

JULY 1993

\$1.95

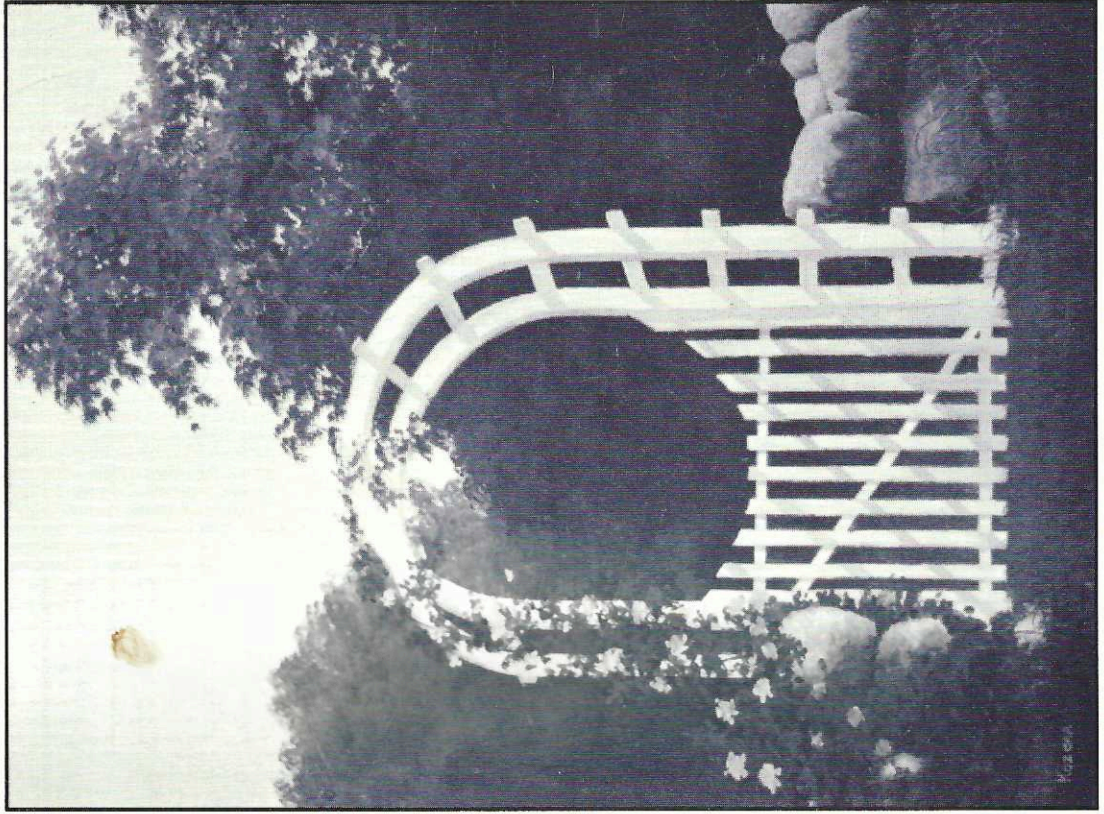
TIDINGS[®]

SERVING THE SHORE AREA

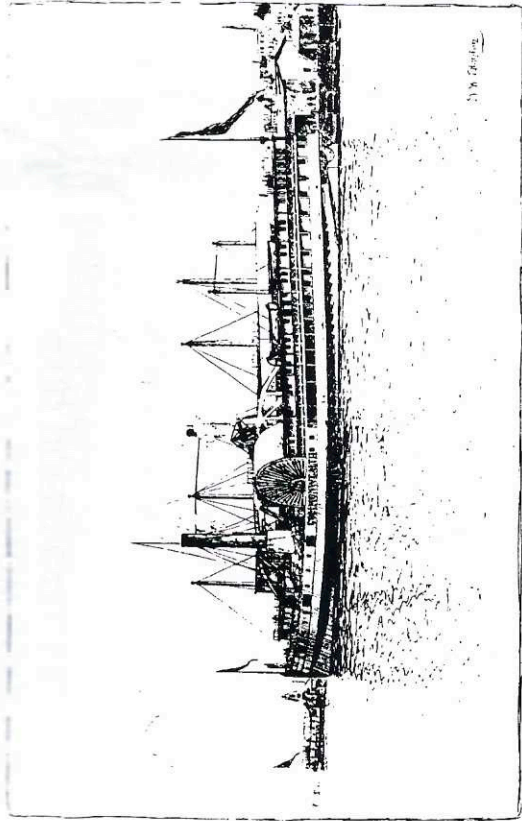
SOUTHERN RHODE ISLAND

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT

Quonnie: A State of Mind **The Way We Were**
Groton's Steamboat Terminal **Religious Street Processions**
The Knight in Shining Wet Suit



