In the spring of 1946 a group of intrepid Scouts ventured into the Plymouth pine barrens to find the property recently acquired by the Cachalot Council. They set out to create a camp by the side of a crystal clear lake. Having worked on summer camp staff over the years, I understand how much work it is to open a summer camp. I cannot imagine the challenge of creating a camp where none was the day before. Their efforts were successful and 75 years ago Cachalot was chopped, lashed, and dug into being. In 2021 Cachalot celebrates its diamond jubilee. Thousands of Scouts and Scouters have made innumerable memories in the three quarters of century since that first summer. In a recent chat a fellow bird watcher and nature photographer related to me that his patrol earned the best time at the Cachalot Klondike Derby in the early 90s. His father remembered that day and talked about it decades later. This is just one of countless examples of Cachalot moments that make it such an extraordinary place.

2020 has allowed precious little time to enjoy camp. It has been difficult. There is nothing to replace the feeling of driving through Myles Standish State Forest, through Cachalot’s front gate, and down the main road past Abner Pond. Peaceful and exciting, it’s like going back to your old neighborhood to see old friends, familiar places, relive memories, and make new ones.

We are planning several anniversary events over 2021 to celebrate Cachalot’s 75 years. Hopefully, COVID safety restrictions will allow for increased use of camp and a full slate of events. It is the mission of the Alumni Association to help preserve these memories and Cachalot for the future Scouts and Scouters. Cachalot will begin its 75th year with several upgrades and face-lifts. An improved 21 Club, Magee Cabins, Winter Cabins, and Noquochoke Lodge will welcome units. A lot of work has been done by our association, the council, the Order of the Arrow, and our ranger Karrie. However, there is more to do.

I challenge all of you to recruit new 75 new Cachalot Alumni Association members. Contact an old camp buddy from your Scouting days. Together we will continue the work of protecting and improving Cachalot for the Scouts and Scouters past, present and, most importantly, those yet to come. It will be them that organize Cachalot’s 100th anniversary year.

#wearecachalot, and have been for 75 years.

Volunteer Scouter taking a break from setting up camp before the summer of 1946. We don’t have names for everyone in this shot, but on the far left is Webster Wilde, then second on left is Craig Black, and in the hat and overalls fourth from right is Ray Covill, the namesake of the Covill Chapel.
I’ve been here since the Ice Age, when my rolling hills and kettle ponds were formed. I’ve been called by many names; “The Barrens” and “The Five Mile Ponds” are just a few. Although there has been some human activity, I’ve been mostly ignored because of my sandy soil, scrub oaks and pitch pines. For many years I stood silent and watched as time passed me by. The seasons came and went with very few changes. Solitude became the daily grind.

Things began to change in the late 1940s when I was given another name: Cachalot.

A group of men and boys arrived and began to transform me into a new and exciting location. In the beginning they cleared areas for tents, cut trees to create an open field, and cut in a new road. Soon they were sleeping overnight and preparing for new things to come. Over the next few years many buildings were erected and tent sites were cleared, and more and more men and boys began visiting on weekends and during the summer months. For the first time in many years I no longer heard only the sounds of the forest but the sound of something new and exciting happening around me.

There was now a year round activity. Weekend camp-outs and large group activities continued to grow and I was no longer unused space. My days were being filled with laughter and shouts and my evenings with songs around campfires. Life was no longer solitary and I began looking to the future for new and exciting events to happen.

But then, on a beautiful spring day, something terrible happened: Fire.

Although I had experienced small fires in the past, this one seemed different. There were several hundred of my new friends participating in a weekend event that were forced to evacuate. The fire came in from different directions, driven by high winds, and continued for several days until it was contained by the valiant effort of fire crews and foresters.

Gone were several of the newly constructed buildings and tent sites that so many had toiled to construct. Gone were my new friends that enjoyed my beauty. I feared that I would return to those long years of loneliness. But soon my friends returned. They began clearing burnt brush and debris. They constructed new campsites, buildings and planted trees. Conservation projects began with new trails, retaining walls and firebreaks. Once again my summers were filled with young men enjoying my trails and ponds. Weekends were once again active with camp-outs and large activities. Soon, even younger boys and their parents were visiting for day activities during the summer weekdays. For many years, my friends filled my ears with joy, songs, and loud cheers.

Everything was back to normal. Except…

I noticed that fewer boys were visiting than before. Although attempts were made to increase attendance, the numbers still declined. One day the younger boys and their families no longer held their summer day activities. A few years later the weeks long summer camp suddenly ended. Several years went by with no boats and canoes on my ponds. Camp sites were bare and the singing stopped. There were still some large weekend events, but mostly I was being used for small weekend camp-outs.

