



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"

THE SAD SAGA OF THE BARNEGAT LIGHTSHIP by Mark Allen



That was then...

Some said that it had been sunk as part of an artificial reef. Others said that it had once been moored at the nearby Coast Guard Base, here on Cape May's Other Side, while others said it traveled between Cape May and Barnegat as a relief vessel. But no one that I knew could say definitively what happened to her, so I did some research.

I learned that even though she was assigned to guard the Five Fathom Shoal, which is located at the entrance to the Delaware Bay, fifteen miles from Cape May's famous lighthouse, she had been christened "Barnegat" because she was also assigned to the most dangerous inlet. But she didn't start out as the Barnegat. Built in 1904 by the New York Shipbuilding Company in Camden, she started out as the LV-79 Hyde. At 131 feet long, she was originally built as a coal-powered vessel. Designed specifically as a lightship, she featured a one-tone nickel bell and 2,800-pound anchor. In addition to an oscillating white light mounted high on one masthead, her stream chime whistle blasted every 20 seconds. An underwater bell and radio beacon were added in 1931. Typically, she carried a crew of 15 to 18 who manned a two-week shift, maintaining her lights, whistles and ensuring that she stayed on station. In 1931, the Barnegat was modernized when her boilers were converted to operate on diesel fuel instead of coal.

After her launch in 1904, the Barnegat served Cape May until 1926 when she began duty as a relief lightship for the Coast Guard's 3rd District, a duty that saw her serving Barnegat Inlet as well as Five Fathom Shoal. She was moved

Two hundred years ago it must have been a beautiful location. Situated at the confluence of the Delaware and Cooper Rivers, just south of Petty's Island, and immediately adjacent to East Camden, what is referred to as Pyne Point Marina is today a wasteland. Reminiscent of a scene from "Thunderdome", the site is strewn with scores of abandoned, damaged and ruined pleasure watercrafts, stacked haphazardly one upon the other. Mixed in amongst the scrub trees, weeds and saplings are barrels, huge floats, tires, beer bottles and rubbish of all descriptions. My friend, and fellow DBLKA member, John Schaeffer, who works parttime as a Keeper at the Cape May lighthouse for MAC (Museums-Art-Culture) and I visited the site one bright, sunny, early spring day on a quest to find the lightship that once guarded Five Fathom Shoal just off the entrance to the Delaware Bay. Over the years, I had heard old-timers talk of the vessel.

In This Issue:

2 - A Beam from the President's Desk

3 - From The Log of the Interim

4 - Peggy's Corner & From The Log (*Continued*)

5 - Featured Article Continued

6 - Remembering November 22, 1963 & Camden

Shipyard & Maritime Museum Reopens

7 - NJ Lighthouse Challenge 2023

8 - Let There Be Peace on Earth

Angelo S. Rigazio, Jr.



Greetings from North Cape May, New Jersey. The holiday season is upon us. Halloween quickly passed with us handing out candy to 380 costumed “trick or treaters”. It was a cold, rainy night but that didn’t seem to bother them. The stores in our area have been selling Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas items since the end of August. I find that odd at times.

We had a very enjoyable, educational meeting at the Bay Shore Center at Bivalve learning quite a bit regarding the oyster industry and the community of people who lived there and worked in the oyster sheds. This was a piece of history of which I had no knowledge; I am so glad we had the opportunity to visit and learn.

Even though our Lighthouse Challenge weekend spent at East Point Lighthouse was cold and windy, we had a great time. Nancy and Carl Tidy provided us with everything that was needed to stay warm and comfortable. We sure had a lot of challengers sign up for our 2024 summer cruises. I enjoyed speaking to the visitors, especially the children who seemed excited to meet a real lighthouse keeper.

