

## Why Stone Harbor

Why Stone Harbor? You do remember that growing up we were Wildwood people? That was my question to my sister. Our father had died in April and she thought it would be a good idea to have a family get together in the summer. Now living in Illinois, I thought it would be fun to bring the family back east to share vacation time with her family. A good chance for the cousins to be together.

Again I reminded my sister that we were Wildwood people. That is where we vacationed with our parents when we were youngsters. I remember going there at age five and my sister was eight. Our family of four went there before we had a car. We would take the train from Norristown, PA to Philadelphia. Arriving at the Reading Terminal and toting our suitcases we walked to the ferry dock to cross the Delaware. Then on to the Jersey Shore rail line heading for Wildwood. Our father always conducted a contest called, "Who can be the first to smell the ocean." My sister usually won because when I declared the scent of salt water she would say, "That is the bay so you are disqualified." In subsequent years when we had a car and drove to the Shore we played the same game, with the same results.

So I asked again, "Why Stone Harbor?" She explained that her Philadelphia neighbor convinced her to give Stone Harbor a trial vacation one year and she fell in love with the small seaside town. So much so that now other neighbors and friends are joining her and her family in what has become a tradition of vacationing together. "OK I'm game," I agreed and so arrangements were made.

I explained to my clan of six children back in the Land of Lincoln that we would be joining their cousins in New Jersey for our annual vacation. All were excited, well with the exception of one. "Sounds like a Snore Harbor vacation," opined our middle daughter. Well teenagers, what can you do? When the time came we caravanned to Stone Harbor.

What we found there in the first few days was amazing: perfect size beaches, a bustling shopping area, fine restaurants, a good movie theater, a modern library, and a very nice museum, telling about the history of the town. We even enjoyed standing in line to purchase an ice cream cone. And that reluctant daughter, she fell in love with walking along 96th street in the evenings and going in and out of various shops.

My sister was right, as usual, Stone Harbor is a special place and after that year we made it our annual vacation destination. It was a long drive from Illinois but it was always worth the effort.

Fast forward...I am now retired and it is time to think about a second home. Naturally all the family votes for Stone Harbor. So in 2001 we purchase a cottage on the southern end of the island. My Midwestern raised son in laws can not get enough of the sea food available in restaurants and they love real Philly cheesesteaks. It does not take any persuading, all of my family and extended family mark their calendars each year for the

time they will be spending in Stone Harbor. They all love being together in this special location where they can hit the beach, hit the shops, and enjoy great ice cream that is worth standing in line for a short time. These traditions are part of what makes vacationing in Stone Harbor so special.

So as you reach Exit 10 and drive east on Stone Harbor boulevard roll down your windows. Drive past the farm stand, drive past The Wetlands, and over the bridge. Now take a deep breath and enjoy the smell of the ocean, that is the magic of Stone Harbor.

Joe McFadden, 145 100th St.