

Pages of Opinion

Whose Dooty Is It?

Not long before winter finally caught up to us, I took a ride in my wheelchair along the west side of the Island and was stunned to see the condition of the pier just south of Meditation Steps. The gull droppings on the pink stone at the north end almost cover the slab. I feel certain that the dooty must be a health hazard, especially for the many small children who enjoy playing there. It should be removed and checked constantly by those entrusted with that duty.

Let There Be Light

The designation of our Island school as a Beacon outpost with a grant of about \$433,000 is something we all should cheer about. The funds hopefully will do much to aid in the development of new or extended youth programs here. Gifford Miller, our Council Member; Council Speaker Peter Vallone; and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani should be thanked by everyone for caring about our at-risk youth.

The Good Old Days

Those concerned residents sparked by RI Housing Management are once again meeting to plan Island Cleanup Day. There was a time, not so long ago, when the Island sparkled like the jewel it was. But that was when the administrators took pride in their handiwork instead of letting us “spoiled children” have to tend to many of the chores that the current crew can’t seem to see need doing.



A Job Well Done

Congratulations to Essie Owens O’Brien and Susan Cohen and the hard-working team who made the Fourth Annual Career Day at P.S./I.S. 217 another rousing success on March 12. Thanks also are due to the participants who told the students of their varied occupations. A recurring theme stressed by the speakers was “stay in school.”

Take a Lesson

That work in the subway tunnel last week suddenly generated the need for evacuation of the stop here by passengers and workers, reportedly because of a buildup of fumes from equipment being used by a repair crew, should be a lesson for RIOC. Let’s suppose that the work was being done on a night when RIOC wanted to have the Tram shut down early, one of its favorite plans. How long do you suppose it would take to get it up and running again?

It’s For You

On March 26, the Public Safety Department will sponsor another of its informative meetings to address residents’ concerns on the quality of life here. Included will be reports on recent crime statistics as well as the status of fire protection. The new senior officers from the 114th Precinct and Queens Borough North Command of the NYPD will be introduced if their schedules can be cleared. Watch for details on the kiosks and building bulletin boards.

Celebrate Women’s History Month



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Good journalism is hard.

No matter how good reporters are, and no matter how fully they immerse themselves in a story, whatever they write can be only skillfully-created impressions of the portions of reality to which they have access. Few reports achieve an ideal target of balance, thoroughness, and conciseness.

Every reporter knows that few participants in a situation will see any report as properly balanced. If there’s any controversy at all, at least some readers will be outraged.

So any journalist who stays at it longer than a few years grows a thick skin, expects never to be applauded universally, and is condemned to go perpetually on to each new story hoping only to measure up to her/his own standards.

But journalists are self-critical – certainly as much as those in any other field. Reading their own work, they cringe at a mis-choice of word, a name misspelled, even a misplaced comma. Seeing the work of others, they may feel admiration, but only with an eye alert for a mis-step.

When TV news showed up to cover RIRA’s recent Town Meeting, many rejoiced that the situation here was finally getting some attention. But nobody was really surprised when the quick hit-and-run reports were less than informed. and even less informing.

But we expect more from print. The print journalist, the reasoning goes, can take the time truly to understand, then to craft language that will communicate some of the texture and depth of a story.

With that disclaimer, a critique of recent *New York Times* reporting is in order. We’ve had a succession of *Times* reporters here, none ever quite getting the story right. Barry Bearak’s piece, published March 3, was confidently expected to be the definitive treatment of a complex situation, but he managed only to force balance in a scale burdened by a feather on one side, and a 50-pound bag of dynamite on the other.

Many Islanders, starved for any attention at all from Manhattan press,

island observer

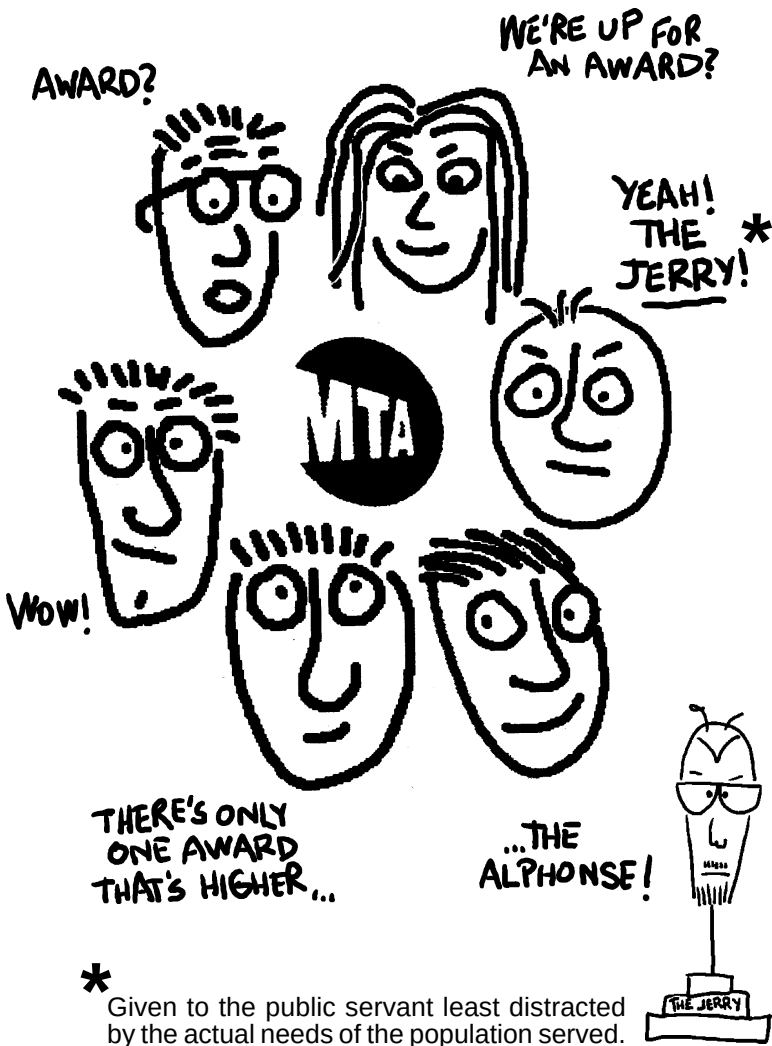
were pleased with the article. But in working to balance his story, he stumbled over some important basics:

