carves slowly, each stroke a meditation on what was and what could have been.

He laments the keel of an unfinished ferry sitting on the shelf, unpursued for more than a decade—a haunting reminder of dreams deferred and love left unspoken—its void felt more deeply with each passing year.

Long Island, Maine—much like the other islands of Casco Bay, community is a tapestry woven from memories and tides across the generations, where every nook and cranny of its rocky shore carries the salt of the sea in the air and across its landscape—and the laughter of children playing along the waterfront, their sounds are carried by the overpowering energy of its nor'easters.

As a young boy, he had spent countless hours at the water's edge, mesmerized by the glimmer of sunlight dancing across the choppy waves. The local fishermen would take him in as their apprentice, guiding him on patching traps, processing bugs, casting nets, and not only teaching him their way of life, but instilling in him an obsession for it—it was a community of men coming together to build him into one of their own. The smells, the language, the way they carried themselves, it all became a part of his cultural identity. Despite being, without question, one of them, he never felt he adequately fulfilled the role.

When he met the woman who would later become his wife, he saw her as someone that loved the island as much as he did. She saw him as her escape, and this mutual misunderstanding would plague their relationship across their many decades together. As much as they had in common, the currents of their dreams ran parallel, destined to diverge into the delta of mediocrity. She, while enamored

with him and the idea of breaking free, harbored an underlying restlessness that hinted at her true feelings—a longing for the mainland, where opportunities were more abundant and life more flexible. Although she'd grown up breathing the same sea air, she was not an island girl in any sense of the word, and winding up with her was his first misstep. After their first child was born, she talked him into leaving the island and forgoing a life as a fisherman.

“If you absolutely need to be on the water,” his wife said, “you can work for the Bay Lines.”

He complied, taking a job as a deckhand for the ferry system that served the islands he cherished. Over the years, he worked his way up to captain, and to his bafflement, his kids held him in high regards, captivated by his stories of the bay, and on the occasions when they could accompany him to work, found amusement in his colleagues, like Captain Chuck Caliandro, who famously steered passenger vessels with his feet while lounging back in the captain's chair.

Still, a quiet ache lingered. From the wheelhouse of the *Abenaki*, he watched his old friends and neighbors from afar, ferrying them to and from the islands he once called home. They were still out there hauling traps and chasing big catches on the Flemish Cap. For all the charm of the job and the pride his children took in it, he couldn't shake the sting of being on the outside looking in, separated from the rugged independence he had once loved.

He took to carving scale models of the boats he'd seen out on the bay—each crafted with meticulous care, a quiet tribute to the adventures he yearned for. He rarely spoke about how his interest in building models began, but his talent quickly became evident. Before long, his pieces found their way into the impenetrable island community:

displayed for some time at the local library, featured in exhibits by the historical society, and proudly placed on the mantles of friends. Those who knew him understood that all it took was asking, and he'd gladly create one just for them.

His wife immersed herself into anything except what was happening at home, seeking constant distraction. Although they lived together, it was purely operational. They parented their three kids, but it was mostly administrative. Over time, she would become lost to the conservative media machine, and he would become sick—off and on—and despite her increasingly apparent psychological issues, he had no choice but to stay and depend on her. In the evenings, The Silence crept in. He found solace in his work—his art practice—retreating to the kitchen, where he shaped balsa wood into lobster boats, models of the vessels once sailed by his mentors and friends. He carved deep-sea fishing trawlers he'd always dreamed of working on. Over time, though, his creations shifted. He began assembling conceptual vessels—fantastical designs that would never sail.

As the years passed, the old man found himself adrift in a sea of memories, longing for the days before his children were born—watching the original Casco Bay Lines fleet vanish one by one, replaced by newer vessels that, though technically superior, lacked the romance of their predecessors. It was then he began working on a series of models to capture the fleet from the era he cherished most: the 1970s, a time he saw as a kind of heyday for Casco Bay. Instead of focusing on lobster boats or fishing fleets, his work soon became a tribute to those iconic ferries—the *Rebel*, a car ferry that once served the people of Peaks Island; *Abenaki*, a passenger and freight ferry that served the down-bay islands and was for many decades the vessel known for making the infamous Mail Boat Run; and

the reserve ferries used on an as-needed basis: *Island Holiday*, *Island Romance*, and a partially started *Island Adventure*—faithfully recreating the Casco Bay Lines fleet as it existed when he had nothing but opportunity before him. But the one ferry he never finished, *Island Adventure*, remained barely started. Its keel had been cut out, sitting alongside her sisters, yet it lingered on a shelf for over a decade, untouched and unfinished. The dream of completing it seemed to slip further away with each passing year, a reminder of a voyage he never took.

The weight of unfulfilled dreams pressed down on him, especially in the moments shared with their three children. His middle child often lingered in the background, watching his father with a mix of admiration and confusion—their relationship pockmarked by unspoken tension caused by their differences and all their incredible similarities. He was the only one of their children who showed an interest in seeing the model of the *Island Adventure* finished, but he would never witness this, as by the time he moved out as a young adult, it still sat on the shelf, barely started—same as it was when he was a little boy.

By the time the kids were all grown, each with their own lives and families, and the old man forced into retirement by illness, the harsh truth was undeniable: the island had grown distant, out of reach. *Inaccessible*. He wondered if he'd ever get back, ever see his friends again, ever experience the feeling of setting a five-stringer off Cousin's Island. At what point was it all gone? *I gotta get down to the boatyard*, he'd mutter to himself. *I can't even remember the last time I put her in the water*. At what point did he notice he no longer had agency over his own life? He couldn't recall. His past is a blur—just a series of minor concessions that added up. Over and over in his head he laments that he gave it all up for what? Stability and health

insurance for his ungrateful kids and a wife that's biding her time, waiting for him to die? *Goddam*—the old man considers for the first time that he just might have wasted his life!

