

## Extracts from “Memories of Grindstone Neck”

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*Alan Goldstein, 75, says, “This is a good place for sailors,” as his own Grindstone Neck story illustrates. Fascinated by the Neck’s historic knockabout sailboats, he went on an odyssey to find the nine custom-made boats and bring them home for the centennial of the Yacht Club. Goldstein, who learned to sail on Lake Ontario, graduated from Syracuse University and the University of Rochester and achieved early success in business through his furniture manufacturing company and real estate investments. Today he spends a great deal of time in both Winter Harbor and Key Largo, Florida, where he has been an instrumental member of the Ocean Reef Club.*

I FIRST CAME TOWINTER HARBOR IN 1974 AND I’ll tell you how I happened to get here. I sailed my boat in 1974 from Rochester, New York, where I lived, out the St. Lawrence Seaway, out around the Gaspé Peninsula, down the coast of Nova Scotia, to southern Nova Scotia. I had never been in the state of Maine before. I then sailed from southern Nova Scotia to Northeast Harbor, Maine. The entire time that I was in Nova Scotia, there was fog, rain, thunder, lightning, but the morning that I sailed into Northeast Harbor, the sun came over Cadillac Mountain, and for the next three weeks, I cruised down the coast of Maine. I said to myself, “This is the most beautiful part of America and I’m going to buy a house here.” So I contacted a real estate broker in Bangor and asked him to send me the listings on every house on the coast of Maine. This happened to be sort of a recession year, and I received a carton that was filled with probably 700 or 800 listings. So when I got to Florida — I sailed ultimately to Florida — I spent the winter going through those listings and eliminating the ones that didn’t interest me, and I narrowed it down to about 20 properties that looked interesting. I sailed back up to Portland, Maine, and I started in there, going up the coast looking at the properties that looked interesting to me.

Now, of real interest was the fact that there was one property located in Winter Harbor that consisted of a peninsula that went into the ocean almost a mile. It was called Harbor Point and it was just opposite Grindstone Neck, just across the bay, and it was a beautiful peninsula. On one side was the harbor of Winter Harbor, and the other side, across Sand Cove, was the Winter Harbor Yacht Club and a golf course. It just looked very interesting. But I did my homework and I started up the coast and as I went up the coast I looked at property after property and nothing really lit my fire.

When I got to Camden, Maine, I decided to rent a car and drive to Winter Harbor and take a good look at this property. When I got there, it was a day like today. It was foggy; you couldn’t see a thing, but there was a small house there, built by a family that had just been transferred out west. They’d never lived in this little house on the Point. And it really did attract me. I went to Northeast Harbor, Seal Harbor, I looked at all these places, and then I got back to Winter Harbor,

and decided to buy that property. I knew nothing about Grindstone Neck, nothing about the Winter Harbor Yacht Club. I had never heard of Fitz Dixon in my life. I just was in love with the house and the property, and I bought it [in 1974]. The next year I returned to Winter Harbor and, to make a long story short, it wasn't until 1980 that I became a member of the Winter Harbor Yacht Club. [It took] five years. I was not known to anybody there, and it was a very closed corporation in those days. But eventually I did get in the club and one of the things that excited me about this area to begin with was the fact that it was such beautiful water, deep water, wonderful sailing water. When I did join the Yacht Club, I was very interested in teaching youngsters how to sail. I'll never forget, one day I went out with Doug Moxham and Bill Holden in a Bullseye and worked on teaching their children how to sail. And that was the beginning of getting involved in junior sailing at the Yacht Club. I think in about 1980 we had a tennis instructor named Bill Nelesky who worked mornings teaching tennis. I said to Bill, "Look, I think it's time you taught the children how to sail." He said, "I don't know anything about sailing." So I gave him a book on sailing and I said, "Stay one chapter ahead of the kids," which is what he did and so Bill Nelesky started teaching children how to sail in the Bullseyes.

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About 1980, or 1981, I became interested in the Winter Harbor knockabouts. There were two knockabouts left in Winter Harbor and they were both owned by Mr. Dixon. The rest of the fleet of seven other boats, a total of nine, were dispersed throughout the Northeast. So the fleet was basically gone and there were no official races at all at that time with just the two boats.

