

## WILLMOTTS &amp; WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

**"There, But For The Grace of God, Go I."**

In the spirit of the coming season, "The Group" will endeavor to provide Christmas for children whose parents normally are able to, but cannot this year because of a tragedy that has befallen them.

For almost two decades, "The Group" has come together for this purpose. We are not an organized, registered charity. We have no formal membership roles. We come from all walks of life, simply to join hands and help pull off the miracle of Christmas.

Last year, over 250 children, who did not expect Santa Claus to come, found their homes filled with gaily wrapped gifts on Christmas morning. Everything they needed was there, from socks and underwear, to pants, shirts, sweaters and outerwear. And, of course, there were toys, games and books.

Everything we do is done anonymously. The parents of the children do not know who their benefactors are. Strangers have just reached out and provided for them in their hour of need. Every family is checked out to insure that their

needs are genuine and legitimate.

The children are identified only by their first names, and their families are only identified by the letters of the alphabet. Sizes and needs are ascertained by a special committee of volunteers.

Once the "wish" list has been compiled, shoppers go afield and obtain the items needed. They literally shop until they drop. They go to the sales, buy the specials, and, more often than not, when merchants find out what is going on, they get offered additional discounts.

Toys are bought in bulk, at below wholesale prices. Every item is inventoried, labeled with the child's proper letter and first name.

For days, volunteers box and wrap. On Christmas Eve, or before, Santa's offerings are delivered to the recipients' homes. In most cases, the parents hide the presents, and are able to offer their children a very special Christmas.

Funds for this endeavor are raised through contributions from "The Group's" members, and from residents throughout Suffolk County. Every dollar raised is

spent on the kids. Not one cent is spent on administrative costs or on salaries. All overhead expenses are donated.

"The Group's" efforts are the purest form of giving. Those of us who participate in this project have accepted the fact that, "There but for the Grace of God, Go I". We all realize that at any given moment, the skids can be kicked out from under us. Since we currently have our health, time

and resources, we donate these to other people.

Please consider becoming part of "The Group." Your donation is needed and it will help provide Christmas for a child who otherwise would not have one.

You may send your contributions to "The Group," c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, P.O. Box 9167, Riverhead, NY 11901.

And why not?

**Managing to Save Money**

A new class of Suffolk County Corrections Officers graduated two weeks ago. Sheriff Patrick Mahoney has hired them to fill some of the positions left vacant because of early retirements last year.

Early last month, Sheriff Mahoney announced he intended to assign first-year corrections officers to daytime shifts because there is a greater need for additional correction officers on those shifts.

Mahoney previously complained that, because of union contract provisions, he has not been able to assign manpower when it is most needed. This has been part of the cause of significant overtime in the county's correctional facility's budget, which is the responsibility of the Sheriff.

Mahoney claims, and has offered documentation, that by assigning the new recruits to daytime shifts, he can eliminate over \$276,000 now being spent on overtime. This all seems logical and sounds like good government.

Union officials are not

happy with the plan, however; especially since some of the members have become accustomed to the overtime and consider it as their right. This has led to some erroneous allegations and bitter feelings between the Sheriff and the corrections officers' union.

Mahoney's job is to manage effectively, getting the biggest bang out of every buck he has available to spend. The union's job is to represent its members and to obtain a good wage for them with good benefits. Allowing a situation to develop that wastes taxpayers' money in needless overtime is not good public policy, nor is it good union posturing.

Mahoney will only be able to schedule these recruits for one year. Each of these new recruits will spend the next 12 months on probation. After that, they will become part of the union and the rules governing their employment placement will change.

Mahoney should be allowed to manage as effectively as he can; and where possible, he should work out a compromise or a working agreement with the union to avoid any further disruption.

And why not?

**Election 1998**

By now we know who the winners are. To them, we offer our congratulations. To the losers we say, thank you for participating in your government.

Unfortunately, too many candidates were put up as sacrificial lambs. They were names put in to fill a slot. They lacked the organization and the funds to run a campaign; and worse yet, the party failed to provide guidance and support. This was particularly true of many Democratic candidates.

