

First of two
holiday issues
in two weeks:
Sat., Dec. 4

The Main Street WIRE

25th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



The Octagon Tower was framed by construction equipment Tuesday afternoon as site clearing progressed. More photos, page 6, and in color on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com.

Site Clearing Under Way for Octagon Apartments Project

by Dick Lutz

Octagon Park has been cleared of the majority of its trees, undergrowth, and stone left over from construction of a century and a half ago in preparation for construction of the Octagon Apartments project. As of Tuesday afternoon, trees remained only at the eastern and western edges of the tract. Fixtures and fences were being removed from the tennis courts.

The pre-construction activity is going forward under approvals granted by the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating

Corporation (RIOC), despite an advisory referendum vote against the project in this month's Residents Association (RIRA) election. In that balloting, 83% of residents who voted expressed their views by calling on the State Legislature to keep the 2002 Roosevelt Island Open Spaces Law as is – not to amend it to permit the Octagon project.

RIOC's outside counsel, Steven Kass, maintains that the project complies with the Open Spaces law. Contesting that view, most notably, is Assemblymember Pete Grannis, who originated the legislative language which ultimately became the Open Spaces Law. Grannis says Kass met with him to propose a change in the law, which says, "...no further development or construction for other than park purposes shall be permitted on any real property which is identified as open space areas in the General Development Plan... unless such development includes the reconstruction... of the historic landmarks located in such open space areas and furthers the use of the areas surrounding the historic landmarks as open space areas."

The Octagon tower, the only remaining part of the City's "Pauper Lunatic Asylum" designed by

Alexander Jackson Davis, is landmarked. RIOC and Mayor Michael Bloomberg agreed to an amendment of the General Development Plan (GDP) for the Octagon Apartments. These facts, combined with a potential argument over the intended meaning of the 2002 law, set the stage for a possible legal battle over the apartments project.

The project would create more than 500 apartments, restore the Octagon landmark, and provide RIOC with an \$11 million shot of revenue.

Bruce Becker, whose firm designed the project with its adaptive reuse of the Octagon structure, said on Thursday that once construction is under way, "It's about a two-year project." Responding to a question about the advisory referendum vote against changing the law for the project, he said, "Our position is that the law shouldn't be changed, and doesn't need to be changed for this project. There's no point in changing the law."

The RIOC Board voted to go forward with the project, with the exception of resident member Mark Ponton, under Kass's advice that all required elements were in place for the project. The Board subsequently urged the community not to sue to prevent the construction, saying costly litigation would drain dollars from RIOC's budget to the detriment of other needed uses for the funds.

Thus far, no community group or individual has started a suit, but *The WIRE* has learned that one is being contemplated by a group of residents.

Another resident, former RIRA Common Councilmember Karen Stewart (wife of RIOC Board member Patrick Stewart, who has cast repeated votes for the project), decried the project in an advocacy article for *The WIRE*'s pre-election issue (nyc10044.com/wire/2504/wire2504.html), writing, "In order to build this development, the Roosevelt Island Open Spaces Law will have to undergo formal amendment in the Legislature. It is for us, the residents of Roosevelt

See **Octagon**, page 6

Democrats Gained in Albany; So Now, What About Reform?

by Erik Kriss in Albany

Roosevelt Island will have a new State Senator in January, and José M. Serrano's victory is part of what many see as a changing tide that could give Democrats control of the State Senate before the end of the decade.

Serrano's victory over Democrat-turned-Republican Senator Olga Mendez on November 2 was one of at least three Democratic pickups of formerly Republican seats in the 62-member Senate.

If Democrats win a fourth – the still-undecided race between the incumbent Yonkers Republican Nicholas Spano and Democrat Andrea Stewart-Cousins – they will have cut the Republicans' 38-24 majority to 34-28.

With Democratic enrollment in-

creasing statewide, especially Downstate, many political observers see the party's ascendance as inevitable.

And tacticians note that in two years, when seats for the State Legislature are up again, the Democratic party will likely have two major vote-getters heading their statewide ticket: U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton running for re-election, and Attorney Gen-

eral Eliot Spitzer running for governor. Popular national and statewide candidates tend to draw their party's base voters to the polls, helping party candidates running for lower offices such as State Senator.

Plus, the Democrats' three- or four-seat pickup in the Senate is expected to level the playing field in the all-important war for campaign

See **Albany**, page 8

Islanders

Dream – An Atlantic Crossing; Means – A 21-Foot Boat, Solo

by Kenneth Paul

With only a little irony apparent, the Brittany native Louis Mauffrier speaks of his "American Dream" – to squeeze his lanky frame into an awkward, small and dank space, subsist for a month on a diet of water and dried, irradiated food, and sleep for but a half-hour at a time.

The jail this Frenchman wants to break into is a 21-foot sailboat crossing the Atlantic Ocean from France to Brazil, in a biennial sail, the Mini-Transat 650, three years from now. He doesn't care about winning the race, he emphasizes,

only about finishing it.

Mauffrier, 39, with his wife, Pascale, and their children, Lucien, 11, and Antoine, 6, lives in an apartment, appropriately, on River Road. They've been in the States for three years. He works as sales representative of a European cheese concern.

Great-grandson of the captain of a three-master, Mauffrier describes himself as "a sailing guy." It was during the 2003 Mini-Transat 650 last October that he decided to enter the 2007 race.

The trans-Atlantic sail spans 4,250 nautical miles, from La Rochelle to Salvador de Bahia, via Lanzarote in the Canaries. About 70 boats enter. The race gets its name from the length limit of the solo craft: 6.5 meters. The boats can be only 3 meters wide. After 30 days alone on board one of them, a microscopic Manhattan studio apartment would seem palatial.

Before he can sail in the race, Mauffrier must build his boat. In Newport, Rhode Island, he and two Americans, Drew Wood and Katy Ambach, pooled resources and energy, and last July, using a high-tech and lightweight unidirectional carbon skin, they started crafting the hull of the first of three innovative sailboats.



Jennifer M. Jones is now on the job as chief of operations at Blackwell Management (managing Island House and Westview for the Sheldrake Organization), with an office in the former Day Nursery quarters at 545 Main Street. Phone there is **212-755-3012**; her e-mail address is JJones@BlackwellMgmt.com. A Certified Property Manager (CPM) and Registered Apartment Manager (RAM), she's a veteran of 15 years with R.Y. Management and for the last eight years, for that company, managed Concourse Village in the Bronx. Blackwell Management is a subsidiary of the Sheldrake Organization, which is becoming a partner of Charles Lucido in ownership of the buildings, with plans to privatize.



Briefly...

Tomorrow (Sunday) a **Panel Discussion on Prospects for Reform in Albany** is being offered by Rep. Carolyn Maloney at the NYU Medical Center, at 10:30 a.m., with the Island's State Senator-Elect José Serrano, Senator Liz Krueger, and Assemblymember Scott Stringer. (See *ComingUp*, page 3.)

