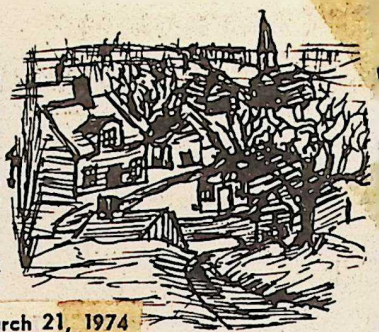
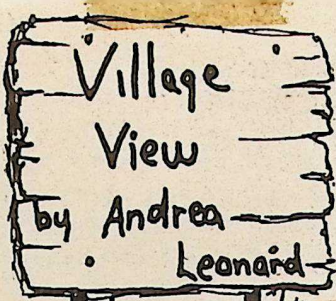




VILLAGE ADVERTISER March 21, 1974

This is Part I of an "exclusive personal interview" conducted by Village Advertiser columnist Andrea Leonard with Mr. Holbrook Davis of Osterville. The interview will be continued on Jan. 31st.

Do you ever wonder how you look to strangers or what image you project to the objective observer? Sometimes it can be fun, even educational, to see yourself through another's eyes.

Recently returned to live in Osterville is Holbrook Davis who called our village home from 1930 when he left the United States to live abroad, for the most part, until a year ago.

During World War II he spent one year with the British 8th Army in North Africa and two years in the United States Navy aboard the U.S.S. Franklin in the Pacific Theatre. He is also a graduate of Harvard University, Class of 1943.

While in Switzerland in 1947 and 1948, he taught business administration and geography in Geneva, then spent five years in business in Montreal. This was followed by three years in New York City in public relations, advertising and sales. The next sixteen years he lived in Montreal, ending up as chief personnel officer of Alcan Aluminium, Ltd. (An international company with over 60,000 employees.)

In addition to his business activities, Mr. Davis took great interest in the YMCA, of which he was Canadian National president at the time he left that country to return to the United States and Osterville.

What does he think of us? I asked him. First we talked of his impressions of the country as a whole.

"My first impressions were three-fold and probably all related. One, of course, is the degree of demoralization, particularly among young people, partly because of the Viet Nam war, partly because of racial and urban problems and partly because of a variety of other problems.

"Young people, consciously or unconsciously, project present trends, twenty or fifty years hence, and are justifiably frightened. They resent the fact that nothing is being done, as they see it, by the older generation, about their somewhat bleak future."

"The second impression is more mundane--waste and dirt. We're a wasteful country and, at least in urban areas, a dirty country. These two factors, certainly the dirtiness, again relate to the general demoralization.

"An American returning home after many years is amazed to see a city like Boston and remember it as it was or compare it, unfavorably, with Toronto, London, Paris or Frankfurt."

"The third impression of a general nature is of the position of the United States in the world. It has changed importantly within the last 20 or 30 years. We've not become a 'have-not' nation, but we aren't in the same position as before; others have caught up and we've erha s sli ed behind."



"Yes, I would. Having been a businessman for over 25 years, I'm somewhat surprised that in the last five or ten, I've developed -- I think a lot of businessmen have -- a broad and concerned interest in issues normally thought to be beyond the realm of business.

Call it social conscience, if you will. It motivated my activity in the YMCA in Canada and I hope to continue here. It's gradually struck me -- but it has struck me and a lot of other people -- we've got to have a lot of changes if we're to bequeath a decent world to the next generation.

Someone asked me if I were a conservative or a liberal. I replied, 'I'm a radical if a radical is one who feels we must have significant changes in our politics, legislation, churches, schools, working habits, international relations -- in short, in our total way of life. But, I'm a radical who would propose or support changes only after careful analysis -- and without rancor.

Take, for one example, our welfare and unemployment compensation practices. Employers are crying for competent labor, yet unemployment compensation costs the nation billions each year. Something's very wrong and politicians at every level should address themselves to a situation which is as degrading as it is costly.

Adults of my age must get up and get out -- be active and try to influence events and trends. The world is changing -- the world has changed; in some respects for the worse -- in some for the better.

Here in Barnstable, we're on an island of relative peace and contentment, but it's a small island, and threatened.

The problems and challenges are just around the corner. If we wish to be proud of our past and more confident of our future, we've all got to get out and be more active."

Interesting to see yourself as you're seen by one who's come home again, after being away many years?

Interesting to see something of the person who has, once again, joined our community, know what he thinks, not only of us, but of himself and his responsibilities to the world in which he has chosen to live?



I believe we could have a situation where Selectmen played an essential political and policy-making role, and a Town Manager, a rewarding administrative role. Nevertheless, I respect the work of the Commission and will vote for the proposed Charter."

You've taken a strong stand, Mr. Davis, against higher taxes on unused land. Some people question how you can do so objectively when you and other members of your family own, I believe, a fairly large acreage of undeveloped land. Would you like to comment on that?

"In the first place, it's no longer possible in this part of the world to hold onto much unused land indefinitely whether tax rates are high or low. Circumstances of the times require its sale and subdivision.

The majority of persons who oppose such taxes on open land, I've found, are not large land-owners. They see, however, that the present policy may prove to be the social, ecological and financial ruination of the town.

If I'm going to live here, as I hope to for years to come, I'm much more interested in a way of life, a community, a spirit, than in fighting for a few dollars which mean practically nothing if you don't, at the same time, have a pleasant place to live. I'm concerned with the whole quality of life."

In recent years, Mr. Davis, you've been very active in the YMCA in Canada, not because you were anxious to run around a gym floor yourself, you say, but because that organization concerned itself with broad social problems, problems of people of all different kinds and, of course, the problems of youth.

Now you've returned to the Cape, would you like to resume activity with the YMCA or similar organizations?

"Secondly, I feel I have a certain amount of imagination and administrative ability which could be of benefit were I a selectman, and I think few would question my sincerity and my affection for Barnstable."

"A few weeks ago, however, I decided not to run, at least this year, for two simple reasons. In the first place, I've not been back long enough to be in a position to run as effectively as may be necessary."

"The other reason, and the principle one, is, whereas I don't think I'd win, I would take away a number, perhaps a critical number, of votes from one or two candidates whom I think are better qualified for the office than the rest of the candidates. Today, Barnstable needs the best it can get."

If you hadn't changed your mind, Mr. Davis, had won, and were now a Selectman, what things do you now see you would change, and how?

"We have tremendous and costly racial and urban problems; many other countries do not. This gives them a great advantage over us. It all adds up to one fact: because of the depletion of natural resources, the wasteful way of life we've gotten used to, our international generosity, and the emergence of other very