

Going out
Time share hell!

Don't expect a Hamptons paradise — you'll wind up in a nut house

By JEFF NICHOLS

FOR years, I've summured in the Hamptons. Every year, I envision a paradise of long walks on the beach with a sultry companion. But it always ends the same: in dysfunction and pain.

Perhaps my luck has something to do with my living situation.

I do not own or rent. I have a share, which means I am the lowest form of Hamptous creature. It's not an easy existence.

When the share house begins to form in February, the organizers are very selective. They agonize, trying to find the right chemistry.

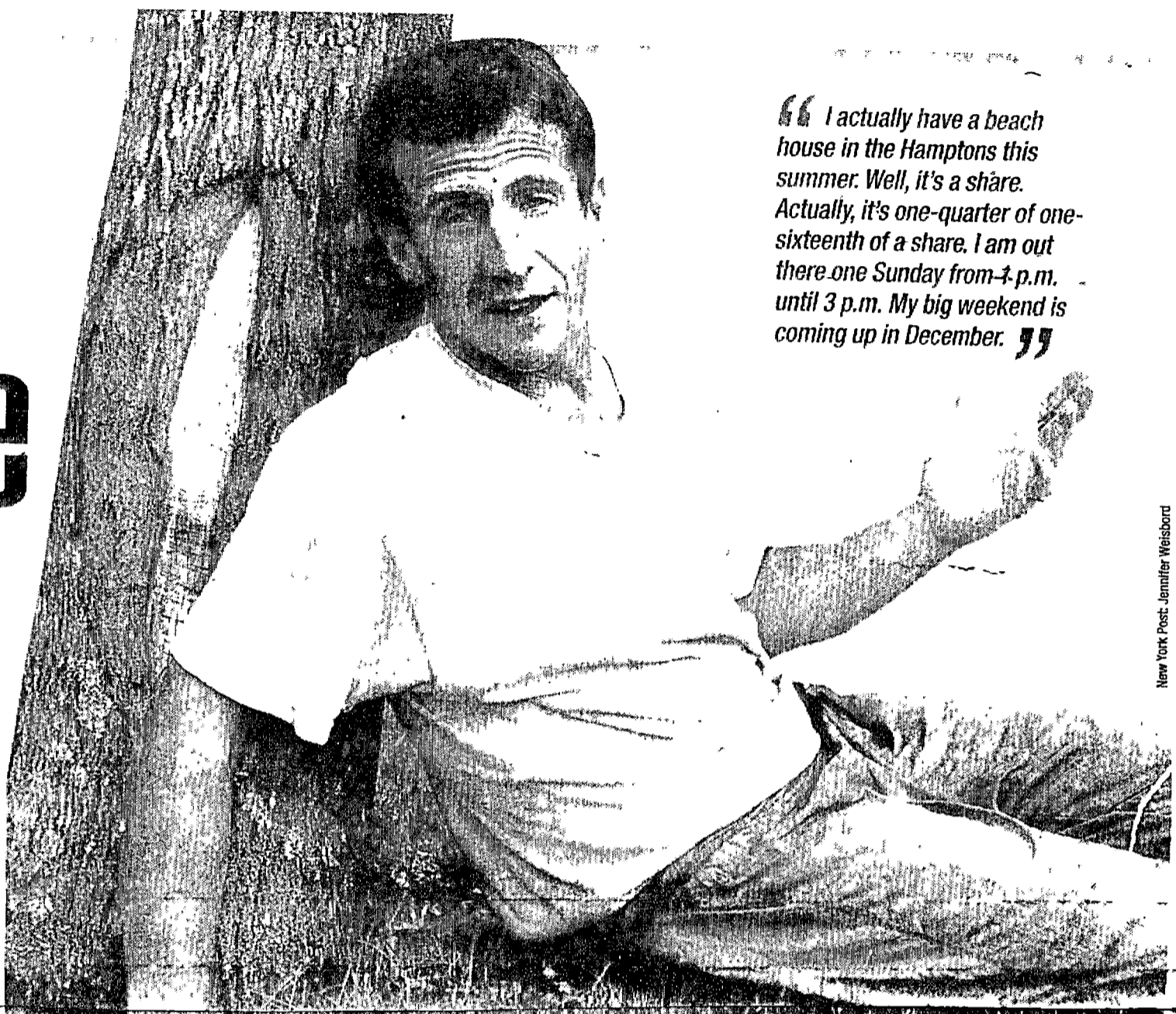
By the time June comes around, anyone with a pulse and \$1,800 is in. Saddam Hussein could land a spot in my house.

