

Did you know?

WIRE is always capitalized because it is an acronym, originally chosen for the first four residential buildings on Roosevelt Island: Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood

Next issue: June 1-2

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044

Briefly...

- RIOC has announced that the outdoor **tennis courts** at the Octagon will be resurfaced starting May 21, with completion scheduled for June 8, depending on weather conditions.
- Some 28 **RIOC employees** who care for the Island's grounds have been working without contracts for over a year. Local 819 of the Teamsters, representing 17 maintenance staff and bus drivers and mechanics, have waited two years for a conclusion to negotiations. Local 32BJ of the Porters Union has been waiting a year; its eleven members pick up garbage, handle some landscaping work, and are porters for RIOC's properties.



Ease on Down In this production number from *The Wiz*, Nick Ortiz (Tin Man), Ariana Simmons (Dorothy), Jed Resnick (Lion), and Stephanie Maikarfi (Scarecrow) take the trip on the Yellow Brick Road. It's part of *Hollywood Dancin' Daze* this weekend at the Main Street Theatre.

Island in Weekend's ArtFrenzy Events

by Gabrielle Parnes

Roosevelt Island will become an artistic mecca this weekend, as part of the Queens Council on the Arts and Long Island City Business Development Corporation's *ArtFrenzy*. The free extravaganza celebrates Western Queens as the new center of artistic life in New York, and is being touted as the city's biggest arts event of the year. Through tomorrow (Sunday, May 20), over 1,200 artists from area galleries will open their doors to offer New Yorkers a glimpse of art in every medium. Roosevelt Island, which has always been home to a community of talented artists, is playing an important role in the festivities. The Island will be one of the featured sites, with free buses shuttling visitors from the *ArtFrenzy* Hospitality Center in Court Square Park to Motorgate garage every 20 minutes.



The inclusion of Roosevelt Island in the Queens celebration was made possible by the efforts of artist Arline Jacoby, 12-year Island resident and president of the Roosevelt Island Art Association (RIAA) since 1995. Jacoby, who has spent her life creating and teaching art, stresses the importance of bringing art "out of the museum and onto the streets." The *ArtFrenzy* will bring art out full-force this weekend, making it accessible to Island residents and visitors alike in an exciting two-day event.

PS 217 will be transformed by architects, builders, and curators into a veritable gallery. Over the weekend, the works of Jacoby and other Island artists will be on display in the building, and the auditorium will host a wide array of performances showcasing the talents of local residents throughout the day, both Saturday and Sunday. Events include an original play reading by Lila Gilbert, poetry by Helen Roht and performance art by Irene Clark. Additionally, there will be music, dance, singing – and even a marionette show. The Senior Center and the Main Street Theatre will also take part in the celebration.

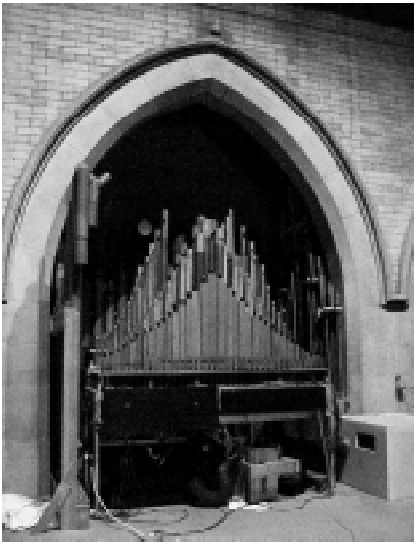
To take the free shuttle bus for events in Queens, first go to the Hospitality Center at Court Square Park (F train from Roosevelt Island to 21st Street-Queensbridge, shuttle to Court Square; or E train to Court Square from Manhattan) to get the free hand stamp and Arts Loop map. To return to Roosevelt Island, take the Red *ArtFrenzy* Shuttle bus, which also stops at PS1, the Isamu Noguchi garden museum, and the Holocauster. For more information, call (212) **613-0006** or check www.artfrenzy.net.

Participation in *ArtFrenzy* is RIAA's first step in achieving its goal of making Roosevelt Island a centerpiece in the New York art scene, says Jacoby. She calls the Island the city's "new frontier" in art, and speaks passionately about the characteristics that make the Island a perfect breeding ground for an artistic community. "Roosevelt Island is a dramatic Island," Jacoby says. "It has a magic about it." That drama, coupled with tranquillity, fulfills the needs of the creative mind. "We're so fortunate to actually live here," she says, noting that artists are able to enhance their talents precisely because of the unique character of the Island.

See *ArtFrenzy*, page 4

Organ Campaign: Adopt a Pipe

Want to adopt an organ pipe? Now, you can. The group responsible for acquisition and installation of the pipe organ now making music in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd plans to raise \$25,000 to pay for the installation by asking residents to "adopt," or sponsor, a pipe. Carole Kennedy, a member of the Protestant Parish who is one leader of the effort, says that the whole community will benefit. "We really consider this to be a community organ because we plan to use it for things other than religious programs." The organ itself was a donation acquired last summer when an Episcopal



Margery Rubin

church in Rochelle Park, New Jersey, closed its doors. "It's a wonderful gift," Kennedy said. "The reason we're having an adopt-a-pipe plan is we want to get as many people in the community involved as we possibly can." Pipes up for adoption are *small* (\$25), *medium* (\$50), and *large* (\$100), each size having a choice among four categories: *Principal* pipes produce the typical organ sound; *reed* pipes are brassy and strong, sounding like trumpets or oboes; *flute* pipes sound like flutes, and a *string* pipe produces sound similar to that of a viola or cello. An adopter might support a *me-*

dium flute pipe, for example, with a donation of \$50, or a *large reed* pipe for \$100. A Recognition Book to be kept near the organ will list the pipes and their sponsors. According to the group's fund-raising sheet, an entire scale can be adopted for \$500. Checks are payable to "Good Shepherd Organ Fund" and can be sent to Good Shepherd Organ Fund, c/o Carole Kennedy, 531 Main Street #712, Roosevelt Island, NY 10044; they can also be left for Kennedy at the Rivercross desk at 531 Main Street. A form for use in making a donation can be printed out from this issue of *The WIRE* on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com. The process of acquiring and installing the organ began when its maker, Brother Richard F. Davidson, visited Good Shepherd to determine its suitability. Organist Ian Hall and Choirmaster Martin Garratt then heard the instrument in its Rochelle Park setting before undertaking final arrangements for its installation on Roosevelt Island.

