# THE VILLAGE NEWS

Volume 28 No. 10 Serving the people of Cabin John and beyond June 1995

## Jean Coolidge Was a Friend to Cabin John Children

Jean Coolidge (who died June 1, 1995) will be remembered by those who were small children in Cabin John in the 60's and by their parents for the rest of their lives. Her influence began during the height of the civil rights movement, when, as a neighbor from Glen Echo, she helped begin the Home Study Program in which Clara Barton School children, parents, and volunteers joined in activities to stimulate learning and achievement. As part of the program, she helped establish a nursery school in the medical clinic, and held tutoring sessions in the children's homes. Although she was an experienced classroom teacher, her style of tutoring was to take a car full of children on field trips to nearby sights that would expand their minds and interests. They practiced swimming, observed the wonders of nature, and increased their appreciation of beautiful things.

Jean participated with community members in fundraising events to support the Home Study Program, usually bake sales or carry-out dinners. The HSP leaders drew the community together through the famous Cabin John Crab Feast held every summer, which they began as a fund-raiser to pay for a professional nursery school teacher, summer camp tuitions, and college assistance.

Jean's husband Brad was a Foreign Service Officer and for many years they lived in overseas. The cultures of the various countries inspired Jean in artistic ways. Wherever she was, she expressed herself through gardening, stitchery, Japanese flower arranging, ceramics, weaving, and more, and happily shared this creativity with others.

Besides the years spent overseas, Jean and Brad Coolidge also spent their summers in Nantucket, Mass. But when she was away, Jean often said she was "homesick" for her home and friends here. She kept her contacts with the children of the Home Study Program after the tutoring program ended, and never lost her interest in their development. They knew they could come to her at any time for encouragement. She was generous with her time and friendship.

In my garden there are at least seven different plants that Jean Coolidge transplanted from her own garden. They are thriving and expanding, and as I enjoy their blossoms I am thankful for having had this generous friend who loved beautiful and growing things.

*Catherine Forman*

## UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENON REVEALED!

In an occurance too macabre to be fiction, Bob Epstein stumbled upon the first tangible evidence that we are not alone in this universe–there may be another Cabin John! While returning home late at night from a conference on alien abductions, Bob took a wrong turn on a foggy back road in Cecil County, Md near the mouth of the Elk River. The air that whipped around the fairing of his motorcycle grew strangely cool, and seemed charged with unfamiliar energy. He eased off the throttle a bit as the darkness and fog grew denser and large tree like objects seemed to encroach on the road. Then he saw it. He wasn't sure at first. "No, it can't be" he said out loud to himself. But the signpost that flashed past in the darkness was no phantom. He turned his bike around and approached the sign, shining the headlight directly on the Scotchcal© reflective lettering. His mind raced for an explanation. To assure himself it was not a dream he read the words out loud, "Cabin John Road" CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

**Citizens Association Meetings resume in September**

# Looking Backwards in Cabin John

June is always a busy month in Cabin John with the end of school. Looking back in Cabin John's history, it was June 13, 1928, that the first graduation ceremonies were held at the newly built Glen Echo-Cabin John School–later known as the Clara Barton School–which had been opened in March of that year with an enrollment of 150 students and 5 teachers. Interesting note: in that first graduating class was sixth-grader Neal Potter who many years afterwards served as County Executive of Montgomery County and still sits on the County Council.

The end of the school came 46 years later when the County Board of Education voted to close it as of June 30, 1974, because of declining enrollment. Cabin John students were henceforth included in the Bannockburn School district. How to use the Clara Barton building has been an important topic of community concern ever since.

Twenty years ago, on June 17, 1975, occurred one of the most dramatic Citizens Association meetings in Cabin John's history. With the thermometer in the 90's 200 people packed the Clara Barton all-purpose room (then not air-conditioned!) to vote on a resolution to petition the County Council to rescind its "down zoning" to residential zoning of three properties on MacArthur Boulevard up to then classified as C-1 commercial. So intense were feelings on the issue that the Montgomery County Police Department actually had officers and a paddy wagon standing by.

The technicalities of the reclassification were a bit complex, and the County had acted in accordance with a community plan adopted only a few years earlier. But for many citizens the basic issue was very simple: should the government take away the rights of the owner by restricting the uses he or she could make of the property?

The debate was fervent (but non-violent), with speeches restricted to two minutes each. After one hour came the vote, and by an overwhelming margin of 144 to 33 the meeting voted to call for rescission of the down zoning.

And so the three properties–which today are occupied by the Captain's Market, the Alpine Animal Hospital, and the Wild Bird Center–retained the commercial classification.

*Thanks to Village News Archivist Andy Rice for contributing this feature. If you have photos or mementos of the good old days in Cabin John, the Village News would like to use them with this feature.*

# Neighborhood Events

AT PALISADES POOL

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Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 AM to 1 PM
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**Sunday Evening:** 6:00 Why we believe the Jewish Bible, 7:00 Praise, Testimonies, Worship, Singing.

