

Next issue:
October 20-21

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



RIRA President Patrick Stewart, as he chaired the September 13 meeting of the Common Council.

Apparent Boycott Aborts RIRA Common Council Meeting

An “emergency” RIRA Common Council meeting scheduled for Wednesday night didn’t happen. In an apparent boycott, a number of RIRA Common Council members failed to attend. Many said it hadn’t been called in the first place. The meeting had been called – or not, depending on whose version of events is correct – to work on compromise wording for an advisory question for RIRA’s November ballot. If put on the ballot, the question would seek residents’ views on whether legislation should be passed allowing local election of a majority of members of the Board of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). If passed, such legislation would change the present system in which the Governor appoints all the mem-

bers of the Board as well as the RIOC President. Whether Wednesday night’s RIRA meeting had actually been called was a subject of e-mail exchanges Sunday through Tuesday among Council members and RIRA President Patrick Stewart. The split over whether a meeting had been called was roughly parallel to the division over whether the advisory referendum should appear on the November ballot or not. In the end, several Councilors who support RIRA President Patrick Stewart in his current position that the referendum question, as proposed, should not be on the November ballot, simply failed to show up. Stewart arrived at 8:04 for the scheduled 8:00 p.m. meet- See **RIRA**, page 6

Patrick Stewart Will Seek Re-Election as RIRA President

Joan Christianson Seeking 2nd Term in First VP Post

H. Patrick Stewart will run for re-election as President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association. RIRA’s current First Vice President, Joan Christianson, will apparently run with him, according to an e-mail communication received Tuesday from Stewart. If elected, Stewart would be serving his third consecutive term in the office; Christianson’s term would be her second. Stewart’s candidacy became known early this week when he mentioned it to *WIRE* Ombudsman Armand Schwab, then to Matthew Katz, the only other formally-announced candidate for the post. Katz said Stewart challenged him to a series of debates, and that he accepted the challenge. (No debate schedule has yet been worked out.) Stewart refused *The WIRE*’s requests for a statement on his candidacy (see box).

Stewart was first elected to the RIRA Presidency in 1996, within a few months of Governor George Pataki’s appointment of Dr. Jerome Blue to the Presidency of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). Within a short time, Stewart became the central figure in resident opposition to Blue, who refused to recognize RIRA or its Common Council as the legitimate voice of residents. As Blue and the RIOC Board assented to the Governor’s deletion of funds for Roosevelt Island from the State budget, the hallmark of Stewart’s leadership of the residents organization was his determination to have Blue removed from the RIOC Presidency. In a defining moment of resident opposition to Blue, Stewart ran unopposed for a second term in 1998, in an election which also saw residents vote by a 92% margin to support proposed legislation that would reduce State control here, give elected residents the major voice in Island policy, and provide for profes-

“No Statement”

Patrick Stewart provided the following e-mail response when asked for a statement on his candidacy by *WIRE* Managing Editor Dick Lutz:

For the third time, Dick, absolutely not. I have no statement, no comment, no nothing for *The WIRE*, lest you misquote, mis-state, misinterpret, or misrepresent what I say. Joan and I are most definitely the unWIRED candidates by conscious choice...and proud to be so. And, by the way, please be sure to report that we refused to give *The WIRE* a statement.

Patrick

sional management of the Island. Soon after, State Housing Commissioner Joe Lynch named Stewart as a non-voting member of the RIOC Board in a move widely considered a deliberate slap at Blue. The Governor, who appoints the members of the RIOC Board, later named Stewart to a voting post on the Board. (Rivercross resident Susan Whitaker was named, as well.) When the Governor moved Blue to the top post at the State’s Human Rights Commission in June, 1999, Stewart publicly credited the Residents Association and its Common Council for getting rid of him. (Blue served in the Human Rights post about a year, then was moved to Battery Park City as Vice President for Construction; his replacement at the Human Rights Commission is Evonne Jennings Tolbert, a Rivercross resident. Blue’s replacement at RIOC is Robert Ryan, who had run the Governor’s election campaign in 1994.) Since Blue’s departure, one hallmark of Stewart’s leadership of the Residents Association has been his opposition to legislation introduced by Assemblymember Pete Grannis and Senator Olga Mendez that would provide for resident election of most members of the RIOC Board. “The bills, in any iteration you can think of, have been financially irresponsible,” Stewart said in the September 13 RIRA Common Council meeting as it debated a proposed November referendum on the question. “They have asked us to take the risk, on behalf of the 8,500 people who live here, a risk that we are not ethically right in doing.” He pointed out that a resident-run RIOC, like the present RIOC, would have no taxing authority. Although the Island has not received State funding for over three years, Stewart said that the Island needs “forty million dollars” in infrastructure repairs. While See **Stewart**, page 3