Islanders

On Roosevelt Island, Art's Spirited Mother Figure is Arline Jacoby

by Gabrielle Parnes

Walking into Arline Jacoby's apartment in Rivercross is like entering a sanctuary of creativity. The walls swirl in a marbled peach design, and paintings, sculptures, and trinkets fill every space. Cacti poke out of pots on window sills, and plants twist to find sun from corners of the room. One has the impression of having stepped inside a living museum. Jacoby, who today is a gravelly-voiced grandmother tickled at the opportunity to display her work to guests, knew she would pursue art even as a small girl growing up in Philadelphia. The youngest of eight children born to immigrant parents, Jacoby was brought up in an artistic family – her father was an artist and musician – and Jacoby remembers the kiln in their house where they would fire ceramics. A teacher introduced Jacoby to jewelry-making, which soon whetted her affinity for sketching. After high school, Jacoby attended the Stella Elkin Tyler College of Fine Arts at Temple University, where she solidified her training in a wide variety of media. Today, the works in her apartment bear testament to her broad foundation, with sculptures in marble and bronze, ceramic pieces, and paintings that range from classical realism to the abstract. When asked about her

influences, Jacoby thinks for a moment before responding, "I can't say. I admire everyone. I try to come up with my own creativity." While creating has always been important to Jacoby – she has had her art exhibited in both solo and group showings in New York and New Jersey – she stresses the importance of using art to enhance people's lives. "I'm not one of those artists who just want to go to a studio and paint. I want my community to have studios, and kids to enjoy art." Jacoby's activist streak led her to pursue a Masters degree in Arts Education. After her three children were old enough to attend school, she worked as a high school art teacher on Long Island for 23 years. Her belief that art should be used for constructive purposes is reflected in her work itself. A special exhibition at Adelphi University displayed Jacoby's sculptures depicting the horrors of the Holocaust. "I said, I want this not just to be pretty, but to enable people to learn something," the artist explains. Among the countless pieces of Jacoby's own artwork displayed in her apartment, she keeps on hand a book in which former students' sketches of sneakers were published, and proudly exhibits a sculpture given to her by a young Vietnamese student. Thinking about the boy, who was put, alone, on a boat



Photo: Gabrielle Parnes

for America by his parents during the Vietnam War, still gives Jacoby goose bumps. The boy used the therapeutic effects of molding clay to create a painstakingly-labored sculpture, which he would later offer his teacher as a gift. Jacoby has used her work as a bridge between cultures, teaching art to non-native

English-speakers as a catalyst for cultural adjustment. She has traveled extensively on six continents, including a summer spent working at the marble yards in Pietra Santa, Italy. But after all her travels, it is to Roosevelt Island that Jacoby returns. The artist, whose children had lived on Roosevelt Island since 1984, moved here from Wantagh in 1989. Jacoby has been very active on Roosevelt Island, serving on the Residents Association Common Council for six years and teaching art at the Youth Center and for PS 217. She continues to work with the Youth Center's after-school Beacon program. Jacoby says the magic of the Island is a perfect environment to create an artistic community. "We're so fortunate to live here." As president of the Art Association, she leads a group of Island artists who meet every Friday evening in their studio on the 12th floor of 546, where they sketch live models. The studio is available for the use of Art Association members at any time, as part of the \$25 yearly membership fee. Jacoby has been responsible for curating art in the windows in Rivercross and Westview, and for bringing sculptures by renowned artists to the Island. Most recently, Jacoby was responsible for bringing the Queens Council on the Art's *ArtFrenzy* celebration to Roosevelt Island.

The Editorial Page

Appalling... With Spalling

On a weekend when Roosevelt Island is celebrating its art and artists, *The WIRE* would prefer this space be occupied by attractive images of our Island, and visitors to *ArtFrenzy* surely would prefer them.

But the fact is, for all the celebration of what's wonderful about Roosevelt Island and its people, there is too much that is going to seed to be ignored. That's because the orien-



tation of Roosevelt Island management long ago somehow became preoccupied with enticing the new, and seriously distracted from maintenance of what's already there – particularly the badly-deteriorating infrastructure that holds this Island and its facilities together.

The Tram station in Manhattan is an appalling example, along with many others that activist Judy Berdy points out to Ryan of RIOC in a letter appearing in this issue.

The new stairway at the Manhattan-side station has been finished for a long time – going on months. But it isn't available to Tramway users; instead, it's already become home base for a homeless person's accumulation of stuff. Presumably, that's easily solved when the time for a ceremonial ribbon-cutting approaches.

What isn't easily solved is the deterioration of the rest of the station. We grow accustomed to seeing it, but if you take a fresh look



Dark spots and streaks show internal rust on the old stairway (currently the up side steps).

Unsafe Traffic Patterns

While the advancing deterioration at the Manhattan Tram station is no threat to life and limb, RIOC has created a genuine safety hazard in its handling of Island traffic. It needs to be addressed.

Until the fence was erected around the Southtown site, drivers navigating the Island had a handy turnaround at the split in Main Street just south of the existing residences of Northtown. That's gone now. All southbound traffic on the Island must travel all the way to the Tram station to reverse course.

Even if that were "temporary" during the long Southtown construction process, it would be unacceptable. But from all appearances, the plans for Southtown will permanently impose a round trip of 20-some blocks on any driver who makes a left off the ramp from the Roosevelt Island Bridge.

at the concrete of the main station structure, you'll see many cases of *spalling*.

Spalling occurs in concrete when steel rebar (short for reinforcement bar) rusts. The expanding rust ruptures concrete and eventually pieces of it fall away. The strength of the underlying structure is compromised. If the spalling is not dealt with promptly and properly, there can be real trouble.

