

# The Mast-Head: Air Traffic

By David E. Rattray | September 1, 2011 - 11:14am

Monday morning's helicopter traffic at East Hampton Airport began at about 6:12, at least according to the clock on my computer screen.

Because of the hurricane, Lisa and I had evacuated the dogs and the children to her parents' house on high ground off Route 114, about two-thirds of the way from East Hampton to Sag Harbor. I was up before the sun on Monday, trying to post updates on the storm on The Star's Web site. The door to the back deck was open, so the dogs, confused about being in the wrong house, could go in and out.

The skies above East Hampton were relatively quiet, at least for one of the last weekends in August. Had at least some of the helicopter crowd not opted to stay elsewhere, I expect the roar would have been more like that on the Monday the Dow Jones Industrial Average fainted after the United States' credit downgrade. I had been at Georgica Beach at about 7 a.m. that day, and let me tell you, the choppers had a certain urgency about them. One after the other came and went, ferrying the titans of Wall Street back to watch their portfolios do the lambaba with the ratings agencies.

I don't mean to make light of the irritation that many residents feel about helicopters. Frank Dalene, who lives in Wainscott, sent round a short video he made last week from his deck, showing what he said was Ira Rennert's chopper, which appears to be only a couple of dozen feet above his house.

Mr. Dalene, whom I have met several times and consider very reasonable, said he thought the pilot was deliberately trying to harass him and his family. Mr. Dalene has been a formidable critic of East Hampton Airport operations and is a co-founder of a new group dedicated to limiting helicopter noise. He said the Rennert overflight shook his house more violently than the Aug. 23 earthquake. Watching — and listening — to the video, I was inclined to agree. The group hasn't said much, if anything, though, about the noise jets make as they home in to the airport over East Hampton Village.

Of course, because this is an important election year in East Hampton Town, with Supervisor Bill Wilkinson hoping to hang on for a second two-year term, it isn't surprising that the airport controversy has come up again and become clouded by politics. What really will get clouded in

the back-and-forth is the fact that some people are being driven crazy by all the noise. It doesn't seem right.

***About the Author***

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