



# Dennis Historical Society

## Newsletter

### March 2023

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**The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm at the Dennis Memorial Library  
1020 Old Bass River Road, Dennis Village**

**Members Welcome**

Please send information & stories for the newsletter to Dave Talbott at the DHS Website email address: [info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org)

### *“Memories from Michael Dubin”*

Unfortunately, I didn't know Mike Dubin well. I wish that I had. He was a part of the fabric of Dennis that was woven by the generation which grew up here in the 1950s. It is my hope that those who knew Mike, the likes of Josh Crowell, Paul Prue and Peter McDowell will draw inspiration from what they are about to read and share their memories of that bygone era with us. As we saw in an earlier newsletter (August 2022), the recollections of Kevin Maher gave us all an inkling of what it was like to grow up in Dennis. Thanks to Mike Dubin's wife Judy, who was kind enough to share some of what Mike wrote, we have been given a window on the past to gaze through, and a view to savor!

*World War II had just ended when my father Phil Dubin decided to bring his family full time to Cape Cod. The Cape had been part of our lives from the time we were very small children, and our parents had vacationed here since they were young as well. Father had an idea that he would find a spot to open a new pharmacy in East Dennis.*

*The first year was spent in an unheated cottage in Eastham driving back and forth to the newly opened Players Pharmacy, a distance of more than 20 miles each way. The name Players came from our close association with the Cape Playhouse and especially with Richard Aldrich and Gertrude Lawrence who were our immediate neighbors and became friends once we moved up to East Dennis.*

*At first, there were 7 of us living in the Eastham cottage that first memorable year - we 4 children - me (Michael), Haralyn, Deena and Ira, my mother Abbie, my father Phil, and my maternal Grandmother "Nana." Nana did all the cooking, and every meal was a feast! How she managed is a mystery to me. Shortly, Uncle Lenny, also a pharmacist, joined my father to work in the drugstore. He moved in too, making a total of 8 people in that tiny cottage. Oh, and of course Spotty my Dalmatian rounded out the group. Funny, I don't remember how cramped it must have been or how cold those winter mornings must have felt, although I am sure my mother and Nana did.*

*When my father announced he had bought the old Grant homestead on Bridge Street, the commuting distance became ½ mile each way! Now that we were 8, we really needed the space. And, the house was going to have heat too!*

*The years from 1948, when we first arrived in East Dennis, were full of wonderful stories about the people and events that made up our childhood and growing up years in this special place.*

*In those late 40s, the pharmacy was the center of community activity next, of course, to the Church. But Church was mostly for Sundays, and the pharmacy was open every day from early in the morning until 8 or 9 each night and until midnight in the Summer. There were few television sets in those days, so after supper the local folks would gather at the soda fountain or in a booth, have a dish of ice cream or a hot fudge sundae, and then of course, out came the cards, and the cribbage games would begin. I learned to play cribbage at an early age, and I learned to cook just about anything on a grille. We also had a telephone booth in the store, and it was the only phone many people had available to use.*

*The first Winter we spent in East Dennis saw some of the biggest snow storms we have ever had. The Hyannis to Provincetown bus got stuck at the Route 134 and 6 intersection (no Rte. 6 then, so Rte. 6A, as we know it now, was Rte. 6), as did all kinds of delivery trucks and cars. The Army had to send in snow blowers from afar to dig us loose. The delivery trucks saw to it that we all had food, and that coupled with the gas fired floor furnace at the pharmacy, a hot grille to cook on, water and bathrooms that worked, we waited out our rescue in relative comfort. It was a very exciting time for a young boy - I remember it as if it were yesterday, and the record breaking snows of January 2005 somehow never really measured up to that long ago first year in East Dennis.*

*The first person of my age I remember meeting was our neighbor across the street from the Pharmacy who promptly greeted us and quickly filled us in on the whole neighborhood. The year round population of the Village of East Dennis*

in 1948 was about 250 -300 at most, and my new friend Dickie (Buck) knew them all. And of course everyone knew him too!

I joined the boy Scouts when we arrived (Clint Gardener was the Scoutmaster) and my folks gave me an official Boy Scout angled flashlight as a gift - you remember the kind that went on your belt so the light shone forward? I was so proud of that flashlight and felt so official wearing it! Dickie had a Boy Scout Hatchet, or so he called it, and by the time the first week was over he convinced me that I really needed a hatchet to belong. And at great personal sacrifice, he would trade his OFFICIAL BOY SCOUT HATCHET for my ordinary, inferior, obviously poorly made flashlight - as long as I didn't tell anyone! When I got home my mother had a fit! "What do you think you will do with that hatchet? Cut off your leg? Now you trade him back that hatchet for the flashlight straightaway. And be sure it still has the batteries inside"

I started school in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at the Ezra Baker School, having transferred from The Eastham Elementary School, where we lived prior to my father finding the property to start the Players Pharmacy. Before the Middle school was built, Ezra Baker consisted of 8 grades. Mr. Dunn was the principal and Mrs. Dunn was one of our teachers. Our class graduated in June 1949, and we went on to Yarmouth High School, where I graduated in 1953 in the largest class ever at that time-64 students!

