

## TO LEASH OR NOT TO LEASH, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Thanksgiving has been heavy on my mind this week and I have been pondering the things I have to be thankful for. Chief among them is that as a pet owner, I share, along with many others, a thankfulness that we are living on Nantucket, and not at many of the places we have lived before or have seen where pets are viewed as a bad thing, where their presence is deemed unhealthy or undesirable.

I am thankful I can open my door and go down my dirt road with my dog unfettered and unbothered. I am thankful that I can drive to remote moors and find wonderful places to explore with my dog, unleashed. For me, and for many, a walk on the beach would not be a pleasure without being able to let the dog run into the water or take a quick swim to retrieve a favorite ball or stick.

Many years ago, when we arrived here for husband Fred's job interview, I was amazed to see dogs being walked downtown, riding along with their owners in cars and participating in all phases of life; a life so different from where we were then living, where taking a dog for a walk in one of the city's numerous parks, even on a leash, was prohibited. Truly, Nantucket was a dream come true for a dog lover.

But times change. Taking things for granted, getting lazy and proprietary about our privileges comes to no good end. And so this past summer, public safety concerns led to restricted pet access to beach locations. Followers of this column know that I always preach responsible pet ownership, which includes maintaining your dog under control and picking up after them. Because some of us have taken advantage of the situation and behaved in an insensitive and irre-



sponsible way, all of us have to pay the price for their negligence. I don't like it, but I get it.

Now, some of our dog lovers want to cut a deal. They want to create a legal situation where we can still enjoy our open spaces with our pets if we maintain control and responsibility for our pets. So, an

article has been proposed for the Town Meeting Warrant. After reading the proposed article, I can see how some might be confused about its intent, but it is amazing how quickly and inaccurately information can flow.

My first clue was a call from a very upset customer the end of last week who wanted to know when and where this Special Town Meeting was to be held to discuss abolishing the leash law, because he definitely wanted to be there. Daniel Manville is a strong proponent of the leash law. He said, "My Cairn Terrier, always on a leash, has been attacked by loose dogs in the State Forest. Their owners always say, 'My dog has never done that!' I don't understand why you would want your dog off the leash ever, because it's for their own safety."

Partly to blame for the upheaval is the other newspaper's feature last Thursday, "Voices of Nantucket," a man-on-the-street interview, which posed the question, "An article has been proposed to eliminate Nantucket's leash law. What are your feelings?"

I have spoken with two of the sponsors for the article and this is what I have found out. The existing wording of the current law is:

No person within the confines of the Town shall at any time permit a dog owned or kept by such keeper run at large beyond the confines of the property of the owner or keeper unless the dog is held firmly on a leash.

you tend to stumble upon things that can enhance the work even more so. It took a lot of time because I basically read the [Nantucket newspapers] from 1900 to 1927, every single issue. It was just a great resource for the issues of the time, as well as island attitudes about some things that were going on outside the island, World War I, the invention of the automobile. I enjoyed the research, it's one of those things I could easily get lost in. The good news is I at least had a novel to keep me disciplined!"

That adherence to detailed research is evident in the novel beginning with the cover photo. The cover photo, "Woman with dory on beach, Cod Fish Park, 'Sconset," is used courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association. As you read Amelia's story, however, you come to believe that it is her picture and it has finally found its resting place. When Hite stumbled upon the photo at the NHA, he knew it was a companion to the novel he was writing. When it came time to publish his book, however, the publisher did not fully appreciate the connection. "Working with the publisher, I really had to fight hard for this design, because they actually just mangled this photo," he recounted regarding the cover design. "Their design of the cover was a picture frame around her shoulders and her head and they got rid of everything else. I said 'What is this? I can't sell a book like this!'" Hite was fortunate to be working with iUniverse, a company that assists authors in

connection with upscale self-publishing. "With traditional publishers, writers don't really have much say in the covers of their books," he explained.

