

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Frank Farance, Roosevelt Island Information Service

In an exchange of letters, little hope for FDR Memorial

Dear Dr. Blue,

I am writing on behalf of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute... regarding preserving the three acres of land at the southern tip of Roosevelt Island as a memorial park... It is my understanding that this has been designated by the Urban Development Corporation and the Four Freedoms Foundation as a memorial park in honor of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Though sufficient funding has not been raised to build the memorial designed by Louis Kahn, I feel that it is extremely important that this site be designated and maintained as a park in honor of the Roosevelts.

I would be extremely grateful if you could confirm that this site will continue to be reserved for a park in honor of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and that no development will take place on this site...

The incredible location... and the ideals behind the development of Roosevelt Island make this a symbolically fitting location for a memorial to President Roosevelt.

Sincerely,
Gifford Miller
Council Member
Fifth District – Manhattan

Dear Councilman Miller:

Thank you for your recent letter to Dr. Blue...

...the southern tip of the island... was never formally designated... for a Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt memorial, and no mention of such a memorial can be found in the Master Lease negotiated between the City and the Urban Development Corporation...

It has been more than a quarter of a century since plans for a memorial were drawn, and to date, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute has not been able to raise the funds necessary to bring to fruition past suggestions.

The agency has recently issued a RFP for Waterfront Development, and Southpoint is mentioned in it. The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, and other interested parties, are welcome to participate in the RFP process, but I would suggest that any proposals submitted demonstrate a greater degree of feasibility than those of the past.

Sincerely,
Michael Twomey Greason
Director of Communications
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation



View from UN: Sign at Southpoint

Website NYC10044

Grannis Asks Mayor to Fill His Slots on the RIOOC Board

by Debra Mount Cornet

Roosevelt Island's representative to the State Assembly, Pete Grannis, has asked Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to propose two names for membership on the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOOC) Board of Directors immediately.

In a letter also signed by City Council Member Gifford Miller, Grannis pressed the Mayor to take action. "We are writing you to urge your immediate attention to the long-overdue matter of fulfilling your responsibility for recommending to Governor Pataki the names of quali-

fied people to fill the two vacancies that have existed on the [RIOOC] Board of Directors during your tenure as Mayor."

Referring to New York State Law, Grannis reminded the Mayor that the two positions may be filled only by him and that one must be an Island resident, and stressed the City's interest in the "continued success of this model community and its 8,200 residents. We feel it is particularly important at this critical juncture in the Island's history that representatives of the City administration be involved in RIOOC's decisions," Grannis wrote.

RIRA President Patrick Stewart supported any effort to enlist the City in Island matters. "I wholeheartedly endorse what Grannis said. However, we have been unsuccessful so far in getting the City involved."

In an interview last week, Grannis acknowledged growing unease about the fiscal state of the Island. "I'm worried that it looks like a financial shell game. It's most critical."

"The Island is a substantial investment. You would think the City of New York might show some concern about whether the Island succeeds." And, he observed, "The people are City Taxpayers."

Governor Pataki recently appointed a non-resident, Frank McKenna, to the RIOOC Board in a position previously occupied by a resident, Willard Warren. Warren could have been reappointed, though his term had expired.

Stealth Budgeting \$100,000 to Good Shepherd

Assemblymember Pete Grannis announced Monday that \$100,000 was appropriated in the 1997-98 New York State budget to start restoration of Roosevelt Island's historic Chapel of the Good Shepherd. The appropriation was placed in the budget at Grannis' request.

In an apparent move to prevent the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation from using the funds for other purposes, or not using them at all (RIOOC President Jerome Blue has refused to ask for a State appropriation for the Island), the funds have been put under the control of the New York Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites Program. The church is one of six Island landmarks.

Good Shepherd has been the subject of increasing concern as it has shown vulnerability to wet weather and ordinary decay. Residents Association President Patrick Stewart, among other resident leaders, has suggested the building might become unsafe for the many community activities centered there.

The church was a gift of the banker George M. Bliss to the Episcopal City Mission Society, and designed by British architect Frederick Clark Withers in 1889 for worship by inmates of Welfare Island's prisons, hospitals and almshouse. Today, the church is used by the Island's Roman Catholic church as well as by the Protestant Parish.

"I'm very pleased that money will now be available to begin the overdue work needed to restore this cherished community treasure," Grannis said in making the announcement. Capital project priorities identified by the Chapel's consulting engineer include work on the roof, masonry, drainage system, leaded windows and exterior doors.

School Seeking Volunteers

The School Volunteer Program (SVP) at PS/IS 217 is looking for participants. Training sessions are scheduled for three Tuesday mornings, starting October 14.

"I like it very much," says Monique Russ, an Island senior who spends two hours a week helping children in the school's library. "I was really shy at first, a little unsure of myself, but I'm absolutely insane about kids. I sense that they need to be surrounded by people who care about them and respect them. Somehow, it's very easy to reach them – even the difficult kids. I found that they're very receptive."