Every Summer saw the influx of the "summer people" who came with their new cars, helpers to clean and some even had chauffeurs to drive their cars. They provided employment and fresh money to fuel our economy, and if we were smart, we learned to salt some of that summer windfall away to keep us going in the long, quiet, job challenged winter.

In 1949 (?), Mr. Louis Segrini finished construction of his masterpiece—the Dennis Drive-in/Fly-in movie theater located on Hokum Rock Road. The drive-in soon came to be one of the big centers of our summertime evening life. I actually only remember seeing one airplane flying in myself though. It was Arthur Sears, and how exciting that was!

There was a clubhouse at the rear of the theater next to the sandy landing field and pilots and their guests could sit and watch the movies in comfort. At first, there were giant speakers which carried the voices from the screen practically all over the north side. At the very least, you could sit in your back yard and hear the whole movie and imagine the action if you couldn't afford the price, or didn't have a car, or know a way to sneak in one way or another. And many did! At 11PM when the movie was over, a line of cars 4 abreast would race down Hokum Rock Rd turning both north and south, and within 10 minutes, all would be quiet again as the crew cleaned up and got the grounds ready for the next evening's entertainment. Don Parker the long- time manager surely would have had stories to tell about his years there. All I can say is it was almost magical to us local Cape Cod kids, especially the teenage boys,

The Cape Playhouse provided the entertainment of the summer theater and brought in the stars of the day for 6 nights and 2 matinees a week. Those of us who worked there as ushers or car parkers were paid the then enormous sum \$1.00 per performance, plus we could watch the play from the rear of the theater, space permitting. My first job was to help park cars at the playhouse, and I would quickly dash over to the Cinema to crank open the wood, sunburst curtain covering the movie screen before each movie. Then I would dash back to direct traffic or fetch the cars for patrons (I was all of 14 mind you—not exactly legally licensed then but no one ever asked!), and then I would hurry back to crank the curtain closed at the cinema until the next scheduled performance.

I even attended an acting school for local kids held at the playhouse for a bit, and we actually put a show on at the playhouse and performed alongside Scargo Lake along with other local kids. Among them were Peter McDowell, Charlie Crowell, Freddie Schenkelberger, Bill Tobin and Joan Altpeter. I have to say, none of us went on to become actors, but we sure had fun, and I don't really remember a bit of it, except for a picture of the bunch of us posing on the Playhouse steps with Basil Rathbone.

All of us Dubin Kids worked in the Pharmacy at one time or another. I collected autographs of many of the stars who frequented the pharmacy and had a very nice collection of which I was quite proud. Until that is, when one week we ran out of scrap paper, and my sister Haralyn decided to use the back of my autographs to write down orders for things for the store. She said it wasn't her that did it, but I recognized her shortcut way of ordering butter because instead of 1 lb she always wrote 1 pd! Gotcha Harry. but what would I have done with those scraps of paper anyway - except for the ones that might be worth a fortune now—oh well!

### MORT and CLARABELLE

The Playhouse and its parade of cars came down Route 134, up Route 6 between 6 and 7 each evening, except Sunday of course, and the Drive in Theater traffic going the opposite way, sometimes as many as a few hundred cars, finally convinced the town that a policeman was needed for traffic control. (This was long before there were traffic lights at the corner of 134 and 6) The Town hired Mort Sears as a Special Policeman. He would roll his little wheeled cart into

the middle of the intersection and direct traffic during those “rush hours”. It truly was a sight to see! Mort and his wife Clarabelle lived at the end of Funn Pond Road in Mort’s mothers house. Mort worked for Hinckley’s Lumber delivering lumber and other building products. Everything was COD in those days before checkbooks were common. Every day, before he took the cash bag back to Hinckley’s he would have one of us help him count the money. Mort carried 2 bags, one was for “my money” the other for Hinckley’s money (the CODs) That money from the old timers was often made up of old style bills or Indian Head pennies, and tried as I might, he would never trade those for current coinage. After all, it was Hinckley’s money—not his! And when he got his \$35.00 paycheck, he would come in and cash it into \$1.00 bills which then went into envelopes, each one marked by my father to go separately into envelopes for gas money, electricity and food for next week. New shoes, a new coat, or whatever he needed to budget for went into envelopes too. There were no Mastercards in those days, just cash, and you saved up for the extras until you could pay for them – period!

