# Sometimes it takes a pro to tackle clutter

*"Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing up is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing." - Phyllis Diller*

**By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH**
*Cape May Star and Wave*

STONE HARBOR – Professional organizer Vali G. Heist believes the clutter that surrounds people is not harmless – she believes it is keeping clutterers from being as happy as they could be.

Heist believes this to the extent that she has created an acronym that describes clutter – C.R.A.P. – Clutter that Robs Anyone of Pleasure.

Heist recently addressed a newly formed group called Clutterers Anonymous. The group is meeting at the Women's Civic Club of Stone Harbor. Heist asked the audience of clutterers what was the difference between C.R.A.P. and "stuff."

"How much time does it take you to organize it?" Heist said. "Everything that has a strong attachment, it takes time to clean, refill, find it, polish it, store it, etc."

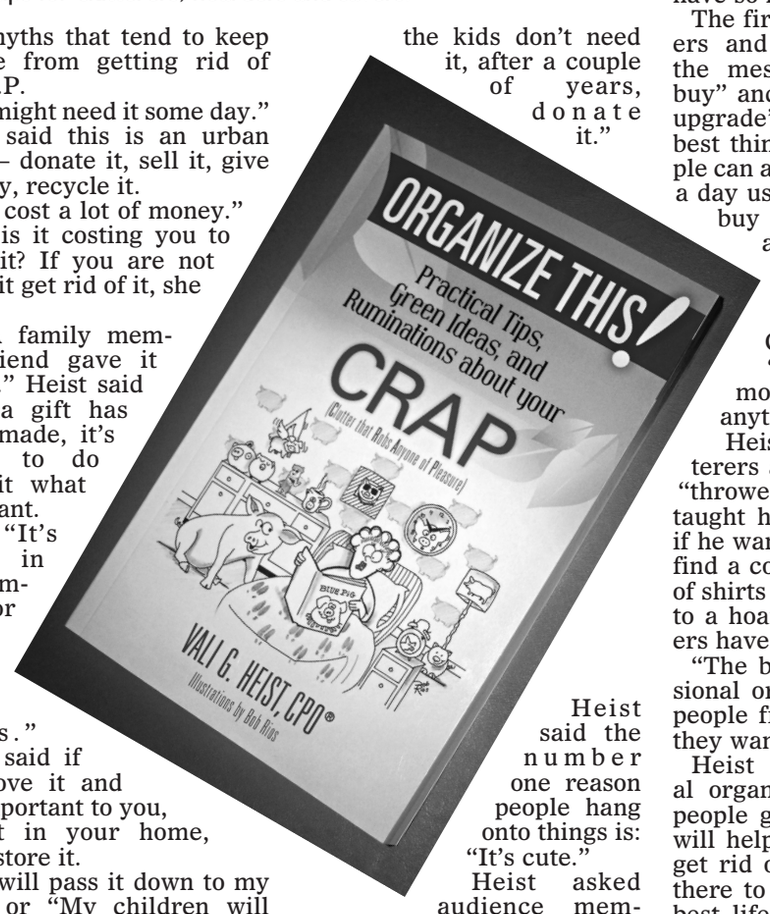
Heist said when it gets to the point where you have to take care of stuff before you take care of yourself that's a sure sign of C.R.A.P.

"The reason I am organized is so I can have fun," Heist said. "I can leave at a moment's notice to do anything."

Heist said clutter is a very personal thing, and people hang onto it for various reasons. Some examples of things she considers C.R.A.P. are:

- Things given by people you don't like or things you don't need. Heist said a woman she worked with hung onto a box of dishes from her estranged mother.
- Projects unfinished for a long time or supplies to do them. Heist said there is no point to keeping a project or craft you are not going to finish – let it go.
- Clutter is clothes that make you feel bad about yourself – clothes that don't fit.
- Memorabilia that has no meaning now.
- Old photos. "It's just paper. If you don't recognize people in the photos what's the point? Heist said. She recommends making digital copies of photos for taking up less space.

**Christopher South**/Cape May Star and Wave
Above, professional organizer Vali G. Heist speaking at a meeting of Clutterers Anonymous. Below is her book, "Organize This!" which offers tips for clutterers, hoarders and savers.




