

Next issue:  
Sept. 10-11

# The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



## Bigelow Will Close; Pharmacy to Gristede's

If all goes as planned, sometime early in September papers will be signed that will bring an end to Bigelow Pharmacy's two-decades-plus life as an independent entity on Roosevelt Island. Pharmacist/owner John Guerra, beset by economic realities, is selling out to Gristede's. Most of Guerra's staff will move to Gristede's, as will Guerra himself. He is not yet talking about the deal, but he told *The WIRE* over a year ago that his business was in trouble. Competition from the health and beauty aids section at Gristede's was a key factor, but there were other pressures as well – Costco and Manhattan drug stores among them.

Under terms of the deal with Red Apple Markets and RIOC, the liability for the Bigelow lease, which extends to the year 2006, will be shared by Bigelow (20%), Gristede's (50%), and RIOC (30%). The liability ends when a new tenant takes over the premises, a storefront in Rivercross.

Guerra had one of the original "no-competition" leases for the premises, but the clause covered only the pharmacy, not the health and beauty aids category of products, which is what allowed RIOC to lease expansion space to Gristede's, with the supermarket free to offer those goods.

Many Island merchants, including Guerra, came to Roosevelt Island years ago with the expectation that Southtown would be built within a few years. Twenty years later, they're still waiting, but many of the no-competition clauses have been dropped from their leases in the meantime.



Pharmacist/Owner John Guerra

**Special Section Inside:  
Full-length interview with new  
RIOC President Robert Ryan**

## RIRA Gears Help Program For Eastwood Blaze Victims

A reception to receive donations of money and household goods for fire victims will be held Monday night, 7:00-9:00, in the basement of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. For information: 759-8336, 371-2332, or 755-4089.

by Debra Mount Cornet

As fire trucks rolled across the bridge to Roosevelt Island the night of Tuesday, August 17, firefighters could see flames bursting out the window of apartment 758 at 560 Main Street. They knew then that they had a bad fire. One firefighter later said, "It was a fire nightmare." By the time the searing flames were stilled, more than twenty apartments stood waterlogged and fetid.



Dorothy Wildes

Engine Company 260, located just across the river, clocked the call at 10:12 p.m. and responded immediately. The rapidity of the fire's spread in the apartment of Dorothy Wildes boosted the call to a two-alarm. About 120 firefighters and 32 units (trucks, engines, rescue vehicles) responded. They subdued the determined blaze by 11:30 p.m.



Firefighters confined the fire to the Wildes apartment, number 758. It was reduced to a charred shell. The hallway and adjacent apartments sustained substantial smoke damage. By night's end, acute heat or smoke had felled eleven firefighters and 16 civilians. Nine of those injured refused treatment; the others were treated and released.

Fire Marshal Frank Licausi determined the cause to be accidental. "The point of origin was directly below an outlet," he said, explaining that two appliances were plugged in. "One of the two caused an electrical

See **Fire**, page 7

## Grannis Holds Self-Governance Legislation for Further Tuning Tells Mendez Plan Needs More Safeguards

Self-governance for Roosevelt Island remains on hold.

Assemblymember Pete Grannis is calling for further work on self-governance legislation, primarily to insure a firm financial footing for the Island once its management passes to a locally-elected RIOC Board of Directors.

"If ever there was a time for heeding the warning *caveat emptor* (buyer beware), this seems to be it," Grannis wrote to members of the Island's Maple Tree Group (MTG), which has worked toward self-governance both before last November's 92% ballot endorsement of the plan, and since. Referring to a letter he wrote to Senator Olga Mendez (full text, page 11), whose version of the legislation was the one under active consideration when the Legislature's session ended in June, Grannis told MTG, "I continue to be very concerned that enactment of her bill *as is* might end up leaving Island residents facing unforeseen financial risks. This would be unacceptable to me and I think should be to the Island community."

MTG members, though preferring an earlier version of the legislation their group had drafted – a ver-

sion introduced in the State Assembly by Grannis – voted unanimously in June to urge passage of the Mendez version, primarily to give residents near-term control of Island development. The group also expressed a concern that the Pataki administration might not support a version of self-governance that was more explicit in preserving a State responsibility for Island finances, feeling the responsibility was preserved by the lease between City and State under which the State operates the Island.

Grannis's memo to MTG continued, "Before taking control of a new governing entity, I believe that both good government and common sense require that a proper due diligence review be undertaken. Since this move will in all likelihood remove the State as the prime guarantor of the Island's future, I believe that we must have in hand proper assurances as to RIOC's condition and full knowledge of what the future holds regarding the new entity's obligations and financial responsibilities."

In a separate memo to Mendez, Grannis praised her work in getting the Republican Administration and

See **Self-Governance**, page 10

## Cabrini Thrift Shop Continues As Island's Oasis of Bargains



by Anusha Shrivastava

Leslie Goldman walks into the Thrift Shop with a small hoard of household goodies – a wrought-iron planter stand that once had adorned a display counter at Bloomingdale's, a telephone, a juicer, a leather bottle holder and glass dishes used to serve corn on the cob. "I haven't used any of these things in the past six months and am not likely to in the near future. For instance, I have been meaning to paint the stand for months but somehow it never gets done and it is merely taking up space in my apartment. I do some cleaning-out at least twice a year and bring things to the store. None

See **Thrift**, page 6



Sister Regina Palomara

# Gridlock on Southpoint

Members of the Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council spent part of their summer weeks gearing up for legal action against the twin-tower hotel proposed for Southpoint. The specifics of their planning are necessarily confidential, of course, but...

...But we do know that a legal challenge to the current Southpoint planning is not viable until the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) takes certain specific actions along the approvals path. That means it's a waiting game for residents (who nonetheless must be prepared).

And from the interview with RIOC President Robert Ryan published in this issue of *The WIRE*, we learn that RIOC intends to see that proposal through to acceptance or rejection before any other idea for the use of Southpoint is given official consideration. The SSJ hotel proposal will, in short, be the only game in town for some time to come.

This set of circumstances makes it virtually impossible for interested parties to put together a financial package to build the FDR Memorial at Southpoint – or make serious plans for some other use of the land. Few sources of potential funding, especially the Federal government, will commit budget for a park and memorial on property which isn't officially available.

So RIRA must wait to mount a legal challenge. And no matter how good an idea may be put forth, it can't make a serious claim for the land. Meanwhile, the SSJ proposal will have to be considered on its own merits, without regard to competing ideas, no matter how good they may be.

And since legal challenges can drag on for years, this state of affairs probably means nothing more than fireworks viewing will happen at Southpoint for a very long time.

The situation is part of Jerome Blue's legacy, of course. It illustrates firmly and conclusively why RIOC should have worked with RIRA on that Request for Proposals that Blue put out. It's no fault of RIRA. Elected Common Council members were given no standing at all by Blue, who stumbled along without considering residents' perspective on *anything*. Blue has thus left Ryan with a series of troublesome development proposals that must be seen through to a legal ashcan before ideas more suited to the nature of Roosevelt Island can have a chance.

The legal action will cost money, much of it yet to be raised. The delays may deny a generation any meaningful use of that marvelous plot of land at the tip of the Island.

An Island under the governance of an elected RIOC Board of Residents would never have blundered so badly, of course, so this mess makes an excellent case for professional management working under the policy guidance of a resident Board. But even that Board would probably have to find its way through the existing proposals before creating or considering better ideas. It might do so more expeditiously, of course, and that makes a strong case for moving quickly on self-governance – which presumes, in turn, that all the parties to that effort can work together – and, we might dare to hope, *soon*.

## At Its Best

A phrase Doryne Isley used to describe Islanders' response to the fire last week, "Roosevelt Island at its best," applies to all involved, of course, including those brave firefighters who became Islanders long enough to extinguish flames that threatened life and property.

Now, there's another chance to see the Island at its best – Monday night, 7:00-9:00, at Good Shepherd. (See page 1.) See you there.

### To the Editor:

I would like to add my voice to the "parking on Main Street" complaints. In the past couple of months I have often had to call my son from a phone on the street to say, "Come down from our apartment, bring a cart and collect the groceries because there's no room to drop them off down here except in front of the fire hydrant."

The southern half of the street has the greatest congestion due to the simple flow of traffic. However, since Public Safety reserved all of the space in front of Trellis, deliveries and Island House residents must park farther down the street. Couldn't some of the larger Public Safety vehicles park behind their offices as they used to do?

I am very proud of our Island's accessibility for the handicapped – Motorgate and the red buses are fully equipped. Therefore, I do not understand why vans and cars with handicapped stickers are allowed to park on the street for hours and sometimes all day without putting a parking sticker on their dashboards. I counted seven such vehicles one day at the end of July. If the handicapped are not required to pay the quarter, couldn't they at least limit their curb-side parking to a short drop-off of a half-hour and then go park in the garage as the rest of us are required to do?