Islanders interested in learning more about the program can call Susan Cohen, the PS/IS 217 Guidance Counselor, at 980-1380.

The New York City SVP, founded in 1956, was the first of its kind in the nation. It has served as the model for hundreds of similar efforts nationwide. Research has demonstrated that nine out of ten students helped by SVP tutors improved their attitude toward school, and a third of those tutored because of academic difficulties achieved or exceeded grade level in reading or math within a single year.

"I feel that I'm getting much more back than I give [to the program]," says Russ. While her volunteer schedule in the school's library is two hours a week, the program uses volunteers for longer periods as well. Most tutoring takes place in daytime hours, but evening and weekend placements are also available.

Group to Propose Fixing Island Gov't

Island government is broken and needs a complete overhaul. That's the conclusion of a report prepared by the Maple Tree Group (MTG), after weekly open meetings since July that focused on what should be done about governance of Roosevelt Island in the future.

The group's leader, David Bauer, will present its group's draft report to a public meeting of the Common Council of the Residents Association (RIRA) at 8:00 Wednesday night (Oct. 8). He is a retired city manager and consultant to local governments.

"We've set personalities aside," says Bauer. "The draft report lays the blame for defects on the system that created the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOOC), which we see as a 'Father Knows Best' approach."

The MTG report proposes that services presently under the control of RIOOC be turned over to an elected board of Island citizens, suggesting that since New York State has withdrawn financial support for day-to-day services, there is no reason for RIOOC to decide how services should be administered.

If RIRA's Common Council gives general approval to the ideas in the draft report, MTG plans to seek replacement of the legislation that created RIOOC.

Copies of the draft report will be available Monday evening at MTG's regular meeting, held at 7:30 at Good Shepherd.

Blackwell House, Island's Oldest Building, Threatened by Neglect and Decay



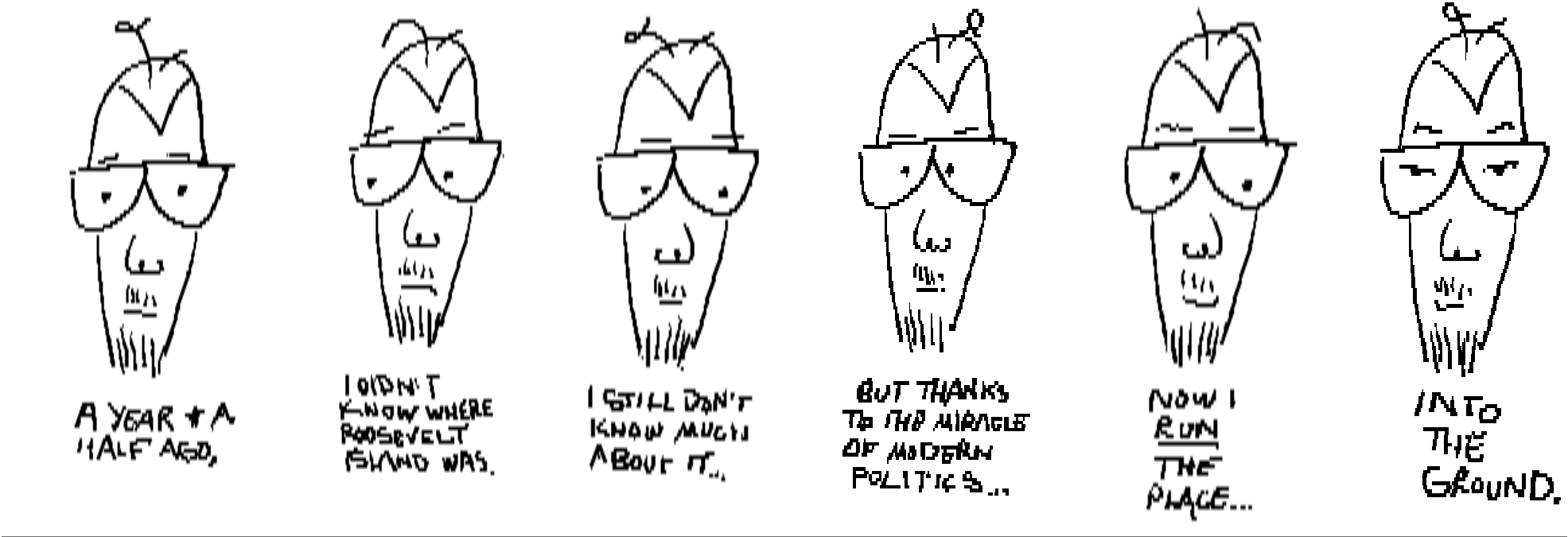
by Mary Camper-Titsingh

Most of us pass the Blackwell farmhouse nearly every day. We are charmed by the historic gray, clapboard house that stands in a park at the south end of our Town Center. The Blackwell House is one of six landmark structures on Roosevelt Island. It is one of very few farmhouses dating from the post-Revolutionary War period and it is one of the oldest houses surviving in New York.

