

Dudley W. Dudley

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It was not until nearly Thanksgiving that the developer of the oil refinery become known. We were stunned. And here he is:



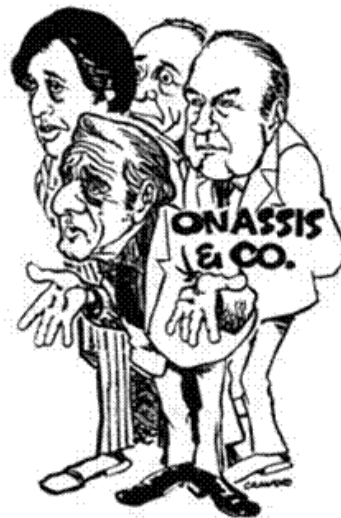
And here he is on a day a few years earlier when he married America's Queen, Jackie Kennedy:



Four days after he married Jacqueline Kennedy in October of 1968 he was in close discussions with Greek Prime Minister Col. George Papadopoulos, Onassis and Papadopoulos were planning a massive project that involved shipyards, power plants, aluminum facilities and – an oil

refinery. The project was officially named The Omega Project and was badly needed by Onassis who needed cargo for his fleet of hundreds of VLCC ships (that's Very Large Crude Carriers). Five years later all but the oil refinery element of the project had pretty much been taken over by Onassis' main rival Stavros Niarchos. But the oil refinery remained an important part of Onassis's plans.

Which resulted in this beseeching band of bandits imploring the citizens of the Seacoast to trust them and to allow the construction of the world's largest oil refinery – a 400,000 barrel per day refinery, almost twice as big as the largest refinery of that time – the Exxon refinery in Texas.



<< Here we have Onassis, to his left is Peter Booras, the real estate agent who maneuvered to get options and previously known for the invention of an endless loaf of bread, behind him is William Loeb, editor of NH's only statewide newspaper and to his left is the Governor, Meldrim Thomson.

Lost in the mists of time is any information on how this group found one another and whose idea it was to build the refinery on our lovely Great Bay. It could have happened at a cocktail party in New York where Thomson met Onassis or his representative. Thomson is not an unlikely initiator of the plan – after all, it was he who proposed arming the National Guard with nuclear weapons and who hatched the hair-brained scheme to get Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket to secede from Massachusetts and join New Hampshire. And the carrot that he offered them was the promise of a nuclear power plant. But – I digress.

The carrots that Onassis was offering with his oil refinery were:

- Cheaper and more plentiful fuel
- Jobs
- Lower taxes

Here's what we would be giving up. Beautiful Great Bay...



I was a freshman state legislator in 1973. I had not spoken often on the floor of the house. I had sponsored very little legislation. I was a real rookie. But I had some seasoned friends one of whom was Marty Gross who, sitting at my kitchen table just after I was elected, said to me: “If you ever want to get anything through the NH legislature just use the two words, ‘home rule’.” I tucked that piece of advice away.....

The legislature met in biennial sessions at that time and to introduce a bill in an off-year it was required that it be shown to be responding to an EMERGENCY. So I looked up the word and this is what I found: Emergency: An unforeseen combination of circumstances that calls for immediate action; an urgent need for assistance or relief. I successfully argued the point to the Speaker -- that the proposal to impose an oil refinery on my town constituted an emergency. And then I recalled Marty Gross's wise words. I would use Home Rule as the foundation of my bill. Home Rule is not a noble concept – it is pretty conservative but it was the highest rung on the ladder that I could reach. Home Rule already existed in NH – a community has the right to approve

