Chapter 10. Programmed Residences

Among the types of shack uses were programmed residencies awarded by non-profit organizations through random-draw lotteries or juried selection processes. Some called these awards "shack time," periods of time in shacks allotted to selected occupants. Programmed uses sometimes were characterized as "an experience" in a shack, one apportioned by artistic merit or lady luck, depending on the program. At present, short-term lottery winners or artists in residence were primary users of four shacks managed by non-profits, the C-Scape shack, the two Werner shacks (Thalassa and Euphoria), and the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack. Such occupants won one-week to three-week stays, as described in Chapter 3. As discussed previously, programmed uses were an innovative type of shack use, developed through the negotiation of management leases between non-profit organizations and the Seashore. By design, the selection systems for programmed uses were impersonal and impartial. The system of programmed stays differed from older traditions in dune shack society, where access to shacks came about through personal relationships based on family or friendships, with a more free-form flow of people coming and going, commonly resulting in long continuities between certain occupants with shacks. By design, programmed residencies tended to be relatively short. Different people cycled through shacks, each person staying for short periods of time.

Jay Critchley and Tom Boland, heads of the C-Scape shack, stated that the Seashore specifically asked for the artist-in-residence program at this shack. The Seashore was familiar with this type of program, they said. It was a national program in the Park's institutional culture, although not traditional for dune shack society. According to Seashore staff, the program was established to tie into the eligibility criterion of the dune shack district for the National Register of Historic Places (the district's association with the development of art and literature in America). In concept, the artist-in-residence programs made available certain public resources (the shack and the natural dune system) to selected artists for creative art or literature. In the case of the C-Scape shack, guided visitors from the Province Lands Visitor Center stopped at the shack to gain additional perspectives about the Seashore by meeting artists and hearing them talk about their activities. The values of the program might be demonstrated by the art and writing coming from the artists, and by the educational experiences of visitors.

As described in an earlier chapter, the C-Scape shack program also allotted one-week stays early and late in the season, open to anyone through a random draw. Critchley and Boland stated that the weekly slots gave common people a chance for a shack experience, not just artists with merit. It seemed to me that Critchley and Boland saw value in an egalitarian system that treated all comers as equivalent, alongside programs that awarded residencies based on artistic merit. The random draw was an equalizer. In practice, both "locals" and "non-locals" participated in the program, as shown by their user statistics.

It also seemed to me that Critchley and Boland believed that a residency at the C-Scape shack was an experience with potential benefits to anyone. Critchley called this a "core experience" offered by the C-Scape shack. The program was giving out something potentially good, a chance for an artist or non-artist to be momentarily separated from the normal course of life, living solitary under primitive conditions in the natural dune setting. In this regard, the shack was viewed as a type of "retreat" with restorative qualities for participants. The program's title specifically refers to this benefit, calling it a "shack of healing." Critchley discussed this generic core experience with the actual experiences of programmed users at the C-Scape shack:

> Everyone has a different experience there, of course. Everyone has different reasons for being there. Some people just want to 'veg out.' You have to like the solitude, the isolation to be there, as well as the lack of hot water, things like that.
>
> The experiences are different because everyone has different intentions on going out there. But the reason people go out there is because there's this core experience, sort of a primitiveness, of isolation, a removal from the sounds, the blips and bleeps of television and other gadgets that we have around us. Listening to the natural sounds, smells, things like that. When the shacks were first built that's all you could get at the time. I think now there is encroaching technology. If that were altered to have the conveniences of your average home then it would become like a beach house, beer in the refrigerator and TV and everything else. It would become something else. It would be just another beach-and-breakfast or something. Maybe that's a question that needs addressing in your report, what the experience is and how much can it be altered to lose the essence of the experience.

So built into programmed uses of the C-Scape shack is a set of ideas about the value of experiencing "primitiveness" ("natural sounds, smells, things like that") as a break from modern life ("blips and bleeps," "gadgets," and "beer in the refrigerator"). For Critchley, there is "an essence" to the experience at the C-Scape shack that he wants to cultivate by careful arrangement of conditions at the shack. In this sense, the programmed shack stay becomes almost like a packaged tour of the dunes offered by dune taxi business, with core elements designed to evoke a beneficial experience in participants. However, as participants are staying in a shack, the package is more like "summer camp" than a taxi ride, albeit a relatively unstructured, isolated summer camp. Afterwards, participants saying something like, "That was a good or beneficial experience for me," becomes a measure of the value of the program.

Experiences of Programmed Residents

I considered interviews with programmed residents to obtain information on this use pattern from its participants. However, I had no telephone lists for this set of users to schedule interviews. I also didn't want to blindly knock on the doors of the shacks managed by non-profit organizations, as this violated shack etiquette. Partway into my research, I discovered a potential source of information – shack logbook entries. I learned that shacks managed by non-profits commonly provided logbooks for occupants to document their thoughts. Some family shacks also had logbooks, such as the Isaacson-Schecter shack and the Tasha shack. The records of programmed residents in logbooks provided short descriptions of their experiences at the shacks.

Jay Critchley lent me *C-Scape Logbook III* as an example of a shack logbook. *C-Scape Logbook III* is a small black book of bound, lined paper, its title embossed on the cover in sand and glue. It was filled with entries over the years by lottery winners and artists-in-residence. The logbook contains writings, artwork, and photographs from occupants of the C-Scape shack from November 1999 to July 2002, representing about 125 different people, my rough estimate based on counting entries with different writing styles. The actual number might be difficult to say precisely because I saw no obvious way to identify authors in the logbook. Some entries were dated and signed, but many others were not. Some entries were as short as a few sentences. Others covered several pages. Most were prose. There were some poems and hand drawings. Here and there, small paintings, photos, and cards were inserted or glued onto pages.

With the concurrence of Jay Critchley, I selected *C-Scape Logbook III* as a source of additional information on the experiences of people who used the C-Scape shack. The logbook provided information directly from the lottery winners and artists-in-residence. The entries were windows to this type of use. I selected five entries to illustrate the stays of short-term shack users, presenting information provided by the writers themselves. The selection below features the first and last entries in the book and three longer entries toward its middle. Of these five, three were in the artists-in-residence program, and two were not. I provide a short commentary following each of the entries, teasing out features of the writer's experience from their record in the logbook.

C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 1

The logbook begins with a poem dated November 3, 1999 by "Nola G."

> storm, storm,
> go away
> come back
> Another day
>
> The dunes, so pretty,
> So pretty
> The grass, the grass
> So beautiful

The date of this short poem (November) indicates that Nola G. used the shack in the late fall, either through the residents program or as a drop-in visitor. Most dune shacks have closed up before November because of deteriorating weather, but C-Scape remained open year-round in 1999. The poem begins by wishing a storm to go away, suggesting that Nola is not happy with the weather. Perhaps she feels confined to the shack by the storm. The childhood chant is not original, but it's likely heart-felt. The second half of the poem praises beauty she sees in the dunes and dune grass. This is all we learn of Nola G.'s stay at the shack.

C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 125

The entry by Deborah Ross dated June 22 to July 13 [2002] is the last chronological entry in the logbook. The dates of her stay indicate that she was an artist-in-residence. Her entry is primarily prose, but also includes a poem and four small watercolors entitled, "all sands lead to the sea," "almost dark painting," "sand fly?," and "wasp in the grass." She offers a birthday poem:

> Birthday Poem
>
> the sky is blue
> I am silent
> surrounded by sand.
> On my back
> opening
> I spread my arms

upward
the sky is blue
I am falling forward
I'm fifty-two

I worked mainly in hand-bound watercolor journals. I find the physical reality of a book keeps my focus on process rather than on product or "art." I work solely from life and consider my note taking as a field scientist considers his subject. Small notation or marks build up in layers over months revealing direction and pattern.

July 10, 2002. Today is my birthday. Last night it rained and stormed so today was clear and beautiful. I walked for miles, stopping to paint at different spots. I wanted to stay quiet and use this day to reflect on my time here. I have accomplished some landscapes which interest me. My goal of large-scale watercolors was not met. The wind was one obstacle. The complexity of a dune landscape was another. To paint a dune often felt like falling backward off a cliff grabbing for any support at hand, some branches holding, others slipping out roots and all. Until I can solve general dune aspects on a small scale I have no FAITH in any grand scale victories. Now in the last couple of days I can say I am getting there. I have loved the solitude. I am so glad I have decided not to have any visitors while at the shack. Several friends wanted to come but this was best alone. I need to breathe and stretch out. Have some time to finish a thought and not speak. I did have a cell phone up till today when it broke. The connections were never that good but the phone enabled me to keep in touch with my husband who's NOT a solitary type. This is the new moon. It's very dark, with many stars.

[Watercolor Picture] 'wasp in the grass.' What this bug means is what is dreamt may happen tomorrow. A few weeks ago when I first came here I found a dead June bug. It was a lovely color so I kept it to paint. A few nights later I had a dream of a hundred golden beetles falling from my painting bag. Then just two days ago I found dozens of gold June bugs eating the centers of the salt spray roses.

I have been very happy here. I met a mouse on the first day. I painted, he bowed and I never saw him again though others would thunder through the insulation board rushing here and there. No mice were interested in my food. I think because it is summer and there is much more mouse appealing bounty outdoors they went there. I never felt really lonely. If I wanted contact I went up to the Visitor Center which is a gold mine for information about the area. The Rangers are very nice. So are the people in the bookstore. Rebecca gave me a wonderful "tidal flats" field trip. And Mimi was fun with the groups. I now know snakes climb trees and that spring tide is not a seasonal term but has to do with the moon. Thank you Compact for this lovely gift of time and marvelous feast for my curiosities.

Deborah Ross, a New York artist, was awarded a three-week stay in the artists-in-residence program. She observed her fifty-second birthday in solitude at the shack. She chose not to have visitors during her stay – she needed "to breathe and stretch out," perhaps expressing her feelings about New York City congestion. She kept in touch with her husband and friends by cell phone. She walked to the visitor center at times, talking with its staff and taking guided walks. She talked to "groups" brought to the C-Scape shack by Mimi, a Seashore guide. She used the visitor center as a source of information. She walked on the dunes. She painted. She spent time on the beach. She said she "accomplished some landscapes which interest me," but her goal of "large-

scale watercolors" was not met because of technical difficulties with wind and landscape complexity. However, she believed she was "getting there" by the end of her stay. She was grateful for the "lovely gift of time and marvelous feast for my curiosities."

C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 87

Toward the middle of the logbook is an entry by Ted Weesner, dated 5/5/01 to 5/12/01.

> The morning of departure. I promised myself the first day that I would make a series of entries here. The dunes, the Dune life, overtook me. I have found myself utterly engaged by this place. The place has colored and flavored every hour. I've woken each morning at 5:30, something I never do in the city, unless it's insomnia that's kept me up until then. I brought a fishing rod and each morning I was out of my bed, casting the waters, catching the blur of the sky and strange light I usually miss. Two mornings ago I caught a big striper, a keeper, and my adrenalin was streaming. I gutted the big fish on the deck, cut fillets, then carved out the remaining strips for a breakfast of striper sashimi with a sprinkle of soy! This is not an everyday city experience for me. Usually, it's toast and coffee.
>
> One morning I came out and a coyote was drinking at the well. He jogged crookedly up the nearest dune. I tried to stay still. Twice he peeked over the edge of the dune, the two of us curious. I took naps at unusual times. I went to bed early. The light and my animal moods were respected. I took long walks. One that I'd recommend is down to Harry Kemp's little dune shack (it's half bed, half books in the interior), following the tracings of the hills, then returning on the beach. It took me two hours. When I got back to our spot on the beach, I ripped off my clothes and dove in the May water. Yikes! A pick-up was coming down the beach. I ran like a scared sandpiper up the trail, shot up the incline, still the guy caught a glimpse.
>
> My meals here were also very much Dune Influenced. I love to cook; I usually make a few separate dishes. Here, I pushed the cast iron pan to its limits, finding unorthodox, occasionally disastrous, ways to combine starch, protein, and vegetables. I ate enough garlic to stave off any lurking packs of coyotes.
>
> I had one very bad experience. It was cold at the beginning of the week and I got to making evening fires. Because of the smoke overflow in keeping the stove burning, I de-batteried the smoke alarm. One night I left the stove door open ajar perhaps a half inch. I woke in the middle of the night coughing, the house filled with smoke. Alone here, I felt the brief flash of near death. What if I hadn't coughed awake? I aired out the house. I made profuse thanks to whatever larger power it is that gave me more time. I've been in car accidents and this was more terrifying. The next morning, though feeling hung over, I did my 5 am rush to the beach. I was determined to fight off the smoke bogeys. The ocean air and that light – so much light to watch here – set me right.
>
> I do feel like I have a little dune in me now. It will be peculiar to walk again on hard surfaces. It we'll be unsettling to wake to car alarms and roaring trucks and not the glancing winds and bird chatter. I came across a Mary Oliver stanza that at first might have struck me as unreal: "On the last night I pack up / For the walk back to town. / Over the dunes, / Through valleys green with scrub-oak, / The edges of my body / Are as bright as the moon." That's it. She's right on. You regain your edges and they glow. I

> leave here a different man. I want to spend part of each of my days on Dune Time. Thank you to Tom and the Provincetown Community Compact. I'm going for my last run and swim.