But Blackwell House may not survive much longer if its present exterior deterioration is evidence. The paint on the entire two-story house, especially the white-painted trim, is cracked and peeling, allowing rainwater to rot the bare wood underneath the paint. Curling wood shingles are buffeted by overhanging tree limbs, vines are growing in a gutter, broken windowpanes are covered over with cardboard, the rear porch, with its four elegant, but splitting Ionic columns that hold up its roof, is threatening to collapse. One can only hope that no pedestrian

See Blackwell, page 3





A Page of Opinion

Stunning Numbers

One day last week I was stunned by a report on television that black babies have a mortality rate 50% higher than white babies. Numerous reasons were cited for the disparity, but I could not really focus on them at the time because the figures themselves were still weighing on my mind. I phoned my friend Jerome – Dr. Jerome Tolbert, who is black and an Island resident – to ask him if maybe I had been mistaken in what I heard. Unfortunately not. I asked what could be done to reduce those tragic numbers. Jerome said he is involved in work aimed at just that goal. He promised to write an article for *WIRE* readers to address the problem.

Sacred Cows

Phew! Or *pew*. There is a stink arising from RIOC's handling of a takeover of control for scheduling events at the Church of the Good Shepherd, and the rentals that might be generated there. Somehow, I have a sense that RIOC views the chapel as a potential cash cow, or if you will, a fatted calf, intending to milk it for all it can. Maybe it's time for someone to nail to the church door a manifesto that says "Let this sanctuary alone." Better still, nail the same thing to RIOC's inner door, the one that protects its sacred cows.



Honoring Olga

One of the few positive things the current administration of RIOC has done in recent memory is to honor our long-time supporter, State Senator Olga Mendez, during Hispanic Heritage Month. Olga has constantly celebrated with us and protested with us here on many occasions, particularly when our Tram service was threatened, and has always been responsive to individual pleas for help insofar as possible. She truly deserves to be awarded all of the accolades Islanders can bestow on her as Hispanic Heritage Month continues through October 15.

Getting Involved

Calling all you would-be community volunteers – those who haven't already offered their services to others. There is a news item in this edition that might appeal to you. Our own PS/IS 217 needs school volunteers. A classy way to get involved.



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I am one of those transplanted New Yorkers. Growing up in Northeastern Ohio, I knew the joy of having a park to romp in, friends to congregate with, and neighbors to stuff a sandwich in me when necessary. So, when the production world brought me to NYC, I expected those little elements of happiness from the midwest to be nothing more than a fond and distant memory.

Then I discovered this Island. A haven for bikes and roller bladers, a place where the water, the trees and the family stroller mingle with the hum of the FDR... a community sensitive to the needs of the Goldwater residents, supportive to the hectic life of professionals and responsive to the basic family unit. How could there be any sort of major upheaval in a world so fundamentally sound?

But, as is often the case, someone and/or something is threatening this brave and harmonious Island environment. It would be easy to complain, blame, point the finger in a variety of directions. After all, in this way we could vent our rage and return to our hectic or placid routines.

Invariably, however, the truth becomes evident. In order to have a community we must commune. Politicians and business interests can either be corrupt and greedy or representative and responsible. It is our duty to make them accountable, responsive and respectful of our community and its welfare.

island observer

If we choose to speak as one, become proactive and define our vision for this island, the insensitive, unresponsive and irresponsible will have no choice but to lead, follow or get out of our way.

Until we do this, the fenced land, empty facilities and "for Sale/Development" signs will continue to plague this gem of an Island.

Maybe we just don't want a community here. After all, we would not be facing the issues at hand if the population organized, galvanized and realized that they, and not some disassociated individual or organizations, are the guts and glory of Roosevelt Island.

It is time to protect and promote that which we love. For most assuredly, there are those who would gladly sacrifice our community for their limited, uninformed and selfish reasons.

Then many of us would have to begin a new search for community.

Tom Shaker

island observer
appears regularly on
Website NYC10044
www.nyc10044.com
Contributions welcome

Letters

To the Editor,

This is in response to your *Hello, Mr. Mayor?* editorial in the September 20 issue, and in particular to the possibility of approaching the media, calling ourselves *the City Dwellers the Mayor Forgot*. By all means, let's take our case to the media in the form of a press conference, but let's place the blame where it belongs: squarely on the shoulders of Pataki & Company.

While almost certainly Guiliani, were we to take our complaints to him, would be sympathetic, legally he would be unable to otherwise help and would be correct in so saying. Roosevelt Island and its governance are simply not in any way under the City's jurisdiction – we were, we are and we will be controlled solely by the State. Better we go to the media billed as *the State Wards the Governor Forgot*.