**Wednesday Evening:** 7:00 Prayer, Testimonies, Bible questions

**Friday Morning:** 10:00 Community prayer and Bible study

Collecting food and clothing for the homeless and needy.

## Cabin John Unexplained

continued from page 1

When sources close to the investigation leaked the story to *The Village News*, we were skeptical. By all accounts, the conditions were hardly favorable to accurate observation. Bob claims to have explored the road briefly but was unable to provide many details. His account includes a description of several "mailboxes" along the road. But an independent investigation conducted by *The Village News* staff uncovered evidence even more astounding. In a telephone interview with *The Village News*, Craig, the postmaster of nearby Earleville when asked about the origin of the name stated,[creepy background music] "...I don't know, it's an old name, there's a creek up there called Cabin John Creek, I think it's named after that."

*The Village News* is organizing an expedition to the area later this summer to collect data, take photographs of the area, and find out if there are any good barbecue establishments nearby. Two lines of inquiry are currently being pursued:
1. That a true parallel reality has been discovered. To test this theory we will study the traffic engineering at the ramp to their Clara Barton Parkway. Any similarities to ours will verify the theory since something so bizarre could never happen twice.
2. That the historical character known as "John of the Cabin" was actually a franchise. The discovery of other Cabin Johns will be needed to support this theory.

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# LETTER

Most Cabin Johners are aware of the ever-increasing traffic through the neighborhood, recognizing that it poses a real threat to our way of life here. But, what many do not realize is that there is a subtle phenomenon happening here, which poses a far greater threat to us.

One by one, those remaining out of the way lots filled with native wildflowers, grasses, and trees (providing rich habitats to area birds, butterflies, and other wildlife) are giving way to out-of-character houses surrounded by sterile, barren lawns. Worst still, the builders of these new houses are trying to force their non-Cabin John views and tastes on us. Here's a case in point:

Up until two years ago, there was only one house (circa 1921) on the south side of Cabin Road, where Joel Rosenthal has lived for 24 years. If you have children, chances are you already know Joel - they flock to his yard and he amicably accommodates them. There have even been "field trips" to Joel's for the kids at the Clara Barton Center. The reason for this is that Joel loves animals and his yard is home to a myriad of them, including chickens, rabbits, birds, and a goat. Most of them have names; some are permanent residents, while others are there temporarily in order to get well. Joel has a knack for nursing sick or injured animals. Many neighbors, including myself, have brought animals to him for help. Joel also likes gardening. His yard is a jungle-like mixture of trees, shrubs, and assorted plants, with a couple of ponds thrown in for good measure. Songbirds, frogs, toads, and other wildlife abound in this mini botanical paradise.

When the wooded lot next to Joel's (which was home to Wood Pee Wees, Warblers, and Northern Orioles) was sold and bulldozed, we were all saddened. When the garish house was built and offered for sale at a ridiculous price, we were appalled. When the house subsequently did not sell, we felt vindicated. Perhaps builders would get the message - people who come to live here want a "Cabin John" style house, nestled into the landscape. But, we were mistaken. Instead of recognizing that his own misconceptions have caused his property to remain unsold, the builder has chosen to blame Joel, his property, his animals, and his way of life.

This situation angers me for several reasons. As a lecturer, writer, and garden designer, I am often called upon to talk about or design gardens that attract wildlife. I've designed butterfly gardens for local elementary schools; lectured on gardening for birds, creating a wildlife habitat, pond ecology; and published articles on the benefits of sharing natural wonders with our children. The point being, there is a vast majority of people who want wildlife in their yards, want a little biodiversity, and are willing to do what it takes to get it. Why aren't builders recognizing this and constructing their properties accordingly? Why are they still shoving boring houses with even more boring yards down our throats? And why are they doing it in Cabin John?

My family and I have lived here for eight years. There are things about our neighborhood that I take for granted:

That my immediate neighbors and I play this "who can let the grass gown the longest before mowing it" game all summer;

That those same neighbors and I let our dead and dying trees stand so that woodpeckers can readily find food and nesting sites amid the decaying wood;

That if I take a walk around the neighborhood I might see a pig, a fox, a Red-tailed Hawk, a dilapidated shed, a huge brush pile, lime-yellow shutters, a blue door.

These eclectic, interesting facets of Cabin John are precisely why I and many others live here. I think it's time for those narrow-minded builders to wake and smell the lumber, keep those cookie-cutter houses out of Cabin John and stop harassing our long-time neighbors.

Marie Rojas
Cabin John

## EDITORS COMMENT

The letter raises several issues that aren't necessarily related. It refers to a "Cabin John style" and to "non-Cabin John views and tastes." If anything distinguishes Cabin John, it is the *diversity* of styles, views, and tastes that coexist here. Diversity is valued. Some of us like wild yards, some like 'em manicured. It shouldn't be a cause for public criticism.

The case of a speculator building a new house, then trying to force changes on somebody who has lived next door 24 years is, well, another matter. If you don't like the neighborhood, don't buy the lot.

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