



WOODS HOLE LIBRARY NEWS

Spring 2017

Volume 11, Issue 9

In this issue we explore the histories of several continuing Woods Hole traditions – Wednesday Night International Folk Dancing and the Library’s own Plant Sale. We also discuss how Woods Hole’s science culture has drawn two new Library trustees, Sharon Benjamin and Steve Senft, to the Cape. Finally we include a review of our librarian Liz Saito’s book *To the Top of the World*.

The Folkdancing Tradition in Woods Hole

by Janaye Rooney

International Folk Dancing, which takes place every Wednesday night in the summer and on the first Wednesday of each month in the winter, has grown into a unique and cherished Woods Hole tradition. Recently, I sat down with long-time folk dance participant and instructor Jan Elliott and began to understand how and why International Folk Dancing, a style of dance centered around community, has thrived and found longevity in Woods Hole.

Woods Hole International Folk Dancing began in 1961 when founder James (Jim) W. Mavor Jr. and his wife Mary moved to Woods Hole. Jim, who began attending folk dances regularly at the age of 12, brought a wealth of folk dancing knowledge to Woods Hole along with his collection of folk dance 78rpm records. Throughout the 60s and 70s Jim and Mary lugged that box of records, a bulky record player, and two large speakers down to the Community Hall to teach folk dancing to a dedicated group of adults on Wednesday nights. When Jim’s Wednesday night dances began to grow increasingly popular largely during the 1970s Folk Dance Revival, Jim hired Jan Elliott, then a teenager, to help teach dances.

Jan, who described her teenage self as uninterested in the social culture at school, felt drawn to folk dancing because of the opportunity that it created for her to meet and interact with new and compelling people. “Folk dancing is social,” she explained. “It’s not performance. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is included.” Jan fondly reflected on the unique connections she made with

Woods Hole community members while teaching folk dancing. “They were mostly adults from MBL and WHOI, and we had great conversations.” For Jan, the inclusiveness of Wednesday Night Folk Dancing inspired her to develop a lifelong passion for and dedication to the art. “You asked about the role that folk dancing has played in my life, and I

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- SPRING & SUMMER EVENTS •
- AT THE LIBRARY! •
- May 20 Archive Party honoring Jennifer Gaines
 - May 27 May Day Parade
 - May 31 Travel Talk Morocco Luisa Bocconcelli
 - June 3 Book Sale (continuing through June 23, during Library hours)
 - June 26 Exhibit of Polly Montgomery sculpture and artwork
 - July 3 Red Yarn Concert for children and families
 - July 4 Parade
 - July 5 Equal Justice Book Group/Discussion
 - July 8 Annual Tag Sale and Children’s Carnival
 - July 11 Library Annual Meeting
 - July 18 Lassalle Dance Lecture (tent. date)
 - July 22 Silent Auction and Celebration for Art and Chair Project
 - July 25 Lassalle Dance Lecture
 - Aug 2 Equal Justice Book Group and Discussion
 - Aug 5 Accessories and Adornment Sale (3rd Annual)
 - Aug 8 Lassalle Dance Lecture
 - Aug 15 Lassalle Dance Lecture
 - Aug 19 Summer Book Sale
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Library Hours

Mondays Noon - 5:30, 7 - 9
Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays 3 - 5:30
Wednesdays 10 - 5:30, 7 - 9
Saturdays Noon - 5:30

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Folkdancing, continued

said it was central," she commented. "Folk dancing became my community."

As far as Jan knows, Woods Hole International Folk Dancing is the longest running and only consistent folk dance on Cape Cod. In an interview with Jim Mavor conducted by Jeremy Korr in 2004, Jim recollects that even as folk dance fads came and went, Woods Hole's Wednesday night dances managed to keep going, winter and summer, for all these years. When I asked Jan why she believes the tradition has so successfully endured in Woods Hole specifically she explained, laughing, that "folk dancing is something some folks wouldn't be caught dead doing ... but in Woods Hole, that's not a problem." She described the Woods Hole community as "tight knit, esoteric, and a bit off the charts," which, she rationalized, makes Woods Hole the perfect place for folk dancing. "Folk dancing is community," she said. "That's what makes it folk, I guess." In a small village where community is highly valued, it follows that an art form focused around the cultivation of community continues to flourish.

Today, the tradition of Wednesday night International Folk Dancing carries on; however, Jim's original records have been digitized, and the dedicated group of adult dancers has, at least during the summer months, continued to expand to include dancers of various ages and backgrounds. If you'd like to meet some new friends while trying your hand (and feet) at folk dances hailing from all around the world, head down to the Community Hall on, Wednesday nights this summer from 7-9!

Call for Library Volunteers

by *Terry McKee*

In our spring 2016 newsletter, we announced a new volunteer program to help the Library maintain the many services it offers to the community. Reliable volunteers make regular book sales, the annual plant sale, the Kids Carnival, and many other fun events and important fundraisers possible.

If you would like to join our corps of enthusiastic volunteers, please add your name and email address to the sign up sheet at the front desk of the Library. If you wish, make note of your special area of interest. You will be contacted by event organizers who will provide information on upcoming needs. If events are not your cup of tea, there are many ongoing jobs to consider – from breaking down cardboard boxes to yardwork to dump runs.

