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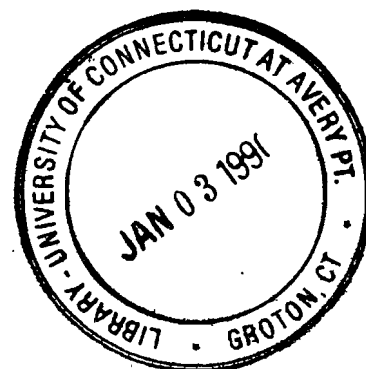
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THE PEOPLE OF AVERY POINT:
MEMORIES AS HISTORY

by

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"There are all those early memories: one cannot get another set; one only has those."

Willa Sibert Cather

The Southeastern Branch of the University of Connecticut opened its' doors in 1967 at Avery Point in Groton, Connecticut, to meet the needs of this area for a public educational institution of higher learning.

Such an ambitious undertaking has demanded the energy and talents of a large and diverse group of people. Avery Point has been fortunate to attract skilled people who have worked effectively to make their campus a center of learning for this region.

The purpose of this project is to present a cross-section of "The People of Avery Point" recalling the history of this campus. Their memories reflect the loyalty and affection this University community elicits from those who are fortunate enough to become part of it.

Much of the rich, unique history of the Avery Point Regional Campus is best told by the people who remember its' beginnings - the early days.

Joe Pezzello, the superintendent of grounds, is one of these people. Joe's father worked as head gardener for Morton Plant, the founder of the Plant Estate at Avery Point. Joe began working with his father when he was ten years old, and vividly remembers the lush and beautiful flower gardens and fruit trees grown on the estate. "When my father was here they had sixty some gardeners. Up by the flag pole there used to be all azaleas - about one thousand going one way, and one thousand rhododendron going the other way." (1)

Many changes have occurred since Morton Plant built the Branford House in 1903 at a cost of 3 million dollars, "when the total deposits in the Groton Savings Bank were \$312,7138.39". (2) The house named for the Connecticut town where he was born was designed by his wife, Nellie Capron Plant who studied architecture at the Sorbonne in Paris. Some of the original estate buildings remained standing and usable; however, when the property was acquired by the U.S.Coast Guard in 1942, to be used for a Training School for non-commissioned officers, it had shrunk to 73 acres. "The massive ornamental gardens" (3) were plowed over to allow for Coast Guard barracks to be built. Joe remembers the Coast Guard years well. "The Coast Guard had infantry

school, bakers' school and radio school. They had a meat school where they cut up meat and they had a boot camp here. At one time there was about five thousand coasties stationed right here. The biggest crews here was between 1955-1958. Over on Pine Island they used to have a dynamite school." (4) Ironically, Morton Plant had used Pine Island as a safe playground for his grandchildren." There was about five hundred apple trees that we sprayed each year and used to make apple pies every day. Captain Rosenthal [of the Coast Guard] used to raise yellow calla lillies in the sun room in the mansion. He won first prize every year at the Ocean Beach flower show. This place was something! Where the gym is we used to call the quadrangle. Without exaggeration, we used to have two hundred different rose bushes tied up on fences around the quadrangle. When the Coast Guard used to muster in the morning on the quadrangle it was just beautiful. You could smell the flowers out to the main gate when they were in bloom. They ripped them all down." (5)

When the University of Connecticut decided to locate its Southeastern Branch at Avery Point in 1967, the character of the estate had been considerably altered. The Plant country home had become "an unavoidable casualty of World War II." (6) With the arrival of Dr. William O'Hara at Avery Point the University founded what has become, over a period of twenty-two years, an academic and cultural center for the people of southeastern Connecticut.

O'Hara brought youthful energy and enthusiasm to his new post. His experience as counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Special Education Subcommittee in 1962-63 excited his interest in educational administration. The goals of this new arm of the University would be "to offer higher education, to meet the adult educational needs of the region and to act as a public servant." (7)

The branch opened in 1967 with five full-time and nine part-time faculty. One hundred thirty-six freshman students were enrolled in this first class. (8) Some of the early faculty who are still teaching at Avery Point remember the excitement and camaraderie of being part of this new school.