The Trust for Public Land has scheduled final presentation of a plan for **Southpoint Park** for Thursday evening, December 9, in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Parking Arrangements potentially useful for the holidays: Central Parking sells books of coupons for reduced-rate guest parking at Motorgate – \$65 for ten six-hour passes, \$130 for ten 24-hour passes. Call **212-321-7500** for information.

Island organizations and businesses are asked to check their contact information on *The WIRE*'s **Contact Sheet** at <http://nyc10044.com/contacts.html> and provide any changes or updates to phones, hours, and other information. *The WIRE* will republish the list in the near future.

Happy Thanksgiving to All from the Staff of The WIRE

Letters

Bimal Parekh
Area Manager
Central Parking
360 W 31st Street
New York, NY 10001
Dear Mr. Parekh:

Please consider this letter as a formal complaint against an employee of Central Parking regarding a terrible and dangerous incident this past Saturday evening. When I parked on level 6A, I walked to the elevator with my guests, who included my elderly sister who has a problem walking stairs. We rang for the elevator, which after many repeated attempts for over 20 minutes did not come. My niece and I had to help her down two flights of very slippery and steep steps.

When we got to level 4, where the Motorgate office is, I went to the office to report the problem and request assistance for my sister. I knocked on the window, as there was no attendant in sight. After a few minutes of knocking on the window, a tall African-American male who was wearing a white shirt and Central Parking Cap, started screaming at me. He was nasty, abusive, and used obscenities because I dared to knock on the window!

This is the worst of several scenarios with your personnel. For example, before the Passover holiday in April, when the elevators and escalators were out of service and I was returning with a shopping wagon full of groceries which were too heavy to take down the slippery, steep stairs, I finally made it down to the office. I told the attendant on duty about the elevators out of service and, instead of offering to call Roosevelt Island Public Safety for help, he said, “What do you want me to do, carry your packages?”

The demeanor and attitude of your personnel is despicable. I remind you that their salary comes from my monthly fee and therefore I should not be treated so disrespectfully. Further, while I understand that mechanical systems are sometimes unreliable, the fact that these employees think that it is OK to treat their paying customers with disrespect is totally unacceptable. Further, I am making you a promise that if any of your employees ever opens a mouth to me like this individual did on Saturday night, especially when there was a potential for a life-threatening emergency involving an elderly woman, I will stop at nothing to have that employee arrested for reckless endangerment, and bring a lawsuit against your company. As a matter of fact, I have not ruled out such an action regarding this incident.

In the meantime, I trust that this problem employee will be removed from this garage and that you will work with RIOC to get those elevators repaired, as well as implement a training program with your employees on how to provide assistance to your paying customers.

Imagine if you will that when I knocked on that window I was trying to report an accident or life-threatening emergency requiring assistance. By the way, I seemed to be interrupting a pas-de-deux between that employee and a young lady with whom he was engaged in a very merry conversation.

I can also tell you that I am hereby putting RIOC and Central Parking on notice that the elevators and escalators must be properly repaired immediately. I understand that there were several stalled attempts to engage elevator consultants and go to contract on these repairs. However, the problem continues, and nothing has been done about the problem because RIOC keeps citing lack of funding. I can also tell you that if need be, I will work with the Residents Association to initiate legal action to force RIOC to get those elevators and escalators repaired immediately. I can tell you that if my elderly sister had a heart attack because of this situation, it would have cost RIOC one hell of a lot more to compensate my family than it would cost to fix these mechanical systems.

Raye G. Schwartz

Copies: Herb Berman, President, RIOC; Mary Beth Labate, DHCR; Steve Marcus, President, Roosevelt Island Residents Association; *The Main Street WIRE*; Community Board 8; Gifford Miller, Speaker, City Council; Virginia Fields, Manhattan Borough President



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To the Editor:

It is an axiom in sports that the team making the fewest mistakes usually wins. What mistakes did the Democrats make in the campaign?

• **The Candidate:** John Kerry is a liberal from Massachusetts. The last successful candidate with that profile was John F. Kennedy and that was 44 years ago. The nation has moved on. Ronald Reagan made “liberal” a dirty word. In the heartland, so many “liberal” candidates have gone down to defeat in recent years that one would think the Democratic Party would have gotten the message, especially after the defeat of Michael Dukakis in 1988. Bill Clinton broke the pattern by insisting he was a moderate. Jimmy Carter was from the South and seen as a moderate. Liberal candidates from the Northeast may have appeal in New York and California and some support in the Upper Midwest, but in the rest of the country, they are looked upon with grave suspicion and distrust.

• **John Edwards:** Part of the Democratic strategy was to enroll young first-time voters and to win their votes with a young and energetic vice-presidential candidate. Unfortunately, Edwards’s public pronouncements were an immediate embarrassment, and he all but disappeared from the campaign trail until late, when he surfaced to assail Dick Cheney and his wife for opposing gay marriage even though they had a lesbian daughter. John Kerry could not bring himself to apologize for this gratuitous attack and sickened a great many Americans.

• **The Direct Message:** Undecided voters sifting through the statements of Senator Kerry during the primary campaign and after his nomination must have been bewildered looking for a consistent theme other than opposition to everything President Bush had done in the past three and a half years.

• **The Image:** The first time I saw a photograph of Senator Kerry windsurfing and wearing Spandex shorts, I knew he had not a clue as to how to establish a link with the average American. John Kennedy had a standing rule that he was not to be photographed playing golf, reasoning that most people regarded golf as a rich playboy’s activity. Kerry, already suffering from the stigma of managing to marry not one but two heiresses, was so tone deaf that he thought windsurfing in the Caribbean and snowboarding in Colorado would win him votes. Later, he made a transparent attempt to portray himself as a man of the people by going goose hunting and throwing around a football. But in a long Presidential campaign, voters have full opportunity to take the measure of a candidate. Kerry, an elitist from wealth and influence who married wealth and influence, should have been satisfied with that persona.

• **The Indirect Message:** This was delivered by celebrities who flocked to Kerry’s side and the causes they espoused. Clinton became enamored of the Hollywood crowd, but we all knew he was an actor at heart who chased women with all the diligence of a Hollywood producer. John Kerry wanted to work both sides of the street. He would personally appeal to intellectual liberals with his “nuanced” approach to problems, while his celebrity friends would win over the Oprah crowd. Michael Moore got a prominent place at the convention. So did Al Sharpton. Voters saw Democrats fawning over a multi-millionaire “man of the people” who had made his fortune and reputation impugning American traditions, and a Brooklyn street hustler fond of opportunities to traduce our police and courts. The message? Profound contempt for average Americans and the way we lead our lives. While Senator Kerry was attempting to establish common ground with the voters in the middle, his celebrity spokespeople were sneering at values most American hold dear.

