Advance Praise

This fascinating, fast-paced memoir is an absolute delight. If you care about New Bedford, the Atlantic fisheries, the seafaring traditions of New England, and the bare-knuckle world of politics, you need to get yourself a copy of *Hometown*. A truly great read. Highly recommended."

– Nathaniel Philbrick, author of
In the Heart of the Sea, *Mayflower*, and *Travels with George*

Wonderfully illuminating, entertaining, and refreshingly honest, John Bullard's memoir is an antidote to pessimism about the ability of politics to promote the public good, and a crash course in the art of the possible. Bullard entered the arena time and again, fighting for what he believed in, and through painful losses and triumphant wins he remained true to his guiding principle that each person can and must do their part to leave the world a little bit better for having passed through.

Although his primary canvas is New Bedford, and more broadly, New England, the political and life lessons he shares are invaluable no matter where you live. Politicians, bureaucrats, local organizers, and concerned citizens who want to improve their corner of the world would all benefit from reading *Hometown*.

Eric Jay Dolin, author of *Rebels at Sea:*
Privateering in the American Revolution

Fittingly, John Bullard's engaging life-story is something like a boat captain's log of a remarkably successful voyage. His account of his young adult life begins with his actual, pivotal, soul-searching solo trans-Atlantic sailing voyage. Subsequently, the uppermost part of the arc of Bullard's years is his important, impressive, dedicated career in wide-ranging but interrelated aspects of life of public service. Perhaps most notably as a progressive change-oriented Mayor of New Bedford and his legendary fishery-saving, jobs-saving, ocean-saving work and applied integrity during his leadership of NOAA.

A reader finds out by the accomplishments of his doing that throughout Bullard's life he has brought high intelligence, manifest ability, and determination to his public service endeavors.… *Hometown* takes us aboard as passengers and gives us the experience of a trying, adventuresome, productive learning experience through high seas and calm waters on the Ocean of Life. Just a few pages into the book you will hear the enthusiastic skipper's voice tell your mind's ear, "Welcome aboard!"

Everett Hoagland, inaugural Poet Laureate of New Bedford;
author of *Ocean Voices, This City and Other Poems*, and *Homecoming*

Hometown

John K. Bullard

Spinner Publications, Inc.
New Bedford, Massachusetts

Foreword by Ken Hartnett

British-born Joseph Rotch was the pre-industrial-age visionary who transformed New Bedford from a sleepy farm and fishing village to the global center of the whaling industry that endured for more than a century, shaping the city and region into the 20th century. With foresight and imagination, he bought ten acres of New Bedford waterfront from fellow Quaker and whaling enthusiast Joseph Russell III in 1765. With this purchase, Rotch had the right winds, the right harbor, the right timber—and none of the limitations crimping his earlier operations on Nantucket Island.

Mission-bent, Rotch built a family home an easy walk from the harbor, and he got down to work, milling timbers to build ships broad-beamed and ample enough to carry cargo across the Atlantic. Before long, he was building the iconic whaling ship, with a barrel perched atop the mainmast that would position an eagle-eyed lookout aloft to scour the sea for prey. Tryworks were constructed on deck to melt down whale blubber, and oared pursuit boats were clamped to sturdy rails for easy dispatch of harpoon-darting crews after a whale sighting.

A vertical integrationist ahead of his time, Rotch would also add banking and accounting arms to his ocean freight, shipbuilding, and whaling operations. He struck gold. Within ten years, some 90 ships would be operating out of New Bedford's harbor. The city competed with rivals near and far in producing fine candles and other byproducts of the spermaceti oils deemed vital as industrialization spread throughout the Western world.

Henceforth, a Rotch or a Rotch descendant has almost always been present—be their names Rotch or Gardner or Morgan or Bullard—whenever decisions of great weight have been made in New Bedford.

John K. Bullard, the author of *Hometown*, grew up under the weight of all those ancestral expectations. He was, after all, the 13th in a succession of John Bullards. All had gone to Harvard College. Along with their names, all inherited certain responsibilities to their family and community—carrying forward the burden and bounty of those who had gone before. How our contemporary John Bullard has handled the weight of his inheritance is a subtheme of this book.

In one sense, *Hometown* is Bullard's personal story. But the book is also about New Bedford and the richness and diversity of its people. As a history book, it tells the tale of two cities: the New Bedford that was and the New Bedford that is now becoming as we move through the 21st century.

Way back when, favorable winds and a deep harbor played a considerable role in Joseph Rotch's decision to bet his fortune on New Bedford. Today, it seems that the winds off New Bedford will likely play a key role in the city's future as the world struggles to cope with profound climate change. And right in the middle stands a Joseph Rotch descendant, John Bullard, as head

of the Ocean Cluster team of advisors helping guide the city to manage the changes ahead in an economy that may well be wind driven.

I am a friend and longtime neighbor. I know how deeply the man cares about the earth and its protection, especially the sea and its fisheries. As a federal fisheries official, he always sought to be fair while remaining relentlessly fearless and independent. It's not surprising to find Bullard once more in a central role. A major combat of ideas and understanding is unfolding in his hometown. Where else would the man be?

Smack in the middle of every fight worth having, you'll find John Bullard, a towering, robust, sea-loving bear of a man with a vigorous mind and a generous spirit who genuinely cares about the principles at stake in this often-muddled world. Preservationist, planner, and politician, Bullard has been head of heritage-saving WHALE and was New Bedford's mayor. He helped rescue the Rotch-Jones-Duff house, the Zeiterion Theater, and the historic district. He forced, at the risk of his budding political career, a reluctant city to build a modern sewage treatment plant and create the park at Fort Taber. He's made enemies, a few, while forging countless friendships.

In *Hometown*, Bullard piles on the details of hundreds of players in his narrative as if fearful their contributions to key planning or executive decisions might get overlooked in the story or lost to history. The author is serious about sharing the credit and/or the blame for the assorted outcomes. Conveniently, an index is provided.

One name repeatedly occurs, Sarah Delano. Bullard writes about this "graceful woman with the will of steel," a Rotch descendent, by the way: "Sarah…brought an appreciation of New Bedford's history, an eye for beauty and the significance of what WHALE was trying to save, and the courage, vision, and entrepreneurship of her whaling ancestors… She would work hard to avoid a battle, but if a battle was to be joined, she was always at the head of the pack, urging everyone on."

He recalls the showdown within the WHALE executive committee when it faced a decision to outbid a would-be restaurant developer for the Rotch-Jones-Duff House or lose the historic home. The developer would remodel the interior and pave over the magnificent gardens for a parking lot unless WHALE met his bidding price. The board wrestled with the costs, seemingly wildly beyond its means.

According to Bullard, Sarah had the last word with this declaration to the more timid officers: "No one is going to remember what we paid for this building. People will only remember whether we saved it."

John K. Bullard was talking about the mind and spirit of Sarah Delano. He was reminding me a lot of the mind and spirit of John K. Bullard.

Ken Hartnett is a veteran newsman, retired editor of the Standard-Times *newspaper, and founding president of the* New Bedford Light, *a nonprofit, nonpartisan digital news outlet.*

Contents

Introduction: Horizon Line

In the fall of 1969, I was sailing off the coast of Vigo, Spain, more than 3,000 miles from my hometown of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Fresh out of college and far from everything I knew, I was searching for a way to save the world.

I was determined to make a difference. So much needed changing, and I wanted to be part of that change. War was raging in Vietnam. The battle for civil rights was moving into the North. Consciousness-raising events had unleashed a powerful environmental movement.

As a college undergraduate, I focused on architectural sciences and physical design, and those fields attracted me as I considered the future. How could I use this for change? What occurred to me so far from home was that the best way to save the world was to focus on just one piece of it. And the best way for me to do that would be to work to make my hometown a better place. As I look back on my life more than a half-century later, I believe that decision has served me well. Saving the world can feel like an overwhelming task. But focusing on a place I know and love has made that work more joyful, effective, and achievable.

In those early years, two books shaped my journey. Saul Alinsky, a community organizer in Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s, wrote a very influential book. His *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* offered practical advice for those seeking to lead others in creating change. His advice was profound and obvious: communicate through your audience's experience and value system. If you want to change the system, you must start with the system you want to change. "Look homeward," he advised his readers, likely mostly middle-class activists, who were perhaps not quite as privileged as I was in some ways. I doubt many of them would have had the means to sail halfway around the world after college. Despite my particular advantages in life—including a well-off family whose even wealthier ancestors played a significant role in American maritime history—I felt connected to these activists and was inspired along with them. Alinsky's advice struck a chord with me: "We must start from where we are if we are to build power for change."

The second book was Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. The Nazis stripped nearly everything from Frankl in the Holocaust. The one thing they could not take was his attitude. Frankl said the key to happiness is for one's life to have meaning. The search for meaning must be directed outward. That is, you cannot make yourself happy by trying to make yourself happy.

I had traveled far from home and been through tumultuous times to understand place and purpose. The recent riots at Harvard awakened and alerted me. Storms at sea made me realize that every day is precious. Those weeks on that sailing trip, where the only constant was the level line of the horizon, made some things simple. The weeks alone in Vigo and later in Lisbon allowed for soul searching. I was able to dig deep because I had the time.

As I sailed, a strange thing happened. With distance and thought, what I had always seen as a confining pressure-packed prison of family expectation evolved into an opportunity. What I had thought of as a path that someone else had laid out for me suddenly became my path. I knew I needed to go home to make a difference and find meaning.

While this purpose became clear in my early twenties, the seeds were planted much earlier. From childhood, I had been caught in a spider web. On Christmas Eve each year, my parents, younger brother, younger sisters, and I would leave our farm in Dartmouth to visit my paternal grandparents nearby in New Bedford. I considered both places home. My grandparents resided in the 1845 ancestral home where my wife Laurie and I later would live with our family. Part of

these Christmas Eve celebrations involved a spider web made of string that wound all over the house and led from one ancestor portrait to another. Some paths led to a bookshelf full of history books, several written by my grandfather John Morgan Bullard, who had extensively researched our ancestors. Not very exciting Christmas presents for young children, but fortunately, other fun gifts were sprinkled in along the way.

Still, the history and the family stories seeped into my consciousness. During those Christmas Eves, in those books, and in many conversations, my grandparents instilled in me a heritage to be aware of, to be proud of, and, make no mistake, to carry on. I am the 13th John Bullard in succession. All before me had gone to Harvard except one, who had been otherwise busy fighting in the Revolutionary War. My Rotch ancestors had brought their whaling business from Nantucket to New Bedford, setting my hometown on its course to become the whaling capital of the world. Joseph Rotch's business acumen outfoxed rival John Hancock for supremacy in the whaling business before the revolution. William Rotch Jr. was the first president of the New Bedford Abolitionist Society and a friend and business partner of possibly the wealthiest and most well-known man of color of his time, Captain Paul Cuffe, the free-born son of Cuff Slocum, a formerly enslaved West African, and Ruth Moses, a Wampanoag woman. Two of the Rotches had been New Bedford mayors. Two other ancestors were congressmen. One ancestor, Edmund Gardner, was badly injured by a sperm whale off Peru as a 23-year-old captain of a whaleship, yet he managed to have a successful voyage and career. Another ancestor, Charles W. Morgan, owned a vessel still visited today by millions at Mystic, Connecticut.

These stories and others shaped me. They created a tremendous bond to New Bedford, where many of these people had lived, were buried, and I was born. They showed that public service was a path that could take many directions. They also set a seemingly impossible level of achievement that somehow, I, among my siblings, felt I was supposed to carry forward. While that pressure had its good points, I often found myself resisting it, like when my first child was born. We broke family tradition and named him Matthew.

For me, it was always clear that I was expected to follow the path that others had walked before me. Growing up, I could map it forward and back. Certainly, I could go off on my own and blaze a new trail, but family expectations were clear, and they set out a definite course for me to follow. I remember a couple of preordained decision points along the way. For example, where would I go to high school? My grandfather insisted I go to St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island, where he and, later, my father had gone. It was a fine New England preparatory school, but as soon as my grandfather spoke the words "St. George's," that was the last place on earth I wanted to go. He said if I chose otherwise, he would cease to be my grandfather. My parents acquiesced. I went and pretty much disliked every minute of my experience there, even though I made many very good friends.

