



Friends First Annual Family Fish Fry is a Success!

The Friends First Annual Fish Fry at Oppenheimer Beach on February 1, 2004 was truly a winning event, and one we are looking forward to doing again next year!

An important part of the Friends' mission is the protection and preservation of not only the natural environment, but also the traditional culture of St. John. The Friends sponsors a number of cultural programs to address this key component, however, we wanted to add a traditional event that would have broader appeal to our larger community and get people involved with the organization. "We wanted to host an event that would engage the entire community, that was family oriented, affordable, and most of all fun!" said Joe Kessler, president of the Friends.

Fish fries were originally held at Pond Mouth (Enighed Pond), where the wastewater plant was constructed and the construction for the new dock is now taking place, and then eventually moved to the barge dock in town. The Friends borrowed from this old-time favorite community get-together, dusted it off, tweaked it a little to suit the day, and the Friends Family Fish Fry was born!

Miss Enid Hendricks prepared a traditional West Indian meal including fish, BBQ ribs, chicken, mutton, fried plantains, peas and rice, and of course, fried Johnnycakes; all of which were delicious!

The music of Cool Sessions helped to create a beach party atmosphere, and by the end of the afternoon they had everyone dancing! A special thank you goes out to electrician Paul Devine for coming out to make sure the band had the necessary power hook-up.

The highlight of the afternoon was the program honoring four cultural icons of our community, Mr. Guy Benjamin, Miss Felicia Caines, Miss Naomi Jacobs, and Mr. Milton Samuels, for their leader-

ship roles in cultural preservation and service to the VI National Park and St. John.

Thank you to all of our sponsors for their tremendous support: American Paradise Real Estate, Arawak Expeditions, Cool Sessions, Frenchman's Reef & Morning Star Beach Resort, Kate N Design, Lew Henley's Sewage Disposal, Mixology Warehouse, Skinny Legs, St. John Ice, Stone Terrace, Westin Resort, and Woody's Seafood Saloon. We would also like to thank the V.I. Police Department, Paradise Taxi and Enid Hendrix for their roles in making this event a huge success.

And a special thank you to all of the volunteers and community members that turned out for the event, we hope you enjoyed the afternoon and look forward to seeing you again next year!

2004 Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 19th, marked the Friends' 6th Annual Meeting. The day was bright and the meeting was well-attended, with about 150 people in the audience including VINP Superintendent, Art Frederick, and keynote speaker Tom Kiernan, President of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA).

Board business began the meeting as Kim Lyons, former Development Director of Friends, was elected to fill the single board vacancy this year. Friends President, Joe Kessler followed with the Friends' Annual Report, sharing our successes of the previous year and asking members to help us meet our ambitious program goal this year to raise \$750,000 and increase membership to over 3000 members.

The Friends presented Kent and Paula Savel with the Volunteer of the Year award for their tireless work with the Annaberg Docent Program and other volunteer activities. Their work at Annaberg provides visitors with a greater learning experience at the Annaberg plantation ruins. Superintendent Frederick honored Jane Bowry for her more than 25 years of volunteer service to the Park.

In addition to recognizing volunteers, the Friends initiated the Friend's Partnership Award, recognizing the VINP staff member who best embodied the collaboration and partnership that is the hallmark of the relationship between the Park and the Friends. This year's honoree was Paul Thomas, Chief of Interpretation, in recognition of his leadership, support and contributions to the Friends.

Tom Kiernan, President of NPCA, a non-profit organization advocating for national parks since 1919, presented our keynote address. He gave an enlightening presentation on the history of our national parks and how our present actions affect their future. Tom addressed the \$2.6M shortfall in our Parks' budget, and how it's only a part of the overall \$600M shortfall nationwide. Tom suggests if we all work together, pressure our congressional representatives to correct this disgraceful condition, we can insure that our national park system protects and preserves our national treasures for future generations.

• TIDINGS NOTES •

Nenie Myrah by Carabana

Friends is once again sponsoring a weekly performance by the local theatre group, Carabana Theater Ensemble, and the seats are filling up weekly. Every Thursday evening at 8:00 p.m. from January to April at Cinnamon Bay amphitheater you can enjoy Nenie Myrah, a story of the life and times of St. John's renowned midwife and traditional healer. Don't miss it!