Under the dim kitchen light, he glances at the models he's built, lined up neatly along the shelf above the table. There they stand—the CBL fleet of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century: *Rebel*, *Abenaki*, *Island Romance*, *Island Holiday*—rendered in meticulous detail, down to the last railing. He knows these old Blount vessels as well as he knows his own hands, could finish one with his eyes closed. And yet this last one—*Island Adventure*, a ship he captained hundreds of times—refuses to take shape, taking up shelf space in quiet defiance. Its skeletal keel rises from the base—a rough outline, still far from becoming a representation of the vessel it's supposed to be. He's tried carving pieces here and there, whittling balsa wood into perfect segments that lie scattered about, yet for reasons he cannot name, he has not brought himself to fit them together. A crudely carved radar unit rests on the shelf beside a flat piece of balsa wood, its surface etched with pencil outlines of windows, hinting it's meant to represent the wheelhouse. Even in this rudimentary form, he'd recognize that wheelhouse anywhere: *That's a Blount wheelhouse!* But he cannot bring himself to do what he's done his whole life: pick up that off-brand X-Acto knife and start cutting along the penciled lines.

In the silence of the kitchen, he can almost hear the murmur of the sea, the gentle slap of waves against the hull as the *Adventure* glides toward Ponce's Landing. He longs for those early mornings, watching islanders cross the gangplank, commuting to town on the first ferry of the day, greeting one another with neighborly nods and quiet waves. He misses the feeling of weightlessness as he and his crew cast off, as if they were unmoored from reality. The old

man realizes that the job he once took for granted, his career with Casco Bay Lines, now feels as romanticized and deeply missed as hauling traps or fishing. But at what point, he wonders, was he ever truly in love with it? He does not recall.

A faint chime sounds from his old desktop across the room. He sees an email subject flash on the screen: *Brunch next week?* from his middle child—still reaching out. Still optimistic. Forever naive. His son’s messages have been trickling in more often these days, suggesting lunches, birthdays—gatherings the old man could never quite bring himself to attend. The cursor hovers over the message, but he refuses to open it. Instead, he shifts his focus back to a different model, picking up a Downeaster trawler he’s been working on, the kind he might’ve captained if he hadn’t conceded—all those years ago. He rubs his calloused fingers across the netting, crafted from a thin twine, using the same technique he would employ as a fisherman to make full-sized nets. Each knot feels familiar, as if he’s threading together fragments of his past, with the same care and precision he once devoted to the nets that he and his mentors had relied on.

At first, he’d chalked it up to his health, thinking he was just getting slower. His eyesight wasn’t what it used to be, and his hands weren’t as steady. But that excuse didn’t hold—he was still cranking them out, one after the other. Just last season, he finished a McCallister tug, a Coast Guard cutter, and a Lionel Plante barge, all without struggle. All without this internalized drama. It’s just this one, the *Island Adventure*, that eludes him. Something about it nags at him in a way the others never did. His gaze drifts back to her keel. The first ferry of its generation to be retired from the fleet, a silent testament to something unfinished—to a life left behind. As he studies it, he feels a strange pull, a sense that the model holds a

reckoning he desperately needs—an echo of his own early retirement, a job abandoned before its time, just like the ferry.

Both unfinished | Both . . . adrift.

He can still hear the rumble of the old Detroit diesel, the way it reverberated through the hull, steady as a heartbeat. He remembers the calm of those fog-bound mornings, ferrying people—and freight—back and forth, the island life he'd felt anchored to, before the rip-tide of family tugged him elsewhere. He's unsure whether it's the model's significance or the memories it stirs that hold him back, but a growing sense lingers: finishing the *Island Adventure* would compel him to confront something he's not ready to face, an acknowledgment, perhaps, of what he left behind, of a life he abandoned, and of the family he stumbled into on a whim, but could never fully bring himself to be part of.

These nearly weightless pieces of balsa have sat untouched for so long that their presence begins to weigh on him. Even balsa, light as it is, can grow heavy when carried on the shoulders for decades.

The stove flares, drawing the old man back to the table. Beside him, a plate of unfinished brown bread and beans rests cold next to an empty coffee mug, its years of patina staining the rim. Firelight leaks through the stove's air vent, casting long, wavering shadows on the wall behind the shelf. For a moment, the old man sees it—the keel, perched where it has languished for years, its shadow now revealing the phantom outline of her completed hull. *It's impossible*. And yet the vision holds him, enticing him, drawing him closer. He knows he can do it. He's fitted identical pieces together three times before, but every time

he's about to complete the fourth, raw hesitation—a paralyzing, inexplicable force—cripples him.

It isn't the model itself that stops him. It's everything else. The thought of all the jagged, misaligned pieces of his life—his family, his job, the island—presses down on him, clouding his resolve. Each failed connection lingers like a phantom, and he wonders if this model will become just another fragment of his unfulfilled attempts, another quiet monument to all he left abandoned.

At last, he pulls the keel from the shelf. Dust scatters onto the table, into his untouched dinner, swirling briefly in the air before catching faintly in his throat—but he doesn't notice. Most of it clings stubbornly to the balsa, as though unwilling to part. In art, time becomes an intrinsic part of every piece—something art restoration embraces. The cracks of a painting, for example, will often go unrepaired. The old man understands this, so he doesn't attempt to clean it. Instead, he works with it.

As he returns to his seat, the keel feels strange in his hands—both familiar and foreign, like the weight of a long-forgotten memory. Holding it steady, it no longer feels like a project, but a mirror, reflecting a life he never fully reconciled.

The crackling of the stove softens. The room itself, now sentient, seems to hold its breath. And then he hears it—a voice from long ago. His son's voice. *Guess you love them more than us.* How many times had the old man heard that? And about whom? Or what? His neighbors, perhaps. His colleagues, the islanders he'd once been so close to but let slip away. His son knew. *All* the kids knew. His wife, too. The old man had loved the outside world more than his own family. He had never regarded them as his own, not really. They weren't of the island, not like he was. This

realization is the spark of clarity, and at once the wind stops. The clattering windows fall silent. For the first time, the old man isn't interested in being haunted by the ghosts of his unresolved journey and decides that *Tonight, it will be different.*

A quiet but unrelenting tug pulls him forward. One hand grips the keel, the utility knife in the other. As he presses the blade into the wood, a new determination anchors him. *The pieces will fit this time. They have to.*

With a deep breath, he gathers up a handful of thin slats, feeling their edges under his fingertips. It is almost as if he hasn't chosen to do this—the act is choosing him. He'd engaged his craft countless times, but this time it feels strange, slightly off-kilter, affecting his environment—as if the walls are being pushed further and further back, stretching into alternate dimensions, causing the room to shapeshift into something beyond what he can fully understand. He'd always known that he'd left the *Island Adventure* unfinished for a reason he couldn't put to words, but tonight, as he lays the pieces against the keel, something deeper clicks into place, the why becoming as inevitable as gravity.

