

VILLAGE VIEW

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Old Man Moolb is dead. He slipped away, passed into the next dimension, breathed his last, met his Maker--however you want to put it--about a year ago. Yes, it was in July, 1981, he died.

The salty old fellow, native of Provincetown, lived all of his 84 years on Cape Cod. His livelihood he took from the sea. Samantha, his widow, still listens for his step; she still watches the fishing boats coming, heavy-laden, into the harbor; and she still reads Leinad Moolb's "last will and testament," as he called it, and wonders how a man like Leinad came to write such a thing. THE CAPE CODIOTTA is its title.

Or so the story goes according to Dan Bloom who publishes THE CAPE CODIOTTA. He says Samantha Moolb gave him the document; he says he met Samantha last August at a party in Mashpee, Massachusetts.

If you believe all this, you'll believe almost anything. You might almost believe, as I almost did, that the publisher of THE CAPE CODIOTTA poster was giving them away, free, to whoever answered his Letter to the Editor that appeared in a local newspaper several months ago. I responded; perhaps you did, too.

The poster, it turned out, wasn't free after all. That didn't truly come as a big surprise to me. In fact, I sent \$1 along with my first letter; but even that was only half-enough. To get the poster it was necessary to come up with a second dollar. But the poster was worth the price, and I've had much more than two bucks worth of fun from correspondence with Dan Bloom, Publisher, of Nome, Alaska.

Bloom's explanation for the charge for the poster is, to me, entirely believable and reasonable: He was flooded with orders. He hadn't expected such an enthusiastic response. To fill all the requests, he had to have THE CAPE CODIOTTA posters re-printed. His small initial run was totally inadequate to meet the demand; like me, many people sent money to help defray expenses.

Printing costs together with postage ran into a good deal more cash than he had anticipated. A charge had to be made just to cover the expense of telling the first 500 people who asked for the free posters that he couldn't fulfill his "no charge as long as supplies last" promise, because the letters kept coming for weeks, even months, after his initial offer was printed.

What is THE CAPE CODIOTTA? Leinad Moolb's "Last Will and Testament" begins with the words:

"Go placidly amid the sand dunes and the sea and remember what peace there may be at sunset. As far as possible, be on good terms with your neighbors..."

And it ends with the words:

"With your Cape Cod grit and your New England wit,

strive to stay calm during even the worst of traffic jams and let not the summer crowds frighten you away for surely it shall be off-season soon. Believe it and pray for electric cars."

In between are a dozen or so more lines no lover of Cape Cod should miss reading. A great many lovers of Cape Cod (from distant places like Iowa, Michigan, California, and Virginia) will post on the wall in the den, scotch tape to the refrigerator door, or frame and hang in the living room, their own copy of Moolb's immortal words.

We have Dan Bloom to thank, of course. Born in Boston 32 years ago, Bloom spent many a summer during his childhood on Cape Cod. Now, however, he lives in Alaska and works for the University of Alaska as public information officer.

Among his favorite places on Cape Cod he includes Provincetown, Nauset Beach, Chatham, and Woods Hole. In the summer of 1967 he worked at the Land's End Restaurant in Woods Hole; the summer before that he was hamburger cook at Nauset Beach Snack Bar. Perhaps you remember?

Like all of us who know and love this narrow land, Bloom has his own special memories and personal images of, his own particular hopes and fears for, Cape Cod. He shares them with us.

The Cape is, to him (as it is to so many), "one of the most beautiful stretches of land in the United States of America." Bloom misses it when he is in Alaska. He likes remembering the Cape in each of its seasons, and especially in off-season months.

He recalls snow on the beaches, foggy days, the sound of the whistle as the ferry leaves for the Vineyard, and sand dunes at Truro. His most exciting experience here came when he and his father set sail from Edgartown, bound for Woods Hole, in a storm. The storm must have been severe, for the boat's rudder broke. "We limped into Woods Hole alive, but barely," he writes. How they managed to navigate at all with a broken rudder, he doesn't say; it's easy to believe, however, that the experience was memorable.

Bloom shares our worries for the Cape. He hopes over-development doesn't spoil it; he believes, "There need to be limits to growth at some point." Yes, Dan, a lot of us have been saying that same thing for decades...

If only Cape Cod were blessed with the space of Alaska, there'd be room for all, and to spare...at least for a while. Eventually, I suppose, even Alaska could become crowded...

And what took Bloom to that far-away land? He lists three things:

1. The lure of the Wilderness.
2. The love of an Indian woman (Tlingit tribe of Southeast Alaska).
3. Salmon fishing.

Being publisher of THE CAPE CODIOTTA, being public information officer for the University of Alaska, and fishing for salmon keep Dan Bloom busy. Answering correspondence from people like me, people curious to know why someone in Alaska is putting out posters exalting Cape Cod, keeps him up nights. But, since the sun shines there 24-hours a day, this time of year, it doesn't matter whether he's awake nights or not, I suppose.

Anyone who wants a poster need not send to Alaska. THE CAPE CODIOTTA may be ordered locally from 495 Periwinkle Lane, RFD 1, Mashpee, MA 02649.

Old Man Moolb is dead, but his legacy lingers on.