

The Nick
A Vision Realized



by
Duke Southard

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Dedication

This book is dedicated in loving memory of Nicholas J. Pernokas and in honor of all those who changed the vision of The Nick from dream into reality.

In Memoriam

To the memory of Bob Hopewell, a believer in “Blessed Events” and in The Nick- a dedicated, unselfish and determined man

Author’s Note and Disclaimer

When asked why I wanted to write this short book about The Nick, my first answer is always that it is a story the deserves to be told. It is an inspiring story of what can happen when individuals turn tragedy into a positive dream and a community comes together to see that the dream is fulfilled. It is the story of an amazing effort of the part of so many people who believed in the impact that successful completion of the project would have on this and future generations. It is an uncommon example of what might be accomplished when people work together toward a common goal. I feel privileged to know the people who made it happen and I can only hope that this narrative manages to convey their effort and gives them the credit they so richly deserve.

The material for this book came primarily through personal interviews although some information was found in various brochures and newspaper articles. Every possible attempt was made to be accurate and factual. The author felt an overwhelming obligation to present this inspiring story in such a way that it does justice to all those involved. If any information in this narrative is incorrect, I offer my apologies. Errors and omissions are completely unintentional.

Duke Southard

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Chapter One

A Tale of Two Nicks

The story of the Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park must be told at two levels. This unequivocal realization struck me one morning early in the process of developing this book. It happened as I perused (once again!) the pages of interviews with those who could be described as the “major players” in the history of The Nick. (I certainly did not interview all that I possibly could or should have.)

The first level, one that is the easier to address, is simply the factual retelling of events since the first beginnings of the Land Bank of Wolfeboro-Tuftonboro in 1988 through to the August 6, 2006, grand opening of The Nick. The undeniable historical facts come through clearly, regardless of whom one interviews or what newspaper clippings are read or what meeting minutes are examined. Accurate history is always important and in the case of The Nick, the traditional who, what, when and where questions are rather easily discovered. This book will hopefully present a fair, detailed account of the dramatic story that is The Nick. It will elaborate on the emergence of the concept which at first seemed destined to buckle under the insurmountable weight of reality but because of the determination of a few, was equally destined to be executed in more depth and scope than had ever been imagined at the beginning. However, a serious disservice would be done if the second level of the story were not told as well.

If the story were simply an example of a successful town project with the usual steps of needs surveys, planning, execution and finally completion, those traditional reportorial questions of who, what, when and where would be more than sufficient. Answering just

these questions would tend to create a “how-to” manual but in this particular instance, the much more elusive question of WHY is of central importance. This is the second level of the story of The Nick. To neglect that part of this inspiring story would be similar to writing the story of the Boston Red Sox and their World Championship in 2004 using just scores and other numerical statistics without addressing the human side, the side that explains why sometimes men achieve successes that normally exist only in the ethereal land of dreams.

The why of the story of The Nick involves a number of energetic, thoughtful, visionary, and goal oriented human beings. The strong wills of these individuals and the powerful drive to succeed in a project of this magnitude inevitably had to result in occasional difficulties, even controversy. While the facts are clear and an accurate chronology is not difficult to determine, the “why?” question, along with all of the intrinsic human drama it necessarily includes, must be the focus of much of this story. This is the part of the story that shouts for attention for it is the side that Nicholas J. Pernokas would surely have wanted to hear.

Chapter Two

Nicholas J. Pernokas

January 15, 1965-January 31, 1997

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the noted American philosopher, poet and writer, once commented that most great institutions are but “the lengthened shadow of one man.” In the case of the “institution” that is known as the Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, Emerson’s observation rings true in a way that even the intellectual giant would not have imagined. “The Nick” is certainly the “lengthened shadow of one man” but it is not because of the accomplishments of Nicholas J. Pernokas, accomplishments that surely were considerable in his tragically short life. Instead, his lengthened shadow stretches across all that has been accomplished in his name over nine years since his passing. Could there be a more definitive example of Emerson’s truism than “The Nick?”

On January 31, 1997, the small rip in the fabric of the lives of the Pernokas family that had appeared almost three years before became a crushing, gaping hole with the passing of their beloved son, brother and husband, Nicholas J. Pernokas.

After two operations and an epic struggle against the uncompromising disease, Nicholas died three years after the initial brain tumor diagnosis. That first diagnosis came when he was just twenty-nine years old, a vibrant, energetic young man with an exciting lifetime spread out ahead of him. What the family did not envision at the time was that Nick’s indomitable spirit and courage would live on in ways that would have filled him with pride and happiness. Out of the dreadful tragedy of Nick’s illness and death would

come the need to fill what John Pernokas, Nick's father, calls "the hole that could not be filled." *The Nick*, the Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park, would become the vision of John and Jill Pernokas and Arthur, his brother, and Jane, his wife. Ironically, the story of the wonderful project which Nick's presence will oversee for generations to come begins in an old sand pit just north of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. The story of John and Jill's attempt to deal with the huge void in the family by unselfishly searching for a project that could capture the essence of what Nick was all about really must start with an understanding of exactly who Nicholas J. Pernokas was.

Nick was born in Boston on January 15, 1965 while the family was living outside the city in suburban Walpole, Massachusetts. Described by his father as a "kid who was never a problem," he was a typical boy who enjoyed being a catcher in little league, eventually playing high school soccer and upon graduation, moving on to Carnegie-Mellon University where he participated in intramural sports and earned a degree in Applied History. On September 1, 1990, he married Jane Hamel. His continuing educational efforts saw him earn a Masters degree in Business Administration at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. At the time of the initial diagnosis of his illness, he was employed as a national account representative for AT&T.

While the young Nick could be described as "typical," whatever that description might mean, Nick was anything but a typical man. He consistently exhibited qualities that moved him well beyond the realm of the average person. Much like the "blessed events" which Bob Hopewell was so fond of describing as *The Nick* project progressed, Nick was the right person in the right place at the right time for so many people. Described by John as being "strong both physically and mentally," he was always there, spending much of

his time and effort in helping others. While it is impossible to define the depth of soul of a man like Nick, an incident that occurred while he was in college typifies the kind of person he was.

During a practice for a campus parade, a fraternity brother slipped and fell from a passing antique fire engine. Nick immediately assumed control of the situation, demanding that his friend not be moved until help arrived then ran for the needed assistance. Not surprisingly, Nick downplayed the incident and it was not until the day of Nick's funeral that John learned that it was likely that Nick's intervention saved the young man's life.

Memories of Nick's uniqueness abound. In college, as others in his fraternity fussed and prepared for their yearbook pictures, Nick simply waited his turn, preferring the picture to show him "as he was." A similar event occurred when Nick was preparing for his senior portrait in high school, his father recalls fondly. "He was always himself," he says. Could there be a more profound compliment than that?

Nick was a family loving and family oriented man. "Nothing made him happier than time spent at the farm," John says. An avid hiker and mountain climber, Nick spent many days in the New Hampshire mountains, including one memorable night spent on Mt. Chocorua with John and his brother, Arthur. He and his family were long-time members of the Appalachian Mountain Club. Always active, always busy, living life to the fullest, Nick continued to be a caring and compassionate person. Never was that more obvious than when he realized how ill he was.

