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EAST GREENWICH

Harris: 'There is no length these people won't go to'

Wife of late marina owner challenges town attorney's court filing, claims property is not "abandoned."

By Chris Keegan
Associate Editor

The wife of Harris Marina's late owner is challenging the town of East Greenwich's claim that the Rocky Hollow Road property is "abandoned," and is questioning the town attorney's claim that he cannot find any heirs to a parcel she has been paying property taxes on.

Judy Harris, an East Greenwich native who now lives in West Palm Beach, Florida, said Monday that despite the town's lawsuit against the estate of Kenneth Harris, the Greenwich Cove property has not been abandoned. She said she was never notified of the lawsuit, which seeks to reclaim the

property.

"I've so had it with these people," she said during a phone interview. "You have no idea what they did to us the last several years."

The lawsuit, filed earlier this year in Kent County Superior Court, alleges the former marina sits on town-owned land and constitutes a public and visual nuisance. It seeks the removal of all structures at the site, claiming the property has fallen into a state of disrepair and has become a threat to public safety.

In May, Superior Court Judge Bennett Gallo allowed the town to post notice of the lawsuit at the marina property and advertise in The Providence Journal, after Town Solicitor Peter Clarkin

signed a sworn affidavit stating he could find no estate in Florida or Rhode Island, and had not been able to locate any heirs.

Kenneth Harris, who opened the marina in 1979, passed away in Florida in January.

"[The property] is not abandoned," said Judy Harris, who contacted the Independent after reading a story about the lawsuit in last week's edition. "Someone is there twice a week to maintain the property."

She called Clarkin's claim that he couldn't find a next of kin "ridiculous," given that she has been paying taxes on the marina property and town officials have her address in West Palm Beach. An official in the town tax collector's office confirmed Monday that

Marina/A4



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

The wife of the late Kenneth Harris, who operated Harris Marina on Rocky Hollow Road for three decades, is challenging the town of East Greenwich's claim that the property has been "abandoned."



In bloom

Photographers and flower lovers have found nirvana visiting the lotus flowers in bloom near the Hamilton Harbour condominium complex, shown above and at left, on Boston Neck Road in North Kingstown. The flowers were introduced in the early 1980s by the developers who converted the former Hamilton Web mill into housing.

Photos: Paul J. Spetrini

CHECK IT OUT!

Maury Loontjens Library is one of RI's busiest



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Lynn Coupland, right, the circulation supervisor at Maury Loontjens Memorial Library in Narragansett, feeds hamsters in the children's room Saturday as Patti Teferian of Narragansett and her granddaughters, Alexis, 8, left, and Rylee Teixeira, 6, of Acushnet, Massachusetts, look on.

WHAT'S THIS?

◆ Check It Out! is a summer series chronicling the unique personalities of our area public libraries.

By Stephen Greenwell Jr.
Staff Writer

Nestled in the Pier on the corner of Kingstown Road and Caswell Street, Maury Loontjens Memorial Library is in its busiest time of year, thanks to its location near Narragansett Town Beach, The Towers and the sea wall.

According to 2014 usage figures collected by the state Office of Library & Information Services, Narragansett is seventh busiest in the state, with roughly

221,000 visits annually, behind much bigger libraries in cities such as Providence, Warwick, Cranston and East Providence. Library Director Patti Arkwright, a resident and native of North Kingstown, said it is hard to quantify how much busier the library gets during the summer, but there are clearly seasons of patrons.

"Usually starting around mid-May, we really start seeing a difference in the traffic coming in, and a lot more requests for general information," Arkwright said. "What's going on in town? What do you have planned for summer? You can see them planning their weeks."

Library/A5

PASSAGES

Rocky Hill math teacher revered as a 'great mentor'

By Chris Church
Staff Writer

Loring "Terry" Coes III was not simply a high school math teacher.

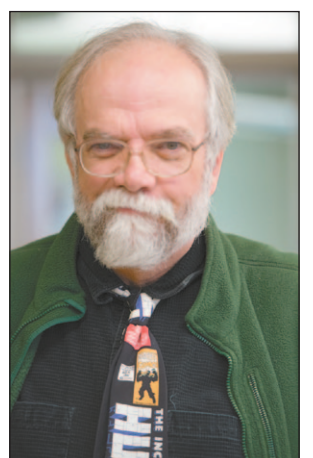
He was a quiet and humble intellectual, a gifted photographer, a beloved mentor, a loving family man and an inspiration to many.