The second fork in the road came my senior year in high school when I was choosing a college. I had defied the football coach and the headmaster by quitting football and playing soccer instead, and my grades miraculously rose. This meant I was a good candidate for Harvard University, the family alma mater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Exercising my independence, I also decided to apply to Stanford University. I felt determined to get off the long family path of attending East Coast institutions and instead pursue my education on the West Coast. I wanted escape, was absolutely set on escape. As my family and I waited for the decisions to arrive in the mail, I visualized my life in Palo Alto, far away from the Ivy and my grandfather. I refused to be entangled.

Then, two letters came. Both Stanford and Harvard accepted me. I stared at the letters and their respective letterheads. And, for some reason, which I still do not fully understand, I abandoned my California dream and moved forward on the well-worn family path.

When the Strike of '69 happened during my senior year at Harvard, I woke to the outside world. During the protests, students expressed their collective anger against the Vietnam War, the lack of civil rights for minorities, and even Harvard's rampant expansion into Cambridge. We shut down the university for several weeks. There were confrontations with police, but all in all, for me, it was a very creative and thought-provoking time.

Aware of the draft, opposed to the war, and wanting to find a way to fulfill my service "requirement," I tried to enlist in the US Navy and the US Coast Guard. When I received a medical deferment because of my asthma, I decided to hitchhike by sailboat around the world to discover what I was meant to do. Significant time at sea is an excellent way to learn humility. It is spiritual. It can clear your mind, make you ready for new ways of thinking. Nurtured by role models, stoked by tumult and fury, and cleared and calmed by the vastness and solitude of the sea, a seed was planted that took root and anchored my life. I knew I needed to go home.

A half-century later, we don't have Nixon as president, but we are still in tumult. We are reeling from the aftereffects of a Trump presidency. Our environmental crisis is worsening. A dramatic assault on civil liberties is gaining strength. And despite the work that has been done, the content of a person's character still sometimes may not mean as much as their skin color, birthplace, gender, or religion. Indeed, as in my youth, "saving the world" remains an intimidating prospect.

There is, of course, no single right answer to the question, "How can I make a difference?" There are hundreds of thousands of right answers. For me, I knew I needed to start in my hometown, my community.

My definition of community started out as a physical space. Later in my career, when I returned to Harvard as a fellow at the Kennedy School's Institute of Politics, I had many conversations with my friend the late John Perry Barlow, a lyricist for the legendary rock band Grateful Dead. We talked about how community could mean a physical place, like my hometown of New Bedford or John's of Pinedale, Wyoming, which he referred to as "meatspace." He was an early adopter of the term, which in its simplest sense means the physical space where people interact. He also considered the definition of community to include "virtual" communities in cyberspace, where people gather online to communicate shared interests. I have discovered over the years that we were both right—an individual can find a home and a community in many kinds of places and spaces.

When I ended my sailing trip, I went back to my hometown, determined to make it a better place. I put down roots, got to know the people and the issues, helped to raise a family, and slowly but steadily made a difference. The issues changed over time. My job changed over time. My definition of hometown changed over time. But I always stayed rooted in a sense of place. What follows are stories of my journey over 50 years. Stories are stories. Mine are true to the best of my imperfect memory. I haven't changed any names or facts, but I don't proclaim this to be a history book. It's just a grandfather's collection of stories about caring for my hometown based on my sometimes-faltering recollections.

As my friend Donald Gomes once said to me, "Well, John, your memory of something might be very different than my memory of the very same thing." Very true, Donald.

These are *my* stories.

What is New Bedford? I've asked myself that so many times, and I've been asked that a million times by others. I've whittled my answer down to a word: seaport. The city of New Bedford is a seaport. We send our people to sea. We always have. I hope we always will. The port is 60 miles south of Boston, but at times, New Bedford could be in Rhode Island or on the Moon as far as the good people of greater Boston are concerned. It is 13 miles long and a mile-and-a-half wide.

It shares its harbor with Fairhaven. It is located in Bristol County and bordered by Fairhaven, Dartmouth, Acushnet, and Freetown. New Bedford is a tough, working-class town that struggles through each day. The public schools struggle to provide an adequate education. The police and non-profit sector struggle to cope with a drug culture borne of too little hope. The port has been the top-dollar port in the entire country for the last two decades, but a rougher, more dangerous job than fishing is hard to find. Many jobs that descend from the city's once-famous textile industry still exist in the city's apparel industry, but like fishing, these are not for the faint of heart or the weak of back.

Regardless of other industries and issues that may come or go, the character of New Bedford, in my eyes, is tied to the sea and the relationships it has forged because of these ties. Crews of whaling ships established early ties to the Azores, Madeira, and Cabo Verde (known earlier as Cape Verde), as well as pre-statehood California, Hawaii, and Alaska.

Even Japan, isolated for more than 200 years, was opened up in part by the whalers. As predicted by Herman Melville in *Moby-Dick*, "If that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become hospitable, it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due; for already she is on the threshold."

Before Melville inked those words while cruising the Pacific in 1841 on a whaling voyage out of Fairhaven, he likely crisscrossed the wake of the New Bedford whaleship *John J. Howland* which had on board a young Japanese castaway named Manjiro, who had been rescued from a desolate Pacific island. The captain brought the 15-year-old to his home in Fairhaven, where the young man lived for 11 years and obtained an education. He later returned to Japan and was instrumental in opening it up to the West, thus fulfilling Melville's prophesy. In 1987, when Japan's Crown Prince Akihito, who has since become emperor, visited the United States to see President Ronald Reagan, he made a special trip to Fairhaven to see the home and environs of Japan's pioneer of the West, Manjiro Nakahama, one of the first Japanese citizens to come to the United States.

This is what "Gateway City" means. New Bedford has been the gateway to America—and the American Dream—for tens of thousands of people. Some arrived on ships like the *Ernestina*, the sailing schooner that brought immigrants from Cabo Verde to New Bedford. Before and since, the city has welcomed others as well, such as Frederick Douglass, who escaped slavery via the Underground Railroad. Through their triumphs and challenges, these newcomers have helped build New Bedford and worked to build good lives for themselves and their families. Success was not guaranteed, and life was frequently a struggle, but one often full of meaning, purpose, dignity, and results.

New Bedford's economy reached phenomenal heights with whaling in the 1850s. The industry's geniuses took some of their profits and invested in textiles, beginning in 1848 with the Wamsutta Mill. The city's population grew from about 20,000 at whaling's pinnacle to about 130,000 when textiles peaked before the factory workers' Strike of 1928. The city's textile industry suffered from labor issues and competition from the South, but the factory magnates had no transition plan to keep the city's economy healthy. New Bedford lost population and jobs and eventually hope as an economic depression became a social depression, and the city's unemployment rate rose to 32 percent, the second highest in the nation. Instead of coming to New Bedford for opportunity, people looked to escape the city.

In the fall of 1969, as I considered my hometown from half a world away, I felt an enormous pull, both intellectual and emotional, to return. Intellectually, I could see New Bedford needed help. The city had problems every bit as complex as anywhere else in America, if not more so. It had about the lowest educational attainment anywhere, a high dropout rate, a struggling

manufacturing economy, and a high unemployment rate. Suburban malls had emptied out its downtown. The poverty level was high, and a large population of non-English-speaking residents had little access to resources. Many major banks and corporations had fled. The population had dropped to about 100,000, and there were few big "movers and shakers" left to get things done. Students who managed to get into college after graduating from the city's substandard public school system often went away, never looking back. New Bedford's challenges were as tough as or tougher than any small city in America, and it didn't have the resources to tackle them.

Urban planners and other professionals wanted to work in places like Boston, Washington, and New York, where there was more "excitement." But unless you were a uniquely innovative city planner like Robert Moses, you weren't going to make much of an impact in a place as big as New York. This was an intellectual reason to work in New Bedford—it was a place where I might really make a difference.

Still for me, the emotional pull was the strongest. This was my hometown. My ancestors were laid to rest in the soil of New Bedford. I had a connection here that I didn't have anywhere else. I had a past and present here that connected to a future and made a path I could understand. There was continuity here that made sense to me. Just as I saw history in the cenotaphs at the Seamen's Bethel, I saw sense in keeping my connection to this seaport. I was from here. One's own concept of "where I come from" is personal. Everyone will describe it differently; there isn't a right or wrong perception of it, just what you feel in your heart. And for some reason—maybe my grandparents' crazy spider webs—I felt a strong tie to New Bedford, where I come from. If there was any place I was going to try to fix up, it was going to be here—my hometown.

I have always been very aware that while my roots in New Bedford go back to 1765, much of New Bedford is very different than I am. I am a White male Yankee with all the advantages that a privileged upbringing bestowed upon me. "Entitled" is an apt description. New Bedford today is definitely *not* all those things.

Whenever I confronted that dichotomy over the years, two questions would always come to mind: How can I live up to those advantages? Why should New Bedford trust me? Those questions motivated me. Every day, I worked as hard as I could to make those advantages work for the city I love. And every day, I worked as hard as I could to earn the trust of the people of New Bedford. It is only my hometown if I earn it, and I hope I have.

The back of my grandfather's gravestone says, "He loved New Bedford, Past and Present." I'll be happy if someone writes on the back of mine, "He loved New Bedford, too."

I. Charting a Course

Sintra, Portugal, 1969

Chapter 1

Coming Around

Running Before the Wind

Chance encounters or offhand comments can have lasting impacts. Perhaps it is like the famed "butterfly effect," where, in theory, a butterfly flapping its wings may change the course or timing of a distant tornado. While planning has been important, chance too has been key in shaping my life.

Before attending Harvard, my then-girlfriend Lynne Mace told me I should read *The Fountainhead*. I did. Thinking the protagonist Howard Roark was pretty cool, I decided to major in architectural sciences. A couple of years later, I read a book about Frank Lloyd Wright for an architectural class and realized his story was, essentially, the same as *The Fountainhead*. Lynne's comment set me off on a path of physical design that shaped my life.

While an undergraduate, I found summer work at Turner Construction Company. One summer, I worked as a low-level laborer on the IM Pei-designed Polaroid plant in Waltham. To this day, I feel a little jolt of pleasure whenever I drive by it.

Another summer, I was part of the engineering team that designed the Mather House for Harvard, also a Turner project. This work was physically easier but more mathematically taxing. Once, we laid out where a huge hole was to be drilled into bedrock for one of the elevators. After the elevator pit had been dug at great expense, our head engineer checked his measurements and found we were off by about a dozen feet. I learned several new swear words that day!

When I wasn't studying in the Swiss French architect Le Corbusier's fantastic and unique Carpenter Center at Harvard, I was racing small boats in the fall and spring with the varsity sailing team. We got to race bigger boats twice each year at the Naval Academy, but we needed a big boat for practicing. Fortunately, we had a loyal alumnus, Richard M. Burnes, who had sent several sons to the college and owned a 45-foot yawl named *Adele*. We practiced on it, and I got to know the "Burnes Boys."

When I graduated in 1969 and wanted to hitchhike around the world by sailboat while figuring out what to do with my life, I called Richard Burnes. Even though I had never raced more than 100 miles, he took a chance on me in the upcoming 1969 transatlantic race from Newport to Cork, Ireland, which covered several thousand miles. That would be my first leg around the world.

During a 100-mile tune-up race with the Burnes family aboard the *Adele*, I was hit in the head with a winch handle, and Danny Burnes, who would go on to become a fine doctor, put ten stitches over my eye as we continued racing. It was a good way to get to know the family and what they were capable of as mates and people.

One night off the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, just as I was about to come on watch, the skipper Mr. Burnes (everyone called him "Bunny") shouted up to his son James (everyone called him "Bear") at the helm.

"What's it like up there, Bear?"

"We've got the bullet-proof spinnaker up. It's blowing 45 knots. We've been out of control for ten minutes," Bear shouted back.

Back home in Buzzards Bay, where I had learned to sail, if it was blowing 45 knots, you didn't go sailing—you stayed home under your bed! Yet, here I was, nearly in the middle of the ocean and a very long way from any help, racing with a spinnaker up. In the middle of the night.

