

## **OCTOBER 27, 2008 F.A.H.P. NEWS**

**Juliet Mace Pyle (c. 1902-c. 1980):** Juliet Pyle was widowed in the early 1930's with two small children, Bob and "Bunny". Well educated, she was left penniless in the midst of the Depression. Charles W. Bush, then principal of Wilmington Friends School, heard of her plight and offered her a job as a teacher's assistant. A fringe benefit was a free education for her children who both turned out to be "straight A" students. Bob and I were in the same class. His mother became an assistant to beloved teacher Mary B. Passmore, who taught fourth grade at Friends for 35 years. That was the year (1932-33) that I went through the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Having no place to live, the Pyles moved in with a Mr. Downing, an elderly widower who lived at 504 So. Clayton Street in Wilmington. Mrs. Pyle was a good cook and the presence of her and her family in his comfortable home was a real shot-in-the-arm to his lonely life. Before Mr. Bush retired as principal at Friends, he needed a dietician and someone to run the school cafeteria. Juliet Pyle fit this need perfectly. She held this position until the school left 4<sup>th</sup> & West Streets in 1937, and helped organize the new cafeteria at the Alapocas campus.

With financial help from a few friends, she opened a restaurant called the "Coffee Shop" in the basement of the new DiSabatino Building at 9<sup>th</sup> and Orange Streets in Wilmington. With good home cooking, it was quite successful from the start, especially at lunch time. In those days there were few good restaurants in the downtown area. The competition seemed to be the caterer Edith McConnell's restaurant (first on Market Street and then on West 9<sup>th</sup>), Judson Ryon's Natural Food Restaurant on King Street, the New York Restaurant on lower Market Street, and two seafood places on Shipley Street, Comegy's, and McClafferty's. Restaurants in the Hotel duPont and even in the Hotel Darling were considered too fancy and expensive for the average lunch.

When World War II was raging, Juliet Pyle, then in her early 40's, joined the WACS. Eventually, as a staff-sergeant, she became head of the WAC recruiting office in Oklahoma City. In March, 1945, when I was assigned to Will Rogers Field for Weather Reconnaissance training, I learned she was there, and I asked her for a date. She accepted, so here was this 21-year-old lieutenant having dinner with a staff sergeant old enough to be his mother. We had a brief but pleasant evening together.

After the war, an elderly Robert Pyle, a distant cousin of her late husband Lawrence, owned the Conard-Pyle Company (Star Roses) of West Grove, PA, and his company owned the Red Rose Inn. The Inn had served food and had a few rooms for overnight guests (Calvin Coolidge's widow Grace stayed there with a companion in the 1930's on their way down U.S. Route 1 to Florida). The older Pyle needed a resident manager for the Inn, and he thought of Juliet. She took the job and greatly enhanced the food operation. In the 1950's, it was one of my parents' favorite eating places, and we would often go for Sunday dinner. Robert Pyle died in 1952, but his successor, Sidney Hutton, liked the Inn's management, and Juliet stayed there until she finally retired in the mid-1960's. A very attractive woman, she added a lot to the people and places that touched her life.

Our “Steamin’ Weekend” (October 25-26) has just passed, with one very poor-weather day and one bright and beautiful fall day. With heavy rain most of the afternoon, attendance on Saturday was under 100, and on a sunny Sunday it was about 300. As usual, however, we had a lot of very happy people, and a wonderful group of volunteers, with all jobs well-covered. Both 1908 cars, the “Gentleman’s Speedy Roadster” and the “Semi-Racer” gave rides in celebration of their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays. Our friend and member Ed Lee, with his high-wheeled bicycle and full riding regalia, was, as always, a big hit. A new orange vehicle was on hand, courtesy of the State of Delaware, to bring people who don’t walk well from the parking lot, and proved its worth on Saturday in the heavy rain. Rob and Chevonne Robison were in charge of the weekend, and did an outstanding job. Many thanks to them and to all who made it happen.

Last Thursday, 13 of us traveled to Dover to accept the Governor’s Volunteer(s) of the Year Award in the category of Cultural Arts. A nice dinner was had at the Dover Downs Hotel, a first visit for several of us. About 25 Governor’s Awards were given out, and the whole ceremony was completed in one hour- very well organized! Thanks to Catherine Coin for nominating the volunteers of FAHP, and to all who made it possible. We have a nice plaque to commemorate the occasion and the award. For those who stayed behind, we thank you for preparing the Museum, the railroad track, and the parking lot for our public weekend.

Ongoing work projects include the water tank for the Model 78, the engine rebuilding to give us another 20-H.P. spare, and the building of a new 20-H.P. kerosene burner. The locomotives and automobiles used this past weekend will need to be cleaned up, with only minor maintenance work required.

The Woman’s Club of Hockessin, formerly the Community Club, plans to have a meeting in the F.A.H.P. office Tuesday morning, with a tour of the Museum following. The Events Committee will meet at 7 P.M. Tuesday evening, October 28, also in the F.A.H.P. office. On Friday, the 31<sup>st</sup>, the small committee working with the Division of Parks on the final “Friends” agreement, will meet to finalize this agreement.

We are sorry to report that Jerry Novak’s sister is seriously ill at her home in Kingston, PA, and our sincere best wishes and thoughts are with Jerry and his sister’s family. We also wish to express our sympathy to Art and Joyce Sybell on the death of Joyce’s father about a week ago.

Tom