I accepted the change and was prepared to welcome those that still came to visit. But then something new and unexpected happened. They called it “Triple E,” a mosquito virus. My friends were not allowed to participate in overnight activities, they were restricted to activities between dawn to dusk. And again, the numbers dwindled. After a hard frost the mosquito threat died out and weekend camping resumed. And then in late winter, early spring, a more deadly attack occurred. COVID-19. All activities were shut down, limited day events, no overnight camping. No longer were my friends allowed to hike my trails and swim in my ponds. As I look forward to the 75th anniversary of that first day when my new life began, I worry if my friends will ever return and if so, how many.

Will I still be relevant to their needs?

Will I still be the place where they can breathe fresh air and enjoy the brotherhood of the campfire?

Will I still matter, or will I be just a memory? 🙁
Fall River’s Statue of Liberty
A Brief History of How the BSA’s 40th Anniversary and a Missouri Scouter Helped Inspire a Monument to Liberty in Kennedy Park

by Dennis Wilkinson

Tucked away in Fall River’s Kennedy Park, near the corner of Broadway and Bradford, is an eight-and-a-half-foot tall replica of the Statue of Liberty, atop a stone pedestal roughly five feet high. Lady Liberty is a little worse for the wear: she’s been patched up a bit, and the rays of her crown are long since gone. Many Fall Riverites don’t even realize that she’s there.

If you were to make a visit, you’d find the following on a plaque on her pedestal:

“With the faith and courage of their forefathers who made possible the freedom of these United States

The Boy Scouts of America

Dedicate this copy of the Statue of Liberty as a pledge of everlasting fidelity and loyalty

The Crusade to Strengthen Liberty

1951

Let’s go back to a few years before the date on that plaque, to the beginning of 1949.

It is less than four years removed from the end of the Second World War. The Truman Doctrine has become policy, and the United States has entered into a new kind of conflict as the Cold War begins. The Berlin Airlift is underway, hinting at what could come, and the tensions that would soon lead to the Korean War are already evident. The country as a whole strives to differentiate itself from its World War II ally, the Soviet Union. An emphasis on the American theme of Liberty is found everywhere, and the Boy Scouts of America are no exception.

The National Council, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Scouting movement in the US as well as drive membership, embarks on a new campaign. In the January 1949 issue of Scouting magazine, Wes H. Klusmann, the National Director of Camping and Special Events, announces plans for Scout Week, making the first mention of a two-year crusade to “Strengthen the Arm of Liberty.” This program will be a primary focus for the next three years of Scouting program, and it kicks off in earnest on February 12, 1949.

This campaign officially begins on Bedloe’s Island (now known as Liberty Island), at the base of the Statue of Liberty. Twelve Eagle Scouts, one from each region, meet with President Truman and gather in ceremony at the base of the statue. With the President, officials from the UN, and French dignitaries in attendance, actress Hollace Shaw embodies Lady Liberty, bearing a lit torch. Each of the Eagle Scouts light a torch from hers to carry back to their region. Those torches will be used to light others, one for each of 542 councils in all 48 states.

The torchbearer for Region One was Daniel C. Abbot of Troop 16 in Newtonville, part of the Norumbega Council. He brought his torch to Fall River on April 7, to light the Massasoit Council’s torch in a ceremony in the Technical High School auditorium run by District Commissioner Arthur Bergeron. Twenty-five units participated, each carrying their own bit of the flame back to their own meeting places.

In Kansas City, Missouri, the crusade inspired local Scouter and manufacturer Jack Whittaker to commission the first replica and finance a mold, in the hope that other Scouts across the country would take up his call to install a local reminder of this icon of Liberty. This first replica was dedicated in Whittaker’s home town on November 20, 1949, with 6,000 people, including the Chief Scout Executive, in attendance. Made by Friedley-Voshardt Co. of Chicago, the statue was 100 inches tall, weighed 290 pounds, and was constructed from pressed sheet copper roughly the thickness of a quarter, mounted on a wooden frame. It was not an exact replica, leading to complaints in April of 1950 from the National Sculpture Society that they were “bad imitations of the great piece of sculpture which is the symbol of our freedom.” The most frequent criticism was that the replicas looked too youthful, with a more rounded face than Bartholdi’s original. By that point, sixty of the replicas had already been installed in twenty-two states, with another hundred statues already on order. With the success of the replicas already clear, the National Council adopted Whittaker’s effort as their own, announcing in Scout Executive magazine in July of 1950 that statues could be purchased for $350 (worth roughly ten times as much today) from the Region VIII office, plus the cost of freight. Their ambitious goal was to install one of these “Sisters of Liberty” in every Scouting district, which would mean thousands of statues.