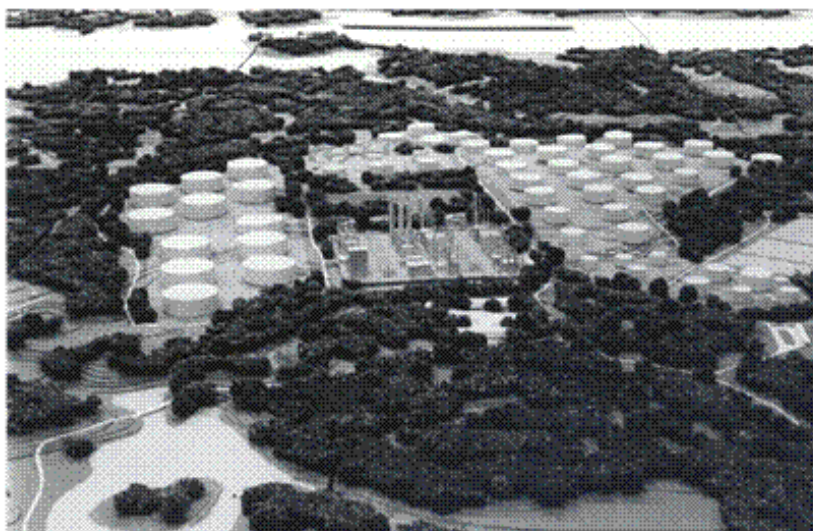
certain potentially intrusive activities such as gambling, the sale of liquor or cigarettes, race tracks. I figured that an oil refinery would surely be as intrusive as any of those. And so I introduced House Bill 18 – a very simple bill – which said “This bill would require a vote of approval of a majority of the town’s voters prior to the approval of a site plan for an oil refinery.” We were off to the races!

This is what we were fighting for:



Here, again, is a scale model of the refinery:

Scale model of Onassis’ proposal



There were many, many more tanks than this that would have been required for the production of a 400,000-barrel-a-day refinery, but this was the Onassis attempt to give us an idea of what the refinery would look like. Here's a better example:



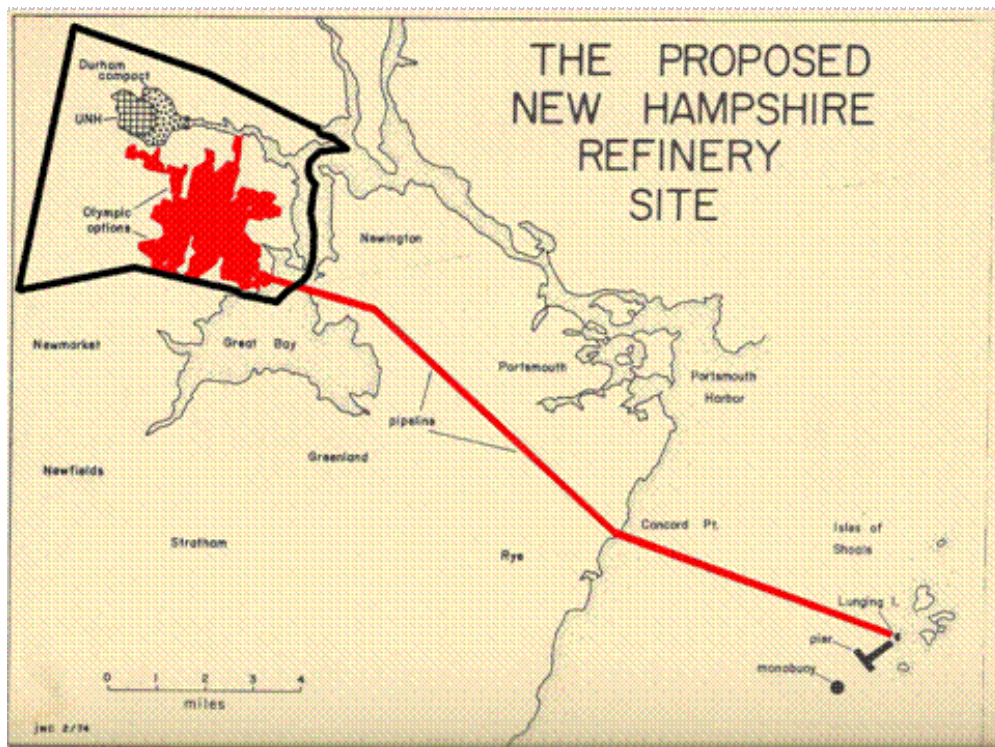
Remember the letter that Katie Wheeler wrote to Onassis, and remember the response she got – that a refinery at night looks just like a Christmas tree? This must be what he was thinking of:



But, we in New Hampshire, know better!



The Onassis land grab was truly Olympic. The red on the map of Durham shows the extent, early on, of land that Onassis was able to option for the refinery. There was more that had not been optioned when this illustration was created. In fact, before it was over, more than 1/3 of the land of Durham was optioned. POINTER For comparison – here is the area that UNH covered at the time and POINTER here is the built-up area of town.



Clearly, it wasn't only Durham that was at risk. Note the red line extending from Durham, across Newington, Portsmouth and Rye on the mainland to the Isles of Shoals. That line is the pipe line that would have brought crude oil off-loaded from Olympic's tankers to Rye and then across land in huge pipes to the refinery in Durham.