"He was the bravest person I've ever known," John says. "He protected us with his indomitable spirit. He made every effort for his and our lives to go on as normal."

“He always tried to protect us from our grief,” Jill adds. When Nick was taken to see his grandmother, then in her nineties, he summoned all his strength and courage so that she would not see the depth of his illness. Nick did not want to tell her and his father agreed. It was just another example of Nick’s compassion toward everyone, especially his family.

Nick never gave up and his hope constantly sustained those around him. When asked about how people deal with this kind of lengthy ordeal when the final outcome appears not to be in doubt, John and Jill shrug and shake their heads. “We never cried until it was over,” John says. The possibility that Nick would have not allowed any desperation to intrude on his last days on this earth is unspoken but quite clear.

Nicholas John Pernokas, named after his grandfather in the Greek tradition, is memorialized in a family cemetery on a knoll overlooking the Ossipee Mountains.

“It brought him home; it just felt right when he came there,” John says.

Knowing the quality of Nick’s character and the life he led, anyone would have to agree that he will be overlooking the Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park and would certainly have appreciated his family’s unselfish dedication to the community in his memory. The great institution that is The Nick will never completely fill that awful “hole that could not be filled” but it will serve to preserve in a tangible way the legacy that Nick left behind. His lengthened shadow will be forever cast across the track and the fields and the playgrounds as The Nick becomes an integral part of the sports vocabulary of all who will have the opportunity to enjoy it.

Chapter Three

Bob Hopewell

A community project of the magnitude and significance of the Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park, “A Place for All Ages,” will always have an aura about it, an enduring sense of those responsible for its success. Who among us has not visited the site of a new playground or church addition or library or any of a myriad of similar ventures and observed a tarnished brass plaque or a faded wood carving placed “in honor of” or “in memory of” at the scene? Haven’t we wondered, however briefly, about those mentioned and the impact of their work? Even to the most casual visitor, The Nick seems to emit a palpable energy that in itself honors those who toiled so long and hard to make it a reality. It is an enormous undertaking that represents untold hours of labor on the part of so many that it demands attention. Even in the dead of winter, when deep snows cover the fields and a warming sun is a distant memory, there is still the feeling that the energy can’t wait to be reawakened.

When a project stretches into years, there will inevitably be those who have climbed aboard at the beginning and are still there as the train pulls into the station for its final stop. They are the people who experienced the exhilarating feeling when all is well and speeding down the track is smooth and inspiring. They also have felt the discouraging effects of major and minor derailments that always accompany such a lengthy effort.

The engineer on the train that was The Nick from beginning to end and a person whose name will forever be intertwined with the park is Bob Hopewell, who was the unanimous choice by all connected with the park to be the first to interview for this book.

“I knew it was going to happen,” Bob said within the first minute of the initial interview. His eyes glistened with enthusiasm and energy as he continued. “We had so many blessed events.” His “blessed events” phrase would be sprinkled generously throughout his vivid synopsis of the history of The Nick.

Chapter Four

Just The Facts

The Wolfeboro Tuftonboro Land Bank was what Bob Hopewell, a member of the original Board of Directors, describes as a “facilitator to make conservation happen.”

The formation of the group in 1988 signaled a move toward a vision of preservation and protection of resources, a vision that Bob Hopewell and others adopted with fervor and passion from the start. The Land Bank, Hopewell points out, was not permitted to own land, only to facilitate its management. Indeed the Internet website for the Land Bank clearly constructs a framework for its existence.

“The Land Bank was established to promote the preservation and most advantageous use of land for the benefit of the community. This includes working closely with the community to expand conservation, social and recreational goals established in master plans and other surveys,” it states.

When an informal needs assessment showed an obvious need for more athletic fields in the local area, the directors of the Land Bank thought that a portion of land it held on Filter Bed Road in Wolfeboro might be a perfect fit for that purpose. A portion of the one hundred and twenty acre parcel (approximately forty acres) was donated to the newly formed Wolfeboro Area Recreation Association (WARA) with the hope that the need for more fields might be filled even though the original plan called for only one adult baseball field. The Wolfeboro Planning Board approved that plan and at the time, Bob Hopewell expressed the idea that additional fields might be a good goal to consider.

Eventually, a conceptual plan done by a landscape architect proved to be flawed and a new master plan would have to be developed. Tom O’Brien, newly recruited leader of the

WARA Board, contacted a local survey company and found that the land would be too expensive to build upon because of a substantial ledge problem. It surely was not suitable for development as athletic fields. However, Bob Hopewell, serving on the original Board of Directors of WARA, was not to be denied.

“If it wasn’t in Back Bay, then it was going to be someplace else. It just had to be,” he says. “This town and the others around the region needed more than just another baseball field—we needed soccer and lacrosse fields, even a track.” The track was not considered even a possibility until much later when the final Master Plan for The Nick was developed.

Bob Hopewell admits that he has not always been a believer in destiny; he leans more toward effective human intervention than toward the Divine when it is time to assist Fate in accomplishing an objective. Soon after he recruited Tom O’Brien to assume the leadership role of WARA in the spring of 2000, the first of what he fondly refers as his “blessed events,” occurred on what was an adult “field trip” to visit the Big Dig project in Boston.

“I knew then that it really was going to happen,” he says assuredly. “I just knew it.” The discouragements of the past with the disappointing feasibility studies, the impracticality of developing the Filter Bed Road property and the loss of momentum for the whole idea faded quickly not long after Tom O’Brien and John Pernokas, a retired United Parcel Service executive and real estate developer, coincidentally found themselves sitting together on the long bus ride to Boston and back.

Chapter Five

“Blessed Events” and “Giving Back”

As the story of Nick unfolds, a recurring theme rises to the surface many times over when the people who made it happen are asked why? Why would you put yourself in the position of working long, often tedious and frustrating hours for such a project? Why would you put yourself in the position of garnering criticism for your decisions, second-guessing of your judgment and questioning of your motives? An ever-present possibility that even those with the highest of ideals, the most integrity and the loftiest of principles may have their actions unfairly judged. When trying to establish a sound motivation for why anyone volunteers for community service or church involvement or even military service, a legitimate question to be asked is actually quite simple: “Why would you want to do this?”

The story of the success of The Nick is ultimately the story of a sizable group of people who believed in the cause. When asked the “why” question, the most frequent response by an overwhelming majority was an equally simple answer, expressed in many different ways but eventually coming down to the same answer: “I wanted to give something back.”

Tom O’Brien, a retired airline captain for Delta Airlines and a naval flying instructor is a man whose enthusiasm for everything in life shows in his constantly animated excitement when he is speaking. He is a typical example of this philosophy. He recalls that the day he had his “recruitment” lunch with Bob Hopewell, he knew that he liked the project on the level that Hopewell was proposing. That very evening, he discussed the

project with his wife, Mary, and made the decision to accept the challenge of leading WARA on its quest for new fields.

“I just knew it,” he says. “My heart told me it was the right thing to work on.” Already a Trustee of the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, O’Brien served in a dual capacity with WARA and the LRCT until the summer of 2003 when fundraising for The Nick and a campaign by the LRCT placed him in a possible conflict of interest position and he resigned as a Trustee of the LRCT.

