



denis carr photo

OPINION

Better Picture

Another summer season — high season, at least — has come to an end and what have we learned? That the ability of the village residents to accommodate summer visitors is only diminished by the level of rudeness the visitors exhibit. That the capacity of local roads is woefully taxed when handling the deluge of traffic that arrives each Friday night. And that the patience of the people in the community has been tested to its limit with a burgeoning nightclub scene.

We heard complaints this summer about lines of traffic winding their way through narrow streets and how impossible it was to find a parking spot in the village; and moaning from people who were cut off either on the road or at the check out line. It was impossible to get into a restaurant, and the noise coming from some of them was enough, apparently, to keep whole neighborhoods awake.

These are not new revelations, we've seen them coming for years. And while it is the price we pay to live in a beautiful area that is fun, exciting and entertaining it can sometimes be an unfair one for some residents.

For us, we are happy to live in a lively community that has a vibrant business district; where people can stroll down the street at night and there is lots of activity going on. Truth be told, we welcome all the new faces come the spring; but we concede that we are just as happy when the streets are a bit more empty in September.

And that's the rather sticky challenge that faces the village in the coming years. We want to believe that Sag Harbor will remain a popular place for a long time — our livelihoods, to a great part depend upon it — but there is a very delicate balancing act it must do. We've seen too much uncontrolled tourism kill towns, and have also seen a strict conservative government strangle a town.

How the village appears in the coming years will largely have to do with what the village government does. It must decide what to allow and what to prohibit, while still maintaining an environment that allows businesses to thrive, and people to enjoy their peace.

We have been an advocate of long range planning, in creating a picture of what we want the village to be and going beyond the view of the village's zoning laws this year — although that's a good start — and begin drawing a clearer picture.

Swimming Upstream

When individuals stand up against larger, more imposing bodies, it's easy to reach for the David and Goliath cliché-book. We root for the underdog. We want to hear the voice from the back of the room, especially when so many would prefer to have that voice hushed.

And this is why we applaud Sag Harbor resident Karl Grossman on his new book, *The Wrong Stuff: The Space Program's Nuclear Threat to Our Planet*, a thorough examination of the dangers posed by the U.S. space program's nuclear-related experiments. But more than that, Grossman's book is investigative journalism at its finest.

There are two stories here: firstly, rather obviously, there's the book itself; but secondly, there's the story of one man who saw something he felt was terribly wrong, and was willing to swim upstream to make sure his voice was heard.

One person, living in a small village on the East End of Long Island, had the courage to stand-up and point his finger at our nation's military, its largest corporations, and the very media that surrounds him.

It may be easy, without reading Grossman's book, to dismiss him as another man with paranoid, conspiracy wielding theories. After all, he chastises the U.S. government, its military, NASA, and much of the national media. But to dismiss him, to ignore his important voice, would only harm the individuals who choose not to listen. Much of Grossman's concerns are rooted in fact; it only took his skills to unearth it.

These are things Grossman want us to know: NBC is owned by General Electric and CBS is owned by Westinghouse; GE and Westinghouse are the world's largest nuclear hardware manufacturers; this October, NASA will launch a space probe with 72.3 pounds of plutonium on board; and there's been, not surprisingly, a blanket of silence around the U.S. space program's nuclear-related technology.

And so, Grossman correctly concludes, the American public doesn't know much about these nuclear endeavors, because the American public has been excluded from the debate.

Grossman writes, "in the U.S., censorship does not happen like it does in other nations, where powerful forces, usually governments, dictate what is to be reported in the "official" or "semi-official" media. In the U.S. the censorship function typically involves the sin of omission."

If Grossman sounds like he's finger pointing, talking about things that are uncomfortable or off limits to discuss, well, he is. And this is why we commend him. This is journalism at its best. Grossman went against the grain, not for the sake of doing so, but because the truth was more important than dollars. Awareness cannot be compromised by complacency.

YESTERDAY'S EXPRESS

125 Years Ago
September 5, 1872

Improving time—Mending a clock.

From the *Corrector*:
The EXPRESS charges us with libel upon Grant in publishing an item stating that Rev. C. W. Denison had written a letter reflecting upon Grant's personal habits. If such is the case, it is libel to publish any item of fact. How absurd! Our legal friend certainly knows better.

Don't squirm so, Brother Sleight. You published a statement of Rev. (?) Denison as to Grant's personal habits and by your language endorsed his assertions. That publication and endorsement made you a libeler, if the assertion was false, and made with the intent to blacken the President's character. True, Denison wrote a letter. That is the only fact in your paragraph. You are alone responsible for the endorsement of an unmitigated lie, and we leave you in the "blind staggers" of libel and mendacity.

100 Years Ago
August 19, 1897

Nathan Brewer had extraordinary luck in drawing his seine on Long Beach Monday last, when he captured, in one haul, over thirteen hundred nice fat porgies. One thing, however, is peculiar about these fish, as while they were so plentiful on this occasion, and so many were dragged to the shore in the net, those who were fishing with lines from their boats "toiled all day and caught nothing."

