

Next issue:
March 26-27

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Annemarie Villaret
Monica Sooi Son and Venice Soonkul Noh participated in the Korean community's celebration of Lunar New Year last month.

Kraut, Stewart Ask Return of Blotter

"I don't know why any police agency would keep its blotter secret." So spoke David Kraut at Thursday's RIOC Board meeting as he and RIRA President Patrick Stewart called for release of Public Safety's incident reports for publication in *The WIRE*.

RIOC has withheld standard incident reports from the public and *The WIRE* for over a year, and their absence has been the subject of many reader inquiries. In their place, RIOC has offered statistical summaries of the kinds of crime committed on Roosevelt Island. Stewart told the RIOC Board, "I don't think they're adequate in terms of describing what happens and the actions taken." Stewart said the Roosevelt Island community needs information on what's happening and what Public Safety recommends residents do in situations of potential danger.

"I have mentioned to Chief [Jim] Fry that I don't think this is a good state of affairs," Kraut told the Board. "We should not attempt to use control of information, particularly crime information, as a way of controlling the press. I believe this kind of information should be made available to *The WIRE*."

DHCR Commissioner Joseph Lynch, chairing the meeting, asked RIOC staff to respond at April's meeting of the Board.

Minischools Forum Set for Tuesday Night Task Force Asks Open Deliberation

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) will try again Tuesday night at 7:00 to conduct an informational session on the proposed conversion of the Island's water-side minischools into luxury condominiums. The last session, on March 1, ended in disarray when residents objected to the absence of any RIOC staff to hear resident concerns about the project.

The meeting will take place at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

RIOC President Dr. Jerome Blue is scheduled to be at the session, and to deliver a report on Southtown progress – with models and illustrations – after the minischools matter has been covered.

The Westview/Island House Task Force, meanwhile, voted Tuesday night to ask that all meetings considering the condo conversions be open to the public and press. The matter has been referred to the RIOC Board's new Capital Planning Committee, but it's uncertain whether its meetings will be open or closed.

YAL Gets Grant

In other action, the RIOC Board accepted a plan to replace the Tram station staircase in Manhattan with a zig-zag stairway, thereby freeing up portions of Tramway Plaza.

The Young Adult League, whose proposal to use Public Purpose Funds for a second year to bankroll its computer training classes has been controversial, was granted \$32,000, half its request, pending presentation of a budget in line with that grant amount. Residents Association President Patrick Stewart, sitting in on the Board meeting as

an observer, restated the dissatisfaction of the RIRA Common Council with the project, and pointed out that the current grant



Patrick Stewart listened Thursday morning to the resolution of the Westview/Island House Task Force calling for open meetings to consider the minischools conversion. In the background, DHCR Commissioner Lynch and RIOC President Blue.

will consume 13 percent of the remaining pool of Public Purpose Funds.

Rivercross Group Fights Maintenance Increase, Asking Higher Surcharges

A group of Rivercross residents is fighting a 5.5 percent maintenance hike, saying that ending an exception that benefits the building's higher-income shareholders would more than cover the revenue increase requested by the building's Board of Directors.

The exception is in the maximum level of maintenance surcharge for residents whose income exceeds guidelines issued by the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The law permits a maximum surcharge of 50 percent, but Rivercross has never imposed more than 10 percent. According to Bob Woolis of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, DHCR requires every Mitchell-Lama building in the State – including the other Mitchell-Lama buildings on Roosevelt Island – to collect the full 50 percent maximum surcharge from any tenant who opts not to provide income information.

"In effect, moderate-income Rivercross shareholders are subsidizing high-income shareholders," said Fran Dym, who chairs the building's Committee for Maintenance and Privatization Fair Play. "If residents

who elect not to provide income information had to pay a full 50 percent, and other surcharges were scaled from one to 50 percent rather than topping out at 10 percent, the building would have a surplus of income. It was an oversight by DHCR, and they're obviously taking steps to correct it." No maintenance increase would be necessary, she says, and that's the substance of her group's case put before DHCR.

The Rivercross Board has scheduled a shareholder meeting for Tuesday, March 23, to consider the matter. The Board distributed copies of attorneys' papers on the matter filed with DHCR, informing residents that "DHCR has now requested that the Rivercross Board consider increasing the surcharge schedule," and adding, "The Board has agreed to enter into a dialogue with DHCR on this matter."