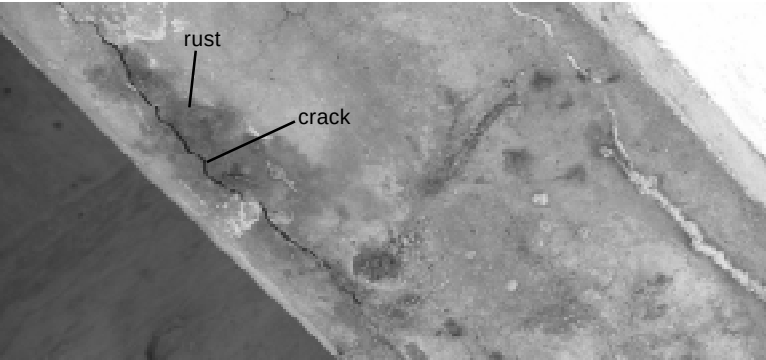
All the discolored areas in these close-up photos of parts of the Manhattan Tram station are the telltale evidence of spalling.

The proper remedy is to drill out the surrounding concrete, remove all the rust, and refill the area. But last week at the Tram station, there was a worker *patching over* areas of spalling. That's only a cosmetic fix. It hides the problem temporarily but leads to more damage in the long run.

We're led to wonder if RIOC is trying to cover up damage just long enough to have some dignitary – who might otherwise be appalled – cut a ribbon. Whatever the motivation, just opening the new stairway won't be a cause for celebration or ribbon-cutting unless some attention is given to saving the rest of the terminal.



Behind the Manhattan Tramway station, looking up near the new stairway reveals this remade corner, patching a spall. Dark spots nearby are additional spalling.



The underside of a major support beam at the back of the station shows rust (the dark spots) and concrete splitting away (the cracks).

Mr. Robert Ryan, President
RIOC
591 Main Street
New York, NY 10044

Dear Mr. Ryan:

As per our conversation, these are the areas that need attention. This is probably half of the infrastructure deficiencies that should be addressed.

Tram

- General decay at Tram stations, Island side and Manhattan side.
 - Old phone booths in stations, See **Berdy**, page 6
- More letters, page 6

To the Community:

We are grateful to *The WIRE* for the coverage of the Southtown lawsuits. We're happy to see this issue stay in the forefront of Island focus.

As you walk by this site every day, please keep in mind:

- The developers put up a huge blue fence, lots bigger than necessary, surrounding the construction site. Why? So you'll think it's hopeless.
- The developers put up "Welcome to Southtown" signs. Why? So you'll think it's hopeless.
- The developers published schedules showing that construction is continuing. Why? So you'll think it's hopeless.
- The developers are demolishing the Nurses Residence, which is nowhere near the site of the first (and possibly the only) group of buildings they plan to construct. That was done much earlier than necessary. Why? So you'll think it's hopeless.

Don't forget: The only work being done is the *work we're paying for*. Phase I infrastructure costs are *paid by the residents, not the developers*. If they continue the demolition, but lose the suit, they've lost nothing!

Here's why several legal experts have told Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) that we have a better-than-average chance of winning the appeal. Our three main assertions are:

- The Environmental Impact Study used to get this project approved was ten years out of date and it was based on a completely different plan. The current plan places buildings over our six-acre park, blatantly ignoring the General Development Plan (GDP) and completely disregarding the Board of Estimate's mandate to keep that six-acre open space intact.
- RIOC violated State law because they didn't have a quorum at the meeting where they approved Southtown. On that point:

The law says there *shall be nine* Board members. RIOC admits there were only *six*. The resolution was passed by only *four*, two of whom were improperly-designated alternates. Taken to an extreme, failing to replace Board members in a timely manner (one seat had never been filled and another had been vacant for six years) means that vital Island issues could ultimately be decided by a single member. That's why State laws on quorums exist.

We're delighted that we'll get our day in court soon. We invite the community to join us for oral arguments on June 12 at 2:00 p.m. in the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court at 25th and Madison. *Above all, don't let RIOC's actions and propaganda wear you down! We've got a very good chance of saving our Island.*

Members of the RIRSD Steering Committee

To the Editor:

Although *The WIRE's* coverage (May 5, 2001) of the Southtown legal appeals is detailed, I suggest the following general framework be kept in mind as the cases enter their next stage.

The Supreme Court's "Appellate Division" is now considering three appeals: (1) the Alternative Southtown Design Committee's ("Alternative") from dismissal of its petition in its entirety as not showing RIOC violated any laws when it approved the Southtown plan; (2) the Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development's ("RIRSD") from dismissal of its petition as untimely filed; and (3) the Roosevelt Island Residents' Association's ("RIRA") from denial of its request to join both suits.

[The Supreme Court made other rulings but they are not being appealed by RIOC. Thus, it upheld Alternative as having "standing" to sue, its petition as properly verified, and it was not required to sue the developers as "necessary parties."]

On appeal, Alternative seeks reversal on various grounds, including that its petition and supporting papers show that RIOC's decision to approve the Southtown plan without conducting a supplemental review under the environmental law ("SEQRA") or amending the Island's general development plan ("GDP"), violated SEQRA as well as other laws.

On appeal, RIRSD seeks reversal because its petition was timely filed, the court having confused it with RIRA. Then, on various grounds, it seeks reversal of the ruling made in a footnote to the dismissal of Alternative's petition: "Since the same reasoning applies to the RIRSD petition, the Court would dismiss it on the same basis, if it had been timely filed."

On appeal, RIRA seeks reversal of the court below's discretionary ruling that its request to join the two lawsuits was both too late and: "The substantive objections as to SEQRA and GDP issues have already been raised by Alternative." On appeal, it argues on various grounds that the court below abused its discretion by denying it permission to enter.

In following the situation, it should be noted that RIRSD's petition differs in part from Alternative's. For example, unlike Alternative, RIRSD sued the developers and City of New York. And, in addition to the laws cited by Alternative as having been violated, RIRSD's petition cites other laws. (On appeal RIRSD argues, for example, that RIOC violated a law on quorum requirements). Alternative's and RIRSD's briefs contain the details of the similarities as well as differences in the arguments being made by each.

Robert Chira

To Assemblymember Pete Grannis:

1. I see in the [May 5] edition of *The WIRE* a letter from Linda Heimer, in which the following passage appears: "When a resident said that the resident Board members represent the community, David Kraut called out, 'No I don't. I represent the State.'" Let me assure you that I made no such comment, or any comment of any kind. I neither "called anything out" nor went to the microphone. I would not have made such a comment, nor could I in any case as it would not be true.

