



## VICTORY IN JAPAN

Our guest writer this month is none other than Nancy Thacher Reid who is alive and well and working diligently on the wrap up of her history of Dennis. She thought the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II would be a good time to tell about one of her old neighbors:

1995 has been for many of us a year of remembering the moving events which occurred as World War II drew to an end. Some of the things remembered awake positive memories--the joy of reunion with returning veterans, the relief in the knowledge that this terrible conflict would soon be history. Other things remembered are still painful after fifty years, as we reflect upon the suffering and loss of life on both sides to say nothing of the destruction of landmarks and works of art and of humble but cherished homes. Probably August will be the most painful time of all. For even in the midst of our gratitude at the end of the conflict in Asia, who among us was not also horrified at the catastrophic destruction wrought by the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Japan? And who among us is not still haunted by the nagging fear that this act may not have been necessary in order to end the war? It may be good for some of us to remember a gentle, friendly man we once knew as a neighbor, who played an important part in the development of this devastating weapon.

Vannevar Bush, a world renowned scientist by the end of World War II, was born in Chelsea in 1890. He was the son of a Universalist minister, and spent some of his formative years in Provincetown, when his father had a ministry there. Although not actually a Cape Codder, he "married on" when he took Phoebe Davis as his bride. Phoebe was descended from the Rogers, Gorhams, and several other Dennis families. Their summer home was an old family homestead, across the street from our home. Van Bush was a graduate of Tufts University, and had advanced degrees from Harvard and M.I.T. As I recall, my Dad, whose formal education ended when he was presented with his diploma from Dennis High School, was not overly impressed with Dr. Bush's academic credentials. But he had known Phoebe Davis since they were both children. Van Bush was Phoebe Davis's husband, and therefore was perfectly welcomed as a summer resident. Dr. Bush had a very easy attitude which seemed to indicate that he felt he was as good as--but no better than--his neighbors. Over the years, Dad and Van became very good friends. They often sat on our front steps enjoying a smoke after supper, talking about the American League Pennant race, what to do about gypsy moths, and of course, the war in Europe and what America's role would be.

Everyone knew that America would be involved but perhaps few realized that the military capability of the U.S.A. was obsolete, as was that of England and France, compared with the modern arms of Germany. Some of the reluctance on the part of our nation's leaders to become engaged in the war was the very real possibility that, unless the military technology of the Allies was improved, Germany might win the War! In 1940, President Roosevelt called together a National Defense Research Committee, and Dr. Bush, then head of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, became the organizer of this scientific "think-tank". In 1941, the group of scientists assembled to address the problems of defense and offense was reorganized as the Office of Scientific Research and Development, with Dr. Bush as the leader. It might be said that O.S.R.D. was in very large measure responsible for the success of the Allies in the war. Some of the developments from this office were sulfa and penicillin drugs, sonar and radar detection systems, and the DUCK amphibian craft which made the D-Day landing at Normandy successful. And of course, the splitting of the atom and the development of the atomic bomb.

We saw little of Dr. Bush during the war years. Mrs. Bush and others of her household managed to come home for at least part of each summer. Brother Ben, ever irreverent, would announce their arrival by shouting, "There's a Phoebe bird in the Buses!" Dad would amble over after supper and catch up on family news. We learned of Dr. Bush's committee's work from the newspapers, not from the family. Those of us in our family who were studying Current Events were impressed to learn that our summer neighbor actually met and advised The President. As adolescent girls, I must confess that my sister and I were more anxious to catch a glimpse of the two attractive Bush sons, just enough older than we were to be interesting.

And then the bombs were dropped, and a new age began. We joined the nation in rejoicing that the war was over, even as we tried to suppress the horror which had disrupted the life of the people in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Anyway, the war was over.

Dr. Bush resumed his summer visits to South Dennis after the war and he and Dad got back to their mutual projects. One summer, Dr. Bush showed Dad how to build a fish pond. Together they pattered down at Bush's Boat House on Bass River, a place they both loved to be. Van and his brother-in-law Major Paul Davis were fierce competitors in the nightly horseshoe pitching contests in our field. Dad, Van, and Paul were among the most faithful fans of the Dennis Clippers, a baseball team of young men of the town which represented the town in the Cape Cod League. If you were lucky enough to sit in the bleachers next to these three men you would have been hard put to know which of them was the world-famous scientist. I never heard Dr. Bush speak about the atomic bomb, although I know the decision was often on his mind. In his book Modern Arms and Free Men published in 1949, Dr. Bush says this: "Two bombs went off, and the war ended....Certainly they ended the war under the conditions that we were free to begin the rehabilitation of the Japanese people, rather than forced to undertake the conquest of a starving desert inhabited by a broken lot of physical and mental wrecks."