Piece after piece he whittles away. Each slice sharpens his focus—not on the model, but on everything around him. The room is porous, as if only a thin membrane separates him from a world he hadn't known was there—a fragile reality hovering close, fluttering with each movement of his knife. Each scrape nudges him towards that delicate, almost transparent boundary, now increasingly in his peripheral. He knows that if he stops now, the silence will once again take hold—thicker, heavier, impenetrable. He lets the feeling guide him, drifting like a moored boat swayed by the tide—anchored, yet no longer steering its own course. He chuckles under

his breath, a low rasp. *Cable steering*. It was the only one of the vessels of its kind that didn't use hydraulics. He remembers the way the *Island Adventure* couldn't corner worth a damn. In the most modest of chop, *she'd slip and slide out wide, like an old dog chasing its tail*.

He fiddles around his toolbox until he finds some copper wire and runs it through the hull's tiny cavities, imagining those stubborn cables snapping back to life. The wire gleams under the light, snaking through each piece as he glues them down. He threads the wire up through the wheelhouse—a nod to the ferry's quirks. *The unseen details matter*. No one will see the cable when the model is in its final form, but he knows it's there, and that's what makes it the *Island Adventure*, and not the others.

Piece by piece, he works faster, sensing his time is running short. He's not quite desperate, but he knows he cannot afford to rest. He glues the first deck to the keel, his fingers moving with a precision that belies his aging joints. Each section seems to draw him closer to that thin line separating him from a place he now sees as not just beyond, but inevitable. As he lays down the last piece of the main deck, the room shifts once again. The crackling fire blends into an impossible silence—a silence that feels like an invitation, a soft murmur just beyond his hearing. This isn't The Silence he'd come to regret, but something else. He looks down at his work-in-progress, his pulse quickening—not from fear, but with a strange, almost childlike anticipation.

While the other Casco Bay Lines (CBL) models gleam in faded yellows, whites, and reds—each detail painstakingly crafted to mirror the fleet he cherished—the one that deserved the most care had received it too late. The others were finished, resolved. But *Island Adventure*, though now complete in form, remains bare—its unpainted

surface a deliberate choice, a quiet reminder of the failure to resolve it when it mattered most. It sits on the table, nestled between a pile of leftover balsa shards and the tools that shaped it, a testament to his perceived shortcomings as a mariner.

With all his models, no matter how many layers of paint or polish he added, there would always be places he couldn't reach, or creative decisions he'd later regret. Perhaps it was an unfinished edge, or a blank space he hadn't noticed initially, but with years having gone by, there wasn't a completed model he wished he could go back and restart. *Perhaps, he thinks, the way I've approached this all was consistent across the board. Unfinished edges and blank spaces, he thinks, covered by the layers of my absence and unspoken regrets.*

Just as this model was pieced together from scattered parts, his family had taken shape around his half-measures, his presence as incomplete as the ship before him. Leaning in, he studies its plain wooden surfaces, eyes catching on each tiny imperfection. Each flaw stirs a memory—a fight left unresolved, a birthday missed, a story he never asked to hear. The lack of paint feels right, a stark reminder of what could have been. He had planned to finish it in the fleet's colors from 1976—blue, white, and red, a nod to the bicentennial. But instead, at the last moment, he decides to leave it as is. The *Island Adventure*, his final link to a life he'd missed, sits exposed—honest in its roughness, a testament to a legacy he never intended. And in this final, unadorned form, he finds a kind of peace.

The *Island Adventure* model stands on the kitchen table at last, fully assembled yet raw and bare. The wood stove, unfed for hours, has cooled, and the last glimmers of its light are barely enough to provide a proper inspection—but he knows she's there. Every plank, railing, window, and

lifejacket, *it's all there*—even the radar and communications gear atop the wheelhouse, carved and glued with precise care, true to the era. The old man, for the first time in years, cracks a smile.

Ever since he'd started turning down his son's invitations, *God, how many years has it been now*, a low hum had crept into his awareness—a persistent frequency he couldn't shake. At first, it felt distant, more a feeling than a sound. But over the years, it grew louder, sharper, following him everywhere. He wondered if it was real, getting his hearing checked, reading up on unexplained sounds, trying to pinpoint its source, but nothing made sense. It was familiar somehow, like a song he couldn't quite place.

Then he notices the invitation—where did this come from? There it is, sitting on the table by his latest creation—a chrome-printed graphic representing the island on linen cardstock. He opens it. *A remembrance ceremony, but most importantly, a chance to return to the island.*

A friend and colleague, long absent from his life, would arrive to take him to the ferry.

“Chuck?”

“Hey, Cappy.”

They hug.

“I haven't seen you since...”

“Yeah. But I've always called it a draw.”

“We all did.”

“Well, let’s get going. They’re not going to start without you, but it would be rude to keep them waiting any longer.”

They reminisce along the way, sharing stories that feel like relics of another time, another world. As they approach the waterfront, the hum grows louder, filling his chest, rattling his bones.

As Chuck pulls over to the side of Commercial Street, he notices the old man’s confusion.

“What?”

“The Maine State Pier,” the old man says, “it’s another block over.”

“We’re using the old terminal for this one, Cappy.” Chuck gives a wink, steps out, and walks around to the passenger side to help the old man to his feet. Together, they make their way through the old ferry terminal, which has been a restaurant for several decades but somehow now stands restored to its former glory.

“They do this for us?” the old man asks, impressed. “Casco Bay Lines of yesteryear.”

“Yeah, well, for you.”

When they reach the dock, the old man’s body stiffens. Waiting dockside is the *Island Adventure*, not the model, not a recreation, the actual vessel—her hull gleaming, restored. And suddenly, it hits him—the hum he’d been hearing all along: the low, rhythmic thrum of that old Detroit diesel engine.