• **The Strategy:** The Democratic Party has become the captive of its left wing. They rejected Dick Gephardt and Joe Lieberman, men of sense and honor who would have brought integrity to the campaign. Democrats turned to Senator Kerry after Howard Dean, darling of the Far Left, scared the pants off everyone else in the party. Kerry was seen as holding on to the Dean supporters while winning over the moderates. Pulled two ways, he was forced into untenable positions to keep the leftists in line, then moved away from them to appeal to the moderates. This was the root cause of the inconsistencies in Kerry’s campaign. Was he for the war in Iraq or opposed to it? Kerry could point to votes in the Senate that answered “yes” to both parts of that question. And so it went on question after question, trying to appeal to two disparate parts of the party and electorate.

Will the Democrats learn anything from this defeat? On the past record, one must be skeptical. But it can be done. Tony Blair forced the Labor Party to break the socialistic mold in which the party had been held since the days of Clement Attlee. That is what it will take for the Democratic Party to separate itself from its lunatic fringe and rejoin the mainstream – an

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I have been a resident of Roosevelt Island for over 25 years and, like many of my fellow Islanders, have witnessed and complained about the deteriorating conditions of the Island, often citing Motorgate as a prime example of neglectful management. Motorgate has become so deplorable that I feel compelled to speak out. Therefore, I am writing to you regarding RIOC’s responsibility and complicity in this matter.

Motorgate is the gateway to the Island for anyone arriving by car. If one is to generalize, based on this first impression, one would conclude that Roosevelt Island is a slum. Ironically, Southtown housing is currently being marketed to a high-end, luxury clientele. It would seem that for all parties concerned, RIOC should make every effort to upgrade Motorgate as part of an overall improvement plan for the Island.

- The specific conditions I am referring to are:
1. Permanent malfunction of the escalators
 2. Frequent breakdowns of one or both of the elevators
 3. The shabby condition of the elevators (ripped linoleum, dirty walls, sagging and dirty light covers).
 4. Building walls with crumbling cement and pock marked with large holes
 5. Dirty windows, pipes, and staircases throughout the facility
 6. Unswept, filthy floors
 7. Stairwells that smell of urine
 8. Abandoned cars allowed to remain in the garage for months at a time
 9. Numerous break-ins; lack of adequate security including security cameras

We Islanders have no alternative other than Motorgate for parking our cars. With a maximum of 40 minutes of street parking and no other parking facility on the Island, we are held captive by a dysfunctional system totally controlled by RIOC. For years RIOC has collected parking fees without requiring their vendor, Edison Parking and now Central Parking Systems (CPS), to meet even minimum standards of maintenance, repair, and security.

Regarding RIOC’s current relationship with CPS, I have the following questions:

1. What is the time frame for this contract?
2. What are the standards that CPS must meet to maintain their contract?
3. What sanctions, such as terminating the contract, can RIOC impose if standards are not met?
4. What oversight does RIOC conduct to assure that CPS delivers appropriate services?
5. Was there competitive bidding upon securing CPS as the vendor and does competitive bidding take place each time the contract is renewed?

It is my sincere hope that you will take this matter seriously. As President of RIOC, you, as well as your entire board, are responsible for carefully managing the hard-earned dollars we residents pay to your facility for parking. We expect, and are entitled to, a higher standard of maintenance, repair, and security than what we have received to date.

Without an appropriate response and follow through from you, it may be necessary for the residents of Roosevelt Island to take a stand and demand that conditions in Motorgate improve by withholding our parking fees.

I look forward to your reply.

Sheila Chazin

articulate moderate who can make a persuasive case for liberal causes modified by common sense. For the sake of the two-party system and for the good of America, let us hope it happens.

Jim Baehler

**Letters deadline
for December 4 issue:
Tuesday, November 30**
After deadline, letters will be considered
on a space available basis.

Letters Policy

The WIRE 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 verification and for our records; *letters submitted anonymously are not considered for publication.*

Preferred submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file created using any common wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files containing macros), or on a PC-standard 3.5" disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed copy left at 531 Main Street. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **Letters are subject to acceptance and to possible editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

The Public Safety Blotter for November 1-14
is now available on **Website NYC10044** at
nyc10044.com/wire/2506/blot2506.html.

I am happy to announce that Thursday, December 9, has been selected for the second annual holiday tree lighting on Roosevelt Island. We are working with the Youth Center, several of the housing management companies, and the merchants association to make this event special. We welcome any suggestions. More details will follow.

The RIOC Column

Later that same evening (7:00 p.m.) the Trust for Public Land will hold a public meeting at Good Shepherd to present the preferred site plan for Southpoint. They will be accepting comments at that time and they look forward to everyone's participation. I urge everyone who is interested to attend and I look forward to seeing you there.

Land clearance has also begun at the open space at the other end of the Island. As many of you may have seen, preparation work has begun on the Octagon site. When that project is complete, there will be parkland at the northern end of the Island that is accessible to all.

A recent edition of *Time Out New York* focused on that northern end of the Island. The issue, which focuses on the best places for kids in New York City, says that Roosevelt Island is fun for children for about three hours. (This was one of the longest spans out of any place in the City, including parks and skating rinks!) The article goes on to say that, after getting off the Tram, people should head north to the gothic lighthouse and stop at the statue of The Marriage of Real Estate and Money in the river near Manhattan Park.

More media attention was focused on Roosevelt Island when the episode of *Fear Factor* that was taped in New York City was aired last week. Segments were taped at the Tram, in Times Square, and by the Statue of Liberty. The

I'd like to kick off my first column as RIRA president with some words of thanks, particularly to Dick Lutz, for his years of work in making a newspaper available to the entire community, and for his willingness to publish a regular RIRA column. *WIRE* revenues seldom exceed expenses, and Dick publishes this paper as a gift to his neighbors. Also thanks to Matt Katz for his fine leadership of RIRA over the past four years. Matt has worked tirelessly to secure every possible benefit for the residents, with considerable success. Thanks also to you, as voters, for putting your trust in me to represent your interests.

I'd like to devote these first few columns to an overview of what RIRA does, and a pitch for your participation, since experience shows that communities with vocal and active resident associations are "the squeaky wheel that gets the grease."

Our first sessions at RIRA will be devoted to discussing goals and directions, and to form the working committees to achieve those ends. It is apparent from the referenda results that the Island strongly supports a permanent home for the Youth Center in former Lilies School quarters, and strongly opposes construction on our open spaces around the Octagon ruin. Islanders want to see improvements in Public Safety and in the way the Island is maintained. I will be encouraging the Common Council to do what we can to deal with these issues.

The message I want to stress to all of the residents is that, with your participation, you can make this a better place to live. The RIRA Common Council needs to hear your ideas and complaints, and also needs your expertise and elbow grease. You can call or e-mail to me or to your building representative your ideas and complaints. The bulk of the work in RIRA is done in committees, *in which all residents may participate*. Our committees are currently established as Communications, Government Relations, Housing, Island Services, Legal Action, Planning, Public Safety, and Social, Cultural and Educational Services. These are the groups that will address all the issues that we've identified, hopefully with your help. *If you have a special knowledge or area of interest please let us know*, and we'll get you in touch with the proper committee chair. I'd like to briefly run through some of the issues that each committee will be dealing with.