Barbara Potts
Island House

To the Editor,

Well, Dr. Blue has done it, again. In his finite wisdom, lack of good judgment and uncaring for the RI residents he has removed the rich history details of the island from the shuttle busses and replaced them with the now badly buckled, hanging "Advertise Here" announcements along the full length and both sides of the inside bus space. I often re-read the history to remind myself of the richness of the island and visitors to the island must also get a similar impression. Now it reminds me of the elementary mentality of RIOC. Oh, by the way, someone thought that it would be in good taste to alternate pale yellow and blue versions of the

advertising signs. There have been no advertisers taking advantage of the impressive RIOC offer in over a month since they have been up. Why?

A more appropriate action would have been to leave the history signs where they were and share the space with the advertising signs. The "advertising" effect would have been the same. What a novel idea!

Dr. Blue, the island has a rich history and the signs should be restored. I can't wait for the day when you are history and your story will be published in the shuttle busses under the title, "Never Again."

Harry Small
40 River Rd.

You may not know about it (not that *The Wire* and many residents haven't tried to get the word to you). It is being blocked by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corp. (RIOC), Jerome Blue, who heads RIOC, and Governor Pataki who runs RIOC.

They have also blocked word to you of some meetings, which all residents have been invited to, to air the future of this Island, but Mr. Blue answers almost zero questions!

As an Island of 8,000-odd taxpaying residents, RIOC and Governor Pataki are giving us almost nothing (even though New York State has a surplus of about \$2 billion!)

Our Island is crumbling (to the point of physical danger).

RIOC wants to sell our Tram "down the river" to the MTA.

They illegally keep public information from us.

They conducted illegal surveys on the Tram and the Metrocard.

RIOC defames Roosevelt Island and FDR by saying we've been spoiled by the "Great Society" long enough (yet all classes live here including the poor, elderly and handicapped).

RIOC is illegally dishonoring the lease of this island with NYC which says NYS could let us go when we were "self-sufficient" at 20,000 residents (we only have 8,000).

They are allowing our Church to go to ruin on the point of collapse.

Our great paper, *The Wire*, our only media, could disappear, and most important...

We pay RIOC a lot of money to do nothing for us and they stand in the way of our democratic process rather than promote it.

We are the only community in this city and maybe the State, where we have no democracy!

I wish I could do more to fight for this Island but I have a mom with Alzheimers and a dad with cancer, who live here (which many Roosevelt Islanders have helped me with) and a full time job (where, like everyone else, I worry about the

next layoff).

If my mom were well she'd fight for this Island with me; please help us do it!

Flood RIOC with your outrage (Tel. 832-4540).

Go to the meetings with RIOC. Call the media and get this story out.

Call legislators – especially Mayor Guiliani and Gov. Pataki (it's election time)!

We can't let a great multi-socio-economic community like us die, just because Gov. Pataki wants it.

Fight back! We are a democracy!

Janet M. Shea

Precinct Meeting Considers Fire Planning

by Debra Mount Cornet

Although most residents list crime and street behavior as their number one complaints on the Island, only a sparse crowd showed up for last Thursday’s Community Precinct Meeting at the Manhattan Park Theater. The monthly meetings focus on fire and police issues.

“It’s a disgrace that not more than fifty residents are here,” complained Roosevelt Island Resident Association President Patrick Stewart. Those attending pressed representatives from the Fire Department and 114th Precinct in Queens for answers on crime and fire safety. But when the meeting ended, fire safety questions lingered, particularly for seniors and the disabled.

Doryne Isley, General Manager of Roosevelt Island Housing Management, started the session by asking Fire Department Battalion Chief Joseph Dwyer to outline procedures for responding to fires on the Island. “A few days ago, we answered a call here with 3 engines, 2 trucks and a rescue vehicle,” he said, referring to a September 21 fire. “We stretched lines and the fire was out in 3 minutes.”

Eastwood resident Joyce Mincheff offered her firsthand account of that fire. “It took 20 minutes for the Fire Department to come up and we didn’t know what to do. I felt the door and opened it when black smoke poured in,” she said. Calling the Public Safety Department, she asked if she should evacuate, and whether it would be safe to take the elevator. Mincheff said she followed PSD advice, took the elevator, then remained trapped in it until the situation cleared.

Thelma McIntosh, Roosevelt Island Housing Management Manager, said that the active fire had been put out before 20 minutes.

RIRA Common Council Member Joan Brooks read a letter she had written on behalf of the Council requesting “assurance that a ‘master list’ of the physically challenged residents” had been kept current. She asked that a meeting be held with the local Fire Department, various Housing Managements and building committees to consider possible “fire drills, and disaster evacuations and total awareness of the entire Island. God forbid there’s a disaster.”

