

# Sippewissett Association Newsletter

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## Calendar

### Summer Social

Canceled with regrets

### Meeting

All meetings via Zoom. TBD

### Board of Directors

#### Officers

Arthur Gaines, President  
 Karl Audenaerde, Treasurer  
 Klarissa Chase, Secretary

#### Directors

Carolyn Eberhard  
 MaryKay Fox  
 Geraldine Klein Robbenhaar  
 Charles Mann  
 David Margaretos

Carol O'Loughlin  
 Robert Skilton  
 Paula Tredeau  
 Sylvia Vatak

### Newsletter

Design & layout: Tom Chilton

## Sippewissett Association

P.O. Box 501  
 Falmouth, MA 02541



# Sippewissett Association Newsletter

## June 2020 Annual Meeting and Follow-Up

This year's Annual Meeting and ballot was conducted by a written Annual Report, with mail-in membership forms and ballots. Of 136 meeting packages going out to members, 107 responses were received (Annual Meeting quorum is 25% or 34 members). All ballot issues were approved: 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes (67-0); Slate of Board (70-1); Slate of Officers (70-0); Treasurer's Report (68-1). As of July 31 the membership (including 4 new members) stands at 111. Twenty-nine reminders will go out with this newsletter to 2019 members who have not yet renewed.

I thank those re-upping from previous terms as well as two newer additions to the Board—Klarissa Chase (whose grandparents were early

residents of Sippewissett) and Dave Margaretos. Thank you all.

As per our bylaws, the July 31, 2020 Board (Zoom) Meeting unanimously appointed two additional members to the Board. We are pleased to add Ms. Paula Tredeau to our Board, a long-time summer resident of Sippewissett who recently retired permanently here with her husband Richard. Also unanimously approved was the appointment of Ms. MaryKay Fox. MaryKay has been very active in recent years to improve the Town management of Wood Neck Beach. Both women have accepted the appointments. With these appointments the Board now stands at 12; our bylaws provide the Board can number from 9 to 13 members.

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## Marsh Mallow

*By Jennifer Gaines*

The coastal ponds of Sippewissett are at their most lovely now, due to one type of flower, *Hibiscus palustris*, known as Rose Mallow, or more locally, Marsh Mallow. The flowers are without a doubt the biggest and showiest of our native wildflowers; they stretch up to six inches across and are usually a bright pink, though they vary from deep rose to white. The plants are tall, at least waist high, sometimes as tall as head-high.

They are a member of the same genus as the hibiscus from the tropics; their flowers are almost identical to those shrubs we might remember from the Caribbean, with wide open petals and a central column comprised of a long single style with anthers and stamens coming straight out

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# Hurricane Carol

by Arthur G. Gaines, Jr.

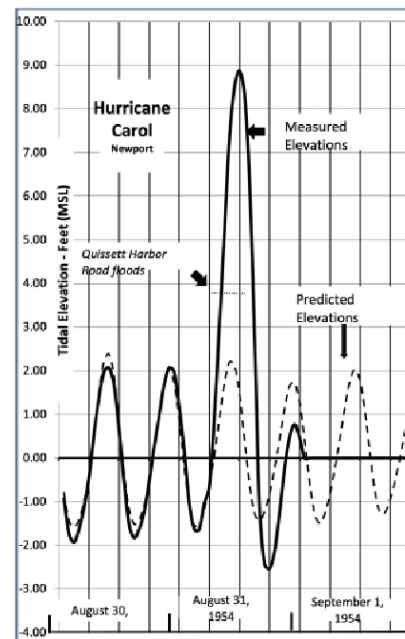
Sixty-six years ago, on August 31, 1994, Hurricane Carol swept into Falmouth. With winds estimated at 115 to 125 mph the storm wreaked havoc—trees down, widespread flooding, massive damage to harbors and their fleets, wave attack high above attempted erosion controls, and power loss from hours to days.