If you have a share this summer, like all Hamptonsites, you'll spend the entire week before your weekend trying to find a way to the beach.

Once out there, you'll spend the entire weekend trying to figure out the best departure time and route back to the city.

On a Sunday, you can practically hear the question echoing across Hamptons beaches: "Is it better to leave at four or eight o'clock?" Less agonizing went into the storming of Normandy.

Once in the pad with your share-mates, avoid group dinners at all costs. Usually there's some cheapo who pounds eight shots, gets the surf & turf, and suggests the check be split evenly. This obviously enrages the other share-mates, who then drink water and split a



"I actually have a beach house in the Hamptons this summer. Well, it's a share. Actually, it's one-quarter of one-sixteenth of a share. I am out there one Sunday from 4 p.m. until 3 p.m. My big weekend is coming up in December."



Jeff Nichols, a stand-up comic, is resigned to rooming with colorful characters like his current sharemates, pictured at left.

Aside from the billing problems, group dinners are known for their haphazard seating patterns. Last summer, I yearned to sit next to a cute schoolteacher from Garden City. Instead, I got the passive-aggressive, wooden-toothed accountant from Queens.

Even worse are dinners at home. One person gathers \$10 from each of the others, then returns home — to their horror — with a case of Schlitz, popcorn shrimp and some chicken gizzards.

Shares are filled with plenty of characters, including clean freaks, sexaholics, potheads and late sleepers who stay up until 4 a.m. listening to Pink Floyd albums, then insist that "everyone keep it down" around noon.

Then there is the silent psycho-killer type, who refuses to volunteer any information about himself. He is an easy target for rumors.

There's the person who runs the house — hated by everyone, no matter how wholesome and genuine he or she is.

And most of the time, you will find yourself with people who have latched onto a belief system to make life more tolerable: born-

ers, triathletes and herbalists. Here are some other key figures:

■ **The Freeloader:** This person is always showing up at the wrong time — then acting as if there had been a scheduling mix-up. When confronted, he or she acts confused and says, "There must be some scheduling mistake. Have I got the wrong weekend... again?"

The offender studies the calendar before conceding, "Oh, yeah, I see now what you are saying. This is not my weekend, nor was last weekend," followed by a conspicuously contrived moment of clarity,

have a quarter-share, which means my weekend is not coming up for a while. Oh, well. What room should I take?"

■ **The Car Guy:** Not so much a person as an apparatus to transport people to the beach. Tragically, he thinks he is popular.

Then the car breaks down and people don't talk to him. But he gets his revenge: When the car is running again, he drags his share-mates on many mundane personal errands before eventually dropping them off at the beach.

He also feels justified, since it's

inappropriate questions of his captives: "So, I hear you were in Vietnam. Did you kill anyone over there?"

■ **The Ghost:** This is the one who does not show up at all, also known as The Coolest Person. After all, if he isn't in the Hamptons, he must be somewhere more glamorous — summering in Paris, working for the CIA or shooting a Julia Roberts movie.

Odds are, Ghost is laying on the floor of a five-story walk-up, strung out, unable to find enough capital under his couch to get on the train. Still, he just has to show up Labor Day to be the talk of the party.

The main point I would drive home about time shares is that, for the most part, we are injured, if not completely broken.

Many people who join shares are creative and gifted, but many are not.

If you are over 30 and in a share, chances are you fit into "the war is over and I lost" crowd. While it can be depressing, once you accept your position, it is not without color. So come lick your wounds