

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

We've had an early switch from spring to summer this year. An early Memorial Day pushes us into summer and yet, perhaps, we would like to linger in spring. We'll linger with the striped bass and the warblers soon to be replaced by Blues and shore birds. The trek to the Norseman for indoor tennis will be replaced by daily outdoor play on clay courts. Canoeing and kayaking will fill out those daylight hours with the new skill of fly fishing from a canoe added. The dunes will give their quiet and solace and reparation of soul. The rounds of berries, beach plums and rose hips will grace our tables alongside the seaclams and catch of the day. Daily swimming and viewing of our beautiful surroundings will constantly remind us of how fortunate we are to live where we do.

Memorial Day is also a reminder of those we don't get to see and chat with, but certainly don't forget. Memory is one of our great treasures. At any time, we can call up a desired memory and savor that part of our lives again. Shut-ins have told me that memory is almost daily with them and that they are so glad that they lived their lives fully and enjoyed the moments. Memory now colors their long days and nights.

I went to the manor to check with Elsie Ferreira about writing this story. She's as pretty as ever and liked the idea of telling her and Joe's story. I also visited Harmony Veara, Boyzeene Cabral, Arthur Duarte and Grace Collinson since it was lunchtime—a high social time at the manor.

It was fun seeing Harmony since he is part of the story. "Harmony the Cop." He was called "Harmony" because of his mild disposition and the fact that he never arrested anyone. Harmony in retirement was the guard at the parking lot of the Shawmut Bank across from Joe the Barber on Winthrop Street. The bank is now attorney Harriet Hobbes office, shops and the P'town Gym. Cape and Island Travel replaced the barbershop.

Evertime I passed Harmony at his post, I would chant "Harmony," long and melodious. Harmony would respond by chanting "Kelly". When Harmony's position at the bank ended, I would chant "Harmony" anyway...habit. Joe the Barber would respond "Kelly". Even with closed doors, the sound still carried. I'm such in the habit that I would still chant on Sundays and Mondays when the shop was closed. When Joe had his stroke, he said it helped bring him back, hearing the call from his house in the back of the shop.

After his stroke, the doctor told him "to go home and retire." Joe was almost 90 years old and was not thinking like the doc-

tor. He walked from the shop to the fire station, around and back—the first two weeks with a walker, the next three weeks with a three-pronged cane, the next two weeks with a regular cane and then unassisted. He opened his shop again and cut hair for two more years until the day I read Elsie's tenderly rendered note on the door, "The Barber Is Very Sick." Joe later put up a "For Rent" sign and put out the word that he would let the shop out free for the winter to an interested party. After that, he would rent it. Who wouldn't be shy of entering Joe's space?

The shop where Joe worked for 45 years—washing the windows inside and out, the counters, the floors and all equipment every Monday—lay empty and hollow through the winter. In the spring, Joe was approached by Peter Karl who wanted to place his Cape and Island Travel company at 1 Winthrop. Joe said "yes" as long as he could leave his chair in there and work one day a week. Imagine booking your exotic vacation and getting your hair cut at the same time.

Joe went to town hall to check zoning and change of use since he was grandfathered. The contracts were signed late April on a Monday. Joe said, pen poised, "If I let you guys do this, I'm not going to live much longer." Joe died that Wednesday at the age of 92. So for the past year, Peter, along with Howard Killen, (whom I call "Tyrone Power"), Stephanie Peters and Joy Long occupy Joe's space with his blessings and do a fine job of shuttling many of us in and out of town to see the big world.

The barber chair is gone now, but so much of Joe the Barber's personality remains — not only at 1 Winthrop street, but all over town with his good friends who relish the memory of his feisty personality, his constitution and his self guide to life.

Joe Ferreira, Joe the Barber, was born in 1903 at St. Michael's Island of the Azorean Islands, Portugal. He travelled to New Bedford as an infant with his parents and older brother, Avrad, short for Veriato. When Joe was 3 years old, the family returned to Portugal. Joe related how "it was tough in the old country." He and his three brothers worked the farms from sunrise to sunset for half-a-dollar a day.

Their father was a barber. He died at age 34. Louis and George were the younger brothers. To escape the drudgery of overwork, Joe returned to New Bedford when he was 16 years old. Avrad came with him. He worked in a cotton mill for \$13 a week. The local barber, John Mello, guided him like the father he lost would have done. "Your father was a barber. It would



be good for you to learn to be a barber."

So, evenings after the cotton mill, Joe worked 6 to 9pm with John Mello. He was taught the tonsorial arts and management. "Make a sign with your hours and keep to that. Be early and be ready for business."

Joe was impressed, grateful and willing. His youthful dream tinged with pragmatism was: "Someday I want to be Number 1, but if I'm not. Number 2 is good. If I'm Number 3, with a bit of baloney, I'll be good as Number 1."

