

Notes for “**In the Arena**” show

To Carolyn Cote,

I appreciate the invitation to be on “***In the Arena***”. Thank you for offering to assist me in preparing for the show:

You will find that I have a lot to tell - the problem will be for us to focus on what parts of my story will be the most suitable for the show.

I wrote this somewhat lengthy story about my “Arenas” so that you will be able to learn about my background and help us to set some mutual and appropriate goals for a meaningful show.

Thank you,

Peter Martin

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In the Arena Show

I watch the show as often as I can. I love the opening words which are an abbreviation of a quotation from President Franklin Roosevelt:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena"

On April 23, 1910, Theodore Roosevelt gave what would become one of the most widely quoted speeches of his career. Here is the complete quotation:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/63389/roosevelts-man-arena>

I have not known Joe Paolino for very long but I have know and respected his accomplishments over the years.

My Career

I worked out of Rhode Island for most of my career. After I graduated from Providence College in 1964, I worked as a social worker in two psychiatric hospitals. I moved from Newport to Woonsocket in 1965. After attending **Boston College Graduate School of Social Work** for one year, I worked in the administration of the social services program, **Progress for Providence**.

When “**P for P**” sent me to Providence College to learn about computerizing their operations, I found that I was more interested in computer programming than continuing in social services.

I was hired by the then Industrial National Band. One of my first assignments was to work on the payroll systems at Providence City Hall.

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My computer career lasted 33 years. I worked for a few different consulting companies and travelled to 40 states and 11 countries.

I actually lived in California and North Carolina from 1990 through 2000. During those days I was very busy travelling the country and working on the then, forthcoming Year 2000 [aka Y2K] computer conversion issues.

Once those projects were completed and the world did not fall apart, I retired to my home in Newport where I waited and wondered what would be my next adventure.

Retirement

At that time, I had the opportunity to pick up the tools of different trades and upgrade my small rental property compound in Newport. One at a time, we ‘demoed’ and restored each of my six small apartments. I was busy again setting the basis for my hopefully long-time retirement.

My property is located along side the Newport Secondary Railway. Indeed, my landscaping projects actually include maintaining this state owned, hardly used corridor.

Proposed Bike Path / Pedestrian Walkway

One of my early ideas was to investigate the possibility of converting one of the two tracks into a one-mile bike path / pedestrian walkway. I conducted a survey of over 100 people and found a strong interest in this project.

I posted the details of the survey and other information on my personal website: <http://www.stacyhouse.com/bikepath/mainpage.htm>

This project, too much spare time, and an interest in getting reinvolved in my home town, lead me to seek some community activity. I was soon appointed to the City of Newport Planning Board. Thus started my twelve years of “community service”.

During the first six years, I became the secretary of the Planning Board, and one of its two delegates to the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission [2003 - 2008]. For two of my five years on the AIPC, I served as the committee chair and as a member of the West Side Task Force [2005-2007].

The Railway

Meanwhile back on the tracks, I became friends with the volunteers of the **Old Colony & Newport Railway**. One day, one of them reminded me that I had many years earlier told him that when I retired to Newport, I would volunteer for work on the railroad.

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In those days, the OCNRR ran on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. My first assignment was as a ‘brakeman’. The main function of brakeman on this historic railline is to guide the engineer in bringing the train back to the station by working on the rear deck and passing information to the engineer via radio.

After a while, I ‘trained on the train’ and became one of their engineers. By then the operations had been reduced to Sundays. However, we ran many work train operations during which time we cut trees and shrubs to keep the railway open.

Battle on the Tracks

In 2004, after 25 years of successful operations, the **Old Colony & Newport Railway** had to enter into a major political and legal battle to continue its operations on the Newport Secondary track. http://www.stacyhouse.com/ocnrr_battle/battle_mainpage.htm

The **Old Colony & Newport Railway** had been ordered by the **Rhode Island Department of Transportation** to either: sign an operating agreement that would give total control of its operations to the **Newport Dinner Train**, or shut down its operations by November 19, 2004.

Concerted efforts by the civic leaders of Newport County had to be mustered. As a result of that effort, RIDOT management reversed that mandate, granted an 'extention', and agreed to negotiate directly with the OCNRR.

I am proud to say that I led the battle which save the **Old Colony & Newport Railway** from being shut down.

