



WOMPATUCK NEWS

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Friends of Wompatuck State Park

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MEF at Wompatuck

By Alma Ramos-McDermott

The Melanoma Education Foundation held its second annual 5 mile road race and 3 mile walk at Wompatuck on September 27th. Despite the on again, off again rain, about 150 people showed up to walk and run for Melanoma. The Dana Farber van made an appearance, giving free cancer screenings and a free Red Sox hat to participants.

Because of the rain the activities were moved into the Visitor Center, which included various informational and educational booths and freebies about Melanoma, as well as tips on how to conduct daily body checks for spots and/or moles from the sun. However, the rain didn't keep a long line from forming at the ice cream truck where free ice cream was being given out to everyone. The Friends of Wompatuck was represented well by Pam Johnson who strung up our banner, displayed FOW t-shirts, and handed out our new brochures while talking about the work we do in the park.

I found myself on the starting line for the second year in a row and, when the gun went off, I was ready. Despite a tough uphill and downhill course, which seemed to encounter every hill known to Wompatuck, I enjoyed being out on a warmish fall day admiring the beauty of the foliage while making sure no one passed me. What can I say? I'm competitive.

Light showers began to fall during the latter stages of the race, but neither the runners nor the teams of walkers were worried. We were on a mission: to finish and to raise money for the MEF. I walked away pleased with my finishing time and my medal, and happy to have helped with a very worthy cause. For more information about the Melanoma Education Foundation, go to: <http://www.skincheck.org>.

Landmine a Big Success

By Vicki Schow

The 2009 Landmine Classic Mountain Bike Race, our biggest fundraiser of the year, was a huge success. With over 400 racers, the newly widened South Field was put to good use! There were torrential downpours the day before the race, with nearly five inches of rain pounding the 25-mile course; however, it came down so quickly and so close to race day that it did not have time to saturate – so there were lots of puddles and slick bridges, but no overwhelming mud. Thanks to the hard work of many dedicated Friends of Wompatuck members throughout the year and the force of event day volunteers, our race is the biggest in the Root 66 Race Series and is fast becoming known as a premier race in New England.



Memorial stone honoring those who served at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot.

Bare Cove Park Dedication Ceremony Draws a Crowd

By Jim Rose, FOW News Editor and Historian

Bare Cove Park celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary Sunday on October 25, 2009. Park members as well as former ammunition depot employees and military personnel attended. A memorial stone monument was dedicated to all who served at the former Naval installation.

Paul Doyle, current chairman of the Bare Cove Park Committee, said a few words on park history to kickoff the event on a bright sunny afternoon.

The U.S. Navy first acquired the land in 1904. The area was called "Hockley" and was used prior mainly for grazing and farming. The ammunition depot provided ordnance for the U.S. Navy during World Wars I, II and the Korean War. During the height of World War II, 2,400 civilians and 1,100 military personnel worked at the depot. The Navy closed its doors in July of 1962 and transferred the land to the Town of Hingham in 1972. On October 27, 1974, the land comprising 469 acres, was opened to the public as Bare Cove Park.

Navy Admiral Jim Gorman (ret.) led the ceremony with a few flashbacks.



Jim Gorman

"I grew up at the depot," Gorman said. "It began when my grandfather was stationed here in 1905. While I was in combat for the U.S. Navy during the Korean War, I found printed on a box of rockets we were using: 'U.S.N.A.D. Hingham, MA.' It was nice to get a message from home. We turned the message around and delivered it to the bad guys. Thanks again!"



Ruth Todd

Next, Ruth Todd charmed the crowd reminiscing on the "good old days" at the depot where she worked as a clerk typist from 1942 to 1948.

"I worked primarily for Commander Dunning preparing weekly assignments for Planning and Production for each filling house," said Todd. "I liked everything about my job. The war broke out and I did my duty. I liked the responsibility I had. The war was very sad and we were all patriotic. I also rolled bandages as a

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Bare Cove Park Dedication Ceremony (continued from page one)

volunteer and remember the blackouts and rationing in Scituate where I lived.”

Todd is the aunt of Wompatuck State Park Director Steve Gammon. The state park was known as the depot’s “Cohasset Annex” from 1941 to 1962.



Pete Stonis

Former crane operator Pete Stonis pointed over at the dock and recalled the ammo that went overboard from the barges. “We had all kinds of things end up in that Back River,” said Stonis. “Machine guns, pistols, grenades, thirty-caliber bullets, five-inch shells, twenty-millimeter crates...you name it! I had to recover it all with a clam shell crane.”



Bill Handrahan

Bill Handrahan, who was an inspector then, adds. “I remember when a forklift ended up in the drink over there,” he said, pointing to the river. “We eventually fished it out. The driver got himself a good dunking. He was okay, other than being embarrassed.”



