

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

DAVID J. WILLMOTT SR., EDITOR

## Democracy Becomes More Democratic

This past week, the Suffolk County Legislature caught the spirit of Independence Day. They voted to reduce, by half, the number of required signatures on referendum petitions.

Suffolk County is the only one that allows citizens to petition for a change in their government. Although Suffolk has had this mechanism since 1978, only one petition successfully made it through the maze.

Politicians deliberately attempted to thwart the citizens' right to petition their government by making the mechanism nearly impossible to use. The original law called for the petition process to be completed within one year. The time span allotted to each branch of government to challenge the petition totaled 440 days. Obviously, at any step the process could be slowed down and stopped.

Under the old law, petitioners had

to gather a minimum of 5% of the voters in each town who had voted in the previous gubernatorial election. The new law requires 2.5%, which amounts to about 12,500 signatures. This is still a daunting task, but possible. Petitioners usually try to gather at least 25% more than the law requires.

The old law required petitioners to indicate, by number, which election district they voted from. Most citizens are unaware of the number of their election district. We understand an amendment to the Levy bill will eliminate this requirement.

Citizens should have the right to petition their government when their elected legislators refuse to address issues. Suffolk is fortunate in having this mechanism. The changes that have been made are for the good of democracy.

The only person who can stop this

bill from becoming law is County Executive Robert Gaffney. He can veto the legislation, setting himself up as against democracy, and anti-citizen, which would not be wise in an election year. The measure passed the Legislature 16 to 0, with one abstention.

Knowing the Suffolk County Legis-

lature as we do, there is no assurance this bill would have the same support if Gaffney vetoes it. As a concerned citizen, you should contact your legislator and thank them for voting in your favor. Write or call County Executive Gaffney and encourage him to sign the bill into law.

And why not?

## Your Questions Please

Suffolk Life Newspapers publishes an extensive candidates' questionnaire in October in order to succinctly provide the public with the views of those seeking office. We are in the process of compiling these questionnaires.

Every year after we have published the questionnaires, we hear from voters and candidates who wonder why we did not include a question on an issue they consider important. Frankly, covering the county and the individual 10 towns is a huge job and some issues do get overlooked.

To avoid skipping over an issue this year, we invite you to submit questions about issues you would like to

know the candidates' positions on.

The candidates who will be answering this year's questionnaires are those running for town supervisor, town councilman, county executive and county legislator.

Please indicate whether your question pertains to a county or town issue. If it is a town issue, please indicate which town. If you can give us a brief background on the issue, it will help us include your questions in our "yes" or "no" format.

The deadline for questions is Thursday, July 15.

This is your opportunity to speak out.

And why not?

## Establish a Hiring Hall

Last Tuesday, the Suffolk County Legislature voted down Joseph Caracappa's bill that would have made criminals out of employers for stopping to hire help from the side of the road.

Immigrants, mostly Latinos, for the last couple of years have gathered on Horse Block Road, in Farmingville, looking for day jobs. Contractors in need of help, stop and hire these people. Homeowners in the area have loudly protested. They see the values of their homes going down. Some people fear for their health and safety. They fear the unknown.

The congestion and haphazard hiring practices are of legitimate concern. We believe Caracappa took the wrong approach. Suffolk Life has editorialized before and we again suggest that the county establish a centralized hiring hall where contractors

can engage workers — a location that is convenient yet removed from the residential communities.

If the hall were properly run, workers could be certified as having the proper documentation. Contractors could be checked to see that they have the proper licenses and meet insurance requirements. A hiring hall would take the workers off the streets, and yet allow them to find employment. Their rights would be protected by pre-qualifying the contractors.

The problems of day workers will not go away until government accepts its responsibility in dealing with that issue directly. Suffolk County has a department of labor. That organization should have the resources to deal with this situation. The county executive must tell the labor bureau to act now and not wait for another year to go by.

And why not?