Janice Adams, enjoying her summer vacation from college, was at home on that morning in their house on Langley Road adjacent to the south end of Gunning Point Beach. Watching the initial stages of the approaching hurricane, she decided to walk out on the beach to take a closer look. After seeing the growing surf and rapid rise of the water level (about 2 ft. /hour—twice the normal rate of flood rise here) she wisely decided to retreat. Further delay and she may not be alive today. Over the ensuing hours of the day Janice took several snapshots that document some unbelievable events of the storm. These photos,

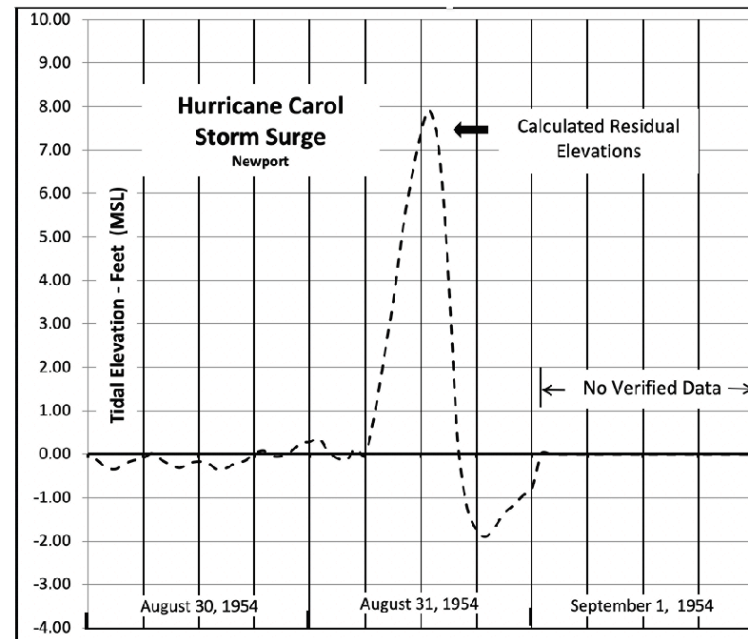
which she made available recently, are what stimulated this article.

Historical tide records from the Newport Tide Station, the best surrogate of sea level along the Buzzards Bay shore, indicate that the observed and predicted tide elevations agreed closely on August 30, the day before the hurricane. The next day at 7 AM (EDT) the observed tide began to depart from predictions and by noon had reached an elevation of 8.87 feet (relative to mean sea level - msl). The predicted high had been 10 AM at about 2.2 ft. (msl). The maximum tide at Woods Hole during Carol had been the same as Newport, 8.88 ft. (msl).

Even more striking than the abrupt rise of sea level was its even more rapid drop – up to 4 feet per hour (which may explain why coastal ponds often form breach ways through the beach during ebb). By 4 PM the tide had dropped to within normal range and by 6 PM reached its minimum at -2.5 ft. or more than 1.5 ft. below the predicted low.



The predicted tide (dashed line) and observed tide (solid line) at Newport (and Quissett Harbor), August 30 - September 1, 1954.



The storm surge due to Hurricane Carol, calculated by subtracting the predicted tide from the observed tide. This "meteorological tide" is purely the result of weather effects and coastal geometry.

A fast-moving storm, Hurricane Carol had departed Falmouth by the afternoon of August 31. Janice Adams made her way to Quissett Harbor to witness the damage. The shore and roadway were littered with boats of all kinds. From recent observations I have noted that the lowest point of Quissett Harbor Road begins