Summer Intern Wanted!

Does spending the summer living on St. John and working for the Friends interest you? The Friends summer internship is available to college students entering their junior or senior year with a major in a field related to environmental sciences or environmental education for approximately 8 – 10 weeks, from June through August. This position includes housing at Maho Bay Camps, and a small weekly stipend. Please send resumes and letters of inquiry to Emily Burton, Program Manager at amigos@friendsvinp.org.

Friends Annual Scholarship Program

The Friends Annual Scholarship Program is once again being offered with the aim of encouraging study among Virgin Islanders at the university level in fields related to natural resource management or protection. The scholarships will be in the amount of \$1000 per academic year (disbursed at a rate of \$500 per semester) and will continue through the senior year, provided recipients maintain eligibility requirements.

To be eligible for the scholarship, students must have:

- Virgin Islands residency and have completed high school in the Virgin Islands
- Completed all prerequisite coursework for majors in appropriate fields.
- Maintained a "B" (3.0) average through the first three semesters for sophomore applicants and through the first five semesters for junior applicants.

For more information, please contact Emily at (340) 779-4940.

From the Superintendent



Greetings Friends of Virgin Islands National Park,

This winter has been an extremely busy time for the Park. First of all, the month of November brought enormous amounts of rainfall. In fact, I was informed by the Resource Management Division that the park received nearly 24 inches of rain for the month. The rainfall caused frequent landslides along North Shore Rd. but, the Ranger and Maintenance staff were able to keep the roadway open. Trunk Bay and Cinnamon Bay were flooded almost daily and occasionally Maho Bay road was nearly impassable. Serious damage occurred to some of the trails, roads and facilities. Hopefully, we will eventually address the damage to the Park's resources via the Southeast Region Storm Damage fund.

The long-awaited Hawksnest reconstruction project is underway. The contractor started a few weeks ago with the demolition of the walkways and facilities. Once this work is completed, new pavilions, along with restroom facilities will be constructed. We are anticipating that by late spring the project will be complete. The park is also making modifications to the Mooring Fee operation. The intent is to make the program safer and more user-friendly. The major adjustments to the program are the relocation of the fee stations and allowing boaters to pay for multiple mooring days. Additionally, the Concession Prospectus for the Trunk and Cinnamon Bay operations will be released for bid this month. The bidding process will be for 90 days.

Last week, the park launched the planning process for the General Management Plan (GMP). Representatives from the Southeast Regional Office, along with members from a consulting firm met with the Park's Management Team to conduct internal scoping. We plan to have scoping meetings with the public sometime during the spring.

In January, I was extremely pleased to meet many of you at the Friends Annual Meeting. I thoroughly enjoyed the message given by Tom Kiernan, President of NPCA. But, more importantly, I enjoyed the dialogue that I had with many of you. Those casual conversations reaffirmed my belief in the commitment that you have for working with the Park to protect/preserve the resources of Virgin Islands National Park. Thus, I am excited about the opportunity to work with you to meet this objective.

Living Art



Steve Simonsen's *Living Art* finally arrived on December 27th and the Friends hosted a book launch party at the Westin the following day. The book quickly became the "must have" memento of St. John and one third of the books have already been sold.

This beautifully bound, 200-page coffee table book with 182 stunning photographs is an exquisite photographic essay that will serve as an eloquent record of St. John's natural beauty. And, if the Park, with the help of the Friends and its members, is successful in

achieving its preservation mission, we can look at this book in the future and say, "St. John is as beautiful today as it was in 2004". How many other places will be able to say the same?

The Friends is proud to have financed the publication of *Living Art* and we encourage you to get your copy (or another one) now. The book is available from fine shops on St. John and St. Thomas or directly from the Friends. When purchased from the Friends, a portion of the price may be considered a tax-deductible contribution that will help preserve the very natural beauty celebrated by this book.

Order your copies either by phone (340-779-4940), through our website (www.friendsvinp.org/store/book.htm), or come by our office in Mongoose Junction.