Joe enjoyed being a barber. When asked why, he said "it's lots of fun". Joe liked to talk, to banter, and said that both

males and females liked the way he talked to them. Besides the John Mello training, certificates of achievement stating that Joe Ferreira is a master of the art of advanced hairstyling and of the Roffler Sculpture-Kut technique hung on the wall. Joe and his wife Elsie Ponte Ferreira, moved to Provincetown in 1934 and Joe started practicing his tonsorial skills for Johnny Lambrou who had a shop where the Lobster Pot is now: shaves 20 cents; haircuts, 40 cents. In 1937, Joe opened a shop where the Seaman's Savings Bank now stands. In 1947, Marcy bought the garage, so Joe bought the White Wind Inn, lived in it, rented apartments, and maintained a barber shop until he built the shop at 1 Winthrop Street in 1950.

Joe bought what is now the White Wind for \$4800, \$300 down. Being short of cash, a friend loaned him the \$300. He called it Casa Vistosa, or "house with a view," and he lived with that view for 18 years until he built a home behind the barbership. "They called me a sucker for buying that house. Nobody wanted it, and I was broke." Joe also bought 3 Winthrop Street, rented it out, and in 1950, sold it to Kathleen Madeiros' brother-in-law.

In 1953, he built the Dairy Queen, kept that for years and then sold it to Elmer Silva. Paul Silva, of Benson, Young and Downs, is the present owner. Joe was negotiating for Lou Allen's house next to the Shawmut Bank. They wanted \$21,000 in 1955. "The place was a mess, but I knew that in a couple of years, and with a lot of work, it would be worth \$150,000. I thought of putting a beauty parlor there, but my family had no interest, so I stopped the deal."

Joe Ferreira was a Selectman, too. Along with Joe, it took Frances Steele, Joe Lema, Clarence Kacergis and Frank Henderson two years to organize our present form of Town Manager government. But barbering was first and last.

Just before his 84th birthday, Joe reminisced about his life. "I work too cheap," Joe said. "I get \$5 a haircut; it should be \$7 or \$8. I have people come from Boston and Connecticut because it's cheap. This place is always crowded. I work from 7 am to 5 pm, 10 hours a day, with a half hour for lunch. After Labor Day, I close on Mondays. I'll work until I drop dead. Next

year, I'm going to make a change and put shampoo sinks in and get a hairdresser. At my age, when I go home, I'm tired. I need a little help. This is a good living. I worked pick n'shovel for 50 cents and hour. I landscaped on Martha's Vineyard. I even cleaned cesspools for \$2 a day. I worked the cotton mills for \$13 a week and the \$7 a week, 6 to 9, with John Mello. Twenty dollars a week-'Jeez...a lot of money,' I thought, but I didn't realize how many hours I wroked. During World War II, the Coast Guard had a boot camp at the Provincetown Inn, so when I closed here, I'd go there 'til 10 or 11 at night, 50 cents a haircut. I went to the Air Force Base in Truro 3 nights a week, 50 cents a haircut. I always worked like hell my whole life, never any time to play. I still work. I'll be 84 on August 9th and still I've never learned to roller skate, to ice skate. I never rode a bike or owned a bike. I never played; I always worked. You'd work, work, work, and never have any money. Things were cheap, but you still didn't have any money. Today, this is beatiful now; you work hard, but you live better."

Joe and Elsie raised two sons, Maurice and Jimmy, to a better life. Maurice lives in Holbrook and works in the Post Office in Boston. Jimmy lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan and is a Professor of English. Joe said he and Elsie never had a fight. "Some arguing, but no fighting. One has to control himself. Be careful what you write about my private life;" Joe warned "or there'll be a god damn war in the house."

So the traffic continued day after day at 1 Winthrop Street. The cronies and the "cuts". Frances Manta, Harmony Veara, Tony Meads, Joe Bucky, the B.H. Dyer Boys, Bingo, Frank and Phillip all had a "club" attitude toward the shop. "It's a good place to loaf and a good place to talk about people," said Joe. "If I'm too busy, I tell them, 'get the hell out!!'"

Joe has smoked since he was 10 years old and had only an occasional drink. But he did love his nicotine. If the "cuts" complained (the cronies had given up), Joe was more polite-language-wise anyway. But if the complaints were about the smoking, Joe had a ready reply: "Go get your hair cut somewhere else!" But nobody did. Whether for gossip or a haircut, they all kept coming back to Joe. And the smoke, after all, was part of it.

Eds. Note: Joe "The Barber" Ferriera passed away this spring. He is loved and remembered by so many of us for everything that he was, everything he brought to this community and to our lives. Our thoughts are with Joe's wife, Elsie and his sons. Joe, himself, is never far from our thoughts as he lives on in our memories.