Joan Pape-Uhle

### To the Editor,

I read with interest the interview with David Kraut in the last issue of the wire. David can often be extremely perceptive in clearly ascertaining motivations in complex situations. Unfortunately, this very laudable and rare ability seems to often completely break down when he considers situations that require a careful and objective examination of facts or grasping the vision to consider creative alternatives.

Perhaps the most glaring example of his lapse of factual analysis is his comments on needed capital expenditures for the Island. No doubt there are needs, and in places substantial needs, but let's be very wary about the sky falling in, or, more precisely in this case, of the Island falling in. David says he doesn't "care what the Corp of Engineers says." He doesn't care what one of the most professional and respected engineering organizations in the country, if not the world, has to say after they have done a thorough and professional engineering study of the seawall. Instead we are supposed to throw this study over the wall into the water and listen to David's opinions about wet concrete and sinking roadways and statements about a storm taking "out half the hospital." The fact is, the Island is all bedrock. Below the surface soil, this Island is one giant rock. Erosion is basically, as Nancy Cruickshank, an Island resident and the geologist for the City water tunnel project, has said, a zero factor. Hence, it is impossible for any storm, even the supposed 100 years storm that is so often invoked, to do any damage remotely close to David's claim. David also offers his opinion about this section of the seawall. Well, of course, when it comes to opinions everyone has their own. I don't know how often David walks up to this part of the seawall he is so concerned about, but I run along it at least once every week. I have never seen the wet concrete, sinking roadway or a street that is "completely eroding."

So, let us stay away from opinion and hone to the facts not only about the seawall but all capital projects. Let us always remember to ask where are the facts, where are the engineering studies to support the statements that are so often so blithely bantered about. Just because we have heard huge sums repeated over and over again almost like a mantra, gives them only

See **Letters**, page 6

# Letters

### To the Editor:

After having been away for three weeks, I looked forward to returning to what had become routine Sunday afternoons for me on Roosevelt Island in the summer time. I brought my book, bottled water and a mat to sit on, to the large grassy area across from the old nurses' residence on the east side of the Island.

I couldn't believe what I found. I was stunned. I could not find space wide enough for me to lean back comfortably, for all that the dogs had left behind. Though inconspicuous at first glance, Baby Gherkin-size droppings covered the entire area, including a good portion of the walkway. *Small* dogs the culprit obviously, not that size matters. In the same breath however, and in defense of small dogs everywhere, I do suppose it's possible that geese visiting the Island could be to blame. No matter, my point remains. And that is...

If dogs are to be allowed on Roosevelt Island as they obviously are (and that's not my complaint), there must be a way to continue to keep the Island clean and the residents happy. Maybe a fenced-in dog run positioned at each end of the Island? Maybe strict "pick up" rules and fines if they don't? I am certain the dog owners, as well as the rest of us, would welcome a solution. And there is one, there must be. Today would be a good day to search for it.

Joyce Keating

***The WIRE* continues to receive anonymous letters each issue. Please note our *Letters Policy*: While we may use letters on a "Name Withheld" basis, we must know the identity of the writer and how to reach the writer.**

### To the Editor:

Your last edition of *The WIRE* was most welcome. It clarified a problem most of us have had with the Maple Tree Group. In correcting the "typo" in a previous column you said that any "new" versions of the self-government legislation in Albany would be submitted "to the approval of the community" not as in the originally written "the approval of the (RIRA) Common Council." Frankly, I didn't even notice the difference until you spent a whole column making the distinction. In short, MTG believes that somehow it has more authority in public affairs than the only freely elected body on this Island. Where does it get this authority? Its leaders claim it comes from the fact that 92% of the voters in the RIRA election expressed support for self-government. The ballot nowhere recognized any entity beyond RIRA. I voted "yes" but it never occurred to me that I had given MTG or any other group a proxy to speak for me on any legislation. Yet MTG went on its own as a surrogate RIRA dealing with our state legislators as if they represented the Island residents.

Just as troubling was your description of what you call "its usual M.O." where MTG goes to the State government through the back door to seek "deal breakers" and "nudging along" legislation whose content was unknown to its supposed beneficiaries. This stealth politics is certainly no way to seek democracy. Moreover, we were later told that this was the only and last chance for self-government, peddling panic along the way.

Anyone with elementary knowledge of Albany's practices can easily spot a "no starter." In addition, the text changed so often that no one had a copy of the final bill. But MTG continues to act as if it has the popular credentials to speak for others and has now announced it is going "to stick" with the present bill. It consulted no one, made the decision in secrecy, and has made it clear that it will by-pass RIRA and present it "to the community." It never bothered to do that before.

Albany is no place for amateurs. "Deal breaking" and "nudging along" is an art learned by years of experience, fertilized by special interest money. Lobbyists get to know the rhythms of legislative sessions, the netherworld of committees, the web of political debts and ambitions, and the simple beauty of patience. It is naive to believe that the State is going to hand over 47 acres of schools and library, Main Street merchants, the hospitals, and a piece of priceless real estate to unprepared and inexperienced Islanders.

This does not mean that changes are not needed to give the Island broader elected representation and participation in community management and planning. To do this will require a whole Island conversation without rancor and bitterness. It is a time for thoughtfulness, mutual respect and common parlay. This "experiment" in a planned community is a certified national and international success. With a new beginning at RIOC, cooperation should replace confrontation. There is much to do, and there is still time to do it, openly and democratically.

Richard C. Wade

## Letters Policy

*The WIRE* welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials, and will consider publication on a *Name Withheld* basis, but the writer's name, address, and telephone number must be provided. **Preferred methods of submission: PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*, or by e-mail to nyc10044@rcn.com** (any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros). Alternatives: Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. We cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.**



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Like all of us, I am horrified by the tragedy that has overcome Dottie Wilde and her family in the devastating fire that swept through and destroyed their home on the night of August 17th. Not a single possession, other than the clothes they were each wearing at the time, survived the flames. It is through the grace of God, of course, that they themselves survived the fire, and that no one else was seriously hurt.

It is a tribute to the Fire Department that the blaze was contained within one apartment, although smoke and water damage affected many others on that wing of 560 Main Street. I have seen the apartment since the fire. Nothing remains but some four to six inches of ash. When you descend the stairs into Dottie's apartment, you face the kitchen. All that remained was the enameled shell of the stove on its side... the insides were gone, as was the room itself, the cabinets, counters, appliances, contents, all reduced to ash.

It was a terrifying and humbling sight. And although my first impression was how lucky they had been to survive, it

was not long before the significance of a loss of that magnitude overcame me.

I have several times been a guest at Dottie's home for holiday or celebratory meals. I particularly remember the dozens and dozens of photographs of children that Dottie has cared for over the years that lined the walls and stood in cabinets. Twenty years of Island children's photos, most of them irreplaceable.

Dottie's family is comprised of her grown son, Ronald, her granddaughter, Sasha, and her great-grandson, Stephen, who's about to celebrate his third birthday. Each of them has lost every possession that had meaning for them, as well as all the practical things we all depend upon from day to day. Whether it be seventy years of meaning, as for Dottie, or only three, as for Stephen, it must be bewildering to feel you've lost each and every possession you had chosen to be your own.

I know this community and I know the community will respond to this crisis. RIRA will hold a Relief Collection Night on Monday, August 30, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Community Room downstairs at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. We ask that you bring whatever contribution you would like to make, whether it be money or household goods to help Dottie's family begin to rebuild their lives. If you can't make it to this event, there is a Relief Fund collection point for cash or checks at the Public Safety Office that is available 24 hours a day.

On other fronts, there is some good news. There are three new Public Safety Officers who have been added to the force, and RIOC has finalized a training agreement for Public Safety with the Port Authority Police. It's a good beginning.

Pete Grannis, ever the community's advocate, has come up with a \$9,000 grant for the Youth Center, and the RIOC board finally authorized this year's \$65,000 Public Safety payment for Youth Center operations. The Youth Center has been an invaluable part of Island life since its inception.

There has been no specific movement on the development front, but RIRA remains deeply involved and cautious. Any development of the Island beyond Southtown must be shown to be not only within the bounds of the General Development Plan (GDP), but separately, an enhancement of the community, socially, environmentally and economically. And there remain construction issues to resolve with Southtown itself.

It has occurred to me that one possible way to save Main Street from the inevitable pounding it will receive from construction vehicles would be for the State and City to cooperate in initiating a ferry service for the trucks themselves from the Queens side of the East River. Barging the construction materials is evidently prohibitively expensive, but ferrying the trucks across could be less expensive than the extensive damage that will result to Main Street, the Roosevelt Island Bridge (which is the responsibility of the City) and the reconstruction of the bridge ramp down to the Island.

Those of us who have lived here long enough to remember the building of Manhattan Park remember the reconstruction of the bridge ramp into the open space that is now PS 217 because our spiral ramp would not allow for the over-long construction vehicles. The construction, and de-construction, of that ramp cost millions of dollars, and this time would involve the loss to the community of Capobianco Field. Surely, it is worthwhile to investigate a truck-ferrying service from the State land at City Lights, on the Queens side of the river, as a cheaper alternative.

