



Think Spring! Think Spring!

MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

A Letter from the President

Dear Islanders,

We are living in an interesting time! I feel we are much more ready for this year's high water as many of us have sandbags, pumps, berms and seawall caps in-place. But with COVID-19 lurking about, we have needed to change our usual summer plans. Ironically, we all may spend more time on the island as travel elsewhere is unwise.

I am looking forward to a different, but still very nice summer on Russell Island. I am sure we will find new and creative ways to enjoy ourselves. I cannot wait to return and open my cottage. I look forward to the change in scenery, the open space and seeing all of you – even with social distancing and while wearing a mask.

One more thing, I want to recognize Georgene Gratten for her generous gifts to RIF that were earmarked for high-water relief. Thank you, Georgene! We appreciate your gifts, and are putting them to good use.

Warmly,

Karen Ridgway, President

High Water Information

Water Level Information

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS) maintain a network of water level gauges on the Great Lakes and connecting channels. The St. Clair River is a connecting channel and there is a gauge at the Algonac Water Treatment Plant a little upstream of the Algonac boat launch. The data for this and other gauges and water level forecasts can be found on the internet at:

<https://www.lre.usace.army.mil/>

Memorial Day

The Memorial Plaque Ceremony is on hold at this time. We will try to hold the Ceremony at some point this summer. During past year donations have been made to honor: John Kirk Clippert, Sarah L Fisher, Don Grosfield, John L LoVasco, Kitty McMann, John & Jo Pfender, Doug & Shirley Reaume, John Shannahan, Susan Traister Shea, Michael Siedlik, Timothy Traister, Terry Trimmer and Cindy Trinity.

RIF Auction and Golf Outing/Progressive Dinner Fundraiser Events

From Beverly Leasia, RIF Auction Chair: Hello Islanders. The Belmont Stakes has been postponed because of Covid-19. As of this writing, another date has not been established. Therefore, the Annual RIF Auction that joins the Hall's Belmont Party, has also been postponed. We are hoping for a party/auction in the Fall. So, everyone please stay safe and maybe get inspired to create something while we "shelter in place".

For the same reason (Covid-19 uncertainties), the plans for a Golf Outing /On-island Progressive Dinner have been put on hold as well.

Music Festival

The Musicfest is also hold. Cross your fingers for an end to the virus, and lower water levels.

A Bit Of Island History

In the Old Days: Part 4
By Anne Buesser Steel
April 2020

In the old days, grocery shopping was more time-consuming and complicated than it is now, especially for islanders! It almost seemed adventurous, even heroic. Of course, getting food to the island has always involved a lot more than hopping in your car and driving to the grocery store--the simple routine of mainlanders.

Islanders first had to plan ahead, decide which ferry they were going to take, then allow enough time to walk to the ferry dock, pulling their wagons or pushing their carts, swatting mosquitoes as they hurried along. No golf carts in the old days! Then shoppers had to check their watches to make sure they got back to the ferry before Captain Russ McCartney pulled away for his return trip to the island. Lugging those groceries back home was a sweaty chore, but the common experience earned our island the affectionate nickname "Lug Island."

If you owned your own boat, at least you didn't need to worry about missing the ferry on your trips. But you'd still need to walk to your island boathouse or boat-well, unhorse your boat, cross the North Channel, and hope for space to tie up at the public dock. Then you risked falling on the slippery boards as you carefully made it to the back door of Poole's Market or Hemenger's Hardware Store. Too bad for the offspring tasked with holding the boat off the dock in the hot sun, while the others helped with the shopping in the shady stores and maybe even got to choose the brand of cookies for that week.

There was also a third way to get your groceries in the old days. You could call Poole's, tell them your shopping list, and they would bag and load them on the next ferry. Russ made regular trips all the way around the island back then, and he'd drop your groceries off at your dock. When my brothers and I were two, six and nine, mom needed that special ferry delivery for the four of us, since dad worked weekdays in Detroit and only came up on weekends.

Back at the cottage, unloading the bags was like opening a treasure chest. We were rich with food! I remember ground beef, hot dogs, Quaker oatmeal, Lorna Doones, (chocolate marshmallow Pinwheels for my dad), Peter Pan peanut butter, Wonder bread, iceberg lettuce, Nestle's Quik, Ovaltine, canned Franco-American spaghetti, ring baloney, Miracle Whip, French's mustard, "Mother" Smucker's strawberry jam, Frito-Lay potato chips, Coca-Cola, large-curd cottage cheese, tomatoes, bananas, Canadian bacon, eggs, and sometimes ice cream if we could keep it out of the sun on the return trip.