2. As for the rest of Ms. Heimer's

See **Kraut**, page 6
More letters, page 6

COMING UP

Compiled by **WIRE** staff – Fax information to 755-2540
e-mail MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com
or click on the e-mail link at www.nyc10044.com

Through Sunday, on Roosevelt Island and locations in Queens, **ArtFrenzy**. See article on page 1 for details.

Wednesdays, through June, 11:00 a.m., **Children’s Picture Book Hour** for ages 2 and up, Library.

Fri.-Sun., May 18-20, 7:30 p.m. (also Sun., 2:00 p.m.), **Main Street Theatre** presents **Hollywood Dancin’ Daze**. Tickets, \$10 (\$5 for floor mats for children 10 and under). Information and reservations: **371-4449**.

Tue., May 22, 6:30 p.m., **Book Discussion Group**, *Corelli’s Mando-lin* by Louis de Bernieres, Library. Advance registration required; limit of 20 participants; copies available at Library.

Tue., May 22, 7:30 p.m., **RIMAC**, Youth Center, 506 Main Street. Second meeting of the Roosevelt Island Mac-Apple Community.

Fri., May 25, 10:30 a.m., **Library Toddler Program** for children 24-36 months, Library (third of four sessions; also June 1).

Fri.-Sat., June 1-2, scheduled start of **Weekend Music at Trellis** at the dinner hour.

Fri., June 1, 10:30 a.m., **Library Toddler Program** for children 24-36 months, Library (last of four sessions).

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to MainStreetWire@rcn.com, fax to 755-2540, or leave copy at desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to **The WIRE**.

Sat., June 2, next issue of **The Main Street WIRE**. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., May 25; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., May 28; materials due Thur., May 31. **Future issues:** June 30; Aug. 4, then every two weeks (with some three-week intervals) starting late in August. **Phone/fax** for news, **826-9055/755-2540**; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, **751-8214/755-2540**; to list your organization’s Island events here (no charge), fax information to **755-2540**, or e-mail MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com.

Wed., June 6, 6:00 p.m., **PS217 Spring Concert**, at the school. Tickets \$2.00; proceeds to Band repair and supplies fund.

Wed., June 6, 8:00 p.m., **RIRA Common Council meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Tue., June 12, 2:00 p.m., **Southtown Appeal Hearing**, Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court, 25th and Madison, Manhattan.

Thur., June 14, 6:00 p.m., **RIOC Board of Directors meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Tue., June 19, 6:30 p.m., **Book Discussion Group**, *Possession: A Romance* by A.S. Byatt, Library. Advance registration required (limit of 20 participants); book available at Library.

Sat., June 23, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., **First Annual Job Fair**, sponsored by Young Adult League, Manhattan Park Theatre Club (8 River Road). For information, call **813-9406** or e-mail YALeague99@aol.com.

Senior Center

Monday
12:45, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

Tuesday
10:00, **Jazzercise**

1:00, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well** (stretch)
10:00, **English as 2nd Lang.**
7:00, **Glee Club** Choral Group

Thursday
10:30, **Creative Arts**

12:30, **Movie**

7:00, **Dance Class**

Friday
9:00, **Citizenship**

10:00, **English as 2nd Language**

7:30, **Lotto** (RISA)

Special Events

Sun., May 20, 1:00 p.m., **Senior Day** event.

Mon., May 21, 10:00 a.m., **Health Talk and Blood Pressure Screening**

Wed., May 23, **Plant World Nursery** trip

Fri., May 25, **Free Bone Density Screening** (call for appointment)

Wed., May 30, **Renault Winery / Atlantic City** trip

Tue., June 5, **RISA Election**

Saturday, May 19, 2001

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Managing Editor – Dick Lutz
Chief Feature Writer – Anusha Shrivastava
Reporters – Francine Lange, Robert Laux-Bachand
Ombudsman – Armand Schwab – **838-3184**
Chief Proofreader – Kay Thompson
Proofreader – Linda Heimer, Frances Salten
Chief Photographer – Margery Rubin
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Ruth Conn

Obituary
by **Deirdre McNamara**

On rare occasions a stranger may come into a life and affect it remarkably. Some disappear, leaving one to question if they were indeed messengers from heaven, colloquially termed “angels.” Others, because of an innate decency



Ruth Conn lived here 1980 to 1995.

or purity of spirit, are allowed to demonstrate conduct, ideals or ethical standards that the rest of us can only aspire to and to which we attribute angelic characteristics.

Many years ago, I met Ruth Conn in Westview where anti-Semitic slogans had been burned into a carpet. At that time I was writing for a number of Catholic papers. Other members of the media were present, along with officers of the Bias Crimes Unit of the NYPD and a representative of the Anti-Defamation League. Her gravitas, gentleness and composure stood out in the flurry of activity, questions, comments. We spoke briefly, and exchanged names and numbers. That was the beginning of strong friendship that continued after 1995, when Ruth and her husband, Steve, left the Island with their beautiful children.

Ruth’s effect on my life was permanent. Only Ruth Conn, at that time, could have persuaded me to take an eleven-hour journey anywhere, in this case the Holy Land. For Catholic or Jew, the Holy Land is the Word of God *in vivo*. Because of Ruth, I experienced the profound peace of the Hill of the Beatitudes, the miraculous Sea of Galilee – with a little help from Prophet Elijah in holding off the rain; the Temple Mount, sacred to Jews and Moslems; because of Ruth, I could place a prayer for peace in the crevices of the Wailing Wall and observe the many ceremonies sacred to her Faith occurring in the restricted area outside the Temple. I lunched with Nazareth Moslems and met Israelis from around the world: Russia, London and native; I spoke with Christians and Moslems from the “Old City” of Jerusalem, and saw developments in agriculture, science, archaeology– the architectural “miracle” of the roof-entry Hyatt in the butter-colored Jerusalem stone, and walked the Via Dolorosa.

Is this about Israel or about Ruth Conn? Can they be separated? Ruth’s life was spent promoting the beauty of the Holy Land on behalf of the Israeli Ministry for Tourism. If she was political, she did not reveal it. Her heart, while very private, held a deep well of compassion for people of all creeds and races. Knowing she was born in post-war Rome I had many questions for her, but respected her privacy. In one of my plays, a ghost story related to the Irish Famine, a contemporary character is actually a beatific spirit returned to earth to transform the lives of a troubled family. Ruth and Steve came to St. Clements Theatre to see it. I never admitted that the beatific spirit was named for Ruth, but I think Steve knew. My heart goes out to the Conn family. After a battle with cancer, Ruth Conn’s work on this earth ended April 18.