See Precinct, page 7

From PSD

Guidelines for Parents & Klds

A search last week for a missing Island child has prompted the Public Safety Department (PSD) to issue guidelines for parents. PSD’s Youth Officer, Michelle Santiago, has suggested these rules:

- Youths should be instructed to proceed directly to their homes at the end of the school day, unless otherwise instructed by their parent or guardian.
- They should be cautioned to advise parents or school officials if they will not be going directly home or to another pre-arranged destination.
- Parents should maintain a list of the names, phone numbers and addresses of their children’s friends.
- Parents should always be aware of what a child is wearing.
- If your child brings a guest home, notify that child’s parents.
- Parents should know where their children are at all times.

In the September 26 incident, it turned out that the eight-year-old had gone to a schoolmate’s home to play video games instead of going directly home, as normal. He was found at 8:30 p.m. and escorted to Public Safety to be reunited with a parent, unaware that he had caused considerable concern and effort, which involved searches of stairwells, rooftops, basements, parks, schools, seawalls, and other locations. Officers from the 114th Precinct even set up a central command post at PSD.

COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friedland • 317-8523

Saturday, October 4 – Monthly meeting of **Westview/Island House Task Force**, lower community room, Westview, 8:00 p.m. Management representatives will be present.

Sunday, October 5 – **Church of the Good Shepherd**: 8:15 a.m., Sunday School; 10:00 a.m., Holy Communion, with Choir and sermon; 11:00 a.m., Pre-Teen & Teen Venture Groups.

Sunday, October 5 – Meeting of the **Roosevelt Island Art Association**, 11 a.m., in the Studio, 546 Main Street, 12th floor. Studio and exhibition space; possibility of modeling sessions. **421-5939**.

Monday, October 6 – Meeting of **The Maple Tree Group**, 7:30 p.m., Church of the Good Shepherd, considering the future of Island government. One hour. All are welcome.

Wednesday, October 8 – Meeting of **Roosevelt Island Residents Association**, 8:00 p.m., Church of the Good Shepherd. **Presentation by Maple Tree Group** of its draft report on governance of the Island.

Thursday, October 9 – Monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of the **Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation**, 10:00 a.m., Good Shepherd.

Tuesday, October 14 – First training session of **The New York City School Volunteer Program**, PS/IS 217, 9:15-11:15 a.m. Call **980-1380** for advance registration. Additional sessions same time October 21 and 28; attendance at all sessions required.

Friday, October 17 – Next scheduled issue of **The WIRE**. **Copy deadlines** Oct. 10, 13. **Ad deadline** Wed., Oct. 8; deadline for *It’s In The Bag* advertising, Mon., Oct. 13 with actual delivery of materials Thur., Oct. 2. **Future issue dates:** Oct. 31, Nov. 14, Dec. 5, 19, Jan. 9, 23, Feb. 6, 20, Mar. 6, 20.

Saturday, October 25 – Roosevelt Island Tree Board’s **Fall Tree Walk**, 10 a.m., conducted by State Forester Michael Curley. Free

Saturday, October 25 – **Halloween Parade**. Call **838-4747** for information.

Please fax or phone event information to **317-8523**. Please provide a phone number for follow-up.

At the Senior Center

Stay Well (Exercise), **Mondays** 10-11 a.m., **Wednesdays** 9:30-10 a.m. **English Classes**, **Mondays** 12-1 p.m., **Wednesdays** and **Fridays** 10-11 a.m.

Bingo, **Tuesdays** 1:30 p.m.

Citizenship Classes, **Fridays** 12:30-1 p.m.

Tai Chi (Exercise), **Thursdays** 10-11 a.m.

Tuesday, October 7, 12:30-2:30 p.m., **Modeling/Walking Workshop**, preparing for November Fashion Show

Friday, October 10, 12:30 p.m., **Oldies Movie**

Monday, October 13, **Closed** (Columbus Day)

Tuesday, October 14, 12:30-2:30 p.m., **Beauty Makeover Workshop**

Wednesday, October 15, **RISA Atlantic City Trip**

Friday, October 17, 10:45 a.m., **Nutritionist**

Monday, October 20, 12:30, **Arts & Crafts**

Public Safety Blotter

September 11 – **Criminal Mischief**, Motorgate. An Island driver returned to his car after parking overnight on 4C (reserved) and found the fenders, doors and quarter panels damaged.

September 12 – **Criminal Mischief**, Motorgate. Five days after parking on Area 3, an Island motorist discovered that his car had scratches on fenders, doors, a quarter panel and hood.

September 23 – **Criminal Trespass and Criminal Mischief**, 560 Main Street. Responding to a report of noise coming from a vacant apartment, Public Safety officers demanded entry. Those inside refused. When the sound of shattering glass was heard, the officers kicked in the door. Discovering that a male teenager had jumped out of a window, they apprehended him when he was seen entering a lower-floor apartment. Also taken into custody were two teenage girls. The trio was transported to the NYPD’s 19th Precinct in Manhattan for processing. Charged with Criminal Trespass and Criminal Mischief were James Barker, 18; Lecia Hymson, 17, and Rachel Jeudy, 17. All are Island residents.

