

# Not Far From Here, Nixon's Still the One

NYTimes

By PRANAY GUPTA JUN 19 1974  
Special to The New York Times

SHELTER ISLAND, L. I.— This is a picture book vacationland. The tourist business is booming. Most motels and summer rentals are booked up through the fall. The tennis courts throb with action, hikers dodge bicyclists in the woods, and in the evening the smells of barbecues, mixed with the sounds of merriment and music, drift lazily over the rich green meadows and the amber beaches.

This tiny island off Long Island is a vacationland for New Yorkers, but the vacationers are only transients. Suffolk County is a conservative, solidly Republican area—in 1968 and 1972, it gave

*This is another in a series of articles exploring the attitudes of President Nixon's supporters in communities around the country.*

President Nixon his largest plurality in any single county in the country—and whatever else Watergate may have done, it has not diluted the faith of Shelter Island's 1,800 year-round residents in Richard Milhous Nixon.

Some of them, like Evans K. Griffing, the doughty, 71-year-old former town supervisor—known around here as Mr. Conservative Himself—say they are dismayed that support for Mr. Nixon seems to be eroding among conservatives around the nation.

"Where is their backbone?" Mr. Griffing said. "It is regrettable that people did not live up to their convictions. If you've got convictions, you'd better live up to them, my friend."

Here in Shelter Island, cars still bear Nixon bumper stickers. Stores and restaurants have pictures of a smiling Mr. Nixon. The other day, when some youths sauntered into a restaurant and loudly poked fun at Mr. Nixon, the owner threw them out.

## Media in Villain's Role

Barely 100 miles from the media capital of the world, within commuting distance of the headquarters of the Eastern Liberal Establishment, the villain is the media and the victim, the President of the United States.

"The man is being crucified, he is not only being maligned but he's being belittled and made a scapegoat by the media," Mr. Griffing said, his feet propped up on the desk in his insurance office. "The media is determined to subject him to every possible humiliation. It is unfair. It is grossly unfair."

Such sentiment is deep and widespread here. On a recent visit, nearly every resident encountered began by berating the media over its handling of the Presidential crisis.

"We feel the President has been indicted by the press," said Thomas L. Jernick, the town supervisor, his stern features stiffening. "Mr. Nixon is being persecuted by the media."

Ed Hannabury, a former police chief who now runs the Osprey Restaurant said: "If the press stayed out of politics and kept their noses clean, we'd have a better country."

One woman snapped: "You are a reporter? Go away! After what you've written about the President, you ought to be jailed."

Suburban Suffolk, New York's largest and the nation's fastest growing county, has long been a Republican stronghold. But local land scandals, indictments of some political stalwarts and aggressive campaigning by Democrats in the last couple of elections have combined to reduce Republican strength a bit. But not in Shelter Island.

## High Median Age Cited

Mr. Jernick says this is largely because the median age of community residents is 46 and "older people tend to change their political habits less." But it is also true that the Democrats appear to have simply given up on Shelter Island.

Probably no single family's sentiments are more representative of this community's conservatism than the Griffings'. As he walked with a visitor from his office to his home, which is just across a shining stretch of lawn, Mr. Griffing said:

"I've got to admire Mr. Nixon. The jackals of the media and Congress are after him but the man is an indomitable person. Very few people could take what has been done to him so far. I feel badly that his private life has been held up to ridicule. We don't even do this to common criminals."

He said he was upset that Senator James L. Buckley of New York, whose conservative campaign had its genesis on Shelter Island in 1970, had called for President Nixon's resignation. Mr. Griffing said that he had written a letter to Mr. Buckley expressing his annoyance but that the Senator "has not had the courtesy to answer me."

Inside the house, Mrs. Griffing, an almost regal woman in her sixties, was knitting. How did she feel about Mr. Nixon now?

"I feel very badly for the situation," she said. "I'm not particularly pleased at the way he's handled it, but then who am I to judge how he

should handle it? We have no idea of the complexities of the situation. I feel that since we've elected him to do a job we should honor him and trust his judgment."

## Opposes Resignation

Then her smile vanished.

"I turn on the news on television and see those millions of people cheering the President in foreign countries and here we are pouncing on him in his own country," Mrs. Griffing said.

Should Mr. Nixon resign? Margaret Griffing pondered the question.

"No. Absolutely not. Resignation always leaves a doubt in people's minds. I'd rather see him tried. I've no doubt whatsoever that he won't be convicted because he is not guilty."