Ted Weesner, a journalist and writer in Boston, was awarded a one-week stay at C-Scape. In his entry he says, "the place has colored and flavored every hour." He contrasts "dune life" with the "hard surfaces" and "car alarms and roaring trucks" of Boston. He woke early, fished, cooked in an unorthodox fashion, breakfasted on striped bass instead of toast and coffee, swam naked, ran naked from a pickup on the beach, napped, took hikes, retired early for bed, and respected his "animal moods." Except for an encounter with a coyote and the truck, he mentions no other visitors. He recommends to logbook readers a two-hour walk to "Harry Kemp's little dune shack" (the Tasha shack). He describes filling his shack with smoke one night, a "brief flash of near death," "terrifying," a "very bad experience." He asserts the one-week stay was life-changing and beneficial: "I leave here a different man," "I do feel like I have a little dune in me now," and "I want to spend part of each of my days on Dune Time."

<u>C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 97</u>

Toward the middle of the logbook is an entry by Jen Roberts, dated 6/23/01 to 7/14/01.

> 6/27 Bed by 11 pm up at 7:30 am. Difficult to paint outside. Satisfied at first. Crushed by the end. View: woman caught in gust, legs of easel begin to collapse, wet canvas nearing doom, umbrella borrowed with hitches and warnings simultaneously somersaults wildly across the dunes. Okay. Two easel legs steady; push the third deeply into the sand at a rakish angle. Woman's hat is thrown behind her jerking and about strangles her as sunglasses jettison when she dashes and claws the sand for the umbrella. Dragging both back to the shack under a merciless sun, the sea grass manages to take most of the paint from a day's work with it. She reaches the deck with a sigh and pauses just long enough for four sparrows to begin their air attack. 'Go away!' She reaches safety inside the screen door and manages to face the mirror. Beet red, dripping sweat, hair sticking and streaking face, she drops everything and runs out the door ducking. She screams her way to the ocean as the chattering of beaks urges her along.
>
> 6/28 Painted indoors, looking out deck windows. Hot out. Asleep by 11 up at 7. Coffee, water, wine, dinner and walks on beach seem to be all I do. And it probably would be if it weren't for my 'production' expectations. Will let go. Dread trip into town for provisions. Don't have appropriate footwear. Look forward to talking to humans tomorrow night. Local friends are having a fire on Race Point. Even if I wanted to leave these dunes it doesn't look like I'll get much of a chance. Unable to reach anyone at home. Feeling lonely. Need to daydream more. Feel like I'm busying myself with rituals: albeit enjoyable. Painting went better today. It's a double-sided blade: need expectations to be productive, the very same expectations that lessen the enjoyment of the process. Let go of the over-achievement crap. There are so many things that I want to record here. Things I don't want to forget. I feel like I'm the only one entering negative thoughts into this journal and wonder if I should just keep them to myself. It is a beautiful place, one I could never leave, but it isn't just the place but those who inhabit it. And this cohabitator… I'm going to sign off for a few days and enter a summation.
>
> 7/14 Waiting on the beach till pick-up. Respectable amount of work started/finished but less than my goal. Took fewer chances than had hoped, but started a large series of

> mixed media drawings that are a hybrid of two aspects of my work which didn't connect previously. Anxious to digest the personal and visual experiences back in the Boston Studio. Taken a lot of personal inventory and must obtain inner and outer quiet for a more contemplative life. Truly feel another week would bring greater resolve to being here. Had few houseguests, but would consider fewer or none if I were to do this over. A bicycle would have made trips for provisions less intrusive. Would try to get up at sunrise and not stay up as late to make more use of daylight. Wish pets were allowed. Missed my dog horribly and she would have helped with household pests, the bouts of loneliness, and the need for human guests. The weather was perfect, a little of everything and not too much of one thing. Allergies made life difficult. Don't know what they're from and haven't experienced that before. Now that the trucks can come this far up the beach, there's tons of trash and speeding. Maybe cans should be provided and it taken up with the 'national seashore.' They want to tear down shacks, but they allow this vehicular destruction. People can walk. The dune tour trucks are constant. I will miss the dewy waves of silver grass and watching it grow; listening to the paint chip; the long shadows of the sea spray rose bushes in early evening; the changing skies; the lighthouse beams; stars and breaking waves. I don't want to leave, but I am fed. Thank you. Thank you.

Jen Roberts, a Boston artist, was awarded a three-week stay in the artists-in-residency program. She worked on a series of mixed media drawings and had a few visitors during the stay. She describes early problems trying to paint outside on the dunes (disruptive wind, collapsing easels, and attacking birds), leaving her "crushed by the end." The next day she painted indoors, "feeling lonely," "busying myself with rituals," and remonstrating herself for her negative feelings: "I feel like I'm the only one entering negative thoughts into this journal and wonder if I should just keep them to myself." Summing up her stay, she states she struggled with "bouts of loneliness," "allergies," and litterbug trucks, and was "anxious to digest the personal and visual experiences back in the Boston Studio." She states that being at the shack for another week "would bring greater resolve to being here." She ends saying she was grateful for the experience: "I am fed."

<u>C-Scape Logbook Entry No. 98</u>

Toward the middle of the logbook is an entry by Allan Baillie, dated 7/14/01 – 8/04/01.

> 7/17 Tuesday. Been here three days now, and this is the first chance I've had to write anything in this journal. It is raining today. Cool. Grey. Overcast with 25-35 mph winds. I photographed the rain drips on the windows, as well as the broken window over the sink. The first day here I looked out from the porch and found a rainbow arcing up clearly to form a quarter circle on the horizon. How lucky! To start my stay here with a rainbow. Years ago I came to the dunes, but I could not remember exactly what they looked like. I thought I would find something like what I saw in California last summer. Undulating parabolic wind swept vistas without any vegetation to be seen. But I should know that nothing is the way I expect it to be. I will search for whatever is here in the province lands that is interesting, and I am sure there will be subjects to make photographs of. There is a long tradition of creating out here in the dunes. I just hope I can continue the art with something worthwhile.
>
> Yesterday while waiting at the airport I looked up and saw walking slowly toward me – Norman Mailer. He looked old but with the same macho chiseled face. He walked with

a cane and disappeared into the airport. A few minutes later he came out with his wife Nora. I said hello as he came by. Seeing Mailer reminded me of how this special place has attracted artists and writers for such a long time. I feel fortunate to be here. I have several ideas for projects here.

Idea I: Photograph the landscape here in black and white using a mirror to reflect other aspects of the space, a visual dimension that reflects other views.

Idea II. Show in color all the small details that make up C-Scape. The pump. The grass. Wood. Sand. Light. Sky. Water. Lamplight. Old art work left in the shack. These images will be put together in a large collage to form an impression of the environment here.

Idea III. Look for patterns. In the sand. In the sea, and the grass. Clouds, etc. Done in black and white.

Last night I set up my 4x5 camera on a tripod and aimed up at the heavens. It was a clear night and the stars sparkled. The night before I saw the moon in a crescent shape coming moving across the window. To photograph the stars I knew the moon would have to be out of the picture, or the light would be too strong to see the stars clearly. I set up around 10 pm without the moon in sight. I wanted to show the pattern of stars make when they traverse the night sky. I opened the lens to it's widest opening and left it open for the stars to move across the sky to form streaks on the film. I checked the night sky about every half hour to see if the bright moon had risen on the horizon anywhere. It didn't come up until around three am and I closed up the camera and went to sleep. This Starscape was the longest exposure I ever did. Six hours! I saw a meteor dart. Will it be on the film?

7/21/01 Today is my birthday. Six decades from my beginning. Mortality crosses my mind. How much time will I have? I want to make use of my time here at C-Scape. Today it is hot, overcast and quite breezy. The wind makes it hard to photograph. When the large camera is used I usually use long exposures that show motion when something in the picture moves. I tried to put a birds nest on the porch to photograph, but was afraid it would blow away. The cloth I use blows so hard I can't hold on to it.

7/24/01 Plan to hike to the airport, rent a car, and drive to the Audubon Society walk down in Wellfleet. There will be more things to photograph there, I hope.

Two mockingbirds came and went all day in and out of a bush by the porch. Inside the bush I found two small baby mockingbirds with fuzzy heads. I few days later the nest was empty. No more activity. About ten yards away a small bird could be seen hopping in the grass, but not yet able to fly. The nest was empty! [The entry ends here for this writer.]

Allan Baillie, a New York artist, was awarded a three-week stay in the artists-in-residence program. He celebrated his sixtieth birthday at the shack. In his entry, he mentions the long artistic tradition at Provincetown, and states, "I just hope I can continue the art with something worthwhile" and "I want to make use of my time here at C-Scape." On his second day he saw Norman Mailer at the airport. It's not said why Baillie was there and not at the dune shack. He is unfamiliar with the dunes. He expected something more like California, saying, "I will search for whatever is here in the province lands that is interesting." He lists several ideas for projects. One

night he photographs star paths. He has trouble with wind: his subjects move or blow away, "the cloth I use blows so hard I can't hold onto it." By the tenth day, he resolves to rent a car to look for things to photograph elsewhere. After a short entry about mockingbirds, we are told nothing more about his shack stay.

Comparisons

Taken together, this set of five entries reveal substantial differences among the experiences of short-term shack users. Two (Ted Weesner and Deborah Ross) had mostly good things to say about their stay in the shack. Two others (Jen Roberts and Allan Baillie) described substantial difficulties that they encountered adjusting to the setting, along with some positive experiences. One (Nola G.) simply wished the rain would end. Supporting Critchley's statement above, the experiences from a short-term stay varied considerably among this set of occupants, apparently linked to factors such as weather, expectations, aspirations, skills, and temperament.

The entries reveal practical challenges presented by the dunes to visual artists. Rain was disruptive, of course, but also wind, unstable sand, heat, and even attacking birds. No entry asserted that this was an ideal place for their art, not even an exceptionally fine place. Instead, entries described difficulties to overcome. This may reflect in part the invited artists' lack of experience with the dune environment. Jen Roberts and Deborah Ross appeared to have found solutions to challenges by the end of their stays. The occupants were forced to deal with difficulties alone, with no suggestions or assistance from a larger community.

An issue for some residents was the solitude of staying at a shack by oneself for periods of one to three weeks. Whereas Deborah Ross and Ted Weesner liked it, Jen Roberts didn't, at least initially. Ross enforced solitude on her stay like a discipline, keeping friends away while occasionally using the visitor center and her cell phone for company. Roberts was very lonely at times, had some visitors (then regretted doing it), and missed her dog "horribly." Ted Weesner thoroughly enjoyed a week of being alone, except for almost killing himself (he believed) with the stove. We don't know how solitude affected Allan Baillie and Nola G.

The stay appeared to provide both inspiration and impediments to creativity for this set of shack users. Deborah Ross found subjects for watercolors in the dunes and local bugs. Jen Roberts was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with her productivity, attributing problems primarily to inner rather than external factors. Allan Baillie was inspired by stars one moonless night, but apparently abandoned the dunes in search of other subjects. Ted Weesner, the writer, believed the rustic setting brought him in touch with a more elemental, animal aspect of his nature, something he viewed as positive.

There are hints about perceptions, what each thought he or she was doing, residing alone at a dune shack. Three (Deborah Ross, Jen Roberts, and Allan Baillie) portrayed their stays in terms of fine art, an expressive culture. They were at the shack to engage in artistic pursuits. This is not surprising, as each was invited as artists in residence. Two of these (Baillie and Roberts) came with high expectations. Baillie judged his stay against Provincetown's notable history of creative luminaries: "There is a long tradition of creating out here in the dunes," and "I just hope I can continue the art with something worthwhile." Roberts' high expectations at times worked against her: "It's a double-sided blade: need expectations to be productive, the very same expectations that lessen the enjoyment of the process," and "let go of the over-achievement crap." Ross was more sanguine. She stated that she was focused "on process rather than on product or 'art,'" and seemed content with the stay: "I have been very happy here."

Weesner was not an artist in residence. He simply had a week at the shack. His entry is silent about art and writing and professional development. His entries read like Tom Sawyer during summer, finally free of town and school: "this is not an everyday city experience for me," he wrote. His week sounds like a giddy summer vacation, or an easy, satisfying personal therapy. There is not enough in Nola G.'s entry to reveal her own understanding of what she was doing in a dune shack during stormy November. She just wanted the rains to stop.

As a group, the entries by programmed users reveal no long-term connectedness with the dune shack or to the dune district. Everything was new to them. This is to be expected in a program structured in this manner. The participants were unfamiliar with the shack, the landscape, the trails, and other physical aspects of the setting. The novelty is probably seen as a stimulating aspect of the experience, benefiting the creative process. In one instance, however, the lack of familiarity with a wood stove presented Ted Weesner with what he called a "near-death" experience. The participants also appeared unfamiliar with the history of the shacks and dune district, its particular people, its lore, its cultural sites, its specific traditions, and its connections with the social groups that have used them for generations. Again, this is to be expected in a program selecting people from the city and placing them in a shack alone. One participant (Deborah Ross) sought out information about her surroundings from the Province Lands Visitors Center. The program was not structured for a flow of information from long-term dune shack residents to the programmed residents. They were not linked to the social network of shack families and friends. Again, this is to be expected for a program designed with "isolation" being a core value. Given their separateness, the programmed users brought their individual ideas, meanings, and expectations to the shacks, uninformed by local traditions except in a general sense, such as Alan Baillie's awareness of Provincetown's storied art traditions and his desire to become a part of it. Overall, the programmed residencies are designed to evoke experiences at the shack that are novel, singularly isolated, and intensely personal, and for newcomers from the city, experiences separated from local peoples, cultures, and traditions.