THREE EXAMPLES of requests to option land:



Norman Beaudet – janitor at the MUB; offered a million dollars for his land. He turned Onassis down asking the question – “But, where would I live?”

Two sisters, Mrs. Remick and Mrs. Tucker in Rye who stubbornly, against all odds, refused to entertain the Olympic offer to option their land so it could be used as the place where the huge pipes on the sea floor could come on-land

The Randalls, owners of Lunging Island at the Isles of Shoals.

Onassis fervently wanted that Jewel in New Hampshire's crown – the lovely Isles of Shoals. This is Celia Thaxter's garden on Appledore Island.



Onassis wanted to build a super-port for his tankers in the “lee” of the Isles of Shoals.



He tried to option several islands but failed until he turned his attention to rugged and beautiful Lunging Island. Peter Booras, real estate agent from Keene, pursued the Randalls, owners of Lunging Island, with a deceptive vengeance. He told Mrs. Randall that he wanted the five-acre island for a “resort development.” We heard that the Randalls had been contacted but we were sure they would hold out. After all – their son who had been killed in Vietnam was buried there and the island had been in their family for generations.

Mrs. Randall said, “This is one of the most beautiful spots we have on the Atlantic coast. This area should remain inviolate – it’s an important part of the nation’s beginnings that most people never hear about.” In fact, Lunging Island was the fishing base of the London Company as early as 1615.

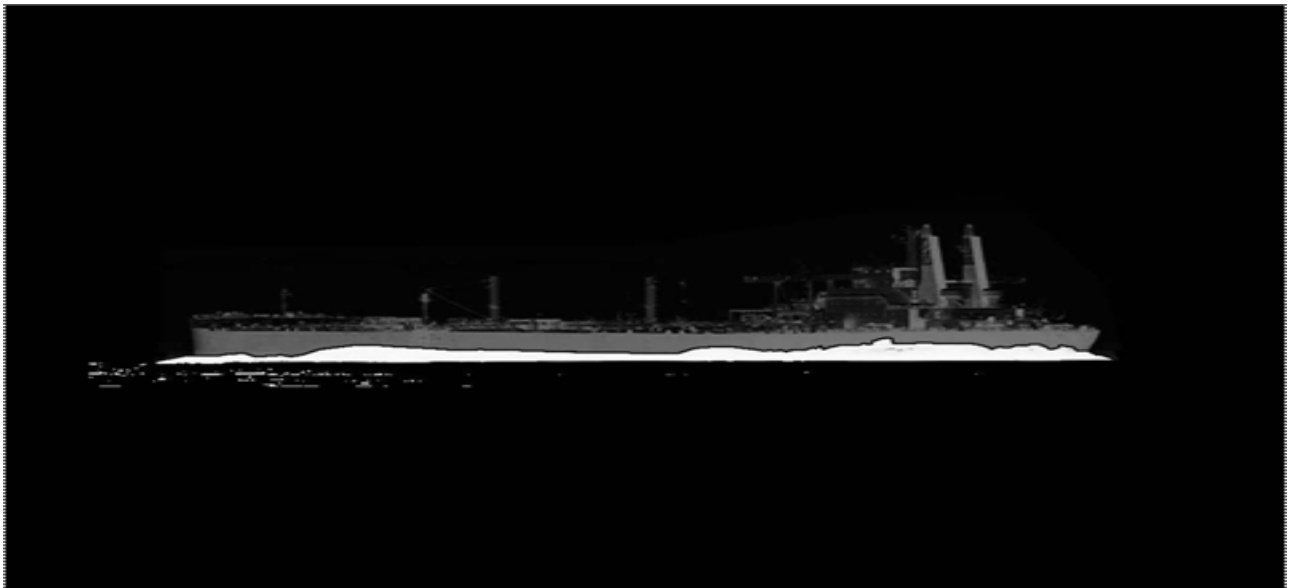
The Randalls said they weren’t interested in selling and did not hear any more about it for several weeks until a real estate agent representing Peter Booras showed up. By this time, they had read press accounts of the refinery and were putting two and two together. They asked the realtor directly if the sale was related to the rumored oil refinery and he eventually admitted that it was. Randall felt it was time to meet with lawyers. They all said that if the refinery went through, the state would likely take their land by eminent domain as being for a public purpose to provide oil in an emergency, and they would probably be paid a lot less than Olympic was offering. When they were told that two other islands had been optioned (untrue) and the owners of a third were “listening”, the Randalls finally succumbed to Olympic’s deception and bullying tactics and optioned the island. Mrs. Randall said, “It’s like a death in the family, of somebody very close.”