A funny thing happened on the way to constitutional reform. Some of you may recall during last autumn’s RIRA election campaign that I spoke about the Residents Association constitution and how it hadn’t been amended since 1991. Our constitution is a fine document, but it isn’t the Bible or Koran, it’s just a set of rules to govern our actions and make the Council’s job easier. And when it gets a little creaky, you remove the rust, add a little oil and a paint job, and get back to work.

This past February I formed an *ad hoc* committee to consider amendments to our Constitution. I asked Common Council Members interested in presenting amendments or just participating in the process to join me, and ten Members responded. Over six meetings, sometimes with a full group and sometimes with just a few people, we haggled over which amendments to present to the Council and in what language they should be couched. Where there was consensus on an amendment, one version was offered, and where there was discord, two.

Amending our constitution is not a simple thing. An amendment may not be voted on at the same meeting it is presented. It requires a two-thirds majority vote of the Common Council followed by a simple majority from a quorum of the RIRA members (that is, 100 residents) at a Town Meeting. And it’s that word, *quorum*, that has caused all the trouble.

I presented eleven proposed amendments at the April Council meeting and included the amendment debate on the agenda for May. On May 2 I called for approval of the agenda, and Patrick Stewart, former RIRA president, objected on grounds that the Constitutional Amendments Committee had not presented the amendments with a vote from the majority of a quorum of the committee. His objection passed by one vote, and the agenda item was stricken.

Now, was he right? Most RIRA committees function with whoever shows up and without by-laws. *Robert’s Rules of Order*, to which our Constitution tips its hat, says that, in the absence of by-laws, a quorum is defined as half the membership of an organization. However, a quorum applies only when business in the form of a vote needs to be taken. This committee’s function was only to present proposed amendments to the Common Council and the only vote necessary or binding is the vote of the Common Council. The Constitutional Amendment Committee took no votes and presented its work product to the Council without prejudice.

Which means that Joe Cristiano’s amendment to preserve the Council seat of a member who moves from one Island building to another (at present, that valuable member simply loses the seat) was offered in *his own words*. And Karen Stewart’s language for RIRA election rules was reproduced verbatim. The Common Council will have the opportunity to approve each amendment, to choose between several versions where they exist, or to reject any amendment in favor of the *status quo*. But Patrick would have you believe that the straw poll, taken at the last meeting of the committee, was a binding vote and invalid because only four committee members were present. A straw poll is *not* a vote, and anyone experienced in organizational work knows it. We took the poll because the language to be submitted had been completed and we were looking to wind up the work of the committee. It was for internal information only, and had no bearing on the vote of the Common Council. By a quirk of fate, neither of our parliamentarians was available to explain this misuse of procedure, and so the motion to prevent the Council from addressing these amendments passed. I asked several Council Members after the meeting if they were clear on what the vote meant. Several were not sure, and others confided that they would have changed their votes if possible.

So, why did this happen? Patrick Stewart and Shirley Margolin (and now, Nneka Pope as well) have seats on the Common Council only by virtue of their membership on the RIOC Board or RICO or Community Board 8. Some have said that these long-time community advocates are afraid that, if the amendments barring appointments to the Common Council from outside organizations (and limiting the membership only to those elected from the residential buildings) pass, they will lose their seats. In fact, Patrick, Shirley and Nneka would be “grandfathered” for the remainder of the election term, and wouldn’t have to face their neighbors for their votes until November 2002. And the amendment creating a new category of member, the “at-large” member, would apply to those moving from one Roosevelt Island building to another, thus preventing the loss from the Council of our most precious commodity, the community activist, as is currently mandated by the Constitution.

In addition to these ideas, one amendment provides for the addition of new Council members when Southtown is completed and occupied, another defines the responsibilities of seated members versus alternates, and a third sets rules for committee participation. One proposed amendment reformulates rules for Town Meetings that have been ignored for years, and another simply requires the Council to look at the Constitution on a regular basis to decide whether to begin the amendment process again. I expect a lively debate on many of these questions, and I don’t expect all the amendments to pass muster. But I think that simply asking the questions may be more important than passing the amendments that any one of us, including myself, has sponsored.

But unless the Common Council gets the opportunity to consider and vote the amendments up or down, democracy has not been served. The question of this committee’s quorum status is blue smoke and mirrors, and does not serve the Council well. I hope our parliamentarians will explain the often arcane rules governing our actions so as to effect a different outcome should the agenda be subjected to another assault in June.

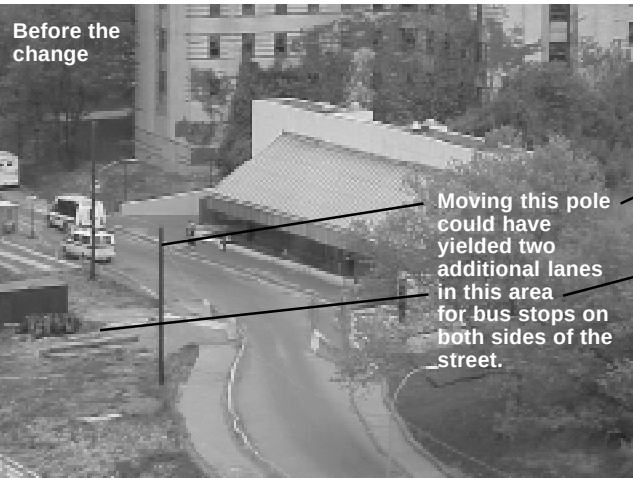
I don’t know why Mr. Stewart chose to prevent the free discussion of these ideas. If you see him on the street, you might ask him.

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz
Residents Association President

Editorials continued from page 2



again on the way to the crossroad at the Tram station.

Those patches of asphalt have a wild mix of pedestrians: kids, seniors, bicyclists, the disabled and the frequent motorized wheelchair.