- He mentioned a \$700,000 Tramway deficit, but had no balancing recognition that *all* mass transit runs at a deficit covered by tax dollars.
- Patrick Stewart is portrayed as giving a “sweeping appraisal... typical of the emotion and hyperbole” in calling Jerome Blue “as devious a man as you’ll ever meet.” But Blue is quoted without comment in his claim of a “focus... on responsible management.”
- Bearak hazarded a suggestion that “feuds and enmities” have existed here for some time. While there may be a Hatfield or McCoy or two among us, such behavior really arrived with Jerry Blue, and with efforts to defend him by shouting “racist” at his detractors.
- Most such reporting – and frankly, even much of what we write in *The WIRE* – fails to provide an analysis of the average Roosevelt Islander’s return on his tax dollar. Frank Farance is working on the details, but as things stand, with no state money coming in, few services provided by the City, and the Island’s breakeven budget funded out of rents and Motorgate fees, those who live here are subsidizing some other community, somewhere else in New York State.

And while this column makes little effort to defend the bungling politics-steered officialdom that plagues us, even DHCR Acting Commissioner Joe Lynch was baffled by the one quotation chosen from a lengthy telephone interview – the one that had him calling us infants off our formula.

So the latest *Times* effort added up to yet another failure in the game of journalistic catch-up that we all play, all the time. **There’s never enough time to get it exactly right in every detail.** We can do our human best with the time, sources, and knowledge available, but we know we’ll never do *perfect* work. **Alas. DL**

The MTA Celebrates a Big Award Nomination



Guest Shot:

David Kraut

Last week, several Island residents received a questionnaire by email from a student named Kuros. One respondent was David Kraut, a member of the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), whose comments were copied to others on the mailserver list. In the communication, Kraut granted permission to *The WIRE* to reproduce it here.

Re: Questionnaire from Architectural Association, London, UK

All the same names, all the same names. All the time, it’s all the same names. 19 years ago when we moved here, Martha and I noticed it was always the same names. The people who organized the nursery school, our baby-sitting co-op, the PTA, the Little League, the Halloween parade – all the child-related issues that centered our life here when the kids were young – were always the same people. Later, as our interests broadened and our other community issues became better-defined, we noticed that the Residents’ Association, the building committees, the Youth Center board of directors, the public protests, were also always led by the same names. I think it was Martha who first started referring to “The 100 Families”. It may have been myself.

The list is not static: people change, grow, leave, move on, lose interest, acquire different interests, or die. People join, grow up, buy in, dive in, pile on, wanna play, get born. But at any given moment, it’s always the same names.

Consider this mailserv. I know almost every one of you personally and have heard every one of your names. You are active, involved, interested, participatory, caring, earnest and giving. Whenever something comes up around here, there you are, lending your efforts, your ideas, a hand. You know that this is your home, and you work to grow it properly and you fight to protect it. To a very great degree, you are the Island. A big part of it, anyway.

Kuros, this is my answer to your questionnaire. If I can be of any further service, let me know. But I must close by sharing something with you. Don’t you dare waste our time asking us to fill out forms for a survey which will later be sent to RIOC. As I have said publicly on several occasions – most recently four weeks ago at a public budget

review meeting, RIOC, as currently constituted, has not much interest in the fabric or fiber of this community. For historical and obvious political reasons, RIOC at the moment is a master builder sort of organization, running dirt-cheap and with little apparent concern for the day-to-day concerns of the community we live in. In previous incarnations, it was far more involved with the minutiae of public life here, although it was at that time a far more spendthrift corporation that needed huge annual state subsidies just to provide for daily operations. I should know, because I have been a director of that corporation in both incarnations. It is my great hope that next time around a balance will be struck. But for the time being, they are not us. I am working to rectify that situation. My neighbors here can tell you I haven’t yet had much success at it. But I keep on keeping on, just like any member of the 100 families. I live here, is why.

Peter Norwood, the head of Public Safety, is reported to have stated that there were more arrests on Roosevelt Island in February than in all of 1997. That is clearly an alarming statistic.

Recent vandalism has Seniors and the disabled afraid to be out in their own corridors and laundry rooms. Public Safety officers themselves have been the subjects of a number of assaults. The gardens were recently vandalized. Cars in Motorgate are vandalized – and stolen. There is extensive property damage, both within and without the buildings.