Virginia Birdsall had just completed her doctorate at Brown University in 1967 when Avery Point first opened its doors. She joined the faculty as a full-time Assistant Professor of English. One of Birdsalls' earliest memories is moving from one building to another while the former Coast Guard facilities were being renovated to accomodate the University. She remembers that her students in English 105 and 109 tried harder and cared more about learning to become good writers than university undergraduates do today. (9)

Birdsall clearly recalls, in the hard times of the seventies, how often this newest branch of the university was threatened with "being closed down and being merged with the community colleges." (10) Many faculty positions were lost and never regained. The remaining faculty had to adjust to a

more demanding schedule. Students and faculty worked together to keep the branch open.

Presently, Virginia Birdsall is the senior professor of the English department at Avery Point. She continues to value the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm found at this campus. "You don't have the politics and jealousies here. The morale is better and a lot more people are here because they want to be." (11)

Kay Janney arrived at the Avery Point campus in Spring 1968 to teach communication sciences and theatre art. Fred Janney joined the athletic department at Avery Point in Fall 1970. Both of the Janneys had been associated with the University at Storrs. (12)

Serendipitous circumstances brought the Janneys to the Avery Point campus. They had visited Mystic Seaport, loved the area, and talked about someday wanting to live here before they were both offered jobs at this campus. (13) "My husband Fred and I always looked at this as our campus. When we were still living in Ohio we used to kid about how we should really have our own school just so things could be run the way we'd like." (14)

Kay Janney was teaching communication sciences at Storrs and not doing any theatre at all when she was told about a position at the new campus in Groton. "I called Bill O'Hara for directions; but, in my typical fashion I got lost. By the time I drove into these gates I was so angry at him. my-

self, and this place that I was really just sputtering. Ten minutes with Bill O'Hara, who was an absolute charmer anyway, and and I was won over. That's the kind of guy he was." (15) O'Hara arranged for a full-time appointment teaching both communications and theatre, but Kay Janney hesitated to take the position because she had two small boys and was expecting another child soon. (16) "This was still in the period when people on the Storrs campus in the administration did not think women should be on the faculty if they were married. God forbid they should have kids! (17) Fortunately, the Avery Point administration did not hold similar chauvinistic views and Professor Janney became a member of the faculty.

Originally the theatre program at Avery Point was adult oriented. "We did mysteries, musicals, some experimental things, and some student written things." (18) In 1971 Kay Janney became a member of the School of Fine Arts and began to specialize in theatre for young audiences - creative dramatics. "Storrs helped me to see that this avenue was what they needed." (19)

This decision proved to be a happy one. The public schools in southeastern Connecticut had very few, if any, theatre programs - a fact Janney discovered while volunteering in the local schools. In 1972 she organized the Avery Point Players who are well known state wide for their work in children's theatre and creative dramatics. (20)

The Avery Point campus is the only regional campus that

has a theatre and several other performance spaces. Among regional campuses only Avery Point and Waterbury have full-time positions in dramatic arts. (21) At Avery Point "we do more in terms of serving the State of Connecticut, both public and private school sectors, as far as dramatic arts is concerned than any other campus." (22) Professor Janney pointed out, "My outreach far, far outweighs anything that Storrs does, especially in terms of the kindergarten through twelfth grade." (23)

As Associate Professor of Dramatic Arts, Kay Janney teaches theatre, (and an occasional communications science course) while continuing to develop and expand the Avery Point touring theatre and on-campus productions.

Stanley Smith, who began as director of Avery Point in 1972, remembers how "Kay Janney, Fred and I got our heads together. Kay felt that the original auditorium, with the seats going all the way down to the stage needed changing. It had been developed for the Coast Guard during the war for lectures for training, not for a theatre. In order to make this suitable for dramatic presentations we removed about four or five of the front row seats, and built what they call a thrust stage coming out into the audience. This made a wonderful facility for Kay to follow up with her dramatic effort. We were able to have full length plays, and We did that with our own maintenance personnel. We did have to spend some money for lumber, but the cost was not high at

all. It was a beautiful way to have that facility used because all the seats were there, but were not being used as the stage was not large enough. I still enjoy coming here for performances. I don't think any of the other branches have such a program. They don't have the facilities." (24)