The lawyer for the Rivercross Board cites the Private Housing Finance Law, which provides that "a schedule of surcharges [is] to be promulgated by the [housing] company with the approval of the commissioner or the supervising agency." By asking the Board

See **Rivercross**, page 6

No Subways Next Weekend

Roosevelt Island will be without subway service next weekend.

The disruption "will facilitate switch replacement, track and tunnel work on the 63rd Street line," the MTA said.

A free bus will shuttle passengers from the Roosevelt Island subway station to the Queensboro Plaza station on the N line and Number 7 line, and the Queens Plaza station on the E, F, G, and R lines. For return trips from Manhattan, riders will take the N train from 59th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Specific hours of the service outage are 12:01 a.m. Saturday, March 20, to 5:00 a.m. Monday, March 22.

The shutdown and shuttle bus service will be repeated the weekend of April 10.

Those Two Island Hospitals (Now One), and What They're All About



by Anusha Shrivastava

Rosemary McKee is one of the few Island residents who knows of the underground tunnel that connects the two branches of Coler-Goldwater Memorial Hospital situated on opposite ends of the Island. In fact, she is lucky enough to have walked through it because she has been working in the hospital for the past two decades. "You don't have to stoop when you walk into it," she says. "It is wide enough for two people to walk in comfortably."

The tunnel, once used by people to walk from one hospital to another, now contains electric lines and steam pipes. People take the shuttle bus to access either branch of the hospital since their merger in January, 1996.

Goldwater Memorial Hospital, named after S.S. Goldwater, the New York City Commissioner of Hospitals in the 1930s, opened its portals in 1939 as a facility for the treatment of tuberculosis. It was called 'Welfare Hospital'

See **Hospitals**, page 6



Island-Wide Party for Father Gorman, Sun., Apr. 11 • Sign up now: 759-5461 or 759-8336

Pages of Thought and Opinion

Trust in Tatters

Perhaps the last two and a half years have made it inevitable. When trust is broken, it is not easily regained. New York State's daily presence, RIOC President Jerome Blue, has turned virtually every Roosevelt Islander who cares into a cynic who will not easily trust the State again.

So perhaps it is inevitable that seemingly positive moves by DHCR Commissioner Joseph Lynch are met with a nearly knee-jerk suspicion. In the Kremlinology of residents' relationship with the State, no move is taken at face value, no gesture greeted without wariness.

Examples:

- Lynch invites Residents Association President Patrick Stewart and RICO Chair Susan Whitaker to sit in on RIOC Board meetings. After an initial sign of relieved gratitude, there is another reaction: "What's his angle?"
- Lynch first seems to be signaling by various actions and private comments that he is carefully circumscribing Jerry Blue's orbit of power. Then he seems to praise him in a *New York Times* article, and the talk is that he is straddling a political fence labeled *expediency*.
- Lynch first agrees to assist the Maple Tree Group in securing a foundation grant that will help plan a transition between State control and resident control of Roosevelt Island, thereby keeping the group from securing alternate government sponsors – then misses a critical deadline. The grant is lost.
- Lynch seems to be telling the Maple Tree Group that he feels its draft legislation – the Grannis Bill endorsed by 92 percent of Island voters on November 3 – can be shaped to be acceptable to the powers in Albany. Then he delays providing promised guidance just long enough that the bill may be too late getting into the legislative mill this year. Then he seems to suggest things should really be left largely as they are, deleting provisions for hiring professional management, and staying with patronage appointments. The result – a suspicious impression. (It may be cleared up in the week ahead.)
- Lynch creates two committees of the RIOC Board and names residents to them, along with others. First reaction: "We finally have a voice." Second thoughts: "These committees are *stacked*."

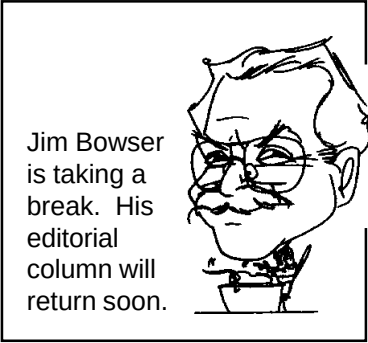
The last instance is perhaps the most important. Much remains to be seen – after all, the committees have met only once. Already, one hopeful outcome was to require Blue to attend a community meeting on the minischools conversion and hear what residents have to say.