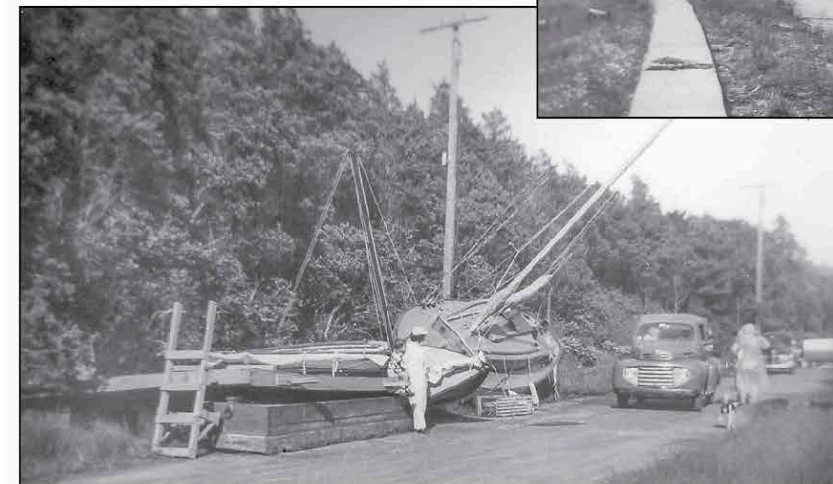
to flood when the tide reaches 3.4 ft. (msl) at Newport (or 5.1 ft. mllw [mean low low water]). Using this as a datum, from the peak observed hurricane tide of 8.87 ft. msl, the roadway would have been submerged beneath more than 5 feet of water.



Looking eastward toward Quissett Boatyard. The small sailboats lying among boulders in the intertidal zone are Herreshoff 12 1/2 footers. Note the exceptionally low tide following the hurricane.



The scene looking westward. Larger boats on Quissett Harbor Road suggest the road had been flooded at high water.



A small boy and woman companion sit among the wreckage of a swimming float, a Herreshoff 12 1/2, and larger sloop. Herreshoffs are still prominent among the fleet moored in Quissett Harbor.

Photos by Janice Adams

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## Fourth of July

The national celebration this year was very different from any in the past—each of us has a different story to tell of this year. But some past 4th of July celebrations stand out in our memories too. The story below is from an essay by Henry Stommel, who those in oceanography recognize as the greatest physical oceanographer of his time—maybe of all times. His family lived near Fieldcrest Farm at the head of Sippewissett Road, a house still owned by his wife, Chickie. Starting in the 1950s, Stommel wrote numerous short essays submitted to the *Falmouth Enterprise*, attributed to Stommel’s pseudonym, “Starbuck.” A collection of these articles was published by his friends in 1992 in a book titled, “*The Starbuck Essays Of Henry Stommel*.” The short excerpt below is from one of these essays, written in 1985.

### My Friend John Moore by Starbuck

“One fourth of July, some years ago, I invited the neighbors to a home-made fireworks display: Giff and Win Ewing, Sue Sisson and Claude Ronne. John C. Moore came, too, from across the street, although, as he said afterward, he didn’t think he was going to see much.

The pyrotechnical cardboard tubes were nailed to boards and sawhorses in the old apple orchard—all ready to go. When the first fountain bloomed it spread to the quickmatch on all the other devices, and the entire display erupted in one simultaneous convulsion of strontium-tinted fire. A dense magnesium-oxide smoke drifted across Sippewissett Corner. Giff fell over backwards in his chair. Globules of molten saltpeter ignited the grass. The garden hose was brought into play, and John C. Moore exclaimed that it was the best fireworks show he had ever seen.”

## Annual Meeting (continued)

### Sippewissett Association

#### Board and Officers

Officers – For a 1-year term (through June 2021)  
 President – Arthur Gaines  
 Vice President – (unfilled)  
 Treasurer - Karl Audenaerde  
 Secretary – Klarissa Chase

#### Class of 2021

Karl Audenaerde  
 Klarissa Chase  
 Arthur Gaines  
 MaryKay Fox

#### Class of 2022

Carolyn Eberhard  
 Carol O’Loughlin  
 Charles Mann  
 Bob Skilton

#### Class of 2023

Geraldine Klein-Robbenhaar  
 Sylvia Vatuk  
 David Margaretos  
 Paula Tredeau

I would like to express my gratitude to two retiring Board Members: Debbie Gove and Maureen Conte. Both have worked for years on behalf of the Association and our community while simultaneously pursuing active and challenging professional careers. I would also like to thank Bob Busby (not a Board Member) who quietly, dependably, expertly, and I would add, patiently, maintained our membership records for many years. Best wishes to these colleagues in their new pursuits.

