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That's the way it was...And I liked it like that

When I moved to Peaks Island in 1971:
There was no library.
There was no day care center.
There was no pavement on the backshore road.
There was no police force.
There was no high speed ambulance boat.
There was no health center.

When I moved to Peaks Island in 1971:
It was a cheap place to live.
It had a beautiful natural environment.
It had a nice, economically diverse community comprised of interesting, private, but friendly people who didn't live here because there were city services, but because they could live their lives as they so chose and nobody bothered them or cared.

For the life of me, I can't understand why anyone would move to an island off the coast of Maine and expect to receive the same services they would receive if they moved to a city.

When I moved to Peaks Island in 1971:
I didn't want to change it.
I didn't think I could make it a better place to live.
I didn't feel a compulsion to

Portland Area Network for Sustainability

How should we move toward a sustainable Maine? What kinds of life style changes and public policies are necessary in order to protect the natural environment, satisfy basic needs and promote equity for the long term future? What are the social and psychological barriers that prevent people from transforming AWARENESS of issues into ACTIONS?

These are some of the questions considered recently by a small group of Portland residents trying to establish the Sustainability Network, an outgrowth of a spring conference sponsored by the Muskie Institute of USM and the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

The purpose of the Network is to help people concerned with sustainability to contact one another, to learn more about problems and possible solutions, and to organize projects collaboratively. The group is interested in self education and outreach activities. Everyone is welcome. Any one who wishes to attend a meeting should call Cynthia Cole at 766-5550, Terry Cline at 766-5106, or Arthur Gladstone at 774-9186.

If there is sufficient interest among Peaks Islanders, perhaps we should start our own group here...or join with the group wishing to revitalize Battery Steele as a community project.

Cynthia Cole

Town Meeting-Power to the People

I attended my first town meeting at about six years of age, or at least that's the first one I remember. I sat next to my mother; she kept her finger on the line item, so I could follow the discussion.

Police Salaries, $25,000 up from $20,000 last year (includes raises and overtime). All in favor? Opposed?

Articles often went through without much discussion. If a town department (like the DPW, the School, the Fire Dept) had done their homework, they would make a strong case for their budget in the introductory remarks for that section of the meeting warrant. We'd look over the line items (What's that $3000 for training, anyway?) and ask our questions.

I remember heart-in-mouth pride as my mother stood, notes folded in her hand, still wearing her white nurses shoes and speaking in favor of funding for our town clinic.

I remember the sense of awe as the meeting rose (all in favor?), the satisfaction when only one or two stood in opposition (All opposed?). When we sat she squeezed my arm and smiled, and Judy Driscoll's mother winked at us.

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Peaks Island Town Meeting—Power to the People

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It felt like real democracy, plain and clear.

By the time I reached high school age, the meeting overflowed into the hall, where citizens watched via closed-circuit T.V. Even so, Joe Walsh (our moderator), seemed to know everyone by name.

The big discussions came when we were being asked to approve large sums of money. Then, you might see a man's neck swell red around his collar, a woman frown and fold her arms, and feel beads of sweat across your lip. Joe Walsh delivered his best jokes, got the biggest (most welcome) laughter at times like these, gently keeping things rolling along.

Controversy in our community was never long lasting—we all got our say, cast our vote, and fair is fair. We were following the advice of our founding fathers, and keeping the power with the people. Arguments and decisions were made out in public, not behind closed doors.

Here on Peaks Island, I was speaking with a neighbor the other day. She was expressing doubts about Islanders' ability to run our own town. "We could vote on the budget," I said, "and decide if we wanted to take our money out of street lights and put it into the child development center..."

"Oh, do you really think we would? Jenny you're dreaming, you're so idealistic."

The conversation implied that we would collectively make rotten decisions. Well, maybe a real town meeting (where the community is entrusted with all our collective tax money, to spend as we see fit) wouldn't always go the way I personally would like to see it go; at least not on every line item. You always win some, and lose some. But I have confidence in the wisdom of my neighbors.

I like town meetings. They taught me to trust my neighbors (whatever the color of their collars) as partners in the management of our community. It's better, plain and simple, more democratic, than the government we have right now for Peaks Island. The Union group, by opposing the referendum effort, is electing to have City officials 'take care of' Peaks Island for us. The Union position is "we don't want to bring the possibility of self-government before Island voters, either in a referendum question, or ultimately in a town meeting. We put our faith in the City."

As a somewhat seasoned veteran of Town Meetings in several communities now, I put my faith in the people who live here.

Jenny Yasi

Town Meeting—Power to the People

A Friend Remembered

Roy Keller of Peaks Island died of AIDS Monday night, July 19 surrounded by family and friends. He is remembered for his vitality, perseverance to know the truth about himself and his world, his contagious sense of humor, and especially his strong love for his family and friends. He did not want for his obituary to say he had died of complications after a long illness, but was insistent it be clear that AIDS was what took him from this world. During these past two years, his life was dedicated to AIDS education...and so his death will be as well. He was a member of the Board of Directors for the Portland AIDS Project.

Submitted by Janet Anderson

Remember When?

