
NEIGHBORHOOD

FALMOUTH
Meeting Seniors' Needs

Newsletter

September 2017

Phone: 508-564-7543
PO Box 435, Falmouth, MA 02541
www.neighborhoodfalmouth.org

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Senior Salon: Wednesday, September 13, 2:00 P.M.
At the Edge of the Rabbit Hole: Navigating the Healthcare System, Dillingham Place. Kathleen Heery, RN Geriatric Care Manager, founder of Positive Aging Solutions, and NF Friend, shares valuable advice on working with doctors, financial advisors, home health care groups, and more. This talk is open to all friends of NF and is part of NF's regular programming for our community.

NF Book Club: Tuesday, September 19, 2:00 P.M.
Our September book is *The Red Coat* by Dolley Carlson. We'll meet at the Falmouth Library in the Trustees Room, Please join us! Rides are available.

Meet For Lunch: Wednesday, September 20, 11:45 A.M.
After a busy summer, let's go to the Coonamessett Inn and catch up! As usual, we'll order off the menu and request separate checks. Let us know if you need a ride.

Helping Hands, Helping Seniors: It's a Matter of Balance, Saturday, September 23, 10:30 A.M., Waquoit Congregational Church. Please let your friends know about this annual NF presentation to inform the community about volunteering for and membership in Neighborhood Falmouth. Join us and your NF community, and please tell your friends!

Video Broadcast Lecture with Dr. Atul Gawande, Monday, September 25, Falmouth Library, Hermann Room, 5:00-6:00 P.M., Doors open 4:30 P.M.
Rescheduled from February, renowned author and surgeon Dr. Atul Gawande will speak from Boston on the value of community, and opportunities, as we grow older. Tickets are free, and (this is a change) we are not taking reservations.



Jo Fletcher

A Profile of NF Member Josephine Fletcher

By Carol Chittenden

Sight loss is a common—and dreaded—part of aging. Josephine Fletcher handles it gracefully, as well she might: now 88, she's been blind since six months of age. The sight loss was apparently due to a fungal disease of birds, ocular histoplasmosis, spread by airborne dust. Until Jo tumbled down a flight of unseen stairs at age four, though, her mother didn't accept the situation. By age six, Jo was bundled off to Perkins School for the Blind, in Watertown. Fortunately that wasn't too far from the family home in Revere.

"I was a mischief maker," Jo recalled, "and I was made to sit in the 'naughty chair' within half an hour of arriving, because I wasn't happy to give back my roommate's toy rubber dog." She now says Perkins "was the best thing that ever happened to me," because she received a better education than the local public schools could have given her—better even than what they provided her two (sighted) brothers. However, "the place was like a jail." The years were 1935–1948. Rules were strict, standards were high—and students were, as ever, full of mischief. After lights-out, which made precious little difference to kids who couldn't see anyhow, furniture was rearranged, illicit feasts took

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took place in closets, and Jo leaned out the dorm window to pick grapes from the vines growing up the wall. Her roommates were glad to hold on to her ankles as long as they, too, got a share.

Intelligence blooms where it is planted, and Jo's found fertile soil in music. She had a dandy set of pipes, and sang in choruses, dramatic productions, talent shows, churches—her voice and skill made her welcome in many settings. She had an excellent academic record, and was nearing the end of high school when she won a singing contest. The prize was a week's engagement at a nightclub. It was so successful that the engagement was extended. She had to make a tough choice: take a chance on supporting herself by singing, or finish school and face a job market that didn't exactly embrace blind girls. She decided to sing, and sing she did, finding work all over New England. After a few years of that, friends and colleagues urged her to try New York. With her mother as chaperone, she took it on in the early 1950's, and enjoyed working with the likes of Blossom Dearie (who was once her accompanist), Sammy Davis Jr., Mel Torme, Jimmy Durante, Polly Bergen, and others. She did some radio and TV work, and shared a vocal coach with Peggy Lee and Lena Horne.