But Lynch named Blue to both committees, an action which certainly moderates any isolation of Blue. And he named only two residents with long track records of being outspoken – Joan Christianson and Patrick Stewart. And on each committee, the doubters see that in one way or another, he can exert control or strong influence over half the membership.

Then, of course, the two committees are *advisory* committees. Seen through a cynic's lens, the committees can be viewed as tools that the State can cite in an assertion that residents have been given a hearing – but their advice can be ignored if it doesn't serve the State's purposes, or the purposes of Lynch's boss, Governor George Pataki.

There is the hope, of course, that Joe Lynch is the man he seems to be – a State official with rock-hard integrity, sensitive to residents, dedicated, professional, and determined to do the right thing.

But he has a long way to go to regain the trust that Jerry Blue so lustily trashed.



As a child of nine, I was a dart-out case. The driver of some GM product of the late '40's executed a perfect panic stop that turned a child's death into a merely startling bump to the pavement. Frightened, I refused a ride and walked home, followed by the driver, who dutifully reported what had happened to my parents, then accompanied them as they took me to the family doctor.

The next evening, I read about my close call – in those days such an incident qualified as news for a small-town newspaper – and learned that after being hit, I "ran into a nearby house." Knowing this to be incorrect, I asked my father why the newspaper had it wrong. I no longer remember his exact words, but his answer made something clear to me:

Newspapers are produced by people. People aren't perfect. Newspapers aren't, either.

I have remembered that simple reporting error throughout a life in journalism that now spans nearly 50 years. It illuminates important questions, so I used it in the late '70's as a journalist-in-residence at The University of Michigan, in talks with talented young writers who had set their rudders on reporting careers. The questions:

island observer

If a newspaper can get a fact so straightforward and benign wrong, what happens when the facts are more complex or harder to get? What happens to accuracy when there are thousands of facts, each with its own uncertain level of clarity, and each with its own degree of bearing on the overall truth? What happens when there are public relations operatives trying to cast a particular light on the facts? And when there are opinions? Or when the journalist ventures into analysis or to report in depth? When space to explain is limited? And when the deadline is *right now*?

To the journalist who cares about his craft, these are critical matters. The most fervently-held standards are subject to unbelievable turbulence.

The New York Times has nearly always been a standard of excellence – the newspaper of record that would shape the canvas across which history would ultimately be portrayed. But like my hometown newspaper of the '40's, it is produced by human beings. And at the turn of the century, newspapering has become an economic enterprise as much as a journalistic one, and the turbulence is geometrically greater.

Even so, you have to wonder how *The Times* could get the Roosevelt Island story so wrong so many times – three, I think, in the last two years or so. And most recently, in a splashy and lengthy City section page-one treatment.

Bernard Stamler's report, published last Sunday, has already been the subject of hundreds of conversations on Roosevelt Island as those intimately familiar with some part of the facts read, sometimes incredulously, the particulars of the story he found over several weeks of visits here. I won't pick over its decaying bones at length here, but one blinding-bright discrepancy in his story shows both the failure of his attempt to capture the situation here, and how easy it is for a journalist to get it dead wrong.

Stamler's story quotes Edward Rademaker to the effect that

See **Observer**, page 6

Letters

To the Editor:

The Sunday *New York Times* City section carried an impressive story about the current problems of Roosevelt Island.

What is not noted is that the the State of New York is breaking the contract it made some 20 years ago with the first people who moved into the model community. The State had laid out a plan for a diverse population, multi-use community to be developed by the State according to the plan. Part of that plan was for the Island to become self-governing when it became self-sustaining.

People who moved to the Island did so because they wanted to be a part of such a community.

Now the residents find themselves faced with a situation where the State says it can change the original plan unilaterally; says it can turn a diverse community geared to pedestrians into a zone of commercial activity without reference to their partners in the contract; says they can go sailing off on a new course without the guiding map of an accepted change in the plan; says they can step aside from the responsibility of assuring the integrity of the infrastructure.

It does not matter which individual is responsible – this not about individuals. What matters is whether the State will honor the original contract with the residents, or whether Roosevelt Island will become a victim of this State administration's placement of expediency before principle.