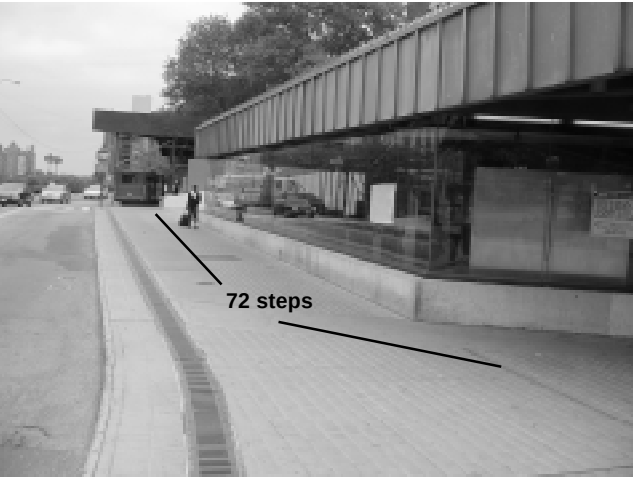
The traffic pattern should be addressed immediately. The unnecessary increased traffic traveling the equivalent of 20 Manhattan blocks to reverse course (can you imagine that in Manhattan proper?) should be eliminated, and the old turnaround restored. Even with that done, attention will have to be given to the drag-strip zones RIOC has created. Even after all that, we'll be no better than break-even with the recent past – and that wasn't all that good.

The message to RIOC is: Safety first. Fix it.

And That's Not All

There's another RIOC blunder that bears on both safety and convenience in that same stretch of road.

Some RIOC genius decided to put the subway bus stop some 72 steps north of the subway station exit. That wasn't at all necessary when moving one underemployed utility pole would have opened at



least one extra lane just opposite the subway station door.

Even with just three lanes, buses going both directions could stop much nearer the subway station. It would be more convenient, particularly for seniors and the disabled.

It would also solve a serious pedestrian hazard. Right now, if an Island-bound subway passenger



decides to wait for a red bus or a Queens Surface bus, s/he walks the 72 steps north, perhaps exposed to hostile weather part of the way. Waiting at the bus stop, if one concludes the wait will be too long, the decision to walk north is a risky one.



That's because you must walk *some 50 steps, in traffic, diagonally*, to get across the roadway and onto protected sidewalk. There is no pedestrian crosswalk there, nor is there any ready access to the sidewalk on the other side. And in that stretch, cars are reaching their highest speed on the Island.

But There's More

Queens Surface buses operate like most City buses. If no passenger signals for a stop and there's nobody waiting at a stop, the stop is skipped. That means passengers flooding out of the subway station from a freshly-arrived train – some of whom might like to take their free second MetroCard ride into Northtown – are out of luck. You can just miss your bus simply because the driver sees nobody waiting.

Red buses skip the stop sometimes, too, even though passengers are leaving the station.

None of this addresses foul weather, when easy access to a bus is all the more important.

But the safety problems are of paramount concern. It just happens that properly addressing the bus-stop and turnaround safety issues will also produce additional convenience for all who use the subway.

RI Subway Changes Focus on N/R Line

There will be diversions, detours and disruptions in Roosevelt Island's subway service through November, according to Jeff Hochman, who follows transportation matters for the Residents Association Common Council.

Notices will be posted in stations, according to Steve Straus of the MTA, and he recommends making it a habit to check them regularly.

Most Islanders have little trouble getting into Manhattan. The rule is, take whatever train comes along on the Manhattan-bound side, and adapt from there.

Problems arise for most residents when they're trying to figure out how to get back to Roosevelt Island. As it happens, that problem will be alleviated after this weekend, despite the many service changes, because all service leading to the Island will pass through one or more Manhattan N/R line stations. Specifically:

Returning to the Island, here's how to connect:

- Monday through Friday, daytime and evenings, 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., get the **Shuttle** anywhere on the **N/R** line north of the 34th Street station.
- Monday through Friday nights (10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.), make your way to the **N/R** station at 57th Street and 7th Avenue, then take the special **F** to Roosevelt Island.
- Weekends May 25-28 and June 1-4 will be the same as nights, except you'll be able to board the special **F** train as far south as 34th Street.
- Most service intervals are supposed to be about 12 minutes.

Leaving the Island for Manhattan:

- For a month, May 22 to June 21, use the **Shuttle** 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. It'll take you as far as 34th Street on the **N/R** line.
- Weekday nights, the special **F** train will stop Manhattan-bound, and will take riders to the **N/R** station at 57th and 7th.
- And for the next two weekends, the special **F** train will run 10:00 p.m. Friday to 5:00 a.m. Monday, stopping at stations down to 34th Street.

There may be changes in night and weekend service after June 8, according to Straus – who emphasizes his advisory to check service bulletins and pamphlets in the stations.

An update on service changes and plans will appear in *The WIRE* again on June 2.

Support Island Merchants

ArtFrenzy from page 1

That character, along with the talent it has bred, will be in the spotlight this weekend, as visitors arrive from all over the city for the *ArtFrenzy*. The event will provide an exceptional opportunity for Islanders to experience all forms of art and culture, at no cost. Along with the activities planned at the school and the other sites (marked by red balloons) around the Island, residents can also take advantage of the gallery openings and festivities in Queens. Activities of note include a film festival at the Kaufman Astoria studios, the opening of the Krypton Neon studio just over the Roosevelt Island bridge and an open house at the Socrates Sculpture Park. The Hospitality Center in Court Square Park will host an array of international music, a children's mural project, and a crafts center where guests can create their own masterpieces to take home. Still, Jacoby notes, pointing out the great number of on-Island activities, residents can have a wonderful weekend without even crossing the river. "I hope everybody on Roosevelt Island stays home and picnics and vacations right here, and doesn't run away."

DL

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J & M SHOE REPAIR

Letters

continued from page 2

Berdy from page 2

- which are deteriorated with dirty phones, frequently out of order.
 - Two out of three turnstiles permanently out-of-order at the Manhattan station. No parts are available.
 - Red tiles falling off the wall at station over two years ago have not been replaced.
 - New staircase, which has been complete for months, is still not open.
 - New awning does not meet at same height as old awning.
 - Torn awnings and decrepit conditions all over station.
 - Cabins in deplorable condition: torn seats, dirty walls and ceiling, dirty floors.
 - Unwashed windows at ends of cabins.
 - Lack of pigeon-proofing, with waste gathering on platforms.
 - Lack of pressure-washing of Manhattan station, which has years of grime on it.
 - Elevator filthy and floor never washed.
 - Handicapped elevator, which has not worked for years, has not been removed.
- At this time, when you have requests out for bid for a new Tram contractor, the above should be addressed and repairs and better maintenance be included in contract costs. No further cuts should be made to Tram operation, staff or hours. The Tram has suffered enough under the last no-show manager and a poor contract. It is time to bring it back to a transportation method that shows pride. Now it is an eyesore, brought on by neglect and lack of RIOC oversight.