## Volunteer for *The WIRE*

*The Main Street WIRE* relies on many Island volunteers to fill important jobs in the distribution process, and there's a role for **you** if you're willing to help. On Fridays, when *The WIRE* comes off the press, we have a stuffing crew at work from about 9:00 a.m. to about 2:45 p.m. (lunch is provided). Later on Fridays (and early Saturday), volunteers deliver the newspaper to every apartment door on the Island, as well as to merchants, the hospitals, and other locations. It's hard work, but an important service to the community, and satisfying. If you'd like to join this dedicated group, please call **935-6043**, or 935-7534, or 826-9055. (Leave your number if a machine answers, and we'll call you back.) ***The WIRE* and Website NYC10044 also seek news and feature writers. Call 826-9055.**

## Arlene Fromchuck

Arlene Fromchuck, a professor of classics at Brooklyn College and a Westview resident since 1974, died August 3 in Hanover, New Hampshire.



Best known on the Island as a runner – her distance was the 10K – Arlene was a poet and a long-time activist in the movement to achieve human rights for the Kurds, an interest she developed after meeting Omran Feili, who was national presi-

dent of the Kurdish student organization in the U.S. at the time of their marriage.

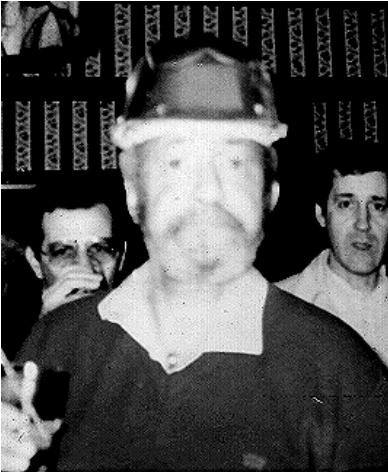
At the time of her death, she and her husband were working on two books: one on the Persian poet Rumi, the other on the history of Luristan, a province in Iran.

She is also survived by her sons, Kamron and Darius, her sister, Suzan, and her father, Sol.

## Charles Nicholls

Word has been received of the death of Charles Nicholls, who became a resident of Roosevelt Island in August, 1977, along with his children, Kim, Wendy, and Tracy, and his wife, Constance.

Charles Nicholls was active on the Island. He moonlighted wiring electrical fixtures for other residents, while working at Rockefeller Center and the World Trade Center. He assisted in selling Christmas trees for the Boy Scouts, and he installed temporary lighting at the Community Gardens, where he and his wife had a plot. He was hospitalized in 1990, with Alzheimer's disease.



Constance Nicholls is a resident of Shepherd's Park, Senior Housing in Hartford, Connecticut.

# COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friedland – phone/fax 317-8523

**Sat., Aug. 28, Mother Cabrini Flea Market**, Good Shepherd Plaza.

**Sun., Aug. 29**, 6:00 p.m., **Going Places**, performed by Irene Clark and Dina Esperanza Mann, Eastwood Amphitheatre. Free.

**Mon., Aug. 30**, 6:00 p.m., **Love Letters**, by A. R. Gurney, performed by Mel Haughwout and Eve Marlowe, Eastwood Amphitheatre. Free.

**Mon., Aug. 30**, 7:00-9:00 p.m., **RIRA Relief Collection Night** for victims of the recent fire, downstairs, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

**Mon., Aug. 30**, 7:00 p.m., **Auditions** for leads in possible **Main Street Theatre** and Dance Alliance benefit: *Music Man*; *Bye, Bye Birdie*, or *Oliver*. Call for information: **371-4449**.

**Tue., Aug. 31**, 6:30 p.m., **Weight Watchers**, Senior Center. Information, 832-3456.

**Wed., Sept. 1**, RIOC's *Summer Sounds on the River* concert series, **Neil Sugarman Quartet** (jazz/R&B), 6:00-7:30 p.m., on the pier (near subway station). Free.

**Tue., Sept. 7**, lecture, **Writing Fiction That Sells**, part 1, 6:30 p.m., Library.

**Wed., Sept. 8, Youth Soccer Registration**, Good Shepherd Plaza, 6:00 p.m. Fee, \$60 per child. (See story, page 11.)

**Wed., Sept. 8**, RIOC's *Summer Sounds on the River* concert series, **Spirit Ensemble** (world music), 6:00-7:30 p.m., on the pier (near subway station). Free.

**Sat., Sept. 11**, next scheduled issue of ***The Main Street WIRE***. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Sept. 3; decision on staffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Sept. 6; bag materials due Sept. 9. **Future issues:** Sept. 25, Oct. 9, Oct. 23 (Halloween issue), Nov. 6, Nov. 20 (Thanksgiving issue), Dec. 4, Dec. 18 (Christmas/New Year issue); Jan. 8, 2000, Jan. 22, 2000, and generally every two weeks thereafter. 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, **317-8523**.

**Wed., Sept. 15, Youth Soccer Registration**, Good Shepherd Plaza, 6:00 p.m. Fee, \$60 per child. (See story, page 11.)

**Wed., Sept. 15**, 7:00-9:00 p.m., **Registration** for dance, drama, and exercise classes. Main Street Theatre. (Also see Sept. 17.)

**Wed., Sept. 15**, RIOC's *Summer Sounds on the River* concert series, **River Brass** (classical), 6:00-7:30 p.m., on the pier (near subway station). Free.

**Fri., Sept. 17**, 7:00-9:00 p.m., **Registration** for dance, drama, and exercise classes at **Main Street Theatre**, including a performance by teachers starting at 7:00. For information, **371-4449**.

**Fri., Sept. 17**, 8:00 p.m., **Juanita Fleming**, *From the Father of Gospel to the Other Side of Duke*, a reflection on the sacred works of Thomas A. Dorsey and Duke Ellington, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. \$10, seniors \$8.

**Sat., Sept. 18**, firm deadline for **Youth Soccer Registration**. (Story, page 11.)

**Tue., Sept. 21**, 6:30 p.m., **Book Discussion Group**, *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Library. Meets third Tuesday of each month; admission free but pre-registration suggested.

**Fri., Oct. 1** (and **Sat., Oct. 2**), 8:00 p.m., **Main Street Theatre Fundraiser**, Anita Michael performs her cabaret act, *A Hairdresser Looks at Her Roots*. Suggested donation \$15 or more. Information, **371-4449**.

**Tue., Oct. 19**, lecture, **Writing Fiction That Sells**, part 2, 6:30 p.m., Library.

**Tue., Oct. 15**, 6:30 p.m., **Book Discussion Group**, *Black and Blue* by Anna Quindlen, Library. Meets third Tuesday of each month; admission free but pre-registration suggested.

**Tue., Nov. 15**, 6:30 p.m., **Book Discussion Group**, *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway, Library. Meets third Tuesday of each month; admission free but pre-registration suggested.



Patrick Stewart

### At the Senior Center

#### Monday

9:00-10:00, **Stay Well** (Exercise)  
10:00-11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beg)  
11:00-12:00, **English as 2nd** (intermediate)

#### Tuesday

1:30, **Bingo**  
**Wednesday**

9:00-10:00, **Stay Well** (Stretch)  
9:30, **Computer Class**  
10:00-11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beg)  
11:00-12:00, **English as 2nd** (intermediate)  
12:30, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

#### Thursday

10:00-11:00, **Tai Chi**  
12:30, **Movie**

#### Friday

10:00-12:00, **Citizenship Class**  
10:00-12:00, **Creative Arts Workshop**  
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**

#### Saturday

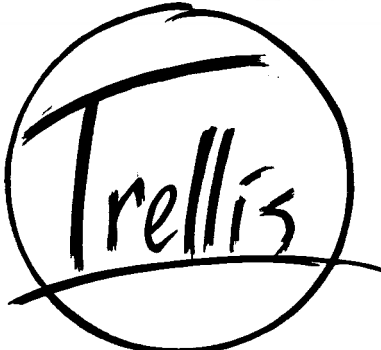
7:30, **Bingo**

### Special Events

Details: **980-1888**

Mon., Sept. 13, 11:00-12:30, **Metrocard Bus**  
Wed., Sept. 15, **Atlantic City** (RISA trip)  
Fri., Sept. 24, 12:30, **Birthday Party**  
Mon., Sept. 27, 11:00-12:30, **Metrocard Bus**  
Mon., Sept. 27, 12:30-2:30, **Health Fair**  
Mon., Sept. 27, 9:30-2:30, **Free Flu Shots** (also November 3, 11:30-2:30)

# Jazz at the Trellis



See you at Trellis  
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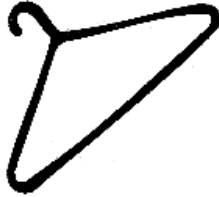
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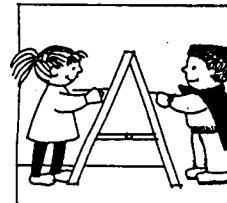
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Letters from page 2

false credibility; it does not add one ray of factual light to clarify or help us understand objectively; so we can determine what the real needs and solutions are. In fact, such statements, and unfortunately firmly held opinions in some quarters, only confuse, scare and intimidate those who have not had the time to examine carefully the problems and the *facts* that are known. I have attempted to do just that with virtually all the claims of great need that have been put forward. In each and every case I have found the claims to be out of line with the facts and usually wildly so. I can assure you that the Island is not about to sink nor is the financial sky about to fall in. A careful, dispassionate and objective analysis of the capital and operating needs of the Island reveal, without a doubt, that we have the financial wherewithal to successfully govern ourselves. The real question is, do we have the courage and the spirit to do so?