Now, a little history of the knockabouts. They were all built in 1907, except for Mr. Dixon's. His boats were built in 1921 and 1922. A gentleman came up here in 1921 in February and took the lines off what was the fastest boat at that time to build the other two boats. When they brought these boats in 1907, they raced them every Wednesday and every Saturday, and the races were preceded by a lobster dinner, with a lot of martinis and a lot of drinking. So here we are, it's 1982. I've been in the Yacht Club for two years and I decided that I would try to put the fleet back together. So I found a boat in Sorrento, Cloverly. I don't know whether I saw an ad or what, but at any rate, I heard about the boats. So I went down to Sorrento and I met with the fellow who owned the boat, and his name was Sturgis Haskins. I think he bought the boat from Howard Flierl. So at any rate, I bought the boat and had it restored, and I brought it to Winter Harbor and now we had three. Then I heard of a boat for sale on Cape Cod and the boat was Sphinx, which happened to be owned by John Banes' grandfather. And I said to John, "You know, there's a boat up in Cape Cod and it's Sphinx, and we ought to go see it. It's for sale." Well, he was very excited, so I chartered a friend's plane and John Banes and I flew to Cape Cod, and we looked at this boat, and he fell in love with it. It needed restoration; it was a mess, but he bought it and brought it back to Winter Harbor, where he had it restored. There are some pictures of it here at the Winter Harbor marina. So now there were four. Shortly thereafter we found Riddle, which is another boat. We had that boat restored at the marina as well. In fact, there's a picture here of the two boats, a newspaper article of them being restored. So now we're five.

Over the next few years we found every single boat but hull number one, which was named Mystery. It was a total mystery. We could not find that boat. I was commodore now of the Winter Harbor Yacht Club and our centennial was coming up in 1990, 100 years. We had eight of the nine boats and we had them restored and brought them all back to first-class condition. We couldn't find Mystery. One day, I was sailing in Winter Harbor, and a fellow that I know, a yacht historian, came up to me and he said he had a present. And he handed me a sheet of paper. On that sheet of paper was a lady's name and a telephone number in Rhode Island. And he said, this lady owns Mystery, but it doesn't look anymore like a Winter Harbor knockabout. Had a different rig, had a big motor in it. She used it for cruising. I immediately called her and I said, "I want to buy your boat." She said, "It's not for sale." She said, "I have a gentleman" — she was an elderly lady, you could tell — "who takes me for a two week cruise every year and I just won't sell the boat." So I said, "Look, in two years we have our centennial. I would just like to pay to bring that boat to Winter Harbor for the Fourth of July so we'll have all nine boats." Well, she said, "I'll think about it." So I wrote her a letter and confirmed the fact that we wanted to have her come. She didn't answer the letter, but in the spring of 1989 she called me. She said, "The fellow who's been taking me on my cruises has died. I'll sell you the boat." Well, at that time, Dexter and Mary Coffin had bought one of the boats. Dexter was a rear commodore of the Yacht Club at the time, and he was anxious to get Mystery here too. He had a jet plane at the time. We all got in his jet and we flew to Rhode Island. He bought the boat. I have a picture here, too, of the boat coming to Winter Harbor.

So now, we had the ninth boat, but it had to be totally restored. Well, I was on the board at that time of the Maine Maritime Museum, and they had a shipbuilding school there, and I was able to get the school to take the project of restoring that boat, and they totally restored the boat. It was a mess. And, as I said, the rig was changed, they had this big motor in it and everything. So they took the boat, they molded all the bronze fittings for the boat, they did the whole thing and they delivered it to us on the third of July of 1990. So on the Fourth of July, we had a parade of all the boats, a major event. We had a big race, and since then, there have been nine boats. Now all the boats are owned by individuals on the Neck. They've all come home. And it's a pretty interesting story. We believe that it is the oldest complete racing fleet in the country.

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When I became active in the Yacht Club, I became active in the community. So, the strangeness that occurred before I joined the club was forgotten. I was commodore for six years in the club, including during the centennial. When I retired, I was very honored to be made a lifetime commodore of the club. Now there have been two honorary commodores because the next one that was made right after me was Fitz Dixon, so the two of us are honorary commodores and we attend all the meetings.