In 1967 the campus library opened its' doors with a collection of "3,328 volumes" (25). Helen Petty, Avery Point's first librarian, remembers sharing a building with the Coast Guard. "The library was upstairs. The Coast Guard had the downstairs. It was sort of fun. The Director had one office upstairs. The secretaries were out in the hall. Maintenance was in another office. The library was in another cubby hole. Security was downstairs. The P. A. system would come on and say NOW HEAR THIS!. They were always having small fires in the wastebaskets." (26)

When the Coast Guard left the library moved temporarily into the chapel at the Branford House (to await renovations), taking only their reference collection. Helen Petty recalls, "The workers wouldn't allow us back to get our books so we would have to sneak in after they left at five o'clock." (27) In the fall of 1968 the remodeling was completed and the library once again occupied the old Coast Guard building. (28) "We were so lucky. We had the best location on campus." (29)

The assistant librarian working with Helen Petty was her friend Rose York. "When I mentioned her to John MacDonald,

who was head librarian up at Storrs (for the position of assistant librarian) he said, 'If you think you can work with her, that's fine as long as she's going on to get her degree. That was how easy it was to happen then.'"(30) Rose stayed on a year after Helen Petty left in 1978 and continued to work as assistant to Constance Cooke.

Constance Cooke joined the Avery Point faculty in 1978 as head librarian. She assumed the task of accomodating the library facilities to the demands of an expanding campus population. "From a collection of 3000 volumes serving a small undergraduate community, the Avery Point library has grown to 24,000 volumes with a large supporting collection of journals, microforms, and recordings."(34)

In 1968 expansion continued. Both credit and non-credit extension courses were offered, summer school opened, student enrollment increased, and the Marine Science program moved to the Avery Point campus.

In 1968 the Marine Science Institute made its' debut on the Avery Point campus with Dr. Peter Dahlinger as director. The Institute was created to develop a graduate program in marine sciences and to consolidate marine research in the University under one umbrella. "Between 1968-1975 six faculty in geophysics, physical oceanography, chemical oceanography and marine geology were hired." (32)

Dr. Sung Feng, presently professor of marine science, and the former director of the Marine Science Institute and

the Marine Science Department, has been with these programs since 1966. He recalls that the Noank Marine Research Laboratory was first established in 1957, under the directorship of Dr. John S. Rankin, Jr. "You can really call him the father of Marine Sciences." (33)

In the late fifties most of the lobster hatcheries along the New England coast were phased out except on Martha's Vineyard, and the Noank facility was turned over to the University. It was originally used in the summer and only started full-time in 1960. "The first person hired was Dr. Bill Lund, Jr. He was the ichthyologist-the fish person, and the first resident biologist at Noank." (34) Dr. Rankin, at that time, devoted only two days a week. He was then a professor in the Department of Zoology at the Storrs campus. (35)

In 1966 Dr Sung Feng was the second person hired at the Noank laboratory under the department of Zoology. This same year Dr. John D. Buck, a marine microbiologist from the department of Bacteriology at Storrs, was transferred to the Noank facility as the third full-time appointment. In 1967 Andy Norwalk, a marine geologist, became the fourth full-time appointment. In 1968 Dr. Peter Dahlinger, a geophysicist, was appointed director of the Marine Science Institute. In 1970 when Dr. Rankin stepped down as director of the Noank Research Laboratory it was merged with the Marine Science Institute. (36)

When Dr. Dahlinger left as director of the Marine Science Institute in 1975, Dr. Sung Feng was appointed to replace him. In 1979 Dr. Feng convinced the Dean of Arts and Sciences to have a department structure. "From that time on I wore two hats, one as Institute director and one as Department head. In 1985 I stepped down and Dr. Donald Squires was hired as director and department head." (37) He remains as director of the Marine Science Institute. "Now our department head is Bob Whitlatch." (38)

The Marine Science Institute is a broad structure organized to embrace different disciplines concerned with marine affairs. The hard sciences; physical, geological, biological, and chemical, as well as the humanities; marine history, economics, and business, can be investigated under the auspices of the University at this Avery Point program. "The Institute by University by-laws cannot award academic degrees." (39)