Islanders: Tex Allen

Chords and Life – Finding the Harmony Is the Jazzman’s Challenge

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Tex Allen clearly enjoys an audience, even an audience of one. “Listen,” he says, taking a seat at his piano and hitting a single key. The effect is striking, and not just for the way one note from a Yamaha baby grand can fill a small Island House apartment. The piano is a fine instrument, and this is a demonstration, a matter of duration. The note lingers. It persists, like the man himself in this room overlooking the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Allen is one of Roosevelt Island’s best-known musicians. He has been an important part of the New York music scene for more than 25 years, playing in jazz clubs, forming his own groups, helping write the script for what he calls America’s native or classic music. And lately he’s been a musical ambassador, making two trips to Beirut this year, performing at a jazz festival in Oslo, and traveling to Paris and Hamburg. For his next concert, though, he can take an elevator. On Oct. 14, he will perform with The New York Septet in *A Tribute to the Masters of Jazz* at the Good Shepherd Chapel. Allen has put together an all-star cast of musicians. “Everyone is practically

a virtuoso,” he says. Because this is a jazz performance, all the details haven’t been decided. There may be guest artists, new compositions by Allen, some surprises, everything from samba to bebop, he says. “It’s adventurous, we’re going for a lot of different things.” “This may be actually a taking-off point as far as performing in other places,” Allen says. “I decided to call it *The New York Septet*, and it came to me like a revelation, because these people are what New York really represents to me. They’re all from various places, but they’ve worked really hard and made a lot of sacrifices and cultivated their crafts.” Allen came to New York in 1973, and his first job, coincidentally, involved a concert at a church – Trinity Church in Manhattan – where he played trumpet in the Gil Evans orchestra in an ambitious jazz performance that produced a CD, *Svengali*, which you can still buy today on Fifth Avenue. Evans, a pianist and composer, was an inspiration, a man Allen compares to the great classical composers. “It lives, just like Bach and Beethoven, Mozart,” he says of Evans’s music. Then he hooked up with bands led by the drummer Louis Hayes and the bassist



Cecil McBee and after that he was, by his own account, “on the Main Street of America’s native music.” But you’d be hard-pressed to find a Tex Allen CD in a Midtown record store. Despite his early success and his legacy as a member of one of America’s foremost showbiz families (his younger sisters are Phylicia Rashad of *Cosby Show* fame and Debbie Allen, the producer and choreographer), Allen’s name thus far has appeared more often in the fine print than on the marquee. Dozens of other musicians have recorded or performed his works, but Allen himself is still pursuing the elusive goal of a wider audience. In a way, he peaked early. He started playing the piano at 6, the trumpet at 10, and the following year he stood, baton in hand, onstage with the Houston Symphony, having won a citywide contest to conduct the orchestra. They played the *Stars and Stripes Forever*. “That was very inspirational to me as a kid,” Allen says. He got a lot of encouragement at home, too. His mother, Vivian Ayers, majored in piano at Howard University and became a poet, and his father, An- See **Allen**, page 6

Gamar Hatima Tovah! (Wishing Our Jewish Neighbors a Good New Year.)

The Editorial Page

30 Days and Counting

Like the national election, the RIRA election is now just one month away.

RIRA’s Nominations Committee is in search of the thirty-some who will run to be elected (or re-elected) to serve Roosevelt Island residents, as volunteers, on its Common Council. If ever, this is the time to search your sense of self and ask whether you have the interest and time to become genuinely involved in your community in this particular way.

RIRA’s Common Councilors serve with various levels of involvement, ranging from the few who rarely show up for meetings to some who dedicate much of their time to the community’s needs. In the spectrum between are the few who work hard and smart at things that matter to the community.

RIRA needs more Councilors in the active categories.

Each new RIRA election is a fresh start. November 7 will be another. There will be the continuity of those who are re-elected. But there will also be the very welcome new faces present to add their energies to the mass.

It’s time, then, to think about whether you might serve your community this way.

Unfortunately...

It’s No Power Trip

RIRA’s effectiveness is severely limited by total absence of any meaningful say in the way Roosevelt Island is managed. The decisions are made by appointees of the Governor, ranging from RIOC President Robert Ryan, who holds the reins day to day, through the members of the RIOC Board, most of whom meet just once a month to ratify staff work.

Those appointees have all the direct power over the day-to-day life of the Island. Most don’t live here. A majority visit the Island only for the short monthly sessions. (The next one is Thursday at 10:30 a.m.) They are not required to heed the RIRA Common Council because RIOC is a creature of the mighty State government, and RIRA merely the democratically-elected representatives of Island residents.

That sounds a little odd in democratic America, doesn't it? Yet attempts to give residents more say in Island affairs have failed, and it even appears the RIRA Common Council may not give residents a chance, on November 7, to express their preference for more democracy. Whether the ballot carries a referendum question allowing residents to express their preference for a mostly local, mostly democratically-elected RIOC Board of Directors could be decided this coming Wednesday night at the RIRA Council meeting.

At present, it appears most will follow the lead of RIRA President Patrick Stewart and vote down the referendum question, thus accomplishing the unthinkable – keeping residents from democratically expressing a preference for democracy.

If that happens, it will leave 1998’s 92% vote intact – an election in which the vast majority of voters asked for more locally-elected control over Island affairs.

What the next RIRA does with that 92% vote, or with any expressed preference for democracy, is likely to depend on who’s elected on November 7 to RIRA’s Council and executive spots.

Think about it. There’s a lot at stake.

DL



The WIRE

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On Being the Messenger...

I must have missed the official declaration, but this would seem to be “Kill the Messenger” month, or “Blame the Event on the Media” week, or something along those lines.