What is the sense of having a party if you cannot offer guidance, staffing or support? The Democratic party in Suffolk County has been in shambles for years. The same old, worn out leadership prevails, and unless candidates raise their own funds and run their own campaigns, they go down in defeat.

It is not fair to the Democratic candidates, and it is a travesty of democracy that Suffolk County does not enjoy a two party system. We love Dominic Baranello. He is a great orator and has often been an inspiration, but he just does not get the job done. How many more years of losing must his candidates sus-

tain before he realizes that he is the problem. Dominic should have the good sense to resign and turn the reins over to younger, more energized people, who will at least offer a hope of rebuilding the Democratic party.

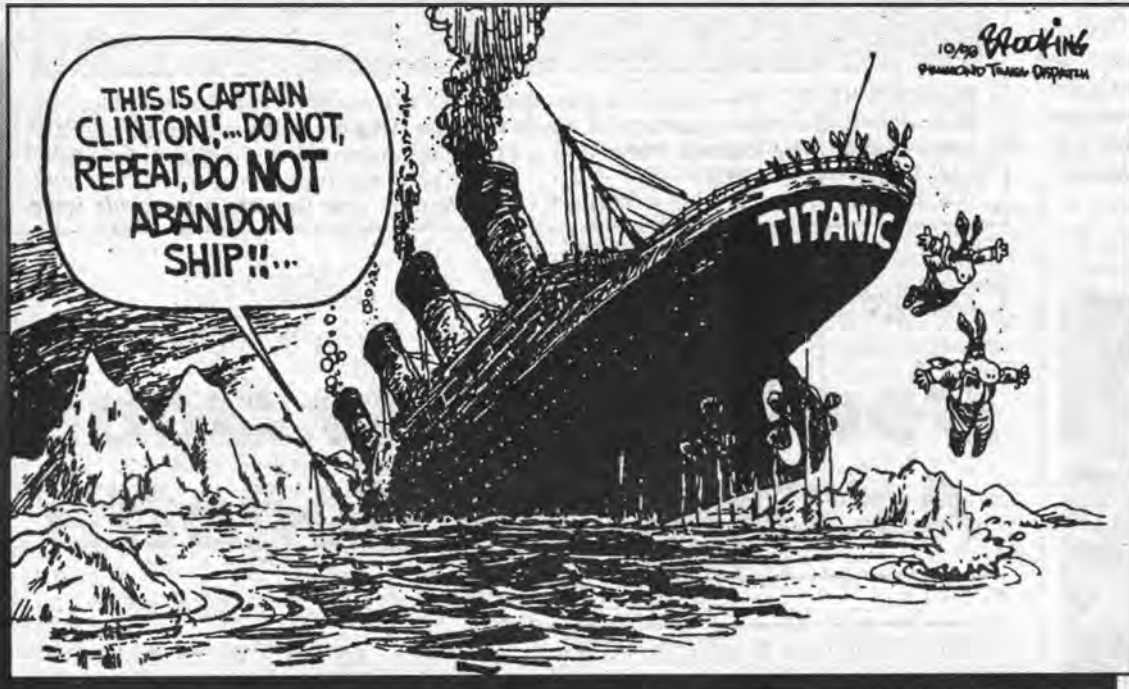
Democratic candidates should learn from their Republican counterparts. Most successful Republican candidates have become more mainstream. They no longer espouse radically conservative views. They may tend to be conservative, but they are not preaching the fringe philosophies of their party.

Many Democratic candidates we have interviewed, however, particularly for state and federal offices, have embraced the views of radical Democrats. They seem to be uncompromising; not even willing to listen to more rational voices.

Fringes have always found it difficult to get elected. Find the common ground you are comfortable with, but do not compromise your beliefs, and you will stand a chance of being taken seriously.

Again, thanks to all who ran for office and particularly to those who turned out to exercise their right to vote.

And why not?

**Person Of The Year**

Once again, *Suffolk Life* will salute the people of Suffolk County who make our communities a great place to live.

We are seeking nominations from our readers for the unsung heroes who have gone out of their way to serve their neighbors and their communities.

This year, nominees will be sought for five different categories: Volunteer, Public Service, Citizen, Business Person, and Employee.