“She’s been waiting for you,” Chuck says, leaning in. “For a very long time.”

As the old man steps aboard, familiar faces greet him: deckhands, old colleagues, the mentors who taught him to fish—people from chapters of his past, now welcoming him as if he’s arrived fashionably late to his own surprise party.

"Welcome aboard, Cappy," they call out in cheers, their voices rising over the hum of the engine. Crossing the gangplank, he feels laughter and camaraderie surround him, the distant past converging with the present.

The *Island Adventure* pushes off, her engine’s hum settling into him, sure and steady. For the first time in memory, an overwhelming peace washes over him—a return to the rhythms of the water, the island on the horizon, its call pulling him back to that rubble-stone shore where he belongs.

Eric Norcross  
Long Island



Laurie Easton Parker  
Swan's Islad



Thomas Kilmartin  
Peaks Island

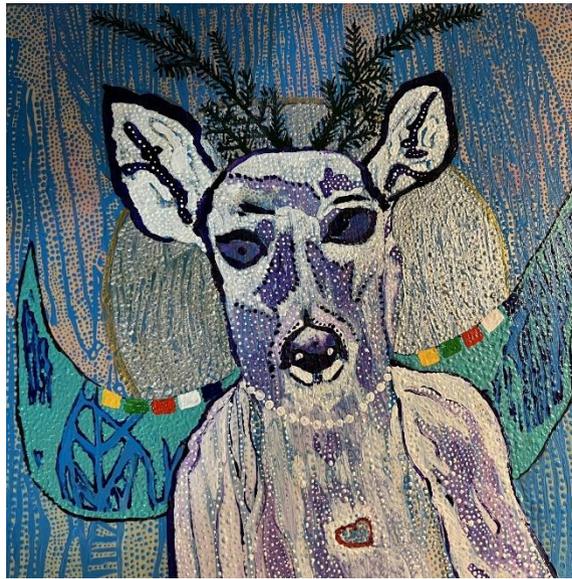
## Uneven Lines

The stroke coarse fibers,  
Brushing down the side of the grainy paper.  
Bleeds tiny colored paint bubbles behind.  
Some lines are either thick or thin,  
Bold or subtle.  
The way she delicately  
Splattered paint on the canvas,  
Her spark of madness,  
Shows me a glimpse of her earthy personality.  
I like the pattern,  
She contrasted her work.  
Colors rotate together,  
Creating an unbalanced image.  
Simple yet complicated.

Ava Schlottman  
Islesboro



Lavendier Myers  
Peaks Island



Kat Farrin  
Peaks Island



Jennifer Turner  
Swan's Island

## Hemispherical Swim

As told by Amelia Earhart expedition Captain Joe Litchfield, currently at sea (as usual) on a research vessel tending tsunami buoys in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean...

I had an interesting day yesterday and I thought I'd share it with you guys as you've known me since Moby Dick was a guppy. Well, like most plans at sea (and I suspect on land as well – but I can't really remember), our idea for the customary, mortifying and abusing ceremony of crossing the Equator (for the Pollywogs on board) and the transiting of the International Dateline (for the wannabe Dragons) did not work out.

Here's what happened: Instead of the humiliating aforementioned ritual – which definitely puts most sailors off their feed for a day or so – we decided to go for a swim. Not just any swim but a swim for the record books! At least for our recorded ship's log book. The "plan" was to station our research vessel exactly at the 180 degree line and the Equator; thus, a lap around the vessel would allow a swimmer to travel from the Eastern Hemisphere to the Western and from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern. This would also take us from one day to the next (crossing the Dateline) and from winter to summer. We all thought this a capital idea, and the timing was perfect as we were to be at this point at about 1200 UTC to further add to the allure. This can only be done at two places on earth and we figured that not many sailors have ever done it.

The crew and clients were all mustered at the Baltic door (an opening in the hull to allow access to the sea for pilot boats) on the main deck located just abaft of the beam to starboard. We set up a shark watch – an important thing in these waters. Everyone had a swimsuit on, except me – I

had only some cut off dungarees – and we were just awaiting 2nd Mate Steve at the helm to get the vessel into final position for the swim.

When Steve called over the radio saying we were “Here,” I, being senior man on deck, stood back a couple of fathoms from the opened Baltic door and paced briskly athwart ships and did (from what I was told later) an admirable dive for an ole sea dog into the Pacific Ocean. I was followed closely by R.W. (Rough Water) Watkins, one of our clients. He’s from Louisiana and he’s a good guy for a back deck bayou buoy boy; but I digress.

We surfaced from the dive and were immediately swept forward. The current was brutal. It looked like we were steaming at about 5 knots with my old Peaks Island Evinrude outboard with a bad carburetor attached to our backsides. We weren’t prepared for this. I was treading water, which I’ve been accused of before, but this took on new meaning.

I hailed the gang at the Baltic door telling them not to go in the water. Thank goodness they didn’t but they did not react to a potential rescue situation either—it being after all a historic swim. The ship’s bo’s’n, Paulie, finally determined that R.W. and I were indeed somewhat in distress and fastened a line around himself, jumped in and swam after us. He looked like a large Mark Spitz in the water with his long hair streaming astern, and we were some happy that he had taken action. Old Paulie got to R.W. and me just as the line he was towing came to the bitter end. I managed to tie a bowline and made it fast to my left wrist. R.W. was ahead of me and he managed to hold on as the deck crew was now mobilized to haul us back to the Jacob’s Ladder.

All the while this scene was unfolding, deckhand Mikey was prattling on about life lines, buoys, radios, life jackets, etc. We call him Alligator Man – because he’s all mouth and no ears. I darn near let go of the line and set back adrift rather than listen to his drivel. It took a while and some hard work on the crew’s part, but we finally made it aboard, unceremoniously, I can assure you. The crew, except for Alligator Man, knew better than to say anything except “You O.K., Joe?”

“Finest-kind,” I would reply.

I proceeded to the wheelhouse and relieved Steve so he could go swimming after we turned the vessel side-to the current. R.W. brought me a cup of coffee and with a knowing smile, I said “Good day to be at sea, by golly!”