Heist said there are certain myths that tend to keep people from getting rid of C.R.A.P.

- "I might need it some day." Heist said this is an urban myth – donate it, sell it, give it away, recycle it.
- "It cost a lot of money." What is it costing you to store it? If you are not using it get rid of it, she said.
- "A family member/friend gave it to me." Heist said once a gift has been made, it's yours to do with it what you want.
- "It's been in my family for years." Heist said if you love it and it's important to you, use it in your home, don't store it.
- "I will pass it down to my kids" or "My children will get it when I'm gone. "If you knew how complicated and exhausting it is for kids to go through a house you would get rid of it," Heist said. "If the kids don't need it, after a couple of years, donate it."

Heist said the number one reason people hang onto things is: "It's cute."

Heist asked audience members if there was a yard sale in their attics or no car in the garage. She said paper management and hanging onto books was an issue for many people. However, as a rule, she said anything not used for at least two years is clutter.

Heist lives near Reading, Pa., and has a second home in Villas. She worked in administration at Alberta University, where one of her jobs was to help feshmen get organized

"After seven semesters I was beat," she said.

Heist worked in project management and financial aid, which she said was the busiest office at a university. She said she read a magazine article about a woman who became a professional organizer. She said there are about 4,000 people across the country who are professional organizers. For many of them, their main work is helping people organize their homes.

Heist said she noticed all the C.R.A.P. people could buy while shopping. She said with each holiday they are putting more and more C.R.A.P. in the aisles.

Heist addressed the fundamental question of why we have so much CRAP

The first reason is advertisers and retailers. She said the message is "buy, buy, buy" and "upgrade, upgrade, upgrade" to whatever the next best thing is. Heist said people can actually shop 24 hours a day using the Internet, and buy more because things are cheaper, people are living in bigger houses, and they tend to fill them with CRAP.

"People are buying more and not taking anything out," she said.

Heist said whereas clutterers are "savers" she is a "thrower." She said she has taught her son, for example, if he wants to buy new shirts, find a corresponding number of shirts to get rid of. Married to a hoarder, Heist said savers have to learn to let go.

"The biggest thing (professional organizers) do is help people find homes for things they want to let go," she said.

Heist said a professional organizer does not make people get rid of things, but will help you decide what to get rid of. She said they are there to help people live the best life, whether they want to clean out a room, an entire house, or start a business.

*Please see* **Clutter**, *page A7*

# Tell

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In reference to the SADC letter Meyers referred to, Wilde said Payne recently visited her vineyard and admitted, in the presence of several individuals, that the letter was incorrect. Wilde said she was trying to simply run a successful farm and feels she is being discriminated against by the mayor and the borough, which has since led to Wilde filing legal action in federal court.

In October, Wilde and Willow Creek Winery filed a lawsuit against the borough and Kaithern, alleging the mayor has used her position to harass the winery. The complaint alleges that Kaithern, who is a neighbor of the vineyard, directed inspection officials to issue baseless stop-work orders and citations and has also attempted to impede on the winery in order to protect herself from competition. Kaithern, as mayor is permitted to perform weddings and she performs numerous wedding ceremonies in the city of Cape May and in West Cape May.

Meyers gave his stance on the upcoming May 30 county informative hearing about proposed amendments to the Right to Farm Act. He said he encourages the borough to have members of the Planning Board and Environmental Commission in attendance at the meeting.

"It's a very important set of rules and the changes that have been made to those are extensive and complicated. I think the document is 57 pages long. It will take some preparation to become knowledgeable about it," he said. "I think the regulations need to be reviewed with a very fine tooth comb because the definitions are not entirely clear."

Maureen Behrmann of Stevens Street said she loved the idea of the winery, but did not want a banquet hall near her home. Behrmann said Willow Creek Winery has led to a high increase in traffic on weekends, which worries her because she and her children often walk along Stevens Street.

"I've had people beeping at me because we're walking partially on the street, but we don't have a sidewalk to walk on," she said.

Brenda Crossley of Pond Creek Lane said she also welcomes the winery and called it a "fabulous venture for the area," but was concerned rules and regulations were not being followed.

"If there are wedding parties or other frequent events, to me that takes away from the rural, agricultural qualities we have in West Cape May," Crossley said. "We're supportive of the winery as a winery."