David J. Bauer
The Maple Tree Group

To the Editor,
The New York Times:

I have read Mr. Stamler's article, "Tempest on the River" (March 7) with some dismay. I've seen your correspondent at several of the many town meetings we Roosevelt Islanders have convened over the last few weeks, although regretfully, this did not include the monthly Residents Association meeting, and hoped he would receive a balanced view of our complicated, convoluted and very real problems. Judging from the quotes in his article, he has not.

The Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) is composed of the entire residential community. RIRA's Common Council is elected from the residential buildings of the Island and is the only elected organization representing the community. I am an elected member of Common Council representing the Manhattan Park housing complex. Neither I nor

any other member of RIRA, with the one exception of President Patrick Stewart, was quoted in the article. I did, however, see several quotes from members of a very small, disruptive, race-baiting clique who are not representative of Roosevelt Island residents' opinions.

In last November's election, RIRA asked the community if they would like to replace RIOC, the State agency appointed by the Governor to administer the Island, with an elected Roosevelt Island Community board, responsible for hiring a city manager to run our day-to-day affairs. 92% of the Island residents confirmed with their votes that they want RIOC replaced, prompting the drafting of the Grannis bill, which is barely alluded to in the Stamler article. Our movement for self-government is the real story here. Taxation *with* representation; what a concept!

Matthew M. Katz

To the Editor,
The New York Times:

Tempest on the River, March 7, glossed over relevant points that cry out for clarification.

As Mr. Stamler reported, Roosevelt Island was originally planned to house 20,000 people. Its developers conceived four types of financial support: annual rent for land-use charged to building owners, revenues generated by Island services such as transportation, earnings from commercial leases and direct support from the State of New York to fill the gap while Roosevelt Island proceeded toward self-sufficiency. As the population grew closer to 20,000, less money would be needed from the State. The State put the brakes on development at a population of 8,500.

Governor Pataki, through his appointee, Dr. Jerome Blue, is currently forcing the Roosevelt Island community to be totally reliant on revenues with only one third of the development needed to make self-sufficiency a reality.

Previous fiscal policy by the State returned approximately \$1.2 million taxpayer dollars each year to Roosevelt Island to cover the shortfall between revenues and costs.

The problems raised by Roosevelt Island's fiscal predicament are the following:

- Islanders are entitled to see their taxes support their roadways, parks and infrastructure. New York State entered a contract to foot the bill when it took control of the land from the City of New York, thereby relieving the City of that burden. Subsequently, however, Governor Pataki has refused to give tax dollars taken from Roosevelt Island's taxpaying public back to Roosevelt Island.

- Since no dollars are returned by the State, Dr. Blue has taken harsh measures to confine spending to a budget based on income that is one-third the needed volume. Dr. Blue's method of reducing spending has been to ignore important maintenance and eliminate needed services, often without notice to the community. Eventually, the expense to replace things that break from neglect will greatly exceed the cost of timely repair, and his failure to carry on adequate dialogue with the community has placed him in disfavor.

- Offers were made for funding some of the Island's needs through the State Assembly. Dr. Blue refused to acknowledge that the Island needed the money, rejected efforts to request funding and then proceeded to cut bus transportation that was vital for the Island's disabled population and school children.

- While Governor Pataki toured the state seeking re-election on a platform of preserving parkland, Dr. Blue sent out Requests for Proposals to build commercial enterprises on Roosevelt Island's parkland, even though the Island's developers had identified construction land that would not interfere with the Island's limited open space.

- While the City of New York united as a one-fare zone through MetroCard, Roosevelt Island's Tramway, even more vital due to long-term track repair that greatly diminished the Island's subway service, has yet to be brought into the MetroCard system. One city, one fare, but not if your destination is Roosevelt Island.

I was an eager participant in the inaugural meeting of the new RIOC Board committees last week. As you’ve read, one is devoted to Strategic Planning and the other focuses on Capital Planning and Development. I have great hopes for these committees and for this process, and the initial meeting served only to support and increase those hopes. The

RIRA
President’s
Column

I sit on the Capital Planning and Development Committee, and can confirm that both real work and real progress was accomplished during our meeting. The most time-sensitive matter before us was the minischool development, and to that end, RIOC has been directed to hold a second community meeting on this matter, which is scheduled for Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Committee members will be present to take careful note of both the issues that have already been raised on the matter, and of any new concerns of the community. At our next meeting, we will then use those questions and concerns as a framework to help us form a recommendation as to whether to move forward on the project as it is now conceived, or ask for modifications.