Captain "Bunny" Burnes

Aboard the Adele, *1969*

Bunny sat back from his chart table, stubbed out his Carlton cigarette, and closed the trashy novel he was reading. He put away his reading glasses. He slowly got up and yelled over the maelstrom topsides to Bear.

"Well, I guess we should take in the spinnaker."

To me, the skipper's calm was somewhat reassuring. I got my foul-weather gear on and went topsides. I couldn't believe the scene. It was a nightmare come to life. Waves crashed into us, and we crashed into the waves. Everyone shouted instructions at the top of their lungs. The noise was deafening between the wind itself and the wind rushing through the rigging. But it wasn't just the noise. It was the blackness of the night against the intense whiteness of the wave crests, the foam, and the sails. Even at night in the blackness, I could appreciate the majesty of the waves and how insignificant they made me feel as if I could be crushed at any moment, on a whim.

We were on a big, heavy boat, but running before the wind under a spinnaker and surfing down these waves at twice her usual speed, the *Adele* was moving like a light dinghy, wildly careening from crest to crest. I tried to reconcile my sense of terror with the skipper's sense of calm. Finally, we managed to blanket the spinnaker under the lee of the mainsail and lower it to the deck. We set a jib and made our way through the storm.

I don't remember how we did in the race, but I do remember these three weeks at sea, the storms and the calms, and the being away from land. I remember that before we saw Ireland, we could smell the land. In those weeks, I learned that going to sea was powerful and that it changed a person. It was impossible to be at sea and not believe you could only exist with the permission of a far greater power.

"Remember," the ocean cries, "you are incredibly small, and you have a lot to be humble about."

After the *Adele*, I sailed on a different American boat for the Cowes Week regatta, a major international race week with hundreds of boats from dozens of countries in waters between Great Britain and the Isle of Wight. I sailed with the crew in the 600-mile Fastnet Race, named for the Fastnet Rock off southern Ireland, which the racecourse rounds. Next, I joined a Dutch boat crew to race from Plymouth, England, down to La Rochelle, France. That's when I discovered that the Aussie boats were not being sailed back to Australia; they were being shipped back "down under."

My hopes to circumnavigate the globe were dashed.

I rejoined the *Adele* to cruise south and then back across the Atlantic. We made our way "south until the butter melts" to warmer seas and then turned east in the trade winds to Barbados and Grenada.

Chapter 2

Agent for Change

Putting It to Work: Ten-Acre Revival

In June 1974, I left MIT and moved to New Bedford with my young family. During graduate school, I married Judith Havens, and in January 1974, we had a baby boy, Matthew. I was excited to come back to the city and begin full-time employment. I wanted to get to work.

One of the first actions I took was to propose the Ten-Acre Development Committee, named for the ten-acre purchase my ancestor made in 1765 and that now made up the waterfront historic district. This committee would be made up of groups wanting to work toward the neighborhood's revival. Drawing from my graduate thesis, I laid out goals expressed to me in the many interviews I had conducted in the district.

All except the Port Society agreed. Being a religious organization, the society supported our goals but felt the committee would ultimately be involved in political work, so it declined direct involvement. The other three groups—the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, which runs the Whaling Museum, the Waterfront Historic Area LeaguE (WHALE), and the Bedford Landing Taxpayers Association—signed two agreements setting us on our way. The first was a pledge to work together toward those broad goals. The second was cooperatively to retain my services at the princely sum of $10,000 per year. I was fortunate enough to have family income to supplement this salary, so I could take the job and pursue the work I wanted to do. The group assigned me an office in one of the buildings owned by WHALE. I would work only on projects that all three organizations unanimously approved.

"If you can agree on only one thing today, that is what I'll work on," I told them. "Maybe tomorrow you will agree on something else."

We discussed my title. I wasn't going to be an executive director because I would be working for three organizations. I suggested that I should be the committee's agent. That word had several meanings that I liked. One was the chemical definition of an agent as a catalyst that mixes with other elements to speed a reaction. Another was the waterfront definition of the person who represents owners as I would be doing, like a shipping agent. But I found the best description of an agent in a John Irving book, *The Hotel New Hampshire*:

> *It's what all the great agents do: they make the most incredible and illogical advice sound reasonable, they make you go ahead without fear, and that way you get it, you get more or less what you want, or you get something, anyway; at least you don't end up with nothing when you go ahead without fear, when you lunge into the darkness as if you were operating on the soundest advice in the world.*

The goals revolved around realizing a shared vision of a working waterfront historic district—a district whose buildings were from many eras and where history continued to be made each day by people who were proud of their heritage but didn't want to be contained by it.

The real connection to the fishing industry had to be protected and strengthened, and the physical barrier of the highway had to be addressed. People and goods needed to flow back and forth from the district to the waterfront.

Historical buildings, largely empty and in disrepair, were to be restored appropriately and occupied. While the district was zoned for industrial use, people knew that commercial and

State Fruit Company

New Bedford Ship Supply

residential uses were better suited for the district and that, along with fishing-related uses, we would aim to develop places to support the tourists the Whaling Museum attracted.

There was also the practical matter of the infrastructure. The streets were in terrible shape, with asphalt, concrete, paving block, and potholes all over the place. Sidewalks were hard to navigate. High-speed through-traffic made walking dangerous. Overhead telephone and electric lines on wooden poles were a visual blight, and the few "cobra-head" type streetlights left the district dark at night.

Our vision was that the people in the district, working cooperatively, would fix these problems and bring economic vitality back in a way that respected history, continued the relationship with the sea, and created new uses around a developing cultural market—all while maintaining control within the district itself.

As I drove to work the first day, I passed North Water Street, which had housed most of the banks—and therefore the wealth—of the richest city per capita in the country during the days of whaling. By 1974, the banks had moved up the hill as the downtown had retreated further from the waterfront, but there were other businesses there. Bob Hathaway in Northeast Marine Electronics served the fishing fleet, and two stores away, Loring Weeks was doing the same. Myron Marder had his headquarters for the famous Marder fleet of eastern-rigged, wooden scallopers close to Union and South Water Streets. State Fruit, Tropicana Banana, and Union Tobacco all landed imported fruit on nearby State Pier.

In the Double Bank Building on North Water Street at the foot of William Street sat the Teamsters Union, where Umberto "Battle" Cruz and Robert C. "Porky" Viera represented the fishing crews and managed the union's pension and health care funds. Around the corner, on Rodman and Front Streets, sat New Bedford Ship Supply run by Rasmus Tonnessen, among the many ship suppliers in the neighborhood. Not far away was Kruger Brothers Ship Supply run by Billy Kruger and Skip's Marine run by Ray Drouin. These businesses outfitted fishing boats with everything from groceries to foul-weather gear.

Closer to the waterfront were related businesses such as settlement houses where fishermen got paid after their trips and many bars where that pay sometimes quickly got spent. Settlement houses function the way counting houses did in the days of whaling. Basically, they do the accounting.

Perhaps the most remarkable invention that the whaling industry offered was not the tryworks that rendered whale blubber into oil or Lewis Temple's game-changing toggle harpoon but the profit-sharing payment system, which kept every member of the crew invested in voyages that stretched from three to five years and at times could be life-threateningly dangerous and at other

CHAPTER 3

Optimism Takes Root

Public Money in the Public Way: Dynamite!

We had money to work with—$900,000 was a lot of money in 1974—but it certainly wasn't enough to fix the district. We had to figure out how best to use the city resources. I listened to people's concerns, needs, wants, and aspirations in day-to-day sidewalk conversations. The conversations were constant, and I was never more than a few blocks away, so everyone always felt engaged in the process. And we didn't have absentee owners, so even though there was diversity of background and business and opinion, we were all right there every day. I could efficiently communicate the district's views to City Hall so that we could figure out a workable approach. No one wanted to impose a solution, and the work was collaborative.

The most visible improvements would be made to buildings, but if we put public money into private buildings, how would we get the streets and public infrastructure fixed? We agreed to begin with the public space and repair everything underground first. Water lines and sewer lines were over 100 years old and leaked badly. Some of the oldest telephone conduit was wooden. All would be replaced.

We also looked at the streets and found a patchwork of paving blocks. Paving blocks are the rectangle pieces of granite that replaced the rounded cobblestones that first replaced mud as a paving material. Some of our paving blocks were covered in asphalt. Where trenches had been dug to repair water or sewer lines, the paving had been replaced with asphalt or cement. The result was an unsightly conglomeration of materials that shouted, "Nobody cares about this place!"

Neighbors in the district wanted to get rid of through traffic. People using the district as a shortcut between the North End and the South End drove fast. We wanted to encourage pedestrian movement, but not the kind that happens when an 18-wheeler hits a pedestrian.

DPW crew laying paving blocks on Johnny Cake Hill, 1977

Carl Caivano: The First Artist Arrives

While Mayor Markey assembled his team and undertook all the planning around the community development process, I was trying to help WHALE get its revolving fund going. I don't think WHALE ever formally said that it would operate a revolving fund in so many words. Still, its practice was to acquire threatened historically significant properties, make necessary improvements to stabilize them, and then market and sell the properties to parties who would carry out the restorations. The proceeds of the sale could go into the next project. Hence, funds could be "revolved," and donated dollars could impact more than one building.

WHALE had rescued several buildings and stabilized them by making minimal repairs or moving them onto new foundations. Moving usually accomplished two objectives: it kept a historic building from being demolished and filled a hole left by the loss of another old building. Some might criticize the moving of historic buildings as destroying the context, but moving buildings was often done in the past. If the alternative was a total loss, then WHALE usually felt moving was the better choice.

The WHALE office was in one of those rescued buildings, the William Tallman Warehouse. We had empty office space downstairs and storage space on the third and fourth floors. On the second floor, I occupied a quarter of the space, and there was a small toilet. The rest was unfinished. As in many old warehouses, there was a large wooden wheel in the fourth-floor attic. From the protruding ridge beam, a rope lift allowed heavy objects to be lifted to any of the floors. A long loop of rope attached to the wheel went through openings on every floor. As long as you knew how to tie knots, you had a freight elevator.

William Tallman built this warehouse in 1790, 25 years after Joseph Rotch's purchase of the land underneath. The building had a commanding view of the harbor, the fishing boats at Piers 3 and 4, and the north side of State Pier. We were surrounded on two sides by New Bedford Ship Supply, owned by a titan of the fishing industry, Rasmus Tonnessen. Fishermen constantly streamed in and out of his store. This was New Bedford's business to the core and had been for

Carl Caivano in his Bourne Warehouse studio on North Second Street, 1976

The Truth of Old Buildings: Mary Scott Magnan and the Spooner House

The next people to move into the district were also artists. Allen and Mary Scott bought the Caleb Spooner House from WHALE in 1976. The simple one-and-a-half-story Federal-style house was built in 1806 in what is called the Foster Hill neighborhood. But it was in the way of the realignment of Routes 18 and 6 into an intersection, an intersection not-so-fondly referred to as the "Octopus." WHALE bought the building before the Octopus could devour this simple and historic house. The group had George Church move it to a vacant lot on Centre Street, where it was placed on a new foundation constructed by Ed Medeiros.

There, Allen and Mary spied it. With winos inhabiting the next lot and the site surrounded by empty buildings, what did they see? They saw what artists see and what WHALE saw, which is the beauty and the truth of old buildings. Like Carl Caivano, Allen and Mary saw the authenticity of the past and were willing to bet their future on it. Other artists would follow. Many years later, the visionary (and infamously corrupt) Providence Mayor Buddy Cianci spoke at a talk in New Bedford.

"We use artists like Marines. We send them into questionable neighborhoods. And they make them safe. And they make them cool. And then others follow."

Artists are leaders; they see what others cannot. They see the beauty of the architecture and are drawn by the history of the buildings and the district. The working waterfront has always exerted a powerful attraction, with an energy you can feel and hear and smell. And Allen was a scrimshander. He carved drawings into the teeth, tusks, and bones of whales and other animals procured before the passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which made trade in those goods illegal. Allen and Mary saw the potential of being located near the biggest museum devoted to whaling, a place where people from around the world would visit, people who were interested in Allen's craft.