As anticipated, nobody was thrilled with last issue’s news report on the September 13 RIRA Common Council meeting in which a handful of Councilors joined Patrick Stewart in skewering another member, while another handful pleaded with them to grow up and get on with the proceedings. Both “sides” in the altercation expressed unhappiness with the report, each calling it unbalanced in favor of the other “side.”

As a rule, journalists feel they’ve hit the balance when criticized by both contending sides of a story as having favored the other side. In this case, that’s no comfort; it was painful reporting such disarray and anger in RIRA’s Common Council.

Meanwhile, Prof. Richard Wade has put out a gently chiding broadside headlined *The Main Street WIRE Goes Haywire Yet Again* – a declaration complete with not one, but two, exclamation points. Wade is apparently miffed that *The WIRE* opted not to publish one of his recent letters to the editor. It was lengthy, and as I explained to Wade in an even longer note declining the opportunity to publish it (and pointing out several inaccuracies), it was much too self-referential. That is, it was a letter

island observer

about a letter, **about a letter, about a meeting.** We like to do things in thorough depth around here, but that’s going too far.

For the most part, as I wrote to Wade, letter-writers get their shot and, if writing on something controversial, they can expect return fire. But letters turning in upon themselves in an Escher-like recursion would soon leave bored readers nodding off.

Meanwhile, Patrick Stewart (see page 1) has extended his “resignation” from *The RIRA President’s Column* (which he stopped supplying in January) by refusing to supply even a statement about his new-this-week candidacy for a third term as President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association. Perhaps for emphasis, he copied his refusal to the Common Council.

Stewart isn’t the first politician to call a newspaper with his voice quavering in anger. He won’t be the last. Mostly, politicians (perhaps not Stewart) think they are on a holy mission and that the press should report it that way. But politics and politicians being what they are, there’s always another side with equally pure credentials wanting it to be told their way.

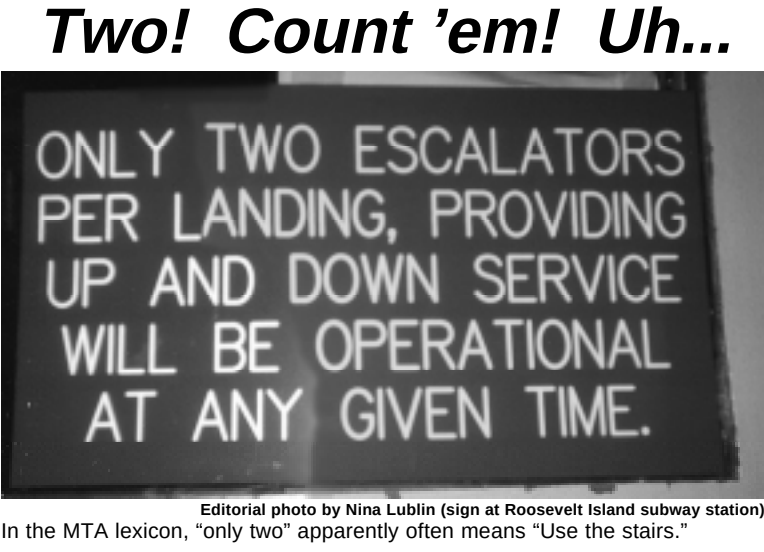
No newspaper is perfect. At *The WIRE*, we do our best and we try to be fair. But it’s not surprising that some otherwise solid citizens would want – figuratively, to be sure – to kill the messenger in reaction to the message.

On a much more pleasant note...

This column wouldn’t be complete without welcoming Robert Laux-Bachand to the *WIRE*’s roster of contributors. A resident of Manhattan Park, he is, in “real life,” a staff editor at *The New York Times*, and we’re immensely pleased to have him aboard.

DL

Letters deadline for Oct. 21 issue: Oct. 15
Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis



Letters

Mr. Robert Ryan, President
RIOC
591 Main Street
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044
Dear Mr. Ryan:

Why aren’t the street lights lit along the west and east promenades of Roosevelt Island and most of those in the courtyards? They have been dark for months. Has RIOC not paid its Con Ed bill? What is the problem?

And with the daylight becoming less each day, darkness is coming sooner to the courtyards. Also, people who do their laundry in the 576 laundry room have to travel across the courtyard in the dark.

Not having lights in these public areas leads to increased vandalism and crime, especially behind the Nail Salon on Main Street. More vandalism and crime means higher maintenance and repair costs. Please do something immediately to bring the lights back to these dark areas.

Further, now that Public Safety has a number of late-model cruisers, the officers, with eyes fixed straight ahead, drive around the Island and have little contact with the Island residents. I live near the river on the east side of the Island, and it is rare to see a safety officer on foot down here. In the old days (I’ve lived here since 1977), Public Safety made regular rounds *by foot* of the buildings and grounds. Even the City Police Department has seen the wisdom of getting police out of cars to walk the streets. Let’s get the Roosevelt Island Public Safety force out of their cars so they can be seen and confront crime rather than driving swiftly by it.

Thank you.

Hattie Jo P. Mullins

To the Editor:
Hats off to Joyce Mincheff! Apparently with only a one-word (“ex-officio”) utterance she has the power to delay a RIRA Common Council meeting for almost an hour.

