

P.O. Box 177
Empire, Michigan 49630

1996/1997, Vol.7, No.2

July 1996

GREETINGS FRIENDS!

"The months of May and June were called the fog months by lighthouse keepers and rightly so, because the water was still very cold from snow and ice and the sun was getting warmer each day. This condition created fog. I remember one spring when the fog signal never stopped sounding for more than twenty days.

"I think the interesting part for me was to listen to the various sounds and try to picture what was happening out there in the fog. I would listen for the lightship and South Manitou whistles; and all the various whistles of the vessels using the Manitou Passage. There was the deep-throated whistles of the large steamers as they sounded the required three short blasts, the lighter toned whistles of others, and the sound of a motorboat engine. They also periodically would sound three blasts on their hand held mouth-operated horns. Occasionally you could hear a siren and bells ringing that indicated that there was a vessel out there towing barges. Once in awhile, out of the main channel area, you could hear a ship ringing a bell rapidly every minute or so to indicate that the captain got tired of that mess and had pulled over to anchor and rest awhile."

from *My Point of View* (Glenn C. Furst)

It seems we all have "messes" to navigate at various times in our lives. Job changes, relocations. Marriages, births, separations. Errors in judgment. When these occur, we long for a hint of the familiar to remind us that yes, we will get through these uncharted waters and yes, when the fog clears life will become friendly once again.

All the Society members come from disparate lives and backgrounds, and yet we meet once a year in July to celebrate and remind ourselves of what we have in common. We greet our family's friends of some 60, 70, or 80 years; we meet new members and see the artifacts that they have come to share. We share the stories of the young and old. We mourn the members we have lost and continue their legacy by passing on their stories as well. We talk about the current concerns of South Manitou Island and the National Lakeshore. In short, the fog clears for awhile and we tend to our friendships as if they were ancestral roses.

We'll see you all at the annual Society meeting and picnic. The weather promises to be warm and sunny with southwesterly breezes (if it isn't, we'll pretend).

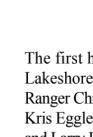
Margaret Braden

SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING EMPIRE METHODIST CHURCH SATURDAY JULY 27, 1996 10:00-12:00 a.m.

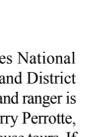
AGENDA:

- I. Old Business
 - A. Memorandum of Agreement with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Duane Pierson, Assistant Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes N.L. will discuss the agreement and answer questions.
- II. New Business
 - A. Nominating Committee: 5 members need to be selected to make a slate of candidates for next years election.
 - B. Presentation by Kim Mann, SMMS liaison and National Park Historic Architect. Kim will speak about current and future projects involving the SMMS.
 - C. Open discussion of new projects involving the SMMS.
 - D. Update on Land Swap issue between Homestead Resort and Sleeping Bear Dunes N.L.

SOUTH MANITOU ISLAND PICNIC EMPIRE TOWNSHIP HALL SATURDAY JULY 27, 1996 12:00 noon



SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY ISLAND OUTING SUNDAY JULY 28, 1996



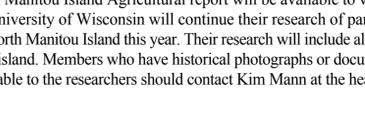
Once again the South Manitou Memorial Society will set sail for South Manitou Island on Sunday July 28, 1996. If you are interested in joining the group **PLEASE MAKE YOUR OWN RESERVATIONS by phoning Manitou Island Transit at (616) 256-9061.** Bring your family, friends, a picnic lunch, rain gear, your South Manitou Memorial Society sweatshirt and LOTS of stories and memories. Judy Fogle will be organizing the event this year! Thank you Judy. See you all there!

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL PARK

The first holiday weekend for the summer is completed at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The island operations still find South Manitou Island staffed with Island District Ranger Chris Johnson, and returning law enforcement ranger Pat Schad. The new island ranger is Kris Eggle. The maintenance workers on South Manitou Island are Dave Nagle, Larry Perrotte, and Larry Robotham. The island is still looking for volunteers to assist with the lighthouse tours. If anyone is interested in assisting with this task please contact Chris Johnson at 616-334-3976.

Returning rangers to North Manitou Island are Dave Hooper and Greg Mullen. The construction of the photovoltaic array and maintenance structure is underway on North Manitou Island, and a number of maintenance employees are on the island. The weekend maintenance employee is Greg Ricketts.

The Huron Valley Group Sierra Club returned to North Manitou Island again over Memorial Day Weekend for their annual service trip.