Volunteers strengthen our ability to keep a strong presence in our active community. Please consider becoming one.

Introducing Sharon Benjamin



by *Vicky Cullen*

Sharon Benjamin moved to Cape Cod in 2013 to join the NOAA Northeast Fisheries Science Center as a Spatial Data Analyst. At NOAA, Sharon analyzes information gathered for fisheries that estimates the effects of federal regulations that either expand or reduce the areas in which fishermen can work.

Sharon grew up on Long Island and got an early start studying Spanish in the first grade. She continued studying Spanish through college, earning a bachelor's degree at Bowdoin College in biology with a minor in Spanish. She has taken opportunities to use her language skills at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain and while studying ecotourism in Costa Rica. She completed a Master of Environmental Management degree with a concentration in coastal and marine resource management at Duke University. Her master's project, entitled "Visualizing Access in New England's Groundfish Fishery," brought her close to our region.

Off the job, Sharon recently joined the board of another nonprofit, Eating with the Ecosystem. This organization in Rhode Island works to sustain wild seafood by focusing on local marine ecosystems and the people who depend upon them. Sharon also has a variety of other interests that include scuba diving, cooking, swing dancing, and perhaps her first passion, knitting. She is an enthusiastic member of the knitting group that meets at the Library late on Thursday afternoons, worked tirelessly on our Fabric and Yarn Sale, and is enjoying teaching a seven-year-old to knit. She reports that she usually has three or four knitting projects underway at once that, she says, require "low, moderate, or high" amounts of attention so she can pick them up as the moment warrants. Sharon's activities for the Library as a plant sale worker bee and as a member of the Events Committee are also most appreciated.

Woods Hole Librarian Takes Readers on an Arctic Adventure

a book review by Prosser Gifford

Our newest librarian, Elizabeth (Liz) Saito, is the co-author of a new book, *To the Top of the World*. Her book documents a research cruise from August 9 to October 21, 2015 aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Healy*, the largest and most technically advanced icebreaker in the U.S. fleet. Beginning and ending in Dutch Harbor, Alaska, the research trip took 51 scientists and 93 crew members to the North Pole, enabling the *Healy* to become the first unaccompanied U.S. surface vessel to reach the North Pole, on September 5, 2015. The *Healy* is 420 feet long, 82 feet wide, and includes 5 fully-equipped laboratories for biochemical, electronic, and meteorological data. She has the capability to maintain a speed of 3 knots through 4.5 feet of ice.

Liz's book is a strikingly-illustrated photographic essay that features a young scientist, Katlin Bowman, measuring mercury samples in Arctic waters and ice during the 62 working days of the research trip. Other scientists on board were calculating the amounts of different trace and radioactive metals, organic particles, microscopic organisms, and carbon dioxide in the Arctic waters. Liz did not go on the *Healy*, but she read Katlin's weekly blog from the voyage and went through thousands of photographs taken by official Coast Guard photographers, crew members, and scientists to choose those that best illustrated life aboard the ship.

Excitements of the voyage included coordination with the German icebreaker *Polarstern* in support of their joint international mission GEOTRACES. In addition, the book highlights the first live broadcast from icebound Arctic waters of a search and rescue exercise, the sightings of Arctic animals such as walruses and polar bears, and a spectacular view of the Northern Lights. The trip gathered over 3,000 samples of Arctic water, ice, and snow for analysis and then led to the later creation of Arctic charts and maps incorporating the data from the cruise.

Liz laid out the photographs to create the story of the voyage and in clear, accessible prose added a narrative line to the photos which discusses life aboard ship and the gathering of research samples. The result is a vivid sense of the stresses and delights of expected and unexpected events during a research mission in a difficult environment. I highly recommend it.

Newsletter Staff

Jarita Davis and Janaye Rooney

Contributors: Terry McKee, Vicky Cullen, Sharon Benjamin, Prosser Gifford, and Arlene Lowenstein

Introducing Steve Senft



by Vicky Cullen

Steve Senft grew up in Woods Hole: Child Center, Woods Hole School, Science School, bicycle delivery for the *Enterprise*. He comes to the Library board with the unique perspective of having lived for a time in the Woods Hole Historical Museum's Bradley House where his father conducted a medical practice in the 1960s. What was Steve's room is now part of the museum's archive space. Although Steve spent his childhood in Woods Hole, he was born in Switzerland and lived briefly with his family in New Guinea.

Steve attended Falmouth schools through ninth grade, then went on to Phillips Academy in Andover for the remainder of his high school years. He completed his bachelor's degree at Amherst College where he wrote an honors thesis on *Schistosoma mansoni*, inspired by his father's work on schistosomiasis, the widespread parasitic tropical disease caused by this organism. Steve's interest in mathematics led to his post-baccalaureate study in computer graphics at Brown University in 1975.

