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Newport

this week

Vol. 43, No. 35

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2015

BORN FREE

WHAT'S INSIDE



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Newport *this week*
ONE OF THE
BEST WEEKLY PAPERS
OF THE YEAR
- R.I. PRESS ASSOCIATION,
2014 AWARDS



Stop.
Look.
Wave.

Bike Back to School

With its straightforward mission "to improve, encourage and facilitate bicycling in and around Newport for the health and well-being of our youth and families," Bike Newport, a fully-funded non-profit since 2013, is making good on its efforts "to help more people get out of the car and into the saddle—to discover, explore, traverse, and enjoy the beauty and delight of our City By The Sea." On Wednesday, Aug. 26, the organization hosted Bike Back to School. In less than 30 minutes, volunteers distributed 20 bikes and helmets (all donated), helped with bike registration, and talked about bike safety. Executive Director Bari Freeman led the children through the many steps of wise riding, including how to signal left- and right-hand turns, and how to execute the Newport Wave. (Photo by Jack Kelly)

Lighthouse Museum Honors Shipwreck Researcher

By James Merolla

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association is recognizing Newport native Jim Jenney for his five decades of meticulous maritime disaster research that has been compiled as the Rhode Island Shipwreck Database.

Jenney has worked with Beavertail in documenting 1,208 vessels that have sunk off of Rhode Island's coast, from Watch Hill to Block Island to the Massachusetts border. Combined with his data on other near-disasters at sea that did not result in a sinking, the database has around 3,050 entries. "It wouldn't surprise me to find 4,000 to 5,000" before the work is complete, he told *Newport This Week*. He has done additional research on U.S. wrecks beyond Rhode Island, and has cataloged some 100,000 of them.

Jenney, 66, grew up in the Fifth Ward and has been interested in shipwrecks since he was eight years old and learned to scuba dive. "It was a great place to grow

up and a great time to grow up. Everybody's parents knew everybody else's parents. You played until dark, as long as you came back when the street lights came on," he reminisced.

He said he was very fortunate in that his dad was an explorer who was very interested in scuba diving. "He taught me to dive. I grew up on [the television series] 'Sea Hunt.' Mike Nelson [Lloyd Bridges' character] and Jacques Cousteau were my idols," said Jenney.

"When I was not quite 18, a friend of my dad's said, 'I think if you go out to Butterball Rock, just off of Castle Hill, you could probably find a wreck out there.' He really got my interest up. He teased me and said I wouldn't be able to identify it," Jenney recalled. "I went to the site, discovered artifacts, and also discovered the Newport Historical Society. That was elemental to my evolution. I read old newspapers, did research, finding out what it was. I not only identified that wreck; I identified six other wrecks," said Jenney.

"I went back to my father's friend and said, 'What you've got out there is the *Lydia Skolfield*. She was lost in 1891.'"

Jenney first partnered with BLMA in 2008 when he was contacted by a member of the board, Varoujan Karentz. Thus began their seven-year association. Jenney was glad to share his research and to make it available to the public. "I don't want this informa-



Marine historian Jim Jenney, stands just a few hundred meters from a wreck in the Newport causeway that he has identified and documented for the Rhode Island Shipwreck Project Database which chronicles every ship that ever sunk off Rhode Island waters. (Photo by James Merolla)

tion to be lost," he said.

A partnership with the lighthouse seemed like a "perfect match" to Jenney. "Lighthouses are designed to prevent shipwrecks, and people who are fascinated with shipwrecks are also drawn to lighthouses," he said.

Does he have any "favorite" shipwrecks? "All the dives are interesting. The U-853, the German sub, off Block Island... *George & Alpert*, a small schooner...she was lost in 1905. She's off Sa-

chuest Point in Middletown. To my knowledge, I'm the only person that has ever been on her. Not much is left," Jenney described.

And what of the legend of Captain Kidd's treasure-laden ship hidden below the water around here?

"He supposedly landed at Block Island and Jamestown. Captain Kidd, according to legend, left his treasure everywhere on the East

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Lawsuit Names Uber

By Olga Enger

For the two years since ride-hailing company Uber launched in Newport, Daniel Moriarty of Newport's Orange Cab and Warwick's Airport Taxi vocally expressed concern that the company is operating illegal taxi carriers in the state. Last week, he took a more aggressive stance by filing a lawsuit in Rhode Island Superior Court.

Orange Cab is authorized for 46 cars in Rhode Island and is one of the largest taxi companies in the state.

Critics say while local taxi companies are forced to comply with strict licensing and regulatory guidelines, Uber operates entirely unregulated. They assert that this presents an unfair playing field between companies and may pose safety risks to passengers.

To operate as a taxi in Rhode Is-

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Rental Workshop Falls Short

By Olga Enger

A long-anticipated workshop to discuss short-term rentals in Newport was not as productive as some council members had hoped.

"More than 20 people from the public came but we only heard from four in 35 minutes," said Councilor Naomi Neville, who, along with Councilors John Florez and Lynn Ceglie, requested the workshop in March through a resolution. Neville requested a similar workshop in 2014, but it was never scheduled after former City Manager Jane Howington resigned.

Guesthouses, or rentals less than 30 days, are permitted by right in the limited business, waterfront business, general business, and commercial-industrial districts. Properties in other districts may apply for a special use permit through the Zoning Board of Review. There are around 170 approved guesthouses in the city, including hotels, while more than 600 homes have been registered this year as short-term rentals (with durations between one and nine months).

"The turnout was not as big as we would have hoped for," Florez agreed. "I think it is just summer. When people have the option

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TO GO

Shipwreck Talk

WHEN: Saturday, Aug. 29, 4-6 p.m.

WHERE: Beavertail Lighthouse Museum

COST: Free

MORE INFO: beavertailight.org