We are looking forward to seeing you all at our winter meeting at East Point in January. Former lighthouse keepers, retired members of the military, will be sharing their stories in a round-table discussion and answering the questions from our guests. So, until next time, keep the lights shining!! *Angelo*

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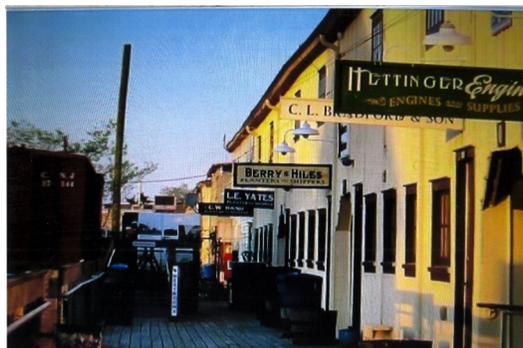
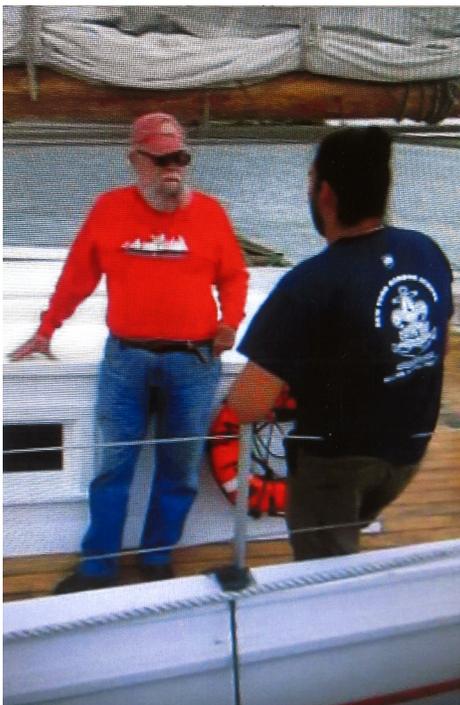
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FROM THE LOG OF THE INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT *by Rod Mulligan*



Our fall meeting was held at the Bay Shore Project, New Jersey's only environmental history museum and the home port of New Jersey's Tall Ship, the AJ Meerwald. We met in one of the beautifully renovated oyster shipping sheds. These sheds date back to 1904. After watching videos regarding some of the local history involving the oyster industry, we had a guided tour of the renovated sheds, the museum, and the AJ Meerwald. When on the Meerwald, we were treated to a beautiful view of the "Wild and Scenic" Maurice River. Across the river we could see the historic East Point Lighthouse. Of interest to me was the video showing **Bivalve**, "The Oyster Capital of the World" in its "heyday". Hundreds of workers would come from Maryland in the fall each year to help with the harvesting, shucking and packing of these delicacies which were then shipped across North America and throughout the world. Meghan Wren Briggs, several oystermen, their relatives and relatives of the actual shuckers narrated the videos.

Most of the millionaires who earned their money in the oyster industry lived in **Port Norris**. Workers, the majority African American, lived and worked in nearby **Shellpile** or **Berrytown**. Shucking and packing oysters was a full-time, strenuous, job. Shuckers, both men and women (some had started shucking at the early age of 16) were in high demand, many groups involved generations from the same family. The workers lived like one big family residing in barrack-like homes with no running water nor indoor sanitation facilities (the community toilet area was near the freshwater pump). Since the housing facilities were located in a low-lying area, the homes often flooded, and the residents were forced to move up to the second floor where they were rescued by rowboats. The "shuckers," both male and female, passed the time when working, by singing. They loved to sing and dance together, not only to pass time but for entertainment. Singing groups were formed; many of these groups sang spirituals. Another enjoyable pastime was gathering at the neighborhood store, having a soda and talking about events in their everyday lives. Besides the homes, a church, a 3-room school, a store, a couple of bars and large buildings where the work was carried out rounded out this village. One of the former residents recounted "there was even an area for people who could swim and an area for those who couldn't." Eventually an outbreak of parasites ruined the oyster industry. Scientists and oystermen worked together to restore the oyster population for the future generations. A typhoid epidemic killed many of the residents. Eventually Shellpile disappeared; the packing houses, the shucking house, the residential houses, the church, the school and other buildings are no longer there. There is no longer any evidence of a once-living, thriving community. *Continued next page*





