

The **Charles River Conservancy** was founded in 2000 and is dedicated to the stewardship and renewal of the Charles River Parklands from the Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam. We fulfill our mission through advocacy, education, volunteer programs, celebrations, and physical improvements.

To make the Parklands more active, attractive, and accessible to all, our programs include:

- Parklands Advocacy
- Conservancy Volunteers
- Service Learning
- Environmental Education
- Swimmable Charles Initiative
- Skatepark
- RiverSing
- Bridge Illumination
- Tree Stewardship
- Pathway Improvements
- Cable Access Programming (BNN & CCTV)

The CRC is grateful to the generous donors who support our work.

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CHARLES RIVER CONSERVANCY

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NAN HOWES

The Charles River Conservancy presents

River Stories

*A treasury of poems and stories about
the river and the Parklands by the people who cherish them*



Table of Contents

3	ABOUT THE CHARLES RIVER CONSERVANCY
4	WELCOME TO RIVER STORIES FROM THE PRODUCERS
5-14	POEMS AND STORIES ABOUT THE CHARLES RIVER
15	INVITATION TO YOU, THE READER
15	CREDITS

“A river touching the back of a town is like a wing. River towns are winged towns.”

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Did you know that THE CHARLES RIVER CONSERVANCY

... is dedicated to the stewardship and renewal of the Charles River Parklands from the Boston Harbor to the Watertown Dam? Since our founding in 2000, we have worked to fulfill our mission through advocacy, education, volunteer programs, celebrations, and physical improvements.

The past support of more than 12,000 friends and donors like you helps make these Parklands more **active, attractive, and accessible for all.**

Each year, as part of our Conservancy Volunteer Program, over 2,500 people help maintain and enhance the Parklands. Through our Service Learning program, students from Boston and Cambridge experience hands-on environmental and stewardship lessons. In the fall, our signature event *RiverSing* (produced in collaboration with Revels) bridges the Charles with voice and light as thousands gather to celebrate the autumnal equinox.

Working with the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Conservancy helps resurface the shoreline pathways to make biking and inline skating easier and safer. We have permanently illuminated four historic bridges. Along with other advocates, we are leading the initiative to

bring public swimming back to the Charles. And this year, the CRC plans to break ground on its world-class skatepark under the Zakim-Bunker Hill Bridge and next to newly reclaimed NorthPoint Park.

Our website, www.TheCharles.org, our newsletter, and our weekly public access television shows help us share the Charles River Parklands in all their beauty and variety. Together with The MIT Press, we published the book *Inventing the Charles River*, which tells the dramatic story of how an industrial wasteland was transformed into an urban park with world-class potential.

Your contributions allow all this important work to continue. To make your tax-deductible donation to the Charles River Conservancy, send us a check c/o EF, One Education Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02141, or go to our website, www.TheCharles.org, to donate online.

For more information about our programs or how you or your company can get involved, please e-mail us at crc@thecharles.org or call us at 617-619-2850.

Dear Reader of River Stories,

Love of the Charles River inspired this booklet of *River Stories* that we are so delighted to share with you this spring.

Over the years, you’ve sent us your stories, poems, and watercolors—works of art and reflection that show your passion for this wonderful river and its urban parklands. We wanted to share this passion with others who, like you, cherish this precious band of green and blue.

We are grateful to Charles River Publishing, Inc., for partnering with us and printing such a booklet as a generous donation. We hope it will remind you of the river’s gifts to you, and inspire in you an even deeper sense of civic pride. After all, the Parklands need your love and support in order to get the care and attention they deserve.

May these *River Stories* reawaken your affection for the Parklands while spring works its own miraculous renewal upon them!

Renata von Tscharnner

Renata von Tscharnner
Charles River Conservancy
Founder and President

P.S. I hope you will use the gift envelope attached and join us in giving back to these Parklands we all love so well.
You can also give securely and easily through our website, TheCharles.org.

Dear Friend of the Charles River,

The Charles River is the most historic body of water in America. It supported the Native tribes, nourished the Pilgrims, provided safe passage for the Founding Fathers, and powered the Industrial Revolution. Now, nearly 400 years after settlers first encountered it, the Charles continues to nourish our communities.

Today we also understand that the river needs our help and support to flourish. That’s why Charles River Publishing and the Charles River Conservancy have teamed up to send you this collection of “River Stories” celebrating the river that runs through all our lives.

Charles River Publishing was founded in 1979 close to the river, near MIT and Harvard. The goal was to become for New England’s academic, artistic, business, medical, and political communities what the Charles River is for the cities and towns along its banks: a vital, flowing source of ideas. On the threshold of its third decade, Charles River Publishing has emerged as New England’s premiere printer of specialty publications through the use of eco-friendly cold-web technologies.

