

Swimming

Fritzi Cohen's big fish story is no exaggeration.



If it's summer in New England, you've got to be thinking *Jaws*. Especially if it's the summer of 2012, when Universal Studios is behind a monster clambake on Martha's Vineyard from August 9-12 called "JAWSFEST: The Tribute." Sponsored by MV Promotions Networks, the event will celebrate Universal's 100th anniversary as well as the cast and crew of this frighteningly successful film.

While the late Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, and *Jaws* author Peter Benchley will sadly miss the BBQ, the event will still be thronged by well-wishers and fans hoping for glimpses of original cast members Richard Dreyfuss (Hooper), Susan Backlinie (Chrissie, the most famous night-swimming shark attack victim *ever*), Lee Fierro (Mrs. Kintner), and possibly Maine's Fritzi Cohen (under the stage name of Fritzi Jane Courtney), who made the most of her part as a selectwoman in the fictional town of Amity. She reprised her role as Mrs. Taft

With the Sharks

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS



Roy Scheider, far left, Murray Hamilton, and Fritzi Cohen grab audience attention during the emergency town council scene in *Jaws*.

in both *Jaws 2* (1978) and *Jaws: The Revenge* (1987).

Faced with tourism revenues in free fall because of great white shark attacks, Cohen is memorable in juicy scenes where the audience sees her staring into the public-relations equivalent of the abyss.

"When I auditioned for Spielberg for a role in *Jaws*, he was 24," Cohen remembers, "just at the beginning of his incredible career. He saw every actor personally and couldn't have been friendlier.

"I was about to read from a script handed to me, when he waved it aside and said, 'Let's do an improvisation instead. You're an Islander and this guy (another actor with me) isn't. He wants to rent the Katharine Hepburn suite in your hotel. Who does he think he is? Okay, you know the attitude. Go!'

"And so we did, and both of us got the parts simply on Steve's gut feeling that we

I'd just been working on *Lenny* at Charles Playhouse in Boston when I got the call to audition. I was exhausted. I asked what's it about. "A big fish." Who's directing it? "Some kid."

could do it. Our month's work on Martha's Vineyard was no glamorous picnic. It was freezing on the beach in May. In the water, it was supposed to be July!"

During shooting, Cohen impulsively told the young director, "I have a feeling you are going to have a dynamite career." To which he replied, "From your mouth to God's ear!" The rest, as they say, is history." Spielberg also told Cohen, "You sound just like my Aunt Sophie."

When Bruce the shark begins devouring the locals at Oak Bluffs Ocean Park, today's



viewers can clearly see Cohen at work and channeling a Maine sensibility when she tells Chief and Mrs. Brody, "You're not born here, you're not an Islander. That's it."

As shooting continued, a New England cliquishness ran through the entire cast. "There was a little gazebo on the beach," Cohen says, "where Richard Dreyfuss, three crew members, and I'd meet to play poker. Peter Benchley walked by, and Richard asked him to pick up a pack of cigarettes. I said to Peter later, 'He didn't even say

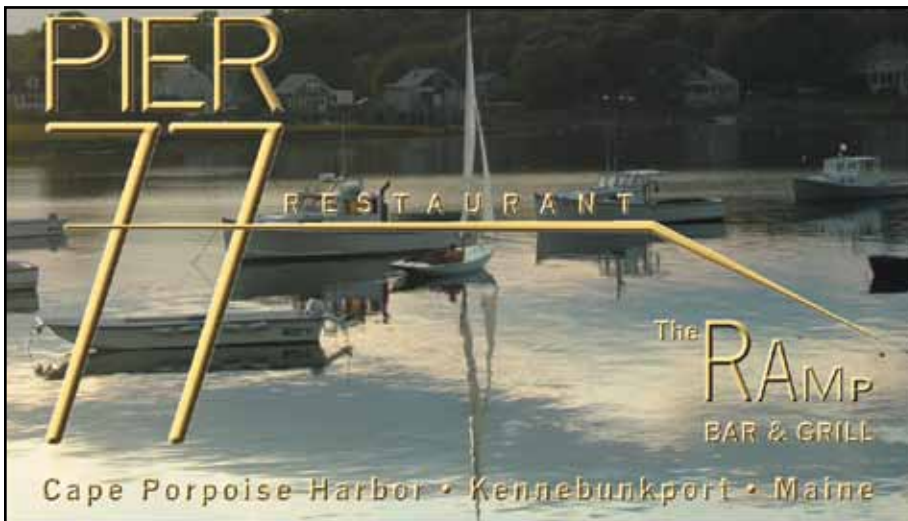
Planning



Peoples Choice Credit Union, Biddeford

Evolving needs and technology had Peoples Choice Credit Union needing a major renovation. PM Construction seamlessly performed all the interior and exterior renovations without disrupting the credit union's normal business hours.