13th Annual Folklife Festival

The Annaberg Plantation ruins came alive on Feb. 26 – 28 with the 13th Annual Folklife Festival. This year's celebration was titled "The Many Faces of Masquerading", presented by the Hybrid Masqueraders, a talented troupe from the island of Montserrat. Wonderful sights and sounds filled the air on this joyous occasion.

The Friends was once again proud to sponsor this special event in honor of Black History month. Children from all over St. John and St. Thomas had the opportunity to come and learn about the history of Annaberg and many different cultural traditions. Mr. Mario Benjamin was there lacing a traditional fishing net, Ms. Gwendolyn was selling her prize-winning, handmade cashew and mango seed dolls, and Mr. Clave Dale was delicately weaving his beautiful baskets. On the first day of the festival, over 500 students and 300 tourists attended the event free of charge.

The masqueraders performed twice each day, doing a traditional dance to the beat of drums and the whistle of flutes. The troupe was dressed in a colorful array of clothing, donning tall headdresses and wild masks. "This was the best entertainment I've ever seen at the Folklife Festival," Friends volunteer Paula Savel said, and she has attended many.

Between performances, many danced to the lively sounds of Smalls and the Music Maker, a local scratch band, and attentively listened to historians Mr. Myron Jackson and David Knight. People of all ages joined in the festivities and left with big smiles on their faces and a better understanding of St. John's cultural traditions.

Jewels from the Sea Benefit the Park

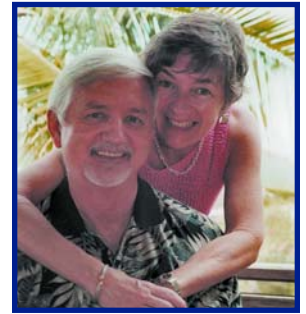
On February 26th & 27th, Caneel Bay hosted goldsmith and jeweler Bethany Savage from Maine, in support of her benefit for Friends of Virgin Islands National Park.

Bethany is a graduate of New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, and has worked as a professional jeweler. Bethany created an inventory valued at over \$100,000 for the event. Her creations are inspired by the sea and its natural elements, depicting shells, starfish, and other sea life. Bethany's refined sense of style adds elegant detail to these beautiful pieces. Her work includes gold, silver, and coral, as well as semi-precious stones such as amethyst, topped off with a gold or silver sealife clasp.

Bethany generously donated 30% of proceeds from sales to the Friends to fund important programs for the park. We are grateful to Caneel Bay for their role in making this event happen, and to Bethany for all her time, effort and talent that went into creating these pieces. We appreciate her leadership in presenting Friends with this fund raising opportunity. Bethany provides an excellent example of personal philanthropic initiative that is admirable.

Affinity Partners Featuring Rudy and Irene Patton of R&I Patton Goldsmithing

Rudy and Irene Patton sailed their own boat to the Virgin Islands in 1971 to take jobs with the Virgin Islands Department of Education. While teaching in St. Thomas, Rudy admired the work of Katherine Palmer, a goldsmith who had trained at Ringling School of Art. She apprenticed him for six months and he soon decided to go into the work full time, teaching Irene to assist him. They resigned from their teaching positions in 1972 and started sailing to various islands to make jewelry for resorts.



In 1973, when space became available on St. John, they re-located to open a studio workshop. When Glen Speer built Mongoose Junction in 1976, Rudy and Irene were a part of the initial planning and moved into their present location after it was finished in 1978.

Irene and Rudy continued studying their art at the Gemological Institute and also with various nationally known goldsmiths. They and a very small group of employees that they trained do all their work on the premises.

Irene and Rudy find the Virgin Islands National Park a great source of inspiration for their work. From the beginning, their designs were based on island life: sea life, animals and other designs of St. John, and they are grateful to the Park for all it provides them. Rudy and Irene wanted to support the Park and its mission, and joined Friends of Virgin Islands National Park as charter members when it consisted of a small committee. Irene served for 8 years as a member of the Friends Board of Directors, and is currently a member of the Advisory Council. Irene said, "The Park is why I (we) are here, essentially. I love being able to participate in the archaeology and work beside the trained professionals to discover more history, and then pass it on to the children and visitors."

