



If you are interested in getting our newsletter through the website and not receiving a printed copy in the mail, please e-mail us at newsletter@friendsvinp.org and we will update the membership database accordingly. This will save the Friends the cost of printing, handling, and postage, which amounts to several thousand dollars each year. The money saved can go directly into our program budget to help fund such things as environmental and cultural education, seminars, coral reef research, and land acquisition. Please be sure to send us your e-mail address so we can notify you online when the newsletter is on the website, or when the website has been updated with important information.

National Park Buys Gibney Beach

Celebration!

Derek Walcott, a true poet of the West Indies, might have been describing Gibney Beach when he wrote the words "lances of palms and the sea's shining shield" in *Star Apple Kingdom*. A significant portion of this very special place is now under the stewardship of the Virgin Island National Park and belongs to the citizens of the United States and their guests. The approximately 2+ acres of waterfront is the first significant acquisition made by Virgin Islands National Park since January 4, 1979 when Annaberg was purchased from the Lockhart family. And it did not come easily.



On August 15, 1997, Ed, Eleanor and John Gibney agreed to option their beachfront property to The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a land conservation organization working in partnership with The Friends.

At that time, the property consisted of a little less than five acres and was valued at well over \$3.5 million. Fortunately for all who cherish the undeveloped beaches of St. John, the Gibneys were more concerned about the future of the island than their own economic self-interest. They agreed to sell to the Trust for less than fair market value. When the Option Agreement expired without

indication that funding would be forthcoming from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), only Ed and Eleanor agreed to extend the Agreement. None of us knew at the time that this was the beginning of many extensions and disappointments.

As St. John beachfront property prices escalated at a rate of 18% or more per year, Congress, engrossed in impeaching the president, neglected appropriations from the LWCF. It became clear that without creative compromise, there would not be adequate resources to compensate Ed and Eleanor. Consequently, Ed agreed to resubdivide his property to include all of his beachfront, but somewhat less than his total acreage. Eleanor agreed to retain a right to remain on her property for a term of 30 years in exchange for the reduced price.

Finally, on April 25, 2000, through the efforts of many people in both public and private sectors, Parcels 1-1 and 1-2-1 Estate Denis Bay were transferred to the people, in perpetuity. A very special thank you to the following people without whom we would have nothing to celebrate: Paul Pritchard of the National Parks Trust for emphasizing the importance of protecting critical inholdings in the Park and for the administrative grant that started this acquisition effort. Henry Diamond of Jackson Hole Preserve, Inc. for the grant that covered legal and travel expenses. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, who as ranking Democrat on the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee successfully pushed for \$1.25 million from the LWCF in the FY-2000 budget. Bob McClymonds, Brenda Marshall, Harvey Abrams, Leslie Kane and all the talented staff at TPL for legal and land acquisition expertise, moral support and lobbying clout in Washington. Deputy Superintendent Judy Shafer for locating the additional \$750,000 of federal funds to complement the LWCF. Glen Speer and Ann Marie Estes, dedicated Board members of the Friends. And finally, Ed Gibney and Eleanor Gibney for their patience and commitment to St. John.

Island Spirits Our Own Magical Musical Comedy Show

Once again, the ever-creative St. John resident Linda Smith Palmer, produced a popular stage performance for Virgin Islands National Park guests and island residents. Linda wrote the script, designed the costumes, solicited donations and directed the historical, environmental singing dancing eco-puppet show. The Friends provided most of the funding.

Before rehearsals began, Linda and a Park Ranger Denise Georges performed with puppets at each of our island schools in an effort to attract children to take on roles in the play. It worked, we have all four schools represented. Including the children, over 60 volunteers make up the cast and crew who produce shows free of charge every Saturday, January through April.



The plot reveals the magical transition of a jaded 12-year-old boy who gets lost in the forest near ancient petroglyphs off the Reef Bay trail. As he sleeps, spirits awake and teach him about pre-Columbian tribes who carved those glyphs, African warriors brought as slaves to the Island, resident bats and termites, and threats to coral reef

survival. The audience laughs over the dancing termite-kids and colorful fish puppet.

This high-energy production allows kids and adults plenty of opportunity to experiment with their ideas and explore their talents. It's also been a terrific way for local businesses to show their support. The numerous in-kind donations include transportation for the kids; lumber and materials for the stage; volunteer carpentry; weekly pizza for the whole crew; and countless hours of volunteer time.

And the show must go on! Linda is already preparing for next year's wacky production. The Friends received a grant to improve the sound and lighting system and we hope to find others who would like to sponsor the fun-filled, informative, community-building event.

Message from the Chairman

John Fuller

Coming to the end of my first four months as Chair of the Board of Directors I can take a moment to step back and note the changes taking place and the challenges the Friends of the Park face as we move into the future.

In the past six years, the Friends grew from a small group of dedicated volunteers who were hard-pressed to raise \$20,000 for a Park project, to an organization with a professional staff helping dedicated volunteers provide almost \$750,000 to the Park over the last two years. This is in no small part due to the efforts and support of our Board. We are a diverse group, from varied backgrounds and with a wide range of skills and interests, but we are bonded by a common love of St. John and a belief that the National Park is our best hope of preserving our past for the future.