In November of 1951, the Massasoit Council announced its intent to donate a replica to the City of Fall River. Louis Yamins was appointed chair of the Liberty Memorial committee, charged with securing funds, selecting a site, and setting up a dedication ceremony. The initial donations come from the Executive Board, with every single member making a contribution. Noquochoke Lodge then stepped up to make the first donation from a unit or other organization, contributing $10 on December 12.
By February of 1951, funds had been raised in unit “banks” enough to proceed, and “it is expected that every boy and adult member of the organization will make a contribution to the fund,” no matter how small. May 20th was announced as the date of the dedication ceremony, to be preceded by a parade. Local attorney Harold Clarkin was named as the coordinator of the event, with William Rosenthal organizing the parade. Fall River’s House Representative, Joseph L. Martin, Jr., former Speaker of the House and the House Minority Leader in 1951, will serve as the keynote speaker for the event.

Unfortunately, these original plans were temporarily delayed by the death of the Most Reverend James Cassidy, the Bishop of the Fall River diocese and later namesake of Bishop Cassidy High School, on May 17th. A new date of June 17th was announced shortly afterwards.

The events of Sunday June 17th began near the old Fall River City Hall at 2:00pm, with a seven-division parade of Scouts from Massasoit, Cachalot, and Annawon Councils; units from Woonsocket and Newport; members of American Legion Post 126, the local VFW drum and bugle corps; and a police escort marching to what was then called South Park for the dedication ceremony. Attorney Clarkin, a past president of the Massasoit Council, served as the master of ceremonies. Rabbi Zalman Schacter gave the invocation, and Reverend John J. Hayes, the Catholic Area Chaplain, gave the benediction. Remarks were made by the Chaplain of the day, Rev. Dr. Finlay Keach of the First Baptist Church, by Liberty Committee Chair Yamins, by Region One Scout Executive Milo G. Clark, and by Scout Executive Zigmund J. Jackim, who presented a small gold replica of the statue to Mr. Yamins as thanks and recognition of his work. Scout Martin Buote of Troop 2 Somerset, also the Chief of Noquochoke Lodge, led the Scouts present in reciting the Oath and Law.

Rep. Martin’s speech warned of the risk of Soviet ideologies to American liberty and stressed the importance of opportunity to the youth of the country: “...and unless the people are determined to stop it, liberty and opportunity will vanish from the American scene. We must be prepared to deal with all enemies of the American way of life...The Boy Scouts in this fine patriotic program give evidence of their zeal and loyalty. We in Fall River are grateful for them. As long as the spirit manifested here today exists, we need not fear for the future of America.”

The statue itself was unveiled by three Scouts: Eugene Pineault of Pack 2, Sea Explorer Francis Charette of Ship 5, and Richard Gomez of Troop 29. Mayor Grant of Fall River accepted the gift on behalf of the city from Council President Raymond Hobson, “declaring that the statue will stand as a symbol of liberty and justice.”

In the years since, a few changes to the site and statue have occurred. Notably, South Park was renamed Kennedy Park in 1963 in honor of President John F. Kennedy after his assassination. The rays of her crown were broken off by 1974. Some restoration work has been done on the statue, with a small plaque giving credit to Edward Walega of New Bedford for that restoration, completed in June of 1968. With the current lack of access to local papers on microfilm, we’ve been unable to discover any detail on this restoration, but we will follow up in a future issue should we unearth anything of interest.

“Strengthening the Arm of Liberty” proved a successful campaign for Scouting. When it concluded at the end of 1951, membership had grown by over 33% to 2,942,779 Scouts, and the number of units nationwide had increased by nearly 16%. While the ambitious goal of a “Sister of Liberty” being erected in every district was not reached, over 200 of the replicas were installed in 39 states, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and even the Canal Zone. Many have since succumbed to weather and wear, but over 100 still stand in various places, including elsewhere in Massachusetts at Lawrence inside the Lawrence Public Library. A web site tracking the remaining statues, including photographs of many of them, can be found at libertysisters.com. It appears that the original statue in Kansas City still stands.