The Island Services committee keeps a "punch list" of conditions on the Island that are hazardous and/or in need of repair. This list includes broken sidewalks, potholes, faulty street lights, numerous items in Motorgate (faulty elevators/escalators, leaks and cracks, lack of security or cameras), and lots more. In future columns we'll discuss plans by the Communications Committee to permit residents to view this list on the internet, and even to add their own issues. Until then, if you know of problems, please let me know, and if you can e-mail me a digital picture, we'll pass it on to the RIOC maintenance staff, and follow-up on the remedy.

Public Safety has long been a sore point among many residents, as the referendum results on this point underscore. Accordingly, a Public Safety Committee has been formed by RIRA. RIOC has frequently said that this perception is worse than the reality. I don't think residents can fairly

Tram segment opened the show and was by far the longest, lasting for almost a full half-hour. The fact that it was the 100th episode and that it was filmed in locations throughout the City also attracted some local newspaper attention. They all mentioned the excitement generated by the Tram segment.

The Renwick Ruin at the southern end has also attracted outside attention recently. We have been approached by a group of young architects that would like to use Renwick



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
e-mail: HBerman@rioc.com

as the model for a theoretical ideas competition. We do not have many details yet, but will share them as soon as they are available. This group sponsored a similar competition last year that attracted international attention.

I want to take just a moment to thank the driver of the bus from Coler-Goldwater that caught fire last week. From all reports, he worked hard to get all of the passengers, including some wheelchair passengers, off the bus and to safety before the bus was fully engulfed. The smoke from that fire could be seen in at least three boroughs, and the fact that nobody was seriously injured really is amazing.

On that note I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving. Enjoy the food and the time that is spent with family and friends.

evaluate how Public Safety operates without a clear idea of what its responsibilities and obligations are. This has been called a "Mission Statement" by some, but I find that term a bit lofty. For starters, I just think PSD management should provide to the community a basic list of 3 or 4 pages on what they believe are their responsibilities. Such a list will serve to focus the discussion into two general areas – are the PSD officers "just following orders" and do the orders best serve the needs of the community? I hope that the Public Safety Committee can get some movement on this issue, not with the intention of telling PSD management how to fight crime or keep the peace, but for them to tell the community what priorities they assign to various tasks. Residents may feel that certain items should be added or removed from such a list, or that tasks should be given a higher or lower priority, and I think that it's a reasonable discussion to have. But first, let's get a basic list of responsibilities.

We are fortunate to have two representatives, Gifford Miller, our City Councilmember, and Pete Grannis, our State Assemblymember, who work hard for Roosevelt Island and take our needs seriously. The Government Relations Committee is charged with maintaining contact with these folks and others in government who can further our interests. In the last year, the committee met with José Serrano, our newly elected State Senator. He's assured us that he, too, will work with RIRA, and I hope this is the start of a long friendship.



Steve Marcus, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: SteveAtRIRA@verizon.net

The Housing Committee should have an eventful period, with the privatization of Eastwood, Westview, and Island House. I hope that the building committees of these buildings will take a very active part in educating and mobilizing their residents; RIRA stands ready to assist them in this effort.

Social, Cultural and Educational Services is the fund-raising and humanitarian wing of RIRA. We've had dances and movies in the past and, while I hope we don't have any of the misfortunes that prompted previous community drives, RIRA will do its best to help neighbors in need.

Legal Action is another fundraising committee – but directed only for lawsuits to protect our interests. This committee also deals with legal strategies and liaises with attorneys. It may be active in responding to loss of open spaces at Octagon Park.

Finally, issues about Island infrastructure, emergency preparedness, parks and promenades, and commercial space are addressed by the Planning Committee. If you have a particular interest in Southpoint Park, you may want to join this committee.

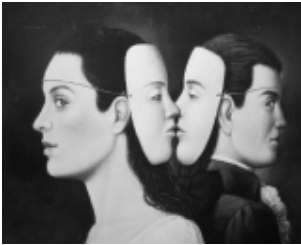
To repeat, RIRA meetings and committees are open to all residents. The Common Council meets in the lower level of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd at 8:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. If you're able, come observe a meeting and, if you like, speak during the public session,

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Panel Discussion: Winds of Change – Prospects for Reform in Albany, Sun., Nov. 21, 10:30 a.m., NYU Medical Center, 530-550 First Avenue at 31st Street; follow signs for classroom A on basement level. State Senator Liz Krueger (Chair, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee), Assemblymember Scott Stringer (Sponsor of reform legislation), State Senator-Elect José Serrano (who represents Roosevelt Island); introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney. Additional information: **212-987-5516**.

Gallery RIVAA Exhibit – Posters by Rafal Olbinski, Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 5, 11-5 (also Wednesdays and Fridays, 6-9), Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street. Sponsored by RIVAA and Poland-USA Promotion.



– The Coming Week –

Toastmasters Open House Meeting, Mon., Nov. 22, 7:30 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

Roy Eaton plays Chopin's *Prelude in G*, **Wed., Nov. 24, 10-11 p.m.**, WQXR (FM 96.3).

– Future Events –

Residents Association Common Council Meeting, Wed., Dec. 1, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open. An opportunity for members of the public to speak is available early near the start of the meeting.

The Main Street WIRE – First holiday issue in two weeks: **Sat., Dec. 4.** (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.)

Deadlines: Advertising in the paper, Friday, Nov. 26; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Nov. 29; inserts due Thur., Dec. 2. **Future issues:** Dec. 18 (second holiday issue). **In 2005:** Jan. 8, 22; Feb. 5, 19; Mar. 5, 19; Apr. 2, 16, 30; May 14; June 4, 18; July 2, 30; Aug. 27; Sept. 10, 24; Oct. 8, 22; Nov. 5, 19; Dec. 3, 17. **Phone/fax** for news, **212-826-9055/755-2540**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone/fax** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214/755-2540**. **To list your organization's Island-related event in this column**, please e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

Annual Bazaar of the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation, **Sun., Dec. 5, 10:00-4:00**, Cultural Center, 548 Main Street.

Southpoint Park Meeting, Thur., Dec. 9, 7:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Final presentation of the Trust for Public Land's plans for Southpoint Park.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Dec. 13, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave copy at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide telephone numbers for possible follow-up.