“I fell in love with the idea that this need was very real,” Tom says, following that with the explanation that it would provide a perfect avenue for him to “give something back” to the community. After some time of working with WARA and after analyzing the need for the fields, he realized that there was a serious restriction in that those who were most interested in seeing something happen were so involved already that they would be hard-pressed to pull it off. In order to build a complex of fields that were sure to cost over a million dollars (the scope of the project at the time) O’Brien understood that strong business and administrative skills would be required. Coaches, league officials, volunteers and parents who already were spending so much of their time in direct contact with the children under their care that someone or some other entity needed to help them realize the goals.

“I could visualize fields full of kids,” O’Brien says. That vision became a driving force in the direction of WARA and an inspiration to Tom himself. “I wanted it right and knew I had to get the right people.”

After just a few weeks, it was clear that the Land Bank parcel was not going to be where the sports fields would be built. O’Brien slowed the pace of his recruitment of a

new WARA board and turned his energy toward the search for a viable location. At the time of his decision to accept his role with WARA, he couldn't have known that Bob Hopewell's first blessed event was about to materialize.

The trip to the Big Dig in Boston was only one of a variety of activities for people in the community that came out of what was known as "Feeney's Breakfast Club," a loosely knit group of men that meet for breakfast on the second Thursday of every month in Wolfeboro. Almost two years later, the group, named after the late Jim Feeney who initiated the breakfast idea with just a handful of men, would hear an impassioned plea from Tom O'Brien for help with The Nick. At the time of the now famous bus trip, the quiet search for land was in progress. Most of those associated with the WARA project would point to the coincidental timing of the bus trip as providing the positive momentum necessary to move everything along.

When the trip was organized, Tom O'Brien and John Pernokas did not know each other yet found themselves sitting on the bus together for the tour. O'Brien, with the WARA leadership role occupying much of his time and certainly always hovering close to the surface of his mind, predictably shared his vision for the organization at some point during the trip, especially their need for office space. There was much talk of the Kingswood Youth Center project that John was immersed in at the time and as they became better acquainted, they realized that they had other interests in common as well. Their discussion, according to O'Brien, ranged from the youth center to WARA to airplane safety (Tom the pilot and John the UPS flight safety director) and a variety of other subjects. Whether the search for land for WARA was part of the discussion is not certain. As the two parted when the trip returned to Wolfeboro, Tom remembers feeling

that John was fully engaged with the youth center project. The subsequent call and invitation to lunch weeks afterward was a complete surprise.

That lunch was the first time that Tom O'Brien recognized that the first of Bob Hopewell's blessed events had indeed occurred. "It was the decision by John and Jill Pernokas to . . . include WARA in their plan to improve the life of young people in our community that was the blessed event."

Much has been made of this bus ride. It has been called fortuitous, a sort of destiny lurking, waiting for just the right moment to bring two people together. To many others, it is purely a naturally occurring coincidence that two men of the stature of John Pernokas and Tom O'Brien would find each other. After all, they both regularly attend the Feeney Breakfast Club; they live in the same town; they seem to have the same philosophy toward young people. Isn't it just a dose of reality that their paths would cross and the juxtaposition of their goals would eventually place them in the same circle? The dilemma as to whether the force of Fate or the simple reality of the situation was the causative factor is one that may be debated. However, there is one ultimate fact that remains. The "something tangible" that was the result of the conversation between John Pernokas and Tom O'Brien on that trip was the eventual purchase by the Pernokases of the thirty-five acre Albee sand pit north of Wolfeboro on Route 28. John Pernokas had been investigating the sand pit (a euphemism as it wasn't truly a "pit") for other possible uses. Subsequently, that purchase led to other unexpected dividends ("blessed events") that move The Nick out of the category of visionary and place it squarely into Bob Hopewell's "I knew it was going to happen" category. John Pernokas describes his

active involvement with the youth center in Wolfeboro, a quite successful effort to help the youth of the community, as a catalyst that “flowed toward The Nick.”

By any standards, the trip to the “Big Dig” in Boston, while just the first in a series of timely “coincidences,” must be judged as special. As Tom O’Brien puts it, “it was the spark that lit the flame and gave life to the vision.”

The Albee Sand Pit was established as the perfect location for the park through a lengthy investigative process spanning the entire fall of 2000, even as John Pernokas was negotiating for its purchase. The sand pit purchase closed in January, 2001. It was time for O’Brien to build the WARA Board, a procedure that lasted until the spring of 2001.

For the first time, Tom O’Brien used the phrase “captains of industry” to describe some of the additions to the new WARA Board. He enlisted Jerry Thayer (a former executive with many years of experience at Anheiser-Busch) as treasurer and Mike Appe, expert in marketing and sales and former executive in domestic sales at Microsoft. Additionally, Bob Copeland, an executive and attorney with Ford Motor Company and Dick Mosher, an experienced town planner, joined the Board. Steve Hale, an original WARA Board member and expert on turf and field construction and management became active on the board as did Bob Hopewell and John Pernokas. Katja Fox added her expertise in public relations to the cause.

Everyone knew that it was imperative that a “first class project” required that an engineering firm be brought into the picture and that a master plan needed to be developed. With new members Don Hughes (a Boston businessman and active in Wolfeboro) and Linda Baldwin (a leader of the Wentworth Association with an avid interest in development of the sand pit) on the board, the Master Plan engineering

proceeded and was completed in early 2002. Subsequently, the necessary permits were secured and the foundation for the future appeared to be firmly laid.

Tom O'Brien calls the sixth month period between early winter and the early summer of 2001 a time of conversion, a period when many who had doubts about the project became believers. It also was a time when the importance of the teamwork concept was established with the WARA Board. The vision that was The Nick began to be shared and that sharing opened a range of possibilities well beyond what anyone had imagined before. O'Brien says that by the fall of 2001, he and others knew that, as he emphatically puts it, "The VISION is correct!" The concepts were falling into place; now the leadership of WARA had to find the right combination of people and strategy to facilitate the execution of those concepts.

Chapter Six

Teamwork

“I believed that the only way we would turn our vision into reality was to concentrate on teamwork,” Tom O’Brien says. If The Nick were ever going to be anything more than a difficult to attain dream, a group of people with widely varied backgrounds and a strong commitment to the cause had to be assembled. O’Brien states that he firmly believed that such a group existed in the Wolfeboro area; the problem he faced was that some of those people were unaware of the need. His solution was to tap into the expertise of those “captains of industry” who lived locally and whose experience would be a vital resource as the project developed.