Without question, artists are also drawn to "questionable neighborhoods" because those are the neighborhoods they can afford. And it is a sad fact that in Mayor Cianci's scenario, after artists succeed in turning around neighborhoods and making them cool, they often get priced out because the wealthy folks "discover" the joys of living in the city.

Most of New Bedford in the mid-70s was available at bargain-basement prices. Allen and Mary could have bought a house anywhere. On the street where I lived in the West End, between the downtown and the city's hospital—considered one of the "better" neighborhoods—every house had been purchased for $20,000–$30,000. And we didn't have winos peeing in our backyard!

But Allen and Mary were drawn to the history, the roughness, the authenticity of the district, and its potential. As work activity increased and sidewalks and building projects grew, the momentum and energy grew.

Mary thought the time was right for more. In 1976, she and Allen organized a juried craft fair and invited folk musicians to play for two days on Centre Street. They called it the Centre Street Summer Festival, and they aimed high. New Bedford had organized the Whaling City Festival earlier that summer in Buttonwood Park, but it was essentially a flea market with amusement rides.

Mary and Allen partnered with the New Bedford Preservation Society for the Center Street Summer Festival. They wanted to set a new standard for New Bedford: we could produce the best and expect the best. They wanted only the highest-quality crafts and musicians. They were betting that people would turn out if you offered the best. Their bet was risky because New Bedford had an image of discounted goods and lower-quality offerings.

Well, on the weekend of the festival, you couldn't find space on Centre Street. It was packed. Allen and Mary had clearly touched a nerve and satisfied an unfulfilled need. People celebrated the change. It was the nation's bicentennial year, and Mayor Markey had many additional activities

The Candleworks: Leading the Banks Toward the Waterfront

The excitement in New Bedford was drawing attention from Boston. A daring and farsighted preservationist named Roger Webb in Boston's Old City Hall took notice. Roger was familiar with New Bedford. In the early 1960s, he worked with my grandmother, Catherine Crapo Bullard, to restore the exterior of the Elizabeth Rotch Rodman House, later known as the Benjamin Rodman House, the first major preservation job in the district. The idea was to return the Wing's Department Store warehouse to the elegant 1820s mansion it had once been. The hope was that if the exterior was fixed up, someone would buy it and continue the interior work. Perhaps, that would jump start the district. Alas, the re-ignition didn't take at the time, and the restored shell waited for years for the its moment.

Roger returned to Boston and worked on a concept that James Rouse would later develop into Quincy Market. Having lost out to Rouse, Roger developed Old Boston City Hall with L'Espalier as a first-rate restaurant on the first floor and offices above. It was clear to him that preservation paid off, and cities across Massachusetts could benefit from the lessons learned and shared. Roger gathered knowledgeable people like lawyer John Bok and real estate developer Bob Kuehne to form a statewide preservation group called Architectural Conservation Trust (ACT) for Massachusetts with headquarters in the basement of Boston's Old City Hall. I joined the board. The group hired a brilliant and tenacious young man named Andy Burnes as its first full-time staffer. Andy was my former classmate at Harvard and shipmate aboard the *Adele*. As an undergraduate, he had learned real estate development working with housing activist Rudy Waker in Roxbury at Low Cost Housing Corp.

The group looked around the state for a project outside of Boston to begin its business model of a statewide historic preservation revolving loan fund. They wanted to identify a project, raise the money, develop it, and use the completed project to springboard into another. In other words, the organization wanted to be a nonprofit real estate developer focusing on historic properties. The question was where to find a challenging enough project to earn recognition but one where they wouldn't lose their shirt right out of the gate?

The members liked all the activity in New Bedford and the commitment shown by Mayor Markey. The group saw a good preservation partner in WHALE. And Andy and I had a mutual trust from sailing across an ocean together, and we could work well together. We were going to have each other's back no matter what.

We decided that the Rodman Candleworks building would be a good project. Located at the corner of Water and Rodman Streets, the three-and-a-half-story building stood sentry at

Rodman Candleworks Building, built 1810

John meets with city council members to discuss its re-use

Moving Heaven and Earth: The Robeson House and Other Moves

When I was writing my thesis and interviewing property and business owners in the district, I met Roland Poitras, who owned Electric Service and Sales at 47 North Second Street, a very nice 1880s four-story brick commercial building located across the street from the 1820 Benjamin Rodman House. Roland sold all manner of light bulbs, fixtures, and supplies for electricians. His business had no connection to either the fishing industry or a budding tourist industry and no real reason to be located near the downtown. His was an industrial use that needed good access to the highway, but Roland had chosen the district years ago because property values were low and there was a lot of cheap space. He ran a good business.

While we were talking, I looked over Roland's shoulder as he stood behind the long counter at the back of the building. I couldn't help noticing a set of granite steps leading up to what looked like the front door of another building.

"Roland, where do those steps go?"

"Come on, I'll show you."

I went behind the counter, and Roland led me up the steps. He unlocked what looked to me like the front door of a large building jammed right up next to the back of his building.

We entered. My jaw dropped.

I had just walked back 150 years in time to the front entrance of an 1820 mansion house, almost exactly like the Benjamin Rodman House across the street. Roland's building, the Bourne Warehouse, had been constructed smack dab in front of another building in 1887. There it was, frozen in time: central hall, four main rooms on the first floor with their original wallpaper and fireplaces. It was filled with fluorescent tubes in storage. I don't think I breathed for several minutes. I felt the same amazement as we ascended the grand central staircase to a central hall leading to four bedrooms on each corner of the building. Each bedroom still had its original wallpaper, and each room had two windows recessed into each wall with wooden shutters you could close from the inside. Virtually all the glass was intact with the wavy imperfections characteristic of glass from that period. Each bedroom had a small closet, and there was an ell in the back with a second set of stairs.

Andrew Robeson mansion, west side of North Second Street, north of William Street, circa 1870

Here was a building I hadn't known about, hiding in the middle of the district: The Andrew Robeson House. Robeson, a prosperous merchant and Quaker abolitionist from Pennsylvania, built this mansion on what is now two city blocks across from his brother-in-law, Benjamin Rodman. While also Federal in design, Andrew's house was built of rubble stone faced with expensive pressed bricks made in Robeson's native Philadelphia and individually wrapped in paper for shipment to New Bedford. The portico that framed the front door had been supported by two full and two engaged Doric columns that were unusually slender and made for a very graceful entranceway. Originally, gardens and stately elm trees had surrounded the property and gave it the appearance of quiet wealth. It must have been quite a sight to have these two elegant mansions facing each other just a block away from the activity of the odoriferous Candleworks, the banks, and the waterfront.

As whaling generated vast fortunes, its wealthy moved their homes up the hill to the County Street area and left their smaller mansions behind. The buildings were absorbed into the neighborhood. For example, the Benjamin Rodman House turned into Wing's warehouse and was surrounded by one-story warehouses. For easier storage of furniture, parts of its beautiful granite walls had been removed.

Likewise, the neighborhood was built up around the Robeson mansion, so it was hidden from view. After Robeson vacated, the largest commercial building in New Bedford, the Corson Block, was built around the mansion in 1880. The four-story Bourne Warehouse slammed up against the front wall to the east. The Corson Block filled the entire side of William Street from Second to Acushnet Avenue, passing close by the Robeson house on the south. Another four-story brick commercial building was built right behind the mansion on the west. An alley, Dover Street, ran close by to the north, and the entire block north of that was taken up by the telephone company in its four-story commercial brick building. Until the central part of the Corson Block burned down and exposed the south side of the Robeson House, you pretty much needed a helicopter to see this magnificent mansion in the heart of the historic district!

In 1978, we went to Mayor Markey with an idea for this building. With the City's help, WHALE would move it across Bill Carter's parking lot and down William Street to an empty lot that WHALE owned across from the Custom House. This lot was where the Model Cities office

Andrew Robeson mansion being moved onto the Carter's Clothing parking lot

Solving Problems in Different Ways: Phoenix Rises

WHALE had not let its coffers empty without planning to replenish them. They had planned a fund drive, and Bob Saltmarsh had agreed to chair it. Bob and his wife, Maura, owned and operated Saltmarsh's department store on Purchase Street. He was a leader of the downtown merchants, always among the first to do anything to support increased activity in the downtown area. He had taken the former Hutchinson's Bookstore and turned it into a four-story department store that sold everything from greeting cards and office supplies to souvenirs of New Bedford. Bob was also a world-class laser sailor, so he was competitive and always wanted to win. It was good knowing he was on your side. He was confident, and his optimism spread easily to those around him.

WHALE had set the fund drive's goal at $275,000, about $100,000 more than we had ever raised. The campaign's purpose was to restore the Robeson House and undertake other smaller projects. On the Wednesday following the removal of the roof, several of us met in Bob's office atop his store. We discussed the relationship between WHALE and the community.

"When WHALE goes way out on a limb to save a building like the Sundial Building, people know we are acting on their behalf," Bob said.

Sarah Delano was confident in the community's support.

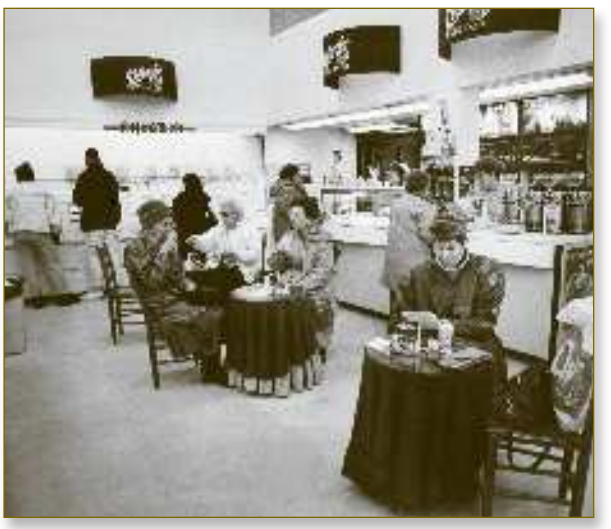
"They have never let that limb get sawn off while we are out there. They will support our action. They will back us up."

Others in the room who would have to go out and raise the money concurred. We increased the goal to $425,000 that day. We went into the community for support, and they did indeed back us up. Before long, we had raised $426,000 to replenish our revolving loan fund. We were back off the limb.

We researched what the Sundial had looked like. To our surprise, it had not been a Spartan Quaker building devoid of ornament, but one sporting an ornate wooden balustrade along the roofline and wooden shutters for every window. We included those in the specifications. Mayor Markey put the building in his Community Development Block Grant plans, and, with an emergency grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, we restored the exterior to its 1850 appearance, complete with the wooden shutters and balustrade. Now that the building was fully restored on the outside and represented zero risk, we again approached the Whaling Museum.

Robert Saltmarsh

Café inside Saltmarsh's store



Blowing glass at New Bedford Glassworks in a newly-built adjunct to the Bourne Warehouse

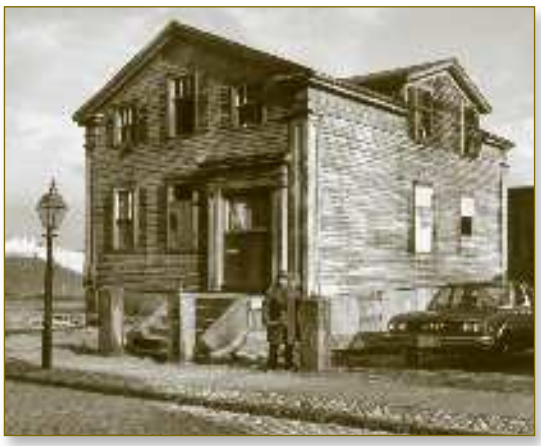
Robert Bryden, CEO of Pairpoint, inspects decorative antique glass once manufactured in New Bedford.

A sale was quickly negotiated, and the museum has used and maintained the building ever since. Unfortunately, they removed the shutters and the balustrade, and the Karalekas brothers got their case of beer but not their plaque.