The Department of Marine Sciences "offers academic and research programs leading to M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in the field of Oceanography." (40) Most of the undergraduate courses are taught at the Storrs campus. Here at Avery Point, John Buck does teach microbiology and general biology, and John Cooke teaches botany. Dr. Feng thinks, "In a way it's a shame how the marine sciences and the Avery Point undergraduate program are so separate." (41)

Dr. Sung Feng is now teaching a graduate course called

Pathobiology of the Invertebrates. He is interested in diseases and immunological response of marine animals without backbones - not fish. "I am specially interested in shell fish diseases because shell fish are economically important." (42) In fact, some very severe damage is done by diseases, as in Delaware Bay in the late fifties, a disease decimated the oyster industry. It killed ninety percent of the oysters. The same disease is presently advancing toward our waters, particularly in Massachusetts on the Cape. (43) "We are working on this project to try to help the oyster people to breed a disease resistant oyster." (44)

In 1974 the Avery Point campus became home to the Connecticut Sea Grant program. The University, under the aegis of the Cooperative Extension Service is the designated institution in Connecticut to manage the federal funds from Sea Grant. Under this program the University collects, puts a priority on, and funds research dealing with the marine environment. After going through a lengthy internship the University finally, in Fall 1988 was made a member of the Sea Grant College Association. Dr. Edward Monahan is director of the Sea Grant program at the Avery Point campus. (45)

In 1983 Avery Point was selected as the fifth regional center of the National Undersea Research program under the auspices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This is one of the five centers or labs around the perimeter of the United States that is responsible for

undersea research. This program encompasses territory from Duluth, Minnesota to Cape May, New Jersey, covering the northeastern territorial waters of the United States, and all the Great Lakes. The first dives to the bottom of Lake Superior were accomplished only three years ago by the NURC program here at Avery Point. Richard Cooper is the principal sea scientist for that effort. (46)

John Dowling, Associate Professor of Marine Sciences, remembers coming to Avery Point in 1969 when the Marine Science Institute was just an office, a director and a secretary. As the Marine Science program expanded with the establishment of a Marine Science Department, and the addition of the Sea Grant program and the National Undersea Research Center, the marine corner of the campus became more heavily populated. Professor Dowling points out, however, "the number of courses we teach, and the number of students we deal with hasn't changed much since 1969." (47)

It's only in the last year or two that all of the Noank facility, except the marine operation people have been moved to Avery Point. The primary research vessel with a ship's crew, maintenance people and the machine shop are still in Noank; but, the building itself is being used by the Mystic Marine Life Aquarium. (48)

Professor Dowling presently teaches one course in the department of Marine Science - Introduction to Oceanography and several courses in the department of Geography and Geo-

physics. He divides his time between the Storrs and the Avery Point campus, enjoying the best of both academic worlds.(49)

The Marine Sciences Program at the Avery Point campus has successfully developed and expanded the specific objectives of its parent organization-the Noank Marine Research Laboratory established by the university in 1957, and offers Connecticut's only marine graduate program in Oceanography and Ocean Engineering. This program, in conjunction with the Sea Grant Program and the National Undersea Research Center has offered research and educational opportunities to a far flung community of marine scholars and scientists.

The new Avery Point campus began its' athletic and recreation program under the direction of a part-time instructor. All students were encouraged to participate in a variety of both indoor and outdoor activities.

In Fall 1970 a full-time position became available in the athletic department and Dr. O'Hara asked Fred Janney to come down from Storrs to take the position. Fred remembers "I found Bill to be a very easy administrator to talk to. He was very good at staff evaluation - getting the most out of the people around him. He developed a real sense of loyalty and esprit de corp. In the early years everyone pitched in and worked together. "Someone would need something, and someone would go out and make it or find it." 50)

Fred Janney recalls John Boland, the first registrar at

Avery Point, spending a lot of time with O'Hara in the evenings trying to figure out how they were going to run the place the next day. "We didn't, and we still don't have a lot of direction from Storrs on what they want us to do."
(51)