Let us take up the challenge and grab the reins in our own hands and then, through the attention, care and creativity we will pour into our community, we will increase efficiencies driving down costs, create additional revenues even before possible development, find solutions to completing Southpoint and Octagon Park as the complete open spaces they are mandated to be in the GDP and implement creative additions to the Island that will add unbelievable flare and life to our Island and complete the original vision and fulfill the promise that attracted us all here: a place to make a home unsurpassed in the world as an artistically designed and creatively executed uniquely livable environment and community.

Lee Edelman

To The Editor:

The chart provided in your article (*Rivercross Surcharges Are Doubled*, July 31,1999, Page1) did cover the percentage increases, but we think it would be more useful to examine some of the actual dollar figures that are involved.

Let’s take a few examples:

1) For a shareholder of a 1-bedroom apartment to incur the maximum surcharge, his income would have to be more than \$14,600 per month. At a 20% surcharge, the maintenance (rent) would be \$1,317 per month. At a 50% surcharge, the maintenance would be \$1,646 per month.

2) A shareholder of a 3-bedroom apartment would have to earn more than \$20,800 per month to incur the maximum surcharge. At a 20% surcharge, the maintenance would be \$1,904 per month. At a 50% surcharge, the maintenance would be \$2,380 per month.

3) A shareholder of a 12-room apartment (yes, such huge apartments do exist at Rivercross!), would have to earn more than \$45,000 per month to incur the maximum surcharge. At a 20% surcharge, the maintenance would be \$4,074 per month. At a 50% surcharge, the maintenance would be \$5,092 per month.

According to *The New York Times*, housing costs nationally are 39.6 percent of income for middle-income Americans. But for the highest over-income Rivercross residents, the average housing cost is 9.07% of income with a 20% surcharge or 11.34% percent with a 50% surcharge. Even with a maximum surcharge of 50%, the monthly housing costs for the very highest income residents of Rivercross are a bargain in today’s housing market.

Most Rivercross shareholders (67%) are middle-income residents who are not subject to any surcharge. A 50% surcharge on the highest over-income apartments could not only eliminate the recent 4.07% maintenance increase, but could substantially reduce the amounts of future increases.

For DHCR and the Rivercross Board of Directors to claim that a 50% maximum surcharge is an unreasonable burden for the highest over-income levels, from \$175,000 to \$545,000 per year before a maximum surcharge is incurred, is a travesty and an insult to the residents of all the other Mitchell-Lama buildings in New York who do pay their fair share.

**Committee for Maintenance & Privatization Fair Play**  
**Fran Dym, President**  
**Mary Camper-Titsingh, Vice President**  
**Jennifer Dunning, Secretary**

To the Editor:

I would like to give my thanks to a few of the people on our Island who care for this community. We are quick to criticize when things go wrong, but often forget to say thanks when someone does a good deed.

There is plenty of evidence from last Tuesday’s [August 17] fire, especially if you look at 560 on the seventh floor, but the Public Safety and the Management Offices’ staff are working very hard for those of us who live here to be comfortable.

First, I want to thank God, who protected us from serious injury even though it was such an intense fire. I would also like to thank Mr. James Fry from the Public Safety Department and all of his staff, Ms. Doryne Isley from the Management Office, and Ms. Thelma McIntosh of the Maintenance Office and all of their staffs. They work very hard. I don’t think anyone could have done a better job than these people did that evening.

They stayed with us the entire time during the fire until everyone was safely upstairs again. I was one of the last people to be able to go up to my apartment; it was 4:00 a.m. I don’t know what time these people finally left for their houses.

To all of them, a job well done. Thanks a million!

Sonia Jang

AVAC Pipe Being Fixed



Emergency repairs to the AVAC system have been under way. This hole in the road appeared at 40 River Road on August 5.



by George Rubin

Intermittent problems with the AVAC system have led to a need for repairs, with the replacement of the main AVAC pipes and elbows.

A large hole in the street dug August 5 at 40 River Road tells the story. This is the major conduit of the AVAC piping system. The street had to be dug up to reach the piping system; also a large amount of water had leaked into the system and had to be pumped out. Jerry Sorgente, Senior Engineer with AVAC, which is part of the Department of Sanitation, said, “Years of wear and tear and erosion had led to this problem.” Robert Petitto, Stationary Engineer with the Department of Sanitation said, “The job should take about two weeks, hopefully. The AVAC system will be down only sporadically. We hope this will not affect gas or electricity to any of the buildings.”

Though the work is being done under AVAC and the Department of Sanitation supervision, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation is paying for the entire repair job. A \$120,000 expenditure was authorized at the August meeting of the RIOC Board of Directors.

Thrift from page 1

of this stuff is so worn that someone else may not get something more out of it for some time.”

Goldman, an Island resident since 1976, is one of the generous donors Sister Regina Palamara and her eighteen volunteers at the Cabrini Thrift Store welcome with a smile. “We like people with a high quality of life to donate things, not people who bring in their garbage,” says Sister Regina, who has been running the store since 1988. “We are trying to upgrade the store and let people see that this is not a junk store. The store should be seen as a recycling center which does its bit to save the earth. It is a service to the community and helps support the Church. With money raised here, we help hard-up cases that no one needs to hear about. We run a Youth program, organize children’s retreats, and a concert series in Church. We are not working for the almighty dollar. We are here to serve people.”

Space for the store has been donated by RIOC. “We used to be in the tiny space where the florist is. Then we were asked to move to where the fish store is. Within a few months we were asked to move to where the hardware store is – all this within two years. We moved into this space in October of 1988. RIOC used to store bricks and paints here so we had to work really hard to make the place look good. There still isn’t enough light and no water supply, but we are making do,” says Sister Regina.

Another change in the offing is that the Library will be taking some space from the store. “We will stop accepting furniture once that happens,” says Sister Regina. “Furniture takes up too much space and moves very slowly. Also, we have to pay a handyman to bring the furniture in and that eats into our meager budget.”

A volunteer who did not want to be identified said she had seen furniture travel in and out of the thrift store all around the Island. “It just keeps coming back after a while!” Some of this furniture might have been bought by Kitty Madeson, a writer, who came to the Island “after years of traveling. I used the store to buy basics. Now, of course, I buy books and clothes for some children I know whose parents do not have too much money to spend.”

One can find reasonably-priced household goods ranging from electronics to cutlery, strollers to posters and jackets to eyeglasses. “I come once a week for the books,” says Kelly Famolaro. “I am building a library and this is a great place to pick up books.” Milagros Pivarro comes in once a week and buys whatever she thinks she can use. “Mostly it is clothes and toys, sometimes furniture,” she says. Louella Pais-Streitz says she comes in whenever she wants to donate stuff and whenever her kids want to. “This is a place where you can pick up handy things. We had some visitors over and bought roller blades for them. I even bought a small bike which I knew my kids would outgrow soon.”

Andrea Moralis admits that she visits every day. “This is our boutique, we come in and see what’s new.” Another regular is

Francisca Gonzalez. “I have been coming in every day on the way back from work. I always find some toys for my kids.” Ernie, William and Tracy, all residents of Goldwater Hospital, come in to browse at least once a week. “The prices are good and they give you a discount if necessary.”

“Browsers are fine as long as they buy something,” says Sister Regina. “There was a time when I realized that people were using the store for long coffee breaks. I had to change the store timings to avoid that. Another problem we face is that some people like to steal. We are willing to help people if they ask, but I suppose that some people feel empowered over a sweater after they have stolen it. I am dealing with raw human nature all the time in running this store, in more ways than one. In fact, it is like conducting an orchestra. I have a violin of a volunteer who trashes everything that comes in and I have to remind her that this is not an antique store. I have a drum who can do the horse-work but will put a five-dollar tag on a dirty tee-shirt. I have a horn who can only talk and do no work. It is my job to see that there is a beautiful song coming out at the end of it all.”