Some local residents may remember a young Steve accompanying his father on house calls. It was this medical observation as well as exposure to the research culture in Woods Hole that set Steve on both an academic path and career in biology. Steve earned his master's in systems neuroscience at the University of Oregon and researched 3D anatomy in the MBL Alkon lab to study how sea slugs learn. His degree and research focused on applying math to describing brain organization. Steve earned his PhD at Washington University in St. Louis, where he examined development of the mouse cerebral cortex and continued his postdoctoral research by applying confocal microscopy to this system.

After helping to found a 3D medical imaging company, Steve returned to his academic endeavors at Yale, Harvard, and the Krasnow Institute of George Mason University in Virginia. Steve's research and teaching

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Digging Deeper into the Annual Plant Sale

by Sharon Benjamin

The Library plant sale is a very happy place to be on the second Saturday of May each year. The small front lawn is crowded with tomato seedlings, herb starts, and greenery growing in plastic pots of all shapes and sizes waiting to find their new home.

It is a joyous community gathering that invites us all to be a little gleeful together over young sprouts in the dirt before we launch into the busy summer season. During the sale, people laugh and chat, milling about rows of Solomon Seal and hosta, and enjoying whatever unpredictable spring weather we have that day. With the plant sale's growing popularity and success, I wanted to share about the work that goes into putting it together and the unique history of the annual event.

The 2017 plant sale was the sixth and last directed by Board Member and Events Committee Leader Nancy Copley. These past several years, Nancy has directed a troop of volunteers ("The Diggers") to collect and prepare plants. About a month before the plant sale, volunteers put small pots, plastic labels, and dirt near the library's book drop so that patrons have the necessary supplies to transplant donated seedlings and plants from their gardens. The preparation concludes with a physically demanding two-week marathon of gardening labor where a crew of 8 or more volunteers digs up plants at 10-20 different private homes. In the week before the sale, Nancy coordinates volunteers in teams to visit plant donors and dig up surplus plants - perhaps curtailing an overzealous bed of foamflower or extricating thornless blackberry bushes and hunks of rhubarb roots. Typically, the most common donations are irises and hostas.

The WHPL plant sale began in 1971 through the inspiration of then-board-member Ann Martin. As a young teenager Ann moved from London to Woods Hole with her parents (the Jessups), after London was bombed during WWII. They moved to the Cape to be with relatives (the Mavor family). After marrying and moving away, Ann returned to Woods Hole to help her aging parents, joined the Library Board of Trustees, and eventually became President of the Board. Ann remained close with her family in England and often hosted visitors from England at her home in Woods Hole. One visitor was her Aunt Gwen, a Red Cross nurse and avid gardener in her home town of Pinner, England. Gwen was a board member at the Pinner Library which had enjoyed success with a novel fundraising idea: local gardeners would divide their hardy perennials and pot them up for sale to the community. With this inspiration, the first annual Library plant sale was imported from across the pond in the spring of 1971. The story goes that Aunt Gwen, at Ann's request, discreetly hid less common British varieties of herbs and perennials on her person and smuggled them into the United States!

The first event earned \$258 from sales of plants contributed by about 35 individuals and businesses. The sale has grown since then, bringing in hundreds

of donated plants, including some from several local businesses, garden centers, and landscaping companies. The Library's successful community events and fundraisers depend on the individual efforts of Woods Hole patrons, and the plant sale is no exception. Patrons who have donated plants thinned from their garden beds as well as extra seedlings from starting their vegetable gardens early provide the great majority of plants sold. In the last decade the plant sale has typically brought in funds around \$3,000. The 2016 plant sale, however, was a record year earning about \$6,800 in great part due to the generous matching gift donation from board member Steve Senft, in honor of his late mother Debbie, who loved plants and the plant sale.

By the time you read this, the plant sale will have come and gone, and we hope you have restocked your garden with some bright fresh greenery. Happy planting!

Steve Senft, continued

focused on mathematics, computer imagery, and understanding of how brains are organized. Abiding questions such as "how does our brain enable us to see the world" and "how do we think?" have guided his work.

Having seen the far-reaching influence of MBL in the neuroscience world throughout his career, Steve is currently enjoying working again at MBL in the Hanlon Lab. Steve works with cephalopods, molluscan invertebrates that have highly developed nervous systems, including extensive central nervous system (CNS) control of specialized "chromatophore" organs in their skins. He relays that an understanding of how these cephalopods communicate with one another and their uncanny ability to alter their skin color patterns to camouflage themselves might lead to new approaches in cell phone technology. The larger picture beckons as well: comparing the remarkable — but vastly different — CNS organization in mollusks vs. mammals (two groups from one planet, diverging over hundreds of millions of years) makes it dramatically clear that there is a combinatorial universe of possibilities of how complex beings can think and experience what it is to be alive.

Woods Hole Historical Museum Welcomes New Director

by Arlene Lowenstein

Deborah Scanlon, an eleventh generation resident of Woods Hole/Falmouth, is the new Executive Director of the WHHM, filling the position held by Jennifer Gaines for more than 30 years. Debbie has been a member of the museum's steering committee and has also served as an editor/writer of the *Spritsail*.

A journalism major, Debbie has worked as copy editor and reporter for the *Falmouth Enterprise* and as communications and projects coordinator at the MBL's Ecosystems Center.