

# PITA NEWS LETTER

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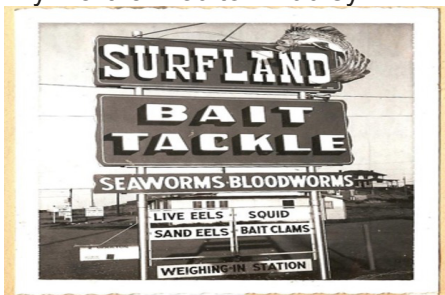
Bringing Plum Island Together

SPRING 2021 Issue 1



## KAY AND RAY MOULTON TRIBUTE... THE HISTORY OF SURFLAND BAIT & TACKLE!

By Martha Moulton-Dudley



It has been two years since Kay has passed and ten since Ray has passed. Not a day goes by where something reminds us of them and their influence in our lives.

Kay was born in Newburyport on December 31st, 1930. She was the 4th of six children born to Ruth and Isaac Webster. Ike Webster formed Riverside Dairy in 1919. It was one of the first dairies in the United States. In addition to the dairy, Ruth and Ike also created Webster's Along the Merrimack, a very popular place that served food and excellent homemade ice cream. Kay's original life plan did not include running a bait and tackle store. She attended Green Mountain College in Vermont. She wanted to be a Physical Education teacher, but one of her professors told Kay that she would not make a good teacher because she lacked patience. We can all attest to that!

Ray was born on December 5th, 1923 in Peabody, Ma. He was the youngest of 8 children. Growing up, Ray used to fish at the Salem Willows. After serving in the Army, Ray lived with his sister and her husband in Newburyport. He started going to Webster's where he met Kay.

Kay and Ray were married in 1951. Cathy, David, and John were born during the first

## Ordinance 69 Update

On March 16th, PITA forwarded an email blast to members from Councillor Sharif Zeid regarding a Newburyport City Council Sub-Committee on Planning & Development meeting on March 18th to discuss the proposed Ordinance 69 Chapter 6.5 Barrier Beach Development Definitions. The proposal would have imposed more restrictions on Plum Island homeowners, which stirred up a lot of citizen interest. The Sub-Committee "received and filed" the proposal and on March 29, the full City Council "received and filed" the proposal, which means that no action was taken. This does not mean that the proposal cannot be reintroduced in the future but at this time it is off the table.

Residents should be aware that the Town of Newbury received a grant to study the fiscal implications of sea rise on Plum Island. Newbury then invited Newburyport to participate and that invitation was accepted. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be released before the end of the fiscal year (before 7/1) and there will be public meetings announced. It is possible that this report may be used as the basis for further proposals related to land use and development on the Island.

PITA strongly recommends keeping an eye out for these meetings and attending. The dates and locations (or via Zoom) have not yet been announced. We will do our best to notify everyone as soon as the dates are known.

Plum Island zoning is frequently a topic on various City of Newburyport and Town of Newbury committees (Conservation Commission, Planning & Development and Zoning Board of Appeals) so residents are paying serious attention to the topic and voicing their opinions wherever and whenever they can.

PITA Hall is now available for community gatherings to discuss the issues and PITA can send out meeting notices and information as needed to keep homeowners informed.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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- Find PITA now on FaceBook to contribute photos, comments.

## PITA Hall is OPEN for Events once again, subject to Covid - 19 protocols.

Book the hall by contacting Frank, discounts for Island residents.  
[HallManager@PlumislandTaxPayers.org](mailto:HallManager@PlumislandTaxPayers.org)

## PITA membership- Join or Renew for 2021.

In case it's slipped your mind, we are asking for renewals for 2021 to continue our efforts. It's only \$25/year individual membership or \$35/year family membership.

See the last President's Letter and membership form on our website.

