

willmotts and why-nots

David J. Willmott, Editor

Fishing season opens

St. Patrick's day traditionally heralds the opening of flounder season. April 1 brings anglers to ponds and rivers in search of trout. Last Sunday, we crossed Shinnecock Canal and along the length of the banks, men, women and children were enjoying their free time fishing for flounder.

Shinnecock Canal is approximately 1/2 mile long, connecting the Shinnecock and Peconic Bays. There is nothing to lure fishermen other than a dirt road and the chance to catch a fish.

This past winter we spent some time in Florida, and were amazed at what this state has done to encourage the sport of fishing. Almost every bridge we crossed had a catwalk that fishermen could use. Piers and jetties are open to the public and people are encouraged to use them.

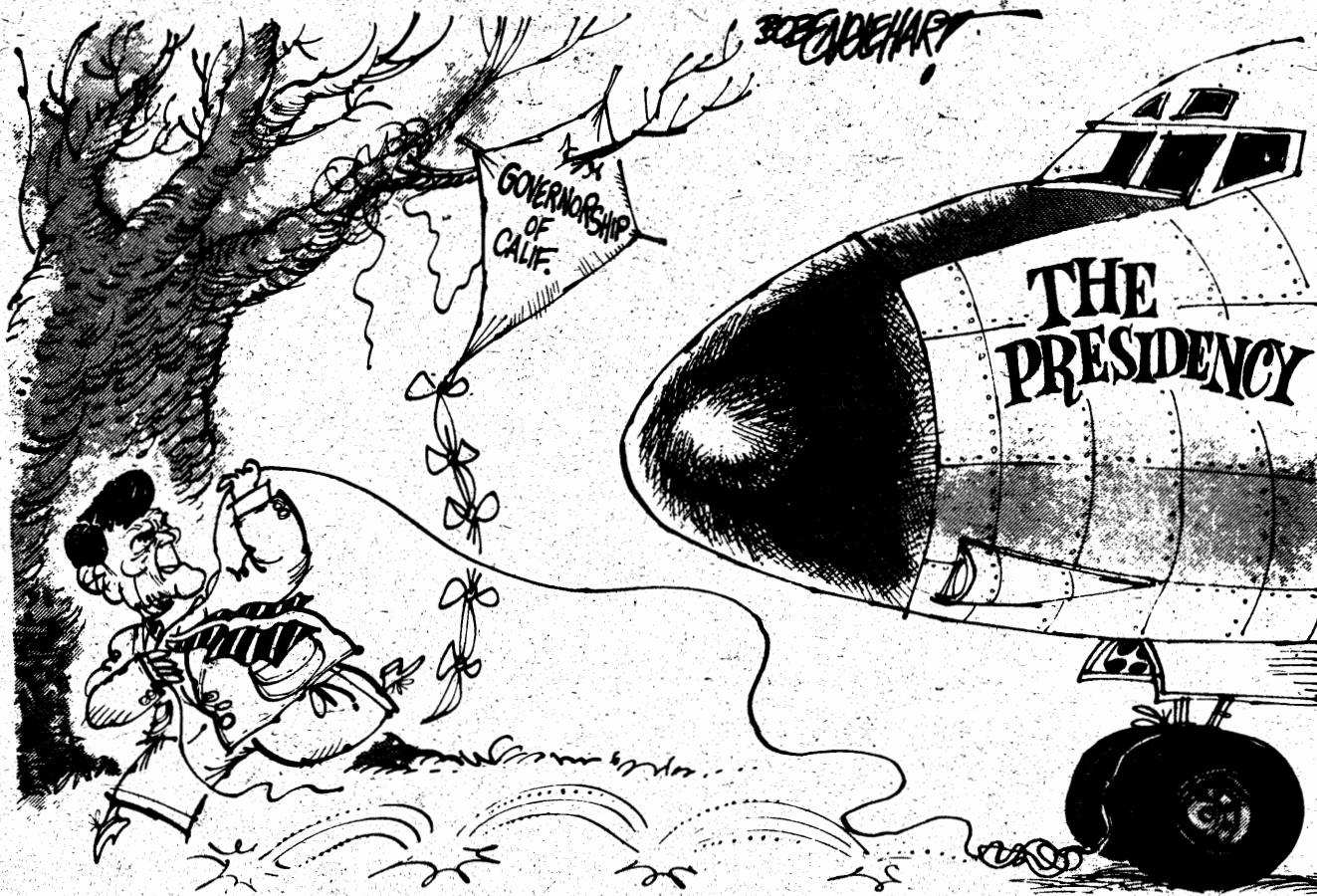
I spoke to one state official who told me the effort of the state to make the natural resources available to the public was one of the best investments going. He explained the catwalks, the jetty platforms and other such structures were relatively inexpensive to construct. They were used almost daily and provided the young and the old, the rich and the poor with inexpensive entertainment and, if they were lucky, a food source.