Sound absurd? It is. There are only two explanations for the September RIRA meeting having turned into the joke it became. Either:

1. Joyce is a miracle worker and with a one-word interruption she can bring everything to a crashing halt, or
2. There’s more here than meets the eye. Obviously something else was bothering the RIRA leadership that night.

The one thing that’s patently obvious is: There’s no leadership. You can read the quotes from the other Council members practically begging the leadership to go on with the meeting.

Please, guys, you were elected to work on Island business. Let’s leave personalities outside of the meeting room.

Name Withheld

To the Editor:
This letter is anonymous. I hate that! But, I’m doing it because the atmosphere on the Island is no longer conducive to publicly stating an opinion.

I read the account of the September RIRA meeting in *The WIRE*. I stopped attending those meetings some time ago because nothing important ever seemed to get covered. I’m hard pressed to remember even one meeting where the person who had the floor was actually the only one speaking. No one runs the place. The only thing it takes to be heard is pushiness and a loud voice.

With few exceptions, the committee reports (when they were given) rarely contained information of any value. They were usually recitations of what’s wrong on the Island, ending with the obligatory placing the blame on RIOC. Certainly RIOC is a major contributor to the problems on the Island, but we’re playing right into their hands when we fight among ourselves and treat each other with the discourtesy displayed at RIRA meetings.

What happened? Where/how did things go so terribly wrong? How did a once terrific community get into this kind of shape? *The WIRE* article about the September meeting gives Joyce Mincheff and Joan Christianson starring roles in what sounds like a fiasco. From what I’ve seen of those meetings, I don’t think it’s fair to single out Joyce for interrupting, nor is it fair to blame Joan for her reaction. Sounds like it was an inevitable outcome of months and months of frustrating meetings where real business is clearly secondary to hidden agendas, moaning about how poorly we get treated by the State, and mean-spirited gossip.

This community won’t survive unless people start working together. Let’s hope a new RIRA gets elected in November. Let’s hope they come to the table with no baggage. Let’s hope it’ll be a RIRA that focuses on uniting the community and tending to the business of running the Island. Until then, let’s all act like adults and leave the intrigue and drama to the Main Street Theatre Club.

Name Withheld

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 phone number must be provided. All letters subject to acceptance, and may be edited for length and clarity. **Preferred methods of submission: PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main St. for The WIRE, or by e-mail to nyc10044@rcn.com** (ASCII text preferred or use any word-processing software). Alternatives: Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main St. or faxed to (212) **755-2540**. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. We cannot take telephone dictation of letters.

The Main Street **WIRE** **CARIBBEAN CRUISE**

Sailing Feb.10, 2001 from Ft. Lauderdale

The holiday season will soon be here. You now have an opportunity to do something special for people who have meant so much to you. A mid-winter Caribbean cruise is the perfect gift of appreciation for your parents, in-laws, or favorite aunt and uncle. Think of the look on their faces when they open the card that says they are going on a seven-day cruise as a gift from you! You have long wanted to do something special for people who are special to you and now you can. For only \$853 per person plus air fare those special people will enjoy seven sun-filled days on a luxurious modern cruise ship with fabulous meals, entertainment every night and exciting Caribbean ports of call.

Call Jim Baehler at **752-6463** and make this dream come true.

Traveling alone? Don't feel left out. We have other passengers willing to share a room. Best of all, your roommate will also live on Roosevelt Island, so you can meet and get acquainted before we sail.

Champagne party: Celebrity Cruise Lines and Liberty Travel are making final arrangements for our complimentary sail-away champagne party aboard the Century as we leave the pier in Ft. Lauderdale. Meet the rest of your neighbors from Roosevelt Island, sip champagne, socialize with old and new friends, and watch the sunset as we sail out into the Gulf Stream on our way to San Juan, the first stop on our seven-day Caribbean adventure.

For a copy of the cruise brochure and further details call Jim Baehler at **752-6463**.



The Public Safety Blotter for September is too long to publish in these pages, but is available in full on *Website NYC10044*: www.nyc10044.com

COMING UP

Compiled by Alain Pinset – phone and fax 208-2907
e-mail alpinset@cs.com

Wed., October 11, 7:00 p.m., **Glee Club**, Senior Center, 546 Main Street. Open to singers of all abilities and voices.

Wed., October 11, 8:00 p.m., **Residents Association Common Council Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thur., Oct. 12, 10:30 a.m., **RIOC Board of Directors** meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. (See story, this page.)

Sat., Oct. 14, 7:30 p.m., **Jazz Concert**, The New York Septet, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, with Roosevelt Island's composer/trumpeter Tex Allen, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. \$12; seniors, \$10.

Wed., Oct. 18, 7:00 p.m., **Dirty Donations**, free adult education program sponsored by Jewish congregation (see story, this page), Cultural Center, 548 Main Street. (First of four classes.)

Sat., Oct. 21, 10:00 a.m., **Fall Tree Walk**, Blackwell House, sponsored by the Tree Board.