Chapter 11. Shack Maintenance and Protection

For dune shack residents, a significant part of dune living consisted of working on the shacks themselves, through maintenance, repairs, and upgrades, managing sand and plants around the shack, and periodic shack relocations. Such work was said to be unending. And it was primarily a "labor of love" by family and friends, typically done without monetary rewards. The severe conditions of the Backshore would destroy shacks except for the vigilant care of residents. Strong winds, blowing water, and shifting sands quickly overwhelm the vulnerable shacks without intervention. Four shacks left fallow rapidly deteriorated after the deaths of their owners – the Gail Cohen shack (C-Scape), the Leo Fleurant shack (Beebe-Simon shack), the Jones shack (Dunn shack), and the Peg Watson shack (Isaacson-Schecter shack). The shacks were undermined or buried by shifting landscapes, and succumbed to damage from lost shingles, wood rot, shattered windows, twisted supports, and other problems. Substantial effort by new occupants was required to restore the shacks to habitable conditions.

Dune shacks were simple exposed structures built and managed to accommodate the inherent fluidity of the barrier dunes, rather than to modify it. This exposed, simplistic accommodation (a so-called "fragile house type" in the state's historic finding) is probably the central defining characteristic of the dune shacks of the Backshore, the feature that makes them "shacks" rather than standard "houses."

This chapter describes the kinds of shack maintenance and environmental stewardship applied by dune dwellers to sustain the fragile balance with the dunes desired within dune shack society. In doing this, the chapter identifies some common shack features, such as personalized shack designs, the mix of old and new materials and technologies, and fences and plants for managing sand. The chapter ends with a case example of shack maintenance: the resurrection of the Isaacson-Schecter shack from a sandy grave in 2004. The case illustrates customary ways of lifting a shack with workers activated through principles of kinship, friendship, and barter in the local informal economy.

Unending Work

Work on shacks is unending, according to dune shack residents, with things needing done every year if shacks are to be kept habitable. Mostly it is basic maintenance and repairs. But occasionally shacks are revamped with upgraded features, like better roofs, windows, decks, and utility systems. And every couple of decades or so, shacks may be repositioned to adjust to new contours of the barrier dunes. During our interview, members of the Champlin family (Nat, Mildred, Maia, Andrea, and Paul) and the Adams family (David and Sally) discussed repairs and upgrades on the Champlin shack accomplished just during the last two years.

> Paul: Every year it's replace this, replace that. Jack this up, shore that up. Sometimes it's done with scraps of previous projects, which are scraps of previous projects. If you don't have the right fitting for something you just can't run out to Wal-Mart, you have to go all the way into town and it'll be another day before you get anything done. So you just make do.
>
> Andrea: Paul put a new water tank on the roof this trip.
>
> Mildred: Andrea put a sink in the kitchen. And Paul and Tracy put all the wood on for a 30-foot roof.

Maia: Last year and the year before it was the water system.
Sally: You have all these wonderful plans for projects and something [unexpected] presents itself.
Mildred: The last storm blew the roofing off the dormer. It rained in the house for three weeks. I'm mopping up the water and cleaning up the black mold.
Andrea: Cleaning all the linens.
Nat: You can't replace the roof until it dries.
Mildred: We had to chop the old dresser apart. It was so swollen it wouldn't open.
Andrea: Two years ago I drove a new well in the valley because the old one was getting buried. Tom [Adams] showed me how to do it with a fence post driver. You take the well point and drive it down with this heavy, cement fence post driver. Dad was down with the wrenches turning while I pounded and pounded.
David: Look at those shoulders and biceps!
Andrea: All of my New York friends, they're so shocked when they hear what I do. I don't even tell them the stories anymore. "You went up to the cape to do roofing?" they ask.
Paul: Yeah. That's what I did last summer I came up. I came in, put on the new roof, and then left.
Maia: We replace posts as we can. Paul and John and Adam – we had a bunch of people putting in the sills. We do what we can on our limited schedule.
Paul: We say to guests, "Welcome to the family. Come on, let's put a sill in." *[Laughter.]*
Mildred: There was this woman that said, "I bet all you do all day long is lie on the beach and read." *[Laughter.]*
Andrea: That was in the editorial in the paper. They think what we do is watch the sun arc through the sky and have all-night wine parties.
Maia: I'm waiting for that.

The repairs listed by the Champlins on their shack from the last two years are impressive, including a new roof, new water tank, new kitchen sink, new water well, and new windowsills. They also repaired water damage and mold from a storm blowing off a dormer roof while the shack was unoccupied. Members of this relatively large extended family accomplished it all, with some help from guests to the shacks. The attitude toward this is not one of resigned drudgery. It's humor. Repairing and upgrading the family shack is a labor of love. In this discussion, the family members laughed that they had so little time to sit on the beach reading under the arcing sun. Living on the dunes was not a relaxing vacation where other people served you by maintaining facilities, as in the summer rental cottage industry. Dune dwelling was self-reliant, improvised living, where a person could not "run out to Wal-Mart." The hard-working component to dune life was difficult to explain to "shocked" city dwellers, it was such a life apart. As Andrea explained, "I don't even tell them the stories anymore." The work on the Champlin shack described above seemed typical of the types of work on other shacks I observed.

Careful Designs, but Growing Like Topsy

Most dune shacks have passed through several incarnations during their lifetimes. Some shacks began as improvisations, small structures thrown up with whatever material was at hand. This was the case with Frenchie's shack, the precursor of the current Schnell-Del Deo shack, according to Conrad Malicoat, who mused about whether "shack" or "cottage" might be a preferable designation for the dune dwellings on the backshore:

> The words are not, in my estimation, a description of the buildings so much. I think that the original origin of that description of calling the buildings out there "shacks" was the fact that

the people who went out there used a lot of the wood that was attainable on the beach. What they came up with was unique.

I remember one particular woman, who you probably heard of – Frenchie. I remember her way of building was absolutely amazing. I mean, she was an artist at building her structure, the way some of the modern art is today. She would do it by erecting, putting pieces up, and then if it began to move around or be dislodged in some kind of way, she would buffer it up with some kind of support, so all of a sudden you had this building she could live in. And if it blew down during the wintertime, that was all right. Well, that was the beginning. Now something like that would be like a shed or something, a makeshift, so for the time that you're going to be there, you could use it, you could stay out of the rain. But a lot of the places have matured to something else, like our place. We have a fireplace, just because, I guess, I can build them. *[Laughter.]* Otherwise there probably wouldn't be one. There are a lot of respectable buildings out there.

So, just to answer your question about what you're going to call them. I don't care if you call them a "shack." What it does is send a very direct vibration back to the original origin of those places out there, because they all were shacks at one time. They all were.

Malicoat doesn't mind the term "shack" because it harkens back to the humble roots of all the dune dwellings (which Malicoat considers noble), even though many of them had evolved today into "respectable buildings" with special features, such as the fireplace in his own shack ("just because, I guess, I can build them"). Malicoat's overarching assessment of improvised shacks like Frenchie's is one of awe ("her way of building was absolutely amazing"), comparing it with creativity in modern art. This touches on an important feature of the shacks – the expressiveness of dune shacks. Makers consider them personal expressions of bold concepts and demonstrations of fine craft. As a group, the shacks are not mass-produced tract homes. There's nothing much standard about them. Each carries a distinctiveness that reflects the personal visions and skills of its many makers. Long-term dune dwellers express considerable pride regarding their shacks. They love their own shacks. Many I spoke to complimented other people's shacks, and then explained what features made their own shack the best of the bunch.

The themes about individual expression, creativity, and craftsman's pride in shack design are found in the Armstrongs' discussion of the incarnations of their own shack. The Armstrongs acquired the shack in the late 1940s, after they discovered it buried under sand at the shoreline. They rehabilitated it with new and old material, as they described below. As the shore bluff eroded, they moved the shack to Old Baldy, the next inland dune ridge. These changes over time, and the architectural merits of the shack, were discussed during the Armstrong interview, with comments from Connie, Janet, and David Armstrong, and Richard Arenstrup. David, who was a professional engineer, began the discussion, responding to my question about technological guidelines in shack construction:

Wolfe: Speaking about technology, have there been any guidelines that you have followed in making choices about appropriate technology, or inappropriate technology, for your shack?

David: Well, in that connection, someone once said, "None of these shacks has any architectural merit. They're all sort of just thrown together." But this one [the Armstrong shack] has a structure for the rear deck that I don't think you could find anywhere. It has beams cantilevered, and planks with further cantilevering. It was entirely unsupported on the far edge, originally. We did put in some posts strictly to be

able to hold the railings that we decided to put round the deck. Have a look at it afterward and see if it doesn't look just a bit unique as far as structural features go.

Connie: The first house really grew like Topsy. If something was needed we would sort of know what kind of lumber was needed and we would hope, after a long walk, we would find such a thing on the beach. A lot of repairs and things have happened. Decks indeed were made of driftwood. The pilings under the house had to be replaced. None of them were treated. Actually, I don't think they are now.

David: Yes, the main posts are.

Wolfe: The house is a mixture of new and old?

Connie: It has had to be.

Arenstrup: It is constantly being replaced, as you can imagine. If you're picking up things on the beach, it comes with bugs already built in. Rotten. And so it's constantly having to be kept in repair and pieces replaced.

David: When we were poor students, anything that we needed to be replaced we'd go up and down the beach until we found something that had washed up on the beach that seemed to be suitable to use for that purpose. Now we buy lumber.

Connie: I can remember straightening nails with a hammer on a rock and rubbing them with ivory soap.

David: For lighting we use candles mostly, and this angle lamp. It's an unusual kind of lamp. Most lamps that hang from anything have the base underneath the chimney that goes straight up from the base. So the base casts a shadow right in the middle of the space that's it's supposed to be lighting up. These have the flame coming out into that transparent bowl that sheds light straight down.

Connie: Believe it or now, those things actually hung in parlor cars in early trains that went west. And you'll see in taverns out west in the 1800s, they'll have these. It's a double angle lamp. It burns lamp oil.

Janet: We don't use kerosene.

David: Kerosene makes so much smell and smoke.

Janet: Liquid paraffin is the fuel of choice.

David: I do have one solar cell that we got chiefly because, when we got into our seventies, our children said they were a little uneasy about our being out here without any communication. They insisted we get a cell phone. In those days the cell phones ate up current much more than they do now. So we got the little solar panel, enough to keep that battery charged up.

Connie: But we've always had solar heated water, as soon as we had the well dug in that lovely hollow in the sand. We'd put out twelve gallons or so of water in the morning when we pumped water. We'd just leave them there. By noontime, by two thirty, that was hot. We had an old-fashioned bathtub down there. By turns we'd go down and have a bath. The rule was to use Ivory soap, not a bunch of cosmetic things, and that bathtub had to be fifty feet away from the well. If you were shampooing your hair, you couldn't rinse it back down into the sand.

The Armstrong shack illustrates an evolution in shack design and materials. In Connie's account, their shack in its early years under their care "grew like Topsy," getting altered bit by bit, much like Frenchie's method of building as described by Malicoat. But as the shack and its family matured, it took on more considered features, becoming a "respectable building." With pride, David pointed out the current shack's innovative cantilevered deck that he designed, urging me to "have a look at it afterward and see if it doesn't look just a bit unique as far as structural features go." In these later stages, it was not true that the shack was simply "thrown together." It had carefully-designed features.

Bill Fitts, a long-time shack user, talked about shack design. His insights elaborated on these points. Fitts was a professional builder in Provincetown who designed and supervised the reconstruction of the Jackson shack after it had burned. He had carefully examined the structural features and workmanship of many of the dune shacks. He observed that many of the original shacks were erected by skilled builders in Provincetown, one in particular being Jimmy Thomas:

> Mentioning Jimmy Thomas, he's of the generation of our parents [that is, the early 20th century]. His wife was an artist. Jimmy was one of the crackerjack carpenters in town, one of the two best I could think of. He was personally affiliated with the dunes, going out there with his family. He did a lot of the building and the repairs, moving shacks from one place to another, getting inundated [with sand] or scoured out from under. He was doing an awful lot of that out there on various shacks for people. It was a little bit on hire, a little bit on friendship.

Many of the early shacks were not "thrown together" at all. They were carefully designed and built by local craftsmen like Jimmy Thomas. In Fitts' opinion, some of the thrown-together work seen on shacks came about later, additions by novice builders staying at the shacks, substandard to the original work.