When you need a construction manager to plan, budget, and perform a major renovation, call Laura Blanchette at 207.282.7697.

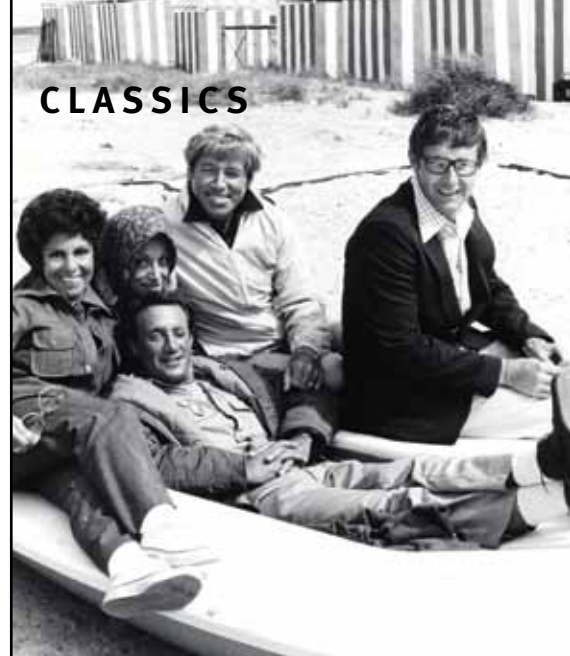


Serving our New Summer Menu

*Open Daily
Lunch and Dinner*

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MENUS, DIRECTIONS & FUNCTION INFORMATION
207-967-8500 WWW.PIER77RESTAURANT.COM
77 PIER ROAD, CAPE PORPOISE

CLASSICS



THEY'RE GOING TO NEED A BIGGER BOAT—Cohen, Lorraine Gary, and Phil Murray support Scheider between takes on Martha's Vineyard, along with *Jaws* author Peter Benchley (right).

please.' But Peter said, 'I'm not about to teach him courtesy at this point in his life.'

Of course, *Jaws* isn't the only big fish Cohen's caught. Among her co-stars across the years is Joan Crawford. No wonder she didn't blink at the prospect of working with a shark.

CRAWFORD NOTCH

"I wasn't a bit surprised by Tina Crawford's novel, *Mommie Dearest*, about her mother, Joan," Cohen says. "I knew Tina years ago when we were both working at the Kennebunkport Playhouse, and I worked briefly with Joan at Poland Spring in 'Same Picture, Different Frame,' an episode of the television series *Route 66*.

"At the time Ms. Crawford was married to the Pepsi Cola magnate and she was Lady Bountiful, dispensing Pepsi to the peons on the set. I played a librarian in a scene with Patrick O'Neal.

"The scenario is that he sees me and remembers Crawford in the same setting years before. There's a dissolve and I become Joan in his mind. I'd had my hair done, lots of makeup, the works. The word came down that Ms. Crawford needed no competition—I want the excitement taken out of her makeup—so my makeup was removed and my hair was pulled back off the face and dowdy. Only then was the star pacified, without ever saying one word of any kind to me. Oh well, the residuals keep coming!" ■

For more, visit portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/05/jaws-extras.



COURTESY FRITZY COHEN

Brighter Smiles &
BRIGHTER DAYS AHEAD!



Portland & Central Maine
DENTAL HEALTH CARE
& Implant Centers

At Portland and Central Maine Dental Health Care & Implant Centers we work to ensure your teeth remain healthy, beautiful and functional at all ages. In our modern, comfortable and friendly offices we offer nearly unlimited services including:

- Full array of family/general dentistry, including root canals and extractions
- Cosmetic dentistry including tooth whitening, veneers, crowns and bridges
- Dental Implants (surgical and prosthetic services) for a fixed solution for missing teeth
- Sedation Dentistry
nitrous oxide, oral and IV sedation

Portland
207.797.5000
315 Auburn Street



Lewiston
207.783.8800
488 Sabbattus Street

*Drs. Peter and Michelle are
Invisalign® I and II certified!*
Straightening your teeth will not only improve your SMILE, but your overall dental health.

*Summer Special!
Get 20% off Nite White or
ZOOM! Whitening services!*

Entrust Your Smile to our
Highly Trained Dentists

Michelle R. Verrier-Davis, DMD, FAGD

Diplomate of the International
Congress of Oral Implantologists

Peter M. Davis, DMD, FAGD

Diplomate of the International
Congress of Oral Implantologists

Donald W. Verrier, DDS, FAGD

Joel S. Doyon, DDS, FAGD

Dheeraj Pamidimukkala, DMD

*Open evenings throughout
the summer!*

www.portlandmainedental.com