Roosevelt Island

- No signs with directions, to welcome or give any information when you exit the Tram on Island side. Most tourists turn around and leave the Island immediately.
- Buses are deteriorating and, instead of being repainted professionally, they are being spray-painted. No preventive maintenance seems to be performed.
- Old signs and notices not removed in a timely manner from buses.
- Street lights long out of order on west promenade from Tram to Main Street have not been repaired.
- Not enough “No-U-Turn” signs along west road. Necessity for a “Make U-Turn Here” sign by Tram station turnaround.
- Lower promenade pier railings need cleaning, and metal railings are rusting and have not been painted in over five years.
- Stonework coming away from cement (area where concerts are held).
- Blackwell House repairs and maintenance.

Chapel Area

- Broken and uneven sidewalk at end of Main Street across from Blackwell House. Broken bricks on pavement around Chapel.
- Inappropriate repairs being done by putting cement in holes.
- Red trash baskets by Chapel: These were supposed to be replaced with black containers more appropriate to the landmark church.
- Interior of Chapel is a disgrace.
- Area between Island House and Chapel used as delivery zone, and truck and tire marks on sidewalk. Entire area dirty and unattractive. Ban on driving onto plaza must be made and other areas used for deliveries.

Motorgate

- General decay of Motorgate and surrounding areas.
- Constant sinking of Main Street, especially at bus turnaround.
- Giant cracks in pavement at base of ramp onto Main Street.
- Lack of window-washing at Motorgate entrances. Once a year is not enough.
- Little or no care and cleaning given to area.
- Crosswalk markings are long gone at foot of Motorgate ramp, creating a dangerous intersection as cars propel themselves down ramp and, hopefully, stop at base of ramp.
- Rust on red framework at bridge arrival area at top of ramp.
- Broken door leading into Motorgate from street. Door swings into bench.
- Arrival level doors broken.
- Lack of oversight of Gristede’s to clean their sidewalk areas.

Kraut from page 2

letter, I hope that any legislation you propose concerning self-governance on Roosevelt Island should contain the proviso that this legislation will not take effect until approved by the people of this community in a public referendum. I have mentioned this to Tony Morenzi on several occasions.

In my view, the 92% of voters who expressed support of the idea of self-governance reflect a very real dissatisfaction with the way this Island is currently operated and managed. The legislation you have been asked to propose is one possible response to their unhappiness.

But I hasten to remind you that to impose a new form of government onto Roosevelt Island is in fact to provide a new “constitution” for our governance, in the sense that the new legislation will provide the basic underlying law of our polity. In the United States of America, no document of this kind is promulgated without giving the public a chance to vote on it. The United States Constitution itself only became the law of our land after its creators had presented and defended it to the public (which was how the Federalist Papers came to be written). New York State cannot impose a new constitution without a public referendum, neither can changes be made to the New York City Charter without such a referendum. I urge you to provide the same good sense and logic to your current legislative proposal: let the people here vote their new “constitution” up or down.

David Kraut

Letters deadline for June 2 issue: May 27.

Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis.

Promenades

- Octagon Park garden buildings need painting.
- Complete rusting of railings on all seawalls.
- Octagon is not securely closed and people have been entering building.
- No sign to Coler and Redeemed Church on west road; sign fell down last year.
- Complete lack of rip-rap (boulders) protecting the seawall in some locations.
- Still incomplete area of promenade by the “Prow” and Redeemed Christian Church. Area could be seeded for grass.
- Promenade has become private parking area for Redeemed Church.

Stores

- Lack of supervision of commercial trash-removal storage areas.
- Area in back of deli is fenced in, but trash inside can be seen and is not cleaned up.
- Fish market puts trash on Main Street in wrong location in advance of pickup.
- Lack of enforcement to make storekeepers maintain the exterior of their stores. General need of all Main Street areas; that infrastructure is 26 years old and falling apart.
- Constant sinking of Westview sidewalk.

Public Safety

- Public Safety vehicles are falling apart.
- Lack of proper rescue equipment.
- Lack of professional appearance of some officers.

Southtown

- It is a priority to bring back triangle turnaround south of Blackwell House. Need to make permanent turnaround at same site when new Main Street is built.
- Need to reconfigure new Main Street and have only one turnaround by Tram station.
- Need to preserve lawn at Tram plaza on Island side.
- Need to communicate Southtown plans to community.

These are the same complaints I sent you in a letter two years ago, with the same concerns. To date most have not been addressed and all the sites have deteriorated considerably.

I hope that you and members of the RIOC Board of Directors finally realize that the above concerns are urgent. The Island is deteriorating at a rapid pace and causing more damage to our delicate infrastructure.

Judith Berdy

To the MTA:

A senior citizen retired from full employment a good number of years ago, I still go out to do voluntary work a couple of times each week and find the MTA subway and bus system a great convenience. It also facilitates getting to medical and other appointments in the City. Combinations have been found that are easier for me. When possible, the use of an elevator is certainly the best way to reach different levels in subway stations as is the case in the metro station at Roosevelt Island where I live. Another station often used is that at Lexington Avenue and 63rd Street.

The elevators stink. They need better maintenance. The disinfectant used could certainly be changed for another that does not smell so disagreeable. The floors of the elevators are deteriorating. Patching up is not a good remedy. Longevity is based on efficient maintenance.

Florence B. Scuklowsky

To Commissioner Mary Beth Labate, the RIOC Board of Directors, and RIOC President Robert Ryan:

Last week we suffered a mini-crisis over the filming on the Tram. It was resolved only through the good offices of a great many people. I’m hopeful that we can learn from the experience, and apply what we’ve learned to the long-range interaction between RIOC and this community.