When I retired as commodore, we still didn't really have a first-class junior sailing program. When Tony Harwood became commodore, I persuaded Tony and the board that we should have

a real junior sailing program and hire a certified instructor. We needed a fleet of boats that were designed to teach children, and that's what we did. I think it was in about 1998 that we — each of five different people bought Opti sailboats, which are little boats for teaching children, and we hired a wonderful girl named Cindy Houghtailing, who is still our instructor. We have taught scores of children to sail. It's a very active program, five days a week, and it's been a very successful program. So I still oversee that for the club and we now have six Optis and probably will have another one next year or the year after. We have a bunch of children participating, we have an instructor and an assistant instructor, and we've got a big fun children's program going. I had a vision.

The Yacht Club really wasn't a yacht club when I got there. It was a social club, the meeting place of our community, for the Grindstone Association as well. So, that's my real involvement here. I am involved in the community. I'm on the board of the hospital in Ellsworth, and I'm quite involved philanthropically in this part of the world as well.

Grindstone Neck and the Winter Harbor Yacht Club are really two and yet they're one. The members are the same. I'm sort of the new kid on the block, compared to many of these second- and third generation people that are here. But it's a great place. It is growing because children are buying homes that are off the Neck, and we're not exactly on the Neck, we just happen to be between the town and the Neck. I think that it's a very special place. You'll find everybody says that. It's more the place than the people, really. I think the fact that we're in a fishing village here, so to speak, and yet, we have a pretty sophisticated group of people over at Grindstone Neck and in the Winter Harbor Yacht Club. It's, I think, quite unusual.

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What I like most about the place, I think, is the geography. It's a very beautiful place. What I like least about it is the fog, this year. It's been really a bad year, but there's a wonderful bunch of people. Very different values, very different backgrounds, and this place means different things to different people. My wife is a gardener and she loves to garden. This is a wonderful place to have a garden; the climate here lends itself to beautiful gardens. And a lot of people have wonderful gardens. The reason I'm here this morning is I'm about to leave on my yacht to go to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

I was very disappointed it took five years to be invited to join the Yacht Club. In fact, I had the property back on the market, because I didn't want to be some place that I wasn't going to be wanted. But it all turned around. . . . I'll tell you how it turned around. One day, I was walking down the street in Winter Harbor and I came upon a friend of mine from Florida, and I said, "What are you doing in Winter Harbor?" And he said, "Well, what are you doing here?" I said, "I've got a house here. What are you doing here?" He said, "We're guests of the Dixons this weekend." So I said, "Come on over, I want to talk with you." And he talked to Fitz and Edie and that's how the ice got broken. He knew I'd been very active down in Florida in the community

and he said to the Dixons, "I think you should get Alan Goldstein in your club. He'll do something there."

I love the knockabouts. They sail beautifully, and they were designed to sail in these waters. They're very, very well-designed boats and they're very beautiful boats. Once I had sailed on one, I knew they were really special boats. Then I bought one, and then a few things happened. In this world, you've got to be lucky. I think I've been a very lucky guy in a lot of different ways. We found John Banes' boat, and he was enthusiastic. Two boats were owned by people who came here and saw our other boats and said, "Hey, I've got one of those," and came into the town office and said, "Tell me about the boats. I've got one." They immediately called me. It worked out well for the club that I had just happened to be at the right place.

[The Centennial] was a fabulous event. And we should talk about that event because we had two major parties. There's a group that comes in July and a group that comes in August at Grindstone Neck. We had a big event at the Yacht Club on the Fourth of July, with fireworks and the boat race and the parade and all that. Then in August, we had a big dance with a band from Philadelphia. We covered the parking lot of the swimming pool with a tent. We had a great party. In 2006 it will be the one hundredth birthday of these boats, and we will be doing something to recognize that in a big way as well. Of course it's very important that we maintain the boats, and they are maintained well, and also that we keep them here. As we all pass on, we've got to make sure to keep the boats in Winter Harbor.

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*\*Copies of the complete work "Memories of Grindstone Neck" may be purchased by contacting Frederick Hauck via email: [rickhauck@maine.rr.com](mailto:rickhauck@maine.rr.com)*