September 27 – **Grand Larceny, Auto, Motorgate**. An Island resident reported that he had parked his car on September 21. Returning six days later, he found the vehicle missing. Insurance papers and garage pass were in the car.

In addition, two previously unreported break-ins occurred in recent weeks at the Roosevelt Island Council of Organization Office at 546 Main Street. In the most recent incident in early August, a computer was reportedly stolen. In the first break-in, July 24, a copy machine, telephone and tape recorder disappeared.

During the time period covered by this summary, have you reported an incident to Public Safety that doesn’t appear here? Please call 826-9055.

Physician Resnick Starts Island Practice

For the first time in its history, Roosevelt Island’s adults will be able to find a personal physician here.

Jack Resnick, M.D., a 20-year resident of the Island, opens a practice Monday at 501 Main Street, joining the practice of the Island’s two pediatricians, Katherine Grimm and Douglas Waite. He plans office hours for late afternoon and evening. Patients will be seen by appointment, arranged by calling **753-5505**.

Resnick plans to serve the entire community, seeing patients with commercial insurance, Medicaid and Medicare. He plans to announce affiliations with managed care companies soon.

“I’m a firm believer in house calls,” Resnick says. “I learned about their importance the last time I was a small-town doctor.” Resnick spent several years as the sole physician in a small North Carolina town before returning to New York to complete specialist training. “Those were the most rewarding years of my practice life,” he recalls. “I really got to know the people well, and would visit them at home. Home is where you really get to know the person.”

Resnick is on staff at Lenox Hill and Mount Sinai Hospitals in Manhattan. “I had considered affiliating with a Queens hospital,” he explains, “but after meeting with the Roosevelt Island Seniors last week, I dropped that idea. They prefer Manhattan-based hospitals.”



A graduate of the New York University School of Medicine, Resnick completed his training as a specialist in adult medicine at the University of Rochester. He practiced for many years on Long Island at the Jewish Medical Center.

Resnick’s family has been active in the Island community almost since its inception. He is the founder of *The Main Street WIRE* and was its editor for its first twelve years. He was also involved in the founding of the Island Jewish Congregation, and a charter board member. His wife, Terri, was involved in the early years of the Day Nursery and the Main Street Theatre (MST). Both senior Resnicks have been active performers on the MST stage.

Other Island physicians have welcomed Resnick’s decision to begin a practice here. Dr. Katherine Grimm, the Main Street pediatrician, says she has been urging Resnick to make this move for quite some time. “Many of my patients’ parents ask me for a doctor for themselves,” she says. “Dr. Resnick will be an important source for health care for many people here.”

Drs. Steven Meed and Jerome Tolbert, two Island residents who are internists with practices in Manhattan, also welcome Resnick’s decision. While both have Roosevelt Island residents as patients, they agree that a community-based physician will meet an important need.

Blackwell

from page 1

will trip on the rotting steps leading up to the porch. The charming colonial garden with its fountain is today a mess of tangled weeds.

When the Dutch owned our island it was called Varkens Eylandt — Pig Island. It had been purchased in 1637 from two Indian chiefs by the Dutch Governor Wouter van Twiller and was farmed under land grants from the Dutch West India Company. Farmer Laurens Duyts defaulted on his lease and lost it in 1658 and by 1667 the British had confiscated and renamed it Hog Island.

In 1668 Captain John Manning was granted a “patent” on the island by the first British Governor of New York, Richard Nicolls. Nicolls was appointed Governor by the Duke of York, who had been given the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam when Britain’s King Charles II laid claim to it in 1664. Captain Manning mismanaged his command of New York’s Fort James during a Dutch attack and was tried by court martial. In public disgrace, he moved to this island retreat, and called it Manning’s Island. There, a visitor reported that the Captain’s “entertainment was a Bowl of Rum-Punch.”

Mary Manningham Blackwell inherited the island from her stepfather, Captain John Manning, and members of the Blackwell family farmed it from the late 17th Century to 1828, during which time it was known as Blackwell’s Island. Between 1796 and 1804 James Blackwell built the simple, well-proportioned farmhouse that remains today. It is the sole survivor of a farm that had “two small Dwelling Houses, a Barn, Bake and Fowl House, a Cider Mill,” a large orchard, running springs and rock quarries. In fact, the Lighthouse at the north tip of the island was built with stones from the Blackwell quarries.

In 1828 Peter Cooper, an iron industrialist and outstanding leader in the civic affairs of New York City, (who planned Cooper Union to pro-

vide for the working classes) persuaded New York City to purchase Blackwell’s Island for \$32,000. The Blackwell House then became the home of the administrator of the penitentiary that was built on our island. In the late 19th Century the name changed to Welfare Island and the warden of the island’s Almshouse moved into the Blackwell House.