Early in 2002, O’Brien stood before a well-attended meeting of Feeney’s Breakfast Club and outlined the vision of The Nick. He presented a brief history of the Wolfeboro Area Recreation Association and outlined the goals of the group. With his usual enthusiasm and what had already become his passion for the cause, Tom described the small but determined assembly of local people searching for a solution to the dearth of athletic fields and recreation facilities available to the people of the area, young and old alike. At the time, as Tom outlined the basic concept behind what eventually became the Nick project, he knew that he had a strong leadership group in place. They were ready to tackle the vision head-on and were not the least bit shy about involving others as well. In his effort to reinforce the teamwork concept, O’Brien often downplays his own contributions to the quality of the group he had assembled, even before the speech to Feeney’s Breakfast Club. He mentions people who “are deserving of recognition at the highest level” without mentioning that for a group like this to reach its potential, some

one needs to be overseeing the work. While not a specific blessed event of the kind described by Bob Hopewell, the gradual assembling of the effective team could qualify as more than just coincidence.

“They were the driving force that put The Nick in place,” O’Brien says, relating the contributions of some of those deserving that highest-level recognition. Jerry Thayer (financial management), Tom Bigelow (best treasurer ever), John Pernokas (always running a project and endless funding), Vickie O’Dowd (fundraising and awareness leader), Bob Hopewell (always present and pulling his load), and Steve Hale (led construction with daily visits and oversight of everything) are some of those he singles out without mentioning that they point to his focused leadership as allowing their contributions to take place.

It was after the Breakfast Club meeting that Tom O’Brien was approached by Fred Stephens, a retired Gillette executive and a professional in sales and marketing. Fred had an issue with the first three letters in the acronym, WARA. “Promoting ball fields for kids with a name like WARA just didn’t appeal to me,” Stephens says. While others had similar concerns, the logistics of changing the name of an organization that was established and already had an identity prevented any modifications. The “issue” quickly became a non-issue and Stephens joined the WARA Board in July of 2002. Soon after, he worked with another new board member, Tina Maxfield, on development of a new brochure that would be used in the fundraising effort that began in the late spring of 2003.

Fred joins his colleagues with the familiar refrain when asked about his personal motivation for becoming involved in this ambitious project. After being strongly advised

to stay out of it by several friends and acquaintances, Fred says, understating the obvious, “I thought maybe I could help, give some direction and leadership in an area that I know something about.”

Not surprisingly, he quickly follows that with the answer to the “why” question with the answer that has only minor variations. He says simply, “I wanted to give something back.”

The development of the fundraising brochure represents just a small part of the enormous undertaking of Tina and Chip Maxfield, the co-chairs of the capital campaign.

“They built the team for the campaign,” O’Brien says, adding that “their long, hard work got WARA up to the Phase One construction point.”

When Fred Stephens rejoined the WARA Board in late 2004 after an absence due to illness, he returned fully energized and quickly put the expertise gained in a long and successful career as an executive in sales and marketing with the Gillette company to good use. He would lead the public relations and awareness efforts, culminating in the hugely successful “Fever Pitch” event in 2005. He would join Tom O’Brien’s Captains of Industry as another firm believer in The Nick.

When asked about the apparent reticence of some of Stephens’ friends to support his joining the WARA team, he explains that they simply had a different viewpoint. As with almost any organization of this type, the birth is difficult. The formation of the Wolfeboro Area Recreation Association Board did not occur easily, moving through the usual pitfalls of legitimate differences of opinion. Any time a group of strong people with strong opinions gather to work on projects of the magnitude of The Nick, the desire to achieve the goal will be the driving force; the methodology for achieving that goal will

more than likely be viewed differently. Over the years required to complete The Nick project, the predictable, unavoidable differences occurred, resulting in some changes in leadership but always, Tom O'Brien is portrayed by members of the WARA board as focused and centered. In interview after interview, he is described as the one who never lost sight of what the end result was to be.

An accurate description of the scope of The Nick project and the five-year sequence of events that led to its successful implementation becomes a daunting project of its own when the scores of people involved are considered. Even those who were involved before Tom O'Brien and his self-described "captains" assumed the leadership role deserve to be identified and recognized. The obligation not to overlook the valuable contributions of all who served on the project will hopefully be addressed in an addendum to this book.

Meanwhile, WARA now had an effective and enthusiastic leadership team, the land it needs for the project, and the belief that, to echo Bob Hopewell once more, "it is really going to happen." So, the Board of Directors collectively are thinking—"Where do we go from here?"

Chapter Seven

Beautiful Vision, Daunting Reality

An official vote of the WARA Board of Directors named the future recreational park the Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park in honor and memory of Nicholas J. Pernokas. The beauty of the quickly adopted “Nick-name” of The Nick is in its simplicity. It just may have been the easiest part of the work looming on the horizon.

WARA interviewed several engineering firms and outlined their preliminary expectations. With much discussion and give and take on the Board, Gale Associates of Bedford, New Hampshire, was the firm chosen to design the project. After meeting with members of the Board a second time, Gale Associates agreed to submit the engineering design of the project.

The winter of 2001 proved to be a busy one with the “many, many” meetings mentioned by Tom O’Brien. O’Brien points out rather strongly again that these meetings were always well attended by those involved and that Everett Albee, the owner of the sand pit which was now to become The Nick, was “tremendously helpful” throughout the initial planning process. His knowledge base of the property provided valuable insight, although certain of Bob Hopewell’s blessed events occurring at the property would surprise even him. With the planning meetings and the trips to look at other projects that had some similarities to the Nick, the winter passed quickly for those who now were proceeding with a vigor that would characterized the project through the next five years.

Bob Hopewell, while admitting that looking at fields in the winter was difficult, says that they learned much from a John Grisham sponsored project in Virginia and a Greenberg memorial project in New York. While Hopewell was doing his research, the

WARA Board also participated in a number of field trips. With the input from the excursions and the ideas gleaned from the Board, local officials, needs assessments and others connected to local athletic programs, Gale Associates developed a preliminary design. After more of the “many, many” meetings, the WARA Board and Gale agreed upon a final design. Soon after the design was finalized, Gale Associates submitted initial cost estimates to the Board. That estimate to make The Nick a reality probably was expected by some on the Board, surprising to others and absolutely daunting to others. However, now they had a plan with a 3.2 million dollar price tag, a tag which included the purchase price of the Albee sand pit. There would have to be many, many more meetings to sort out where to go from here.

The discussions of the difficult issue of where exactly to begin led, quite logically, to the engagement of a professional fund raising firm, a company that would offer advice and counsel in how to attain the lofty goal for the project. The first in this process appears to always be a feasibility study to determine if the area would (or could) support such a project. In what Tom O’Brien would describe as WARA first failure, the consulting firm was unable to perform to expectations. The large number of interviews that were supposed to be conducted for the study were not completed; actually, the study consultant was able to conduct just three interviews in six weeks. In a short time, the WARA Board, now making decisions as a team, realized that they were paying a substantial price to the consulting firm for advice. The resulting study was a failure and most of the advice that was given consisted of what effort they, the Board, needed to put forth. They were already well aware of this fact.

“So, why are we paying them?” some wondered.

The summer of 2002 had gone by. The need for a new chair for the capital campaign was obvious. The WARA Board spent considerable time deciding whom the right person might be to recruit for this crucial position. The decision was made to ask Tina Maxfield, a current Board member and her husband Chip. As mentioned previously, Tina, along with Fred Stephens and Donna DiCasparro of Excelsior Graphics, had already designed a brochure as part of a package for campaign prospects. The Maxfields accepted the position as co-chairs and built a strong team for the huge task facing them. A friend of Jerry Thayer's, "T" Tall from Vermont, was contacted and arranged a training day to plan the upcoming 2003 phase of the campaign.