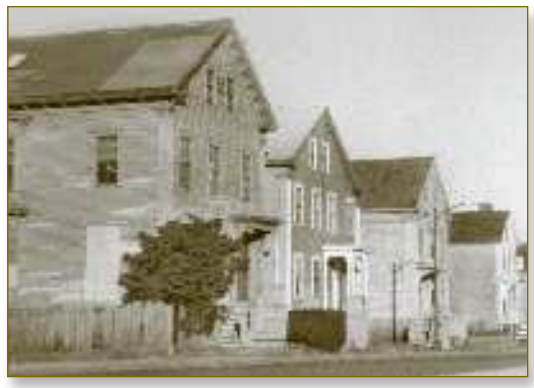
There was much else going on at that time. Once the Robeson House was cleared of the site behind the Bourne Warehouse, I reached out to Pairpoint Glassworks. This famous glass company had once employed hundreds in the South End of New Bedford to manufacture the highest quality high-lead-content art glass. The company had moved and was manufacturing out of a plant in Sandwich near the Cape Cod Canal. I visited with CEO Robert Bryden and asked if he would like to return to New Bedford. I suggested he could expand into the first floor of the Bourne Warehouse and a new building to be built where the Robeson House had been. After much discussion that entailed my learning a lot about the manufacture of glass, he agreed. They constructed the new factory, and Pairpoint candlesticks, vases, and famous cup plates once again were made in New Bedford.

WHALE bought an empty lot across the street north of the New Bedford Glass Museum in the Benjamin Rodman House. We identified two small wooden Greek Revival homes in the city's South Central neighborhood that the redevelopment authority had contracted out to demolish. To save the buildings, we acquired the houses from the demolition contractors. We hired George Church, a farmer whose family had raised crops in Rochester for several hundred years, to move the structures. Soon the Abijah Hathaway House and the Haile Luther House had new sites on

Haile Luther House, after being moved to North Second and Elm Streets—and restored.



The biggest neighborhood project that WHALE got involved in was the Hatch properties. Millie Hatch was a wonderful lady who lived in a beautiful Italianate building on the corner of Pleasant and Hillman Streets. Not only did she keep her own house up perfectly, but she was also the major supporter of the First Baptist Church next to City Hall, a significant landmark that, as a wooden church built in 1829, required constant care. Millie also owned and rented out six wood-frame houses just north of her on Pleasant Street. The buildings varied in age, one possibly dating back to the 18th century and others to the mid-19th century. The rental properties were in deplorable condition, and Millie wanted to tear them down and build a large commercial building like the one on the other side of Pleasant Street.



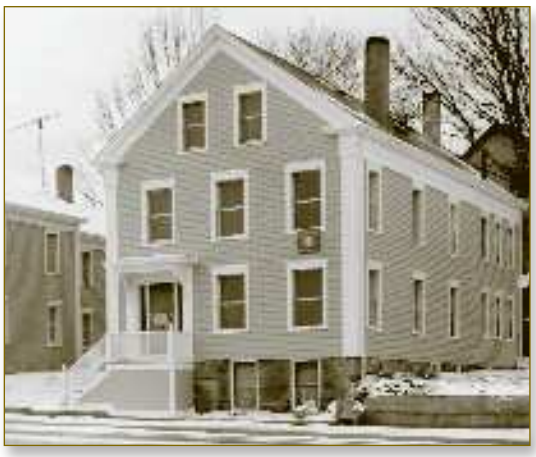
Hatch properties, looking north on Pleasant Street from Hillman Street, before restoration

I had many conversations with Millie. She lived on the very edge of the Foster Hill neighborhood. This neighborhood was filled with historic houses, but the widening of Route 6 and the construction of the enormous intersection known as the "Octopus" had cut it off from the nearby downtown. High-rise housing developments and new commercial buildings faced it on the east, as did the headquarters of the New Bedford Fire Department.

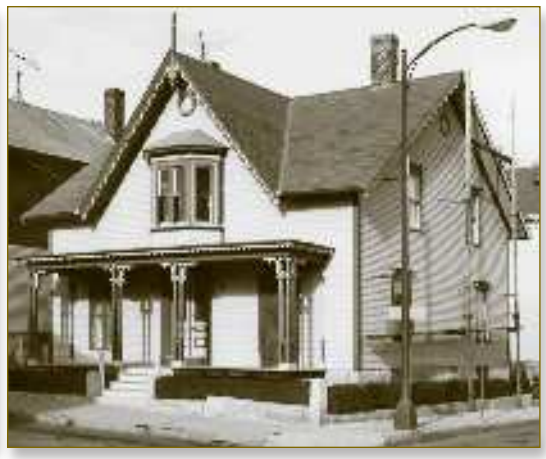
WHALE felt that the Foster Hill neighborhood could not afford to lose another row of houses. The Hatch properties became a beachhead where we had to stand our ground for the neighborhood. Finally, we talked Millie into selling the properties to WHALE. Again, with help from the city, we fixed up the exteriors and sold each property to individuals who agreed to finish the restoration.

As we did so, more owners in the neighborhood started fixing up their homes. The New Bedford Preservation Society held several "holiday house tours" in the neighborhood. We successfully showcased the architectural wonders in what had been the city's northern edge during the whaling era and one of the first neighborhoods to house the people who powered the early and nearby mills. More importantly, these tours spotlighted the care that New Bedford's residents were putting into their homes and the pride they took in the results of research and hard work.

Restored Hatch house, Pleasant and Maxfield Streets



Restored Hatch house, Pleasant and Hillman Streets



Nowhere in All America: The Rotch-Jones-Duff House

In 1981, another threat loomed. A mansion house at 396 County Street, the grandest example of what the wealth of whaling produced, was under threat.

County Street follows the crest of a hill, and it was here that the whaling merchants eventually decided to build their homes. When Herman Melville came to the city in 1841 before shipping out on the *Acushnet*, he became familiar with the city and described the scene in *Moby-Dick*:

> *Nowhere in all America will you find more patrician-like houses, parks, and gardens more opulent, than in New Bedford. Whence came they? How planted upon this once scraggy scoria of a country? Go and gaze upon the iron emblematical harpoons round yonder lofty mansion, and your question will be answered. Yes, all these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. One and all, they were harpooned and dragged up hither from the bottom of the sea.*

William Rotch Jr. built his house at 396 County Street after the death of his first wife, Elizabeth Rodman. His second wife, Lydia Scott, wanted to move up the hill. As we know, William's daughter, Sarah Arnold, gave his first house at William and Water Streets to the New Bedford Port Society, which moved it up to Johnny Cake Hill and used it as the Mariner's Home.

It is hard to overstate William Rotch Jr.'s impact on New Bedford. He ran the world's largest whaling business from the city, while his father and brother ran the French side of the business. Rotch's Wharf was where Piers 3 and 4 now extend, and their Counting House, destroyed when Route 18 was built, was next to it. Rotch was the first president of the New Bedford Abolition Society and a friend and business partner of Paul Cuffe. Rotch was the first president of the New Bedford Institution for Savings, and the largest funder for creating Friends Academy.

When he, at age 75, and Lydia moved up the hill and built their house, they had William's son-in-law, James Arnold, lay out the gardens. Gardening was serious business for the whaling merchants, who often brought exotic plants back from distant ports. James Arnold's will broke down into two parts. He left the first portion for "the poor and needy of New Bedford who may be deserving," which my brother, Peter, and I help administer through the Community Foundation. The remaining half went to Harvard University, which used it to create the Arnold Arboretum in Boston.

The property at 396 County Street was significant for several reasons besides being the home of New Bedford's leading whaling merchant. When William died at 91 in 1850, Edward Coffin Jones bought the house and lived there with his family until his death in 1880. Edward was involved in the whaling and ship chandlery businesses. After he died, his daughter, Amelia Hickling Jones, lived in the mansion until she died in 1935. Like the rest of her family, Amelia was a significant contributor to New Bedford.

When Amelia died, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Duff bought the house. Mark Duff had been involved in whaling but had diversified into petroleum and coal as whaling died out. When he died in 1967, his wife Beatrice took over. She maintained the house, the gardens with their large gazebo, the greenhouse, and the outbuilding in the back until they became too much for her. By this time, the property was the only estate left in New Bedford that still comprised its original landscape, occupying an entire city block with a formal boxwood and a rose parterre garden.

Richard Upjohn had designed this house for William Rotch Jr. It was the first commission for the architect, who would later gain fame as the designer of New York's Trinity Church and become the first president of the American Institute of Architects. The property, without question, has historical significance because of the three families who lived there and because it

no question in anyone's mind that the Old Dartmouth Historical Society is an excellent museum. It conveys much of the history of Old Dartmouth better than any place else could. Trying to duplicate their resources would be foolhardy. But what they don't do, and in fact cannot do, is educate people about domestic life in a domestic setting. They can set up a room and put out the tea plates, but they can't set up an entire home. They have individual pieces of furniture, but they can't place them in context. And they certainly can't tie indoor life to outdoor life as befits a city where horticulture was so important. We felt that a house and garden museum was the highest and best use in this particular case.

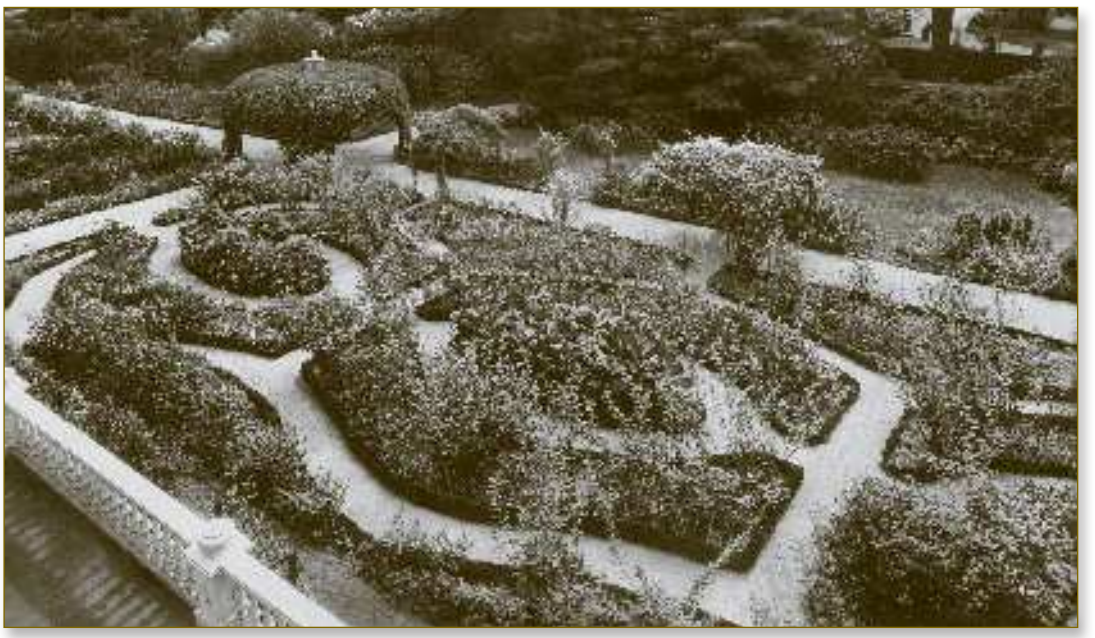
We began negotiations with Mrs. Duff. We appealed to her sense of history and legacy, saying we wanted to tell the story of the three families who lived there. We explained that we were a nonprofit and that gifts made to WHALE were tax-deductible. We talked about mutual friends. We tried everything we could. Mrs. Duff wasn't moved. She may have been angry at our interceding in her sale. She knew there was a three-month window. At any rate, she said her price was a firm $150,000. She wasn't going to budge.

Next came a WHALE board meeting. We usually met in the Sunroom of the Wamsutta Club, which is in the James Arnold mansion. WHALE met monthly on the third Tuesday at noon for lunch, and Sarah Delano chaired the meeting from the head of the table. I sat next to her. There were about 20 directors, including a clerk, who took the minutes, a treasurer, who kept the books, and a vice president. The directors got along well with each other. They didn't take themselves too seriously, but they took WHALE's work very seriously.