A graduate of Columbia University's MFA program in screenwriting and directing, Hite's background is evident in the dialogue and the picturesque descriptions of "The Last Boat." "Screenwriting is visual, as well as possessing the economy of dialogue and the economy of words all together," he explained. "It really informed to a certain degree the pace of the novel, but I will have to say that in various drafts of the novel people in the book industry would say 'You need to slow this part down.' In a novel you have more time to develop the scenery. Writing for the screen kind of helped me trim some of the dead weight to make sure the story kept moving at a nice pace. In terms of pace, in terms of description, and in terms of dialogue, that background really helped in the writing of the novel."

Through it all, however, is Amelia's voice, strong and mesmerizing, pulling you under the surface of her story, much like the Nantucket Sound. Through Hite she found her voice, and her story could now be told. ■

Hite will discuss his novel "The Last Boat" at the Nantucket Atheneum Great Hall, 1 India Street, this Sunday, Nov. 25, 2 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Jan Jaeger is owner of Geronimo's, Ltd., Nantucket's pet supply and gift shop, and is a member of DWAA and CWA (Dog and Cat Writer's Associations of America). Her pets at home are Junior, a Chesapeake Bay Retriever and three cats. At the shop are the cats, Messrs. Fish and Chips, Flower bunny, Willie guinea pig and two budgies. Send e-mail to jan@geronimos.com.

## THE LAST BOAT

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"fascinating," he said, a note of reverence in his voice. "I think that women have so many layers and I've had some very larger than life female characters in my personal life."

Hite has been a frequent visitor to Nantucket for the past 20 years but even as a child he heard the siren song of Nantucket calling to him. "As a child my family visited Cape Cod. I wanted to come over to Nantucket, but we just didn't have enough time," he reminisced. "So I wanted my parents to stop the car on the shore so I could at least get out and see it. But we didn't stop, and of course I now know I wouldn't have been able to see anything anyway!"

Hite and his wife Diane purchased a house on Nantucket in the '90s after having fallen in love with the island during their first visit. They set out to renovate their home, and stayed with their friend Linda Loring when they came up on the weekends to check on the progress. "At the end of the day we'd sit around the fire and [Loring] would talk about Old Nantucket and the characters she used to run into. It just struck me that here's this island that draws these strong unique characters, and I wanted to create one."

Hite's inspiration was bubbling under the surface, waiting for a subject. "I love history to begin with, and researching," he explained. "I enjoy it because

## SMALL WORKS

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### SUSAN WHELIHAN

Susan Whelihan obviously took the adage "One man's trash is another man's treasure" to heart and turned it into art. "I'm going to be showing some broken plate mosaic pieces. My technique is called 'pique assiette,' a fancy French name for broken plate," she explained when asked about her entry in the Holiday Small Works show. "I find all of the bases for my mosaics by going to tag sales and antique sales. For my Nantucket box, I only had one of the boxes before I sold the first one. Then I found an iden-

tical box at a tag sale right around the time I sold the first one. It was one of those coincidences that are just too coincidental."

Even though she is relatively new to the art scene, Whelihan's talent is definitely not just a coincidence. "Before I moved to Nantucket, I lived in the Lower East Side [of New York City], off the City in the East Village. All over that area, and it's usually on the municipal structures, lampposts, walk/don't walk signs, artists had created these mosaics and stuck them on these structures. I was very inspired by what I saw in New York," she explained when asked about her mosaic works. "My favorite artist is Hundertwasser. What I like is that he does a lot of different types of work. One thing he would do is take a

preexisting structure and add tiles, funky things like that. I always love doing things like that, taking something ugly and old or recycled and making it art."

Whelihan's own journey has taken her from Nantucket to San Francisco, then back to Nantucket. Through it all, however, her art work has interpreted her experiences. "I started experimenting with mosaics when I lived here for the first time in 2000," she said. "I was just sort of experimenting and not making that many finished pieces. I continued with them when I moved to San Francisco. The first piece I ended up doing was in a window pane structure. I drove myself across the country, and it gave me a lot

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