

# Mission honors Stanley, Dixon

By Anne Kozak

**BAR HARBOR** — The Maine Sea Coast Mission honored philanthropist Edith Robb Dixon and local historian and boat-builder Ralph Stanley for their many contributions to the well-being of area communities at this year's Sunbeam Award Gala.

In accepting his award, a ship's clock, Mr. Stanley recognized all those who helped him in various ways to become the boatbuilder he is today. "The credit goes to my helpers, parents, teachers, those who lent me tools and money," he said. Mr. Stanley considers wooden boats to be better than those built with fiberglass because wood is a renewable resource.

Mr. Stanley is concerned the future could lose the knowledge and craftsmanship it take to build a wooden boat.

Born in 1929, Mr. Stanley grew up in Southwest Harbor. In addition to making toy wooden boats as a child, Mr. Stanley drew boats and in his early 20s made his first boat — a 28-foot wooden lobster boat. By the time he sold his business to his son, he had

built about 70 boats ranging from small sailboats to large offshore lobster boats.

In 1999, the National Endowment for the Arts named Mr. Stanley "a master boatbuilder" and awarded him a National Heritage Fellowship.

He also makes violins, and plays regularly at Grange dances and for senior citizens in Bucksport.

And while he readily admits that a lifetime is not enough to do all that he wants to do, he has found yet another calling — researching and compiling genealogies and lists of wooden boats and their uses.

Mr. Stanley serves on the board of a number of historical societies — Penobscot Maritime Museum, Mount Desert Island Historical Society and the historical societies of Islesford, Tremont and Southwest Harbor. He is also a fellow of the G.W. Blunt White Library at the Mystic Seaport Museum.

In accepting her award, Mrs. Dixon, a summer resident of Winter Harbor, said it was an honor to be at the gala with so many young people present: "We

need young people to support organizations that are important to us," said Mrs. Dixon. She also called not just on young people but also those from Mount Desert Island to visit and support SERC (Seaboard Education and Research Center) which is one of a network of research centers in the National Park Service and is located on the former U.S. Navy base in Winter Harbor.

"SERC is a first-class facility and conference center and is a big part of Acadia National Park," said Mrs. Dixon who, along with her late husband Fitz Dixon, have played major roles in ensuring that the former Navy base, a major source of income in the area, continues to be a source of income although.

Acadia National Park superintendent Sheridan Steele calls her a "terrific leader" and credits her with playing a major role in helping the park convert the former Navy base at Schoodic into a dynamic science and education campus that benefits students and participants of all ages.

Recently Mrs. Dixon pledged a lead gift of \$1 million to rehabilitate Rockefeller Hall, a building in the style of the Jordan Pond and Browe Mountain Gatehouses, Rockefeller Hall, which is on the National Historic Register, will become the major welcome center of the SERC campus.

In closing Mrs. Dixon reiterated how honored she was to have received an award and called on those attending to work together to benefit the people of Maine, "the best people I have ever met."

Mrs. Dixon has a long history of philanthropy both in Down East Maine where she has summered for 60 years. Mrs. Dixon and her late husband have for many years supported the Maine Coast Memorial Hospital and were pivotal in ensuring funding for the hospital's recent expansion. She has been a strong supporter of The Grand Auditorium in Ellsworth. Her commitment to protecting the environment is evidenced by her support of Frenchman Bay Conservancy, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and SERC.

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Maine Sea Coast Mission board member Ruth Colket, left, talks with Sunbeam Award winners Edith Dixon of Winter Harbor and Ralph Stanley of Southwest Harbor at the gala at the Bar Harbor Club on Friday.



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