



Memories of a Hamptons Paparazzo

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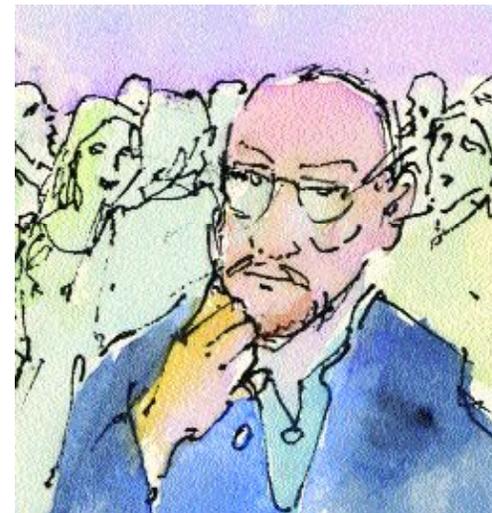
Debbie Tuma at work

In the non-stop whirlwind of Hamptons summer benefits, private parties, movie premieres, book signings, art openings, sporting and cultural events, I have had the pleasure of meeting, interviewing and photographing hundreds of famous people. As part of the small pack of Hamptons media professionals, who are joined on the summer weekends by the New York media professionals, we share a common, and fascinating lifestyle of running from event to event over 13 weekends of summer.

Often, we bump elbow to elbow as our cameras click for that one perfect shot of an A-list celebrity. More often than we'd like, we squeeze into tight places and tight shots, tripping over each other and our equipment, vying for the right angle, the right pose, of these sought-after celebs. These photos will appear in local newspapers, to city gossip columns, to the flashy pages of fashion and entertainment magazines around the world. But it's always the thrill of the chase, hunting down these celebs at all the nightclubs and parties, and even spotting them at the beach or walking through town, in their off-hours.

When I look back on all the parties and social events I've covered over 20 summers in the Hamptons, my mind is a mish-mosh of martini bars, gift bags, green manicured lawns, cocktails by the pool, hors d'ouerves, chit-chat, TV cameras, flashing bulbs, and background music. But I also think of the adrenaline rush of meeting deadlines, getting that photo to my editor that night or the next morning, and staying up till all hours to get all the right quotes, photos and captions straight.

People always ask me, "Of all the parties you've covered, which ones were the best?" or "Who was the most fascinating person you interviewed or photographed?" Although it's hard to remember all of the above, here is a small sample of my favorite events, and interesting people, from recent summers.



James Lipton - Hampton Classic



Calvin Klein, "VIP Sunday - Hampton Classic



Alec Bladwin - Hampton Classic



Debbie Tuma, Mercedes Ruehl, A.F. Wargo - Stella Adler Benefit, Bridgehampton

HAMPTON CLASSIC HORSE SHOW—GRAND PRIXE SUNDAY

One of the highlights each summer is the Hampton Classic Horse Show, held the last week in August, with champion English riding and jumping, on a world-class field in Bridgehampton. Over 50,000 people per day come to view the riding events each day, to shop in the elegant boutiques on the grounds of this exciting course, and to be part of this special event. But the finale of this seven-day event is always the Grand Prixe Sunday, when the winners are announced, the cash and trophies are given out, and one of the best parties of the summer takes place in the exclusive yellow and white-striped VIP tent.

Many companies and corporations buy tables in this tent for their clients, which are displayed with the most elegant flower decorations, and also displayed with food by the top caterers. Business executives, horse people, movie stars and politicians all mingle in this long tent while watching the action in the ring. Many of the celebrities over the years have come to watch their children and other family members ride in this event. The late Peter Jennings always came to watch his daughter Elizabeth ride, and this year, proud papa Bruce Springsteen sat in the VIP tent watching his daughter Jessica ride. Two prominent people who have come regularly over the years to the Classic are Calvin Klein and Kelly Klein, and Kelly has been riding in this event for years as well. Joan Lundun and her children have ridden in this show. James Lipton is a big supporter and comes regularly to follow the action. Over the years, a familiar sight at this show has been famed photographer Francesco Scavullo, until his recent death. He always loved the horses, and coming to the parties. Another horse-lover is Steven Spielberg, who even ducked under an umbrella to come this year in the pouring rain, wearing his yellow slicker. "This is one of my favorite events of the summer in the Hamptons, and I wouldn't miss it for the world," Spielberg told me on Opening Day Sunday.

Christie Brinkley, another rider passionate about horses, has come each year with her family, as has Alec Baldwin, Katie Couric and Matt Lauer. This year, as well as last, New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg has come to the Grand Prixe Sunday, as has former Mayor Rudy Giuliani and his wife, Judy. The Hampton Classic International Horse Show raises money each year for Southampton Hospital and other charities.

STELLA ADLER PARTY, BRIDGEHAMPTON

Since so many of the famous actors living in the Hamptons have gone to the Stella Adler Studio of Acting in Manhattan, there was a great benefit for this prestigious school last summer. It was held at the lovely, wooded Bridgehampton home of Barbara and John R. "Bunky" Hearst, with a cocktail reception, followed by some Broadway singing and acting performances. Actor Roy Scheider, who attended this school along with Mercedes Ruehl, made some speeches about the high quality of this school, which has also turned out such famous actors as Warren Beatty and Marlon Brando.

This party was a "who's who" of celebrities—with other stars including Eli Wallach and his wife, Anne Jackson, Sidney Lumet, Kitty Carlisle, Phyllis Newman, and Dina Merrill with her husband, Ted Hartley. Also on the scene was playwright Joe Pintauro, and Pia Lindstrom. Besides the delicious catered food, and the music provided by the Andrew Baker Trio, this party had a lovely atmosphere, with views of the woods from all windows and open-air decks of this magnificent home of the Hearsts.

During this event, Roy Scheider told of how the Stella Adler School got him started in his chosen career of acting, and how he hopes it will also benefit other young actors. "It was very exciting to go to this school, with top professional teachers," he said. "I will always be thankful for this great education."

In addition to this amazing benefit, another even more star-studded benefit for the Stella Adler School was held later that year, the "Stella By Starlight Gala" with Warren Beatty, who became the Chairman of the Stella Adler Studio taking over for Marlon Brando. Brando's son Miko was also there, along with Vice-chairs Roy Scheider and producer Mike Medavoy. Others attending were Lauren BaCall, Whoopi Goldberg, Jessica Lange, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Ron Howard and his daughter Bryce Dallas Howard, Mike Nichols, Tony Kushner, and Albert Maysles.

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