Thereafter it stood empty and by the late 1960’s it was in an advanced state of decay. The noted architectural historian, Henry-Russell

Hitchcock prepared a report for the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1969 recommending the preservation and restoration of the Blackwell House because “it has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value.” In 1973 the New York State Urban Development Corporation commissioned the well-known New York architect, Giorgio Cavaglieri, to carry out the complete restoration of the Blackwell House. He did so in a highly sympathetic and suitable manner.

In 1984, at the urging of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society, the Island’s administrators spent approximately \$40,000 on repairs and repainting the historic structure. The Historical Society had been using the



Judith Berdy, Historical Society

Blackwell House, circa 1965

house for its community meetings, lectures, exhibits and special events. Judith Berdy, a former President of the Historical Society, reports: “The Blackwell House was the focal point of the Society. People were always intrigued by it and wanted to see the rooms that had been furnished and decorated in 18th Century style by Vera Hahn, a well-known interior designer. The Blackwell House was even pictured in an issue of *Colonial Homes* magazine.”

After the 1984 restoration, however, the Historical Society was denied access to the house. Instead, Island administrators rented the house at less than \$2000 per month to a businessman who has since defaulted on payments and declared bankruptcy.

No revenues are now being realized. The current RIOC administration is taking legal action to evict the tenant and repossess the property. Carole Kennedy, current President of the Historical Society, commented: “We have no idea where the 18th Century antiques, chairs, a highboy, a gilt mirror, two tables, a valuable strip rug, etc. have been stored. But worse, interest in the Historical Society has waned since we can’t use the Blackwell House for meetings any more.”

Over the last thirteen years the ravages of time, neglect and indifference have allowed the Blackwell farmhouse to slip into a dilapidated state of disrepair that may be threatening its continued existence. How can we instill pride in our country’s heritage in our children when we undervalue an asset like the Blackwell House with a want of respect and failure to protect it?

A correction

In *The WIRE*’s lead story last issue Zakia Wazani was misidentified as an Eastwood Resident. She should have been identified as the Co-Chair of the Westview/Island House Task Force, and is a Westview resident.

STOP YOUR FOOT PAIN NOW

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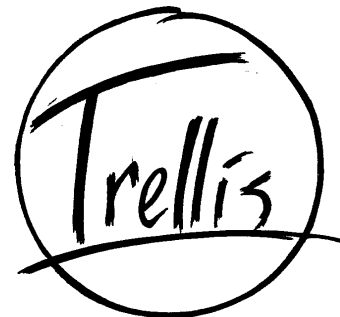
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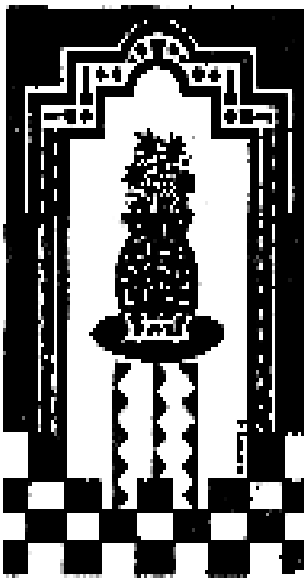
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Jay Levine

SOCCER The Fall 1997 Soccer season on the Island began two weeks ago. Below are the up-to-date standings for each division thru Saturday, September 27. Each team in every division will play six games and the play-off format includes every team. In the opening round of the playoffs, each division's first-place team will play the fourth-place team and the second-place team will play the third-place team. The two winners from the first round in each division will advance to the championship game. Games are played on Friday nights at Octagon Field at 7:15, and on Saturday at Octagon and Blackwell Fields at 9:00 and 10:30 AM. And don't forget our Kinderkickers playing on Capobianco Field, also at 9:00 Saturday mornings.

NEWS If you have any sports-related news, announcements, questions or comments please call me at **688-3358** or e-mail me at wiresports@aol.com, so it can be included in future issues of *The Main Street WIRE*. Photos of Island sports events (with caption information) also welcome (leave for Jay Levine at the Westview door station, 625 Main Street).

Senior Division	W	L	T	Pts
Blue	2	0	0	6
Red/Blue	1	0	1	4
Silver	0	1	1	1
Yellow/Black	0	2	0	0

Week 1, Red/Blue def Yellow/Black 5-2, Blue def Silver 2-1.
Week 2, Blue def Yellow/Black 1-0, Silver ties Red/Blue 1-1.

Junior Division	W	L	T	Pts
Red/White	2	0	0	6
Green/Blue	1	1	0	3
Blue/White	0	1	1	1
Purple/White	0	1	1	1

Week 1, Red/White def Blue/White 4-1, Green/Blue def Purple/White 4-1.
Week 2, Red/White def Green/Blue 4-1, Blue/White ties Purple/White 0-0.