## Pay Off the Debt

What would you do? You have invested too much in your home. The mortgage payments are killing you. You are up to your limit on your credit cards. You have borrowed every penny you can. You have almost nothing left for food, clothing or the other necessities of life after you pay your monthly bills. You are taxed to the limit.

Then a long-forgotten aunt passes away. She leaves you a sizable inheritance. There is enough money to eliminate your debt. You have always wanted a new boat. The house could use new furniture. Your kids are going to a state school and you would prefer to see them in an Ivy League college. Do you pay off your debt or do you fund the luxuries you cannot afford?

Most people would do the prudent and logical thing. They would pay off the debt that is choking them. They would improve their quality of life by using the monies they were paying in interest to buy the luxuries.

Unfortunately, our governmental leaders do not think or rationalize like we common folks do. Our federal, state and county governments are awash in cash. They also are awash in debt. Money was borrowed to keep the government going during hard times or

to fund long-term capital projects. The economy has been on a roll and is producing record-breaking tax revenues, much higher than had been anticipated.

Good times do not go on forever. The pendulum swings and we may find ourselves in a severe recession. Not only will the surplus disappear, but we will not have enough money to fund the government or to pay all the interest on all the debt. This will lead our politicians to cry that they must raise taxes.

As history has taught us, this is counter-productive. When government takes more money out of circulation it starves the golden goose that fed it. This causes cutbacks. Expansion halts. Workers are laid off. Profits dwindle and more demands are put on government for necessities.

Today's economy presents wonderful opportunities. It also can be a trap that there may be no way out of if imprudently handled.

Instead of coming up with new ways to spend money, prudent politicians should develop plans to run the government lean and mean and use any surplus to pay-down our staggering debt as fast as possible.

And why not?

# WILLMOTTS & WHY NOTS

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## Homebound for College

In the next few months, thousands of young people will head off to college. Some will go to far flung and exotic places to acquire an education. They will spend \$10,000 to \$15,000 on room and board, expensive airfare and long automobile trips; and then there is the cost of tuition. Many will see their parents go into hock, mortgaging their homes or taking out home equity loans to finance their children's education. Many of these students will take out student loans that will have to be paid back when they get out of school. Many students who take this route face indebtedness for more than 10 years and still are not free of this yoke.

RT Many first year students who go off to college do so without firm convictions or knowledge of what they want to be. It is just the idea of getting away and spreading their own wings that appeals to them. Without support and supervision they flounder. They party until they drop or are dropped out. They return home with no degree or education, but they still have debt.

The smart kids stay right here on Long Island and pursue a career at a local college or university. Long Island has many excellent institutions of higher

learning offering myriad specialties: from computers, medicine and aviation to curricula that meet almost every need. There is no need to leave Long Island to be educated, or leave home and the support of family and friends.

Suffolk County Community College (SCCC), with its three conveniently located campuses, offers students an ideal opportunity to obtain a degree at a fraction of the cost of an off-island school. Tuition currently runs about \$2,200 for the entire year. A two-year program will lead to an associate's degree. If a student wants to pursue a bachelor's, most Long Island schools will accept 100% of the courses taken at SCCC.

Just take a look at SCCC's fall catalogue in the fold of today's paper. There are courses for everyone, whether you are pursuing a degree or just looking to increase your knowledge and proficiency in a particular area. At SCCC, you can fit your educational needs to your own schedule and available time.

Tuition, room and board and expens-

es in an out-of-area school can run from \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year. That is \$80,000 to \$100,000 for which someone has to pay. Whether it be mortgages on the homestead or direct loans by the student, it will have to be paid back.

If a student starts an education at SCCC, he or she can complete the first two years for an investment of less than \$5,000. With a transfer to a four-year

school, the balance of a bachelor's can be accomplished in another two years for \$10,000 to \$20,000 by staying here on Long Island.

