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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters must be received **by noon Tuesday** for publication in that week's paper. Letters may be handwritten, typed or emailed to don@nantucketindependent.com. Be sure to include an address and phone number. All letters are printed at the editor's discretion and may be edited.

CALENDAR

The calendar section includes free listings and photos of island events. Email your event listing to Gene Mahon, events@nantucketindependent.com. Fax: 508-228-4858. Listings and photos for consideration must be received **by 5 p.m. Friday**.

ENGAGEMENTS & WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Provide either your own pre-written announcement or fill out one of our forms and we will write it for you. Announcements and photos are printed free of charge. Forms are available at The Independent, and may be faxed or emailed. Call 508.228.1654, or email sharon@nantucketindependent.com. Announcements and photos must be received **by 5 p.m. Friday**.

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Provide us with your child's name, date of birth, name of parents, siblings and grandparents. You may submit a photo or drop by the office anytime during normal business hours and we will take the photo for you. Must be received **by 5 p.m. Friday**. Email: don@nantucketindependent.com

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NO CHANGE

The other day I was out resurveying the damage done in the woods by tropical storm Noel when, with great commotion, my favorite red tail made his way down through the pines and perched on the fallen dead tree that had missed my brother's wellhead by less than an inch.

"Morning," he said.

"And to you," I replied. "I have a story to tell you." Without giving Hawkeye time to interrupt, since he clearly had something on this mind, I continued.

"Last week, I was standing outside a small shack on the wharf and, through the window, I could see one of the people inside reading The Independent. A moment later, I heard a voice say 'No Hawkeye,' and the paper was closed and put down."

"So?" said the hawk.

"Well," I stammered, "I am sure the man would have liked the column if he had read it through, but I thought it was kind of a compliment. People — or at least many people — seem to like your insights."

"Well don't let it go to your head. Now, are you done?" the bird demanded.

"Yes, I am done. You certainly seem antsy this morning. What's on your mind?"

Hawkeye stared at me for a moment. "Have you read those citizens' articles for the 2008 Town Meeting?"

"I haven't read the articles themselves, only the press accounts."

"Me too," he said. "And I am so upset that, after I finished reading the paper, I missed two meals. I was off target and both of them got away."

"I am sorry to hear that", I replied. "I didn't see anything that seemed so bad." I thought for a moment. "Actually, there are a couple of things I don't like very much, but nothing bad enough to make me miss eating."

"We won't get into your eating habits," Hawkeye snorted. "Let's talk about those warrant articles."

"Look at them. Some of them are very well intended, and make sense, but they are almost all attempts to micromanage; many in response to inadequacies perceived in the way things are going today. Basically, people are stepping in because town government doesn't."

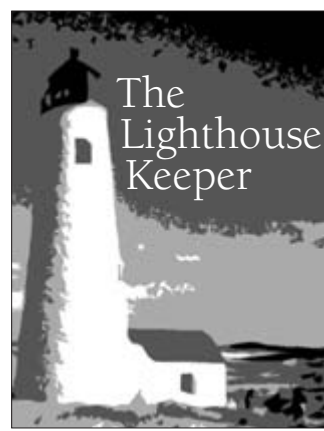
"I have thought about this quite a bit," I said. Let me try a theory out on you."

"This should be good," Hawkeye huffed, rolling the only eye that I could see.

Undeterred, I went on. "It's becoming clear that there are two factions that both want the same thing. Neither one wants change. One faction doesn't want change because it is afraid any change in the ground rules — or the balance of power, if you will — will take away their ability to do what they want. The other resists change because they want things back the way they were before the other group started changing them."

"Naturally, that makes no sense," the hawk says.

"The irony, I said, "is that the two groups are pretty much at loggerheads with each other because each thinks that the other is trying to change things. The result is almost nothing of substance gets done."



BY DANIEL W. DRAKE
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

"I will give you an example," I continued. "Take the issue of road paving. For some reason, the Planning Board, which most would say is representative of one of the factions, feels that road paving needs to happen every time a lot is subdivided. The other side says road paving ruins Nantucket's character. The first group doesn't want to change the ways things are currently done and the second group wants change so as

to revert back to the prior status of unpaved roads or cobblestones. By using town meeting, the result is a kind of all-or-nothing situation. And no one is happy."

"My belief is that on road paving, just as with sewer connections, beach preservation, mass transit, energy efficiency and many other topics, there need to be policies in place — developed by consensus among our elected officials and with enough continuity insured that the policy isn't going to be revisited every 12 months. If the policy is bad or doesn't work, there are checks and balances in place to negate the implementation but there needs to be a starting point. The ad hoc system we have now just doesn't work."

"How does that particular change happen?" Hawkeye asked.

"I wish I knew," I replied sadly. "The current way of doing things is so entrenched and everyone is afraid of change. It gives some people a feeling of power that, with just a few signatures, they can get an item on the town meeting agenda. So, it looks like the micro-management you seem to dislike so much is not going away anytime soon."

"You don't like it either," he responded, correctly.

I knew the time was getting short. "Hawkeye," I said, "there has to be something about these articles that got you so upset. The micromanagement issue is not new."

"Yea," he replied. "There is. I don't like the proposed change to the leash law to allow dogs off their leash if they are in their owner's 'control.' I can speak from experience about dogs that, right in front of their owners, chase both me and my meals. What does 'control' mean?"

"I have no idea" I said, thinking sheepishly about the how our dog might define the word. Can you imagine the excuses? "Of course I was controlling my dog, your honor. He just wasn't paying attention."

Hawkeye was starting to get restless. I said, "Did you see the article requiring certain houses to have four-inch house numbers, instead of the three-inch numbers all houses are supposed to have now. Don't you think the numbers should be lit so they are visible in the dark?"

"I don't know what the flap is," Hawkeye said as he took his leave. "I can see three-inch numbers a mile away." ■

The "Lighthouse Keeper" reflects the views of the author and does not necessarily represent the editorial position of The Nantucket Independent. Please send any ideas or comments to drake@nantucketindependent.com.