



# The Bay Run



Newsletter of  
The Delaware Bay  
Lighthouse Keepers  
and Friends Association, Inc.

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“Our mission is to preserve the history of the  
Delaware Bay and River Lighthouses, Lightships and their Keepers”

## MY APPRENTICE COAST GUARD MEMORIES – PART 1 *by Ron Mikulski*

One fine day in the summer of 1965, I received an invitation from the government to participate in the selective service draft. Later in the year, I was to report to the local draft agency for a physical; at that time all physicals for the area were conducted at 401 N. Broad Street in Philadelphia, PA.

Getting off the train at 15th and Market, I walked down to the Broad Street location. An hour later I was declared fit for service. For whatever reason I decided to walk back to the train station on 13th Street instead of 15th Street. About halfway down the block, I came across an old storefront (no longer there) with “JOIN THE COAST GUARD” emblazoned across the windows on several large posters. I remembered thinking that this may not be a bad deal since I had spent many summers living on the water at my aunt’s waterfront place.

So, I walked in. The recruiter was very friendly although he informed me there was a substantial waiting list, but since I was there, I might as well take the test. I finished the tests, which were a mixture of basic mechanical skills and English comprehension. In a few minutes he returned and said I scored a 99 out of a hundred, missing out only identifying an obscure tool used with wood lathes. He then said I would be hearing from the Coast Guard shortly.



Approximately 3 weeks later I received a letter stating if I was still interested, report to the recruiting location October 1 and to bring only essentials for 2 or 3 days. Upon arriving at the recruiting office, I and about 25 others were sworn in and promptly put on a rickety old bus which took all of us to the Cape May Coast Guard Training Center.

I spent 4 days in an old wooden holding barracks until all the people that were to be in my training company arrived. We were then transferred into the new (at that time) training barracks under the designation of Mike 59.

I remember events such as: being taken out on an old wooden 36 foot MLV, which was a unique experience; thinking I could swim faster; doing calisthenics on the parade ground before dawn; being glad to do them to keep warm; one extremely out

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Angelo S. Rigazio, Jr.



Greetings from North Cape May, New Jersey. I remember growing up hearing the old saying, “April showers bring May flowers,” but that is not going to be true here this year. It is nearing the end of March, and the flowers are already blooming. The daffodils, forsythia, cherry trees, plus other trees and bushes are full of flowers. Our cedar tree is dropping an abundant amount of pollen on us every day.

We had an educational meeting at East Point Lighthouse in January. Thank you, Nancy and Carl Tidy, for hosting the event. The round table discussion proved to be an uplifting meeting for those in attendance. Hearing the stories told by former USCG members brought back memories for me and others, too. Thank you all for coming to share your experiences with us. Lots of reminiscing.

Summer will soon be here, and we have reserved July 20 for the first Delaware Bay lighthouse cruise on the Bonanza II out of Fortescue, NJ. We are waiting for the August date confirmation as of this writing. You can find updates for all the events on our Facebook page and our website.

Our organization is struggling with holding four general meetings each year and we are asking everyone to present ideas for more successful meetings. We try to find meeting places that interest all members, but it seems like we have not found the right venues as yet. We need your vote on decision making as it is your dues that keep the organization going. We are getting older, not going out as much and life happens for each of us but if there is something of interest that we can plan, please let us know. We also need to somehow reach out to the younger generation or there may come a time when the DBLHKFA cannot go on. We need your thoughts and ideas.

So, until next time, keep those lights shining!! Those lights are not going to be there forever. *Angelo*

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## FROM THE LOG OF THE INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT *by Rod Mulligan*



Our winter meeting was held on Saturday, January 27 at East Point Lighthouse in Heislerville, NJ. Retired US Coast Guard members shared their adventures and experiences of being stationed on lighthouses, lightships, etc. with the attendees. Most of these men entered the military at an early age--either right out of high school or in their early twenties with their basic training taking place at Base Cape May, New Jersey.