The decision to run a "quiet campaign" was made, at least until approximately sixty percent of the goal was reached. The capital campaign accomplished much in 2003. With heavy contributions from the Board aiding the process and substantial time and effort put forth by the campaign team, over one million dollars had been raised as 2003 came to a close. This accomplishment came about despite the team running into some difficulties obtaining appointments to speak with prospects.

The fundraising brochure project chaired by Tina Maxfield served as an additional motivational tool for the WARA Board, which continued to press ahead with optimism and enthusiasm even though disappointed in what had taken place in 2002.

"The real hero here was the team- the WARA Board," Tom O'Brien says. "(We) never came anywhere near giving up hope."

Meanwhile, Katja Fox was in charge of public relations and publicity. Through newspaper articles, the project remained in the public eye thanks to Katja's talent. Her work was so good that the Granite State News would print her articles without rewrite

and actually published several features of their own between the purchase of the land and 2003.

With the realization that the leadership needed to handle their own public relations and fund raising was available in their own ranks, WARA moved forward with an aggressive capital campaign fully believing that “it is going to happen.” Including the substantial amount donated by WARA Board members prior to that day in 2003 when Tina and Chip Maxfield assumed the co-chairmanship of the fundraising effort through to the Grand Opening of the park in August of 2006, almost three and a quarter million dollars has been raised in support of The Nick project.

At the end of 2003, many would have never thought it possible.

Chapter Eight

The Capital Campaign

The ambitious Nick project, with its daunting price tag, clearly was not going to become a reality through the bake sale and car wash route. As the capital campaign started, the WARA board was well aware of the self-established philosophical stance that this project would not require any municipal funding. The “Place For All Ages (And A Place For All Time)” was to be a private endeavor. It was Bob Hopewell who repeatedly sounded the optimistic trumpet that this venture would find the necessary number of believers to make it happen.

“What it is going to take,” he remembers telling those who already believed and were rolling up their sleeves to get started, “is making the effort to personally contact people and explain the importance of what we are doing.”

With Tina and Chip Maxfield providing energetic and able leadership, the fund-raising began in earnest in early 2003 after all zoning and land use clearances and permits were received. Following the suggestions that personal contact and positive connections with all who might have had an interest in the project were crucial, the campaign received a number of substantial donations in the spring of 2003. These generous contributions provided the positive momentum needed if the long range campaign were to be successful. For purposes of this book, the major contributors will not be identified nor will those who supplied donations in kind with substantial gifts of professional expertise, construction materials and helped with uncountable contributions of time and effort for the cause. What is worth noting, however, is another of Bob Hopewell’s “blessed

events,” an occurrence which Tom O’Brien refers to as one of many watershed moments in the campaign.

While the initial fundraising endeavors were climbing a few hills of success, there were also occasional descents into the valleys of discouragement and disappointment. During one these infrequent but bothersome descents, Bob Hopewell called on a potential benefactor in Brookfield. With his usual knack for forming strong relationships through an approach that included a combination of honesty, candor, belief in the project and persistence, he returned with a \$100,000 gift. This donation to the project caused him to repeat his positive mantra.

“I just knew then that it was going to happen and that others would soon be joining in,” he says. This donation qualifies as one of his blessed events because it was one of those turning points that ward off any looming discouragement or disillusionment that might have the potential to be debilitating to the effort. However, in the words of Tom O’Brien, the details of this particular event “(were) so very important and (the story) must be told.”

By the end of 2003, enough money had been raised to begin construction. WARA considered this a critical juncture as it was time to show the community that The Nick was going to be built. They prepared a specification sheet of the construction of one half of the park- Phase I of the project. Three utility fields, a parking lot and roads to the mid-park (soon to be dubbed the Heart of the Park by O’Brien) comprised this phase.

“We had enough money to build it but not much more,” O’Brien says. Engineering work lagged behind so the advertising for the park was late being distributed for the start of construction in June, 2004. Fortunately, Paul Price of Peerless Golf Construction

Company knew the project well and wanted the job. The firm was low bidder by a substantial margin. Under Paul's direction, construction began in late June. Meanwhile, the capital campaign continued and by the fall of 2004, more money had been raised than was needed for Phase I but it was not enough to finish the park. Because the contractor and all the equipment was already in place at the park, any additional work could be completed at a somewhat more economical rate. It was a "terrific opportunity" and one that WARA wanted desperately not to allow it to slip by but the funds simply were not there until Bob Hopewell's short trip to Brookfield.

One hundred thousand dollars was needed and when Hopewell returned with a very saleable one hundred thousand dollars in stock, the park was built for much less than expected with a higher standard of quality than WARA had thought possible.

"The timing could not have been better," Tom O'Brien says. Who could deny that this gift falls well within that category of coincidences that are better known as Bob Hopewell's blessed events?

Vickie O'Dowd and Rhonda Alden, described by all involved in the capital campaign as major positive influences, designed and instituted a program that promoted an awareness of the project in the community. This program dovetailed perfectly with the philosophy established early in the fundraising process, a philosophy expressed by Tom O'Brien.

"We needed to begin with a quiet campaign, one that would result in converting enough non-believers to believers." The generally held belief was that this kind of an effort would result in finding a core of "big givers" who could provide the project with the necessary momentum to arrive at the top of a high mountain, not a small hill.

The ambitious scope of The Nick project added to the fact that so many strong-willed and talented individuals were involved inevitably produced its fair share of stress and conflict. Even when the final goal is unequivocally clear, efforts of this magnitude by their very nature will generate a variety of ideas and methods to reach that goal. Also inevitable is that strong personalities will clash and not always agree on the best way to proceed. The Nick's capital campaign and the methodology for attaining the goal of completing the project led to some difficult discussions which, inevitably as well, resulted in changes in the people in leadership roles.

"It was not always smooth sailing," Fred Stephens points out. "We definitely had to deal with some political issues. It certainly was not all roses."

Any difficulties that arose during the early part of the capital campaign clearly were overcome. Tom O'Brien felt that with the formation of the Board consisting of Jerry Thayer, Mike Appe, John Pernokas, Katja Fox, Dick Mosher, Linda Baldwin, Ken Hoyt, Maureen Boorznaian, Steve Hale and Bob Copeland, he had the "right people" in place and the subsequent successes of the campaign seem to bear that observation out.

Jerry Thayer used his expertise in the field of finance to form a committee with the knowledge base needed to oversee the large and complex monetary aspects of the project. Mike Appe, a former Microsoft Corporation manager, established the computer programs and protocols for the management of the funds. John Pernokas possessed the business acumen to assist in that area as well as having the obvious emotional attachment to the project. Steve Hale brought years of experience in grounds maintenance and management. Katja Fox kept the project in the forefront in the community. Vickie O'Dowd and Rhonda Alden helped with fundraising and ran the community awareness

campaign. Ken Hoyt and Maureen Boornazian maintain connections and sound relationships with the sports community while Bob Copeland added his considerable legal and organizational skills to the group.