Like many popular New York entertainers, Jo frequented a restaurant called The Little Cottage. One particularly annoying young man there, named Al Fletcher, gradually became a friend. When friendship evolved into romance, Jo's mother grew alarmed, packed up herself and her daughter, and whisked them back to Boston. An aunt helped Jo and Al stay in touch, and their devotion only grew. One night after performing at the Perkins School prom, they eloped, Jo still in her prom performance gown. "Not as glamorous as it sounds," she says wryly. And it took a long, long time to reconcile with her mother, despite the fact that the marriage was a happy one. At first they lived with Al's mother, but when a baby, a girl they named Cere, was on the way, they moved to a little apartment in the Bronx. Blind girls aren't generally considered good babysitter material, and Jo had no idea how to care for a newborn. Luckily, her pediatrician was unfazed, and gave her a few lessons to get started. Jo continued singing and recorded a couple of records, in addition to being a mom. When Cere reached middle school age, Jo and Al decided to go where the schools were better, so the family moved back to Massachusetts, and Al took a job with the Postal Service in Buzzards Bay. The change of scene was also marked with a family change: the arrival of two more children, Heather, and then Drew.

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SEPTEMBER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

September is a wonderful time to enjoy our town. Here are just a few cultural things happening this month. Let us know if you'd like a ride.

Walking Program: Falmouth Senior Center, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:00A.M., September 7 to November 2. Pre-registration is required. Call 508-540-0196 to enroll. Free.

Lecture: Michael McNaught, "Britain's Cavalry: The Battle of the Somme, 1916," Wednesday, September 13, 7:00 PM, Falmouth Museums on the Green

The Somme campaign in 1916 was the first great offensive of World War I for the British, and one of the bloodiest military battles in history. By the end of the campaign, the Allies and Central Powers would lose more than 1.5 million men.

Play Screening: National Theatre of London's *Twelfth Night*, Friday, September 15, 7:00 P.M. and Saturday, September 16, 2:00 P.M. at Falmouth Academy. A new twist on Shakespeare's classic comedy of mistaken identity. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased online, by phone, or at the door.

Lecture: Fred Morin and John Galluzzo, "Massachusetts Aviation," September 28, 7:00 P.M. [Location?] Explore the Bay State's aviation history, including Massachusetts becoming home to the first Naval Air Reserve Base and to one of the first Coast Guard Air Stations, and the story of the Boston Airfield, which would become the largest international airport in New England.



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Welcome to our newest Members:

Ronald and Ruth Englund
Elaine Perry

Welcome to our new Volunteers:

Pamela Bachrach
Sandra Couto
Tricia Gibbons
Ellen Peebles
Lisa Perry

*We hope you love NF as much
as we do!*



THREE FOR SEPTEMBER

Join us for these three NF
presentations in September

Wednesday, September 13, 2:00 P.M.
Dillingham Place

**AT THE EDGE OF THE RABBIT HOLE:
NAVIGATING THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM**

Get tips on coordinating the different
entities on your team, how to make choices,
and what to look for in an advocate

Saturday, September 23, 10:30 A.M.
Waquoit Congregational Church

**HELPING HANDS, HELPING SENIORS:
IT'S A MATTER OF BALANCE**

Invite your friends to learn more about the
benefits of becoming a Neighborhood
Falmouth member or volunteer

Monday, September 25, 5:00 P.M.
Falmouth Main Library, Hermann Room

DR. ATUL GAWANDE

Doctor and author Atul Gawande speaks on
Villages and Aging

Josephine Fletcher — continued from page 2

Jo's music career moved from professional to amateur: she participated in local performances of *The Sound of Music*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Sugar Babies*, *A Christmas Carol*, and others. She delighted in the role of the crazy grandma in *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Community music was often in the form of church choirs and chorales, especially at St. Margaret's in Buzzards Bay and Saint John the Evangelist in Pocasset.

In 1974 Al died, when Heather was 10 and Drew was 8. Cere drove Jo back and forth to Boston hospitals where Al was being cared for, and her good friend Lois watched the children through that difficult year. Afterward, Jo took a job with the Army National Guard, where she was a receptionist, one whose vivacity and saucy sense of humor livened up the formal military atmosphere. She would occasionally use the PA system to announce made-up "blue light specials." And then there was the time she booked a belly dancer to arrive just as the general was concluding his December staff reports. She became known fondly as The Voice of Camp Edwards.

