

Fairhaven High School Hall of Fame Award

Fairhaven, Massachusetts

June 30, 2012

Introduction of John Everett



Kristin Vehrs

Good evening:

It is my privilege to introduce the honoree, John Everett. I am Kris Vehrs -- John's wife of almost 30 years.

John is a native of Sciticut Neck and is a third generation lobsterman. After graduating from Fairhaven High in 1961, he attended the New Bedford Institute of Technology, now UMass Dartmouth. From the age of 4, John worked alongside his father fishing and learned a great deal about mechanics and fixing engines- very necessary when alone on the water. In college he chose to major in engineering because he already knew something about engines – boy was he surprised when he found out about all of the math involved!

After graduating from college, he was off to Cape Canaveral for four years to launch rockets with the Apollo space program. However, "God's country," as he calls it, drew him back again to fish with his father, Johnny Everett and Uncle, Tony Everett.

He found his life's passion when he started working for the National Marine Fisheries Service, which allowed him to use his personal fishing experiences and his doctorate in business administration from Florida State University to develop and manage fisheries policies and science. John's roots in Fairhaven have inspired many of his passions at work and at home. His own observations fishing in Fairhaven led him to study new theories of fisheries ecology. His fishing background made him obsessed with the weather – the weather channel theme song is one our family knows well, and he always talks about his dream house with a widow's peak to watch the storms roll in. He was able to channel this passion and his knowledge of oceans into work for the International Panel on Climate Change, leading work on Oceans and Coastal Zones, Polar Regions, and Fisheries over a dozen years. His work and that of his colleagues led to a shared Nobel prize for the IPCC. This led to an appointment in Rome to set up the United Nations Atlas of the Oceans -- an Internet website designed to share information about the ocean among all countries and peoples.

John retired 10 years ago from the National Marine Fisheries Service after 31 years. He started his own fisheries and consulting business as a side project, and has now thoroughly flunked his first retirement. Ocean Associates has grown to 200 employees worldwide, including several members of our family and our cul-de-sac where we live in Virginia.

Even though he no longer lives here, John has maintained his connection to Fairhaven. Our freezer is always stocked with quahogs John has harvested on his frequent visits. He has not forgotten his handy-man skills learned as a fisherman that are now so valuable to our family and our neighborhood – sometimes a line forms on our couch with neighbors bearing broken things to be fixed. I know John is very thankful for his continued Fairhaven High friendships, and I as well now call many of his classmates friends.

John is joined here tonight by his mother Miriam Everett a 1939 graduate of Fairhaven High, his Aunt Barbara Fuller, class of 1943, his sister Bette, class of 1965, and her husband Bob Hamilton, John's daughter Susan and her husband Frank Linhares and our daughter

Kimberly. We are all very proud of his accomplishments and we hope there are more to come.

### Acceptance of Achievement Award



John Everett

Thanks to all who made this award possible – from those who nominated me and to my family and friends, who provided nurturing and support and taught me their work ethic over the years. Everything I have accomplished is because of the people and institutions, such as the Congregational Church, DeMolay, and Boy Scouts, that provided the framework and much of the invaluable knowledge that would be needed wherever I went. They taught me about hard work, honesty, being trustworthy and the value of friendships.

I would like to share with you some personal highlights along my journey. The things I learned in Fairhaven have followed me everywhere I have been.

As a fisherman, I learned there is no pay unless you work and that the work day is very long in the summer. There is rarely a day off and this is fine. I enjoyed being on the water, trying to outfox the other fishermen, using the knowledge taught to me

by my father and grandfather. This same idea follows me now as I enjoy competing with larger companies, using everything I have learned along the way.

As Kris implied, I was not fond of math and avoided it at FHS like the plague. I wanted to be a history teacher and lobster in the summer. But, there was no way to pay for college except at New Bedford Tech and since I knew how to fix engines, I chose Engineering. My mother knew the Dean of Admissions and got me in on probation because I had none of the math and physics prerequisites. I kept fishing for a year after I received my engineering degree, but we moved to Pocasset on Cape Cod, so that I did not compete with my father. There was double the money as a fisherman than the engineering jobs available.

As a youngster in Fairhaven I read everything I could about astronomy and science fiction, so when the Chrysler Corporation invited me to join their Apollo team launching the Saturn rocket, I sold my boat, gave my pots to my father, and moved to Florida.