We are proud to offer you these “River Stories” in hopes that they will remind you of the debt we all owe to this historic waterway, and to encourage you to help ensure its future viability through conservation and environmentally sound planning and business practices. Please contact us if we may help you with ideas about how to support the next century of the Charles River.

Richard Saltzberg

Richard Saltzberg
Charles River Publishing, Inc.
President and CEO

Swimming in the Charles

BY JIA H. JUNG

FOR THE RECORD, I WAS THE FIRST ONE IN, submerging so fast that no photographic evidence remains of my plunge. I jumped in summer-camp-style—without thinking. I sank down, down, down into the Charles, towards a history in sediment. The water was the color and temperature of lukewarm Dunkin’ Donuts coffee. I resurfaced, bracing myself for my skin to melt off, but it didn’t happen. Instead, I enjoyed the best view of both Boston and Cambridge that anyone could ever have.

The gun sounded, and I was pushed under by dozens of slippery, competitive bodies squirming to get to the front of the pack. A huge amount of the brown water found its way down my gullet, and I surrendered to my fate. Like billiard balls, the group broke up, and I was semi-alone, swimming, swimming, swimming.

I didn’t think about the algae that would later drain from my suit like neon Gatorade. I didn’t worry about the “flotsam and jetsam” we’d been told we might encounter. Instead, for 36 minutes, my life flashed before my eyes, and I enjoyed the show. I remembered all the times I had been on the river, if not in it. Cruises. Tours. Fireworks. Field trips. Walks. Drives. I was a kid again: throwing crumbs to lure the hardy life forms underwater; enjoying the view from the Science Museum in the ’80s, when everything seemed new; holding my dad’s hand as the sparks of Independence Day shimmered over the silver-black water and reflected off the glassy skyscrapers along the bank.

I hoisted myself out of the water, heaving breaths. I felt a tingling sensation, but it was not the onset of an inevitable rash; it was good, clean adrenaline. And happiness, afforded by the magnificent opportunity to swim in the Charles River and show the world how far the city and her people have come to make it as healthy as it is beautiful. I felt like a kid, with my whole life ahead of me.

Jia H. Jung, Swimming in the Charles (in 2007)

Jia H. Jung, a graduate student at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at UC San Diego, is a proud Massachusetts native. She adores anything water related, and dreams of having a job that requires her to chase pirates on jetskis...then maybe write about it.

The Game

BY EVAN MOSS

THE WORDS “THE GAME” CONJURE UP MANY DIFFERENT EMOTIONS FOR FANS OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL, but to those who live along the Charles River, The Game is the Yale–Harvard contest – the oldest rivalry in college football. When the Game is played every November, the banks of the Charles River turn into a massive tailgate party for fans and foes alike. People come from all over the world to watch one of the grandest spectacles in sports.

It might come as a surprise that the Charles River Conservancy last year held a volunteer event on the same date in the same location as The Game, but the sheer determination of the volunteers often matched that of the players on the field. Loud whoops sprang up from the masses filing toward the stadium and encouraged the efforts of the volunteers, even if they didn’t understand that the cheers were not for them.

A kind gentleman asked what we were doing in the midst of such a spectacle. While expressing his admiration for our efforts, he said that he walked eight miles in this area every day and couldn’t bear to see it look so neglected and abandoned. I learned that for the past 38 years he had worked as an athletic trainer for Harvard and had never missed The Game. He then amazed me by asking for a saw and some tools. I said, “But you’ll miss the game.” He countered, “I can miss one. This area means more to me than the game does.”

I explained the proper pruning techniques and the protocol for composting all the cut debris, and offered him the tools for the job. I said I’d check in with him in a bit and see how his work was progressing. As the hours passed, I supervised the others in the group, offering encouragement over the din of the football fans cheering nearby.

Later, while wrapping up the event, I realized I’d almost forgotten to collect my tools from the surprise walk-on volunteer. I drove along the parklands and found him still working. The area looked fantastic. I stood there awestruck that this man had given up his day to toil along the river and beautify his favorite bench and vista. Dozens of compost bags sat filled along the pathway, exactly as I had asked for them. This one dedicated man had completed as much work as the rest of the group had during their five-hour clean-up. Still in a state of disbelief, I told the volunteer that he had to stop, as it was nearly dark by then. As we put everything away in the truck, I realized that I didn’t even know this man’s name. I introduced myself, explaining what the Charles River Conservancy does for the parklands, and he replied that he’d seen us working many times before and had never stopped to say thanks. I sheepishly countered that his efforts today more than made up for his not having stopped before.

