

INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth volume of stories about interesting people I've encountered while running *Dan's Papers*, the free newspaper I founded as a teenager in the Hamptons in 1960. The title of all these books are variations of the phrase "In the Hamptons."

Fifty-five years ago, the Hamptons were a series of stunningly beautiful but sleepy old New England towns strung out into the ocean on a remote rural peninsula where people made their living farming and fishing. There were many bodies of water—lakes, ponds, harbors, bays and the Atlantic Ocean with its sixty miles of beaches. The landscape was fabulous, with cliffs, hillsides, long flat stretches of farmland, and wonderful vistas leading out over the land and the sea to the horizon. There were old English wood-shingled windmills. There were grand town greens and tall churches. The Hamptons still is a beautiful place, but it's mainly known today as the go-to summer place for anybody in America who is a billionaire or celebrity. So although the people I write about are the common thread of these books, the cast of characters changes. In the earlier chapters, you'll read about local railroad buff Ron Ziel and motel owner Sol Richer. But in later chapters, you'll read about the Ira Rennerts and Dr. Oz.

This volume, however, for the first time, also includes some of the hoaxes that have famously appeared in *Dan's Papers*. We still run them. I consider hoaxes to be a lively form of journalistic entertainment that wakes people up and gets them on their toes, particularly when they least expect it.

One of the first was "The MacKensie Seagull Whistle and Harness," a fake advertisement for a device that could get seagulls to tow your car off the beach from where you got it stuck.

That story resulted in hundreds of letters about this device, hundreds of orders, and hundreds of stories about the hoax in newspapers, TV news broadcasts, and magazines. *TIME Magazine* devoted a half page to it. The Associated Press distributed their version nationwide.

The most recent hoax is also in this book. "Lions in the Hamptons," was to appear in the newspaper on December 27, 2013. But because it takes several days to edit, headline, typeset, print, and deliver a newspaper, I'd written it a week earlier. However, the staff saw it when it arrived a week early, they loved it, and immediately posted it on our Website. By the time the paper came out, the dust was already clearing from the coverage of it around the country, not only on radio and TV and in other print media, but also in over a million blogs, tweets, and likes online.

I can't even predict where you would buy this book. On a tablet? In a brick-and-mortar bookstore. I hope you enjoy putting yourself *In the Hamptons 4Ever*.