While the Public Safety Department is a division of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), over half their budget is paid directly from your apartment rent in Eastwood, Island House, Westview and Rivercross... a total this last fiscal year of \$863,000. The remainder is paid by RIOC from other income derived from the Island.

The officers are not police, they are New York State Peace Officers, and they are not armed. They are often themselves at great personal risk in doing their jobs. They are not universally given the respect they deserve, and since the crime they deal with most frequently is malicious mischief, they are not usually successful in apprehending the criminal.

It seems to me that Public Safety suffers woefully from the lack of a tightly defined mission. Is their overall mission the maintenance of the peace and enforcement of the law? All laws? We don't know.

Do we want them to be police officers? Are they as responsible for maintaining the peace within the building as without? Do we want them to be Housing Police? Should we be asking them to be Social Workers as well as Peace Officers? What should we be asking them to be? Do we know what we want them to be? It seems to me that we ask them to be all of the above, and clearly they cannot and should not.



Patrick Stewart

Personally, I would be content to have them enforce the laws of the city and state of New York. But they are unable to do that. Do we want to confine their roles to Housing Police, and seek outside policing for the rest of the Island?

There are alternatives. This is a State community, so the State Police are a possibility as supplementary support. A substation of the NYC Police Department is a possibility. A private security firm is a possibility. The Guardian Angels might be approached and their help enlisted. There are other possible alternatives.

But first, clearly there needs to be a definition of Public Safety's overall mission, and a formal plan of strategy and tactics to allow them to accomplish the defined mission, within their capability.

RIRA has begun a process whereby all of the parties involved will begin to develop a plan to create an effective law enforcement regime for this Island. We need your thoughts, ideas, opinions and criticisms as we move forward. Please write to RIRA, PO Box #335, Island Station, New York NY 10044.

We pay for and are entitled to a safe Island.

Public Safety Blotter appears this issue on page 7

COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friedland • 317-8523

Wed., Mar. 25, 8:45 a.m., PS/IS 217, Parent Workshop: Raising a Responsive and Responsible Child. Speaker: Richard Gallagher, Ph.D., Director of the Parenting Institute, NYU Child Study Center. Refreshments. For information or a reservation, call **980-1380** or **980-0294**, ext. 2422.

Wed., Mar. 25, 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Councilmember Gifford Miller hosts **City Council Speaker Peter Vallone**, for an open discussion with Island residents. Senior Center, 546 Main Street. Open to all residents.

Thur., Mar. 26, 7:00 p.m., Precinct/Community Meeting, Senior Citizen Center, 546 Main Street, with the Commanding Officers of Queens Borough North and the 114th Precinct (which covers Roosevelt Island), sponsored by Concerned Residents of Roosevelt Island, the Disabled Association, the Public Safety Department, and other groups.

Fri., Mar. 27, Dining Out Group of Roosevelt Island, at Taverna on the Park, a Greek restaurant. Reservations essential for dinner and transportation. Call Harry Small, **583-0064**.

Wed., Apr. 1, 8:00 p.m., Common Council meeting, Roosevelt Island Residents Association, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to all residents, who are invited to address the Council.

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

Fri.-Sat., Apr. 3-4, next scheduled issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Mar. 27; stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Mar. 30. **Future issues** April 17, May 1, 15, 29, and thereafter generally every two weeks until summer. Unscheduled **extra** editions may be published as news and advertising support warrant; advertisers who would like to be included in one or more **extra** editions, without warning, are invited to call **826-9055** to make their interest known. **Phone/fax** for news, (212) **826-9055/755-2540**; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, (212) **751-8214/755-2540**; phone & fax for events, **317-8523**.

Sat., Apr. 4, 7:00 p.m., Main Street Theatre goes Western with *The Mostly Monty*, line dancing, vittles, and live country music. \$20/person. **371-4449**.

Sun., Apr. 5, 10:00 a.m., Roosevelt Island Art Association regular meeting, 12th floor, 546 Main Street. Live model sessions. **421-5939**.

At the Senior Center

Every week:

Stay Well (Exercise), Mondays 10-11 a.m., Wednesdays 9:30-10 a.m.

Bingo, Tuesdays 1:30 p.m.

English Classes, Mon. 12-1 p.m., Wed. 9:30-10 a.m., Fri, 10-11 a.m.

Arts & Crafts, Mon. 12:45-2:30 p.m.

Scheduled activities & events:

Tuesdays, 10-12 a.m. & 1-3 p.m., **Tax help**.

Wed. Mar. 25, 7:00 p.m. City Councilmember Gifford Miller with **City Council Speaker Peter Vallone**.

