

# Be aware of what you buy

The following is a true story. I did not make this up. It is worse than my worst nightmare. Freddy Krueger ranks in the Mother Goose category when compared to this frightening tale.

Last week I went to a charming toy store in a nearby town to buy a Christmas present for Emily, the 5-year-old daughter of some very close friends. It has been a while since I've purchased anything for kids of that age, and I probably looked a little lost amongst the young mothers crowding the store with and without their offspring.

A nice young lady with a generous smile looked at me sympathetically and said, "You look like



**You can't beat a system you can't understand**

By Sam Bari

you could use some help." I had to chuckle. "Do I look that lost?" I asked. "Yes," was her quick reply.

I told her that I had not the foggiest idea of what 5-year-old girls played with these days, and asked if she had any suggestions. She said, "Absolutely," and led me back to the doll department. She suggested

a doll in a big box. It came with little dresses as well as other clothing and accessories that looked as if a real baby girl could wear them. I noticed a bottle and other baby paraphernalia that seemed to make the package complete, so I thought it was just the thing I needed.

"It's our most popular model," the clerk said enthusiastically, and she started to list all the features. I interrupted her and said, "Sold - save the sales pitch."

Then she said that if the little girl were given a duplicate gift she could come in and exchange it for something else. What more could I ask? Everything seemed perfect. The doll she showed me was a

display model, so she went to the back of the store and retrieved a brand new unopened box. "Here's a new one," she said brightly. "I'll have it wrapped for you."

This was shopping heaven, I thought. I bought the latest model of a popular toy; it was gift-wrapped, and the price was right. I was in and out of the store in less than twenty minutes. Mission accomplished.

I delivered the present two days before Christmas, and Emily was ecstatic. She wanted to open it right away, but her parents told her to wait until Christmas morning.

I more or less forgot about the doll after that and went about the business of spending Christmas with my family. Then, along about three in the afternoon on Christmas day I received a phone call from Emily's father. I thought he called to thank me. Well . . . he did — sort of.

"So - how did Emily like the doll?" I asked. "Oh - she loved it," he replied. "As a matter of fact, it's the only toy she's played with all day. Not only that; it's the only toy that all of her little girl cousins and friends have played with all day as well."

"Oh really," I beamed. "That's nice to hear. I'm glad she liked it."

Then he asked, "Did you know that it's a fully functioning doll? It actually drinks water out of a bottle, and eliminates it as if it were a real baby."

"You're kidding," I said.

"No. I'm not," he replied. Then he said, "Did you know that the doll is also anatomically correct?"

"That's interesting," I said. "I guess she'll learn how all her parts

work."

"Oh, I don't think so," he said. And I noticed a slight chill in his voice. Then red flags started waving before my eyes, bells rang, and sirens screamed.

"It's a boy doll," he said. I felt my heart skip a beat.

"It is?" I said in a voice an octave higher than normal. "I distinctly remember purchasing a girl doll," I said defensively. Then it dawned on me, when the woman went to the back of the store to get a new doll, she must have picked up the wrong box.

To make matters worse, a warning sign was on the box about parental guidance being recommended for children under a certain age, something none of us noticed. I explained what I thought had happened, apologized profusely, and offered to take it back and exchange it for something else.

"Oh no," he said. "She loves the doll. I wouldn't make her give it back. However, you might be getting a call from my wife. We knew that at some point we would have to have 'the conversation' with our daughter. We just didn't think it would be today."

"Since you're the master of a system we can't understand, my wife would like to know how to answer all of the questions like 'What's that? Why does he have one? Why don't I have one? How does it work?' You know, the usual stuff. How to respond to those little inquiries is something we can't understand."

All I could say was — ouch. Explaining anatomically correct toys is yet another glitch in a system we can't understand.

# Harbor Commission has unfinished projects on its agenda for the New Year

By Sam Bari

The Harbor Management Commission spent 2007 making plans, putting out fires, and prioritizing projects to get the best use out of their limited budget. Overall, the year was productive, informative, and thought provoking.

After wrestling with updated quotes, proposals and an increasing "to do" list, commissioner Robert Bowen, the facilities committee chairman, came up with a list that is being presented for review by the Town Council on projects that must be initiated on an as needed basis.

The list of waterfront improvements published in last week's Press included: the curbs and rails at East Ferry; the Ft. Getty boat ramp; the wood pile pier repairs; the wood pile pier new touch and go dock; the wood pile pier extension; the Ft. Getty pier; and the ferry landing at East Ferry. The list was a compilation of much needed repairs that must be initiated before they are beyond fixing and need to be replaced at greater

expense.

Bowen said it doesn't make sense to add new things to deteriorating facilities. "Some of these projects are nearly a decade old and still haven't gone beyond repeated discussion," Bowen said at a meeting earlier in the year. Consequently, he and the facilities committee have worked long and hard hours over the past months to compile the list of "must do" projects. Along with the list are budget recommendations to initiate the tasks and complete them according to need. Chairman Michael de Angeli said he would review the report and discuss the projects with Town Administrator Bruce Keiser.

After the town administrator and Town Council review the list, the commission is hopeful approvals will be made, funds allocated, and projects will be initiated.

The commission also made tremendous headway on the Harbor Management Plan and ordinances. They met with the Coastal Resources Management Council

(CRMC) last May to discuss what was needed to complete the plans, and they are presently waiting for CRMC representatives to make rulings so plans can be submitted for approval.

In addition to waterfront improvement plans, management plans and ordinances, the commission was saddled with the new harbormaster's boat suffering from galvanic corrosion. The commission had been trying to replace the old harbormaster's boat for several years, and finally had the funds to purchase a boat designed to serve the town for a long time at a cost of nearly \$98,000, according to de Angeli. The craft was only in the water a couple of months when severe galvanic corrosion was discovered, causing the inflatable hull to separate from the aluminum bottom.

The boat has been inspected, and analysis of the inspection is expected next week so that repairs can soon be under way to prepare the boat for use in the spring.

Despite the many obstacles preventing progress, the commission managed to install kayak racks, recommend mooring fields, and prepare a data base so that harbor business will be completely computerized by the beginning of the New Year. The ordinance and management plan will also be completed shortly, and put to rest. If all goes well, many harborfront improvements will be well on the way to completion by the beginning of the 2008 boating season.

# Art show looking for entries

The Wickford Art Association is searching for entries to its "Man and Beast" Open Juried Show. The show is open to work in all media, which features figure or wildlife themes. There is a non-refundable entry fee of \$12 per entry, or 3 for \$30. Cash prizes will be awarded. To register, bring actual artwork to the Wickford Art Association Gallery on Wednesday, Jan. 30

between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m., or on Jan. 31 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Accepted artwork will be displayed at the gallery from Feb. 1 to Feb. 20. An opening reception will be held on Sunday, Feb. 3 from 1 to 3 p.m. For directions and complete submission guidelines, visit [www.wickfordart.org](http://www.wickfordart.org) or call the gallery at 294-6840.



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