#1, **Rod Mulligan**, I am originally from Bridgehampton, Long Island, an area that was surrounded by military bases due to its proximity to New York City. At the age of 18, my first inclination was to join the air force, but at that time, I was informed that the coast guard was looking for volunteers due to low enrollment, so I decided to volunteer for the coast guard. After my basic training, I was assigned to a buoy tender, the Zinnia, stationed at its home port of Gloucester, NJ. (NOTE: Buoy tenders were named for flowers and plants). While stationed on the Zinnia, I was involved in Aids to Navigation bringing needed supplies to the Delaware Bay lighthouses and servicing range lights and the buoys, which was a dirty job. After my 2 years on the Zinnia, I was then transferred to the Agassiz, for the remainder of my time. The Agassiz was a Search and Rescue vessel, out of Cape May, covering the coast from Norfolk, VA to Montauk Point, NY. After finishing my assignment on the Agassiz, I spent 2 years in the coast guard reserve, receiving my honorable discharge right before the Cuban Crisis. Being in the coast guard was a good experience; I got to meet a lot of good people.

#2 Next to speak, was retired chief **Marvin White** who was also assigned to the Zinnia, that is where Marvin and I met. Marvin spoke about how it was necessary for two men to climb out on a buoy in the Delaware Bay to control its rock & roll enabling them to change the battery. The constant rocking and rolling of the buoy in the Bay sometimes caused the men to feel nauseous. At that time, he was being paid fifty cents a day for his efforts. One time he was called on to rescue a “damsel in distress”. While swimming to her aid, he was aware that another coast guardsman on his ship was shooting an M1 in the area where he was swimming. After rescuing the lady, he asked the shooter why he was shooting. The shooter didn’t answer but Marvin found out later that he was shooting to keep the sharks away during the rescue. He stated the ship always slowed down for passing whales. Marvin was involved in patrolling the North and South Atlantic Ocean enforcing Federal laws regarding fisheries and drugs. During that time, he was stationed in New London, CT and his last duty was at the Faulkner Island Light House on Long Island. Retiring in June 2004, Marvin was honorably discharged after 24 years of service. (Editor’s Note: Marvin White passed away April 5. A tribute will follow.)

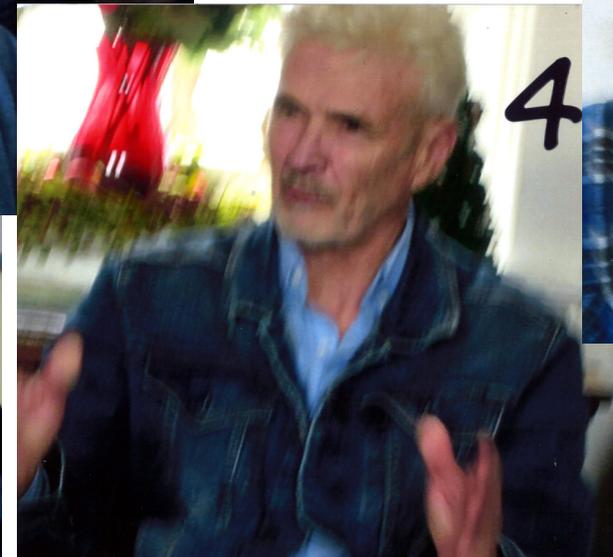
#3 **Mike Hamilton**, was stationed on the New London Ledge Light located at the mouth of the New London Harbor, New London, Connecticut. He explained some of his duties while on the light, was to report the weather every 4 hours, record in the ship’s log several times day, etc. This lighthouse, which has been featured on paranormal reality shows, was constructed in 1909 and is currently on the National Register of Historic Places. After finishing his time in the coast guard, Mike joined the navy.

#4 **Charles Markley**, from York, PA, who traveled from PA to share his experiences with us, explained that he was first assigned to the coast guard cutter, Morgenthal, but then spent time on three of the Delaware Bay lighthouses: Miah Maull, Brandywine and Harbor of Refuge. These lighthouses were supplied with fuel, water, mail, etc. by the buoy tender Sassafras. When his time assigned to Harbor was done, he was replaced by our organization’s president, Angelo Rigazio.

#5 Sharing his experiences next was **Charles Bolton**, who spent most of his coast guard tenure on the lightship, Ambrose. After passing the coast guard requirements, he was sent to Fort Hancock, NJ where the Sandy Hook light is located. Charlie stated that he “grew up fast” thanks to his coast guard experience. He was then transferred from Fort Hancock to the lightship Ambrose which was located on the busy channel leading into the Hudson River, supporting the busy port of New York City. This lightship had the most powerful light at that time; ships could pick up the signal at 19 miles. Being stationed on the lightship during Hurricane Donna proved to be quite an experience. The Ambrose was the last lightship to be replaced by a Texas Tower. This tower is no longer there.