Being home bound for college offers many advantages over going away. Students have the support of their families, free room and board and an atmosphere to learn in. But, of greater importance, students can take the time to mature and develop a better sense of self worth. Students should value that over beer blasts and wild parties.

And why not?



## A Monument to Mankind

On July 20, Americans will celebrate man's landing on the moon. Not only did men land on the moon, but they did it with a craft made here on Long Island — the result of the efforts of Nassau and Suffolk County residents.

There are those who would say World War II was won by Grumman. It was a home-bred engineering and manufacturing company that grew up in our backyards. During the war, Grumman turned out more than 500 fighter planes a month. Those planes were the backbone of the United States Navy's defense. They were built not only by men, but by women who threw off their smocks, abandoned their kitchens and went to work full time to help this country be victorious in its fight for freedom.

Grumman went from being a prime military supplier to being instrumental in our quest to explore space. The Grumman team designed the lunar module. Field tested in Calverton, it was the first object to land on the moon. In effect, a Long Island product was the first contact the world had with the moon.

Few things excited America more than our exploration into space. We well remember the lift off, the voyage and the countdown to the landing. Everybody was glued to their television sets, and a roar of appreciation went up around the country upon the successful landing. We had done what no other country had achieved.

Grumman was absorbed by Northrop in 1994. The properties have been, and are in the process of being, sold off. Most of the engineering and all of the manufacturing facilities have been moved off Long Island. Today, what

remains are the memories and the heritage of the Grumman era.

A group of dedicated ex-Grumman employees does not want this heritage to become just a memory. They have established a non-profit corporation whose mission is to build a living museum on the former Grumman property. This is a fitting tribute to the tens of thousands of men and women who were a direct part of the Grumman family, and the hundreds of thousands of people who were subcontractors and support personnel for the company's vast operations.

Almost every Long Islander has a family member, a friend or an associate who was directly connected to Grumman. The museum will be a living tribute to the history and to the efforts these people put forth for our armed forces and for our space exploration efforts.

The volunteers are reaching out to each of us who have been affected to assist in the creation of this museum. They are asking Long Islanders, particularly those who had any affiliation with Grumman, to buy a brick in the memorial walk. They are asking for a contribution of at least \$10. Already, several hundred bricks have been sold.

Depending upon Long Island's support, the memorial museum will be either a static or a living museum. It is believed the museum will attract visitors from around the United States who have an interest in aviation and history.

For your convenience there is a coupon on page two that you can use to make a contribution. We must remember Long Island's rich history.

And why not?

## Too Hot for Words

With Sunday's blistering heat the lights began to falter and the loss of electricity became apparent. During Sunday and Monday, thousands of residents across Long Island lost power, some for a few hours and others for more than a day.

We wondered and worried; would the intense heat across the Northeast cause a regional blackout such as we experienced back in the mid-sixties? During that crisis, the entire grid went down and the country was blacked out from Boston to Washington. We barely dodged that same bullet this time. The men and women of LIPA did a good job of responding to the crisis. Our hat is off to them.

On Tuesday morning, LIPA made an appeal to businesses and governments to close down early and send employees home. The utility hoped to shed part of the load and avoid a breakdown of the system. This was both good, bad and disastrous. Sending several thousand people home early gave them time off, but, unfortunately, produced a counter effect.

People who have home air conditioners usually turn them off when they leave the house. Some people have systems set on a timer to go on and off at a prescribed time. If the people who got out from work early went home and turned on their air conditioners their systems caused more of a drain at the worst time, when demand was at its highest.

One thing overlooked was that many businesses and most county offices have

their own backup generating systems that could have been called into play to help mitigate the record demand for electricity. One of the legislators pointed out the county was not called upon to turn on its generators. To compound the problem, the air conditioners and lights were left on when employees vacated the buildings so no energy was conserved.

Now that we have a break in the high temperatures, it is critical that LIPA surveys the island to determine who has generators; both big commercial installations and small home generators. LIPA could set up an incentive plan to have these generators turned on and run to reverse feed the electricity. A premium should be offered to those who can generate electricity to help LIPA overcome these infrequent shortages.