Lawrence Schuster echoed this sentiment, talking about his shack. Schuster walked me around his shack, pointing out features. The tour was filled with particular pride about improvements and innovations, such as a widened bed, fiberglass insulation in the small kitchen, upgraded electricity, and new ceiling hooks for hanging cookware. Many of the upgrades were required to undo the inferior work of the Navy when they altered the shack during World War II. The Navy added the small kitchen room with inadequate insulation. The Navy installed ceiling panels of poor quality materials that Schuster ripped out. Like other shack tours I was given, Schuster was able to point to particular wood or fixtures and tell me the story of where they came from or how they were found or donated. The physical items in the house contained and brought to mind very personal and satisfying stories for Schuster. For instance, he related that he got the elaborate hinges on the outhouse by removing them from a boat that soon afterwards sunk in a blow (maybe because he removed them, he laughed). His shack had a swallow's house on a post, and a chair on the roof to get a view of the ocean. The house was substantially buried by sand, like the Isaacson-Schecter shack described below. Schuster said he will have to lift it eventually, but he joked that he was letting his potential workers get practice with some of the other shacks first. He had salvaged a long, barnacle-encrusted beam from the beach, cut into four pieces, to use for supports when he lifted the house. It lay on the ground beside the shack. In barrels at the front the shack, he grew parsley, tomatoes, and kale. In his kitchen he canned jellies and jams from wild berries. But he didn't fish from the shack, he said, a "busman's holiday" for someone like him who worked on the ocean most days.

Old and New

The Armstrong shack discussion above identified a feature common to most shacks: the mix of old and new materials, and of old and new technologies. The mix of old and new reflects pragmatism and efficiencies. As related by the Armstrongs, when the family was young, salvage often sufficed, although it came waterlogged and bug infested. "Now we buy lumber," said David, as they are able to do so. Shack technology also combined new and old, evolving with the needs of the family. Liquid paraffin was still the preferred choice for lights. A double angle lamp from a 19th century design worked best to light the shack. The family saw the utility of a small solar cell to power a shack telephone, so the children could communicate with their aging

parents at the shack. Bath water continued to be solar heated, but without the intermediary solar cells.

Shack residents commonly incorporated salvaged materials into shacks. Shack residents looked for ways to build cheaply and efficiently. Old materials found in town and on the beach at times were used to upgrade shacks at much lower costs than new materials. Plus, they often looked better than new materials. Residents frequently knew the source and dates of materials in the shacks. The Champlin family (Mildred, Maia, and Paul) and Adams family (Marcia and Sally) talked about salvage in the construction of their shacks:

> Marcia: Ours had salvaged materials.
> Mildred: That was part of it, making the houses out of salvaged stuff. That's certainly what happened in the 50s – recycling, early recycling. The windows came from [condemned buildings in] Brooklyn. They were putting in an expressway in Brooklyn.
> Maia: The front porch is made up from wood that washed up on the shore.
> Paul: Monkeywood.
> Sally: Our house had the old windows from the post office in town. They were taking those out.
> Marcia: The shutters were made from a dance hall floor, we understand.
> Paul: Isn't this an old barn? [Pointing to the ceiling.]
> Mildred: Yes, the roof boards. There's a board up there that's 22 inches wide that came from that barn, a hundred years old when Don took it down.
> Paul: See, that's the thing about these places. The bell posts were probably 30-40 years old when they were taken from the dunes and planted here.

The posts for the Champlin's mission bell originally were electrical poles left on the dunes when the Peaked Hill station was decommissioned. Nat Champlin dragged these to his shack with his car. Other materials were identified through word of mouth, among friends in town or on the dunes. For example, to help repair the mission bell, their neighbors, Evelyn Simon and Emily Beebe, offered posts that they had found up the Cape in Dennis. Paul Champlin, who called his neighbors "the new generation" because they had replaced Leo Fleurant at the neighboring shack, described how Simon and Beebe had acquired their posts:

> Down at Evelyn and Emily's, the new generation, they stumbled across a whole load of telephone poles when they were putting in their house. They were pilings they were sawing up and using as posts. They got them from the town of Dennis. There was this set of pilings that needed to be taken out. A guy they happened to know said, "Take as many as you want as I have to remove them anyway." So they got hauled all the way out here and they're sitting there buried now, except for the ones that are holding up the house. I wandered over there yesterday after being told by Sally that I should see about these posts. Sure enough, they're these 30-foot pilings that are just waiting to be hauled over here and put in. Evelyn said, "If you can figure out how to get them over there, just do it, they're all yours." They're worth $1,500 just to buy them, and then you gotta get them out here, if you can find them. That's a perfect example of making do with what you can get. And if we didn't use those, down on the beach there's a 56-foot log, if we could figure out how to get that one up here. We'd go to the beach, waiting for the beach to open, we'd tow it in front of the house, then figure out how to get it up there.

This illustrates the informal economy of the lower Cape, where personal friendships frequently provided material and labor at cheaper costs than the formal markets. According to Paul, if the posts from the neighboring shack didn't work out, then a beach log might be used.

In renovating shacks leased from the Seashore, new dune dwellers (Beebe-Simons, Isaacson-Schecter, and the Dunns) also incorporated found materials in the shacks. Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter used wood from an old house in North Carolina, as well as timber from the old boathouse of the Peaked Hill station that belonged to Zara Jackson. Emily Beebe described how she and Evelyn did it:

> Traveling on the fire road you pass the C-Scape, the next place you see is ours, Leo's Place… He had a chimney that we rebuilt. It kind of exceeds the quaint rustic rough definition physically, though most of the materials it was made from came from old houses in town. We visited lots of old building projects through the years that we rebuilt this place. And we found materials on the beach. And we found materials in the dump. First of all, we didn't have any money. The only thing we had to buy new we bought new, like asphalt shingles for the roof, cedar shingles for the walls, tar paper for underneath, and nails. Everything else we reused. A lot of fun. A lot of challenge.

The choice of found materials was in part family economics – it was simply cheaper to use materials from old buildings, the dump, and the beach when a family had limited funds for shack construction. But as implied in Beebe's statement, the use of old materials is consistent with a view that the shacks are "quaint," "rustic," and "rough." Because of exposure, new items like shingles quickly acquire a weather-beaten look, bleached and battered by blowing sand.

Innovative technologies for solving routine tasks get invented by shack dwellers. This was illustrated by Lawrence Schuster's approach to getting propane bottles up to his shack. For the first fourteen of his twenty-two years in the shack, Schuster walked out to his shack. He said he'd carry a little something each trip. For big loads like bird seed he made arrangements for them to be delivered, bartering something for the delivery, like his homemade wine. Now he owned a four-wheel drive jeep and used it to haul materials. He showed me how he used the jeep to drag heavy propane bottles up the steep dune to his shack. He rigged a large pulley system to posts sunk at the top of the dune and at the bottom, near the jeep trail. Running a long rope through the blocks, he hooked the line to the propane bottles and the front bumper of the car. By backing up the jeep on the trail, the jeep pulled the rope through the pulley system, dragging the heavy bottle up the steep dune. In demonstrating this technique, he stationed me at the top to yell when the bottles arrived. I watched him haul up two bottles this way.

Managing Sand

One common aspect of the dune shack maintenance was the management of sand in the immediate vicinity of a shack. Resident families took considerable effort to sustain a delicate balance between the shack and the inherently fluid natural landscape. Wind and water moved sand. Beaches grew and contracted. Hills rose and fell. Dune ridges displayed a tendency to march inland from the beach over a course of years. Changes commonly were incremental, as sand was lifted, carried, and dropped to another spot, grain by grain, depending upon physical obstructions like plants, or the placement of footpaths and sand fences. But sometimes things changed rapidly with storms.

Dune dwellers managed sand primarily with fences and plants, and secondarily with shovels and backhoes. The Armstrongs walked me around their shack, showing how they attempted to manage sand, "grain by grain." Connie Armstrong said she tried to imagine how an individual grain would likely be transported by the wind blowing in certain directions. She erected sand

fences and planted dune grass and rose bushes accordingly around her shack, with the goals of stabilizing or moving particular dunes over the course of several years. If done properly, the wind did most of the work of moving sand to the proper places, working in combination with the fences and plants. The bottom portion of the Armstrong shack, raised above the ground, was enclosed with a solid wall in part to tame the winds beneath the structure. A large patch of rose brushes was what stabilized the dune to the southwest of the shack, she said. The roses began to desiccate and die because of moth infestation a few years back. So the family began pruning them in the fall to eliminate the ends with moth tents before the hatch. This hard, scratchy task helped considerably. The rose patch was healthy again, she said. She planned to do it again soon. The northeast dune in front of their shack was exposed to blasts of wind during winter. They have an ongoing project of planting grass and moving fences to protect that slope. To the northwest of the house they have used an S-shaped configuration of fences to break the wind and to build a sand barrier over to the front of the house.

The management of sand and plants was discussed by the Champlins, who lived in the western neighborhood a considerable distance from the Armstrongs. They used similar techniques:

Maia: The people who live here become stewards of the land. That's something that you don't get in a week-long stay with wine parties. It's an understanding of the fragility and how to protect it.

Paul: It's looking out at the yard here and seeing all that grass and knowing when there's too much grass, that this place is going to get buried in a year or two. And then having the gumption to go out and start managing it.

Nat: Too much grass collects sand and builds dunes.

Paul: Yeah, the tap root goes way down. There's a bit of management that has to be done then.

Maia: That's counter to the intuition of the soil conservation service. They like to build stuff up. But sometimes you can get too much and it builds against a building, a structure, and either buries it or rots it out. Charlie Schmid's house, his lower story or stories, were buried.

Andrea: It's sort of like wind through buildings in a city. If there are sand dunes, the wind goes between the dunes and creates blowouts. It just creates a lot of havoc.

Paul: You don't want too much blowout. You don't want too much build up. So we've learned through snow fencing and grass. We've planted grass, and taken grass, and moved grass. It's this whole balance you try your best to maintain.

Andrea: We've carried dozens of wheelbarrows full of sand.

Mildred: You have to manage it.

Paul: When we do have to build it up, we know when and how. We've even just in the last few years discovered that the snow fences that stand up this tall [he indicates with his hand], they're just a little too big. So we chop them in half the long way and you have these half fences that you can stretch out from here to those poles. This year they'll build up a little bit. Once you're satisfied with that, you pull them up, and you move them. And you move them, and you move them, and you move them. And then by the time that cycle is done, maybe we'll have to start again, maybe we'll have to pull some grass.

Dune dwellers like the Armstrongs and the Champlins asserted they have become experts in managing sand with fences and plants. These are relatively low-technology solutions to potentially major problems. The sand fences (snow fences) are purchased from the stores. They are thin pine slats wired together so as to gap a few inches, standing about three to five feet in height, and in long lengths. They are relatively cheap, lightweight, and flexible. Their design

slows wind blowing through, allowing sand to be dropped along the fence. As described above, the Champlins modified fences and positioned them in ways designed to use the wind in moving sand, to prevent sand from accumulating in the wrong places, and to remove sand from one place to another. Dune grass was used in the same manner. Where it was planted, dunes stabilized and grew. Blowing sand is caught by the grass and dropped, building the ground surface. The buried grass sends out new runners and tops, growing above the new surface. When terrain reached an optimum height for the shack, dune dwellers might trim or pull or relocate the bunch grass.

The Clemons-Benson family set sand fences and planted salt rose bushes to help secure the slope on which their shack sat. At one point, its precursor (the Fearing shack) almost toppled over, so slope management was a foremost concern. Peter Clemons explained to me the reason he placed fences across the dune's face below his shack:

> It's for wind and for sand. Remember that Marianne said at one point this whole dune blew out from under the shack? Well, that's because the wind just comes right down this valley. The wind just comes through. If you walk down and kill any of this beach grass, you eliminate the possibility of it holding. The fence helps break the wind in the winter. We've planted fifteen or twenty *rosa rugosa* bushes. That bush is at least twenty years old. It hasn't grown much. That's another one that's doing better. Some of these fences I've put up around them to help them resist the elements.

According to Paul Tasha, the rose species growing profusely on the dunes and planted by Clemons on his slope were accidental introductions to the cape:

> You see the rose hips and the bushes with the rose flowers on them next to the shack? Those are an introduced species. They're not native. Apparently somebody had a big shipload of them from Japan, a hundred years or something ago or more. The ship wrecked and they got spread up and down the east coast. I guess the roots floated ashore all over the east coast, from Nova Scotia to Virginia. They survived and now they're all over the place. But they're a good plant.

The Armstrongs managed plants without the use of herbicides or insecticides, preferring to accomplish slope management in low-impact ways:

> Connie: We've avoided bringing certain chemicals out here. We absolutely don't bring certain chemicals. We don't spray any of the insects or kill any of the beasties with poisons.
> David: We use pruning shears mostly.
> Connie: Pruning shears at the right time of the year to get rid of the nests, and then just burning them. Plus, you're out here, you say, "You just can't get rid of all those things. They're going through a seven-year cycle. You just have to live through it." You go on faith.

Despite the on-going, low-tech efforts of dune residents to manage sand with fences and plants, at times the sand moved into configurations that jeopardized a shack or shack access. This often transpired over a number of years, but it might happen over a single winter under unusual circumstances. At these times, some shack residents have used equipment like backhoes to move sand, digging out areas in the vicinity of the shack to restart the efforts with fences and plants.