The result was a separate 5-year operating agreement between **RIDOT** and the **Old Colony & Newport Railway**. The operation continued for the next 10 years until the equipment fell into disrepair. Meanwhile, the **Newport Dinner Train** changed ownership and continues to run successfully on the North end of the island.

A Political Opportunity Opens

In September of 2007, **Representative Paul Crowley** died at after an 18 month battle with cancer. He had served the constituents of Newport as their representative for over 28 years.

As the volunteer webmaster for the Newport Division of the **Ancient Order of Hibernians**, as I was posting tributes to Paul Crowley, I found myself thinking of what could have become of my life I had I accepted an offer support by the **Newport Democratic City Committee** for me to run for the **House of Representatives** in the

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early 1960s. Unbeknowst to them, shortly before their decision to offer their support, my young family and I had moved to Woonsocket.

Now I was home again - living in **House District 75**. I was a weary from being involved in long-term future plans and not seeing any of them coming to fruition. I wanted to get involved more current projects.

I thought running for the remaining year of Representative Crowley’s term. I did not have the impetus, knowledge, nor backing to continue that thought at that time. Another Democratic candidate ran and lost to an young, impressive Republican who later stated that he had to be convinced to put his name on the ballot. In all due respect, he did not seem motivated to serve the people of Newport.

A Decision to Get ‘In the Arena’

During the next six months, I often thought of what could have happened if I had run for the office. After many years of representation by native Newport members of the Democratic party, the seat had fallen to not only a Republican, but to a Republican from ‘out of town’. *My God, how could he ever represent my fellow Newport natives!*

When the time came, I announced my plan and ‘pulled’ my nomination papers. I was more than fortunate to be introduced to Anna, a very smart, very personable young lady who was between jobs. She volunteered to become the manager of my campaign.

I learned the ‘art of letting go.’ Anna was able and willing to make decisions, line up the right people and resources, and to keep me focused on the goal.

As a result, I found myself elected to office.

A New Arena - The House of Representatives

I enjoyed serving in the Rhode Island House of Representatives from District 75 - Newport from January 2009 until January 2014. It was a great experience.

I have happily moved onto other interesting activities including a book and a movie, which are both based on my accomplishments as a State Representative.

A summary of my accomplishments and acknowledgements can be found in the District 75 section of my website: http://www.stacyhouse.com/@District_75/mainpage.htm

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Highlights - Six Years of Service

Fighting Child Pornography

One of my proudest accomplishments was the fight to get a very important bill, which had been submitted by the **Rhode Island State Police** and turned down for eight years before I was elected to office.

I had to submit this bill for three years in a row before it finally got passed. The bill grants the **Rhode Island Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force** to resolve the identification of those who choose to trade in Child Pornography by use of a relatively simple administrative subpoena vs. needing a full court subpoena.

When I left office, I received a letter of appreciation [[RISP Letter](#)], a formal citation [[RISP Citation](#)] and a RISP ‘retirement pin’ from **Colonel Stephen O’Donnell**.

The PardonThe Pardon of John Gordon

John Gordon was an Irish immigrant who was hanged in 1845 for a murder many historians and legal professionals, believe that he did not commit.

In late 2010, I was asked by one of my constituents, author **Ken Dooley**, to introduce a House Resolution that would request then **Governor Chafee** to pardon **John Gordon**.

Based on formal hearings that were held in the **House Committee on the Judiciary**, we were successful in getting this done. For more information click here: [John Gordon](#)

On Wednesday, June 29, 2011, Governor Lincoln Chafee granted a pardon to John Gordon at a ceremony held in the same room that John Gordon was tried and found guilty in 1844. [Governor Chafee's press release](#)

A book "**The Hanging and Redemption of John Gordon**" has been written and published by author **Paul Caranci** about the life of John Gordon and the success that we had in getting him pardoned.

Ireland's **Prime Minister Enda Kenny**, during a visit to the **Rhode Island Irish Famine Memorial** in Providence in September 2014, publicly thanked **Governor Lincoln Chafee** and me for our work on this effort. Click here for a photo taken at that event [Meeting with Enda Kenny](#) .

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Recognition of 2nd Lt. Robert Thorpe

Robert Thorpe, a Cranston native, served in the **39th Fighter Squadron** as a pilot in **World War II**.