Our community has long been calling for increased participation in the decision-making processes that so intimately affect our daily lives. Those cries have come from many different quarters and through many different voices. Commissioner Joe Lynch, through the creation and population of these committees, has responded fairly, and is taking us at our word. We must, in turn, through community participation, show him that he has made the right decision.

I’m genuinely looking forward to Tuesday night; and I am confident that I will take the great pride I always do at the quality of the thoughtful concerns of our residents, and the articulate manner in which I am sure they will be presented.

It will be the first time in a very long time that I will have equal confidence that someone is listening.

caliber of the qualifications and expertise brought to the committees by the resident members is outstanding, and I see no reason why we cannot expect fair and reasoned judgment on the matters before both committees.



Patrick Stewart

COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friendland – phone/fax 317-8523

Mon., Mar. 15, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Historical Society exhibit opening, **Portrait of a Changing Island: 19th-21st Century Maps**; dedication of **Arlene Atkinson Historical Reference Archive**, Cultural Center, 548 Main Street.

Tue., Mar. 16, 7:00 p.m., **Community Forum on Minischools Conversion**, with RIOC President Dr. Jerome Blue, Developer Diane Wilson, others, and opportunity for resident comment. **Progress Report on Southtown** by Jerome Blue. Good Shepherd Chapel.

Weekend of March 20, subway service down all weekend; allow extra time for travel.

Sun., Mar. 21, 2:00 p.m., **Classical Music Concert**, fund-raiser for Self-Governance, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Admission: One book of first-class stamps per person, or two tickets, \$15; 1 ticket, \$8. Selections by Bernstein, Bizet, Mozart, Schubert, Tchaikovsky, others.

Thur., Mar. 25, Precinct-Community Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Senior Center, 546 Main Street.

Fri.-Sat., Mar. 26-27, Easter issue of **The Main Street WIRE. Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Mar. 19; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Mar. 22. **Future issues:** Apr. 10, 24; May 8 (Mother’s Day issue), 22; June 12 (Father’s Day issue); July 3 (Fourth of July/Fireworks/Business cards issue), 31; Aug. 28 (Labor Day/Back-to-School issue); Sept. 11 (Rosh Hashanah issue), 25; Oct. 9, 23 (Halloween issue); Nov. 6, 20 (Thanksgiving/Business Cards issue); Dec. 4, 18 (Christmas/New Year issue); Jan. 8, 22, 2000. Advertisers wishing to be included in unscheduled **extra editions, without notice at the time**, are invited to call **826-9055** to make their interest known. **Phone/fax** for news, (212) **826-9055/755-2540**; urgent/breaking news, 917-353-1647; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, (212) **751-8214/755-2540**; phone/fax to list your Island organization’s event here without charge, **317-8523**.

Sun., Apr. 4, 10 a.m., **Roosevelt Island Art Association**, live model

Wed., Apr. 7, 8:00 p.m., Meeting of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public welcome to address the Council during public comments session at the beginning of the meeting.

Weekend of April 10, subway service down.

Sun., Apr. 11, 4:00 p.m., **Party for Father Joseph Gorman**, open to all, including non-parishioners, Manhattan Park Theater. To volunteer, contribute, or attend, call for information: **759-8336** or **759-5461**.

At the Senior Center
Every week

Mondays

9:00 **Stay Well** (exercise)
10:00 **English as 2nd Language (Beginner)**
10:00 **Computer Class**
12:00 **English as 2nd Language (Intermediate)**
12:30 **Arts & Crafts**

Tuesdays

9-10 **Korean/English Class**
10-11 **Blood Pressure Screening**
10-11 **Free Tax Counseling** (also 12:30-4)
12:30 **Bingo and Games**

Wednesdays

9:00 **Stay Well** (Stretch)
10:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Beginner)
11:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Intermediate)
12:30 **Lotto** (Games)

Thursdays

10:30 **Crafts Program**
12:30 **Movie**

Fridays

10-11 **English as 2nd** (conversation & written)
10:00 **Billiards/Pool Table Open**
10:00 **English as 2nd Language**
10:30 **Blood Pressure Screening** (to 11:30)

Saturdays

7:30 **Bingo & Games**

Special Events

Sun., Mar. 14, **Sunday Lunch**, \$2.00, members only. Reservations 980-1888
Wed., Mar. 17, **St. Patrick’s Day Dinner Party**, \$8.00 per person. Information, 980-1888.
Fri., Mar. 19, **Creative Art Class**, 10-12



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Frances Ann Freeman

Frances Ann Freeman died February 6.

