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3 What is
Killing Flora?



7 Feathered
Things



12 Way Back When:
An Evening at
Playland, N.Y.



THE VOICE OF NORTH STAMFORD

FALL 2025



06903

NORTH STAMFORD MAGAZINE

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North Stamford Association

An association of residents dedicated to preserving North Stamford as a desirable place to live.

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Watercolor by Bob Callahan





What Is Killing Flora?

by Linda Leavitt

*A*ROUND THE TIME that the Covid pandemic was devastating the human population, I noticed that the leaves on one of the many beech trees near my North Stamford house were wilted. We'd had rain recently and nothing else looked wilted, but I mulched around the base of the tree and gave it extra water in hopes of perking it up.

The tree did not respond to my ministrations. The wilted leaves developed yellow and then dark green stripes, then drooped, curled, turned half brown and dropped. By 2023, this condition had spread to many of my other beech trees. Looking online, I discovered they likely had beech leaf disease, caused by a nematode and spreading widely throughout the country. It has no known cure.

Young trees are more susceptible to the pathogen and can die within three years. Instead of majestic, smooth trunks and a green canopy over my yard in July, I now had a lawn, deck and driveway covered with shriveled, black-tipped leaves. My whole neighborhood was similarly afflicted.

I love trees, and so do birds and squirrels. I have dozens of mature beech trees on my property. This was depressing.

One of my neighbors paid an arborist to have two of his beeches treated with nutrients that were supposed to help them resist the invasion. (They are still standing so maybe it worked.) I thought my trees were too far gone to treat so, with a heavy heart, I contacted a North Stamford tree service and had eleven beech trees removed.

The following year, I had another sick beech taken down and two trees pruned. Now, in year three, I'm planning to take a 13th and 14th beech down and treat another three.

At first it was a consolation to have

Tree cutting



more light on my deck and shining through the windows in my family room. The land formerly occupied by my beech forest, which slopes down to a brook, filled up with some kind of green ground cover. I didn't pay much attention until fall, when it started turning tan. Then I realized the grass stalks, unnoticeable when green, had grown to be three feet long, stiff, dry and ugly. Mats of these stalks were smothering pachysandra, ferns and everything else in their path.

I had noticed this new grass, with its bamboo-shaped leaves, growing along my road and thought it was kind of cute. I had no idea it could grow to such lengths, turn so ugly, and spread so aggressively.

I looked at the website of the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and found out the invader was likely invasive Japanese stilt grass, which grows in "flood plains, stream banks, moist woodlands, and areas that are prone to soil disturbances, such as tilling, mowing, and deer traffic." Stilt grass likes moist, acidic soils rich in nitrogen and can grow in lawns as well as shaded

Continued on page 4

← *Winter kill rhodo*

What Is Killing Flora?

Continued from page 3



areas.

I wish the deer, who like to chow down on my hostas, would get interested in stilt grass. Alas, according to the Penn State Extension, stilt grass has little appeal for grazers. Deer eat native plants instead, allowing stilt grass to invade the spaces they create. "In the fall, the thick layer of smothering thatch is slow to decompose," the Extension notes. "Left unchecked, Japanese stilt grass can overtake native vegetation in three to five years." Stilt grass has shallow roots and it's not hard to pull up by hand, especially when soil is damp.

You can use a trimmer or mower set very low on larger areas, but the experts say it's best done in late summer when the plants are about to flower in order to prevent seed dispersal. They recommend mulching the soil in ornamental beds and keeping lawns dense and healthy to discourage stilt grass encroachments. They warn against mowing your lawn too short or too often.

If you feel you need help to deal with an infestation, the Extension suggests hiring a professional to apply glyphosate (AquaNeat) or glufosinate (Finale). I'm concerned about using a pesticide near my brook. I have little hope of preventing regrowth of the pesky stuff, but I'm determined to pull up the dead stilt grass stalks and keep new growth under control. I want to encourage pachysandra to continue to spread down a bank into the area and ferns to grow up

from the brook.

Rhododendrons added to my landscaping woes this past spring. In winter, I like to estimate the outdoor temperature by looking out the window and noting how tightly furled my rhododendron leaves are. But when the weather warmed this year, the leaves on four of my bushes were not only tightly furled, but brown and hard. I've seen a lot of half-dead rhododendrons in my neighborhood too. The culprit is winter kill. "The winter damage from this past season is widespread," said Bartlett arborist Ryan O'Leary. "Arborvitae, chamaecyparis, juniper, cherry laurel, dwarf Alberta spruce – all are showing winter injury." Three contributing factors cause this.

1. Drought during the fall. Even irrigated plants suffered from the lack of rain.
2. Fluctuating temperatures over the winter. Evergreens and broadleaf evergreens 'wake up' when the temperatures increase and translocate water to their leaves/needles. When the temperatures fall, water freezes inside the leaves/needles and bursts the cells inside the plant, causing damage.
3. The very strong winds we had during frigid temperatures caused more damage to the already damaged leaves/needles.

