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## Christopher Lloyd Talks About His Childhood at Waveny House Fundraiser

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Christopher Lloyd on Wednesday night stepped toward the limestone fireplace in the grand hall of his childhood home in New Canaan, just over the border from Darien, turned and told 50 town residents gathered there that returning to Waveny House reminds him of his past.

On this evening — a cocktail party hosted by the [Waveny Park Conservancy](#) to honor the organization's founders and supporters, and kick off fundraising plans for 2017 — the [actor](#) said he found himself thinking about “one particular incident” involving his father, Samuel R. Lloyd Jr.

“My father liked to have a cigar from time to time, and there was a humidor in that room, the billiard room,” he said, pointing past the staircase that New Canaanites for decades have climbed to reach the Recreation Department’s offices.

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“There’s still a billiard table in there, though for some reason it’s kind of dark. And there’s a humidor, and when I was seven, eight, nine years old, I became aware that it contained cigars, and I experimented. I kind of secreted one, went outside, lit it up. At seven, eight, nine years old, that must have been quite a sight. And I kind of thought, ‘This is interesting.’ ”

The young Lloyd continued to smoke the occasional cigar and “one night I was in the library — that’s that room over there,” he said, pointing in the other direction, toward the of the 1912 home, “and I lit up a cigar and my mom and dad were going to have guests for the evening. I was aware that they were all upstairs. So I lit up a cigar and then I heard my father walk down those stairs. I could hear him on the steps.”

Lloyd quickly stuffed the cigar into a bronze, lion-shaped ink well on the library’s desk, and “went upstairs to take a bath.”

The boy soon hear his father’s voice asking whether he could come in, Lloyd recalled.

“What was I going to say?” he said, drawing laughter from the room.

“We chatted a bit and then he reached into his pocket and took out the cigar that I hadn’t finished and another one and he said, ‘Let’s have a cigar.’ Words to that effect.

So I was sitting in the bathtub and he gave me what I hadn’t finished. I didn’t think about the fumes, that anybody in this area would have smelled them. I wasn’t smart enough to realize that.

So I took the cigar and he had a Zippo or something, and he was immaculately attired — my father, they used to describe him as kind of an Edwardian gentleman out of his time, the tie pin and the whole thing. Very refined. So he lit my cigar, he lit his and he sat down.

We had a conversation, about what I don’t know. But I was smoking the cigar in the bathtub. Ultimately I got very sick. Very sick. Obviously my dad was very pleased with the outcome. And it broke me of my addiction to smoking.”

The story offers a peek into a childhood spent romping in a house and grounds that — as his mother, Ruth Lapham Lloyd, wished — thousands of New Canaan kids also have enjoyed in the 50 years since the family conveyed the property to the town.

To mark the milestone anniversary, the Waveny Park Conservancy will cap a year of fundraising with what Bob Seelert, chairman of the nonprofit organization’s board of directors, called “the event of the year in New Canaan.”

The Golden Gala is to be held Dec. 2 at Waveny House, an elegant black tie dinner that will be themed around the “Gilded Age,” about when the beloved structure itself was built, a century ago. The event will feature a live auction, entertainment and dancing. Christopher Lloyd, together with his wife, Lisa, will serve as the gala’s honorary chairpersons, Seelert said.

It’s a position of honor that Lloyd said he is grateful and happy to fill.

“My mom would be so pleased to see what all of you are doing,” he told those in attendance at the kickoff party. “It’s exactly what she hoped — to preserve this place, for it to be a park where the people of New Canaan, and wherever else, could come and play. Take a walk in the woods, whatever — get married. So, I just cannot express how grateful I am to all of you.”

With food supplied by New Canaan chef (and “Chopped” winner) Silvia Baldini, flowers and décor from local volunteers and photographed by [NCHS junior Eden Neleman](#), the kick-off cocktail party saw the Waveny Park Conservancy’s [board members](#) and their spouses mix with donors, supporters and key town officials.

In his remarks, Seelert reviewed the conservancy’s work to-date (including the creation of new trails that are [getting high marks](#) from park goers), spotlighted fundraising efforts (some \$1 million has been raised so far, including through a successful “[tailgate party](#)” out back of Waveny’s balcony in the fall that will be held again this year) and described some of the “transformative” work still to be done, including [at the pond](#) located at the foot of the sledding hill and [in the cornfields](#), a plan that [recently received unanimous support](#) from town officials.

The most expensive project for the conservancy is the pond, and fundraising efforts for this year also will include a town-wide mailing, Seelert said.

However, the “biggest opportunity for us in 2017 is to recognize the fact that this just happens to be the year that is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mrs. Ruth Lapham Lloyd conveying the entire property to the town,” he said.

“Earlier in the 1960s, she donated 46 acres to the town which became the site of today’s high school and then in ’67, the remaining 296 acres became town property. And I’m not sure people really fully realized

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what an incredible iconic and transformative asset this place would be, take a look at what has happened,” Seelert said, turning to the town’s highest elected official, First Selectman Rob Mallozzi. “What would New Canaan be, Mr. Mallozzi, without Waveny?”

Kolb described Waveny as a place that brings people together, and noted that the gala will be “special and unique” just as Lloyd’s own personal experiences in growing up at Waveny House are unique.

Lisa Lloyd said that when her husband first brought her to Waveny 12 years ago, “I was stunned.”

“I mean, it’s a beautiful, beautiful place. We have been here occasionally when no one knows, and walked the grounds, and I’m so honored to be part of this. We don’t live here, we live far away. Everyone I’ve met from New Canaan has been lovely and wonderful and gracious. Thank you for that.”

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*All photos with this article are published with permission of Eden Neleman of [Eden Lucien Photography](#).*