We almost never bought spices, as we hardly ever threw the old ones away, no matter what the “expiration” date was. We’d just use the ice pick to poke around inside the can to loosen up the contents so we could use it. We also rarely threw away staples from the pantry, no matter how old, as long as the item didn’t look or smell bad. It seemed wasteful, and also meant fewer items to lug across the island on the next shopping trip.

What dishes did we eat? In the early years we were penny-pinchers. We ate quantities of my great-grandma Lizzie’s Ferguson Stew, made with browned ground beef and onions, stretched to feed any number with a cream sauce of butter, flour and milk, and served on a baked potato or noodles. Other mainstays were baked beans and hot dogs, tuna noodle casserole, and meatloaf. I also remember watching mom clamp a heavy iron meat grinder to the edge of the wooden kitchen table, force hunks of leftover ham into the mouth, and turn the crank. Long spirals of pink meat twisted out, to be mixed with chopped pickles and Miracle Whip. Voila—ham salad!

Frequent desserts mom made were bread pudding and baked egg custard. On major occasions like the Fourth of July, dad would cook up his famous from-scratch chocolate sauce. A steaming spoonful drizzled over vanilla ice cream would instantly solidify into a hard, lava-like flow that you had to chip at with a knife to eat. Then in late summer came the black raspberries. We picked, it seemed, until our pails overflowed with the nubby berries, while getting our arms scratched from the thorns, bitten by mosquitos, and trying to avoid the poison ivy. But the reward! Berry pie, of course. Aunt Jo Pfender went a step further and harvested the small black mulberries that fell from the mulberry trees along South Russell Drive near Dotty Martens’ cottage. With them she made a dessert to die for: rich pastry tarts with heavy crème and cooked mulberry filling.

In those days we didn’t seem to have many food scraps to deal with—not much was wasted. I think we might have simply dumped our garbage into the underbrush in the middle of the island—I don’t really remember! But as time went on many of us islanders purchased green, pyramidal waste cans that were half buried in the ground. We kids were tasked to carry the scraps and garbage outside to dump it into the maw of that contraption every night. It was usually after dark. I was terrified by the thought of falling in, or of something coming out of it and pulling me in! Several times when it was my turn to take out the garbage, one of my brothers would sneak out after me, grab my shoulders and pretend to push me into the green monster.

On the good side, taking out the garbage was an excuse to linger outside while our siblings and cousins were doing the dishes. In our extended family, it was a universal law that, since the adults cooked, the children cleaned up! The best part of dish duty was the chance to snap each others’ butts with damp dish towels while we “worked.” Speaking of doing the dishes, mom confessed years ago, that when she and Aunt Jo stayed in the cottage on weekdays, minding their combined seven children who were too little to do the dishes (their husbands were at work in the city), they often put dirty dishes in the oven until they had no clean ones left to use.

Before I was old enough to stay up and eat with the grownups and older children at the dinner table (my parents and other relatives usually ate late, after their happy hour) I had my early supper on the small back porch, at a wooden table whose extra leaves had been removed so it could fit there between the broom closet and the old icebox. I felt grown-up sitting there by myself, and I was not lonely, since I could talk to my mom through the open kitchen door. The table had a red and white checked oilcloth covering it. One vivid memory is sitting there with the late afternoon sunshine filtering through the screen, the dark mysterious woods across the road, next to the Loomis’s cottage, and mom coming out with a plate of thickly-sliced tomatoes. I was surprised because she knew I didn’t like tomatoes! Smiling, she said these were different, and urged me to try them. Intrigued, I cut a small piece and tasted: it was delicious! Ever since I have loved tomatoes, even without sugar, and make a point every summer to buy a bag of fresh ones from Potato Joe’s on my way to Algonac.

One of my most memorable island meals gave me a glimpse of self-sufficiency. I had dug up some juicy night crawlers under the spirea bushes by our front porch. Then I went fishing, and caught a nice-sized perch with one of the crawlers. Mom had just taught me to filet, instead of scale, my fish, because Hobie Loomis had just taught her.

She was now convinced it was a better method. I struggled with this new procedure, but ended up with enough flesh to sauté in the frying pan with butter, salt, and a little lemon juice. As I ate, I savored the satisfaction of realizing I had completed every step of the process of catching, cleaning, and cooking my own meal. This past summer, our grandson Lachlan, then ten, experienced the same satisfaction for himself.