#6 The last to speak was **Angelo Rigazio**, a native of Springfield, Massachusetts, who currently lives in Cape May, and who joined the coast guard at age 19. One of his first assignments was printing the coast guard magazine, “The Eagle” plus printing the ID cards of the other “coasties”. He was then assigned to Harbor of Refuge Light in the Delaware Bay. This light is the most exposed light to the elements of the bay and was so named because it provided a place for passing ships to wait out storms. “Harbor” also provided a place for the Delaware River Pilots to board the ships they escorted up to the ports of Wilmington, DE, Camden, NJ and Philadelphia, PA. The keepers on “Harbor” entered and left their duty by climbing into a basket lowered by helicopter. This was also how they received their supplies. Electricity was provided to the lighthouse by an underwater cable that was run out from Lewes, DE. One of the highlights of Angelo’s life was delivering a brand new 40’ boat to the America’s Cup Races in Newport, Rhode Island.

We certainly thank all our guest speakers “for their service” and for their time spent with us giving information about their experiences and adventures while in the coast guard. It was, indeed, a very interesting meeting, to say the least. Someone should consider interviewing many of these former military personnel to glean information for a book.





## SAVE THE DATES – Mark Your Calendars:

**Organization information: (Save the date—Mark it on your calendar.)** Our spring meeting will be held at historic Fort Mott, Saturday, May 4 (rain date Saturday, May 11) beginning at 11 AM. Bring a picnic lunch; lunch will be scheduled for Noon and after lunch, if so inclined, take a walk around the grounds to tour the Fort and cemetery. This 64-acre fortification was built to house Civil War prisoners and was part of the Harbors of Defense for Delaware. There is also a ferry available to take you to Fort Delaware; tickets may be ordered online. Fort Mott is located at 454 Fort Mott Road in Pennsville, NJ 08070. Phone 856-935-3218. We hope to see you at this historic venue.

**Saturday, July 20 -** Four-hour narrated Sunset Cruise in the Delaware Bay to Ship John in the northern part of the Bay leaving the dock at Higbee's Marina at 3 PM on the Bonanza II out of Fortescue, NJ. Get up close and personal with 5 lighthouses. Bring a lunch; bring a friend. These lighthouses are not going to be there forever. Cost of cruise \$50. Payment is due 2 weeks BEFORE the cruise, checks made payable to DBLHKFA may be mailed to Maxine Mulligan, Treasurer, 1049 Simca Terrace, Vineland, NJ 08360. For reservations and further information call: Darlene or Angelo Rigazio (609) 408-6692; e-mail: darlenej50@yahoo.com - KeeperAng54@yahoo.com or check our website (Delawarebaylightkeeper-friend.org). You will be notified if the cruise is cancelled due to inclement weather; your check will be returned.

**Saturday, August** No date has been confirmed for the August cruise. Please check our website for further information (DelawarebayLightkeeper-friend.org) or contact any of the officers (see bottom of page 2).

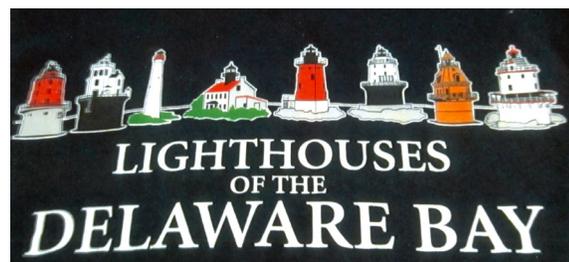
**Saturday & Sunday, October 19 & 20 -** New Jersey Lighthouse Challenge – You are challenged to visit all the lighthouses in New Jersey in one weekend. Take the challenge!!

**East Point Light** is open for tours monthly every 1st and 3rd weekend.

**Events at Bayshore Center at Bivalve** are scheduled every month. Check bayshorecenter.org or call 856-785-2060 for more information.

### WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

**JUST ARRIVED –** Lighthouses of the Delaware Bay" sweatshirts and T shirts containing pictures of ALL the Delaware Bay Lights are available at all our meetings and on our cruises. Price of a sweatshirt \$40 – L & XL sizes available in light blue or navy. XXL and XXXL sweatshirts also available @ \$45. New T-shirts showing all the Delaware Bay Lights – price \$25. XXL and XXXL available at \$30.