ALGATA



GEORGE WEAVER, 1885

FEATURES

- 8 Groton's Steamboat Terminal
Stolen from Stonington.
- 12 Quonnie: A State of Mind
Paradise on Earth for generations.
- 18 The Way We Were
New London in the 1850s.
- 24 Religious Street Processions
Summertime festivals of faith.
- 29 The Knight in Shining
Wet Suit
The hi-tech age of chivalry.

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 Calendar of Events
 - 7 Tidings Exchange
 - 34 Back Issues
 - 35 Tide Chart
 - 36 Oops...
- ## CENTERSPREAD
- View of New London, Connecticut, from the Shore Road,

COVER

"Rose Arbor", oil by Robert Kozora of Hope Valley, RI. Mr. Kozora has exhibited on all levels, received numerous awards, and is currently represented by galleries in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, and Bermuda. A native of Pennsylvania, he received his formal art training at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. Inquiries may be made directly to the artist at (401) 539-7358.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Marianne J. McNee, page 12, is a former advertising executive now staying at home in Old Greenwich, CT, with her two children. She has been enjoying "the Quonnie experience" each summer since she was three months old, and is happily passing it on to her children.

Linda Whitlock, page 29, lives in Waterford in retirement from The Williams School where she was Dean of the Faculty.

Anne Fitzgerald, pages 29 through 33 illustrations, is a free-lance illustrator who lives in Westerly, graduated from the Mass. College of Art in 1991, and attended the Rhode Island School of Design.

PHOTO CREDITS:

The Carol W. Kimball Collection, pages 8-11.
Marianne J. McNee, pages 12-17.
Larry Chick, pages 24-28.

TIDINGS MAGAZINE

PO Box 502
Westerly, RI 02891
401-348-7040

Established 1983

PUBLISHER: Margaret Driscoll (1983-1993)
EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Robert M. Driscoll
COPY EDITOR: Linda B. Whitlock
DESIGN: Laura Bradley
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS/
CIRCULATION: Margaret M. Driscoll (Jr.), Eleanor W. Driscoll, Anne H. Driscoll, Catherine R. Driscoll, Geoffrey M. Driscoll
CONTRIBUTORS:
Writers: Larry Chick, Carol W. Kimball, Margaret W. Rase, Martin Sheridan, Martha P. Sherman

ADVERTISING SALES

Advertising Closing Date: Six weeks prior to publication date

Calendar of Events and Community Bulletin Board Closing Dates: 2 months prior to publication date.

Tidings: Serving the Shore Area (ISSN 0897-0335) is published 6 times a year (April/May, June, July, August, Sept/Oct, Nov/Dec) by Tidings, Inc. PO Box 502, Westerly, RI, Vol. 11, No. 3 Copyright © 1993 Tidings, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this magazine in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Yearly subscription (6 issues): \$10.00. Single copies \$1.95. Back issues available at \$2.00, plus \$1.00 postage per issue. Second Class Postage paid at Westerly, RI.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Tidings, PO Box 502, Westerly, RI 02891.

Manuscripts pertaining to Rhode Island-Southeastern Connecticut are invited. Payment is made upon publication. The Publisher claims no responsibility for unsolicited material. No material will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Letters to Tidings Magazine or to its editors become the property of the magazine and are assumed intended for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore be used for such purposes.

Quonnie: A State of Mind

The community's
peace of mind
is passed on
from generation to generation.

I'd Rather Be In Quonnie!" should be the one bumper sticker on our car.

