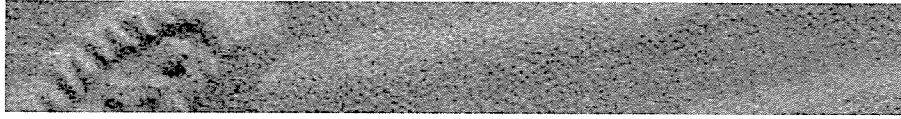


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...words...from some great local writers

Go Fly a Kite!



karen amster-young :: The Beach Chair Chronicles

...weekly observations & discoveries from manhattan to the east end...

A few weeks ago I took a break from writing this column in order to handle an exciting PR project for a renowned interior designer participating in the 2007 Hampton Designer Showhouse. Truth be told, I also took a break to simply observe and reflect. I had been reviewing my columns on this site to date and had noticed a unifying thread: they were always about being a little stuck, stressed or side-tracked by minutia. A few others had also pointed out these recurring themes; and then there were some others that truly were relating to my raves and rants and feared I would stop complaining! Well, for the latter group, I am happy to report that I still feel the same way, so don't worry! However, it made me step back and actually look at all the great things that make the summer so wonderful. It also made me take a closer look at the genre I have currently chosen to pursue in my writing: the personal essay as a journalistic form. This form has been on the receiving end of some harsh criticism lately. A recent report on a top journalism web site questions whether those in journalism and in the publishing world are too fixated on the idea of a positive narrative thrust? It asks, "Are we afraid of the rambling nature of the essay?" Taking its name from the French word *essai*, meaning "attempt," an essay doesn't set out to tell a complete, narrative, happy story, but rather simply tosses out an idea(s) like a trial balloon. The report continues that Essayphobia (love that word) doesn't make sense. These days, non-fiction sells better than fiction. Short sells better than long. The essay is a slick fit with today's reading

habits — although whether it fits the tastes and proclivities of today's writer is another question. According to our old friend Webster, the essay is "a short literary composition of an analytical, interpretive, or reflective kind, dealing with its subject in a non-technical, limited, often unsystematic way, and, usually, expressive of the author's outlook and personality." With the need to meld observation of the outside world with the reflections of the soul, this is not the standard journalistic enterprise. Perhaps this is a challenge more journalism programs ought to take up.

With that said and my general observational, slightly cynical, stressed-out viewpoint still in check, I set out on a mission: can I observe the world around me as usual but make note of all the wonderful pleasures of summer? This mission happened to coincide with the official start of my summer on July 1st. If you don't know why my summer officially started on July 1st, I encourage you to review my first column about preparing for the summer. Okay, so deep breath, here it goes:

1. Riding in a great convertible in the Hamptons without traffic
2. Eating ice cream and walking around town
3. Eating fat-free, tasteless yogurt called something like "Mocha Peanut Butter" and walking around town (OOPS! wrong column; but really, do they actually think this stuff tastes good?)
4. Actually relaxing by my pool and not moving for at least one hour, despite kids running around
5. Standing in line at Verizon for 2 hours in Bridgehampton and realizing that the same incompetent people who work at the Manhattan store come here for the summer (Oops! wrong column again!)
6. The unmistakable aroma of a great BBQ
7. Having an "aha" moment that can only happen when away from Manhattan. This "aha" moment can be anything from finally deciding what color bath mat to buy to more important decisions about relationships, life and so on. However, for some reason, even the bath mat decision can feel liberating out here.
8. Actually buying something on sale at a Village store and liking it
9. Dropping your cell phone in the toilet by accident (Sorry, wrong column again; see #5)
10. The great Hamptons air
11. Watching my daughter run barefoot
12. The sunsets
13. That perfect drive to Amagansett to LUNCH or that Clam Shack place on a perfect day

14. Dancing at Cigar Bar in Sag Harbor
15. Finding that perfect anything, especially when you don't really need it and you just stumble upon it
16. No line at Coopers Beach when my daughter is absolutely starving and can't live another moment without a grilled cheese sandwich
17. Lobster every weekend – in the backyard, at a great restaurant or anywhere
18. 10 minutes at my beach house without anyone there
19. Spending a night at a good 'ol Carnival in the summer; there is something so great about the fact that they never change. I am not talking about the big fund raising Carnivals that are part of the summer out here. I am talking about the ones with cotton candy and a real Ferris wheel thank you.
20. Absolutely LOVING a new song on the radio
21. Being first on-line for coffee at Hampton Coffee Company or Golden Pear or anywhere in the Hamptons. In order to achieve this feeling you must have insomnia and be there before 6:42 on a weekend
22. Discovering that despite being a popular restaurant you have no desire to ever go back. This sense of sureness comes with age and, in the process, you ensure that you won't be experiencing bad food and bad service for the remainder of the summer (ok, wrong column again)
23. Getting a "little color" that falls within the range of "safe" and actually makes you feel better
24. Playing a great game of tennis despite having not played in 3 weeks. OK, the truth is I have not played in 3 weeks but I know it will feel great when I do :)
25. Seeing an ex-anything and just not caring
26. Seeing your husband do the laundry at least one day
27. Seeing absolutely no dirty laundry for more than a day
28. Not hearing about or airing any dirty laundry for more than a day
29. Having your annual "in the Hamptons" High School friends weekend with all the husbands and kids and realizing they've known you for about two decades and will love you forever, despite your faults.
30. Realizing your high school friends freakin' have known you for almost two decades!!!! What is that? When did that happen? How old am I? How did we get this old? (Oops! wrong column again!)
31. Finally almost writing a column that is not talking about the ongoing quest for true relaxation, being stuck or just being annoyed. And successfully identifying some of the great things about summer in the Hamptons.

And remember, as stated earlier, according to our old friend Webster, the essay is "a short literary composition of an analytical, interpretive, or reflective kind, dealing with its subject in a non-technical, limited, often

unsystematic way, and, usually, expressive of the author's outlook and personality. I bid adieu until next time. I say, go fly a kite if you don't want to hear any rants or raves, complaining or whining. Flying a kite is, perhaps, one of the best things about summer (see! I can do it!).

Karen Amster-Young, formerly principal of Amster-Young Public Relations, Inc., is a freelance writer living in New York City. She lives with her husband, Ben and 6 year-old daughter, Alison. She continues to work as a public relations & marketing consultant and is currently working on a non-fiction book. Her work has appeared in a number of publications, including magazines on the East End. She can be reached at atkaren@thehamptons.com

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