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FREE

How does she do it?

Is it smoke and mirrors or just hard work and political savvy?

How has County Executive Lucille Pattison, a Democrat in a largely Republican county, dominated the local political scene for more than a decade? Our in-depth analysis, starting on page 11, offers some answers.



by Juilene Osborne-McKnight

Rhapsodizing on the Hudson

We are sailing on the Hudson. Any writer who does not rhapsodize when sailing on the Hudson is a fool, or, that worst of beings, a pragmatist. I am certainly the first on occasion, but I have never been accused of being the second. I rhapsodize when sailing on the Hudson.

We motor out on the Rondout Creek in the late morning light. Beside us trawlers glide by, imposing with their long lines and high flying bridges. Other sailboats putter by, sails furled. We all wave. Speedboats try to rein in on the Rondout, holding back their power for a run up the open river. One lone courageous fellow paddles his kayak between the larger vessels; the swells threaten to swamp him even here in the shelter of the creek.

Further up the creek, the Clearwater is tied at anchor. A crew member is standing in the lifeboat which is roped above the stern. Beneath her feet, water is trickling merrily out of the bottom of the boat.

"It leaks!" she calls to us as we pass.

"So we see!" we shout back.

The water continues to descend; all of us laugh. Who could worry on such a glorious day?

By degrees, we achieve the open river. The wind is gusting wildly back and forth across the expanse of water; whitecaps crest along the little swells. Near us, a sailor has turned too close to the wind; his sail is luffing wildly.

Our friends who own the boat decide that we will use the motor. The wind is a little too high, the water a little too rough. If we sail, we will be lying on keel.

We nod and smile. It is nice to be in the capable hands of people who know what they are doing, even if they are being cautious for the sake of their passengers' child. Occasionally it is nice to not know what you are doing. We do not know about throwing off anchor lines. We do not know about raising or lowering sails, about *green right going* or *red right returning*.

We know the port side from the starboard side; we know the bow from the stern. We know enough to sit on the deck drinking cold sodas and watching the parade of boats go by. We know enough to tip our heads back in the sun and wind. Our little girl knows enough to stand up and stretch out her arms each time we encounter the wake of another boat. She knows enough to shout with laughter as the boat rocks in the swells.

Ignorance is bliss.

The speedboats open up when they hit the open river.

They whiz past us, spray flying from them, moving so fast that they seem to glide above the surface of the water. They move too fast to wave.

Let them have speed; I want to savor the river.

On the other bank, the train goes by, an engine at each end. The train faces north and south at the same time, something you cannot see as a passenger. The two-headed train reminds me of the Push-me-pull-you of the Doctor Dolittle tales. I tell my little girl and we laugh to think the train could strain its middle so.

'That is what the Hudson still has: romance, the romance of history, the romance of natural surroundings, not changed too much from one or two or three hundred years ago.'

Wind surfers dart out from the shore. They cling to their sails in the gusting wind, bundled up in wetsuits against the inevitable fall. I consider them a little crazy, but it's fun to watch them zig-zag across the water, their brightly colored sails dipping and swirling like laundry on a wind-tossed line.

I watch the depth finder measure the river below us—here 30 feet, here more than 50. I think about the traders who plied canoes piled with pelts down the Hudson. I wonder how they felt with the river stretching wide away to either side and deep below them, the only sounds the dip and swish of the paddles and their own echoing laughter. I wonder if the grandness of the river and the immensity of the blue and purple mountains pressed in on them, overwhelming them with their largeness, or if they ignored their surroundings for the task of moving their goods downriver. I look around for the kayaker, wondering if he made it to the other side; I

cannot see him anywhere.

These surroundings would be impossible to ignore. They remind us that we are very small and the world around us very large. They place us as a pinprick of moving light in the frames of history and geography. Even the condominiums rising along the river near the mouth of the Rondout look as fragile as matchsticks against the river and the mountains.

I consider Henry Hudson and the Half Moon. I consider the parade of New York wealthy who came upriver in the beautiful weather. I try to consider Donald Trump coming ponderously up the river in his yacht with the onyx bathrooms, but the image lacks romance.

That is what the Hudson still has: romance, the romance of history, the romance of natural surroundings, not changed too much from one or two or three hundred years ago.

We turn back toward the Rondout. The old lighthouse comes into view. Near the shore, two swans glide gracefully by. Gulls swoop overhead, crying raucously. A doe stands at the edge of the woods near the creek. We wave to the crew of the Clearwater. Speedboats slow down, edge into the creek, contained.

An antique car show gleams from the Rondout riverfront. A turquoise convertible and a red roadster face us; the car enthusiasts on land wave to the boat enthusiasts on the water. Further along, a man sits near the undulating branches of a willow tree. He has a sketch pad on his knee; we will not disturb his reverie.

Our friends begin the docking process, throwing out lines, jumping to the dock. We unload coolers and windbreakers, lift a laughing child to the rocking dock below.

We return to the mundane; we load the cars, find the restrooms, begin the long drive back home.

But something of the river remains; something in the wide alluring curves of the water, in the distant Catskills beckoning like some purple Brigadoon, something that remains with every Hudson traveler.

Never accuse me of being a pragmatist; I have been sailing on the Hudson.

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