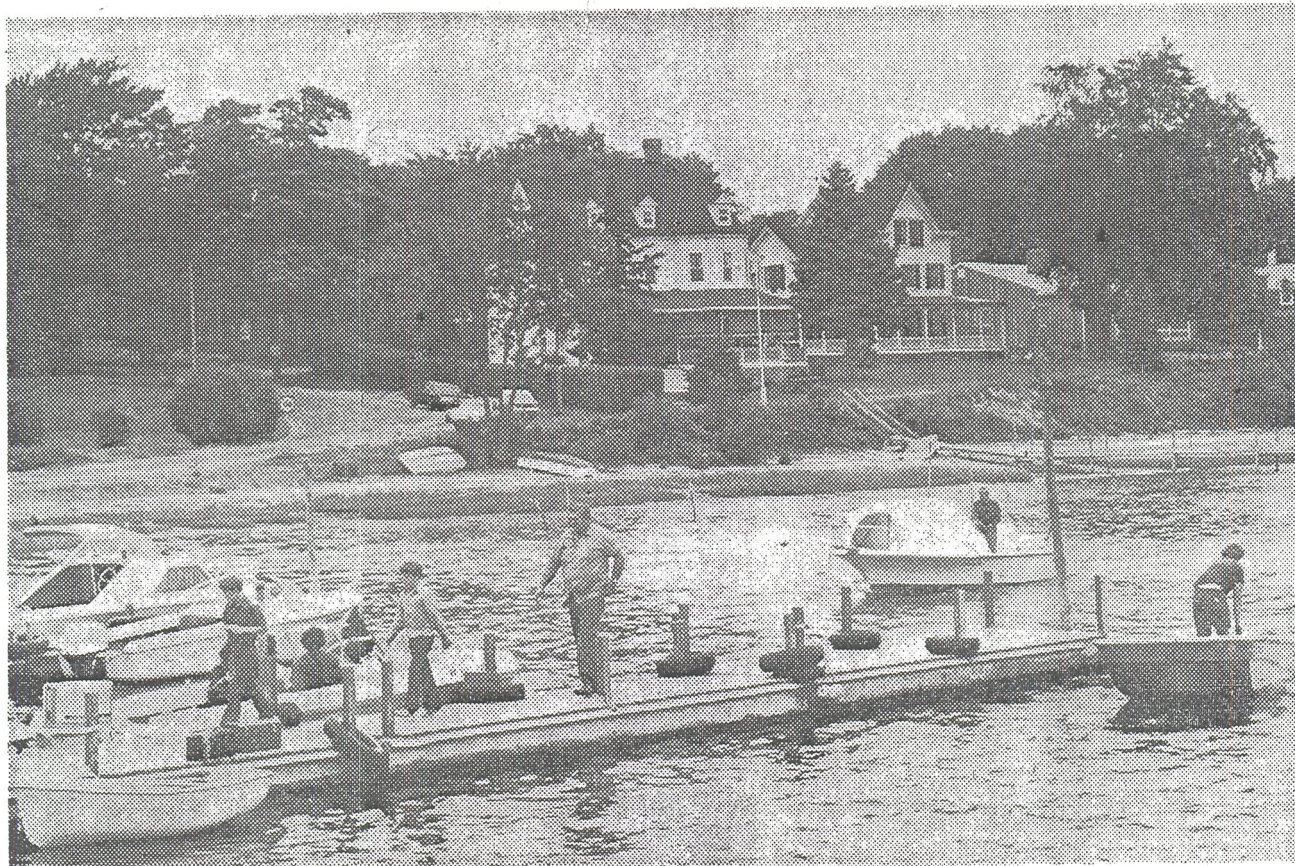
Mr. Griffing broke in.

"It's reached the point where there must be an impeachment trial," he said. "The President has got to be exonerated. We cannot have a government succumb to innuendo, scurrilous attacks by the media. If he resigns now, succeeding presidents could be driven out of office simply because some people do not like them."

"Yes," said Mrs. Griffing. "There must be a trial. This thing has gone on too long."

Later in the day, when the visitor went to see the supervisor, Mr. Jernick, the official said: "It's too bad Mr. Nixon did not surround him-





The New York Times/Robert M. Klein

A scene on Shelter Island, L. I., a stronghold of support for President Nixon and the Republican party

self with more people like Henry Kissinger."

Mr. Hannabury, the former police chief, said: "The President has been seriously undermined by these attacks on him by the press. Yes, I believe he should pay his share of taxes and I feel he should turn over those tapes that are relevant to any proper investigation. After

that, they should lay off him."

Down at the Shelter Island Marina, Skip Tuttle, a thirtyish man who owns a boat repair and supply store, said: "I'd certainly vote for Mr. Nixon again. I'm sick and tired of the pettiness shown by the media. Leave the man alone!"

"Nixon is being exploited by the press," shouted Frank-

lin Hallock, a real estate dealer. "He makes good copy. All they want to do is to play him down. I think they should stop talking about Watergate and pass legislation so it won't happen again."

And Charles Dominy, a former Suffolk parks commissioner and sheriff who now lives on Shelter Island, said ruefully: "The media hasn't

reported all the facts. And what they report is prejudicial to the President. Look at television, for instance. Those reporters say things with an inflection and attitude that makes it sound as though Nixon is a criminal. He is a good man."

This is still a community of true believers, and Richard Nixon is still a winner here.