He was shot down, captured, tortured and beheaded by his Japanese captors. His sacrifice had never been recognized by the United States government. I was asked to get posthumous recognition for him.

Through the efforts of the **House Veterans Advisory Committee**, ceremonies were held in his honor in the **State House**, and at the **Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery** in Exeter, 69 years after his sacrifice.

As a result of obtaining the posthumous honors for 2nd Lt. Robert Thorpe, I was invited to be the speaker on October 26, 2013 at the **39th Fighter Squadron Association Reunion** in San Antonio, Tx.

Click on the following link and go to page 4 of their newsletter to see their report on this meeting. [39th FS Newsletter](#)

Following that reunion, actual WWII veterans of the **39th Fighter Squadron**, author **Ken Dooley**, and I started the effort to create a book memorializing the Thorpe's sacrifice and the sacrifices of other members of the squadron.

Establishment of Veteran Designated Licenses

Through my work with the House Veterans Advisory Council, I was asked to submit legislation that would enable Rhode Island veterans to have their operator licenses and state ids marked so as to identify them as veterans. Working with the Department of Motor Vehicles, we were able to accomplish our goal.

As of November 2014, over 9,040 veterans had obtained their designation.

Complete Streets legislation

Though my work with **AARP** and the **Rhode Island Department of Transportation**, I was able to get a **Complete Streets** bill passed into law.

This law sets an advisory standard for those who are designing roads to take into consideration other forms of transportation such as pedestrians and cyclists.

As a direct result of my involvement on this project, three additional crosswalks have been added to the **Americas Cup / Bellevue Avenue** reconstruction project in Newport.

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Rhode Island Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission

I was appointed to serve as the House of Representative appointee to the **Rhode Island Civil War Sesquicentennial [150th] Commemoration Commission** which, through my legislative efforts, was able to fund the publication of a book "**The Rhode Island Home Front in the Civil War Era.**" Click here to see [the book](#) .

I continue as a member of the **RICWSC's Advisory Council**.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

For three years starting in July 2010, I had the privilege to serve as the **Rhode Island Legislative Commissioner** on the **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission**.

I attended many meetings with the local commercial and recreational fishermen.

I attended the ASMFC Summer meeting in Alexandria in July, Virginia and the 70th Annual meeting in Boston in November.

During the 2010 legislative session, I was able to introduce and get passed, two bills that were created to help the Rhode Island fisheries

The Next Arena

The Book

Following my retirement from the House of Representatives in January 2015, I convinced author Ken Dooley to further the honors that we had gotten for **2nd Lt Robert Thorpe** by restarting work he had been doing on a book about the capture, torture, and beheading of Thorpe.

We combined our experiences; his as a noted **author** and **playwright**, and mine as **designer** and **computer specialist**, to write and produce the book.

It quickly became a book about the **39th Fighter Squadron** activities in the Pacific theatre during **WWII**. We enjoyed many months doing this creative work which was motivated by our mutual respect for those who made the ultimate sacrifice in WWII.

The resulting book, **Relentless Pursuit - The Untold Story of the U.S. 5th Air Force's 39th Fighter Squadron** was published by in August of 2015.

Following the publication of the book, I built a website which further documents the project: www.wwii-relentless-pursuit.us .

What had started as a simple request to get honors for 2nd Lt Robert Thorpe, has now become a more encompassing book about the 39th Fighter Squadron activities in the Pacific theatre during WWII.

Unfinished Business

Movies

Ken Dooley and I continue to enjoy working on on creative projects. At the present time, we have nearly completed scripts and supporting website for three possible movies:

- **John Gordon**
- **Judgement at Yokohama**
- **Bellevue Avenue**

We have are being offered funding on some of these projects.

All three of these movies are based in part on my successes while serving in office.

Music

I have ‘stepped up’ my music ‘career’ since leaving the state house. I am play both the piano and harmonicas. I am currently playing in weekly music sessions at a local church hall.

Websites

I continue to use my ‘nerd’ skills by creating and maintaining websites for charitable organizations.

So What is the Story?

As we prepare for your the TV show, one can ask: “**What is the story?**”.