Many companies have just enough generating capacity to serve their own needs, but, at different times of the day, they could generate electricity that could be put into the system for the common good.

In the very near future, self generation of electricity will become the norm on Long Island as businesses adapt to using micro-generators, and homeowners are able to take advantage of the fuel cell technology. When this happens, there will be no need for new power plants or mass generation.

It is imperative that LIPA inventory the energy producing, private generating capabilities on the island and develop a plan to harness it before we have another calamity.

And why not?

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## Three Years and Still No Answer

On July 17, 1996, TWA Flight 800 exploded and went down south of Moriches. Two hundred and thirty lives were lost. Although three years have passed, we still do not definitively know what caused that horrendous accident.

The National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) theorizes an internal explosion, caused by a spark in the center fuel tank, was the reason. Credible questions have been raised about this theory and alternative theories have been offered. One such theory suggests the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile or missiles.

More than 1,000 people on Long Island, in different locations near the south shore, on land, sea, and in the air, reported similar sightings of a streak of light coming from the land toward the plane. They report having witnessed two explosions. The witnesses come from all walks of life; some had technical and scientific backgrounds, others were just casual observers. Depending upon their vantage point, their stories were different, but contained the same basic facts.

Theories were also advanced that the

plane may have been downed by friendly fire. At the time of the incident, commercial pilots spoke of their jets being locked on by fighter planes during routine maneuvers. What if one of these pilots made a mistake and pushed the wrong button? Did this happen to Flight 800?

A Middle Eastern terrorist group announced the day before the incident, a plane would be brought down in the United States. The CIA had this information, but discarded it as an idle threat. The Olympics were being held in Georgia and the focus was on the United States. The Clinton presidency was under intense attack and the president could not afford an embarrassing incident. Did the federal government try to cover up this accident?

At the time of the incident, Weeks Salvage Company, one of the largest marine salvage operations on the East Coast, had heavy equipment at the crash area. It had divers and cranes ready and was able to make a quick recovery.

American Telephone was in the process of laying an intercontinental line, and it, too, had deep sea equipment in the area, includ-

ing a robotic submarine. Both organizations stood by waiting for an order to assist, but none ever came.

Why did the government not use these private contractors? What did they have to fear from civilians getting to the scene of the accident first?

Another possible theory is that Flight 800 may have been brought down by an electronic magnetic pulse. Our Armed Forces were testing weapons in the area at the time of the Flight 800 incident. An electronic magnetic pulse is a "Star Wars" type of weapon that is intended to be used to stop ballistic missiles from entering our sovereign space. Did one of these weapons fire and inadvertently hit Flight 800? The military denies the possibility.

Many of us are left with the feeling we

cannot trust the government. It tells us what it wants us to know and expects us to accept its statements on blind trust. We have learned to be skeptical. The president himself taught us this bitter lesson.

Few of us have faith in the NTSB's findings on this issue, which have raised more questions than answers.

The things we do know: On the evening of July 17, 1996, there was an explosion, Trans World Airline Flight 800 blew up, and 230 people died needlessly.

These are the facts. Someone knows what happened. The American people, and the people of the world, have a right to the truth. Three years later, that truth is not self evident. We will continue to search for the answers.

And why not?



## Don't Rush to Build

The never-opened Shoreham nuclear power plant was originally conceived to be a 520-megawatt nuclear generating facility. LILCO's officials, however, claimed they had to make the facility produce 820 megawatts in order to meet Long Island's projected energy demands.

Shoreham was built and the ratepayers paid for it four different times. It never opened because of safety concerns, and never generated one kilowatt of commercially viable power. Long Island has not since experienced blackouts or brownouts because Shoreham was not in operation.