Letters

Mr. Douglas Sussman
Director, Community Relations
MTA

Dear Mr. Sussman:

This is a follow-up to our conversation Friday afternoon, March 13, 1998. When we spoke, you claimed that you were not aware that this community and the passengers on the Roosevelt Island line were not notified that two weeks or more of asbestos removal was to begin the next day. You also seemed surprised when I told you that there had been several incidents of smoke, fumes, and even a fire, and that we never saw the presence of a supervisor for the project. I also told you that we were told that the irritating fumes which filled the station on March 4th and 6th were caused by construction workers who kept the vent doors closed while they were using welding equipment to remove tracks. Amazingly, they had masks and goggles, and we were not even warned when we entered the station that this condition existed. After they were ordered to keep the vents open, there was a fire caused by the work-

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to officials, and will consider publication *Name Withheld* basis, but the writer's name, address, and telephone number must be provided. **Preferred methods of submission:** IBM-compatible 3.5-inch floppy disk (any wordprocessing software) left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*; by ASCII text email (72260.20@compuserve.com); or typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. **All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.**

ers filling a trash barrel and igniting it to keep warm (March 10th) and causing a four-hour service interruption on the line. Further, after I spoke with you on Friday, a similar fire during the evening rush hour caused a service interruption of several hours. This time, traffic on Roosevelt Island was disrupted and fire engines and ambulances were called to surround the station. Passengers at the 63rd/Lex station were kept waiting on the platform without announcements for over an hour. When the service interruption was announced, passengers were told there would be a four hour delay due to a "smoke condition." When they tried to get their money refunded so they could take the tram, the token booth clerk became abusive. When a few of them called transit to try to get help and report the clerk, they were shouted at and told that transit was under no obligation to refund their fares. One resident managed to get a name: the person was identified as a supervisor named Blackwood. That resident, Bill Lorenz, said that the supervisor was verbally abusive and hung up on Mr. Lorenz.

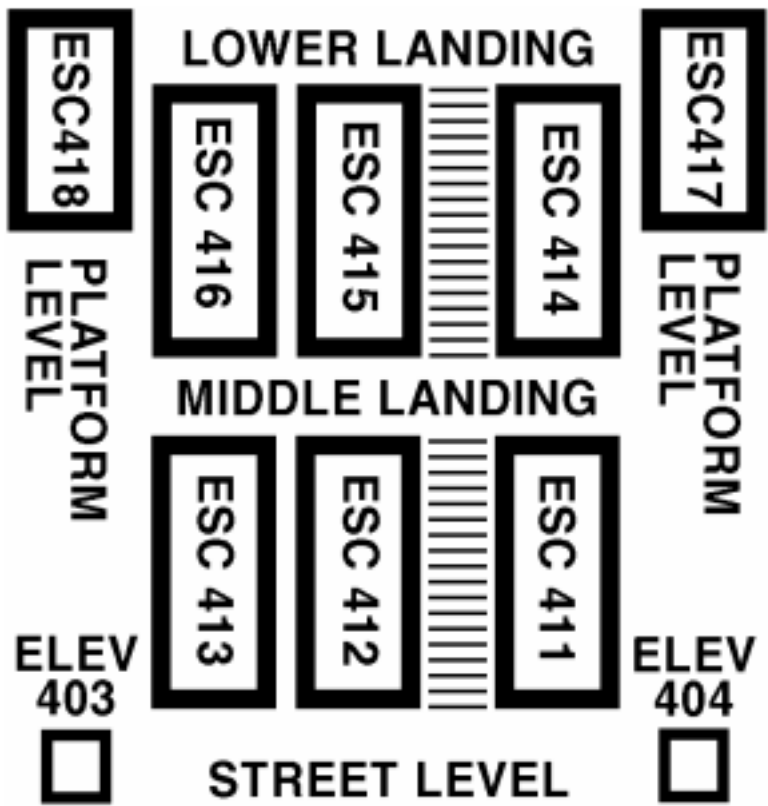
During our discussion on Friday, you assured me that signs would be posted visibly at the stations along the line, and that you would make sure that a supervisory presence was available to us for the duration of this project, starting with the commencement of the asbestos-removal project. This is to let you know that several people and I visited the Roosevelt Island station on Friday night at 8:30, 11, and 1AM. When we got there at 8:30 there was only one sign, which was posted next to the subway map behind the token booth, and not in direct view of passengers who were entering or exiting the station. We asked to see a supervisor. There was a man in an orange vest, I think one of the "monitors" who was placed at the station to give directions about transfers. He claimed he didn't know anything about signs. We insisted that he find a supervisor, and he said he thought someone might be downstairs. Sure enough, he got the "supervisor," a short man who didn't speak much English (or claimed not

This letter continues on page 6
More **Letters** on page 6

Tracking Subway Problems

prepared by Raye Schwartz

Use this diagram to help report subway problems as you experience them. The forms and reports will be provided to the MTA regularly.



STATION SERVICES

Day/date: _____ Time: _____ am/pm

☐ **No escalator service in which group:**

☐ Upper — Direction: ☐ up ☐ down

☐ Lower — Direction: ☐ up ☐ down

☐ Platform — Direction: ☐ up ☐ down

☐ **Elevator no. _____ out of service**

☐ **Other** _____

TRAINS

☐ **Manhattan-bound train arrived at** _____ am/pm

☐ **Waited _____ minutes for:**

☐ Queens service at ☐ 57th ☐ Lex ☐ RI

☐ Manhattan service at ☐ 21st ☐ RI ☐ Lex

☐ **Other** _____

How to report: Call (212) **688-5446** and leave a message reporting the condition and time you observed it. **Example:** *At 2:20 p.m. Monday, no up escalator at lower level.* You need not give your name, but please be sure to provide the time and day of your observation. To report by fax, complete the appropriate information on the form above, and fax it to (212) **759-0558**. Diagram shows layout as viewed from the street.