Rhododendrons have shallow roots and are more susceptible to changing soil conditions than other shrubs. But I might have saved the rest of my rhodos if I had mulched and watered them during the dry months. The damage done, I had no choice but to prune the bushes down to the base where there are a few green leaves and buds. One of my bushes bloomed nicely after heavy pruning.

We all know what's causing a lot of this mayhem. Since the beginning of the 20th century, temperatures in Connecticut have risen three degrees. The state Department of Energy and Environmental Conservation predicts a continuing increase in heavy rainfall, which leads to soil erosion, nutrient deposition, and the spreading of contaminants and pathogens. But there have also



been extended periods of drought and less snow.

Reduced snowpack leads to soil freezing, which can damage roots and reduce nitrogen uptake. Unlike native species, invasive plants are more tolerant of extremes and more aggressive. "All native plants are vulnerable to invasives for a multitude of reasons," said O'Leary. "Invasives typically germinate and grow at a faster rate than natives."

Our environmental problems are a moving target. Sometimes the weather is too warm, sometimes too cold, often too wet or too dry. Fortunately, there are always new plants and some old standbys that may help our home landscapes weather the constantly changing conditions. Dan and Emily Lato, the owners of Designs By Lee, note that the list of invasive plants they are not allowed to sell gets longer every year. It includes stiltgrass, Japanese knotwood, honeysuckle, bamboo, burning bush, and bittersweet. The Latos say they have seen increased interest in native species at their nursery.

But most groundcovers common in North Stamford, like pachysandra, are not native. Vinca minor, also known as creeping myrtle and periwinkle, originated in south central Europe. I also like dead nettle (lamium maculatum) with its variegated leaves and purple flowers and sweet woodruff (gallium odoratum) which sports fragrant white flowers in spring. All of these have the potential to be invasive, but they are not nearly as aggressive as stilt grass and are so attractive that I welcome their spread.

Our best strategy is to plant a variety of things so that if catastrophe strikes, the damage will be limited to one type of shrub, tree, flower, or ground cover. I also heartily recommend vigilance. Notice if a plant is running amok in your landscape or a tree is looking sickly. That beech sapling with the curling leaves is unlikely to recover and should be cut down. An ounce of observation and timely action is worth a pound of cure. 🌱



Stilt thatch looking down to brook



Stiltgrass old and new



Infected leaves showing nematode damage

Nevermore

by Myra Kreiman Kijek

Black soot underneath
Buried bones turned to dust
Empty ovens sit idle
While tourist's tongues cluck
In disgust and disbelief

Train tracks once bustled
Carrying two-legged loads
Of humans to the slaughter
Of their bodies and their souls
To a destiny too awful to behold

Untold stories both tragic and proud
Of sacrifice, humanity and horror
Will never be whispered or shouted aloud
Tattooed numbers and scars deep within
Are testaments to the evils of sin

Never again we say at displays of shoes and
Glasses and luggage and lampshades
Made of flesh never again will we ignore
The signs, the handwriting on the wall,
I ask you not to forget, nevermore.

As we hurtle into an unknown future
There is one truth to carry with us
History repeats itself when we bury it
Deny it and take the lie to it
Remember this quote the raven,
'nevermore' ■



Feathered Things

by Sally Sacks



I'VE BEEN DOING a lot more bird watching these days. Because it's been so dreadfully hot, I've spent much of my time in the air-conditioned family room, which gives me a first-class view of the outdoor avian activities.

The birds have been voraciously devouring the contents of the three feeders. I can hardly keep up with them, refilling nearly daily and keeping Amazon busy with new supplies. There are several pairs of goldfinches and they seem extremely territorial and aggressive. I have seen pairs of them evidently fighting in midair, and they frequently chase the house finches from the thistle feeder, a behavior I've never seen before.

Then there are the house wrens. I have always been very fond of these tiny birds, whose mellifluous melodies fill the air each spring as they start to establish their new households. For years, a pair has nested in a jar attached to the side of the porch, and we've enjoyed watching them create their new home, make themselves comfortable, feed their young and then, sadly, flee the old homestead to – where?

But a "New York Times" article by Margaret Renkl, whom I highly respect, has given me pause. Evidently, these tiny, cute birds are not as nice as I'd thought. According to Renkl, they pull out established nests, fill others with sticks to prevent fellow birds from nesting there, and – horror of horrors – actually puncture

other birds' eggs in unguarded nests. I can hardly believe this behavior. Could it be that my house wrens are a different, more peaceful breed? I am giving this matter some serious thought.

We host a couple of pairs of cardinals and two juveniles. These youngsters are spoiled and expect their parents to continue to feed them indefinitely but they will soon have to fend for themselves. The best of parents must eventually practice tough love.