As the daylight slipped behind the horizon, we continued to talk and then agreed we’d meet again soon. I drove away thinking about how this man had decided that the state of our shared open spaces meant more to him than a 174-year-old tradition. Since then I have never looked at the people who use the parklands in the same way. You never know who will be your next great volunteer and what he or she will be willing to forsake for the betterment of the parklands.

I offer this river story to you, Ken. You may never know how much this small gesture meant to me and how it forever changed the way I work with volunteers and people who enjoy our open spaces. Cheers!

Evan Moss, The Game

Evan Moss, Stewardship Program Manager at the Charles River Conservancy, has spent many hours biking along the Charles, and also has a deep appreciation for the different vantage points given by kayaking. He works with thousands of volunteers each year to make the Parklands more active and attractive.

Down by the Riverside

BY ALEXANDRA MARSHALL

WHEN MY FIRST CHILD WAS A BABY, the newly trademarked Snugli was a way to carry her next to my heart, wearing her like a “frontpack,” for my meandering walks along the Esplanade. In those days when it was still permissible to do only one thing at a time, time itself seemed to expand or shrink to fit any size object of contemplation. And since it never took much to feel occupied, I could sit on a bench to note merely how the segmented Red Line can meet itself coming and going across the Longfellow Bridge, while in the foreground the sun strikes the river like a gong, sending shiver-like shimmers along the water surface. And if that was it, it was quite sufficient.

Today, though, hardly anybody tends to relax on those benches, and certainly not the new mothers, who jog past me with iPod buds in their ears while pushing their BOBgear Sport Utility Strollers advertised as “the stroller of choice for the Ironman Triathlon.” As these newborns sprint by in their all-weather Polartec bunting, I feel sure that their mothers will be raising an entire generation of daredevils whose so-called resting pulses, if they survive infancy, will make it impossible for them to be still. And that isn’t all I worry about. May I protest the fact that it only takes an intermittent shove – look, Ma, no hands! – to propel this engineering marvel?

So now I must wonder what an earlier generation would have criticized me for, and as I look at an old photograph of the river’s Embankment I see leisure-class ladies in gentle conversation, wearing fancy hats and flattering tapered-waist jackets with long skirts that reveal their smart leather shoes. Their babies are probably back home in lacy bassinets tended by surrogates, but at least they aren’t candidates for Shaken Baby Syndrome – “choose a model with shock absorbers,” BOBgear urges – or, in the case of my own, a child who gets sneezed upon at communicably close range. And, yes, I admit it. While she was napping in her corduroy pouch and I was concentrating on watching the sun coax open the buds of the weeping cherry (with the gulls beyond facing into a stiff enough breeze to move the clouds around the sky) I would also be grasping after something else, out of reach, like the lyrics for a pop tune I once loved but couldn’t quite recall. Critic that I am of teaching babies to fly before they can walk, there’s no pretending that in my own way I wasn’t also multi-tasking.

Our river is alive, is the point, and whether it stimulates a companionable stroll or solitary contemplation or serious fitness, by its very being – flowing – it too is working all the time. There’s a current to go with, or against, and though the two banks don’t mirror each other, their views are interactive.

RENEE LARIVIERE

In winter the ice can reach toward the center from both shores, or even merge, but during most of the year the river is no single thing. This is another way of saying that it educates us.

I’m walking along the Esplanade and hearing a tune in my head again, and I recognize it. I can’t remember all of its verses (which vary from version to version anyway) but I learned the chorus – “I ain’t gonna study war no more!” – in childhood singalongs. The lyrics progress from “I’m gonna lay down my sword and shield” to “I’m gonna shake hands around the world” – so it’s not a Spiritual for nothing – and of course it’s called “Down By The Riverside.”

Alexandra Marshall, Down by the Riverside

Alexandra Marshall has published five novels, most recently *The Court of Common Pleas*. She grew up by the Hudson River but, having moved to Boston thirty years ago, has raised her own children along the welcoming banks of the Charles.

