

for F. Jones ↓



Photos by John McDonnell—The Washington Post

The main house at Chopawamsic Island is close to the shore. The island's owners are asking \$800,000 for the property, which includes two other restored homes.

Couple Asking \$800,000 for Island

ISLAND, From A1

Potomac river-front property typically sells for \$50,000 an acre. What's more, the island comes complete with the restored homes, five boats, three tractors, the swimming pool, a piano and a 1969 Saab automobile.

"I use that for carting groceries up the hill," Mrs. Fry said.

There is no road on the island, nor is there a telephone. But there are towering oak trees, shady grassy slopes, fruit trees bursting with apples, plums and cherries, the damp breeze from the Potomac and the sound of beating wings from blue herons and other hiver birds soaring overhead.

To Dr. Fry, now 74, and a former surgeon at the Quantico Naval Hospital, the island offered "a certain amount of isolation from this busy world." To Erma Fry, 55, it was "an adventure."

They hope to sell the island to a kindred spirit who would continue their work.

Lewis said that former Beatle John Lennon, a Saudi Arabian prince, a wealthy Washington attorney who would entertain clients there on the

land. Then we discovered it was an island. We went ashore, but we couldn't see anything. It was totally overgrown with vines."

Fry, filled with "pioneer spirit," bought the island and started to work. Originally, there were seven houses on the island dating to the 1600s but only three structures could be restored. Today the three dwellings—the main house, where the Fry's live, a guest house and a caretaker's cottage—are furnished with brass beds and quilts and filled with antiques.

Fry spent \$150,000 on renovation the first year. With the weekend help of Marine friends from the base, he cleared the land and planted grass, trees and raspberry bushes. Because it was difficult to take heavy equipment there, virtually all the work was done by hand. They dug a 280-foot well and later, a swimming pool. There is a septic tank for each house and electric power from an underwater cable.

Using two pontoons and a large board, the Frys rigged a 24-foot work boat to make the 10-minute trip from Quantico to the island. They used the boat to carry their cars and other

Marine base. On Sunday mornings, they hear the soft peal of faraway church bells.

Erma Fry thinks the island would be perfect for "a yoga retreat or a fat farm." Lewis suggests the buyer should be "someone important, someone who is under great pressure and needs to get away, someone who values privacy."

But Dr. Fry, who is due to retire in August from the Veterans Administration, said he hoped the island would be sold to "somebody who

would enjoy it as much as we did. There's still a lot to be done."

As for the Frys, they're going ashore.

"We've been all over Virginia looking for a farm," Dr. Fry said the other day. "We finally found one we like in Charlottesville. We're going to raise a large garden and some small animals."

Asked if he would be willing to tackle another deserted island, the soft-spoken Fry answered, "I think I'm too old for that kind of work."

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Lewis said that former Beatle John Lennon, a Saudi Arabian prince, a wealthy Washington attorney who would entertain clients there on the weekends and a young surgeon from the Washington area are already interested.

"We also contacted (boxer) Sugar Ray Leonard about using the island as a training camp," Lewis said.

Dr. Fry recalled this week how he first discovered the only inhabited island on the Potomac in Virginia. "I was in a boat coming around the river. We first thought it was part of the

there, virtually at the water's surface by hand. They dug a 280-foot well and later, a swimming pool. There is a septic tank for each house and electric power from an underwater cable.

Using two pontoons and a large board, the Frys rigged a 24-foot work boat to make the 10-minute trip from Quantico to the island. They used the boat to carry their cars and other large items to the island, which had been uninhabited for years.

Fry said he once had wanted to start an azalea farm and brought more than 7,000 azalea plants to the island. But rabbits ate every plant within a few months.

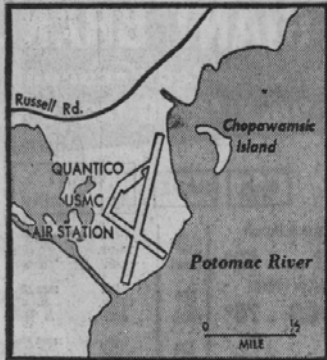
"We have muskrats, beavers and groundhogs, too," said Erma Fry. "One year I found a snake in the swimming pool."