MTA:

The Numbers to Call

Compiled by Raye Schwartz

To report a station condition or an uncooperative employee (with badge number): **718-243-3222**

Station Manager for Roosevelt Island is Esther Weston: **212-424-3936**. Leave a message; if you receive no response, escalate.

To complain or obtain customer assistance: **718-330-3322**

Customer service representative for access for the disabled: **718-596-8585** (6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Monday-Friday)

To report non-working escalator or elevator: First, notify the token booth clerk, then call escalator and elevator repairs at **718-243-5838**. (They may tell you to report the problem to the station manager or token booth clerk; if so, tell them you have been directed to this number by Steve Strauss.)

Steve Strauss, MTA Community Relations Manager: **718-694-5135** (or fax 718-488-6538)

Douglas Sussman, MTA Deputy Director of Government and Community Relations: **212-878-7469** (fax 212-878-7468) Also: Kenneth Martin (Sussman's Assistant): **212-878-0128**

Alan Friedberg, MTA, NYCTA Committee: **212-308-1712** (fax 308-1834)

To write to the MTA:

E. Virgil Conway, Chair
Metropolitan Transit Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

If you don't get satisfaction, contact me. I am documenting problems and complaints related to our subway station, service, escalators and elevators at the Roosevelt Island station, and uncooperative MTA employees. **688-5446** (or email to rgschwar@ix.netcom.com).

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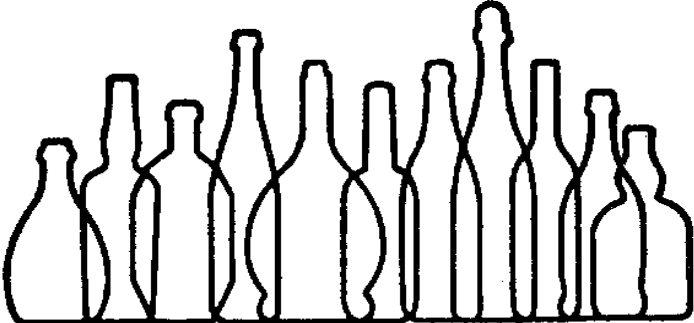
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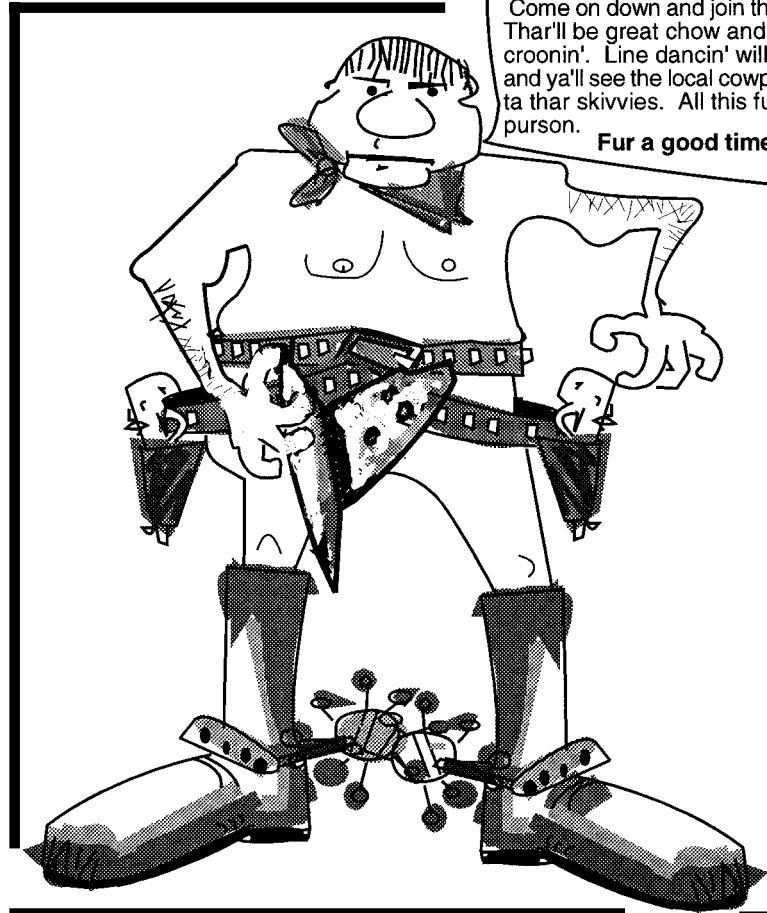
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-NY Daily News



(212) 223-9115



Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance goes Western on Saturday, April 4th at 7 PM. Come on down and join this benefit gala!! Thar'll be great chow and live country croonin'. Line dancin' will be larned ya and ya'll see the local cowpokes strip down ta thar skivvies. All this fur only \$20 a purson. Fur a good time call 371-4449



Assistant District Attorney Beth Fisch, Rivercross General Manager Josephine Laudadio, and Harold Church, Manager of Energy Services at ConEd, speak to fifth graders.

Career Day at Island School

PS/IS217 held its fourth annual Career Day Thursday, March 12. The day began with a welcoming briefing for the presenters in the school library, followed by presentations in the fifth through eighth grade classrooms in which students were informed about a variety of occupations.

Presenters spoke about how they got their current positions, the salary range for beginning to advanced workers in the field, the skills and educational requirements for the position, and told about what a typical day at work is like. Students had an opportunity to ask questions of the presenters.