Sat., Oct. 21, next scheduled issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., October 13; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., October 16; bag materials due Thur., October 19. **Future issues:** November 4 (pre-election issue), 18 (Thanksgiving business cards issue); December 2, 16 (Holiday issue); January 13, 27, 2001; February 10, 24; March 10, 24; April 7, 21; May 5, 19; June 2, 30 (July 4 business cards issue); August 4, then every two weeks starting early in September. 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, **826-9055/755-2540**; urgent/breaking news, 917-353-1647; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, **751-8214/755-2540**; phone/fax to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), **208-2907**, or e-mail alpinset@cs.com.

Sun., Oct. 22, **RIRSD Champagne Party Fund-Raiser**, 5-7 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater Club. For tickets and details, call **688-8907**.

Sat., Oct. 28, 6:30 p.m., **Halloween Parade of Lights**, the Island's traditional Halloween Parade. Starts at Blackwell House.

Mon., Oct. 30, 7:30 p.m., **Maple Tree Group** meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Wed., Nov. 1, 7:00 p.m., **Dirty Donations**, second class in RIJC adult education series, Cultural Center, 548 Main Street. Free.

Tue., Nov. 7, Election Day. Balloting at PS/IS 217.

Wed., Nov. 8, 7:00 p.m., **Dirty Donations**, third class in RIJC adult education series, Cultural Center, 548 Main Street. Free.

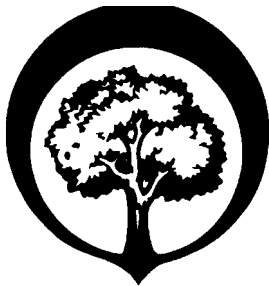
Wed., Nov. 8, 8:00 p.m., **Residents Association Common Council Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Sun., Nov. 12, 1:00-4:00 p.m., **25th Anniversary Celebration of St. Frances X. Cabrini Parish**, Manhattan Park Theater Club.

Wed., Nov. 22, 7:00 p.m., **Dirty Donations**, final class in RIJC adult education series, Cultural Center, 548 Main Street. Free.

Fall Tree Walk October 21

The Roosevelt Island Tree Board has scheduled a Fall Tree Walk for Saturday, October 21 at 10:00 a.m. It will be led by Tony Emmerich, the new State Forester, who is starting his assignment in this geographic area.



TREE CITY USA

Along the way, Maurice Bleifeld, Chair of the Tree Board, will distribute the Island Tree Walk folder which is a self-guide to the trees in the vicinity of Blackwell House. He also wants to use the occasion to signal an alert for the Asian Longhorned Beetle which has already destroyed 5,000 trees in the New York area, ever since it was first discovered in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, a few years ago.

Bleifeld invites residents to attend, saying, "This Tree Walk is a good chance to become acquainted with 20 different species of trees at one time."

Admission is free. The tour will start at Blackwell House.

RIOC Wants Written Statements

The October RIOC Board of Directors meeting will include updates on Southtown development and the Mini-School conversion project, according to an agenda issued by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation this week. The Southtown report is listed as a status report by the developer, while the Mini-School report is listed as a RIOC status report.

The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 12, at 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

A report from the Public Purpose Funds Advisory Committee is also scheduled, and new business includes two applications for funding – one from the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, the other from the State Energy Research and Development Authority.

Residents wishing to speak in the Public Session are asked to register 24 hours before the meeting by calling **832-4540**, ext. 0. Statements are to be limited to three minutes. The RIOC press release says, "Additionally, a written statement containing the sum and substance of the oral statement must be submitted to the Secretary of RIOC for possible inclusion in the minutes." The "must" is a bit flexible, according to RIOC.

RIJC Offers Free Series

Dirty Donations is the title of a four-part adult education program to be lead by Rabbi Leon Morris of the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation starting October 18.



Rabbi Leon Morris

The Torah prohibits a prostitute's fee being used for the building of the tabernacle. How broadly was this applied through the ages? What are the implications of this ancient prohibition in modern times?

These four classes will trace the issue of tainted gifts from the Torah to contemporary rabbinical literature. Those attending will not only learn about ways in which money can be regarded as "dirty," but also about the development of Jewish law.

No previous knowledge is required. The sessions are open to all Islanders and friends.

The classes will be held in the Cultural Center, 548 Main Street, at 7:00 p.m. Wednesdays, October 18, and November 1, 8, and 22. The entrance is just north of the Bakery. The number for further information is (212) **688-4836**.

Halloween Parade Plan

There are a few treats and tricks afoot for this year's Halloween Parade, sponsored by Roosevelt Island Housing Management.

According to Marilyn Engstler, Director of Community Relations, the parade has been transmogrified (in true Halloween tradition) into *The Halloween Parade of Lights*, an evening event. Along with various dancing and howling in the moonlight, the parade is scheduled for Saturday, October 28, with assembly at Blackwell House at 6:30 p.m.

Engstler promises more details for the next issue of *The WIRE*.

Stewart from page 1

Stewart himself has at times called for a resident advisory referendum on the local control question, he has opposed asking residents to vote on a form containing this statement, headed *Financial Responsibility*: "I understand that the State has provided no funds to Roosevelt Island for four years, and that passage of such legislation [providing for an elected resident majority on the RIOC Board and professional management] may or may not change the Island's financial condition."