Some of Sister Regina’s volunteers are devoted friends who travel from far to help her. Pat Wenzel, a former Island resident, drives in from Greenwich, Connecticut, to work in the store. “I enjoy talking to the people here. I love this community because it is the way it should be. There aren’t too many places where you have people talking to each other,” points out Pat. Madeleine M. Faiella comes from Staten Island because she thinks this place is unique. “I meet people from different cultures and learn about their culture. Above all, I have learned that there is only one God and that I want to give him something back by serving his people.” Stella Amadeo is 71 years old, and comes to volunteer regularly because helping others makes her “feel good. I am fortunate enough to have good health and I like to use my time smiling and helping others smile.”

Not all volunteers have service to the community on their minds, but their work is outstanding and Sister Regina values their contribution very highly. Nassima Coddereenes is all of ten years old and helps pick out clothes with pink or blue tags that denote the length of time they’ve been hanging in the store. She earns ten dollars for her monthly effort and is saving the money for a trip around the world. Her seven-year-old brother, Thibault, is also a volunteer. When asked what he would do with the money he earned at the store, his reply was pat: “I’ll go with Nassima.”

When the children have sorted out older clothes and books that no one seems to want, Sister Regina puts them out for a half-price sale. Whatever items are left are then sold at 25 cents apiece, and finally for two cents. If there is still something left over, it is shipped to missions in countries where it might be used. “We send things to Ethiopia, South Africa and the Philippines,” says Sister Regina.

“Those of us fortunate enough to have more than we really need should consider donating things to the store, but please,” she asks, “don’t bring in what is completely worthless.”

**Thrift Shop Sampler**

Crutches

200 blouses under \$5

Trivial Pursuit – \$2

Yatsee – \$1

100 board games \$2 & less

Puzzles

\$50 WaterPik – \$10

Nostalgic Fondue Set – \$10

Original art works under \$5

Bread maker – \$10

Bikes & helmets

Exercise equipment

# Fire from page 1

overload or an arcing, which produced enough heat to ignite the baseboard and carpet. One of the wires led to a lamp, but the other appliance could not be identified because the fire totally consumed it.” He said that no evidence existed that electrical wiring contained within the walls contributed to the fire, but the heat of the fire damaged wiring in the apartment above, making it unlivable.

Licausi added that the heat was more severe because the fire was fully contained within the Wildes apartment by the heat-resistant structure of the unit. This intensified the fire and heat, at times overcoming the firefighters, who wore heavy bunker gear. “These fires generate a lot of heat because of the thick walls. This creates a virtual oven for firefighters,” he said.

Dorothy Wildes, who was not home when the fire broke out in her apartment, shares it with her son, Ronald Wildes, her granddaughter, Sasha Ross, and Ross’ infant son, Steven Sanchez.

Ross recounted her experience in realizing the apartment was ablaze: “I had gone to bed and woke up to an alarm and thought it was my clock. The second time I thought somebody was cooking, so I opened the bedroom door and saw smoke.” Although not sure the apartment was burning, she grabbed her son, slammed the door and opened the window and began to scream. She saw a friend and Public Safety Of-



ficer Rydell Lindsey on the east roadway. They told her to get out of the apartment. “I threw my son back on the bed and ran out of my bedroom into his room. It was unclear what had happened. I thought my uncle might have been cooking.” The smoke increased and turned “pitch black,” she said, so she grabbed Steven and ran up the stairs to the door. She burned her fingers opening the door.

Ross discovered her uncle and PSO Lindsey just outside the door. She said her uncle had begun banging on doors but people told him to go away. Public Safety Officers, with the aid of residents, began advising people to evacuate their apartments.

At that time the family did not know whether Ms. Wildes was home, so Ross began screaming that her grandmother was inside. Firefighters had not yet arrived and the intense heat from the apartment apparently precluded entry by others.

Wildes learned of the fire when she returned, and was taken to Elmhurst Hospital and treated for a panic attack, according to her granddaughter, and released. Ross and her son were also treated with oxygen and transported to Elmhurst, where they were later released.

Neighbors told of their experiences. Al Hooks, who lives below Wildes in apartment 456, was lying in bed when he smelled smoke. “I looked around,” he said, “and saw smoke inside my apartment. In the process, I heard an explosion above me. Then, I heard people upstairs screaming.” Hooks, who is disabled, said that he then got in his chair and

tried to close his window, but sparks were flying outside. He then left his apartment, finding that others were starting to run out by then.

“I was scared,” he recalled with some emotion. “They were jam-packed at the elevator.” He pushed himself to a rescue truck where he received oxygen. He and his nephew later cleaned his drenched apartment until 4:00 a.m. “I still feel very uncomfortable. It’s damp and gloomy.” His apartment sustained extensive water-damage.

Jennifer Simone, who lives in Apartment 726, had returned from upstate tired, and had just lain down when she heard a smoke alarm around 9:45. “I first thought it might be my sister’s television, but then I heard someone shout, ‘Everybody get out!’ My mom was so scared,” she said. Although she couldn’t coax her cat from under the couch, her sister Lisa grabbed a pet bird and they left.

Ms. Simone said that the hall was filled with people in all manner of dress, including some in underwear. “I went to Island House and fell asleep on the floor. But then I started to cry. When we went home around 3:00 a.m. it was pitch black.” After questioning the maintenance men about safety, she slept with her

light on.

Because hallway smoke alarms did not sound until barrier doors were forced open, allowing the smoke out, some residents just doors away were not immediately aware of the blaze. Elizabeth Kiehm, in apartment 750, said she and her parents were watching a movie when Public Safety Officers knocked and instructed the family to leave. “We thought it was a joke,” said her mother, Joyce Kiehm. Her husband ran out barefoot.

When they returned later, the Kiehms found that firefighters had entered through a window, breaking glass and furniture. Bedding was water damaged, forcing them to sleep on the floor. Water had damaged Elizabeth’s computer beyond repair. “It hurts inside,” Ms. Kiehm said, holding her chest.

As firefighters swept the building smashing windows and breaking down doors, the community cranked up to pitch in and help. Doryne Isley arrived at about 10:40 p.m. to assess the situation from the management perspective. “It was a terrible fire,” she said. “But, thank God, the walls withstood the heat. That kind of fire in a building that didn’t have a good rating would have taken the whole building.” (Roosevelt Island complies with the State fire code for high-rise residential buildings. Apartments are fire-resistant – meaning they are designed to confine fires within apartments for four hours.)

As Public Safety Officers and residents hustled people outside the fuming building, Main Street sidewalks filled with confused residents. Emer-

gency vehicles clogged the street, stopping traffic. Despite this, calm prevailed, according to witnesses. Isley said that, given the circumstances, “it was Roosevelt Island at its best.” She praised both Public



Safety and Island residents for their combined effort in assisting their neighbors. James Fry, Director of Public Safety, said that he had received several letters of praise from residents for his officers, and has himself written letters of commendation.

Fay Vass, whose daughter Michelle Vidra lives in 560 and is also disabled, said, “I think that Public Safety, the Management Company and RIOC did a marvelous job in making residents feel safe and secure.” Vass and other residents assisted by guiding evacuees to temporary rest areas.

Temporary shelters were opened in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, the 576 Community Room, and the Island House Community room. Beverages and cots were given to dazed residents. The Red Cross set up shop and took information in case placement became necessary. A representative of the Mayor’s Emergency Response Team also came to the Island to offer the City’s assistance.

By 4:00 a.m., most residents were able to return to their homes. Some chose to stay with friends or relatives. The maintenance staffs of all the buildings worked all night and the next few days with little sleep. Although they scrubbed soot-covered walls and wet-vacuumed soaked floors, an odor lingers, and the hallway outside the Wildes apartment is smoke-blackened. Telephone lines were damaged and only emergency lines are working in some apartments.

Susan Ahn, 16, who lives in Apartment 460 with her two sisters and mother, Cynthia Ahn, said there is still water dripping down her walls. “We had white wall-to-wall carpeting, but the water soaked it so badly we couldn’t get it up. For two days we walked around on the wet floor until we could get it up.” A tile floor



## Public Safety Blotter

July 28-August 19, 1999

**7/28/99**, Harassment, 500 Main St., A person entered Public Safety Department (PSD) stating underage female youth slapped her underage daughter. She refused EMS. Other girl’s mother arrived at PSD, discussed matter with other mother, resolved it between them. Youth Officer advised.

**7/30/99**, Verbal Dispute, 625 Main St., Couple in verbal dispute, escorted to PSD, agreed to settle it in civil court.

**8/1/99**, Harassment, 686 Main St., GM phoned PSD, stated that a male committed petit larceny on 6/23, and he requested he be escorted out of the store. PSD, NYPD responded. The man was escorted out of the store.

**8/1/99**, Vehicle Accident, 400 Main St., There was a stopped vehicle blocking traffic at bend before nurses quarters. Car was being driven by un-licensed, underage girl. PSD sergeant driving RMP#3 attempted to drive around it to investigate why it was stopped, but car went into reverse, striking the RMP. Car owner issued two summonses.