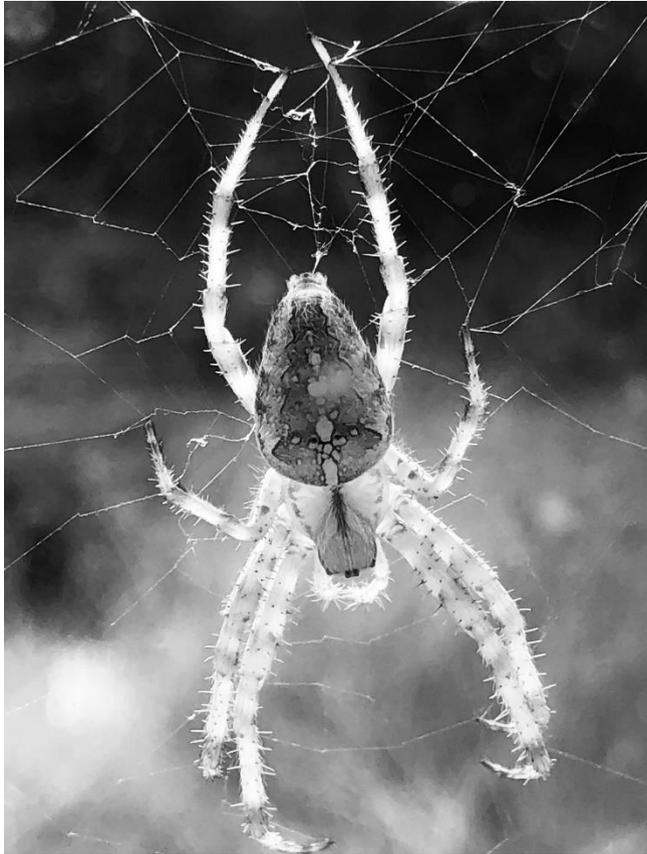
R. W. just shook his head, turned around and went back down the companionway.

“Best Re’grds, Cap’n Joe.”

Captain Joe Litchfield  
Peaks Island



Kat Farrin  
Peaks Island



Jeanne E. Hutchins  
Matinicus



Kenneth McCafferty  
Great Cranberry Island

### Seventh Heaven

I was in seventh heaven on a sunny beach day, wearing my blue Ked sneakers with the white rubber covered toes. The left shoe was faded gray, having lost it for a week in the seaweed above the high-water mark. Later that summer, I found the sweater my mother knitted for me last winter at the hide-tide mark, washed by the waves. After being laundered, the sweater fit in a haphazard way. No matter, as clothing was an afterthought when there was sea glass to find and clams to dig.

I remember like it was like yesterday: building Flintstone houses with Marsha, palming the smooth shale rocks and using them for walls and a roof. Striped periwinkles lined the walkway, and the little yellow Littorina snails decorated the sandy garden. Until the tide came in, this was my world.

Eliza Jane Adams  
Chebeague Island

## So Peaceful

of a summer afternoon, these island woods:  
mounds of sun-dappled moss  
at the feet of tall, straight spruces,  
the sharp fragrance of their needles  
and quiet but for the song of the hermit thrush,  
its loops and curls lifting a divine canopy  
over these trees. If I could drape myself  
like a cotton coverlet over the forest floor,  
and, resting, take on the forms of those soft,  
spongy greens, letting the filtered light  
play over my newly pliant frame,  
might it blot out fear from news  
of the guns, the destruction, the invectives,  
the suffering with a wish that the same  
might betide those directly afflicted  
who have no access now to such scenes?

Susan Deborah King  
Great Cranberry Island



André Benoit  
Cliff Island



Jan Keiper  
Frenchboro



Gail Grandgent  
Little Cranberry Island

## The Steady Ship

as love unfurls, it sails into  
an unknown sea  
a light breeze, a passion and a partner is all that's needed

this passionate breeze that electric first touch sets love off  
into calm green waters and blue skies the boat wake  
foaming and singing as it turns  
the ocean over

love will need a crew of patience to man the deck

love will need a crew of resilience to steer the course

love will need to be resourceful when seas start to build,  
and the skies darken as they do

love will have to sail through sadness and pain, suffer loss  
and hope for gain

far out to sea  
when love tosses on mountainous waves it's here,  
facing fear love needs a crew  
of faith and resolve  
with them  
the boat steadies  
tacks back towards the shore to where the rocks'  
rigid faces have  
been sculpted by time  
and the spruce and hardened oak woods bend in the wind,  
but still in large families  
stand grounded and tall  
the boat rides the crests like the strongest of steeds  
with all crew accounted for love sails home into  
the serenity and protection of the harbor

a beautiful thing once again whole anchored by a chain  
made of many links ready  
for the next adventure

Jack Merrill  
Islesford



Kim Bellows-Smith  
Frenchboro

Free Summers on the Rock  
—For Poochie and Esther

Hamilton, Doughty, Ross, Leonard, Dyer. My summer evenings were often filled with my family sitting on the porch, deciphering the web of families that make up Chebeague, an island off the coast of Maine where I spend my summers. I live on John Small Road, which doesn't mean much considering we don't have street signs. Chebeague is made up of about 400 year-rounders. My grandparents joined the 'year 'rounders' thirty years ago, and for that I am forever grateful. Because of them I spend every summer in a one-store, one-church, and one-gas pump town. It's the kind of place where you leave the doors unlocked and accept rides from strangers, though there are few. But in all honesty, that is not what makes up the island; it's the names.

Each evening, I would run through the yard, scolded by my grandmother along the way for getting my feet dirty, to sit on my grandfather's lap. As each car hummed its way up our road, he would tilt his head to one side and listen. With astonishing accuracy he would say, "That's Poochie Ross," or "There goes Esther." He would guess each car correctly simply by sound, and each time I would watch in amazement. But as I grew older and became familiar with the lugging of one car or the whine of another, they and the people who drove them began to disappear. One summer Poochie's car frequented our road a little less. Esther somehow looked smaller behind her steering wheel than before; the tie dye of her dress was now almost impossible to see over her steering wheel. And then one day, they did not come up the road at all.