There is a power line that transmits electricity across the Long Island Sound. Most Long Islanders believe it is solely for the importation of electricity. This is not true. Eighty percent of the line's capacity is for the exportation of electricity to New England. LIPA is currently in negotiations to build an additional line. The expense of building it will be charged to Long Island ratepayers. Is the line for import or export? Who will benefit, LIPA customers or KeySpan, which owns LILCO's former generating capabilities?

This past week, LIPA Chairman Richard Kessel announced LIPA has put out requests for proposals for three to six 75 megawatt generating facilities to be located on or near LIPA properties scattered throughout Long Island. He claims this is in response to the record usage during the recent heat wave.

Before LIPA invests one dime, either by erecting generating facilities or contracting to buy from power producers, the utility must answer some very basic questions.

First, what is the capability of the self generating facilities on Long Island? Can private companies, who have backup generators and generating capabilities of their own, produce enough electricity to answer an unusual spike in demand?

Second, can the current line we own be freed up to import electricity to meet record demand?

Third, does it make economic sense to construct an additional line for the importation of electricity? Will this be more economical than building costly plants?

Fourth, would it not be more prudent to build stand-alone units to meet the demand at peaks, rather than a full 75 megawatt system?

Because of a news blackout the public has read little about the new technology for self-generation. This is a viable alternative. In 1998, Allied Signal manufactured 19,000 gas driven, self generating units that are being installed throughout the country. The cost of these units can be recovered in less than one year, making them a viable alternative to staying on the grid.

As word spreads, we can expect more and more businesses to invest in self generation, thereby reducing the LIPA load, during both off hours and peak demand. It is expected, with the turn of the century, Plug Power of Latham, New York, will begin to market home sized generating units that will reduce the cost of producing electricity to six or seven cents per kilowatt hour. Homeowners will abandon LIPA in huge numbers to realize these savings.

Self generation is not a pipe dream. Demonstration models have been produced, and major corporations have invested in the technology. It is not a question of if, but when this technology becomes readily available that the entire energy situation will change.

We must look to the future and not make the same mistakes made in the past based on fear. At the same time, we must walk a delicate line to ensure we have the energy available to meet today's demands. This requires critical and honest study.

We bought Shoreham because of fear, deception and lies. We cannot afford to make this mistake again. We urge LIPA to go slow and make sure it is on sound footing and avoid being sucked into another financial pit from which we will not be able to get out.

## Save the Runways

Last Tuesday, Steve Kirschenbaum, the chairman of the Grumman Museum Committee, made an impassioned plea during the Riverhead Town Board's week session to save the Grumman runways. "Don't throw away this valuable treasure that cannot be replicated," he said.

Kirschenbaum brought to the board's attention that Grumman is the largest airfield on Long Island. If you were to overlay Gabreski Airport in Westhampton with Grumman and its buffers, nothing could be built from Gabreski to the ocean, and nothing could be built to well north of Sunrise Highway.

Grumman has two runways, 10,000 feet and the other, 7,000 feet. Kirschenbaum researched the Grumman runways and even he was amazed to find out would cost over \$100 million for site preparation and concrete. This does not include the cost of the land both inside the fence and the buffers on the outside or the cost of the infrastructure.

The board was made aware of the tremendous economic impact possible if the runways are kept in existence. A fixed base operator could be brought to the airport who would not only pay rent but a percentage of the gross. The airport and its runways are ideally suited for companies refurbishing planes. The tradespeople in these fields are well paid and would boost the local economy.

The Riverhead Town Board recently inked a deal with a developer for the core of this site. It became apparent during the board meeting that definitive lines have not been established. A general agreement was reached, but it does not commit the town to specifics.

There are those on the town board who fear that if we keep the runways we may not be able to afford the up keep. The runways are still in excellent condition and are much too valuable an asset to give up, according to John Talmage, another spokesman in favor of keeping them.