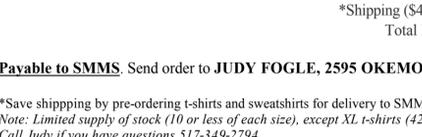
This year's work included restoring the Carlson and Anderson family plots in the cemetery.

The materials included wire fencing and wood pickets was donated by the South Manitou Memorial Society. The pickets were constructed by Dick Kishline with the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes. Cedar posts were donated by Dennis and Chuck Kruch. Thanks to all individuals and groups who assisted with this project.

Quinn-Evans will be on South Manitou Island, June 25-28, to collect paint samples and do additional field research on the Lighthouse Complex.

The final draft of the South Manitou Island Agricultural report will be available to view at the picnic on July 27th. The University of Wisconsin will continue their research of park cultural resources by venturing to North Manitou Island this year. Their research will include all historical themes associated with the island. Members who have historical photographs or documents that they would like made available to the researchers should contact Kim Mann at the headquarters building (616)326-5134.

South Manitou Memorial Society Sweatshirt & T-Shirt Order Form



Dedicated to the preservation of our history in order that we may pass the light of our symbol to future generations

South Manitou Memorial Society t-shirts and sweatshirts are available in oatmeal (cream-colored) with the society logo printed on the left chest with the above mission statement on the back in large print.

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ home _____ evenings _____

| T-Shirts | | | | Sweatshirts | | | |
|----------|-------|-----------|-------|------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Size | No | Price ea. | Total | Size | No | Price ea. | Total |
| XXL | _____ | \$16.22 | _____ | XXL | _____ | \$27.00 | _____ |
| XL | _____ | 14.00 | _____ | XL | _____ | 25.00 | _____ |
| L | _____ | 14.00 | _____ | L | _____ | 25.00 | _____ |
| M | _____ | 14.00 | _____ | M | _____ | 25.00 | _____ |
| S | _____ | 14.00 | _____ | S | _____ | 25.00 | _____ |
| Youth L | _____ | 12.00 | _____ | Youth L | _____ | 20.00 | _____ |
| Youth M | _____ | 12.00 | _____ | Youth M | _____ | 20.00 | _____ |
| Youth S | _____ | 12.00 | _____ | Youth S | _____ | 20.00 | _____ |
| | | | | *Shipping (\$4.00 per order) | | | |
| | | | | Total Enclosed _____ | | | |

Payable to SMMS. Send order to JUDY FOGLE, 2595 OKEMOS RD, MASON MI 48854

*Save shipping by pre-ordering t-shirts and sweatshirts for delivery to SMMS meeting/potluck on July 27, 1996. Note: Limited supply of stock (10 or less of each size), except XL t-shirts (42 in stock). Call Judy if you have questions 517-349-2794.

Albert J. Bates

CHBOSN, Albert I Bates, USCG (Retired) died on 5 March 1996. He is survived by his widow Mrs. Edith V. Bates of 1404 W. Water Street, New Buffalo, MI 49117.

CWO4, Bates was born on 27 July 1914 and retired on 1 July 1965. He was a member of the Association of (ask Ethel) for 44 years.

We will miss him!

National Park Service Request

Quinn-Evans, the architectural company compiling research on the South Manitou Lighthouse requests the following information:

- When was the Lighthouse boathouse torn down or burned down? (it was the small boathouse located between the 2 existing boathouses in the village) If anyone has a date please contact Kim Mann at Sleeping Bear Dunes Headquarters at (616)326-5134.

Thank you!!



SOUTH MANITOU MEMORIAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

DONATION: _____ \$50.00 _____ \$10.00
_____ \$100.00 _____ \$25.00 _____ SOTHER

THE SMMS IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION. CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE TO THE EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW. SEND TO: SMMS P.O. BOX 177 EMPIRE, MI 49630

Part I of a Two-Part Story: "I Remember ..."

BENTH S. JOHNSON

"A COLORFUL PERSONALITY"

by Glenn Furst

As long as I can remember, his name was Ben Johnson. Mostly just Ben. Often to others you referred to him as "Ol' Ben". I never knew his name was Benth until long after he died.

Ben was born in Norway, a country that produced some of the finest sailors in the world. His language was the waterfront, down where the ships were moored, and sailors spun their yarns while sewing canvas that was torn during the storms on the last trip. He helped them spread the canvas or whatever else they asked of him. It was here he learned the nomenclature of a sailing vessel and how to tie the knots that were required of a sailor before they could be signed on. It was hard for him to wait until he became old enough to go to sea. "Finally, when I was fifteen years old" he said. "I ran away from home and sailed away on a clipper ship."

