



# Eagle Island Journal

A Publication of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island

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"Inveniam viam aut faciam."  
Find a way or make one

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Recently I sat down to write my President's Message for the Eagle Island Journal. I wanted to say thanks to my many friends for strong support during my recent stay in the hospital. I left the rough draft by the table next to my chair. I was rather pleased with what I had written. Michelle, my caregiver at home while I recover, saw it and asked to read it. I was afraid she would have difficulty reading my handwriting so I read it to her.

This is what I wrote: It is often said that the greatest treasures we can accumulate in life are good friends. The truth of that saying became abundantly clear recently when I spent some time in the hospital to have a pacemaker installed. Followed by about 10 days in rehab getting my strength back. I had top notch professional care in both places, but the most meaningful support I received came from the members of the Friends of Perry's Eagle Island and Brunswick Naval Museum the two groups that I work with. The dozens of get well cards and letters, plus phone calls and visits from members of both groups did more for my morale and I'm convinced speeded my recovery. My new pace maker and I are doing just fine. I recently celebrated my 90th birthday and I wasn't even the oldest one there. I am grateful to my friends for your strong support when I needed it most. This whole experience has made me feel like I'm a very wealthy man. My heartfelt thanks to you all.

Her response, "That's nice but that's what you wrote last time". With that she went to my desk and brought back a copy of the last Eagle Island Journal. Sure enough, she was right; it was almost identical to my previous message. Clearly Michelle didn't need a pacemaker. With some thought, I concluded that if I was sincere it wouldn't hurt to say "thanks" twice.

A heartfelt thanks to you all, Harry

## The Ned Dewey Friends of Peary's Eagle Island Volunteer Award

The Edward (Ned) Dewey Friends of Peary's Eagle Island Volunteer Award is given to a member of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island whose commitment to the Friends and to Eagle Island over many years has shown dedication to the preservation of Eagle Island as a State of Maine Historic Park and a United States National Historic Landmark and to the legacy of Admiral Robert E. Peary as a national hero for his polar explorations and his discovery of the North Pole in 1909. Dedication as a Friend volunteer can be shown by working to protect, maintain, and preserve the Eagle Island Peary summer home, now museum, the island's natural beauty, and/or by assuring all visitors to Eagle Island receive the welcome that Eagle Island offers all who land on its shores and beaches.

Ned Dewey set the standard for this award over his two decades of service as a member and officer of the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island. The award is given by vote of the Board of Directors of the Friends to a volunteer who most closely meets the criteria and standards that Ned set for us all.

The initial Ned Dewey Volunteer Award is presented to Robert O. Johnson with gratitude for his dedication to the protection and preservation of Eagle Island, for his outgoing welcome to all visitors to the island, and for his "Friendship" to all Friends; presented posthumously January, 2016.

The Friends will provide a plaque inscribed as above with multiple spaces for future awardees. This is intended to be an award given for exceptional commitment and service with no specific period or timing for awards. Nominations can be received by the Friends at any time and such nominations should be supported by detailing the nominee's commitment and service as expected in the criteria above.

A tribute to Ned detailing his contributions to the Friends over his 20 years of membership and leadership that set the standard for this award will be presented in a companion plaque, with both plaques mounted on a wall of the Welcome Center.

## **ROBERT O. (BOB) JOHNSON**

The Friends of Peary's Eagle Island lost a dear friend when Bob Johnson lost his valiant fight against cancer in December 2015. For nearly two decades Bob's commitment to the Friends of Peary's Eagle Island and to its mission to protect, preserve, and maintain the island, the Peary Museum, and the Peary family legacy set the standard for all of us who volunteer for the Friends. He was a tireless worker, a willing volunteer for any project that needed attention, bringing to every project his sense of humor, and a most gracious host to all visitors to the island. We remember fondly his greetings to all as they headed up the lawn from the dock toward the museum, "Thank you, folks, for bringing us such great weather!" or some similar welcoming comment.