75 Years Ago
August 24, 1922

A popularity contest for boys and girls thirteen years and under will be a feature of Old Home Week and Tournament Day.

The first prize will be a team of donkeys, cast and harness, donated by Theodore P. Dixon of North Haven; and the second prize will be a bicycle. Votes will be a cent each and the standings will be posted each day.

50 Years Ago
August 21, 1947

Some time Saturday afternoon a Grumman Mallard will circle over Sag Harbor and land at the Agawam ramp. Out of that Mallard will step L.A. (Jake) Swirbul, president of Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation. He remembers when he went to Pierson High School and how he longed for a well-equipped playground. Several years ago he began planning some scheme that would lead to such a playground for the school children of the village. About a month ago an idea crystallized in his mind — run a first rate boxing show in Sag Harbor and donate the proceeds for a playground fund.

25 Years Ago
August 24, 1972

Pony rides will be part of the entertainment for the Muscular Dystrophy Carnival, Saturday, August 26, starting at 11 A.M. (Lenny Pino, you're a dear).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Golden Opportunity

Dear Bryan,
I think it's great that Fred Thiele is trying to enlist money from Pataki's Clean Air/Clean Water Bond Act to help purchase Golf at the Bridge. The dogged reality has been that the Town just couldn't afford such a price-tag on its own. That property has 80 billion gallons of the purest water on the South Fork. That water is, literally, our money in the bank, because once water gets contaminated, it costs millions to remediate it—and that's just for a local neighborhood. On a wider scale, that is, throughout the U.S., it's costing trillions what nature does for nothing. But in this instance, that aquifer can never be remediated if it gets contaminated.

The confounded opportunity has arrived—the 2% transfer tax on the horizon, the Clean Air /Clean Water Bond Act money can make this possible with the help of the Town and County and, of course, Mr. Rubin. I don't think, in his heart of hearts Mr. Rubin would want to be remembered as an environmental ogre. In fact, he's probably quite decent. He hasn't the time I know, but if he personally sat down and read the massive amounts of data I've been accumulating, he'd realize why putting a course at the pinnacle of the moraine is the worst possible site for such an enterprise. So please, Mr. Rubin and the Planning Board don't go bulldozing the track just yet. Perhaps the track can have a new use—for bicycling. Even bicycle racing. There's a giant culture and industry centered around it that generates millions. We could be like the Lehigh Valley Velodrome located in Pennsylvania which plays host to world-class bicycle track racing every summer including try-outs for the U.S. Olympic Bicycle Track team) and with it, lucrative sponsorship. Bicycle competition for adolescents is a big draw in Los Gatos, California. Surfing the NET I found an incredible amount of these sorts of things.

As is now, the rest of those acres could remain untouched; leaving it a passive park with trails and our giant reservoir of the purest water preserved for generations to come. We're lucky that Fred Thiele was appointed to the

Addicted to Weapons

To the editor
I believe we are all touched by some kind of addiction being members of an addicted society. Alcoholism, cigarettes, consumerism (shopping), prescription drugs, gambling. I almost forgot, money: we have more millionaires and billionaires than ever before. All legal and acceptable.

Mention "street drugs" often involving young people and everyone is up in arms. Such drugs are illegal. I'm not suggesting legalization, but that is where the focus lies. Let me change the lens for a moment.

All of the above seem insignificant and pale alongside our worst addiction, the manufacturing of weapons, weapons and weapons. Hardly a whimper is heard, although it borders on insanity. Most recent example: a quote from New York newspapers, "Citing a new era of peace and democracy across Latin America, President Clinton yesterday lifted a 20-year-old ban on advanced weapons sales to the region." The warped thinking of a superpower, which also implies the sort of democracy we proclaim. A military regime.

Surely this addiction existed long before Clinton came to power. We now sell 67% of all the weapons around the world (including land mines) to democracies, poor third World countries and dictators, causing untold suffering and bondage, not to mention a few past wars.

In the Iran/Iraq War we supplied weapons to both sides much like an arms bazaar. Just before we began the Gulf War, we were still selling arms to Saddam Hussein. A grave insanity, which threatens a large part of the planet, sponsored by the death lobbyists in Washington. Their vision impaired by the almighty dollar.

It's all legal, done in our name, with our tax dollars (260 billion every year), no wonder we're broke.

Most addicts are usually in denial so...we call ourselves the leaders of the free world, the last Superpower remaining on earth. How does that strike you?

Thank you,
Larry Darcey
Sag Harbor

FROM THE BRIDGE

Same to You, Buddy

Take off your seat belts dears, it's been a bumpy ride. The summer of ninety-seven draws to a close (not a moment too soon) and it is time once again for deliberations. It is time for the annual Sag Harbor, World Invitational, Grand National Rude-off! I hope you have been setting aside a goodly store of venom, squeezing those little glands have we been? Good! It is your job to send to me your favorite and dramatic story of summer rudeness. It will be my job to sort through the mountains of entries to select the most deserving for a night (or afternoon if you prefer a matinee) of utter abandon at a local watering hole with plenty of the atmosphere and character of our charming little fishing village, the Corner Bar. I will present the winner with a gift certificate good for dinner (or lunch) or just a couple of amusing hours at the bar. There are almost no strings attached!