When John Boland was offered a job at the Quinnebaug Community College in Danielson he left and O'Hara offered Fred Janney his position. Janney started as registrar in Fall 1971 and in the spring O'Hara had a heart problem. When Dr. O'Hara recovered he left for a job at Mt. St. Mary's College in New York. In the interim, Fred Janney served as Acting Director until Stanley Smith was chosen to be the new director. Janney returned to his job as registrar, and then moved on to his present position of Business Manager/Executive Assistant to the Director. (52)

The Avery Point athletic and recreation program grew along with a growing student population. The use of the pool was expanded and baseball, golf and tennis were popular. One year there was a fairly active intramural program; a basketball league, a volleyball program and a cross country team. During one period the students had a water polo team that competed against other colleges.(53) Presently Avery Point's athletic program centers about intercollegiate competition in baseball and basketball (54)

"The late 1960's and early 1970's was a period of great growth at Avery Point."(55) In 1971 enrollment peaked at 521

full-time and 53 unclassified students. Faculty of the branch had increased to 20 full-time and 19 part-time.(56)

Unfortunately, this same year, Governor Thomas Meskill warned UConn of more budget cuts. The Avery Point Branch entered a period of doubt and confusion. Both students and faculty reflected the ambivalence of the University's commitment to its' newest branch. Enrollment dropped to 454 full-time students. (57)

Further doubts were raised when in 1972 Dr. William O'Hara announced his resignation to become president of Mt. St. Mary's College in Newburgh, N.Y., citing "serious financial and organizational limitations at UConn." (58) O'Hara left Avery Point with a "mixed sense of accomplishment and frustration." (59) He had accomplished a good working relationship with his students, the faculty and the administration, but felt that more active public support and a greater commitment on the part of the community was needed to ensure the future success of UConn's newest center for learning.(60) Dr. O'Hara is remembered by those who worked with him, during the challenging early years at Avery Point, as a hard working, dynamic educator and a person of warmth and integrity.

Retired Coast Guard Captain Stanley Smith was appointed to succeed Dr. William O'Hara. Stanley Smith had been on the faculty of the Avery Point campus for the previous three years as an assistant professor of mathematics. He was

familiar with the problems resulting from the state wide budget cuts. As Director he spearheaded an effort to bring new tenants onto the campus. Space was available, and the need to supplement revenue acute. Project Oceanology, the Coast Guard Research and Development program, the Groton Board of Education and the Electric Boat Company training programs became in-house residents during this period. "At that time in 1972, when I took over the directorship we were approached by nine area towns that were sponsoring Project O, and I managed to convince the authorities that this would be a good thing for the region." (61)

Project Oceanology is an independent non-profit organization made up principally of the school districts of southeaster Connecticut . There is a delegate from each of the school districts who is a member of the Project. The University is a member of Project O and entitled to a seat on the Board of Governors and Project O is also a tenant of the University.(62)

When the Coast Guard returned to the campus in 1972 their presence in the beginning, was relatively small. That presence has grown a great deal over the years.

Dr. James L. Baird, Jr., the present Director of the Avery Point Regional Campus, points out that the Coast Guard Research and Development Center today is the largest of four separate Coast Guard units housed on campus. The other three commands consist of; the Central Oil Identification

Laboratories, the Internal Ice Patrol, and the Marine Fire Research Safety Division.(63) Together, these units represent a pool of talent and technology that complement the University's commitment to environmental protection and preservation.

Another tenant arrived on campus, somewhat unexpectedly, in 1972 when the Groton Board of Education lost its' entire facility to a fire. The superintendent of the Groton school system called Captain Smith that very afternoon, after they had assessed the damage, and asked if there was any space Avery Point could give them. The building next to the present academic building was vacant, and that whole facility was turned over to the Groton Board of Education. It was six or seven years before they were able to relocate into the town. "That was another way the University was able to help the Town of Groton." (64)

During the early 1970s' the Electric Boat Company ran a number of training programs for their workers in what is presently the administration building. Avery Point was able to house another tenant by renting out space not being utilized by the undergraduate program, and at the same time provide a local industry with a facility for their training programs. (65)