My time in Florida was marked by highs and lows. Six months into my assignment, astronauts Grissom, Chafee, and White were killed during a pre-launch test for which I was the coordinator. It took several stressful months to find out that I had not been the one responsible for anything that led to the fire. A few months later, as Chrysler's Technical Lead for the Saturn I, I was asked to present the plans for launching the next rocket to the Space Center managers and by television to NASA Houston and NASA Headquarters. I was 24 years old. In the front row of the large, filled auditorium, a few feet in front of me sat the man who designed the rocket, Werner Von Braun. It was pure excitement.

After 4 years at Kennedy and with a new Masters degree in hand, I was en route to a new job in Burlington VT. While stopping in Fairhaven, the job fell through and I stayed a year working with my father quahogging in the outer harbor. The outer harbor had been closed for 50 years due to sewage pollution, and when my father started fishing it the harbor was filled with big old quahogs – worth only 3 cents a pound, and the younger \$1 a pound quahogs were nowhere to be found. In the following years we and three other boats dredged the harbor with big hydraulic clam dredges. To my father's amazement the area became much more productive, and we were able to catch our limit of 3000 pounds of little necks in just 2 hours of dredging- an awful lot of money. The harder we fished, the more young quahogs there were. We threw the old ones back to make room for the high valued littlenecks.

After a year of fishing with my father and Uncle Tony, industry leaders finally persuaded the National Marine Fisheries Service to hire me because of my Master's thesis recommendations on the government vessel subsidy programs, which

Congress had adopted and passed into law. I was the only former fisherman, as well as the only engineer and business major at fisheries Headquarters.

As I left for my government career in Fisheries, my father told me to figure out why it seemed that dredging led to hugely increased quahog production. This took many years - but after reading about similar experiences elsewhere and research findings, I realized that dredging provides the clean stones and shells that baby quahogs need for attachment. After talking with members of the Fairhaven-New Bedford scallop industry and reviewing more research at their request, the same idea looks to be true for scallops and many other important resources. The New England Fishery Management Council is working to verify this, and if it is supported, fisheries regulations might be changed to reduce closed areas - since closed areas don't encourage production and I believe actually reduce production.

My father also told me to "straighten out this fisheries mess." Throughout my career I kept this in mind, trying to make sure I was part of the solution and not part of the problem. While working a year in the US Senate, I led the first revision of the Fisheries Management Act. In that role **and** as head of Fisheries Policy and Planning for a dozen years, I had my chance to get fisheries policies better coordinated and based on science. As bad as things are today, they might have been worse.

My father taught me the "foggy day rule" and it's corollary that nothing in the sea dies of old age. As I would sit in meetings in Washington, my colleagues would often try to second guess the local fisheries managers, by imposing more stringent regulations such as closing areas or specifying times that boats could work. I would remind them their ideas would not pass muster against my father's rules. If a cop was not on every boat, there would always be a foggy day where someone would find a way to catch the critter you were trying to protect. The fishermen had to agree the rules were needed and that they were enforceable for everyone. Usually, the local managers had done this coordination pretty well. Managing a common property such as the ocean's resources is a complex issue.

In 1999, I began a 5 year assignment setting up and managing the United Nations Atlas of the Oceans, working in Rome 1/3 time while retaining my regular job as Chief of Fisheries Research. I was in heaven, rekindling my love of history from the days when I had wanted to be a teacher, and exploring ancient Rome and other parts of Italy every moment I could. The restaurants were also thoroughly explored.

The day I retired from the government I left for Rome, to continue developing the UN Atlas of the Oceans. This consulting job for the UN led to further work and forming a corporation so 17 of my buddies and I could work together in our retirement life. We enjoy working together and mentoring the next generation of fisheries scientists and managers. None of us have the all too-pervasive thought of "leaving the job in the

office” when we go home. For us it means we can think about things all weekend or all night and hit the desk on Monday (or Saturday or Sunday) morning with our brains in gear.

I could not have planned the path I took, but everything provided a foundation for something later in life. Supervising work in Rome and at the National Marine Fisheries Service at the same time helped me learn to work nearly completely on the internet – the key thing that makes my consulting business possible.

As a government manager, I always wondered if I could make it in the private sector. The success of Ocean Associates provides the answer and has a special meaning to me.

My father always called Fairhaven “God’s Country”. He was right. I’d like to thank everyone here tonight and Fairhaven High School once again.

Thank you!