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12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
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7:00, **Dance Class** (Beginners)
Tuesday
10:00, **Computers**
10-11, **Dance & Relax**
1:00, **Bingo**
6:00, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**
Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
10:00, **Spanish Class**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
12:30, **Sculpting**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**
Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**

12:30, **Movie**
1:00, **Drawing with Pastels**
7:00, **Dance**
Friday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
1:00, **Bridge**
6:00, **Dance & Relax**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**
Saturday
7:30, **Bingo (RISA)**

Special Events

Sat., Nov. 20, 6:00, RISA Annual Dinner
Thur-Fri., Nov. 25-26, Center closed
Tue., Nov. 30, RISA Las Vegas trip
Sun., Dec. 18, 6:00, Holiday Party
Fri., Dec. 31, 8:00, New Year's Eve Party

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which is always near the start of the meeting. If you're not able to attend but want to get involved anyway, e-mail me at SteveAtRIRA@verizon.net or give me a ring at **212-486-5733**. Your questions, ideas, suggestions, and offers will always be welcome.

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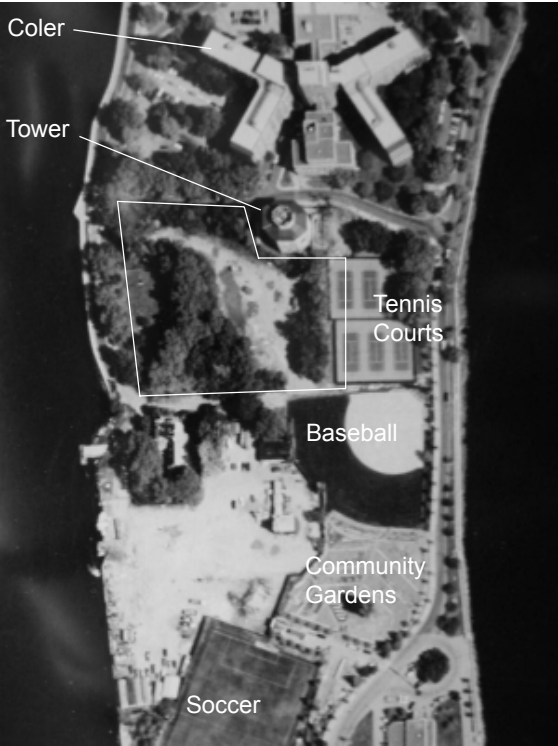
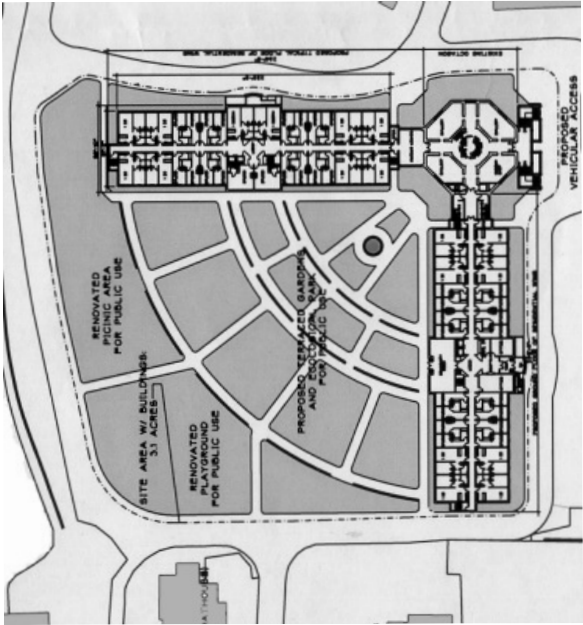
The Octagon Project and How It Grew



Originally presented as a pair of low-profile wings extending south and west from a restored Octagon Tower (top), the Octagon Apartments project grew in height, evolving to 13-story towers separated from the tower by connectors. As shown in site plot at right, the building’s north-south wing also acquired an east-west addition. A parking lot was added under the tennis courts.



In maps of the Island designating uses of space under New York State development, an “Ecological Park” was planned for the portion of the Octagon Park site that will now be occupied by the apartment development. Map above shows west at the top; diagrams below show north at the top, as does the aerial photo at right.



High-altitude aerial photo, now several years old, shows elements of Octagon Park in same orientation as site plot at left. Trees and undergrowth in the outlined area were removed this week as part of site-preparation activity. Fences and net posts were removed from the tennis courts.

Octagon from page 1

Island, to speak out strongly through this referendum.” She wrote, “The building as it was originally conceived was lovely,” adding, “All of that is history now. Taller wings and an extension dwarfing the Octagon, on-site parking, no affordable housing...” The wings have doubled in height from the original proposal and grown from an L shape to a modified U or J shape (site plot, below left) with the addition of a third “wing.”

As for income from the project, Ms. Stewart wrote, “RIOC needs the income because Governor Pataki has defaulted on New York State’s responsibility to Roosevelt Island’s capital expense. Bad governance will be rewarded by an income source from assets [meaning Octagon Park] taken from the governed.”

Large trees are now mostly gone from the site’s central area, along with barbecues, swings, and picnic tables. The tennis courts on the eastern edge of the site are to be replaced. Becker said Thursday that because there will be no parking under the courts, they can be replaced in time for summer tennis activities. On-site parking has been reduced greatly, according to Becker. “It will no longer extend under the tennis courts,” he said Thursday, “but only under the building and under the courtyard.”



Nobody Hurt Gasoline burns under this Coler-Goldwater shuttle bus, which was a total loss last week after it caught fire at a stop sign near the hospital’s north campus. Everybody got out safely. The driver told Public Safety officers that flames shot out from the front of the bus. Three vehicles in the adjacent parking lot were also damaged, according to the Public Safety Blotter (nyc10044.com/wire/2506/blot2506.html).

Orphans International Fundraiser Nets \$75K



Roosevelt Island-based Orphans International raised about \$75,000 in its fund-raising affair at the Yale Club earlier this week. Jim Luce, founder of the organization, received a Congressional Recognition Award through the office of Rep. Charles Rangel. Over 350 people participated, and there were diplomats and performers, including the Sulawesi dancers above, from Indonesia, Guyana, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic. The organization received letters of support and proclamations from a long list of officials, including Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton, Representatives Rangel and Carolyn Maloney, Mayor Mike Bloomberg, City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, and Assemblymember Pete Grannis.



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Albany from page 1

cash, a war the Senate's Republican majority has been winning for decades. Special interests and lobbyists tend to contribute to the party in power, but with the Democrats getting close to retaking the majority, many big donors are expected to hedge their bets.

The Senate Minority Leader, David Pater-son of Manhattan, argues that, in the races in which his party was able to come close to matching Republicans' spending, Democrats won, or came close.

The party gave financial backing to Stewart-Cousins, a Westchester County leg-islator, and to David Valesky, who exploited a GOP split Upstate to narrowly win a Syra-cuse-area seat from Republican Senator Nancy Larraine Hoffmann, another former Democrat.

More warning signs are on the horizon for the Republicans, who have used skillful re-drawing of district lines, the adoption of some key Democratic issues such as gay rights and protection of access to abortion clinics, and the ability to lure former Dem-ocrats such as Mendez, Hoffmann, and Pedro Espada of the Bronx to maintain the Senate majority they have held since 1966.