I told him about Suffolk County putting up fences in some prime fishing areas and 'No Fishing' signs in other areas. He said in effect, 'What the hell can you expect from those damn yankees; they are a bunch of dumb, snobbish S.O.B.'s who would prefer to put up a super-structure that would be a monument to their stupidity than to give the average poor snook a chance to enjoy himself.'

Well, I was born a yankee and his insinuations, although true, hurt. What is wrong with us that we don't make every inch of our natural resources available and easily accessible to our people? There are few fishermen who feel they have to have a comfort station, a snack bar, a paved parking lot and sixteen rangers running around to enjoy catching a couple of fish. Shinnecock Inlet is one of the last vestiges of free fishing that has escaped the forbidding 'No Trespassing' signs and hasn't been fenced off yet. Its use is a testimonial to the need for such facilities.

Probably this editorial will give one of those pompous S.O.B.'s an idea so it too may be off limits when the lilacs bloom and the weakfish slip from the Shinnecock into the Peconic. Maybe though, we might have one of our new legislators who has not yet become poisoned by the system demand the park recreational fishing lands owned by the county residents be opened up to them.

If the hillbillies down in Florida can make us 'smart' yankees their laughing stock, maybe it's about time we take stock of ourselves to figure out where we have gone wrong. And why not?



Both pockets hurt

Politicians have the hair-brained idea if they take money out of one of our pockets it doesn't hurt as much as if they take it out of the other pocket.

Last week, Perry Duryea, Assemblyman from the First District, screamed bloody murder about Carey's veto of a portion of the budget which pertained to school aid. This portion would have given Long Island's districts more money than they received the year before, allowing the school boards to continue the reckless spending sprees they have indulged in the past. Carey claims if these monies were left in the budget, the whole state budget would have been in jeopardy as it was uncertain it would balance; this would result in much higher interest costs for the state.

As a taxpayer I really don't see how it makes much difference if I have to pay increased income taxes, sales tax or increased real estate taxes. Any way I look at it, the money is coming out of my hide and I am going to suffer just as much because of it. The state legislators, and particularly Assemblyman Duryea, wanted to come home to their districts to tell us about the wonderful things they have done for us and how they managed to keep school taxes down (these taxes makeup a large portion of our real estate tax burden).

This is pure hogwash and the legislators know it. The state does not have any Santa Clauses hidden under the eaves who will bail it out from reckless spending nor does the state have any printing presses capable of running off money it can distribute to local municipalities. If the school districts' money was to come from the state, it would have to be supplied by additional taxes raised by the state. These taxes would come either directly or indirectly from us. If additional monies were raised, unions representing the school teachers and other school officials would have a stronger case to demand raises and additional fringe benefits and

the school boards would acquiesce to their demands.