Look carefully at their house on Lunging Island because the next two slides also show it and show the scale of the Olympic proposal.

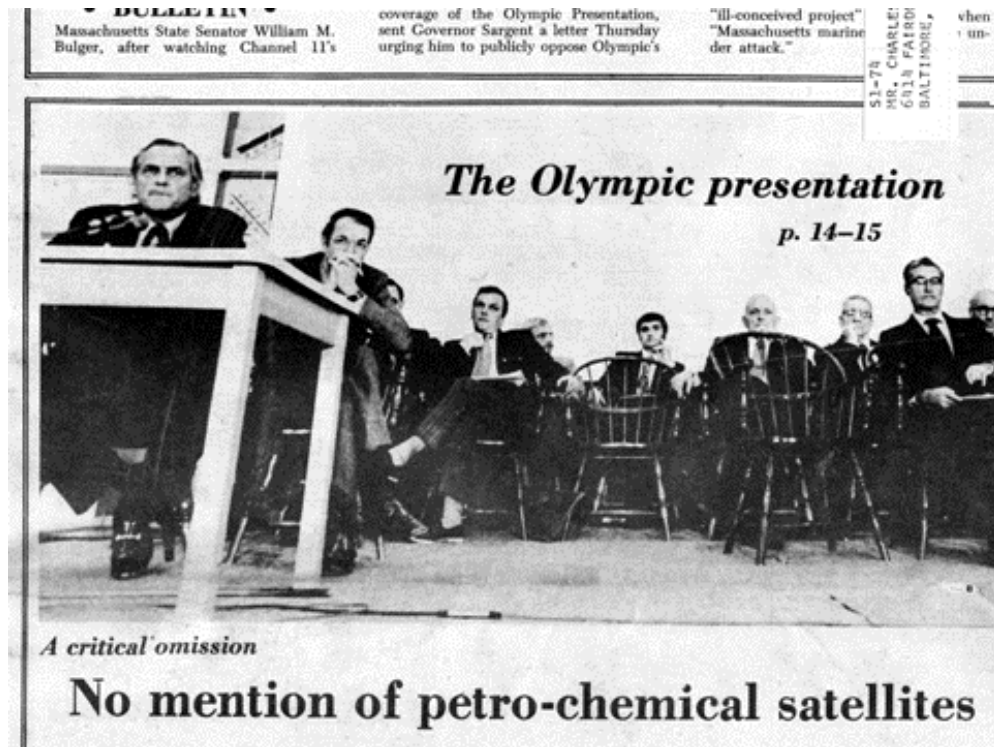
Here is Lunging Island and if you look very carefully, POINTER you can see the top of the house that appeared in the previous picture.



Here is Lunging Island with a to-scale tanker behind it. POINTER



In February Olympic invited all skeptics to a meeting at the UNH field house. They promised to answer all questions. But it didn't go well for them.



Here's just one example: The Olympic proposals had stated that the refinery would use 6,000 gallons of fresh water a minute. Clif Horrigan, a UNH graduate student and an hydrologist asked Mr. Greene, one of Olympics consultants, where they planned to get the 6,000 gallons. Greene conferred with his colleagues on the stage and came back to announce that they realized they had made a mistake – they really only needed 3,000 gallons. To her credit, Clif was undeterred and she asked where they would get the 3,000 gallons. Once again, Greene consulted his colleagues and returned to the microphone to say that they recognized a further error and would need only 1500 gallons. The place went wild! There were no believers in the room.

Another example of a meeting called by Olympic going very wrong was a meeting held at the Rye Junior High School and intended to answer any questions the fishing community might have. Olympic started the meeting by showing a short promotional film depicting its work in Saudi Arabia and in the Gulf. The film was beautifully done complete with a British narrator, stirring music and lovely shots of beaches. It was well received until it showed the laying of pipe underwater – apparently huge explosives were required and mammoth geysers of hot water and steam erupted. If there had been a fisherman friendly to the Onassis proposal at the beginning of the evening, there were none at the end.