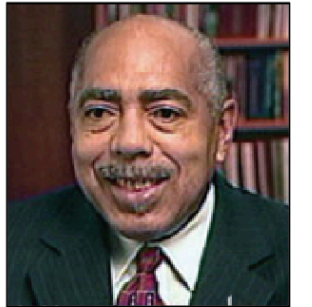
## Walter E. Massey to Receive Sigma-Xi Gold Key Award

Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society, announced that Walter E. Massey, PhD, is the 2020 recipient of the Society’s most prestigious award, the Sigma Xi Gold Key Award. It is the highest honor presented to a member who has made extraordinary contributions to his or her profession, has fostered critical innovations to enhance the health of the research enterprise, to cultivate integrity in research, or to promote the public understanding of science for the purpose of improving the human condition.

Long-time members of the Sippewissett Association, Walter and Shirley Massey are summer residents of Sippewissett.

We are honored to have them as neighbors and friends.

Dr. Massey has had a distinguished career, spanning 54 years, including: President (2010-2016), now President Emeritus, School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Chair, Giant Magellan Telescope Board; Chair, City Colleges of Chicago Trustees; President Emeritus, Morehouse College; Former Head, National Science Foundation; Former Director, Argonne National Laboratory; Former Chairman, Bank of America; Former President and Chair, American Association for the Advancement of Science.



Congratulations to Walter and Shirley and their family.

## Marsh Mallow (continued)

from that core, and perpendicular to it. They belong to the Mallow family which also includes hollyhocks, okra, and cotton.

This native hibiscus grows very successfully, but in only one narrow habitat. Gardeners would say “They like to have wet feet and full sun.” And that is exactly what they find along the edges of our coastal ponds. Fortunately for us, they can tolerate quite a bit of salt, and it is the brackish marshes where they abound, almost ringing the ponds. Their stems and bottom of their leaves are covered with a fine down which prevents them from losing a lot of moisture, which must have been particularly helpful in the recent drought. Massachusetts is the northern boundary of their territory, which stretches south to North Carolina.



(A note about Latin names: In the most recent guide books, you will find this plant’s name as *Hibiscus moscheutos*. The specific epithet means “musk-scented”. Previously, that name referred to a more southerly species, usually white flowered with maroon centers. In their wisdom, taxonomists have decided that the two types are really one species so merged them, giving them this one name. I have always been fond of “*palustris*” which means “of the marshland” - so perfect for this plant. Humpf!)

These flowers are, in short, dazzling. Their portrait has graced the cover of more than one wildflower guide. We are so fortunate to have these growing in such glorious profusion here. They are so spectacularly beautiful, no more so than on a still day when their reflection is mirrored in the pond’s surface. Be sure to appreciate them now. They will soon be gone!

Hurricane Carol:

The Saga of the Bathhouse

*Excerpts of a Conversation between Arthur Gaines and George Billings*

For many decades, there was a bathhouse at the south end of Gunning Point Beach, near where the current path leads down from Langley Road to the beach, on land owned by Langley Keyes and his predecessors (and now by the Salt Pond Areas Bird Sanctuaries). The structure's specific origin is not certain, but it undoubtedly came from one of the oldest families on Gunning Point: John Haynes or perhaps the Langleys and the Robbs. From at least the 1920s or '30s, the bathhouse was shared by the Langley/Keyes family and the Robb/Billings family.

GB – “Gentlemen and ladies of an earlier era did not change into bathing attire at home and walk down the street in their nearly full-body woolen bathing suits. Such a display was considered uncouth, never mind uncomfortable, so aspiring bathers wore proper attire to and from the beach and changed in the bathhouse.”

AG – “My wife Jennifer’s Great Uncle Rogers Trainer had a beach cabana at Watch Hill, R.I. When going to the beach Rogers, in his day, wore a three-piece business suit and wingtips.”