Throughout all of this avian activity, the resident chipmunks and squirrels constantly patrol the patio, vacuuming up the scattered seeds and trying to intimidate one another. The squirrels are still attempting the Big Leap that would bypass the baffle and land them directly on the feeder. So far, they've succeeded at about seven feet, but I moved the Adirondack chair yet again and they can no longer launch themselves successfully.

And don't forget the hummingbird feeder. Ordinarily the nectar would last for at least a week, while the diminutive avians flutter about. But then the woodpeckers discovered that nectar was the perfect beverage to wash down those dry seeds and whoosh, they were gulping it down like

Continued on page 8



Feathered Things

Continued from page 6

cheap beer. What do they care that I'm constantly boiling down sugar and water in 90 degree weather?

The most thrilling sighting occurred one day last week. I returned home from some errands and headed, as usual, for the cool family room. To my amazement, out on the patio, not six feet away from me, sat a large barred owl. I knew they were around – the night before, while having dinner on the porch, we could see two in the bushes and a third calling plaintively, “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?”



But to see this magnificent creature right in front of me! I was enthralled. After a minute, it flew off onto a nearby pine tree branch. And before I could recover, in flew a second owl and parked itself in the same spot! This one decided to stay for a while. It spread out its wing and tail feathers and posed as if it were taking a sunbath, remaining in that position for a good five minutes.

I realized then that the chipmunks and squirrels had completely disappeared. They know a predator when they see one. Finally, after preening its feathers a bit, the owl flew off into a low-hanging branch.

The show was over. 📷

Finding

Barbara Espinosa Occhino (c) 2025

I NEVER IMAGINED I would make Stamford my permanent home. I attended eleven schools in California, New Jersey, Florida and Venezuela. My family never ventured north to New England. Growing up, we were constantly on the move and I learned to embrace change.

Bonding to any one place meant missing friends and longing for a home I left behind. So it was much easier to just let go. Yet, from the first time I drove around what is now my neighborhood, I felt an uncanny familiarity and a bond I had never experienced before. I have built something here: A life, a family, a community, a place in my heart.

My husband, Ron, was born and raised in New York and had relatives in upstate Connecticut. After we both graduated from Rutgers University, his employer relocated him to Maryland while I continued to work in New Jersey. Within a year of living in the Old Line State, Ron asked to come back to the New York Metro area. They agreed to have him manage their Norwalk office, so after we got married in 1982, we rented and later purchased a condo on Bedford Street in Stamford. With \$30 in the bank, we started our own marketing agency and worked long hours building our future.

Back then, downtown Stamford was a quaint neighborhood with a handful of restaurants, a Grand Central Market, Bedford Pharmacy, Sol's Toys, Bedford Records, Frank Martin & Sons, Engel's Furs, and other mom and pop jewelry, printing, and clothing stores. We frequented the Bedford Street video store and ice-skated at the Landmark Square rink.



Roots

The Stamford Town Center was a bustling indoor mall featuring national retailers and department stores including J.C. Penney, Saks, Filene's, The Limited, Waldenbooks, and Macy's. You could always find a bargain at the Caldor on the corner of Broad and Summer Streets. As a young couple, we enjoyed living downtown but knew we had to invest in the highly desirable area north of the Merritt Parkway. We sold our condo and bought a two-bedroom, one-bath ranch house on a small, one-third-acre property. Our two daughters attended the Brookdale Nursery School and Northeast Elementary School. We became parishioners at Holy Spirit Church back when Masses were held in their gymnasium.

While our children were in their primary grades, we upgraded to our current home just

minutes from the New York border. It was a tranquil street with old-time charm, where neighbors visited each other's homes during the holidays, shared homemade ice cream, and hosted cookouts.

Having our own business gave us the freedom to arrange our schedules. We volunteered with Junior Achievement and made ourselves available as chaperones for school activities and field trips. Our girls thrived in the public schools and participated in the summer programs at Long Ridge Camp, Mead School Creative Summer, and the Stamford Museum & Nature Center camp. I took dance classes with my daughters at the Roxbury Academy on Cascade Road.

Living in the serenely wooded landscape, while being able to drive downtown for the myriad activities offered, was the ideal combina-



Finding Roots

Continued from page 9

tion. These were the years of free Jazz Up July, Wednesday Nite Live, and Alive at Five concerts at Columbus Park. Families brought lawn chairs, elders danced to nostalgic melodies, and strangers became friends. The streets echoed with the sounds of jazz, blues, funk, soul, and classic pop and rock.

Since its original launch in 1997, residents looked forward to the entertainment at Columbus Park. The audiences broke into thunderous applause for acts like B.B. King, Dionne Warwick, Boz Scaggs, The Temptations, George Benson, and The Four Tops, among others.