Careful placement of trails was another way long-term dune residents managed sand. Trails around shacks were routed in ways to avoid alignment with prevailing wind directions. This was

done to avoid blowouts. When signs of blowout conditions developed, shack residents commonly placed fences or tree branches to block footpaths and to encourage sand deposition. There were two customary rules commonly followed in using footpaths. In more heavily-traveled areas, particularly around the shacks, the rule was to use footpaths. Sticking to paths protected dune grass and other plants off the path, helping to stabilize dune systems. In less-traveled areas, some dune dwellers said they purposively avoided using standard routes. Taking different routes prevented the creation of footpaths that might eventually blow out or erode. During the middle of an interview, I observed Peter Clemons attempt to enforce these customary rules with strangers who were not using footpaths near the Fowler shack, a conversation incidentally recorded on tape:

> *[Yelling to the hikers.]* Excuse me! Can you stay on the path please? There's no path over there! Who are you looking for? Well, stay on the path! *[To himself.]* How rude.

The hikers apparently did not know the customary rules for using footpaths near the shacks, or were disregarding them. The intervention by Clemons was intended to protect the dune grass that helped to stabilize the hill by the Fowler shack.

Minimal Infrastructures

Because of their low-impact accommodations with the landscape, dune shacks represented a relatively unique experiment in human settlement on a barrier dune system. This was the opinion of Graham Giese, an expert on the geomorphology of Cape Cod and former dune dweller. Giese was once a co-owner of a shack in the eastern grouping (the Vevers-Pfeiffer-Giese shack). His wife, Barbara Baker, also was a former dune resident, having lived at the Jackson shack for a number of years. Their home was on High Head in North Truro overlooking the dunes.

According to Giese, the typical approach on the eastern seaboard has been to substantially modify coastal zones to accommodate human settlement. Soils are contoured and hardened in place with concrete and other fortifications. Rivers are redirected. Wetlands are dredged and filled. Jetties are built. Vegetative covers are substantially transformed. Such large-scale modifications characterize human settlement along America's shoreline. They are done to stabilize a base for houses, harbors, and coastal industries. These types of changes were visible throughout Cape Cod. Impacts on sustainable natural systems have been huge. Scientists like himself scramble to document and understand impacted natural processes such as ocean sand transport and wetlands productivity. But Giese saw in the dune shacks a uniquely different approach. Instead of modifying the barrier dune system, dune shack residents have built simple structures, attempting to fit them into their immediate surroundings without substantially altering natural systems. It represented a type of low-impact habitation rarely seen on the east coast within a sustainable community.

He stated the dune shack society might be viewed as an instructive, ongoing demonstration of compatible human-nature relationships with potential lessons for coastal dune ecologists. For example, the dune shacks provided a practical demonstration on how people might live on barrier beaches without disrupting natural cycles of sand deposition. The usual course of action for homes on beach bluffs was fortifying bluffs or to changing coastlines with breakwaters. These structures commonly disrupted sand flow, threatening the barrier beaches that protected salt marshes important for wildlife and fisheries, among other values. By contrast, the dune shack community had no similar structures. The shacks were slightly relocated with changing sand

conditions, allowing the beach to contract and expand, fitting into more natural cycles. To what extent this altered cycles of sand deposition was a researchable question.

As Giese observed, an important feature of dune shacks as a general house type was the minimal infrastructure built to support the neighborhood of shacks. It was what a shack lacked, as much as what it had, that defined it as a distinct house type. In general, the dune shack settlement had no concrete barriers, no breakwaters, no fortified bluffs, no paved roadways, no drainage ditches, no storm drains, and no extensive conduit systems for electricity, water, and sewage. As a general house type, shacks were built on skids or pilings allowing an accommodation with the fluid substrate. For managing dunes, the community used indigenous plants and portable sand fences. These choices set certain limits on (or challenges regarding) the amenities in shacks. They also made the dwellings inherently vulnerable, exposed to wind and water, floating on changing landscapes like boats in slow-motion, susceptible to careening tilts by scouring or inundation by building dunes. But the design was preferred over alternatives that transformed the natural landscape. The vulnerability of shacks was accepted in exchange for intimacy with the landscape, the goal of living close to natural systems. Dawn Zimiles described this accommodation between dunes and shacks as "really exciting":

> You know, the shacks kept falling down because the sands would shift. Part of the culture there was this complete care of the natural landscape. The thing is, if you stepped on the dune grass and broke it, the houses would fall down. Part of the way of maintaining the life there was that you had to be careful of everything. This was the feeling there. It was really exciting.

Dawn's family knew this first hand. The Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack toppled several times in its life. The family's response to this was not to substantially modify the natural setting, but to be more careful of it. Ways of living were adjusted to Nature, rather than the reverse. This was a high value expressed through dune shack architecture.

Moving a Shack: A Case Example

Most dune shacks, perhaps all of them, have been moved at least once during their lifetimes to save them from falling into the sea or being buried under dunes. Among the first stories told to me by dune dwellers during interviews were accounts of relocating shacks. The stories were free of any bitterness or blame or regret. Instead, they were stories of awe, describing powerful natural forces, and of pluck, describing common people accomplishing great works under difficult circumstances, banding together to resolve dilemmas created by sea, sand, and storm. Dune residents came alive telling the stories. They commonly brought out photograph albums to illustrate the heroic events, laughing, pointing, saying "remember this?" and "remember that?" This genre, the "shack move" story, was emblematic of dune life. The stories were testaments to a central feature of dune living – that dune dwellers accommodated to the fluidity of the barrier dunes. In the long term, the sand and storms were in charge, not the dune dwellers. To survive in this place, on occasion one had to move everything up and over to sustain the dune settlement. Flexibility, not permanence, was the nature of the dune life.

The following case example illustrates the shack-move genre – the lifting of the Isaacson-Schecter shack. When I first visited the dunes in June of 2004, I was told by Seashore guides that sand was burying the Isaacson-Schecter shack. They took me out to see it. And there it sat, far down a hole in the sandy soil.

I learned from Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter what had happened. The dune the shack used to sit atop began to grow, accumulating sand dropped grain by grain by the winter winds, collecting in surrounding patches of wild rose and beach grass, becoming higher each season. Isaacson and Schecter battled encroaching sand that began to spill down onto the shack. Every spring they dug out the door and walkways and separated the shack walls from the surrounding sand hills. They carved out and shored up with boards hauled to the site, scavenged or bought. Eventually, boards on one side held in place tons of sand, preserving a narrow walking space separating the sand dune and the shack. And still the dune continued to grow each year. By 2001, the windows' vistas were gone. A person stared into sand. The shack sat in a hole, encased within a walled-up dune, effectively surrounded. The land's contour had reconfigured. The shack rested on the surface of an older time. Isaacson and Schecter said this was not an unusual event. Such things just happened in the course of dune life:

Isaacson: This is what I think is a ten-year event for every shack. You're either going to get blown out, or you're going to get filled in. It was never accounted for in our lease [with the Seashore]. So we took it on ourselves to do it.

Schecter: In terms of tradition, you know, the thing we discovered was that some people let it get buried and built on top of it – you've heard these stories that people have found that there are whole buildings under their building, if they look – or they would bring out a little backhoe, and like snow, they'd just move the sand away. But because it's now a Park, you can't just bring a backhoe into the Park and start rearranging the sand. Although…

Isaacson: It may have been the easiest way.

Schecter: Yeah, that's what I would have liked to have done. And I'm not sure that it would really have wrecked things because this is always moving. But, you know, I respect the Park. You can't just start rearranging part of the Park because it suits you. So I appreciate what they are saying, but I do think a backhoe is the way to go with this stuff, because if you build on top and then you get a blowout it creates a dangerous situation. The backhoe is just moving sand.

Getting buried had happened to many other shacks before. Like them, it was time to adapt to the inevitable. If they couldn't remove the top of the dune with a backhoe, then it was time to lift the shack to the top.

The buried Isaacson-Schecter shack offers an interesting case example of lifting a shack. It illustrates the technical challenges involved. It also illustrates two very different ways to approach it, which I will call "customary approaches" (within dune shack society) as distinct from "standard approaches" (within government agencies). Ways of lifting shacks established over time within dune shack society can be called "customary approaches." The principal features of customary approaches include personalized labor relations, small-scale technologies, and well-matched materials, with economic factors (labor, equipment, and materials) frequently donated, bartered, found, or acquired through informal economic arrangements. Ways of accomplishing construction jobs (like lifting a shack) through government agencies can be called "standard approaches." These approaches are guided by formal agency rules and standard operating procedures, at times involving contractors and federal, state, and municipal entities. As this case illustrates, the Isaacson-Schecter shack was lifted using a "customary approach" rather than a "standard approach." The customary approach proved more timely, more efficient, and less expensive. In addition, it proved much more personally satisfying, at least for the dune shack residents.

I pieced together the project's history from information acquired during interviews. I also had the good fortune of seeing the Isaacson-Schecter shack in its hole in July, and then freed of the hole in August after its ascension. In this story, standard approaches were initially explored but then abandoned in favor of a customary approach, which was successfully implemented. Undoubtedly I've missed some details, but I believe this is the gist of the story. It's worth telling in some detail, perhaps as much as $90,000, the amount the customary approach may have saved taxpayers.

My understanding is that in 2001 Isaacson and Schecter contacted the Park Service with a proposal. They wanted to lift their dune shack. The two shack heads huddled with Seashore staff to figure out how best to do it. At this point, many approaches were under consideration, including alternative ways to address labor, materials, equipment, techniques, and impacts. Regarding responsibilities for monetary costs, the shack's lease agreement was examined. The lease contained no specific language regarding lifting the shack if swallowed by sand. Shack rehabilitation and routine shack maintenance were clearly specified. After consideration of these matters, the monetary costs of lifting a buried shack could be reasonably assumed to be something additional, not included in the specific lease terms. If this assumption was accepted, the monetary costs might be paid by the Seashore and not the shack residents.

Monetary costs were estimated at about $15,000 during the discussions of 2001. One potential option was to have costs paid by the residents at the time of the work, and then prorating the costs over the remainder of the lease, effectively reducing the residents' monthly rent. Essentially, long-term rents would be paid in advance. This had an advantage of avoiding the necessity of tapping into government money, typically fully allocated to other projects. Park Service solicitors were consulted regarding this potential approach.

Meanwhile, several approvals were deemed advisable given the potential impacts of the project. Sand would be moved. Equipment such as trucks hauling materials might be used. The preservation of a shack of potential historic value had to be reviewed for potential effects on natural and cultural resource values. Approvals from three entities were solicited – the Town Conservation Commission for moving sand within one hundred feet of a coastal bank (part of coastal zone management provisions), the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program for protecting endangered species, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission for avoiding adverse effects on historic properties. Such approvals generally take months to procure, so these reviews postponed the project through 2001 and into 2002. By August 2002, the Seashore informed Isaacson and Schecter that the project had passed the reviews, although with modifications. Larger equipment would be needed, including a small crane, if the shack were placed on a platform. Placing the shack on a platform offered a longer-term solution for moving the shack than simply lifting a shack on beams, the original concept. The work was approved for September. However, given the changes in the initial plan, a revised estimate for monetary costs would be needed.

When the revised cost estimates came in, costs had jumped from $15,000 (the original job) to $39,500 (the modified job). This brought the planned September work to a halt. Covering costs of this magnitude through prorated rents was not feasible. Other solutions were discussed. The Seashore considered whether $40,000 might be available in its next-year's budget, perhaps through the Cultural Resources program. Tentatively, this appeared possible. However, this would necessarily delay the project, postponing it to 2003 when the funding might become available.

Under this approach, the government would have to buy the service. The work would go out for competitive bid. Accordingly, the Seashore developed a scope of work, put out to bid during the winter of 2002-2003. Details of competitive bids are the privileged information of federal procurement entities. But according to scuttlebutt, the returned bids were "horrifying," that is, magnitudes higher than previously-assumed estimates. Outside bidders figured their costs for lifting the Isaacson-Schecter dune shack, using a crane and other equipment, from $80,000 to $100,000. Higher monetary costs might be attributable to several factors, such as the platform design, inflation, and federally-mandated wages, workman's compensation, OSHA standards, overhead rates, insurance liability indemnification, and project management add-ons (such as project oversight by federal historic preservation experts). All these expenses must be built into a bid for a firm to see a profit. By going out for competitive bid, it becomes a "deep-pockets" project, at least deeper than the pockets of most dune shack residents.

In 2003, the high bids once more brought the project to a halt. Participants huddled again to assess potential options to reduce costs under standard government approaches. Possibilities included a contract with a refined scope of work; a cooperative agreement with a nonprofit organization; cost sharing, with the Park contributing materials; local Seashore staff doing the work; Historic Preservation staff from Lowell doing the work; a volunteer project sponsored by Friends of the National Seashore; an RFQ saying "this is the problem, tell us how to fix it"; an amended shack lease with reappraised values, revised rents, and longer terms; a terminated lease; a postponement until general standards were developed – these and others were considered. None felt right. Another year passed without the shack getting lifted.

By this time, 2004 was approaching. Three years had gone by since the initial proposal by Isaacson and Schecter to lift their shack. The shack was still buried, and getting buried deeper. Isaacson and Schecter worried that further delays jeopardized the building's structural integrity due to wood rot from damp sand. A preservation specialist from the Park's Northeast Region Cultural Resource Center believed delays would not necessarily hurt the building.