A number of Republican senators from Long Island, Queens, and Staten Island are expected to retire in the near future. Repub-lican strategists worry about the lack of ob-vious GOP successors in those areas and fear the seats could fall to the Democrats.

What will it mean?

Serrano, for one, sounded a decidedly lib-eral message after winning his party's primary to face Mendez in the general election.

He argued for an increase in the State

minimum wage, reform of what he called the "harshest in the nation" Rockefeller drug laws, and a solution to "a housing emer-gency in our city that is pricing us out of our community." He cited his efforts as a City Councilman from the South Bronx to keep libraries open, build affordable housing, and create more classroom seats in schools.

But Upstate and suburban Democrats tend to be more conservative, and a Democratic majority in the Senate would certainly have to accommodate their views.

Valesky, Stewart-Cousins, and others en-joyed success this year by campaigning on promises of legislative reform, claiming a dysfunctional, leader-driven system is re-sponsible for 20 straight years of late State budgets and legislative gridlock on issues ranging from drug-law reform to cost-cut-ting changes in New York's expensive Med-icaid health care system for the poor. And as the political season fades and the gov-erning season approaches, much of the talk in Albany is on whether such legislative re-form will, indeed, happen.

Democrats also expanded their majority in the State Assembly by one seat, to 104-46, including the return of Roosevelt Island's representative, Alexander "Pete" Grannis. And many see Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan, as no cham-pion of legislative reform.

The day after the election, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, an Albany-area Repub-lican, strongly hinted that he would embrace reform. "We got the message loud and clear: the people want change," Bruno said. But he was not clear on the change he favored.

Many State Senate and Assembly candi-dates promised to push for changes in the rules of their respective houses, as proposed by New York University's Brennan Center for Justice in a July 21 report that labeled New York's the most dysfunctional state govern-ment in the nation. Assemblyman Scott Stringer, D-Manhattan, and 16 of his fellow Assembly Democrats introduced a resolution calling for the adoption of many of the Brennan Center proposals. And Bruno promised to embrace at least one, which calls for eliminat-ing his power to prevent any bill from coming to the floor of the Senate for a vote.

But it was far from clear that Bruno would be willing to adopt other rules changes. And, in blaming the Democratic-controlled As-sembly for blocking many GOP Senate pro-posals aimed at reform, Bruno raised the specter of past fights and finger-pointing that resulted in legislative paralysis.

Silver, meanwhile, has been relatively si-lent on the reform issue, asking a "steering committee" of his loyalists to round up the reform ideas under discussion in New York and present them to a meeting of his Demo-cratic majority.

But what Bruno, Silver, and their col-leagues do on the issue could have conse-quences in 2006. Pollsters and political sci-entists say voter anger toward State govern-ment was more palpable this year – and growing – particularly in the economically distressed Upstate metropolitan areas of Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse.

Upstate, this year's campaign featured everything from the emergence of a turkey farmer campaigning for the ouster of incum-bents to the State's small-business lobby for the first time aggressively targeting a par-ticular lawmaker for defeat.

The efforts of Mark Bitz, president of the Syracuse-area Plainville Turkey Farms op-eration, won widespread media coverage. Bitz created an anti-Albany web site, www.freenys.org, in which he presented a well-documented case of how the State had failed the Upstate economy, a failure he said led him to consider selling a famous busi-ness that has been in his family for six gen-erations.

And in the Rochester area, the National Federation of Independent Business and sev-eral regional Upstate business groups tried to make a "test case" of defeating Assem-blywoman Susan John, a Rochester Demo-cratic. Not only did they argue that John was too liberal, but the groups also endorsed leg-islative reform, agreeing with Bitz and oth-ers that a system so dominated by its lead-ers left little room for creative policy-mak-ing that could help improve the State's busi-ness climate.

The groups came close. John, a close ally of Silver who chairs the Assembly Labor Committee, barely held off a challenge by Republican Michael Slattery.

Meanwhile, Downstate, Democratic Nassau County Executive Tom Suozzi also zeroed in on reform. Like many other county leaders, Suozzi argued the State Medicaid program is driving property taxes through the roof because localities, including New York City, must pay part of the cost of Med-icaid even though the State makes the program's rules. He charged that State law-makers were unaccountable, and broke with other county leaders by declaring the only way to make legislators take notice was to target incumbents and beat them.

He created a political action committee with a website at FixAlbany.com, to do so. With the money the committee raised, Suozzi helped defeat Assemblyman David Sidikman in a Democratic primary in Nassau County. Then he helped Valesky beat Hoffmann in Syracuse in the general election.

Senate and Assembly rules are all up for renewal in January, when lawmakers return for the 2005 session.

Between now and then, Brennan Center officials and others plan to try to keep the heat on re-elected legislators and newcom-ers, who take their seats January 1. Wednes-day in Albany, Brennan officials joined with State Assembly Republicans to keep the fo-cus on the issue.

Tomorrow (Sunday) morning, Serrano is scheduled to take part in a panel discussion at NYU Medical Center entitled "Winds of Change – Prospects for Reform in Albany." (See *ComingUp*, page 3.)



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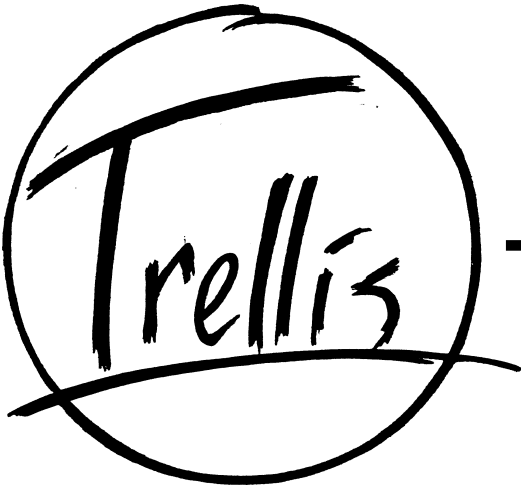
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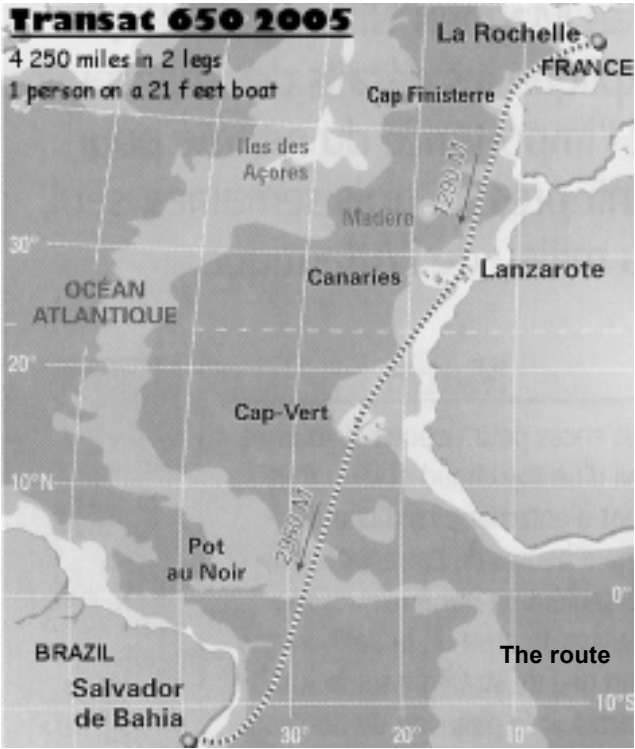
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Mauffrier from page 1

you are creating,” Mauffrier explains, with an air of patient resignation.

