

HUDSON VALLEY MEMORIES

by *Ralph J. Ferrusi*

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Until June 27, 2019, I had lived my entire life in New York State.

It never ever occurred to me that I would live anyplace else (except for Paris...)

I was born in Peekskill, New York, and grew up and went to grammar school in Buchanan. I graduated from Hendrick Hudson High in Montrose, and attended the Academy of Aeronautics in Queens (I was an "airplane nut"). My cousin Henry "got me a job" at IBM, in Poughkeepsie. I got married, moved, and raised a family in Wappingers Falls. I attended Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie. I hiked and climbed in the Hudson Highlands, Catskills, and Adirondacks, and Kath and I boated and canoed all up and down the mighty Hudson River for decades from the Adirondacks to Manhattan.

Thursday, June 27, 2019, Kath and I closed on the beautiful house that we had lived in for 28 years on Stormville Mountain, and got outta Dodge in our packed-to-the-roof cars, driving six-plus hours in the hot blazing sun to a house in the quiet, peaceful community of Ocean Pines, Maryland, near Ocean City, and Assateague Island.

First, briefly, what don't I miss—e.g., what made me leave??? First and foremost, New York State's truly exorbitant TAXES. I could never understand why, with the highest taxes in the Union, we had some of the absolutely lousiest roads: where was all that money going??? And, ICE. I dealt with snow my entire life, and made the most of it as a grownup: first, as a downhill skier, then as a cross-country skier. But, in later years, winters became ICY. The Straw That Broke The Camel's Back was in 2019 spending three full days, chipping—with a 10-inch flat-bladed shovel—a half-inch-thick layer of ice off our very steep, 250-foot driveway. That Summer we put the house on the market, and burned our New York State bridges.



It still hasn't truly registered (sunk in...) with me that I no longer live in New York State. What do I miss??? Family, of course, and friends. The Stormville house we lived in 28 years that backed onto the Appalachian Trail. Hiking and canoeing friends. Deli/library/pizza/Subway people. The River. The mountains. The river towns and marshes. The farms and fields. The Walkway, and the rail trails. THE City. The Greater Newburgh Symphony Orchestra. Stonecrop Gardens. John Vargo.

I often wrote about our Hudson Valley experiences and adventures in this magazine. It was a long, wild ride: we loved these places, and I loved writing about them. My first article was in 2008, and between 2015 and 2021 I wrote 48 articles. Here they are, by year, with some well-chosen quotes from each:

2008

"River Once-Wild: Not Your Father's Hudson":

A truly epic canoe trip along 30 miles of the Upper Hudson from Luzerne/Rockwell Falls to Champlain Canal Lock 7 at Fort Edwards, that included "seven massive, impassable dams".

2015

Saugerties Lighthouse: Reached by "A beautifully constructed trail...to the magnificent 1869- vintage lighthouse at the end of the spit of land connecting it to the shoreline."

The Saranac River: A three-day/two night canoe trip across Saranac village's Lake Flower to Lower Saranac Lake: "...on calm waters, under cloudless blue skies...as Good As Canoeing Gets:...some of the best canoeing I've ever experienced."

Lake Champlain: "Four Lake Champlain Big-Water Crossings In A Seventeen-Foot Canoe??? YA GOTTA BE KIDDING....."

Hudson Valley Honor Flight Mission #5, 09/27/74: as a "Guardian" for Master Sergeant Freddie Kratzer. "Made ya proud. Very proud..."

"Constitution Marsh "By Sea": "...one of our absolute favorite Hudson River canoe destinations."

"A TALE OF TWO MUSTANGS": P-51K "FRAGILE but AGILE", P-51D "The Jacky C." "...the North American P-51D Mustang holds a very special place in my heart..."

2016

Little Stony Point: "Breakneck & Bannerman's Island" You aren't allowed to land on Bannerman's. Otherwise "...a very good, very satisfying Labor Day on the River."

"A Single Drop of Water? Or Rum?" We follow one from the Adirondacks to "...a week at the fancy Bay Garden Beach Resort" on "...idyllic Rodney Bay, on the northwest corner of Saint Lucia, in the Windwards."

"California Dreamin'" on Walter and Nancy Neff's 54-foot Pacemaker!!!. We've always been "...pretty much at the bottom of the pecking order out on the Hudson...in our canoe." [Today] "...we'd soared..."

pretty much to Hudson River royalty..."

The Rondout Creek: From Port Ewen to the Route 213 dam. "...another Super Day on the River."