The presentations were followed by a luncheon during which presenters met with student council representatives to exchange ideas. This event was coordinated by Essie Owens O'Brien, PTA Executive Board Member, and Susan Cohen, Guidance Counselor, with the assistance of Vivian DeAnnuntis, Administrative Assistant.

Presenters included two PS/IS 217 graduates, Lena Milam, Computer Graphics Designer; and Limaris Perez, a student at Penn State University. Others discussing their work lives included:

Godfrey J. David, Adm. Office-Guyana Mission; Katherine T. Grimm, M.D., Pediatrician; Linda Pickett, Secretary/Administrator; Mary Stenzel, Teacher; Josephine Laudadio, CPM - Real Estate; Jack Resnick, M.D., Internal Medicine; Staff Sergeant Morales, U.S. Army National Guard; Diane Simpson, International Business; Nicole Cherry, Teacher/Banker; Lawrence Itskowitch, D.D.S., General Dentistry; Judith Mc Leichte, School Nurse; Peter Norwood, Director of R.I. Public Safety; Jim Fry, Dep. Director of R.I. Public Safety; Beth Fisch, Assistant District Attorney; Christine Sorrenti, Paralegal; Muriel Mulcare, Career Development Specialist; Janice Fareed, Account Executive; Harold Church, Manager - Energy Services; Lloyd Phillip, Chase Asst. Branch Manager; Allison Skeete, Financial Administrator; Claude Trahan, Dir.-Equal Employment Opportunity; Al Ridenhour, Environment & Safety Instructor; Michael Jones, NY Fire Dept.; Lilia Monteiro, Writer.



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J & M SHOE REPAIR

Letters from page 3

to)! That man was carrying a plastic shopping bag with yellow signs and a roll of tape. We questioned him about why the signs were not hung and, finally, he made some excuses about not wanting to dirty the glass (that’s the only place they could be hung as the entire station is surrounded by glass walls and glass doors). He also said it wasn’t his job description to hang signs, and couldn’t/wouldn’t answer us about who was going to do it!

You also told me that you found out that containment barriers were being erected along the 300 feet of conduit involved in this “embedded asbestos” removal. Well, I have a hot flash for you: the barriers are half walls on top of the divider between the tracks. They are only a few feet in height. My husband can see over the top of the barrier to the other side from the platform, and it doesn’t run the full length of the station, nor does it extend into the tunnel. Thus, the shuttle train moves the air and debris as it barrels into the station, dispersing the asbestos particles and circulating them into the air throughout the station. Further, the vaulted ceiling is high enough so that the mezzanine level can overlook that platform area. It is completely open and balconied, overlooking the work area. It is not sealed off, and the work area is completely visible and exposed!

I have enclosed a copy of a chart [see page 3] which I told you I started as a means of documenting the problems we have. This chart is compiled not just from my experiences and observations, but is a compendium which summarizes a great deal of input from many

Roosevelt Island residents who either phone, fax, or e-mail me. I’ve even created a layout of our escalators and elevators which shows the numbering plan of that equipment. That chart is something we have been asking for since this station opened. It is something that NYTA should have made available and posted visibly, and has refused and ignored despite numerous calls and letters. I have the names of two previous field managers who tried to help us get these for our ten-story-below-ground station! Thus, even if one of the token clerks bothers to write on the board that an escalator is out of service, nobody knows where “escalator 415 out of order” is, and we are still not informed about whether there is an adjacent escalator going up as well as one going down!

The bottom line is that this project is a disaster waiting to happen. The MTA is endangering the lives of everyone in this community. This line should be shut down while dangerous work is proceeding. Transfers to the subway in Manhattan from the Tram should be made available immediately. If Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), a state agency, and MTA, a state agency, can’t agree that the Metrocard should be honored between both and can’t understand that the money is coming out of New York State and not individual political empires, then don’t kill us in the process. The Roosevelt Island subway line must be shut down immediately until this dangerous work is completed and until you can get the proper supervision and safeguards in place!

When I spoke with you, I thought I had finally reached someone who would keep his word and solve a problem. Once again, in dealing with someone from MTA, I am disappointed (but not surprised)! I think you need

to understand that we are not going to go away. However, since this situation involves safety, it needs immediate resolution now, today, and not next week, next month, or next year!

Raye G. Schwartz

To the Editor, New York Times:

Re your story on Roosevelt Island (Metro Section, March 3), I am grateful for the effort to get a balanced view of our community, but the report foundered on the complexity and depth of the situation it attempted to portray.

Under Governor George Pataki and his political appointee Jerome Blue, there has been cost cutting, yes, but not responsible management. Responsible management doesn’t repeatedly give promises of action or information, then renege on them, even to the point of ignoring requests under the Freedom of Information Law. It doesn’t make unilateral, arbitrary decisions when bylaws require consultation and votes from a Board of Directors. It doesn’t claim self-sufficiency on one hand, and a Tramway deficit on the other, as an excuse to try to cut transportation services. It doesn’t cut funding from millions to zero when a Republican master plan projected that self-sufficiency would require a population of 20,000. (We currently number 8300 and ground rents from Island buildings contribute millions to State coffers.)

The article quotes DHCR Acting Commissioner Joseph Lynch as saying we “have been spoiled by State money.” Residents of Roosevelt Island ask only for what was promised us in the Republican-created master plan for Roosevelt Island, and what every other New Yorker gets for his tax dollar as a matter of course.