The long-time educator at Rocky Hill School died June 13 at the age of 65, just two days before he was set to retire after 41 years at the Potowomut school.

Coes is survived by his wife of almost 43 years, Dana (Cross) Coes of Wakefield, daughters Katherine Swanson of East Greenwich and Jennifer Coes of Malden, Massachusetts, and a large extended family.

Patricia Pontarelli, head of Rocky Hill's Lower School, first met Coes in 2001 when she was hired as a first grade teacher.

"He just loved children of



COURTESY: PETER HANNEY

Longtime Rocky Hill School math teacher Loring "Terry" Coes III died just two days before he was set to retire in June.

all ages and really enjoyed them and really saw what they were all capable of, regardless of how young they were," she said. "He was a

Coes/A4

Rockin' stroll



PHOTO: MICHAEL DERR

Greg LaBoss of Coventry performs outside Jigger's Diner during the "Music on Main Stroll" held July 23 on Main Street in East Greenwich. LaBoss was one of more than 50 musicians to perform during the event.

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UNDER THE SEA

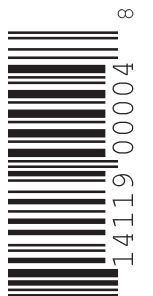
Theatre By The Sea's "Disney's The Little Mermaid" is full of spectacle. C1

EXCLUSIVE ON THE WEB



State lawmakers doled out \$2.5 million in legislative grants to charities and organizations this past fiscal year. Should the General Assembly have the authority to issue grants?
Yes - 6 votes (13 percent)
No - 40 votes (87 percent)

IndependentRI.com



Marina

Continued from A1

taxes on the property for 2014 – which totaled \$723.39 – were paid in full.

Judy Harris also said her late husband has three brothers, a sister and four estranged children who live in the East Greenwich area, and Kenneth Harris's brother, Norman, is the owner of Norman's Restaurant on Main Street.

Following hearings in 2009 and 2010, the state Coastal Resources Management Council ruled the marina was operating in a public right of way, and ordered all unpermitted docks and floats in coastal waters to be removed. The order was upheld in a July 2011 Superior Court decision, and the CRMC considers the town of East Greenwich to be the parcel's current owner-of-record, according to an agency spokeswoman.

While the marina predates the establishment of the CRMC, Kenneth Harris failed to obtain "grandfather" status with the coastal agency between 1994 and 1999 – or with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which the CRMC would have honored.

"They tried to take that marina away from my husband for years," Judy Harris said, noting her late husband spent tens of thousands of dollars fighting for the property over a five-year span. "There is no length that these people won't go to."

She also said the court summons that was supposed to be posted at the marina property was placed in error on adjacent land owned by Anderson Boatyard LLC. Clarkin did not return a phone message from the Independent by press time Wednesday afternoon.

Young accuses Town Council of 'racism'

In an unexpected twist, Christopher Young – a perennial candidate for the Providence mayoral seat who also has run for Congress – accused the East Greenwich Town Council of racism during Monday night's meeting, and offered to mediate the case. (The council discussed the lawsuit with the town's Cove Management Commission in executive session



PHOTO: JAMES BESSETTE

Christopher Young, a perennial Providence mayoral candidate, addresses the East Greenwich Town Council Monday night. Young offered to mediate a lawsuit the town has filed against the estate of Kenneth Harris, who owned Harris Marina on Rocky Hollow Road.

prior to the public meeting.)

Young, who is no stranger to seeking the political limelight, was arrested in 2009 at Brown University during a health care forum, and again in 2011 during a same-sex civil union protest at the Statehouse. He also was kicked out of a Providence mayoral debate in 2010 holding a 3-foot statue of the Virgin Mary.

During public comment, Young said he found it hard to believe that Clarkin could not locate Harris's kin because it took him just "five minutes" to find Judy Harris's address in the town's tax database. He accused the town of treating the Harris family unfairly because they're African American.