SAVE THE DATES – Mark Your Calendars:

Organization information: (Save the date—Mark it on your calendar.) Our winter meeting will be held at East Point Light in Heislerville, NJ on Saturday, January 27 (snow date February 10). Itinerary: Meeting at 11; Lunch at Noon (brown bag); Guest speakers at 1. We are planning a “round table discussion” with former coast guard personnel: Aids to Navigation, Search & Rescue, Lighthouse Keepers, Lightship Personnel, Ocean Patrol, etc. sharing their adventures. If any members (former military) are interested in participating in

this discussion or know of anyone who would like to take part, please contact President Angelo Rigazio (609-408-6692) KeeperAng54@yahoo, Darlene Rigazio darlenej50@yahoo.com or Maxine Mulligan (856-691-8224) Memax1@juno.com. We are hoping to keep history alive through your stories.

WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE

JUST ARRIVED – brand new “Lighthouses of the Delaware Bay” sweatshirts and T shirts (contain pictures of ALL the Delaware Bay Lights). They 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.

COMING SOON IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS will be a 4-part series by Ron Mikulski regarding his adventures during his first year serving in the coast guard. Mikulski was once Treasurer of the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and is also a close friend of Steve Murray. Thanks for your contribution, Ron.

FROM THE LOG OF THE INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT *CONTINUED*

The video took us on a tour of “what used to be”. What was once a residential area is now made up of a few roadways, grassland and trees.

Thank heavens the weather cooperated (rain was forecast); we had quite an interesting afternoon which included a delicious lunch at the Oyster Cracker Café. A special thanks to all the Bay Shore Project personnel who made it so.

BARNEGAT LIGHTSHIP *(continued from page 1)*

offshore along the shipping lanes on August 15, 1927. Staying on station was critical as the Barnegat had been positioned at an oceanic crossroads that saw vessel traffic coming in from the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, from New York and New England as well as from the South Atlantic coast and Caribbean. Additionally, all passing ships had to make a course change when approaching the Barnegat in order to avoid the shallow water of the Five Fathom Shoal. Anchored as she was, far from shore, Barnegat's brilliant light, loud steam whistle and clanging bell must have been reassuring indications of safety for passing vessels on dark, foggy nights.

The Barnegat kept this schedule until World War II when she was repositioned in the Delaware River at Edgemoor as an examination vessel. The river narrows at this point and the Barnegat Lightship was tasked with intercepting all vessels coming upriver and then verifying each arriving ship's identity, homeport, last port of call, and cargo. She continued this duty throughout the war from 1942 to 1945, after which she returned to her pre-war stations of relief vessel for Barnegat Inlet and Five Fathom Shoal. She remained at this station until March 3, 1967, when she was decommissioned.

Renamed Coast Guard Lightship #506, the Barnegat was moved to the Cape May Coast Guard station for storage on Cape May's Other Side. Now decommissioned and declared surplus, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare acquired the Barnegat for educational purposes and moved her to the Coast Guard shipyard at Curtis Bay, Maryland, in preparation for the vessel being relocated to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in Saint Michaels, Maryland. Meanwhile, the New Jersey Marine Consortium attempted to secure the vessel in 1970 but could not obtain necessary permits, so the Chesapeake Bay group sold the Barnegat to the Heritage Ship Guild in Philadelphia to be displayed at Penn's Landing. There, moving under her own power, the Barnegat commenced making excursions along the Delaware several times a year until financial woes forced the Guild to sell the Barnegat to Rod Sadler. Sadler relocated the vessel to his marina in Camden and started making plans to restore and then exhibit the vessel in Camden near the battleship New Jersey. Unfortunately, Rod Sadler passed away in 2015 before restoration could commence. His Pyne Point Marina, and the lightship Barnegat fell into neglect, and she remains there until this day.