Now with Carey vetoing these additional funds for the local school districts this is what may happen: The school boards will either live within the income of district residents, or they will raise real estate taxes which will bankrupt these people. Faced with this reality, many school boards will be more reluctant to give in to labor's demands. Additionally, incumbent legislators running for re-election this year will be faced by angry homeowners whose real estate taxes may have been raised. This is something the legislators want to avoid in an election year.

It may not seem like Carey did us a favor by vetoing this portion of the bill, but in the long run his political courage may result in a small halt in the questionable, spiralling cost of education. And why not?

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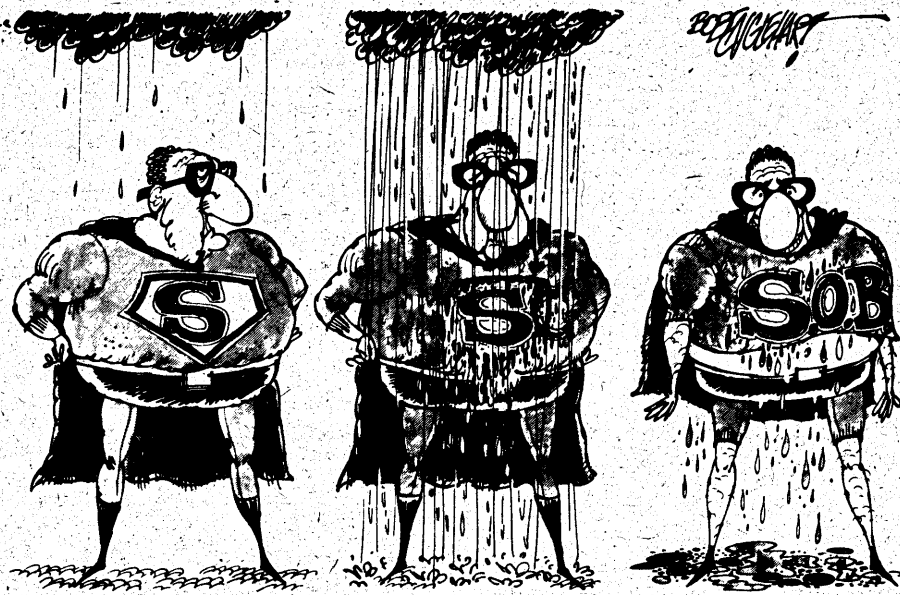
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We still don't have facts

King John's farmland preservation bill is still being discussed by the County Legislature. Almost three years after this idea was first proposed, the public still has not been given the cold hard facts as to cost, taxes, impact and alternatives. Last fall when we interviewed candidates for the County Legislature, almost all were hazy about this project. None the less, some were very much in favor and others were equally opposed. The farmland acquisition program is being promoted like the South West Sewer District proposal was.

Farmland preservation has merit, but it should be spelled out in detail. The alternatives to this program should be given equal space. We feel the tax implication is most important. What will this project cost each one of us in increased real estate taxes? At the start of the program and at its conclusion, we want to know the effect

on the tax rate in the towns where this land is located. Obviously, the taxes lost on these lands will be paid by the remaining landowners in the communities. How much in dollars and cents will it cost?

This farmland preservation is a mammoth undertaking. It is not a program we can or should buy blind. We fear King John knows that if the public has all the facts at their disposal, they will turn his program down. King John would then lose his one claim to national fame. Better for the great wizard to be unknown in Oshkosh, Michigan, than to have the people of Suffolk sucked into a dubious proposition they can ill afford.

Until we have all the facts and in language we can understand, we encourage all legislators to withdraw their support from this questionable proposition. And why not?

Withholding... hold up

Your tax obligation comes due April 15th, the year after you have earned the income on which the taxes are levied. In the late '30's, President Roosevelt introduced a withholding tax system to finance his war against the Depression. It is easier for you to pay your taxes since they are withheld from your salary as you earn it, rather than having them due in a lump sum come the 15th of April.