Fall River’s own “Sister of Liberty” has stood since that day in 1951. She continues to lift her lamp of imprisoned lightning, glowing world-wide welcome, from her granite perch in Kennedy Park.
Remembering When
Celebrating 75 Years of Cachalot in 2021 By Telling Its Story

On March 28, 1946, at ten past noon, the deed to the property that would become Camp Cachalot was recorded in Plymouth with the Cachalot Council as the new owner. A rush to prepare the camp for its first summer camp season a short three months later would follow. In the seventy-five years that have passed since, thousands of Scouts, Scouters, and many of their family members have passed through its gates, hiked its trails, camped among its forest, fished its ponds, and sung with joy around many campfires.

If you are reading this, you’re almost certainly one of them.

Without those people, without you, Cachalot would be just another place. The story of Cachalot is not complete without the stories of the people who camp there. Your stories.

So, to mark Cachalot’s Diamond Jubilee, we’re asking you to share your own stories: your memories of Cachalot, your memories of other people at Cachalot; even the stories of what your time at camp has enabled or inspired you to do. These stories will become a part of the body of knowledge we’ve been accumulating about Cachalot since the Association was founded in 2004.

So, how do you contribute your stories?

In Memoriam

Paul Sardinha, Scoutmaster of Troop 27 in Fall River, passed away unexpectedly on December 3rd, 2020.

In addition to his role as Scoutmaster, he was a member of the Knights of Columbus and St. Anne’s Fraternity and a Eucharistic Minister at St. Bernard’s Church.

A graduate of Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School, Class of 1970, he was a Senior Engineering Lab Specialist for B.D. in Warwick, RI.

Besides his wife of 43 years, he leaves two children, Lisa Berube (husband Brian) of Swansea and Michael Sardinha (wife Lori) of Fall River; five grandchildren, Cameron, Dominick, Kyle, Nicole and Logan; three siblings, Beverly Carreiro (husband Leonard) of Somerset, Sandra Sardinha of Fall River and Mark Sardinha (wife Heather) of Florida, and many nieces and nephews.

The easiest way to do share is to send it to us in an email message. You don’t need to be a professional writer, and you can be as brief or as long-winded as you want to be. You can send your story to us at:

iwasthere@cachalotalumni.org

Please be sure to include your name and the years that you were at camp. If you would prefer that we not use your name when re-sharing your story, just let us know in that message. If you have a photo of yourself from your time at camp, we’d love to have that as well—just attach it to the email. If you have multiple photos or documents from your time at camp that you’d like to share, please reach out to our History committee at curator@cachalotalumni.org; they’ll work with you to make copies of them, or will arrange to take them off your hands and preserve them if you no longer want them.

If you want to go one step further, tell the story in your own voice: record yourself telling it, in audio or video. Video would also let you show off more than one photo, or things like uniforms or other memorabilia. If you decide to go that route, it will probably be too large to send as an email attachment, so please reach out to the email address above and we’ll figure out the best way to get the recording to us.

Other Anniversaries

Cachalot’s 75th isn’t the only occasion we have to mark this year. 2021 is also the 100th anniversary of the founding of Camp Noquochoke in Westport, the former camp of the Massasoit Council. As an Association we consider Noquochoke to be one of our predecessor camps, and do our best to record its history as well. If you were a Noquochoke camper, we’d love to hear your stories as well. All the same guidelines apply.

We look forward to hearing your tales of camp!

An Unprecedented Year

Cachalot by the Numbers in 2020

This year was our third working with the Cachalot Campmaster corps to track the utilization of Cachalot by units both in and out of the Narragansett Council. As everyone knows, 2020 was not a normal year at all, and was unprecedented in Cachalot’s history. Like virtually everything else deemed non-essential, Cachalot closed for public health reasons after the weekend of March 7, with barely a sixth of its year completed. And while the Council made a valiant effort to allow use of camp when they could, EEE conspired to kick in just as we had a brief COVID-19 lull to allow only one more weekend of overnight camping for the remainder of the year. We didn’t think it made sense to report on the numbers as if it were a normal year, but we wanted to show our members a few statistics to show that demand for camp was still high. For those of you involved in units, thank you all for doing your best to keep the Outing in Scouting in this challenging year!