In 2012, Stamford began charging a \$10 general admission fee and an outside security company was hired to manage entry, along with about 25 police officers and barricades. When the city started promoting the concerts outside of Stamford, the audience chemistry changed. By 2013, it was no longer relaxed or family friendly. A single gated entrance was established, including bag checks, wristbands, and restricted entry before 7:00 P.M. for those under 21. Admission continued to creep up until tickets were \$40 to \$50, and the concerts were moved to Mill River Park in 2023. Alive at Five officially ended in 2024, with organizers citing issues with increased production expenses, rising artist booking fees, fewer sponsors, and competition from regional music festivals.

Those concerts weren't just entertainment; they were medicine. Live music releases feel-good hormones, unites people, and helps dissolve anxiety and loneliness. In those shared moments of rhythmic camaraderie, the music brought everyone together, giving people of all ages, races, and income levels a sense of belonging. That all seemed to disappear with the changing times.

Yearning to support free live music in our community, from 2014 to 2021, I served as the music curator, alongside Stamford Downtown,

Stamford's ArtWalk, the Sunday "Summer Vibes" music at Latham Park, the Friday Heritage Park "Afternoon Music in the Parks!" concerts, and the annual Make Music Day.

I interviewed, recruited, and coordinated over 100 musicians, folkloric dancers, and youth ensembles to perform at downtown venues, parks, storefronts, the library, and Old Town Hall. Managing and promoting these concerts was an exhausting labor of love that was taken over by Stamford Downtown and eventually eliminated.

Fortunately, we can count on one North Stamford venue that kept the live music tradition going strong. The Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens



has been hosting its Summer Concert Series (also known as "Music @ the Bartlett" or "Summer Music Sundays") since 2011. They offer a diverse lineup of bands performing on the Great Lawn on Sundays from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. in an open-air garden setting. Residents bring lawn chairs, blankets, and picnic treats as they celebrate the rhythm of life under the stars.

The population of Stamford has increased by 33 percent since we first moved here, making it the second-largest city in the state, behind Bridgeport, and surpassing both Hartford

and New Haven. The inevitable development has brought growing crowds and traffic, appealing to a different generation.

For us, it's about the tranquility and beauty of North Stamford. I found my roots among the pine, maple, and birch trees. We remain in awe of the foxes, birds, deer, and other wildlife roaming in our yard. Most of our neighbors have moved away, but three original families remain, reminiscing about the early years and being grateful for the enduring friendships that have made this place our home. 🦊



Way Back When

By Bob Callahan

*A Nostalgic Stroll Through the
Not-so-depressed 1930s Depression*

An Evening at Playland, N.Y.



PLAYLAND, often called Rye Playland and also known as Playland Amusement Park, is an amusement park located in Rye, along the Long Island Sound. This 280-acre park was built in 1928. A point of interest: Rye is in Westchester County and was founded as the town of Peningo Neck in the 1600s after being purchased in parcels from the Siwanoy Indians.

I would often go there on a Friday evening to have some fun on the rides and watch the Friday night fireworks over the Long Island Sound. I was also hoping to find the love-of-my-life there, someone feeling too scared to go on a ride by herself. No such luck!

Frank Darling, a veteran park manager with experience at Coney Island and the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, was hired to

design and run the new park called Playland. The well-known NYC architectural firm Walker & Gillette and landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke were commissioned to produce a comprehensive design of both buildings and grounds, making Playland the first planned amusement park in the country.

Construction commenced in September 1927, and was completed in six months. The park began operation on May 26, 1928. Rides that were operating on Playland's opening day included the Grand Carousel, Derby Racers, The "Original" Whip, and the Dragon Coaster. The Airplane Coaster was added in 1928 while the Casino opened in 1929.

Playland also sold the most delicious salt water taffy. Little gems wrapped in



a white wrapper and twisted at both ends. It was similar to the taffy sold at Jones Beach and Coney Island in Brooklyn. That plus the cotton candy was usually my light supper on that day. How nutritious!

The rides we loved were the Grand Carousel, Derby Racers, and the Dragon Coaster. When you were on the Dragon Coaster the car would climb up a steel incline and enter the Dragon's mouth. Pretty scary. But the Airplane Coaster was a little too adventurous for us. That one closed in 1957 having been deemed too dangerous.

In 1966, a major fire at the amusement park claimed some of Rye Playland's all-time classic attractions, including the original Bumper Car ride and the "Magic Carpet" Funhouse.

Playland was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1987. At the time, it was the United States' only Art Deco amusement park. Playland also had an indoor skating rink. The New York Rangers used to practice there. Now the hockey team from nearby Manhattanville College plays its home games there.

The adjacent beach was a delightful place to take off one's shoes and just wade through the water. The pool next to the beach was really big. I never went swimming in it but it was fun to people-watch.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy claimed parts of Playland's boardwalk. It was flooded and there was substantial damage to the Ice Casino and scattered debris throughout the park.

But back in the 1940s it was a great place to spend a Friday or Saturday night with friends. And yes, the taffy and cotton candy supper gave me strange dreams that night.