Some of the neighbors close to Calverton, who built their homes while Grumman was in existence, fear that if the runways are kept, Grumman might become a general aviation airport with scheduled flights. Talmage and Kirschenbaum pointed out the town can put restrictions on the weight of the planes landing at Calverton thereby precluding national and international flights.

It was apparent the town board is over its head on this issue. Some members do not fully understand the magnitude of the airport, its potential and the impact it may have on the future of Riverhead.

There is much at stake here. The board should reserve judgment until after the general election in November.

And why not?

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In a sense, Mike Forbes' stunning announcement last week that he was changing his registration from Republican to Democrat, was a return home.

Forbes' parents and his uncles were staunch Democrats. They published the *News Review*, which was the Democrats' newspaper of record for the county, out of Riverhead. Forbes formed his own beliefs in college and pursued a career as a politician — as Republican and staunch Conservative.

When Forbes decided to run for Congress, he espoused strong beliefs in the Republican philosophy of government. He strongly supported the second amendment, and criticized the government for not enforcing current laws for allowing the criminal element to obtain weapons and escape punishment. He wanted to be an advocate of small business, eliminating regulations and freeing workers from having to join a union as a prerequisite for a job.

Forbes was pro-life. He abhorred the idea that a child's life could be taken while in its mother's womb at any stage. He professed to having strong family values.

Forbes signed the contract with America. He was a soldier in Newt Gingrich's army of Republicans who wanted to take control of Congress to rein in spending, downsize government and return it to the people.

Just this past week, one of his original supporters dropped a fund raising letter from Forbes off at my office. When he first ran for Congress, his original fund raising letter asked for a contribution of \$50. This one asked for a minimum of \$500 and he is not even up for reelection this year.

The letter that accompanied the appeal spoke of the wicked liberal Democrats using Hollywood money to help unseat Forbes as a Republican incumbent. It indicated that Tony Bullock was in the process of raising \$1 million to mount a campaign against him. Forbes also wrote of the ills of the liberal

## Home And No Place to Go

Democrats and the damage they are doing to this country.

As I cleaned off my desk on Friday, I reread the letter and thought to myself that the charges in this letter are veracious, and it appears that such an early start in next year's race for the First Congressional District could be a clear indication of a vicious campaign to come.

Saturday, when I heard the news that Forbes had changed enrollment, I found it almost impossible to believe. Sure, Forbes had made friends with labor, and taken an anti-gun position. This was a matter of conscience that he knew would cost him support and votes, but he was still a Republican and, up to that point, we believed, espoused most of the principles of the Republican party.

We have always been disappointed in politicians who change parties while holding office, particularly, if they do it midterm. When a candidate goes to the voters and says, "This is who I am, this is what I am all about," he asks for their support based on his beliefs and philosophies. When elected, he has a responsibility to carry out his platform. Changing his mind on an issue or two is understandable. In doing so, a candidate knows he will weaken his base of core support, but to abandon entirely what you stand for is not tolerable.

When Forbes made his announcement, he gave as a reason that the Republican party has been taken over by extremists. If by this he means it has been taken over by Republicans, he is probably right. The national Republican Party had moved far to the left on many social and economic issues; too far for many loyal Republicans.

The Democratic party has traditionally been a coalition of groups with extreme social agendas. If Forbes makes himself out

to be a purist, he will find it very difficult to survive in this environment.

Forbes had a promising future. He did himself, the party, and the country no favors when he led the aborted attempt to remove Newt Gingrich from his position of leadership. He proved himself disloyal, not only to the party, but to his mentor.

Forbes' latest move leaves him in no man's land. He will not have the trust of the Democrats, and he will face the disgust of the Republicans. This bodes poorly for the First Congressional District, as he can call on no one to respond to our needs.

Mike Forbes should resign and allow the election of a new congressman, who will represent the First Congressional District with firm beliefs.

And why not?



## What Is Wrong With the Tax Cut?

The Senate passed its version of a tax cut and the House did likewise. In the House, the Democrats almost unanimously voted against the bill, and President Clinton warned he will veto the bill.