I learned recently how this film came to be shown. Apparently a commercial pilot from the seacoast had a lay day in New York City and he decided to go to Olympic Headquarters just to check it out. Of course he was welcomed profusely and asked if he would like to see a film of their operations in Saudi Arabia. They showed him the film and he told them it was beautifully done and asked if he could have a copy to bring back to NH with him!



SOS created a petition in opposition to the refinery and got 4,000 people to sign it. I offered to take the petition to Concord and present it to the Governor. I called the Governor's office to make an appointment and was given a time. When the day approached, it was cancelled so I made another. It, too, was cancelled – the Governor would be out of state trying to line up fuel for snowmobilers! But eventually I got an appointment that was not cancelled and I made my way to Concord. When I got there I went to the Governor's Council chamber to wait to see Governor Thomson. I waited and waited and waited. The press was there hoping to get a picture of me giving the petitions to the governor. We waited some more. Finally, a photographer asked if he could take a picture of me with the petitions and I said "Sure" and he snapped this picture – just as the governor's secretary asked me to come in. Right away Thomson asked me why I had brought him the petitions. I said that I had brought them because I thought he would want to know how thousands of his constituents felt. He asked how I knew they were his constituents and I said because there is a column for them to record where they live. Then he asked how he could tell if

they were voters and I told him there was a column for that too. We had a short discussion about the fact that the gas shortage was not of refined oil, but of crude and he became so angry that he told me to “get off your high horse and get out of here.” Which is just what I did curbing the impulse to slam his very large and heavy office oak door.

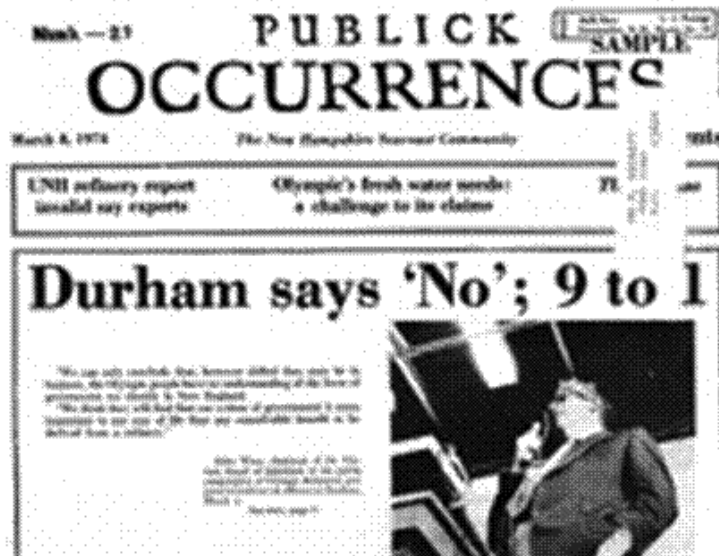


Finally Town Meeting Day came. With Joe Michael as a strict and even-handed moderator the meeting got underway. The only thing to be discussed that night was the oil refinery. Other more typical warrant articles were put off for another day.

Nancy Sandberg spoke and got a standing ovation, Tommy Thompson made the unpopular case FOR the refinery, there were many who spoke but – finally – it was time for the town to vote.