Transportation is an ongoing issue for blind people, at least until the day self-driving cars change things. Falmouth had better transportation services than Bourne, so in 1988 Jo found out about a little house for sale in a leafy Falmouth neighborhood near a grocery store. It came complete with basement apartment and tenant, so she took the leap. With the help of her beloved guide dog Misha and Misha's three predecessors, Jo could walk to most necessities. Retirement in 1997 didn't mean Jo just sat back and leaned on her cane. Far from it: she started the Radio Reading Service on Cape Cod, providing spoken local newspaper reading for people with visual impairment. That service now runs on the energy of others. She created a program for public high school students to join Perkins school students in staged dramatic readings. About 2009, after hearing a deacon report on prison ministry, Jo accepted an invitation to speak at the Barnstable County Jail. Now she talks there periodically with inmates about dealing with challenges, about not giving up. Jo Fletcher knows about challenges: in addition to her blindness, last year her daughter Heather lost a long and painful struggle with cancer.

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Psst! NF seeks
additional volunteers.
Pass the word.

Josephine Fletcher — continued from page 3

When visual impairment comes into a person's life, Jo's words of advice are, "Don't give up your independence. There are so many assistive devices and services available now, and more being developed all the time. Find out about them, learn to push those buttons while you can still see them. Do NOT give up your independence." She expects people to keep on reading one way or another, and hopes to have an audience for the novel she's writing just for fun. Go, Jo!



"Cookin' Cozy"

By Bruce Ivar Haslun



It has been my observation over the decades that bakers are decidedly serious people. They are generally devoid of frivolity. When a baker's recipe reads quarter of a teaspoon of salt, they actually expect you will get out the ring of 5 spoons and carefully level off a quarter-teaspoonful. The mere cook, at least this mere cook, figures 2 or 3 cranks of the sea salt grinder is close enough. To a mere cook, an eighth of a teaspoon of nutmeg is what can be grasped between thumb, index and middle fingers and works good enough. Great Aunt Sigrid, a fanatical baker in my youth, would watch me at work and was often heard to say, "Have you ever noticed that good enough seldom is?" Lighten up!

So when it comes to baking, I usually rely on friends. Mrs. Crocker is very reliable; the roly-poly Doughboy can be very helpful. A little water, a bit of vegetable oil, an egg or two and dessert is out of the way. Now the creative cooking can begin.

But then comes this bountiful time of year. Summer blueberries! Peaches oozing with flavor! Beautiful juicy cherries! Real fruit deserves better than batter from a box. The time of year for Ma's Surprise Pie.

Ma gave me the recipe years ago when I became her son-in-law. Because she is a superb baker, she understands my limitations. This recipe is easy, comes together quite quickly and, best of all, is very forgiving precision-wise. I rarely use any other.

Ma Erhardt's Never-Fail Surprise Pie

For the crust:

Combine: 1½ cups flour; 1½ teaspoons sugar; 1 teaspoon salt; ½ cup vegetable oil; 2 TBLS cold milk. When well-blended, press into pie dish.

For the filling:

Toss to crumbly: 4 cups fresh fruit; 1 teaspoon cinnamon; ½ cup sugar; ½ teaspoon nutmeg; 2 teaspoons flour. Spoon evenly into crust.

For the topping:

Blend: ½ cup cold butter, cut up into small pieces; ½ cup flour; ½ cup sugar. When crumbly, sprinkle over the filling.

Place pie in a brown paper bag and seal shut with staples. Place in 350 degree pre-heated oven for 90 minutes. Do not peek!

Be sure to place the bagged pie on a sheet pan. Some fruits can get syrupy and they're an awful mess to clean out of the oven. While it's never happened to me, I'm told the paper bag should be as free of printing as possible since it could char which probably wouldn't enhance the pie. Another tip: This recipe is great for fall apples!

Skoal y'all!



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



NF volunteer Tony Colacchio and NF Member Madeleine I. Felker wrap up food shopping with a stop at Starbucks.

Tony is one of the founders of the Wheelchair Curlers group in Falmouth. He recently led six curlers to Korea for International Wheelchair Competition.

We are proud to have him here at NF.