Now you can renew Membership and join online - **via PayPal at**  
**[Plumislandtaxpayers.org](https://www.plumislandtaxpayers.org)**

Kay Moulton continued



four years of marriage. Ray worked at GE in Lynn for several years and also at C. Leary & Co. package store in Newburyport. Almost every weekend during the summer, Ray and Kay used to go camping and fishing at Sandy Point. Around 1959, Ray decided he would like to try opening a bait and tackle shop on Plum Island. In 1960, Ray and Kay rented the property where Surfland sits now for \$200 a month for the months of June, July, August, and September with the option to buy. In October, they purchased the property for \$6,500. The property had a small building down by the road (where the Surfland sign is now) and a house farther back. The small building was used as the shop. My sister Cathy recalls that as kids, they had to crawl through a window to get into the shop. The front door was very close to the road and they weren't allowed to use it. A back door was installed the next year.

Ray and Kay kept the shop open long hours during the fishing season. On weekends, it used to be open 24 hours and Ray would sleep in the shop. During those night hours, there was a group of fishermen who brought steaks and other meats down to Ray. They worked at the meat processing facility and Kay always suspected that the meat was never paid for... she said the family always enjoyed it! My father was a meat and potato guy. We never had casseroles, but we did have many meals of scrambled hamburger, mashed potatoes, and a vegetable.

Mickey Villane who owned The Beachcomber (now known as The Beachcoma) used to hold an annual Plum Island Striped Bass Derby. At Surfland, we have pamphlets from 1958-1966. Mickey also had a local radio program about fishing and sporting news. He used to refer to Ray as "Sleepy Eyes Moulton" because the customers would knock and wake him up to weigh in a fish or buy bait and tackle.

Kay Moulton continued on next page

## 2020 History Photo Book of Plum Island

Since March 2020, Plum Island resident Maria Casey from 28<sup>th</sup> Street has been capturing photos of things that we wouldn't normally see on the Island if it wasn't for the pandemic. For example, restaurants closed; no parking on the turnpike; drive by graduation celebrations; individuals with masks; 6ft social distancing; outside eating; etc. As she was taking photos, Maria decided she wanted to add photos of folks at their home/cottage, activities on the Island, boats on the Basin, sunsets, sunrises, birds and so much more. Over the winter, her project became a 2020 history photo book of Plum Island.

Maria took photos up until December 31, 2020. Her goal was to capture all of this and create a Shutterfly history photo book to be donated to the Town of Newbury, the City of Newburyport, PITA, Museum of Old Newbury, Newbury Town Library and City of Newburyport Library. Maria hopes to make the donations by mid to late summer of 2021.

Maria, we look forward to the book when it comes out!

## PITA Board of Directors

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- Current events, well sort of...
- Rent PITA Hall
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- Volunteer Opportunities

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Kay Moulton continued

In August 1963, an article called "Striper Mecca of the North" was written in The Saltwater Sportsman. Local fisherman Hippy Lynch was on the cover. For those who don't fish, Plum Island is a well-known and important contributor to the migration and feeding grounds of the Striped Bass fishery. Over the years, there have been quite a few articles about the fishing on and around Plum Island.

In the fall of 1963, Ray and Kay decided to raise the house that the family lived in and create the shop underneath. The small building that housed the shop was moved to a lot adjacent to the town parking lot across from PITA Hall. Realizing that business was growing, they also realized the need to increase their work force and had two more children... I was born in the September of 1963 and Liz in June of 1966.

We had many local fishing families on Plum Island that would bring fish into the shop. Kay kept scrapbooks of all the photos of fish that were weighed in. We have pictures of 2 and 3 generations of families. Some of the family names that I can recall quickly from growing up in the shop are Currier, Anderson, Seeley, McGee, McDonald, McCoy, and Smith.

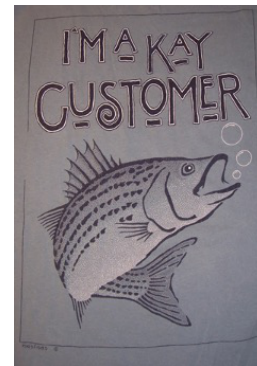
In 1967, another article in The Saltwater Sportsman was published, titled "Where Bass Come Easy". Plum Island resident George Seeley was featured in this article. During the 70's, the Merrimack River was stocked with Coho Salmon. Many salmon were caught in the 70's and 80's. Bluefish were also around and blitzed along the oceanfront. Back then, Cod fishing was excellent in the river and along the beach in the winter.