One set of approaches still presented itself, sidelined during discussions. Dune residents might lift the shack using customary methods. Under this approach, shack users would provide labor and arrange for equipment and materials. Local experts within dune shack society would deal with technical aspects. Dune shack residents would protect historic, cultural, and natural values following guidelines developed in consultation with the Seashore. In sum, the shack would be lifted as shacks typically were lifted, using customary methods within dune shack society.

As 2004 unfolded, that is what transpired. The dune residents lifted the shack using a customary approach. I interviewed Gary Isaacson and Laurie Schecter in August, soon after the job's completion. They recounted events, beginning with their reasons for moving ahead:

Schecter: When the Park said "no" and decided the project wasn't feasible, we said, "You know, our original proposal was this. We'll go back and just do that. We can do that by hand."

Isaacson: We had our shack three years in the ground. So Laurie just said, "We have to do it. We have to do our work."

Schecter: Three years. The sand was up to the roof. You saw it. We can't keep waiting because the thing was rotting. We're watching all our work rotting away.

Isaacson: So Laurie said [to Park staff], "You have to do what you have to do, we have to do what we have to do."

Schecter: So, the Park staff got all the regulations for us that we needed and we went ahead and did it. It would have been way easier three years ago. This was really hard because of how deep we got. Three years ago we wouldn't have had to raise it as high. It just wouldn't have been the same amount of work. But we just got to the point to say, "I know it's taking a while, I know it's going to take you time, but we're going to have to just do it. We can't keep waiting."

The shack, resting on several beams, was lifted using small, hand-pumped hydraulic jacks. Once at the proper height, the beams were bolted to large posts set vertically into the sand. This was done with volunteer labor without a crane or a heavy supporting platform. Isaacson and Schecter described the low-tech method to me, with substantial pride of accomplishment:

Isaacson: The first thing we had to do was bring the beams in, eight people carrying one beam with their backs to this porch wall in a space that's only two-feet wide, and then dropping the beam, avoiding their feet. So the first thing is getting the beams down close to the shack. Well, actually, the first thing was to dig out enough sand so that those beams could get under the shack.

Schecter: That was a feat. We had to build sand walls [wooden walls holding back the sand], which made the area even more enclosed than it was originally. So we were working in a teeny area and then working about twelve inches under the building. To get even twelve inches of sand out under this building was a huge feat.

Isaacson: My favorite was Genevieve [Martin] going under the shack on her back and then kicking the sand out instead of shoveling. She couldn't sit up. She couldn't dig it. She could just kick it out from under.

Once we got a clearance of about twelve inches, the beams needed to get under there. But if you've got posts holding up the shack, how do you get them under? So we had to support the shack and cut the posts away to put the beam in place. Three beams. Then we attached the beams to the building with plates. The three beams were in position.

The beams had to be put on posts. So we needed to set these big eight-by-eight posts that weighed about four hundred pounds. In order to set those posts, we had to dig holes. In order to do this, we sank a galvanized garbage can to keep drying sand from falling back in. So we dug sand out from a garbage can, tapping the sides down until the top of the can was flush with the sand. So now we had this starting cavity with wet sand at the bottom. Then we took a huge sand auger, twelve-inch head, and we started taking up the sand carefully, two people lifting the sand auger, tapping it out. It had to be eight feet deep.

Schecter: We knew we had to sink the posts eight to ten feet deep. Once the sand walls were removed we knew we'd get extra sand [securing the posts]. So it was between seven to eight feet deep that we dug each hole.

Isaacson: Now, how do you get a four-hundred pound post vertical into that hole? And the post can't hit the sides of the hole on the way down.

Schecter: And it had to be done fast, so the sand wouldn't dry out in the hole. We had to dig the hole and set the posts within a certain period of time, hours, so the sand hole wouldn't collapse.

Isaacson: We used a tripod with sixteen-foot legs. The beam is also sixteen feet. How are we going to get that vertical? We came up with an idea that saved us. We made a shelf out of two-by-six pressure-treated stock, the back of which had two-by-four legs with points, six feet long. We hammered those legs into the sand with the back of the two-by-

fours resting against the shack, a five-foot wide shelf with handles. Two of the legs of the tripod would fit into those two corners against the shack. They want to go against the shack and out. We screwed them into that shelf. The third leg was out on the bank. We used a chain fall.

Schecter: It's a pulley system that allows you to go a fraction at a time by pulling on a chain. It won't allow itself to reverse.

Isaacson: So we positioned the tripod, two of the legs nearly vertical because it's only nine inches away from the building, the third leg on the bank about eight feet from the building, so that the chain would be directly over the hole. Then we wrapped the chain one foot off-centered around the post, so that it would want to go down. So we start hoisting. We get it directly over the hole. We have one or two people on each leg, one person at the chain fall with the pulley, one person on the roof guiding the post, one person at the hole guiding it in so it doesn't hit the wall, about seven people altogether, and then we had straps attached to the posts as it goes up so it's not going to wobble, and then we start lowering it into the hole. We get it square to the building, and we get it set.

Schecter: A video of that would have been great.

Isaacson: One of the postholes on the northwest side, in the middle of the shack, was down three or four feet and we hit a rotted two-by-four. So, we had to step down. The walls collapse, and we have to re-dig. We're now down all the way. We get the post in. And the sand bank gives way from a small leak not bigger than three or four inches around, underneath. All the dry sand goes whoosh! And it filled up that hole automatically. Had we been twenty minutes later, we would have had a filled hole again. Each of those posts was a chapter.

Wolfe: To lift up the shack, how did you do that?

Schecter: We had to dig down below the building to set jacking stations. The first lifting was hard because we had to dig into a hole to set the jack. We had to set it on something that was strong enough that wasn't going to sink into the sand when we started to jack the building up. We had to dig a hole, build a little platform, and put the jack under the shack.

Isaacson: At one point I'm on my back, midway underneath the shack, and I need a hammer. But because the beam is resting on the sand and I didn't want to crawl, you know, pull myself, I started digging underneath the beam until I saw daylight and I put my hand up and yelled, "I need a hammer!" And I took the hammer and hammered on down. We had maybe about nine jacking points at that stage, little hydraulic jacks, twelve-ton and six-ton. I'd call out…

Schecter: Gary sat in the house and measured with a level. He told each person at a jack…

Isaacson: "… Laurie, five more pumps! Joyce, ten more pumps! Ok, Everyone together!"

Schecter. When it got level, everyone would do it.

Isaacson: This is because everyone is pumping at different rates. Every jack is going to produce a different result. And we didn't want the shack to break. The porch is kind of independent. And the roof is independent.

Schecter: So basically, we wanted to lift it all level at the same time. So he was in here with a level watching that it stayed level and he would tell whatever station to pump, and they pumped. Then, when any one of them reached their maximum height, everyone stopped. We put blocking in to hold the building. Everyone's station was blocked. Gary ran around to check to make sure it was safe and looked good. Then we released the jacks. It would all sink a little bit, just like an inch or so. Then we set new blocking stations higher on the cribbing. And we did it again. It only took three days of doing that. This was surprising. The time was taken in doing all the prep work, which was setting the

beams, setting the posts, getting the sand out of here, that took three or four weeks. The actual jacking only took three days. And we were very slow and very methodical.

Isaacson: We didn't want any accidents.

Schecter: We didn't have a scrape. Nothing.

Isaacson: The posts are lateral supports. We made them long enough so that we can go up another two-and-a-half feet [in the future if necessary].

Schecter: It's attached with bolts.

The method described by Isaacson and Schecter is an example of a customary approach to lifting a dune shack. This is evident by where the ideas came from. Isaacson and Schecter tapped into the knowledge base of dune shack society during project planning, as they explained.

Schecter: Because we've done so much work doing [shack] maintenance, we know things. We're a wealth of resources. I can say this of other shack owners too. When we went to raise this building we went to everybody we personally knew who had done this kind of work out here in the Park before, not that we knew everybody who had. But as we came across people, we interviewed them. We talked with them. We'd say, tell us, how would you do this? What about this? What about that? And so we gathered a ton of information about how these buildings were raised or maintained in the past related to the sand. We asked, how have people traditionally maintained and worked on these buildings? So, we gathered a lot of information.

Wolfe: This information, this knowledge you consulted, it's not written down anywhere?

Isaacson. No.

Wolfe: So it's an oral tradition. Are people willing to share it with you?

Isaacson: Oh yes!

Wolfe: They don't say it's proprietary knowledge?

Isaacson: Oh no.

Wolfe: Why is that?

Isaacson: Why are they willing to share? Well, they want to preserve the shacks, I think.

Schecter: Yeah. I think a lot of people do. Like Will Hapgood has done a lot of maintenance and has lived here since he was a child. He's seen how these buildings were either taken care of, or not taken care of. Bill Fitts was maintenance for Peaked Hill [Trust] and has done a lot of Cape work. And then there's Winkler, the guy who has the crane business on the Cape here. And Scott Dunn has done work. I don't know that I can list all of the people. But if somebody said, "You should ask so-and-so about this," we would. Of course, we went to all the Park specialists too, anybody who had anything to do with construction.

Wolfe: They have salaries for this, right?

Schecter: Those people do. Yes, the Park people do.

Isaacson: There was one fellow who came out unrelated to doing any work in the shack. I had thrown my back out. So he worked on my back. He's a masseuse. He said, "How's the job going?" I said, "It's going well. I've got some concerns. I still don't have a real handle on whether the beam size is going to be sufficient, because no one really has been able to tell me." He says, "Well, I've worked in raising shacks, buildings, and construction on the Cape for twenty years." So after he worked on me, we climbed down, got under the shack, which was pretty much eighteen inches or a foot space, and he looked and said, "You've got a great infrastructure, you don't need this beam, you don't need that one, this is what you should use." It gave us confidence to move ahead.

Wolfe: He didn't charge you for that information?

Schecter: *[Laughs]* No.

The labor for the project primarily came from Isaacson and Schecter's network of friends, but also through word of mouth. Some workers heard about the project and showed up. This system of labor resembled that described by Beebe and Simon in Chapter 3 when they renovated their shack. Isaacson and Schecter consulted the Seashore as well. It was not the case that the "customary approach" and "standard approach" necessarily involved different sets of people. Some local residents were comfortable working in either system – the customary system where work is often done through informal, personal arrangements, and the standard government system, where work follows formalized rules and standard government procedures. Isaacson and Schecter were willing to work in either system. Apparently, so was a crane owner in Provincetown.

Isaacson: Now take Winkler who does crane work. We were going to take delivery of four-by-twelves, 24 feet long, three-hundred to four-hundred pound beams.

Schecter: As background, he came out three different times to bid on this job, once for us, once again for us and the Park, and once for the Park. He didn't get any of the jobs. We knew he had blocking, which is the wood for cribbing to keep the building up while you're working on it.

Isaacson: He didn't get the job, so I was, like, a little embarrassed to call him to ask for help. Here we were taking delivery of all these beams, but how do we get them out here? Well, I tried to rent a truck that would have done it, but the trucker was out of town. So I went to Winkler and I said, "Could I have the lumber delivered to you, and then, do you have a truck that would take it out for us?" He said, "Not a problem. Anytime you want it delivered, we'll have it delivered." And I asked, "Can I use some of the cribbing?" He said, "Not a problem." So the lumber was delivered to Winkler. He's about five miles from the gate [to the dunes]. They loaded it right onto a truck. He brought it in. We had a group of volunteers to get it off the truck. Then he went back and got the cribbing. And then in one load he brought it out. I mean it was amazing to see this thing coming up that first dune, a flat-back truck. Then he raced in reverse, stepped on the brake, and the cribbing came flying off. *[Laughter.]* We got our cribbing. So I asked him, "Um, how much?"

Schecter: We said we'd pay him for the job.

Isaacson: He said, "No, oh no." He knows this is a volunteer effort. So he lost the job…

Schecter: …but he put all that time and effort into it. And I said, "I'll pay you!" And he said, "No." But he did say, "Do you think I could stay a couple of nights in the shack?" And I said, "But of course!" *[Laughter.]*

The above narrative illustrates formal and informal economic relations. Isaacson paid for his massage, a formal economic transaction. But the masseuse also gave a free consultation about the shack's infrastructure, which was an informal transaction. Isaacson and Schecter offered to pay money for hauling and cribbing (a formal transaction), but Winkler instead traded for shack time (an informal transaction). In the informal economic system, the so-called "underground economy" of the lower Cape (a term used by Jay Critchley and Tom Boland), these types of trades and out-right gifts are said to be common. People know one another personally. The giving and taking produce reciprocities benefiting parties over the long term. They provide personal satisfaction in accomplishing worthwhile goals through camaraderie and mutual aid. In this case, the immediate goal was the preservation of a dune shack that many local people cared about. But a suite of other values gets reinforced through the informal economy, especially good personal relationships in a small town where people must live together over the long term. After listening to their story of lifting the shack, I asked Isaacson and Schecter about the bottom line – how much the customary approach cost the shack owners:

Wolfe: It's a remarkable story. How much did the Park Service pay for this?
Isaacson: Nothing.
Schecter: Nothing.