Sometimes we ate on the front or back porch, on lawn chairs in the yard, out on the dock, or at the playground on Picnic Day. But the meals that fed our souls and kindled our hearts every summer were the dinners seated around the dining room table. I can see it now. There are flowers in a vase, candles lit, a cotton tablecloth and napkins, china plates, and gleaming glasses. No matter how many are present, another chair can be found, another space created for one more person. Hands are joined while grace is spoken. A dog sleeps under the table. New stories are shared, and old stories retold. Laughter abounds. The presence all our island neighbors, and the spirits of all those who no longer walk this earthly island, is felt by all. Facing each other, smiles are exchanged, and love radiates around. Now bring in the food and drink, hear the welcome honk of a passing freighter, spy the moon rising over Walpole, and the meal becomes an earthly banquet to rival any heavenly gathering.

And outside in the dark, our river runs, quiet and life-giving, like the blood in our veins.

Kroger Community Rewards Program / AmazonSmile

Kroger:

To get enrolled in the program, all you need to do is register online at www.krogercommunityrewards.com. Be sure to have your Kroger Plus Card handy and register your card with the Russell Island Foundation after you sign up. If you do not yet have a Kroger Plus Card, they are available at the customer service desk at any Kroger store.

Here is a step by step explanation of what to do to get enrolled in this beneficial program:

1. Go to www.krogercommunityrewards.com and click on MICHIGAN, scroll down the page and click on the ENROLL box.
2. Click on SIGN UP TODAY in the “New Customer?” box.
3. Sign up for a Kroger Rewards Account by entering your zip code, clicking on favorite store, entering your email address and creating a password. You will need to agree to the terms and conditions.
4. You will then get a message to check in your email inbox and click on the link within the body of the email. Follow the instructions in your email.
5. Click on MY ACCOUNTY and use your email address and password to proceed to the next step.
6. Click on EDIT KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS INFORMATION and input your Kroger Plus Card number. Update or confirm you information.
7. Find Russell Island Foundation which can be selected from the drop down list (or enter the NPO number – 90286) click SELECT in the next section and Click SAVE CHANGES in the third section

To verify that you are enrolled correctly, you should see Russell Island Foundation on the bottom left portion of your information page. It will take 7-10 days before your purchases will begin earning rewards for the Russell Island Foundation after you have registered your Kroger Plus Card online. You will know that you have successfully registered your Kroger Plus Card because at the bottom of your Kroger receipt you will see: ***“At your request, Kroger is donating to The Russell Island Foundation”***.

REMEMBER that purchases will not count for the Russell Island Foundation until after you register your card – so please take the time to do that now! You will need to swipe your registered Kroger Plus Card or use the phone number that is related to your registered Kroger Plus Card when shopping for each purchase in order for it to count towards the quarterly rewards check sent to the Russell Island Foundation. For those of us who regularly shop at Kroger – this is an easy way to help the Foundation accrue monies.

Amazon Smile:

AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know with the added benefit of supporting charitable organizations like the Russell Island Foundation! It offers the same products, prices and services as Amazon.com. AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization. To shop at AmazonSmile, simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked: "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. On your first visit to: you will need to select the Russell Island Foundation as your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. AmazonSmile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make on AmazonSmile will result in a donation to the Foundation. Please take advantage of this program, encourage family and friends to sign up also! This is just another way to add money to the Foundation by doing what we normally do....shop!

Russell Island Foundation Board

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 Steve Engelhart

Membership and Dues

The Russell Island Foundation was established to financially support Russell Island improvements and beautification projects. If you are not already a member, please consider joining the Russell Island Foundation. Over the last 22 years we have raised just under \$700,000.00 dollars. Memberships and donations to the Foundation are great gift ideas. Think Birthdays, Anniversary's, Christmas gifts, and Memorials.

Annual dues of \$100 are tax-deductible and qualify you to be a voting member at the annual meeting of the Russell Island Foundation held on Labor Day Weekend. You do not have to be a cottage owner to be a member. Please consider membership.

Current Foundation Members include the following families. Our year runs from September 1 to August 31st.

Mary Abramson
Joel and Deena Bacow
Peter and Kathy Bardin
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Chuck Treska

Please send annual dues made payable to: **The Russell Island Foundation**

Mail to: Kathy Engelhart
1011 Satterlee Road
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

My gift is in: Dues _____ A contribution (\$100, \$150, etc.) _____
Memory of _____
Honor of _____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
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