Driving down 6th Street, we had passed the Mastery Charter High school of Camden on the right and Pine Point Park on the left, before finally coming to the water's edge. We knew that Pyne Point Marina should be farther off to the right, but thick overgrowth, derelict vessels and rubbish blocked our vision. Moving closer to the water, two tall masts like those depicted in one of Barnegat's photos finally appeared. Whereas I had been curious and somewhat interested, John had been downright eager and determined. He grabbed his camera and set off bushwacking his way through the thick jungle of shrubs and rubbish. John was not one to be deterred. When my friend finally returned, he did so with a grin and over 60 photographs; a complete photographic record of the lightship called, Barnegat, circa 2023.

I was happy we found the Barnegat. Happy but very sad. Happy that we had found her and that she was still afloat but sad to see her current state of disrepair and to realize her future is bleak at best. The Lightship Barnegat is a 119-year-old icon, a reminder of a time long past, and mariners long gone; she is a legacy of all Keepers, past and present.

On a much happier note, just a few weeks ago, Camden County took possession of Pyce Point Marina with the expressed intent to restore the site and make it a unique riverfront park. We can only hope that a restoration of the Barnegat Lightship will follow.

(My thanks to Mark for his informative, interesting contribution to the Newsletter. We, too, hope that the Barnegat is restored for future generations to learn about and explore.)



This is now...
Trashed Barnegat Lightship in Camden, NJ

REMEMBERING NOVEMBER 22, 1963

By M. Mulligan, Editor

There are specific times in everyone's life that events of certain days will always be remembered... the date, the time, the events of the day, where you were, and what you were doing. Here we are sixty years later, and I can still recall three special days in my life that I don't believe I will ever forget – January 6, 2021, September 11, 2002, and November 22, 1963. In 1963, I was working as a secretary at Memorial Junior High School in Vineland, NJ and had gone to the post office during my lunch hour to bring and/or pick up the mail which was part of my daily routine. When I returned to my car, the radio was playing very solemn music. At the time, there was a man, Vaughn Meader, a comedian and impressionist, who did impersonations of our President, John F. Kennedy, announcing certain occurrences with that easily recognizable Boston accent. I thought it was one of his recordings.

As I traveled back to the school, a very solemn voice related what had taken place in Dallas, Texas a short time before. I listened to the facts and when I got back to the school, related them to the principal who immediately turned on the intercom radio flipping the on button in order to make an announcement to all the classes and personnel throughout the building.

There was immediate silence as the radio announcer related the facts as to what was happening. At 12:30 PM Dallas time, shots had been fired; President Kennedy and the Governor of Texas, John Connally had been hit. Both men were rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital and into surgery. The President was in very serious condition and was given The Last Rites. I could hear students, teachers and other school personnel crying as the announcements continued eventually announcing the President had passed away. His body was placed in a casket and taken to Love Field to be placed aboard Air Force One. At 4:58 that afternoon, the plane bearing the President's body, landed at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. Vice President Lyndon Johnson had been sworn into office on another plane on the return trip. "Jackie" Kennedy, the President's wife, our "first lady," stood silently by, her pink suit covered with blood.

Many of you will remember the events that followed. Lee Harvey Oswald, the expected assassin, was arrested, placed in jail where he was fatally shot by Jack Ruby. Schools were closed the day of the President's funeral. Most of the people watched the funeral parade witnessing the symbolic riderless horse with the riding boots placed backwards on each side of the saddle; the rest of the Kennedy family watching the parade and the Kennedy children standing at attention, brave little "John John" saluting as the horse drawn carriage bearing his father's body passed by.

I had a pen pal from Wales at that time and will always remember the letter I received from her regarding this event. She stated: "I never thought anything like this could ever happen in the United States." John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States and the youngest person to ever be elected president, had been assassinated. What a sad but memorable day in the history of our country...November 22, 1963.