Full-use weekends were 26% of the usual available weekends (46)
But we had 31.4% of the average attendance of the prior two years
Units were mostly in-council, not surprising with travel restrictions
We still had Cub Packs and Scout Troops making use of Cachalot

1096 people
$4105 Income

None of the day use weekends could generate income (as all available facilities were free)
Looking only at our “normal” January and February year-to-year we were actually up by 11% over the previous two year average income, but down 7.5% in overall attendance (all of which is accounted for by a significant drop in Klondike attendance. Excluding the Klondike, attendance was up 27%)

And Troop 74 Dartmouth and Troop 52 Fairhaven still managed to make it out to camp for 6 weekends. Each.
Their Own Memories, In Their Own Words

Ed Tavares and Larry Harney, Cachalot Wall-of-Famers

AS TOLD TO VIC SYLVA AND DENNIS PREFONTAINE

In April of 2019 we had the pleasure of meeting to interview Larry Harney and Ed Tavares. Both served on Camp Cachalot’s first summer camp staff, Ed serving as a Unit Leader and Larry serving as the “Maintenance Kid.” Their tenure in Scouting has surpassed 75 years of service—each. They both shared their fondest memories of those early years as members of the first year’s Camp Staff, including Harry Leil, Ray Covill, Arthur Gifford, Arthur Karos, Assistant Camp Director Leslie Robinson, and Camp Director Roland Deneault, to name a few. Ed recalled the first year as “comic operations.” They both remembered first having to hike into the camp to first survey the property for camp sites and program areas.

They recalled campers meeting at William Street in New Bedford and being transported to Cachalot by truck. The fee was $20.00 per week and the campers and staff worked for half a day and had half a day of program. Tom Cullen Field, which was then wooded, began to get cleared. Two sites were selected: “Sleepy Hollow,” now in the area of Cub Hill, and “Nob Hill,” which is where the Dining Hall now stands.

A well pump was installed behind the beach area for water. A cook stove was assembled, and Larry remembers George Gibson, a volunteer Ranger, doing most of the meal preparations. A Baker tent was used as the first latrine. Larry recalled the “21 Club” being moved from Westport and serving as staff housing, and a military surplus Quonset Hut being purchased and used as the camp’s first maintenance building and storage area.

During the second year of camp a large platform was constructed for a 20 x 60 old Army hospital tent that was used as a Dining Hall. This was illuminated by two auto headlights. Garbage runs were to the old New Bedford dump and later, holes were dug to dispose of rubbish.

In the later years a shelter was built at Abner Pond by the Loranger and White Construction companies, both of which became loyal supporters of Camp Cachalot.

Ed recalled that Roland Deneault designed the first camp patch, which went on to be used well into the sixties.

Larry “fondly” remembers the endless weekends that members of the Restoration Committee spent building tent platforms, cradles and picnic tables at Ray Rogers’ house in Fairhaven, and every weekend at camp clearing debris and rebuilding that led to the establishment of a family camping area adjacent to Little Five Mile Pond that became “Squaw Corner.”

Ed initially had a career as a District Executive in the Cachalot Council, then went into teaching. He retired after many years as an educator at New Bedford High School. He continued to serve on many District and Council Committees.

Larry retired from the Milhench Supply Company. His many years of volunteer service included Camp and Property Committees, where he served with his longtime friend Fred Prefontaine.

Both men are recipients of the Silver Beaver Award, are founding members of the Camp Cachalot Alumni Association, and have been inducted onto the Association’s Wall of Fame, Ed in 2011 and Larry in 2013.

— Dennis

Seeking Wall of Fame Nominations

We are continuing to seek out nominations for the Camp Cachalot Wall of Fame. Modeled after other “Hall of Fame”-type institutions, the Camp Cachalot Wall of Fame is intended to be a lasting memorial to the people and organizations that have been instrumental in the success of Cachalot and the experiences of those who have attended Cachalot over the years.

To be eligible for the Wall of Fame, a candidate must have had their first involvement with Camp Cachalot must be no less than 20 years prior to the year in which they are nominated; must have made significant contributions in either in Service to Cachalot, to the Program at Cachalot; in a Professional Scouting capacity; or through significant Financial contributions making a direct, lasting impact at Cachalot. Candidates must be vetted and approved by the Camp Cachalot Alumni Association’s Wall of Fame, Veteran’s, and Executive Committees. Anyone may nominate someone for the Wall of Fame, but voting is done only by active members of the Association. Any individual who appears on five ballots without being voted onto the Wall of Fame goes to our Veteran’s Committee for further consideration. The Veterans Committee may name one individual per year to the Wall, solely at their discretion.

Nomination forms are available on our web site at www.cachalotalumni.org/walloffame. Nominations for the 2021 ballot must be received by end of day, April 19, 2021. Please be as complete as possible and make a strong case for your nominee.