"There have been issues of discrimination with this family for decades in the town, including unequal treatment of their family," he told the council. "I'm trying to avoid the town paying litigation costs ... I'm trying to mediate so there aren't any excessive attorneys' fees that are charged to the town, and that the family is treated more fairly, since the family helped build the town."

"They've been paying taxes on their property," Young added. "To come into someone's property and say they're going to take it from you, it's like the town coming in and taking one of your properties. It's just outrageous."

Young said the property could serve as a "public

stateroom room facility" similar to a yachting center, where people could learn how to sail. He could not be reached for additional comment by press time.

Town Council President Michael Isaacs said Tuesday he was "taken aback" by Young's comments.

"I was surprised with the allegations, which were very unfounded," he said. "Our solicitor was informed that Mr. Young does not represent Mrs. Harris and appeared at the meeting all on his own. We are reaching out to Mrs. Harris to try to work with her on an amicable solution to all of this. Our solicitor will be speaking with her."

Isaacs said a previous Town Council tried to work with Harris by offering him a 10-year lease on the marina property in 2010, though an agreement was never reached.

"The council has been sympathetic and has tried to help Harris and the boaters who kept their boats there," he said. "We worked with them to come up with a lease solution so that he could remain in business ... This started eight years ago with notices from the state saying the marina was not legally permitted. The town tried to work with the marina and the state to keep the marina open for as long as the state would permit."

"Ultimately, with permitting the marina and all that, it did not work out," Isaacs

continued. "We were willing to execute a 10-year lease, but unresolved issues with the CRMC never got resolved. We tried to work with [Harris]. We were supportive."

Isaacs also said the town has worked publicly with Norman's Restaurant, which fell behind on its property tax and sewer bills last year.

"We granted them multiple extensions, worked with them to set up a payment plan as we did with other restaurants to keep them in business and [now they're] back in business," he said. "We worked with them just like we'd work with anyone else to keep them open."

Asked about the Harris' continued tax payments on the marina property, Isaacs said: "I've always been told the town asserted ownership of the right of way. The town felt legal clarity was necessary, but I think the best way to resolve this is with a discussion with Mrs. Harris. That's what I'd like to see happen."

Judy Harris said Tuesday via email that she never asked Young to serve as a mediator, and that Young asked her to sign the property over to him. A court hearing in the case scheduled for Monday has been continued until Aug. 24.

Editorial Assistant James Bessette contributed to this story.

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EAST GREENWICH

DOT: Time's up for town to buy Frenchtown Road parcel for housing

Agency appears to be moving ahead with land auction, despite local plan for affordable housing.

By James Bessette
Special to The Independent

Unless more time is granted to the town of East Greenwich, plans for a new affordable housing complex on Frenchtown Road may never come to fruition.

Town officials received word from the state Department of Transportation last week that they were "essentially out of time" regarding the purchase of a 3-acre parcel on Frenchtown Road near Route 403. The land, which is currently for sale, will soon go up for auction by the DOT, according to Planning Director Lisa Bourbonnais.

Representatives from the East Greenwich Housing Authority, Cove Homes Inc., FJS Associates Ltd. and Union Studio offered a proposal to the Town Council in April to build an affordable housing complex for seniors and/or disabled residents.

But the plan, which would have aided the town's need to increase its affordable housing stock, required the town to spend \$336,000 to buy the parcel from the DOT – or enter a lease agreement and acquire the property with Rhode Island Housing loan funding.

Bourbonnais said Tuesday the town knew the parcel went up for sale last June, but had no interest in acquiring it – nor did it have the finances to obtain it – and was going to defer the offer to another buyer.

That changed in the spring when the Housing Authority presented its plan to construct a new facility that would include 60 to 70 one-bedroom units, common areas for dining, a gym and a small theater for residents with low-to-moderate incomes. However, the land sale was already well underway when the Housing Authority unveiled its vision to the council, Bourbonnais said.

Bourbonnais said the DOT gave the town – which has the first right of refusal – until the end of July to decide if it wanted to purchase the parcel. However, the town was given assurances from the State Properties Committee that as long as it was moving toward acquiring the parcel "for public benefit," then it

would "be given the courtesy of figuring out [the] financing and understanding it a little better," she said.