**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:** When our founder, Carole Riely, passed away, she left many maritime photographs (some original) that have been incorporated into two loose-leaf notebooks. These photographs are from Carol's personal collection and include vintage and modern photos of lighthouses, keepers' dwellings, lightships, etc. Items in this collection originally belonged to: Jim Gowdy, Robert Lewis, the US Coast Guard, et al. The drawings included are by artist, Roger Miersmann. These photographs (60+ in each book) have all been labeled for identification. If anyone is interested in purchasing this "once in a lifetime" collection, please contact Maxine Mulligan at Memax1@juno.com or (856) 691-8224. Asking price is \$50 each or both notebooks for \$75. We are making this special offer to our members first. Proceeds will benefit the Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers & Friends Association.

**ENJOY READING THE** 4-part series by Ron Mikulski regarding his adventures during his first year in the coast guard. Thanks for your contribution, Ron.

## THE OYSTER FAMILY'S 2023 SUMMER ADVENTURE

*By Oliver J. Oyster*

As I mentioned in my last column, Shelley and I were planning on staying local for our summer vacation in '23. We decided to take day trips to learn more about what the area has to offer. So, "why not explore the Delaware Bay and check out the lighthouses?" It is very convenient. We had heard there was a delightful cruise that visited the bay lights so we packed up the twins and off to Fortescue we went where we could attach to the bottom of the Bonanza II out of Higbee's Marina. Luckily, we were able to hear the tour guide's voice and learn the facts. We want the twins to learn as much as possible about the history of the area in which we live and check out these historic water lights before they disappear.

Off we go, headed south in the bay to Brandywine Shoal Light. We tell the twins to hold on tight as we are moving right along. Originally constructed in 1914, this is the site of the first screw pile lighthouse in the United States. It was the last remaining manned light station in the Delaware Bay and was automated in 1974. The 3rd order Fresnel lens from Brandywine is now on display at Tuckerton Seaport in Tuckerton, NJ. We make a mental note to visit Tuckerton someday. In February of 2013, the National Park Service announced that the lighthouse ownership would be transferred to Brandywine Shoal Inc., a non-profit organization headed by Captains Jeff Stewart, Sr. and Jr., owners of the Cape May Whale Watcher. Travelling north in the bay, we looked up to see a beautiful black and white lighthouse with a small building hanging over the side. We are informed that we are now at Fourteen Foot Light and that the small building hanging over the side is the infamous Fourteen Foot outhouse. Although Fourteen Foot's primary role is an aid to navigation, this lighthouse also served as a base for the Delaware Bay Observing System, run by the University of Delaware College of Marine Studies, which operated sophisticated monitoring equipment collecting weather and oceanographic data to relay to the university. The lighthouse was sold in 2007 for \$200,000 to be used as a summer residence by the owner. A beautiful vacation site, indeed.

Such heart rendering stories we heard about Cross Ledge and Elbow of Cross Ledge Lights. It seems that they were bound for disaster...they just couldn't catch a break! When construction began on Cross Ledge in the winter, floating ice destroyed the entire structure, so a lightship originally assigned to that area had to remain on station. Then, during WWII, the structure was used by the air force for target practice on bombing runs which destroyed most of the building. The coast guard burned what remained. It was then decided to try to erect another lighthouse since this area was a very dangerous part of the bay. It seems there was a slight turn in the shipping channel here, sort of an "elbow," so another lighthouse was constructed in the same area and named, Elbow of Cross Ledge. The newly built light was struck numerous times by passing ships plus in 1951, the structure was damaged in several storms. The keepers had to sleep in life jackets because the area was so dangerous. Finally, the lighthouse was done away with, and a steel skeleton tower was constructed on the old foundation. This tower remains in service at present.

On to Miah Maull Lighthouse which was once painted brown but is now a brilliant red. This lighthouse, named for Nehemiah Maull, a Delaware River pilot who perished in an accident in the bay, was opened in 1913. We were invited to "climb the stairs and enjoy a 360-degree view of the Bay" but we just enjoyed the view from our vantage point. The coast guard assumed responsibility for Miah Maull in 1939. This lighthouse, still considered a major navigational aid, is regarded as a favorite fishing spot. We were informed that this lighthouse is also visible from the deck of the Charlesworth Restaurant in Fortescue, NJ.

We are now approaching Ship John Shoal Lighthouse, as far north in the bay that this tour will take us. This lighthouse was named for a 1797 incident in which the ship "John" ran aground. The passengers were unloaded safely but the ship was lost. The lighthouse is a beautiful brown structure with a concrete platform that was originally built on one of the two adjoining piles of rocks in order to hold tanks for which there was no room in the building itself. It is now powered by solar panels placed on the rocks where the tanks once stood.