To the River Charles

BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

RIVER! that in silence windest
Through the meadows, bright and free,
Till at length thy rest thou findest
In the bosom of the sea!
Four long years of mingled feeling,
Half in rest, and half in strife,
I have seen thy waters stealing
Onward, like the stream of life.
Thou hast taught me, Silent River!
Many a lesson, deep and long;
Thou hast been a generous giver;
I can give thee but a song.
Oft in sadness and in illness,
I have watched thy current glide,
Till the beauty of its stillness
Overflowed me, like a tide.
And in better hours and brighter,
When I saw thy waters gleam,
I have felt my heart beat lighter,
And leap onward with thy stream.
Not for this alone I love thee,
Nor because thy waves of blue
From celestial seas above thee
Take their own celestial hue.
Where yon shadowy woodlands hide thee,
And thy waters disappear,
Friends I love have dwelt beside thee,
And have made thy margin dear.
More than this;—thy name reminds me
Of three friends, all true and tried;
And that name, like magic, binds me
Closer, closer to thy side.
Friends my soul with joy remembers!
How like quivering flames they start,
When I fan the living embers
On the hearth-stone of my heart!
'Tis for this, thou Silent River!
That my spirit leans to thee;
Thou hast been a generous giver,
Take this idle song from me.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 – 1882)

was an American poet, born and raised near Portland, Maine, who spent the last 45 years of his life living in Cambridge. He was professor of Modern Languages at both his alma mater, Bowdoin College, and later at Harvard University. The Charles River served as inspiration for several of his poems.

The First Day of Summer

BY BARBARA KIRCHHEIMER

WHEN I DESCRIBED THE THAMES AS “PICTURESQUE” IN MY 1936 JOURNAL, I had probably never heard of the Charles River. Now, on the first day of summer, I am looking from my ninth-floor balcony at this most enchanting river. It makes a graceful double curve, rippled by wind and tide as it flows to Boston Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean.

The trees along the banks are lush and green after the soggy spring, and there is so much sky that my daughter said, “You can tell the earth is round from here.” No one could tire of watching what is, literally, the passing scene. Rowing crews slide by, rowboats come and go, and canoes and kayaks and pleasure boats, and sometimes the big summer tour boats with their striped awnings. The passengers wave to the strollers and skate boarders along the bank, and sometimes a child will look up, and I’ll wave.

The ducks and geese have a busy life on the river, cleverly avoiding the human activity. Of course the newborns have to stay close to the bank. A few weeks ago I saw twelve tiny goslings in a perfect row, mother and father like parentheses keeping them in line.

Sometimes I call my bedroom “The Rome-Paris Room,” because I can see the Colosseum-like Harvard Stadium and the arched Seine-like bridge just above the bend. But the Charles is not the Tiber, not the Seine, and certainly not the Thames. Unlike those other urban rivers, the Charles disappears completely after dark—unless a full moon shines on a cloudless night. I wonder sometimes if it really does go away, hurrying down to the ocean and back before daybreak. Perhaps on a moonlit night I could join it, floating along until I too become part of the sea.

**Barbara Kirchheimer,
The First Day of Summer**

Barbara Kirchheimer lived at 1010 Memorial Drive in Cambridge when she wrote a memoir in four parts entitled “Annals of Aging.” The first part was written in London about thoughts of the Thames River. The last part took up a similar theme as she thought about the two rivers. She currently lives at Brookhaven in Lexington—a retirement residence.

SILVIA SUÑÉ

Running for the Environment

BY MICHAEL EPSTEIN



RENEE LARIVIERE

MY FIVE-MILE, EARLY-MORNING RUNS used to end with the sounds of the refrigerator door opening and closing, the whirl of the blender as it pureed OJ, yogurt, and fruit, and my noisy gulps as I drank my morning smoothie. Now my runs end with the sounds of plastic water and juice bottles, aluminum soda cans, and glass beer bottles thumping and clanging into my blue recycling bin.

I have been running along the Charles for nearly 45 years, and I've always "multi-tasked" while doing so. At first, I listened to NPR while running, staying up on current events while working off the latest dining indiscretions. More recently, I had stopped listening to the radio and used the quiet for thinking. I had often done my best "thought work" for my job, drafting memos in my head, deciding on action plans, and thinking strategically, while moving at a steady pace along the river. Then one day two years ago, I added another activity to my morning runs: picking up recyclable bottles and cans from the parklands along the river. It seemed natural to turn my anger and frustration about litter into a more productive and useful activity – actually picking up the stuff.

Now, two years later, the focus of my early-morning runs is still physical conditioning; as I move from the "isn't it amazing I'm 60" to "only three more years to Medicare" stage of contemplation, the cardiotoxic work and weight control have become even more important. But despite retiring from my job as chief operating officer of one of Harvard's teaching hospitals, I still have daily "thought work" to do. The focus has simply shifted from budgets, strategic plans, and memos to relationships, volunteer work, and personal finances. And I have added two new dimensions to these runs: helping to beautify the parklands by picking up discarded containers, and helping the environment by keeping them out of the waste stream that pollutes our air and threatens to bury us under landfills.