Born December 8, 1927, she was a resident of Roosevelt Island for 20 years, active in RIRA, Black History Month, the Melanite Society, and in charity fund-raisers.

She attended New York City public schools and the City University of New York. She worked for the City Department of Correction and rose through the ranks to Deputy Superintendent.

Six years ago, she relocated to the Palm Coast of Florida.

Before moving to Florida, she was diagnosed with end-stage renal failure, but approached the illness with courage and was able to make a full life in her new Florida home, rediscovering her love of art.

Her daughter, Lael Freeman, lives on Roosevelt Island.

She is survived by daughters Lael, Karene, and Melanie; grandchildren Masud and Nia; a sister, Dorothy; and a brother, Thomas Wood.

Memorial services were held February 28 on the Island, at the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

Contributions may be made in her honor to Frances Freeman’s Artist Scholarship Fund, c/o Karene Freeman, Esq., 271 West 125th Street #215A, New York, NY 10027.



Concert to Fund Self-Governance Effort Slated for Next Weekend

Two Island residents, Linda Richter and Sherie Helstien, are among performers presenting a classical vocal concert Sunday, March 21, at 2:00 p.m., at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, to raise postage funds to promote legislation to bring self-governance to Roosevelt Island. Admission is a book of first-class stamps (or \$8). Program includes works by Bernstein, Bizet, Mozart, Poulenc, Rossini, and others.



Trudy Wodinsky
Lyric coloratura soprano



George Maldonado
Baritone



Linda Richter
Lyric coloratura soprano



Lorraine Davidson
Mezzo-soprano



Gregorio Rangel
Tenor



Sherie Helstien
Lyric coloratura soprano



other
^
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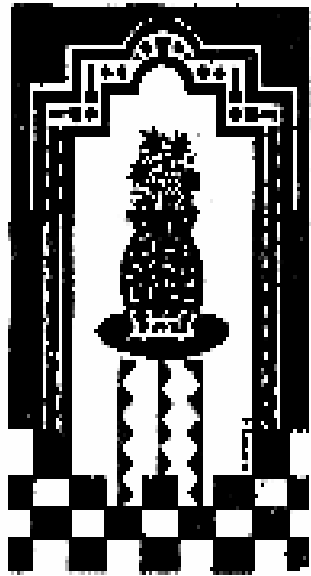
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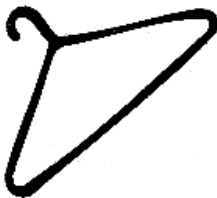
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Hospitals from page 2

at the time. Architecturally designed to provide patients with plenty of sunshine and fresh air all day long, it became a center for rehabilitative medicine when the threat of tuberculosis subsided. During the polio epidemic of the 1950s, the hospital became a comprehensive research and rehabilitation center to treat that disease. Coler Hospital is the newer one, having accepted its first patients in 1952. It is named after Bird S. Coler, the first comptroller of the City of New York and former Commissioner of Public Welfare.

Samuel Lehrfeld, the Executive Director of the Coler-Goldwater Memorial Hospital under whose aegis the merger took place, explains that since the two facilities service identical patient populations, more efficiency could be achieved through the merger. “We used to compete for patients, staff and money but not any more. Together, 3,000 employees now take care of over 2,000 chronically ill patients. We are the largest municipal long-term care complex in the U.S. We have the largest number of ventilator beds in one facility in the country,” he says proudly.

Other advantages were the identification of \$2.5 million in additional revenue, realignment of the skill mix of nursing and pharmacy staff, reduced overall personnel services and consolidation of 11 major departments resulting in a decrease of \$500,000 of departmental operating expenses and costs. The hospital has been marketing itself as a Specialty Care Center for the New York City area for the past three years. Its new slogan is *Restoring Health...Rebuilding Lives*.