Shortly thereafter, the Electric Boat Company expanded its' presence on the Avery Point campus. The Director of Community Affairs at Electric Boat approached Captain Smith

with the idea of using the Branford House for boat launching parties. The main campus gave permission for the launching parties and Electric Boat poured thousands of dollars into renovating the first floor of the mansion. (66)

In the late 1960s' the steam heating line to the Branford House had broken during the winter and had not been repaired. Humidity and moisture caused " a terrible, terrible mess." (67) Through the combined efforts of the University and Electric Boat the mansion was rescued. "Electric Boat deserves credit for helping from 1972-1975 and after. They spent a lot of money on Branford House." (68)

When anti-nuclear demonstrations began at Electric Boat, the University wanted to avoid picketing on the Avery Point campus, and it was mutually agreed that launching parties would no longer be held at the Branford House. (69)

The former Coast Guard chapel in the mansion provided a serene setting for music classes taught by Victor Norman. Kay Janney held some of her theatre classes in the mansion, and it was also used for chamber music events.

The students of Avery Point have always valued the Branford House and enjoyed holding social events there. Captain Smith remembers one year in particular when the students wanted to hold a formal dance at Christmas time in the Branford House. "None of the youngsters knew how to do ballroom dancing, so we hired a ballroom dancing teacher from the area.... It was a magnificent party. We had sit down

tables and a buffet line to get food. It was beautifully done and they all knew how to ballroom dance." (70)

When Stanley Smith resigned as Director in 1975 he had been with the University for six years, as teacher and administrator. During those years the Avery Point campus had expanded its' facilities to house new tenants and offered both the students and the local community a University undergraduate program unexcelled in the area. Although full-time faculty positions in some departments were lost by the policy of attrition implemented at the Storrs campus during the early years of his administration, Director Smith is justifiably proud of the achievements of both the faculty and the students on the Avery Point campus.

Dr. James L. Baird, Jr. arrived officially as the new director of the Avery Point campus on October 1, 1975. Dr. Baird had been head of the Department of Biology and Vice-President of Student Affairs at the Rochester Institute of Technology. In 1962-63 he had been on the faculty of Connecticut College in New London while still a doctoral candidate at Storrs. From 1960-64 Dr. Baird did some work at the Noank Research Laboratories. (71)

Baird was familiar with this area from his own days in the Coast Guard, and as an alumnus he was aware of the new property the University had acquired. He remembers that literally "I never set foot on it [the campus] until the summer of 1975. I was aware of it, had been by it, but had

never been on it." (72)

Dr. Baird began his administration by working to expand the reach of the University into the surrounding community. Programs for non-traditional students, new tenants that "would benefit the University intellectually as well as financially" (73), more variety of courses and hours for students, and more flexible scheduling for the faculty were all designed to enhance the campus as a learning center for the region.

In 1976 Diana Hanford began her association with the Avery Point campus as an Assistant to the Dean of Students. " On Labor Day, ironically, I got a call about three o'clock in the afternoon, asking if I wanted to start on September fifteenth.... It was the kind of job where you jumped in and learned by osmosis. It's an interesting job because you learn so much about the University." (74)

The Student Affairs Department at Storrs is basically concerned with student academic status issues. Admissions, orientation, and student counseling are each separate departments. At Avery Point Diana Hanford's position encompasses all these areas, and she must keep in touch with each separate department at Storrs. "People at Storrs will tell me that I know more people at Storrs than they do because their focus is much more narrow." (75)

Working with the student government, Diana Hanford also serves as coordinator for undergraduate student activities.

These activities vary from year to year, but usually follow a traditional pattern. This year there has been an active intramural program. Volleyball, pool nights, video and movie nights, and band nights are popular activities. A yearly semi-formal dance at the Branford House has become a favorite tradition.(76)

The student government is the main volunteer service group on campus. It sponsors community service projects like the bloodmobile, and helps with open house and student tours. "There always seems to be a nucleus of students who really care about the place and about one another. That's one reason why I feel in the [annual] Avery Point awards it's important to honor students who give their time to be of service to the campus as a whole and to one another." (77)

An important part of Hanford's job is to acquaint Avery Point students with the variety of educational and career opportunities available at the University. Representatives from Storrs in career planning and cooperative education come to the campus to familiarize the students with different programs the University offers.(78)

As Assistant to the Dean of Students, Diana Hanford has a multipurpose position at Avery Point. Her office provides the student population direct communication with the administration, the faculty and their fellow students, at both Avery Point campus and the main campus at Storrs.

