

Susan Klein  
PO Box 214  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

May 12, 2022

Joan Malkin, Chairperson  
Martha's Vineyard Commission  
PO Box 1447  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Greetings, Ms. Malkin and Members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of the Aidylberg III project on Wing Road in Oak Bluffs. I'm hoping that your decision concerning the plans before you has a positive impact on the 40 B process so that the project for providing new living spaces for our elder citizens can go forward as soon as possible. My intention in writing this letter is to inform and encourage.

I was born and raised on Wing Road—three doors down from the Bergstrom family—the current site of Aidylberg housing for elders, which we all know is the bequest of Marguerite (Bergie) Bergstrom who was the founder of Island Elderly Housing. I've been a tax payer in Oak Bluffs for more than forty years, was a teacher in the Oak Bluffs Elementary School, an island-wide Kindergarten consultant, and a member of the Oak Bluffs Finance Committee in the 1970s—and I've taught memoir writing workshops at our senior centers for the past 15 years.

My thinking is that some history of the people of that primarily Portuguese Catholic neighborhood might offer some insight into the traditions of how we lived there. The span of Wing Road is relatively short, bracketed on one end by County Road where Wing becomes Barnes and on the other end by the adjoining crossroad of Spindle's Path and Dukes County Avenue where Wing becomes Circuit Avenue. Both ends of Wing Road were once large farms with produce stands owned and run by two branches of the DeBettencourt family, one off Spindles Path, and the other encompassing both sides of Wing Road from Norris Avenue all the way to County Road, the only houses (besides the farm house) heading south was the Madeiras family on the corner of Norris and the Norton family on the corner of County and Wing. Pheasant Lane did not yet exist, nor did any of the roads between Norris and County as that was all actively farmed. Half way between the DeBettencourt farms, the Steere family farmed their property on Wing Road that extended "out back" all the way to Richmond Avenue.

In that small enclave of Wing Road lived families who took care of each other, quietly noting needs and helping each other out. We were not an affluent neighborhood by any means; everyone had a garden in the back yard and we all canned our vegetables and foraged for blueberries and beach plums for jelly to add to the apple jelly we made from our own trees. Summer and autumn were literally captured in Mason jars to help get us through the winter. As no one locked their doors back then (and depending on the season), any one of us could come home to an anonymous gift of venison chops or bluefish fillets in the fridge or a bucket of sea water and clams on the porch, or an entire bass in the sink (for which old Mrs. Gonsalves would be very grateful because she rendered the whole fish into a massive amount of soup for the whole neighborhood which she distributed to all the households after morning Mass at Sacred Heart, the winter church right across from Viera Park—particularly during Lent—which we all

appreciated, the eyes of the bass floating on the top of one “lucky” family’s portion, notwithstanding).

Those households contained folks whose surnames were Cardoza, Pachico, Madeiras, Phillips, Amaral, Rose, Gonsalves, Steere, Martin, Bergstrom, Carter, Klein, Bernard, Fauteaux, Corriera, and several Sylvia households including that of our next door neighbor Representative Joseph A. Sylvia for whom State Beach is named.

Helping each other with any kind of project was what we did—and the neighborhood people were intrinsically civic-minded. In that short list of families there were more than half a dozen fireman including Nelson Amaral who served in the department for 56 years including 35 as chief, and his wife, Eleanor, who was secretary to the fire department for more than 40 years; a water commissioner; Superintendent of the Highway Department Frank Correia; a selectman; two school teachers; my mother, Elsie Klein, who was the head cook at the hospital; several members of the finance committee; a manager of the Oak Bluffs dump; a manager of the Camp Meeting Association; and Manny Francis, who, with Don Madeiras, were the Parks Department and who kept Ocean Park a focal point of beauty in our town for decades.



As you know, the design of our homes included the front porch where we gathered all the time. As you can see in this photo taken in the very early 1950s, there are about seven chairs on the porch of our house and a baby gate to keep Yours Truly from journeying off unattended to visit the neighbors.

Visible on the right is the home of Representative Joseph A. Sylvia and two doors up is the site of Aidylberg III.

I’m aware that this is not your run-of-the-mill letter of support for a project. But, I thought it was quite possible that only a few of you might know the history of that beloved neighborhood. I’m 70 now, and though I dearly hope to age in place in my cottage (off Wing Road), it would suit me fine to be able to remain in the neighborhood and rock on the front porch of Aidylberg III and watch the world go by. Some things don’t change. We’re porch people.

So, my hope is that IEH and the MVC can put their heads together quickly and creatively to resolve whatever issues remain to facilitate breaking ground on Aidylberg III and honor the generosity of spirit and vision of Marguerite Bergstrom and her bequest in keeping with that intrinsic neighborly generosity of the folks on Wing Road.

Cordially,

*Susan Klein*

“The Midwife of Story”

Narrative Consultant

Editor, Storyteller

Workshop Leader

Presentation Coach

[www.susanklein.net](http://www.susanklein.net)

[sk@susanklein.net](mailto:sk@susanklein.net)

508 693-4140