“Our patients range from two-year olds to hundred-year olds, accident victims to those with congenital diseases and AIDS and in the recent past, we have received several gunshot victims, too,” says Lehrfeld, who has been associated with the hospital since 1973. “We even have a patient who came here after he jumped off the Statue of Liberty.”

Sunderam Srinivasan, the President of the Residents Council in the hospital, is a post-polio patient who has been at Goldwater since 1990. “This is home for us,” he says. “We get looked after by dedicated staff and keep busy with various recreational activities. We have our own radio station, computer laboratory and horticultural center for therapy.”

Not all patients are pleased with this. A wheelchair-bound patient who did not want to be named declared, “They keep us so busy, I feel I have no time to rest. In any case, what is there to like about a hospital? A home, any home, is better than a hospital.”

While that may be true, Lehrfeld counters the complaints by stating all the advantages the patients have by being on Roosevelt Island. “We have a great view and tranquillity which is conducive to healing. There is very little traffic, no pollution and no sirens. The ‘rush-rush’ of the city is missing, and crime is negligible. Transportation is easy and those patients who want to go out find it very easy to commute.” The Executive Director continues, “I know people complain that some patients ask for money so we try to monitor wandering patients. However, no patient loses his rights just because he or she is a patient so they are free to go to any place and should be allowed to do so. They are free to enjoy the beauty of this Island. I have been here since the time rabbits ran around and, even though those are gone, there is still a lot to enjoy.”

Lehrfeld goes on to state that Island residents are also fortunate to have the hospital in such close proximity. “Residents are exposed to patients and develop compassion and understanding for their circumstances. It is second nature for them to see people in the wheelchair, and go up to talk with them.”

He wants more interaction between residents and patients and claims that there were plans for a clinic that would be open to residents, but “too many people had their own agendas so the plan failed.”

“I would encourage hiring people from the Island to work in the hospital. As of now, our auditorium is available to Island residents, we train them in CPR, and volunteers from the Island put in many hours in the hospital,” says Lehrfeld. Srinivasan adds, “Some of us attend meetings on the Island and have an opportunity to meet with Island residents.”

This desire for increased interaction is clearly in keeping with the stated philosophy and goal of the hospital – “to sustain and maintain life, helping individuals reach a maximum functioning potential and eventually return to the community as viable, productive and self-supporting members of society.”

Letters from page 2

- Although Mr. Stamler quoted a Blue supporter’s claim that opposition to his development proposal is an attempt to keep out lower-income families, he failed to note that not one nickel of Dr. Blue’s \$1.1 billion development scheme is earmarked for lower-income housing.

- His lack of ability to attract lower-income housing is under attack by the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), an organization which holds Island-wide, bi-annual elections to elect two or more representatives from each building unit. The number of Island voters who cast their ballots in the most recent election was similar to the number voting in the general election for President of the United States.

- Island residents are forced each day to view increasing decay and to stomach horrendous cuts in services. In particular, complaints of growing drug abuse in Roosevelt Island’s buildings and streets are mounting, with no budget to increase police protection. Dr. Blue has refused to cooperate with the Island’s local press to inform residents of local crime. He has forced elected representatives of the community to request information about his administration’s policies through the Freedom of Information Law.

- By dispensing funds earmarked for public purposes to a select group of his cronies (in conflict with the established process to determine the validity of such proposals), Dr. Blue has surrounded himself with a handful of supporters who cry out “racism” to quell public outcry over substantive outrage. Some residents see attempts to spin Roosevelt Island’s woes into racial conflict and Blue’s failure to vocalize opposition to their behavior as his single most egregious act.

Observer from page 2

Roosevelt Island’s “100 families” have always had their way, then goes on to give ear to Deirdre MacNamara in her tribute to the President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation: “Dr. Blue doesn’t let himself be manipulated by *this small group* that wants to control everything.” (Emphasis added.) But Stamler does not mention that 92% of voters chose, in the November advisory ballot, to get both Blue and the State of New York out of Roosevelt Island affairs.

To let MacNamara’s label, “this small group,” stand in place of an unambiguous 92% is to get the story wrong, and I doubt that even its author would quibble on that point.