Year after year, the names that I knew so well began to disappear. Bob Dyer and Poochie stopped lobstering, and then suddenly the sign in front of Bob's house, "don't stop

if you don't have 20 minutes!" and Poochie's old lobster boat, which sat in his front yard, were gone. It sent me into a panic. These names I heard so often, these people who had become constants in my life, were vanishing. My grandfather and I often say that being sentimental was our greatest curse, which during this time I thought was true. But in my mourning, I began to see something. Although old faces were missing, new ones were taking their place. Now my brother is one of the boys working at the boat yard, always covered in grease and chatting with customers at the gas pump. It is my friends who are now lobstering, out sterning for their grandfathers, just as their grandfathers had done decades earlier. I found myself working for the sailing school, becoming a constant for a new generation of island kids. I felt a surge of pride when asked, "who's your family?" and the flash of familiarity and then warmth as I said, "Lynch."

I now understand that the island is not disappearing with one generation, but rather mine is becoming a part of it. We are continuing to build a community that has created who I am, and what I stand for. Like my grandparents, my goal in life is to be able to return there, and just like them, become a part of the island. I want to help to continue to create a group of people who look out for each other no matter the circumstances, until the next generation comes to take my place. It feels as though I always have so much left to say about Chebeague. There are so many stories that I cannot, and quite frankly do not have time to share. But that is the beauty of the names. With each one comes a whole life of memories, passed down from parent to child to grandchild. The beauty of Chebeague is in the unsaid.

Maryn MacNeill  
Chebeague Island



Ingrid Gaither  
Great Cranberry Island

## Night Sky

beneath the arc of night sky,  
the stars,  
by seasonal design,  
drift in restless light,  
unfettered by fanciful interpretations—  
neither ancient stories told,  
nor portents to be divined,  
they proceed through time.

And we, of pending plans and purpose,  
in island darkness absent city's glow,  
are held in place,  
in awe.

Jacqueline Gryphon  
Peaks Island



John DeWitt  
Isle au Haut

## Queen of the Coyotes

I read that coyotes like crows  
Recognize people

She  
Does not like coyotes  
But they recognize her  
Poop on her doorstep  
And to the side of it  
Walk across the road into the  
Old Island cemetery  
And look back at her

It's winter  
The island has emptied out  
And I imagine her in her aloneness  
Husband gone years now

Revvng up the old golf cart  
And a coyote leaping aboard  
Barking out a direction  
South point!

Kat Farrin  
Peaks Island



William Spont  
Islesboro

Approaching Matinicus by Boat

—submitted by Ava Kabouchy

The Shores again arose out of the Tumult sea  
The mountains slipped away and Faith said, “Let it be.”  
Seas danced as waves, and my heart felt light  
While the blue green coast grew clear and bright;  
As celestial music came from the land  
    A single note with Silvertone  
    Illusive in its quality  
It faded soon before ‘twas known  
    But having heard I knew  
Among the man made things of struggle  
    hurt and pain  
They are all pierced by silence to the gain  
Oh, Matinicus, how far you are from all the Earth!  
Yet in your struggle to survive  
You carry God’s own birth.  
He lives in those who do not see that they  
Bear his image in Simplicity  
To dance, to laugh, to sing  
While we journey on life’s trip  
With natural gifts of earth and joyous given friendship  
Perhaps it’s here we find our heaven  
That Mustard Seed of mystery  
    Binding all human wisdom  
    Into gentle hospitality

C.R. Ripley  
Matinicus Island

## The Legend of the S.S. No-No

A punt is a small, flat-bottomed boat for use in small rivers or shallow water. So, as summer jerks living our summers on the Island, we logically used this floating box made of wood in our many ocean adventures. Our parents told us that this particular boat belonged to Madre (my grandfather's third wife), and the name on the side, No-No, was there for a reason, as in "do not/use it." "Ok, ok, we won't," we would say. But even as the words left our lips, "We paid no, never mind," and sneaked out to the boat to explore. Our rule of thumb was to fit as many kids in the boat as possible until the water lapped over the gunwales.

Putting out to sea was a process. We bought drop lines from The Fisherman's Friend (an all-purpose Island store) and bait from the town's gut-retching, swill-smelling commercial bait house. There would be a few life jackets; these were jammed into the bow of the punt. Some would row, others would sing and drag their hands in the murky brine of the Atlantic. We would find a spot maybe half a mile offshore, then tie the painter to an unsuspecting colorful lobster buoy. This would act as our anchor. Baiting our hooks and unwinding our always-knotted drop lines, we were now ready to fish.

Since Atlantic Mackerel ran in swirling schools, sometimes we could catch 10-20, to the point of childhood boredom. Turd Pollock were also plentiful, but when you took them off the hook, they would crap all over your hands. Then there was the Spiny Dogfish; this creature was a mini-shark with a painful spine under its dorsal fin (we knew to steer clear of it). We would spend our day soaking up the sun, watching the seals popping up sporadically, and fishing. Our eyes scanned everything and everywhere as the glories of nature ruled the day. Our catch would be thrown to the wind for the seagulls to fight over. We loved

the sea and for today anyway, she loved us. The ocean is a moody beast; you don't want to get on her bad side. When our day was over, we discreetly put the No- No back in her berth, ... 'til tomorrow?

Richard Flagg  
Vinalhaven



Susan deGrandpre  
Peaks Island

## The Moss on Swan's

The time has come  
to discuss moss.  
It has been postponed  
too long but  
can be ignored no more.

There is a place  
where the moss  
is more than ankle deep,  
if you are lucky enough  
to sink so far.  
Barefoot, your feet thank you  
and will sing your praises  
from the bottom  
of their souls.

Silently as you tread,  
your tracks slowly rise behind you  
as the moss returns  
to the shape it has held  
for a million years.

Sink to your knees,  
as in prayer.  
Lay upon your stomach,  
triceps at home,  
elbows never had it so good.  
Because of long acquaintance,  
your chin trusts your elbows  
and might bury itself as  
softness is always and everywhere  
so very welcoming.

