

PROVINCETOWN
BANNER

*“Be just and
fear not.”*

Serving the Communities of Provincetown, Truro and Wellfleet

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‘Shared sense of place’

Mass. Memories Road Show highlights community connections

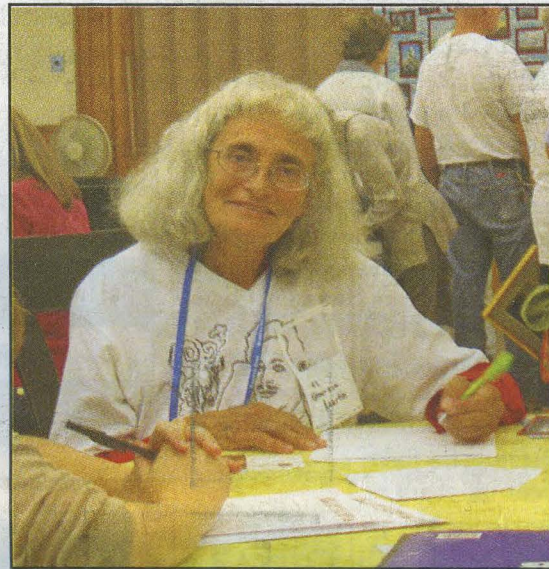
By **Deborah Minsky**

BANNER CORRESPONDENT

PROVINCETOWN — Judging by the amount of traffic in the first two hours of its four-hour running time, the Mass. Memories Road Show was met here with great enthusiasm.

Mass Memories “Provincetown-style” opened its doors at 10 o’clock Saturday morning, Sept. 28, and by noon more than 90 individuals had registered to participate. One “Roadie” volunteer who wished to remain anonymous noted, “A good turnout is 100 people; I know Provincetown is going beyond that. With each person presenting and sharing the stories behind three photographs and or memorabilia, that adds up to 300 significant bits of local history, scanned, video-taped and documented for all to share into the next century.”

And there were still two hours left for more people to show up and share their historic selections. In fact, at close of day, according to the town’s library director, Cheryl Napsha, one of the



PHOTOS DEBORAH MINSKY

(Above) Genevieve Martin fills out forms with a Mass. Memories volunteer. (Right) Lifelong Provincetown resident Rachel White shares her family photographs.



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local organizers, the ultimate official tally was 168 participants.

"The day went off without a hitch due to the UMass-Boston group, who work like a fine-tuned machine," she said. "They were wonderful to work with, and I'm very happy with the turnout."

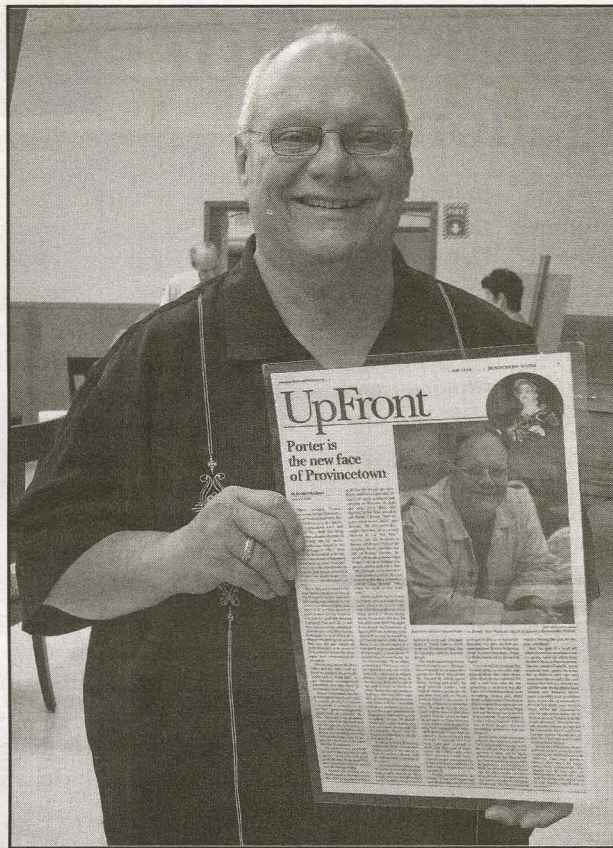
As testament to how resoundingly universal personal history can be, as the gathering at Veterans Memorial Community Center unfolded, the event became a combination of old-timers' reunion, new friends meet-and-greet and a sometimes raucous sharing of related documents.