Those who worked with Bob recall his unique affirmative response when asked a question, "Yup, yup, yup" - three 'yups' in rapid succession. At first it seemed like that was just his way of expressing an emphatic "Yes!" But eventually we realized that the first 'Yup' was his emphatic "Yes!"; the other two 'Yups' could more accurately be translated as, "Now let's get going!" or "What's the hold up?" or "Get a move on!" Bob, can you get your end of the beam alone? "Yup, yup, yup." (Translation, "Yes, now get your butt in gear!")

And we all remember, after working two summers to complete the new Welcome Center, the day that the public was invited in for the first time. Characteristically, Bob was at the front door to welcome them, but the young lady first to accept his invitation as the first visitor, hesitated - having just come up from the beach she looked in on the freshly varnished floor, then down at her sandy sandals, and then looked at Bob. Without any hesitation, Bob brought out a chair and a soft brush, had her sit down and ceremoniously began to clean the sand from her sandaled feet! The brushing tickled, she giggled, as did others looking on. When one other visitor gave him a hard time about lingering too long with his attention to the young lady's legs, Bob, again without hesitation, had her male companion sit down to succumb to the same treatment - all done with such warmth and good humor that visitors got the immediate impression that the Welcome Center was, indeed, a welcoming place. And it has retained that aura ever since - thanks to Bob!

Whenever there was a project on the island that needed volunteer attention, Bob was there - trail building, stone wall repair, building maintenance, or new construction. And always Bob would bring his large thermos of coffee and enough coffee cups for all volunteers that day. Often he would have some 'goodies' to go with his coffee. Except the one day he brought his favorite - some type of 'processed' herring. He claimed it was pickled herring, but even the stoutest Mainer among us recoiled at the odor, noting that it smelled more like bait fish given to him by a lobsterman who wouldn't even use it as bait for his traps. If his herring wasn't appreciated by his coworkers, his coffee and his company sure were! One volunteer characterized it as,

"Hot coffee from a warm heart!"

That's how we remember our Bob Johnson.



## Captain Bill Frappier, Jr., 1942-2015

Captain Bill Frappier Jr. longtime mariner and historian on Casco Bay passed away unexpectedly on October 12, 2015 after a brief illness. My Dad fell in love with all things Casco Bay as a child when he summered on Bailey Island, his favorite place in all the world. Enthralled by the steamboats from a young age, Dad went on to spend 40 years of his life researching and writing a comprehensive history on the subject, the first volume of which was published as *Steamboat Yesterdays on Casco Bay* in 1993.