CAMDEN SHIPYARD & MARITIME MUSEUM

Camden Shipyard and Maritime Museum has reopened. The museum features two new exhibits: "Disasters on the Delaware", which relates the long and lurid history of the Delaware River including a disaster in 1777 when Revolutionary soldiers fired on a British warship and hit its powder magazine with a resulting explosion that shattered windows for more than 16 miles. The other new exhibit is "Silent Witness" – photographs of Shipwrecks by Stefano Benazzo, an Italian sculptor, model maker and photographer who has devoted his life to the memory of abandoned ships.

The museum is at 1912 S. Broadway in Camden 08104 (856) 541-1447 or visit: www.camdenshipyardand-museum.org OR www.waterfrontsouthcamden.com

(NOTE: Hours are noon to 4 PM; Thursdays by appointment)

THE 2023 NEW JERSEY LIGHTHOUSE CHALLENGE

On a very brisk, windy, cool weekend in October, we volunteered at East Point Lighthouse for the Challenge. How brisk and windy was it? The 35 – 40 mph wind gusts blew the side out of the tent in which we were housed. Thanks to Carl Tidy and his co-workers, another tent was set up in a different location for our Sunday stint. We were also provided with a propane heater which kept us warm the entire day.

The “Challenge” is to visit the 10 land-based lighthouses in New Jersey, plus the 3 life-saving stations and 1 museum in one weekend. Again, this year, we met people from various states including: Arizona, Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire and Florida. There were even some visitors from our northern neighbor, Canada and, of course, many challengers from New Jersey. It is always amazing how many lighthouse enthusiasts come from all over the country to participate in the Challenge. It was interesting listening to their adventures and learning about their various backgrounds. Our president and former USCG Petty Officer 2nd Class Engineman Rigazio made quite a hit with the challengers telling his tales and answering questions regarding his time as a Keeper on Harbor of Refuge Light. When not relating his adventures, he was busy signing autographs and having his picture taken. It was nice when parents brought their children to our tent to listen to his stories. We have a celebrity in our midst. How neat to hear real-life stories from a keeper who has “been there, done that”. *(NOTE: Rigazio will gladly sign autographs for our members for a slight fee.)*



Top Left: Volunteers the Rigazios & Mulligans



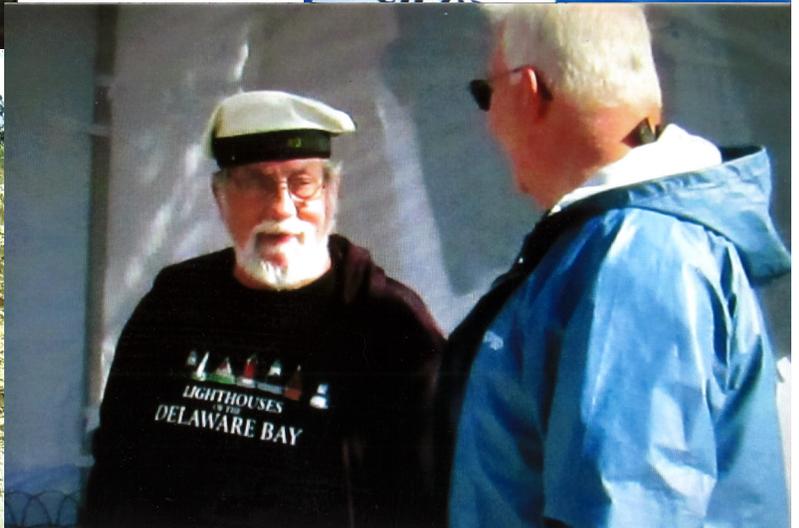
Top Right: Sign In Booth

Middle: East Point Gift Shop

Bottom Left: Security at the lighthouse



Bottom Right: President Rigazio sharing info with a challenger



LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant
to be.

Let peace begin with me

Let this be the moment now

With every step I take

Let this be my solemn vow

To take each moment and

Live each moment

In peace eternally

Let there be peace on earth

And let it begin with me.

By Sy Miller and Jill Jackson

Picture by Paul Bradley



ABSECON LIGHTHOUSE
ABSECON, NEW JERSEY