

ISLAND PROFILE

STREET TALK

by Ted Hills

What do you think about the ban on real estate broker signs?



In this economy, they could make it a little more lenient in order to allow them.

DONNA EMMA



The town is cluttered with too many signs, it's time to draw the line.

ALEXANDER BUDD



If it's someone's lawn, they should be able to put whatever they want on it.

TUCKER PRIBOR

From living on the water, to setting anchor in the community

P.A.T. Hunt | Building a sense of belonging at Taylor's Island

BY CAROL GALLIGAN
FEATURE WRITER

On Saturday, this coming weekend, scads of guests will be arriving on Taylor's Island in the middle of Coecles Harbor. They will have come under their own steam by boat or kayak, or will have been ferried over from the mainland on larger vessels, commandeered for the occasion by the Taylor's Island Foundation. Arriving for an afternoon of sun, breezes, views and summer feasting, they will be greeted, among others, by the co-chair of that committee, P.A.T. Hunt, whom everyone calls Pat.

When Pat greets visitors to the Island, where this interview took place, and shows them around S. Gregory Taylor's historic home, it's clear that she has not only the Island's past but its future in sight.

As we talked, five women pulled up by boat, followed by a dad with his two sons. Pat patiently answered their endless questions. Who was S. Gregory Taylor? When and where did he die? How did the Town of Shelter Island come to own the place? Where does the running water and electricity come from?

She spoke knowledgeably about the present and the past, but her current mission is all about the Island's future. What could the Island become? How might it be used and by whom? What needed to be repaired or replaced and where would the money come from? How could it become self-supporting? And, as with most parents, her love for the place and her dreams for its future came shining through.

Where does this passion come from? Pat grew up in Connecticut, one of three children, with a stay-at-home mom and a dad who drove a truck, and went on to meet her future husband, Bridg Hunt, when they were both New Haven residents. Bridg of the North Ferry Company is the son of Esther and Bridg Hunt of Dering Harbor.

When Bridg first mentioned Shelter Island to Pat, "I had never heard of it. He had been a summer person, starting with his great-grandfather who, with his family, summered here." After the couple married, they moved onto Bridg's boat and



CAROL GALLIGAN PHOTO

P.A.T. Hunt on the grounds of Taylor's Island.

anchored it at a mooring in front of her in-law's home.

"We moved aboard in 1980," she remembered, before her children were born. "My daughter arrived in 1981 and my son in 1985. And for the next 14 years we lived on the boat. My children were home schooled." When asked what the kids thought of such an unusual arrangement, she replied, "That was the only home they knew. After the mooring in front of Esther and Bridg's we lived at Piccozzi's marina and our big joke was that we moved south for the winter. That was to the other side of the Island where we tucked into a little basin in Tarkettle. Our goal was to go cruising and we finally did do that in late 1989."

They went down the intracoastal waterway, spent some time in the Chesapeake area where Bridg's sister lived, went on to Fort Lauderdale, then to the Bahamas and finally as far east as Eleuthera Island.

"For the kids, this was life. They enjoyed it, it had a lot of lessons for each of us. In fact, before we left, Wendy Clark, who was a wonderful first grade teacher here in the school, actually had a field trip where the kids came to see this family that lives on a boat and they home school. It was a great lifestyle. And then things changed."

"We'd been talking about moving

off the boat. The kids were getting bigger and so were their friends and we were feeling like that lifestyle had come full circle. We'd cruised the boat, I'd gone to graduate school; we'd lived in Boston harbor, where we were part of a community of live-aboards as well as a very diverse community of home schoolers, so we really felt we had come full circle with the boat."

They had been planning on one more year aboard when Hurricane Bob arrived. "We always say 'Hurricane Bob kicked us off.' Our boat went ashore and we just said, it's like the boat saying, 'You guys are never going to get it together, I'll just have to kick you off.' We never went back on board. Not that the boat was wrecked or anything, it's just we got the hint."

They live now in a home in the Heights by Chase Creek. "I remember the first time a storm was brewing and I didn't have to concern myself. When you're living on a boat you

are so attuned to the weather and the tide, it's always in the forefront of your mind, for obvious reasons. I mean I loved the connection but it was nice to be released from it, too."

With her children grown, she began to search for something to do that would give her as much pleasure as her former life with them. After a trip with Bridg to Rose Island in Newport, where the community had renovated an old lighthouse and turned it into something new and beautiful and open to the public, she began to think about Taylor's Island in the same way. "It's all about a sense of place," she said. "I just feel so grateful to be able to go from my nuclear family, nurturing them, to my extended family, my community and to create a place for them to gather, like a family did here last Saturday celebrating 50 years of a marriage."

Her emphasis is on building community. "I feel that Taylor's Island can bring people together, that it's that sort of a catalyst." She went on to emphasize, "Communities don't need a sense of separateness. They need a sense of belonging."

The Taylor's Island Committee meets the second Tuesday of the month at 9 a.m. in Town Hall, and like all committee meetings, is open to the public. The group's minutes are posted on the Town's website.