
KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

How many times in either anger or innocence have I heard a tourist ask on approaching the low tide, "Where's the water?" No water, the project is over. A substitute activity far from the water fills the gap. But low tide has all its possibilities too. Some people like to just lie on the beach, but there is the promise of discovery during those hours the ocean pulls away from our shores. The tidal pools of crabs, periwinkles, moon snails, sand lances, and various vegetations could keep a difficult child occupied unto behavior. The shards, beach glass, old bottles, and stones of distinction are picked up by everyone. The view seems to go on forever. It's a walk you can stop or start anywhere you want and it's just behind Commercial Street.

Whenever you do walk the flats, you feel you have been somewhere. One thing I like to do out there is to watch the shore birds. The migrations have been going on for a month. Long before we think of winter, this wildlife population is enacting, is actively preparing for the change. Armed with scope, binoculars, and book, I usually cover either the west or the east end on one low tide. Semi-palmated plovers, sanderlings, one pectoral sandpiper, a few dunlin and lesser yellow legs were the spotted birds of the day. There are two yellowlegs, greater and lesser. They are both easily identified by these bright yellow legs. The differences between the two is size, greater 14 inches and lesser 10 inches or thereabouts. The bill of the greater is longer and may be upturned. If all that fails you, listen for the call—great is a 3 to 5 note call, lesser is 1 to 3 note call. Once you hear this call, you will not forget it. It is distinguishable from all other tones on the flats.

In the coming weeks more dunlins will be coming in. I think of the dunlin as a miniature woodcock of the shore. The sturdy bill and body, the short neck, the hunched look of its back. Dunlins keep us company all winter. Shore birds are active and busy feeders. When the tide is out they know it's time to fill up. You can watch them dash and dart, probe and pry, finding all the delicacies that the Bay has served up to them. They are not skittish, you can get quite close if you walk slowly and quietly. You may become so curious that you will return at the next tide with binoculars. You'll find this brief interlude like a vacation at home. Relaxing is a pleasure in itself.

Hawthorne Bissell on an average day is one of the most interesting characters you would ever want to meet. But to see Hawthorne sweeping his clay tennis courts on a motorcycle and with a broken leg, puts even Hawthorne into another dimension of in-

teresting. Could you walk by a 78 year-old good-looking tennis pro sweeping the courts, broken leg and motorcycle and just keep going? No, nobody could. What's the story Hawthorne? "Well, it's the 'survival of the old pro.' Life goes on; the work goes on." Hawthorne has been riding a motorcycle for 46 years and this was the first year he met with any damage. A slick puddle was the meddler.

Hawthorne Bissell has been teaching tennis for 56 years. His method is Zen tennis and playing the game for recreation. Hawthorne is a music lover, plays guitar and piano. You can hear the timely notes drifting over the tennis courts at any point of night or day. Hawthorne Bissell prefers two-handed Bach to the two-handed backhand.

Hawthorne says he has seen the game change from the sport of kings, white clad and involved in enjoyment to a game of gladiators at the Colosseum. "We have gone from scoring to 1-2-3-Bang!—sudden death, the serve, and volley game. I want to resurrect recreation again. The psychiatrists are working overtime. Dammit, the ball won't get over the net!" Hawthorne's peaceful and constructive ideas are altogether different from that pressure of competition and proving oneself. His method is to teach a person to play tennis in 5 lessons. Not to kill the ball or win Wimbledon but to be 3 behind that baseline and to keep that ball in play—to have fun, to enjoy oneself. Then you beat "Mr. Nobody" and someday you will beat "Mr. Somebody." Hawthorne Bissell's strong intent and gift to the game of tennis is to teach the beginning adult tennis player, to teach them well and to give them an added skill and pleasure of life. Of himself, Hawthorne says, "I never was any good. I'm a teacher. I do have a big serve from upstairs (as he pointed to the early morning sky), a good serve with no anticipation. What I want is to stay alive and play tennis. I enjoy life. Music and tennis are my two great pleasures. If I had to choose, the music stays. I'm through with advanced tennis; I'm after recreational tennis. You keep the ball in play as you grow older but the irony, it's like oil and water, the older fellow can't. Now here's the old pro, me, with a broken leg and my young pro, Jack Dunham, with a pulled hamstring. What a situation. We carry on anyway. It's all underneath; it's a matter of survival. 56 years I've been here. People come back to see the Monument and Bissell" and as you exit and take a last look at Hawthorne Bissell at the net on a crutch teaching the volley, you can understand what he means: No empty words, but visual, actual and survival. Hawthorne



Hawthorne Bissell sweeping the courts with his 1964 Honda motorcycle with Volkswagen wheels and broken leg

Bissell's courts are open daily, light till dark. There are five clay courts and they are situated behind the Moors Restaurant in the far West End. Visit for any reason. It will be an experience and you will enjoy it. If you don't play already, you just may take up the game.

How do you like the new bulletin board outside the library? Lamp of Learning painted on and all? Ernie Irmer once again. How many signs has Ernie done, how many display projects? Ernie's is the first name people think of when they want a sign done. So they go over to Brewster Street and turn into Ernie and Palmyra's house. All built by Ernie, all hand pegged, all coddled and landscaped to individual taste that shows great care and planning. We're delighted with the new bulletin board which will let people be aware of and read the library's varied activities. You, Friends of the Library, paid for it. You'll be paying for the bookbinding fees this year, too. I'll give you a complete list of the spending of your monies at fund raising time. For the small amount each of us gives, a lot of good comes forth.

Don't forget to visit the Heritage Museum during the exhibition for the tenth anniversary. The Museum is dedicated to the history of Provincetown. The fisherman, the fireman, the Coast Guardsman, the artist, the poet, the photographer, and the scrimshander are only a few of Provincetown personalities on display. The artifacts and tools of whaling, life saving, turn-of-the-century pharmacy, school and fire equipment will give you a view and a few thoughts about life before the nuclear age. You can observe Flyer Santos and David Ditacchio working on the world's largest indoor scale model of a boat, the Rose Dorothea, which won the Lipton Cup out of Provincetown in 1907.

The skill of boat building can be observed daily at the Museum. If you've never seen a boat being built, this is a most convenient opportunity for you. You are welcome. See everything in the Heritage Museum. It is the history of Provincetown, so diverse and effective that I call it the smallest city on the earth.