Dr. Fry has unearthed numerous arrow heads, relics of the Chopawamsic Indians who reportedly inhabited the island. In the 1600s, according to Erma Fry, the island was used as a river stop for travelers. But the early land records kept in the Stafford County Courthouse were destroyed during the Civil War.

Once known as Scott Island, the Potomac River spot was the home of the "Mt. Vernon Ducking Association," a hunt club, and President Theodore Roosevelt is reported to have hunted there.

"The Marine pilots call it 'Pork Chop Island' because from the air, it looks like a pork chop," said Erma Fry.

At night, when the crickets are chirping, the Frys can hear the faint bugle notes of taps from the nearby

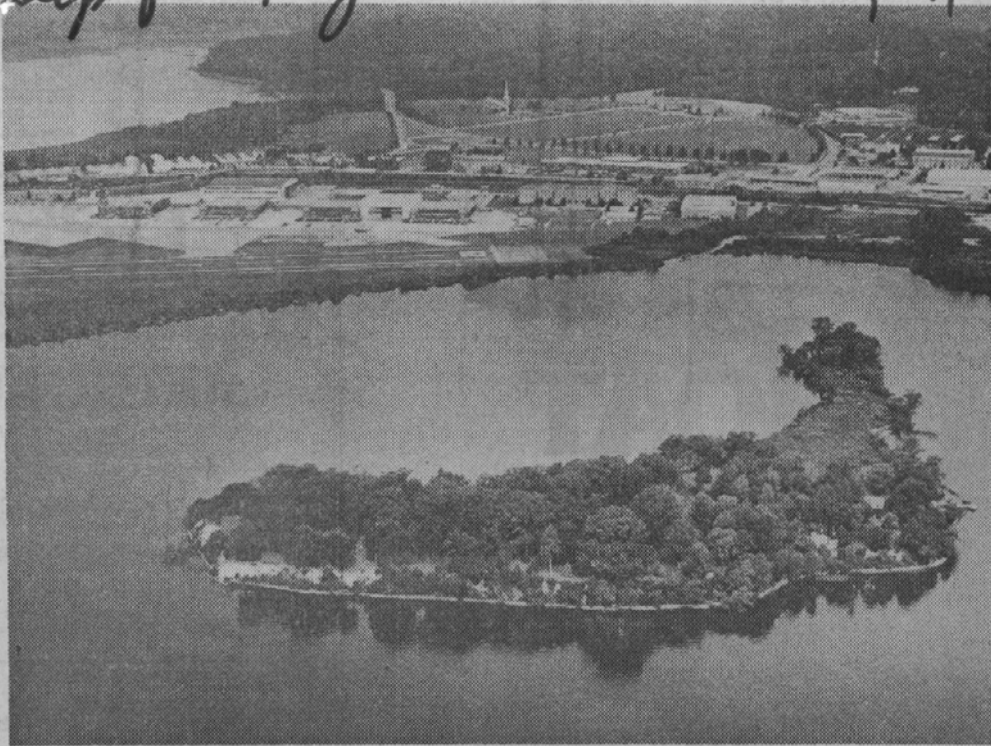


By Dave Cook—The Washington Post



Erma Fry stands on the porch of a house on the island she and her husband own.

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By Ken Fell—The Washington Post

Chopawamsic Island is in the Potomac River, just a few hundred yards off Quantico Marine Base.

Want a Secluded Island? Got \$800,000?

By Stephanie Mansfield
Washington Post Staff Writer

Back in 1958, Dr. Wesley Fry, a Navy physician, wanted a place to get away from it all.

So he shelled out \$14,000 for 13 acres of Northern Virginia underbrush, overgrown vines and mosquito-infested swampland known as Chopawamsic Island. The once-deserted island is 300 yards off the Quantico Marine Base in the Potomac River, 20 miles south of Washington.

"Nobody wanted it," Erma Fry, the doctor's wife, recalled this week. "In those days, it wasn't fashionable to own an island."

Twenty-one years later the Frys are betting that Washington's inflated real estate prices have been carried downstream. Their island, now something of a Potomac paradise with three restored pre-Civil War homes and a hand-dug swimming pool, is up for sale.

The asking price? \$800,000.

"It's hard to put a price on an island," said Robert Lewis, a Woodbridge real estate salesman representing the Frys. "And besides, Dr. Fry has put his whole life into the place."

The asking price is realistic, according to Alexandria real estate agent Charles R. Hooff Jr., because

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