What happens though, is you are giving the government an interest-free loan for as long as 15½ months before this money is due. If you could legally invest the money withheld from your paycheck each week in a savings account, come April 15th after you paid your taxes, you would have left over the interest this money had earned. In addition, you would pay the exact amount you owed the government and would not have to wait for the return of any overage you had paid in during the year.

New York State introduced the withholding system during the Rockerfeller era. Now it is revealed that Governor Carey is planning not to return any tax refunds you may have coming due to you in 1977 till after July 15th at the earliest. According to a prospectus being circulated to

financial houses, the state will withhold these refunds in order that the state may earn interest to pay bills it will have coming due. In simple terms the state intends to place a tax on top of a tax by denying you the right to have your overpayment returned to you quickly and efficiently. This is ethically wrong and is morally unjust.

If your withholding taxes are not submitted on time, you are fined. If you do not pay your tax obligation on April 15th, you are charged interest plus penalties from that day forth. The tax man is not one bit understanding about your circumstances or reasons why you do not have the money to meet your tax obligations. He doesn't care that you have other obligations you may feel come first such as buying food, or paying the rent. He wants his money and he wants it when it is due, and if he doesn't get it you are fined heavily for not living up to his rules and regulations.

This rip-off is so unjust it is incredible. If you feel as incensed as we do, get off a letter to the Governor's office today, or in 1977, the summer will be past and you will still be looking for your refund from the state. And why not?

Did you forget?

We are now three months into 1976. We have faithfully delivered Suffolk Life to your door each week as we had promised.

Reviewing our paid subscription records, I have noted that there are still a number of subscribers who have not voluntarily paid for their 1976 subscriptions. Each year in December, we send all readers a bill tucked inside Suffolk Life. A one year subscription is only \$4.99. We ask you to voluntarily pay this subscription fee by the first of January.

We depend upon subscription funds to finance the news portion of Suffolk Life. This portion of the paper costs us almost \$500,000 a year to bring to you. Your \$4.99 subscription fee pays this cost of doing business.

If you have not already sent in your annual subscription renewal, please do not put it off any longer. Fill out the form found at the bottom of this notice, make out a check to Suffolk Life Newspapers for \$4.99 and send to Suffolk Life Newspapers, Circulation Department, Box 262, Westhampton. This payment for your subscription will keep Suffolk Life a free and independent newspaper dedicated to the average person who calls Suffolk home.

If you cannot afford the \$4.99 at this time, you may indicate so on the form and we will accept as a paid subscription what you can spend. If you do not value Suffolk Life at all, please so indicate and we will have your subscription suspended. Thank you for your cooperation, understanding and support. And why not?

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There must be a better way

We go through life paying taxes on just about everything we earn or buy. We don't give much thought to it except on April 15th when our income taxes are collected and on the first of the year and six months later when our real estate taxes come due.

There is almost nothing we touch from the time we rise until the time we go to bed that is not taxed. The razor blade and soap we use in the morning carries a sales tax. The car we drive is powered by gas on which we pay a gasoline tax plus a sales tax. The business we go to pays a corporate tax plus real estate tax. The money we earn is subject to an income tax, a social security tax, a disability tax, an unemployment tax, and workmen's compensation tax.

When our day's work is done, we settle back to have a cocktail before breaking bread. The liquor has been taxed for storage, for vating, for licensing and sales. The bread we will consume has been taxed every step of the way. We go to a movie and are faced with an entertainment tax as well as a sales tax. And on it goes.

But why? Why do we have to pay taxes on everything? Are our tax monies being used properly and for projects we approve? The answer to both questions is no.

There could be one universal tax imposed either upon sales or value that would replace every other tax. For this tax to work there could be absolutely no exemptions, loopholes or shelters. It would mean politicians would lose all their special interests who in turn keep them in office by receiving tax advantages from the politicians that are not ordinarily available to the average taxpayer.