Too bad those folks who are whining about the supposed lack of services on Peaks weren't here 25 years ago when our roads were nearly impassable by car and our dump was an open pit infested with rats. We had no health center, no ambulance, no library, no community room, no child care center, no senior citizens center. Our public safety officers were deputized firemen. We traveled in dirty, unheated ferries to a derelict terminal and an Old Port area that consisted largely of boarded-up buildings and dirty, unfit streets.

Due to the efforts of many islanders working closely with city officials progress has come to Peaks. And, yes, that progress has been funded, in part, by increased taxes. We have a quality of life here that is the envy of many mainland communities. So let's stop complaining and start enjoying the fruits of what so many have worked so hard to achieve.

Kim Erico MacIsaac

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Want to hash it out?

We hope The Peaks Island Opinion has enough meat in it to stir up some talk, but we don't want to get in the last word. That's your job. And just to make it easier (and more fun), we're setting up a monthly rap session which will make room for further points of view on topics presented through this journal.

This almost intellectual/socially facilitated meeting will leave room for good conversation, differences of opinion, persuasive arguments, what-ifs, inuendo, laughter, drinking a beer, eating popcorn, sipping tea. Our first "Opinion Roundtable" will happen Monday, Aug. 23, 7pm at Jones' Landing Restaurant. Childcare will be available at Jenny's Yasi's house- call 766-2604 in advance if possible, to set that up.

The roundtable topic aligns with the Opinion's (this month, our topic, at least in theory. Is Cost of Island Life, Taxes and services), plus whatever else stirs up conversation. Come just to listen, to get the last word, or at least to get a word in edgewise!

Make friends, influence people, and have an interesting night out. For more info, call 766-2604 or 766-5084.

Jenny Yasi

Next Deadline! September 1

Theme: "Life on Peaks Island in the Year 2000," but we'll print your cartoons, articles, poems, letters, on any topic.

News Bites

Officer Mike Barter, a 14 year veteran of the Peaks Island Fire Department, married Ann Marie Motta on July 31. Congratulations to Mike and Ann Marie.

Portland Fire Chief Joseph Thomas reports that the new emergency medical boat is in the water. Although the bright red lobster boat style vessel has not yet been officially named and christened, it has already made several runs to the island. The ambulance boat can make the run from the west side of State Pier to Peaks Island in 9 to 13 minutes, which is a significant improvement over the Fire Boat time of 20 minutes.

The Peaks Island Research Committee (PIRC) continues to try to negotiate a debate with representatives from the Union Party. So far, no agreement has been reached on a date and time.

Back Issues of the Opinion are at the Peaks Island Library until the end of summer, when they must be removed due to lack of space. Look them over now or maybe never. The themes of the issues were:

#1. Sell government or Union!
#2. Emergency Services
#3. Our Children (with Special Section—Glimpses of the Legislative Hearings)
#4. Our Natural Environment

There have been many reports of deer damage to island gardens this year. Mike Johnston reports deer damage to his garden on Island Avenue (downfront).

The Peaks Island lead screening tests revealed that 27% of the children tested had elevated levels. Ten percent of these elevated levels may be false positives.

That's the way it was... And I liked it like that

Kathy Skerl Caron

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convince my neighbors that I knew more about island living than they did.

I took responsibility for my own life and accepted the fact that there wasn't a policeman on every corner, that the hospital wasn't down the block, and that if anything happened to me I'd have to deal with it myself.

When I moved to Peaks Island in 1971:

It was an affordable community with few city services.

It had a diverse community that was one of the last strongholds of the rugged individual and the eccentric character.

That's the way it was... and I liked it like that.

Kathy Skerl Caron
Bulletin Board


AA Meetings - Open: 6:15 pm Wednesday evenings, Brackett Memorial Church.

A publication party celebrating the release of Annie O'Brien's third book this year [Who Belongs Here? An American Story (illustrated by Annie, written by M. Knight)] will happen at Books Etc., Friday August 27, 5-7 pm. Everyone is welcome!

Casco Bay Tumblers 5th Anniversary Klezmer Weekend Oy Vey! We've been together for FIVE years and you're invited Saturday, August 21 Tumblers at the Whaling Wall 7pm, free! Sunday August 22 Klezmer potluck and dance at the Fifth Maine...

Recipes

Rice Salad
1 cup uncooked wild rice
5 1/2 cups chicken stock or water
1 cup shelled pecans, walnuts, or sunflower seeds
1 cup raisins
grated rind of 1 large orange
1/4 cup chopped fresh mint, or dried to taste
4 scallions, thinly sliced
1/4 cup olive oil
1/3 cup fresh orange juice
fresh ground pepper
salt to taste (optional)

Cook rice in stock or water (approx. 35 minutes). When cooked, drain and rinse. Transfer cooked rice to a bowl, add remaining ingredients and toss. Adjust seasonings to taste. Refrigerate mixture for at least 2 hours. It gets better as the week goes on!

Calendar and Bulletin Board: $3.00 for up to 20 words. Bulletin Board includes things like rideshare, swap and barter, for sale, calendar. Sponsors contribute $15.00 (or more) for the issue in which their name appears. Thank you for your support.

Recycle this paper - Pass it on to a neighbor!