COURTESY OF JEFFREY THOMAS

The Nobska Lighthouse wreath was damaged by strong winds.

Strong Winds Prompt Removal Of Wreath At Nobska Lighthouse Before Christmas

By LIN LIN HUTCHINSON

Strong winds on December 19 prompted the early removal of this year's Christmas wreath from the Nobska Lighthouse.

"It was not safe to leave it up," Friends of Nobska Light president Kathleen Walrath wrote in an email to the Enterprise. "We will not be putting it back up this year."

The decision to remove the wreath came as a powerful storm system moved through southern New England in the days leading up to Christmas week, particularly on the Friday before the holiday.

According to the National Weather Service, the highest reported wind speed in Woods Hole was 59 miles per hour.

Jeffrey D. Thomas, a board member and facilities manager for Friends of Nobska Light, said the wind approached the lighthouse from an unusual direction. Typically, the wind follows the contour of the wreath on the street-facing side of the tower, but during this storm, it shifted course.

He added that the protective fender, similar to the inflatable bumpers used to shield boats while docking, became displaced, and the wreath's metal frame moved. Large decorative ornaments, greenery and portions of the plastic bow were blown off the eight-foot-tall, 250-pound wreath.

No significant structural damage to the lighthouse was reported, and the wreath was removed on December 20 as a precaution to protect both public safety and the historic structure.

A similar incident occurred in December 2023, when a series of powerful storms with wind gusts reaching up to 70 mph severely damaged the Christmas wreath hanging on the lighthouse.

The old wreath, which had a plywood frame and had been used for about 20 years, was torn apart by the wind and repeatedly struck the lighthouse tower, damaging the iron catwalk and a porthole.

The damaged wooden-framed wreath had been hoisted by the US Coast Guard each year prior to the transfer of the lighthouse license to the town in 2016, Thomas said.

The 2023 damage prompted Friends of Nobska Light to design and install a more durable wreath for the 2024 season.

Thomas, who has been a member of the organization since 2016 and a former Coast Guard Auxiliary Nobska Lighthouse tour guide, designed the new diamond-plate aluminum frame, which was fabricated by Peter Vidal of Vidal Metal Works.

The new frame itself was not damaged in this year's storm, he said.

Friends of Nobska Light, which is composed of volunteers, plans to assess repairs over the summer and develop an improved hanging method for future winter seasons, Thomas said.

Recycling Tip Of The Week

Plastic Cutting Boards– Drop-Off Option

We know we need to be careful with plastics in the kitchen. If your old plastic cutting board is no longer suitable for use, the best option is to drop it off at the rigid plastic drop-off at the WMF (no fee required).

For more information about whether an item is recyclable, visit the website http://recyclesmartma.org.

Troy's Take

Emulating A Convener And Collaborator

By TROY CLARKSON

Each year at this time, many of us make resolutions. We resolve to exercise more, swear less and be better.

The key, of course, is to follow through and actually be better, whatever that means for us individually. For Paul Hart Miller, who has carried political activism and charitable advocacy as his calling card his entire adult life, it means demonstrating that, in this deeply divided society in which we find ourselves, we can search for, encourage and find common ground and civility.

Paul is a living example of civility and civic commitment. Professionally, he is an executive in the health care industry, but his expertise in that genre only begins to tell the story of this polymath of a man. He has deep roots here, living in the house in Monument Beach with his wife, Susan, that has been in the family for generations.

Paul sees his brand of engagement as an alternative to grousing, meaning that he truly believes that encouraging respectful and meaningful dialogue between people with opposing views is not only important, it is imperative. It includes active listening alongside respectful dialogue—a simple recipe that seemed commonplace a generation ago but seems a rarity today.

To prove that his approach can work, Paul set out to bring together two political veterans from opposing political parties that had worked in challenging political environments and survived—even thrived.

Paul is a self-described political junkie who cut his teeth in politics in his hometown of Lake Charles, Louisiana, where he not only supported local candidates, he ran for office himself. We met at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the Senate in Boston several years ago. We both attended several events there and began to recognize one another. We finally said hello one night and became fast friends, likely due to our shared commitment to public service and civility. Over the years, we've met often for coffee—sharing stories of our own political adventures. At one recent meeting at the Daily Brew, Paul shared how he met former Governor Charlie Baker. They met at a candidates' forum at WGBH. Paul approached the then-candidate for governor and, much like he did with me, he found common ground with Baker, as he had been involved with a health care organization that had its headquarters in Lake Charles. That's all the hook Paul needed. They have been friends since.

In a similar fashion, Paul's political engagement in Louisiana has remained strong over the years. He returns to his hometown frequently and has maintained meaningful relationships with many elected officials there, which led him to contact former Governor John Bel Edwards.