A universal tax would be simple to collect and administer. Because of its simplicity, money could be raised at a fraction of the cost of the bureaucratic system we use today. This tax would cost each individual far less than our present tax burden and would do much to spur capital development because once again there would be an incentive for everyone to make money.

We question if our tax dollars are being spent wisely. Again special interests play an important part in the dispersal of our tax dollars whether at the school board level or at the federal level. Our tax dollars are directed towards their needs regardless of whether this expenditure is justified or necessary. This is why you have exhorbitant welfare costs, bankrupt pension systems, studies of the tsetse fly's sex life and other spending hoaxes.

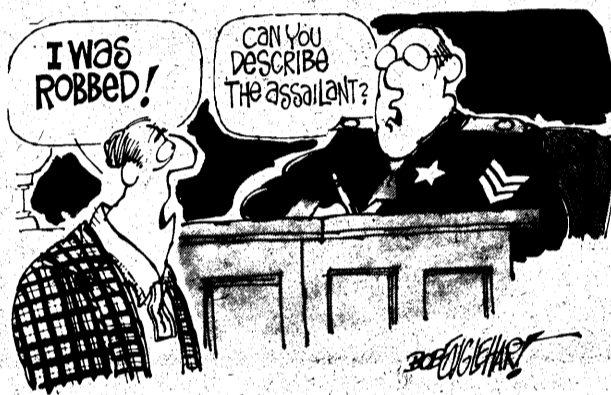
Granted, government has grown almost too big to be reached by the voice of the average citizen, but all elected officials are persuaded by communication from their voters. If you are still unhappy after paying your April 15th tax bite, take a few moments and send off your sentiments to your elected official who will be spending your tax money during this coming year. If enough people do, it might have an effect. And why not?

Brookhaven Town has been embroiled in a controversy concerning the federal government's apparent desire to give Brookhaven a \$900,000 gift. This money comes from the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

The controversy centers around what these funds may be used for. Some residents fear the town may be forced to use these monies to create additional low-cost housing or rehabilitate some of the existing slums. Others fear by accepting these funds and using them for community development, any area where these funds have been spent (such as parks and recreational facilities) would then have to be made accessible to all residents of the United States.

Supervisor John Randolph has maintained throughout this controversy, the funds may be used for community betterment and do not come with strings attached. But we agree with the Republicans' suspicion of anything coming out of Washington.

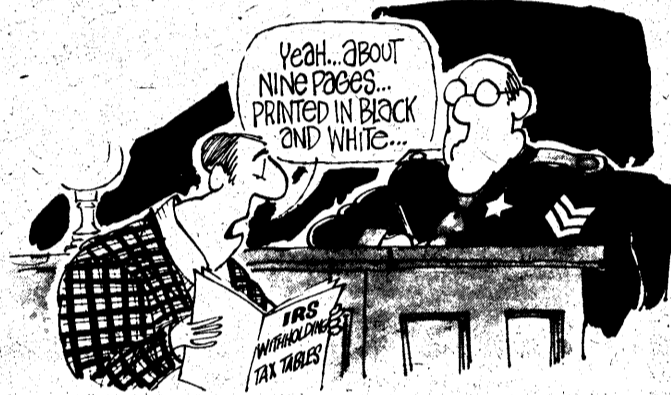
We learned long ago that for every cent Washington spends or gives you, it places burdensome retribution that often times outstrips



the benefits derived from the funds. The funds themselves have to come from either taxes collected from us by the federal government or from government's deficit spending, the direct cause of runaway inflation.

If these funds can be used to reduce the real estate tax burden in Brookhaven Town they might be worth accepting. But, if these funds must be spent on items not normally covered by the budget, this will only increase the growth of Brookhaven Town government and cost the individual resident more in taxes in the years to come. For example, although the funds may be sufficient to create a new park, the park itself is only the down payment. The park has to be staffed and maintained, and the cost will recur year after year after year. This will be paid for directly through your real estate taxes. If these funds are given to the community so liberally, it will encourage projects to be created for which there is no demand or need.