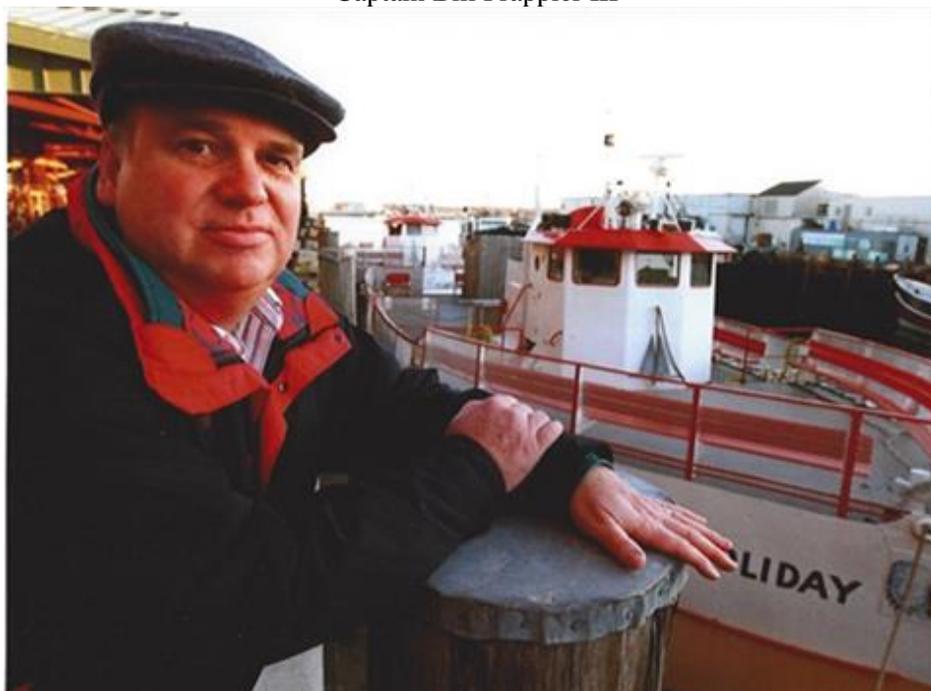
A sea-going career as a Merchant Marine officer spanning over 30 years culminated with the purchase of a small tour boat company offering narrated cruises around Casco Bay and to Eagle Island in 1998. Dad absolutely loved running out to Eagle. He enjoyed sharing his passion for the history of the bay with the thousands of people that we carried to the island over the course of 11 years. As a talented celestial trained sailor Dad would vigorously defend the Admiral's accomplishment of reaching the North Pole.

My father was an old fashioned romantic and one heck of a story teller. One story from our trips across the bay always brings a smile to my face. Dad would always highlight two ladders on an old cottage on Stave Island. One ladder was on the side of the house and the other went to the peak of the roof. He would tell our passengers how "before modern conveniences like radio and television the owners of the cottage would climb those ladders to reach the roof peak to enjoy the glories of the morning sunrise in the east and sunset in the west." My father had the pleasure of meeting the owners of the cottage at one of his book signings for *Steamboat Yesterdays*. They told him how much they enjoyed hearing his story about their ladders as we passed by the island but that it wasn't exactly accurate. In fact, the ladders were placed there because the shingles blew off their roof so often that they permanently erected them for easy repairs. Not quite as romantic as Dad had envisioned!

My family has very fond memories of spending time with Dad on Eagle Island. Mom, my sister and some of the grandchildren made the trip many times. My nephews always got a chance at "taking the wheel" alongside "Grampie" while en route to the island. After disembarking our passengers on the island we would always make our way ashore to have lunch. My mother especially enjoyed spending time with Dad on the porch swing of caretakers cottage. Looking back, I will always cherish our lunches often spent out on the trails. "Dave's Way" was our favorite. The two of us would explore practically every inch of the island over the many years we ran there together. We loved trying to locate lost features of the Admiral's estate. We were quite sure that we had found the remnants of the Admirals "salt water pool" and the exact spot where the Admiral had enjoyed lounging in the grass later writing how he had loved to "lay sleepy with the sound of the sea."

Our family and friends will be traveling across the bay aboard our vessel the *Islander* for my Fathers memorial cruise this Spring to spread his ashes off of Bailey Island. I envision that this journey "down bay" will include a long pause just off the shores of Eagle Island to remember the good times we had there. I feel blessed that a beautiful and special place like Eagle Island will forever be a place where my wife and I can bring our children to remember fondly our time with him.

Captain Bill Frappier III



## Josephine and Marie By Diane Friese

This is the first of several articles in forthcoming issues focusing on various aspects of Josephine's and Marie's lives, their connections to Eagle Island, their promotion of Admiral Peary's legacy and some "behind the scenes" reflections, often in their own words, about their lives and experiences in the Peary household and travels in the Arctic.

Josephine Diebitsch Peary was a strong, multi-faceted woman. She was: an intelligent and educated life learner; avid writer and author; loving mother and grandmother; skilled outdoorswoman; fundraiser for Peary expeditions; charter member of the National Geographic Society and the Appalachian Mountain Club; honorary member of Women Geographers; and a loyal, loving and supportive wife and partner to Admiral Peary and his 20-year journey to reach the North Pole. And she was a person like ourselves, who had occasional self-doubts, worries about her household finances, and concerns about her husband and family.