He and his colleagues finished last month. The boat, said to be the first of its kind to be built in the United States, weighs 400 pounds – but for racing it will weigh nearly a ton more, thanks mostly to water ballast. That huge amount of ballast hints at the boat’s stability. Mauffrier calls it unsinkable – and indeed it sounds more Molly Brown than Titanic. Even if the little boat should turn over, there’s a brilliant emergency compartment with a pair of trapdoors top and bottom, so that the sailor eventually can wriggle to safety even from an upside-down boat.

In September, Mauffrier transported the hull to New York, hoping to be able to keep it on Roosevelt Island while he finished it in the coming months. The idea, which Mauffrier discusses with characteristic affable intensity, was to enable the Island’s residents, especially the children, to watch and even participate as work on the sailboat proceeds. Mauffrier argues that Roosevelt Island’s environment is more an ocean one than a riparian one (“It is not a river,” he says, “It is a salty island.”), and he regards it as a travesty that no boat is docked here. “The boat would be a door to the sea which is around,” Mauffrier says.



**A finished example of
the boat Mauffrier is
building**



Negotiations with officials of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) did not bear fruit, however. At last word the carbon boat, called Black Face, was stowed in a Mauffrier friend’s space in Fresh Meadows, Queens, until a suitable way station could be found for the final 500 hours of work on it. The Frenchman expects that the boat will be put in the water next spring and that he will sail a U.S. qualifying course next summer. To compete in the Mini-Transat 650, sailors must demonstrate the ability to complete with their craft a 1,000-mile sail.

If all goes well, Mauffrier would then sail in a qualifying race in Europe the following summer, of 2006, and finally in the climactic race in October 2007. On the way, he hopes to publicize “the rights of the children of the world” and his support for Amnesty International.

Preparing for a long ocean race in a small sailboat entails more than learning how to handle a sail.

For one thing, you need money. Though the Mini-Transat was inaugurated in the 1970s in part as a modest alternative to the multi-million-dollar budgets that already were necessary for ocean races appealing to the yacht-owning class,

it’s not cheap. Some producers make donations of materials, other non-monetary contributions can be had, and ultimately the sale of the boat can defray expenses. If Mauffrier were to commission the entire project, he estimates costs as well into six figures.

Putting accounting aside, the sailor must contemplate the security training, to handle the stress and to cope with any potential disaster. As Mauffrier describes it, sailboats in the Mini-Transat 650 are allowed no electronic controls and only a limited VHF communications capability, which allows transmission of three basic messages to the single large escort boat: “I have no problem;” “I have a problem but I can handle it;” or “I have a problem and I need help.”

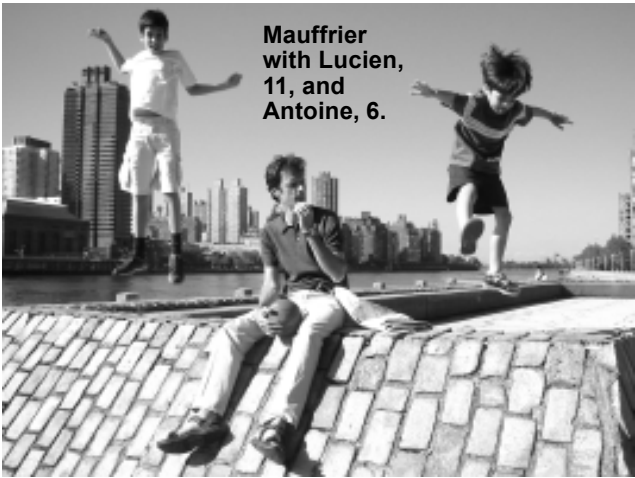
Then, too, it sounds like a preposterously grueling regimen, this solo ocean sailing, because of the cramped spaces, the unappetizing diet, and especially the erratic sleep pattern that’s required and the pain of never really being able to stand erect, instead wallowing on your bottom, virtually nonstop, in high humidity.

Still, for Mauffrier this enterprise, after three-plus years of preparation, will be worth it. He speaks of sailing as “a matter of harmony.” He speaks of finding “my personal way.”

“Once you’ve done that,” he says of the Mini-Transat, “you’re not the same as before.”

Even as Mauffrier dreams of life after October 2007, and his ultimate goal of sailing solo around the world, he delights in the challenges of the next three years, and especially of finishing the race. He insists that he doesn’t care where he finishes, first or last, that he doesn’t care about somehow outpacing the many professional sailors involved. He cares only that he finishes.

Sitting over a beer at Trellis, Louis Mauffrier persuasively declares: “If you arrive, you won. And that’s how life is working.”



**Mauffrier
with Lucien,
11, and
Antoine, 6.**

Holiday Lighting Drive Under Way

The Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce is once again getting ready for holiday lighting on Main Street, soliciting contributions to decorate streetlight poles and array strings of lights across Main Street. Some 22 light poles are available at \$275 each, and Island organizations can pay for a string of lights at \$500 to \$700, as an alternative. This will be the fourth year; the program was started immediately after 9/11/01. Julie Palermo, Chamber President, has additional information at **646-331-3445**, as does Carol da Silva at Roosevelt Island Housing Management – **212-838-4747**.

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Deadline for December 18 issue: Tuesday, December 14

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED – The Icla da Silva Foundation is looking for volunteers to help in the office, located at Goldwater Memorial Hospital on Roosevelt Island. Please call Airam da Silva at **212-593-1807**.

Want to Work the Next Election?
It's \$200, an Early Call, & 16 Hours

by **Judy Berdy**

After many years of being a typical New Yorker and complaining about how the general election sites are operated, I decided to volunteer and work at one. About four months ago I found the poll-worker application on the Board of Elections website at <http://vote.nyc.ny.us/pollworkers.jsp>. I filled it out and did not hear back before the primary election in September.

But six days before the November 2 General Election, I received a postcard asking me to be at 155th Street and Riverside Drive at 5:30 a.m. on Election Day. I immediately called the Manhattan office and pleaded that this was probably the farthest I could travel in the borough. They agreed to let me work near home.