There is no such thing as free money. It all comes with a price tag and it is the taxpayers who end up with the bill. And why not?



Why buy development rights?

John Klein's farm land preservation bill is based on the concept that farms can be preserved if the county buys the development rights but not the tangible land or the farms. The county plans to pay 80 per cent of the real market value for these development rights. This will leave the farmer with the ownership of the land itself for approximately 20 per cent of its market value. This aspect of the Farm Preservation Bill has been conjured up to placate the farmers. Without the farmers' cooperation, this plan probably would have been unable to get off the ground.

Serious second thoughts should be given to just what we, the taxpayers of Suffolk County, are buying, and what, in reality, we are preserving. The plan calls for the purchase of approximately 4,000 acres of development rights. This will keep approximately 3,200 new families out of the East End. That is the only part of the population which would be held back by preventing the farm land from being developed into residential communities. Most of the agricultural land slated for acquisition would, eventually have been zoned one and two acres for residential development.

With an average of 3.8 people to a family, we will only be limiting the population by 12,000 people. This is not a startling number when you figure it represents less than 1 per cent of the current population of Suffolk County.


We question whether purchase of only the development rights is worth the 80 million dollar investment, particularly when you consider Suffolk County already owns over 20,000 acres of

parkland.

Would it not be wiser to spend the other 20 per cent and own this valuable 4,000 acres of farm land in its entirety, not only for agricultural use, but for parks, recreation and life-long preservation? Otherwise, we will be spending \$80,000 plus interest to buy thin air. We question the whole farm land preservation concept and we encourage you to do likewise. And why not?

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Are county parks for people?

Parks commissioner answers editorial

Parks Trustees

- Richard White, Jr., Chairman (East Hampton)
- Mrs. Gilbert Hanse, Babylon
- Mr. Mark Pedisch, Brookhaven
- Mrs. B. Tappen Fairchild, Huntington
- Mr. Anthony Yonda, Islip
- Mr. Olin Warner, Jr., Riverhead
- Mr. Harold Nilsen, Smithtown
- Dr. Aiden T. Stuart, Southampton
- The Hon. Albert Martocchia, Southold
- Mrs. Sidney Beckwith, Shelter Island

Dear Dave:

After reading your editorial on the Suffolk County Parks Department, we wish to add some notes of our own and assure you that there indeed are both Legislators and individual citizens who are most concerned about costs, management and services in our County Parks. Namely, the Parks Committee, who meets twice a month, and the Parks Trustees, comprising a representative from each of the ten townships, who meet once a month; both devote themselves to questions involving budget, policy, personnel and maintenance of the parks system.

May we say at the outset that this is a most complex undertaking, as the parks system covers 20,000 acres and offers a variety of recreational use to more than 2 million Suffolk citizens on a year-round basis. Whenever one has to deal with this intensity of public demand, there are bound to be misunderstandings and even mistakes, but we feel that the department, on the whole, is one of the best administered in the County, despite severe financial cutbacks due to our mandated cuts in budget and personnel. (Actually the parks budget is number 11 in size, costing \$4 million annually, coming in order after Social Services, Police, Health Services, Buildings and Grounds, Public Works, Sheriff's Office, Probation, District Court and the Youth Bureau and Suffolk Community College).

Your comments regarding no trespassing signs and fencing were well taken. In the former case, the no trespassing signs were used as an interim measure while the proper signs indicating "No hunting, fishing and wood cutting" were being made. Hunting and fishing is allowed by seasonal permit, but vandalism and tree cutting is a continual problem, and the signs are not meant to exclude the public but rather protect public property from thoughtless abuse. Also it is true that there was some fencing installed some years ago, specifically at Sears Bellows and Cedar Point, that is questionable. However, fencing is not a general policy of the department, but is done on a limited and selective basis, usually as a result of public demand or to protect certain areas from unauthorized use.