Abject Men of the Dunghill

by Mark Diamond

GARTH BEVAN SOLD CADILLACS. He specialized in CT5s and his trademark was a white tie. “Talk to the guy in the white tie, he’ll make you a good deal.”

CT5 is the Cadillac of Cadillacs. It took Garth two years to win the model franchise. He had to promise the owner of the dealership a percentage on each sale but the prestige alone was worth it. Garth once sold a CT5-V with the 6.2-liter V8 in Coastal Blue with aniline seats and super cruise for \$120,000. That’s a lot, but the buyer took title to a beautiful beast, one not seen on a Merritt Parkway filled with Teslas and Kias and Porsches but no Cadillacs.

“Look at these people who come in,” he said to me over breakfast at the diner a few months ago. By the way, I’m Al Buttermilk. Garth and I worked together at Alden Ford a few years ago. My real name is Allan Baternilch but I changed it to Buttermilk because Buttermilk is more memorable than Baternilch, don’t you think?

“They’re not special,” he complained. “A guy came in two days ago without socks. He said he was a bond salesman, he sold government bonds. I was trying to sell him a car and he was trying to sell me a bond. Can you imagine the nerve?” Garth’s hand was shaking a little when he lifted his coffee.

“But if anyone was special in that situation, it was me,” Garth went on. “I had something he wanted and he was trying to sell me something I would shit a pineapple before I bought. So I just kept talking, talking, talking. Finally he gave up and stopped trying to sell me a bond and I sold him a car.”

“Which means what?” I asked. Garth was known to tell a story without a point.

“That I’m a better salesman than he

was. Even though he had all kinds of money to spend, he wound up giving it all to me. And you know why?” Garth wasn’t interested in an answer. “Because I convinced him that what I was offering would make him feel like a million dollars and you can’t feel like a million dollars driving in a million dollars and you can’t screw in the back seat of cash.”

I always found Garth amusing. He had a cocky way of speaking. “Out of curiosity,” I asked him, “when was the last time you screwed in the back seat of a car?”

“Not the point.” The waitress brought our scrambled eggs and Canadian bacon. “It wasn’t on the menu but I brought you some hash browns,” she said, settling our plates.

“Who asked you?” he snarled while looking down at his plate, then up at her with a smile.

“Drop dead. And don’t forget to leave a big tip.”

Did you ever notice how the biggest talkers stop talking when they’re eating, like it was going to be their last meal. He was half way through his food before he said, without me asking, “My problem is that my wife likes money. I mean, so do I. But I can live without it. I can live without too much of it. I grew up in Baltimore, you know.”

“I know. Would you pass the pepper?” I didn’t want to reach over his plate to get it.

“Don’t get me wrong,” he went on. “My wife is great. She still looks reasonably good and she still talks like a schoolgirl in bed.”

“Is that what it takes?” I chuckled.

“Big deal. I know a guy who got married because the girl had just gotten a

personal injury award. I know another guy who married his wife because she had inverted nipples. I’m just saying, my wife likes money and so do I, so I need a way to make more money.”

“Why don’t you just sell more cars?” I suggested.

He shook his head. “You can only sell so many cars. Can I get a refill?” he asked the waitress as she walked by. She poured some. “And some extra creams?” She brought some. “The thing is, last night I couldn’t sleep. And I came up with a great idea in the middle of the night when I couldn’t sleep. By the way, how often do you get up at night to go to the bathroom?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” I said. “Twice maybe?”

He pursed his lips like he was whistling. “Whew, that much? Let me ask you something, do you know how many graves there are in this country?”

“Graves!?” I asked. “No, not off the top of my head. Why?”

“So there are fifteen million graves in the United States and over a hundred thousand cemeteries,” he said. “I checked it on Google. Other than florists, maybe, once someone is in the ground, no one hits the audience.” He paused for a sip of coffee.

“Now let me ask you this. How many people do you know visit their relatives’ graves?”

“Not many.”

“Exactly. Not even their parents or dead spouses. Well, maybe people visit dead spouses more than parents. And maybe not, it doesn’t matter. My idea is this. I think that if it wasn’t such a pain in the ass and so time consuming, a lot more people would visit their loved ones more often than they do now. So my idea is this. I offer to go to the cemetery with a video camera and a laptop and do a live feed for them, like they’re right there. I’ll call it “Have Grave, Will Travel” or something like that. Not that. But something like it.

“They can pay their respects for five or ten minutes, that’s plenty. They can check to make sure the cemetery people are keeping everything hunky dory. They can say whatever they want to the deceased and we’ll broadcast it live right there at the grave. We’ll do everything in real time. It will be just like they

were there, except they didn’t have to sit in traffic.”

Garth was on a roll.

“And we can provide packs.” In sales lingo, a pack is some kind of add-on that you can charge extra money for, like all-weather mats or an engine warmer.

“Let’s say the customer is Jewish. We can show a hand putting a rock on the headstone. Let’s say they’re Christian. We can show a hand gently laying a bunch of flowers on the ground. If it’s some other religion, we can do whatever the hell it is they do.”