A winner in each of the above categories will be chosen from each of the ten towns in Suffolk County.

Last year, over 5,000 nominations were made. The news staff at *Suffolk Life* has the daunting job of reviewing the applications and choosing the winners.

So many people do more than their part, they go out of their way to be better

citizens. They are the people, common people, who are rarely recognized for the goodness they do. This recognition program gives *Suffolk Life* readers an opportunity to nominate these outstanding individuals. The program helps encourage each of us to be our best, to put aside our self interests and reach out to others.

We encourage you to think about the people who have made a difference in your life and enter them in this year's People Of The Year Award.

Entries must be received by November 26. Please mail your entries, nominating who you think should be chosen, to People Of The Year, c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, P.O. Box 9167, Riverhead, New York 11901.

And Why Not?

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Congressional Hearings Should Be Held

Like anything else, the devil is in the details, and a report by a group of retired aviation professionals claiming there was a government cover-up on the cause of the downing of TWA Flight 800 is a devil of a detail.

The 109-page report, *Interim Report on the Crash of TWA Flight 800 and the Action of the NTSB and the FBI* given to the Congressional Subcommittee on Aviation this past July, two years after the incident.

Written by Commander William S. Donaldson, US Navy (Retired), this report charges that the plane was destroyed by two high-explosive anti-aircraft warheads, and that the President and Department of Justice impeded the investigation.

There is enough information presented in this report to raise serious questions about what the FBI, the NTSB, and the CIA have categorized as "mechanical failure," which they claim caused a Center Wing Tank explosion.

The retired aviation professionals supporting the report, including former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas H. Moorer (USN Retired), believe the destruction of FL800 was an act of terrorism and they have presented sufficient information to warrant a Congressional investigation.

And we agree.

If this incident was a terrorist act, it impacts the entire nation, especially since this is not the first nor last time commercial pilots have reported seeing rockets being fired off the East End of Long Island.

The public has a right to know the truth about what happened to FL800: 235 people were killed on that plane when it exploded over the Atlantic Ocean just south of Moriches on July 17, 1996.

If it turns out that the plane was shot down by terrorists, it becomes a matter of national security and we have a right to know why it was covered up.

And why not?

## Should We Be Building Stadiums?

Twenty years ago, Nassau County built a state of the art stadium. Throughout that period, the Nassau Coliseum has been the home of the New York Islanders, a professional hockey team. It has also hosted the New York Nets, a professional basketball team that since has moved to New Jersey.

Two decades after the creation of this sports complex, the facility is no longer new, state of the art, or all that attractive.

In a series of tangled financial moves, the ownership of the Islanders has gone to a new group. Many fans and Long Island supporters were elated, because they anticipated the new owners would do everything in their power to bring the Islanders, once again, to Stanley Cup status.

But those new owners, almost immediately, started lobbying for a new sports complex, which was initially proposed by the county executive's office. They did not negotiate to build it themselves, but to have the taxpayers of Nassau County do it for them.

Why should the taxpayers pay for such a facility? When it comes time to attend an event at the stadium, the Philadelphia-based management company charges residents and non-residents the same outlandish parking fees. Ticket prices to games are obscenely high, and preclude most middle class families from attending on a regular basis.

Then, adding insult to injury, the concession stands at the stadium

charge close to \$10 for a hot dog and a single drink.

When it did not appear that Nassau County was moving fast enough on a new stadium, the Islanders' new owners moved out of the coliseum, lock, stock and barrel. They justified that move with claims that the facility has several safety issues, real and imagined, that need to be resolved.

But the new owners lost on two fronts: Nassau County took the Islanders to court, and a judge has forced the team to move back into the stadium. Then, the fans responded to the Islanders' with low attendance at the games, which forced the team to drop ticket prices.



## The Governor That Was

Now that the governor has a new four-year term ahead of him, perhaps he will take the time to review the fact that his election numbers were a bit different in Suffolk County this year, compared to four years ago.

Is that because of his \$23 billion LILCO-LIPA deal? Is it because many voters grew tired of his back door borrowing practice of financing state government? Or, perhaps, is it because many in Suffolk County realized

that Independence candidate Tom Golisano might have offered a more promising future, despite the fact that he did not have a well-oiled political machine behind him like Pataki did.