**8/6/99**, Trespass, 40 River Rd., Doorkeeper phoned PSD, stated there were youths in the fenced in pool without authorization. PSD officers responded, 4 youths were in pool area, said they had been swimming. There is a “No Trespassing” sign posted. Three youths’ mothers responded, provided identification, youths were issued “C” summonses.

**8/7/99**, Assault, 510 Main St., A person informed PSD Officer his underage daughter was assaulted in elevator by unknown youth, causing swelling to eye and by banging her head on wall. EMS responded, treated her at scene. NYPD responded.

**8/8/99**, Theft of Service, 552 Main St., Cab driver entered PSD, stated a perpetrator would not pay fare. After being arrested, perp. began to act irrationally. EMS and NYPD present. Perp. was taken to Elmhurst Hospital for examination and transported to 19 Precinct for processing.

**8/12/99**, Dispute, 531 Main St., PSD officers responded to scene of dispute. Spouse left apartment without incident. NYPD responded, prepared report.

**8/12/99**, Missing Property, 501 Main St., Manager of store phoned PSD, stated perp. had taken two laptops valued at \$1500 each. She stated that the door was locked with no signs of forced entry. Window was closed but not locked. NYPD responded, prepared report.

**8/12/99**, Petit Larceny, 599 Main St., Female entered PSD, stated she had placed purse on counter and went to lavatory. She noticed someone fleeing from store, locked door, did some paper work, noticed purse was missing. PSD officers searched area, recovered purse with everything except the cellular phone, returned same to victim. NYPD responded, prepared report.

**8/12/99**, Petit Larceny, 875 Main St., Male entered PSD, stated he had left a bag containing valuables on bench while playing. When he went to retrieve it, the bag was gone. PSD officer and NYPD searched area with negative results. NYPD prepared report.

**8/16/99**, Criminal Mischief, 688 Main St., Resident entered PSD, stated that her car locks were tampered with, later she noticed that school supplies, etc. valued at \$100 were missing. She said she would contact NYPD. Later victim stated it would cost \$200 to replace locks. Officer searched area with negative results.

**8/17/99**, Fire, 560 Main St., Person notified PSD Officer of fire at location, officer responded, confirmed same, contacted central. PSD units responded to scene, evacuated all tenants from affected floors. Resident advised officer of her grandmother still in the building. Officer attempted to enter apartment to search, but could not because of heavy smoke and intense heat. Seven residents and ten firefighters were transported to Elmhurst Hospital for various treatments, smoke inhalation, one person burned her hand, EMS treated one firefighter and eight civilians at scene; they all refused transport. There were no fatalities. One apartment was heavily damaged. Several apartments suffered water damage, door damage, FDNY had to break several locks on apartments.

**8/19/99**, Noise Complaint/Found Property, 4 River Rd., Anonymous persons reported to PSD that someone was riding a loud scooter north and south on east seawall. Officers responded, conducted search with negative results. Scooter was discovered in lobby next to elevators, unattended, w/o license. Officer took it to 114 Precinct to voucher, to prevent hazardous condition.

is now buckling. The Ahns lost her mother’s wedding gown and several traditional Korean dresses.

Isley issued flyers to all the victims following the fire. The first letter apologized for their ordeal and included an insurance form. The second letter alerted them to the scheduled arrival of an insurance inspector, and the third apologized for his failure to show. To clarify conflicting stories regarding coverage, Isley said, “Our insurance doesn’t cover personal possessions, but that doesn’t mean that they won’t entertain coverage.” She encouraged all those affected to file claims, but to also consider purchasing insurance.

A group of residents has organized a fund-raising effort for the fire victims. On Monday (August 30), a reception will be held in the Community Room of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Fay Vass, one of the organizers, requests that contributions of cash or household goods be brought at that time. Distribution of the funds will be made in consultation with Housing Management. Although the Wildes

must start from scratch in their new apartment, consideration will also be given to other victims with pressing needs, said Vass. Further contributions may be left at the Public Safety Office. Those with questions may contact Fay Vass, **755-4089**; Patrick Stewart, **371-2332**; or Joan Christianson, **759-8336**.

In the days following the fire, the Fire Department held drills to assess their performance. “A drill is not unusual,” according to Lt. Joseph Pascale of Engine Company 260. “Roosevelt Island has a multitude of difficult stairways. It’s a lot to drill.”

As for residents and fire concerns, Chief Dixon told *The WIRE*, “People can’t completely depend on the Fire Department to get them out. Everybody must take responsibility to plan for a fire.” He added that it is more difficult for the disabled, but they should plan with family and friends for an emergency. RIRA President Stewart says he plans to bring the Fire Department’s Outreach Program to the Island.

Stewart said, “We have a lot to be both proud of and thankful for.”

***The WIRE* publishes this information as received from RIOC and makes no representation as to its accuracy or completeness.**

# Library Announces List For Book Discussions

A dozen books have been chosen for monthly meetings of a book discussion group at the Roosevelt Island Branch of the New York Public Library, according to Lawrence Kapture, Branch Librarian. The books will be read by the participants over the next twelve months. Roosevelt Island Community Literary Associates works with the Branch to promote and assist with the program. Its President, Ivens Stanton, is one of the leaders of the discussions.

The Book Discussion program was first offered last year after the merging of the Roosevelt Island Library into the NYPL system. The group meets the third Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Library. Admission is free and books for the following month will be lent to participants, who are asked to pick them up as soon after the prior meeting as possible. Pre-registration for the program is suggested, since admission is on a first-come basis, but individuals can join each session as space permits.

The first novel in the series is *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez which is the selection for September 21. Illustrating the variety presented, future books include *The Sun Also Rises*, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Women in Love*, and *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*.

The full list:

|          |                                                                |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sept. 21 | <i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i> – Gabriel Garcia Marquez    |
| Oct. 19  | <i>Black and Blue</i> – Anna Quindlen                          |
| Nov. 15  | <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> – Ernest Hemingway                   |
| Dec. 21  | <i>The Stranger</i> – Albert Camus                             |
| Jan. 18  | <i>How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents</i> – Julia Alvarez |
| Feb. 15  | <i>Waiting for Godot</i> – Samuel Beckett                      |
| Mar. 21  | <i>Women in Love</i> – D.H. Lawrence                           |
| Apr. 18  | <i>Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood</i> – Rebecca Wells  |
| May 16   | <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> – Zora Neale Hurston       |
| June 20  | <i>Flesh and Blood</i> – Michael Cunningham                    |
| July 17  | <i>Candide</i> – Voltaire                                      |
| Aug. 21  | <i>House of Mirth</i> – Edith Wharton                          |

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## Consideration of Minischools Condo Conversion Acquires A New Dimension as Developer Brings Attorney to Session

**News Analysis by Dick Lutz**

The formal process of considering a second-floor expansion of Roosevelt Island’s Manhattan-side minischools may now have become a delicate dance whose primary purpose is to avoid losing a law suit that may arise if the project is ultimately turned down. While the overall acceptability of the plan remains a matter of debate, those who are managing the process must now contend with the possibility of the matter ending up in court.

Developer Diane Wilson brought an attorney to the last session of the RIOC Board’s Capital Planning and Development Committee, chaired by Board member Frank Angelino. While the words weren’t spoken, the clear implication was that Wilson might sue if she feels she’s dealt with unfairly in any rejection of the minicondos idea.

The project has stirred opposition among residents for two reasons. First, it adds a partial second story to each of the buildings, adversely affecting views from some apartments in Westview, Island House, and Rivercross. Second, there is concern about the demographic “fit” of new residents able to pay over half a million dollars for a residence.

There are other concerns raised in opposition, as well.

- Will buyers come forward to spend \$500,000 and more for residences whose main floor is on the westside promenade, where windows may have to be curtained for privacy? The marketability of the units, say the plan’s backers, is a matter of concern for the developer.
- Will RIOC ultimately be forced to permit traffic on the promenade for wealthy residents who want more convenient access? RIOC has said a flat no to automobile access to the condos from the promenade, and has said this consideration will be built into the plan.
- When Southtown is built, some opponents feel, the minischools will again be needed as schools. RIOC President Robert Ryan says he has a firm indication of disinterest from the Board of Education.

The issue of lost views has become pre-eminent in the current phase of consideration. The presence of Wilson’s attorney at the June 22 meeting, and the resultant injection of legal considerations into the discussion, changed the chemistry.

Residents Association President Patrick Stewart, who serves on the committee, had brought photos to the meeting. They suggested the problems of diminished views from some apartments. Stewart led into a discussion of the problem by saying, “I don’t think we’ve addressed the value of the buildings and apartments and how the value would be affected if the condos are built.”

Lisa Knox, who also serves on the committee, raised the question of compensation: “Have you continued your negotiations regarding monetary damages to the owner of the buildings?”