In 1977, Dr. Homer Babbidge, former President of the

University of Connecticut, brought a Masters of Business Administration program under the auspices of the Hartford Graduate Center to the Avery Point campus. Dr. Babbidge the first president of the Hartford Graduate Center, approached Dr. Baird to rent space for their MBA program. "The University felt this would be one way of providing the citizens of southeastern Connecticut with a long needed graduate degree. Even though this program is dramatically more expensive than it would be under the University the service is being provided." (79) Dr. Baird makes no bones about his opinion, "I would really like it to be the University's program. More recently, they've raised the ante by offering programs in mechanical and electrical engineering. The same thing is true. We should be offering them. I've never been satisfied with the fact that another institution is offering what we should be offering, but at least, the service is being provided." (80)

The University is providing a service unique to this area - the Bachelor of General Studies program. This flexible program arranges upper division undergraduate study for adults who cannot commit to a full-time traditional degree seeking program.

As early as 1977, efforts were being made to establish a BGS program at the Avery Point campus. By March 1978 a BGS proposal had been drafted. "This concerted effort by faculty and administrative officers of the Southeastern campus has

shown that there exists a very real need for publicly supported formal study leading to a bachelor's degree for adults who are confined by circumstance and inclination to the region. The resources of the Southeastern campus and those of the region should be brought together to help fill a very serious deficiency in educational opportunities in the region." (81)

The need for such a program had been established, but the program itself was slow in coming to the Avery Point campus.

Fred Janney remembers going to seminars in Newport about non-traditional students. "I came back ... excited about it and I was bugging the hell out of everybody I could find."

(82) Fred remembers seeing Barbara Graves and me (the author), walking through the hall and saying to us "I just got out of a meeting I think you people would be interested in. Then it was forever and a day before it really began."

(83) Finally, in Fall 1979 the BGS program was approved for the Avery Point campus.

Virginia Birdsall remembers a lot of fuss about the BGS program when it first came to Avery Point. Some people thought it was a great idea; others were concerned about the extra effort it would demand from the administration and the faculty. Everyone did agree that the program was necessary to the survival of the branch. (84) "Now, no one feels particularly burdened by it." (85) In fact most professors

agree, BGS students stimulate and challenge the faculty and their fellow students.

The BGS program's official representative, Joan McMullan, came to the Avery Point campus in February, 1982 as Counselor and BGS Campus Coordinator in the Division of Extended and Continuing Education. McMullan has been with the University since 1972, and has worked on each of its' campuses. (86)

When she first arrived, thirteen students were registered in the BGS program. Several upper division courses were being offered in both the day-time and the evening. "Each semester, you would get three or four courses, but you had to go days and nights to get them." (87) As enrollment in the program increased more advanced courses were brought in and more courses were offered in the evenings. "It was getting very exciting, getting bigger and bigger." (88)

The first Avery Point BGS graduate was Barbara Graves of Oakdale, Connecticut. Barbara was one of Avery Point's first non-traditional students and she remembers the long wait for the BGS program to come to the Avery Point campus. " Getting a bachelor's degree would have been impossible for me if I had to leave the area. The BGS at Avery Point gave me the opportunity to earn a university degree and still meet my family responsibilities." (89)

In 1989 the BGS program will graduate sixteen or seven-

teen students from the Avery Point campus. The average number who graduate yearly is between fifteen and twenty. State-wide there are about two hundred BGS graduates each year. The average age of the students in this program is thirty-five; sixty percent are female. A large portion of these students are divorced and seventy-five percent of the women are single parents. Fifty to sixty percent of those who receive Bachelor of General Studies degrees continue on to graduate school.(90)

With these facts available, and a personal knowledge of each BGS candidate, McMullan has been able to streamline the expanding BGS program. "I think this coming semester I'm only offering twelve two hundred level courses. We can separate the students into maybe six groups , and I know so well what they need." (91) Each student now has more courses available to suit his individualized program. and more opportunity for social interaction with other BGS students.