Let me point out that I don't run with a blue recycling bin in tow, nor do I even carry a plastic bag. As I enter the final 5 to 10 minutes of my 45-minute run, I simply keep a sharp eye out for the stray bottle or can that has been inconsiderately tossed onto the grass or pavement. I am rarely disappointed. Most of these containers are not the result of beer parties on the benches by the river (though some major collections have appeared to be just that!). They tend to be alone or in pairs and have either been left there intentionally or inadvertently dropped by bikers, runners, or others who exercise. Whatever their source, these bottles and cans are both a blot on the landscape and a burden for the waste stream.

I began this activity in April 2006, and by year's end I had picked up 263 bottles and cans. (Yes, I'm a counter and recorder as well!) After a full year, I had disposed of 381 containers from the parklands. Of course, there is a major seasonal variation due to weather (it's hard to find those bottles under a foot of snow and ice!), use of the river (there are major peaks around holiday and football weekends), and my own travel (I'm out of town a good bit of the summer), but a reasonable estimate is about 30 containers per month, or two to three per run.

So, what kind of an impact does this make? To put it into perspective, a recent article in National Wildlife Federation Magazine estimated that Americans discard 75 billion disposable beverage containers each year – more than 300 for every woman, man, and child. Fewer than 20% of those are recycled. I doubt if I'm making much of a dent in the other 60 billion, but I'm making up for at least one average person who might have discarded the 600 or so containers I've picked up over the past two years. If every one of us who enjoys running, walking, or bicycling around the Charles River Parklands would occasionally pick up a bottle or can and drop it in their town's curbside recycling bin, we could compensate for a few thousand Americans who are not helping the environment.

I have found great satisfaction in adding beautification and environmental protection to the thinking and exercising I have done on those wonderful mornings along the Charles. I hope you'll help us enjoy our beautiful river's parklands by picking up an occasional bottle or can – and making the area even more beautiful.

Michael Epstein, Running for the Environment

Michael Epstein is a retired physician who spent his 35-year career at Harvard Medical School, first as a neonatologist and later as the COO of Children's Hospital and the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. A Conservancy board member, he runs in the Parklands thrice weekly from his home one block off the river.