The Isaacson-Schecter case provides an impressive illustration of shack maintenance comparing customary approaches and standard approaches. The estimate to lift the shack through a standard Park approach (a formal bid procedure) was about $90,000. It took three years of work to reach that bid before the Seashore rejected it as unfeasible. During this time the shack was getting buried further. By comparison, the actual lifting of the shack with a customary approach cost the Seashore nothing. It employed networks of friends, in-kind reciprocity, loaned equipment, and gratis local expertise. Both types of approaches were collaborative, with the Seashore and shack residents working together to address a shack problem. But in terms of efficiencies and costs, the two approaches were exceptionally different. The customary approach proved much better suited to the challenges of repositioning a shack buried in sand.

Chapter 12. Social Challenges

"Liquid earth." These were Conrad Malicoat's words for the dunes of the Backshore. And as he and others pointed out, lives constructed on liquid earth displayed fluidity as well, a creative expressiveness, a compliant malleability to a changing fundament. To an outsider like me, the shacks conveyed fragility, a vulnerability to natural forces unlike standard communities designed for stability, strength, and durability. But my seeing fragility was a partial understanding. The simplicity of the rustic shacks floating on or just above the sand on pilings was also a strength. The liquid earth of the Backshore had claimed all three Peaked Hill Coast Guard Stations, each version built strong and solid by conventional standards. Meanwhile, the fragile shack settlement around the stations had endured. The shacks survived through the constant fiddling of their occupants. The adjustments were unending by the testimony of shack users. And the work wasn't easy, labors of love extracted through familial obligation or comradeship. Yet an enduring life on unspoiled dunes was achieved this way, a demonstration of the potential mutuality of a human settlement with dune grass, unstable sand, howling wind, and pounding surf.

Dune dwellers found meaning in shack life. Living roughly at the edge of society was not a summer project, or a vacation, or "an experience" (like programmed shack time) for long-term dune dwellers. It represented a chosen path through life. The potentials and achievements of dwelling on the dunes over a span of years were unique and irreplaceable, according to long-term residents. Living in shacks on the Backshore was part of a cherished way of life. It meant the preservation of Old Provincetown. It meant the extension of fine arts to new horizons. It meant living close to Nature. And it meant the nurturance of oneself with family, friends, and close-knit communities.

"Very tenuous." These were Murray Zimiles' words for life in dune shacks. As he and others pointed out, the fragile connections between dune shack society and the dunes were tenuous. They relied on unspoiled dunes, adaptable shacks, and unbroken lines of tradition bearers, that core of the society transmitting the traditional culture. Historically, dune shack residents had worked to preserve these three essential elements.

The tenuous nature of this traditional culture is the final subject of this report. The chapter describes how dune shack residents portray recent social challenges to their life in shacks. The general public's demand for a "piece of unspoiled beach" had never been higher on the lower cape, including the shacks. The recognition of "historic values" placed new demands on shack residents. And the end of legal tenancies raised uncertainties about long-term residents. While the physical preservation of shacks was more certain, the preservation of cultural traditions associated with the shacks was not.

"Ooos-and-Aahs"

Even in Eugene O'Neill's time, the Backshore was a tourist attraction. In 2004, near the center of Provincetown, I encountered a billboard that sold the dune shacks as one of the main sights along the dune taxi tours:

> Art's Dune Tours. See the outback of Provincetown. Tour the awesome scenery throughout the cape National Seashore and sand dunes. Learn the history of the life saving stations and

dune shacks while enjoying the endless scenes of beautiful mountains of sand. Over 54 years.

The history of the dune shacks was promoted alongside the "awesome scenery" and the history of life saving stations (see Fig. 3). To me it raised the question, were shacks historic attractions? Or were they homes? If both, did one threaten the other?

Privacy was one of the highest values in the traditional culture of dune shack society. While valuing this, dune shack residents appeared to be tolerant of the taxi tours, operated by a Provincetown family with long, friendly relations with dune residents. The tours did not stop at shacks or visit the residents, no doubt a mutual accommodation between the tour operators and shack dwellers. Even so, the contradiction of shack privacy and tourism, this underlying tension, was subtly expressed at times. If shacks looked like "sights" to tourists, then tourists looked like "insects" on their "Anthill" (see Chapter 6).

At the root of this tension is the question of cultural authenticity. Can shack residents continue to live authentic lives if they become too much of a tourist attraction? Can artists continue to find conditions of creative solitude with strangers taking pictures? Can dune dwellers do what they have come to do on the dunes under the watchful eye of tourists? This was the point of the humorous story told by Kathie Meads about Joseph Nune's early beach tours and Eugene O'Neill's nude beach parties. As she told it, O'Neill supposedly yelled, "You're really cramping my parties bringing your dune tours over here! Joe, you can stop by anytime, but don't bring the dune tour by anymore!" Her friends laughed at the image of Boston schoolmarms cramping Eugene O'Neill's style because the issue was still fresh, in Provincetown as well as on the dunes. Provincetown had become such a tourist destination and summer resort, its year-round residents were struggling to preserve its traditions (see Chapter 7).

A more recent version of the Nunes-O'Neill imbroglio occurred when Provincetown briefly designated the beach adjoining the Champlin shack as "clothing optional." The Champlins had no forewarning, they told me. The designation drew substantial numbers of nude sunbathers. According to Mildred Champlin, her young grandchildren had to walk among them to access the beach. And the sunbathers were upset at the Champlins on the bluff, going about their normal shack routines. Some female sunbathers yelled at him, chuckled Nat Champlin, calling him a "pervert." It took three years to fix the incompatibility. The town revoked the designation, restoring the beach to prior conditions.

For artists in residence at the C-Scape shack, tourist visits were stipulated requirements. During the Adams-Champlin interview, Sally Adams reported on hearing talk about that kind of program extended to other shacks:

How many years ago was this? [The superintendent] had the brilliant idea that they were going to run tours out to the houses and have all of us sit around and tell our histories. That's another thing, each time the administration changes, high-level administration or local administration, the attitude toward us and the houses and everything has changed dramatically.

Adams did not like the idea. Scheduled visits like these were directly at odds with shack values of solitude, privacy, and autonomy in the traditional culture. In other historic parks and monuments, such programs operate. In Alaska, I remembered boat cruises down the Tanana River out of Fairbanks, stopping to talk with Athabaskans at "traditional" summer fish camps. The camps were run like concessions.

During interviews, some shack residents worried that as legal tenancies ended, dune dwellers might be replaced by other kinds of users, such as those who complied with tourist visits, or occupants unconnected to the dunes except through reading or quick training by program operators. Dawn Zimiles asserted that such programs would replace the dune's cultural traditions with something else:

> I just feel that if you take the people who started the house and the whole scene away from their house, you are not going to have the same culture. Do you know what I mean? If you don't have the real people that built and really lived in that place, that was their way of life, then you can't recreate it. It becomes something else. And here, I think that the original people did have this. A lot of the people are still out there from the original families. My family did have this enthusiasm for the environment and how it lends itself to the inspiration of art. And so now, because people know about that, they have a situation where the government manages the area and brings people to experience the art. But that's not what it was about.

Conrad Malicoat summarized the issue by contrasting residents with "roots" on the Backshore with the "people that flow in-and-out":

> The Park is mainly interested in the people that flow in-and-out, and gawk-and-look, and ooo-and-aah. But [on the dunes] you don't get that aspect of it. There are roots out there. Don't pull those weeds up. *[Laughs.]* They're good weeds. They're very nourishing weeds. And if the Park could do that, that would be another change.

So Malicoat, in fine humor, compared the traditional culture rooted on the Backshore with "weeds." But "good weeds," he laughed at his good-natured jibe. He hoped the weeds would be allowed to continue.

"Weird Paradoxes"

The recognition of the historic values of the dune district saved certain shacks from demolition, according to dune dwellers. It also placed new demands on shack residents. Some of these seemed peculiar to dune dwellers, particularly when working to keep a shack habitable. Andrew Clemons reflected on the "weird paradox" he felt about shack maintenance, working on his family's shack (Clemons-Benson shack):

> I was always aware of the weird paradox of needing to fix things [on the shacks], but also needing to keep things looking like we haven't fixed it, that we haven't tampered with it. The Seashore was telling us we weren't supposed to change it too much.

The historic value of shacks created the paradox. Could shacks change, or must they conform to some historic period? If they must conform, which period?

I interviewed several who mentioned this pressure on the traditional culture. Josephine Del Deo recounted how shacks customarily changed over time, discussing the history of the preservation paradox:

> When Olson became superintendent, all the actions he took as superintendent was to minimize the cottages, to try to get rid of them. Naturally the Park Service didn't want the

> responsibility of maintaining these places. It's costly. So he started by completely bulldozing Charles Schmid's cottage after he died. That raised a hoard of wasps, of hornets, throughout the whole community, not just the dune dwellers. Everyone was incensed that that had been done. So they backed down slightly. We had this hearing in 1985 where we all tried to say, "You can't do this. These cottages are of great historic value. You must honor them."
>
> At that point we were just trying to save the *situ,* the locus of these cottages – we had to try to save just the buildings at that point. You might say we were saving "the locations." But take Phil Malicoat. He had to rebuild his cottage at one point. The dune dwellers, we knew them all. Everybody rebuilt on their own, without expanding the footprint [of the shack]. It was because they wanted to be there.
>
> Frenchie's cottage became very, very low. Every year she had to dig it out of the sand. Finally she said to Sal in 1976, "I'll allow you to put a structure on top of my original cottage." The Park allowed us to do that on the footprint, because really, she couldn't live there. She couldn't use it. So Sal put this cottage up in 1976.
>
> It was in no way similar to what had been there. What had been there was a little tarpaper shack that Frenchie constructed with her own hands, with a dirt floor, unbelievable. It was just gorgeous, so wonderful. She had a pump inside the shack. It was loaded with fleas. We loved it. *[Laughter.]* She did everything herself. She had these lovely painted old things. A marvelous lady. But from the standpoint of historic structures, the structures changed so dramatically over the years.
>
> You know, originally a couple of them were halfway houses. The Jones cottage, Randolph Jones, that was possibly a halfway house because the distances seem to be of that nature and also the size of the place was so miniscule, it couldn't really sustain any other kind of activity. And of course in the 1940s the Navy came and took over the Braaten cottage and they restructured that whole thing. They put soundproofing on the ceiling. You could hardly say this was the original cottage.
>
> That's the way it went. And Sal worked on Hazel's cottages, helping to keep them going, you know. And Boris built his cottage over four times. So when the Park began to say, we were violating the historic structure by changing anything, it was kind of ridiculous. So finally, now we're historic cottages. Then this whole thing about the structure became even more intense.

As recounted by Del Deo, the historic values recognition created the paradox regarding shack renovation. Historically, shack forms were never stagnant. And the Seashore had approved substantial renovations, such as building a shack on top of Frenchie's buried cottage. This was the traditional culture. Any single historic period or particular design for a shack was simply one point in the dynamic flux.

Technology was another place the paradox was debated, as shown in the interview with Maia Champlin Peck and Andrea Champlin:

> Maia Peck: One of my complaints about the historical preservation process is that people think that history stopped at a certain time. You're not allowed to put in obvious visual changes to your such-and-such period historical house because it'll alter the appearance of it. But history is ongoing, and its history is an ongoing adaptation to this environment,

like solar panels, perhaps using better equipment to move sand. So as far as what "standard," I certainly wouldn't set it at 1954 because we like to use the solar power out here, which is a very important thing. It's maintaining the way of life and managing out here with the best tools that we have. We have different tools now.

Andrea Champlin: Yeah. They used the best technology that was available at the time. If they had solar panels back then, they would have used them.

Peck used solar panels to illustrate the inherent tension between historic preservation and living traditions, but there were many other examples I heard during interviews, from the shape of a roof line to whether screws securing shingles should or should not have puttied ends. Peck and Champlin asserted that shack residents customarily incorporated appropriate new technology (what they called the "best" technology). Peck asserted that shack upgrades were aspects of a "way of life," a living tradition (what she called "ongoing history"). I observed at least three shacks with solar panels in 2004 (the Champlin shack, Schuster shack, and Armstrong shack), though there may have been others.

The discussions over shack renovations had a "post-modernist" cast at times. In deciding how to rehabilitate the former Peg Watson shack, Gary Isaacson and Seashore staff negotiated about what "a shack" might look like as a finished product, as if "a shack" were a house type like "Cape Cod Cottage." According to Isaacson, the discussion even came down to details such as "red" being in the kitchen to make it look more authentic (the Seashore thought it should have red). In post-modernist architecture, decorative elements may be plucked out of context and employed in exaggerated styles to make metaphoric, symbolic, and even ironic statements. The measure of authenticity is whether the building evokes a feeling of authenticity (that is, "it looks like a real shack"). Detractors might view this as the replacement of authenticity by contrivance. For instance, Jay Critchley worried that "new money" was transforming Provincetown into a type of theme park ("P-town Inc., Formerly Provincetown," "You'll swear you were really there") (see Chapter 9). Yet even Jay Critchley dipped into the post-modernist pallete in the renovation of the C-Scape shack. The Provincetown Community Compact purposively maintained a rustic, simplified quality to foster solitude, self-confidence, and self-reliance in programmed users. In such cases, "shack" becomes an objectified and manipulated concept, contrasting with the humble precursors of today's "respectable buildings," using Conrad Malicoat's terminology (Chapter 11).