As we head back to Fortescue, we realize how much more informed we are about these beautiful lighthouses. It was very interesting. Some day we hope to return to cruise to Harbor of Refuge located further south in the bay but from what we have been told, the cruise would be much longer since there is a great distance between Harbor of Refuge in the south and Ship John located in the northern part of the bay.

Since we took day trips, we will be keeping you informed so "stay tuned" for more updates. We hope you all had a great summer. There is always so much to see and learn about in our area.

*Captain Mike Rothman with the twins*



## MY APPRENTICE COAST GUARD MEMORIES

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*Continued from page 1*

of shape fellow falling off the inverted climb and being seriously injured; another fellow who tried to escape by swimming across Cape May Harbor and making it to the bell buoy—Cape May Station picked him up. Apparently, he did not realize at that time, he could have just walked out on the ocean side beach without any problem. Another memory is being asked the question who wanted to be Captain of a Coast Guard Cutter and those answering “yes” were given a push mower to cut the grass.

Several weeks later, nearing completion, everyone was trying to guess where he was going. Some were going to icebreakers; some to weather ships\*\*, some to Vietnam and some were going to general stations on the East Coast or the Great Lakes. (\*\*Weather ships were stationed in Boston and patrolled a triangular area off Greenland emitting a beacon by which airplanes and ships navigated.) That was rough duty, especially in the winter. I later saw some of the ships in Boston; I could see all the hull plates battered from the waves in and around the framework. Those aboard spent a great deal of time removing ice in the winter so the ship would not capsize. The ships were originally painted grey but eventually switched over to white. This gave antiwar people a broad canvas for a while until a few of the more innovative of the ship’s crew took to dumping Bunker C on them. Bunker C was a thick coal tar like substance the ships used for fuel—very black and difficult to remove.

Up until the time the Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Defense to the Department of Transportation, the Coast Guard ran all the river patrols and directed the dockside delivery of materials. After the transfer, the Coast Guard was not considered a combat force leading to removal of all personnel in Vietnam and dissolution of the “Coastal Forces” which were the equivalent of the Navy seals.

I, the only one from my graduating group, was surprised to be assigned to Cape May station. I remember the person who gave me the assignment saying, “Oh, you’re only moving next door,” and explaining to me the Station was on the Training Base but not part of it. *(To be continued)*

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## ENJOYABLE DAY TRIPS FOR THIS SUMMER

When traveling north on Route 9 towards Smithville, NJ, there is a large sign on the right directing the driver to the Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge, a 48,000 acre tract of South Jersey wetlands featuring a natural habitat for wildlife. It is open from Wednesday to Sunday 10 AM – 2 PM. There is a driveway leading to the museum for one’s perusal and a small gift shop. You are invited to take the scenic 8-mile Wildlife Drive which will take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours due to the 15-mph speed limit. If you are so inclined, you may pick up a map of the many trails throughout the area, do some hiking or just wander along the boardwalks over the salt marshes. There are 2 observation towers along the way to augment your viewing experience. A view of the Atlantic City skyline enhances the background. Bring your camera and binoculars. After a truly enjoyable afternoon, unwind from the daily stress of everyday life by continuing on Route 9 north about 5 minutes to Smithville to do some shopping in their quaint shops and enjoy a late lunch or early dinner at their award winning dining room.

(NOTE: We had planned on scheduling a meeting here but we were informed that they do not deal with organizations, just private visitors.)

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## CHECK OUT THE MARINE MAMMAL STRANDING CENTER IN BRIGANTINE, NJ 2024

Since 1978 when the Stranding Center was founded, over 5,600 animals have been rescued. These rescues include those suffering from serious injuries such as shark bites, boat strikes and fractures to simple respiratory infections, parasites or malnutrition and dehydration. The center’s goal is to rescue, rehabilitate and release stranded marine mammals and sea turtles. These rescues include whales, dolphins, seals and sea turtles; ninety percent make a full recovery and are returned to the wild. It is the only marine stranding center in New Jersey.

The Marine Mammal Stranding Center is located at 3625 Atlantic-Brigantine Boulevard, Brigantine, NJ 08203. It opens at 10 AM on Saturdays and can be reached at 609-266-0538. Stop by and enjoy a virtual tour of the center, glean information from the knowledgeable guides, and visit the gift shop.