But we have unique problems. Because we are on an island, we have to be concerned with the constant maintenance of the seawall (Blue’s plan of repairing it only in an emergency requires much higher expenditures). We have six historic landmarks, all allowed to deteriorate under this administration. We have one of the few remaining areas left in the city designated for parkland, now threatened by Blue’s offer of the land for development by the highest bidder. Our higher proportion of disabled, elderly and children depend on the Tramway as their lifeline. (The exaggerated size of its claimed “deficit” is proportionately equivalent to that of City transit in general. All transit is subsidized.)

In direct contradiction to accusations of racism by Blue’s handful of supporters, there are several black leaders on Roosevelt Island whom the majority of residents highly respect and support. Those calling for Blue’s ouster have also offered a few names as possible replacements for Blue, one of them a black man. Contrary to the suggestion in your article, there are no “long-term feuds and festering enmities”—only recent disagreement on Blue’s ability, his allowing serious deterioration of Roosevelt Island, and his tacit endorsement of charges of racism against those who criticize him.

Your article does mention the lack of democracy here – that we cannot elect or recall those who run our community and affect our daily lives. What it omits is our claim that if we had the power of the ballot, Blue would

have been gone long ago. Blue’s former boss, Senator Alphonse D’Amato, has questionable motives for protecting him. Governor Pataki (who appointed Blue), when warned about Blue’s incompetence by DHCR Commissioner Joseph Holland, fired Holland instead of Blue. This protection of an incompetent administrator, discrimination in the form of no Metrocard for the Tram (making us the only City residents without it), and the total zeroing out of Roosevelt Island from the State budget suggest Roosevelt Islanders are being punished for not voting for the Governor.

At a recent town meeting, more than 600 angry and frustrated citizens called for Blue’s ouster, a say in who replaces him, and elected representation on the Board of Directors governing the Island. I would hope the Governor will hear this plea for democracy and act more like a statesman than a politician, by giving Roosevelt Islanders a voice in their government and by restoring the funding necessary to protect the State’s multimillion dollar investment in this community. This is no longer Welfare Island. The State and the Governor should start treating us like citizens rather than orphans.

Linda Heimer
President

Roosevelt Island Safety Coalition

To the Editor:

So our supermarket owner finally gave his side of the story. Very interesting, but I can hardly sympathize with him.

He talked about his superior, imported-from-Holland Red Peppers at \$5.99 a pound. Maybe his French chef knows the difference. My palate is not that sophisticated, so I buy red peppers at from \$.59 to \$.99 when I go to a Queens store.

So much for his “competitive” price of \$1.29 a pound.

Then let’s look into bananas. For about a year, Sloan’s price for them was \$.79 per pound, while in Queens they had been about 3 pounds for a dollar, seldom more than \$.49 cents a pound. What’s the reasoning there? Even now, the price seems to have settled at \$.59 cents, which is better than \$.79 cents, but still not competitive.

I could list hundreds of items with the same story, but so could everyone else who lives here.

Granted, the size and appearance are very much improved, but at whose expense? You guessed it. The public must pay.

Dorothy Cusce

To the Editor:

I read the March 7 edition, a great issue, of *The Main Street WIRE* with much interest. I was particularly taken by a letter to the Editor written by Frances Salten. She provided me with an idea. I too support the Southern Law Center. In a recent report I learned that they have plenty of money, but like many charitable organizations, wisely continue to collect while the going is good. So instead of sending a contribution to them for fighting racism, I am sending one to The WIRE for doing the same thing here on Roosevelt Island. Keep on keepin’ on.

Karen Ingenthron

Island Theatre Goes West

by Ginny Ewald

East meets West on April 4, when the Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance presents its annual gala. Line dancing, home-made chili, and cowpoke entertainment are all part of the Western theme. The action starts at 7:00 p.m.

If line dancing somehow passed you by up to now, don’t worry. Island residents Gene Scaglione and Carmen Alvarez will teach you all the steps you need to know. And partners aren’t necessary!

Live country music crooning comes to you from the High Plains Drifters ’n Pioneer Cactus Crooners, otherwise known as MST stalwarts Worth Howe, Nancy Howe, Anita Michael, Mary Jo Schager, Kevin Gates, and Bob McDowell.

The highlight of the evening will be *The Full* (whoops – make that *Mostly*) *Monty* performed by Mitch Elinson, Joe Palermo, David Kolakoski, Joe Vacirca, Jim Baehler, Jonathan Panzyck, Worth Howe, Larry Linzer, and some possible surprises. If you have noticed any of these gents twitching in the bank line, you know that Diana Brill’s choreography is at work (photo, page 1).

Tickets are \$20 a person. The proceeds support scholarships for dance and theater lessons and help purchase needed equipment. This is a good cause, and you’ll have good fun, be well fed, and well entertained. Singles are welcome. Teens are welcome. And you don’t have to dress country if you don’t want to!

For information, call 371-4449.

Norwood from page 1

He suggested residents concerned with the Island’s safety attend Thursday night precinct/community meeting at 7:00 at the Senior Center, where they’ll have an opportunity to meet the Commanding Officer of Queensboro North, as well as the Commanding Officer of the 114th Precinct, which includes Roosevelt Island.