It came to me that he wasn’t kidding around. Garth really thought this would be a good business and I knew from my past with him that once he had the bit in his mouth, there was no stopping him. Still I asked, “If it’s such a good idea, how come nobody has done it already?”

“They said that about radial tires. So what do you think?” He wasn’t interested in an answer. “I’ve already set up a business line of credit with Chase. The initial outlay won’t be much. I already have a car. The trick is to sign up as many people for the same cemetery around the same time of day so I don’t have to go running from grave to grave. But there’s scheduling software they sell that helps with that. If I charge a hundred bucks and get only ten people a day, that’s not bad! And if it grows, AS it grows, I can hire college kids to go out and hit multiple sites every day.” I wondered, “Will the cemeteries let you do it?”

“Yes. I checked into that. Cemeteries use a standard contract from their trade group for the services they provide and it doesn’t forbid relatives from taking photos, so long as it’s done in a respectful manner. That’s the language they use, ‘respectful manner.’ I even hired a lawyer who drafted a permission that my customers can sign and send back to me to show the cemetery people I have permission in case they cause a problem. And can you imagine the kind of free press coverage we’ll get from something like this. I even have a motto. ‘Pay Your Respects From The Comfort Of Your Couch.’”

I thought he was trying to suck me into a bad idea and ask me for money.

“I don’t know, Garth. It’s a touchy area, death. It may be a good idea but it may be a terrible idea.”

Continued on page 16

Abject Men of the Dunghill

Continued from page 17



1930 Cadillac V16

Garth wived his hands. "Wait, I saved the best for last. I already spoke to ten cemeteries on Long Island by the airport and they agreed to let me run my business for a small percentage of the take. Even though I don't need their permission, but I agreed to do it to avoid problems later on."

"They said you could do it?" I said. "Wow, I'm surprised."

"I'm not," he smiled. "I have confidence that it's a great idea. I'm going back right after breakfast today and tell them I quit. I would bet my life this idea will make money."

We finished breakfast and I wished him luck outside the diner. Driving back to work, I was thinking what a character Garth was. But I knew him to be a real good salesman and had heard dumber ideas in my time. Not much dumber. But who knew.

It was a few months before I saw him again. I was sitting in the same diner and saw Garth pull up and park. Although I hadn't thought of it since the last time I saw him, I was surprised at how anxious I was to hear what had happened. Then of course I was kicking myself for not getting in on the ground floor even though I didn't know what happened. Garth spotted me when he walked in and came over to my table.

"Want company?"

"Absolutely, sit down, sit down."

I called the waitress over. "What do you want, I already ordered."

"Eggs, bacon and hash browns?" she asked.

"Leave off the hash browns," he said.

"Screw you. And you didn't leave a big enough tip last time."

"How about coffee?" he called after her as she walked away.

"I'll be right back."

"So Garth, I got to tell you. I'm real curious about what happened. Did you quit?"

He nodded, "I did."

"No kidding? Wow. You know, I thought more and more about it. It's a stupid enough idea to work. It's clever. And you're right, it's potentially a huge audience."

Garth shook his head. "It's true. I'm glad you came around."

"So tell me, how is it going?"

Garth stirred some sugar into the coffee that the waitress had brought over. "First of all, thanks for the encouragement, Al. It made a big difference."

"You're welcome," I said. "So tell me?"

"So I decided not to do it after all."

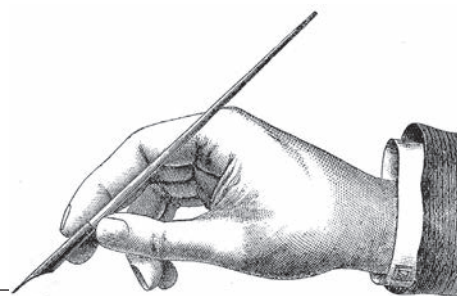
I couldn't believe it. "What," I nearly shouted. "It's a great idea. You'll make millions. Why the hell didn't you do it!"

Garth nodded vigorously. "I decided fuck it, I'll just sell more cars." 📱

Mayoral Forum

THE NORTH STAMFORD ASSOCIATION held its Candidates for Mayor forum on October 15, before a full house at the Long Ridge Firehouse. Democratic Mayor Caroline Simmons and Republican mayoral candidate Nicola Tarzia answered questions about their backgrounds and goals. The forum was one in a series of forums that the NSA holds each year for members only. Past forums include the state of real estate in North Stamford, a meeting with the Stamford Superintendent of Public Schools, the status of construction on the roads in North Stamford, and police officials discussing community safety and security concerns. 📱





Stamford Museum

Letters TO THE *Editor*

To the Editor,

The Stamford Museum & Nature Center has dedicated The Lynn & Stephen Cohen Gallery in recognition of the couple's incredible generosity as founding investors in our Campaign for Future Generations. The Stamford Museum & Nature Center is dedicated to preserving and promoting art and popular culture, the natural and agricultural sciences, astronomy, and history since 1936.