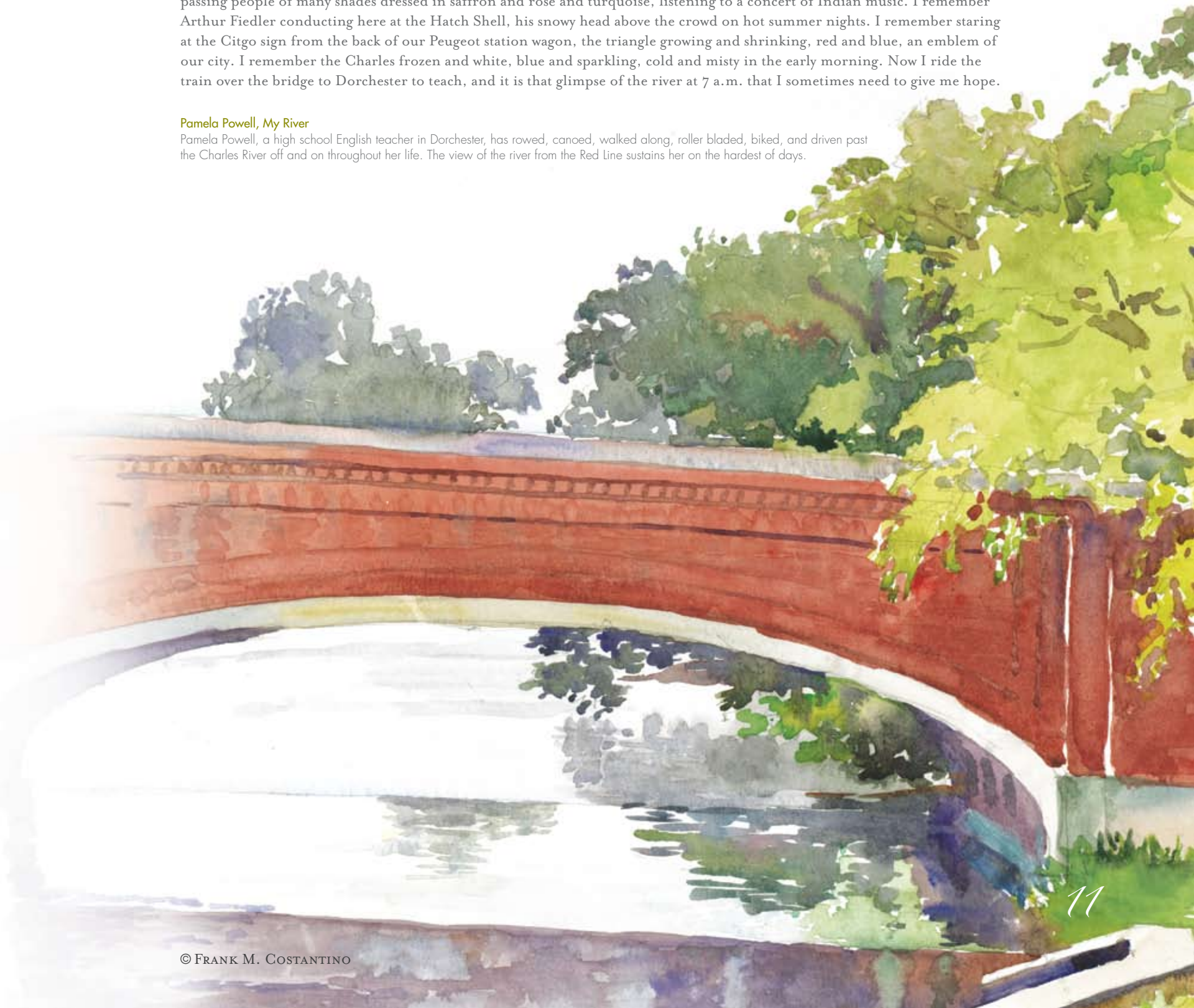
My River

BY PAMELA POWELL

IN HIGH SCHOOL WE RAN THE BRIDGES AS CARS HONKED PAST, but better, far better, was to sit in the stroke position in our boat of four, to lean forward and pull hard, the muscles in our arms tightening as we leaned forward, then moved the oar through the bottle-brown water. The water looks cleaner now as my daughter pulls pebbles from the edges and throws them back in. We're watching the Head of the Charles on a summery fall day, listening to the announcer at the Cambridge Boat Club, and the clip of oars in the oarlocks, splash of paddle, lazy wheeling of a hawk overhead. The river wends its way through the city of my childhood, the city I have returned to, the way it winds through my mind, my memory, my past. My son sails on its open expanse from the Boston side. We roller-blade along its banks. I ride my bike into Boston with my sweetie to catch the train to the ocean, passing people of many shades dressed in saffron and rose and turquoise, listening to a concert of Indian music. I remember Arthur Fiedler conducting here at the Hatch Shell, his snowy head above the crowd on hot summer nights. I remember staring at the Citgo sign from the back of our Peugeot station wagon, the triangle growing and shrinking, red and blue, an emblem of our city. I remember the Charles frozen and white, blue and sparkling, cold and misty in the early morning. Now I ride the train over the bridge to Dorchester to teach, and it is that glimpse of the river at 7 a.m. that I sometimes need to give me hope.

Pamela Powell, My River

Pamela Powell, a high school English teacher in Dorchester, has rowed, canoed, walked along, roller bladed, biked, and driven past the Charles River off and on throughout her life. The view of the river from the Red Line sustains her on the hardest of days.



It Will Always Be Home

BY REBECCA STIEVATER

ASK ME WHERE MY FAVORITE PLACE IN BOSTON IS. Go on, do it. Okay, I'll just tell you. It's the middle of the Charles River. Well, more specifically, it's in a rowing shell in the middle of the Charles, experiencing the city in a way relatively few people have.

Throughout my four years of high school, I spent 10 competitive seasons rowing on the Charles, as a member of both the Brookline High School team and Community Rowing, Inc. Together with these teams, I experienced both the highest highs and the lowest lows of my adolescence: the elation of winning, the anguish of losing, the pain of pushing my body as far as I thought it could go, and the exhilaration of realizing I could go farther and harder than that.

Somewhere between my first tentative steps into the locker room as a high school freshman and my last summer season at CRI, the Charles River became a part of my life. But it wasn't until I left Boston for Ithaca, N.Y. (where, as a member of the Cornell women's rowing team, I rowed on a 2,500 meter inlet, flanked in a nondescript way by trees and houses, that led out into Cayuga Lake), that I realized just how good I had had it in Boston. The countless other teams, the city skyline, the notorious turns of the Charles, the bridges, the boathouses rich with history that dotted the shores...all of this I took for granted in high school.

And so I returned the summer after my freshman year to row out of CRI with three friends. As the season unfolded, I thought there was no better way to spend my summer. But that all changed one evening in July. My boatmates and I had gone to Indianapolis for USRowing Nationals; we were poised to be in medal contention for the Senior B (i.e., under 23) event and psyched for the week of racing ahead. But then, toward the end of the week, I got a phone call saying my father had passed away. A massive heart attack while out rowing on the Charles.