In 1970 and 1976, writer Jack Fallon published articles again about Plum Island for The Saltwater Sportsman magazine. Ray had taken him fishing, but made him promise not to write about the trips. Jack was one of the first "Kay Customers".

Ray was the fisherman; Kay only fished a couple of times. They would be out in the boat and Kay would be waving to all their customers. Ray told her to knock it off, sit down and shut up or he wouldn't take her fishing again... so Kay didn't fish much after that. Kay said a lot of customers would get mad at her because she wouldn't tell them where Ray caught his fish. Ray wouldn't tell her.

Kay listened to Ray's advice to their customers and all the "old-timers" who came into the shop. Kay quickly became a wealth of knowledge in regard to striper fishing in this area. One time when I was working at the shop, Ray came in. There were a few customers waiting to talk to Kay. He told me to go wait on those people. I said that they were Kay Customers. He didn't really know what I meant. He walked over to the customer and asked if he could help him and the customer replied, "No thanks, I'm waiting for Kay." That put Ray in his place. Many years later, we did a T-shirt.

Growing up on Plum Island was special. Something I cherish. Kay made sure all of us had swimming lessons. There was a house on



## You may be a Kay Customer if:

- You call Surfland and ask, "Is Kay there?"
- You don't stop at Surfland if you don't see Kay's red truck parked over by the garage.
- Kay is on your speed dial.
- Kay shows you how to snell a hook.....AGAIN!
- Your wife or girlfriend wants to know,

"WHO THE HELL IS KAY?"

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Kay Moulton continued on Page 5



## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

### INTROSPECTION: AMY SCUITO

by Sandra Turner

The full moon high tide had long come and gone revealing a long stretch of smooth sand. The churning sea deposited hundreds upon hundreds of precious sand dollars on the beach that day, or so the story goes, of a woman in search of change and her fateful walk along the shores of the island she called home.

Awed at the sight of so many sand dollars, she quickly returned with bags and a sled in tow to gather as many as she could. On her porch they laid, drying in the sun as she diligently worked to transform their beauty into exquisite necklaces, earrings, key chains and night lights so others could share in the wonder and simplicity of nature. After they are dried, the sand dollars are watercolored and glazed by hand before being made into jewelry pieces.

Thus Amy's Creations came to be, and has sustained Amy Scuito as a self employed designer and craftswoman for the past twelve years. From early spring to late fall, she travels throughout New England attending trade shows and festivals.

All was well until the pandemic hit in March. The Boston Flower Show cancelled halfway thru and the rest of the shows went down like dominoes.

Amy Scuito hopes some of the venues will be on for the fall as she misses the camaraderie of fellow artisans and seeing her customers in person.



In the mean time Amy has been making face masks, in a variety of patterns (with an emphasis on popular sport designs). In keeping with her ocean theme, Amy has incorporated stainless steel lanyards with small sand dollars attached with charms.

Amy can be reached through on her Face Book page [AmysCreations](#) or text her at: (617) 290-7546.



**Sandra Turner**  
Artist/Owner  
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Kay Moulton continued

20th Street with a pool. They held swimming lessons there. Cathy, Dave and John took lessons there. Liz and I took lessons at the YWCA.

The shop would shut down for the winter. There was a fireplace in the shop. As a family, we would spend time down there playing ping pong and board games. During the storm of '78, we stayed warm when the power went out, while watching the National Guard plow the huge ice cakes that came over the road.

While living and raising her family on Plum Island, Kay was one of the original members of the Plum Island Mother's Association. I was one of the recipients of the Association's scholarship that was given out yearly when I graduated from Triton in 1981. As a fundraiser, the mother's club published a cookbook. I still use some cookie recipes from it.