*Near the peak of Hurricane Carol, viewed across the Adams flooded yard in the foreground, the beach at Gunning Point was completely submerged and hurricane-driven waves thundered against the cliff beneath the Cape Codder Hotel. The bathhouse is seen just to the left of the Strout house on the pond’s far shore.*

*On August 31, 1954, as the hurricane tide rose at Gunning Point Beach, the structure was wrenched off its footings, driven over the submerging coastal bank and across the storm-flooded pond before hurricane-strength SW winds and seas. It grounded near the present Strout home off Sippewissett Road near Cape Codder Road.*

GB – “That property was owned in 1954 by Dorothy Adams Strout (later Hennessy), widow of Edward Strout, mother of current owner, “Ted” Strout, and sister of Donald Perry Adams, Janice’s and Carol’s father, who in 1952 bought what is now Jan’s house at the opposite end of the beach. The brother-sister relationship presumably was a happy factor in prompting him to buy so close together. The elder Mr. Strout reportedly took possession of his house just weeks before the Great Hurricane of ’38 savaged Southeastern New England.”

GB – “My Uncle Roger (Roger Robb, my mother’s only sibling, and his 2nd wife, Aunt Lil [Lillian Nordstrom Robb]) used one of the four changing rooms in the bathhouse. A cigar connoisseur, he left a handsome, wooden box of the finest pre-Castro Cuban cigars on the shelf in the changing room. Remarkably,



*Looking west, toward Buzzards Bay, the bathhouse, now aground with receding flood water, sits astonishingly intact after its stormy journey across the beach and pond. Waves still break across the drowned beach.*

*Photos by Janice Adams*



they survived their trip to the other side of the pond, jostled, but safely nestled on the shelf, well above the high-water mark. When the bathhouse was returned to its home base, Roger joyfully retrieved the cigars, unfurled one of them, meticulously clipped the cigar end with his perfectly honed pocket knife, carefully burned the sulphur from the end of his preferred wooden match, and thoughtfully drew the flame into the cigar, as he rolled it for an even light. As the resulting cloud of blue smoke wafted about him and descended on the wreckage of the old Langley pier, he enjoyed the crisp, post-hurricane view of the bay and exhaled a gratified, ‘Aaaahhhh!’

Only days before their arrival at Gunning Point from Washington, Aunt Lil bought a new bathing suit at Julius Garfinckel & Co. Never having worn it, she left it on a wooden peg in the changing room. With the hurricane bearing down on the Cape, she postponed her swim. The suit did not fare so well as the cigars. As the bathhouse made its way northward on the cresting swells of an angry bay, the planks of the building flexed, opened, and closed throughout

the journey, eventually snapping shut on the garment like the jaws of a hungry striped bass on a lure. Uncle Roger sadly freed it with his pocketknife, but the remains were then unsuitable for use (please pardon the pun).”

AG – “So what eventually happened to the bathhouse?”

GB – “By the late 1960s, the Keyeses, Robbs, and Billingses no longer used the bathhouse, so Lang Keyes met with builder, Bill Newton, to discuss its disposition. Bill Putnam happened to encounter them on the beach that day. He offered Lang \$100, and contracted to move it to his backyard on Gunning Point Road, where it rests to this day. Bill removed one of the interior walls and two doors of the bathhouse to re-purpose it as a garden shed/summer house.

My oldest brother, Charlie, reminded me that Lang Keyes drew caricatures of assorted Keyeses, Robbs, and Billingses on the interior walls of the bathhouse, complementing other penciled, dated inscriptions there. Some of them are still there, but very faded with time.”

## Sippewissett Traffic and Safety Stalls in 2020

by David Margaretos

2020 has been a very challenging year for everyone and for many it has brought serious hardship. Under the circumstances it is understandable that our Town officials have appropriately focused their efforts on the many significant issues facing Falmouth and that our efforts to mitigate vehicular speeding and improve safety have been unable to move forward.

Although we have received strong support from the Traffic Advisory Committee and the Chief of Police, their shifted priorities and shortage of resources did not allow them to complete the actions they had planned for this year. If there is

a silver lining it may be that summer tourism and traffic along the Sippewissett-Quissett corridor have been reduced this year as a result of shelter-in-place and work-at-home policies, and with it we have seen a lessened speeding problem.

Our strategy going forward is to re-engage with town officials in the future, when they have the time and resources to commit to improving safety in our neighborhood. We have let them know that we understand the realities of 2020 and that we will be ready to resume work with them at the appropriate time. The Traffic and Safety Committee appreciates the patience of our members and looks forward to reporting greater success in the upcoming year.

