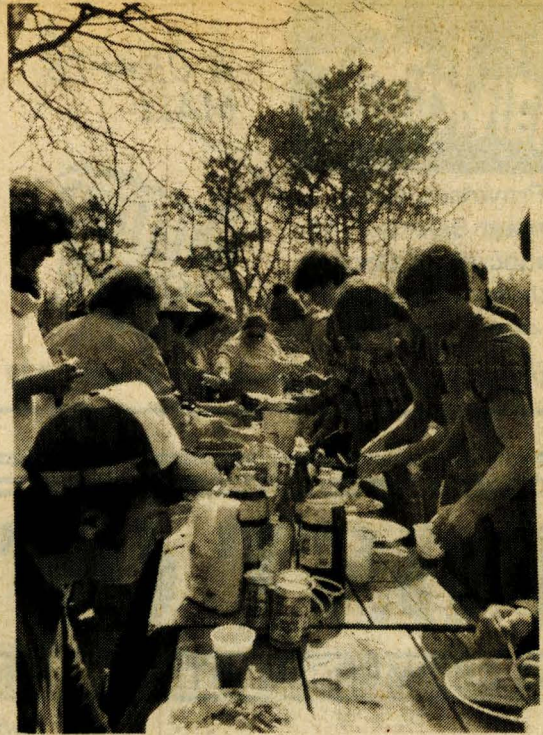


# Easter Picnic

by Jan Kelly

(Provincetown) The 14th Annual "Poor People's Picnic," "Beggars' Banquet" or just the "Easter Picnic" took place in Beech Forest this Easter. Many of you probably never heard of this local celebration, but it has been public these 14 years. Fifteen years ago, Vicky Williams and Bob Sullivan invited some close friends to a private Easter dinner. Well, as private as you can get in the Beech Forest. It seemed like such a good idea that it was mentioned often during the year and enthusiastic plans were always chatted after a couple of schooners of draft. One never knows how those stimulated discussions will end; we could only wait 'till Easter Sunday. And Easter Sunday 14 years ago, about 100 people showed up with turkeys, hams, Rita Mark with a standing rib roast, wharf rats with huge cods and six packs, clambers with buckets of quahogs and shucking knives, everybody's "old ladies" as the term was those days, with home-made breads and cakes, ingredients from earth foods, beer and wine to slake the thirst of all. Three National Seashore picnic tables are put end to end and the bounty is placed and sorted. That's at 1:00. At 12:00, a crew was there hiding Easter eggs in the surrounding woods. The excited children arrive, run in all directions, even knocking each other down, to collect the hard-boiled treasures from the Easter Bunny. Eggs found and counted, the meal begins. In an orderly fashion, the self-service buffet is on. You may wonder why this always amazes me, but go in the Surf, the Bradford, the O.C. and once upon a time the "Fossil," check the doorway of the New York Store and that's the basis of your Easter picnic clientele. Our own finest rough and tumble crowd who keep your scanners and bartenders busy. Good guys, but rough. The day of the Easter picnic they always amaze me, gentle, smiling, conversationalists to glibness. No cursing, no yelling, no pushing. If you blink your eyes you could almost see them in tuxedos, almost. Dogs, children, wharf rats, senior citizens all together. Another nice touch is that families are together. When teenagers are straining to release themselves from home and restrictions, they show up as a family. Here they can spend time with their cronies and with family. Annie Prince comes from Eastham with her 3 boys, Salvatore, Dante, and Dylan. We gauged the age of the picnic by Annie's thirteen year old. She was pregnant with him at the first picnic. We could do it by her Easter bonnet, too. It's the only time she wears this pink straw hat.

This picnic has been held with snow, flooding and extreme dampness. Rain is a bit too much, so it moved to Jackson Lambert's last year. In 1983, the Beech Forest was so flooded, we had to move the tables up on the hill. I remember eighty plus Justin Avellar saying he had never seen such a damp Spring in all his years here. 1974 was balmy. Easter was April 14th that year, late. I had to leave a bit early as my Siamese,



*a good time was had by all*

Formalhaut was giving birth to Felix, Pharsalia, Frightful, Kelly, and Sabu. I was trout fishing on the Pamet early morning and that was my picnic offering. This year it was a bucket of oysters. I missed Donna Ditacchio's whiskey cake this year. She's in New Hampshire. We all missed Towanda. She's in Portugal. I'll tell you about that sendoff another time.

So the kids, dogs, turkey, ham, wharf rats, mothers' refugees to other parts, the bikers in black leather and the babies ate and drank and enjoyed each other's company till the cool of the evening and one more picnic passed. It's the most peaceful get together Provincetown has. Most tourists passing by have apprehension you can easily measure in their expressions. As they view, that passes like a wave. They understand nothing but they feel welcomed as they pass on their walk. The shock becomes a smile. Can you hear them at home later, "I saw the strangest thing today . . ."

Frank and Karen Shilah Milby were there. Brandon was in Boston tending to Brandon, Jr., 8 months old and mother Pam. Ruth Greenblatt, Barbara Rushmore, Peter Macara, Nora Gavin Welch, Jill Richter, and her boys Sasha and Mischa, Naomi Lake and her boys, Jacob, Aaron, and Nathaniel, Wayne Peters, Black Bob, Julia McGrady and all the other party people. We miss Vickie and Bob who started it all. Vickie had her Easter in Connecticut and Bob, we lost when the Cap'n Bill went down in 1978. We always surprise ourselves. What a good time we have spending an afternoon with each other. A simple time. Food, drink, talk, music—ingredients to enhance any holiday.