Minor Division	W	L	T	Pts
Red	1	0	0	3
Gold	1	0	0	3
Blue	0	1	0	0
Green	0	1	0	0

Week 1, Red def Green 2-0, Yellow def Blue 2-1.

Precinct from page 3

Peppered with questions, Dwyer heralded the World Trade Center bombing as evidence of how such an unlikely event had been tackled. "Firefighters had to carry people down." He acknowledged that the added weight of respirators and chairs, like the ones found here, require more personnel.

Virginia Granata of the Disabled Association challenged Dwyer. "We get no straight answers about fire drills. Hemming and hawing, just like now. Could Security provide a chair to enable us to come down a stairway? Can't we work out a plan?"

Suggesting there is an unclear chain of responsibility among the Fire Department, Management, and individuals, Dwyer answered, "I am in a very uncomfortable position." He vetoed the acquisition of special apparatus, saying "That is beyond our means. Our concerns are to the general populace."

Eastwood resident Ron Vass, a member of the Board of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, challenged that answer. "You have two hospitals here. You should have had a disaster plan years ago." He also faulted the ambiguous City/State guidelines.

"We do have a unique problem here. We do need to look at it." Vass added a warning, "Sometime we'll all be sorry we had no preventive medicine."

Dwyer tried quelling the unease. "If a disaster happens, we have the dimensions, the building lay-out and we are aware."

RIRA President Stewart returned to fire guidelines. "What laws are we operating under here? Are our buildings fireproof?" He added residents' concern over the growing task of communicating with non-English speaking residents, especially among the Seniors.

Isley intercepted that question. The buildings "are fireproof," she said, then added "Nothing is foolproof. But 99.9% of fires will be contained." The theory is that a routine fire, like from a kitchen, can be held to that area – if the door remains closed.

Fireproof construction should block it from spreading up or down. However, smoke circulates more freely.

Isley offered Management's cooperation with residents and the Fire Department to formulate a plan and distribute information. "We can all come together. In the event of a catastrophe, we'll all know where our places are and have a game plan." Attendees nodded.

Later, Brooks lauded Isley. "I thought she was open to our comments." However, she added, "Dwyer just seemed overwhelmed by all our questions."

Community Relations Officer Dwayne Palmer represented the new commander at the 114th precinct, who did not appear. Residents requested another CPOP (Community Police Officer Patrol) to patrol the Island. "You have the lowest crime statistics in the area," Palmer said. "You just don't warrant extra officers."

One resident voiced a loud objection. "Kids are running the streets, drugs are everywhere, and you better do something before someone's killed," she warned.

Palmer extended an invitation to residents to participate in an upcoming series of community meetings sponsored by Mayor Giuliani's Task Force on Police Relations. "Following the Abner Louima affair we are holding dialogues between the community and police officers. You may talk with individual officers and ask questions about them individually. They may also talk about problems they may have with you," Palmer explained. (Transportation and food are provided. Interested residents may contact Palmer at the 114th Precinct at **718-626-9311**, or speak with the Island's CPOP officer at **718-626-9717** or at Public Safety, **832-4545**.)

To complaints of people "hanging out" or constantly using pay phones, Palmer explained that "loitering" laws no longer exist. He said other means exist to control some activity. A summons may be issued for either disorderly conduct or noise may be issued. He assured residents that incoming calls had been discontinued on pay phones.

In addition to routine patrols, a special program has been activated on the Island to reduce problems in stairways and halls. "Your manager signed up for the Vertical Patrols," he said. "This allows officers to enter the buildings and patrol each floor. If we find someone in the halls who doesn't belong there (a resident or a visitor), we can arrest them." Vertical patrols are conducted randomly increasing spontaneous detection.

Public Safety Director Peter Norwood followed Palmer, expressing his own disappointment at the small attendance. "This room should be filled with all of us," he said. "We're getting a lot of new information and ideas." He did note, however, that he had never seen a community so concerned.

Norwood had challenged residents "to put our (PSD) feet to the fire." However, when Judith Berdy, a member of the Residents Association Common Council, asked a question, Norwood laughed. "Why do you always pick on me?"

Undeterred, worried residents asked about dark areas of the Island being unpatrolled. "We patrol," Norwood said, "based on prior complaints in an area."

What about the youths who congregate by the pizza parlor? Norwood's response met skepticism. He stated that PSD officers stationed across the street could monitor the situation. Norma Simon, Senior Association president, defended the youths. "I've talked to them and they say, 'Build us a skating rink.' They just need a place to go," she said.

Norwood praised the summer efforts of Youth Officer Michelle Santiago who opened the Sportspark Pool each day. With the pool program now over, she said she needed an alternative, and volunteers.

"Not to take away from youths," Housing Management's Isley replied, "but I will put out any family whose child destroys our property. There are no three strikes. I want to make sure the children understand."

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