The problems of personnel and productivity are always with us in a system where park property must be maintained on an annual basis, and yet the work force is comprised of both maintenance staff (park foremen and crews) and quasi-police peace officers (parks rangers). All 152 of the former, and 88 of the latter, are protected by civil service status which mandates 12-month employment. (300 seasonal employees are hired annually to cope with summer crowds). Winter work slowdown for the ranger staff is mitigated by using this time for staff vacations and police academy training. No new personnel have been added since the job freeze of a year ago, a cost cutting directive that has resulted in 20 positions in the department currently unfilled due to attrition. However, in that same time, the County has acquired 1,000 new acres of park in Montauk as well as the upkeep of Colndre Hall in Huntington -- all of which this reduced staff must now cover. We feel the staff is doing a fine job and the taxpayer is most surely getting his money's worth.

Two last points are in order. County parks are restricted to Suffolk County residents, or taxpayers, and their guests. The parks pass fee covers only the administration cost for identifying those who are authorized to use the parks and thereby excluding those who are not.

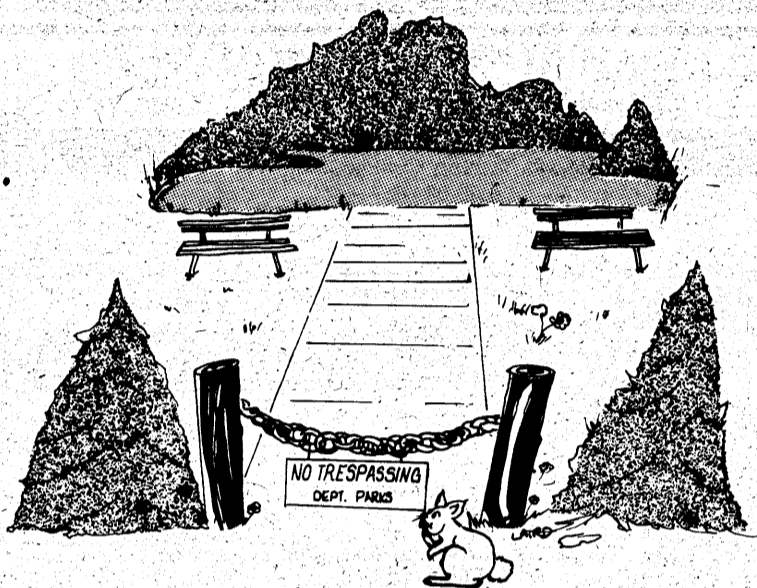
Secondly, parks personnel (namely 10) are living in parks property in precisely those locations where 24-hour maintenance and security is vitally necessary. In all cases, this kind of resident advantage has saved the County thousands of dollars formerly spent for overtime services. The question of real rental value is moot because the County, under Charter, is not allowed to rent park property to the general public. The token fee of \$90 covers the cost of occupation, and utility costs are now borne by the individuals themselves. The "bonus value" of these low rents are not declared on income tax returns, for the County Attorney determined the County would have to pay fringe benefits on any declared value, just as if it were straight salary.

In closing, may we reiterate that both of the parks boards are organized to answer any questions the public might have, and we always welcome any suggestions and comments that will help us do a better job. We have enclosed a list of committee members and parks' trustees in hopes of strengthening communication on both the County and local level.

Most sincerely,
 Joyce Burland
 (Chairman, Parks Committee)
 Richard White, Jr.
 (Chairman, Parks Trustees)

Parks Committee

- Joyce Burland, Chairman
- Martin Feldman
- Mildred Steinberg
- Anthony Noto
- John Wehrenberg



Editor answers Parks Commissioner

Dear Joyce:

We, as Suffolk residents, are proud of our parks system. It is a beautiful system that offers many people a variety of activities and ample opportunity to do their thing. Overall the parks are kept clean and neat; they show good planning and are designed to serve the whole community.