When we met, Sarah and I explained what had transpired at the zoning board and in the negotiations with Mrs. Duff. Some members grumbled about the high price, saying we should be able to buy the property for $135,000. Others worried about what it would look like if we overpaid.

At the time we were considering this project, we were also well into saving the Zeiterion Theatre, the biggest endeavor we had ever undertaken. The Rotch-Jones-Duff project would come at a time when we were already extremely stressed financially. Everyone understood this property was unique and believed a restaurant with a parking lot was unacceptable. Members

Rotch-Jones-Duff Garden



also realized that there really wasn't any other organization except WHALE to help save the mansion. The real question was, when is a project finally more than you can handle? When do you finally have to say, "Enough! This is beyond our resources."

I looked at Sarah. I looked around the table as the sun shone through the windows onto the white tablecloth, the plates of food, glasses of water, and people's faces. Everyone was looking at Sarah. What I saw was a transfusion, almost like a blood transfusion. Call it a courage transfusion. It emanated from Sarah and went down each side of the table to the end through each and every person. Their expressions changed. Sarah was calm. Her face had a firm look to it. She wasn't stern or animated, just clear and calm.

"No one is going to remember what we paid for the building. People will only remember whether we saved it."

After Sarah said that, there was no further debate. There was no need of a vote, though one was taken. Once again, ordinary people did the extraordinary and committed themselves to a task, not knowing exactly how we would succeed but knowing we would.

When the zoning board reconvened a few months later to conclude the drama of Mrs. Duff's decision, the room was again filled with people anxious to know the mansion's fate. Chairman Gomes wanted to know what solution we proposed.

"Well, WHALE, you have had your 90 days to decide what to do. Mrs. Duff has a hardship and deserves an answer. The zoning board is ready to make a decision."

Sarah Delano rose.

"WHALE has agreed to buy the building."

I would say her words brought the house down, except that isn't the right analogy when talking about saving buildings!

We bought the house and started work immediately on several fronts. Knowing how important the gardens were, we reached out to the Buzzards Bay Garden Club. Suzanne Underwood was on WHALE's board and was a landscape architect and member of the Garden Club. My mother was also a Garden Club member, so I talked with her. We toured the parterre garden, the wildflower walk, the greenhouse, the rest of the grounds, and the house.

We told the Garden Club we were planning a house and garden museum, and we thought that a partnership with them would be ideal. They could restore the gardens, use the greenhouse, and utilize the facility for educational programming. The club supported the idea and has been an active and beneficial partner from the beginning.

One of the club members, Betsy McBratney, brought an added dimension. Her husband, Dr. Greer McBratney, raised bees, and so we were able to bring back beekeeping to the gardens. Through the club, we also connected with Allen Haskell, whose landscape business up on Shawmut Avenue in the near North End was famous all over America. Allen served clients like Martha Stewart and won prestigious awards at the Boston Flower Show year after year. He joined the effort and helped decorate the house during the holidays every year until his death.

We realized we would have to set up a separate governance structure. We established the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum as a separate nonprofit organization with a separate mission and a separate board of directors. Unlike WHALE, this organization would need to be around forever and would have a very different kind of mission. Through the museum, we wanted to tell the story of New Bedford through the eyes of the three families who had occupied the house. To help us do that, we also set out to find members of the three families.

Sarah Delano and I were both Rotch descendants, and others still lived in the region, so we set out to inform them of the plans for the house and recruit them. One early recruit was my cousin, Francis "Frank" Gray, who became an early and longtime treasurer. We also knew

members of the Duff family because we had bought the house from them, but there were far fewer of them, and their interest seemed weaker, at least at the outset. The Jones family had lived in the house the longest but was hardest to reach. I finally reached a wonderful woman named Marjorie Forbes Elias, who was related to the Jones family through the Forbes connection. She lived in Cambridge. When I told her about our efforts to save the house, she became very interested and was helpful in locating her relatives, many of whom still have connections to the nearby Elizabeth Islands. As a result, we have usually been able to have representatives of all three families on the board as we govern the house and gardens of their ancestors.

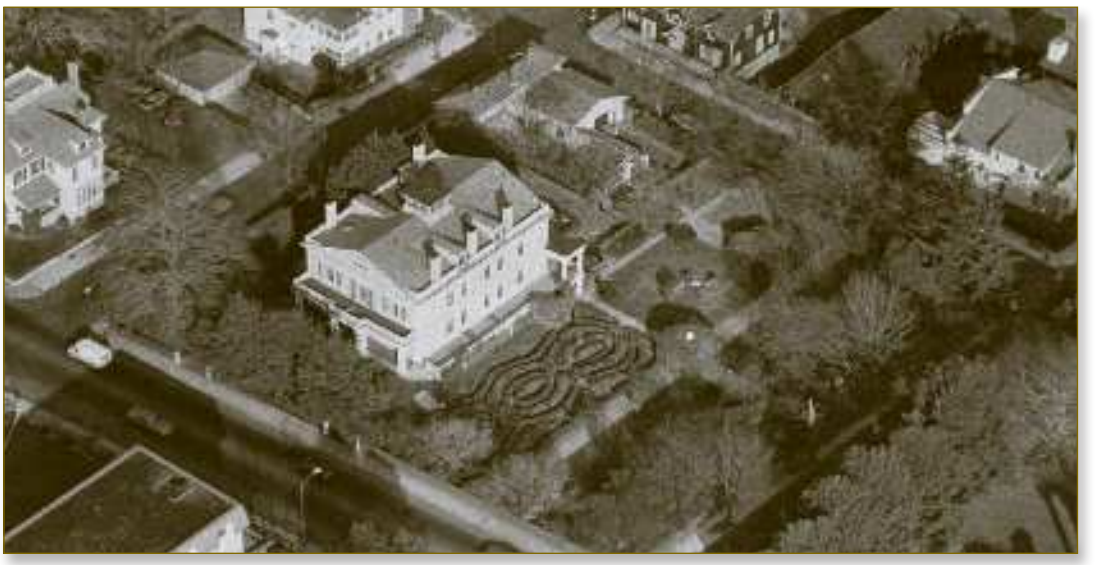
Sarah Delano and Anne Brengle

The next big step was hiring an executive director. We chose Anne Brengle, who had worked with me as membership director at WHALE. She had also worked at the Whaling Museum for several years, so she knew the museum world. She was the ideal person to get the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum off the ground and running. She was familiar with New Bedford and all the people who would need to be involved. Everyone knew and respected her. She was organized, calm under pressure, and optimistic. And she was engaging. People just jumped in to help her with projects that needed doing.

Anne started organizing the interior exhibits to tell the stories of the three families and working with the families to see what might be available from them to display. She also stayed in touch with the Garden Club as they researched what the gardens had looked like and figured out the best way to bring the grounds back to mid-19th-century times. She worked with the board on fundraising to restore the exterior and build restrooms and an office for museum use.

One challenge was how to get people to visit a house museum more than once. Because of my involvement in certifying museums for the Massachusetts Council on Arts and Humanities, I had to visit many museums. On one of my visits to a house museum on the Connecticut

Overview of entire property of Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum



Judi, Matthew, and I tore out all the heavy bushes and modernized the kitchen. We repainted the inside, respecting the significant architectural elements but not trying to make the house into a museum. As Matthew grew older, he had a train set up on the third floor, which had no heat or plumbing. It had been used for bedrooms when the Rotches and their many children occupied the house.

Meanwhile, I was putting an enormous amount of energy and thought into my work saving buildings. It was consuming work. And one of the things it consumed was our marriage. After a few years, I was alone in the house, with visits from Matthew.

But perhaps, I wasn't completely alone.

Several people over many decades have described to me how they encountered a woman dressed in Victorian clothes in and around my house. Usually, they would see her in the bedroom by the Oriel window. Sometimes they would be outside the house looking in and see her. Other times they would be in the room and see her there with them. Sometimes this woman would speak to them, occasionally calling them by name. Everyone described her as friendly.

Of course, I'm quite sure this is the ghost of Sarah Tappan Crapo, returning to her favorite room. If one person tells you such a thing, you wonder about that person. But if 20 people independently describe the same phenomenon, then I say, "Why not?" Her presence certainly made itself known—to some. I only wish she would have sat down and talked with me, her great-something grandson. But she never did appear to me.

In August 1980, I visited my brother Peter and his wife Tia in Vermont, where Peter was in law school. At 3 a.m., August 12, the phone rang. My father was on the line. Never a good sign.

"Your house is on fire. I'll call you back."

I waited. I paced. I imagined. I waited some more. Finally, an hour or so later, he called back.

"How bad is it, Dad?"

"Just a small hole in the roof."

"Thank God. What does it look like inside?"

"You can't go inside. It's too bad."

"I'll get there as fast as I can."

I said goodbye to Peter and Tia and drove four hours south, trying to reconcile the conflicting images in my mind of my father's two messages. *Just a small hole in the roof. Too bad to go inside.* I tried to imagine the scene. I knew the roof shingles were the old asbestos type of shingle. They wouldn't have burned, but they would have contained the fire like a kiln. I wondered what had caused it; nobody was in the house.

When I finally got there at about eight in the morning, my house was quite a sight. I saw the small opening in the roof where the New Bedford firefighters from Station #3 had punched a hole to vent the fire.

My neighbor Nancy Crosby told me that there had been a ferocious thunderstorm the previous evening. "It felt like bombs were going off in the neighborhood. The flashes were so bright and so frequent. The noise was deafening. A lightning bolt must have hit your chimney and started a fire."

Nancy said the fire must have had quite a head start. The fire alarms had gone off inside the house, but they couldn't hear them because of all the thunder. It wasn't until they smelled smoke that they knew something was wrong and called the fire department.

My house sat on top of a hill. I knew that from the jogs I would take in the neighborhood. There was no downhill way home. And the two tall and massive chimneys provided an inviting target for lightning to reach the ground.

When I arrived, I saw almost everything I owned out on the front lawn. My neighbors, my parents, Laurie Miller, her parents, and others were all there helping. I had been seriously dating

Laurie Miller for a few years by this time. She and her two kids, Lexie and Toby, were living in Dartmouth, and we had been spending a lot of time together. It was a comfort to see Laurie and my friends and family, but I was shocked to see the house.

The crew had carefully removed as much as they could from the house. It seemed as if every towel within a mile of the house had been deployed to soak up all the water the firefighters had used to extinguish the blaze. Carol Nelson, an architect and friend, had procured a half-dozen industrial fans, and they were hard at work inside the house, blowing air out the open windows in an attempt to dry out the wet plaster.

The first floor was extremely wet, with the wallpaper in the front hall peeling off the walls and water stains already coming through the paint on the walls and ceilings. A six-foot length of plaster crown molding in the library had crashed to the floor.

As I walked up the central stairway, I looked to the Oriel window. The ceiling to the third floor had burned through to that second-floor bedroom. Water damage was everywhere. I proceeded up the narrow stairway to the third floor and attic. Everything was black char. Practically every roof rafter was burned through. I walked toward the front of the house, where Matthew had his train set. It was a melted mess. The smell, as anyone who has had the misfortune of losing a home to a fire knows, is unforgettable.

More bad news came when I called my insurance agent, Charlie Toomey, who sat on WHALE's board. I had insured the house for what it was worth. It took Charlie about two days to declare the house a total loss and get me a check for the full amount. But when I talked to a contractor about what it would take to fix the place up, the number was ***three times*** as much. That was an expensive lesson about the need to insure a property for what it will cost to replace, not what it is worth, especially in a city like New Bedford, where beautiful buildings were still undervalued.

I moved back to my parents' house, which I know is what every parent wants to see! I engaged my neighbor Max Ferro of Preservation Partnership to help with the design and specifications

With Matthew, Toby, Laurie, and Lexie on the back steps at Irving Street, 1989

Class Acts: Performing at "The Z"

Sarah Delano with Director Dan Kirsch

Finally, we were ready for our reopening gala on September 25, 1982. Shirley Jones came to Laurie's and my house for a reception before the show. People, many in black tie, lined up around the block to get into the Zeiterion for the show. Restaurants were packed beforehand. Downtown was alive.