Golisano received 7% of the vote in Suffolk, almost 25,000 votes, and only 13,434 votes in Nassau, a total of 3.3%. Statewide, Golisano received 473,326 votes, which amounts to 5% of the votes cast.

This is not enough to threaten Governor Pataki's position, obviously, but it should be enough to convince him that he needs to take a more serious look at helping Suffolk County through its difficulties, including guaranteeing its right to aggressively establish a competitive energy market.

Four years ago, Pataki promised Suffolk and Nassau counties that he would not bail out LILCO, but he did. Now the residents of Long Island are strapped with paying back the money borrowed to bail out LILCO and falsely reduce electric rates. Before his new four-year term is over, this money will become due and Long Island is going to need help.

While we congratulate Governor Pataki on his win, we also implore him to be more conservative in his fiscal spending, and to clear the way for a free, competitive energy market in Suffolk County.

And why not?

## NOMINATE YOUR PERSON OF THE YEAR!

• Business • Employee • Public Service • Citizen • Volunteer

Nominee \_\_\_\_\_ Category \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's Home Town \_\_\_\_\_ Explain \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL IN YOUR NOMINEES TODAY! (DEADLINE IS 11/26/98)

MAIL TO: Suffolk Life Newspapers, People Of The Year Contest, P.O. Box 9167, 1461 Old Country Rd., Riverhead, NY 11901-0102

## WILLMOTTS &amp; WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## People Are Killing Participatory Democracy

For more than 200 years, this nation has survived as a representative democracy. Recently, however, it appears as if its citizens have forgotten the heavy charge each person is given to defend our way of life.

The right to vote is referred to as suffrage, which has Latin and French origins dating back to the 14th century. It means to pray in support of, or to give one's pledge to, someone or something.

In the 16th century, the word vote came in. It, too, has Latin and French origins, meaning to vow one's exclusive devo-

tion or opinion toward someone or something.

The authors of the Constitution of this nation agreed, in the latter part of the 18th century, that all men were created equal and, therefore, could vote on matters of state, as long as they met particular religious and property-holding requirements.

In 1870, Congress adopted the 15th Amendment to the Constitution; the 19th Amendment in 1920; and the 24th Amendment in 1964, prohibiting state government from charging a "poll tax."

A year later, Congress adopted the Voting Rights Act, which prevented the imposition of a literacy test. More amendments came in 1970, 1975, and 1982, all to protect the suffrage rights of every American.

From the Revolutionary War to the Gulf War, countless people have died to protect the rights of this nation, especially the right to have a voice in government.

Yet earlier this month, Governor George Pataki was reelected by less than 25% of the population that is eligible to vote.

It has been worse than this in the past. Eight years ago, former Governor Mario Cuomo was reelected by less than 15% of those eligible to register and vote.

People should be embarrassed.

Part of the reason for this apathy is that most of our lackluster politicians simply offer bland, non-issue-oriented rhetoric throughout their campaigns, or they simply overload newspapers, television and radio with irrelevant personal attacks on their opponents. This further depresses the interest of the average citizen in government.

The stark reality, however, is that politi-

cians will attempt to get away with anything they can. Political inadequacy is as much the fault of those who do not vote, as it is the politicians.

In many other countries, citizens who refuse to register or fail to vote are financially penalized. In this country, more than 67% of the population believes their opinions do not count because other people, the infamous "they," are in charge. So why vote?

Still others think that all politicians are untrustworthy, and taking the time to vote is a waste. They believe it is ridiculous to choose between the "lesser of two or three evils," so they do not vote.

What they do not understand is that it is absolutely essential to fully functional democracy that every citizen accept the responsibility to participate in every vote, to have a voice in choosing those who are "best" equipped to hold public office.

Voter apathy is an unnecessary political disease. Incompetent leaders are elected by competent citizens who refuse to vote.

And why not?

## Easier Voter Registration

Many people are snickering at Minnesota voters for having supported Governor-elect Jesse "The Body" Ventura, an ex-Navy SEAL and former flamboyant professional wrestler.