My father had started rowing after I did. A long-time jogger, he always admired the boats along the river, and when I finally picked up an oar, he felt inspired to do the same. So he joined an amateur adult program and rowed with people who, like himself, had picked up the sport after seeing their sons or daughters try it. At the end of that evening in July, just at the end of an inter-squad boat race, he collapsed and died.

When I found out the next day, after several grief-stricken conversations with my mother and siblings, we decided that my dad would have wanted me to stay and finish racing. Always my number-one supporter, he had watched most of my races over the years. During our last conversation, he had congratulated my boatmates and me for winning our heat and wished us luck in the finals to come.

To say I was a mess in the days that followed would be an understatement. But as I muddled my way through the rest of the week, to both an unexpected bronze medal performance in the Senior B 8+ event and a respectable silver medal performance in the Senior B 4+, I knew I'd made the right choice in staying on to finish. My dad wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

I finished the summer in a haze of grief and went back to Cornell for my sophomore year. The next time I returned to Boston was for the holidays — and for the first time in my life, it was the place I least wanted to be. Running along the river, especially along the stretch between the B.U. and the Mass. Ave. bridges — my dad's last race has taken place in the Basin — all I could think about was how much I missed him.

And yet, I found myself moving on, and things got easier. Despite my proclamations of never wanting to be in this city again, I knew that Boston would always be home for me.

It wasn't until a year and a half later that I truly came to understand this. Back at Cornell, in the semester after my father's death, I spearheaded a fundraising project with the Alumni Affairs office and the rowing team to raise money for a racing shell in his name. The overwhelmingly positive response allowed us to buy a bright red Hudson 8+ for the varsity women's team.

We dedicated the boat, the Willard J. Stievater, at the 2005 Head of the Charles Regatta, and it was here that I felt things had finally come full circle. My family and I had turned the grieving process into a meaningful memorial to my father — I could think of nothing he would have appreciated more than having a boat named after him. I came to realize that he had died in a way that I think we would all like to go: doing something we love. And he went out a winner — when he collapsed, it was right after his boat had won.

I like to think that, with the dedication of the boat — with the red Hudson making its inaugural trip to the starting line of the Head of the Charles for the Championship Women's 8+ event — my dad returned to the river.

It has been over three years since he passed away. I graduated from Cornell in May, and in September I returned to Boston and found a job, appropriately enough, at the Charles River Conservancy. I think back to my declaration never to return to the city, and I smile — because as hard as it was to be here in the weeks and months after my father's death, the experience ultimately tied me even more intimately to the city. I've recently joined Riverside Boat Club, thus beginning what I hope will be a triumphant return to rowing on the Charles.

As I run now along the footpath next to the Basin, I am still reminded of my father — and I always will be. But the thoughts are no longer painful. Instead, I just think of how much the river meant to him, how much it means to me, and how intricately our lives became attached to it. His story might have ended there, but with any luck, it is there that mine will continue.

Rebecca Stievater, It Will Always Be Home

Rebecca Stievater, a Brookline native and Charles River Conservancy employee, has been rowing on the Charles since high school. In 2004, her father died of a heart attack while rowing with BU. She raised money for a boat in his memory, an experience that tied her closely to the river.



SILVIA SUÑÉ

Singing by the River

BY SIENA A. FLEMING

MAY 1ST HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE DAY TO SING AND DANCE ON THE SHORES OF THE CHARLES. Even before I could walk, my mother would take us to the Cambridge side of the Weeks footbridge to catch the first rays of sun and to join in the reveling. The night before, she would prepare flower garlands to crown our heads. Once we reached the gathering, we would join in the singing of spring songs. Besides singing, dancing and weaving the Maypole ribbons marked this early-morning hour. Once we had greeted the Harvard students, in their black tie and ball gowns, and wished each other Happy May Day, we would proceed toward Harvard Square, to dance and sing some more, before having breakfast at Au Bon Pain.

Having left Cambridge many years ago, I miss the May Day celebration. This informal festival on the water's edge has become one of my fond childhood memories. When I happened to be in Cambridge for the fourth *RiverSing*, those songs came back to me. *RiverSing* also celebrates the season, but instead of spring it marks the autumnal equinox. And instead of the sunrise, the revelers watch the sun go down as they sing.

I love to think of the riverbanks as a place to sing and dance, a place to celebrate the season. Wherever I am on May Day or the beginning of fall, I think of the Charles River.

Siena A. Fleming, Singing by the River

Siena Antonia Fleming spent the first 15 years of her life a block from the Charles River, where she learned to ride a bike and inline skate on Memorial Drive on Sundays. She is a student at NYU in early childhood education.

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Invitation to you, the reader

We hope you enjoyed reading... and that you feel inspired to write your own *River Story*—which you can submit online through our website, TheCharles.org. There you can read even more reflections and memories, and gain new perspectives and appreciation for these beautiful Parklands. Only what we consciously treasure will become the object of our care.