This group, along with the inestimable Bob Hopewell and strong support from community resources, especially the local radio station WASR and local newspaper, The Granite State News, moved the campaign ever more smoothly over the hills and valleys.

There were some who believed that those involved in the fundraising were in for three to four years of personal calls and interviews as they attempted their “conversions” in the community. However, as previously mentioned, within a year (2003), the million-dollar mark had been reached. In yet another example of visionary thinking, WARA set aside twenty percent of everything raised during the capital campaign as an endowment fund which was then added to the nearly five hundred thousand already set aside for the future maintenance and upgrading of the park.

Looking at the four phases of the entire project as some envisioned it, the “Money/Fundraising” phase connected the “Vision” phase to the “Construction” phase. The first stage the The Nick planners had successfully navigated (Vision phase) allowed for the selling of the idea to those who would hopefully be paying for it. A clear vision of where a project is going is crucial if it is to be accepted. The capital campaign was proceeding in a positive direction toward the construction phase. However, The visionary thinking on the part of the WARA leadership already had them concerned about the fourth or “Operational” phase. This led them to the inevitable conclusion that the long-term success of the The Nick would depend not only on the success of the initial capital campaign. Perhaps even more importantly in the long term would be WARA’s ability to

sustain the momentum and energy developed during the first three phases of the project. That energy, according to Fred Stephens, simply must be maintained. The same philosophical stance that determined that The Nick would be a private enterprise also would apply to the continuance of maintenance, upgrading, and repairs. They, too, would depend on private sources and a usage fee structure.

“Ten years from now,” he says, “we will be able to truly measure our success.”

When the capital campaign went over two million dollars, the Board decided that it was now time, in the phraseology of one Board member, “to take the bull by the horns and show people something.”

In March of 2004, the Construction Committee of WARA made the decision regarding the hiring of the general contractor and the construction at the former Albee sand pit commenced, carrying over into 2005. The face of the property would be forever changed. The transformation had begun, changing the bleak, almost desolate parcel of land just north of Wolfeboro on Route 28 into the Nicholas J Pernokas Recreation Park, A Place For All Ages- *The Nick*.

Chapter Nine

The Construction- More Blessed Events

The word inevitable is used much too often in the description of the people and events that comprise the story of The Nick. A catalogue of a few of those events would look something like this: the long bus ride to Boston where Tom O'Brien and John Pernokas meet- thought to be an inevitable stroke of Fate by some; the failure of the property on Filter Bed Road to meet the needs of WARA- inevitable in its final disposition; personality clashes and changes in personnel on boards and committee- inevitable but finally resulting in the "right" people in the right places. This catalogue could likely go on quite a bit longer but one final example: Bob Hopewell's personal statement of inevitability- "This project is absolutely meant to happen."

As the construction begins, there are the *inevitable* problems that are bound to occur as such a large project develops. It is at this point that John Pernokas says the Board of Directors of WARA played a crucial role. With the expertise and efforts of members of the board members, the hurdles and obstacles of required permits and variances are cleared, not without a number of stumbles. In the end, "relationships determine results" as one board member is fond of saying. All contingencies have been met and the way seems clear.

The fundraising is going well, especially with the site being available for viewing, no longer just a nebulous concept on the paper plans of architects and contractors. But, much of the feasibility of the development of the site was based on cost and it would take just two more of those blessed events to make certain that the project is "absolutely meant to happen."

A sand pit is just that- a sand pit. Ask anyone to describe a sand or a gravel pit and the answers are sure to include words like barren, bare, desolate, scarred and perhaps even depressing. The challenge facing WARA and its contractors was clear. Even with Everett Albee's generous gift of time, energy and advice, changing the Albee sand pit into a thirty five acre recreational park with grassy fields, a playground and picnic areas and even an all weather track required expertise, vision and probably a considerable leap of faith that it could be done.

Two of Bob Hopewell's family trips strongly influenced his vision of what he thought could be done. He visited a volunteer led Greenberg Foundation park prior to 2000 and then toured a baseball wheel project in Virginia, sponsored by author John Grisham in 2000. In both cases, he took photographs and investigated any literature available. His trips, along with the information gleaned by the other investigative trips by members of the WARA board, solidified the belief that although the problems were myriad and varied, two major obstacles existed at the Albee site.

First, as Steve Hale, a golf course superintendent, knew full well, a lush field of grass required a solid base of good topsoil. Once the topsoil issue was resolved, there remained a formidable second obstacle; namely, finding a dependable water supply to keep the fields well irrigated.

John Pernokas, recalling the topsoil discussion says that "we were estimating that we would need about twenty thousand yards of loam," admitting that the number was staggering.

Bob Hopewell's excitement bubbles over as he describes his favorite "blessed events" that helped overcome these two barriers.

“We had no idea what was in mounds surrounding the pit,” he says. He speculates that perhaps some of them might have been composed of loam that was scraped from the surface to expose the sand. Many years before, according to Hopewell, the site had been home to a bull-pen style race track of sorts. He thought that perhaps that explained some of the mounds around the edges of the pit. Also, everyone was aware that Everett Albee had put down some loam to grow a tract of grass for when the pit was eventually closed. For years, model airplane enthusiasts kept it mowed so they could practice their hobby of flying powered models. Whatever the explanation, the fact is that Everett Albee, WARA, the engineers and the contractors all believed they were going to have to truck in thousands of yards of loam, an extremely costly proposition.

The graders and bulldozers arrived and work began on rearranging the sand in the pit. The best sand was moved into one large pile in preparation for mixing it with loam to make the topsoil. All the other sand was moved into place to set the elevation of the fields when they were constructed. What was left after these two operations was a tremendous pile of loam; “huge beyond imagination” Tom O’Brien describes it. “We’re still not sure where it all came from.” The result was a savings of over eighty thousand dollars that was going to be used to add the necessary nutrients to the sand for constructing the soil.

“That essentially solved the topsoil issue,” Hopewell adds.

The answer to the water issue came about in much the same way, according to Hopewell. Dire warnings from a skilled and experienced well driller in the area had supplied a generous supply of trepidation for WARA. Without a good supply of water, the grasses at the park would be impossible to maintain. The knowledgeable well driller informed the WARA board that a neighbor across Route 28 had drilled a one thousand

feet well, only to be rewarded with a minimal flow of two gallons per minute, and it was likely that they would have the same result in the sand pit. It was time for another of those Bob Hopewell blessed events.

Steve Hale, who is often referred to as “our rock” by Tom O’Brien, had extensive experience in golf course maintenance, including the reconstruction of the Lake Winnepesaukee Country Club with Paul Price. That reconstruction presented many challenges with water issues heading the list. Steve knew all about hydraulic engineers and dowers. He consulted with both again for The Nick, unconvinced that he would meet with any more than the average success he had before, especially in light of the well driller’s warning. His solution, after listening carefully to all the possibilities, was to mark the two sites that would be the most convenient for the plan of the park. One of these two deep wells produced twenty-five gallons per minute and the other gushes out between sixty to one hundred gallons per minutes.

The situation went from “you are probably not going to get any water” to two wells that have a water supply so plentiful that this is not likely there will ever be a problem with the water supply.