You might not stop  
at your chin because

your nose demands  
a closer look.  
It may start  
with a short sniff  
but that will not suffice.  
A breath will begin  
deep in your chest  
which, coincidentally,  
is deep in the moss.  
It may feel like  
that breath you took  
when your lungs  
were brand new.

Your eyes feast  
on the green  
all around you,  
in this world of whorls,  
endless lace and lattice.  
Like moss itself,  
you take your sustenance  
from the air.

After a day spent  
in the company  
of this verdant royalty,  
it is clear to me  
that there will be  
no pavement in my Heaven.

Weston Parker  
Swan's Island



Donna Rogers  
Matinicus Island

## Grammie's Stove

(In memory of Ada Ladd Herbert 1901-1979)

It was an ancient behemoth in my young mind, and it had lived out its usefulness. But, the wood-fed iron cook stove still had an intrinsic beauty. Light teal and beige in design, it was my grandmother's pride and joy. No modern electric range for her while she had anything to say.

Over years of hard usage, the cast iron had cracked, the grates rusted, and the paint faded and worn. Yet, my grandmother would lovingly bake and cook the most amazing foods. She knew just where to place the pans, which foods to make, and where and how long to bake them. All daily meals were prepared on the wood stove: the top cooked eggs, bacon, fried foods; the oven baked all the breads, desserts, cakes. On the stove two huge cast iron tea kettles provided the daily hot water needs, especially for tea. Only a small double electric burner was allowed on the end of the stovetop, because my grandfather had demanded it. Grammie would compromise no further!

I'm not sure of the age of the old wood stove. It was present from my earliest memories. It preceded the oil furnace and provided not only the meals but also the heat. When I was very young, it attempted to heat the whole large house. It did an inadequate job. In the winter, the fire would burn out, and only many layers of quilted blankets over feathered bed mattresses would keep us warm. So, going to bed or getting up at night was a very cold proposition.

In 1979, Grammie passed away and the old stove sat sadly quiet. Two years later, the great house was burned down by an arsonist, silencing the old cook stove forever.

Mike Herbert  
Islesboro



Aidan Olney  
Isle au Haut

December 3

He saw a snowflake.  
I said it couldn't be snow.  
Cattails lost their seeds.

December 6

Whiskered winter moths  
shimmy up the black window.  
It looks light to them.

December 9

Frostbitten roses  
brown edges, darker centers:  
forgotten, not gone.

Sarah Goodman Cuetara  
Peaks Island

## I Have Never Owned a Dog

Nine years ago, I met a dog.  
A young Siberian husky, lonely and displaced.  
I agreed to take him home, much to his dismay.  
He lived with brothers and sisters, but their time together  
was up. He had no way of knowing a human had sold him  
off.

Nine years ago, a dog met me.  
A young woman, lonely and displaced.  
A confident visage, but a fragile spirit.  
With cash, pen, and paper, I made a transaction for a life.  
But I did not buy a dog that day – that deal was for his fate.

Eight years ago, I taught a dog.  
He was a quick learner, but defiant to the core.  
I tried treats and walks, timeouts and scoldings.  
Oswald could be taught, but he could not be trained.  
In our time together, it was me who was tamed.

Eight years ago, a dog taught me.  
Expressions and howls, groans and moans.  
As I taught him my language, he taught me his.  
We communicated with conversation and debate, not orders  
and commands. We forged our bond with love, intelligence  
and mutual respect.

Seven years ago, I saved a dog.  
He was torn from his family, but that was inevitable.  
I could not change that fate, so I chose his future.  
He lost contact with his family, so I gave him mine.  
And I treated him with a kind of respect that no other  
human would.

Six years ago, a dog saved me.

I lost everything – not just my home and my property, but my mind. My memory of that time is gone, but the feelings survived. Hopelessness, isolation, uselessness – my spirit was shattered. But every time I pondered the end, the ideation was stopped by a pair of sparkling blue eyes.

Five years ago, I amazed a dog.

With a long trip and a ferry ride, we began a new island life. The island changed us, but not because of beaches, forests or marshes. The flexibility of time gave me room to heal, but time meant little to him; it was the end of my moping and sulking that he could feel.

Four years ago, a dog amazed me.

He met an injured mouse. He offered a toy as a token of friendship, then howled when the critter passed.

He met a doe. He laid next to her as she grazed his food, neither threatened by the other. He met a hummingbird.

As it hovered by his nose, he gave it a gentle kiss. The bird slowly moved on to graze a flower by his side. Underneath his messy coat and wolf-like visage was a heart of gold.

Two years ago, a dog said goodbye to me.

Oswald was changing. He expressed anger and pain.

He never so much as grazed a hand, but something was clearly wrong. He walked and played as if nothing was amiss, but only when I was around.

Oswald knew that he was ill – he defied his pain to comfort me in the only way he knew.

One year ago, I said goodbye to a dog.

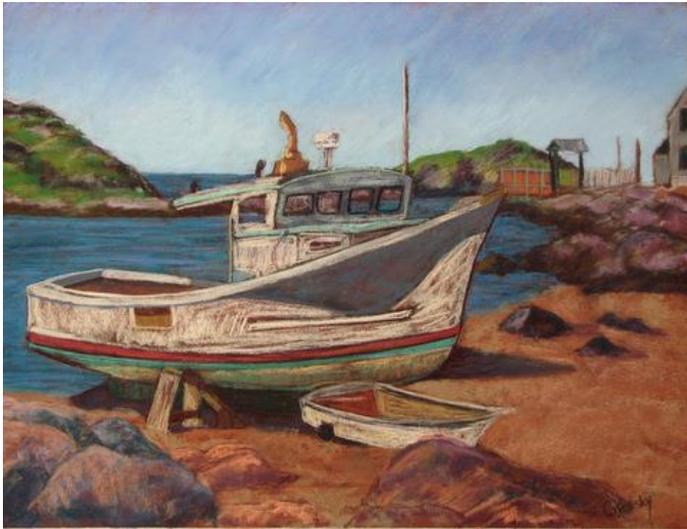
I thought he refused food because he was picky, and walked slow because he was bored. But when I dropped his leash and he did not flee, I knew something was wrong.