We had planned on scheduling a meeting at this location but there is not sufficient room. (Information from Internet)

## CROSSING THE BAR



Sadly we remember **George "Buddy" Grover**, Absecon's Lighthouse dedicated volunteer, who passed away at the age of 96 at the end of last year. We all remember him as he shared information on the Absecon lighthouse at our fall meeting in 2023. He was a beloved figure with the community and amongst lighthouse enthusiasts. Since 2009, Buddy served as a volunteer lightkeeper, a role where he greeted visitors with a warm smile, shared captivating stories, and imparted valuable historical knowledge. He hailed from Hamilton Square, NJ; his dream of going to college was abruptly interrupted when he was drafted into the Army. He didn't pass the Army physical, so he joined the Marines. After his stint in the military, Buddy briefly attended the University of North Carolina before settling in Atlantic City in 1956 and began working at the Shelbourne Hotel. After his wife passed away, Buddy started volunteering at the Absecon Lighthouse, playing the part of an old-time lighthouse keeper. In his nineties, he continued climbing the 228 steps of Absecon lighthouse at least once a week, imparting his knowledge to the visitors. The entire community mourns the loss of a true friend and dedicated volunteer. His absence will undoubtedly be felt by all who had the privilege of knowing him. (Information from the Atlantic City Press, 2023)

We just received news of **Sylvia Johnson** passing over the bar on September 24, 2023. She and her husband, Bill, who was in the coast guard and the keeper of Miah Maull Light, were both honorary members of our association. Sylvia lived most of her life in Newport, NJ, was a floral designer at Gate's Florist for many years and was an employee of Owens Illinois during World War 2. But most of all, she loved to travel. Her favorite place to visit was Disney World. Many times, she shared with us one of her favorite stories. When she and Bill were "courting," and he was stationed on Miah Maull Light, she would go down to the shore of the Delaware Bay and flash the headlights on the car. He in turn would answer by flashing the lights on the deck of the lighthouse. True love!! She is sadly missed by members of our association and friends.



It is with regret that I announce the passing of **Betty Mognier** on December 19, 2023. Graduating from West Catholic High School for Girls, she married and eventually settled down in a turn of the century home in Anglesea, NJ directly across the street from the historic Hereford Inlet Lighthouse. A talented artist, her plan was to spend the days by the seaside expressing herself through painting, photography, calligraphy and poetry, doing much of this almost daily in the tranquil lighthouse gardens. Betty fell in love with the lighthouse and became a "Jill of all trades". She did the book-keeping, developed the tiny gift shop into a much nicer, larger and more appropriately stocked store, trained staff and tour guides, did press releases, handled marketing and advertising, served as assistant newsletter editor, solicited for senior bus tours and school trips, helped arrange for special events and craft shows, helped with research and interpretive displays and ran information/outreach tables at various events throughout the State. She worked every day, even on her scheduled days off and kept the lighthouse open through the winter months without salary. She was one of the founding board members of the non-profit Friends of Hereford Lighthouse making the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse, at that time, a gold standard in the lighthouse community.

Betty was honored with several important awards including the "Lighthouse Keeper of the Year Award" given by the Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers and Friends, Assoc. in 2010; "The Freeling Hewitt Award" given by the Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse in 2009 and was part of the team that was awarded the "New Jersey Historic Preservation Award" in 2005. As stated in the novel, *AHAB'S WIFE*, "She too learned to love the light and the fidelity that it required". We will truly all miss Betty and all her contributions to the lighthouse community. A Tribute to Life was held for Betty on March 9, 2024. (Written by Steve Murray)

It has been brought to my attention that a former member of our organization has "crossed the bar". This, being brought to my attention, happened in a rather strange way since we hadn't heard from Linda in a couple of years. About two months ago, a lady from Mineola, Texas called me telling me she had purchased a denim vest in a thrift store in Texas. The vest had several lighthouse buttons and patches on it. One of the patches was a Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers Assoc. patch with Linda Peirson's name on it. The lady had done some research, found my phone #, called me to ask about Linda and to ask if I wanted the vest.

After researching Linda on the Internet, it was discovered that Linda had passed away in December of 2021. She and her husband, Paul, were active members of our organization for several years, attending meetings and taking part in outreaches. Born in Wilmington, Delaware, Linda eventually moved to West Grove, PA; she had varied interests throughout her life, one of which was volunteering at the United Methodist Church in her hometown. Linda was a caretaker and very devoted to her husband who has also "crossed the bar".

Linda wore her "lighthouse vest" constantly and was known as the "Delaware Lighthouse Lady". We would like to take this opportunity to remember her, acknowledge her, make other members aware of her passing and pay this tribute to her.