Ventura, whose reputation was built on his ability to stir up enormous support from his audience, got into the race because the career politicians in St. Paul are proposing another property tax increase this year despite the fact that there is a \$4 billion surplus in the state's coffers.

He complained that taxes had gone up on an average of close to \$500 a year for the past four years, and he was outraged. So, he threw himself into the mix and promised Minnesota an All-American fair shake.

Political critics in Minnesota complained that his two opponents had no imagination or principles, while Ventura pitched himself as an energetic, creative, fiscal conservative with liberal social views — a modified version of the "radical middle" candidate-model epitomized by Ross Perot.

Part of the reason for the Ventura phenomenon in Minnesota is the public's distaste for the same old sleepy, good ol' boy antics of status quo politicians. Much of it is because that state has been progressive when it comes to allowing its residents to

register right up to when they are going to vote.

New York State has one of the most difficult systems, requiring residents to register for a vote between specific days, and between specific hours, at least 30 days before an election date.

How many more roadblocks can be thrown in front of hard working residents, who spend most of their days trying to make a living?

Minnesota has less than five million residents. More than two million voted in the recent gubernatorial race.

In New York, less than 25% of the voters gave Governor George Pataki a four-year return ticket back to Albany. There are more than 18 million residents in New York State, and less than four million voted in the gubernatorial race this year.

It remains to be seen whether Ventura is good for Minnesota. One thing is for sure: at least half the people of that state came out to have their say.

Making voter registration simpler in New York State is long overdue. Many of our state legislators have been in office for close to 20 years. They are in the twilight of their political careers, and would create a great legacy if they revamped the voter registration laws of this state.

And why not?

Several of the town boards in Suffolk County have become oblivious to the needs of their constituents, because they seem to be on a needless spending spree.

In Huntington, the town board has approved a measure to issue \$48 million in bonds for the town's Housing Authority, which is planning to turn the money over to the Long Island Housing Development Corporation, in order to build a 200-unit apartment complex for senior citizens. That breaks down to about \$240,000 a unit.

Sounds like a noble project, except Huntington just approved issuing \$15 million in bonds to purchase open space and park lands. This is on top of the \$62 million bonds Huntington will help pay for, through Suffolk County's open space, farmland, and parkland preservation program, which was also just approved by the voters.

The town board is acting like the bonds are not the responsibility of Huntington's taxpayers. We all know that is a lot of bunk. If something goes wrong, these bonds will have to be paid off, or the credit rating of the

## Best Service For Lowest Cost?

town will be put in jeopardy.

In Smithtown, the council members had the gall to give themselves a 41% salary increase (from \$29,870 to \$42,000); a 14% salary increase (from \$73,336 to \$83,500) to the supervisor; and a 23% hike (from \$43,698 to \$53,698) to the town clerk and tax assessor.

Several members of the board complained they have not received an increase since 1993; and the job was supposed to be part-time, but is much more demanding.

Each one of these people ran for office knowing what the job entailed, and they told the public, at that time, they were willing to do it for the amount of money being paid. Now is a little late to complain about the pay.

The arbitrary approval of this kind of salary increase for elected officials is outrageously excessive. Raises for elected offi-

cials should be tied to the consumer price index.

In Riverhead, there is a slightly different approach, but given the fact that it is a much smaller town, with a much lower tax base, it is not much better.

Six months ago, the Riverhead supervisor claimed the previous administration had left it with a \$1 million shortfall which, he said, was going to push next year's tax rate increase up by more than 10%. The board never justified that accusation, and has since backed away from it.

Then, two weeks ago, Riverhead agreed to issue over \$500,000 in bonds to pay for normal, everyday maintenance and operation costs that should have been taken out of the general fund.