The Lower Wappingers Creek: From the Wappingers Falls Creek Road boat ramp all the way up to White's Marina!!! "a pretty good [nearby] round-trip workout: a decent bang-for-the-buck." "Tivoli Bays, Magdalene, and Cruger Islands": "All in all, a super day in the Bays and around the Islands."

Annsville Creek to Popolopen Creek: "...four hours and forty-five minutes..." "...things got, shall we say, a bit dicey..." **The Delaware River: "A Near Perfect 6 Mile Paddle"**

The Collings Foundation B-17G "NINE 0 NINE": My September 9, 2016 flight. "Just do it..."

2017

"Constitution Marsh "By Land": "The boardwalk offers an extraordinary opportunity to actually walk out deep into the marsh."

"Local Boy Makes Good": (co-authored by Ralph III) Ralph III accepts the Non-Boater Luncheon of the Year award at the New York B.A.S.S. Chapter Awards Banquet in Auburn, New York.

"The NINE 0 NINE Revisited" The story of the "real" NINE 0 NINE.

"Largemouth Bass": By Ralph III. Everything You'd Ever Want To Know About Largemouth Bass...

Black Creek: "A beautiful spot virtually unreachable except [by] small 'human-powered' craft."

Manhattan's High Line: "...astounding open-air views of the cityscape below, above, and all around..."

Tupper Lake's Wild Center: "Walk the Walk, but don't miss the museum."

Dennings Point: Around the point from Scenic Hudson's Foundry Dock Park in Beacon to the Fishkill Creek, then up to the rapids above Scenic Hudson's Madam Brett Park. "Another great day on the under-crowded Hudson..."

Manhattan's Circle Line: "When Is A Circle Not a Circle???" Duhhh, when it does NOT go all the way around Manhattan...

"Let's Talk About B-24 Liberators": The Collings Foundation "Witchcraft is the only true B-24 still flying: the last one..."

2018

"Tondelajo!!!" B-25 Mitchell. When the Wright Cyclone R-2600-92's were revved up "...the sound blast was the absolute LOUDEST thing I had ever experienced..."

Norrie Point: From the Yacht Basin all the way down to Bard Rock. "We had just about maxed out our...energy..."

"P-51 'Sweet and Lovely'": With a photo taken at the September 28, 2007 Gathering of

Mustangs and Legends: 77 Mustangs (!!!) were in attendance.

"The Roosevelts, the Vanderbilts and Henry Hudson: Some Things They Didn't Teach You in Grammar School" Yup!!!

"I've Always Wanted To Fly A Flying Box Car": The Dover Air Force Base Air Mobility Command Museum.

"Yonkers to the 79th Street Boat Basin": "...we paddled up to the main dock as if we owned the place..." An Epic Hudson River canoe adventure.

Constitution Island: I asked Anna Warner "what year it was and...she said 1890." I "told her that it was 2017."

"PB4Y2 Privateer": Great stories from Larry Keefe, who flew as an Aviation Radioman in one from 1944 to 1946 "Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site Formal Gardens": "...at the first sight of this awesome, begging-to-be-photographed sight I stopped dead in my tracks— WOWZER!!!"

2019

The Basher Kill: "Ox-Bow Heaven"

"Crom Pond, by Boat and by Boots: "...pristine, idyllic...and all to ourselves...Paddling Paradise!!!"

Stonecrop Gardens: "A Word of Warning: be careful—like myself—you may just want to live here...forever..."

The Stockport Flats: "...in my opinion, the coolest-named stretch of the entire Hudson River..."

Hudson Valley Honor Flight Mission #22, 04/13/19: I flew as a Korean War/Vietnam Era veteran, escorted by my Guardian Spencer Effron. "I have always been very proud of my military service. But today is the very first time I have been honored for my service."

Let's Talk About the P-82/F-82 Twin Mustang": "...the earlier versions (made trainers) were faster than the fighter version..."

The Cornish Estate: "New Years Day, 2019 was a temperate, bright, blue-sky day..."

2020

"The NINE-0-NINE, April 7, 1945-October 2, 2019": "...at some point, things became 'in the hands of the gods: and, the gods let us down'"

The Lower Croton River: "...this...could—and possibly would—be our last time out on the Hudson and Beyond for quite a while." The Croton "Darn": "Mom couldn't resist little jokes...we had to call [the Croton Dam] the Croton 'Darn'."

2021

"A Tale of Four Old Crows: "[Chuck] Yeager described Bub Anderson as 'the best fighter pilot I ever saw'."