I took the two-hour training class the next evening. It was an overview of how to do the different tasks, followed by a 25-question open-book test. You do not find out if you pass or fail the test. (One suggestion is on-the-spot grading). I even watched the 30-minute videotape that they show to every student. It is narrated by Marcia Kramer of WCBS, and it recaps what you have been taught.

All the terminology was strange to me, including affidavit ballot, challenged votes, and the procedures. Our City still prizes penmanship over computers.

Election Day had not even dawned when we appeared at our site. Many of the workers had been there before and knew exactly what to do. It was a challenge to be ready for voters in the 30-minute set-up time allotted. We new people pitched in and had lots of on-the-job training.

Here's the process: At one table, you sign in people, and give each a card. They present the card to the official at the machine, and the machine is set. You step inside, pull the red lever, vote, and pull the lever back.

It sounds simple, but there are many people who arrive with problems, questions, or lack of registration. Of course, the 42-

year-old voting machines break down occasionally, and it always happens in the busiest district. If your district is big enough, there are two machines.

After a few hours at the table, you get into the swing of things, try not to get distracted,

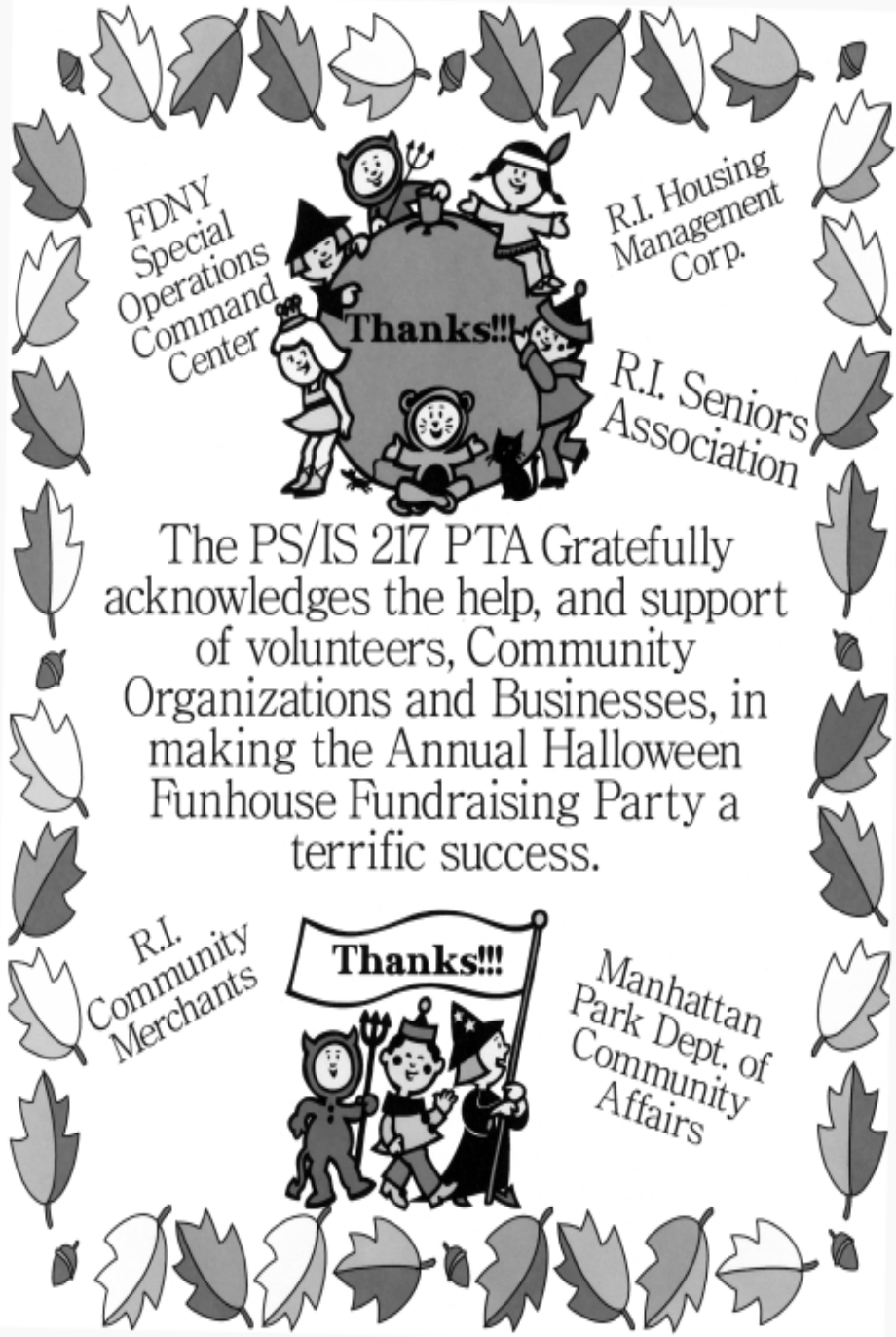


keep the numbers, names, cards in order and, by the end of the evening, know that all will be in order.

We had a good team and processed over 500 voters at our table.

Many people have the misconception that poll workers are political appointees and that they do not get paid. Actually, anyone can fill out the application, get trained, and do the work. Where else can you earn \$200 for a 16-hour day? (You get a break and two meal hours.)

I told some neighbors that this is a great way to spend a day. Many of our workers are way past retirement age, and a 16-hour day is a real strain. New people would be welcome to the job and make it easier for everyone to be more efficient.



The PS/IS 217 PTA Gratefully acknowledges the help, and support of volunteers, Community Organizations and Businesses, in making the Annual Halloween Funhouse Fundraising Party a terrific success.

for the power of an informed community



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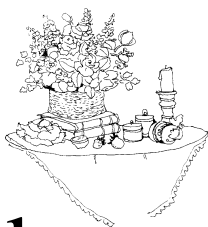
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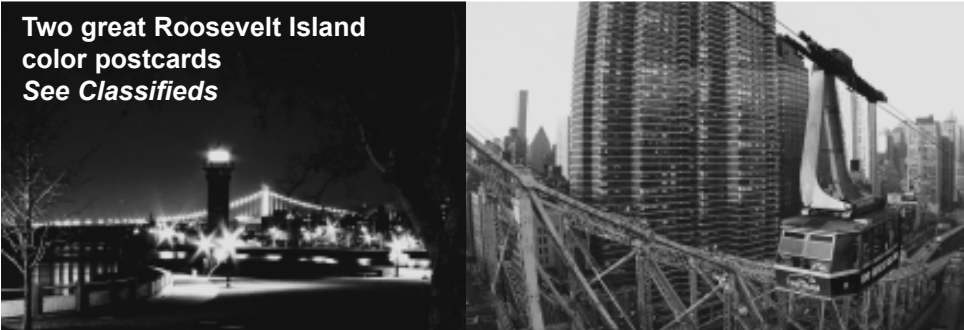
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