The Road Show has been described as a digital time capsule being developed to archive the history of Massachusetts, one town at a time. Over the last decade, 22 of the state's 351 towns and cities have been documented. Provincetown is the 23rd.

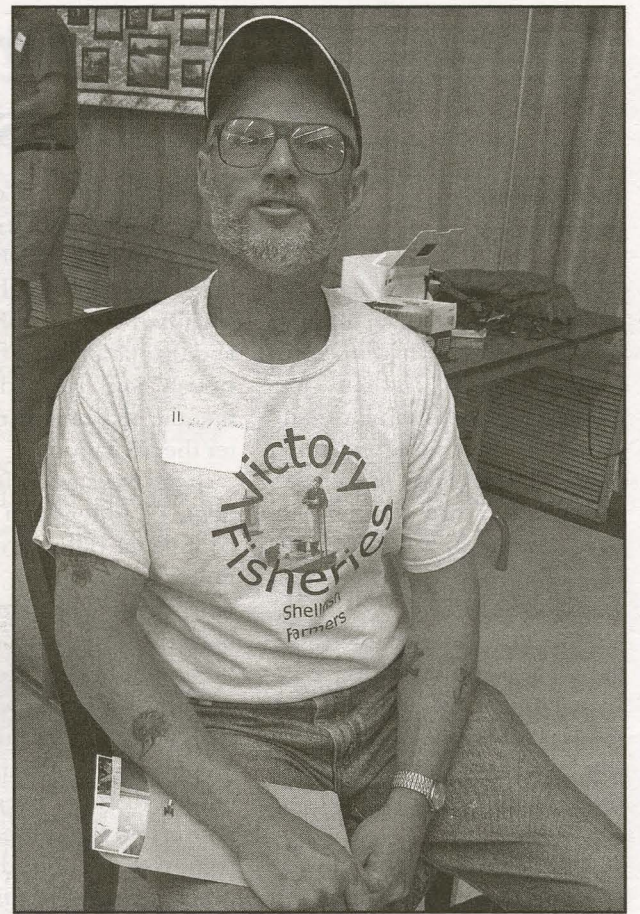
Chris Hottle, the town's council on aging director, and Town Clerk Doug Johnstone were the team who initially fostered the concept and pushed Provincetown into participation. Library Director Cheryl Napsha and her staff, notably Rebecca Levin, subsequently took over as local organizers, and they worked with local volunteers and folks from the University Archives and Special Collections Dept. at the Joseph P. Healey Library, UMass-Boston, among others.

Interestingly, it was not just current local residents showing up Saturday, but a number of former townies from up-Cape and as far away as Maine and Delaware, to participate. Ruth Ann O'Donnell Hurd traveled from Damariscotta, Maine, just to catch up, it would seem, with old friends like David Mayo, Gabby Rilleau, Rachel White and Joan Duarte Wood, a Provincetown native who now lives up-Cape. Roxanna Adams displayed a treasured artifact, a hand-carved ivory tool; Hersey and Joan Taylor brought centuries-old documents dating back to President Abraham Lincoln that connect to Provincetown's illustrious maritime history. Fisherman Alex Brown, of Creek Road in Provincetown, was among the early participants to share his story via videotape. Peter Clemons and Genevieve Martin joined others who brought photos commemorating their stays in dune shacks. Lauren Richmond shared a photo of her antique West End house at the 1976 time of purchase. Gail and John Vasques shared their histories and an image of John's no-longer operational dragger "Gail" that once plied the fishing sites offshore of Provincetown.

John McDonagh, executive director of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, brought a



Vernon Porter holds a page from the Provincetown Banner with a feature story about him when he started working at Town Hall.