Andrew Clemons (Clemons-Benson shack) said he felt at times that shack residents were living in a "piece of art":

> One of the things about living out here, for me anyway, was this: in everything you do, you sense the artistic qualities in small things. You'll go down and you'll be pumping water and you'll be thinking, 'I'm living a very interesting life right now.' You know how subconsciously, when you look at a piece of art, when you look at a really great piece of art, you know that there's something beyond what's just right in front of you. I think living here reinstates that there is something else. But it's not just a pretty picture. It's the fact that you're doing something in that pretty picture. You're a part of that picture. It reinstates the great stuff about life.
>
> I feel this way about tourists. I have this feeling that tourists have this image of the perfect little Cape Cod town. That's what they go to try to experience. But it's impossible to experience the little quintessential Cape Cod town just by walking around buying postcards and buying t-shirts. If you really want to experience that little Cape Cod town, come live there for a while. Come work on a scalloping boat for a day and see how your hands peel off.

Accordingly, some tourists might think they experience "the little quintessential Cape Cod town" by "buying postcards and buying t-shirts." But for Clemons, living on the dunes since his childhood, an authentic life was manifested by "how your hands peel off" and his internal sense of greatness behind surface forms. To him, authenticity was personally living and working in it.

An Uncertain Future

In my assessment, no dune shack resident I interviewed felt secure about the future of the dune shacks or the cultural traditions associated with them. From the histories they recounted, preservation had been a longstanding concern for shack residents and others on the lower cape (Chapter 2). The preservation effort had variously focused on preserving the dunes against development, preserving the shacks against demolition, and most currently, preserving dune dwellers from dispossession as legal tenancies ended. In 1988, the concern for the future was expressed in a statement from Josephine Del Deo writing to the Massachusetts Historical Commission about historic values:

> We believe that you believe that an entire heritage belonging to the best of American traditions is at stake here, something that does not just vaguely fall within your purview, but is substantially within your jurisdiction. This cultural legacy is now in total jeopardy. It can disappear forever from the American landscape; it may well do so. If it remains, it will remain to remind us, and generations to come, that art is part of the nation's honor; that poets are indispensable statesmen; and creativity, no matter who expresses it, carpenter or astronomer, is the heart of a nation's survival. Kemp may be a minor poet, but he wrote:
>
> > Our sun, with all its worlds, drops down the sky
> > For, banked in shining heaps, the great suns fly
> > Onward in fiery swarms like golden bees,
> > While from all sides the everlasting seas
> > Of night break on them as they thunder by…
> > And ignorant generations live and die
> > Amid this storm of stars, and feel at ease.
>
> Can we feel at ease with our conscience if we deny that this kind of vision has existed in the cottages at Peaked Hill and might exist again? In asking the Massachusetts Historical Commission to declare the entire group of eighteen cottages as a cultural unit to be preserved as symbolic landmarks at the very edge of our continent, we request much more for the future than for ourselves. As I have stated previously and which I feel it is appropriate to repeat:
>
> > This constellation of dune cottages constitutes a continuous enrichment of the American dream traditionally derived from the freedom to imagine and to advance new worlds.
>
> This freedom and this dream should not be lost.

In her statement, Del Deo (1988) portrayed the "cultural legacy" of the shacks as a living tradition ("a continuous enrichment," "the freedom to imagine and to advance new worlds"). In her assessment, the cultural legacy was in "jeopardy." Similar fears for the future still prevailed among dune dwellers in 2004.

Dispossession was the focal concern at present. This opinion was voiced by Dawn Zimiles, whose family's connections to the Gelb-Margo-Zimiles shack were described as "tenuous" by her uncle:

> Most of the people I've been in contact with have not lost their shacks yet. Like Paul Tasha has not lost it but is always afraid of losing it. There are other families. I think most people are afraid of ending up how my family has ended up. That's what they are afraid of.

As described in Chapter 2, Paul Tasha compared the pending loss of the Tasha shack to losing his mother. For him, the prospect was dispiriting, degrading the experience of being at the shack.

Generally, I do not like "what if" questions in interviews, like asking, "What if Boston vanished?" – the door's wide open for speculation. Even so, to explore this concern, I asked some shack residents what it might be like, not living in the family's shack. Zara Jackson spoke from experience. She had lost her shack to arson in 1990 (see Chapter 5):

> That was like the loss of a limb. It was a terrible feeling to have lost it. I was in a state of mourning. It's like an adjunct of myself. When I was a kid, and my parents were separated, I lived in different places. But this was the consistent place. I could always depend on coming back here.

The images she used was "losing a limb," "mourning," and missing the "consistent place" in her life. Her reservation of use with the Seashore allowed the shack to be rebuilt.

Peter and Andrew Clemons discussed the prospect of not living on the dunes in a shack during the interview at the Fowler shack:

> Andrew: I feel that I need to say, I have never experienced an absence of the dunes. But I have to say I'm scared of the possibility of that, really scared, actually. Because I mean, you grow up out here and you have it, and it's like, 'I have a shack.'
>
> The thing is, I know enough about myself now to not plan a life that does not include the shack. I want to move to L.A. and live there, but I'm always, like in the back of my head, I'm like, 'Well, how am I going to get back to the shack? How often am I going to come back?' That's always a part of my process wherever I go.
>
> Peter: I think that's an interesting piece of our experience on the dunes. We had three children, for the last 25 years, and we had so many family and friends, so many of our children's friends and their parents and all, that there were always kids around [the shack]. And I think that's one of the things that owners have contributed to the dunes – there isn't any other mechanism for that. Family. You can't plant families here for a week and have the kids kind of get it. If it's a visit or an afternoon or something, we have had hundreds of kids introduced. But our kids knew it. It was their place to explain. It is the essence of having these places stay in family, to try to keep this whole thing, this tapestry. It will be blown away if it's not part of a family.

Like Zara Jackson, Andrew Clemons had grown up connected to a shack. He asserted that the shack was "always a part" of "my process," and the possibility of losing it was personally frightening. For Peter, the deep connections to the dunes developed by long-term families were at stake.

The Armstrong family discussed this question among themselves. Connie and David Armstrong had a life term reservation for the Armstrong shack, but the next generation of family and friends (including Janet Armstrong and Richard Arenstrup) faced the prospect of loss:

Wolfe: What would be the effects, personally and on the family, if this shack were no longer available in the way it's been?
Janet: It would be like the greatest member of the family dying.
Connie: It's sort of a character in all our lives, even before our children were here. Our children were so passionate about it. We expected to have it the rest of our lives, but this would be up to Janet and Ruth to answer. When we signed the stipulation, our lawyer gave us a reason for taking life instead of the 25 years.
David: We were at an age when he thought there was a good chance that one of us would live more than 25 years. And furthermore, if you took the 25 years and you still were here, and they were out here with bulldozers, you'd feel really bad.
Janet: What an awful choice to have to make. In that sense, if you might compare it to an old, elderly relative dying, it's very sad and you loved them but the time has come. But it's more like a young child dying suddenly. That's what's tragic. That's even more tragic, a child with a future, with a whole life in front of him taken away.
Arenstrup: It's a future that's dying.

David: Depending upon who or what was responsible for it, I don't like to think what my attitude toward them, or it, would be.
Connie: Hopefully, we wouldn't be alive to know that.

Arenstrup: This is particularly difficult on their children, because their children are going to have been here for half a century, and all of a sudden they are going to be ripped out of this environment. They cannot find someplace else.
Janet: It isn't just a house. It's a spirit, a life.
Arenstrup: It's not like you can just pick yourself out of a city neighborhood and move yourself to another neighborhood and say, 'You know, it's approximately the same thing.' This isn't somewhere else.
Wolfe: There's a special attachment?
David: Absolutely.
Connie: There are really deep-felt roots for us. We wanted them to be grounded, to love the place. But I will feel guilty too, if their love… if they're hurt. There are six people involved here, seven.
David: And many others.
Connie: And many others too.

Like Paul Tasha, Janet Armstrong compared the prospect with losing a loved one. But for her, it was like a young child dying suddenly, "a child with a future, with a whole life in front of him taken away." Connie Armstrong expressed feelings of guilt for teaching her children to love a place on the dunes ("we wanted them to be grounded"), then leaving them "hurt."

In this final exchange, members of the Champlin family (Mildred, Paul, Maia, Andrea, and Lydia) and the Adams family (Marcia, Sally, and David) turned their response into a free-form discussion about family. Its thread is that their shacks held their families together:

Maia: I would say this is definitely one of the things that brings us together. We come as a family. We make a point of rendezvousing here at the cape at the same time, even though it's very difficult. We all have jobs and lives and we do not live on the cape. I

see my childhood friend. I grew up with this woman, and I see her a couple of weeks in the summer. This is what holds our group together.
Sally: The same is true of our family. This is where we congregate. This is where we had a service for Ken.
Mildred: They didn't actually bury Ken here, but they had a service.
Marcia: And the 50th anniversary party.
Paul: Leo's ashes were scattered here.
Mildred: The girls came up, Maia and Sally, for Leo's interment. We threw the ashes in.
Sally: Well, not really an interment – more like an ex-terment. *[Laughter]*
David: Leo is all over the dunes.

Paul: But the kids, Maia and Andrea, John and Tom and everybody would get together, for the parties we did have. We'd go in back and we'd play flashlight tag and king of the hill.
Mildred: And the age range for king of the hill was 16 down to 3.
Sally: And still is.
Maia: And Sarah did point out that we are continuing it – me with Sarah, and Tom with Lydia. And you're starting to make new friends down at Emily and Evelyn's and their son.
Paul: Emily has a 10-year-old son, Sean, who is just a real crack. He's a dunes person. He's a real "dunie."
Mildred: Last night, Paul's family came. We had mostly kids. They had to go back out on the dunes. We had the greatest time watching those kids. It's just like the old days.

Maia: I think if we didn't have access to the houses, we're geographically dispersed, and there would be definitely degradation of the ties. We wouldn't have this experience together year after year. I think it'll have a huge impact.

Andrea: And I think there's value in having a place like C-Scape where people can come and have their needs taken care of for a week and make beautiful pictures, and that's lovely. We're sad because the person who was there, it was the end of his lease, and so he had to leave his home. But there is a value for a place like C-Scape. But there's also room and value for places where there's continuity. You need that continuity.
Sally: And certainly a week at a time is not the experience out here.
Mildred: It would be a totally different experience.

David: Our 16-year-old grandson is currently with us. We got such a kick last night watching all the kids go out over the dunes, including the 16-year-old, down to 4, I guess. They're all leaping, rolling.
Andrea: And they're all learning something about the dunes and rare ecosystems. I used to work with wetlands biologists who were very envious that we came to these understandings. Now here's another bunch that's starting to learn about how sand moves.
Mildred: We go out every night and look at the stars, with a star book that I have that's all marked up.
Sally: Kyle brought his from Michigan.

Andrea: We've also known people down at C-Scape. They are transient community. But the art community isn't that big, so I know people from New York who have done the C-Scape thing, or want to who have applied and not gotten in. Remember Portia Munson

came out with her husband and child? We visited with them. I know her in New York. They have a house in upstate. They're not living in the city anymore.

Mildred: So, I think it would really be, regarding your question, what would happen – I think it would kind of fall apart.

Sally: Fall apart.

Mildred: We would carry on our lives. We would try to get together one on one, but it's very difficult to get everyone in one spot.
Maia: And we'd lose a common interest. She's an artist in New York City. She has an entirely different life than we do. We have the suburban life, my husband is an academic. We'd have very different interests. This is a common thing. We pool our resources and we come together and try to work out our problems, and celebrate, have our celebrations.

Lydia: Since some of us live far away from the ocean, it's a real treat for us.
Maia: She's going to my childhood haunts, yesterday at the flats, picking blueberries and going to the dunes.
Sally: I guess we might even show you our secret blueberry stash.
David: There's an extra charge for that.

Andrea: No, it's fascinating. We have the only memory on the beach of half of the stuff out here and half of the artists. Everybody's gone. The Park personnel changes on a regular basis, except for one person.

Mildred: If we go, it's like the Smithsonian burning down.

Paul: That's already happened to a great degree in town.

Sally: And the same thing is true in our family. Except for a couple of years that we missed, this is where we've been in the summers. This is how we've spent our lives. It's our identity, really.

For the Champlins and the Adams, the question of potential loss of the families' shacks evokes a kaleidoscope of thoughts and memories from everyone. It's a blur of past, present, and future, of old and young, and of the living and dead. There are recollections of who visited who and when at the shack, the gatherings of sisters and brothers and cousins and best friends, the ties that bind. And about last night's "king of hill" after dinner by flashlight, "just like the old days." And learning about the dunes. And the marked-up star guides. And the 50th anniversary party. And the scattering of the ashes of their beloved Leo "all over the dunes." And "the girls" coming up for it. And the newest neighbor, the 10-year-old boy who's a "real crack." And tomorrow's promise to reveal the "secret blueberry stash" to the latest grandchildren. It's a blurred catalog of dune life, flashing before mind's eye. And the matriarch Mildred proclaims in recalling it, even just last night's joys – "we had the greatest time."

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