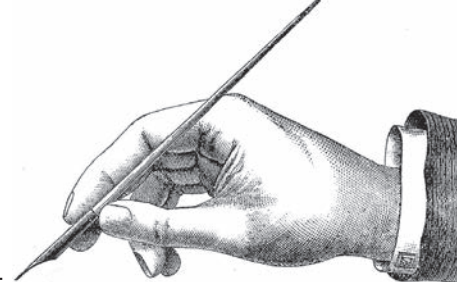
For more than two decades, Lynn Villency Cohen, the museum's longest-serving board member, has been a visionary in advancing our mission including chairing the Exhibitions & Collections Committee,

which ensures the care of our permanent collection of over 20,000 objects. The Cohens' philanthropy was instrumental in making our new Astronomy Center a reality, which brings our astronomy and planetarium programs together under one roof. The new 11,000-square-foot Astronomy Center will open in November. Lynn and Stephen lead by example, inspiring others to see the power of philanthropy in action. We invite great families, corporations and leaders to follow their example by investing in our Campaign for Future Generations and in the SM&NC's enduring success as a statewide treasure.

Melissa Mulrooney



←
Photo by Michael Callahan



To the Editor:

Stamford History Center

The Stamford History Center buzzed with warmth and community spirit on May 8th as it proudly honored the Cingari family, founders of Cingari Family Markets. Stamford History Center, a cherished institution dedicated to preserving and celebrating Stamford's rich past, celebrated the contributions of the Cingari family at the Waters Edge at Giovanni's in Stamford. Attendees included members of the Cingari family, local dignitaries, and history enthusiasts. Board member Rick Petersen kicked off the night decked out in colonial costume as General Putnam. Friends of History sponsors included Murace Plumbing and First County Bank.

Emily Derr



To the Editor:

Dress To Be Seen

Aren't we lucky to live in such a beautiful area? As soon as fall is in the air, we take to the outdoors walking, running, and biking without a second thought. We all expect to come home safely, but are we taking the rights steps to ensure that?

Before you head out, take a moment in front of the mirror. If you're wearing something bright and reflective, great. But if your outfit leans more toward "Men In Black," head back to your closet and choose brighter, more noticeable clothing. Being visible to drivers is crucial. You'd be surprised how many people dress in dark colors or even camouflage. In areas like North Stamford, where trees create heavy shadows, it can be incredibly difficult for drivers to see pedestrians or bicycles.

I know this all too well. Years ago, I had a collision with a cyclist. I was driving slowly, turning onto a side street, and never saw him coming downhill. He was wearing a dark outfit and the shadowy contrast completely concealed him.

Please don't let this happen to you. Dress to be seen, stay safe, and enjoy the outdoors responsibly.

Joseph Bilotti

Letters TO THE Editor

**villa
maria
school**

To the Editor,

For over 50 years, the Villa Maria School has been home to a community of students who have struggled in traditional school settings. Villa is designed to be a small, understanding and safe place where students are accepted and challenged.

Our teachers are dedicated to helping our students realize their potential by encouraging meaningful relationships and promoting lifelong learning through skill development. Our students come to Villa for support with reading and writing, math, language, social skills, and executive functioning.

The Villa model provides skills remediation in small classes (an average 4:1 ratio) where students with similar academic and social-emotional goals are grouped. Key to each student's development is the focus on assessment-based remediation, a skill-based curriculum, an expert faculty, an emphasis on social skills and social-emotional development, and a supportive learning community.

Please visit our website at villamariaschool.org to learn more. Better yet, come visit!