The supervisor has promised large salary increases for department heads, and is also promising the public there will only

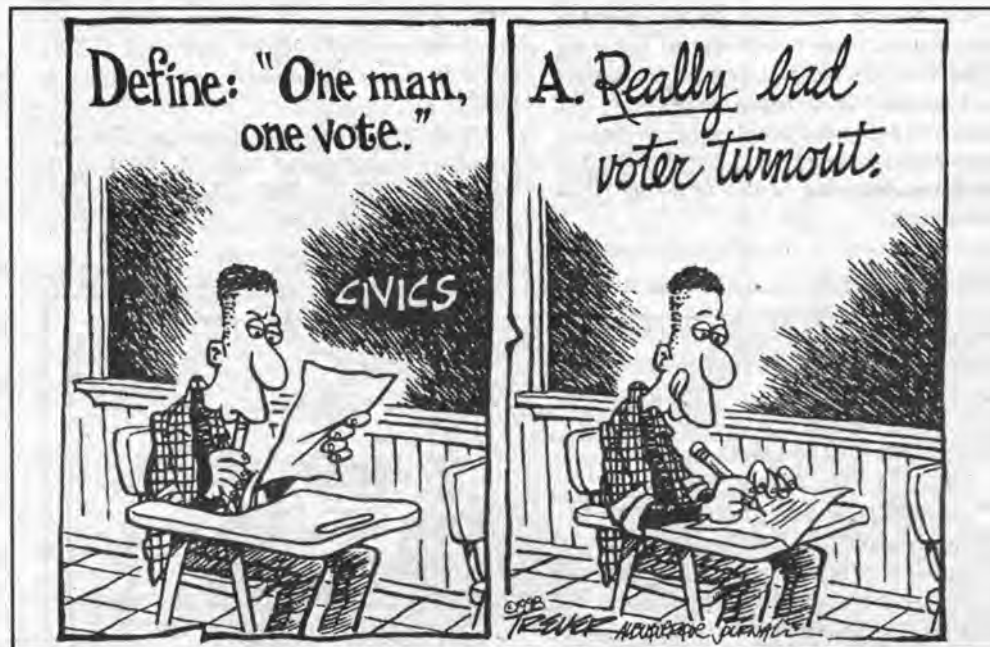
be a 4% or 5% tax rate increase next year. In the meantime, he is talking about cutting back on spending for various programs, while the board comes up with the "brilliant" idea of establishing a public relations position in the supervisor's office, apparently to keep the media more informed about issues in Riverhead — a duty the supervisor has historically dealt with.

Public officials are elected to guard the public's tax dollars by making sure all expenditures are prudent, not reckless or careless.

Islip Supervisor Pete McGowan has cut more than \$1.25 million in taxes since 1994, and has just recommended another 1% decrease in town taxes, along with a 2% cut in garbage taxes for next year.

Islip has not lost any of its town-sponsored programs. It has simply followed what McGowan says is the "best possible service at the lowest possible cost." That is what elected officials are supposed to strive for.

And why not?



## WILLMOTTS &amp; WHY NOTS

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## Electricity Surcharges To Be Considered

The ink is barely dry. The bonds have just been issued for the LIPA takeover of LILCO, and they are already talking about increasing electrical rates.

They are not calling it rate increases but a "surcharge," which by any other definition is an increase in rate. It would be added on top of the rate to cover the cost of lost revenue from customers who take advantage of proposed conservation measures that would reduce their electrical consumption.

LIPA has proposed budgeting \$35 million for conservation programs for next year, and then spending \$12 million per year for the next four years. Consumers will be encouraged to replace high energy consuming refrigerators with low energy models, and to change light bulbs and electrical systems that eat up more energy than new or energy efficient devices.

If customers reduce their energy consumption, they are going to

reduce LIPA's ability to fund itself through electrical sales. This shortfall, some are suggesting, must be made up for by an increase in electrical revenues. A surcharge avoids raising the rates beyond 2.5%, which automatically brings the PSC back into the picture. According to LIPA's gurus, a surcharge is not a rate increase, and therefore, escapes the cap.

Energy conservation is only the tip of the iceberg in competition. As new technology goes onto the market, whether it is fuel cell self-generation or micro-turbines, energy demand over the grid will be reduced, and LIPA will be in financial peril.

This should come as no surprise to anyone; it is what we have been talking about for over a year, because it is the Achilles heel of the LIPA deal. We are surprised it has raised its ugly head so early, but this is only a shadow of what will come.

And why not?