The Island's Maple Tree Group, which has spurred development of the legislation, is headed by Matthew Katz, who is also Stewart's only announced opposition for the RIRA Presidency. Thus the question of elected local control versus continued State control of the Island may become a central issue in the campaign.

On Wednesday, Katz told *The WIRE*: "I welcome opportunities to contrast our philosophies of what the RIRA Common Council is, and what it might be if used to its full potential. Patrick should respond to the disappointments and frustrations of many Council members over lost opportunities in the last two years, and be given a chance to shoot down my hopes and expectations for the Island's future." Saying he hopes the proposed debates will happen, Katz added, "This is an excellent way for Roosevelt Islanders to hear our positions on the issues and to demand responsibility and accountability from their next President."

Stewart also opposed efforts by Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) to mount legal opposition to certain aspects of the current plan for development of the land between the Tram station and Eastwood/Rivercross. However, RIRA joined the RIRSD suit as an intervening party after Stewart's wife, Karen, discovered that the Southtown plan called for construction that would reduce a mandated six-acre park to about three acres, considered by many to be a violation of the Island's General Development Plan. (Justice Harold Tompkins of the State Supreme Court ruled July 5 that RIRSD filed its case too late, in a decision that confused RIRSD with RIRA, whose intervention pleading had come after a deadline for legal challenges. The case, along with another mounted by Rivercross resident Robert Chira, is currently on appeal.)

On its editorial page, *The WIRE* has backed both the MTG effort toward elected local control of the Island and the RIRSD challenge to the form of the present plan for Southtown. Among other factors, this led to Stewart's "resignation" from *The RIRA President's Column* in January, 2000, after a three-year run. He wrote, "There is no question but that my decision is in part based upon the editorial direction of *The WIRE* itself... I am frequently asked by Islanders whether, by virtue of my own presence in *The WIRE*, I therefore support *The WIRE*'s position on Island issues and events. Nothing could be further from the case."

He continued, "RIRA needs its own separate voice." Referring to a planned RIRA newsletter to be distributed to residents, he continued, "We will have something before you soon." No newsletter has yet appeared, but Stewart has declined repeated *WIRE* invitations to resume the column.

There is no charge for listing Island events here. E-mail information to alpinset@cs.com or fax/call 208-2907.

Senior Center

Monday

9:15, **Stay Well** exercise
10:00, **Internet Class** (starts 10/23)
12:45, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

Tuesday

10:00, **Jazzercise**
10:30, **Beaded Jewelry Wkshp**
1:30 p.m., **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday

9:15, **Stay Well** (stretch)
10:00, **English as 2nd Language**
(Beginners' session at 10:00,
Intermediate session at 11:00.)

12:15, **Oriental Calligraphy**
7:00 p.m., **Glee Club**

Thursday

10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:00, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**

Friday

9:00, **English as 2nd Language**
(Beginner's session at 9:00,
Intermediate session at 10:00)
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**
11:00, **Citizenship Class**
7:00 p.m., **Games** (RISA)

Saturday

7:30 p.m., **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events

Oct. 9, 11-12:30, **Metrocard Bus**
Oct. 9 – Office closed.

Oct. 11 & 12, **Broadway Show, Tale of The Allergist's Wife** (\$10), Broadway preview.

Oct. 16, 9:30-2:30, **Free Flu Shots**
Nov. 9, 9:30-11:30, **Free Flu Shots**

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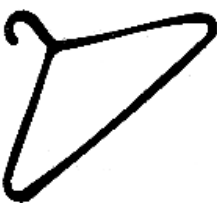
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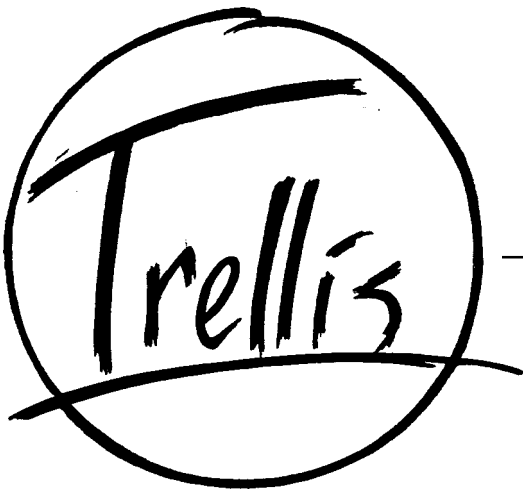
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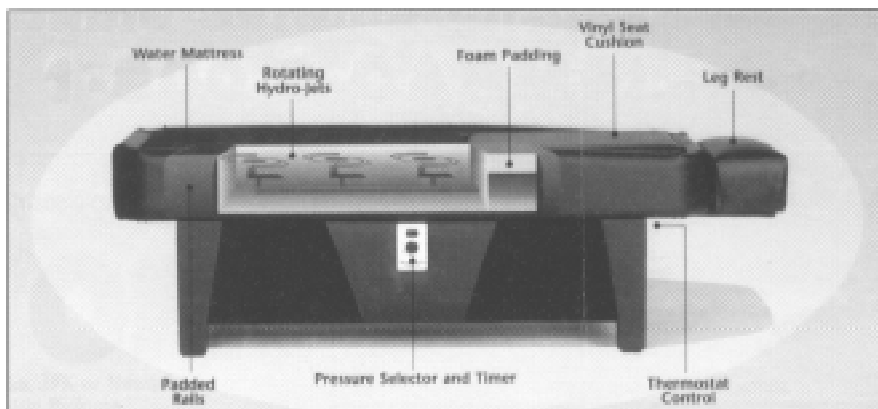
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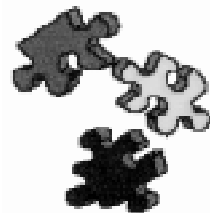