Not so long ago I traveled to a nearby island and a bay which I remembered fondly for its pristine beauty. I had not been there in 12 years. I understand that things change, but this understanding could not prepare me for a beach littered with rental boats, floats, umbrellas, chairs, and one bar after another along the shore. Returning to St. John, our ferry passed by the most developed beach in the park, Trunk Bay. From the water there was no sign of that development beyond the lifeguard stands near either end of the beach. It looks pretty much as it did more than 20 years ago when I first saw it. I am grateful to the National Park for preserving the natural beauty of St. John.

Through our interpretive program at Annaberg Plantation, we are keeping alive the traditions of the past. With the exciting artifacts found at Cinnamon Bay archeology site, we are uncovering the roots and gaining an understanding of the early peoples of our islands. The installation of moorings helps to preserve the fragile and beautiful reefs that are important to us in so many ways. Less glamorous, but no less necessary are our programs for glass, oil, and battery recycling. The Friends needs your continued support, through your generous donations, your membership dues, and your time as volunteers to continue to expand and improve these programs in the Virgin Islands National Park.

The Friends Board recently spent a Saturday in a workshop where we examined our organization, our goals, and our responsibilities as Board members. It was a marvelous opportunity to exchange ideas and explore strategies to prepare for the exciting years ahead. I am honored to be associated with such a fine group of people.

Moorings Protect Coral Reefs



Last year the National Park Service asked the Friends to raise the funds necessary to install approximately 200 boat moorings throughout Park waters. Over the years substantial damage has been done to the Park's coral reefs and seagrass beds by carelessly dropped boat anchors.

The Friends Board of Directors fully agreed with Superintendent Russ Berry about the importance of protecting our coral from this unnecessary destruction. We made a request of member S. Donald Sussman, environmentalist and philanthropist, who generously donated \$265,000 to the Friends for this very worthwhile project. This major donation, along with several smaller donations, got the project off and running during the spring of 1999.

Proposals were solicited and bids were received from six firms interested in designing and installing the moorings. An evaluation team made up of Board members Ashley Boynes, John Garrison, Julien Harley, and Glen Speer evaluated the bids and selected a partnership made up of American Underwater Contractors of Jupiter, Florida and Moor Seacure, Ltd. of Tortola, BVI.

Work began in September and continued at a rapid pace until year end, with four to six divers working with specialized hydraulic equipment six and sometimes seven days per week. The Friends provided project management and coordination between the contractor and the Park's resource management division.

We now have a total of 215 high-quality moorings in the bays around the park, capable of safely holding 60-foot vessels in winds in excess of 40 knots. Special thanks go to Donald Sussman for his wonderful donation.

New Challenges



Becky Bremser, Program Manager

It is amazing how much one week out of the office can open your eyes to something. I learned about a resource that will be vital to the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park and a new challenge for me. In the last week of March, I attended a weeklong seminar on grant writing.

This intensive class taught by Dr. Don Udell kept me busy throughout the week. I learned that there are a lot of foundations that help non-profit organizations to fund their projects. However, when proposing a grant to these foundations, knowledge of their expectations helps tap into this resource. How you ask for funding can be as important as how the funding will be used.

As a class, we focused on three main areas of grant writing. We discussed the organizational and design demands that transform a project idea into a grant proposal. Time was also spent on how to properly research and prospect foundations. Third, we were given the tools to completely develop a grant proposal.

My week away made me realize the challenge that is involved in writing grant proposals. I finished the class with a whole new set of goals for myself and redefined my role in our organization. I've already embraced this challenge and two new proposals in the works.

First Development Director



Trudy Toliver starts May 1 as Development Director for Friends of Virgin Islands National Park. Originally from Oregon, Trudy worked for Portland's transit authority for 16 years in a variety of capacities ending as Executive Director of Human Resources.

"She has the right blend of people and organizational skills to make a great fundraiser," says John Garrison, President. The Friends of the Park is now well positioned to grow. With a full time Development Director the Friends can apply for more foundation grants, encourage more membership and better manage projects. This means they can provide the Park greater means to preserve and protect the resources and improve visitor facilities.

Trudy is familiar with non-profit organizations having been a board member of two non-profits for a total of eight years. She also held positions as a community liaison, transit planner and marketing representative. In 1994 Trudy received a master's degree in business focusing on human resources and organization development.

"We're pleased to add Trudy's skills to the Friends," says John Fuller, Chair of the Board of Directors. "As a volunteer here for the past six months, she has already made a difference." Trudy and her husband Jim Owens began their stay on St. John as volunteers for the National Park and the Friends last October.

Your Chance to Help

This year the Park requested from the Friends' Board over \$400,000 in needs. They need funding for an interactive electronic visitor kiosk, continuation of the Annaberg Plantation events, seasonal workers housing and much more. Be a part of these projects. Write, email or call in your contribution at 340-779-4940.

Nexttime you visit the Park, you'll see the difference!

Comments or suggestions? Write the Friends [webmaster](#).