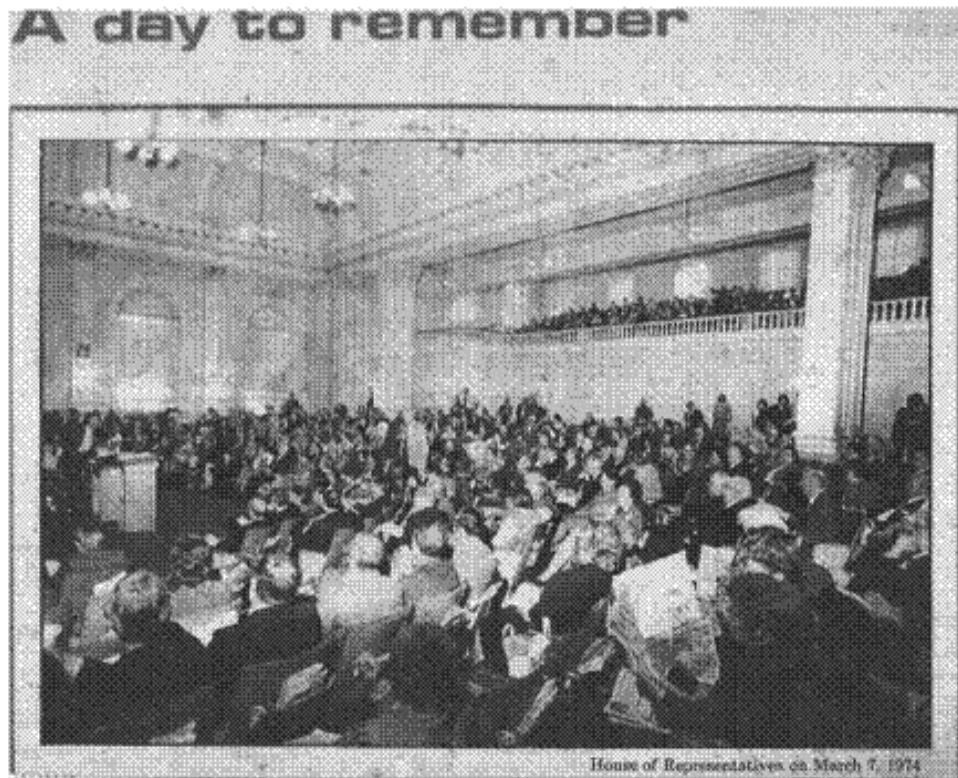


And vote it did – by a margin of 9 – 1 Durham voted in opposition to the refinery. The vote in Durham had absolutely no legal effect. It was a referendum that indicated the town’s feelings – no less, but no more.



The Town Meeting was March 6. My bill, the Home Rule Bill was scheduled to be heard on March 7 – by total coincidence, the day after the Town Meeting. On the weekend before the vote,

every newspaper in the state carried an insert exhorting readers to “Help Bring a Refinery to New Hampshire – Contact Your Legislator Now” And the back page duplicated a telegram sent to the Governor from William Simon, Energy Czar in the Nixon administration. The telegram stated that if NH built the refinery it could be assured of more plentiful fuel at lower prices.....Weeks later it was revealed that the telegram was a total fabrication – that neither Simon nor anyone in his office had sent it. Its author is a mystery to this day.



On March 7 my bill, House bill 18 – the bill that required the approval of a community before an oil refinery could be sited within its bounds -- was heard before the NH legislature. The House was packed and so was the balcony. People and media had come from all over the world to witness the vote. But preceding the vote on House bill 18 was a vote on House bill 34 which would establish an energy siting body that would have the authority to override any zoning or wishes of a community in the siting of energy facilities. It was voted down setting the stage for House bill 18 – the home rule bill. I made an impassioned speech asking for the votes of those from Coos to the Sea. The non-binding but huge “NO” vote in Durham the night before was there to help persuade legislators from Berlin and Salem and Nashua and Concord and Manchester to join the legislators from the Seacoast and the bill became law.

And it was over. In reporting on that day, the *NH Times* had this to say:

“A century from now, when historians look back on the 1974 session of the NH Legislature, they’ll call it the Oil Refinery session and remember March 7 as a turning point in NH history. That’s the day when, unexpectedly, the 400 member House, the House too big to be bought, said ‘No’ to the plan of a foreign billionaire to build a \$600 million oil refining complex on Durham Point in violation of a local zoning ordinance.”

So – the House never specifically voted against the oil refinery and the Town of Durham never addressed the question of a zoning ordinance variance, because Olympic never asked for the variance. Olympic knew they would fail when, on March 6th Durham voted 9 to 1 to oppose a refinery and on March 7th the NH House voted to sustain the town’s right to have the final say.

And nearly forty years later a bench constructed from 60 million year old New Hampshire Granite was made with proceeds left over from a production of a wonderful play called “Oily Vey”. The bench is inscribed: “Durham Says No to Olympic Oil March, 1974.” And here am I, Phyllis and Nancy on the bench which has been placed on Wagon Hill Farm in Durham by the lovely bay:



And so, the Shoals survive:



As does Durham Point:



And the sun continues to rise and set over our beautiful ocean!



And now – one final story: A group of us went out to dinner at a restaurant in Concord the night after the legislature voted. All was going well until I looked across the room only to see a table at which were seated all of the consultants from Olympic. I moaned when they got up and headed in our direction. What were they doing? Were they announcing plans for a refinery in Rochester? In Newmarket? In Sanford? Any of which would have huge implications for the Seacoast. But that was not what they were doing. Mr. Greene, their leader, shook my hand and said that they had come to tell us that they knew the RIGHT SIDE HAD WON! And, for once, I agreed with them!