

David vs. Goliath or How a Few Little Towns Overcame the Richest Man in the World

1973, the beginning of the first energy crisis and the awakening of the end of the “gravy train” of cheap fuel. This crisis precipitated many efforts around the world, not the least of which was to find ways to create more home grown fuel. Aristotle Onassis, with the blessing of Gov Mel Thompson, sent his men out to deceitfully con the “local yokels” into selling options to buy their land for the purpose of creating a “game preserve” for their wealthy client. But the cat was soon out of the bag and “Publik Occurrences” newspaper was born to fight it along with countless seacoast folk, not the least of whom were those in Rye who saw the threat clearly. Frances Holway had started the Civic League in 1969 and its Town News kept people abreast of events. Guy Chichester was one of the leaders of the protest and he and others met in Jessie Herlihy’s sunroom to plan strategy. Huge tankers would off load crude at the shoals and the pipeline would run under Rye to the Great Bay refinery in Durham which would have been the biggest in the world. “Save our Shores” was formed and the fate of the seacoast hung in the balance. This was a pitched battle to defend a way of life and it was won by all those who stood up and fought it. Once home rule was granted by the legislature, it was the people of Durham who had the final say and they voted it down overwhelmingly in 1974. But they were emboldened by all the support they had throughout the seacoast including Rye. Not In My BackYard...not in anyone’s backyard!