Shellfisherman Alex Brown was among the first to be videotaped telling his stories.

People who missed the event but wish to see for themselves the fruits of this day of documentation can visit the Mass. Memories website, massmemories.net, or wait for videos taken by PTV. The library also will place the event online, and the Monument is planning a future exhibition of selected photographs.

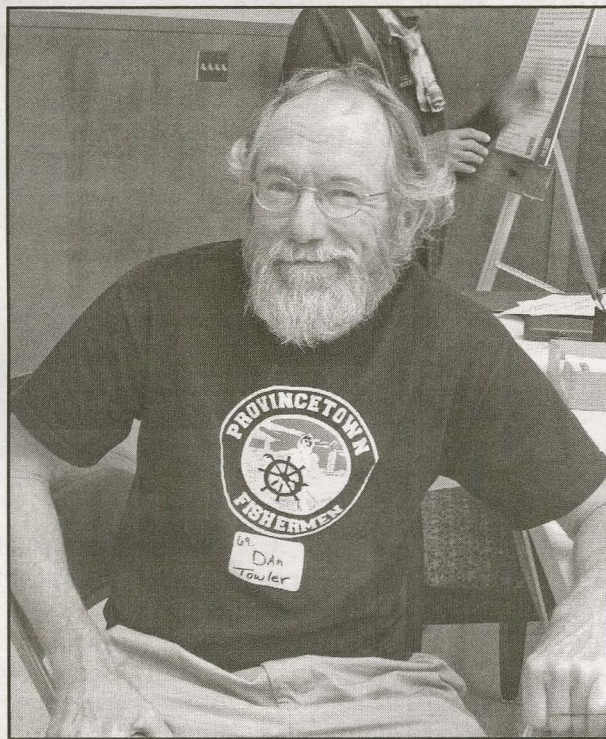
historic black-and-white photo of the 1907 laying of the Monument foundation. Part-time resident Julian Popko included images of his wharf-side whale statue and his ever-popular lobster pot holiday tree that annually decorates Lopes Square. Dan Towler, a local boy since early youth and known for his vintage postcard collection, arrived with a bagful of documents.

Rodney Reetz and Barbara "Maebush" Stevens, long-time employees at various town locales, including Fanizzi's Restaurant, the town parking lot and the U.S. Post Office, were there to share and soak in all the sights. Vernon Porter brought a laminated copy of an old Banner feature article about his arrival on the Town Hall scene.

One of organizer Napsha's favorite moments, she said, was when a man from the AIDS Support Group



Ruth O'Donnell Hurd of Damariscotta, Maine, shares her Provincetown stories.



Dan Towler checks in with a bag of memorabilia.

PHOTOS DEBORAH MINSKY

of Cape Cod "brought photos of the original staff, of which he was one, and another of today's staff as they celebrated their 30th anniversary. He also brought in the original wooden sign that marked their first office."

Life-long Provincetowner Susan Avellar helped with photo scanning, as did Julia Perry and Nauset Regional High School student Brian Nelson, who was there as part of a community service requirement. Local historian and photographer Peter Cook glided from table to table, chatting up old friends and catching a glimpse of what they planned to contribute to the town's story.

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The library's Levin wants people to know, "It's not over yet. The [local] planning team hopes to keep the ball rolling to preserve our precious community history. Though Mass. Memories Road Show was a one-day event, we want to continue to add to our town collection. Individuals who missed the event or had more than three items to contribute are invited to contact Doug Johnstone of the Provincetown History Project to get their items scanned into our online archive. As with the Road Show, all items will be returned after scanning and available for public viewing, nostalgia and research at www.provincetownhistoryproject.org."

As a final note, Ms Levin put in a plea for copies of The Provincetown Advocate from the 1920s or earlier. "We have some mysterious gaps in our digitized collection, especially from the nineteen-teens."

At day's end, Town Clerk Johnstone noted that it "was wonderful to hear the stories and see the interaction of the people who came to the Road Show. The day really highlighted how truly connected we are on our shared sense of place, in what for me was a remarkable community event."