I, too, was fifteen years old when he told me these stories. That was my age when I began to work for "Ol' Ben."

He told so many stories of his sailing days as a young man. Not to me during working hours, but he lived alone and his house was a favorite place for men to gather in the evening and spin yarns. My ears were open to all these stories. Stories both good and bad for a young man to listen to, always told in the kitchen, a room filled with blue tobacco smoke, a spittoon on the floor, and the coffee pot on the wood burning range. Ol' Ben only made coffee once a day, in the early morning and it lasted all day. The fire went out in the stove when Ben and I went to work in the morning and when we came to the house for lunch Ol' Ben would head for that coffee pot. He would pick it up by the handle, raise it high above his head and slowly lower it to his mustached mouth and swig away. He would set it back on the stove with a satisfied "aw" and wipe his mustache with the back of his hand. I seldom drank coffee at Ol' Ben's house, you see, I needed milk and sugar in mine, and that wasn't like a sailor.

I worked three summers for Ben and each year I learned valuable lessons about life in general. He was a remarkable person. I learned that he had served a short time in the Life Saving Station with my father and I would wonder what my father would be like if he had lived. He died as age thirty-five of appendicitis.

There was no way you could be hearing distance of a Ben and not listen to what he had to say. I never asked him why he talked so loud. I just assumed it was a carryover from his sailing days when working high up in the sails of a full rigger or a clipper ship. If you did not shout every word, you could not be heard above the noises of the wind and flapping of canvas. He loved to tell about the time he fell off the yardarm of a full rigger. "Down I came ar's first and hit the bottom boards of our overturned dingy I was lucky I fell on that dingy and didn't hit the deck or I would have been killed" he would say. "The bottom of that dingy caved in and my head and knees were all that was sticking out of the hole. They called the ship's carpenter and he had to saw me out. I wasn't hurt a dumb bit, but the captain made me go to bed for the rest of the day."

Ol' Ben had lived a lifetime when I got to know him. He had raised a family of five children.

page 1

two boys and three girls. Sigwald, George, Gustie, Bessie and Jessie. His wife had died and was buried in the cemetery and he had married again. He was married to my great Uncle Theodore Beck's widow, Alvina. They did not live together much of the time. He worked in his fishing nets. She liked the farm life with her two sons -- Willie and Arthur. This was the arrangement when our family moved back to South Manitou in the year 1928.

Ben, like all sailors, was a very superstitious person and there were certain things you just didn't do unless you wanted to invite disaster. For example, you never ever began a new venture on a Friday. To launch your boat for the first time, or begin a voyage on a Friday was one of the worst things you could do. Many vessels, he would tell me, that sailed on a long trip on Friday were never heard from again. Just disappeared from the face of the earth. You always coiled a line in the direction the sun traveled or you could look for trouble. Believe me, I had a lot to learn when I started to work for Ol' Ben.

When I first started to work for him, I asked how much money I was going to be paid He told me \$2.00 a day. That was ok with me because I had so much to learn. The following year he asked me to work for him again. Knowing I had learned a great many things, I asked him once again how much I'd be paid. He said "You come and work a few days and I'll decide how much you are worth this year." After a few days I asked again. He told me \$2.00. Two bucks it was, or nothing. I never did get paid any more than \$2.00 a day during the three summers I worked for him. I didn't realize how valuable an education he was giving me, nor could I ever dream how well his training would serve me in my thirty-year career in the U.S. Coast Guard.

The work of lifting nets (pulling them to the surface from the bottom of the lake) was hard work, especially if they were set in 35 to 40 fathoms of water. Ol' Ben never did equip the "Swallow" with a gasoline powered lifter. We used to alternate pulling them up. You pull a net and then I'll pull the next one. I wasn't ready for this kind of work having lived at North Manitou Lighthouse for so long. It was only with sheer determination that I was able to get my net up from the bottom. Then I could move to the easier job of removing the fish and coiling the nets in a net box until it was my turn again. My legs soon became bowed from the heavy weight that was placed on them, and perhaps the lack of fresh milk and vegetables while on North Manitou was part of the cause. When the gill nets were set in shallow water the lifting of them was much easier.