This served as a cue for Wilson’s attorney to attempt to put the possibility of compensation in perspective from Wilson’s viewpoint: “I am not aware,” he said, “of any development where a person develops, as of right, and compensates other tenants. You have to understand when you ask her even to consider that, how radical a proposal that is in the development community. If there were such compensation, how would you compensate? If you have a view that was 3/4 blocked and now is 1/2 blocked, how do you compensate? This is a very slippery slope to go down.”

He continued, “Let me ask the opponents, because many have philosophical objections... would compensation change

# “Fiction That Sells” Lectures Offered by Island Library

*Writing Fiction That Sells*, a two-part lecture series by an award-winning local author, is being offered by the Roosevelt Island Branch of the New York Public Library (NYPL) in September and October. It is the first in a series of special programs that the branch will offer during the next twelve months. In making the announcement, Lawrence Kapture, Chief Librarian of the branch, noted that admission is free. The Roosevelt Island Community Literary Associates is assisting NYPL with arrangements and promotion for the event.

The lectures, each of which will give different aspects of writing as well as finding and dealing with publishers, will be at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays: September 7, 1999 and October 5, 1999.

The lectures are being given by Gwendolyn Johnson-Acsadi who writes under the pen name of Gwynne Forster. A long-time resident of Roosevelt Island, she has been acknowledged for her novels by the Affaire de Coeur Critics as One of Five Outstanding Achievers and One of the Ten Favorite Authors among all Romance Authors With Books Published in 1998. *Beyond Desire*, her sixth novel, published in January, has been selected by Doubleday Book Club and the The Literary Guild for distribution to its members in a hard-cover edition. Gwendolyn has finished her seventh novel, *Against The Wind*, which will be published in October.

The first lecture will cover decisions that precede writing, such as time period, location, point of view and theme; getting started, encompassing research and character development; and chapter construction and pacing, including outline, ending scenes and chapters with cliffhangers; and flashbacks.

The second talk will encompass eliminating mid-manuscript lull by introducing new characters and plot twists; dialogue vs. narrative to achieve natural conversation and introspection; rewriting; organization and time management; and making the first sale to editors and agents.

The lectures will be given at the Island branch of the New York Public Library at 524 Main Street. Because of the popularity of the author and subject, it is suggested that those interested stop at the library or telephone **308-6243** to reserve a place.

plan is] right or wrong is not up to me, but if this developer walks away, then what happens?”

Joan Dawson, a member of the RIOC Board of Directors who also serves on its Capital Planning and Development Committee, then returned to the issue of views, asking for a list of apartments whose views would be affected by the second-story addition, and asking for something specific that might be addressed to solve the views problem. “I agree that we need to do something about the minischools,” she said. “They cannot just remain vacant.”

Ryan added, “There’s money going out the window. My job is to see that RIOC operates in standard businesslike practices and that we see revenue come in and that in turn we use that revenue for the benefit of the citizens of Roosevelt Island.” He added, “If there can be an accommodation reached so those people are happy and the developer is happy, and we can take that [matter of views] off the table, what are the other concerns we have?”

With that, Ryan went around the table taking notes on committee members’ other potential objections to the minicondos project. Some of the concerns expressed included:

- Marc Diamond: “The quick answer is that the second floor is the issue. There’s a lot more to it, like why do we put ourselves in the position of having to compensate people? Why go so far as to [have to] consider it? If the second floor were adequately resolved, I would [then] want to look at how it would affect the surrounding neighborhood.”
- Byron Gaspard: “The second floor is an issue, but there is also a failure to explore alternatives.”
- Mary Camper-Titsingh expressed a concern about vehicular traffic and aesthetics, saying, “The island has a certain look about it and the GDP planned for one-story buildings and, putting in a second story reduces the step-down effect.”
- Jeff Hochman: “Since Ms. Wilson keeps saying we need the second floor to sell [these residences], she’s [effectively] saying it may be difficult to sell them even with the second floor. If she can’t sell them, what happens? Does she maintain them?” In response to Hochman’s concerns, Ryan suggested there could be adjustments in price and other purchaser incentives found. Angelino added that an agreement with the developer would include language prescribing a course of action if the units were not sold and occupied within a certain number of years.
- Joan Dawson pointed out that if the Board of Education eventually retook possession of the buildings, it could add a second floor, or even three or four stories.
- Patrick Stewart: “My main concern is the second floor, but we also need a clarification of the environmental impact statement.” Stewart raised a concern that the RIOC Board’s original conditional approval of Wilson’s plan was for a project without a second floor.

Wilson’s attorney appeared, at one point, to suggest that the possibility of compensation could be considered only after a final approval of the project: “It’s premature to have those conversations... It’s a subject that may be more appropriate once Ms. Wilson is approved... and then when you talk about doing neighborly things... what being a good neighbor means, then it’s a subject for further conversation. I’m sure there’ll be some point when Mr. Ryan is going to come to us and say, ‘I have a neighborly suggestion,’ and [then] we’ll consider it...”

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# Self-Governance from page 1

Senate interested in self-governance for Roosevelt Island, but continued, “the legislation that came out of this process [that was] offered to us on a take-it-or-leave-it basis by the Senate leadership is not a bill that I felt comfortable in advancing in its current form.

“While your negotiations with the Governor’s Office and Senate produced a bill that made good on our promise to put residents in the driver’s seat of a new management entity, I am deeply troubled by the risks it poses of putting them at the wheel of a jalopy that might not make it around the bend, rather than a viable public benefit corporation that is both fiscally sound and fully apprised of the Island’s physical condition.”

Concerns about the Island’s infrastructure have been at the heart of resistance to the legislative effort by Residents Association President Patrick Stewart, who has called for a reliable inventory of the likely cost of repairing the seawall, AVAC system, roadways, and other basic systems which, he believes, were neglected to the point of danger under the three-year administration of Dr. Jerome Blue, who left the RIOC Presidency in June. In his memo to Mendez, Grannis wrote, “...the previous administration of RIOC has left all of us with a great deal of uneasiness with regard to the fiscal and physical condition of both RIOC and Roosevelt Island. While Dr. Blue

was fond of trumpeting his ability to make the Island self-sufficient... many questions were raised (and are as yet unanswered) about how he was accomplishing this.”

Before listing work he feels is necessary before self-governance moves forward, Grannis’s memo to Mendez continues, “Once done, self-governance will likely be irrevocable. And, while the Pataki Administration has not been responsive to the Island’s needs in its budgets over the past five years, it remained at least morally responsible as long as the Governor controlled RIOC [through appointment of its Board of Directors and the its President]. This Administration will have virtually no reason to be concerned about the Island if their link to RIOC and the Island – the Governor’s control of the RIOC Board – is severed.”

In his memo to MTG, Grannis promised further work on the legislation after Labor Day. However, it is generally believed, based on the State Legislature’s past working patterns, that no legislation is likely to be passed until well into the year 2000. MTG members have expressed a fear that the “moment will pass” for self-governance legislation if the Governor’s priorities change, or if residents become more comfortable with the new RIOC administration of Robert Ryan than they were with RIOC under Jerome Blue.

# Samaritan Returns Important Papers, Relieves Resident’s Worry Over Loss

by Mary Camper-Titsingh

A member of Roosevelt Island’s Korean community is relieved after a good samaritan came to her rescue, returning lost documents.

Thomas Marshall is the hero who found Mrs. Yi’s precious documents. He had come to Roosevelt Island to visit a friend, Warren Colbert, a patient at Coler Hospital, on a very hot Friday, July 16th, and was on his way home to Brooklyn when he found the manila envelope on a bench in the Roosevelt Island Subway stop. Opening it he saw a passport, green card, medicare card and bank card for Oh Hyun Yi. Those were important papers that he knew should be turned in at the office of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation the next time he came to our island.

That was the weekend of the Kennedy tragedy and for Mrs. Yi, one of Roosevelt Island’s Korean Seniors, the loss of the envelope was a very serious personal tragedy, as well. A resident of the Island since 1994, she had been to the U.S. Justice Department’s Immigration and Naturalization Service that day with the documents required for a follow-up to her 1997 application for U.S. citizenship. A shy lady and not yet fluent in English, the discovery of the loss of those precious documents clearly showed on her

worried face when Oak Soon Hong, a Board Member of the Roosevelt Island Seniors Association, ran into her. Acting as Mrs. Yi’s translator, she helped her to report the loss at the Public Safety Office as well as at the office of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. But to no avail.

Meanwhile, Thomas Marshall had to make a ten-day trip to Puerto Rico, his native country, and could not turn in the manila envelope to the RIOC office until he returned from there. RIOC delivered the manila envelope to Mrs. Yi on July 28th with the Sender identified only as Thomas Marshall and a phone number. Attempts by Oak Soon Hong to reach him by telephone to thank him for finding the precious documents failed until August 10th when, much to everyone’s surprise, it turned out that Thomas Marshall is a Volunteer with the Roosevelt Island Senior Association. In fact, he is responsible for the flourishing plants and flowers on the Center’s outdoor terrace. Selina Ng, Director of the Senior Center, arranged a meeting between Thomas Marshall and Mrs. Yi, with Oak Soon Hong acting as translator, so that she could express her deep gratitude to him. Thomas Marshall’s broad smile told of his pleasure at having helped someone.