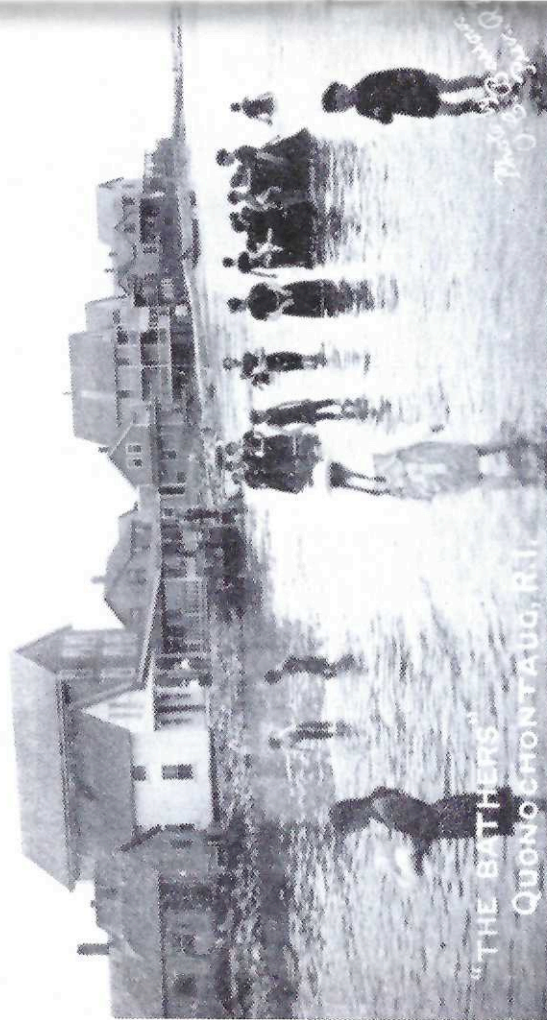
Bonnie Quonnie — Quonochontaug, Rhode Island — has been a part of my life between May and October since the late nineteen-fifties, but only recently have I come to understand how important Quonnie is to me and my family.

My husband was the first person to say he was "in a Quonnie state of mind" not long after he started visiting in 1987. It may have a lot to do with the fact that we are always at Quonnie on weekends or vacations, without the demands of work, major housekeeping, or a heavy list of errands hanging over our head. It may also reflect the fact that my parents are the homeowners, even though we all contribute in one way or another. But I like to think that the Quonnie state of mind exists because of all that Quonnie offers — the topog-

raphy, the ocean and pond, the people, and the traditional community events such as the summer parade.

The beach is the center of Quonnie life. Even when the weather isn't beach friendly, I visit the beach to get my bearings. It's the point of origin for my Quonnie state of mind. The beach plum plants frame the entrance boardwalk with a sweet, tender effervescence. Their pink flowers bend softly with the ocean breezes. The ocean cascades out toward Block Island offering a nice, open space unencumbered by any things man-made.

Quonochontaug is made up of three sections. East and West Beach surround Central Beach, with large rocks defining Central Beach. Although there are "technical" boundaries for all three beach areas, you can walk a good piece in either direction and still be in Quonnie.



For generations, Quonochontaug's tranquility has been as stable and dependable as its unassuming structures.



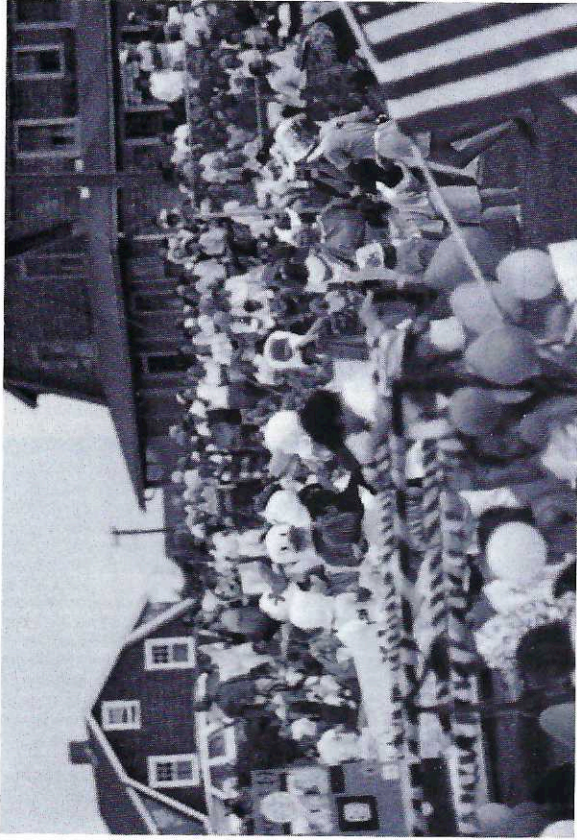
The annual Fourth of July

Ocean waves roll in from the Block Island Sound providing the soft lapping or hard crashing aural backdrop. The waves have differing levels of intensity depending on the weather; thus, the beach has a different sound and look each day. The feel is always the same, though; soft and warm underfoot, daring, cool, and exciting in the water.

