

New Bedford Spotlight: Roger Chartier



by Edward C. Dugan

The New Bedford Crawler Series: New Bedford as seen by the people who live and work there.

By this time some of us have reservations about the New Years resolutions we made. About this time we start to realize that we might fall a little short on our promise to lose 40 pounds by February 1st or clean out the cellar enough to turn it into a weight room by March.

Occasionally, though, you might meet someone who has made a resolution and stuck with it. More rarely, someone who has stuck with one for a lifetime.

Roger Chartier's resolution was made after his divorce from his first wife.

"I made it a point to live a life with as much adventure as possible and do as many interesting things as I possibly could," claims Roger; who is a musician, DJ, webmaster, writer and resident of New Bedford, MA.



No doubt Roger continues to follow his goal. He has traveled the world including China. His current wife is from China and they have a condo in Shanghai. He plays at least a dozen different musical instruments. He has 14 websites available online and maintains with five blogs. He received his pilot's license in 1992.

A typical work day for Roger starts with a trip upstairs to his home office. He spends hours each day working on his blogs and websites, including www.whalingcity.net, a site devoted to detailing the history New Bedford. Roger meticulously adds information to this website, filling in details in a chronologically ordered list of events.

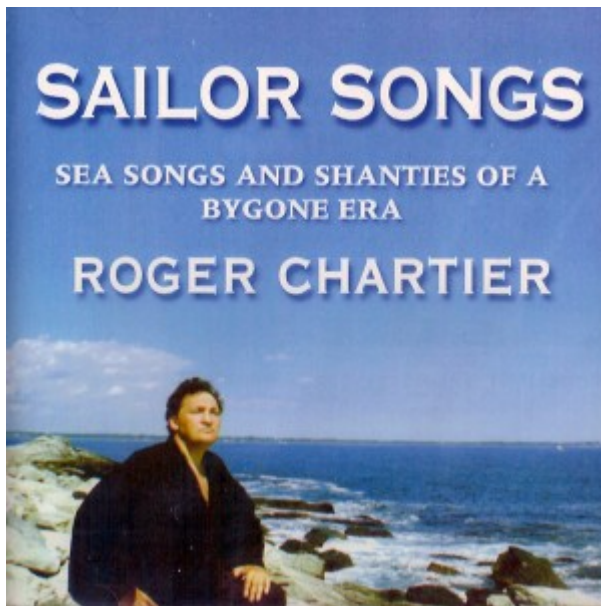
"I put way too much time into it," claims Roger, "I just can't help myself with the history thing. I was taking a journalism course at the Standard Times. Just for fun I took the course with my brother-in-law Jim Donnelly. Jim and I had a conversation about New Bedford, during which I expressed some frustration with the current state of the city. By the time I got home that night, though, I had started thinking about the reasons that I had put together my two CD's of Sea Shanty songs." (Some of the lyrics of the songs refer to New Bedford history.) "I thought about the past and the glory of New Bedford. I thought I had better open my mind."

Roger started writing about New Bedford's history, starting from tales of Norse appearances in the area to the establishment of a fortification on Cuttyhunk Island by

Bartholomew Gosnold and the trading at Smoking Rock.

“It is an enormous amount of information,” claims Roger.

“Besides the chronological history, there are also biographies of New Bedford historical figures and videos,” Roger adds. In spite of this, Roger claims that he is just getting started. “It kills me not to be able to add information about surrounding areas such as Fairhaven.” But Roger wants to keep his website specific to New Bedford.



Roger’s sources for the website include his extensive library of historical books including selections from the 1800’s and historical navigational charts from the 1700’s and 1800’s. Chartier’s online accessibility results in some interesting debates with others who are interested in local history. When I interviewed Roger for this article he was negotiating

with another local historian about whether King Philip’s (a native American) wife and son were once held on Palmer’s Island. According to Roger’s website, captured Indians were held on the island garrison during “King Philip’s War,” a conflict between settlers and the Wampanoag Indians. Most were later sold as slaves in the West Indies.

When Roger finally makes it out of his office and into the sunshine, he’s ready to jump on his Goldwing motorcycle, ready for the day’s adventure.

He might be traveling to one of his music performances at senior centers, nightclubs, lounges, adult day care centers, nursing homes or restaurants. Within a fifty-mile radius of Roger’s home, Roger estimates there are about six hundred

potential venues for him to play. He usually plays guitar and sings with recorded tracks in self-accompaniment. Roger is capable of a wide range of styles, including Beatles, roaring 20's, standards, swing or Hawaiian steel guitar.

"I have been doing it all of my life." Roger says. " I am always learning new songs."

Or Roger might be heading off to a wedding to be a disc jockey. He has a special trailer that can be hitched to the motorcycle.

Alternatively, Roger might be heading with his wife to one of his favorite historical hideouts. His father and grandfather were also interested in history and they taught him several things about local history and showed Roger a few local historical spots while he was growing up. Roger hints that besides King Phillip's cave, there may be other spots unknown to the public waiting to be rediscovered.

Roger has also been a photographer. He worked as an audio technician for Fox and ESPN. He has worked as a talent agent and had his own sound company. He ran a nightclub in the 1990's. His writings include everything from the historical "Crew of the Essex" to some humorous and outrageous stories he has written under a pseudonym. He played in bands until the 1980's.

We can probably trace Roger's talent for chronicling history to his excellent memory for dates. Roger remembers the time of the day he bought his first guitar.



"It was Saturday, March 15th, 1965 at 2:00 PM. I was 14 years

old.”

“If I see a guitar, I get an itch right here.” Roger claims, pointing to his palm. He cannot resist the temptation to pick it up and play.

Is there some secret to having the time to do a miraculous number of things in one lifetime?

“I don’t waste much time. I probably have watched a total of two hours of television programs in the past month,” claims Roger. It would be safe to assume that this has afforded him more time for other things.

Roger mentions that he is goal oriented. “I manage to get there.”

I guess that Roger knows where “there” is for himself. I’m sure that many of us would like to know where that is for ourselves. Perhaps then we could cycle off to that place post-haste.