Shirley Jones did not disappoint. And from then on, we did not have to explain why we needed to save the Zeiterion. Anyone who was there that night or on subsequent nights knew. We ran a short season and then closed for Phase II to complete the renovations.

During this time, Governor Ed King was worried about his re-election and sought support around the state. There was a fund set up to help the Hynes Auditorium in Boston with state money, but for it to get passed legally, it had to make other places in Massachusetts technically eligible. If other cities had civic centers or exhibition halls, they also were eligible. I went to Mayor Markey with an idea. I suggested we make the building two condominiums and turn the theatre into an "exhibition hall" so it would be eligible for state funding. The Penlers would keep the front, except for the lobby, for their travel agency. WHALE would transfer the second one to the city, which would accept it and then create an "exhibit hall commission" to oversee it. The commission would turn around and contract with WHALE to run the theater. Nothing would really change except that we would be eligible for the state money, which I thought might amount to $1.1 million for Phase II. Even though I am sure Mayor Markey had doubts about owning a historic theater, he agreed.

Tom Bucar, our vice chairman and a good lawyer, created the first condominium in New Bedford. Mayor Markey set up the commission. We received $1.1 million from the state, which funded the restoration of the auditorium, the roof, bathrooms, utilities, and more, all designed by the architectural firm of Dyer Brown of Boston. Dyer Brown was getting so much preservation

Cutting the ribbon, officially marking the theater's opening, 1982

Scott Lang's Suggestion

As we were putting together the board for the Zeiterion in 1982, I knew we needed a lawyer. I had heard that a young man named Scott Lang had experience in entertainment and sports, so I paid him a visit at his office at 401 County Street. He practiced with John Xifaras, and they both also specialized in labor law.

Scott was a fascinating guy with a breadth of talent and experience that was hard to believe, considering how young he was. He lived in the West End with his wife, Gig, and their three kids, Nate, Andy, and Sarah. He had gone to Marquette College in Wisconsin, earned his law degree at Georgetown University, worked on Jimmy Carter's Presidential campaign, and served in his administration for a few days before deciding it wasn't for him.

He had represented several NBA basketball players and served on the Rules Committee of the Democratic National Committee. Close to the Kennedys, he had worked with Senator Ted Kennedy in his unsuccessful presidential bid in 1980.

Scott has a droll sense of humor. You can see his jokes coming like a big slow curveball. But like curveballs that can't be hit, they are effective just the same and right on target.

When we met at his office, we started talking about the Zeiterion, the board, and needing someone with his skills to serve on it. He listened for a while.

"John, have you ever thought about running for mayor?"

"What!"

"Mayor Jack Markey is going to be made a judge, and there will be a special election. Have you ever thought about running?"

"Scott, we're here to talk about you joining the board of the Zeiterion. Don't go turning this around."

But turn it around, he did. Scott wasn't interested in joining the board.

I had never run for anything since elementary school. I grew up in Dartmouth, not New Bedford. I was an old-time Yankee who had gone to prep school, not the local high school, and then Harvard. I had more strikes against me than I could count.

Scott pointed out that I had a record that no one else in the city had, except the man retiring to become a judge. He pointed out that I had led the revitalization of the very visible waterfront historic district in partnership with the mayor. He said that such work had created a spirit in New Bedford that touched people all over the city. He suspected many of the people who supported Mayor Markey, valuing that partnership, might support my candidacy.

He then made another argument. He said I had done a lot for New Bedford, working with WHALE and other groups in the historic district. He said I could do a lot more for New Bedford if I were the mayor, and there was a lot that needed to be done. I couldn't argue with that. We talked for a while longer in the bay window overlooking County Street. I told him I would need to think about it and talk with Laurie.

"One more thing, Scott," I said when I got up to leave. "I'm not running for mayor unless you are my campaign chairman."

Attorney Scott W. Lang, 1982

CHAPTER 4

Mayor of New Bedford

First Run

I discussed the decision with Laurie, Lexie, Toby, and Matt. Running for mayor would change our lives completely. It would be a very public process that would intrude into our lives, all of our lives. We talked about how it would require a total commitment from me, including nights and weekends. That would mean less family time. We discussed how politics could be nasty. Opponents can say mean things that aren't true. They would certainly criticize me, but they might criticize my family too. People in politics don't necessarily fight fairly.

I don't know how much of this sank in as a warning, but my family was clearly supportive of the campaign because they knew I wanted to do it. We were in, all in. We weren't sure how this adventure would unfold, but we expected it would test us and hoped it would teach us.

With my family behind me, I now had to put a campaign team together. With Scott Lang as my campaign chair, I had someone with tremendous experience to guide a novice like myself. True, I had worked on Gerry Studds's first unsuccessful campaign for Congress in 1971, and I had supported Mayor Markey's campaigns by doing odd jobs, selling tickets to fundraisers, and working on "visibility" to get the candidate's name out there.

But I had never been in the inner circle, and now I was as far inside as anyone could get.

When Markey agreed to become a judge, he had to step aside as mayor. That triggered a special election in the midst of his term. Following Mayor Markey would not be easy, but there was a pent-up demand for someone new after a decade of one administration. Nineteen people stepped forward to run in the non-partisan preliminary special election, which was held in February 1983. The preliminary would narrow the race to two candidates for the final election in March 1983. This meant the campaign would begin around Thanksgiving of 1982 and run through the winter, an unusual season for politicking. This special election would decide who would be mayor for the six months remaining of Markey's term, which ended with the regular election in November 1983.

Tryne Costa, Peter Bullard, and Walter Ramos walk the length of New Bedford in one day—13 miles.

The general gist of a campaign is that you put together an organization made up mainly of volunteers who accomplish a series of tasks that reach a crescendo on Election Day. If you win, a very small percentage of those volunteers might transition into your administration, but most go back to their normal routine until the next campaign. People's motivations vary, but the great majority give their time, money, and good ideas for the same reason you do—they want to make their community a better place for themselves, their children, and their grandchildren. It sounds corny, but you realize how many people are idealistic when you work on campaigns.

A Second Run and Victory: Exhilarating and Humbling

After cleaning up from the campaign and saying a lot of thank yous, I went back to work for WHALE and the other groups in the historic district, spending time on the Zeiterion Theatre and the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum.

Brian Lawler served the half-year of the special term and then ran for re-election. We felt that was not enough time for him to demonstrate whether he could be a good mayor, so we did not challenge him in the race in the fall of 1983.

But by spring of 1985, we felt the city needed a change, and we gathered our team together for a run. It was most important to define our central issue. While we benefited from Tubby Harrison's polling for this, I also relied on about a dozen people whose advice was based on a thorough knowledge of the people of New Bedford, political experience born of many campaigns, integrity, street smarts, and an idealistic vision for our city. Their ideas were sometimes different from poll results, and we argued that knowledge on the ground was the team's strength. We trusted each other, so the arguments produced better decisions that everybody got behind. We were loyal to each other and the cause.

Scott Lang led this group, which included my brother, Peter, who, in one of the happy accidents of the first campaign, decided not to become a Boston lawyer but rather to join Scott and Mardee in starting a law firm in New Bedford. Ben Baker, Pete Rioux, Steve Roberts, and Dick Walega were key players. Elsie Souza, a New Bedford teacher, and her husband Tony contributed significantly, as did Ed Girard, a retired teacher. Maria Tomasia, who was working for Congressman Gerry Studds, and her husband, John, introduced me to many influential people in the Portuguese community. Jeannie Duval, who headed the teachers' union, was a vital volunteer. Liz Isherwood and her husband, John Moore, again provided invaluable advice and services, from buying ad space to creating leaflets. Walter Ramos again added wisdom and professionalism. Robert Alves, head of the Longshoremen's Association—the only union to support me in 1983—was a key labor advisor. This time around, he was joined by Umberto "Battle" Cruz, who headed the Teamsters.

Announcing a second run, spring 1985

A Seething Waterfront

Two weeks after inauguration, pickets demand the private auction house be shut down.

In the early 1980s, New Bedford was still a leading fishing port, but it was feeling the strain from several fronts. About 250 boats from New Bedford and Fairhaven fished out of the port. Scallops and groundfish made up the bulk of the catch, with lobster and highly migratory species like tuna and swordfish also contributing. The Magnuson Act, passed in 1976, extended the US jurisdiction from 12 miles offshore to 200 miles, Americanizing fishing areas and creating a bonanza for the fleet. The benefit was short-term. We soon found out that we could overfish as easily as the Russians and the Japanese.

Then, in 1983, the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands, settled a dispute between the US and Canada over where the border should be drawn between the two countries. The court awarded Canada the northeast part of Georges Bank, home to some of the most productive fishing areas in the world. The creation of "The Hague Line" had two adverse consequences for the American fleet. The first was obvious—we lost access to precious fishing grounds that our people had fished for over 100 years. The second was less obvious—overfishing the areas we were left with. New capital had been pumped into the New Bedford fleet after the Magnuson Act passed. This larger, newer, more powerful fleet now was forced to fish in a smaller area, guaranteeing that the remaining grounds would be overfished at an even more destructive rate than in years past.

By the winter of 1985-86, the port of New Bedford was feeling the economic strain of collapsing fisheries. Profits were running low, and tensions were running high. Half the fleet was unionized, and those crews abandoned the Teamsters and switched to the Seafarers International. But the boat owners didn't want to deal with either union. Instead, the owners wanted more and demanded that crews take a lesser share of the revenues from the trips.

In January, about 500 fishermen marched on City Hall. This is what awaited me on the day I was inaugurated. As I vacationed with my family in Florida trying to gather my thoughts and the priorities for my administration, I read in the national press about a fishing strike in New Bedford that had violent overtones. Anger was high, and a couple of buildings had been torched. I had been hoping for a grace period, but that looked less and less likely.

Strikers fight for better wages and pension and health benefits.

"Harvey, we'll get right on it, but what did you think would happen when you set up that private auction?" I said, trying to convince the dealers to back down. "You brought this on yourself. Why don't you have your guys return to the public auction where it is supposed to be."

"Not going to happen. This is a much better facility," Harvey countered.

"Says the guy crouched under his desk," I said. "We'll send the police, Harvey."

The situation was heating up. I conferred with Ben Baker and Roz Brooker. The public auction was important to maintain because it was one more right being taken away from fishermen. If the auction were public, there was some transparency. If it was a private enterprise, deals and prices were confidential. We knew there was a city law requiring boats to sell at the Wharfinger Building, and we wondered what would happen if we decided to enforce it. I called Superior Court Judge George Jacobs, who had sworn me in just days before, and explained the situation.

"Mayor, I know the law well," the judge said. "As it happens, I wrote that law when I was city solicitor for a previous mayor. Having written it, I know it is unconstitutional! We did it just for show. If you arrest some unfortunate captain and bring him before my court, I'm going to throw that case out so fast your head will spin."

"Judge Jacobs, that's very helpful to know upfront," I said with a laugh.

George certainly hadn't made our position any stronger, but at least we knew what we were looking at.

Ben, Roz, and I discussed the issue with Police Chief Arthur Oliveira and decided, despite what George had told us, we would ask the police to enforce the law against the first captain who sold at Yellowbird. That happened to be Joe Avila. The fine was $50. I don't know whether he paid it. The New Bedford City Council raised the fine to $300 to put more teeth in the law, but I didn't want to make any changes until the courts could get us a definitive answer.

Protesters angry about the private auction face-off against police, creating a volatile situation.

The fish strike wore on. Boat owner Bob Bruno's truck went up in flames, and there were other incidents. Despite the anger and the resistance, the union boats never got a contract, and the auction never returned to the Wharfinger Building. The owners busted the union, and the dealers privatized the auction. In my opinion, that was two steps back for the industry.

Six years later, after I had left City Hall and was working for the New Bedford Seafood Co-Op, I was driving three people to a fisheries meeting in Portland, Maine. Fisherman and boat owner Rodney Avila was in the front passenger seat of my VW Rabbit. Howard Nickerson, a long-time organizer for the Offshore Mariners, sat in the back behind me. Behind Rodney was his cousin, Joe. We had a three-hour drive ahead of us.