# Deposition of Willow Creek Winery given

**By CAIN CHAMBERLIN**
*Cape May Star and Wave*

WEST CAPE MAY – A lawsuit filed by Willow Creek Winery and its owner Barbara Wilde against the Borough of West Cape May and Mayor Pam Kaithern in October 2012 claims the mayor has used her position to harass the winery.

Wilde's attorney, Colin Bell of the Atlantic City law firm of Hankin, Sandman and Palladino, filed the complaint on behalf of Willow Creek Winery. The complaint alleges that Kaithern, who resides within 200 feet of the Willow Creek property, directed inspection officials to issue unjustified stop-work orders and citations.

In 2003, Wilde was granted $890,000 from the county which included a deed restriction that specifies 36 acres of the farm's 50 acres must remain in agricultural use. According to Wilde, the deed restriction precludes her from building condominiums or homes on the property, but does not forbid her from hosting events in the vineyard, as long as she is using them to promote and sell her agricultural product.

Wilde's lawsuit alleges that Kaithern performs wedding ceremonies throughout the city of Cape May and West Cape May, and that she is attempting to impede the winery in order to protect herself from competition.

On Feb. 4 at the County Administration Building, Attorney Bell questioned Diane Wieland, the County Director of Tourism, who was sworn in and testified before Sheila McWilliams, a certified court reporter. According to the report, the defendants' attorney, Allan Richardson of Richardson, Galella and Austermuhl, Esquires, was also present during the deposition.

At one point during Wieland's deposition, Bell asked Wieland if she has ever had any conversations with Kaithern regarding Willow Creek Winery. Wieland referred to a Conference of Mayors meeting at the Mad Batter restaurant in Cape May in September 2012, in which Wieland was a speaker. While giving a presentation, Wieland said she handed out a brochure to those in attendance, listing venues and events in the county. She said Kaithern approached her after the presentation and claimed that the brochure contained incorrect information about Willow Creek Winery, saying it is not actually a 50-acre property, and it contained an elaborate chicken coup, which would be used for events and unauthorized events they were planning to host.

Bell then asked Wieland if she specifically remembers what Kaithern was referring to in terms of the events.

"I know she was very, very much against the wedding aspect, of which I explained that we didn't purposely list that because we know that was an issue, and that's why if anyone had put that in their copy, we did not list that because we knew there was an issue. Other than that, when they signed off, we assumed it's correct," Wieland said in the deposition.

Wieland went on to testify that she subsequently verified the information and that, contrary to Kaithern's representations, it was indeed correct. Bell asked Wieland if Kaithern mentioned anything more about performing wedding ceremonies. Wieland said, in her opinion, the mayor was concerned that her personal wedding business would go down.

"(Kaithern) had said that Barbara Wilde was an ordained minister, that she was going to be performing weddings at Willow Creek, that in September (Kaithern) normally has two and three weddings a weekend, Saturdays and Sundays," Weiland said.

Weiland continued, saying Kaithern was supplementing her mayor's salary by performing weddings, and now Wilde would be doing them, and she would not be able to perform as many weddings.

Wilde said this is one of the many reasons Kaithern has allegedly discriminated against her vineyard. Wilde referred to other neighbors who have continually addressed concerns about Willow Creek Winery at borough meetings as "co-conspirators" of Kaithern, who are political supporters of the mayor or contributors to her campaign.

"It is illegal and inappropriate to use your elected position to harass and discriminate in order to further your personal agenda," Wilde said. "The deposition of the County Director of Tourism substantiates that this is exactly what is happening."

The lawsuit filed also alleges that under the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Laws, because Kaithern owns property within 200 feet of Willow Creek Winery, she should have disqualified herself from official proceedings and actions as mayor regarding the winery.

When the lawsuit was filed in October, neither Kaithern, nor Borough Solicitor Frank Corrado were aware of the lawsuit until they were contacted by local press to comment. At the time, Corrado told the Star and Wave he could not comment on the issue because it was a matter of litigation, but said the plaintiff's suit had no merit.

Corrado could not be reached before press time for additional comment.

Wilde said more witnesses will be examined by her attorney regarding the case in upcoming weeks.

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