

Letters from our readers

Not listening...

Editor, The NEWS:

I am a 72 year old Long Islander, 50 year resident of Smithtown. Again and again over these past several years, we the people have appealed in town meetings, by phone, by email, thousands of us to our town board and indirectly to the Smithtown Planning Board they appoint, to not approve the preposterous development overreach at Gyrodyne, to leave Flowerfields, as fields.

We've talked about traffic congestion, inadequate environmental impact statements, loss of precious open space and historical preservation, which can all be summed up by one phrase. "Quality of Life."

We the people have pointed out that we, and not a few commercial enterprises, are the true tax base of the community. We, not only through the taxes we pay individually, but by our support and our patronage of every business in this community. Every dollar we spend is a dollar from which they pay their tax bills. Without our collective support, the structure collapses. How did our Representatives respond? They ignored us and passed it anyway.

Well now we are engaged in a lawsuit, one which I've contributed money to support as have many others. I'll contribute again, but this, I think, is not enough.

The time is at hand for change, and by that I mean to elect people to these offices who listen, care what we think; in short who represent us.

David F. Salomone
Smithtown

Thanks...

Editor, The NEWS:

Back in the early spring I had written a letter to Supervisor Wehrheim asking if he would consider having some safety rails installed at the Long Beach launching ramp. He was very receptive to my suggestion and promptly contacted our Director of Parks, Buildings and Grounds Joe Arico.

Within a few weeks both Mr. Arico and his foreman Matty called me to discuss the plans. Long story short, these safety hand rails have now been installed and will no doubt make it easier to get in and out of boats at the dock... especially for us seniors and handicapped boaters.

Thank you to Supervisor Wehrheim, Joe Arico and crew for listening and making a day on the water that much sweeter.

P. Kindel
Smithtown

The road once traveled Kicking grass...

After being a busboy for three years, I was itching to find a job where I got to go outside, so I began working for a landscaper on Saturdays by the summer of my junior year of high school. Fresh air in my lungs and sunshine on my face, I thought, would be a welcome change for me. I soon missed the bus cart.

I was the first guy at the boss's house on New Mill Road every Saturday morning. The crew was a ragtag group of guys two years older than I and together we loaded up the truck and trailer with industrial-sized mowers, trimmers, gasoline canisters, plastic barrels, and blowers before setting out for Bretton Woods condominium complex in Coram. I had to stand in the truck bed for the forty minute drive. There were obviously no seatbelts up there, so I leaned on an upside down barrel and hung on, but I didn't mind the drive. The roads were usually empty those mornings and as we drove down Main Street I saw my town from a different perspective. I looked down at the barren parking lots and the shops that were not yet open. I was eye level with the unlit marquee of the movie theater and the traffic lights seemed to hang lower from that height. Everything felt drowsy.

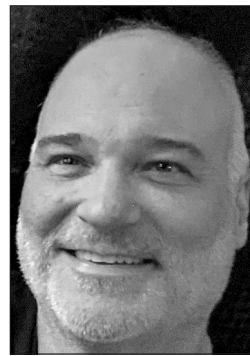
The placidity evaporated as soon as we pulled into the complex's entrance and a dreadful full day's work under the sun was on the horizon. Unlike Angelo's that had a dinner rush with a steady flow of conversations and tables of characters, cutting grass at the condos was a long, laborious, and boring task. As the youngest guy in the crew and low man on the totem pole, my job was to mow the lawns in front of each unit's door. The sun made some days downright grueling. It didn't take long before I looked and felt like Cool Hand Luke. My sodden baseball cap's brim dripped with sweat, my t-shirt stuck to my back, and my legs were speckled with pieces of freshly cut grass. I regretfully stopped using sunblock after one of the older guys made fun of me for it, so my arms were usually roasted red each week.

Some days the sun was so punishing that I swear I hallucinated about the unlimited amount of soda I was allowed to drink at Angelo's. When it looked like a condo owner was out, I used his garden hose to slake my thirst, gulping down water like a parched horse, ignoring the aftertaste of plastic from the hose. Lunch was McDonalds and after scarfing my burger and fries down, I cherished the respite from the heat and stayed in the air conditioned dining area before the boss whistled for us to get back in the truck.

One good aspect of the job's monotony was that it allowed my mind to wander. As I pushed the loud mower over lawn after lawn, I made the red sun and smells of gasoline and grass work as catalysts for my creativity. As I mowed I opened the gates and thought about girls I longed for, rock and roll lyrics, stand-up comedy material, and short story ideas. I also thought about old movies I needed to watch, books I needed to read, and records I needed to hear to take my mind off the fact that I felt like a member of a chain gang.

Sometimes after those particularly searing days the boss bought a six pack and passed some bottles up to us in the back of the truck as we drove home. It was heavenly. As the truck rolled down Jericho Turnpike, the early evening wind blowing through my hair, a cold bottle of Beck's cooled me down. There was a sense of blue collar accomplishment when we arrived back in Smithtown. It was like I was a longshoreman returning from the docks or a miner crawling out of the mines.

A hard day's work was under my belt and though my skin was red from the sun, my sneakers green from the grass, and my hands caked in dirt, my wallet was \$50 fatter. There are times now when I'm cloistered in my classroom or knee deep in essays and I crave a day under the sun with the lawnmower rattling in front of me, but maybe the grass is always greener on the other side.



By MATT KINDELMANN



Photographs (above and right) in last week's edition of **The Smithtown News** of a house fire at Raven Drive in Commack had an incorrect credit for the photographer. The photos were taken by Jack O'Laughlin, a member of the Commack Fire Department who was at the scene of the fire.