## Text of Grannis Communications on Self-Governance Legislation (story, page 1)

August 10, 1999

**To: David Bauer [and members of the Maple Tree Group]; Patrick Stewart, Dick Wade**

The attached [memo to Senator Olga Mendez] is FYI. I regret that we were not able to reach agreement with the Senate on Roosevelt Island self-governance this session. We will be back in session at some point in the fall, so we will have time to take up this issue then if we can find common ground.

As I have cautioned repeatedly, if ever there was a time for heeding the warning “caveat emptor,” this seems to be it. As I wrote to Senator Mendez, I continue to be very concerned that enactment of her bill *as is* might end up leaving Island residents facing unforeseen financial risks. This would be unacceptable to me and I think should be for the Island community.

Before taking control of a new governing entity, I believe that both good government and common sense require that a proper due diligence review be undertaken. Since this move will in all likelihood remove the State as the prime guarantor of the Island’s future, I believe that we must have in hand proper assurances as to RIOC’s condition and full knowledge of what the future holds regarding the new entity’s obligations and financial responsibilities.

I will be taking time in August to catch up with my family after our marathon session. Hopefully, we can wait until after Labor Day to talk about where we go from here.

**Pete Grannis**

July 30, 1999

**To: Hon Olga Mendez**

**From: Pete Grannis**

**Re: Roosevelt Island Self-Governance Legislation - S.5893**

With the session moving to adjournment, I wanted to share with you my deep disappointment in our inability to reach agreement on Roosevelt Island legislation and of my continued and abiding interest in working with you for a new governance system that puts decisions involving the Island’s management and future development in the hands of Island residents. Since it is all but certain that we will be returning in the fall to work on the Health Care Reform Act and other issues, I am hopeful that we will be able to use the upcoming time to work out necessary amendment to S.5893 to protect the interests of our constituents.

I know that you and your able counsel Jorge Vidro put many hours of hard work into this effort, and I commend you for your success in getting the Senate Majority and the Pataki Administration involved in discussing the issue of self-governance. I also know that this was a particularly difficult undertaking for a Democratic member of the TOP-controlled Senate. But despite your efforts, the legislation that came out of this process and offered to us on a take-it-or-leave-it basis by the Senate leadership is not a bill that I felt comfortable advancing in its current form. While your negotiations with the Governor’s Office and Senate produced a bill that made good on our promise to put residents in the driver’s seat of a new management entity, I am deeply troubled by the risks it poses for putting them at the wheel of a jalopy that might not make it around the bend, rather than a viable public benefit corporation that is both fiscally sound and fully apprised of the Island’s physical condition.

The approach dictated in the bill signed off on by the Senate Majority and the Governor’s Office is, as you know, vastly different than A7820, the bill I introduced early in the session at the request of the Island’s Maple Tree Group. Having enthusiastically supported the painstaking efforts of the MTG in developing a framework for self-governance that was approved by an overwhelming vote, I felt confident that their bill, with some technical modifications called for by the Speaker’s staff, would have put in place a system of self-governance – with appropriate safeguards for dealing with future contingencies.

These safeguards have become an overriding concern for me for several reasons. First, the previous administration of RIOC has left all of us with a great deal of uneasiness with regard to the actual fiscal and physical condition of both RIOC and Roosevelt Island. While Dr. Blue was fond of trumpeting his ability to make the Island self-sufficient and that he had matters under control, many questions were raised (and are as yet unanswered to my satisfaction) about how he was accomplishing this task. I am mindful of the long list of capital improvements and repairs identified by the prior administration as being needed on

the Island that he cavalierly brushed aside. On this list were such projects as the seawall, Octagon Park and Good Shepherd’s Chapel. And I also recall the years of multi-million dollar capital appropriations in the pre-Pataki era to meet these needs. To the best of my knowledge, despite repeated requests, Dr. Blue never produced any list of the Island’s capital needs, much less any explanation of how he intended to pay for them. With Governor Pataki’s elimination of all operating and capital support without a word of protest from Dr. Blue, and without the ability to borrow money or issue bonds, the new resident-stewards of RIOC would have nowhere to turn for the capital to meet these needs now or in the future except themselves or the far from certain prospect of a special State appropriation.

A second and related reason for my concern is the nature of the transfer of power we are proposing. Once done, self-governance will likely be irrevocable. And, while the Pataki Administration has not been responsive to the Island’s needs in its budgets over the past five years, it remained at least morally responsible as long as the Governor controlled RIOC. This Administration will have virtually no reason to be concerned about the Island if their link to RIOC and the Island – the Governor’s control of the RIOC Board – is severed.

For these reasons, I believe that, at a minimum, any final agreement on Island self-governance legislation should include these components:

1. A clear statement that the State bears the responsibility for turning over to the new entity an Island operation that is fiscally sound and is not in need of capital repairs other than those for which the State is responsible under the terms of the Master Lease with NYC. To this end, prior to transfer, the State should be called upon to do the following:
  - A. Prepare an inventory of RIOC’s current responsibilities, and those of the State and city under the terms of the Master Lease.
  - B. Contract for an independent engineering report on the Island’s infrastructure and facilities, and
  - C. Contract for an independent audit of RIOC’s operations and finances.
2. A clear statement of understanding of which of the State’s obligations under the Master Lease, if any, will survive the transfer of responsibility to the new entity.
3. A requirement that New York State assume responsibility for repairing or agree to reimburse the new entity for the cost of repairing any structural defects of which it had knowledge /or of which it could have reasonably be expected to have knowledge with proper management practices (such as the repairs needed for the Good Shepherd Chapel).
4. Maintenance of existing State indemnification protections that were removed in the latest draft of the bill. After the transfer, the new operating entity will continue to be a State public benefit corporation, and it should be treated no differently than other such entities in terms of State indemnification. Since RIOC currently carries a sizable amount of insurance, which will cover certain levels of risk and would continue to be maintained by the new entity, there is no foreseeable added risk to the State in providing its traditional indemnification. It seems clear that no level of private insurance would be adequate in the event of a catastrophic occurrence related to the Tram or other Island facilities – and residents should not be on the line for such losses.
5. A commitment by New York State to fund the Island’s expected future capital needs, absent the inclusion of provisions for empowering the new entity to raise its own capital for maintaining the Island’s infrastructure and addressing emergencies.

My goal with these suggested modifications is certainly not to derail this welcome willingness by the Pataki Administration to consider self-governance for the Roosevelt Island community. But I feel strongly that when contemplating fundamental changes of this magnitude, it is better to be safe than sorry. We have the opportunity now to try to do as much as we can up front to guarantee the future viability of the Island community under its new governing structure.

I feel strongly that our Island constituents are entitled to self-governance without leaving to chance the funding of costly capital projects or leaving them to their own devices to cope with problems that could have been addressed before we move on this legislation.

I look forward to discussing these issues with you and your staff.

**Pete Grannis**



New York Junior Tennis Leaguers were joined by their sponsors, Councilmember Gifford Miller, RIOC President Robert Ryan, and Housing Management General Manager Doryne Isley, to celebrate their achievements Friday, August 20. Pictured with them are reading- and achievement-award recipients for the summer season. The season ends today (August 28) with a trip to the U.S. Open qualifying rounds. The winter season begins the first weekend in November at the Island's Racquet Club.

# SPORTSWIRE

**YOUTH SOCCER** The Roosevelt Island Youth Soccer Association (RIYSA) is asking for early registration by participants, and is inviting all boys and girls, ages 5-14, to register now for the fall soccer season. Because of record-breaking enrollment last season, and the USA Women's World Cup victory, the Association expects a large turnout, and is asking parents to register their children as soon as possible.

Final deadline for registration is September 18. Players from last season should have received pre-registration material in the mail, which should be returned immediately. For new players and those who didn't receive information, there will be registration sessions on two Wednesdays, Septmber 8 and 15, in front of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

The registration fee is \$60.00 for all divisions. (Divisions include Kinder Kicker (5-6), Minors (7-8), Juniors (9-10) and Seniors (11- 14). The fee covers all field space, uniforms, insurance and trophies for all participants. Shin guards are required for all participants; the Association will supply them only for Kinder Kickers. Soccer shoes are strongly recommended.

Player assessment and team assignments will begin Saturday, September 18th, 1999. The season starts Friday-Saturday September 24-25.

The Youth Soccer Association is also seeking volunteers, who are asked to attend the league meeting Tuesday (August 31) at 7:30 p.m. in the Rivercross Community Room.

For further information, parents and prospective participants can call James Herlihy (President) at 223-5144, or Jay Levine (Vice President) at 688-3358.

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