## Witnesses Wanted

Over the past three weeks, *Suffolk Life* has been reviewing an interim report on the crash of TWA Flight 800. It is authored by Commander William Donaldson, USN (retired), in cooperation with the Association of Retired Aviation Professionals.

The report raises grave questions concerning the downing of Flight 800. It brings into question the possibility of a cover-up, and how the National Transportation Safety Board and the FBI possibly missed many opportunities to ascertain the facts, and thus, reached wrong conclusions.

In an editorial board interview with Donaldson last week, he stated that many of the witnesses were not properly questioned. Their statements were not corroborated in a scientific fashion. A number of witnesses who had come forth were not even interviewed, and thus their testimony

is not part of the uncompleted case.

Donaldson is seeking the identity of anyone who believes they saw anything suspicious just prior to the incident, or anyone who saw streaking lights from the shore, or if offshore, noted any unusual ships or watercraft off the shore line.

The report, which is far from finished, raises a lot of doubts about the conclusion reached by federal officials. Personally, we have never been comfortable with the governmental explanations, and are encouraged to see someone of Donaldson's background conducting a more thorough investigation.

If you have any information that you think might have some bearing, even though you may feel it is insignificant, please contact Donaldson at 1-800-270-1026.

And why not?

## Your Opportunity To Stand Up

Suffolk County is made up of approximately 1.4 million people. Each year some of its residents go out of their way to serve their fellow man. It can be simple acts of kindness, or putting one's life on the line to save someone else's.

Last year, *Suffolk Life* established a project to recognize these outstanding individuals, the everyday unsung heroes. The project was entitled, "The People Of The Year."

We ask our readers to nominate their special heroes. Tell us what act or deed your nominee accomplished. Our editorial staff will read every nomination, and then endeavor to do the hard part: picking the most out-

standing candidates in each category.

You will find a nomination form in *Suffolk Life* (page 3). Why not take a few minutes to jot down your nominee, and the reason you want him or her considered. If there is not sufficient room on the nomination form, you may send in an additional note to elaborate on your choice.

This is your opportunity to say thanks to someone who has touched your life in a meaningful way. A list of all nominees will be printed prior to the announcement of the special people who have been chosen for the 1999 People Of The Year.

And why not?

## Happy Thanksgiving To Our Readers

The staff at *Suffolk Life* would like to take this opportunity to wish every one of our readers a wonderful and joyous Thanksgiving.

When you gather with your family and friends tomorrow, we encourage you to discuss sharing your bounties with others less fortunate.

Once again this year, "The Group" is endeavoring to carry on the spirit of Christmas, by providing children a Christmas they will never forget. These special kids normally have Christmas provided by their own parents, but due to circumstances beyond their parents' control this year, they have to tell the kids Santa won't be coming. There may have been an accident or illness, a loss of a job or a business, but the end result is the same: There is no money left for gifts.

We hear of these individuals through various sources. Their need is confirmed, and volunteers shop for the kids. They are given clothes from underwear to outerwear, and will find under the tree, cheerfully wrapped boxes of toys, games and other fun stuff that make Christmas special.

Neither the parents nor the children will ever know who their benefactors were. "The Group" operates under a premise of total anonymity. We are just a group of ordinary Suffolk County residents who have come together every year for nearly 20 years. We pool

our resources of money, time, energy and love. We provide Christmas for close to 200 children each year. We are limited only by the number of volunteers, time and money we get.

The entire "Group's" effort, although not a registered charity, is funded by donations from everyday people who, at one time or another, have faced adversity themselves. They reach out and anonymously contribute to the effort.

We spend absolutely no money on administrative costs; therefore, the donors do not even receive an acknowledgment of their contributions. What they do receive is the knowledge that they have helped people within their community have an especially enjoyable holiday. Kids are renewed with the spirit of the season, and, even if for just a little while, delight in the concept that Santa came to their home.

"The Group's" motto is, "There but for the Grace of God, go I." This year, I hope it is not my turn. I have my health, I have my wealth and I will share it for as long as I can.

If you or your family would like to become a contributing member of "The Group," you may send your donation to "The Group" c/o Suffolk Life Newspapers, PO Box 9167, Riverhead, NY 11901-9167.

And why not?