Josephine was one of the first people to write journal and newspaper articles about the Arctic Eskimo culture. During the three expeditions she accompanied Admiral Peary, she wrote in what eventually became her Arctic Journal manuscript. In 1894, she was paid \$5,000 for this manuscript which was a significant sum of money at that time.

The following is an excerpt from an article she wrote in 1896, based on notes from her journal, for a monthly Philadelphia women's journal "Among the Arctic Highlanders," The Home Queen, Vol XV. No 2. This is her description of the first female Eskimo she met.

"Someone has said that if two Yankee men were standing on a desert Island they would at the very beginning of their acquaintance swap jack-knives and each would make money by the trade; and so too, it might be said that if two women were to meet at the confines of the earth, the first duty of each would be to ascertain what the other wore. At least, I felt it a positive duty to my sex to find out all about the costume of the other woman, and after we had become better acquainted I discovered that she had also a burning desire to know how I was clad."

"The seal (not the fur seal of Alaska), but the hair seal of Greenland furnished the material for her "*netchah*" or upper garment, which is made like a sweater, with a hood attached and must be drawn on over the head, as it has no opening down the front or back. The *netchah* reaches just below the waist and is met by a pair of "*nanookies*" or trousers, made of fox-skin. Under this seal-skin garment is worn a bird-skin shirt called "*ahtee*", made from the skins of the little auk or the black guillemot. The trousers are very short, in fact, only trunks, and form a connecting link between the *netchah* and the long seal-skin boots or "*kamiks*" which reach half way up the thigh and are pulled on over the soft brown stockings or "*alisee*" made from the fur of the reindeer."

Diane Friese, Eagle Island Volunteer Docent

Information for this article was derived from perusing copies of Josephine Peary's writings which are housed at the Maine Women Writers Collection at the Josephine Abplanalp Library at the University of New England's Portland campus.

These articles will also be available on the Friend's website [friendsofpearyseagleisland.com](http://friendsofpearyseagleisland.com)

## Eagle Island News

Bowdoin College alumni will be visiting Eagle Island again this year during the reunion weekend.

Friend's Docent Priscilla Seimer will be doing a database of plant life found on Eagle Island.

The Treasure Hunt for children that was developed by two of the Friend's Docents Ruth and Sue, and which was so popular last year will be returning this year with more rewards and more items to search for.

Our Outreach Program has been expanded to help schools visit Eagle Island. Do you know of a school group that would like to visit Eagle Island? Contact us for more information.

This year the stone steps to the library will be repaired and restructured. The cement stairs will also be resurfaced. Your donations this year will aid in the expense of this major necessary project. Thanks in advance for helping us maintain Eagle Island for this generation and many more generations.

## Eagle Island Historic Site Polar Bear Hide

### By Teresa Myers

The Eagle Island Polar Bear is a polar bear hide with mounted head and paws. The bear hung for years at the Peary House on Eagle Island as an important part of the interpretation of the site. In its long-term installation the hide hung year-round in the open, suspended from a hook on the head mount and draping over furniture below it. This arrangement, while allowing the bear to fit inside the room, did facilitate a remarkable degree of damage to the hide. Being on display in the open air left the hide vulnerable to attacks by pests. Clothes moths infested it heavily, weakening the hide and shearing off hair in large areas, especially in the trunk. The hide, subjected to extreme shifts in temperature and humidity, unfiltered daylight, pests and strain from display format, began to degrade internally.

For all that, most of the pieces were still with the bear. It had been lined with cotton fabric, which gave a certain amount of support and structure. The legs and much of the upper body remained in reasonably good condition. With extensive treatment, the bear could be salvaged.