Growing up, my brother David learned to build custom fishing rods. Some of his rods are still in use today. Kay and John learned to fix fishing reels. Kay was very well known for her ability to fix fishing reels. She taught me to fix the reels later on.

One day, a man walked into the shop and asked her if she was Kay. He lived in Amesbury and bought a fishing reel from L.L. Bean in Freeport, Maine. He needed a repair, drove up there and they told him he had to go to "Kay's on Plum Island" to get the reel fixed. They never told him the shop name. He drove all around the island looking for Kay's.

During the summers, Kay would yell up to us in the early morning and tell us to go fishing. She would send Liz and I down to the half-day party boats at the Point to catch mackerel to sell at the shop for bait, or out with "Scotty" to catch smelts in the basin for dinner.

There were bluefish blitzing on the beach. I remember going down and some guys were surprised to see a girl fishing. One guy said to me, "if you need any help, let me know". I heard another guy say to him, "don't you know who she is, she Kay's daughter!" Even in my other life as a special needs teacher at Lowell High School for 27 years, I was known as Kay's daughter. Surfland had and still has many customers from the Merrimack Valley communities.

In 1973, my father started 3R Marina with Kay's brother Ray and her brother-in-law Red. They rented land from Kay's parents up behind Webster's/Riverside Dairy off of Merrimac Street. Five years later, Ray also started Riverfront Marine on my grandfather's property and later moved to their current location in Salisbury in 1982. Ray, Dave and



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Kay Moulton continued on next page



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### Kay Moulton continued

John started selling and servicing boats and motors. Kay's mother sold the property on Merrimac Street and Ray lost the lease on the Marina land.

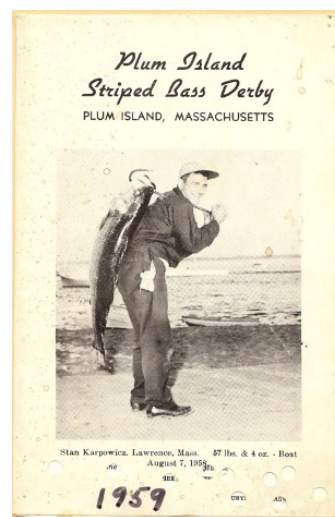
In 1989, Kay and Ray added an addition to Surfland and created a new shop. In 1991, Ray purchased a marina on the Parker River in Newbury. Dave and John still run the boat businesses. Riverfront will celebrate their 43rd anniversary this year. Cathy worked at Riverfront for many years also, but food was her first love. She owned Cathy's Country Kitchen in Rowley and then moved into the Fowle's space on State Street in Newburyport for many years until she closed the restaurant. I miss her breakfasts... especially the bacon!

Kay and Ray started their life on Plum Island in 1960... Liz and I continue that life. Surfland has been in business for 61 years. Kay worked Surfland for 58 years. Ray and Kay created a legacy that continues to thrive. Kay is remembered as an amazing woman throughout New England with an incredible knowledge of striped bass fishing. Ray brought Plum Island into the forefront as an important striped bass fishing area.

We have 60 years of Plum Island and Striped Bass fishing history in scrapbooks at the shop. We also have a great post card collection that Kay started many years ago. Alan White and Kay would get together to compare, trade, and talk about newspaper and magazine articles that are in these scrapbooks, which include pictures of every striped bass that we have weighed in at Surfland during our 60 years, as well as pictures of old cottages and newspaper social blurbs that Mike Bulger and Kay shared with each other. Several years ago, I was asked to do a presentation at the Andover Library Fish On month. It was great to sit with Kay and go through all the scrapbooks. She recalled many stories that went into our presentation. One day, Kay's best friend, Ann Hickey wanted to do a Plum Island history tour that the Parker River Wildlife Refuge was doing. Ann and Kay hopped on the van and joined the other people. Not one to hold back, Kay made a few corrections to the person who was narrating the tour. When they were departing the van, a gentleman thanked Kay for coming on the tour.