At Christmas time, Hinckley’s gave every employee a turkey. Mort’s mother cooked it up every year, but when she passed, the task went to Clarabelle who had never cooked a turkey before. She felt, however, that she had watched Mort’s mother enough times so she could tackle it. The day after the holiday, she did not come into the store, and we didn’t see her for 4 days! Finally, Clarabelle came in and plunked herself down at the counter. She had that look on her face muttering “oh jeez!, oh damn!, oh Lord!” Clara, we all asked, “Whatever is wrong, and where have you been?” “Damn turkey, damn turkey,” she said. Mort said he will never speak to me again. What happened? What happened? “Damn turkey, I boiled the thing for 8 hours, and it fell all apart! Then I put the parts in the oven just like Mort’s mother used to do, and when it reached 500 degrees, this little bag inside exploded! You never saw such a mess. Mort didn’t get no supper or dinner, and it took me till Tuesday to clean up the mess.”

Clara and Mort were our beloved locals, and when we speak of them, we miss that wonderful generation of independent, self sufficient men and women who found it so difficult to accept those new fangled ways without a fierce battle. And when they had to, they usually found a way to adapt them in their own special way.

There are more of those stories to tell, and I hope they will find their way into print while there are still people around to remember them. It was such special place to grow up, and such a privilege to experience what we did. Those lucky enough to have been here then know that very well and love to reminisce about those good old Cape Cod days—I know I sure do...from “the memory files of Mike Dubin.”

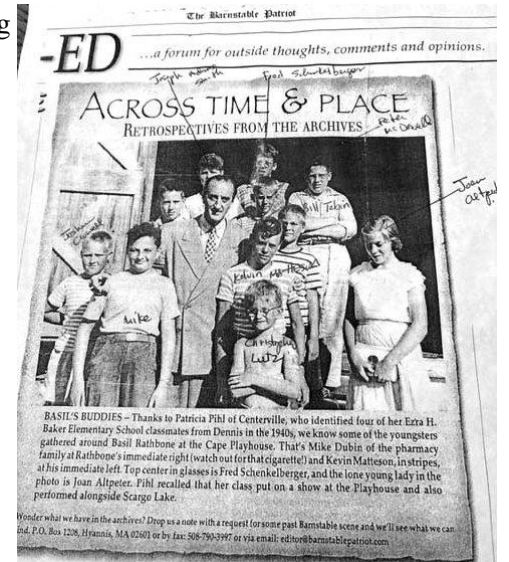
## Once Upon a Time in Dennis

Accompanying Mike’s files, Judy enclosed this photo of an undated clipping which Mike had saved from *The Barnstable Patriot*. Interestingly, when I searched the *Sturgis Library Newspaper Indexes*, I found the same photo (12/06/2002), but with a different caption. The caption to the right, which Mike saved reads as follows: *BASIL’S BUDDIES – Thanks to Patricia Pihl of Centerville, who identified four of her Ezra Baker Elementary School classmates from Dennis in the 1940s, we know some of the youngsters gathered around Basil Rathbone at the Cape Cod Playhouse. That’s Mike Dubin of the pharmacy family at Rathbone’s immediate right (watch out for that cigarette) and Kevin Matheson, in stripes, at his immediate left. Top center in glasses is Fred Schenkelberger, and the lone young lady in the photo is Jean Altpeter. Pihl recalled her class put on a show at the Playhouse and also performed alongside Scargo Lake.*

Because of the notes which Mike had made on the clipping, it is possible to identify others in the photo. Josh Crowell above Mike’s right shoulder, Peter McDowell directly in front of Fred Schenkelberger, Bill Tobin to the left of Peter McDowell and Christopher Lutz is directly in front of Kevin Matheson.

So let this newsletter be your inspiration! There is so much history floating around in your gray matter which needs to be preserved for future generations. If not *your* memories, share the memories of your loved ones as Judy did. ***Our Memories Are Our History*** – what a shame it would be to lose them!

***Thank you Judy and thank you in advance to those who are about to share their past with us!***



*The Barnstable Patriot, clipping provided by Judy Dubin*

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***It's Membership Renewal Time!  
March is the Month!***

When your letter arrives, don't just renew your membership, also consider giving a membership to a family member, or friend.

What a great gift!

Not only will that membership be appreciated, it will help us grow!

Please include a note with the name and mailing address of the gift recipient along with your payment.

You can do so online using **PayPal** at <http://www.dennishistoricalsociety.org/GetInvolved/Membership>

After making your payment, email us at [info@dennishistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@dennishistoricalsociety.org) to send the name and mailing address of the lucky recipient.

***Thank you!***

***2022 Annual Appeal***

***Thanks to your wonderful support and generosity, DHS is within a few hundred dollars of having its best Annual Appeal response ever!***

***Please help us over the top!  
Your contribution will greatly assist our museum volunteers, docents and committee members in fulfilling our Mission Statement:***

***To Preserve, Protect & Promote  
the History of Dennis,  
Massachusetts***

***If you have already given  
Thank you!***