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Allen from page 1

drew, for whom he is named, was known as a great dancer. The Allen children followed in their parents’ footsteps, learning art and music and dancing. “I think I taught Deborah her first few steps,” he says. “I studied tap and ballroom dancing and a little bit of bal-



Photos: Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

let. We all studied the same things.” Even as a child, he had a flair for the technical aspects of music: “I did arrangements, complete orchestrations off of records with my trumpet; I’d take all the parts off and write them out for all the instruments.”

Dr. Andrew A. Allen, who died in 1983, was a dentist. He was the one who acquired the “Tex” nickname, while attending Howard, and his son, Andrew Lloyd, inherited it, with a brief apprenticeship as “Little Tex.” The Allen sisters went on to Howard, but Tex stayed in Texas. He studied music composition at what was then North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas), in Denton. By whatever name, it is, according to Allen and UNT itself, “one of the largest and best music schools in the United States.”

He sharpened his skills as a composer, but it wasn’t until he came to New York, he says, that he really became a trumpet player. In the meantime, he returned to Houston to put together a band called the United Nations Sextet (“a very mixed group”), which played mostly rhythm and blues. “We were one of the few bands to be working, four or five nights a week, playing jazz in a regular place, anywhere in the country,” Allen says.

The United Nations Sextet? Was this a

premonition? He is on Roosevelt Island in 2000 by virtue of an intimate U.N. connection – his wife. Dagmar Allen had the apartment when they met about ten years ago. She works in the administration of a U.N. development program. They met at a Broadway opening. He dedicated a song to her on his second CD, the 1999 *Tex Allen Song Book*, called *Say Little Mama Say*. (The song “is for my wife, who happily gives me the business.”) The CD also has a song dedicated to his children from his first marriage. The youngest, Oliver Lloyd Allen, now 11, did a cartoon sketch of Tex in hip-hop regalia, which is on the cover.

Allen is rather circumspect about some of his personal history. He guards his wife’s desire for privacy and doesn’t like to give out his age, or his mother’s – although it’s hardly a secret, in his case, that we’re talking about the ’40s (his decade of arrival, not the total), and he’s old enough to have six grandkids. When he came to New York City he had a mass of curly black hair.

A Tribute to the Masters of Jazz

The New York Septet’s concert is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. October 14 in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Admission is \$12; \$10 for senior citizens. No tickets are being printed for this event, but those who wish to pay in advance can contact Tex Allen at 758-9391. He will initial a program that will serve as a ticket.

Allen, on trumpet, will be joined by Justin Robinson on the alto sax; Richard Perry, tenor sax; Jackie Terrasson, piano; Billy Johnson, bass; JoJo Smith, percussion; and Mark Johnson, drums.

Now he’s got more of a Michael Jordan look, with a few gray bristles in the beard. As for his mother, one has the feeling that he’s simply being ... prudent.

Vivian Ayers and Andrew Allen were divorced in the late ’50s. By some accounts she was a formidable force, at least in her daughters’ drive for success (there’s a younger brother, too, Hugh, a real estate banker in North Carolina). Vivian Ayers has been a New Yorker for many years and operates the Adept New American Museum, devoted to the culture of the Southwest, in Mount Vernon. “She’s still feisty, very young,” Allen says.

Allen is not that close to his siblings. “They’re very busy women, I’m very busy, too,” Allen says. “We see each other maybe three, four times a year.” At the end of

March, Phylicia Rashad and Tex performed in Houston in a “family reunion” benefit for the Conrad Johnson Music and Fine Arts Foundation, a music scholarship program named for the Houston big-band leader. The Allens have teamed up on other occasions over the years, but at times their ships seem to be moving in different channels. Four days before Tex’s concert, for example, Phylicia will be at Town Hall for a benefit for the Brainerd Heritage Fund, which is supporting the restoration of a historic South Carolina school for blacks that operated until 1939. (Vivian went there, and Phylicia bought it for her.)

Tex is not involved in that event, but it may be just as well, because he’s preoccupied these days with his own concert preparations, even to the point of handing out fliers on Main Street. If he doesn’t fill the Chapel, it won’t be for lack of promotion. That cannot be said for The New York Septet’s previous performance at Good Shepherd, on July 27, which went largely unnoticed on the Island, although people in the audience judged it an artistic success.

One of Tex’s converts that night was an Island House neighbor, the Rev. Luke McCann. The concert, he says, was “absolutely stunning.” Father McCann compared the musicians’ solos to the improvisations of the Italian poets of the 16th Century, who thought up and recited their lines in sequence. “One was better than the next,” he said.

