

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

Oh the heat! We are in the grip of the "Dog Days". The arbitrary season begins July 3rd and runs 4-6 weeks. Many people think of dogs panting while reclining in shady spots and in holes they dig a little deeper each day. Others think of mad dogs, bites and rabies. But, beyond the name, the season has little to do with dogs. *Sirius*, the Dog Star, rises in conjunction with the sun during this period. Sirius is the brightest star in the heavens, a first magnitude star, part of the constellation *Canis Major*, the Great Dog. In 1844, Bessel discovered that Sirius does not remain fixed, but moves in a small orbit. This would indicate a companion star balancing the movement. Years later T.H. Stafford studied the position of the companion and in 1862 Alvan Clark mapped its position. He also discovered that the surface temperature of the companion star was the same as Sirius, so he called it Sirius B.

Sirius B is an eighth magnitude star which gets its brilliance from its density. Some speculate that such stars are so compressed that one teaspoon of their matter would weigh a ton! Each contains almost as much matter as our sun. But the matter is compressed into a sphere called a *White Dwarf* whose diameter is slightly more than three times that of the Earth.

In ancient Egypt, the rise of Sirius indicated the beginning of the flood of the Nile. For the Greeks and Romans, the rise of Sirius signaled intense summer heat. The poor Medievals, who were always on the dark side of things, saw the rise of Sirius as an omen of droughts, plagues and insanity. In the twentieth century, such sayings as "mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the noon day sun" has shifted the erroneous "Dog Days" title to the animal again. But Sirius, first magnitude, brightest star in the heavens, in the constellation of *Canis Major* of the Orion family, will

keep the sun company on rising for these 4-6 weeks and the heat will continue.

If Sirius were confined to Provincetown, we would call the star *Augustitus*. I always feel *Augustitus* begins the last week in July and Sirius leads the way.

You can locate Sirius if you look above the horizon, in the East, at about sunrise. The patrol car stopped one year concerned and ready to jump to action for whatever calamity would have me scanning the horizon in a still-dark sky. Stargazing is an ever-consuming activity, always with suggestions of eternity or other worlds, or other times. Wendy Willard and I keep a year-round vigil on the constantly moving stellar show, jotting notes or leaving messages of what the skyward thrill of the darkened sky we've been lucky enough to observe. It is a main activity of our dune shack living. Lack of electric lighting makes a showcase of the heavens. Binoculars help as can a telescope. But a scope can also be jittery and make isolating a star or planet more difficult.

The publication *Odyssey* from Cobblestone Press can simplify what seems overwhelming. *Sky and Telescope* is also an old standby. Read a magazine, go to the beach and check out the skies to confirm what you've read. You'll feel a magnetic pull to look upward, to speculate on what you see and on all that lies beyond your vision.



Speaking of stars, I spend every Tuesday with a great constellation...of tennis players that is. We have played every Tuesday for about 15 years. We began as singles players who wanted to add the game of doubles to our tennis skills. We loved the social side so much that we developed our own league, as well as our adaptive skills. The league grew from 4 to 8 to



12 and so on until we surpassed 20 players! All 5 courts at Bissell's Tennis Courts are taken every Tuesday. A clinic with pro Sheldon Caldwell takes place from 9:00-10:00 AM and then the tennis matches run from 10:00-12:00. We constantly practice and develop our games. There is always something to learn, re-learn or even un-learn such as a bad habit or attitude. Tennis can be played from early childhood into old age, adapting all the while. The level of play in this group is 4.0. We take nothing for granted and everybody wants to improve since self-improvement allows everyone to enjoy the game even more.

Learning means pleasure and does not stop on the courts. To extend the fun, camaraderie and learning, we have turned to basketball and softball, to birdwatching, kayaking, theatre nights, lectures and concerts. The hi-jinks continue with theme parties and dressing for Carnival, whatever the theme for a given year. But the instant gratification after an "arduous" 3 hours on Tuesdays happens when we descend on Pucci's roundtable, order up wings and nachos and celebrate the day. Pucci's has been so gracious to us through the years. A table of sweaty, noisy ladies is something to deal with for 2 hours every week. Especially when it is one of our zany tournaments!

For the Hawaiian Open, Que Linda carts in about 30 Hawaiian shirts purchased at flea markets, rummage sales and thrift shops. For the occasion, there are socks, flags and dishes with pineapple motifs holding variations of pineapple-laced food, pina coladas and Hawaiian music while we play! The annual winner has her name inscribed on the "Golden Pineapple". For the Irish-Mexican Open—it was supposed to be the Irish Open but we wanted nachos and margaritas—we arrive either in sombreros or tam o'shanters thereby deciding on which team we will play. Mallory White, a full and professional piper arrives in kilt and regalia and plays the pipes as we play tennis. The fare is cornbeef, cabbage and Guinness plus frajitas, nachos and margaritas! Gail Bliss and Mallory White, the hostesses and tournament founders provide the hand designed and fired plate used as a trophy.

"Oh yeah! Serious tennis?" you're saying. To the surprise of many, women come from Centerville, Brewster, Orleans, Wellfleet and Truro to join the fun and enjoy the tennis in Provincetown. They love the setting of the quiet moors near Bissell's Courts and the tournament sets their game for the rest of the week.

Besides all the fun and positive sportsmanship, these women have naturally gravitated to deepened friendships akin to a support group. No one goes through a tragedy, a crisis or even a cold or fever alone. Their sisters of the racquet are involved and

helpful in all circumstances. Leprechauns and Senoritas one week, hula dancers with ukeleles the next, but good tennis, good fun and good friends all the time.



We want to say hello to a dear lady who recently returned to town, "Clean Jean," so-called because she cleaned houses; "Jeannie Bucket" because she was a scallop shucker. She has left Key West and she looks great, proudly sporting her upper arm scallop tattoo. She was sharing a beverage with the McGrady clan of ladies—Julia (Momma Julia that is) and daughters Theresa, Helen, Kathy and Naomi Costa. The window of The Old Colony Tap is a great place to people watch. Tourists form a never-ending parade of attention-getters. It's ladies day off and out at the Old Colony, P'town ladies know how to play.

Saturday we said goodbye to a great lady ever filled with the gift of life, a zest for living, a good artist, 5-times married and ever on an adventure. We lost Lily Harmon this winter and we will always miss her even though she stated she would miss us if she were not here. The Art Association held a memorial for Lily who was a staunch supporter of the arts and other artists.

Jack Kearney told me of his first show in New York. Being from the Midwest and in the city for the first time, Lily asked him, "Do you know anybody in New York?"

"No, Lily, I don't," he replied.

Well, Lily gave him a grand party with 50 people. Kearney's show was a success and he then had a lot more friends. Mischa Richter gave a very moving and humorous observation of Lily. They were art students together at Yale in the 30's. Mischa spoke of Lily as a woman of mystery. She wore jodphurs to class. They dated and shared their views on each other's art.

During one visit, there was a knock on the door and in came Peter Harndon, Mischa's upstairs neighbor. Lily and Peter were introduced and Peter Harndon became Lily's first husband. "I launched her on her career," Mischa mused.

Lily traveled with us on the first Art Association trip to Russia. She helped me pick out a pair of amber earrings at Catherine The Great's summer palace. I wore them and an amber necklace bought at Dostoyevsky's home to the memorial service as my public salute to a grand dame and a dear friend, Lily Harmon. She will be missed by all in that crowded hall and by so many others who could not attend. Should you like to know more about Lily Harmon, you could have a private visit with her by reading her autobiography "Freehand".