Kay was an industrious woman. She never sat still. During the winter months, she sewed, knitted, baked, and made the best peanut brittle around. Many of her customers and Plum Islanders are in possession of her hats, scarves, fleece blankets and her other creations. She loved doing the PITA Christmas Fair every year. I think she participated in every one over the years... and if Frank didn't have a coffee and blueberry muffin waiting for her on that Saturday morning, he got the look.

Kay and Ray truly loved Plum island, and their 5 children also hold the Island as a special place in their hearts. They taught us to work hard and to enjoy life. We are all workaholics and are proud to continue their legacy on and around Plum Island.



1953-1960



Ray and Kay Moulton



"Plum Island Basin Sunset" by Candy Way



## PLUM ISLAND ART FESTIVAL "The Art of Summer!"

The Saltbox Gallery will once again host The Art of Summer, the tenth annual Plum Island Art Festival, presented by the artist members of the gallery at Plum Island Hall during the weekend of Saturday June 26<sup>th</sup> through Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup>. This gala show will feature the work of eight renowned local artists who will be present throughout to display their artwork of local and familiar Plum Island scenes. There will be oil, watercolor and pastel paintings as well as photography on display and for sale at Plum Island Hall. Location: Plum Island Hall, 8 Plum Island Blvd., Newbury. Show hours: Saturday and Sunday, June 26 – 27, 10AM – 6PM. Free Parking. COVID protocols will be in effect.

## Rent PITA Hall

<i>Weekend Rates</i>	
Member	\$325
PI Resident Non-Member	\$375
Non-Member	\$450
Commercial	\$550
<b>Weekday</b> Monday-Thursday (\$100/half day)	\$200

**MERCY MEALS** Please NOTE: free use of the Hall to Island residents for mercy meals, and recognition of your loved one on the PITA sign.  
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## River Valley Charter School Students on Plum Island

by Susan Grillo & Ellen Link



You may have seen a small group of children wandering about Plum Island during the day over the past several months and wondered what they were up to! They were at school, learning in a different way about the seacoast environment and discovering lots of amazing things. PITA partnered with the River Valley Charter School (RVCS) in Newburyport over the past year by making our Hall available for in-person learning. RVCS approached the PITA Board inquiring about using the Hall as a remote classroom base of operation, which was needed due to COVID-19 in-school restrictions. Although the Hall was closed to the general public, RVCS had a plan that was approved by the Newbury Board of Health and the School Administration. It worked!

The 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade students learned about the tides, currents, storms, navigation buoys, winds, sand migration, beach erosion and more. They learned how lots of trash (including microplastics, glass, aluminum, plastic bottles, fishing gear and other debris) that ends up on the beach

and in the marsh threatens ancient sea creatures and the health of the Great Marsh that protects the mainland. The students got involved... they organized beach/basin/river clean-ups. The next one will be on May 15<sup>th</sup> (rain date May 22) at Plum Island Point. Meet at the parking lot (bring your own gloves and masks please).

The students also received a grant from the Youth Ocean Conservation Summit for their "Protect Our Prehistoric Pals" project. They are asking Plum Island residents for help... see the students' letter below to learn more.

Dear Plum Island Residents,

We are 4-6th grade students from River Valley Charter School. We have been lucky enough to spend this year having classes outside on Plum Island. We're writing to ask for your help with a project. We have been working to create a better reality for the horseshoe crabs. We want to clean up the marsh before horseshoe crabs come to lay eggs.

You might be thinking, horseshoe crabs...those weird looking things with the pointy tails?! For those of you who think they're dangerous, they've actually been saving lives all over the world. The blood of this ancient creature is being used in our beloved life-saving Covid vaccine and many other medicines. As for their pointy tails--those aren't to sting you; they are for flipping themselves over if they get stuck on their own backs.