Van Bush died in 1974. He and Phoebe rest together in the peace and quiet of the burial ground behind the old South Dennis Meeting House. Every now and then, I stop by to pay my respects--not to the world renowned scientist, but to my father's friend--a man who

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## CALENDAR

Aug. 19-27 Dennis Festival Days. Look for fliers at participating merchants or call the Chamber of Commerce for information. 398-3568.  
See below for Dennis Historical Society events.

Sept. 24 DHS Annual Meeting. Details in next month's newsletter.

### ....CONTINUED FROM OTHER SIDE

took upon himself a large responsibility in the development of weaponry which assured the victory of the Allies against Germany, a man who was at peace with the decision to deploy the massive weapon of destruction which he had helped to develop, a man who cheered for the Dennis Clippers, and often managed on game nights to come across the street early enough to share a slice of Mother's blueberry pie. It helps a lot in dealing with the angst of the bomb. NTR

### DENNIS FESTIVAL DAYS --1995

This grand affair is right around the corner and it just keeps getting better. This will be the 37th year since Bob Briggs and Bob Stone organized a few events to try to extend the tourist season through to Labor Day. Dennis Historical Society has several interesting events planned and you are cordially invited to attend one or all of them.

On Tuesday, Aug. 22 George and Catherine Wilson will lead a narrated historic bike tour of the Village of East Dennis. The tour will take approximately two hours and will leave from the East Dennis Community Church at 8:30 A.M. It is requested that all participants wear helmets. For further information call 385-8989. There is no rain date. Also on Tuesday the Village Garden Club will present an informal flower show at the 1736 Josiah Dennis Manse. This year's theme is "Showcase of the Seashore". Wednesday, Aug. 23 from 2-4 P.M. will find the 1801 Jericho Historical Center open. The Barn Museum is a real treasure. You can lose an afternoon checking out all the interesting items in there. At 7:30 P.M. on Wednesday at the West Dennis Community Center DHS will sponsor "Fare Exchange" a program of colonial cooking featuring foods of the Americas and Europe with tastings. Chef John Williams of Weston and the "Golden Ball Tavern"--and brother of our own President Lu Crowell-- will prepare and narrate this interesting repast. On Thursday, the 24th the Flower Show will continue at the Manse from 2-4 P.M. and on Friday, the 25th Jericho will be open from 2-4 P.M. Be sure to see the Driftwood Zoo. We'll end up on Saturday with a Colonial Open House at the Josiah Dennis Manse from 1-4 P.M. Costumed guides will demonstrate the colonial skills of spinning, weaving, quilting, butter and ice cream making, colonial foods, early American school practices, children's games and NobsCUSset Indian lore. Also the Falmouth Militia will be on the grounds demonstrating drills in military skill and discipline. This will be very interesting to children as well as adults, so if you have some or know some bring them along. Be sure to pick up a flier for a whole week of Dennis fun.

### SOME NEW MEMBERS

DHS has some new members. Irma D. North and Mr. and Mrs. David B. Brewer joined our ranks. Please do come out to all our events and I'd like to recommend that you become involved in some of our many activities by volunteering to help. You'll meet some great people and we have a lot of fun. Long time member Edmund Nickerson, who is so helpful with our house dating boards, has become our newest Life Member. Welcome, one and all!

### A NOTE FROM THE ED

Ye Olde Ed apologizes for the late arrival of the July and August newsletters. As the old saying goes, "I've had other fish to fry." My younger daughter, Carol, was married July 15th--at home, an intimate little affair for 140. The logistics of that venture are mind-boggling even now, but everything came together at the last minute. Great-grandfather Capt. Anthony W. Gage would have been proud. The old homestead, now home to the fifth generation, was all shaped up in Bristol fashion. Grandmother Millie Gage Horton of "green thumb fame" would have beamed to see profusions of flowers everywhere in her yard. The severe weather forecast at 10 A.M. did not materialize and the tent did not blow away to Chatham, as I had feared. The sky was sapphire blue, a nice breeze came off the Sound, everyone had a good time, the Reverend Joshua L. Crowell played the "bones" with the band, the bride was beautiful, and I have a new son-in-law named, appropriately--Dennis.

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