We also invite you to share your passion for the Parklands in more tangible ways:

- Come volunteer with us to ensure the Parklands get the hands-on attention they deserve (such as landscaping, clean-up, planting, and pruning).
- Donate to ensure that Conservancy programs such as service learning, tree maintenance, environmental education, pathway improvements, the Swimmable Charles Initiative, and *RiverSing* can continue.

The Conservancy depends on your caring for these Parklands. To make your tax-deductible contribution to the Charles River Conservancy, send us a check c/o EF, One Education Street, Cambridge, MA 02141.

You can also give securely and easily through our website, TheCharles.org.

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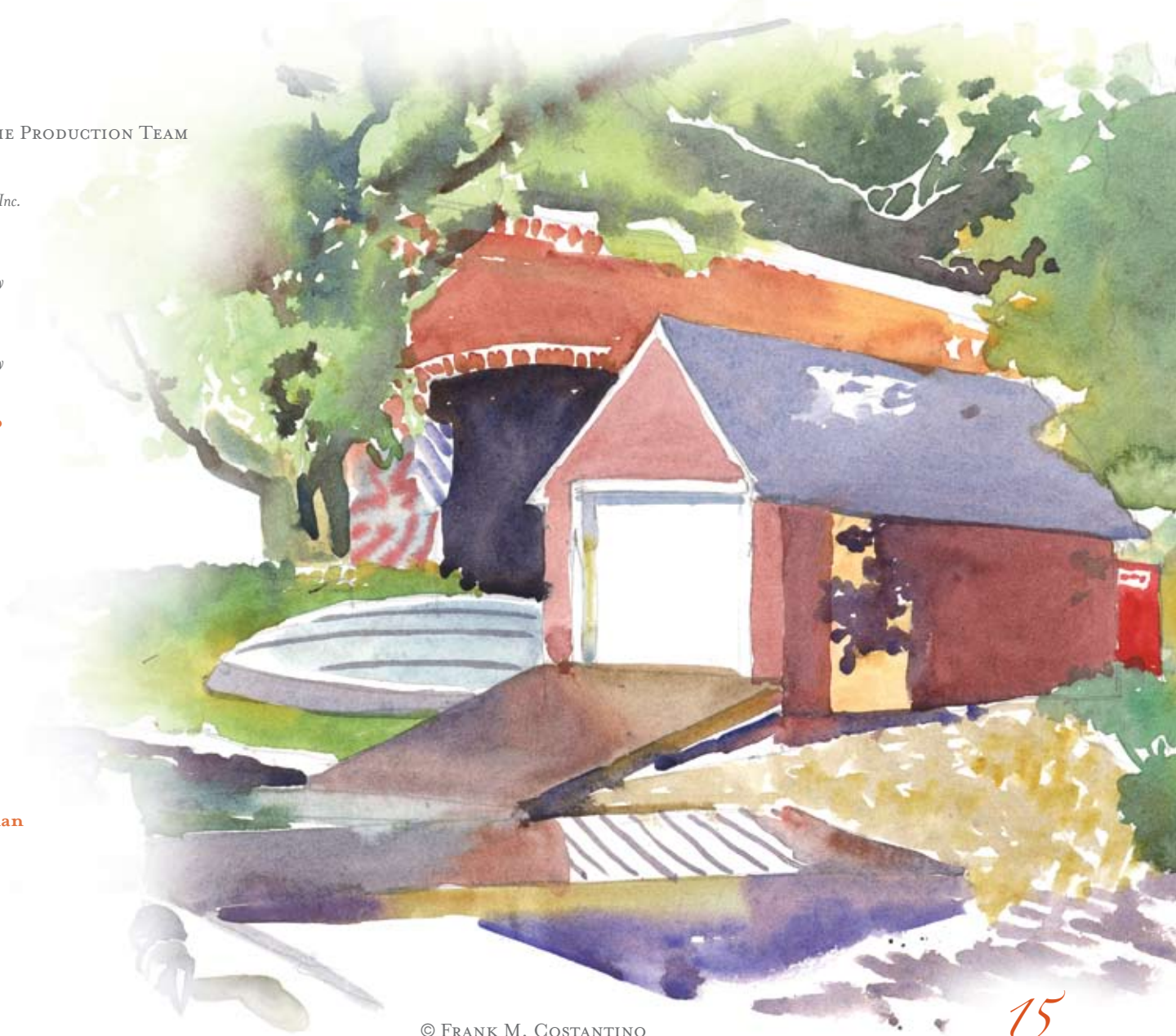
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