So join our effort to clean the marsh and Protect Our Prehistoric Pals!

We welcome help in many forms, here are a few:

- Help cleaning the marsh
- Donate gloves, bags, trash grabbers
- Get the good word out about horseshoe crabs
- Survey nesting areas
- Dispose of debris from the trash we remove from the marsh

If you want to help, or would like more information about how horseshoe crabs help save lives, send an email to our teacher: [elink@rivervalleycharter.org](mailto:elink@rivervalleycharter.org).

If you send us a picture of you cleaning up trash or your bag full of trash, we can thank you and will add your photo to our wall of helpers!

Our project was recognized by the Youth Ocean Conservation Summit:

"Through their Protect our Prehistoric Pals project, students at River Valley Charter School will use their YOCS grant funding to organize marsh cleanups to help ensure horseshoe crab habitat is free of debris. Additionally, they will lead efforts to educate visitors at the Parker River National Wildlife River, as well as their peers, about the importance of horseshoe crabs."



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## Thoughts from a Reservation Terrace Resident

by Lela Lischke Wright

**55 Reservation Terrace** is the location of my most favorite home yet. I grew up on the shores of the Merrimack River and was taught to have a healthy respect for the tricky currents and hidden surprises found in the most unexpected places. Today as I sit at my desk looking out at the jetties and the mouth of the river all seems perfect with the world, sun bouncing off the gently flowing waters, seagulls flying about, and the occasional fishing boat passing by. It is undoubtedly beautiful out here.

One of my favorite things is the opportunity to see the daily activities of the people boating, fishing, sunbathing, picnicking, a figure in the distance walking alone or with a friend, someone tossing a ball for a dog to chase, and the unexpected proposals and weddings at sunset on the beach. Both residents and visitors alike are kind, considerate, and happy to stop and chat. The river beach, like a hidden treasure, is cherished by families with little ones, safely distant from the currents, the ocean waves, and the notorious undertow.

Living here year-round, we've seen this area change dramatically over the last six years. The dunes have all but disappeared and the river beach is now a quiet little cove that becomes furious in a storm. Instead of shoveling snow to clear the driveway this past winter, we have been shoveling 3 feet of sand out of the garage that washed in with the water during the February Nor'easter. Our neighborhood has had a particularly difficult year. Aside from the pandemic, we have experienced flooding in April, October, November, December of 2020 as well as January, February, and April of 2021 -- primarily around 71<sup>st</sup>, 73<sup>rd</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Streets. I've lost track of how many times we had to clean up whatever was left

behind... sand, trash, sea debris, and building materials (often covered with the sludge from the "controlled sewer overflows").

The issues here on Reservation Terrace have little to do with sea level rise, climate change, or typical shoreline erosion. These problems are manmade, caused in part by the repairs to the jetties in 2014 & 2015 by the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE). Although it provided much needed relief for the southern end of the island, it has had devastating consequences for us. The ACOE has stated there were some errors in the design that have contributed to the change in how the water flows and the unfortunate outcome. We are hopeful that with the long-awaited dredge, some sand replenishment, and possibly a modest adjustment to the south jetty, we will see some stability soon.

One of the greatest things to come out of the struggle has been the many new friends we have made, the conversations shared with people passing by, often total strangers and even neighbors we had not yet met.

Many weekend visitors have stopped to offer a kind word or express sympathy as they watched and waited with some expectation that the City would send a crew out to clear the streets and beach of the debris. We will continue to request help from the City to clean up the giant plastic sand bags left littering the beach, to clear the roads of sand and debris, and hopefully to repair the roadway before the busy summer season arrives.

As we begin our 4<sup>th</sup> year here despite the difficulties, we still believe we live in one of the most incredible places. We find living out here year-round has given us a greater appreciation of how this magical place we call home affords us a kind of peace and tranquility that many can only dream about. We look forward to long, hot, sunny Summer days, and we will continue to enjoy the breathtaking sunrises and sunsets and even the magic mist that rolls in occasionally.

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