George Clark

Navy veteran George Clark joined in. “Over to the left there is where they had “G” House,” said Clark. “That’s where I worked supervising workers packing shells with ‘D’ powder. That’s the stuff that turned people orange. Most of the time, I was a welder here.”

When in the military, Clark stood Honor Guard for President Roosevelt, aviator Amelia Earhart, child actress Shirley Temple and the first commercial Trans-Pacific seaplane “China Clipper.”



Ron Meade

Depot truck driver Ron Meade remembers when Hingham got smothered with a big blizzard in 1956. “The Town of Hingham requested snowplow help from the depot to dig the neighborhoods out,” said Meade. “I was in the Transportation Department and was put into action with our snowplow.”

The Navy honored Meade as “Worker of the Month” for his dedicated efforts. His picture accepting the award can now be viewed at the gate house exhibit located near the railway museum park entrance.

Korean War veteran Max Sarazin showed up in scarlet red attire honoring the U. S. Marine Corps. “I was assigned



Max Sarazin

to the depot in March 1954,” said Sarazin. “I had guard duty then. Many a time my duty post was walking the area around the new concrete pier. One night I fell off the side of the dark end of the pier and landed on the railroad tracks hurting my hip badly.

“We had guard duty four on and eight off for twelve days, then had every other weekend off. I’d go home to see my girlfriend, now my wife.

“Once I was on duty down at the pier when a seagoing tug had dropped off a lighter (ammunition barge) and proceeded toward the mouth of Back River when he lost control of his rudder and ran into the bridge piers.”



J. B. Mills

Former depot sailor J.B. Mills has bad memories as well as the good ones of depot days.

“One of my saddest days here is the time the USS YF-415 exploded and sank off Boston Harbor,”

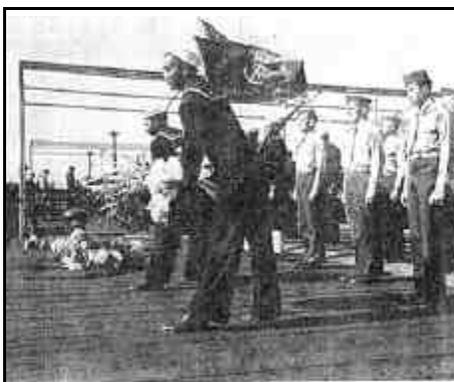
Mills said with a somber look on his face. “I knew all of the crew from the depot detail. They were all my black brothers.

“The thing that really gets my goat is us black sailors were all classified as “stewards” before 1942, not seamen. Thanks to Eleanor Roosevelt, she changed all that. We are all seamen now.

“Another incident that makes me mad was the German prisoners over at Camp McKay in South Boston were treated better than us blacks. They even gave them sightseeing trips.

“Other than that, I loved my duty here at the depot. This is the town where I met my lovely wife.

“Also, did you know that the famous saxophonist John Coltrane was stationed at the depot? He enlisted in the Navy in



J. B. Mills (on left in background) throwing wreath at USS YF-415 funeral ceremony.

1945 and played in the Navy jazz band called the ‘Melody Masters.’ That’s when he made his first recording. In fact, he’s one of President Obama’s favorite musicians.

One last fact to say, now that I’m on the subject of presidents. JFK came to the depot’s schools for a few days to learn about ammo. He was what we called a ‘Ninety Day Wonder’ (Officer Training School). In fact, my buddies and I played touch football with him and the Wonders at a field near Beale Street.”



George Bartlett

Speaking of Beale Street, former guard and Ordnanceman George Bartlett recalls a humorous incident near the Main Gate at Fort Hill Street.

“One night a drunk drove his car down the railroad tracks,” Bartlett said with a smile. “He thought he was going down Beale Street. You should see the car bounce up and down. I would think that would have sobered him up. When the guards pulled him over, he was three sheets to the wind. He could hardly walk.”



George Neat

Standing next to the old dock area former Guided Missile Officer George Neat thought back. “When I first came to the depot, I was billeted at the Annex where I was in charge of 30 enlisted men and two chiefs, said Neat “I was responsible for the servicing of the Navy’s first ship-to-air guided missiles, the *Terrier* and *Tartar*. We would send the missiles over to this dock area to be picked up by barges and then sent out to a waiting warship in Boston Harbor.”



Fred Zumbahlen

Marine veteran Fred Zumbahlen smiled when asked what his most memorable events were.

“The Marine guards during WWII patrolled the depot perimeter on horseback,” said Zumbahlen. “Well, one night I dozed off riding my trusty steed ‘Smokey.’ The horse knew the way back to the barn. Unfortunately, the door opening was a foot too low and I was knocked off my mount. Talk about a wake up call!

“Also, at high tide, Navy submarines would dock right here and take onboard torpedoes and ammo. My experience here was unforgettable.” ■