

View From The Center

By

Steve Sears

It's a thing of beauty.

82 year old Ed Segall conducts his aptly named Sunset Tribute nightly. He owns and works at the Sea Gull's Nest, located right on the beach in Sandy Hook, every day.

He's the mascot, and rightly so.

And what is the Sunset Tribute? Ed makes a short speech honoring our great nation's freedom fighters, which is followed by a patriotic song as the sun sets over Sandy Hook Bay.

Patriotic, and popular.

You have to love a place with a deck, a view, and the beach and waves at its steps. At the Sea Gull's Nest, which is run by H.S. Concessions, Inc. you're mighty close. Our family has spent mornings here at gorgeous Sandy Hook National Recreation Area, Stefanie and Lucille on the beach, and I taking my nature walk all the way down to Fishing Beach and back. Others spend their eternity on the beach, and then climb the steps of the Sea Gull's Nest for lunch and snacks. At night, post-sunset, the lights come on, the band enters, and dancing ensues.

The best thing? "The views," says Scott Segall. "Being on a narrow strip of land, the peninsula, and seeing both the Atlantic Ocean on one side, Sandy Hook Bay on the other side, NYC to the north, picturesque Highlands to the west...360 degree fantastic views."

You see, there's no bad time to be here. Seagull's Nest is open rain or shine, and there's something on the menu for everyone. Hot dogs, burgers, wraps, grilled fish sandwiches, fried and grilled clams, grilled lobster tails, and more.

And yes, the Sunset Tribute. "The crowd erupts into simultaneous applause," claims Scott Segall. "It is quite moving. Many people come from far and near for our nightly tribute."

Join them. You have to enjoy a day or night "at the nest."

Shawn Zappo, the chef at Yoga Basin (603 Mattison Avenue in Asbury Park) has made me a super smoothie called Liquid Energy: mango, strawberry, banana, coconut milk and hemp seed protein, and some "added raspberries for a little extra kick." I drain the cup while wandering through the six week old Yoga Basin.

I feel the "kick"...in a good way.

"Everything we do has to reside in positive energy," claims Regine "Reggie" Flimlin, Yoga Basin owner. "If we're not feeling it, we don't move forward with it or we change it. Our mantra affects the classes, the food in the café, the programming in the studio, the retail we support. It's our mission and our mantra."

Trust me, you'll exit feeling better than when you entered.

"My entrance into the world of vegetarian/vegan cooking was through Eastern Philosophy back in 1990," says Zappo, who has no *formal* culinary training. "Back then vegetarian options were not easy to come by so I had to learn how to cook for myself-and fast! I used to spend a lot of time at the Brooklyn Hare Krishna Temple when I was a

teenager. I first learned about vegetarian cooking there, and it was a great place to learn as they make some of the best veggie cuisine out there. Then, over the years I built on that foundation working with various people.” His resume lists him in the kitchens of Omer Basatemur of Kaya’s Kitchen in Belmar and Mark Rassmussen of Veggie Brothers in Bradley Beach, whom he calls the best vegan\veg chefs on the Jersey shore, “so to work with both of them was a blessing.”

The cuisine is healthy. “The feedback from most people is it's food that gives you energy, makes you feel good and does not bog you down so to speak.” Most popular? “Our vegan ‘chic’ salad, homemade hummus, and our mega omega salad seem to be the biggest hits.” Menu expansion is on the horizon. “We do plan to expand our menu very soon and add what I would call ‘comfort’ foods: homemade veggie burgers, tofu scrambled egg breakfast burritos, and a few other surprises.”

Speaking of surprises, the Asbury Park boardwalk is THE place to be on September 18th and 19th for Yoga Basin’s premiere Yoga Festival By the Sea. Starting at 10 a.m. on the 19th, the “World’s Largest Yogi Gathering on a Boardwalk” will take place, and it could find a home in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Okay, there goes my surprise, Anyway, be there...and be sure to grab a smoothie beforehand.

Good things have happened to me in Manasquan.

One late September afternoon, while the wind attempted to make a frisbee out of my paper plate, I devoured two cheeseburgers, french fries and a soda while on the deserted beach. I pondered how just a few weeks prior, the beach was probably filled with vacationers. It's times like there where you can think, and think I did; about my writing career, how I was fortunate to be here, all by my lonesome on such a beautiful day, wind and all.

I loved Manasquan so much that a few months later, I and my wife returned to dine in town, at any spot we pointed to. Maria's Italian Cuisine (165 Main Street) was it, and there was less thinking on this visit to town, but more talking since my wife was with me. It was the quickest I'd ever received an entrée. Just minutes after I placed my order, our server delivered my meat lasagna with a side of meatballs. It was just like a Sunday meal at my mother-in-law's house when my wife and I first met.

Maria's isn't elaborate, but nice – just like the beach had been that late September day.

That's all I need.