"[The DOT] has been trying to put this out for auction for 13 months and [they] said 'We're tired of waiting,'" Bourbonnais said. "So we kind of gave everybody a jolt on it and said the DOT is in very much a hurry and it's time to either agree to sign a [purchase and sales] agreement or not. I don't know what the reasoning was [for] the DOT to call us and tell us we're out of time. They are going to continue to work with us, but they're losing patience."

Kevin Nelson, supervising planner for the state Division of Planning, said municipalities are given a 30-day right of refusal before another offer from a private party can be approved. Therefore, if an offer is made, a city or town has 30 days to either match the offer or pass.

Nelson, who stated he isn't directly involved with the Frenchtown Road land discussions, couldn't confirm if an offer from a private party was made on the parcel and whether the town was provided 30 days notice.

State Properties Commission Chairman Kevin Flynn could not be reached for comment by press time, nor could Paul Carceri, chief of real estate for the DOT.

The DOT land issue was an agenda item set to be discussed publicly during Monday's Town Council meeting, however council President Michael Isaacs deferred discussion until a closed-door executive session meeting after 9 p.m.

As to why the matter wasn't discussed in open session, Isaacs said "legal issues" had to be discussed. He said the issue would then be addressed publicly at a future council meeting. The next council meeting is scheduled for Aug. 24.

Sidewalk alcohol licenses OK'd

Also Monday, the council renewed evening outdoor liquor licenses for six Main Street establishments, allowing them to serve alcohol along the sidewalk starting Saturday through Oct. 31.

The restaurants that were granted approval are Dante's Kitchen, 315 Main St.; Fat Belly's Pub, 241 Main St.; La Masseria, 223 Main St.; The Grille on Main, 50 Main St.; Rasa, 149 Main St.; and Red Stripe, 455 Main St.

Coes

Continued from A1

great math mentor. He was always smiling, he was kind and respectful to everyone. He was just a wonderful man."

Colleagues said Coes invested himself fully into students' success, not just in the classroom but in every aspect of their lives. Pontarelli's son and daughter, who both graduated from Rocky Hill, were no exception.

"They have really fond memories of him, not just as a teacher but as a person as well," Pontarelli said. "He will be truly missed."

Maureen Fahey, chairwoman of the math department, first met Coes when he hired her in 1997, and she said he played a key role in how she approached teaching.

"He was very big on having kids think instead of having them work on short, quick math questions," she said. "He always wanted them to think and discover on their own using guided activities."

Fahey said Coes was incredibly adept at teaching all children – from the advanced placement students to those who struggled with math.

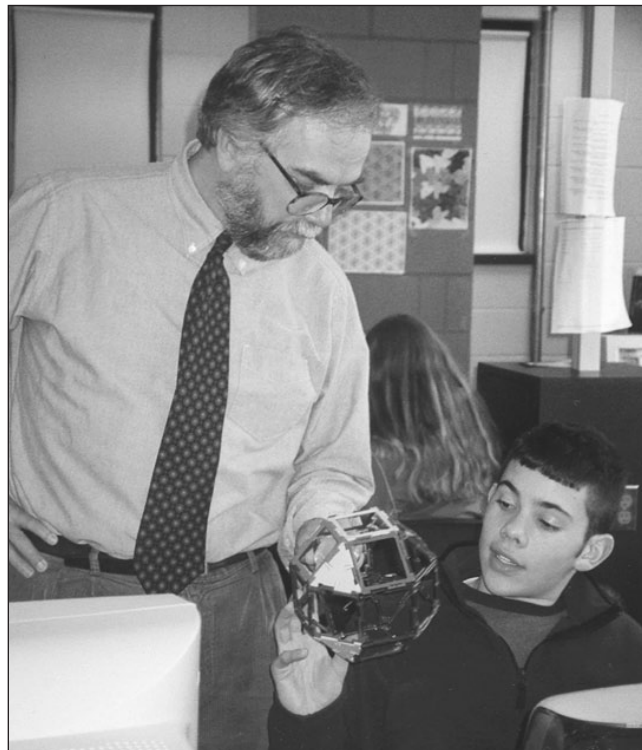
"He was somebody that could teach every end of the spectrum and that is remarkable," she said.

According to his obituary, Coes was a 1987 Woodrow Wilson Fellow and won a Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics in 1998. He contributed to multiple mathematics textbooks and journals and served as a dedicated officer and board member for several regional and national mathematics education organizations.