Irene created a replica mold of each zemi discovered at the Cinnamon and Trunk Bay dig sites, and cast the zemis in bronze. Irene and Rudy provide these pendants on black leather necklaces at no cost to the Friends to sell in our office and on our website. The proceeds from the sale of the zemis go directly to the archeology program fund.

In addition, the Patton's offer these zemis in gold and silver at their store in Mongoose Junction, and donate 100% of the proceeds from these sales as well.

Irene and Rudy continue to be generous members of the Friends and find ways to increase their support, both financially and through volunteer projects. Please stop in to see Irene and Rudy at their store in Mongoose Junction and check out all of their beautiful designs.

The Friends want to thank Rudy and Irene for all of their support, they set an excellent example as a conscientious community partner for all to emulate.

Upcoming Friends Events!

Gala Event

The Friends Gala Event scheduled for March 27, 2004 has been postponed until March 2005. We wish to host an interesting, unique, and elegant evening, and are searching for just the right venue in which to entertain our "Friends," and raise significant funds for important Park programs. Thank you for your interest, support and understanding. We will keep you updated as plans develop.

Beach-to-Beach Power Swim

Plans are coming along swimmingly for the Memorial Day weekend Beach-to-Beach Power Swim!

The race will consist of two courses: a short course from Maho to Cinnamon, about 1.25 miles; and, a long course from Maho to Hawksnest, about 3.5 miles. You can compete in the long course as an

individual or as part of a 3-person relay team. Swimmers assisted by snorkel and/or fins may also compete.

Swimmers may register up until 12:00 noon on May 29th, and the registration fee is \$25.00 per participant. Late registration begins at 12:01 p.m. on May 29th until 5:00 p.m., and the cost is \$40.00 per participant. Swimmers can register on-line at our website www.friendsvinp.org/swim, by phone (340) 779-4940, at Connections on St. John, and at Endurance Sports on St. Thomas and St. Croix.

There will be a pre-race meeting at Maho Bay Camps on May 29th at 5:00 p.m.

See our website for more details and a course map, or email us at Swim@friendsvinp.org with questions, or if you would like us to put you on our mailing list.

Maho Bay Camps is offering a 25% discount on lodging for race participants based on availability.

President's Message

By Joe Kessler

Last year, Friends members were alarmed to learn that VINP was named by NPCA as one of the **ten most endangered national parks** in the country. VINP is no longer on the "bottom ten" list, but we must guard against thinking that all is now OK in paradise. While there has been some improvement – **resources have not recovered and the threats continue unabated.**

- The most significant step towards improvement of marine resources was the establishment of interim regulations for VI Coral Reef National Monument. This is important, but hollow without the enforcement, education and research needed to support it. The Monument was allocated less than half of the resources needed to fully implement these programs.

- The Park continues to be heavily visited with more than 1.2 million visitors annually. Yet, the Park continues to suffer a 30% shortfall in its operations budget, which significantly hampers the Park's ability to protect resources and effectively manage visitation.

- The development of in-holdings within the Park continues at a record pace. The development of in-holdings reduces habitat for native flora and fauna, spoils the "viewscape", and damages the reefs with

silt and other effects of erosion.

Perhaps our park has only been displaced from the list by parks in worse shape since clearly the threats remain. Is there really much difference between being one of the ten most endangered parks or being one of the fifteen most endangered parks?

As someone dedicated to helping preserve and protect this unique national park for our enjoyment today and for future generations, you can help confront these threats. Please make your voice heard on increasing appropriations so that our Park can acquire development-threatened in-holdings as well as meet its \$2.6 million budget deficit. And, if you are going to build on St. John, especially within the Park's boundaries, please be very sensitive to the ecological and visual impacts of your project and employ environmentally responsible design and construction practices.

Through our projects, advocacy and environmental education efforts, we work tirelessly at helping make VINP a model of resource protection and cultural preservation. However, we can only be successful with your support – your financial support and you generously giving of your time as volunteers. You have shown that VINP is important to you – **please come forward and help us confront the challenges that threaten it.**



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