## Covid-19 and Beach Etiquette

By Carolyn Eberhard

Board Members at the July 30 meeting expressed alarm over a lack of compliance at beaches with Governor Baker's Executive Order No. 31, mandating face masks to be worn in public places, or social distancing where masks are not possible. Initial adherence to these directives is believed to have resulted in the low and diminishing Covid-19 case rate in Massachusetts until recent weeks. Now there is an upturn in cases, for example with 10 lifeguards in Falmouth contracting the virus. Seen as a state-wide issue, the Governor has recently made more stringent travel restrictions, even among neighboring New England states, to be enforced by fines of \$500/day for noncompliance.

In short requirements at beaches call for:

- \* Individual household groups at least 12 feet apart
- \* No groups with more than ten 10 people



- \* Face masks required when less than 6 feet apart from people not in your family group
- \* No face mask required when actually in the water

A specific event cited at our Board meeting occurred at Gunning Point Beach in July, where a large number of young adults "short-term renting" a local house staged a large and lengthy party on the beach, with no evidence of face masks or social distancing. Their behavior was perceived to be a threat to others on the beach at that time.

Residents using our private beaches are requested not to constrain access points with beach equipment and to leave clear space for others to safely pass, to enter and leave the water, and to transit the beach—consistent with the Governor's Executive Order. Covid-19 is a threat to all, on and off the beaches.

## Dr. Merle Mizell (1927-2020): an appreciation

by Arthur G. Gaines, Jr.

The Board of Directors of the Sippewissett Association was saddened by Merle's death on June 5, 2020. Merle served long and well in support of our organization, often taking a leadership role, beginning when the Sippewissett Association was formed in 1969. His last Board meeting was on January 12 this year.

Merle's long and distinguished career at the forefront of biomedical sciences, working at Tulane University and, during summers, at MBL in Woods Hole, is well outlined and acknowledged in published obituaries. We have only a few, more personal, words to add.

He expressed his love of this community in many ways, which was really an expression of love for his family and the many happy summer years they spent here. He was a firm defender of our community's legal right of access to the water's edge at Buzzard's Bay, to our open woodlands and to other amenities of our community that make it wonderful for families.

He and I enjoyed numerous luncheons at the MBL Swope Cafeteria, usually on Fridays when Merle always ordered the clam chowder, made special on Fridays. We would often sit outside under an umbrella and I was impressed at how

many people, many distinguished MBL scientists, would stop by and express best wishes and friendship for Merle. It was clear he and his late wife Lorraine, married for 51 years, were widely admired as active members of the MBL community.

We talked at length about the new Mizell-Hoskins Trailhead as it was taking shape. He once told me his son Michael, when visiting a last time with incurable cancer, had expressed the wish to view his beloved childhood haunts at Flume Pond, but there was nowhere to park or stop in a flow of speeding traffic. The now-established trailhead facility, which Merle endowed, is decorated with snowdrops we transplanted from his garden on Cape Codder Road. Merle provided a substantial contribution to our Traffic & Safety Committee, of which he was an active member, for the purpose of establishing a RADAR sign along Sippewissett Road to warn drivers of excessive speed. Merle recalled happily the College Light Opera Company whose summer performances were one of the joys of summer for his family.

We are pleased his daughter Tracy Moore, now of New Hampshire has retained her membership.

## Hurricane Carol (continued)

As a point of interest, the highest purely astronomical tide ever predicted at Newport was 3.42 ft. (msl) on April 27, 1994 (or 5.16 ft. mllw). This suggests flooding of Quissett Harbor Road is nearly always a result of weather effects added to astronomical tides.

The Sippewissett area escaped the worst damage from storm waves, as the wind was predominantly from the southwest. We will not always be so lucky.

*I thank Dave Margaretos, who computer enhanced the photographs used in this article and the accompanying box. AGG*

*Several articles have been written over the years about Hurricane Carol, many of which are available online. A recent one by Board Member Maureen Conte appeared in our summer Newsletter in 2012 giving her perspectives on the event. The current short article presents additional local views and information.*