I did not go to the **House of Representatives** when there was an opportunity in the early 1960s. I went down a different path. In deed, I went down many different paths, one path leading to forks in the roads. More decisions were made by circumstances rather than by choice. My career included two graduates schools and experiences in Social Work, computer programming, software and consulting sales and support, and management consulting.

But the story should not be about a **wandering career path!**

I was fortunate to go to the **House of Representatives** as a retired person. For the most part, the wandering was over. I had re-established myself in my home town. Perhaps it can be said that I ‘reinvented myself’ as a ‘retired guy!’

Being otherwise not ‘occupied’ provide me with opportunities that I would never had as a younger person trying to serve two masters: corporate life and community service.

I was free to attend all of the appropriate state house and community meetings. In fact, I was able to complete 12 years of combined service to my community with perfect attendance records.

I never missed a City of Newport Planning Board meeting, I never missed a meeting of the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission. I never missed a House session, rarely missed a committee hearing, and almost always stayed until the meetings were over.

I am grateful to the House leadership for their respect of my perfect attendance. One afternoon, after an afternoon meeting with the House leadership, I became very dizzy walking the hallway of the state house third floor. In spite of my refusal for help, I was whisked away to an emergency medical clinic for a much needed check up. A few hours later, I was brought back to the state house. All during the travel, I noticed the House Chief of Staff on his cell phone updating the House leadership as to our whereabouts. We were dropped off at the door and rode up the elevator. As we entered the House chamber, I noticed that it was ‘at rest’. As soon as the Speaker saw me come into the room, he brought the House back to business and adjourned the session. I later realized that he had held the House in session so that I would maintain my attendance record.

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Second Retirement.

The end of my active political career came about after my position on the issue of extending the gambling at **Newport Grand Casino** was misrepresented by an opponent.

It is interesting that I was on the opposite side of the issue with Joe Paolino. He had gotten involve in the casino and was seeking the extension of the facility to include table games.

I had been a long time member of the board of directors of the anti-gambling group: **Concerned Citizens About Casino Gambling.**

The voters of Newport had twice voted against the extension. The **Newport City Council** had passed a resolution asking the General Assembly to put the issue to another vote.

Although I was personally against the extension, my responsibility as a state representative was to introduce that resolution to the **House of Representatives.** I did so, without asking any other representatives to co-sign the bill except the other Newport representative.

My ‘adversary’ on the issue, Joe Paolino, seemed to know and respect what I had to do.

My own anti-gambling group interpreted my action as being ‘pro-gaming’. They chose to ignore any explanations to the contrary and ignored my six years on the CCACG board of directors.

They found themselves a ‘shill’ who simply stated that she would never have introduced the resolution to the General Assembly.

She did nothing! I performed my responsibilities to the Newport City Council!

The net result: I was awarded with an opportunity to retire for the second time.

So the upshot of this story is that as an “**Old Retired Guy,**” which is how I was referred to by my first opponent, I had stepped into, and enjoyed serving in one more ‘Arena’ - the arena of elected office.

Fortunately, I had the time, money, and resources to ‘give it my best shot’!

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My Next Arena

In spite of all my years spent in schools and other training, my attention was, and still is focused on many of the areas about which I know very little.

When given an opportunity to talk about the **Pardon of John Gordon**, I always start with “*When I first started with this project, I knew very little about history and less about law*”. What I have learned in life is how to gather the right people together and to ask for their help.

I was able to use my training and skills as a project manager to get things done. When people ask me about the John Gordon pardon, I tell them that I gathered the right and knowledgeable experts and that I simply ‘drove the bus!’

My Continuing Service

My second retirement has been very rewarding.

I spend a lot of my time doing volunteer work on websites for some of the local Irish charitable organizations, including the **Ancient Order of Hibernians** [www.aohnewport.org], the **Museum of Newport Irish History** [www.newportirishhistory.org] and the **Rhode Island Irish Famine Memorial committee** [www.rifaminememorial.com].

My nights, which previously were spent in House committee meetings and other like events, are now spend playing music with my newly found friends.

Conclusion:

My favorite quotation:

As I go back to the opening quotation for the show, it reminds me of one that I have added to my own website:

“It is a wise person who recognizes what he can and cannot do; and then, maximizes his contribution and achievement within the domain of the achievable”.

In my 12 years of public service, I feel that I maximized my contribution.