After low-temperature treatment at the Maine State Museum to stop the moth infestation, the bear traveled to Teresa Myers Conservation Services in Sebec, Maine for treatment. Study and research confirmed extensive damage to the hide itself; the internal structure of the skin was coming apart and would have to be bound back together with a consolidant. Once consolidated, the skin could be flattened as far as possible and attached to a lining material. This flattened hide (the attached head still on its taxidermy mount) could then be displayed horizontally in a specially built display case on Eagle Island. As discussions of the finished product and the display case progressed, it became clear that a display case that could comfortably house a 9-foot by 8-foot polar bear would not actually fit into any of the available spaces at the Eagle Island site. Yet the polar bear must be displayed there as an important part of the site's interpretation, and it must be enclosed for protection. After much discussion a compromise was reached. In a heavily damaged area, the hide would be cut laterally and conserved in two pieces. For display, the upper half could overlap the lower half, essentially shortening the trunk, covering the heavily damaged and fragmentary lower portion of the trunk, and yet still allowing display of all four legs and the tail. With that important decision finalized, work could begin on the bear. The first step was to cut the hide at the agreed-upon location. That done, the bear could be worked on in two parts, upper and lower.

The cotton backing was removed, revealing padding glued to the paws and a solid plywood board forming the underside of the head's mount. For the lower half, once removed from the backing, it separated into six major sections and many small fragments. All hide was then consolidated using a very dilute solution of adhesive in a non-polar solvent. Four applications were required, with complete evaporation between each application. During the process of consolidation, curled pieces of hide were gently flattened under weight. Once the hide was consolidated it was time to repair tears using the same material that will be used to create the full lining; Hollytex. For an adhesive I chose Beva Film. Pieces of Hollytex were lined with Beva Film and then cut to shape and applied to the hide with a low-heat tacking iron. The remaining treatment will involve attaching the lining to upper and lower halves, followed by some aesthetic restoration work on the head, repairing cracks in the taxidermy mount. The fur will be carefully cleaned and then it will be ready to begin its journey home to Eagle Island.



For a more detailed description of the process of restoring and preserving the polar bear pelt see our website:  
[www.friendsofpearyseagleisland.com](http://www.friendsofpearyseagleisland.com)

## Josephine Peary Rose

The Friends of Peary's Eagle Island are trying to locate a rose bush that was named for Josephine Peary in 1898. After a contest was held in 1897 by The Dingee & Conrad Company of West Grove, Pennsylvania, to name this new rose described as being "a strong, rapid grower without a weak spot, able to withstand, unprotected the most severe winters" it seemed fitting that the entry of name "The Mrs. Robert Peary Rose" should win the contest. We know Josephine Peary must have had the rose at one time on Eagle Island, but it no longer exists out there. Does anyone have any information on this rose and perhaps know of one still surviving? If so please contact us through our website: [friendsofpearyseagleisland.com](http://friendsofpearyseagleisland.com). As always, thanks!

## Docents Needed

The Eagle Island Docent Program serves an important role in a visit to Eagle Island. Our docents' energy, excitement and enthusiasm for the island and its history enhances and enriches your experience there, and we know from feedback comments that this hard work is appreciated.

After a full season with the Welcome Center fully operational, we have learned some important lessons about our staffing requirements, the principle one being that it is critical to have a minimum of two docents on the island every day it is open. So this season, it is more important than ever that we increase the number of docents available to do this important work. If you have been searching for a way to become more connected to Eagle Island, please consider becoming a part of this rewarding volunteer experience. Training material and transportation to/from the island are provided. Our spring orientation luncheon for docents will be held June 4<sup>th</sup>, and we would love to see you there. For more information, contact Wayne or Gaye Miller, co-coordinators of the docent program, at (207) 725-6595, or email at [millerawayne@comcast.net](mailto:millerawayne@comcast.net) or [millergaye@comcast.net](mailto:millergaye@comcast.net).

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