So get busy. You can write it down and mail it to the Express c/o Joe Hanna. You can fax it to the Express. You can E-mail it to Baseline2k@AOL.COM and it will find its way to my hand. You can phone it in if you must (725-2637), but only if you can be positively identified. You must be able to tell me how you are related to a Schlavoni or I'll know you are an imposter (being related to a Remkus as an alternate is admissible and divorces count). You may also sidle up to me in an alley, or unlit portion of a parking lot to whisper in my ear. . .NOT however, if you are young, attractive and of the gender to which I am affiliated only by the bonds of marital bliss. If you do not know how to sidle, there are lessons at the Watermill Community House on every other Thursday. Always a good skill to have if you contemplate a life in public service.

Other rules: the story must be true. For best results it should be fresh, but we will not turn our noses up at a genuine classic from years gone by. I must warn those of you expecting to trot out some banal effrontery from the past that this, here and now, is the golden age of rudeness. The glories of ancient Greece, the might and magnificence of the Roman Empire at its most powerful, the smoky furnace of the Industrial Revolution. . . these things are but the flickering of a gnats wings compared to the panorama of the golden age of rudeness. Only in the passage of The Great Khan and his savage host (Ghengis, not All) across the trembling steppes, spreading fear like Nutella over the burnt toast of that tragic land do we have a foreshadowing of what has befallen our charming fishing village.

On Saturday last, as I guided the not mighty Fiat through the maze of Main Street (a maze composed of double parked Lexi waiting for the drivers of the BMWs and Mercedes sitting in the parking spaces and showing their back up lights to actually do something, Harbor Youth Brigade walking the line, pedestrians with ambulatory narcosis, and large, slow white cars from Florida that back out of spaces on the other side of the street into what was left of my lane) I saw a little act of discourtesy. A woman heading South in a large Sport Utility Vehicle (it wasn't a Land Rover, so she is probably eligible for the prize) was in the process of turning right at the Laundromat (do we still call it Sudsie's?). She was moving forward and turning at a rate that was perfectly suited to the traffic conditions. A sedan pointing North, from a standing start and with no turn signal, leapt forward with the suddenness of a snake strike crossed the double yellow line and bashed its way in front of the SUV. The woman already in the turn was forced to slam on her brakes. This was too much for her and she pressed down on her horn like the grapes of wrath. The sedan accelerated. The SUV did too. Not fully vented of her adrenaline-induced panic and rage, the woman in the SUV

went to work on the horn again, speeding up to tailgate the sedan. "Hey!" Yes. I know. My own horn button shows the permanent imprint of the heel of my hand from just such an incident. The urge to follow closely and take the confrontation to the next level is strong indeed. That same day as I piloted the not mighty Fiat past the firehouse, a pearlser Audi with Jersey tags pulled up to my rear bumper. We were five over the limit, but that wasn't enough. He was close enough to smell. He was in one gah-dawful hurry to recreate. They're out here to relax right? Not for a minute. He put his foot to the Audi and went around me, crossing double yellow lines to do it. Since other people were on the road in the opposing lane, he cut back in front of me and if they had used a second coat of paint on the Fiat we would have touched. "Why, that son of a . . ."

The Fiat may not be mighty, but she was given a double overhead cam racing engine that is capable of revving so high only dogs can hear it. I downshifted smartly to third and called forth whatever Italian engineering had set aside for just such an emergency. The Fiat responded with a

VOICES OFF
by Joe Hanna



soprano coloratura exhaust note and not a modest surge of forward motion. Deep in my abused flesh, corrosive fight-or flight chemicals were being pitched into the passing blood stream by glandular organs that had seen it all before. . . too much of it. Neither the eighteen year old Italian machinery, nor the much older and equally poorly used flesh could long function at the same level of performance as when first designed. Both of us were being dangerously stressed.

It was then I became aware of the touch of my beloved's hand. . . on mine. . . as it grasped the shaking gear shift knob. "Let it go" she said calmly "Let him just. . . go."

Yes. We must let them all go. To play their game is to lose. But we have our stories. The days are getting shorter. There is a faint back-chill in the air. Not long now. We must be of good cheer. Later, when the volatile spirits have had a chance to evaporate from our memories, we will warm ourselves around a cheery fire with stories of outrageous boorishness, breathtaking vulgarity, astounding feats of selfishness, dumbfounding arrogance, heroic acts of penny-pinching, spellbinding personal aggression and over it all like the vivid fabric of a big-top tent, a great covering rudeness.

You must get your tales to me as soon as you have a moment. You'll feel better when you share. It will help to know that others feel as you do. All is not lost. . . it is merely rented out for the summer.

by Joseph Hanna

Go on, you know you've got a couple of good rude stories. Call Joe. That number again is, 725-2637

The Sag Harbor Express.

Published continuously since 1859

Gardner "Pat" Cowdin, publisher

Bryan Boyhan, editor • Karin Cadzın, director of advertising
Victoria Gardner, publisher 1960-1988