Norwood indicated that the February crime numbers were well within expectations, and certain not “higher than all of 1997 combined,” as had been suggested in some meetings. He provided these numbers to The WIRE:

Assaults, none; Robbery, one; Burglary, one; criminal mischief, ten; Disorderly Conduct, one; Harassment, seven, Grand Larceny, none; Petit Larceny, five. Action in response to these incidents, as well as additional actions, included eight arrests by Public Safety and two by

NYPD; and seven “C” summonses for criminal activity. In addition, the department responded to one fire and 42 other calls, such as giving aid to a resident in distress (14), responding to a dog loose in a hallway, a disabled elevator, escorting children, a flood condition, loud music, and other quality of life situations. In one case, the U.S. Secret Service was assisted in an apprehension at 2 River Road. Shoplifting (with no charges pressed), verbal disputes, unsecured premises, open mail boxes and other minor matters were involved, as well.

“C” summonses include such offenses as trespassing (for example, playing cards in a hallway), disorderly conduct, and harassment.

“A” summonses are issued for parking violations, “B” for moving violations, and “C” for anything more serious.

RIOC from page 1

the original plan for Southpoint, which included a memorial park for Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

- Raye Schwartz: Subway problems (see letter and other materials, page 3). Schwartz asked for better communication from RIOC, saying that she had learned RIOC had word of subway repairs far in advance of residents, but didn’t pass the word along.

- Dorothy Donald also reacted to language in The New York Times report, unhappy that her building had been referred to as “the welfare building.” Donald seemed to dissociate herself from charges that opposition to Blue is racially motivated, saying “a person has a right to speak and write as you feel, and there shouldn’t be a situation where people talk about what they say. I don’t know anything about racism... We should try to get along.”

- David Bauer, leader of The Maple Tree Group, which issued a 1997 report calling for greater democracy on the Island: “I urge this board to examine what is happening as they control the affairs of this island... and [to take steps toward] a participatory democratic form of government. If you can visualize a modification that will make it possible for this Island to be managed democratically, then the buzz you hear tonight will go away... I ask you... Are you in favor of democracy? Then take such steps within your power to see that it happens on this Island.” Bauer’s statement was greeted with extended applause from about 180 residents attending the meeting.

Bauer also asked why takeover of the Island’s library by the New York Public Library (NYPL) system is taking so long. He indicated that NYPL officials found the lease presented to them by RIOC to be at considerable variance from terms agreed upon in negotiating sessions. Blue responded by saying the lease will be signed in the near future, but there was no resolution of the question of discrepancies between the prepared lease and negotiated terms.



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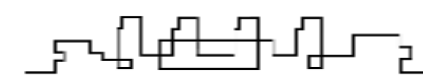
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Public Safety Blotter

March 3 – Arrest Assistance. Lloyd Smith of 4 River Road entered Public Safety Department (PSD) headquarters after being notified he was wanted by the NYPD in connection with a burglary charge. Taken into custody, he was turned over to police.

March 5 – Robbery, Assault, 560 Main Street. A RIOC bus driver reported a sidewalk dispute, with youths fleeing towards the subway and a man lying on the ground. All PSD officers responded and requested EMS at 11:42 p.m. The victim was lying on the ground semi-conscious. A PSD officer apprehended Charles Glover, 17, of 211 Sunnyside Court, Brooklyn. Troy Fountain, 18, of the same address, was also arrested. A small bag, allegedly containing marijuana, was found in the latter's possession and a small packet, allegedly containing cocaine, was found in Glover's possession. They were charged with robbery and assault. EMS transported the victim to hospital. He was listed as a resident of 10 River Road.

March 10 – Gas Leak, 400 Main Street. PSD officers responded to a report of a gas leak at the subway station and assisted in evacuating subway riders from the station. FDNY/EMS also responded. There were no injuries.

March 12 – Harassment, 516 Main Street. One underage youth informed a PSD officer that another underage youth had punched her in the back in the courtyard. Both were brought to PSD office and the mothers of both children were called. No charges were pressed. Both mothers agreed to keep their children away from each other.

March 14 – Criminal Mischief, Eastwood. Washers in two laundry rooms were vandalized; one in 576 Main Street and two in 536. Coin slots were removed. PSD officers searched the buildings for the culprit(s) without success.

March 14 – Larceny, 686 Main Street. An underage youth tried to take a bottle of beer from Gristedes and was brought to the PSD office where he was issued a Juvenile Report citation and was then released to his mother's custody.

March 14 – Larceny, 510 Main Street. A restaurant food deliverer phoned the PSD to say that when he had placed food on the lobby floor, an unknown person had fled to another building with the package. The deliverer chased the perpetrator to 4 River Road, where the culprit again assaulted him and fled. The victim was unable to identify the attacker and refused NYPD and medical assistance.



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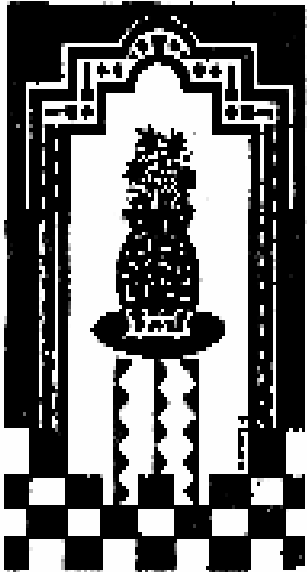
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