Skye Gillespie

Answers

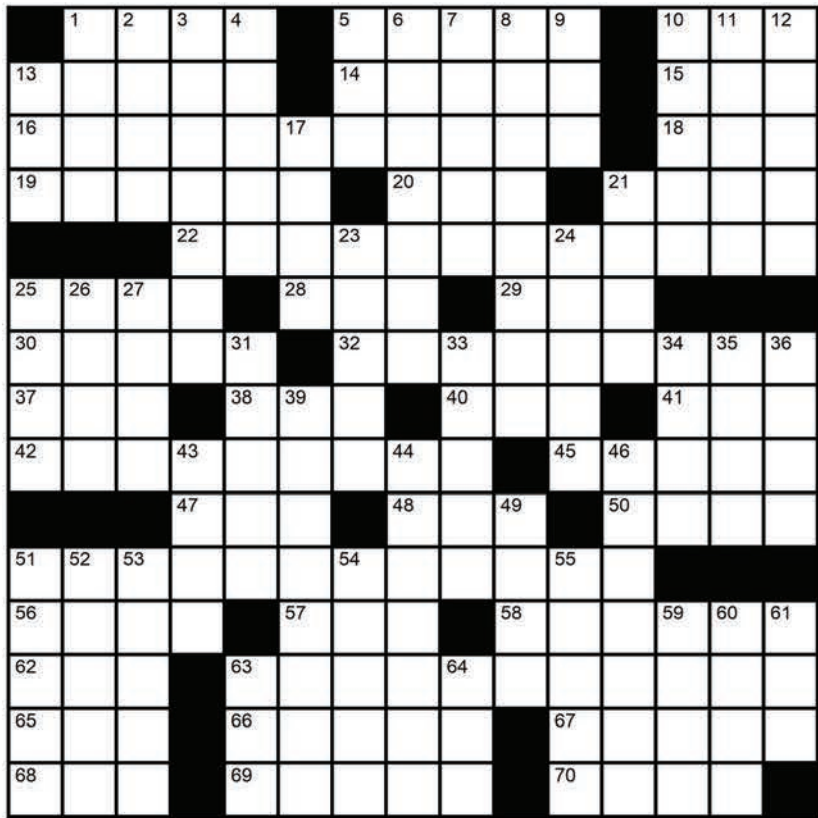
Starring Stamford on page 22

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Starring Stamford

ACROSS

1. Ramp cousin
5. Bookworm gatherings
10. Good name for a slow cooker?
13. Common landscaping element
14. God of Islam
15. Dance style
16. Coming attraction at Stamford's
22-Across
18. Egyptian royal symbol
19. "I have it so hard!"
20. First lady?
21. Museo holdings
22. Stamford destination found on
51-Across
25. Kind of glow
28. Cinnabar, for example
29. Hamilton's prov.
30. Massage target
32. They know a lot!
37. Mont Blanc, e.g.
38. Swift tour section
40. Wildebeest
41. Black or Red body
42. Puzzled or solved, for example
45. Bonus, metaphorically
47. They're between options
48. Red stick letters, in cartoons
50. Overnight ____
51. Road where you find Stamford's
22-Across
56. "Magnum, P.I." setting
57. Spike of film
58. Like family lore, typically
62. Sixers legend, to fans
63. Coming attraction at Stamford's
22-Across
65. In the past
66. New Jersey athlete
67. Battery units
68. Milky material?
69. Lock
70. Coder's "if" alternative



Puzzle by Dave Murchie

DOWN

1. Timber wolf
2. Station on the Trans-Canada Highway
3. Never-ending
4. "Instant" result of a Lennon song
5. JFK overseer
6. Editor, in effect
7. "____ Lucy"
8. 1933 Saint-Gaudens double eagle, for example
9. Short, in a way
10. Ignite
11. Sample
12. Footwear part
13. Take off, slangily
17. Nix
21. Not for
23. Dense, in a sense
24. "I'm so bored" feeling
25. "Yesterday!"
26. Kareem's alma mater
27. Emulates Snoop
31. Dish variety
33. Bond, for one
34. Indian home
35. Word on a wheat back
36. Hangs in the middle
39. StubHub user, often
43. Blocks in woks
44. First bishop of Paris
46. Restrain
49. Wrongdoing
51. Pops
52. Hold stuff
53. Sarcastic "Super!"
54. Get lost?
55. Do option
59. Olive, and others
60. Certain string
61. Insta chats
63. Summer setting in SF
64. High rollers from Chicago and NYC?

Crossword Puzzle answers on page 20

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the association is to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of life in North Stamford, identified as all areas north of the Merritt Parkway and within the limits of the City of Stamford. The mission of the Association shall include, but not be limited to:

~ Seeking to ensure a fair share of city services commensurate with the taxes paid for North Stamford;

~ Protecting the integrity and seeking to ensure the appropriateness of land use regulations and decisions, including but not limited to the regulations and decisions of the Planning, Zoning, Zoning Appeals, and Environmental Protection Boards of the City of Stamford;

~ Encouraging the enhancement of the quality and availability of educational opportunities in North Stamford;

~ Promoting communication among the residents of North Stamford;

~ Maintaining the natural beauty of North Stamford, and;

~ Advocating the need to preserve, protect and defend the natural resources and environment within North Stamford and its surrounding communities.

NSA Membership

Join your neighbors who are already working to help the community. Please complete the membership form and mail it to us with a check.

If you would like more information, phone us at 203.329.2498 or email us at Info@northstamfordassoc.org

Please send your Letters to the Editor to:

NSA
P.O. Box 16830
Stamford, CT 06905
www.northstamfordassoc.org
or
Mark Diamond at
markd53@hotmail.com

NSA Membership — Year 2025 North Stamford Association Membership Dues

Please complete this form and mail it to:
P.O. Box 16830, Stamford, CT 06905
or join/renew online at northstamfordassoc.org

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____
Email _____



Membership per Household
Gifts ☐ \$ 25
Sponsor ☐ \$ 50
Patron ☐ \$125
Benefactor ☐ \$125+