So, as a way to demonstrate that civility and collaboration still exist in politics, Paul approached yet another friend at McNeese State University in Louisiana and suggested that the two governors could offer a talk on how they worked together and in their home states with the opposing political party. The title of this lecture was "Getting Results Against the Odds," a nod to both governors serving with legislatures largely of the opposite parties, but working with them to achieve bipartisan goals. The lecture series is named after Bill McLeod, another friend of Paul's, who was a longtime judge and legislator in Lake Charles.

The forum was a resounding success. In a press event prior to the lecture, Paul noted that its intent was to "promote and better understand community service." It surely achieved that—and so did Paul. Imagine bringing two governors together to discuss getting along and working together. Imagine the relationship building it took for them to even agree to Paul's request. The very scheduling of the event and the idea that led to it is a testament to Paul's passion for coming together, working together, and finding how we can exist together. What a salve Paul's approach is in a weary political world.

MEGHAN MOORE OF MEGPIX PHOTOGRAPHY

Paul Miller

So, what does a lecture in Louisiana have to do with our issues here? Well, Paul is a local, and his efforts halfway across the continent demonstrate that all of us can make a difference and make our discourse, our engagement and our outlook just a little better. We can and we should emulate that approach—both locally and as far as our reach will take us.

Paul's commitment goes well beyond talking about working together. He gives back in many ways, including serving as the chairman of the board of the JFK Hyannis Museum, the Cape's very own homage to our cherished Cape Codder and 35th President of the United States. Paul sees his volunteer work as similar to his efforts with the lecture series. He is a convener and a collaborator—two skills that, exercised in combination, can have results that are a lesson for us all. "The art of compromise is out the window," Paul noted to me during our visit, but he uttered that with resolve, not with regret, as his aim is to continue to convene and collaborate and show others that compromise—even amongst political rivals—is still possible.

As the 2026 election season heats up, you will likely see Paul at candidates' events around the Upper Cape and surely in Falmouth, taking his signature selfies and sharing his signature smile. So, as you create your resolution for the new year, whatever it is, whatever form in which you wish to be better, emulate locals like Paul Hart Miller, who don't just talk about it, they live it.

Letters

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a stellar student with great promise. Each one of these patients is not only an individual tragedy, but a family tragedy. Taken in its totality, addiction is a community tragedy. If you don't work in health care, social services, law enforcement or the clergy, you might seriously underestimate how widespread addiction is in beautiful Falmouth. Yet chances are you have a family member or friend who is dealing with addiction. So, addiction is never that far removed from our lives.

Since I have seen so much addiction over my 50-year career in medicine, I have struggled to understand it better. One thing I have come to understand is that addiction is not about a character flaw or about "just saying no." Another thing I have learned is that there have been significant advances in our understanding of what drives addiction, and also how to prevent it and how to treat it. I have also learned that it is unlikely that there will be a magic bullet to "cure addiction." The fight against addiction will be a long one and fought on many fronts—in the classroom, in the family, in the hospitals, in the therapy rooms, in the group sessions, between friends and by leveraging effective social policies. But the first step in all of this is for each of us to become better educated about addiction. As such, the Marine Biological Laboratories, through its community lecture series (the Falmouth Forum) has invited a national addiction expert to address the community about current "best practices" for addiction. Dr. Ruth Potee will speak in Woods Hole on January 9 at 7:30 in the Cornelius Clapp auditorium. The lecture is free to the public and requires no prior sign-up. It can also be livestreamed by going to the Falmouth Forum website.

I remember that 30-year-old mother receiving CPR in the Falmouth emergency room as if it were yesterday, though it occurred in 1984. I also remember telling her family that our attempts to save her life were unsuccessful. To describe her in that moment as a drug addict would have been demeaning. She was a daughter, a wife, a mother, an artist and she was far too young to die.

Michael Fishbein, MD
Punch Bowl Drive
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Justice And Due Process For Immigrants

The federal government is rolling out a plan to streamline the rounding up and deportation of undocumented immigrants to make the process more efficient.

Plans reported in the Washington Post and Boston Globe include transforming seven regional warehouses, all located in southern and Midwestern states, into massive detention facilities, each capable of housing 10,000 or more immigrants. These centers will be fed by a system of regional processing centers where immigrants will be temporarily held as they await relocation to more-permanent quarters.

This plan is highly reminiscent of those used by the Nazis during World War II who constructed dozens of regional concentration camps throughout Germany, fed by an efficient railroad network capable of carrying millions of victims to their extermination. The Nazis' ethnic cleansing agenda was built on a bedrock of hatred and grievance, scientific efficiency and political control by a charismatic, ruthless and deranged madman.

As similar forced-removal policies are implemented in our own country, we—ordinary citizens who know this is categorically wrong—must stand up and challenge at every turn this increasingly more-efficient and calculating forced removal system. Most immigrants entangled in the US forced deportation system have committed civil infractions: overstaying visas or entering the country without proper paperwork. They are not criminals any more than you or I are criminals for driving with a broken taillight or failure to stop at a stop sign.

Today, 70 percent or more immigrant detainees have never

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