The discovery of the loam and water on the property placed these two major obstacles solidly in WARA’s rear view mirror. With almost two thirds of the fundraising accomplished, WARA began the final push towards its goal. The time had come for an active involvement with community events and Fred Stephens and others were poised to do just that. Bricks and “Fever Pitch” lay ahead.

Chapter Ten

Bricks and Mortar and Fever Pitch

The personal contacts continue; the drive for substantial gifts, both monetary and in kind, continues; the community awareness campaign continues; the WARA retreats and meetings continue. The Nick, by the summer of 2003, had become a recognizable entity. The sign announcing the location of The Nick is displayed prominently on Route 28. As more and more people realized the scope and impact of the project, a sense of excitement developed. Anyone even vaguely connected with young people's athletic programs in the area can see the possibilities for fields that are kept in first class condition and will improve the chances of teams in search of a place to play actually being able to find one. When The Nick is mentioned in casual conversation, it is greeted with a positive nod of recognition. Fred Stephens, whose motivation to join the WARA effort was simply because he thought "maybe I can help," is always thinking of additional ways to build excitement for the project.

With the outstanding leadership of Paul Doran and Vickie O'Dowd and others, the "Buy A Brick" program, a program that will have its most dramatic impact at the Grand Opening of The Nick, is an ongoing fundraiser which began in 2005. As of February, 2007, the "brick" idea had sold six hundred and one bricks with donations reaching almost eighty thousand dollars.. The annual Oktober Fest is an immensely popular event in the community. The first of these events took place in 2004 at the home of Brian Underwood and it was quite successful. In succeeding years, the event has been held at The Nick itself.

These, combined with smaller events and fundraisers, continue to help accumulate the necessary maintenance and improvement capital. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the Wolfeboro Area Recreation Association is well aware of the need for continued efforts in this area, likely in an amount of well over two hundred thousand dollars per year to see that The Nick maintains its quality and “first class operation” status.

Perhaps the most visible and dramatic fundraiser was held in August of 2005. “The inspiration came as I sat watching the film one evening,” Fred Stephens says.

Orchestrated, organized and presented masterfully by Fred Stephens with considerable assistance from people like Katie Ling, the “Fever Pitch” event epitomized the effort of WARA to bring unique experiences to the community. “Fever Pitch” was, by any standards, a huge success. As an awareness event, it probably was unmatched in its effectiveness, especially for the summer visitors. As one WARA board member puts it, “It is undoubtedly the best event I have ever attended in Wolfeboro.”

On two successive nights, the Brewster Academy campus and the Great Waters tent overflowed with both avid fans of the Boston Red Sox and just plain interested people who were treated to a viewing of the film, “Fever Pitch.” Tickets had been circulated throughout the town for a free admission and the crowds were huge each night. With generous support from local merchants and special donations of sports memorabilia from the Red Sox and others, the event featured a successful auction and on the second evening, a special guest appearance by Jimmy Fallon, one of the stars of the film. It was Fallon’s ad-libbed and completely unrehearsed antics behind a back lit screen that had the audience roaring even before the main program began, setting the positive tone that carried through the entire evening. Many other celebrities attended, including a former

Red Sox catcher, a current executive with the Red Sox, and a local summer resident, one of the producers of the film.

While the event turned out to be a successful fundraiser, Fred Stephens points out that in reality, the fund raising was secondary. The Fever Pitch event was designed to be a image builder for The Nick, providing a momentum boost to the push toward the financial goal that was now in reach. Those two nights in August accomplished both goals with more success than even the ever-optimistic Fred Stephens had imagined.

As 2005 came to a close, the Grand Opening Committee, chaired by Fred Stephens, had been formed. The awareness of the project that was toward the top of the priority list for WARA was no longer an issue. The community support so necessary to its completion certainly appeared to be in place. 2006 promised to be an exciting year for everyone connected with The Nick.

Chapter Eleven

The Grand Opening

The first two items on the agenda of the Grand Opening Committee on June 19, 2006, present a clear synopsis of the expectations that permeated the entire six year process that had brought The Nick into being.

First, Chairman Fred Stephens distributed a quotation from Charles Swendoll regarding the importance of attitude and its subsequent impact in people's lives. It says, in part, that "attitude is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes. . . we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. . . I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it . . . we are in charge of our attitudes."

Second, Stephens passed along this formula which he hoped would be put into action by the committee but it seemed to cover a much broader range as it pertained to The Nick in its entirety. The formula was this: Activity + Responsibility + Accountability = Success.

The Grand Opening of The Nick was just weeks away, a culmination of the work and dedication of so many people whose attitudes were such that they were able to take forward a project and reach a goal that at first glance seemed unattainable. It was the formula for success taken to its limit. As Chairman Stephens said at a committee meeting in January, 2006, "our key word is celebration" and that became the key theme throughout the planning for the Grand Opening.

The date for the Grand Opening was eventually set for August 6, 2006, after consultations with virtually everyone involved. As the committee began its work, there

could be no doubt of the attitudes of those serving on it. There also could be no doubt that this Grand Opening would meet every definition of success as the pride and emotion of being involved in such a meaningful effort spilled over and energy and enthusiasm reigned at every gathering of the committee. The members of this committee and their respective responsibilities are listed as part of an addendum but that listing cannot possibly indicate their willingness to undertake any task with grace, good humor and competence.

“Amazing cooperation among people in this group. . . volunteers actually jumping to help!” (Quoted from the notes of the author, written during the July 11, 2006, meeting of the Grand Opening Committee)

Decisions had to be made and the program was undergoing changes even until the last possible moments. While there was considerable discussion about who might speak at the celebration, certain parameters were established. For example, if any politicians were to be invited, they would be given definitive time frames in which to complete their speeches. (The final list of speakers included only Congressman Jeb Bradley, a local resident who spoke eloquently but briefly, referring primarily to the importance of The Nick for the children and young people of the community.) Other speakers included Fred Stephens to welcome the crowd, Reverend George Harvey to deliver the Invocation, Bob Hopewell, who had been there since the very beginning, Tom O’Brien as President of WARA and finally John Pernokas, for quite obvious reasons. At the conclusion of the speeches, all speakers would take part in the ribbon cutting ceremony followed by Sue Glenn, Wolfboro Recreation Director, setting free a bevy of butterflies.

Despite the fact that the park had actually been the site of athletic contests before the “Grand Opening,” the formal opening ceremonies carried a powerful and poignant message to all attending. While John Pernokas had addressed the gathering of ten teams for a soccer jamboree on September 17, 2005, and told them that they were making history that day, this day was different. From the time early arrivals began circulating around the park, there was a definite sense that something special was happening. While upbeat music blared from the speakers scattered around the field and lacrosse and baseball teams warmed up on the fields, the inherent energy of athletic contests mingled with an intangible sense of purpose, of formidable goals met, of obstacles overcome.

When finally Fred Stephens approached the microphone to welcome the now huge gathering, those present had to feel that they were witnessing history. The emotional spirit of the crowd showed in the silent respect of the Invocation and the proud recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. After Bob Hopewell delivered a synopsis of the years leading up to the special day, Tom O’Brien followed with an emotional description of his time with WARA.