But there is more to it. When Edward Rademaker talks about “the 100 families,” he is picking up a phrase from David Kraut, who used it in a *WIRE* guest-shot piece to describe the revolving core of residents who care enough to be actively involved in trying to create a better Roosevelt Island. Far from being only a “small, well-educated group,” the community’s more-than-100 truly involved people are genuinely representative of Roosevelt Island and all its diversity in education, physical ability, age, income, color, and ethnicity. And *The Times* fails to mention that, contrary to Rademaker’s claim that the Residents Association “is not representative of most island residents,” RIRA (by definition) includes *all* residents, and the members of its Common Council are elected by all adults who care to vote.

Far from being just the Island’s “largest civic group,” as Stamler wrote, RIRA is more accurately characterized as its *only* fully representative group. Its President is elected Island-wide.

A reporter who faces a right-now deadline and omits something so basic can be excused, once, if he’s new to the job. A *Times* reporter, on the other hand, with weeks to produced a definitive story, and space for over 3,000 words, cannot get something like this so wrong without casting suspicion on his work – and on the standards of the newspaper that prints it. Fortunately, *The Times* usually does better.

A cub reporter seeking the easy way out will often accept an official rendering of the facts rather than dig, and Stamler made that mistake, too, passing along Jerry Blue’s pronouncements as fact when, in reality, they are as faulty as his management of the Island.

I know too well the inherent stresses of the craft to get excessively excited over this particular journalistic failure. But I do listen with concern when a few smart people suggest Stamler’s report is “pretty good,” and with dismay when I talk to Island activists who have been disappointed, once again, by *The New York Times*.

DL

Candidate



Cecilia Caruso is running for the Community School Board for District 2. She is Executive Director of FEAT (Fighting for Equality in the Allocation of Textbooks), founded to address the problem of unequal distribution of textbooks in City public schools. She is a nine-year resident, and holds Masters Degrees from Columbia. The election is in May. Information: 486-3019

trust born out of conflict generated by Blue’s actions.

Granted, it is a complex situation – not easily assessed. But there is much that has been missed by your reporters. I invite you to contact me and/or several members of the Residents Association Common Council – the only *elected* resident representatives. Or try Maple Tree Group members who, out of frustration and with the support of 92% of Island voters, have rewritten the legislation governing Roosevelt Island, soon to be introduced into the State legislature. There is more to the story, most of which can be supported by hard documentation, than you have portrayed.

Linda Heimer
RIRA Common Council

Rivercross from page 1

to consider an increase in the surcharge schedule, DHCR has implied it may no longer approve a schedule limiting surcharges to a 10 percent maximum.

The Board’s notice to shareholders calls the surcharge consideration “a very significant issue for all shareholders.” Its lawyer also points out that “Rivercross’s 10 percent maximum surcharge was incorporated in its initial ‘Offering Statement’ (pursuant to which all shareholders purchased), and was approved by the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), DHCR’s predecessor.” When attempts were being made to draw residents to Roosevelt Island and Rivercross in the ’70’s, UDC allowed the lower surcharge schedule as one way of attracting buyers.

Carol Ule, the attorney representing Dym’s group, told *The WIRE*, “Our position is that the same rules applied to all other Mitchell-Lama developments [in the Rivercross category] should be applied to Rivercross.” She continued, “Frankly, it appears that many of

See **Rivercross**, page 7

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Rivercross from page 6 (starts on page 1)

these maintenance increases imposed over the years were done to the advantage of those who would ordinarily pay surcharges up to 50 percent, and to the disadvantage of those people who are the target population for Mitchell-Lamas. They paid steady increases over the years when people who might have [been required] to pay surcharges greater than 10% have just paid the same maintenance surcharges.”

Dym’s committee initially challenged allocation of shares at Rivercross, contending that based on current market value, studio and one-bedroom units carry a disproportionately higher number of shares when compared with the building’s largest apartments. A related issue raised by the group has to do with terraces (balconies), for which it says shares were never allocated. It contends this forces owners of apartments without terraces to subsidize the terraces of those who have them. That issue is raised anew in the group’s recent pleadings to DHCR, which point out that a portion of the requested 5.5 percent maintenance increase would go to pay for repairs of balconies.

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