In the beginning I was inclined to do everything the hard way. Ol' Ben would say "Don't work against the sea, you gotta' let the sea work for you." I didn't understand at first, but after watching Ben for awhile I caught on. We'd let our lifting on the bow of the "Swallow". Lake Michigan almost always has a sea running and the nets headed the boat into it. The bow was constantly rising and falling. Ol' Ben would hold the nets steady when the bow began to rise and pull in slack rapidly when the bow was falling. It was simple as duck soup. Thereafter I always hoped for a moderate sea when we were lifting nets.

The job of working for Ol' Ben was no easy job, but an interesting one and good training for a young man who was going to follow the sea. (My legs slowly straightened as I grew older).

Every person I ever knew was fascinated by the size of Ben's hands - they were huge in size - caused in part, I'm sure, from sliding down hemp ropes that had been treated with tar when he was a young man.

What a character this man was! I am humbled by the realization that I am incapable of finding the right words to describe him. He had lived a rough, tough life as a sailor but was reverent to his maker and seldom used profanity unless caught up in a sudden fit of anger. However, he used many words to replace the profane words. Like "Jugus" a favorite, and "Holkey, Pookey, Hookey" as a phrase. Ordinarily a good natured man and enjoyed a sense of humor I noticed his mood could change quickly as a result of either a good catch of fish or a disappointing one. A blind man could easily have known the

page 2

fishing was good by hearing a loud voice (easily heard above the exhaust noises of the "Swallow's" noisy engine) singing a Norwegian sailor's song. It went something like this - "Hon Slinger. Hone Dingher. Ha Day. We sal the orga wer!": He told me that was a song Norwegian sailors sang when working high up on the yardarms of a full rigger. It helped to relieve tension and fear of falling.

I'll always be able to see Ol' Ben standing in the front door of the boat's cabin removing the fish from the nets and singing his song of happiness with fish scales on his mustache. There was a kindness about Ol' Ben too toward nature. During the three years I worked for Ben there was one sea gull that always sat on the bow stem of the boat where we lifted nets. It had only one leg. When Ben would find a small chub in the net, he would call "chickie chickie" and toss the fish to that one-legged gull.

Fish was bringing thirty-five cents a pound on the Chicago market and Ben, liked to supplement that bulge he had sewed in the inner lining of his vest, but he was generous too, and often times would wrap a nice whitefish up in paper and say to me, "Here, take that home to your mother." The other mothers on the island got a fish now and then too.

For a few families on the Point (including ours) whitefish livers were a delicacy. The livers were always steamed from fish taken from pound nets where the fish was alive when removed from the net. Perhaps still flopping around then it went on the cleaning board. The fish too small for shipping was sometimes given to the Coast Guard men for smoking. All families benefited from the smoked fish so there was always considerable pressure on Ben to bring in the smaller whitefish to be smoked, even though these fish were illegal. Ol' Ben loved to pick folks, but he had been warned by the game warden and it made him nervous each time he did it.

One of his favorite expressions, and always said in a loud voice, "When you do right - you come out tight!" Another expression you heard frequently, most often early in the morning when he came out of the kitchen door and faced the morning sun, he would call out "This is the land of milk and honey!" It would create a smile on the face of everyone who heard him - and believe me most people on the Point heard him. Regardless of the time, or how far away a person was, he would call a "Good Morning" greeting to that person with a comment about the weather.

No one on the Point carried a watch in those days. Pocket watches were not waterproof and watches were not necessary as the man in the lookout sounded the time each thirty minutes on a ship's bell. The hour was sounded in ship's time. The bell not only informed the people of the time of day, it was comforting to realize the man that rang the bell was also watching out for house fires, little savages getting into trouble, etc.

It was only a short period of time after we arrived back on South Manitou that my step-father bought another Model T. This one was a sedan. This feature eliminated the fussing around with side curtains and stuff when it rained. "I can drive the kids to school in bad weather" Dad Hutzler said. "Glenn can have our old one." I was shocked - but tickled pink. It seems our original Model T that had been on North Manitou Island had been purchased with my father's insurance money and it seemed proper that I should have it. It was now nine years old and had tires on it that were part the regular size and others were balloon tires. I tried to keep balloon tires on the back and the smaller size on the front, but not always did it turn out that way, and then the car had a cockeyed appearance. The top had become tattered from encounters with trees, so I took it off. As long as it would run it was a beautiful machine to me. The engine had developed excessive end play in the crankshaft and that caused the magnetos points to separate making it necessary much of the time to jack up a back wheel in order to get it started. I learned quickly to park it on a side hill. But I loved that car and it was worth the hard work I did for Ol' Ben to buy gas for it.

End of Part I

Stay tuned for Part II in the Next issue of the South Manitou Memorial Society Newsletter!

page 3