

Nov. 17, 1986

# KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

The woods are leaner now. The temperature, the true measure of climate, has arranged the green to glorious colors, the weakening and the dropping. Now all is mulch. The first frost will settle the goldenrod and the aster. The fleshy leaves of the goldenrod protect the flowers through light frosts, "dustings," but the first killing frost claims the land. The aster ends in a flower that will not seed. It's gradual; daily you feel and see the change, but when it happens, it is abrupt. One morning it is cold and the woods are quiet. At first you think there is less to see, less to look at, less to observe. But no, the bareness of the woods has its own beauty. Maturation over, it's the time to rest and enjoy the time left by the busy and prolific spring and summer. The bounty is stored by us and by the birds and animals. We are prepared for the worst. As I look at two pomegranates on my table, I think, "The love apples have shriveled. The plumpness of autumn has become the leanness of winter." Life is cyclical and predictable and every season has its beauty.

Human life is like that, too. Despite Mark Twain's "Youth is wasted on the young," and Shakespeare's cynicism of experience in the scribing of *The Seven Ages of Man*, toothless and milk drinking to start and the same to finish life. We all know that life is an unannounced gift to us and the more we have of it the happier we are, despite our own grumblings or those more formal and public grumblings of the great thinkers. One person who may or may not be aware of his purchase on the elusive bounty of life is Jack Rivers. We who observe Captain Jack Rivers in his daily on foot coverings of Provincetown are aware of it and if not quite amazed, are in admiration of it. When we see Jackie crossing town or going down the pier at that clip of a speed, we remind ourselves "that man is 90 years old!" When I point him out to people they think he is 68-70 years old. He knows where he's going and he goes with vigor.

Jackie Rivers was born Joaquim Batista Revez at Fuzeta, Algarve, Portugal on January 10, 1897. In 1913, Jackie travelled to America to fish out of New York with his uncle Manuel Pastinha. They fished on the *Faustina*, a schooner owned by the Fulton Fish Market and manned by Swedes and Norwegians. Jackie and Uncle Manuel were the only two Portuguese on board. The schooner ported eight dories, 16 men—two men in each dory hand lined for bluefish. They used frozen pogies for chum. They went down east as far as Montauk. This was summer fishing. In winter, Jackie would go to Pensacola, Florida and fish for red snapper. Four hundred miles south of Pensacola the waters were rich with this much-demanded fish.

It was expected that young Joaquim would follow his father to the Grand Banks. Jackie was one of three children and the only one to come to America. Father Joaquim Revez was the organizer of the crew. He would go to Lisbon and recruit 40-50 men for each trip. Being crewmaster for Ben Saude was a taxing job of great responsibility. The trips lasted 6 months, only touching shore at Newfoundland for supplies. A hospital boat propelled by steam would go to the Grand Banks to check the fishermen, perform medical services and steam off. None of this appealed to the young Joaquim, so he teamed up with his friend Tony Henrique and the pair left from Olhao, Portugal. That was 74 years ago. After four years in New York, Jackie went to Gloucester, Massachusetts, to fish and fished there from 1917-1919. He tried to enlist in the service during World War I but fishermen were requested to stay on at their jobs since they were providing food for the nation. That was their patriotic duty. Empty moored fishing boats would help no one. During his time in Gloucester, Jack Rivers made several short trips to Provincetown. He noted that in Provincetown he could have a small business owning his own boat. With his first wife, Carmen Thomas and children Emily and Jack, Jackie left Gloucester and fishing for his father-in-law and set up home and business in Provincetown. They lived in Anthony Souza's house on Pearl Street where his third and youngest child, Louis, was born. Louis Rivers captains the "Miss Sandy." Shortly after Louis' birth, the family moved to 5 Arch Street where Jackie and his wife, Lucilia live now.

Jackie bought the *Emilia* and with two crewmen, fished her for 50 years. That boat went to Joe Roderick and Jackie bought his second boat, *The Elizabeth*. Jackie has fished since he was 12 years old. He says he is not retired, but did stop fishing at the age of 82. If we go by his "not retired," that's 78 years of fishing. His heart is still in it. I asked Jackie, if he had his life to live over, what would he do? "Fish, fish, fish! I love to fish and I eat a lot of fish. Yes, I'd go fishing!" Jack Rivers is so sturdy, so calm. I asked him how he has kept from worry from tension. "I worry about the family only, not business." He explained to me how all the details of life are done for him by his wife he loves so much, Lucilia. He spent his time and energy only on fishing and the family. He is up every morning at light and after coffee and an English muffin, is out for his walk. He crosses the center of town, walks out through the cemetery, a stop at the A&P for any small household need and home for lunch. After lunch it's "I'm going to the wharf." He returns home about 4 pm, relaxes and relates the happenings of the day.





*Jackie & Lucilia Rivers at home*

to Lucilia and enjoys his dinner. His appetite is good, his body is lean. No fat and straight-arrow posture. At 90, he still drinks 3 cups of coffee a day and has an occasional Macieira brandy. All that sounds good? Well, Jack Rivers was the 24th Provincetowner to sign up for his clamming license. You'll see him out there digging quahaugs with energy that belies his age.

One obvious reason for Jackie's strength is Lucilia. She is a story in herself. Lucilia had a prominent position in Portugal working for the Singer Sewing Machine Company. She taught sewing and embroidery and made patterns for the company. She can sew anything without a pattern. She enjoyed her job, was well paid and had the satisfaction of sharing her skills and talents with willing learners. She had never married and supported her mother. When she lost her mother, Lucilia went to spend some time with her cousins in Setubal. Jackie, then a widower and visiting the area, would call on Lucilia's cousins, friends of himself and his family. His Latin heart and practical Portuguese mind set a site on Lucilia. Every night he would visit. Every night he would propose. He knew the family. He knew Lucilia was alone now. He was alone. Persistently he visited and proposed. Lucilia had no idea of marriage and "he was older than I. Oh, how I suffered," Jackie says. "But, I'm smart I went every night." Finally, Lucilia did wear down. This wearing took from April to October and Lucilia, her own woman, worked up to the last day.

They went to Lisbon to be married and spent the next 6 months in Portugal. They returned to 5 Arch Street, Provincetown and settled into a life anyone could envy. That was 22 years ago. The love and the concern for each other is in every word, gesture and

object in the house. This is peace. This is love. Why is there so little of it in the world when it seems so simple?

While doing Friends of the Library work this week, Lu Hetlyn, LTA, (Library Technical Assistant) pointed out a book title of interest—*Disarmament*: fiction—the author probably didn't think of that non sequitur which would result from the filing of his masterpiece in the Dewey Decimal System. Then your mind starts working that phrase, that idea, that theme. So on *All Things Considered*, on WGBH, the parts of the news which clarified to me that evening were "Touchy Arms Control" and "Israel Bombs Lebanon in this half hour." A phrase can turn cartwheels without the writer or speaker being aware of it. Friends of the Library fundraising letters are out now. If you are not on the list but would like to donate, envelopes are available at the Library. You can help the Library with their extra needs.

The benefit for the Animal Shelter held at the A-House October 10th is still receiving donations. Private pledges came from the Impulse Gallery, Halcyon and Frank Hurst, the Boatslip, and Anne Kane to date, Reggie Cabral related to me.

The Yearrounders Committee has had their first meeting. Our experience of last year was interesting and gratifying work. Howie Schneider, Jay Critchley and I spent the time of the first meeting altering and tailoring the plans for this February celebration so that you can repeat and add to your enjoyment of last year.

We are aiming for the weekend before Valentine's Day again. Provincetown's quietest weekend traditionally, but not any more. We may need your help, so be ready.