

Nobska Reflections

By Carol Murray

My husband, Jim, and I moved to Nobska in August 2001. We were blessed to have also lived at Bass Harbor Head Light in Maine and could not believe we'd have another opportunity to live at a lighthouse and this one on Cape Cod.

We quickly noticed how much the community considered Nobska its own personal landmark. Whether it was tourists, locals with their guests, late night revelers, young and "not so young" lovers, artists with their easels, people enjoyed coming to Nobska. On a sunny day it was not unusual to have a family of red foxes basking on the front lawn and a coyote or two crossing down the back road. We learned to close our car windows at night as a raccoon almost caught a ride back to Connecticut in our daughter's car after finishing her left over dinner in the back seat.

There was always something going on at Nobska. Wedding ceremonies were always fun to watch from our window and listen to the sound of bagpipes drift in. Limos stopped by regularly to allow a bridal party a photo op, Christmas Carolers were a highlight during the Christmas season, as well as the annual visit of Flying Santa and the 4th of July provided our own rainbow of fireworks.

Mornings were usually quiet but occasionally you would be awakened by helicopters circling just off the point only to discover the Coast Guard was practicing its water rescue drills. One early morning after 9-11, Jim was away and I woke to the sound of gunfire. Thinking we were under attack,

I crawled to the window and saw guns being fired from a boat right under the point. Terrified, I called the Coast Guard who investigated and found out it was duck hunters. Another morning we were alerted by screams and yells from our neighbors dock. We ran down and found some teens had just caught a 45" striped bass.

Weather was a big issue when living at Nobska, especially the wind. The Keeper's Quarters still had older wood windows that depending on where you were in the house the wind either sounded like cookie sheets clattering together or trumpets blasting away. At times the wind was so strong you could not open the front storm door or light a fire in the fireplace for fear smoke would fill the house. Fog also created problems setting off the foghorn that would blast twice every 30 seconds. We adjusted quickly, but our guests would tell us how they tried sleeping in every room to escape the sound. One morning we found our family of guests strung out across the family room with toilet paper stuffed in their ears trying to get some sleep. One of the best aspects of living at Nobska is the view. Up on a bluff, out on a point with a 360 degree panorama you could see for miles. At every different angle you see water somewhere and are treated to sunrise and sunset each day. When the sun hits the islands just right it was magical illuminating different local island landmarks.

We had been living at Nobska for just a month when 9-11 devastated our country. Neilie Hefferman Casey, originally from Falmouth, was on board

one of the planes which struck the Twin Towers, leaving behind a 6 month daughter. Her husband, family, friends and local leaders eventually created a living memorial in her honor and Nobska Point was officially renamed Neilie's Point. On the eve of the 2002 Falmouth Road Race we were fortunate to meet many of Neilie's friends and family who were going to run in her honor. We were so inspired by their devotion that we stayed up half the night painting a huge banner (like the T-shirts they'd be wearing) "For Neilie" with a Gerber daisy (her favorite)...and then hung it on the lighthouse at dawn. I will never forget watching the Falmouth road race from up high on the lighthouse catwalk. The runners looked like a flowing river of colors as they crested the small rise and came into view from Woods Hole then snaked forward continuously filling the road for what seemed like forever around the lighthouse and onto to Falmouth.

Living in the lighthouse, you become an unofficial ambassador to the many tourists and lighthouse enthusiasts. Our two labs, Ginger and Gunner, were the personal greeters to those who came to view the light. They would remain by the fence letting people affectionately pet them and beg for treats. A tough day for us at Nobska occurred when our beloved dog Ginger had to be put down. Ginger had the sweetest farewell as the road was closed to traffic for laying lines underground that day and there was complete solitude. We were alone on the front lawn with our dogs when the vet arrived and Ginger was allowed to peacefully drift off to sleep overlooking the sound.

We loved to invite neighbors and friends in the community to our home. They welcomed us immediately and included us in the regular tennis and paddle games and social events. We felt right at home and were fortunate to meet such wonderful warm hearted souls. It was fantastic to live in Nob-

ska Lighthouse but it was the friends we made that made our tour in Woods Hole so very special.

We never tired of climbing the lighthouse stairs, crawling through the little door hatch to the catwalk outside, and feeling like you were on top of the world. On a foggy night the light would cast your shadow across the water for what seemed like forever. It was not until our final hour in Nobska, I was in the tower half way up the stairs gazing out the small window that I discovered something incredibly special. I started singing "Old Man River" in a deep low voice and sounded ready for an American Idol audition. In fact the louder I sang the better it sounded (to me anyway). It was best for visitors that I had not discovered this novelty sooner as I really cannot sing. If you ever find yourself in the lighthouse, you should try this.

About the Author

Carol Murray, wife of James F. Murray, Captain, US Coast Guard (Ret), lived in Nobska Lighthouse from 2001-2003. They now live in St. Pete Beach, Florida and Southwest Harbor, Maine.