They told me his cancer was invisible, terminal, and incurable. His pain was immense. My heart was broken,

but it was my turn to be strong and say goodbye.  
I laid him to rest by his island home where time  
does not flow.

Today, I remembered a dog.  
Nine years ago, I bought freedom for a friend, but I did not  
purchase a husky. To call him a pet would be a lie; Oswald  
was no property, he was a friend and an ally. I miss him  
dearly, but I would not call his death a loss. It was an honor  
and pleasure to know him. He was never mine to lose.  
I once had a friend named Oswald, but I have never owned  
a dog.

Sophia Caldwell  
Little Cranberry Island



Cynthia Leavesley  
Monhegan Island

## Living Memory

for the year-round community of Isle au Haut

This year I have watched the passage of time in flowers. Dandelions, wild strawberries, leatherleaf, and goldthread, each claimed its glory, then yielded to what came next — swamp orchids, beach pea, blackberry, oxeye daisy, bunchberry, violets. The spring tumbled into summer in the procession of bloom, the multiplication of insects, the spreading of pollen, and the inconspicuous work of seed-making in the green tangle. Now it is September, the season of asters and goldenrod. The nights are cooler, the water in Long Pond brisk. I have jam in the cupboard, veggies in the freezer, logs in the stove. The bumblebees are giving way to monarch butterflies heading south, and the summer birds are going. Seeds float or fall or fly, reminders of everything that is ending and everything that will begin again after what is here now has passed.

We are passing now, who once were young, who came with our dreams and our skills to settle on the island. We became fishermen, builders, teachers, gardeners, woodworkers, homesteaders, cooks, painters, writers, innkeepers, officers of the Town. We built houses, businesses, roads, boats, friendships and feuds. We worked on the sea, the clam flats, the fields, the woods, the Town Landing, in the Town Office, the Library, the Store, Moxie, the Park, the Church, in home kitchens, in shops, in bait sheds and sawmills. We attended Town Meetings, Selectmen's meetings, Planning Board meetings, Power Company meetings, ICDC meetings, Lobstermen's Association meetings, Boat Company meetings, School Board meetings, Historical Society meetings, Lighthouse meetings, Store meetings, Library meetings, Church meetings. We planned parades, dances, weddings, celebrations, funerals, triathlons, book clubs, auctions, talent shows. And we dropped everything to take care of one another.

And now a new young generation is taking hold,  
buying land, building homes, growing gardens,  
having children. And just as we remember  
Skeet and Jini, Phil and Edna, Gooden Grant,  
Miss Lizzie, Noyes and Isabel, Maybelle and Gordon,  
Jack and Belvia, Stan and Dottie, Bob and Gerry,  
Pat and Tina, Bud and Anne, Charlie and Sally,  
Bob and Bobbie, Ben, Diana, Ed, Al, and Ted,  
the young people will remember us — Billy and Bernie,  
Jeff and Judi, Dan and Sue, John and Kendra,  
Rita and Alvah, Bill and Brenda, Bill and Peggi,  
Lisa, Lincoln, Lee, Rob, Greg and Diana,  
Matthew, Paula and John, Payson and Lucinda.  
We are still here, still treasuring the beauty of this place,  
and this community we helped build. But now,  
like those before us, we are stepping aside, grateful  
for the energy of the future growing up among us.  
Every summer the wildflowers repeat themselves,  
but the people who take root here are as singular  
and as precious as another island year.

Kathie Fiveash  
Isle au Haut

7:15 to town

they plop onto the hard seats of the 7:15 ferry  
oblivious to the adults who quietly scatter themselves  
around the cabin

or in better weather move outside to talk in the salt air  
these recent children flock together much like the loons  
rafting by the dock poised to take flight the minute they get  
word of ice out on inland lakes

twenty minutes to town and the day lies ahead

i watch them as they cluster around glowing screens  
enchanted by ghostly pixels of what i'm not sure  
unlike the few who pull open notebooks  
to begin last minute computations or compositions

an oil tanker passes outbound from the harbor as a water  
taxi boldly skims close by heading in threaded by a lobster  
boat passing between the ferry and a barge moving towards  
the bridge that has already opened for a cruise ship limping  
back to the repair dock morning commuters annoyed that  
any boat would dare to do this at 7:30 am

i watch in amazement as a boy threads white string through  
his fingers in an apt movement that makes me think that it's  
simply amazing that kids still do cat's cradle on their way  
to school just to pass the time

until i realize he is just untangling the white wires of his  
headphones

i'm now a whole decade older than that sixty year old  
smiling public man and so little do i know of what and how  
they learn these young creatures of an ever turbulent world  
that swirls all around them

like the tide shifting under this boat carrying us all forward  
twenty minutes to town and the day lies ahead

Irv Williams  
Peaks Island



Linda Prybylo  
Peaks Island

# Island Writers & Artists



(photo credit, Kendra Chubbuck, Isle au Haut)

You are invited to contribute your  
work to

## *The Island Reader*

Volume 20

Summer 2026

**The What Brings You Joy Edition**

**Submission deadline:**

**JANUARY 15, 2026**

For complete details visit  
[www.seacoastmission.org/islandreader](http://www.seacoastmission.org/islandreader)

## **About Maine Seacoast Mission**

In 1905, two Mount Desert Island pastors and brothers, Alexander and Angus MacDonald, sailed a small sloop named Hope to islands along the coast of Maine. This trip became the first of many such trips for Maine Seacoast Mission, the nonprofit they founded.

Today, the organization serves the people who live on the rugged islands and Downeast coast of Maine. From its flagship 74-foot vessel the Sunbeam and its Downeast campus in Cherryfield, the Mission offers healthcare, education, and community outreach programming. Maine Seacoast Mission is thankful to the communities it works alongside.

To learn more and to donate, please visit:  
[www.seacoastmission.org](http://www.seacoastmission.org).



(Photo credit, Douglas Cornman)

**Chebeague  
Cliff Island  
Frenchboro  
Great Cranberry Island  
Isle au Haut  
Islesboro  
Islesford  
Long Island  
Matinicus  
Monhegan  
Peaks Island  
Swan's Island  
Vinalhaven**



Maine Seacoast Mission