The rocks nearby offer children little swimming pools and easy-to-see mussels, shells, and seaweed. I still love walking to the rocks and looking over the ocean's miscellaneous deposits. And now that we have our children, it's a pleasure to see our older daughter, Sarah, make the new discoveries that I must have made as a child. Our younger daughter Kate, while still an infant, will soon be following in her sister's footsteps. Walking along the sandy beach massages my feet; I can almost sense the callouses melting from my toes. I especially love walking on the beach after a swim because I dry off quickly

and the sun on my back warms me. I wish I could say the water at Quonnie beach is warm. I can't. The temperature seems to hover in the mid-sixties (F) except on the warmest days of the summer. However, this has never stopped my father who loves to swim off Quonnie Beach regardless of water conditions. Over the years I've become water tough too — I can go in if I'm really hot and the sun is out, even if the water is cold. Of course, riding the waves warms me immediately and then I love being in the water. Otherwise it's a real struggle to get in past my ankles. When I do get in, I always feel better for the effort. It's sort of a badge of honor.

My mother has been doing Sunday crossword puzzles on the beach for as long as I can remember. Every puzzler on the beach has his or her own style with utensils and dictionary usage under close scrutiny. It's another badge of honor to complete the puzzle without using any sup-



parade in downtown Quonnie.

plemental texts; it's *de rigueur* to use a pen. I can hear my mother shout out clues like "what's a female water spirit?" and can see my father cast his eyes skyward as if to divine the answer.

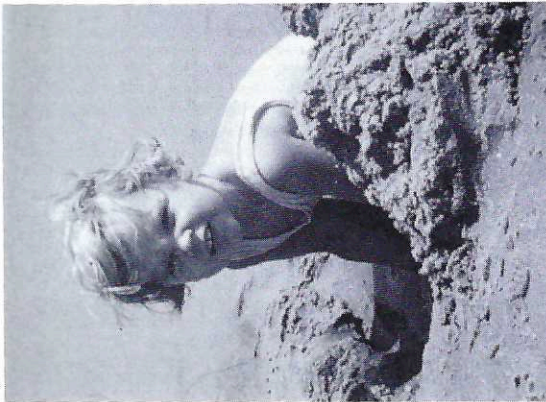
Quonnie has been part of my family's life since 1959. For the first few summers, we rented houses all over Central Beach. But after two years, my parents decided to build a house and we stayed at our new house for entire summers, renting our suburban residence for July and August. My father would arrive via car or train with the other fathers on Thursday or Friday and we'd have weekends together. My mother, with five children, must have had very busy weeks!

After five years, we sold the house and inexplicably left Quonnie for several years to pursue other summer interests closer to our permanent home in Connecticut. But my parents had foresight. At the same time they sold the house, they purchased

another lot nearby. Ten years later another house was built and this is where my family has vacationed since 1978. My mother still wonders how we could have left Quonnie for those ten years.

Since we've "come back" our appreciation of and devotion to Quonnie has escalated tremendously. The quality of our vacations there is very high because we all get to do a lot of different things.

For me, it means going to the beach in the morning. With luck, I'll get in the water and take a swim. Sarah has no fear of the ocean and runs straight to the water the minute it dawns on her horizon. She does not dither around trying to decide if the water is warm enough. The water is always warm to her. Watching Sarah dart around, just as I must have, is exhausting but fun. During the hottest hours of the day, we head home for lunch and a nap. In the afternoon we might go back to the beach, or to Watch Hill or the pond, or play ten-

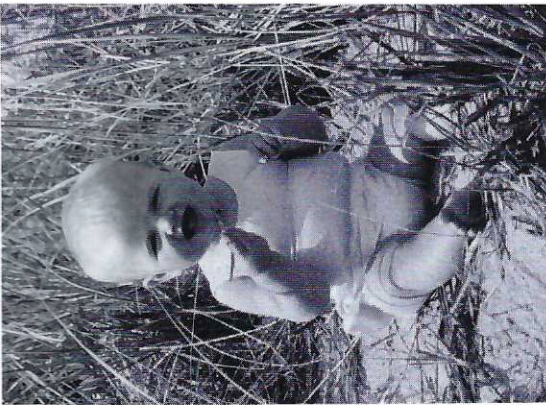


The author in 1960, at left, and daughter Sarah in 1991.

nis. On a really good day, I'll get out and play nine holes of golf with my husband. When I'm in Quonnie, every outing or activity seems that much more fun.