Allen would probably appreciate the Renaissance allusion. He does have a solid base of fans here, having performed concerts on the waterfront, and at the Main Street Theatre with the singer Juanita Fleming. And the chapel was overflowing when he played a new composition, *Lullaby for Inez*, at the funeral of Inez Dickens Gumbs, one of many tributes to the longtime Grog Shop owner, who died May 26.

Personal events and experiences are Allen’s subject matter, and he says he’s been in a very productive period lately. “I’ve got some pieces that... I really don’t know what to do with them,” he says. “When you get a piece of music, writing it on a piece of paper sometimes takes a little courage.”

“Most of what I learned about writing I learned at living,” he says. “True music is an expression of feeling and you have to live the feelings in order to communicate.” Thus, most of the songs on the new CD are dedicated to family and friends, and one, *Forever I Love You*, is meant to convey a sense of premonition: the song “means I was in love with you before we met.”

He describes its creation: “I came into my house one day with a perfect piece of music and I sat at the piano and played the whole thing at once, I was singing it before I was playing it, but the melody was in me and I wasn’t making it up, it was there.”

Allen plays the opening bars of a wistful ballad, then laughs with pleasure. “That’s a perfect melody and I never did that in my life! And that just came with me one day when I walked in this house. I had been out partying with some friends for a couple days. I wasn’t feeling that good and, when I walked in, that music walked in with me. I couldn’t believe it, I literally, practically cried for two days.”

Forever I Love You is the last song on the CD, in an arrangement with trumpet, piano and contra bass, but it’s hard to imagine that the perfect version – aside from the one in Tex’s head – isn’t the pure unadorned sound coming right now from that gleaming black Yamaha.

There was a gap of about six years between the *Song Book* and Allen’s previous album, *Late Night*, a period of some unhappiness for a man who proudly declares that “I never compromised on art for business.”

“When you have your own expression, sometimes it’s harder to get in the door,” Allen says, “because a lot of the people who are in the administration of record companies, they look for something that’s already done, and they give you excuses like maybe they’re taking a risk to do this and do that, but for me it was a very humiliating and very frustrating situation.”

His friends came to the rescue in 1998, and the result was the *Song Book*, an independent production by Allen and Buddy

Williams, which Allen is marketing through Geronimo Inc. right here on Roosevelt Island (Box 0042). “This is the greatest compliment in my life as a musician, because the musicians decided that they were tired of waiting for a company to produce my writ-



ings, and they got together and raised the money to produce this CD because they believed in my work,” he says.

The Geronimo distribution title, which he’d gladly trade for a major label, reflects Allen’s abiding interest in multihued Americana. “I think of the music as embracing people,” he says. “It’s warm and it gives you a sense of home.”

Tex Allen hasn’t had the celebrity of his sisters, but he admits being lucky to be able



to pursue his calling as a jazz musician, and he seems to be well adjusted to the trade-offs: “The music I do is a product of living, and I’ve done a lot of living. I’ve covered a lot of ground.”

And he has maintained his sense of humor. “I asked God for a job, to be his musician. Twenty-four seven, 50 years later, I came back and said, ‘Look Lord, you didn’t tell me all this was coming along.’ A little voice came over to me, and He said, ‘Hey, Tex, the gig was optional, now do you want it or not?’

“And I said, ‘OK, I’ll take it.’ “And it got worse!”

RIRA from page 1

ing, and took attendance at 8:19. At 8:21 he pointed out that only seven members were present – not enough for a quorum – and adjourned the meeting. When asked to remain for a discussion by those seeking to put the advisory question on the November ballot as an advisory question, he declined.

The Council Secretary, Susan Waide, resigned that post Tuesday in an e-mail message saying that the secretarial function was unnecessary if a few members of the Council and a *WIRE* report could override Council wishes and force the calling of a meeting. While the RIRA constitution provides that five of its members can call an emergency meeting, the controversy was over whether such a meeting had been agreed upon in the Council’s September 13 meeting. Finally, on Tuesday, Stewart issued a call for the meeting.

The referendum matter may be considered at the Council’s regular meeting this coming Wednesday night (October 11) at 8:00 p.m. in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

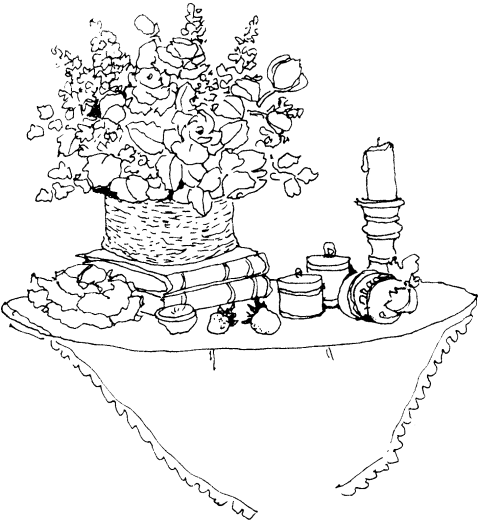
A non-binding straw vote at the September 13 meeting revealed a 10-8 division narrowly against putting the referendum question, as worded, on the ballot, suggesting the matter could be decided based on which Councilors were able to attend a meeting to consider the matter.

To be put on the November 7 ballot, the referendum question would have to be ready in advance, suggesting that the October 11 Council session is the last scheduled opportunity to reach a decision to include the question in November voting.

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