"So, John, you remember when you were mayor?" Joe started the conversation off.

"Yea, Joe, I remember that," I said.

"So, John, you remember right at the beginning there was a fish strike?"

"Yea, Joe, I remember that too."

"So, John, you remember how they moved the auction?"

"Yea, Joe, I remember about the auction."

"And John, you remember how you went and arrested a captain?"

"Yea, Joe, I remember that, but I don't remember who it was."

"Well, that captain was me!"

"Oh, well, I guess this is going to be a ***long*** ride to Portland, Joe."

We talked about the strike, what had happened to the industry since the strike, and touched on other topics. Rodney was a great storyteller, and so was Howard, so the drive went quickly. Along the way, Joe mentioned he had lost his house recently in a fire. I told him about the fire in my house, and we shared our experiences. When you lose a home to fire, you lose more than just the physical structure. You lose all the items inside connected to your memories.

Joe said one of the things he missed the most was his collection of Brother Dave Gardner albums. Brother Dave was a comedian from Tennessee with a real Southern sense of humor. My college roommate was from Louisville, and he loved Brother Dave. I had acquired two Brother Dave records, which is the ***last*** thing you would expect a New England Yankee to own. When I told Joe I would give him my Brother Dave records, the arrest from the strike days was officially forgiven.

Striking fishermen were a constant presence on the waterfront.

it seemed as if I was developing an addiction to adrenaline and reverting to the attention span of a seven-year-old. I often had only a few minutes to make serious decisions before moving on to the next topic. There was so much going on, I could not adopt a leisurely pace.

In that high-stakes, hurry-up atmosphere, Chief Benoit said, "It happens."

And I let it slide.

A year or so later, after I was out of office and working in the Clinton administration in Washington, I got a notice that I would be deposed in the civil rights case of the family of Morris Pina Jr. vs. the City of New Bedford, et al. When I contacted the City Solicitor's office, they said that Assistant City Solicitor Patrick Walsh would defend me as I was one of the parties being sued along with Chief Benoit, arresting Officer Leonard Baillargeon, and other city officials and police officers. I asked Pat what the case was about, and he said the family alleged that Baillargeon and other police officers had used excessive force contributing to Morris Pina's death. He said I would have to testify in federal court in Boston.

I flew from Washington and took the witness stand. The lawyer for Mr. Pina's family showed me several pictures of the young Black man's body on the jail cell floor. He was surrounded by a pool of blood and looked as if he had been badly beaten. I was shocked. The case concluded and awarded Pina's estate about $500,000, which I was told was low for such an outcome. The findings determined that Mr. Pina had been beaten and that the incident had been covered up.

I thought back to my misgivings during Benoit's job interview. He looked away then and, in another significant moment, looked away again. It seemed to me that he chose to tell me something he thought I wanted to hear instead of something that I needed to hear. He was a training officer whose officers had not been properly trained to follow the most basic rules of proper use of force. If Baillargeon, as head of the union, behaved this way, I wondered who else was acting this way? When you make errors with people who carry guns and batons, those errors can be tragically serious and even fatal. When leadership doesn't address problems, they are allowed to continue.

I had made many excellent choices of people to serve. But I do have some regrets. Clearly, I had not done enough to set expectations about department heads' responsibilities to me, each other, and the people we served.

Environmental Issues

The environment was one of the four priorities I set out in my inaugural address after I was first elected. The people of New Bedford deserved clean air and water just as much as the people in the wealthier suburbs. Whenever I said that it always generated applause. Getting results proved more complicated. The task before us was daunting on so many fronts. New Bedford had dirty air, dirty water, and run-down parks, in part because we are a poor city with industries that will pollute if allowed.

I get sick and tired of corporate titans like GE's Jack Welch being lionized as great examples of how the private sector works and how corporate America is so much more efficient than government. They brag so much about the benefits of capitalism. But then, you see how GE disposes of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) that cause cancer and are endocrine disruptors in the Hudson River and around Pittsfield, MA. They leave their waste for others to clean up at a cost of hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. This is what is known as "privatizing profits and socializing costs." And it makes Jack Welch and his ilk among the biggest hypocrites you can find. He should be a role model for no one.

New Bedford had its own companies that dumped their trash and pollutants in our public places for other people to clean up. To be fair, when PCBs were declared illegal, the companies

CHAPTER 9

Turning Wild Ideas into Federal Programs

Fisheries Crises

While we were working with the President's Council for Sustainable Development, our office was also charged with developing a response to the fisheries crisis in New England. There were several reasons for this assignment. One was that as the former mayor of New Bedford and organizer of the fishing industry in New England, I was familiar with the issues and the people. I had a lot of valuable support on Capitol Hill, and the New England delegation was particularly powerful. Another reason was that the National Marine Fisheries Service, sometimes called NOAA Fisheries for short, had the job of regulating the groundfish industry, which was the industry most in crisis. As the regulator, NOAA Fisheries was not liked, to say the least. Having me lead the disaster assistance might make it more palatable.

I met with Rollie Schmitten, who had gotten the top NOAA Fisheries job I had competed for earlier. We had a good talk and developed an excellent relationship that never soured. He assigned me a person from the Sustainable Fisheries Division named Bruce Morehead. Bruce didn't know what he was in for when he met with Lance and me. The culture of the National Marine Fisheries Service and the culture of our office could not have been more different. Lance and I were wide-open thinkers. I had on my desk a framed gift from Senator Ted Kennedy of his brother Bobby's famous quote, "Some men see things as they are and ask why. I dream of things that never were and ask why not."

Bruce lived in the land of rules, regulations, and small, incremental change. In addition to our being political appointees and newcomers and Bruce being a career professional lifer, there was something else that could have made this relationship difficult. The fact that we were working on a disaster in New England was in itself an indictment of a failure to properly manage a fishery. Our work was a walking criticism of the National Marine Fisheries Service itself. Or at least it could be seen that way. But Rollie and Bruce never did.

Bruce, Lance, and I developed one of the best relationships we could ever have. Lance or I might throw out a wild idea, and Bruce, instead of saying, "That's crazy, you can't do that. You guys should be committed," would say something like, "OK, we might be able to get something like that accomplished if we did it this way. What do you think of that approach?" With that kind of back and forth, our goals would get implemented, and our wild-ass ideas could be turned into federal programs.

We started meeting with fishermen. We had one meeting to begin assessing needs in Portland, Maine, with about 25 people. Lance and I drove up with a young man from our office, Ruben Yui, who was also a political appointee. As we talked about the needs of fishing families at the meeting, I found myself saying, "What do we need?" I was thinking back to my recent past when I had been working for these same people as part of the Co-Op. After a few minutes, Barbara Stevenson, a formidable woman who owned several boats in Portland, looked me coldly in the eye.

"John, you're not 'we' anymore."

With that barrier established, we continued to work, and we identified 11 needs that fishermen, their families, and their communities would need if they were to get through the crisis. The list included grants, loans, health care, industry involved in research, and a novel idea to reduce the fleet's capacity by buying out boats.

We started developing each of these ideas, often with help from industry members. Jim O'Malley from Point Judith led a small group looking at reducing fishing capacity. He reviewed programs in Scotland and other places and talked with industry members, bankers, brokers, and others.

He came up with a simple, fair, and very intelligent plan. The premise was that a fishing vessel was worth about what it grossed in sales. Jim's team created a formula for an auction where the government would ask for bid prices from people who wanted to sell their boats. That would be the numerator. The average gross over the last three years would be the denominator. If a vessel owner wanted to sell his boat for $1.0 million and it grossed $1.0 million, its score would be 1.0/1.0 or 1. If the boat had grossed $2.0 million, the score would have been 1.0/2.0 or 0.5. The government would pick the lowest scores until it ran out of money. Simple, fair, accurate, transparent—and designed by industry.

Now, all we needed was the funding.

Apropos of Approps: Finding the Funding

One day when I was in my office, Commander Don Winter asked about the fishing disaster work. I told him we were surveying needs in New England and trying to finance the relief.

"You know, John, there is $65 million salted away for fishery resource disasters in a Defense Appropriations Bill?"

I could not believe what he was saying.

"What did you just say, Don? Why hasn't anyone told me about this? Does anybody know about it?"

"I do."

"How do you know about it?"

"I put it there when I worked on the Hill for Senator John Breaux of Louisiana. It's for fishery resource disasters caused by natural disasters like hurricanes Iniki, Hugo, and Andrew."

This might work.

"How much did you say again?"

"$65 million. In a Defense Approps bill."

"I owe you big time, Don."

I went across the hall to Legislative Affairs to talk to Sally Yozell. I asked her if she knew about the funds. She told me it didn't exist.

I went down the hall to John Carey in the deputy undersecretary's office. Same answer. Didn't exist. I saw Doug Hall, the assistant secretary. He didn't know about it either.

Maybe this wasn't going to work.

I was losing confidence. I went back to Don. He insisted the funds were there.

"Remember, I said it was in a Defense bill? These guys aren't used to looking in Defense bills," he said.

A little while later, Don brought me the language. There it was in black and white—$65 million for fishery resource disasters caused by natural disasters.

Making the Case for Assistance

Excited again, I walked down the hall to see Terry Garcia, NOAA's chief lawyer. I told him the situation and said we had a fishery resource disaster in New England. I told him Secretary Brown wanted us to address it, and there was tremendous support on the Hill for us to do something quickly. I told him we had met with fishing families and had a report with needs.

Terry was a very sharp lawyer from California. He read the language.

Chapter 10

Back to Massachusetts

Kennedy School Days

Before we drove home, I walked to the Russell Building to say goodbye to Senator Kennedy.

A supporter and friend since my days as mayor, he had backed me in joining the Clinton administration, and he had forcefully advocated for the people we were trying to help with disaster assistance. I had learned so much from him. He had known defeat as a presidential candidate in 1980 but, through hard work, had become arguably the most effective senator in the history of the Senate. While he was respected and comfortable working on the international stage, he epitomized my belief that "all politics is personal."

We reminisced, and he asked about my plans. I told him I wasn't sure. He suggested I consider the Kennedy School, explaining that its Institute for Politics sought people fresh out of government to teach undergraduates about the real world of public service. I said I would check it out.

Senator Kennedy loved sailing and had a beautiful blue schooner named *Mya* built in 1940 by Concordia, the same company that built our yawl in 1965.

"There is one thing I do know, John. You are going to get to spend a lot more time on the water than I am!" He gave me his broad toothy grin as I left his office.

I quickly applied to the Kennedy School and was accepted as a teaching fellow for the spring semester. Harvard paid a modest amount, covering housing in Cambridge with enough left over for Laurie and me to eat for the five months we would be there. I had a ground-floor office on John F. Kennedy Boulevard, a couple of blocks from Harvard Square.

For my non-credit seminar for undergraduates, I chose the topic of sustainable development. I lined up several guest speakers, including my former colleague Lance Simmens, who was then working for Health and Human Services, managing the fishermen's health care program, and supporting HHS Secretary Donna Shalala. I persuaded Peter Clavell, my good friend and former mayoral colleague from Burlington, Vermont, to come down. Peter called himself a progressive Democrat and had focused his administration and campaigns on making Burlington the most sustainable city in America. He had succeeded Social Democrat Bernie Sanders, who was mayor when I first became mayor.

About 30 undergraduates enrolled in my seminar. What is great about the Institute of Politics, which the Kennedy family endows, is that the focus is always on the students. We had great give-and-take conversations for a couple of hours twice a week. Because the class was not for credit, they came just to learn.

Sustainability was an issue in 1998, but climate change, while well known to scientists, had not really penetrated the public consciousness or conversation. Al Gore's book and movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, wouldn't come out for another eight years. Still, these students knew things were out of whack, and they knew that in a case of intergenerational injustice, it was their generation that was being screwed by mine. They wanted to learn how and why that had happened and what they could do about it. They wanted their hands on the levers of power. And when you go to Harvard, you feel you are close to the levers of power.

The institute director was new that year. Senator Alan Simpson, a tall, thin, conservative man from Cody, Wyoming, had recently retired from the Senate and had come with his wife, Adele, to Kennedy country to share his wisdom and considerable wit.