Quonnie's ambiance is reflected by the homes, all of which have a relaxed atmosphere. Many of the houses are faded Cape Cod gray and have a soft, ocean-weathered look. They blend in with the green hues of the wafting sea grass and deep blue ocean-sky color. Several have creative names such as Seascap, O'Briny (the O'Brien family), Red Top, Topsy Turvy, Old Salt, Quononah, and The Doll House (the Doll family). The homes are not of the scale of neighboring Newport and Watch Hill "cottages"; rather, Quonnie homes are more casual. Nobody in a Quonnie state of mind wants to spend a lot of time housecleaning, maintaining a fancy cupola, or supervising a staff.

The gardens are lovely. Quonnie's numerous rocks form natural borders around the vivid oranges, yellows,



and reds. There are very few fences or other artificial boundaries. The gardens are clearly to be enjoyed for gardening's sake, as opposed to showcase gardens tended by hired hands. For Quonnie homeowners, nurturing the gardens is part of their Quonnie state of mind.

On my bike, I can feel Quonnie's spirit. Biking along Surfside Avenue, parallel to the ocean, is the best part of my trip. I can hear and feel the crash of breaking waves and sense the enormous power of the sea. The smell, too, of heavy waves and damp seaweed refreshes my smog-weary nostrils. I always take my time pedaling along the streets so that I can enjoy looking at my most loved homes and gardens.

Nearing Quonochontaug Pond, I travel over a road straight out of the 1920s. It is very narrow, and brush grows right to the edge. There are no overhead lights or electricity poles. It was cleared long before there was any thought of big cars or trucks. In fact, my bike takes up a good part of

the road!

Just west of Central Beach, Quonnie Pond is a good size body of water with tall marsh grass and rock formations giving clear landmarks. Some days, a few horses graze lazily along the pond's edge. The sun glistens on the water as it stretches toward the west. In our early days here we had a sailboat and a motor boat. Now we enjoy the pond on walks or when we go clamming. My brother-in-law windsurfs there and the breeze always gives him a good ride. The sun sets over the pond and there are often beautiful sunsets.

We've rented houses on the pond, too. It has a very calming effect on the day. No crashing waves to keep your senses occupied. One year the house we stayed in had a rowboat, and my friend Frances and I took it out for a ride. We forgot about Quonnie Pond's tide and I remember a long walk back to the house dragging the boat through three inches of water.

Much of Quonnie was damaged or destroyed in the hurricanes of 1938 and 1954. In fact, an official survey taken at the time of the 1938 hurricane reported the destruction level to be 99% between Quonnie and Charlestown. Both beach-front and inland homes were ripped off their original foundations, only to be dragged back by stubborn or resourceful landowners. Today, they bear virtually no traces of their mistreatment so many years ago. These homes are among my favorites because they have withstood the test of time and trial.

The Quonochontaug Central Beach Fire District's annual Fourth of July parade is a slice of pure Americana. It is a Quonnie institution and a major bonding event for the

community. Virtually everyone turns out to catch a glimpse.

The parade has been in existence for over fifty years. Marking the beginning of the parade, an antique fire engine drives around the community blaring both patriotic songs and its siren. You cannot possibly miss the parade. Each year there is a theme to the parade like heroes and heroines, or cops and robbers.

We were always in the parade as kids. My parents somehow came up with a way to involve five children, spread over a ten year age span. One year we were the owl and the pussycat; another year the bull and the bear (something to do with the stock market). Prizes are still awarded to participants, so everybody feels as if they accomplished something. I'm looking forward to our children's participation over the years.

For my family and me there is no better place than Quonnie. Our times spent here are pleasant and we look forward to each visit with longing. Even as I write this, I'd rather be in Quonnie! The fact that we will be coming here for many more years makes Quonnie a very powerful place; one where sense of family, friends, and uncomplicated time prevails all.

Quonnie will serve as a continuum for our daughters. As my mother and father "gave" us Quonnie, my husband and I and our whole family will "give" all that is Quonnie to Sarah and Kate. The girls will know that their grandparents and parents have a real love for the beach, the ocean, and the community. They will walk the same paths as their aunts, uncles, and cousins. I'm certain that they too will come to possess the Quonnie state of mind.

Marianne J. McNee