"His genius was known to relatively few people because he was such a modest person," said Matt Gnoflo, a Latin teacher and director of diversity at Rocky Hill.

Coes was revered by students, a fact that was illustrated each year when seniors would ask him for letters of recommendations to various colleges and universities.

"I think that is a huge testament to the respect and love



COURTESY: PETER HANNEY

Rocky Hill School math teacher Loring "Terry" Coes III is shown above with middle school student Danny Houde (Class of 2005) sometime between 1999-2001.

the students had for him," Gnoflo said.

Coes earned his bachelor's degree in English from Williams College in 1971 and completed his master's degree in mathematics from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 1986. Prior to his hiring at Rocky Hill School in 1974, he taught fourth grade at the Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C., for three years.

As a teacher with more than 40 decades of experience, Coes was not the type of teacher who rebuffed change as technology changed the way teachers teach in recent years.

"I think sometimes younger people can engage in age discriminatory behavior," Gnoflo said. "If you did that with Terry you were mistaken. He was one of the most progressive educators I've ever met. He not only engaged in new technology but he often lead the charge in educating and training other educators."

Aside from being one of the cornerstones of the Rocky Hill community for more than four decades, Coes may be best known for his photography,

and would often be seen walking the school's bucolic bay-side campus with his camera strapped around his neck.

"His photography brought out a side of him that people didn't always see in school," Gnoflo said. "He had a way of getting people to photograph in a way that is so natural. He captured those candid moments because he had a special gift of putting people at ease."

"The two best pictures I've ever had taken of me in my life were taken by him," Fahey added.

Coes served as the school's photographer, and at the end of each school year, he would provide CDs to each graduating senior with photos he had taken of them through their time at the school. He also would put together a slide show for each senior class capturing moments that comprised their time at the school – from first to 12th grade for some students.

"I don't think there was ever a dry eye in the house after those presentations," Fahey said.

In 2010, he founded Coes Photography, a boutique

photography service specializing in family and event photography.

Former students took to Facebook to express their condolences and share memories of the impact Coes had on their lives.

"Terry Coes didn't just teach math at Rocky Hill, he left a special mark on each and everyone of our hearts," Shannon O'Rourke wrote on the "Remember Terry Coes" page. "Thank you for not only teaching me concepts of geometry, but for being such an inspirational photographer and capturing every moment throughout my high school career. This world will not be the same without you."

Amy Foy wrote, "Growing up, math was by far my worst subject in school. It was honestly insanely embarrassing how horrible I was at it. Even my own mother would throw up her hands in a crazy lady frustration not understanding why I didn't 'get it.' That never seemed to matter to my high school math teacher Terry Coes. He was always the most patient with me, which meant more to me [than] he probably ever realized. An incredibly kind teacher and all around human being. I took my first photography class from him, which I will be forever grateful for the things he taught me. I wholeheartedly feel so blessed to have known him and am saddened to hear of his passing. Great teachers can leave life long lasting impressions on you."

A memorial service in celebration of Coes's life will be held Sept. 12 at 11 a.m. at Rocky Hill School, 530 Ives Road, Potowomut.

Private messages of condolence for the family may be sent to Avery-Storti Funeral Home, 88 Columbia Street, Wakefield, RI 02879. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to either the Terry Coes Innovative Teaching Endowment (rockyhill.org/donate/coes-endowment) or the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Mathematics Education Trust (nctm.org/met); or to the Norman Bird Sanctuary in Middletown (normanbirdsantuary.org/support/ways-to-give).

Meet Luke



Luke is a friendly black and white cat with a black spot on his nose and chin. He's about 2½ years old. He's neutered and up-to-date on his shots, and he tested negative for feline AIDS and feline leukemia. Luke has a brother, Kyle, who's black and white, too. If you would like more information on Luke and Kyle, call the Pet Refuge, 500 Stony Lane, North Kingstown, at 294-1115 or stop in during business hours Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Adoption applications are available on the shelter's website at petrefuge.net/adoptions.html.

PET REFUGE No-Kill Animal Shelter
500 Stony La., North Kingstown 401-294-1115 • www.petrefuge.net
Make a difference in an animal's life