What is wrong with giving back to the American people some of their own money? We currently are enjoying an unprecedented, vibrant economy. More dollars than were ever imagined are pouring into the Treasury. When this country was in a recession, the taxes were raised to meet the government's needs. No one liked to see them increased, but we had our obligations and responsibilities.

Now that they have been met, why not take the pressure off the American people, give them back some of their own money and let them spend or invest it as they individually see fit? The Democrats prefer to see the government keep the excess taxes and expand its role. On this one, the Republicans have the right idea for the right reasons.

One provision in the House bill totally eliminates the inheritance tax. Under the current law, any value in an estate more than \$650,000 is taxed by the federal government at 55%. The state adds 14%, bringing the total to 69%. The estate tax raises less than 1% of the annual revenue of the government. It costs the government 65 cents to collect every dollar. Eighty percent of the monies raised by the estate tax are on estates of \$2.5 million or less.

The state portion of the estate tax will expire in the year 2002. New York State's current law is forcing many valuable residents to leave the state, depriving it of the

dollars they would spend if they continued to live here. The very rich, those with estates valued at \$5 million or more, have traditionally used loopholes to escape taxation.

There has been a surge in the number of people who have given up their United States citizenship to avoid having their wealth wiped out by the government. Others have used various trust mechanisms that require assets to be prematurely put into trusts to avoid taxation.

Most of the estates worth less than \$5 million today have been generated by an individual's hard work, risk taking and prudent investment. All along the way these people have paid business and personal taxes at the highest rates. Why should their estate then be taxed again and confiscated?

The enormous federal estate tax must be paid in six months. This requires the families to liquidate most of their holdings. Businesses must be sold, farms disbanded, and homes and furnishings relinquished. Although people may be worth a lot of money on paper, few have the liquid assets to pay off the tax man.

The House tax reform bill will eliminate estate taxes gradually over the next ten years. The Senate bill will reduce the tax burden, but will leave it intact. We do not see how either the Republicans or Democrats can be opposed to the elimination of the inheritance tax. It is unfair, and produces very little, but it can create financial ruin for families.

Therefore, we say, "Eliminate the estate tax."

And why not?

## JFK, Jr., Remembered

The tragic death of JFK, Jr., brought back a swell of memories of his father. Both men, filled with so much promise, were tragically taken from us at the prime of their lives.

President Kennedy's loss was a personal one for me. When he was a senator from Massachusetts, I was a student in college. My law professor, Dr. Glennon, was a personal friend of Kennedy's and a huge supporter. Rarely a week went by that he did not make reference to the Senator. He said Kennedy was the country's best hope for an Irish Catholic president.

I met Kennedy by chance during a dedication over which he was presiding. A group of us, mostly vets, were at the Am-Vets drinking beer. Kennedy was being hosted in a catering room adjacent to the bar. On the way to the men's room, Kennedy spotted us and asked if he could join us. We spent a couple of hours talking. Each of us left that chance meeting promising him we would do everything we could, in our own way, to help him become president.

Before I was old enough to vote, I found myself as co-chairman of the Citi-

zens for Kennedy in Suffolk County. I virtually stopped working on my own business and put in 1,566 hours on his political campaign.

The night Kennedy was elected president, I felt incredibly proud. I followed almost everything he did, including the births of his daughter and son. The Kennedys were the idols of America. They were models of intelligence, grace and had the charisma we all desired. They made us feel good about being an American.

I cried when I heard the shocking news of President Kennedy's death. I, and the country, went into mourning.

My most vivid memory of JFK, Jr., was the stoic, young boy in a Chesterfield coat saluting his father as his casket passed by.

That young boy grew into a fine young man who had the potential of following in his father's footsteps. I am sorrowed by his death, but God works in strange ways.

I pray the media will give the Kennedys a break, by stopping their insensitive haunting, and give them time to grieve in private.

And why not?