

KELLY'S CORNER



Loella Summers

by Jan Kelly

People have been asking what is that bird who calls so often and so insistently and has a "whirr" on the end of the call. That's the house finch. Sparrow-sized, and somewhat resembling a sparrow, this species was introduced to the US in the 1940s. The male has a red breast and brown streaking for the rest of the body. The female has all brown streaking. They may nest in eaves of buildings as well as in open air. We had two broods survive on the Tennis Club porch last year than last. They do seem more abundant this year. That diagnostic "whirr" can be heard in almost any part of town.

Tom Somes saw the great horned owl by Great Pond early morning. Wendy Willard has found pellets. The white wash and the pellets are more frequent these weeks. A possible sign of a busy daddy owl hunting to feed a young family. We'll all be watching end of the month, first part of May for the young learning to fly. They are called "branchers" as a parent owl stays close by and coaxes the owlette from branch to branch

until they can fly. The larger animal will be the young if you should see this scene. When full grown and independent, they will have "shrunk" to adult size.

April is our fourth calendar month. Some say it is named for Aphrodite, goddess of love. Others say it is from the Latin word "aperire" to open, as do the buds at this time of year. April Fool's Day or All Fool's Day is celebrated internationally. The end of winter, time of Spring Equinox, and time to be light. Sort of like Mardi Gras or Saturnalia or Halloween. Practical jokes and duping are the preferred activity of the day. The French called the fooled person a fish, Poisson d'Avril, and the Scots call them a cuckoo. It's a day of liberty, when anyone, no matter how restrictive in their personality, can be fooled. Only for a moment does it have to last and that's part of the humor, the timing. The ones who succeed in the fooling are the earliest and the good actors. If the person gets you early, relates an observation which is believable, you're sure to get you. Dot Tarvers got me at 6:30 am on Route 6. Something about my bicycle. So I got my revenge all the way to

and from the woods. I complimented Mary Deschene on her smart wool blazer suit but too bad she had a run in her stocking. By 10:00 it was all worn out. I told Taffy Silva our neighborhood raccoon was in his car, asked Tommy second floor why he took all the wheels off his car. The stories get so wild nobody would believe them and that's the end of April fool. It may as well be April 2nd as noon April 1st. Wendy Willard's favorite April Food line is, "There's a cat on your head." Mischief is natural to the human heart.

Loella Summers phoned me and asked me to take a look at a magnificent Easter amaryllis lily she had bended from a second hand bulb to a perfect example of its species. It's not the first bloom Loella has coaxed from what looks like a "throw-away onion." Ruth Watson is the original owner of the beautiful amaryllis. Loella takes the bulbs when the first bloom has faded. The amaryllis is a gigantic and handsome bloom related to narcissus and bella donna. The word capitalized means a shepherdess love.

When I went to visit Loella and her lily where she rents at Louis and Charlotte Cordeiro's cottage, I was introduced to the "jungle." Loella's spare bedroom is her greenhouse. She calls it her jungle and all it lacked was a monkey to make you believe it.

Loella Howes was born in Harwich on September 23, 1897, a Cape Cod Yankee and proud of it. She and her brother and mother moved often and lived in many towns on the Cape. In 1925 Loella worked at the Shawsheen Mill in Andover for the American Woolen Company. She worked there for years while raising her family of two children, Anita and Ernest. They came to Provincetown in 1944 and Loella worked for Herman Robinson at his store, for Dr. Stocker when he was at Small's Court, and for Dr. Hiebert. Her life of work always included volunteer work. Knitting doll clothes for the Salvation Army at Xmas allowed Loella to show her creative style. The rug in her living room, hooked for granddaughter Bette's wedding is a tribute to her quick hands and mind.

At the time of my visit, Loella was recuperating from a cracked knee bone and eight stitches over her eye, result of a nasty fall. The cast must stay on 6-8 weeks. Loella said she would leave it on 8 weeks "to be sure." No pity allowed. As we chatted, we were also waiting for Loella's ride to the Council on Aging where she answers the phone three days a week. The other two, Wednesday and Friday, she volunteers at the Methodist Church rummage. Loella also volunteered at the Heritage Museum for years. Loella reports herself as being "very fortunate." She has a wonderful and loving family numbering to eight great-grand children now. They call her "G.G.", short for great-grandmother. Loella Summers has four generations living on the same street. Brewster Street is graced with not only Loella, but her daughter Anita, who works at Adam's Drugstore, and husband Fernando Gonslaves, granddaughter Bette Gonsalves White and husband Johnny White and great-granddaughter Sarah White. Loella says this wonderful family keeps her going. She has

enjoyed 89 years of good health and even that knee can't keep her down. "If I weren't busy, I suppose I would survive, but I wouldn't be happy. When you're busy helping others you don't dwell on yourself." Well, 11:30 arrived, we shut off the light rock music and Loella "bustled," cast and all, to her waiting ride. She had to choose some gift items for shut-ins she would visit after work at four that day. Her own housework was done for the day. Breakfast dishes washed. She left her home in showroom condition at 89 years old. Did we get that simple lesson? A supportive family and helping others, receiving and giving. Activity. The amaryllis was a symbol of the morning visit.

Sylvia Newman of our Library just returned from a visit home to Brazil. Carnival, as well as family, scheduled the visit. Remember her two sisters in the column last summer? The bathing beauties who are also international swimming champions? Well, Zenaide Fernandes had a dramatic and important win while Sylvia was home. Zenaide came in sixth place of two thousand swimmers at the Competicao, Samoa at Ipanema Beach. The course was three miles of ocean swimming, not easy. Samoa is a large athletic shoe company which sponsored the event. Last summer we had a lively visit from three of Sylvia's swimming sisters because they were competing in the masters games in Toronto. This summer they will be in Japan competing. Next time the swimming sisters visit Provincetown, we must ask for a demonstration.

Have you noticed there are two vintage, light-blue Cadillacs in town? The only way you are going to know Donna Hensley from Chester Peck is to look for the felt hat. Donna's mother gave her her 10-year old Cadillac. It's so long it took Donna what seemed forever to turn a corner. Suggestions are to rent it out for the summer with shower privileges or just let it sit in front of Casa Dolores on Brewster Street and book numbers from it.

391 Commercial Street is being renovated. Note the widths of the boards on the sides. One is twenty-three inches wide. Others are twenty-one and a half inches, 21 inches to seventeen and a half inches. John and Adelaide Gregory have a 23 inch floor board at their house at 72 Commercial Street, "the oldest house." When son Kenny did work on the front of the house we measured several 20s, and 21s, but only one historic 23 inch board.

Twenty-three inches was the cut-off size legally. Anything over that measurement was taxed by King George III of England. He wanted 24s and over for shipbuilding. If it were known that you had a 24 inch or better, soldiers would come and take it right up from the floor. Outside stairways were taxed, too. Showy and opulent and George wanted the wood. The boards in these old houses like 72 and 391 Commercial, are vertical. Windows rested on the slabs and so were flush inside and jutting out. narrow wall space was the problem. Go take a look at this 23 inch board. it has a lovely knot hole in it, too.

Wasn't it pleasant reading this column and getting your mind off your taxes for a little while?