The Continuing Education department is also responsible for non-degree seeking students and McMullan serves as counselor and coordinator for these students. "They are a varied group; some may be students who are matriculating at other educational institutions, some are in transition between degree programs, some are taking courses needed for a career change, some are exploring personal or vocational options, and others may be taking courses for personal enrichment." (92) McMullan points out, "A lot of kids are

choosing to be non-degree because they have good jobs, they like living at home, and they're not ready to go away. They do their two years of liberal arts here on a part-time basis. It's cheaper to live at home, they can afford a car and can save money. That's the way some kids need to do it. A community college has its' place, and has some very special offerings, but this is the University, and its' University quality right in the back yard of most of us. Kids that would never have the chance for a University education can come here." (93)

The Avery Point campus continues to offer housing to tenants who enhance the University's intellectual commitment to the southeastern Connecticut community. Avery Point's most recent tenant, (who leases space on the third floor of the administration building) the Southeastern Connecticut Library Association, does exactly that. They are a state funded clearing house for library services in southeastern Connecticut. All public libraries and institution libraries in southeastern Connecticut are members. They offer a variety of informational and interlibrary loan services, and have a rather extensive film and video tape collection which circulates through the area public libraries. The Southeastern Connecticut Library Association is a consortial effort of libraries under state sponsorship. Both institutions and municipalities belong. (94)

Dr. Baird points out that the educational services the

campus is providing to the community are dramatically above what they were. "We may, in September of this coming year attract two hundred full-time day students. That would get us back to where we were in 1976." (95)

There are two new programs being seriously considered that would bring even more students on campus. These programs - one in maritime studies, and one in general engineering, are four year undergraduate degree programs. A residence hall is also being considered for the near future. There is an immediate need for housing for graduate students, faculty, and staff visitors associated with the marine environment.(96) "We're convinced we can easily attract full-time, from all over the world, students in ocean engineering, particularly, if we could provide housing. Over ten percent of the undergraduate student body are people who are not residents of this area...." (97)

The Avery Point summer school program brings in fully one-third of its' students from outside the University. "If we had housing on campus we could fill any number of beds in the summer." (98)

Dr. Baird is very committed to the programs now in place at Avery Point. He points out that Avery Point now has a total student population of approximately 1300. "A far cry from the low point in 1977 of 350 students." (99) There are fewer full-time traditional students than there were ten years ago because of a decrease in the number of eighteen

year olds. Much of the growth at Avery Point has been in response to the educational and cultural requirements of a growing segment of adult students. The need for non-traditional, part-time, non-credit, extension and graduate programs increases, and the Avery Point Regional Campus continues to develop and expand in response to this need.

This project began as a straightforward account of the history of the University of Connecticut at the Avery Point campus, from its' beginnings in 1967. Almost immediately, the work took on a life of its' own! I discovered the memories of the people I talked with painted a richer, more vivid picture of campus life and history than any written record I could turn to.

My own earliest memory of the Avery Point campus is a Sunday drive to locate the University of Connecticut branch right in our own backyard. My oldest son was graduating from high school, and looking for a place to begin his college years. This Sunday drive in 1969 was the first of many, many such drives our family would make to Avery Point. All five of my children, a daughter-in-law, and a son-in-law began their University educations on this campus. I began as an unclassified student in 1972, when the Avery Point return to

college program was in its' infancy.

This work has been a happy task for me - a fitting conclusion to the years my family and I have spent at Avery Point. I have learned so much about the campus and its' people. The years I've spent working for a bachelor's degree were filled to the brim with work and family responsibilities - leaving me little time to "smell the roses." This work has given me that opportunity, and I've enjoyed every minute!

Talking to people who have spent many years at Avery Point has reaffirmed my own enthusiasm for this unique campus. Their stories recount the history of the struggles to establish and expand this much needed center of learning for southeastern Connecticut. The obstacles they encountered as they went about this work mirrored the every-day problems of the region they served. Their determination to meet these challenges, while benefiting the University itself, also has enabled the Avery Point Regional Campus to offer a variety of quality educational and cultural opportunities to our local community.

FOOTNOTES

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2
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3
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12
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47
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