John Pernokas, who admitted afterward that he wasn’t sure he would be able to do it, shared the importance of this day and what it meant to the entire Pernokas family. What he did not share but what people should know is that the Pernokas family, particularly John and Jill, have quietly and without fanfare donated and pledged fully one third of the entire 3.2 million dollar goal. What should also be known is that the Pernokases supplied the commitment and intangible spirit which formed the foundation of this project from start to finish, all directed toward John’s stated goal of doing “something magnificent” for the memory of his son and for the good of the young people in the community and

surrounding towns. Indeed, the dedication of John Pernokas in his work for the Kingswood Youth Center had “flowed” into The Nick. Perhaps, overflowed might be a more accurate term.

The ribbon cutting and the symbolic release of the butterflies completed the formal part of the program. The games and the food and the camaraderie that followed were symbolic in their own right, heralding the beginning of an era that the founders of WARA more than six years before. That day they saw their vision realized- The Nicholas J. Pernokas Recreation Park, truly A Place For All Ages (And A Place For All Time)

SPECIAL NOTE

During the course of this narrative, references to Bob Hopewell are made in the present tense. After the interviews were completed and the first draft of this book neared completion, Bob Hopewell passed away. On October 14, 2006, the first “Annual Meeting of WARA was held. Bob was the chairman of the Nominating Committee. This meeting was to serve as a transition. WARA had decided years before that the original team would stay together until the park was built and operating. The Grand Opening in August marked that point. Now, at this meeting, new officers and board members would be elected and new procedures for rotation of terms would be put in place. In effect, it was to be a change from the building aspect to the operational aspect. It was a “changing of the guard” sort of meeting.

Tom O’Brien describes it this way. “I talked about the change taking place and Bob’s work in setting it up and was about to turn the meeting over to Bob when his head settled on the table.” Attempts to revive him were not successful. “Bob was gone,” Tom continues. “Peacefully, surrounded by friends, doing what he loved.”

“The Grand Opening and this meeting were the end of the beginning and the beginning of the rest of its life. Bob left us at that very point.”

The blessed events, the dedication, the sheer determination that said this park is going to happen- all are part of Bob Hopewell’s legacy. John Pernokas spoke of wanting to have a memorial for his son that would be “something magnificent.” Would that all of us could leave behind such a wonderful, magnificent legacy like that of Bob Hopewell.

Addendum I

At one point in the text of this manuscript, the overuse of the word *inevitable* is mentioned. I would like to use it one more time. While attempting to capture the spirit and the history of the long and complex story of The Nick, it is inevitable that some names of people who played a role in its successful completion will be overlooked. I offer my most sincere apologies to anyone in that category. Any oversight is purely of my own making and is not intentional.

In an effort to keep this type of oversight to a minimum, I offer the following names of people who have been mentioned in my interviews and research. These are in no particular order and especially are not in order of importance. This is simply a catalogue of names of those who in many different ways made the vision of The Nick a reality.

Duke Southard

Maureen Boornazian	Joe Collie	Donna DiCasparro	Paul Doran
Sue Glenn	Fergus Cullen	Vickie O'Dowd	John Pernokas
Harlow Sarles	Don Smith	Kathy Simoneau	Fred Stephens
Bill Swaffield	Zach Tarter	Dick Mosher	Gary Miller
Bob Hopewell	Tom O'Brien	Everett Albee	Dean Richardson
Pete Caesar	Don Hughes	Mike Appe	Chip Maxfield
Tina Maxfield	Jerry Thayer	Tom Bigelow	Paul Price
Todd O'Dowd	Bob Copeland	Josh Spaulding	Steve Hale
Ken Hoyt	Jim Rines	Linda Baldwin	Katja Fox
David Smith	Bob Varney	Bill Jubonen	

Addendum I (Continued)
“In Kind Donors”

Individual

Sue and Jeff Adjutant
Elaine and Kenneth Alley
Irene and Michael Appe
David Babson
Patty and William Cavallaro
Suzanne and Davis King
Diane J. and Paul R. Doran
Anita and Steven Fair
Betsy and Richard Halstead
Chuck Haughey
Traci and David Holland
Mike Ingalls
Leslie and Spencer Johnson

Roland Kinville
Janis and Larry Klein
Jeff Larson
Tucker Lovering
Patricia and Jonathan Lovering
Nancy and Shawn Papp
Arthur Pernokas
Bryan Stanley
Candace and Gerald Thayer
Joan and Bob Theve
Christie and Daniel Walsh
Linda and Larry Wilberton

Business

Bartlett Tree Experts
Baybutt Foundation Co., Inc.
Best Designs Vinyl Siding
Bigelow and Ashton, P.A.
Bradley’s Hardware
Calico Graphics
Camelot Book-Gift Shop
Carroll County Glass
Devylde’s Community Market, Inc.
DJ’s Septic Pumping Service
Donald Shure’s Home Detailing, Inc.
Excelsior Graphics
F.H. Antonucci, Inc.
Forest Pump & Filter Co., Inc.
Garwoods Restaurant and Pub
Great Waters Music Festival
Green Mountain Communications
Green Mountain Furniture
Greenleaf Irrigation
Hampshire Pewter Company
Harriman Construction
Image Awnings
J. Clifton Avery Agency, Inc.
Larson’s Turf Equipment

Leone, McDonnell & Roberts, P.A.
Linda’s Flowers and Gifts
Mike’s Lock and Key
Norway Plains Associates, Inc.
Peerless Golf, Inc.
Rourke Builders, LLC
Scott M. Thurston Elec. Plumb. & Heat
Shannon Rental
Signature Events
Spider Web Gardens
Superior Insulation
The Kingswood Press
Thirsty Water Systems
Tinker’s Flooring
TLB Music
Vaune Dugan Architectural Services
WASR Radio
Walker and Varney
Williams Concrete Floors
Winnepesaukee Lumber
Wolfboro House of Pizza, LLC
Wolfboro Oil Co., Inc.
Wolfboro Rotary Club Charities, Inc.
Wolfetrap Grill and Rawbar
Zarse Custom Cabinet Company

Addendum II

The Nick- A Vision Realized

About the author . . .

Duke Southard is a retired public high school English teacher and Library/Media Specialist. He has published professional articles in *Media and Methods Magazine* and served as president of the New Hampshire Educational Media Association. He was presented with an “Edie,” the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Award for his outstanding contribution to the school library/media profession in the state. His educational credentials include a Bachelor of Science degree from Villanova University, an MA in English Education from Glassboro State University and a CAGS from Boston University.

He is married and the father of three children. He lives in Tuftonboro, New Hampshire. He is the author of two novels. His first, *A Favor Returned*, was published in May, 2000 by Peter Randall and distributed by University Press of New England. His second novel, *Agent for Justice*, was published by Hot House Press of Cohasset, Massachusetts in October, 2003. A memoir about the tragic death of his son entitled *The Week from Heaven and Hell* was published on demand by Lightning Source, a division of Ingram Publishing Company in April, 2005.

He may be contacted through his website, www.dukesouthard.com.