RIOC is a politically-derived organization and, as such, has little or no institutional memory. However, there are residents of Roosevelt Island who have lived here for 20 or 25 years, have been community activists during that time, and have vast experience with virtually every issue, crisis and emergency that is likely to occur. There are literally centuries of experience that could be drawn upon from the audience at any Town Meeting, any RIRA Common Council meeting, or, for that matter, any RIOC Board meeting.

As a virtual newcomer myself, having lived here only 12 years, I’m often not the person in the know. But, clearly, if the resident members of the Board of Directors, or the old-timers on the RIRA Common Council don’t have the information to head off a crisis, chances are one of them knows just the right person to talk to.

For this resource to be useful, however, RIOC will need to function with more transparency than it does now. If there had been early consultation with some of the folks who were active in the negotiation process when *Nighthawks* was filmed on our Tram, I expect that many of the right questions would have been asked this time around. And asking the right questions often leads to the right answers and solutions.

Everyone makes mistakes. And smart people learn from them and apply the lessons to the next problem. RIOC will need to be smarter, to be more open and to use the resources at hand if it is to serve this community better. Thank you for your renewed efforts on our behalf.

Matthew M. Katz
President, RIRA

SPORTSWIRE

The standings in the Roosevelt Island Youth Program’s Little League through May 15 are:

Minors		Majors	
Green	4 - 2	Royal	6 - 3 - 1
Royal	4 - 2	Navy	5 - 4
Navy	2 - 4	Red	4 - 5
Red	2 - 4	Green	4 - 5 - 1

In the **Minors**, the Royal team defeated the Green team on May 5 to move into a tie for first place. The Royal team continued to share first place by defeating the Navy team on May 12 by an 8 - 1 score. Ben Duffy and Alfredo Figueroa hit home runs for the Royal team, while Asher Russem and Seth Vacirca each had a couple of hits to fuel the attack.

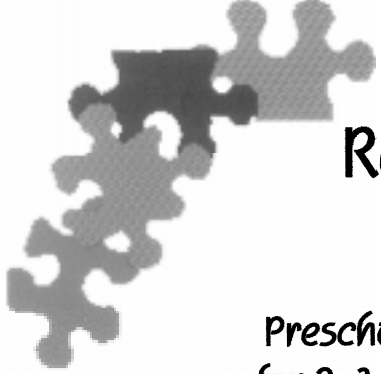
In the **Majors**, the Royal team moved back into first place by winning three games in a row before running into a hot Green team on May 12 and dropping an 8 - 4 decision. In that game, the Green team pitcher, Lamar Burrows, struck out 11 batters in recording a complete game victory. Thomas Herlihy, Remy Armenakis, Dax Armenakis and Max McMillan led the offensive attack for the Green team.

In **Senior League** action, the Island’s Youth Program team, playing in the East River Baseball Association, continued in first place with a 6-3 record. The Seniors defeated the Yorkville 1 team 4-3 and 16-4 in a doubleheader on May 5th, before dropping a game to the Big Apple Sports Club team by a 15-11 score on May 12th. In the doubleheader with Yorkville 1, Brandon Stueber picked up the win in the first game with two innings of sparkling relief, striking out 6 of the 7 batters he faced. Alex Gherardi picked up the win in the second game allowing only one hit and one run in four innings. The offensive attack in the doubleheader was led by Brandon Stueber (a home run and 5 RBIs in the second game), Scott Davis (4 for 4 and 2 RBIs in the second game), Seth Kaufman (3 hits and 5 RBIs in the doubleheader), and Steve Kroski (3 hits and 4 RBIs in the doubleheader).

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer’s name, address, and phone number must be provided for our records. **Preferred methods of submission:** PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*, or by e-mail to MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com (ASCII text preferred or use 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 if brief, but we cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.**

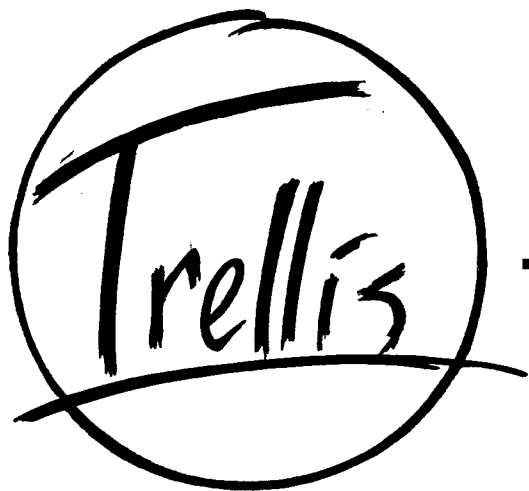
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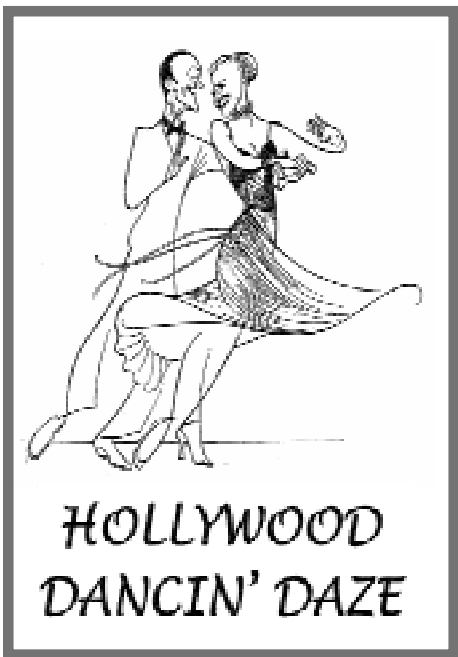
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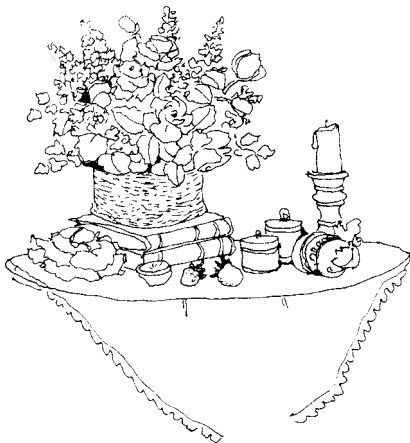
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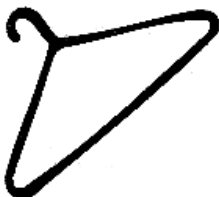
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