The editorial to which you refer was aimed at some weakness within the system. In answer to your letter, I am sure there must have been a typographical error, for you claim there are 2,000,000 citizens within Suffolk. According to recent LILCO figures there are only 1,300,000. You are off about by 35 per cent.

I do not find your normal, logical, people-oriented thought process coming through regarding the No Trespassing signs. We are in the printing business and we know firsthand that the copy could have been set that would indicate "No hunting, No fishing, No wood cutting" within the period of an hour. Instead the county issued signs that indicate No Trespassing on County parks land for any reason.

Now you indicate hunting and fishing is allowed by seasonal permit. But no one knows how you go about getting a seasonal permit or even why one is needed.

The Parks Commission obviously has forbidden wood-cutting within the park structure. There are thousands of cords of dead wood contained within the parks system. This dead wood should be cut out and removed. Most parks and even parkway systems allow people to go on their lands to remove this wood. People are forbidden to cut live trees and should be; but they are encouraged to remove the wind-blown and dead trees. This produces a form of recreation for the amateur woodsman and also provides fuel for his home. The parks commission should reconsider their position on this point.

The temporary signs you spoke of were put up last fall. They are still hanging there on trees. Six months is a bit long for a temporary measure that is questionable in the first place. Several thousand dollars in printing costs and labor were expended on those signs. This is the kind of waste that we are criticizing. In addition, we are offended by the lack of consideration given to the people who might want to use these lands but are kept out by arbitrary decisions of the parks commission.

You mentioned that the Sears Bellows and Cedar Point fencing is questionable. Joyce, you know darn well it is not questionable. It is absolutely ridiculous. Fences cost several thousand dollars, they serve no useful purpose and the only thing accomplished by their installation was the needless spending of county taxpayers' dollars.

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The letter we received on April 9 indicates you feel the parks are not over-staffed and that you are getting, dollar for dollar, your money's worth out of the park employees. If this is so, why is there a resolution being brought before the County board on the 27th of April to transfer some of the Park Rangers from their present assignments to act as guards at the Suffolk County Airport? We understand the Parks Commission is attempting to stream-line their operation and these guards will be excess staff. Somebody has their wires crossed.

You also mention all the full-time park employees are protected by civil service. You have been in county government long enough to know that you can abolish excess positions, and when you do people who hold these positions are terminated. From a business standpoint, it would make much more sense to employ more people part-time, on the basis of need, than to keep people on year-round.

We note your defense of the county parks fee system. To find out how effective this is, last Thursday, April 22, we went out into the county parks. The vehicle we were using did not have any identification on it. We did not have a county park permit. We rode in and out of several different parks and never once were we stopped and asked for a permit. Most of the parks we visited had a fair number of people in them. I think this county parks fee system is a rip-off, forcing the taxpayers to pay an additional fee on top of the \$4,000,000 in real estate taxes they pay.

I am saddened to see that you have been swallowed up by the system and are now advocating the wonderful benefits of having county officials and employees living in low-cost in-park rentals at the expense of the taxpayer. I don't buy the argument for one minute that the people living in these luxurious accommodations are giving us twenty-four hour a day guard service. This is poppycock. You know it is poppycock. We are happy, however, to see the privileged few living in these homes are at least paying their own utility costs.


We hope you are serious about wanting the public to offer suggestions and comments on the park system. We also feel the committee and the parks trustees should seek parks employees' ideas as to how the parks system can do a better job for the public and also how their time and talents can be better utilized.

We have had numerous parks employees come to us over the years with ideas. We have asked them why they do not go to the parks commission or to their immediate supervisor with their suggestions. They have told us that if they make any waves, they end up being transferred to the boondocks or are asked to resign.

Suffolk County has an incredible parks system. Our concern and interest is having it run practically and efficiently. As we see weaknesses we will continue writing about them. As we see improvements we will inform the public likewise. And why not?

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