

Assateague Island Is Submerged in Controversy

By JOHN PIERSON
 United Press International
 Assateague Island, Md.—(UPI)—Assateague Island off the Maryland-Virginia coast is submerged again—this time in controversy.
 On Ash Wednesday in 1962 a storm swept over the low sand reef, carrying away all but a dozen of its houses.

Now Interior Secretary Stewart L. Udall wants to do away with the remainder and make Assateague a national seashore.
 But the owners—at least some of them—don't want to go. And they're holding onto their land almost as stubbornly as the waves are trying to eat it up.



SHOWS ISLAND—This United Press International newsmap shows Assateague Island, center, which Interior Secretary Stewart Udall hopes to acquire for development as a national seashore. (UPI)

Last spring when Udall dropped onto the beach in a helicopter, one of the owners walked up to the secretary, shook his finger at him, and said, "You, sir, are on our land, and you're trying to use our money to take it away from us."
Wants Rest of Reef
 As a matter of fact, the interior department already has appropriated the southern third of Assateague—the Virginia portion—for a wildlife refuge. What Udall wants is the rest of a barrier reef typical of many along the Middle Atlantic Coast.
 Assateague is long, narrow and low. From the air it resembles a worm—far wear dragon clinging close to the mainland for protection.
 A broad sandy beach confronts the ocean. Behind the beach dunes rise up gently where grass has gotten a toehold. Still farther inland, vegetation increases and dunes fall away into salt swamps.
 Here and there are patches of higher ground, forested with pine and oak and carpeted with myrtle, bayberry, sumac, rose and catbrier.
Ponds and Potholes
 Scattered about in the marshes are ponds and potholes bordered with bull-rushes and other food larders good for ducks and geese. The wildlife preserve is a major wintering spot for waterfowl of the Atlantic flyway.
 In 1923 Boy Scouts put a pair of tiny Japanese Sika deer on Assateague. Now more than 1,000 of them roam the island.
 The most famous residents are some 200 wild ponies whose ancestors are believed to have come ashore hundreds of years ago from a Spanish wreck. Children have read about them in Marguerite Henry's "Misty of Chincoteague."
 The ocean waters abound with blues, striped bass and weakfish; the bays with clams, oysters and crabs.
Explains Reasons
 Little wonder then, with all this beauty and abundance, the owners shook their fingers at Secretary Udall. But un-

like a Kansas farmer a year ago, they did not order Udall off their land. He stayed long enough to explain why he wants Assateague for a federal reserve.

Assateague, he said, is the largest undeveloped seashore between Cape Hatteras, N.C., and Cape Cod, Mass. It offers splendid swimming, fishing, boating and other water sports as well as a chance to watch birds and other wildlife in their natural habitat.

The island is within easy reach of the major population centers of the middle Atlantic states. One can drive there from Baltimore in three hours, from Washington in four. Philadelphia is 200 miles away. New York 200.

Would Build Bridges
 Udall said the federal government would build bridges to the island and sand dunes

along its 35-mile ocean front to protect it from storms like the one last year.

Thus a fine stretch of seashore would be preserved for the enjoyment of millions of persons.

Left in private hands, Udall said, Assateague's future is dim. Private developers would probably not be willing to build dunes at the rate of \$1 million a mile or install the expensive water and sewage systems required because so much of the island is at sea level.

But the owners say Udall exaggerates the cost of drilling wells and getting rid of sewage. They claim the dunes can be built for much less.

Pride of Ownership
 And, like most Americans, they have pride of ownership. "This is our land. We want to keep it," one of them

told Udall. "This isn't Czechoslovakia."
 Local officials on the mainland have sided with the islanders. They don't want to see the property taken off their tax rolls. Maryland state officials take the federal view that national parks always produce prosperity next door.

A spokesman for the landowners accused Udall of wanting to keep the whole country "a wilderness." The secretary shot back that if this attitude prevailed "there would be no national park system."

Meanwhile, waves pound in from the Atlantic, winds whip in the topmost branches of a loblolly pine, a great blue heron has begun

his descent to the edge of a salt pond, and a deer observes it all with a liquid eye.

Shrine Club Plans Canned Food Drive

The Jackson County Shrine club will hold its second annual canned food drive for the crippled children's hospital the evening of Aug. 12, President Earnest Kennedy has announced.

The food will be taken to Portland by a caravan starting at Ashland and will be joined by trucks from each town through which they pass. The Southern Oregon group will be met at Eugene by a similar caravan from the coast which will start at Brookings.

The two caravans will meet Aug. 16 and continue to Portland the same day. The following day, the caravan personnel will attend the Shrine All-Star football game and will be introduced at ceremonies during the game.

The local Shriners will be assisted by De Molay boys and Scouts. Several pick-up trucks will be assigned to a particular area with the boys picking up the canned food.

Last year's caravan was able to collect about 33,000 cans of food for the hospital. The Shrine clubs now are planning to make this an annual event in southern Oregon for the Portland unit of the Shrine hospital organization.

Ticket Sale Slated For Annual Event

Medford city firemen will begin sale of tickets Tuesday, Aug. 13, for their annual harvest ball.

The dance will be Sept. 14 at the Medford armory with music by Baldy Evans orchestra of Klamath Falls.

Firemen in uniform will start calling at Medford business establishments Tuesday.

Proceeds will go toward the department's annual Christmas project.

Firemen repair toys and they are distributed as presents for needy youngsters of the area. A total of 888 children of 251 families benefited from the project last year. The Salvation Army distributed the toys.

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